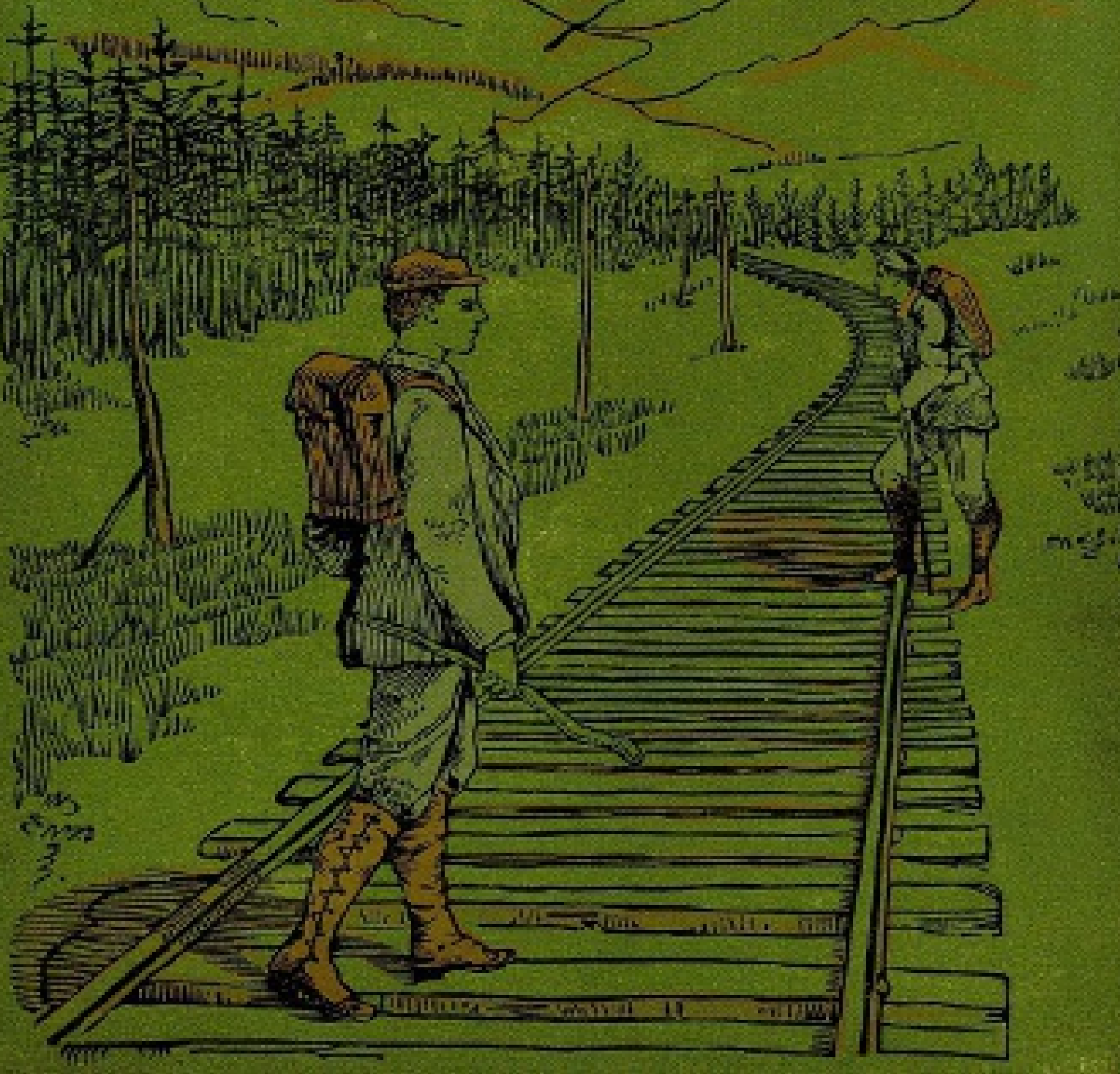
THE BOY TRAMPS
OR ACROSS CANADA

BY J. MACDONALD OXLEY



Title: The Boy Tramps, or Across Canada

Date of first publication: 1896

Author: James Macdonald Oxley (1855-1907)

Date first posted: June 6 2012

Date last updated: June 6 2012

Faded Page eBook #20120614

This eBook was produced by: Marcia Brooks, Mary Meehan & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at http://www.pgdpcanada.net

This file was produced from images generously made available by Florida's Publication of Archival, Library & Museum Materials (PALMM)

THE BOY TRAMPS

OR ACROSS CANADA

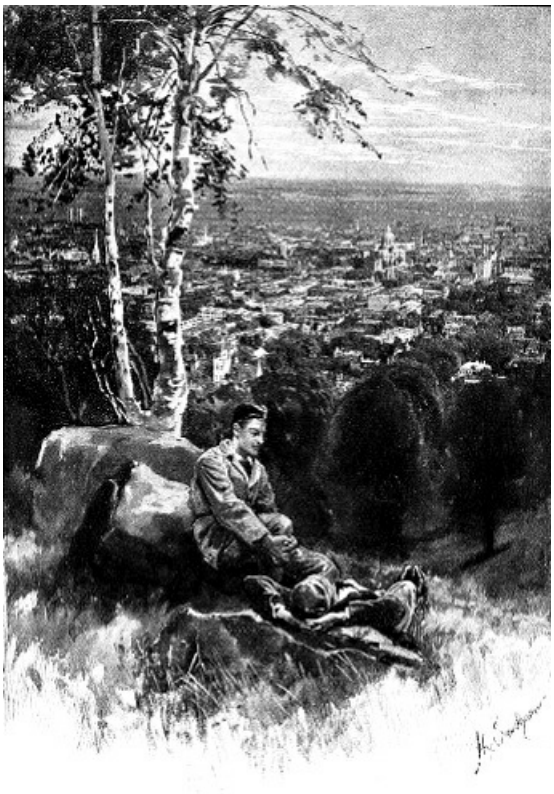
BY J. MACDONALD OXLEY, LL.B., B.A.

AUTHOR OF "THE ROMANCE OF COMMERCE"

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
HENRY SANDHAM

NEW YORK: 46 East 14th Street
THOMAS Y. CROWELL & COMPANY
BOSTON: 100 Purchase Street

ROCKWELL and CHURCHILL PRESS,



"Being somewhat weary from their Exertions, they were resting for a Few Minutes."—See Page 70.

CONTENTS.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

THE BOY TRAMPS

OR, ACROSS CANADA.

CHAPTER I.

AT SCHOOL AND AT SEA.

It seemed in flat opposition to the familiar adage "like likes like" that Bruce Barclay and Arthur Rowe should be the most devoted chums at Merchiston Castle School, for certainly, to all outward appearance, the only point of similarity between them was that they both had fathers in the far East enduring the pains of exile and braving the perils of fever and cholera in the arduous pursuit of fortune.

As they came upon the cricket-ground together they presented a notable contrast, one to the other. Bruce was one year the elder, and stood full two inches above his companion. In many respects he was a typical Scotch laddie, and needed only tartan and sporran fitly to represent the son of a Highland chieftain.

He was tall for his years, but his well-knit frame was free from all suspicion of lankiness; and though his cheeks bore no tinge of red, they had that healthy pallor which betokens a sound, strong constitution. His features were regular, and when his clear gray eyes lit up with merriment or tenderness, the most captious critic could not deny that he looked "na sae ill;" but in repose his countenance wore a somewhat heavy expression, due in large part to his tendency to "brown studies," that was not attractive. He had light-brown hair that was always well brushed, and a set of white, regular teeth that owed nothing to the dentist, and was altogether a thoroughly wholesome, stalwart youth whose seventeenth birthday would soon come round.

If Arthur fell short of his friend in height, he so surpassed him in sturdiness of build that they both tipped the scale at the same weight, to wit, one hundred and forty-five pounds. He was a worthy son of John Bull, and promised, if spared to middle age, to attain quite aldermanic proportions. In the meantime, he stood five feet six inches in his stockings, had an athletic figure, with every muscle well developed, a frank and decidedly pleasing face, deep blue eyes brimming with mischief, an ever-ready smile, and a shock of crisp yellow curls that seemed to bid defiance to the discipline of the brush.

In their mental characteristics also the boys differed as widely as they did in their physical. Acute as Bruce's intellect was, he never made haste to put his thoughts into action. Reason, not impulse, was his master, and he often showed a degree of discretion, an amount of canniness, in fact, hardly to be expected from one of his years. He had abundance of spirit, but he kept it so well in hand that one who knew him slightly might imagine him dull, little conceiving what a geyser could burst forth if he were touched to the quick.

Arthur, on the other hand, wore his heart always on his sleeve, or, to use another simile, had the latch-string of his mind ever hanging out. Of the faculty called "reserve" he had practically none. He did his thinking at electric speed, and had an opinion ready as soon as the issue was presented. His temper was as quick as his heart was warm, and having once expressed an opinion or taken a position, he would maintain his ground resolutely, no matter what the odds might be against him. In a word, he was a hearty, healthy boy, loyal to his friends, fearless before his foes, and fated to make a good mark in the world, provided his impetuosity did not entail some untimely disaster.

The one point of similarity between Arthur and Bruce that has been noted needs further explanation. Mr. Rowe and Mr. Barclay were merchants in Shanghai, the former being engaged in the silk, and the latter in the tea, trade. There the boys had been playmates in the handsome English settlement, and thence at an early age they had been sent away from the enervating climate to the bracing air of Scotland, in which they had flourished famously.

For the past nine years they had been at Merchiston, making their way up from class to class, and winning renown at cricket and football. Bruce was decidedly the best scholar, and helped Arthur over many a hard place by patient coaching, although the latter needed only to give his mind to his studies in order to take rank with the leaders in the classes.

They had both reached the sixth class, Bruce being at the top and Arthur not far from the bottom, and were beginning to look forward questioningly to the future, for it was not decided whether they should continue on to the University. They hoped their fathers would allow them to do so, but had no definite assurance in the matter.

In the meantime they were making the most of their last year at dearly loved Merchiston, and a memorable year it proved to be for both them and the school, as it witnessed the signal defeat of Loretto at cricket, and Fettes at football, in the

achieving of which glorious double event they each bore a brilliant part.

The football match took place in February, and it was only due to the intercession of Bruce that Arthur, in spite of his speed, and skill, and strength, had a place on the fifteen, the trouble with him being that he was impatient of discipline, and apt to take his own way of dealing with the ball instead of implicitly obeying his captain.

For this reason, Bruce, who played forward, while Arthur was one of the half-backs, felt especially anxious that he should cover himself with glory, and before they went on the field he besought him not only to play his best, but to do exactly as he was bidden even though he thought he knew a better way.

"It's your last chance, you know, Arthur, to beat Fettes," he urged; "and they gave us a bad licking last year, and if they do it again this year we'll be sorry for it all our lives, won't we?"

"But they're not going to do it," answered Arthur, bringing his teeth together with a snap and clenching his fists. "I'm going to get a touch-down right behind their goal if I die for it." Then after a moment's silence he added, "All right, Bruce, I'll obey orders. You needn't worry about me."

He proved as good as his word. Without abating a jot of his energy or enterprise he played his position in a way that rejoiced the captain's heart, passing with great judgment and accuracy, never failing in a tackle nor muffing a kick, and obeying every order and signal like a well-drilled soldier.

The struggle was a fierce one, and maintained with splendid resolution on both sides. Neither team gained any advantage in the first half, and the second was well advanced before Arthur saw the opportunity to redeem his pledge to Bruce.

He secured a mark on a sudden kick-out from a maul, but instead of taking his kick determined to attempt a run-in. He gave a quick glance of inquiry at his captain, who divined its meaning, and nodded assent.

That instant Arthur was off like a startled deer, clearing the opposing forwards before they had time to recover from the maul, and thus having only two of the half-backs and the back left to reckon with.

The first half-back, having to come at him on a slant from the rear, was easily disposed of. The second gave more difficulty. It was Sangster, undoubtedly the best player on the Fettes team, and, realizing the danger there was of Arthur's dashing charge succeeding, he braced himself to meet him with the low tackle for which he was renowned.

The chorus of cheers rose into a continuous roar like that of a cataract as Arthur's feet flew over the turf. He was apparently making no attempt to evade Sangster, and Barclay, watching him with throbbing anxiety, wondered what his strategy might be.

"Just as Sangster's sinewy hands were about to encircle his waist, He suddenly sprang High in the Air."

Another moment made it plain, for, just as Sangster's sinewy hands were about to encircle his waist, he suddenly sprang high in the air, and well to the left of his opponent, who, losing his balance in the effort to turn quick enough, fell over on his knees, while Arthur sped exultantly past him.

The outburst of applause that greeted this clever feat reached even Arthur's ears, and stimulated him for the task yet before him. He was now within fifteen yards of the goal, and five yards in front of it stood the full-back with every nerve and sinew attent, like a panther ready for his spring.

Arthur knew he could not repeat the trick that did for Sangster. But his resources were not yet exhausted. His quick mind evolved another no less brilliant.

When but five yards remained between him and the back he dropped the ball upon his toe, kicked it over the other's head, and then, having both hands free, used them to thrust his opponent aside, and, pressing past him, fell upon the ball as it lay just behind the centre of the goal, the most exhausted but happiest being on the ground.

It is one of the accepted statements of the school that never had the "Chief," as the beloved head-master was called for short, shown so much excitement at a football match. In spite of his at times provoking waywardness Arthur had a warm place in his heart. Indeed, he had supported Bruce's petition that he be allowed a place on the team, and this really admirable performance consequently gave him peculiar pleasure.

Amid a breathless silence the leather was placed, Arthur himself being assigned to hold it, and Bruce got into position for the kick. It was an easy one to make, to be sure, but many a place-kick fails, and there was anxiety on the Merchiston side and hope among those of Fettes.

As composedly as if it were an every-day occurrence, Bruce took a few swift strides, caught the ball fairly with the point of his toe, and away it went sailing over the uplifted hands and faces of the baffled opponents, full ten feet above the centre of the cross-bar. The touch-down had been duly converted into a goal, and the match was won for Merchiston.

Not one shadow of jealousy clouded Bruce's delight in Arthur's achievement. Under the special circumstances he was really gladder at heart than if he himself had been the hero of the day, and in his enthusiasm he threw aside all his reserve as he shouted and danced about in as lively a fashion as the youngest boy in the school.

Arthur's turn to be jubilant over his chum's powers came some months later when the annual cricket match with Loretto was played at Pinkie. Loretto, going first to the bat, had, in spite of the utmost efforts of Gray and Hutchison, the Merchiston bowlers, and the faultless fielding of the other players, amassed the threatening total of two hundred and fifty runs, the largest on record in the contest between these schools.

Bruce was captain of the Merchiston eleven, and his face grew more and more serious as the score rose steadily, until at last all the batters were out, and it was Merchiston's turn to wield the willow.

"Now, fellows, we've got to play for our lives," were his words as the eleven gathered about him for a minute. "There's not much chance of our matching their score, but we might make a decent draw if we play carefully. Let us all do our best."

Bruce went in first, taking Loney, the "barn-door" of the eleven, for his companion, and the excitement was unusually keen as the innings opened.

Arthur did not shine at cricket as at football, and on this occasion was fain to be content with a place among the spectators, whence his voice rang out from time to time in commendation of some pretty piece of work on the field.

The proceedings were tame at the outset, the Loretto bowlers being well on the spot, and neither of the batsmen caring to take any liberties with the well-pitched balls. But presently Bruce began to open his shoulders, and the score started to climb after the high mark set by the other side.

At the end of half an hour Bruce had got thoroughly set, and the bowlers were treated with scant respect. One clever cut followed another, varied by long drives to the off and to leg. The telegraph figures grew apace, and even stolid Loney caught inspiration from his captain, and made a gallant effort to emulate him, which unhappily cost him his "life," but not before he had compiled the respectable total of twenty, so that the score, first wicket down, stood at sixty-five, and the feelings of the Merchistonians took on a brighter hue.

None of the succeeding batsmen made so long a stand as Loney, yet they all contributed their share to the rapidly growing total, and meanwhile Bruce kept on hitting freely, and piling up runs in a way that left nothing to be desired.

At the end of two hours a rattling cheer, led off by Arthur, announced that Bruce had completed his century, and fifteen minutes later another cheer greeted the appearance of the figures 200 on the board.

The Loretto boys began to look anxious. The victory that seemed so securely theirs might yet be snatched from them. Nearly an hour of play still remained, and Barclay showed no signs of weariness or failing skill. There were five more wickets to fall, and so stubbornly were these defended that it took another half-hour to get rid of them.

Ten minutes before the time for drawing stumps the Merchiston score stood at two hundred and forty. As may be easily imagined the excitement was now intense, only ten minutes more to play, and ten runs yet to make to save a draw. All Merchiston, from the "Chief" down to the newest boy, held their breath as each ball was delivered, and gave a sigh of relief when it was well taken care of by the batsman.

Presently a roar of "Well hit! well hit!" and a fusillade of hand-clapping greeted a grand drive to the off from Bruce that cleared the boundary fence and was good for five.

Some anxious minutes of careful play followed during which Bruce's partner added two useful singles, and then just a moment before the call of time Bruce himself laid hold of a short-pitched ball on his leg side, and putting all his strength into the stroke lifted it far above long leg's head, and the match was won with two good wickets to spare.

Bruce had carried out his bat after being nearly three hours at the wickets, and having put together the splendid score of one hundred and twenty-eight runs, the highest ever made in a first-class school match in the history of Merchiston.

The ovation that he received as he walked back to the pavilion was enough to turn the head of any boy. Even the defeated of Loretto joined heartily in the cheers, and when the head-master wrung his hand warmly, exclaiming, "Nobly done,

Barclay! I never saw better cricket in the school," Bruce felt that his cup of happiness was full to overflowing.

As may be readily understood the difference in the mental temperaments of the two lads showed itself very markedly in their studies. Arthur had great quickness of apprehension and a retentive memory, but chafed against routine work and sadly lacked steadfastness. Bruce, on the other hand, although slower to seize upon new ideas, forgot nothing that he had once learned, and had the power of pegging away patiently until the most difficult task had to yield itself to him.

As the close of the session drew near, Arthur showed a little deeper interest in his work, but Bruce kept steadily on at much the same pace as he had started.

When the prize list was published, both names appeared upon it, but with a big difference, for Bruce, besides winning the Chalmers Mathematical prize, had headed his class in Latin, German, and Chemistry, while Arthur had gained only one honor, and that, strange to say, on the very subject least likely to be congenial to one of his lively nature, to wit, Divinity. Like a true friend, however, he took as much pleasure in his friend's prizes as if they had been his own, and their last year at dear old Merchiston was the happiest of all, the only shadow being the fact that they must take their leave of a place where they had spent so many joyous days, and go out into a world of which they had so little knowledge.

Both Mr. Barclay and Mr. Rowe had provided liberally for the boys during their stay at Merchiston, and they had been able during the long holidays to join travelling parties visiting different parts of Great Britain and the Continent; but all this was a mere trifle compared with the experience that was before them now.

To the fathers in far-away Shanghai had gone regular accounts of their sons' progress, and they had been looking forward to the time when the course at Merchiston would be finished, and the boys could go out and show themselves for parental approbation ere their future course was decided upon.

As it was not advisable for them to reach Shanghai until the summer heat had passed, and they already had seen a good deal of the Old World, it was arranged that they should spend a couple of months travelling in the New World, proceeding to Shanghai in the autumn.

This entirely fell in with their inclinations. They had read much about the United States and the Dominion of Canada, and were eager to visit those countries, particularly Canada, because it was a British colony, and they thought they would feel much more at home there than they would among their American cousins.

The matter being left largely to themselves, it was finally decided that they should go to Canada first, and then, if they had any time to spare, a tour could be made of New York, Boston, Washington, and some of the other chief cities of the United States, before they went on to the Pacific Coast, where the steamer would be taken for Shanghai.

Thus it came about that the last week in June saw them on their way to Liverpool, with Merchiston and all the happy days spent there only a memory to be cherished through life.

It was the first time they had really been upon their own responsibility, and they both felt highly elated thereat, although Bruce, with his wonted reserve, managed tolerably well to conceal the fact.

But Arthur gave himself away with the utmost frankness. He strutted up and down the platform at the railway station like a young rooster on a sunny morning. He patronized the porters, and tipped the guard with what he flattered himself was the nonchalance of a globe-trotter. He lolled about on the cushions, affecting a fine indifference to the scenery, and letting it be understood that he was vastly bored by the journey, while all the time he was mentally hugging himself at his good fortune in getting off on this "grand tour" practically as his own master, and with the best friend he had in the world as his companion.

At Liverpool they went on board the fine steamer "Parisian" of the Allan Line, and were delighted at the stateroom which was to be theirs for the next ten days, and at the sumptuous fittings of the saloon.

"Won't we just have a fine time!" exclaimed Arthur, after they had got their things stowed away and were able to look about them. "There'll be lots of fun, you know, and Duffus, who's been across in this steamer twice, says the grub is prime,—as good as a Christmas dinner every day in the week."

"But suppose you're seasick?" suggested Bruce, with a quiet smile. "It won't make much matter how good the grub is

then."

"Do you think I'm going to be such a fool?" answered Arthur indignantly. "No, sir, no seasickness for this child," and he set his feet firmly on the deck, and rested his hands on his hips.

Bruce discreetly said no more, although he felt pretty sure that both he and his chum would have to pay the usual tribute to old Neptune before they had been long at sea.

The trip down the Mersey was full of interest, the big steamer threading her way through the maze of shipping with an intelligent accuracy that made her seem like some huge living creature.

The weather being fine the boys spent all their time on deck, Arthur asking numberless questions of the officers and men, and already beginning to scrape acquaintance with some of the passengers, while Bruce kept more in the background, yet lost nothing of what was taking place.

They had appetites as keen as razors for dinner, and were among the first to respond when the summons came. They found the fare provided fully equal to their school-mate's description. From the point of view of their Merchiston experience, where the food had, of course, been more substantial than elaborate, as best befitted hearty boys, it was as good as a Christmas dinner, and Arthur devoted himself so assiduously to the different items of the lengthy *menu* that his *vis-a-vis*, a gray-beard traveller, leaning across the table with a humorous twinkle in his shrewd gray eyes, said in an undertone:

"That is right, my lad, make hay while the sun shines. You may want nothing but a bit of biscuit and a cup of tea this time to-morrow."

Kindly as the tone was in which the words were spoken, Arthur was quick enough to detect the touch of satire that underlay it, and it made him flush hotly.

His first impulse was to retort, "Will you be good enough to mind your own business?" but Bruce, who feared something of the kind, gave him a significant look, and what he did say was:

"That's all right, sir. I'll take my chances," and although it was not in the pleasantest tone imaginable, yet the old gentleman took it in the best of humor, and went on with his dinner, saying to himself:

"A fine-spirited boy that! I thought he was going to tell me to mind my own business, but he's evidently been better trained. I must find out who he is."

Not imagining that he had awakened any interest in his fellow-passenger, Arthur paid him no further attention, nor did he allow his intrusive remark to cast any cloud upon his enjoyment of the good things before him.

By the time the boys thought of getting into their bunks the "Parisian" was rolling about in the Irish channel at a rate that made the business of undressing by no means an easy task. Just as Arthur was trying to get out of his trousers the steamer gave a sudden pitch that, finding him unprepared, and unable to balance himself, sent him hard against Bruce, who was in his turn toppled over by the sudden impact, and the two boys fell in a tangled heap of legs, arms, bodies, and braces in the corner by the sofa.

They were soon on their feet again, laughing heartily and none the worse for the collapse, but Arthur, as he straightened himself out, became conscious of a dizziness in the head and uneasiness in the stomach that caused him to hurry off the remainder of his clothes and climb into his berth with as little delay as possible. He even omitted to say his prayers as was his wont, so pressing did he feel the emergency to be, and so anxious was he to give no vent of his feeling to his companion.

Bruce suspected the truth, notwithstanding, but was too considerate to make any remark. He knew quite well he had his own battle to fight, and was not disposed to be critical of others.

They had a very restless and uncomfortable night of it, as the "Parisian" pitched and tossed unceasingly; and when morning came Arthur realized that in spite of his rash boasting he had fallen a victim to the remorseless power of the sea, and that his place at the breakfast-table would be vacant for that morning.

He was too wretched to feel much concerned over this. His one thought was, how soon would he be himself again; yet,

since misery loves company, he did find some consolation in the discovery that Bruce was no less upset, and that they were likely to fairly share the confinement to the stateroom.

"How long do you think we'll be like this?" he groaned, looking straight up at the ceiling, for he did not dare lean over the edge of the berth, Bruce being below him.

"Only to-day, I hope," responded Bruce, striving nobly to put a cheerful tone into his voice. "If we keep still all day we'll be right enough by to-morrow."

Keep still, indeed! The suggestion was easily enough made, but it was far from being easy of execution, with the great steamer apparently making frantic efforts to turn somersaults, and the boys' interior departments seeming to be in quick and distressful sympathy with her every movement.

However, thanks to the kind ministrations of an attentive steward, they did manage somehow to get through the long, dreary day, and the following morning being bright and clear with little wind, they succeeded in crawling out on deck, when the keen fresh air so braced them up that by dinner-time they felt equal to resuming their places at the table.

As the old gentleman who sat opposite to Arthur took his seat he gave him a pleasant nod of recognition which seemed to reply:

"Well, here you are again, but I was right, you see, after all."

And the boy, in a sudden impulse to frank confession of having boasted prematurely, leaned across with reddening cheeks to say:

"I didn't want even the tea and biscuit this time yesterday. I was awfully knocked up."

A bright smile broke over the gentleman's face.

"An honest confession is good for the soul, they say," he returned. "You've shown the right spirit, my lad, and I hope we shall soon become better acquainted."

That he was sincere in the expression of this hope was manifested when they all rose from dinner and went on deck, for as soon as he had lit his cigar he joined them, and introducing himself as Mr. Gillespie, of Montreal, availed himself of the privilege of age to ask them a number of questions about themselves.

They were soon deep in talk, Bruce, as usual, allowing Arthur to take the lead in the conversation, yet not in anywise standing aloof, but showing by his attentive listening and occasional shrewd remarks that he felt thoroughly at ease.

Mr. Gillespie, who had a houseful of sons at home, took a deep interest in the young travellers, and before the voyage ended gave them so cordial an invitation to spend some days with him in Montreal that they gladly accepted it.

The days slipped by very pleasantly upon the "Parisian," each one finding the boys' list of acquaintances extending until it embraced nearly all the first-class passengers, the chief exception being the men who spent their time in the smoking-room playing cards and drinking champagne with a zeal and zest that made it appear they regarded these occupations as the chief end of life.

Nor was Arthur content with the saloon as his sphere of activity. His eagerness for information took him all over the ship. He got himself spattered with oil in the engine-room, and grimy with coal-dust down among the furnaces. He even penetrated into the steerage, carrying cakes and fruit to the dirty-faced children that swarmed there like rabbits in a burrow.

To one of these youngsters, a pretty, blue-eyed, fair-haired German boy about five years of age, he took a great fancy, and one day brought him on the main deck to show him to Mr. Gillespie.

They were having a lively game of romps together when Arthur, picking up the child in his arms, held him over the railing to give him a bit of a scare; but, instead of being frightened, the little chap crowed and kicked so vigorously that Arthur lost his balance, and before he could recover himself the boy had slipped out of his grasp and dropped into the waves twenty feet below!

CHAPTER II.

SOME ADVENTURES ASHORE.

Arthur's first feeling as the child slipped from his grasp, and, with a splash scarce audible to him so far above, vanished beneath the breeze-rippled water, was one of paralyzing horror. But it was only for a moment. The next instant, throwing off his coat and cap, with one quick movement he raced down to the stern, and not hesitating a second at the height, leaped off the taffrail into the foam of the steamer's wake.

Suddenly as it all took place Bruce was nearly as quick as his companion; but his cool, clear head told him a better thing to do. Snatching up one of the life-preservers, ready at hand for just such an emergency, he sprang after Arthur, and just as the latter appeared above the waves with the child firmly held in his left hand, while he struck out strongly with the right, Bruce also appeared not twenty yards away with the life-preserver, and called out cheeringly:

"It's all right, Arthur, I've got a life-preserver. Stay where you are. I'll bring it to you."

"NEVER HAD HIS CHUM'S VOICE SOUNDED SO SWEET TO ARTHUR BEFORE."

Never had his chum's voice sounded so sweet to Arthur before. In his noble impulse to rescue he had not stopped to consider how, if he got the child, he would be able to keep it and himself afloat during the time that must necessarily elapse before a boat could be lowered to pick them up. But now the thoughtfulness of Bruce had solved that problem; and as the life-preserver came within his reach he grasped it with a tremendous feeling of relief, exclaiming enthusiastically:

"What a brick you are, Bruce! We'll save little Dutchie between us all right."

Meanwhile there was intense excitement on board the steamer. Mr. Gillespie had at once given the alarm, the engines

had been stopped, and preparations made for lowering one of the boats as rapidly as possible.

Although not a moment was lost in this, it seemed awfully long to the anxious passengers crowded at the stern before the boat got off, the headway of the huge vessel being so great that the boys were far astern, and scarcely visible before the first oar struck the water.

But the rowers put all their strength into every stroke, and the heavy boat fairly tore through the water, which happily was not at all rough, until after ten minutes of hard pulling the welcome order "Easy all" told them they had reached their goal.

When the boat ran alongside the boys, and the men in the stern lifted them and the child carefully over the gunwale, the rowers held their oars upright in the air, and gave a mighty "hurrah!" which, making its way back to the steamship, was echoed by the relieved and rejoicing passengers who had been watching every movement of the boat with feverish eagerness.

The boys had a rousing reception on their return to the steamer, the gentlemen cheering and clapping them on the back, and pronouncing them most emphatically "the right sort," and fine, manly fellows, and so on; while the ladies, their eyes brimming with tears, felt quite ready to kiss them, all dripping as they were. As for "little Dutchie," he was fairly overwhelmed with caresses, to which he submitted with the stolidity of his race. He was also the object of many gifts, which he accepted as calmly as he did the caresses.

After Bruce and Arthur had changed their clothes they returned to the deck, where they found Mr. Gillespie on the lookout for them.

"You came out of that handsomely, my lads," said he, giving a hand to each. "You," looking at Arthur, "only did your duty under the circumstances, but it couldn't have been done better; and you," turning to Bruce, "acted like a true friend. It warmed my old heart to see you, and I tell you," he added, his face kindling, "if I'd only been twenty years younger I'd have gone over with you to make sure you were equal to the job."

"Oh, I felt pretty sure of that, thank you," responded Bruce modestly. "Arthur and I are good swimmers, and could have kept afloat a long time without the life-preserver, but I thought it was better to have it, all the same."

This incident deepened the friendship between the old man and the boys, and they were more together than ever. He seemed to enjoy keenly the stories of their school life, and they completely exhausted their stores of such for his benefit.

In return he gave them many interesting chapters from his own long and eventful life, nearly all of which had been spent in Canada; and they were absorbed listeners as he described some exciting experience in the early days of the city, or a thrilling escape from the perils of travel through regions where, not only the railway, but the post-road, was yet unknown.

In this way the boys grew so interested in Canada that they began to discuss between themselves whether they would not spend the whole summer in that country, and leave the United States for another time.

"We've only got until September, you know," argued Arthur, who entirely favored the idea, "and it's an awful big country."

"That's true enough," assented Bruce, who, however, had not his mind quite made up. "But so are the United States, and the dear only knows when we'll get another chance of seeing something of them. Don't let us decide now," he added, "wait until we've been in Canada a little while, and then see what we'll do."

Arthur agreed to this, and the matter then dropped for the time, there being plenty of other things to occupy the boys' attention.

They had grand games of shovel-board and deck-quoits, they read the books in the steamer's library when it was too stormy to be on deck, and they turned up with a good appetite at each one of the five meals so lavishly provided for all who cared to take them, so that not for a moment did time hang heavy on their hands; and presently the always welcome cry of "Land ho!" was raised, for the "Parisian" had come to the entrance of the Straits of Belle Isle, and the ocean voyage was over, the remainder of the trip being practically inland sailing.

As they passed through the Straits, and steered southward along the coast of Newfoundland. Mr. Gillespie interested the boys greatly with tales of the dangers of navigation in the great Gulf of St. Lawrence, and how many fine vessels had been wrecked on the pitiless coasts, or through collision with icebergs in the fog, or by running into one another when enshrouded in mist.

When darkness came on, the lighthouses placed here and there to warn navigators to keep off, sent their bright rays gleaming through the night, and so familiar was Mr. Gillespie with the course, that he knew each one of them as they were opened up,—Point Armour on the Labrador coast, and Point Rich on the Newfoundland side,—and he had a story for each.

That night one of the fogs so frequent in those waters enveloped the steamer, and the fog-horn was kept going steadily, much to the disturbance of the boys, who could not sleep for its mournful bellowings.

"Oh, dear, I wish that horrid thing would shut up," groaned Arthur, rolling over in his berth and trying to shut out the persistent sound by covering his head with the clothes. "It'll drive me crazy if it keeps up like that all night."

"Wouldn't you rather have it going than take your chance of having some other steamer run us down?" asked Bruce, whose habit of mind was to take the most reasonable view of anything that occurred.

"Oh, I guess this steamer can take care of herself," growled Arthur, determined not to be appeased, for he was indeed desperately sleepy. "She's too big for anything to hurt her, anyway."

"Not a bit of it," replied Bruce. "They've got to be just as careful as if she were a steam-launch. But, listen!" he exclaimed, starting up in his berth. "Is that an echo, or is it another steamer answering us?"

The boys listened breathlessly, and sure enough there could be heard in the intervals of the blasts of the "Parisian's" horn a fainter blast that evidently was not an echo, for it had a different pitch and a briefer duration.

"It is another steamer, and it's coming right toward us," said Bruce. "Now, my boy, don't you think it's a good thing our fog-horn has been kicking up such a row? See, they're signalling each other with long and short blasts so as to show how to pass."

The idea of another vessel as big and as swift as the "Parisian" emerging suddenly out of the dense obscurity and charging right at her for lack of knowledge as to her position came over Arthur so strongly that he gave a big gasp of relief, and said in quite a meek tone:

"I'll forgive the fog-horn, even if it does seem a nuisance when a fellow wants to go to sleep. I wish I could get a look at that other steamer."

But it was altogether too dense for that, even if they had been on deck, and as they listened, the sound of her warning blasts grew fainter and fainter until it was heard no more.

Shortly after this they both fell asleep despite the incessant bellowing of the horn, and had got well into the land of dreams when they were suddenly aroused by a shock that nearly tumbled them out of their berths.

Scrambling on to the floor of the stateroom they cried at the same moment:

"What's happened? Have we struck?"

But as neither could answer the other they soon saw there was nothing to learn by staying where they were, and, without more ado, they hastened to pull on some clothes, and get out into the saloon, where they found many of the other passengers already gathered in various stages of *dishabille* that might have been amusing at any other time.

They were all rushing about in a frantic fashion, demanding to know what had happened, and there seemed nobody competent to answer until one of the officers appeared, and was immediately surrounded by a score of excited men and women who shouted at him as though they thought him deaf.

When he was able to make himself understood, it appeared that the steamer had run down a sailing-vessel, striking her almost amidships, but that she had not sunk, being timber-laden, and her crew would all be rescued, while it was not thought that the "Parisian" had received any serious damage.

This announcement was enough to cause Bruce and others to complete dressing and to hasten on deck. Working their way to the bow they found that the steamer had not yet entirely disengaged herself from the other vessel, and there was a great flashing of lights and shouting of commands going on.

Being relieved from all anxiety as to their own safety, or that of the crew of the stricken ship, they could look on at the busy scene with easy minds.

What the captain of the "Parisian" desired was to get the wreck cleared away from the bow and drawn alongside until those on board had time to remove everything of value to the steamer, when the wreck must be abandoned to its fate.

In spite of the admirable discipline which he maintained, the suddenness of the shock and the darkness of the night confused his men at first, and they did not execute his orders with their wonted intelligence and rapidity, putting him in a towering rage, which greatly impressed the boys, who had never before seen him otherwise than in a genial mood.

Before long, however, despite the difficulties of the situation, the vessel was cut loose and drawn alongside, and all on board her reached the "Parisian's" deck with their clothes and other belongings, which, being accomplished, the steamer resumed her course. A careful examination of the fore-hold having established the welcome fact that although the bow had suffered some slight damage, it was not enough to cause a serious leak, and at the worst, only the fore-compartment would be flooded.

When the excitement had all subsided the boys went back to their berths, and as they turned in for the second time, Bruce said:

"That settles the fog-horn question, doesn't it, Arthur? If that vessel we ran down had only been blowing a horn like the steamer we met we'd have gone by her all right instead of smashing into her as we did."

"That's so, Bruce," assented Arthur sleepily; "I'll never feel mad at a fog-horn again;" and having delivered himself of this virtuous resolution, he rolled over to finish his much-interrupted night's rest.

The following morning they were steaming by the big island of Anticosti, which stands right in the heart of the St. Lawrence Gulf, and as they gave its dangerous shores a wide berth Mr. Gillespie told them many thrilling tales of the terrible disasters of which the island had been the scene.

Well had it deserved the ill-omened title of "Isle of Shipwrecks," from the day when Sir William Phipps' troop-ships were cast away upon it with the loss of hundreds of brave British soldiers until the present, when the wrecks of several fine iron steamships were still to be seen sprawling upon its merciless reefs.

The boys were also told about Gamache, the mysterious smuggler and wrecker, whose sinister renown had filled the whole Gulf in years gone by, and who was believed by the superstitious sailors to be in league with the devil, and able to exercise supernatural powers if hard pressed.

They reached Quebec on the afternoon of Friday, and on the advice of Mr. Gillespie got off the steamer to spend a day or two in looking over the old city, whose towering citadel at once made plain to them why it was known as the Gibraltar of America.

Arranging to meet their kind friend in Montreal, they bade "good-by" to the "Parisian" and betook themselves to a hotel, feeling glad enough to be on *terra firma* once more, full of enjoyment and interest as the trip across the ocean had been.

Immediately after dinner they set out to explore the city, with its steep, narrow, tortuous streets, its quaint old-fashioned buildings, and its foreign-looking people chattering away in a language that the instruction they had received in French at Merchiston in nowise helped them to understand.

Presently they were hailed by the driver of a very odd-looking vehicle, who seemed in a great state of anxiety to be hired.

"That must be one of those *calèches* Mr. Gillespie was telling us about. Let's hire him for a while and drive around. We'll get along ever so much better that way," said Arthur, always ready for something new.

It was a lovely evening, and there was a full hour of clear twilight still to come, so Bruce thought the idea a good one, and much to the gratification of the cabbie they climbed into his curious chariot, that very much resembled an ancient

two-wheeled gig, and bid him drive them about for an hour.

Some Adventures Ashore.

"What a queer old place this is, to be sure!" exclaimed Arthur after they had been threading their way for some time through streets so narrow that there was scarce room for two carriages to pass. "It's a good deal like Edinburgh, isn't it, though the houses aren't half so high."

But when their drive brought them to Dufferin Terrace, more than half-way up the precipitous flank of Cape Diamond, and from this superb promenade there opened out one of the most magnificent views in the world, they forgot all about the contracted shadowy streets in their admiration for the wonderful panorama spread before and beneath them.

Right at their feet lay the old town, now dark in shadow, beyond it the glorious river, bearing scores of vessels of every variety on its bosom, swept steadily seaward, its farther shore seeming dim in the distance, so great was its breadth. Above them the citadel rose in successive terraces of mighty masonry, while on their left the newer part of the city stretched away in rank after rank of solid stone structures.

"Auld Reekie can't show anything finer than this, can she, Bruce?" said Arthur. "It's certainly worth coming a long way to see, isn't it?"

"It is, indeed," assented Bruce, letting the comparison with Edinburgh go by unchallenged, because, loyal as he was to the Scotch capital, he did not wish to take issue with Arthur on the matter. "Just look there," he added, pointing to the east, where the moon was rising like a huge crimson balloon. "I wish we had the Chief here, he's so fond of a fine view."

The assurance of bright moonlight decided them on prolonging their outing until bedtime, so they directed the *calèche* driver to take them out of the city a little, as they wanted to see something else than rows of gray houses.

They were accordingly driven out through St. John's gate and along the St. Foye road, on which stand a number of the

finest residences Quebec could boast. The driver called out the names of the proprietors, but his pronunciation was so execrable that neither of the boys could understand what he said.

"It's too bad we're so weak on our *parley Français*," said Bruce in a rueful tone. "I'd like to be able to understand that fellow."

His desire to understand him, and to make himself understood by him, was presently intensified by the man's strange behavior. On the way out the road he had stopped in the dark shadow of some trees to hold a whispered conversation with two other men who were invisible to the boys, and now when he was ordered to turn about, instead of going back over the same route he went aside into a narrow road that seemed to lead nowhere in particular.

"What can he be up to?" asked Bruce, with an accent of suspicion in his voice. "He's not going back the same road as we came out on."

"Let us see if we can't find out," responded Arthur, and giving the driver an emphatic poke in the back he shouted in his ear as if he thought him deaf, "Say, look here, driver, where are you taking us? We want to go back the same road as we came."

Instead of vouchsafing any explanation, the driver shook his head as though to say, "I don't know what you're driving at," and giving his horse a sharp cut that sent the creature off at a gallop, bent forward in his seat as if to avoid further questioning.

Beginning to realize that their situation was very perplexing, if not indeed perilous, the boys hurriedly consulted as to what they should do, and had just made up their minds to lay hold of the driver and compel him by main force to do their bidding when the *calèche* came to a stop with a suddenness that nearly pitched them out of it.

At once they sprang up from their seat, wrathful and alert for danger, and at the same moment were grasped by two men who seemed to have come up out of the ground, so sudden was their appearance.

"Hit hard, Arthur, they mean mischief!" cried Bruce, and, suiting the action to the word, he let fly his tightly clenched fist full into the face of his assailant, catching him squarely on the bridge of the nose, and causing him to loosen his hold with a howl of pain.

Not less promptly did Arthur act, but in a different way. His position was such that he could not strike out to advantage, so, lowering his head, he butted his man violently in the stomach, putting him *hors de combat* for the nonce.

Having thus shaken off their assailants the boys dashed away up the road down which they had been driven, and, being in good trim for running, had no difficulty in leaving far behind the *calèche* driver, who had not been able, owing to his horse starting at the noise, to render his fellow-scoundrels any assistance.

The boys did not slacken speed until they were back again on the broad, bright St. Foye road, and even then, not feeling perfectly safe from a renewal of the attack, they hastened on until they came to a house whose open door seemed to invite them in for protection.

Bruce rang the bell, and was marvellously relieved when it was answered by a pleasant-looking gentleman whose look of inquiry was caused by their disordered appearance and heavy breathing.

"Can you speak English, sir?" panted Arthur, with a bob of his head which was hatless, its covering having been lost in the short struggle.

"That I can, my lad," was the prompt reply given with an encouraging smile, "very much better than I can French. What is it you want?"

Thereupon the two boys between them told their story as best they could in their breathless condition.

They found an attentive and sympathetic auditor, who, when they had finished their narration, expressed lively indignation at the assault upon them.

"That's not the first thing of the kind that has happened here," said he. "There seems to be a regular gang of these scoundrels, and you were very lucky to escape from their clutches without being robbed, and perhaps beaten half to

death." Then, at the thought of the two rascals, one with only the blow on the face, and the other with the butt in the stomach, to show for their villanous enterprise, he broke out laughing. "But you certainly did teach those ruffians a lesson they're not likely to forget in a hurry. I wish I'd seen you knock them out. What a wiry couple you must be! Come in to the parlor, and let us get better acquainted."

Only too glad to accept this offer of hospitality, the boys went into the parlor, which had a delightfully home-like look, and having given their names were introduced to the lady of the house, who received them graciously.

The upshot of the matter was that they remained for over an hour, and after being served with refreshments, were accompanied a good part of the way back to the hotel by the gentleman and his huge mastiff, "to redeem the honor of old Quebec," their thoughtful escort said when they assured him they could get along all right by themselves.

On reaching the hotel and reporting their experience to the proprietor he was very anxious for them to put the matter into the hands of the police, but they shrank from doing this, not knowing how much trouble it might entail.

"And besides," added Bruce, with a quiet smile, "you see they got very much the worst of it, anyway, and we're quite satisfied to let the thing rest, aren't we, Arthur?"

Arthur nodded an emphatic consent, so the hotel manager said:

"Oh, well, of course it's for you to say. If I were in your place, however, I'd follow the thing up."

But they were much more anxious to get to bed than to set the police on the trail of the foiled highwaymen, and went off to their room, well enough satisfied at having got safely back to it.

The next morning they had, of course, to visit the famous falls of Montmorency, and, determining to be in good hands this time, they hired one of the carriages belonging to the hotel.

The drive to the falls was full of interest, the road leading along the river-side past old red-roofed châteaux, moss-covered and many-gabled, quaint stone houses with double rows of dormer-windows picturesquely set in their steep roofs, and frequent churches of "Our Lady" with cross-crowned spires.

Farther on they came to comfortable farms with thatched barns and granges, with dove-cotes full of feathered beauties, and with old-fashioned windmills extending their gaunt arms to catch the breeze.

"Isn't it like what we saw in France?" said Arthur. "It seems easier to believe that we're on the other side of the Channel, than of the Atlantic."

"You may well say so," responded Bruce. "Just look at these girls spinning in the doorways. Isn't that just the way they did in Picardy? Let us stop and ask for a drink; I want to have a better look at them."

Ordering the driver to pull up, the boys got out and made their way to the door of one of the farm-houses, where two dark-eyed, olive-skinned girls were standing, and in the best French he could command Arthur asked for a drink.

The girls blushed and giggled, looked at one another with a puzzled expression, and then, after whispering together, went off to the back of the house, presently returning, each with a piece of wood which they offered him with a graceful curtsey.

At once, seeing that he had made some mistake, Arthur shook his head energetically, saying:

"*Non—non—c'est quelque chose des bois que nous voulons*," illustrating his meaning by smacking his lips and pointing down his throat, whereupon the girls' faces lit up with a look of comprehension, and bursting into merry laughter they darted off, and returned this time with two bowls of rich milk, which they presented with renewed curtseys.

Having quaffed the milk, and offered payment therefor, which was smilingly refused, the boys made their best bow and withdrew. When they settled in their seats again, Arthur said, in a very meek tone:

"There was evidently something wrong about my French. Have you any idea what it was, Bruce?"

Bruce looked very thoughtful for a moment. Then he broke into a shout of laughter.

"Why, of course," he cried. "You said *des bois*, didn't you? and you should have said *à boire—quelque chose à boire*. That's good enough French for something to drink."

Seeing his mistake at once, Arthur joined heartily in the laughter, and, as the joke seemed too good to keep, they told it to the driver, who was greatly tickled.

"We ought to stay here awhile and practise up our French," said Arthur. "It's a very different thing working out a good exercise in it at school, and speaking the language so that the people will know what you are driving at."

"Right you are, chum," asserted Bruce. "To be offered a stick of wood when you're dying for a drink may seem funny, but it's rather too dry humor for me."

"Bully for you, my boy!" cried Arthur, slapping his companion heartily on the back. "You've actually made a joke, haven't you? and not a bad one, either. Bless me if I don't send that to the 'Merchistonian' by the first mail."

"Get out with you," laughed Bruce, blushing furiously. "You'll do nothing of the kind. You'd have to give yourself away too badly to tell it right."

"Well, it's good enough to be sent, anyway," persisted Arthur. "And now you've begun, I hope you'll keep it up. I'm immensely fond of jokes, though the only ones I ever make seem to be always at my own expense."

By this time they were nearing the falls, whose mighty roar was already sounding in their ears.

"They say you're apt to be disappointed by your first look at a water-fall," said Bruce. "I hope it won't be so in our case."

Following the advice of the driver they did not go at once to the edge of the falls, in which case they would certainly have been disappointed, but made their way down the steep bank by a path through the trees, and thus came out at a point where the cataract burst upon their view in all its fury and splendor.

As they gazed upward at the foaming flood, falling full two hundred and fifty feet upon the great boulders a little below them, and felt the cool touch of its spray upon their cheeks, heated by their exertions, they were for some time silent. The majesty of Montmorency had not simply equalled their expectations, it had far surpassed them.

"This is grand, and no mistake," exclaimed Arthur, giving a sigh of profound admiration. "I don't wonder they talk so much of their falls. Why, just look at that water! You might think it was milk, it's so white, mightn't you?"

"Well, you know the people about here," answered Bruce, "the *habitants*, Mr. Gillespie called them, have given the name of *La vache*—the cow—to these falls. I saw it in a guide-book at the hotel."

"If it really was milk," said Arthur, "I'd like to run a dairy here, and have the contract for supplying the city—it wouldn't take a fellow long to get rich on those terms."

"I'm afraid Montmorency's milk would hardly be as good as that the girls gave us," returned Bruce, "and by the same token I'd appreciate another bowl of it if it was handy."

For lack of milk the boys decided to have a drink of water, and despite the warnings of the driver, who told them the rocks were very slippery, proceeded to clamber farther down to where they could see a tiny pool gleaming attractively out of reach of the spray.

They were both good rock-climbers, having had plenty of experience in Scotland during the holidays, and the very fact of the presence of a spice of danger made the undertaking all the more attractive.

They reached the pool all right, and, having slaked their thirst, were about to make their way back again, when Bruce, who was an ardent botanist, caught sight of a lovely cluster of delicate fern nestling on a ledge, where, from time to time, the breeze blew to it the spray from the falls.

"I must have a bit of that fern," he cried. "Wait a moment until I get it."

Not being interested in botany, Arthur sat down on a smooth rock to watch him satisfying his scientific enthusiasm.

The ledge was not easy of access, but, undaunted by more than one slip backward, Bruce persevered until he got his fingers within reach of the fern, and carefully detached a good handful of it.

"Bravo! chum," exclaimed Arthur, who had been watching his efforts with much interest from his comfortable seat. "'If at first you don't succeed, try, try again,' works well as a rule. I hope, now you've got your fern, it'll be worth all the trouble you've taken to get it."

The last word had hardly left his lips when the narrow ledge on which Bruce was standing gave way under his weight, and, with a cry of alarm, he went slipping down towards the wild welter of foam and fury at the falls' foot!

CHAPTER III.

THE BEGINNING OF THE TRAMP.

Echoing his companion's cry Arthur rushed to the edge of the shelf and peered over in an agony of apprehension.

Bruce, still holding tightly to the ferns, had partly slipped, partly fallen, full twenty feet below, where by a happy chance a projecting point of rock had arrested his descent a few yards short of certain death.

When he saw Arthur looking over he called out to him in a tone of entire self-possession:

"Don't try to come down—you can't help me that way. Get something to pull me up. I can't hold on here long."

Now, Arthur was as quick at devising expedients as he was hasty in undertaking risks, and Bruce had hardly spoken before a happy thought flashed into his mind that he proceeded to put into execution with his wonted promptness.

Clambering back to where the cabman stood he said to him, "Stay where you are, I'll be back in a minute," and then he darted up the path by which they had come down.

In a wonderfully short time, considering how far he had to go, and how steep the way was, he was back again bearing the reins taken from the horse, and without wasting a moment in explanations he gasped out:

"It's all right, come along, your help's needed," and disappeared down the cliff.

Sorely puzzled, but convinced that there was something wrong, the cabman followed as best he could, and arrived in time to see Bruce catch the end of the reins which Arthur had flung to him.

"Now, then," panted Arthur, who indeed had little strength left after his tremendous exertions, shoving the end of the rein into the cabman's hands, "pull away, and we'll soon have him up here."

Uniting their strength the man and boy had little difficulty in bringing Bruce up beside them, and a pretty well-drenched and dishevelled-looking creature he was; yet, as he sank down on the rock utterly exhausted by the strain he had endured, he held up the bunch, saying, with a faint smile:

"I held on to it, you see."

"What a chap you are!" exclaimed Arthur admiringly, patting him on the back. "But aren't you hurt somewhere?"

"I believe I am," replied Bruce, rolling up his trouser legs and revealing a pair of shins with numerous scrapes and bruises. "Nothing worse than that," he said cheerfully. "It might have been ever so much worse, eh, Arthur?"

"A deal sight worse," responded Arthur. "Some fellows would have broken their necks if they'd been in the same box, but you're one of the lucky chaps, Bruce. Can you climb back to the carriage without help?"

"Of course I can," said Bruce, and picking himself up he began the ascent as if nothing had happened.

He looked so comical with his clothes clinging damply to him that Arthur could not resist the chance of trying his hand at joke-making.

"Say, Bruce," he exclaimed suddenly, "there's nothing dry about Montmorency's humor, is there?"

It was now Bruce's turn to offer congratulations, which Arthur accepted with the comfortable feeling that they were on even terms now.

The day was so bright and warm that the drive back did Bruce no harm, and on arriving at the hotel a generous application of arnica and sticking-plaster so soothed and mended his various hurts, that after a hearty lunch and a couple of hours' rest he felt quite equal to joining Arthur in a visit to the citadel that afternoon.

They went on foot, the better to enjoy the glorious prospect which opened more widely at each stage of the ascent, and after a leisurely walk came to the great gate whose leaves were formed of interlaced iron chains immensely strong, and

passing through they crossed a wide deep fosse between high stone walls, and then by a sally-port entered the fortress.

Crossing the level space of the interior, they went to the edge of the ramparts and looked over. A sheer descent of three hundred feet met their gaze, and so narrow seemed the strip of land between the foot of the precipice and the river, that it appeared almost possible to spring from the ramparts clear into the swift current of the St. Lawrence.

"What a dive that would be!" exclaimed Arthur, who was very fond of diving from a height, and very expert at the rather dangerous amusement.

"Would you care to try it?" inquired Bruce.

"No, sirree," responded Arthur. "I'm not that tired of life just yet. But, I say, Bruce, wouldn't this be a grand place to try a flying-machine like the one we were reading about the other day? A fellow couldn't wish a better place to start from, could he?"

"What a chap you are, Arthur," said Bruce, smiling. "First you think this would be a fine place for a champion dive, then you would try a flying-machine from it. What on earth will come into your head next?"

Arthur was silent for a while, as if thinking deeply. Then, lifting his head, his eyes flashing with the brilliance inspired by a new idea, he laid hold of Bruce's arm, saying:

"I'll tell you what next. Let us make a walking tour of this trip through Canada, and begin by footing it from here to Montreal."

Bruce's answer was a long whistle and a look that seemed to say: "Well, this beats everything! Are you losing your senses?"

Interpreting the meaning of the look, Arthur, without waiting for it to be followed by speech, hastened to say:

"And why not? We had many a good long tramp in Scotland, and this wouldn't be any harder, and it would be ever so much more fun than riding in the stuffy cars in this glorious weather."

"But look here, Arthur," replied Bruce. "You know you'd get sick and tired of it before we had walked fifty miles, and it's nearly two hundred to Montreal."

"I wouldn't do anything of the kind," returned Arthur, in a tone touched with vexation. "If I set out to do it, I'll go right through with it. I promise you that."

Now, Bruce was not one to commit himself rashly, and Arthur's proposal was so entirely novel that he wanted time to consider it, so he just said pleasantly:

"It's a great notion, Arthur, but I'd like to think it over. We'll talk about it again to-night, eh?"

"All right," responded Arthur; "there's no hurry. Let's see some more of this queer place."

Going over to the western ramparts they looked out across the Plains of Abraham, where Wolfe had won Canada for England at the cost of his own life.

"It was too bad altogether," said Bruce, with a deep sigh, "that Wolfe was killed. He ought to have lived to see the British banner take the place of the French one, and to have enjoyed all the honors he deserved."

"It was hard lines, wasn't it?" said Arthur. "But, you see, he would go into the thick of it himself, and the bullets were bound to find him. Suppose we go over and have a look at his monument."

Leaving the citadel they made their way over to the monument, and then, having examined it, roamed about the Plains until their growing hunger suggested a return to the hotel.

After dinner Arthur brought up his walking project again, and they discussed it for some time, Bruce, as was characteristic of his cautious, far-seeing nature, dwelling on the difficulties and drawbacks of the plan, and Arthur, the most sanguine of optimists, doing his best to remove them each and all.

Finally, after a talk with the manager of the hotel, whom they took into their confidence, and who thought Arthur's idea perfectly feasible, Bruce gave in, saying:

"All right, Arthur, I'll try it; but if we give out half-way, and have to take to the cars, remember I prophesied it."

Too well pleased at having carried his point to be hurt by his companion's persistent scepticism, Arthur shouted:

"Hurrah for you, Bruce, you're a trump! There's no fear of you giving out, and I'll not let you beat me if I have to crawl along on my hands and knees."

The following morning, having sent their portmanteaus on by train, they girded up their loins for their long walk. They were well provided with money, and, upon the advice of the hotel manager, they procured a small revolver apiece and a good supply of cartridges.

"There's only one chance in twenty of your needing them for protection, but if you do, you may need them mighty bad," said he; "and, anyway, you can amuse yourselves with them on the way, only take care and don't shoot any cows or hens by mistake."

"Oh, we'll take good care of that," answered Arthur. "We're not going to be shooting promiscuously, you may depend upon that."

Carrying nothing in their hands but stout walking-sticks the two boys made their way out of the city, and, striking a good steady pace, took their course along the northern bank of the mighty river. The road was in good condition. The day was bright and fine without being oppressively warm, and they were both in the best of spirits.

"This beats riding in those hot, dusty cars out of sight, doesn't it, Bruce?" exclaimed Arthur enthusiastically. "We're in no hurry, you know, and if we do get tired we can rest whenever we like, or ask some of the farmers to give us a lift if they're going our way."

"But how are we going to make them understand what one wants when we're so weak in our French?" inquired Bruce. "We may have to starve to death, because we can't get it into their heads that we need something to eat."

This, of course, was said with a smile that showed the speaker was not serious, so Arthur, carrying on the pretence, responded:

"Oh, that's easy enough; we'll just go into the house and take what we want, and then pay for it."

"Yes, and have our heads broken for our impertinence," returned Bruce. "No, no, we'll have to manage better than that."

As they talked they were walking along through a country that might have been a bit of Normandy in old France.

The hamlets that succeeded one another so closely had a strangely foreign appearance, with their quaint, red-roofed houses rich in dormer-windows, their huge chimneys, and the big ovens built outside the houses, that each seemed capable of cooking enough for a company of soldiers.

"What folks they must be for eating about here!" said Bruce, noting the size of these ovens.

"And as it's getting pretty close to lunch-time, I vote we try what they can do for us in that way," suggested Arthur, who had a noble appetite.

"Very well," assented Bruce, "you go ahead and see if you can get something better than a stick of wood this time."

Entering the gate of a very comfortable-looking farm-house, Arthur went up to the door and knocked gently. No response being elicited, he knocked more loudly, and at last there appeared an aged dame into whose wrinkled face came a look of surprise mingled with suspicion as her eyes fell upon the two boys.

This look was not dissipated, but, on the contrary, deepened, when Arthur essayed to explain his object, and after listening to him for a very brief moment she shut to the door in his face with a bang whose emphasis admitted of no misinterpretation.

"By Jove!" cried Arthur, in blank amazement at this summary treatment, "the old dame's got queer notions of civility."

"I suspect she was afraid for her spoons," said Bruce, with a quiet smile; "we must look like a pair of desperadoes on a foraging expedition."

Involuntarily Arthur glanced at his companion and then at himself.

"Nonsense," he responded, with a short laugh of derision at the idea, "we look all right."

"Well, then, perhaps it was your bad French that frightened her," suggested Bruce meekly.

"Never you mind my bad French," retorted Arthur, with some heat. "If you think you can do any better I just wish you'd try. I'm only too glad to leave it to you."

"We may as well go away from here, anyway," said Bruce, waiving the point as to which could do best at the French. "See, the old lady's watching us from the window."

With an awkward, crestfallen feeling the boys returned to the road and plodded along for some time in silence. Arthur, like all sanguine people, being easily discouraged, already began to fear that his plan would have to be abandoned, while Bruce began to congratulate himself on this being quite probable.

Presently they caught sight of a tin-sheeted spire flashing above the trees, and Bruce said, "That means a church, and a church means some sort of a village, and there's sure to be an inn. Let us push ahead, we'll have a good lunch yet."

A few more turns of the road and they came out into an open space which at the first glance promised to fulfil all of Bruce's surmises. There stood the church, stone-walled, tin-roofed, solid, and attractive, and around it clustered a number of houses, looking well-kept and comfortable.

"Ha, ha! that looks hopeful," exclaimed Arthur, brightening up, "and there's the priest just coming out of the church. We'll ask him. He's sure to give us a civil answer, anyway."

Hastening up to the curé, who had a plump, pleasant countenance and the air of being at peace with all the world, himself not excepted, Arthur began to address him in French, but the old man, with a courteous wave of the hand, said smilingly:

"HASTENING UP TO THE CURÉ, ARTHUR BEGAN TO ADDRESS HIM IN FRENCH."

"Pray do not trouble yourself to speak our language, I understand your own very well."

Whereupon Arthur, feeling much relieved, proceeded to state the case, not forgetting to tell about the humiliating reception they had met with at the farm-house down the road.

The curé chuckled in evident enjoyment of the tale.

"Ah," he said, with a deprecatory lift of the head, "that was Madame Grothé, no doubt. She is a poor, nervous body who lives all alone; you must not think hard things of her. And now come with me. There is what they call a hotel here. It is a small place, but quite clean, and the Madame can cook," the last words being accompanied by a smack of the lips that spoke volumes for the culinary art of the mistress of the establishment.

As they walked toward the hotel they fell into easy converse, and the good curé manifested such interest in the boys and their doings that Arthur was moved to invite him to have lunch with them, which invitation, after some little demur for mere form's sake, he accepted.

When they reached the hotel, Bruce, determined that the meal should not be spoilt for lack of proper instructions to the mistress of the house, asked the priest if he would be so kind as to give the necessary directions.

"And what would you like to order?" he asked, evidently well pleased at the commission.

"Oh, we'll leave that entirely to you," Bruce answered. "We're very hungry, as we had an early breakfast, and have walked a good many miles since, and we'd better call this dinner, I think."

While the meal was being prepared the three sat in the shade of the house, and the boys asked many questions of their new acquaintance.

He heartily approved of the idea of walking to Montreal, greatly to Arthur's satisfaction.

"It's like one long village street nearly all the way," he said, "with churches every six miles or so, and plenty of little hotels like this one. You need never go to a farm-house."

The waiting for dinner naturally served to whet the boys' appetites to a very keen edge, and they hailed the summons to the dining-room with a shout of delight.

Simple and plain as the furnishings of the table were, they could not have been improved upon neatness, and when the dinner was served it fully justified the curé's promise.

First came a delicious soup, slightly flavored with garlic; then a fine roast fowl that the priest carved with admirable skill; after that an omelette *aux fines herbes* worthy of Paris, followed by a luscious pudding, with coffee to finish off. The bread and butter was of the best, there was cream in abundance, and altogether the boys enjoyed their repast so thoroughly that Arthur accurately voiced the sentiments of both when, leaning back in his chair with a sigh of unspeakable content, he said:

"I'd just like to stay here for a week. This is the best dinner I've had for ever so long."

The curé seemed highly pleased at their appreciation of the fare and establishment.

"It is very good, is it not?" said he, rubbing his hands together. "Madame Ouimet understands how to look after her guests. She would be very glad to have you stay with her for a week, I am sure."

"Oh, we can't do that, thank you," replied Bruce quickly, for fear Arthur should show some willingness to consider the idea. "We must keep right on, for it's a long walk to Montreal, you know."

After sitting a while over their coffee, the boys paid the reckoning, which was only one-half what they expected; and having thanked the good curé for his kindness, and received his paternal blessing, they set forth again, resolved to keep

going until dark if possible, the curé having told them of a comfortable hotel about ten miles ahead.

They both felt in high spirits, and ready for a lark of some kind should opportunity offer.

As a rule, persons in that frame of mind have not long to wait before their chance comes, and they had not gone more than a couple of miles when they came to a snug-looking barn, in whose adjoining yard a number of hens clucked and scratched busily.

Just as the boys were opposite the gate, a big rooster sprang on top of it and crowed in the most vigorous manner. There was something peculiarly bumptious and challenging on his part that reminded Arthur, who was a diligent student of "Punch," of the "Gallic cock" so often pictured in its cartoons.

"Just look at him," cried he; "he's calling us names, as sure as you live. I'll just give him a scare, to teach him better manners."

So saying he pulled out his revolver, and before Bruce could stop him pointed it at the rooster and pulled the trigger.

Now, he had not intended to injure the bird at all, but simply to shoot over its head and frighten it with the report. But as luck would have it, his aim proved better than he imagined, and to his horror the bullet struck the ill-fated fowl full in the neck, almost severing the head from the body, and over it tumbled into the muck of the barnyard, flapping its wings in the convulsions of death.

The boys' first impulse was to take to their heels and get out of sight as soon as possible; but their second thoughts did them more credit, and, standing their ground, they looked about to see if any one would appear to call them to account.

They had not long to wait. Out of the barn darted a middle-aged *habitan* in whose countenance alarm and anger were curiously blended. He had heard the report, and now saw his pet rooster weltering in its own blood.

As soon as he appeared Arthur stepped up to the gate, and forgetting in his agitation to put his revolver away, and still holding it in his hand, said in English:

"I am very sorry I killed your rooster. I really didn't mean to, and I will pay you whatever it was worth."

Not understanding a word he said, and terrified at the sight of the revolver, the poor *habitan* shrunk behind the fence, and then deeming discretion the better part of valor, took to his heels incontinently, disappearing behind the corner of the house, which stood a little distance from the barn.

In spite of their concern at the damage unintentionally done, the boys could not refrain from bursting into laughter, the conduct of the frightened farmer was so comical. At the same time they felt bound to make fitting reparation, so they followed the fugitive to his house, Arthur taking care to put his revolver out of sight.

Their knocking at the front door produced no response, and in some perplexity as to what ought to be done, they were about to turn away when from behind the house came the farmer accompanied by two sallow-faced, black-haired youths who were evidently his sons.

Pointing at the boys, who now began to feel that the situation was in some danger of becoming complicated, he spoke with great vehemence and such rapidity as to be altogether unintelligible to the pedestrians. Anxious to bring the affair to a speedy conclusion, Bruce now stepped forward and asked:

"Can any of you speak English?" at which the elder of the sallow youths brightened up and replied with a conscious blush:

"Oh, yes, I can, myself. I have been in the big city."

Much relieved at this discovery, Bruce then hastened to explain what had happened, and how sorry they were, and how willing to pay the full value of the defunct rooster.

The young French-Canadian having repeated all this to his father, there was a manifest lifting of the clouds, and the atmosphere became less oppressive. After consulting with his sons for a few minutes the one who spoke English said:

"My father understands now, and is not angry any more, and he says he will be content with one dollar for the cock."

It was more than the real value of the creature, but the boys were in no mood for bargaining. They wanted to push on without further delay. Arthur therefore paid over the sum asked in silver, and bidding the trio, whose faces were now wreathed in smiles, a hearty "good-day," the boys resumed their walk at a rapid pace.

The afternoon lengthened out as they trudged steadfastly onward, being anxious to reach Pont Rouge, if possible, before nightfall. The rooster episode had quite satisfied their desire for a lark, and their mood was one of strict business.

The miles slipped by one by one, and they began to feel leg-weary; but not a hint of it did the one give the other, although the entire cessation of talk between them was enough to show that their whole energies were concentrated in the task of keeping their feet going.

At last Arthur could not keep his feelings to himself.

"Oh, dear!" he groaned, "when shall we get to that place? It must be ever so much farther than the priest said. I'm more than half-tempted to try another farm-house."

"Yes—and meet with the same warm reception that Madame Grothé gave you," said Bruce, smiling. "No, no," he added, "we won't do that unless there's no other alternative than sleeping in a barn."

Just at this juncture the rattle of a wagon was heard behind them, and through the dusk there came one of those long-bodied country expresses that have such fine carrying capacity. It contained two people, presumably man and wife, and there was lots of room in the back part.

"Here's our chance," cried Bruce. "Let us ask them for a lift."

When the wagon reached them, Bruce took off his cap politely and called out:

"*Monsieur, voulez-vous nous embarquer?*"

The farmer at once pulled up his horses and answered pleasantly:

"*Oui, certainment, embarquez, s'il vous plait.*"

Feeling very much elated at the success of his attempt at French, Bruce sprang into the wagon, and Arthur promptly followed his example. There were some sacks of grain that made capital seats, and the tired boys stretched out upon them with a delicious feeling of relief.

Their good Samaritan seemed very eager to converse with them, and poured out a flood of questions in his own tongue, the gist of which Bruce could not catch at all, and at last he was fain to confess that his French did not go far, and to ask the farmer if he could not speak English.

As it happened he could do something with English, and managed to maintain a conversation in this language as they jogged along toward Pont Rouge, which was his destination also.

They had gone about a couple of miles, and were descending a steep incline, when a part of the harness suddenly gave way that let the wagon run forward on to the horses' heels. They were a sturdy pair of French-Canadian ponies, full of spirit, and this unexpected assault from the rear frightened them into a wild gallop.

There was no brake on the wagon, and it swayed from side to side of the road as it plunged down the hill at a fearful pace.

CHAPTER IV.

THROUGH THE RAPIDS AND OVER THE BRIDGE.

Utterly powerless to offer any assistance, the boys could only hold tightly on to the heavy bags of grain while the wagon bumped and bounded over the road.

Had it been bright daylight their situation would not have been so alarming, but by this time darkness had closed in around them, and they could hardly see the length of the wagon ahead.

It was a long descent, and a deep ditch bordered the road on both sides, to the edge of which the wheels came perilously near from time to time as the affrighted horses dashed onward with uncontrollable impetuosity.

The farmer, holding manfully to the reins, was one moment calling soothingly to his horses and the next offering explosive ejaculations of prayer to his patron saint for supernatural assistance, while his wife, evidently overcome with terror, crouched down between the seat and the low dash-board of the wagon uttering plaintive moans that were very pitiful.

In this way they must have gone some hundreds of yards when the catastrophe which had been continually threatening took place. The heavy wagon swung over the side of the road into the ditch, and after rolling and pitching for an instant or two like a ship in a storm brought up against the other bank with a shock that sent all four of its occupants hurtling out of it.

The boys happily had braced themselves for this emergency, and, dark as it was, they managed to spring out clear of the wagon and to land upon the side of the ditch. Although they came down pretty hard, the bank, being of soft turf, received them kindly, so that beyond a sharp shock which dazed them for a moment neither suffered any damage.

But the poor farmer and his wife were not so fortunate.

He was pitched forward upon the horses and received from one of them a kick in the stomach that completely knocked the wind out of him, and she was flung out over the dash-board against the bank, striking against it head first with such violence as to be rendered insensible.

Picking themselves up at once, both boys hastened to help their less lucky companions. They first gave attention to the woman, and drawing her up to the top of the bank, sought to revive her by fanning her face with their hats.

Finding, however, that this availed nothing, and fearing from the farmer's groans that he was in a worse plight still, they went over to him. By this time he had regained his wind somewhat and was able to call out lustily for help.

Lifting him upon his feet they brought him to his wife, and at once the good fellow forgot his own suffering in anxiety for his helpmate. His anxiety was quite pathetic as he held her head in his hands and besought her to speak to him.

At this juncture the welcome light of a lantern appeared upon the road, and the boys saw with vast relief that it was in the hands of one man while another walked beside him.

"Hurrah!" exclaimed Arthur. "We'll be all right now. We'll be able to see what we're doing."

The new-comers belonged to the nearest house, having been attracted by the noise of the disaster, and they at once set to work to put matters right with a vigor and wisdom of action that showed them to be people of no common intelligence.

Bidding the farmer give his whole attention to his wife a few moments longer, they extricated the helpless horses from the tangle of harness, and got them up on the road, neither one of them being badly hurt.

Then one of them brought some water in his cap, and this being dashed in the face of the unconscious woman aroused her from her faint, and enabled it to be made clear that she had no bones broken.

The house from which these efficient helpers came was not far distant, and soon the whole party moved thither, taking the horses but leaving the wagon where it was until the morning.

On reaching the house the boys inquired how much farther on Pont Rouge was, and learning that it was only a mile, they decided to push on, although cordially invited to pass the night at the farm-house.

Walking rapidly they got to Pont Rouge without mishap, and, finding the hotel quickly, tumbled into bed, thoroughly tired out.

They were both somewhat stiff and sore the following morning, and in no particular hurry to resume their tramp. But neither had any thought of abandoning it notwithstanding.

They postponed the start until after mid-day, and then setting forth with good spirit put a dozen miles behind them ere nightfall, getting rid of all their stiffness, and thoroughly enjoying the exercise.

That day and the following ones were devoid of exciting incident, but full of pleasant sights and sounds. The road ran through a continuous series of farms that stretched like broad ribbons up from the water-side to the woods above. A decent degree of comfort seemed the common lot, while the great stone-walled, tin-roofed churches with lofty spires that were met with every six miles or so showed that the people had not only enough for themselves, but good tithes to render to the great religious system which held undivided sway in that part of the country.

The people all appeared happy and contented, and their courtesy never failed, so that the boys began to feel their inherited contempt for everything French weakening considerably under the influence of this new experience. As Arthur bluntly expressed it:

"They're not a bad lot at all, these Canadian frog-eaters, are they, Bruce? I don't mind owning up that I'm getting to like them better than I ever thought I could."

To which frank admission Bruce gave his assent in his own temperate way.

The curious names of some of the places they passed through amused them greatly, and they made zealous efforts to master the pronunciation of such puzzlers as Lachevrotière, Yamachiche, Maskinonge, Lanoraie, and Sault-aux-Recollets.

Now and then they accepted the offer of a "lift" extended by some one driving in the same direction, and they always managed to make some village before dark where there was a hotel in which accommodation could be had for the night.

In this way they came to Montreal, entering the city from the east end and availing themselves of the tram-cars to reach the Windsor Hotel, at which Mr. Gillespie had advised them to put up.

They were not a little surprised at the size and splendor of the Canadian city, whose crowded streets, lined with great buildings for business, or handsome homes, reminded them of the big cities of the Mother Land.

"We must stay here some days," said Arthur. "There'll be lots to see, I'm sure."

"Yes, indeed," responded Bruce. "It will be quite a treat, too, after the country life we've been having. We must hunt up our boxes and things as soon as possible, and get on some fresh clothes. I'm beginning to feel frowsy; aren't you?"

Arthur did not take as much thought for his appearance as his chum did, but he liked to look well all the same, and was no less eager than the other to regain the baggage from which they had parted at Quebec.

Not knowing just how to accomplish their object they determined on seeking out Mr. Gillespie. There was no difficulty about this, he being so well known in the city, and the welcome they received on entering his office showed that they had made no mistake in taking him at his word:

"And so here you are at last," he exclaimed, smiling cordially and grasping a hand of each. "You've been so long on the way that I was beginning to wonder if something had happened, and to think quite seriously of making some inquiry about you. Sit down now and tell me what you've been up to since you left us at Quebec."

Whereupon the boys gave between them a full and spirited account of their various adventures that Mr. Gillespie enjoyed keenly, the shooting of the rooster especially tickling him.

"Ah, ha!" he laughed, throwing himself back in his chair. "That was certainly a great shot, Arthur, and well worth the

dollar it cost you. There's a nuisance of a rooster somewhere near my place that I wish you'd treat in the same way."

Having been told of their difficulty about getting their things, Mr. Gillespie at once put that matter right by despatching a clerk to have them taken to the hotel, and then insisted that they should dine with him that evening, saying that he would send his carriage for them.

Mr. Gillespie's was one of the finest residences on the mountain-side, and the elegance and luxury of its appointments gave his young guests sensations of surprise that they found some difficulty in politely concealing, the truth being that they had not expected to find in Canada, a country of which their notions were still very vague, such tokens of wealth and refinement as now surrounded them.

So home-like was the atmosphere of the house that they were not long in becoming entirely at their ease, and spent a delightful evening, whose hours slipped all too quickly.

Among the members of the family were two boys much about their own age, and the next few days were devoted to seeing the lions of Montreal under their guidance.

A noisy, merry quartet they made as they visited the docks crowded with steamers and other shipping; climbed the towers of Notre Dame; made a pilgrimage of the cathedrals and principal churches; and explored the highways and byways of the Mountain Park.

It was while on one of these tramps through the park that they rendered a timely service which caused them to be the heroes of the hour.

The four boys had been playing a game of follow-my-leader, and Bruce and Arthur had become separated from the other two. Being somewhat weary from their exertions they were resting for a few minutes on a rock by the roadside when they heard the sharp clatter of hoofs approaching at no ordinary rate, and rising above them the shrill screams of a terrified woman.

"That's a runaway, sure," cried Arthur, springing to his feet; and he had hardly spoken before there came around the bend of the road above them a light carriage containing two ladies, and drawn by a pair of large ponies, both as black as night.

The ponies had taken fright at something, and were coming down the road at full gallop, their heads stretched out at full length, and their hoofs fairly spurning the ground.

The ladies, having in some way lost the reins, which trailed at the ponies' heels, were crouching helplessly on the seat, one having her face buried in her hands as though to shut out the danger, the other with wide-staring eyes and ashen face, looking straight ahead as she uttered shriek after shriek with the full force of her lungs.

"Now then, Arthur," exclaimed Bruce, darting across the road so as to be opposite his companion, "you take one horse and I'll take the other."

He had just spoken when the ponies were before them, and the boys in the same instant sprang for their heads.

Being thus assailed on right and left both ponies tried to swerve, and the simultaneous "shy" caused them to crush against one another with the result of compelling a momentary stumble, and breaking of their furious pace. Of this the boys did not fail to take full advantage, and, holding hard upon the bridles, they dragged at the animals' heads until at last their weight told, and the pair were brought to a stand-still only a few feet short of a declivity, to have gone over which would have inevitably entailed injury, if not death, to some members of the quartet.

As it was, no harm had come to any one, not even the ponies being the worse for their escapade beyond being badly blown, while the ladies were soon sufficiently recovered to be able to express their lively gratitude to their timely rescuers.

It was while this was being done that the Gillespie boys came up, and, having the acquaintance of the ladies, were able formally to present Bruce and Arthur, which made matters still more pleasant.

The disturbed state of their nerves not permitting the ladies to resume their drive, the Gillespie boys volunteered to take the now subdued ponies home, while Bruce and Arthur escorted the ladies thither on foot; and although the two chums had not hitherto had much opportunity to cultivate feminine society, nevertheless they managed to acquit themselves very

well indeed, and at the conclusion of the walk were most cordially invited to call at their first opportunity.

The story of their daring feat soon spread through the city, and for the first time in their lives they found themselves subjects for newspaper notice. Ingenious reporters interviewed them, and put in their mouths many things they had not said at all, and what purported to be their portraits, but looked far more like two choice selections from the Rogues' Gallery, appeared in an enterprising evening paper.

Arthur rather liked this notoriety, but to Bruce it was quite displeasing. He preferred being allowed to go on in his own way, and although Arthur sent copies of all the papers to his father, Bruce mentioned the matter so briefly in a letter to his father that one might have supposed such an event was a comparatively common occurrence.

Mr. Gillespie was so delighted at his young friends' exploit that he gave a grand, dinner-party in honor thereof, to which, of course, the two ladies were invited, and their rescuers had a fine time receiving the attentions of admiring friends.

The other great event of their stay in Montreal was the passage of the Lachine Rapids. These rapids, which are in the St. Lawrence River a few miles above the city, are usually passed in large steamboats which make the trip every day during the summer. But occasionally a more exciting and dangerous method is possible, and it was of this the boys had an experience.

They had gone up to Lachine in company with the Gillespie boys to pass the day at that charming summer suburb of the city, and after a jolly morning spent in canoeing and bathing, and a hearty lunch at the hotel, they were lounging about on the long pier down which the railway ran to meet the steamers, when their attention was attracted by a stalwart Indian who was talking earnestly to a group of men in the shade of the station.

He was such a splendid specimen of humanity that even if he had not been an Indian, Bruce and Arthur would have wanted to have a good look at him, but when in answer to their inquiry Jack Gillespie replied, "That man? oh, that's Big John, the Caughnawaga Indian, who used to pilot the steamers through the rapids," their interest was aroused to the highest pitch.

They had, it in true, seen some Indians on the way up from Quebec, particularly at Lorette, but none of them compared with Big John, and although his dress was much like that of the men with whom he was talking, still there was sufficient of the red man in it to make it appropriate to its dusky wearer.

Moved more by the desire to get close to the man than curiosity to hear what he was saying, Arthur drew near the group, and soon gathered the purport of his talk.

It seemed that he proposed to undertake one of the trips through the rapids for which he was renowned, that afternoon, provided he could get enough passengers to make it worth while, and he was trying to persuade two of those who were listening to go with him.

As soon as Arthur understood this he became fired with a thrilling idea, and, without waiting to consult the others, spoke it out boldly:

"Would you take us boys with you?" he asked, standing in front of Big John, and looking up eagerly into his face.

"To be sure, young gentleman, I would, if you pay me."

"And does it cost very much?" Arthur inquired, hoping that no exorbitant amount would be named.

Big John glanced across to where the other boys were, and, indicating them with a nod of his head, asked:

"They all come?"

Arthur now felt it necessary to consult the others, and so he called them over to see what they would say. Big John's terms were ten dollars for the four. Bruce thought it too much to pay, but he was overruled by the Gillespies, who welcomed the notion cordially; and Big John succeeding in persuading two of the men to go also, they paying another ten dollars, the party was made up, and the Indian pilot said he would be ready to start at three o'clock.

Sharp at the appointed time he appeared in a large boat of the kind locally known as a lumberman's *bonne*. A craft more admirably adapted for the difficult and dangerous undertaking could hardly be built. Full twenty-five feet in length, with

sharply slanting bow and stern, sloping sides, and broad, flat bottom, put together in the strongest possible fashion, and having a crew of four swarthy, sinewy Indians from the village opposite, each holding a short, heavy, ash oar, while Big John towered on the stern wielding a huge paddle as tall as himself, the whole outfit was certainly well calculated to inspire confidence, and the four boys leaped on board without a twinge of apprehension.

Pushing out from the pier the boat, urged onward by the quick strokes of the oarsmen, rounded the projecting arm of the pier, and at once began to feel the touch of the mighty St. Lawrence, the current at that point having a speed of more than six miles an hour.

As they shot down with it towards the superb arch of the Canadian Pacific Railway cantilever bridge, and darted beneath its widest part, the water around them began to break into swirls and to bubble up as though rising from springs at the bottom.

It was of a light-green tint, like aquamarine, and looked very pretty and enticing, so that Arthur, who felt greatly exhilarated by his novel surroundings, was moved to say:

"Wouldn't I like to have a swim in that water! It looks just like the ocean."

"Ah, my brave boy," said one of the gentlemen who was sitting beside him, "if you went in there you'd never come out alive."

"I suppose not," replied Arthur. "But it does look tempting, doesn't it?"

The nearer they drew to the rapids, the more swiftly the boat moved, yet the men did not cease rowing. Big John, alert, watchful, quick, and strenuous of command and action, looked like a king, with the sharp-peaked stern for a throne, and the boys gazed now upon the bubbling, speeding waters, and now upon him, with feelings of unreserved admiration.

"Big John looked like a King, with the sharp-peaked Stern for a Throne."

He spoke to his crew in their native tongue, so that just what he said could not be gathered, except from the manner in which it was obeyed. The rowers never turned their heads, but, with their eyes fixed on the pilot, pulled hard upon the right or left, according to command.

Presently the roar of the rapids broke loudly on the ear, and the snow-white foam that capped the great billows showed clearly in front.

"It looks very dreadful, doesn't it?" said Jack Gillespie, pressing close to Bruce, who, with calm face and steady eye, was gazing ahead, trying to make out what the course would be through that wild welter of waters.

"It does that," responded Bruce. "But Big John has often been through it before, you know."

Arthur, recking nothing of the risk, could hardly keep still on the thwart for very delight. The only thing that could have added to his happiness would have been to exchange places with Big John, provided, of course, he were equal to the situation.

Just before the heart of the rapids was reached a large island divided the river into two branches, and an inexperienced voyager would certainly have turned into the left branch, the commotion of the water being manifestly much milder there than in the right branch.

But it was towards the latter that Big John pointed the boat, and not only so, but directly into that part where the billows leaped highest and the foam was whitest.

Here the arrowy stream was opposed by two tiny islets, one, indeed, being little more than a huge bowlder, and right between these and the rock-guarded shore of the large island the *bonne* was headed.

"Now, boys, hold tight on to the gunwale, and don't mind being splashed a bit," said one of the gentlemen. "We'll be into the thick of it in a minute."

Big John took no more notice of his passengers than if they had not been there. His whole attention was absorbed in the thrilling task he had in hand.

Borne as lightly as though it were a mere chip on the back of a great mass of water plunging downward, the heavy boat poised for an instant at the edge of the first fall, and then dived straight into the smother of foam.

The boys did not only hold fast to the gunwale, they held their breath likewise, and their hearts seemed to them to stop beating in the supreme excitement of that moment.

Stout and strong as the boat had appeared when beside the pier, it seemed a mere cockle-shell now, when in the grasp of the Lachine Rapids.

The water roared, and whirled, and billowed, and foamed all around them, and to their eyes no way out of the seething turmoil presented itself.

But a few sharp orders from Big John, half a dozen quick, powerful strokes of the oars, supplemented by the huge paddle in the pilot's brawny hands, and the boat emerged from the first watery chaos unharmed and ready for a tussle with the next.

There was a brief space of quieter water, and then another deep dip, after which came a wild whirlpool at the side of a great mass of rock whose top had been worn smooth by the incessant dash of the waves over it.

Just beyond this the boat took a sudden swerve as if it had for a moment escaped from the steers-man's control, and the bow struck a hidden rock with a startling shock that sent a thrill through the hearts of the six passengers.

"We've struck bottom!" cried Jack Gillespie, and moved by a common impulse all four boys turned to look into Big John's face.

Not a trace of alarm or concern did it manifest. The Indian seemed as impassive as the Sphinx, and in response to a curt command the rowers gave two fierce tugs at the oars that fairly lifted the boat over the obstruction, and off she darted again like a living creature.

"Hurrah, we're clear again!" shouted Arthur, clapping his hands in expression of his relief, while Bruce's face lit up with a smile. "We'll soon be through now, won't we?"

There was not much more of the rapids left, and they shot through them without mishap, reaching the still water below, a little splashed with spray, but otherwise bearing no sign of their exciting experience.

Bruce had not spoken during the passage, but when it was over he went up to Big John and said in his heartiest manner:

"It has been a splendid trip, and I've enjoyed it more than I can tell you. I hope you'll always have as good luck as you've had with us."

Big John looked much elated, for, although he performed the feat every year, still the pleasure of success had not yet lost its edge, and he took an honest pride in the skill for which he stood alone.

"That's all right," he replied, his bronzed features losing their tense expression and relaxing into a smile. "You like it very much? You tell plenty people come too—eh?"

Bruce laughed as he answered, "Oh, yes, I'll tell my friends, but most of them would have a long way to come."

The talk now became general as the boat glided on past Laprairie and Nun's Island, under the great tube of the Victoria Bridge, and across the harbor to the canal dock, where the passengers took leave of Big John and his crew, and the boys then made their way back to the hotel.

They spent that evening at Mr. Gillespie's discussing their plans for the future. Encouraged by the success that had upon the whole attended their tramp from Quebec, Arthur was anxious to continue it along the line so far as practicable, and Bruce offered no strong objection.

But Mr. Gillespie said it was out of the question for them to walk any farther than Ottawa, as beyond that the Canadian Pacific Railway ran for the most part through a wilderness until it reached Winnipeg, when the great prairies begin.

"Well, then," said Arthur, "let us walk to Ottawa, ride on the cars as far as Winnipeg, and then walk the rest of the way, or as much of it as we feel inclined to, at all events. Do you agree to that, Bruce?"

"Yes, that seems fair enough," assented Bruce.

"If you are determined upon that, then," said Mr. Gillespie, "I'll go with you to see the authorities at the head office of the railway, and have it so arranged that you can take the train wherever you like."

"Oh, that will be splendid!" exclaimed Arthur; "for you know we may get tired of tramping, and it will be jolly to be able to take the cars at the next station if we feel like it."

Accordingly the next morning they went with Mr. Gillespie to the chief offices of the railway at Windsor Station, and as luck would have it they encountered the president himself in one of the corridors.

Mr. Gillespie, who knew him well, at once accosted him, and hastened to explain the purpose of his visit, at the same time introducing the two boys.

The president, who was a man of large and imposing presence, with a strong, handsome face, regarded the boys in silence for a moment, and then with an amused chuckle said:

"They'll soon get sick of that notion, but there's no objection to their trying it. I'll fix things up for them the way you want. Just come into my office and I'll have it attended to."

The boys had already heard a good deal of this wonderful man who had worked up from the post of telegraph clerk to the presidency of one of the greatest railway systems in the world, and they watched him with mingled feelings of awe and admiration as he disposed with lightning speed of a lot of business awaiting his attention, and then took their affair in hand to deal with it in the space of a minute by some brief directions to a clerk who came in response to the pressure of an electric button.

After a few minutes' waiting the boys found themselves provided with an unlimited stop-over ticket without extra charge, and also some important letters to the officials along the line, instructing them to give the young travellers due courtesy

and assistance whenever required.

Having duly thanked the president for his kindness, and received his best wishes for a pleasant and prosperous journey, the boys took themselves off, too full of admiration for the great man who had thus shown his interest in them to feel at all hurt at his scepticism as to their sticking to their program.

"He thinks we'll not hold out long," said Arthur; "but he doesn't know us, does he, Bruce?"

"We'll not give in until we have to, anyway," responded Bruce, who was now as heartily committed to the undertaking as his chum.

"The experience will do you no harm, boys," said Mr. Gillespie, "and you're sure to have more adventures than you would if you went in the ordinary way. But I hope you won't be in any hurry to leave us. We have not begun to get tired of you yet."

"Then this is the time we ought to go," answered Bruce, "while our welcome is still fresh, and then you'll be glad to see us again if we ever come this way."

"Oh, you'll never lack for a welcome so long as I am in Montreal," returned Mr. Gillespie; "and you must take some letters to friends of mine in Ottawa and Winnipeg, so that you may have a good time at these places."

"There's one thing I'd like to do before I leave Montreal," interjected Arthur, whose mind was ever busy devising fresh adventures.

"And what may that be, Sir Venturesome?" asked Mr. Gillespie, smiling on him indulgently.

"Why, sir, it's to walk across the river on top of the Victoria Bridge," replied Arthur. "I suppose lots of people have done it already."

Mr. Gillespie gave a whistle of surprise, and regarded his young friend with a look of admiration.

"Upon my word," he exclaimed, "you *are* enterprising, and no mistake. Here I've lived in Montreal since before that bridge was built, and such a notion never entered my mind. Indeed, I don't know of anybody but the workmen being allowed on top of the bridge."

"Oh, yes, sir," spoke up Arthur eagerly, "other people have walked across. I was told about it yesterday, and they say it isn't so hard to do."

"All right, my boy, I'll make some inquiry," said Mr. Gillespie. "I am well acquainted with the chief engineer, and if there's no objection to your trying it I will arrange with him about it."

"Oh, thank you, sir," cried the boys together, for Bruce, as soon as Arthur propounded the scheme, had given it a warm welcome in his mind.

Mr. Gillespie kept his promise promptly, as was his wont, and that evening was able to inform the boys that the chief engineer would allow them to cross the bridge the following morning in charge of one of the workmen.

Jack Gillespie was very anxious to be allowed to accompany them, but his father would not consent, fearing that the boys might get larking together, and have an accident of some kind.

At the hour appointed the boys went down to the bridge, armed with a note from the chief engineer of the Grand Trunk Railway, and were met by one of the foremen of the repair-shops, who was to be their guide. He had a pleasant, intelligent countenance, and seemed quite to enjoy taking the boys in charge and spending the morning with them, instead of in the grimy shop at his dreary round of toil.

"You'll have to be careful, sirs," said he as they walked towards the entrance to the bridge. "There's a bit of a breeze this morning, and you'll feel it pretty strong when you're out in the middle."

"Oh, we'll be careful," they answered. "We'll not let the breeze blow us away."

It was quite an undertaking getting on top of the huge tube which spanned the great river, but the boys made light of it,

and were soon standing high above the rushing stream, and able to command an unbroken view of the city and its picturesque surroundings.

But they had no eyes for this prospect, fine as it was. Their whole attention was absorbed by the wonderful roadway of wrought iron that stretched before them for the space of almost two miles, curving slightly in its course from the northern to the southern shore of the St. Lawrence.

"Wouldn't it be grand to ride across on a bicycle?" said Arthur.

"Yes, and be blown into the river before you'd got half-way across," responded Bruce. "No, thank you, no bicycle for me. We'll find it quite enough of a job to get across on our feet."

Bruce was right enough in this, for the farther out they went the more they felt the force of the wind, which did not blow steadily, but in gusts that tugged hard at the boys' hats as if determined to carry them off their heads.

Pushing ahead with careful, steady steps they reached the middle of the bridge, and there rested for a while to look up and down the river, and wait for the passing of the Laprairie ferry-steamer that was passing up against the heavy current.

The steamer seemed almost at a stand-still so sturdily did the stream oppose her advance, and when she came to the central span the boys might have leaped upon her deck far below had they cared nothing for the consequences.

They were lying flat upon their chests and looking down at the people on board when a sudden gust caught Bruce's hat from off his head, and sent it sailing through the air like a bird.

Slanting this way and that it flew downwards until with a big swoop it fell plump into the lap of a lady passenger sitting on the upper deck, who, startled by the unexpected donation, gave a wild shriek, and tumbled over backwards, to the great consternation of the other passengers.

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Bruce, too much concerned at the loss of his head-gear to appreciate the ludicrous scene on board the steamer. "How can I get it again?"

"I guess you'll have to let it go," said the foreman; "you can get another over at St. Lambert's."

"I suppose there's no help for it," sighed Bruce. "I'm sorry it scared that lady so badly."

"What a yell she did give!" said Arthur; "you could hear it away up here as plainly as if you were right beside her. I wonder has she got over her fright yet."

Crossing to the other side they looked over and saw that the lady was still in the hands of her friends, while a big red-faced man, presumably her husband, seeing them above him, shook his fist at them angrily, as though he considered that the hat had been thrown down on purpose.

"He evidently imagines I did it for a lark," said Bruce ruefully; "he doesn't know how glad I'd be to have my hat back again."

There was no possible chance of that, however, so, tying his handkerchief on his head, he made the best of the situation, and the three resumed their lofty promenade.

In spite of the breeze, which bothered them not a little, the boys were enjoying their novel experience very much when the foreman's hat blew off his head, and in making a quick spring to recover it he tripped upon a projecting bolthead and fell forward with such violence as to be rendered insensible by the contact of his forehead with the unyielding iron.

Not only so, but in an involuntary contortion from the pain of the blow he rolled so near the edge of the bridge-top that he would have gone clear over had not Arthur, who was nearest him, thrown himself upon him and held him fast, crying out in a tone of deep concern:

"He's badly hurt, Bruce. See! he's bleeding!"

The poor man was indeed bleeding freely from a nasty cut over his right temple, and he lay as motionless as a log while Arthur strove to stanch the wound with his handkerchief.

"This is a bad fix," said Bruce, looking very grave; "we'll have no end of trouble in getting him across if he's as much hurt as he seems to be."

"He's had a dreadful knock, that's certain," said Arthur, regarding the senseless man with a face full of sympathy.

It was some minutes before the poor fellow came to himself, and still longer before he could stand upon his feet again.

"My head's all going round," said he, putting up his hand in a bewildered way; "I'm afraid I can't go on without your help, gentlemen."

"Oh, that's all right," responded Arthur cordially; "you just take our arms, and we'll go slow, and help you along the rest of the way."

Doing as suggested the foreman was able to make slow progress shoreward, but with manifest difficulty, the shock of the sudden fall having been very severe, and the wound in his temple most painful.

It was a curious and trying situation for the boys. The breeze had swelled into a strong wind, and now that they had to walk three abreast, and steady the faltering steps of their guide, the top of the iron tube seemed to have grown much narrower.

But they put their feet down firmly, and kept right in the middle of the way, both leaning in against the foreman, and thus bracing themselves to withstand the force of the wind.

At last, to their unspeakable relief, they reached the St. Lambert end of the bridge, and all danger was over.

"My gracious!" exclaimed Arthur when they were once more standing on the solid ground, "but I'm glad that's over; once will be quite enough for me." Then turning to the foreman he added, "And now we must hunt up a doctor for you as quickly as possible. That cut needs looking after right away."

The doctor was found without difficulty, and the wound dressed, after which they all went to the station and took the first train back to the city, where they parted with the foreman and returned to the hotel, well pleased at having come through the dangers and difficulties of the walk across the big bridge on top without any mishap to themselves.

CHAPTER V.

PERILS AND PLEASURES BY THE WAY.

Delightful as their stay in Montreal was proving, it could not be protracted indefinitely, and on Monday morning, having parted from Mr. Gillespie and his boys with many regrets, and promises of repeating the visit some time in the future, they set forth on their tramp to Ottawa, their trunks being forwarded by train. They calculated on reaching Ottawa by Friday at the latest, and then having Saturday and Sunday to spend there before resuming their journey.

They were both in the best of spirits, Bruce being now thoroughly reconciled to Arthur's idea, and indeed quite as enthusiastic about it as he was himself.

Walking rapidly they soon left Montreal with its forest-clad mountain behind, and were passing through richly cultivated market gardens that a little farther on changed to trim farms with spreading fields of grain and wide stretches of orchard.

A Glimpse of Montreal from St. Mary's Current.

"I'd like to be round about here when the apples and pears are ripe," said Arthur, with a longing look at the trees already showing promise of heavily burdened boughs in the autumn. "I wonder what the farmers do to keep their apples from being stolen by the Montreal boys?"

"They have watch-dogs, I suppose," answered Bruce. "Something like that one coming towards us now," pointing to a big yellow dog, half-mastiff, half-hound, that was running down the path in front of a house, with his mouth open so as to show his long, white teeth and to give forth a deep, hoarse, growling bark.

The moment Arthur's eyes fell on the creature he conceived an intense dislike to him, he was so repulsive in appearance and seemed so ready for mischief.

"You ugly brute!" he exclaimed, stopping to look right into the dog's face, "you ought to be killed on sight for being such a fright."

Of course the animal did not understand his words, but it really seemed as if it must have read aright the contemptuous expression of his countenance, for as Arthur finished speaking it gave a fierce bark that was almost a roar, and sprang over the gate, with hair bristling and fangs protruding ominously.

Now, neither of the boys had had the slightest idea of provoking an attack. They were simply amusing one another with comments upon what they saw, and Arthur was completely taken aback when he found this dangerous-looking customer bearing down upon him.

But he had no idea of being put to flight, nevertheless. In his hand he held a stout oak walking-stick with which Mr. Gillespie had thoughtfully presented him, and, swinging this over his shoulder, he met the dog's onset with a blow on his head that knocked him off his feet.

Like a flash the infuriated creature recovered himself and sprang at Arthur's throat before the boy, not suspecting so quick a return, could put himself on guard again. He missed the boy's throat, but caught him at the shoulder, and might have inflicted a serious bite had not Bruce grasped him at the neck with both hands and throttled him until he dropped to the ground limp and powerless.

"Now, then, let us run for it," said Bruce, "before the brute gets his breath again, or his master finds out what's going on."

So off they started full pelt, and did not pull up until they had put a couple of hundred yards behind them. Then, as there was no sign of pursuit from dog or man, they stopped to get their breath, and to see the extent of Arthur's injuries.

Fortunately they were not at all serious, the dog's teeth not having penetrated the sleeve of his coat, and making only blue bruises without drawing blood.

"You've been more frightened than hurt, Arthur, this time," said Bruce, with a sigh of relief; then adding, with a smile, "But you mustn't call the dogs hard names again, they've evidently got very tender feelings in this country."

"So it seems," laughed Arthur. "That fellow gave me a regular scare. I never thought he was coming at me until he jumped. You just stopped him in time, I tell you, my boy, for he was hurting awfully," and he rubbed his shoulder to ease the pain.

"It can't be much fun stealing apples if all the farmers keep dogs like that," said Bruce. "I wonder how the rascal feels now. He won't forget the choking I gave him for a while."

Keeping on steadily after this little excitement they passed Sault-aux-Recollets, where they had a chance to admire the noisy rapids of a branch of the Ottawa river, and to wish that Big John was at hand to take them through in his big boat. Two miles beyond was St. Martin Junction, where they halted for dinner and a rest, having made twelve good miles since starting out.

That afternoon they spent in the society of the saints, or rather of the pretty little French villages which had been named in their honor, proceeding from St. Martin to Sainte Rose, from Sainte Rose to Sainte Therese, and from Sainte Therese to Saint Augustin, which place they reached just before dark, and there remained for the night, finding comfortable quarters in a diminutive hotel.

From Sainte Rose their road had followed the northern bank of the Ottawa, of which broad stream they were continuously getting charming views as it rolled onward to the St. Lawrence, bearing many steamboats, lumber barges, and rafts of timber upon its brown bosom, and the beautiful river was their companion throughout the remainder of their tramp.

Leaving Saint Augustin bright and early, they resolved not to stop until they had got to Lachute, some seventeen miles ahead, and by dint of very close attention to business they accomplished their object. Their route lay through narrow but well-tilled farms, mostly given to dairy products, and they met or passed many people with pleasant, contented faces who always nodded or smiled in a friendly way. Some, indeed, who were driving and who had room in their wagons invited the boys to jump in, but they declined with thanks, as they wanted to do the whole distance on foot.

Lachute they found to be a flourishing town with huge paper-mills utilizing the abundant water-power, which they spent an hour in visiting, and were highly interested by the various processes which turned a block of wood into a roll of paper.

An afternoon's hard walking, aided by a lift in a wagon for several miles, brought them to Grenville in good time for tea, and they spent a pleasant evening there watching the rapids which at that place break the course of navigation, rendering a canal necessary in order that steamers may pass up and down.

Here they saw for the first time a raft of square timber. It had come down from the head-waters of the Ottawa, and was manned by a stalwart tawny crew of Indians, half-breeds, and French Canadians, who, the day's work being over, were free to indulge their fondness for song, and dance, and boisterous laughter.

Being anxious to have a good look at these raftsmen the boys asked if they might go on board the big raft, and, receiving a hearty assent, joined the group of men around the "caboose," where the great fire of logs lit up their swarthy faces, and was reflected in their flashing eyes.

They were singing one after another of their river songs, and very pleasant it was to listen to them, as their rich and soft, though untrained, voices, now in solo and now in full chorus, rendered these quaint *chansons* which had been handed down through generations.

Both Bruce and Arthur loved music, and they keenly enjoyed this curious open-air concert with its picturesque surroundings. The men were evidently well pleased to have them as listeners, although they made no attempt to enter into conversation with them.

After several songs had been given and liberally applauded one of the men produced a fiddle, and drew from it merry strains of music that would have set the toes of an auld kirk elder tapping. No sooner had he begun to play than a handsome young half-breed stepped out from the circle, and began dancing in a graceful fashion, snapping his fingers, and giving a shout from time to time by way of emphasis.

After he had finished, the foreman of the gang of raftsmen, a ruddy-haired, freckle-faced Scotchman, approached the boys and said in a courteous tone of invitation:

"Maybe ye can sing or dance a bit yerselves?"

Bruce shook his head with a smile of denial, but Arthur, whose pulses had been stirred by the moving music, asked:

"Would one of our school songs do you?"

"Ay, to be sure," responded the big Scotchman heartily. "We'll be much obliged for the same."

"Come on, then, Bruce," said Arthur. "Let us give them a song."

Bruce at first shrank from attempting it, but Arthur urged him strongly, arguing that it would be only civil, seeing how hospitably they had been received; so in the end he consented, and they sang a couple of glees that went very well indeed, and were lustily applauded.

Then Arthur, who was in great spirits, gave his companion a start by asking:

"Can any one play Scotch music? My chum can dance the fling and sword-dance splendidly."

"What nonsense!" exclaimed Bruce, blushing furiously. "Don't pay any attention to him."

But the foreman's face had brightened at the question, and snatching the fiddle out of the hands of the man who had been playing, he cried:

"Play Scotch music, is it? Maybe I'm your man for that," and at once the fiddle broke forth into the liveliest kind of a lilt, whereupon Arthur shoved Bruce out into the middle of the circle, saying:

"Foot it featly now, my boy."

Somewhat hesitatingly at first Bruce began the dance, but as the inspiring strains fired his blood, he put more and more

vigor into his movements until he seemed the very incarnation of energy, the Scotchman urging him on with encouraging shouts of enthusiastic approval until he could dance no more, and was fain to throw himself upon a big timber, completely blown.

A perfect storm of applause greeted the performance, and the delighted spectators were eager for more; but Bruce was not to be persuaded, and to escape their importunities he bade them "Good-night" and took himself off, Arthur following reluctantly, for he would have liked to stay until the party broke up.

Instead of going direct to the hotel they walked down the river bank some distance, the night being bright and clear, and the swiftly rushing waters very attractive. They had gone some little distance past the houses, and were about to retrace their steps, when the shrill cry of a woman in great fear came from the other side of a low hill.

"What's that?" exclaimed Arthur, looking at Bruce as though he might have an answer ready.

"It's a woman crying for help," answered Bruce. "Let us go and see what's the matter."

They hurried over the hill, and on the other side found a young girl struggling to free herself from the grasp of a raftsman who was apparently attempting to kiss her.

"Hi, there! stop that! let the girl alone!" shouted Arthur, his choler rising in an instant, and rushing forward he caught the raftsman from behind, making him loosen his grip of the girl, who at once darted off without so much as saying "Thank you."

Furious at this interference, the raftsman, who was a sinister-looking half-breed, turned upon Arthur with a horrible oath. But Bruce was too quick for him. Putting out his foot he tripped him cleverly, and as he fell prostrate, leaped upon his back, pinning him to the ground.

As he did so Arthur noticed a long knife stuck in a sheath and hanging at the raftsman's hip. With a quick movement he drew it out, and when the ruffian, throwing off Bruce, regained his feet, he found his other opponent facing him with the keen blade.

Having had a sample of the strength of both lads, and being deprived of the weapon to which he naturally resorted in a scuffle, the half-breed decided that under the circumstances discretion was the better part of valor, and after relieving his feelings by a torrent of abuse, set off for the raft, Arthur calling after him, "If you want your knife again, call at the hotel. We'll leave it there for you."

Keeping a sharp eye on him to make sure that he did not double on them, and attack them from the rear, the boys returned to the hotel, and were much gratified to learn that the girl to whom they had rendered such timely source was the daughter of the proprietor, who had been returning from an evening visit at her aunt's when she encountered the raftsman.

The hotel-keeper manifested his gratitude in a practical way by giving of his best to the boys, and absolutely refusing to accept any payment the following morning.

"No, no," he said emphatically, pushing away the proffered bank-note, "not one cent will I let you pay me. You helped my little girl out of an ugly fix, and the least I can do for you is to charge you nothing for your night's lodging, and if you're ever passing this way again just come right in, and stay as long as you like, and it won't cost you a cent."

Seeing that he was in earnest, and would be hurt if they insisted upon paying for their accommodation, the boys thanked him for his hospitality and resumed their walk. As they passed the place where the raft had been tied up they saw that it was gone, and with it the owner of the knife, which still remained in the hotel-keeper's hands.

There was a threat of rain in the sky as they started, and they pressed forward with energy, as they wanted to reach Montebello by dinner-time. The road ran through very pretty scenery, the river being usually in plain view on their left, while on their right the woods stretched away to the foot of the Laurentian Mountains, except where broken by farms that seemed to be well worth the tilling.

In one place they came to a wide extent of open country, and Bruce, thinking something might be gained by taking a short cut through the fields instead of following the more roundabout road, proposed that they should make a bee-line across country.

Arthur quite approved, and, anticipating no interruption of their progress, they left the highway for the more attractive sward. They had crossed one field and had about reached the middle of another, when a rumbling roar in the rear caused them to wheel about suddenly, and to their consternation they saw that they were being pursued by a big black bull that was bearing down upon them with blood in his eye.

"Heaven help us!" cried Arthur, "we're in for it now. We've got to cut and run."

There certainly was no other alternative, so, taking to their heels, they dashed off toward a clump of trees that had been left to afford shade for the cattle, and now offered the only refuge in sight.

They were both fleet of foot, but so, too, was the bull, and he was drawing dangerously near when, one turning to the right and the other to the left, they came to a sudden stop, and the bull, bewildered by their strategy, blundered past between them without touching either. With remarkable quickness for so large and heavy an animal, however, the brute pulled up short, and, singling out Arthur, charged madly at him.

Now, in the brief breathing space afforded by the successful dodge Arthur had slipped his knapsack from off his shoulders intending to throw it down, that he might run the better. But when the bull came at him so suddenly he involuntarily swung it in his face, and as luck would have it the horns caught in the straps, causing the knapsack to fall over the animal's eyes, and for the moment blinding him, while Arthur darted aside untouched.

Despite the bull's frantic tossings the knapsack hung on persistently, diverting his attention from the boys, and enabling them to get a good deal nearer to the clump of trees before the breaking of the strap relieved the creature, and, if possible, more furious than ever he resumed the chase.

They reached the trees not more than twenty yards in advance of him, and had not time to climb out of harm's way before he was so close that they had to begin a game of dodge among the tree-trunks that might have been amusing enough with a less bloodthirsty playmate.

Roaring and plunging, the great creature hunted them with extraordinary malignity until at last tripping over the exposed roots of a big tree he came down with a crash, and before he could recover his feet both boys had sprung into the branches of two adjacent trees, and climbed up out of all immediate danger.

For a moment the bull lost sight of them, but Arthur's taunting cry of "Here we are, old Taurus, just climb up and get us," revealed their place of refuge; and it really seemed as if the maddened creature strove to accept the boy's challenge, he made such frantic efforts to reach them, while they mocked him merrily.

For a time this was well enough, but soon their situation became very trying. They were both weary and hungry. They wanted to reach Montebello in good season for dinner, and, moreover, the rain, which had been threatening all the morning, now began to fall, not very heavily, to be sure, but in a way that meant a thorough soaking if they were long exposed to it.

"Goodness gracious!" groaned Arthur, "how are we ever to get out of this? I'm starving, and I'm getting wet through, and I'm more than half-inclined to slip down on the other side of this tree, and take my chances of getting to the road ahead of the bull."

"Oh, no, don't try that," said Bruce earnestly; "the bull will get tired in a little while and go away."

Whether the animal would have done so was not allowed to be known, for a few minutes later the barking of dogs was heard, and presently two fine collies came racing through the woods with a very inquiring look upon their intelligent countenances. They seemed at once to take in the situation, and did not require the urging on of the beleaguered boys to assail the bull in the rear with sundry nips at his shanks that made him right about in short order, and give his whole attention to defending himself from their attack.

For a short time he stood at bay, and then, with a roar of baffled rage, broke away and lumbered off across the field with the dogs close at his heels. As soon as he had got some distance away the boys dropped to the ground, and Arthur, having recovered his knapsack, they made all haste to regain the road, continuing along which at a rapid walk they presently reached Montebello, where a comfortable little hotel afforded a welcome refuge from the rain and a good dinner into the bargain.

To continue their tramp in the afternoon was quite out of the question, and they were at a loss what to do with themselves when the hotel-keeper, an intelligent, sociable man, suggested that they should visit the Papineau château, which stood a short distance beyond the village.

On making inquiries about this place, of which they were fain to confess their ignorance, they learned that it was there the famous Louis Joseph Papineau, who was responsible for the Rebellion of 1837, when Lower Canada rose in arms against Upper Canada, had spent the declining years of his life in peaceful retirement. His son now enjoyed possession, and, having been a great traveller, had built a museum to contain his extensive collection of historical relics and trophies of travel, which were well worth seeing.

Being assured that Monsieur Papineau would receive them courteously, and be glad to show them his museum, they set off for the château. They had no difficulty in finding the entrance gate, and as they passed up the well-kept drive they saw around them the evidences of wealth and refinement.

Soon they came upon the mansion, which was a precise imitation of the châteaux they had often seen in France, having the round towers with sharp-peaked roofs, the big dormer-windows, and the graystone walls, and standing in the doorway was the master himself, a benevolent-looking old gentleman wearing a velvet smoking-jacket and cap.

The boys advanced with their caps in their hands, and Bruce explained the object of their visit. M. Papineau received them graciously, and, after expressing his regret that the state of the weather would not permit of his showing them over the grounds, went into the house for the key of his museum, which was a separate building to the right of the residence.

Having procured the key he took them into his treasure-house, and they at once saw that they would be well repaid for their coming. The building was like a small chapel, except that it was lighted from the roof instead of by windows at the sides. All around the walls ran glass cases filled with objects of interest, while the centre of the room was occupied with birds and animals skilfully mounted, and comfortable chairs upon which to sit at ease.

In the cases were historical relics of unique interest and value, and a thousand and one objects of art and other curios, such as travellers with well-filled purses are sure to gather.

To M. Papineau the task of describing these and their associations was evidently a labor of love, and the boys being most appreciative listeners, the time slipped by unheeded by all until Bruce, bethinking him of his watch, glanced at it, and was astonished to find the afternoon flown.

He at once began to apologize for their having remained so long, and they were about to take their leave, having thanked M. Papineau most cordially for his kindness to them, when the old gentleman, laying a hand upon the shoulder of each, said in a tone that was as much of command as invitation:

"Not at all, my young friends. You shall not depart in this fashion. You have helped me to while away what would otherwise have been an afternoon of *ennui*, and now you must do me the honor to dine with me, and in the evening my servant will convey you back to the hotel. Shall it not be so?"

The boys were too honest to simulate reluctance to accept so attractive an invitation, and, with a glance at Arthur, whose beaming countenance clearly expressed his mind, Bruce said:

"You are very kind, sir, and we will be only too glad to do as you say, for we find it lonely at the hotels."

So they went into the house, where they were first shown into a dressing-room, and then, having had a good wash and brush up, they went into the drawing-room, and were presented to Madame Papineau, a sweet old lady, who gave them a motherly welcome.

The dinner, served in the old-fashioned French style, was heartily enjoyed, and they remained for an hour later, chatting with their kind hosts, and telling them all about their experiences in the past and their plans for the future.

Shortly after nine o'clock they took their leave, and were escorted back to the hotel by a stout man-servant, who could not speak a word of English.

"Well, we do seem to have the rarest kind of luck, don't we?" said Arthur, as they walked away from the château. "No matter what kind of a fix we get into we come out of it all right, and we're always meeting with people who are as kind

to us as if they were our own relations."

"You're just right, Arthur," responded Bruce; "and I hope it will be so all the way across, and then we'll have a good story to tell our fathers when we reach them."

"But we've got a long way to go before that, haven't we?" said Arthur, swallowing a sigh that he did not want to confess to. "How jolly it would be if they were with us!"

"There wouldn't be much walking for us if they were, my boy," said Bruce. "They'd want to travel in the train."

"That's so," assented Arthur. "They'd not be bothered going this way. I wonder what they'll think of us when they see us. It's a good many years since we went to school, and we must be very much changed. Do you think they'd recognize us if they were to see us in the street?"

"No indeed!" answered Bruce. "Unless they'd know us from the last photographs we had taken to send them."

"Ah! but our mothers will know us right off," said Arthur. "We won't need to tell them who we are." And he gave a glad laugh at the thought of meeting again the mother from whom he had been so long separated.

The servant accompanied them all the way to the hotel, and evidently considered himself well repaid by the piece of silver Bruce handed him.

They were in excellent humor for their beds, which were very clean and comfortable, and did not turn out of them until long past sunrise the next morning.

They found the road in capital condition for walking, there having been just sufficient rain to lay the dust without making mud, and they kept steadily at it all day long, save for a couple of hours rest at mid-day, thereby getting as far as Buckingham, where they halted for the night.

They were now within twenty miles of Ottawa, and they spent the next day doing this distance in leisurely fashion, so that they reached the Chaudière Falls before sunset, and crossed the broad iron bridge between Hull and Ottawa just as the whistles were blowing for the day-gangs at the big lumber mills to leave off work.

Mr. Gillespie had told them what hotel to put up at, and they were rejoiced to find their portmanteaus awaiting them there, for the clothes they wore were beginning to show the effects of pedestrian travel.

After a late dinner they went up to ParliamentHill to spend the evening. The grand proportions and admirable architecture of the Houses of Parliament and the Departmental Buildings impressed them deeply.

"Who'd have thought to see such fine buildings out in this country?" said Arthur, with a touch of Old Country conceit. "Why, they're nearly as big and as splendid as the Houses of Parliament in London, aren't they, Bruce?"

"'Who'd have thought to see such fine Buildings out in this Country.' said Arthur."

"Almost," replied Bruce, gazing admiringly at the dome of the Library, with its beautiful flying buttresses and soaring pinnacles. "I wonder can we go through these buildings to-morrow; I would like to see what they're like inside."

A gentleman who was standing near them overheard what Bruce said, and answered it courteously:

"There is no difficulty whatever about your seeing the inside as well as the outside. You just go through one of the side entrances and you can roam about as you please."

Bruce thanked him for the information, and they fell into conversation, in the course of which Arthur, pointing to the Chaudière Falls, which were faintly discernible and distinctly audible to the north of where they sat, and remembering their exciting passage of the Rachine Rapids, asked:

"Has anybody ever come down these falls in a canoe or boat?"

The gentleman laughed as he replied:

"Only one man is known to have come through the Chaudière and lived to boast of it. Would you like to hear about him?"

"Yes, indeed," the boys chorused eagerly, and, laying aside his cigar, the new acquaintance told the tale:

"It happened nearly forty years ago," said he. "My father, who was engaged in the lumber business at the falls, saw the whole thing, and I've often heard him describe it. A big raft of square timber was being run into the slides above the falls, and one of the cribs, owing to the men not understanding properly how to steer it, got out of the channel near the shore and into the powerful current, which soon swept it away towards the brink of the falls, over which no human being had ever passed alive. All the men working in the mills quickly heard of it, and crowded upon the old Suspension bridge which stood where you see the iron one now, not one of them supposing that there was anything but death for the two unfortunate raftsmen. It must have been an awfully thrilling sight as the crib came down through the roaring rapids above the falls without it being possible to give the poor men any help. Just as the crib entered the rapids one of the men—his name was Baptiste Beaudran—made a desperate jump for the shore, but fell far short of it, and vanished utterly, not a

trace of him ever being found!"

"The poor fellow!" sighed Arthur, whose sympathies were readily roused, and who was listening to the narration with intense interest. "He must have been drawn right in under the falls and kept there by the water."

"Perhaps so," said the gentleman. "The other man, Paul Filardeau, kept his place, and, to the astonishment of everybody, the crib, instead of going right over the falls, stopped on the very brink, having caught against a bit of rock that held it fast. The spray was dashing over Paul and drenching him, but so long as the crib held together he was safe enough, and my father, and some others who had not lost their heads, at once set about devising means to rescue him.

"They got a thin fishing-line, tied a stone to one end, and, going as near the crib as they could, tried to throw the stone aboard it. After several misses they were successful, and Paul, understanding at once what was meant, pulled on the string, to which a stronger line had been attached, and then a hawser, which was passed over a high post. A large iron ring was then fixed on the hawser, to which a smaller rope was fastened, a few feet at one end being allowed to hang down for the purpose of securing round the man's body.

"The arrangements being completed, the signal was given to Paul to start. It was a risky business, and no mistake, but it was his only chance for his life, and he never hesitated. Tying himself to the ring which ran freely on the hawser, he launched out from the crib and disappeared in the foaming water. But at the other end of the rope they were pulling for all they were worth, and the next moment he bobbed up again with his cap still tight on his head.

"The crowd gave a great cheer, which was soon followed by another and still louder one as the man reached the shore, and was lifted out of the water by my father and those with him, not a bit the worse save for the wetting, and that means nothing to a lumberman."

Both boys drew a big breath of relief when the narrator of this thrilling incident had finished.

"That was wonderful, wasn't it?" said Bruce; "and if the crib had turned a little way to either side it would have gone over the falls. Is the rock on which it caught there still, sir?"

"No," replied the gentleman, "it wore away some time ago, and there's no sign of it now."

"But how do the big rafts get past the falls, then?" asked Arthur. "They'd be all broken up if they went over them, wouldn't they?"

"Oh, they come down through the slides," was the answer. "Haven't you seen the slides?"

"Why, no," responded Arthur; "where are they? and can we see them?"

"Of course you can; they're up there to the left of the falls, looking this way. They're so surrounded by lumber piles that you can't see them. You must go up to-morrow and have a look at them. They're well worth seeing."

The boys thanked the gentleman for his story and the information he had given them, and went back to their hotel determined to see both the Parliament Buildings and the slides the following morning.

They returned to Parliament Hill right after breakfast, and under the guidance of one of the messengers, who explained everything to them as they passed from room to room, they made the rounds of the buildings.

In the Senate Chamber they sat in the chairs of the grave and reverend legislators, and even dared to try the cushions of the great carved chair used only by the Governor-General on the occasion of the opening or proroguing of Parliament. Then in the House of Commons they took turns in the Speaker's chair, and faced one another across the floor as leader of the Government and of the Opposition respectively.

Thence they went into the superb library, and looked over the illustrated papers and magazines until mid-day, making themselves quite as much at home as if they had been members of the House.

After lunch they were ready for the slides. On inquiry they learned that a tram-car that passed the hotel door would take them to the very spot, so they jumped on board, and after a ride through the city reached the region of the big lumber mills.

They had no difficulty in finding the slides, for these passed beneath a bridge over which the tram-car ran, and, as with their wonted luck, a number of cribs were going through that afternoon.

Making their way to the head of the slides, which were, in brief, gigantic wooden troughs, sloping downward and filled with water, whereby the great clumsy cribs of timber coasted down from above the falls to the smooth water below, they stood for some time watching the cribs one by one begin the descent.

The longer Arthur looked on the more keen became his desire to try a trip through, and at last he made bold to call out as a crib slid by:

"Please will you take a couple of passengers?"

"*Certainément*, if you do not mind getting wet," was the reply from the man addressed, a pleasant-faced French Canadian.

"Come along, then, Bruce," cried Arthur, springing on board, his chum following without a word of protest, and, taking the places assigned them by the raftsmen, they began the passage of the slides.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PASSAGE OF THE SLIDES.

The curious craft to which the boys had thus committed themselves requires description. It was really a raft, composed of huge sticks of square timber ranging from fifteen to thirty inches square and averaging twenty or more feet in length. These were all of white pine, and looked as fresh and bright as if they had just been hewn.

The crib was made by placing a dozen of the sticks side by side and fastening the two outer ones together by cross-pieces secured by big wooden pegs. The intermediate sticks were not attached to anything, but kept in place by their own weight; on top of all lay three immense timbers, one at either side and one in the centre, called the "loading-sticks," that bore heavily upon the cross-pieces, and thus the whole crib was held together more by the sheer weight of its parts than in any other way.

The place assigned the boys was on the centre timber, about the middle.

"You stay there," said the raftsman, who held the stern oar, a huge, heavy thing made out of a rough scantling, "and you may not get wet, unless," he added, with a serious expression, "we break up, and then we must all swim for it."

The crib by this time had got well started down the narrow canal that led to the slides, and even if the boys had repented of starting they could not have withdrawn from the enterprise.

The canal was lined with high wooden walls past which the clumsy crib was gliding at a speed that plainly showed the great force of the current by which it was being borne onward.

The passage was so narrow that every few yards the crib would strike the sides and scrape along, with strange groans as if of suffering, which did not fail to tell upon the boys' nerves; but it was when they came to the first dip that they began to feel some alarm.

After sweeping by tall piles of boards they saw ahead of them a light wooden bridge beyond which the water was evidently at a lower level.

"See, Bruce!" exclaimed Arthur, pointing ahead, "there must be a fall there, and we've got to go over it."

Without turning his head, Bruce nodded assent, and the next moment they had reached the bridge and, not pausing in their swift flight, had plunged over the fall of several feet, the sudden descent sending the front of the crib deep under water, so that a wave swept over the whole deck, drenching the raftsmen to the knees but sparing the boys, who were above its reach.

"A miss is as good as a mile," said Bruce, quietly settling himself more firmly on the timber. "But that's only the beginning of it, if I'm not mistaken."

It was, indeed, only the beginning, for hardly had they got over the surprise of the first dip when they came to another and still deeper one, beyond which was a long slope of slimy timbers barely covered with water whereon the crib scraped throughout its whole length.

The creaking and groaning of the great sticks were positively distressing, and as the boys shot past the high wooden walls of the slide they both devoutly wished themselves on top of them, although neither confessed the fact by word or look.

The slant grew sharper, and the speed of the crib increased the farther it went, until it was flashing by like a toboggan down an ice-hill; and, realizing that they must bring up presently in the river below, the boys gripped the loading-stick tightly, and awaited the issue with no small anxiety.

Now, one of the uncertainties which always lent a big spice of danger to running the slides, except in cribs specially strengthened, was whether the crib would hold together to the end of the passage, as it often happened that the middle sticks would be scrubbed out, or the cross-pieces torn away, and the whole thing fall apart.

Neither Bruce nor Arthur knew anything about this, but the raftsmen did, and their swarthy faces took on an anxious

expression as the groaning and creaking increased in a way that showed there was a more than usual amount of friction. They had almost reached the bottom of the slope, and the smooth level water below was in full view, when the front raftsman gave a cry of warning, and at the same moment made a spring for the side of the slide nearest him, which by good luck he succeeded in reaching and drawing himself up to the top.

Neither the boys nor the other raftsmen were in position to imitate him, and before they could do anything else the front cross-piece snapped like a pipe-stem, and the whole front of the crib opened out like a gigantic fan.

When this happened the big loading-stick, upon which the boys crouched, struck the bottom of the slide with a sharp shock that threw them in into the water right amongst the other sticks.

Their situation at once became one of great peril. They were almost near the bottom of the slide where the water was full twenty feet deep, and they were hemmed in on every side by the disorganized portions of the crib, a blow from any one of which might mean death. Neither of the raftsmen could offer any assistance, one being on top of the wall, and the other struggling for his own life.

Yet neither of them uttered a cry nor lost his self-control for an instant. They clearly recognized that their only chance of life lay in relying entirely upon themselves for rescue from their perilous plight, and they struggled silently but sturdily with the mighty current that seemed determined to overcome them.

At the foot of the slide they were for a moment carried under by the rushing water and buried beneath a bank of foam, but they fought their way to the top again, and, sweeping aside the thick froth of the fall, at the same instant caught sight of a big stick floating near.

A few quick strokes brought them to it, and drawing their shoulders clear of the water they saw each other for the first time since the collapse of the crib.

"Thank Heaven, you're all right!" exclaimed Arthur, his pale, wet face lighting up with joy.

"And so are you, I'm glad to see," responded Bruce, smiling back at him. "But we've got a good soaking, haven't we?"

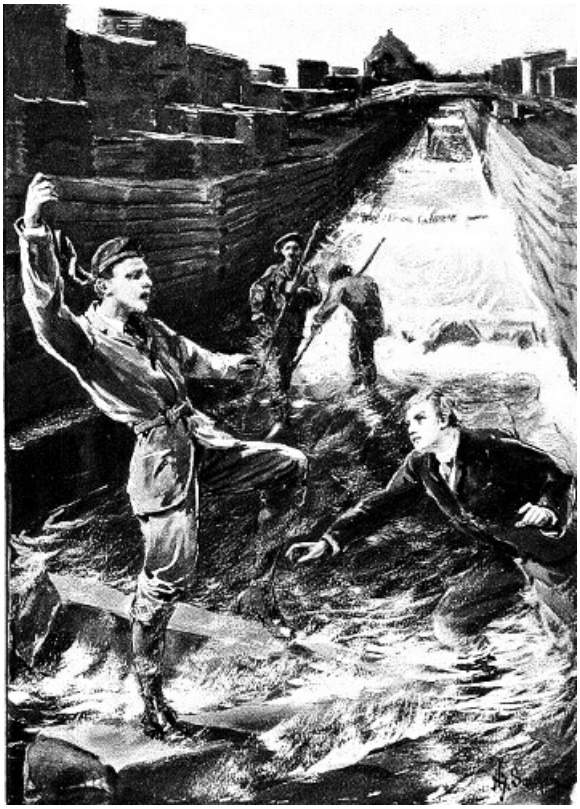
It was ever Bruce's way to take things quietly, no matter how alarming they might be. He really felt as deeply as any one, but he liked to hide his feelings under a mask of composure that came as natural to him as Arthur's excitability did to him.

Being in deep, still water now, the boys thought they were pretty well out of danger, but were soon awakened to a new peril by a shout of warning from the raftsmen on the shore.

Another crib had been in the slides not far behind theirs, and having made the passage unscathed, was now charging down upon them with tremendous impetus, the water foaming fiercely before its massive front.

"Look out, Arthur!" cried Bruce, who was farthest away from where the crib would strike. "Let go where you are and make for me."

Arthur gave one startled glance at the charging crib and then made a dash for Bruce, reaching his side just as the heavy crib struck the timber at the very spot where he had been the minute before.



"ARTHUR GAVE ONE STARTLED GLANCE AT THE CHARGING CRIB, AND THEN MADE A DASH FOR BRUCE."

So furious was the onset of the crib that it seemed to spring upon the loose stick, bearing it down under the water that closed over it, foaming.

The boys went down with the stick, and this time it seemed as if it was all over with them; a horrible sense of suffocation possessed them; they became faint to the verge of insensibility, and indeed they would certainly have drowned had not a swerve of the crib released their stick and allowed them to rise to the surface close alongside, where the raftsmen promptly grasped them and hauled them on board utterly exhausted, yet with breath enough left to murmur thanks to their timely helpers.

An hour later they were back in their room at the hotel putting on some dry clothes and laughing gleefully over the exciting experience of the afternoon.

"What between water-falls, highwaymen, runaway horses, bull-dogs, and timber-slides, we're having a lively time of it, aren't we, chum?" said Arthur, pulling on his trousers.

"Yes, and if we get through the rest of our adventures as well as we have through the first we'll have a lot to tell our fathers when we arrive in Shanghai, if we ever reach there," replied Bruce, arranging his necktie with wonted precision.

"Never fear, we'll get through all right," returned Arthur confidently, "our luck is going to last."

They remained over till Sunday in Ottawa, in the morning attending service at St. Andrew's Church because of its name, and going again in the evening because of the attractive preaching.

On Monday afternoon they boarded the transcontinental train as it passed through Ottawa on its long journey to the Pacific Coast. They were so impressed by the costly and elegant equipment of the cars that they wondered if it were not some special train they had got on board, and not intended for ordinary passengers like themselves.

On looking round at their fellow-travellers, however, their minds were soon made easy, and they settled down to enjoy the comforts of the most sumptuous railway carriage they had ever rode in.

"This beats anything I've ever seen," said Arthur, noting with hearty admiration the artistically carved white mahogany, the broad panels of Mexican onyx, the gleaming mirrors, and the rich soft plush which combined to make up so satisfying a picture. "It's quite good enough for a prince, isn't it?"

"Quite," assented Bruce, stretching himself out luxuriously on the soft cushions. "And it makes me feel like a prince to be here."

"This is one of the wonderful Pullman sleeping-cars we've heard so much about, you know," said Arthur, "and I'm all impatience to see how they're managed."

"Oh, you'll have to wait for bedtime to see that," said Bruce. "See, there's the porter; they have nothing but negroes for porters on these cars. Jack Gillespie was telling me about it."

Arthur looked hard at the porter, who was in truth much more of a mulatto than a negro, and felt much inclined to ask him some questions, but, fearing the other passengers would overhear him, he refrained, preferring to wait a more convenient time.

They were beginning to feel very hungry, and to ask themselves how they would manage about dinner, and whether the train stopped at some station long enough to allow the meal to be had in comfort, when a railway official came into the car, calling out loudly:

"Dinner now ready in the dining-car," and forth-with there was a general move of the passengers in the direction indicated.

"Come along, Bruce," cried Arthur, springing up to join the procession; "that includes us, I imagine."

So they went into the next car ahead and found themselves in a long, handsomely decorated room furnished with tables and comfortable seats, where the gleam of glass, the shine of silver, and the snowiness of linen made a very welcome picture for folks with keen appetites.

Taking one of the small tables that held only two persons they looked about them with admiring eyes. It was their first experience of a modern dining-car, and they saw much that was interesting to them.

To be served with a six-course dinner in the style of a first-class hotel while speeding along at the rate of thirty miles an hour was certainly a very pleasing novelty and one which they heartily enjoyed.

When the time came to make up the berths in the cars for the night, the boys' wonder was aroused anew. They watched every move of the dusky porter as with quick, deft touches he transformed the seats into broad couches, and drew out from the sides of the car wide berths whose existence until then might never have been expected, covering them with mattresses and bed-clothing, and thus, as if by magic, converting them into beds fit for a king to sleep on.

"This certainly beats anything I ever saw or imagined," said Bruce. "It's well worth coming all this way to see, isn't it?"

"Right you are," responded Arthur as he dived into his berth, "and I'm going to be so comfortable here that I won't want to turn out in a hurry."

Comfortable as they undoubtedly were the novelty of the situation kept them awake a good while, and they were about the last to get to sleep in the car.

But they made up for it by over-sleeping the next morning, and when Bruce put his head through the curtains that closed him in he was dismayed to see that all the other berths were already made up, and to hear the dining-car conductor call out: "Last call for breakfast in the dining-car." Rousing up Arthur, who had not stirred, a hurried toilet was made in the lavatory, and they got into the dining-car just in time to secure some breakfast, whereupon they determined to get up earlier in future.

The railroad ran through rough yet picturesque scenery, and as the boys noted the number of streams they crossed, and lakes whose shores they skirted, they expressed to one another how they would like to try the fishing in some of these waters which looked as if they ought to hold plenty of trout and other fish.

"There is no trouble about your doing that," said a gentleman who had the seat behind them, and overheard their

conversation. "If you can spare the time you may have all the fishing you like."

They were at once interested, and, accepting the gentleman's invitation to come into his section, they questioned him as to how it could be managed.

"There's no trouble about it," said their informant. "You just have to stop off at Nepigon station, and the station-master there, or the hotel-keeper, will tell you just what to do. You'll need a couple of guides, of course, and a good canoe to do the thing properly, and perhaps you might think it too expensive."

"Oh, that's all right," responded Arthur somewhat pompously. "We've got money enough to carry us through, and we're in no hurry as to time."

"In that case," returned the gentleman, hardly restraining a smile at the young lad's important manner, "you will have no difficulty. I've been up the Nepigon myself, and can promise you as fine trout-fishing as you ever had in your life."

This information put the boys in great humor. They had often gone a-fishing in Scotland during their holidays, and thus acquired some skill as anglers, and the prospect of trying their fortune with the big trout of the Nepigon was very attractive.

They plied their new acquaintance (who gave his name to them as Mr. Cooper, and explained that he was one of the divisional engineers of the railroad, having charge of the section over which they were passing) with many questions about the country, and the railroad itself, and he interested them deeply by detailing the tremendous difficulties the company had to encounter in building the road.

"I spent nearly two years on the north shore of Lake Superior," he said, "and I hope I'll never have to work so hard again in my life. We used over one hundred tons of dynamite a month in blasting through the rocks, and removed nearly three million tons of rock. We had fully twelve thousand men working summer and winter, and two thousand teams of horses, besides three hundred dog teams in the winter time. Those were stirring times, I tell you, and I could make a big book out of the strange things that happened. One day an Irishman in charge of a team was waiting for a load near a huge pile of iron rails that had been laid down on top of a high bank when the weight of the rails made a landslide that carried cart and horses into the lake, where the rails pinned the team to the bottom in twenty feet of water, and it could be seen there for many a day afterwards, the water being perfectly clear. The Irishman had a narrow escape from sharing his horses' fate."

"The difficulties we had to overcome were something appalling. Why, in order to get material and supplies from the lake shore opposite Michipicoten to the railway line, we had first to cut a road seven miles long through the rocks, and then traverse a lake for the same distance by steamboat. Next came sixteen miles of rough, rocky country, requiring plenty of blasting and cutting. After that a second lake sixteen miles long, then three miles of road, and finally a third lake.

"We had to bore tunnel after tunnel right through solid rock, and no less than ten rivers, one of them one hundred and fifty feet in width, had to be diverted from their natural courses and carried through tunnels excavated under the road-bed. So you see," Mr. Cooper concluded, "we Canadians feel rather proud of this great railway of ours, seeing how hard it was to build this part of it, at all events."

As the boys listened to these interesting statements they thought that the Canadian people had good reason to be proud of so vast an undertaking, and were disposed to congratulate themselves that it had been carried to such successful completion that they could roll comfortably along in a luxurious Pullman car over the iron road that had cost so much human thought and labor to construct.

But it was when they came to the stretch between Heron Bay and Nepigon that their admiration for the builders of the road was raised to its highest pitch. Here the track was laid, for the most part, upon a rock gallery carved out of the face of the cliffs, and directly overlooking the majestic breadth of Lake Superior, whose waters seemed more vividly blue than the heavens above. A hundred feet or more below them lay the lake, while overhead towered massive crags, richly colored and fantastically adorned with trees, vines, and creeping, blossoming vegetation and mosses.

"We never saw anything like this at home, did we, Bruce?" said Arthur, whose quick eye lost nothing of the grandeur of the ever-changing picture revealed through the broad windows of the car.

"I'm sorry we did not walk this part. We're going so quickly that one hasn't time to see all you'd like to."

"I would like to be tramping it, too," said Bruce, "especially on so glorious a day. I hope we'll have weather like this so long as we stay over at Nepigon. Oh, but, Arthur," he added, his face lighting up at the thought, "if we're only lucky enough to land a six-pounder apiece! I never caught anything bigger than three pounds in my life."

It was soon after breakfast when the train reached Nepigon station, near the mouth of the Nepigon river, and the boys, taking leave of Mr. Cooper, with many thanks for his kindness, let the train go on without them.

Mr. Cooper had given them a note to the agent of the Hudson's Bay Company at Red Rock post, not far from the station, and, leaving their portmanteaus with the station-master, they started to hunt him up.

In this they had no difficulty, and on presentation of the note were most cordially received, and invited to remain and have mid-day dinner, at which their doings might be discussed.

In the midst of laying out for them a program that would occupy three days, their host, Mr. Stewart, interrupted himself to ask:

"Look here, is there anything to prevent your staying a week if I could make it worth your while?"

The boys looked at one another. They were not, indeed, in any special hurry, and if the inducement were strong enough they could remain a week, but they wanted to know first whether it would be worth while doing so.

Mr. Stewart, divining the meaning of their glance, hastened to add:

"What I have in mind is this: I have to go down to our post at Poplar Point very soon, and if you'd care to accompany me I'd start to-morrow, and on that trip you'd have all the trout-fishing you could wish, and see something of the country besides. What do you say?"

Arthur was for accepting off-hand, but Bruce wanted more light on the subject. When, however, he understood that what was so kindly offered was a long canoe trip, with every provision for safety and comfort, he accepted the invitation cordially.

The afternoon was spent in making the necessary arrangements, and the following morning the little party set out. It consisted of Mr. Stewart, Bruce, and Arthur, three brown, sinewy half-breeds, and Mr. Stewart's dog Nep, a fine specimen of the "huskie" breed, from which come the best sledge-dogs in the world.

They had two canoes, and were divided up in this way: Mr. Stewart with Bruce, Nep, and one of the half-breeds occupied the first canoe, while Arthur with the other two half-breeds had the second.

Mr. Stewart thoughtfully provided the required fishing-tackle, and took his rifle, the boys had their revolvers, and the half-breeds ugly-looking hunting-knives and hatchets, so they were pretty well armed.

The canoe interested the young travellers immensely. They had never seen that kind of craft before, much less been in one of them, although they were familiar enough with them in books.

The two canoes were both excellent examples of the means whereby the American Indian has from time immemorial traversed the multitudinous waterway of the northland, and certainly nothing more perfectly adapted to the purposes required has ever been constructed by human hands.

A skin of the tough outer bark of the white birch, sewed together with the fibrous roots of the spruce, tightly stretched over ribs of cedar, and the seams daubed with the resinous gum of the pine or tamarack—such is the Indian canoe, light, strong, and buoyant, simply constructed, and easily repaired if damaged. Floating like a bubble on the water it will, if not too deeply laden, ride safely over seas sufficient to swamp an ordinary boat. Astonishingly easy to be upset by a novice, it becomes in experienced hands the safest and most stable of crafts, as it certainly is the most picturesque.

Seated in the bottom of the canoes while Mr. Stewart and the half-breeds did the paddling, the boys had nothing to do but enjoy themselves as they glided across the still waters of Lake Helen to where the swift current of the Nepigon river makes its entrance.

They were enjoying their new experience to the utmost, and exchanged appreciative comments as the canoes kept side by side. In the course of the morning, however, Arthur's restless spirit began to tire of inaction, and he watched with longing

eyes the steady, skilful sweep of the paddles in the half-breeds' hands.

At length he could not further contain himself, and looking across at Mr. Stewart called out:

"Might I try to paddle a little when the men get tired?"

Mr. Stewart laughed as he answered:

"I'm afraid you'd have to wait a long time for your turn, then, my boy. These men of mine can keep this up all day long for a month. They don't know what the word 'tired' means when they've hold of the paddles,—do you?" he asked, looking around at the half-breeds.

They flashed their white teeth in a complacent smile, and nodded an emphatic negative without saying a word.

"But," continued Mr. Stewart, noting the shadow of disappointment on Arthur's countenance, "there's a spare paddle in each canoe, and you're both welcome to try your hand at it if you want to."

Bruce was no less eager than Arthur to hold a paddle, and so the next minute they were sitting on the cross-pieces in the centre of the canoes and paddling away with great vigor.

Seeing that they had never before held a paddle, it could hardly be expected that they should at once put their strength to the best use, and a quiet smile of superiority stole over the swarthy features of the half-breeds as Arthur barked his knuckles and scraped his wrist against the gunwale of the canoe in his undue eagerness to be of help to the paddlers. Bruce, taking things more quietly, did not expose himself in the same degree, although he found some difficulty in managing his stout ash blade.

But, by taking pattern from the half-breeds, and giving their whole minds to their work, both boys ere long got into the swing of the thing, and kept at it bravely in spite of aching backs and weary muscles until the canoes reached the foot of the Long Rapids, where, much to their relief, Mr. Stewart called a halt for dinner.

As they got out of the canoes Mr. Stewart said, in a tone of hearty approval:

"Well done, my lads, you'll make right good paddlers in no time."

The boys felt so pleased at this compliment that they quite forgot for the time the blisters on their palms, and Bruce said in reply:

"It's very kind of you to say so, sir. We did our best, but we never had a paddle in our hands before, and we find that there's a good deal to be learned in using it."

"Of course there is," said Mr. Stewart cheerfully; "but you'll not take long to learn, and you'll be able to help us a good deal on our trip; and now," he continued, "as we'll stay here a couple of hours, you might as well have a try at the trout while Lacroix is cooking our dinner."

This suggestion suited the boys admirably, and in a twinkling they had the rods ready, and directed their steps to a pool at the foot of the rapids, which the canoes would have to overcome by being portaged.

A more likely looking spot into which to cast a line no angler could desire, and, comparatively slight as the boys' knowledge of the gentle art was, their hearts beat high with hope of success as they dropped their flies into the deep, clear water which eddied and swirled not too swiftly after dashing over a sharp slant of jagged rocks.

Nor was their confidence misplaced. Hardly had the flies touched the water than there was a rush, a spring, a quick, hard pull on the line, and both boys simultaneously shouted with delight:

"I've got one! I've got one!"

CHAPTER VII.

PADDLE AND PORTAGE.

To say that Bruce and Arthur were excited when the strong tug on the line and the sudden bending of the rod told them that they were hooked to good big trout is but faintly to describe their feelings.

Never since they set out upon their journey had such thrills of joy inspired them. They almost forgot to draw breath in the intensity of their anxiety to land their finny prizes, and heard nothing of Mr. Stewart's warning shouts:

"Play them carefully, my lads; don't be in too much of a hurry. They're little demons to fight."

But the boys were in no mood for care. Their one thought was to get their trout ashore as soon as possible, and in his eagerness to accomplish this Bruce pressed his fellow so hard that he tore the hook out of his mouth, while Arthur, in attempting to jump to a rock that seemed a superior coign of vantage, slipped and fell, the rod flying from his hands and shooting far out into the middle of the pool.

"I've lost my fish!" cried Bruce, chagrin over-spreading his countenance.

"And I've lost my rod!" responded Arthur, picking himself up and rubbing his bruised shins. "But I'm just going after it," he added, and without more ado he plunged into the cool, clear water and struck out vigorously for the rod, while the other members of the party looked on with mingled amazement and amusement.

A few quick strokes put the rod once more in his possession, and returning to the rock on which he had tumbled, he took his place again, crying triumphantly:

"I've not lost him yet. See if I don't land him, after all."

Sure enough the taut line showed that the hook still held, and, paying no heed to his dripping condition, Arthur, his ardor in no wise cooled by his bath, but his wild excitement considerably abated, played his lively captive like a veteran angler, now letting the line run out to its full length, and now reeling it cautiously in again, until at length he had the supreme satisfaction of drawing in to the shore within reach of one of the half-breeds as fine a five-pounder as ever the water of the Nepigon had yielded.

When the speckled beauty was safely landed, Arthur threw down his rod, and capered about for very joy, the drops of water flying from his dripping garments.

"Isn't he a monster!" he cried exultantly. "He's well worth a wetting, I tell you." Then catching up the fish he ran over to where Lacroix was busy cooking dinner. "Can't you put this fellow on your bill of fare?" he asked. "Please do, if it is not too late."

The half-breed smiled indulgently at the boy's excitement.

"To be sure," he replied. "There is time enough," and taking the trout he in a twinkling had it decapitated and cleaned and ready for broiling.

Meanwhile Bruce was going on quietly replacing the fly on his hook, and dropping it gently into the pool. For a few minutes there was no response, Arthur's plunge having frightened the fish away. But presently Bruce's turn came, and he hooked a good big trout, which gave him a lot of work before being vanquished. It was not a five-pounder, but it was well worth catching, and dinner being ready by the time it was landed there was no more fishing that morning.

After a hearty dinner, at which Arthur's trout was the *pièce de resistance*, and a half-hour's rest while Lacroix cleaned up and the other men smoked their pipes in luxurious content, Mr. Stewart gave orders for the portage.

It being their first experience of a portage, the boys watched the proceedings with great interest. The half-breeds were all sturdy fellows, and the indifference with which they treated heavy bundles made the two young spectators stare with astonishment.

A large box of goods for the post at Poplar Point would be swung on the back by a broad leather strap that crossed the

forehead, known as the "tump-line." This served as a foundation upon which was lifted a heavy bag of flour, a roll of blankets, and a miscellaneous bundle on top of all. Then, with an axe in his belt and a stout stick in his hand, the half-breed would go off contentedly, and traverse without a stumble a rocky path over which a white man might find it hard enough to pass unburdened.

What elicited the warmest admiration of the boys, however, was the way the canoes were carried past the rapids which could not be navigated in safety.

Turning each one bottom up a half-breed got underneath, and, seizing it by the middle, shifted and strained until he had it poised fairly upon his shoulders with both bow and stem clear of the ground, when he marched off looking like a gigantic snail.

Of course, Bruce and Arthur offered to do their share of the carrying, and divided with Mr. Stewart the small bundles which made up the balance of the freight.

This portage was more than a mile in length, over bare, burnt granite ledges, and, under the glare of a mid-summer sun, the boys found it very wearisome, but they soon forgot that when the canoes were launched again in the still waters of Lake Jessie.

Pushing on to the head of Lake Jessie, the canoes pressed through the Narrows into Lake Maria, whenceforward the scenery was so beautiful and striking that they seemed to traverse an enchanted land.

The Nepigon ran swift and deep through a narrow channel of rocks whose lofty walls, undulating on either hand and jutting out into headlands, overlapped each other so that the *voyageurs*, as they might fitly be called, seemed to be navigating, link by link, a chain of charming lakelets.

"Just look at those rocks, Arthur," Bruce called out from his canoe. "We never saw anything like that in Scotland."

The coloring of the cliffs was indeed remarkable, their hard gray faces being decked by the lichens with orange and yellow, green and gray, in every possible shade. The marvellously pure water, the splintered crags, lichen-painted, the silver-stemmed birches, aspen-poplars, and balsams crowning the cliffs, combined to make up a picture of unforgettable beauty.

At times paddling vigorously,—for the men were glad of the help they could render in fighting the swift current,—and again taking it easy in the bottom of the canoes, the boys' cup of happiness was for the time full to the brim.

Toward sundown they came to Split Rock, where a great mass of rock divided the stream into two branches which poured down on each side of the obstacle in impassable torrents. The way seemed barred to further progress, and the boys began to wonder what would be done.

But the paddlers kept at their work, and presently sweeping around a dark headland, a tiny bay was disclosed whose gentle eddy bore the canoes to a safe landing-place.

"We'll camp here for the night," Mr. Stewart announced, much to the boys' approval, for they were getting tired and cramped in the canoes, and wanted to stretch their legs on shore.

As soon as the things were landed, Bruce and Arthur had their rods out, and tried the pool at the foot of the rapids. They had not long to wait. First one fly and then the other was greedily taken, and with little difficulty two fine trout were secured for supper.

That night the boys for the first time in their lives slept in the open air, it being so fine and warm that Mr. Stewart did not think it necessary to put up the small tent he carried, and the novelty of the thing kept them a long time awake, gazing up at the stars, and listening to the ceaseless music of the twin torrents created by Split Rock.

When they did fall asleep they slept so well that they seemed to have had only a short nap before Mr. Stewart's cheery voice summoned them to throw aside their blankets and wash themselves awake in the clear waters of the river.

A long day of paddling and portaging across Lake Emma and Lake Hannah, and through narrow rock-bound channels, brought the two canoes at last out into great Lake Nepigon, on whose southern shore the little party camped for another night, and the following morning completed the voyage to Poplar Point.

Having read much of the famous Hudson Bay Company in the vivacious books of Ballantyne, the boys were eager to see one of the company's stations. But there was nothing imposing about Poplar Post. It consisted simply of a small group of log-built houses and store-rooms unprotected by walls, and fringed by Indian wigwams whose occupants were evidently on the best of terms with their pale-faced brethren.

The factor of the fort, Mr. Graham, gave Mr. Stewart and his companions a warm welcome and the best his establishment afforded. In the evening, as they lounged together by the lake shore, enjoying the cool air that came softly in from the great lake, the two officials vied with each other in stories of strange and startling experiences while in the company's service, told principally for the benefit of the boys, who listened to them with absorbed interest.

One of Mr. Stewart's stories particularly impressed them; it gave them so vivid a conception of what winter travel on foot in the northern wilds of Canada meant.

"It was in the winter of 1874, and I had set out from the post at Red Rock for Fort William on an important piece of business which could not be delayed. I had only one companion, a half-breed, who was stupid enough to lame himself the first day, and rather than be delayed, I sent him back and pushed on alone, hoping to meet some Indians who might keep me company. But not a living soul did I meet, and I was still alone when night came on. That night, before a blazing fire that threw its light far out among the tall birches and spruces, I thought I heard a noise of some one coming. It could not be the wind; there was none now to stir the branches. Soon the sound ceased. Just as I was crediting it to my imagination, I heard it nearer and almost behind me. It might be a stray Indian, who would keep me company for the night. But why should he not come boldly into the firelight? And why should he move from place to place beyond its rays? Now I heard the sound to my left, and was peering in that direction when the snow was crunched more distinctly, and I saw advancing two luminous balls which seemed as large as eggs, and of prismatic colors. Just then a log of the fire fell down, and a fine blaze rose. There stood but a few yards away a great moose! He gazed for a full minute, as if spellbound by the firelight.

"At a slight movement of mine he uttered something between a snort and a whistle, wheeled into the dark woods, and I saw him no more. In my loneliness I felt the loss of even the animal's company. The following morning I half-repented of my resolution to go on alone, and was strongly tempted to return to Red Rock; but my pride would not let me, and I started off. The course took me to a lake of which I knew something, and I diverged a little to have the advantage of travelling on the ice down a long bay and outlet stream of which I had heard from an Indian. The sun was obscured all day, and yet I was so perfectly sure I was right that I went along the rugged coast without once consulting my compass. About four o'clock in the afternoon I was astonished to hear the sound of a water-fall. Pushing on I soon saw the cloud of mists. Then I knew I was off my course. The secret was that there were two outlets, and I had mistaken the smaller for the larger, which begins five miles more to the north, and flows to the falls on a course almost at right angles to that which I had followed. Some distance above the falls both streams unite in a long, deep rapid. The island between this junction is lofty, with precipitous banks. As I ought to have been on the north side, there was nothing for me to do but to cross the river, or go back to the lake and follow the northerly outlet, or else strike out from the lake and make a bee-line for the right trail. There was no crossing below the falls, so far as I could see, for the banks were high and precipitous. To go back to the lake would be a dangerous loss of time. But it appeared not impossible to cross so narrow a stream at the brow of the falls. There the spray and snow, advancing from each side during the winter, had formed an irregular ice-bridge. In the centre it was narrowed to about six feet wide—simply a mass of frozen foam and spray. I had no choice but to venture on this or retrace my steps. As either choice seemed about equally desperate, I resolved to cross at all hazards.

"If the frail bridge should give way, no one would know my fate unless I left some trace on the bank. For that purpose I cut a large chip out of a birch, and wrote on the white wood: 'Feb. 22, 1874. I must cross this ice-bridge over these falls. If it break, you know my fate and my name'—which I appended. Out on the bridge I went till I reached the narrow place, which was about six feet across. On its edge I loosened my pack and threw my snow-shoes and satchel across. Next moment I would have given the world to have them back again. But now the die was cast. I must go on or soon freeze. It was impossible for me to travel without snow-shoes. With a pole to steady me I advanced, with my heart in my mouth, to the narrow space of frozen foam. It seemed honeycombed but hard. The roar of the water just beneath scared me, and the sight of the chasm below the falls made me giddy. I felt my feet crushing the foamy mass; but I dared not spring on the frail structure. My only hope was in going on gently, and subjecting it to no such shock as I should give it by a jump. Then all was suddenly over—the perilous place was passed in a few seconds—I was safe! Now, it seemed almost childish to have left that message on the tree. I would have given a good deal to be able to blot it out, but cross again?

No! In adjusting my snow-shoe strings for the rest of my journey, I missed my knife, but soon remembered that I had put it in my satchel after lunching. Turning out the contents of the satchel I found not only the knife, but two matches. I fairly screamed with joy. Now I could rest instead of tramping all night around some tree to keep myself warm. After a frugal supper I did rest well before a great fire of branches that I wrested from dead and living trees. To keep the fire smouldering till morning I hacked down a birch with my tomahawk, cut it into three long lengths, and 'niggered' these each into two by turning them on the coals. Then I put them all on the fire and lay down. On awakening I found three inches of new snow on my blankets.

"But last night's embers still smouldered, and I soon blew them to a blaze. Again I breakfasted alone, and resumed my lonely way over fallen timber, hills, and rocks. About eleven o'clock that morning I came to what looked like a river about fifty yards wide. When I had nearly crossed it, the ice became 'glare.' The water had apparently risen here over the first ice formed, and then run along the bank till it swept away the snow, had then been re-covered with ice, and had finally receded, leaving a shell of ice. Here and there a snag protruded.

"I did not think from appearances that there was deep water under the shell and near it, but as I advanced I kept poking cautiously with my pole. When I was not more than five yards from shore, my right snow-shoe broke bodily through as if a great bubble or mere scale of ice had been just there. I had time to throw my weight on the other foot, but there I was stuck. My right snow-shoe had turned, and was held under the ice. I tried every conceivable plan for extricating it, and all in vain. I dare not try to kick my foot loose from the snow-shoe, for if I lost it in the current I could not travel farther. I dared not lean back to loosen the strings, and so haul off the shoe, for thus I might lose my balance on the left foot, and plump down through the hole. I was wholly mistaken, too, as to the depth of the river; by my pole the water was nearly seven feet deep. If the ice under my left foot should give way I was done for. I dared not struggle, lest it should break down. At the end of a quarter of an hour I was worse off than ever, for my left leg was weakening with the strain. I was at my wits' end, when a way out of my peril suggested itself. There was a small snag near, but it was just beyond my reach. I could catch my tomahawk's head on the snag, but not firmly, and I dared not pull with so slight a hold, for fear of losing it and falling backward. It occurred to me that I might chop away the ice around the snag, and then pull it near enough to clutch.

"In this I succeeded after many minutes' labor. Now I could pull myself free, but dared not try lest I should lose my snow-shoe. The hold I had enabled me, however, to move my right foot, which I did in every conceivable way, for perhaps ten minutes. At last, when I had almost given up hope, a lucky turn brought the shoe up edgewise, and I carefully made my way ashore over the most treacherous of ice. My right leg was wet nearly to the knee, but the weather was not very cold. I made a fire with my last match, warmed myself well, and resumed my journey. Three hours of precious daylight had been lost, but I managed to reach the main dog-trail about sundown. There I might have spent the moderate night even without a fire, but my pluck was reënforced, and I resolved to try for camp that night. There was a good trail and a clear moon. The line might have gone ahead about seven miles after I left it, I supposed. But it seemed I had been on it for twenty miles, when the trail led me on and off a long, narrow lake. I was so tired that I felt that I could go little farther, when I happened to see some patches in the snow. Stooping, I found them to be bits of rabbits' fur, and I knew some Indian wigwam was probably near. Soon I came across new snow-shoe tracks diverging from the trail. These I followed about fifty yards and found the wigwam, banked up to the middle with snow and cedar bark. A friendly column of smoke rose up from the pointed roof into the clear, moonlit air, and here I resolved to stay for the night. I entered, with the everlasting 'booshoo' as my salutation, and as the Indian etiquette demands, shook hands all round. There were two big Indians making snow-shoes at one side, and two squaws with an old one and two papooses at the other. A bright fire blazed on the 'caboose,' with some flat stones around it, on which pieces of rabbits' flesh and beaver tail were roasting. After the first salute no one took the slightest notice of me.

"The men went on with their work and the three squaws looked vacantly into the fire. I put off my pack and satchel and sat for a while in solemn silence. Then I took out two big plugs of tobacco, handed one to each of the men, and gave my whole remaining stock of sugar and tea to one of the squaws, whom I supposed to be the 'mistress of the house.' This called out all round a series of '*mequitches*'—thanks. Again there was long silence, after which the squaw to whom I had presented the groceries rose silently and put some water into a tin can with some tea from one of the little bags I had given her. Then another long silence. When the water boiled, she handed me the can of tea and my little sugar bag, which, after sweetening my tea, I returned to her with the usual '*mequitch*.' She then pointed to the roast on the hot stones, and muttered '*Buckate*'—'You are hungry.' I certainly was, but that mess was too much for me, although I appreciated her hospitality. I excused myself on some plea or other, and ate instead the remainder of my cheese with some biscuit and

tea, dividing the remaining biscuit between the two papooses. The wigwam could not be much more than ten feet across, and I was wondering how eight human beings could find room to sleep in it, when one of the Indians took his snow-shoes and went out. After a little while he returned with some cedar brush, which he laid down by me. Then in a low voice he drawled out '*Nebagan*'—'Your bed.' Rabbit-skin blankets were then produced, and, without a word, each Indian curled up for the night. So did I, and slept like a top until late in the morning. I had no difficulty in engaging one of the Indians to accompany me the rest of the way in consideration of sundry pounds of tea and tobacco, which I was glad enough to give him for his service."

With the conclusion of Mr. Stewart's thrilling story, a very decided conviction came into the boys' minds that, however pleasant might be the life of a Hudson Bay official in the canoeing and fishing season, it was not at all to be envied in the long, cold winter of the north.

Mr. Stewart's business did not take long to transact, and he was ready to go back the following morning. The boys would have very well liked to stay longer at Poplar Post, but of course they said nothing to that effect, allowing their regret at leaving to find expression in their farewells to Mr. Graham, who gave them a warm invitation to visit him again.

The return trip was a much easier undertaking than the going up, and there was a great deal more fun for the boys. Once the Nepigon river was entered the paddling became mere child's play compared with the strenuous toil it had been up-stream. Right out in mid-channel, courting instead of dodging the current, the canoes glided smoothly down the rippling waters, now swiftly, now slowly, occasionally pausing to have a try at a big trout in an eddy.

Many of the rapids that had to be laboriously avoided by portages on the way up were run without landing, and the paddlers got so in the spirit of this exciting sport that they ventured upon trying one that they had not been through before.

It was in two parts, the first rapid being intricate and dangerous from sunken rocks and startling passages through which only unerring skill sufficed to steer the canoes.

Then came a wide, still pool, a sharp turn, and a long, dark slope, with a white fringe at the bottom, as to the meaning of which there could be no mistake.

The bowman in Mr. Stewart's canoe looked at it with some dismay, but it was too late to draw back. Whipping off his coat he quickly unwound and regirded his sash, thus preparing for a swim for life, if necessary. "Sit down low," he cried warningly to Bruce, who had been up on the cross-thwart, and who now instantly squatted down in the centre of the canoe, feeling a tickling of his midriff that was not altogether pleasant.

Glancing back at Arthur, whose canoe was just behind, Bruce called out:

"How do you like this, Arthur?" and, nervous as he felt himself, he could not help being amused at seeing his chum sitting low in the canoe and holding tight on to the sides with both hands as though he was afraid of the thing slipping away from underneath him.

"Keep a tight hold, Arthur," he cried, "we're just coming to the worst of it."

Arthur, forcing a smile of indifference, contented himself with replying by a nod, and the next instant both canoes were glancing down the smooth incline, like toboggans descending a slide, and almost as swiftly.

Anxious as they were at the sight of the foaming billows, the boys did not fail to enjoy this curious coast, and their hearts thrilled with excitement as, with paddles poised in air, the canoes reached the great curls which lifted their crests where the dark purple water broke into white.

"Here goes for it!" Bruce said to himself, as the canoe plunged right into the midst of the wildly agitated waters, and a wave sprang aboard, drenching the bowman to the skin.

For some moments it seemed as if the paddlers had overestimated their ability, and the whole party would pay the penalty of their rashness with their lives. The light birch-bark structures were tossed like chips from billow to billow, the spray repeatedly breaking over their occupants so that the boys were filled with fear.

But by dexterous mighty strokes the paddlers won the day, and presently both canoes swung safely into the eddy far below the fall.

"Very big water," was the pithy remark of one of the half-breeds as he looked back at the great white waves whose gauntlet had been so skilfully run.

The remainder of the return trip was marked by no special incident, but the boys enjoyed every moment of it, and were quite sorry when their arrival at Red Rock brought their canoeing experience to an end.

It fell out that they were in time to catch that day's train, as it rolled in from the East, so they made haste to do so, taking leave of Mr. Stewart with many expressions of gratitude for the pleasure he had afforded them.

The car in which they took their seats was so precisely like the one in which they had ridden from Ottawa to Nepigon, that they for a moment looked around with the expectation of seeing some familiar faces.

But instead of greetings they were met with cold stares of curiosity, for in truth they presented a rather odd appearance, their clothes being a good deal the worse for wear, and they themselves being badly sunburned.

They did not mind being stared at, however, and settled themselves down comfortably to talk over the events of the past few days, and to make plans for the future.

"We ought to have some fine adventures walking across the prairies," said Arthur. "I'm quite impatient to begin, aren't you?"

"I can't say that I am," responded Bruce, as he stretched himself out on the cushions. "It's very comfortable on board these cars, and we get over the ground so fast."

"But you're not thinking of giving up the walking, are you?" Arthur asked in an anxious tone, looking into his companion's face.

Bruce kept silence for a while as though meditating on the matter, until Arthur, growing impatient for a reply, caught hold of his arm and demanded with considerable temper in his tone:

"Answer me, Bruce! Do you want to back out?"

Now, it was not according to Bruce's nature to back out of anything to which he had once fully committed himself, unless it proved to be impracticable or injudicious, and that Arthur should suggest such a thing nettled him so that he retorted:

"Well—and what if I should?"

In an instant Arthur's face was aflame, and, making no pretence of controlling his voice, he fairly shouted:

"If you do, I'll have nothing more to do with you, and I'll think you're too mean for anything!"

It was the first time since their leaving Edinburgh together that they had had anything approaching a falling out, and Bruce, not trusting himself to reply, for he was stung to the quick, sprang from the seat and made his way to the rear of the car, leaving Arthur in the seat, strangely divided in feeling between anger at his chum's behavior, and anxiety lest he should really have it in mind to give up the walking across the prairies, and perform the journey tamely in the cars instead.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RACE WITH THE TRAIN.

Both Bruce and Arthur were high-spirited boys, and as each thought the other was at fault their pride prevented them from making overtures toward a reconciliation, and they were still at variance when the train reached Port Arthur.

Here Arthur jumped off to have a look at the place that bore his own name, and having misunderstood the porter's reply to his question as to how long the train stayed there, strolled up the street some distance, with his hands in his pockets.

Noticing some enticing candy in a confectioner's window he stepped in to buy a pound of it, intending to make it serve as the olive branch of peace when he returned to the train.

The girl who served him was very slow in making change of the note he offered in payment, and on leaving the shop he was horrified to hear the engine toot, and to see the train glide off without him.

He raced down to the station, shouting frantically, but by the time he reached the platform the train was a couple of hundred yards off, and speeding away at a rate that precluded all possibility of his overtaking it.

Out of breath from his effort, and overcome with vexation, he threw himself down upon a packing-case, and had hard work to keep himself from bursting into tears.

"Well, if I'm not a duffer!" he exclaimed in profound chagrin at what had happened. "What did that black fellow mean by saying that we had fifteen minutes to stay here, when the train didn't wait more than five? I'd just like to punch his woolly head for him. And what will Bruce think when he finds out I'm not on the train? What will he do, anyway? I wonder will he go on to Winnipeg, and there wait for me to catch up to him."

Just then, seeing the station-master coming along the platform, Arthur went up to him, and in a shamefaced manner—for he felt that he had made a considerable fool of himself—told him the plight he was in.

Much to his relief the station-master did not seem to consider the case very serious.

"You and your friend weren't going any farther than Winnipeg, you say?" he responded. "Well, there's not much harm done. He'll wait for you there, and you can go on on to-morrow's train."

"Won't there be another train before to-morrow?" exclaimed Arthur.

"Why, no," answered the station-master, smiling at his blank expression. "There's only the one passenger train each way a day. But you'll be all right here. They'll make you very comfortable up at the hotel."

Convinced that there was nothing to do but suffer patiently the consequences of his mistake, Arthur went up to the hotel, and sat down on the veranda to consider the situation. He felt sure that Bruce would be greatly disturbed on missing him from the train, and at the thought of his concern all resentment against him vanished, and had Bruce appeared at that moment Arthur was ready to rush to meet him with open arms.

As he sat there moodily turning over these things in his mind, a tall man with a wild Western look dropped into the chair beside him, and, elevating his feet to the railing, said in an easy, drawling voice:

"Are you playin' a lone hand, young fellow, or have you some partner in with you?"

Only too glad in his loneliness to have some one to talk with, even though he was rather a strange-looking customer, Arthur brightened up, and explained his position to his questioner.

The big man seemed to find it quite a joke, for he laughed so heartily as to nettle Arthur, who was seeking for sympathy, not to be entertaining.

The man evidently noticed this, for he hastened to say in a mollifying tone:

"Don't ye git riled, young fellow. I'm quick on the laugh, I know, and it's kinder comical the way you're fixed. But don't ye worry, you'll get your partner all right again."

While they were talking a boy came up from the station holding a yellow envelope, and seeing them he called out:

"Do you know if Arthur Rowe is around here?"

Arthur at once jumped to his feet, and responded eagerly, if not grammatically:

"That's me! What do you want of me?"

The boy was lazily climbing the steps without troubling himself to make any reply, when Arthur, overcome with impatience, and guessing that the envelope was for him, sprang forward and snatched it out of his hand.

Sure enough it was addressed to him, and, tearing it open, he read this message:

"FORT WILLIAM.
"I've got off here. Come along right away.
"BRUCE BARCLAY."

Having no idea where Fort William might be, Arthur handed the despatch to the man beside him, saying:

"He tells me to go on to Fort William. Do you know where that is?"

The big fellow had another laugh as he answered:

"About five miles due west. That's where the big elevators are."

"Five miles!" echoed Arthur. "Is that all? Why, I'd think nothing of walking there, and"—pulling out his watch and consulting it—"I've got lots of time. I'll start right away."

"Hold on, young fellow," said the man. "Don't you think you'd better get your dinner first. It's just about ready now, and if you don't mind waiting till we've had our feed, I'll drive you over to Fort William for the fun of the thing."

This proposition suited Arthur perfectly, and he accepted it with grateful alacrity, for he was very hungry, and the notion of a drive with his interesting acquaintance was quite attractive.

Accordingly, after a comfortable dinner, which he keenly relished, the two set off for Fort William behind a horse of so fiery a spirit that Arthur every moment expected him to jump clear out of the harness.

He was a beautiful creature, as black and shiny as a lump of coal; and his stalwart owner was evidently very proud of him, showing not the slightest concern at his rearing and plunging, but keeping a firm hand on the reins, and saying soothingly:

"Easy now, Blackie, go easy, my beauty."

By the end of the first half-mile the horse came more under control, and presently settled down to a swift, steady trot that swept the light wagon along at a delightful rate over the smooth, level road.

"How does that strike you for a gait?" asked the driver in a tone of confident self-satisfaction.

Not having had time to recover his breath, which the alarming antics of the animal had quite taken away, Arthur could only gasp out: "Its perfectly splendid, sir!"

"Right you are," responded the man cordially. "I guess you know a good horse when you see it."

Just then a freight train came tooting up behind them, the two roads being not fifty yards apart, and in full sight of each other.

The shriek of the engine and the roar of the train proved too much for the high-strung nerves of the horse, and, with a sudden plunge, he darted off at the top of his speed.

Strange to say, instead of showing any alarm, the horse's owner, after uttering a good round oath, said, in a tone that showed temper rather than terror:

"They think they're mighty smart on that engine; but I'll put the laugh on them by showing them the way to the station."

Then instead of trying to hold in his horse, he let reins loose, and shouted to the flying creature:

"Hit her up, Blackie, hit her up! Show the fools your heels."

The remainder of that ride Arthur will never forget. The splendid animal, with outstretched head, open mouth, and tossing tail, tore along the road as madly as Tam O'Shanter's Meg flying from the warlocks and witches, while his owner, leaning forward till his face seemed in danger from the flashing heels, kept encouraging the straining brute with mingled oaths and words of endearment.

It was a light wagon with a low seat, and swaying and swerving as it was along the road, Arthur had no little difficulty in keeping his place, although he held on to the seat for all he was worth.

But the excited driver gave him no heed, and he did not dare to speak to him, he seemed so absorbed in urging his horse to the utmost.

Meanwhile the train was thundering on a little distance behind, but gaining nothing, the driver and fireman and the rest of the train crew watching the wagon with countenances betokening no less surprise than admiration.

"What if we meet another team on the road?" Arthur asked himself with considerable perturbation, and the thought had hardly passed through his mind before a big country cart came into view as they swung round a turn of the road.

"Surely he will pull up," murmured Arthur.

But no, the driver still let the reins hang loose, and kept urging on the horse until it seemed as if a collision were inevitable, when, by a sharp tug at the light rein, he turned aside just enough to pass without going into the ditch on the other side.

Arthur gave a great gasp of relief at this avoidance of the danger, but no sooner was one peril passed than another presented itself, for not far ahead, lying at ease in the shade thrown across the road by a large elm, was a cow, whose head being turned away, was not aware of the approach of the living thunderbolt.

"Heavens above! look at that cow!" cried Arthur, involuntarily making a grasp at the reins.

The man shook him off roughly.

"Say, do you think I'm blind?" he growled, and kept straight on.

There seemed no possibility of avoiding a collision, as the road was too narrow and too much elevated to allow of both wheels keeping to it, and the ditch on the left side was decidedly deep.

On dashed the horse, and before the cow, sleepily chewing her cud, awoke to the situation, the right wheels struck her back, rose up over her, and came down on the other side.

Arthur would assuredly have been pitched out on his head had not the driver quickly thrown his left arm around him and held him in his place, and the next instant the wagon was whirling along through the dust, while the astounded cow, rising clumsily to her feet, stood still one moment in sheer bewilderment, and then, with uplifted tail and tossing head, galloped down the road in wild confusion.

Startled as he was, Arthur, looking back to see how the unfortunate cow fared, could not help breaking into a laugh at her panic, whereat the man, evidently accepting it as a tribute to his skill in the case, said in a complacent tone:

"Pretty sharp bit of driving that, eh, sonny? It's got to be a tight place that I can't send Blackie through, eh, my boy?" and leaning over the dash-board he actually succeeded in giving the horse an affectionate pat on the hind-quarter.

The houses of Fort William now came into view, and Arthur wondered if the man wouldn't moderate his pace as he entered the town.

But not a bit of it. The freight train still thundered along in the rear, and he was bound to reach the station before it, so the wild flight was maintained, until at last, with a great flourish, and a big round oath to express his satisfaction, this

modern Jehu pulled up his panting, foaming steed in front of the station a full hundred yards in advance of the train.

Who should be standing on the platform watching the performance with lively interest but Bruce. The moment Arthur saw him he sprang from the wagon, and running to him gave him a regular hug, exclaiming:

"Here I am, safe and sound; but, oh, what a drive I've had!"

Bruce heartily responded to the hug, and then asked:

"What have you been up to? Tell me all about it."

From both their minds all trace of mutual resentment had vanished, and the sky was clear of clouds once more.

Before beginning his story, Arthur turned to introduce Bruce to his new acquaintance, but the man had disappeared, having indeed taken his horse away to rub him down after his tremendous exertions.

"Oh, dear!" said Arthur regretfully, "he's gone already, and I never thanked him for being so kind to me; but," he added, "I expect he's just taken his horse to the stable, and I'll see him again."

Having thus relieved his mind, he hastened to tell Bruce all that had happened since the train went off without him, and how glad he was that they were together again.

When he had finished, Bruce said: "Well, your luck is certainly amazing. You're always falling on your feet. Here, now, instead of being alone at Port Arthur until to-morrow's train could bring you along, you've had a good dinner and an exciting ride, and you're all ready for another adventure."

Arthur laughed, and looked well pleased at his chum's words.

"You see I'm a good chap to travel with. There must be a good fairy in special charge of me, and you'll be all safe so long as you're in my company. And now what are we going to do with ourselves for the rest of the day?"

"Why, let us do the lions, if there live any," suggested Bruce. "What can those big buildings on the other side of the railway tracks be?"

"Those must be the elevators," responded Arthur. "Suppose we go over and see them."

So they made their way across by the overhead bridge, and on reaching the great wooden wharves that lined the bank of the river Kaministiquia, and above which the big buildings towered high and broad, they were delighted to find a fine iron steamer moored alongside.

"Why, that's an ocean steamer!" exclaimed Bruce in surprise. "I never expected to see one like that away up here."

"I wonder will they let us on board," said Arthur, with a longing look at the gangway. "Suppose we try. They can only turn us back, and that won't hurt us."

"I'm agreed," answered Bruce.

They accordingly climbed the gangway, and no one making any objections or asking any questions they went all over the steamer, admiring the solid comfort of her appointments, and surprised that such a steamer should be needed for fresh-water navigation.

Encountering an officer with a gilt cap they ventured to ask him some questions, which, being politely answered, led on to a conversation in the course of which they learned that the steamer was one of three belonging to the Canadian Pacific Railway, which voyaged between Fort William and Owen Sound, on Lake Huron, the big buildings being grain elevators for storing vast quantities of wheat from the cars, and pouring it out again into the holds of the steamer.

Having seen the steamer, nothing would do Arthur but that they should see the inside of one of the elevators. This was not so easily managed, however, but, thanks to the intervention of the officer, they were permitted to go over one, and got themselves finely powdered with grain dust in the process.

The afternoon was gone by the time they were through with the sight-seeing, and they went back to the hotel, where

Arthur was glad to find the man who had given him so thrilling a drive.

"Oh, sir!" he cried, running up to him, "please forgive me for not thanking you for that splendid ride. But you went off before I had a chance to. Is your horse all right?"

"I reckon he is, young fellow," answered the man pleasantly. "A little break like that don't hurt *him*. But, say, didn't those galoots on that train look sick when we made the station a hundred yards ahead of them?"

"They did, indeed," said Arthur. "They never imagined that a horse could beat them, and they found out their mistake."

The man from the West then went on to talk about Blackie, and other horses that he owned, and the boys learned that his name was Ralston, and that he was a horse-dealer who was there awaiting a consignment of horses from the ranches near the foot-hills of the Rocky Mountains.

He had many good stories to tell that evening as he sat with the boys on the veranda, and they were sorry enough when he took his departure for Port Arthur, having urged upon them to be sure and visit some of the cattle ranches when they were out in that part of the country.

Among the guests at the hotel was a man who might have stood as a model for some painter depicting Methuselah, and the boys happening to look at him with a good deal of interest the hotel-keeper said:

"That's our oldest inhabitant. Would you like to be introduced to him? He used to be in the Hudson's Bay Company, and he can tell you a good many interesting things about the place long before the railway came here."

Bruce replied that if the old man wouldn't mind they would like to know him, so they were presented in due form to the veteran, whose name was Andrew Graham, and who readily responded to their request to be told something about the early days of Fort William.

Considering the weight of years he bore, Mr. Graham was a remarkably vigorous man, and evidently found keen enjoyment in recalling the past when the Hudson's Bay Company held sovereign sway over the whole Northwest, and Fort William was one of the most important of its posts.

Situated at the very head of lake navigation, and connected by a wonderful net-work of rivers and lakes with both the semi-arctic waters of Hudson's Bay and the vast grass-covered prairies that began at Red River and stretched clear across to the Rocky Mountains, every one coming and going between Montreal and the Northwest territories stopped at Fort William on their way, and it was always full of life and bustle.

Mr. Graham had been a clerk at the Fort in the palmy days of its prosperity, and he made the boys' eyes shine with delighted interest as he graphically described the visits of the chief officers of the Company, swelling with dignity and surrounded with luxury; the arrival and departure of the bronzed *voyageurs* and fur-hunters, as dark of skin almost as the Indians themselves, the Chippewas, Sioux, and Crees, who were so apt to give trouble if they succeeded in getting bold of the fire-water, for which they were always willing to barter their very souls.

So romantic was it all that the sentiments of the old man found a ready response in the boys' hearts when he regretfully exclaimed:

"Ah! those were the good old days, my lads, when a man had to be a man every inch of him if he would amount to anything. But now it's all changed. The fur trade isn't a circumstance to what it used to be, and the railroad's taken all the romance out of our life. Eh, ho! it's the way of the world, I suppose, and we old chaps that can't keep up with it must be satisfied to lie by in a corner, as I'm doing, until their time comes to go under the sod."

For the sake of seeing Fort William in its glory the boys would gladly have had the railroad and the big grain elevators and the fine steamship vanish, and the portage path and the canoe resume their places.

But there was no chance of that, and they had to content themselves with accompanying Mr. Graham the following morning to see the only relic of the old Fort still visible,—a shabby stone building used as an engine-house!

Having exhausted the resources of the place by mid-day they were very glad when the train from the East came in to the station, and they could take their places to complete their journey to Winnipeg.

It was about nine o'clock of the following morning when they rolled into Winnipeg, and before doing anything else set about seeing that the trunks forwarded from Montreal had duly arrived and were awaiting them.

After some little difficulty they were all found in good order and condition, and their minds being made easy on that point, they set out to explore the place.

"Why, this is a regular city!" was Arthur's exclamation as, turning away from the station, they looked up Main street, a thoroughfare of mighty breadth, well paved with cedar blocks, lined with attractive shops, and crowded with hurrying carts and wagons.

"Well," queried Bruce, "and what else did you expect it to be?"

"I don't know," answered Arthur, with a shrug of his shoulders. "Something of the same kind of a place as Port Arthur or Fort William, I suppose."

"But this is the capital of the province, and it ought to be a good deal more of a city than they are," returned Bruce. "By the way, we mustn't forget those letters of introduction Mr. Gillespie gave us. Hadn't we better go to a hotel, and put on some better togs, and see if we can find the people to whom they're addressed?"

"I suppose that is our best plan," assented Arthur.

So they strolled along until they came to a hotel the appearance of which was satisfactory, and having engaged quarters, sent for all their baggage, as they wanted to overhaul their belongings before setting out from Winnipeg again.

While they were thus engaged they had a visitor in the shape of a reporter from one of the evening papers, who had been told something about themselves and their plans by one of their fellow-passengers on the train, and who was determined to interview them.

Bruce would have much preferred declining to say anything, but Arthur, feeling flattered by this attention of the press, welcomed the caller cordially, and talked freely with him, the result being that the "Evening Palladium" contained nearly a column of brightly written matter relating to the boys, their experiences since coming to Canada, and their novel idea of walking across the remainder of the continent.

Of course this made them the objects of much notice, and several gentlemen called upon them to express their interest in their undertaking. They also received numerous invitations to lunch and dinner, were put up at the club for the period of their stay, and Arthur, happening to mention something about Bruce's skill on the cricket-field, he was invited to play in a match against the Brandon Club the following Saturday.

As much to please Arthur as himself, Bruce accepted the invitation, and made a very creditable performance, his score of thirty-five runs being a substantial contribution to Winnipeg's success, while he did very good work in the field.

So hospitable did they find the good people of Winnipeg, and so many were the forms of amusement offered them, that they might have spent a month there without having a dull hour. But Bruce soon grew impatient to start on their long tramp, and they had to forswear many social beguilements in order to set about the necessary preparations.

The advice they received was sufficient in quantity and variety to have bewildered much older and more experienced heads, while of solemn warning against the possible perils of the route they had enough to have frightened less daring spirits out of the enterprise entirely.

Arthur was inclined to pay a good deal of heed to the different counsellors, and would eagerly indorse this suggestion and that, and want them immediately acted upon. But Bruce took things more coolly, listening with due courtesy to the often conflicting counsel offered, yet not committing himself to the adoption of any of it.

Every day added to the number of friends who were anxious to do something for them, and one of the pleasantest incidents of their stay was their visit to Silver Heights, which occupied an afternoon.

They drove out in a big open wagon behind a spanking team of bays, there being half a dozen in the party, and the going was so smooth and pleasant that they felt sorry when they reached their destination.

Silver Heights (so called because the prairie knoll on which it stood used to shine as with a silver rim when the sun was

reflected from the polished culms of the buffalo-grass) was placed near the left bank of the Assiniboine river, about five miles from the city. It was formerly the residence of the Chief Commissioner of the Hudson's Bay Company, who had taken an old log-house and enlarged and beautified it until it became a stately mansion, surrounding it with garden, farm, and orchard that made the show-place of the prairie province.

"I think I wouldn't mind spending a summer here," Arthur remarked with a significant smile as they sauntered through the grounds and noted the abundance of fruit-trees,—apples, cherries, currants, gooseberries,—and on the sunny side of the walls sprawling grape-vines that promised luscious bunches in due time.

The cherries were already ripe, and the leader of the party being well known to the man in charge, they were permitted to pluck a quantity, and found them very juicy and sweet.

But what interested the boys most deeply was a small herd of buffalo, a surviving remnant of the vast herd that once populated the boundless prairies. These were carefully maintained in a large enclosure by themselves, and evidently throve well in captivity, to judge by their well-covered ribs.

"Well, what do you think of them?" asked Mr. Martin, whose guest the boys were. "You've read a good deal about buffalo, no doubt. Now, tell me frankly, do they come up to your expectations?"

Both Bruce and Arthur hesitated to reply for the same reason, they were afraid of giving offence if they spoke their minds, yet, as Mr. Martin evidently expected an answer, Arthur said in a hesitating way, "They'd look a great deal better if they were only groomed, wouldn't they?"

Mr. Martin burst into a hearty laugh, in which the other three Winnipeggers joined.

"Well said, my boy," he exclaimed, giving Arthur an approving clap on the back. "You'd make a first-class politician. I know you're dreadfully disappointed in the looks of the brutes, but you're too polite to say so for fear of hurting our feelings."

In truth, the dishevelled, dilapidated appearance of the buffalo (which had not yet got through shedding their winter coats and were consequently hung all over with matted tufts of rusty hair), combined with their sleepy and spiritless bearing, like that of stall-fed cattle, could not fail to be a sharp disappointment to the boys, whose conception of the former monarchs of the prairie had been formed from pictures representing magnificent creatures with superb manes thundering over the turf with head lowered and tail aloft.

"If you don't mind my saying so, they're not just what I thought they would be," responded Arthur. "They're not a bit fierce, are they?"

"Not as a rule," said Mr. Martin. "At certain times in the year the bulls become dangerous, and have to be watched, but usually they're as quiet as other cattle."

While they were talking, a saucy little fox-terrier belonging to one of the party darted through the fence and began springing at the big bull of the herd with noisy barking.

The old fellow rose ponderously to his feet, his great bulk, as he did so, causing the boys to revise their first impressions considerably, and, after standing a moment as if in blank astonishment at the impertinence of his tiny assailant, gave a dull roar of anger, and moved down upon the dog.

The dog's owner did his best to call him off, but the little rascal paid no heed to him; in fact, he seemed to be urged on by the vigorous shouts and whistling.

All the buffalo were now on their feet, and showing signs of excitement, which greatly improved their appearance. But the fox-terrier paid attention to none of them save the bull, and the more the big creature resented his worrying the more zealously did he persecute him.

"Confound the little wretch!" exclaimed Mr. Martin, shying a stick at the pertinacious terrier. "It'll serve him right if that bull tosses him clear over the fence."

There seemed little danger of this happening, however, the dog being altogether too agile for the clumsy creature he was annoying.

Presently, after tempting the bull well out into the field, the terrier, seeming suddenly to weary of his sport, turned tail and fairly scooted for the other side of the fence.

As it happened, he chose where the gate was for his exit. The bull charged furiously after him, gaining speed at every stride, until, by the time he reached the gate, he was under full headway.

"By Jupiter! if he hits the gate going at that rate he'll go through it sure," cried Mr. Martin, in a tone of alarm.

He had hardly spoken before the bull, following close on the terrier, which slipped under the bars not more than five yards in advance, struck the gate in the centre with such tremendous force as to shatter the fastenings, and throw it wide open, and the next instant he was out in the road ready for any mischief.

"Look out for yourselves, everybody!" Mr. Martin shouted. "He means murder."

For one moment the enraged animal paused, as if uncertain which of the party to attack, then, singling out Bruce, probably because he chanced to be the nearest, he charged furiously at him.

CHAPTER IX.

BY FOOT AND BUCKBOARD.

"Look out for yourself, Barclay!" cried Mr. Martin, picking up a large stone and hurling it at the animal, hoping thereby to divert his attention, but only succeeding in intensifying his fury.

Bruce was doing his best to look out for himself, and his eye lighting upon an apple-tree that stood not far away with low-hanging limbs offering an easy refuge, he made a fine sprint for it, the buffalo bull not far in the rear.

Meanwhile Arthur had been tortured with anxiety for his chum, and wondering what he could do to aid him. It was not according to his nature to be a mere spectator of such an affair, and nothing else occurring to him he laid hold of a stout stick and rushed after the bull, shouting:

"Go it, Bruce, he'll not catch you!"

By dint of utmost effort Bruce reached the apple-tree a little in advance of the bull, but his lead was not enough to enable him to more than clear the animal's horns as he charged madly after him.

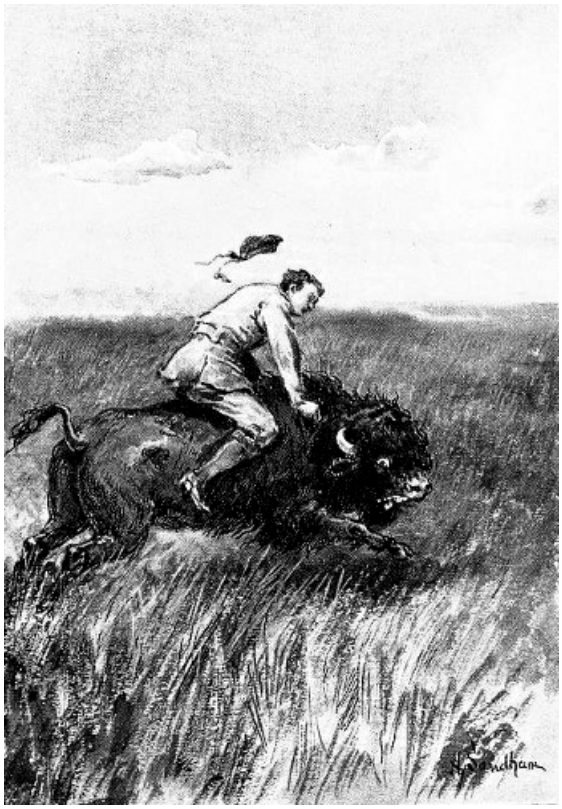
Then a very curious and comical thing happened. The bull's huge head struck the trunk of the tree with such tremendous force that Bruce, who was at that instant reaching for a higher branch, missed his hold, and fell, like a ripe apple, plump on top of the creature's hump, which he frantically clutched lest he should fall under his hoofs and be trampled to death.

Completely bewildered by this unexpected movement on the part of his intended victim the buffalo came to a full stop, and tossed his shaggy head violently up and down, in wild endeavor to free himself of his living load.

This halt gave Arthur time to come up, and recking nothing of the risk to himself in his generous passion for help to his imperilled friend, he proceeded to belabor the hind-quarters of the bull most vigorously with the stick, although it would be pretty hard to make out just what he expected to accomplish by so doing.

By this time Mr. Martin and the others of the party had also got hold of sticks, and they came nobly to Arthur's support, the whole of them shouting at the top of their voices as they hammered away.

Now, to have a big heavy boy astride of his hump, and to be beaten with many sticks into the bargain, was something the bull had not at all taken into account when he charged so blithely after Bruce, and these most persuasive arguments to desist did not fail of their due effect upon him.



"Bruce has an Unexpected Ride."

For a bare moment he stood his ground, shaking his head furiously, and roaring with baffled rage. Then, with a wild plunge and upward fling of his heels, he dashed off at a tangent in manifest flight.

"Jump off, Barclay, jump off!" shouted Mr. Martin, seeing a new danger for the boy unless he promptly dismounted.

To jump was out of the question, but Bruce did the next best thing, he let go, and came flop on the ground, while his strange steed went careering off, no doubt immensely relieved at being rid of his rider.

Bruce got his clothes very dusty, but suffered no other damage; and when the others had congratulated him upon having come off so well, and he had regained his breath, he was not disposed deeply to regret the experience, which would in all probability be a unique one, and well worth telling about.

Feeling themselves responsible for the buffalo being at large, Mr. Martin and his companions did not rest until by their united efforts he had been driven back into the field, and the broken gate secured again. They then returned to Winnipeg in high hilarity over their memorable outing.

Amid the pleasant surprises of Winnipeg, the boys had one great disappointment, and that was the almost total disappearance of Fort Garry, nothing remaining of the famous old fort save a dilapidated stone gateway, standing solitary and shamefaced in the middle of a grassy common.

They had looked for strong high walls and sturdy towers, such as the pictures had promised; but this was all they found, and they felt as if they had been cheated.

"I think they might have left the fort just as it used to be," was Bruce's regretful remark. "Everybody who came here would want to see it. Wouldn't Ballantyne be disgusted if he were to come back and find that they had torn the old place to pieces, just to turn it into building lots!"

Arthur had not much sentiment in his composition, and just how Ballantyne might feel did not concern him greatly; but he shared in Bruce's disappointment, because any kind of a fortification appealed to his military spirit, and he would have

appreciated the peculiar interest of one set in the heart of the Canadian wilderness, which had been the centre of so many stirring episodes.

But barring this, the few days spent in Winnipeg were filled with enjoyment, and only their impatience to begin the really important part of their novel enterprise enabled them to withstand the many temptations they had to prolong their visit.

It was on a bright sunny Monday morning when they finally got started, with all the omens in their favor, despite the kindly croaking of some friends who would fain have persuaded them to at least take horses, since they would have nothing to do with the cars.

"You're very good," was Arthur's reply, to which Bruce gave assenting silence. "But we've pledged ourselves to try walking it, and we'll do our best first. Of course, if we've got to give up, why, we'll do so, but not before we've made the attempt."

They arranged matters in this wise: Their trunks were forwarded by train to Regina, three hundred and fifty miles ahead, to await their arrival, so that they might be able to get a fresh supply of clothing, which they would be sure to need.

They themselves went in as light marching order as possible, their only baggage being light knapsacks, containing extra stockings, handkerchiefs, matches, and a few other necessaries, and their revolvers, which hung at their belt.

In their hands they carried stout sticks that could be used as weapons of defence, if necessary, and in their breasts as light a pair of hearts as ever crossed the billowy prairies.

The track of the Canadian Pacific Railway was to be their pathway, and they lost no time in passing through the maze of sidings and railway shops that covered nearly a square mile on the western edge of the city.

Having shaken off this cinder-strewn suburb they found themselves right out on the prairie with a suddenness that was surprising. The city did not taper off gradually, but came to a full stop, and the level green prairie began, seeming as little influenced by the proximity of a centre of population as if it had been only a collection of Indian tepees.

The reason of this sharp division lay in the greed of the speculators, who held the land all about the city at altogether too high a price for the settlers, and the latter were therefore driven farther afield.

"Isn't this just glorious?" Arthur exclaimed, after they had left the city some miles behind, pausing to look back at the line of yellow buildings, and then ahead at the long, green level stretching away to the verge of the horizon. "Aren't you glad we are going to walk instead of flying across in the train, and hardly seeing anything at all?"

"I don't mind saying I am," answered Bruce, his own face lit with a glow of pleasure at the beauty of the landscape, which, however monotonous when viewed day after day, could not fail to inspire when seen for the first time.

North, south, and west of them lay a world of verdure, "vast emerald meadows where the slightest breeze marked its progress in waves of glancing light as the pliant grasses yielded to its undulating pressure."

"Why, this is just like the ocean!" Arthur went on; "and those houses away over there," pointing to a far distant farm with its little group of buildings, "might be vessels coming towards us. Oh, if we only had wings, so that we could fly here and there, and see everything, instead of having to keep in a straight line as the railway does, there'd be any amount of fun in that."

"How would a balloon suit you?" queried Bruce, who liked to humor Arthur in his flights of fancy, although be rarely indulged in them himself.

"Tiptop!" responded Arthur ecstatically. "It would be the very thing; and then think, when we come to the mountains, how grand it would be to be able to go right up to their summits without any risk of slipping and breaking your precious neck. I tell you what it is, Bruce, I'm going to have a balloon some day."

"You'll certainly never be quite satisfied until you do, Arthur," responded Bruce, smiling; "but in the meantime we had better be pushing on if we want to reach Rosser Station in time for dinner."

A few miles out from Winnipeg they were able to leave the track and take to a road that ran parallel. They were glad to do this, as they found it tiresome work walking on the ties, which were placed too close together to allow of a good

stride between them, and yet far enough apart to make it impossible to skip one without jumping.

"I do wish the people who built this road had been more considerate in placing the ties," Arthur had said in quite an injured tone, after they had been making use of them for over an hour. "If they'd only put them about a foot farther apart they'd just suit my stride to perfection."

"I don't imagine they took pedestrians into account, Arthur," answered Bruce. "This line was built for people to ride over in cars, not to walk upon. See, there comes the train now. How fine it looks rushing down upon us!"

They stood to one side as the train swept by, and waved their hats to the passengers looking out of the windows.

"Do you wish yourself on board?" Bruce asked, with one of his quizzical smiles.

"No, sir, not a bit of it," responded Arthur stoutly. "What adventures would one have riding in one of those cars? Nothing to do but sit and sleep and eat all day long."

The train presently vanished among the billows of shimmering grass, and the boys kept up a steady tramp, until, not long after mid-day, they came to Rosser Station, a cluster of some half-dozen houses, at one of which they were able to obtain a simple but substantial dinner that they were in excellent humor to appreciate.

After an hour's rest they set forth again, and plodded on diligently until sundown, by which time they reached Marquette, where they halted for the night, feeling very well satisfied with the day's progress.

Refreshed and strengthened by a good night's rest in comfortable beds, and rejoicing in the continuance of perfect weather, they kept very close to their work all next day, and thus had the satisfaction of getting into Portage La Prairie that afternoon.

They were pleased to find this place quite a flourishing little city, with a cluster of big elevators and flouring-mills near the railway station, and a capital hotel, whose comforts were particularly welcome after the plain fare of the past two days.

After their evening meal they strolled about the city, which is situated upon high, level ground sloping southward to the Assiniboine river, and were tempted by the long twilight to continue their walk down to the river bank, about a mile distant.

No sooner had Arthur seen the water than the desire for a swim took possession of him.

"Happy thought! Let us have a plunge, Bruce," he cried, giving a joyous snap of his fingers. "I'm just grimy with dust, and it'll be ever so much more fun taking a bath here than at the hotel."

"I'm with you," responded Bruce, "though the water doesn't seem very clear, and the bank is decidedly muddy."

Seeking out a spot where the grassy bank jutted well into the stream, they lost no time in throwing off their clothes and diving into the brown flood of the Assiniboine.

The water was deliciously warm, and had a soft, smooth feeling that was inexpressibly grateful to them after their two days of steady walking under a bright sun.

"Isn't this just fine?" exclaimed Arthur enthusiastically. "Come now, Bruce, I'll race you across the river and back."

"All right, my boy," answered Bruce; and in a moment they were hard at it, cutting swiftly through the tawny water.

Arthur was first to touch bottom on the other side, but on the way back Bruce drew up to him, and they were head and head together, puffing and blowing like a pair of porpoises.

Arthur, in his eagerness to win, hardly looked ahead, but Bruce, not being familiar with the river, kept a good lookout forward, and was not a little startled to see through the gathering gloom a dark figure stealing stealthily over the grass towards the spot where they had left their clothes.

"Arthur! Arthur!" he called softly to his companion, who at once stopped his vigorous strokes, fearing that something had happened. "Look there!" he continued; "what's the meaning of that?"

Arthur glanced toward the shore.

"Some rascal is trying to pick our pockets, or perhaps steal our clothes. What shall we do?" he whispered.

Bruce thought for a moment, and then answered: "You go up the river a little, and I'll go down, and we'll get ashore as quietly as we can, and try to run the fellow down."

Arthur approved of the plan, and so they separated, and swam shoreward in different directions, not uttering a word, although they could easily make out the figure of the person, who was evidently taking some liberties with their clothing.

Strangely enough he did not seem to be looking out for them, but was giving his whole attention to the examination of their belongings, and they consequently were enabled to land before he took alarm.

Then, as if waking up to his danger, he gathered an armful of clothes and started to run in the direction of the city, at which proceeding both boys set up a shout, and recking nothing of their nakedness, for the case was manifestly desperate, made after him at the top of their speed.

It was well for them that the grassy sward offered a soft carpet for their bare feet, or otherwise they would have been at a sore disadvantage; as it was, the odds were, if anything, in their favor, barring the head-start the thief already had.

The chase that ensued was so exciting that it seemed a great pity there were not some spectators—of the male sex, of course—to witness it. Certainly a more diverting foot-race had not been run across the prairie since the days when the Indians held undivided sway.

The boys were somewhat fatigued and out of breath from their exertions in the water, but on the other hand the thief was burdened by the bundle of clothes so that he could not run as rapidly as if his hands were free.

"Keep it up, Arthur, we're gaining on him!" Bruce cried, as they raced up the slope from the river's edge to the level of the prairie.

"I'm all right," Arthur panted back. "We'll catch him."

The thief at this point evidently began to have some fears of the success of his rascally enterprise, as he dropped a couple of articles, perhaps with the hope that the boys would pause to pick them up. But his pursuers were not to be fooled by any such device. Paying no heed to these lures they kept right on, and their fine running powers commenced to tell in their favor.

The distance between them and the object of their pursuit lessened so rapidly that in sheer fright he dropped everything he had picked up, and, with empty hands swinging at his side, fled frantically from them.

Seeing that he had surrendered everything Bruce stopped short.

"Let him go, Arthur," he said; "he's got nothing, and we'll have enough to do to find all our things before it gets too dark to see them."

Bruce's counsel was indeed of the best, for it was no easy task to discover all their things as they lay scattered on the grass, and by the time they had got them together it was so dark that but for the lights of the city they would hardly have been able to find their way back there.

Yet the whole episode had so comical a side to it, that in spite of their natural irritation at the attempted rascality they could not help breaking out into hearty laughter over it, as they hurried on their clothes.

"What a pity somebody hadn't been on hand with a Kodak to take an instantaneous photo of us as we raced after that villain!" exclaimed Arthur in a well-simulated tone of regret. "It would be such an interesting memento of the occasion, you know."

"I'm afraid our friends would think there was too much of the naked truth about it," said Bruce, with a quiet smile; "as it is, I'm only too glad that there were no spectators, for certainly we were never in so absurd a position before in our lives."

"I wonder who the fellow was that tried to make off with our precious garments," soliloquized Arthur, "and what he took

us to be. I imagine if he knew that these were all we had in the world nearer than Regina, he'd be considerably surprised."

"I wouldn't be a bit surprised if he was an Indian, or half-breed, or something of that kind," suggested Bruce. "The trick was worthy that kind of a creature."

They were on their way back, and had got within half a mile of the city when the figures of three men showed dimly ahead of them, and a gruff voice called out:

"Hold up there! You've got something we want."

The boys gave a simultaneous start, and pressed close together, Bruce saying in a whisper:

"Get your revolver ready, Arthur. These fellows mean mischief."

Then, speaking in a clear, firm tone, he replied to the ominous summons:

"Stand aside there, or we'll shoot you."

In answer to this came a rude, mocking laugh, and a challenge to the boys to show their "guns," if they were not simply trying to put up a bluff.

The clicking of the revolver was the boys' reply, and it sounded remarkably distinct on the still evening air.

"Eh!" sneered the man who alone of the three had spoken. "So ye *have* got guns. Well, in that case we bid ye good-evenin', as we was just taking a little walk for our health, and don't feel any particular hankerin' for lead."

Neither of the boys made any response to this sally, although Arthur found it very hard to hold his tongue, and indeed would have blurted out something but for a warning nudge from Bruce, who, realizing that they now had the whip-hand of the would-be footpads, did not want to imperil their advantage by further irritating them.

There was a moment's awkward silence, and then, with a murmuring of muttered curses, the foiled scoundrels slunk away into the darkness, carrying with them Arthur's explosive, "Avaunt, ye villains! Vanish into the womb of night," which he gave forth with an exaggerated stage accent as the best way of expressing his relief at their welcome retirement.

Keeping a sharp lookout to right and left, and holding their revolvers in hand ready for use, if need be, the boys hurried toward Portage La Prairie, determined to be more careful in future as to the place they chose for an evening swim.

On their telling the hotel-keeper about their adventure he had an explanation ready at once. It seemed that the city was fairly invested with the worst kind of tramps, beating their way across the continent, stealing rides on the brake-beams and axles of the cars when they could, and using "shanks' mare" when they could not.

"These three rascals were tramps, without a doubt, and you were very lucky to have your revolvers or they would have taken everything of value you had. They're mostly a bad lot, those fellows."

"Are there many of them about here?" Arthur asked.

"Why, the woods are full of them, as the saying goes," replied the hotel-keeper. "Hardly a train pulls out from Winnipeg without some of them hanging on by their eyelids underneath, and you'll see them at 'most every station along the way. They're an everlasting nuisance. The Government ought to do something to put an end to them."

The idea of often encountering such characters on their journey was very displeasing to the boys, and they had a good deal to say to each other about it, but without coming to any conclusion in the matter except the resolve to be very much on the alert for these suspicious customers.

The glorious weather continued as they set out from Portage La Prairie next morning, but the country through which they passed was not at all so pleasing as it had been, a few miles of walking bringing them to a region of rough and brushy sand-hills,—the old branches of Lake Agassiz,—which they found utterly uninteresting and monotonous, so that they were especially glad to reach Austin, and the end of these sand-hills, ere the evening shadows closed about them.

Beyond Austin it was the real prairie again, and very pleasant walking indeed. For the first time they came across the genuine article of "tramp," not the amateur affair like themselves. It was a small party of four, two being men of middle age, and the other two mere youths.

Without being positively ragged, their clothes were much the worse for wear, and their faces betrayed great economy in the use of soap and the razor.

They at once accosted the boys, and asked a number of questions as to who they were, whence they came, and whither they were going.

At Bruce's request Arthur left altogether to him the answering of these inquiries, and he did it with such discretion as to prevent the tramps from being much wiser in the matter.

But while it was comparatively easy to foil their curiosity, it was a more difficult matter to part company with them, as they evidently intended to inflict their society upon the boys, whether the latter desired it or not.

It was out of the question to provoke an open rupture, so they plodded along together for some miles, both Bruce and Arthur with admirable success adopting a tone of good-fellowship that put the tramps at their ease, so that they became very communicative, and told a number of stories of their experiences that were decidedly amusing, albeit at times somewhat coarsely expressed.

There was no shaking off their uncongenial fellow-travellers, until late in the afternoon they all came to Carberry, a thriving town of about a thousand inhabitants, on the outskirts of which Bruce handed the oldest member of the quartet a dollar to get supper for them all, and then the two boys made haste to the hotel.

That evening as they were lounging restfully on the hotel piazza they overheard a conversation between some men, in the course of which one of them stated that he was going to drive over to Brandon the following morning. This gave Bruce an idea that he at once submitted for Arthur's approval.

"We're sure to see more of those wretched tramps to-morrow," said he, "if we go right on, and I certainly don't want to have them hanging on to us. What do you say to asking that man who is going to drive over to Brandon, which is about thirty miles ahead, if he'll take us with him? We'll pay him properly for it, of course."

"The very idea!" assented Arthur heartily. "And we'll not only get rid of the tramps, but we'll be as far on by mid-day as we should be by night, if we walked all the way. So we'll have the afternoon to spend in Brandon, which is quite a big place, they say."

Being thus supported Bruce at the first opportunity addressed the man, and presented his request.

"And who may you be, young chap?" was the response, uttered in a tone of curiosity rather than suspicion. "And what may be your business in Brandon?"

"Oh, we're just travellers going across the continent," answered Bruce frankly. "And we've been walking a good part of the way just for fun. But we want to ride from here to Brandon."

"There's a good many folk," began the man, looking the boys over narrowly, and then hastening to add, "but not, perhaps, just of your kind, who walk a good part of the way, too, though they don't do it mostly for fun, and they're not exactly popular in these parts."

"Oh, yes, we've seen some of them," exclaimed Arthur brightly, anticipating Bruce. "And it's just because we want to get rid of their society that we'd like to be allowed to drive over with you. We'll pay you, of course, whatever you may charge."

"Why, now," said the man, with an exaggerated air of comprehension, "that's something like business you're talking; and how much do you feel like giving for the lift?"

"Would two or three dollars be enough?" Bruce asked.

The man laughed, and his face relaxed into an expression of entire friendliness as he brought his heels down with a thud on the floor of the piazza, and rose up from his chair.

"It would be just two or three dollars too much, young fellow," he replied. "I'm satisfied you're all right, and you're welcome to come along with me for nothing. I'll be starting at eight o'clock sharp, and you be on hand just here."

The boys joined in thanking him warmly, and promised to be ready for him when he came in the morning, and he went off seeming well pleased at the arrangement.

Some time before the hour appointed they were awaiting the wagon, and when eight o'clock passed without its appearing Arthur began to get anxious and to wonder if the man were going to disappoint them.

But a few minutes later he drove up, calling out pleasantly:

"Hope you ain't tired waiting. I had to fix a hit of my harness. Will this outfit suit you?"

It was the first buckboard the boys had seen, and they examined it with interest. A better style of carriage for driving across the prairies could not be imagined. It was as admirably adapted to its purpose as the canoe and toboggan to theirs.

The wheels were placed far apart, and joined together by three thin, hard-wood boards, elastic enough to render springs unnecessary. Upon these boards were placed two ordinary wagon-seats, leaving sufficient space at the rear for a couple of trunks or bags of grain to be tied on.

The strong, supple boards yielded readily to all the irregularities of the road; but there was no risk of their breaking, no matter how severe a shock they might be exposed to, so that even with a heavy load one had never to stop to consider the vehicle.

The driver, who now introduced himself as Joe Edwards, invited Bruce to take a seat beside him, saying in an apologetic way to Arthur:

"Ye can have the other seat to yourself until we catch up to some pretty girl going our way, and then, I reckon, ye'll not object to having her for company?"

The improbability of finding a pretty girl tripping over the vast prairie alone was so patent that the boys saw through the joke at once, and laughed heartily over it, Arthur responding briskly:

"Object! no, indeed. I'll be only too happy. But do you really think there's much chance of our seeing any ladies out here?" This last with a fine pretence of eagerness.

It was now Mr. Edwards's turn to laugh, and an easy footing being thus established at the start, the drive began most auspiciously under an unclouded sky, and with a pleasant breeze blowing from the west.

As they passed through the outskirts of Carberry, the boys saw their frowsy companions of the previous day loafing along the road, and a thrill of joy went through them as they realized that they were rid of their undesirable society.

The tramps recognized them at once, and the oldest of them snarled out viciously after them:

"Oh my, ain't we fine a-riding in our kerridge! Won't yer ask yer coachman to give us a lift?"

Mr. Edwards's response to this was to toss the reins into Bruce's lap, saying, "Just hold them a minute," and then to leap to the ground, flourishing his long, heavy whip, and swearing roundly at the tramps.

Lazy as they certainly looked, they were not too lazy to save their skins from the stinging lash. They stood not upon the order of their going—they went at once; and as they skedaddled over the prairie in different directions, the boys almost rolled off their seats for laughter at the ludicrous sight they presented.

Having chased them until he was out of breath, Mr. Edwards returned, his anger, which had been aroused at the tramp's insulting remark, appeased by the completeness of their rout.

"The consarned trash!" he panted, as he climbed into his seat and set the horse off at a canter. "If they had more of the whip they wouldn't be the everlasting nuisance that they are around here."

The horses were strong, spirited, and speedy, the buckboard ran smoothly over the soft prairie road, the air was just pleasantly warm, and the boys fairly revelled in the enjoyment of their drive.

Mr. Edwards had been a good many years in the Northwest, having been engaged upon the construction of the railway, and presently he began to talk of the days when the iron road was being built at a rate never equalled in any other part of the world.

"Those were great times, I tell you, young fellows," said he enthusiastically. "We beat everything that had ever been done in the line of railroad-making, and we were mighty proud of our job. I was foreman of a gang of Scotchmen, big chaps every one of them, mostly from Glengarry county, in Ontario, and we weren't going to let any other gang give us the go-by in our work.

"Of course it was like child's play, building the line across these prairies, compared with what it was along the north of Lake Superior, and I had a pretty good taste of that, too, before I settled down here. But there was lots of hard work in it all the same.

"You see this prairie ain't all level, as the city folk think it is. It's all up and down hill when you come to look at it, and in laying the track we had to keep the rails on a level, and put the line out of reach of the winter snow. And do you know, it took nearly twenty thousand cubic yards of earthwork in every mile to fix it all right.

"Then, you understand, we were building a road that had to last, not a temporary track, and we made everything as solid as we knew how. The line was laid from one end only, full tied and full spiked as we went, and the rails were laid one right after the other. They were never hauled ahead by teams.

"That being so, now how fast do you think we built this railroad?"

Having propounded this question Mr. Edwards paused for a reply, and Bruce, seeing that he was expected to hazard a guess, said tentatively:

"I don't know much about building railways, but it seems to me that if you got ahead at the rate of a mile a day you did splendidly."

Mr. Edwards laughed long and loud. Bruce's modest estimate evidently tickled him immensely.

"A mile a day!" he shouted, with a vigor that made his horses jump so that Arthur nearly performed an involuntary somersault over the back seat. "Wouldn't my gang laugh to hear that! Just listen, now, and I'll make your eyes open.

"In 1882, in seven weeks the construction company laid no less than one hundred and thirty-four miles of main track, or an average of three and one-fifth miles a day, not counting sidings."

"Phew!" came from the boys simultaneously. "Just think of that!"

"But we did better still the next year," continued the ex-railway builder exultingly. "In forty-eight working days one hundred and sixty-six miles were put down, five and a half miles a day, and one day we actually laid six and one-third miles, requiring six hundred and forty tons of steel rails."

The boys were silent, these astounding figures taxing their credulity to the utmost. Yet they felt full confidence in the truthfulness of the narrator, who went on to put the marvellous progress of the railroad in another way.

"Work was begun in the month of May, 1881, and before the end of that year trains were running one hundred and sixty-five miles westward from Winnipeg. Next year four hundred and nineteen miles more were done, and in 1883 another three hundred and seventy-six, the whole distance between Winnipeg and the Rockies being completed in three seasons' work.

"I don't think any railroad-building in the world ever beat that," concluded Mr. Edwards triumphantly, "and there's no man deserves more credit for the same than him that's now president of the road."

"We know him," exclaimed Arthur, jumping up in his seat. "We saw him in Montreal, and he was very nice to us, and he had our tickets fixed so that we can ride on the cars whenever we don't care to walk."

The fact that they had the acquaintance of the great man who ruled over the Canadian Pacific evidently caused the boys to rise in their companion's respect, and he asked a number of questions about him and about Montreal, which gave them a chance to do the talking, of which they fully availed themselves.

Steadily and swiftly over the undulating road the horses trotted hour after hour, passing an occasional solitary rider, or a buckboard with a single horse, whose driver responded cordially to the greeting Mr. Edwards never failed to give.

There were some good farms along the way whose grain-fields spread out on the flats in the bends of the Assiniboine river, and swept up the sloping sides of the hills to the level of the plateau. The river itself, although nearly one hundred yards in width, was hardly visible through the dense growth of cottonwood, willow, and maple trees that lined its banks, and made a welcome break in the monotony of the prairie.

Soon after mid-day tall elevators came into sight ahead, and half an hour later the buckboard came to a stop before the chief hotel in Brandon, the second largest city in Manitoba.

Enjoyable as they had found both the drive and Mr. Edwards's companionship, they were very glad to get to their destination, for they were as hungry as bears, and needed no sauce in order to whet their appetites for the excellent dinner soon set before them.

After dinner Mr. Edwards went off to attend to his business, and left them to their own devices. Having been "on the go" steadily tor several days, it quite fell in with their inclinations to "take a loaf" that afternoon, and they strolled about the well-kept streets of the prosperous little city, looked in at the elevators, went over the big flour-mill, sipped ice-cream at the confectioner's, and thus whiled away the hours very pleasantly.

They saw nothing more of Mr. Edwards until late that evening, and then it was under circumstances which enabled them to do him a service that made a good return for his kindness to them.

They had been roaming about the streets in an aimless fashion, the night being too fine and warm to spend in the hotel, when their attention was attracted by the sound of men's voices raised to so angry a pitch that the coming to blows could not be far off.

"Let's see what the row is," said Arthur, hurrying off in the direction whence the voices came.

Bruce would have protested had Arthur given him time, but he had darted away so quickly as to leave Bruce no other alternative than to follow him.

They were in one of the lower streets of the city, where bar-rooms abounded, and before one of these they saw their friend of the morning in fierce altercation with a big shaggy-bearded ranchman.

Both men had evidently been indulging too freely in strong drink, and were just in the mood for a fight, their furious dialogue flaming with fierce oaths, and their fists being clenched ready to strike.

CHAPTER X.

CREE AND CONSTABLE.

Fascinated by the exciting scene, and stirred to fervent sympathy for their friend, whose side they as a matter of course espoused, the boys stood not far from him, wondering in what manner they could be of assistance to him.

Mr. Edwards's opponent was unmistakably his superior in size and strength, but lacked his agile frame and knowledge of the noble art of self-defence, and when at last they did come to blows the big ranchman soon found that the task he had undertaken was by no means so easy as he had imagined.

Making no pretence of parrying his opponent, he struck out furiously with both right and left fists, swinging his long arms around like the sails of a wind-mill.

In this way he did get in some heavy blows at Mr. Edwards that made the boys wince, and utter horror-stricken murmurs, but the railroad-builder was as tough as he was active, and he returned these favors with more than interest.

In the meantime, although there were no signs of the police, a crowd of deeply interested spectators had gathered, who evidently thought it a pretty fight, and a welcome bit of amusement for a fine summer night.

Mot so the boys. It was all horrible to them, these two strong men smiting one another and besmearing their faces and hands with blood, and they would have put a stop to it at once if they had the power to do so. Only anxiety for their friend kept them among the on-lookers, and but for this they would gladly have hurried away.

Presently the two men came to close quarters, they clinched, they strained for a moment in a fierce wrestle, and then with a sudden pitch the big ranchman went over Edwards's shoulder headlong to the ground, while the crowd broke into a roar of applause at the latter's clever tactic.

Filled with murderous fury at being thus ignominiously worsted to the manifest approval of the spectators, the giant sprang to his feet, and drawing his revolver levelled it at Edwards, while the startled crowd scattered to right and left, thinking more of keeping their own skins whole than of protecting their endangered fellow-being.

But if they had no generous impulse to interfere, there were others present who had. Like a flash Arthur darted forward, and struck up the ranchman's hand with a smart blow of his fist just as the trigger was pulled, the bullet flying harmlessly over the roofs of the houses; and when the foiled ruffian turned madly upon the daring boy, Bruce, who had followed close, threw out his foot so deftly that he tripped heavily over it, and measured his length on the ground.

At that moment the police put in an appearance, and the crowd vanished like spectres, leaving Edwards and his prostrate antagonist with the two boys to explain what was the matter.

The ranchman, being already down, made an easy capture, and Edwards, stating that he would quietly accompany the officers to the station, the boys accompanied him, resolved not to desert him until they knew what would befall him.

As they walked along Edwards thanked them warmly for their timely interference in his behalf.

"It was a pretty close call for me, young fellows," he said. "That chap can shoot straight even when he's drunk, and he was just in the humor to kill me, although he'd have been sorry enough when the liquor was out of him again."

On arriving at the police-station the sergeant in charge made a preliminary investigation into the affair, as the result of which Edwards was released on his promising to appear before the magistrate in the morning, while the ranchman was locked up, as he had fought the officers every inch of the way, and given them any amount of trouble.

Having washed off the marks of the fight, Edwards returned to the hotel with the boys, and there related to an admiring audience how they had rushed to his rescue, and saved him in all probability from death, so that they found themselves the object of quite a bothersome amount of attention, receiving many pressing invitations to "have something," or at least to take a cigar.

The next morning they went with Edwards to the court, and were called as witnesses in the case. It was their first appearance in that capacity, but they both acquitted themselves very well, although Arthur was inclined to say too much,

and Bruce to say too little.

The magistrate's judgment was that both Edwards and the ranchman should be fined, the latter's impost being much heavier than the former's, and should also be bound over to keep the peace for six months. They were then discharged; and both by this time having forgotten their anger at the other they shook hands heartily, and came away together, quite reconciled.

Having parted from Edwards with many expressions of mutual esteem, the boys set out from Brandon in the best of spirits, and quite ready for some more walking.

The railway, the course of which they followed closely, although they preferred the prairie turf to the ties, now drew away from the Assiniboine river, which had been in sight so long, and rose from the valley to a rolling prairie over which the eye could sweep unchecked clear to the horizon.

The weather, which had been so fine and favorable ever since they left Winnipeg, took a sudden change for the worse as they tramped along. Heavy clouds darkened the sky, and the wind began to blow in angry gusts that betokened a nearing storm.

"I'm afraid we're in for a wetting," said Bruce, glancing apprehensively at the sky, "and there's no shelter in sight, so we'll have to grin and bear it."

"I suppose we'll have to bear it, but I'm blest if I'll do any grinning," responded Arthur. "It's bad enough to get a soaking without pretending to like it."

The rain at first fell in stray drops, which soon, however, thickened into a heavy pour, and, quite unprotected as they were, it did not take long for the boys to become thoroughly drenched.

"Dearie, dearie me!" sighed Arthur as he wiped the teeming drops off his rain-beaten face, "what a time we are having! Is this just your idea of fun, old chap?"

Bruce laughed, and shrugged his shoulders. "Not quite," he replied. "I'd rather have the sunshine, hot as it was sometimes. But keep your spirits up, chum. If my poor, damp eyes don't deceive me, that's a station ahead, and we shall be able to get shelter there until the storm is over."

Cheered by the sight of the house, they plodded resolutely on until they reached it. They looked so disreputable in their dripping and bemired condition, that the station-master evidently hesitated about offering them any hospitality. But when they showed their railway tickets and their well-filled purses in proof of their not being ordinary tramps all his suspicions vanished, and he was ready to do his best for them.

Their clothing was so thoroughly soaked that in order to dry it properly they had to strip completely, and, the station-master kindly lending them some of his spare garments, they lolled about, looking very absurd, but feeling thoroughly comfortable, while the woman of the house dried their own things in the kitchen.

As the rain showed no signs of letting up, the station-master suggested that they take the west-bound train, which was due at four o'clock, and by which they could get to Broadview, one hundred and twenty miles ahead, by ten o'clock in the evening. Then, if they felt like it, they could resume their tramp the next morning.

The suggestion approved itself at once, and their clothes being fit to put on again in good time before the train appeared, they paid the station-master liberally for his hospitality, which had included a substantial dinner, and got on board, well pleased to be able to progress in spite of the rain.

They did not take places in the Pullman, as they would be on board the train so short a time, but were content with seats in the first-class car.

Having no books to read, and finding nobody to interest them, they wandered into the colonist car, which was crowded with men, women, and children coming to settle in the rich wheat-lands of the Northwest.

Some of the children were quite pretty little creatures, albeit somewhat grimy, and the boys began to play with them. The boy who sold candy and peanuts happened along just then, and his appearance gave Arthur a happy thought that he put into execution with his wonted impetuosity.

"Hold on there!" he cried. "What's your basket worth?"

"Do you mean with all that's in it?" the boy asked, looking surprised.

"Certainly," answered Arthur. "I don't want the basket. I want its contents."

The boy made a hurried calculation, and said:

"You can have the whole thing for a dollar."

"I'll take it," said Arthur, pulling out his purse and handing over a dollar bill.

Looking as if he felt sorry he had not asked more, seeing how promptly his price had been agreed to, the boy gave up the basket, and Arthur at once called out:

"Now, then, children, come along. I'm going to give you a regular blow-out."

For a moment or two the children hung back. The news seemed too good, and they were incredulous. But when Arthur pressed packages of candy and handfuls of peanuts into the hands of the youngsters nearest him, those farther away quickly closed in, and the two boys were surrounded by a regular swarm of children, thrusting up eager, dirty little hands, and crying:

"Give *me* some candy! Give *me* some nuts!" and so on, until the basket was completely emptied.

As may be readily supposed, the parents viewed with lively approval the liberal distribution of dainties among their offspring, and in their own rough way sought to express their gratitude, so that Arthur felt that he was well repaid for his investment.

After spending an hour with the immigrants, the boys returned to their own seats just in time to hear the announcement that supper was ready in the dining-car.

They lingered at the table as long as they thought seemly, and with this, and a comfortable snooze, managed to put in the time until their arrival at Broadview.

Not feeling in any hurry for bed when they got to the hotel, they hunted around for something to read. Arthur found a paper-covered novel that satisfied him, and Bruce a copy of the poems of William Cullen Bryant, which he had not been reading in long before he called out:

"Arthur, listen to this a minute, it is such a splendid description of these prairies we're now in the midst of."

Arthur, who had no passion for poetry, lifted his head, to listen with a very resigned air, and Bruce read the following lines with admirable expression:

> "'These are the Gardens of the Desert, these
> The unshorn fields, boundless and beautiful,
> For which the speech of England has no name—
> The Prairies. I behold them for the first,
> And my heart swells, while the dilated sight
> Takes in the encircling vastness. Lo! they stretch
> In airy undulation, far away.
> As if the ocean, in his gentlest swell,
> Stood still, with all his rounded billows fixed
> And motionless forever. Motionless?
> No—they are all unchained again. The clouds
> Sweep over with their shadows, and, beneath,
> The surface rolls and fluctuates to the eye.
> . . . . . .
> Man hath no part in all this glorious work;
> The hand that built the firmament hath heaved

And smoothed these verdant swells, and sown their slopes
With herbage. . . .
The great heavens
Seem to stoop down upon the scene in love,—
A nearer vault, and of a tenderer blue,
Than that which bends above the eastern hills. . . .
. . . In these plains
The bison feeds no more, where once he shook
The earth with thundering steps—yet here I meet
His ancient footprints stamped beside the pool.'

"Now, Arthur, isn't that fine? Wouldn't it be grand to be able to write such poetry?"

"I suppose so," assented Arthur, burying himself again in his book, while Bruce, giving an expressive shrug of his shoulders, went on to read "Thanatopsis," and to let his heart go out in longing for the gift of poetic expression, of which, so far as he knew, he had not a trace in his composition.

During the night the storm came to an end, and the next morning dawned clear and cool. For an hour or two after setting out, the boys kept to the railway track, the turf being too wet for walking upon.

But as it got toward mid-day they wearied of the ties, and took to the prairie, which felt very soft and pleasant underfoot, and had by this time dried off sufficiently not to wet their feet.

About ten miles from Broadview they were overtaken by a small band of Cree Indians on their way to Indian Head, some forty miles farther on.

They had such a shabby, disreputable appearance, being dressed principally in dirty and tattered hats, shirts, and trousers, which seemed to have been cast off by their white brethren, that the boys viewed them with considerable distrust, and hoped they would ride on past them.

But the Crees had no idea of so doing. Curiosity and cupidity combined to make them eager to offer their company to the boys, and they were evidently not to be easily got rid of.

The band was comprised of four men and two squaws, and there was not a pleasing countenance amongst them. Prepared as the boys had been by the Indians seen at different stations along the route for the upsetting of their cherished conceptions of the "noble red men," yet the disillusioning these reamers of the prairies gave them was unpleasantly sharp.

"They look like a lot of cut-throats," said Bruce in an undertone to Arthur, after an apprehensive glance at their unwelcome fellow-travellers.

"That they do," responded Arthur, putting his hand to his hip to make sure that his revolver was in its place.

"Arthur put his Hand to his Hip to make sure his Revolver was in its Place."

The Indians were all mounted, the women riding in the same way as the men. Their mounts were poor scraggy creatures, mere ponies in size, with dirty blankets for saddles and bits of rope for bridles, and they had some spare ponies, which followed in the rear along with the dogs.

Having surrounded the boys, who had kept walking on stolidly as though unconscious of their nearness, the Indians strove to enter into conversation.

"Fine day, boss," said the senior member of the party, with a wolfish grin that was intended to express an amiable respect. "You taking big walk? Perhaps you tired, eh?"

Seeing that it was impossible to avoid an exchange of speech, Bruce looked up at him, and answered briefly:

"We're not at all tired. We prefer walking."

The hint seemed too broad even for an Indian to miss its meaning, but it made no impression upon this fellow.

"Riding heap better than walking. You take pony. We give you pony to ride."

Without waiting for the boys to accept or refuse his offer, the Cree then said something in his own language to the squaws, at which they halted their ponies, and slid off to the ground without a word of protest, whereupon the Indian, taking hold of the rope bridles, led the ponies up to the boys, saying in his most engaging manner:

"Good ponies—you take them—you like them."

Now, neither of the boys had any desire whatever to accept the loan of a pony, but even if they might have been persuaded to this, they could not have been guilty of such discourtesy as to dispossess the two poor women. The moment had come for decided action. Straightening himself up, and looking the Indian resolutely in the face, Bruce said in his most manly tone:

"We don't want to ride, and even if we did we wouldn't take the ponies from your women. You ought to be ashamed of

yourself for offering them."

Having thus spoken, while Arthur's eyes flashed in indignant assent, Bruce wheeled about to resume walking. But he found their progress barred by the other men, who, at a sign from their leader, had placed themselves in their way, and there was that in their looks which gave Bruce pause. He realized that he and Arthur were in a trap, from which they could not escape by show of force, and that their only policy was to accept the situation, and await the first chance of deliverance from it.

Controlling his feelings by a great effort he therefore stood still, having whispered to Arthur, "We'll have to give in, or there'll be trouble."

Arthur, recognizing Bruce's right to leadership, had kept silence from the beginning. He felt quite sure that Bruce would manage the matter far better than he could. So he now just answered with a nod of acquiescence.

Interpreting their step to mean the acceptance of his offer, the Indian again put forward the squaws' ponies. But Bruce shook his head most decidedly.

"No, no," he cried, stamping his foot vigorously. "We won't take the women's ponies. Since you are so anxious for us to ride with you, let us have a couple of the spare ponies you have there, and give your women their own back again."

Seeing that the boys were quite determined, the Cree, after some talk with his men, had two of the spare ponies brought up, and rope bridles put on them. There were no saddles for them, however, so that the boys had to ride bareback, which was not entirely pleasant owing to the animals being so thin and sharp-boned.

But it satisfied the Indians, and, only too glad to secure temporary immunity at the price of a little discomfort, the boys got astride their ponies, and the whole party moved on again in apparently the best of humor.

None of the Indians, save the leader, offered any attempt at conversation, but he made amends for the rest by pouring forth a flood of questions that Bruce found it quite a task to answer without telling more than he thought expedient. He wanted to know all about the boys, and what their business was, and whether they had come to buy a farm, and if they wanted any cattle or horses, and so on, and so on.

In the meantime they were making steady progress across the prairie. But presently Bruce noted with apprehension that they were steadily drawing away from the railway line. Pulling his pony up short, and pointing in the direction he wished to go, he asked:

"Why, are you getting away from the railroad? You're taking us out of our route?"

The Indian smiled sardonically as he answered: "That's all right. Me know heap shorter way than that. Me show you how get there quick."

"I don't believe him a bit, whispered Arthur in Bruce's ear; while the latter stood still, sorely puzzled as to what was best to be done.

"No more do I," Bruce whispered back. "But how can we help ourselves?"

That they could not help themselves was the next moment made clear by both their ponies receiving a sharp cut on the hind-quarters from the Indians nearest them, that caused them to start off at a gallop straight away from the track, the Indians whipping up their ponies at the same time, and following close behind.

Just at this moment Arthur's quick eye caught sight of two horsemen just appearing above a swell of the prairie far ahead, and the thought flashed into his mind that they might be white men who would render them assistance.

Running his pony close beside Bruce's, he pointed to the distant figures, exclaiming:

"Look, Bruce, those are not Indians. Let us make for them," at the same time digging his heels into the gaunt ribs of his pony, and urging him forward with his utmost energy.

After one glance ahead Bruce followed his example, and before the Indians realized what they were about, they had a clear lead of fifty yards. Then, with wild whoops, the red men set off in pursuit, and a most exciting chase for all

concerned ensued.

The boys had not only the advantage of a head start, but of being lighter weights and having fresher ponies than their pursuers, and, consequently, although the latter were far better riders, they gained but slowly.

Yet, gain they manifestly did, as the boys, throwing anxious looks backward, could not fail to see. And Arthur, growing desperate, was about to draw his revolver with the idea of risking a shot at the nearest pony, when Bruce called out:

"Don't do that! See, the men are coming toward us."

The two horsemen had, up to this point, seemed to be oblivious of what was taking place, the breeze blowing from them, and thus preventing the cries of the Indians from reaching their ears.

But now they looked toward the on-comers inquiringly, and after exchanging a few words, wheeled their horses, and putting spurs to them, galloped towards the boys.

The moment the Indians saw this they pulled up short, and with many an angry imprecation scurried away as fast as their ponies could carry them, while the boys, keeping straight on, were soon in the presence of the horsemen, who proved to be a corporal and constable of the mounted police on outpost duty.

"Hello! what's up?" demanded the corporal, as the boys with some difficulty brought their ponies to a stand-still. "Were those Indians chasing you?"

Both boys were considerably out of breath, but Bruce soon got his voice sufficiently to answer:

"Yes; they're Indians. They wanted us to go along with them, and we didn't like the idea, so we cleared out when we saw you coming."

"And may I ask who you are, and what your business here may be?" asked the corporal courteously, for Bruce's voice, and the general appearance of both boys, showed him that the new-comers were persons of good position, however odd the circumstances in which they found them.

Deeming it full time he had something to say, Arthur hastened to account for their presence, and to explain their plans.

The corporal and his companion were evidently quite amused at what he said.

"Well, gentlemen," said the former, "begging your pardon for saying so, but it seems to me a rum go, it does, your footin' it across these prairies when ridin' 's so cheap. Why, you can buy a fairish pony for the matter of twenty dollars, ride him as long as you like, and providin' you take right care of him, sell him again, when you've done with him, for as much as you gave for him. Isn't that so, Bill?"

The constable nodded assent, and seeming well pleased at having so good an opportunity to impart counsel the corporal continued:

"If I may be bold, young gentlemen, as to give you a bit of advice, I'd say come along with us to Broadview, and get a couple of ponies there, and ride the rest of the way to the mountains, if you don't want to go in the cars."

"But how about these ponies that belong to the Indians?" asked Bruce, who had too tender a conscience to think of depriving the Crees of their property, even if the use of it had been forced upon him.

"Oh, you needn't bother about them," was the corporal's reply. "Just turn them loose when you get to the town, and their owners will find them quick enough. They'll not let them long out of their sight, you bet."

Accepting this solution of the difficulty the boys rode on to Broadview with easy minds, and enjoying the company of the mounted policemen, which they found more congenial than that of the ragged Crees.

The corporal on parting with them urged them to visit the headquarters of the police at Regina, and having become much interested in this unique organization by what he told them about it they promised him they would.

Reaching Broadview in time for supper they made inquiries as to the west-bound train, and, finding that it would pass about ten o'clock, they decided to go on board, and ride as far as Regina, a hundred miles ahead, thus gaining sufficient

time to allow them to spend a day there.

It was not yet daylight when they arrived at Regina, but they found their way to the hotel, and made up for the broken night's rest by sleeping far into the forenoon.

There was not much to be seen about the town. So immediately after dinner they set out across the prairie for the establishment of the mounted police, which was in plain view a mile away.

They were feeling in very good trim, because having once more caught up with their trunks, which they found awaiting them, they had been able to get a fresh outfit of clothes, and they presented a very prepossessing appearance as they strode along.

The corporal had told them to ask for the officer of the day on reaching the barracks, and to tell him they would like to go over the place.

It happened that just as they came to the gate, which was protected by a guard-house with a sentry on duty before it, the officer of the day was going his rounds, and they were at once brought to him.

He was a young man whose whole appearance and manner suggested an officer in the regular army. Even the eye-glass was not missing, while a light riding-whip took the place of the cane.

He received the boys courteously, and, on their explaining the object of their visit, invited them to accompany him through the establishment.

They were surprised to find everything closely resembling cavalry barracks that they had seen in the Old Country. 'Tis true, the buildings were plain wooden structures, for the most part only one story in height, but their occupants were fine soldierly fellows, fit for places in the Life Guards, indeed in many cases the marked refinement of their countenances showed that they were much above the ordinary soldier class.

This fact so impressed Bruce that he could not refrain from saying something about it to the officer, who had made himself known to them as Inspector Stark.

"Oh, yes," he replied with a smile, "our men are quite out of the common, as a rule. We have Oxford and Cambridge graduates amongst them, and many fellows from first-class families in England and eastern Canada. Why, one of Charles Dickens's sons was an officer on the force for years."

The boys opened their eyes at this. Their respect for the force was vastly increased by this information, and they looked upon the young officer, whom these high-born privates were so dutifully saluting, with feelings akin to awe.

Having looked over the stables, with their rows of bred-up bronchos, whose intelligent eyes scanned them curiously, and visited the huge riding-school in which the cavalry exercises were performed in winter, at Inspector Stark's invitation the boys went over to the mess-rooms, where they were invited to have something to drink.

They had no taste for wine or brandy, but they were glad to have big bumpers of ice-cold lemonade, that were inexpressibly refreshing that hot afternoon.

While they were sipping their lemonade several of the other officers dropped in, to whom the boys were duly introduced. Arthur happening to ask Mr. Stark if he had ever had any adventures, the inspector referred him to one of the older officers, who, finding he had two eager listeners, readily consented to relate some of his experiences while on the force.

"When the mounted police force was first organized," he began, "things were very different in this Northwest to what they are now, and it's but fair to the police to say that they deserve the largest share of credit for the improvement that has taken place. They've had to keep a sharp eye, and, if necessary, a strong hand, on the Indians, indignant at the limiting of their hunting-grounds; on the French half-breeds, suspicious of their English rulers; on the whiskey-smugglers, willing to carry on their illegal traffic at the muzzle of the rifle, if need be; and on the horse-thieves, whose revolvers were always ready in case of argument as to the rightful ownership of a horse.

"That's the sort of work we had to do, and it was pretty exciting sometimes, I can tell you. It's a good many years now since word came to Winnipeg, where I was then stationed, that a most notorious whiskey-smuggler and horse-thief,

whose hands were freshly stained with the blood of the United States marshals, was reported by a scout as having fled across the boundary line, on his way northward.

"One afternoon, not being on duty, I rode out across the prairie with no special object in view, but thinking that possibly I might light upon some track of the undesirable immigrant.

"Cantering rather carelessly along I came upon an encampment concealed in a *coulée* that at once aroused my suspicions. I had only my revolver, but I resolved to investigate a little, nevertheless.

"On getting close to the camp a sinister-looking man, whom I at once recognized from the description sent us as the fugitive desperado, came out and gruffly demanded what I wanted.

"Determining to put a bold face on the matter, I replied that I wanted him, at the same moment covering him with my revolver.

"He swore furiously and vowed he wouldn't stir, but I kept him at the point of my revolver, and after some little difficulty drove him before me back to Winnipeg, and landed him safely in jail."

"That was capital, wasn't it?" exclaimed Arthur. "I'd like to do something like that."

"You'd better join the force, then, and you may have the chance," the officer responded; then adding, "While I'm about it, I'll tell you another incident. Word was brought to our post at Fort Macleod that three noted horse-thieves we were most anxious to catch were spending the night at an encampment about thirty miles distant. Taking ten picked men, with a good scout, I set off soon after sundown. We rode hard but warily through the gathering darkness until we reached a thick clump of trees within half a mile of the camp. There we halted to rest our horses, and wait until midnight. When midnight came, six of us, led by the spy, crept cautiously into the midst of the camp, and reached the tepee in which the horse-thieves were sound asleep.

"Not a dog barked nor an Indian moved, and in a trice we had entered the lodge and grabbed our men, hurrying them away at the muzzle of our revolvers, before the bewildered Indians could offer any resistance. By breakfast-time next morning they were secure in the cells at the post."

"While you're about it you'd better tell the boys the story of the 'pinto' horse," suggested one of the officers with a laugh, in which the others joined.

"Not a bit of it," was the response. "Let Harrison tell that himself, as he was the hero of it. Speak up, now, Harrison."

At this, an inspector, who had been reading a magazine, looked up, and said good-humoredly:

"Oh, all right, if the boys would like to hear it. I don't mind telling the yarn even if I didn't figure quite as brilliantly as Baker did in what he told."

"It was this way: a large theft of horses had been reported at our post, and I went off with six men to try and recover them. We had been searching fruitlessly for several days, and were inclined to give up, when late one afternoon, while the men were getting ready to camp for the night, I rode out alone for several miles.

"Suddenly I came upon a narrow *coulée* with a thicket filling its bottom, and what did I see, partially concealed in this thicket, but the big 'pinto' horse which had been specially described as one of those stolen.

"While I stood there congratulating myself upon having located the robbers, and wondering what would be the best thing to do, a man emerged from the underbrush, and I shouted to him:

"'What are you doing with that pinto horse?'

"'Pinto horse, is it?' he shouted back, promptly covering me with a well-aimed Winchester. 'That's none of your —— business. I'll give you two minutes to get out of sight. Now, git!'

"I looked at the man, and saw he was in dead earnest. I had no rifle, and even if I had had one, he already had the drop on me. There was nothing for me to do but to back out ingloriously, which I did, vowing that I'd never again go reconnoitring alone and without my rifle."

A murmur of laughter followed the conclusion of the story, and then, having expressed their gratitude for the courtesy shown them, the boys took their leave and wended their way back to Regina, well pleased with their visit to the headquarters of the Mounted Police.

CHAPTER XI.

BEAR AND BRONCHO.

In view of the troublous times they had been experiencing at the hands of tramps and Indians, and of the fact that they were beginning to weary of the monotonous expanse of prairie, the boys, after consulting together, decided to take the train from Regina to Medicine Hat, a run of three hundred miles.

They did this very comfortably in a luxurious Pullman, enjoying the view from the windows, and congratulating themselves—for it was intensely hot—on not being afoot.

At the Old Wives' Lakes, which they were much disappointed to learn contained not fresh water, but an undrinkable solution of alkali, their attention was attracted by the water-fowl that congregated there in myriads,—swans, geese, ducks, and pelican,—causing Arthur to exclaim:

"I wish we could stop here for a couple of days and have a try at these birds. That looks like splendid shooting, doesn't it, Bruce?"

"You may well say so," replied Bruce. "I'd like very well to have a shot at them myself. But we mustn't stop off, and, besides, we have no guns. We'll have to let them alone until some other time."

"I'm afraid that some other time's a long way off," said Arthur, with a rueful expression. "But look, Bruce, do you see those marks on the prairie like paths worn in the sod—what can they be? There are no sheep out here, surely."

"I'm sure I don't know what they are," responded Bruce; "and see those curious round places like gigantic saucers that are so much greener than the grass all around them. They all seem to be about the same size and shape. I'd like to know what they are."

Just at that moment the conductor passed through, and Arthur put the inquiry to him.

"Why," he replied, with an expression of surprise at his questioner's ignorance, "those long, dark lines are the old buffalo trails, and the round ones are their wallows. There've been no buffalo in these parts for a good many years, but they've left their marks so that they won't be forgotten in a hurry."

The boys looked at the prairie, still bearing these pathetic memorials of a vanished race of noble animals, with renewed interest. Along those narrow paths the shaggy, humpbacked bison had passed in Indian file by the uncounted thousands, until their myriad hoofs had written their signature so deep that the changing years had done little to blur it, and in the cool, soft mud which once filled these circular depressions they had luxuriously wallowed for relief from blaze of sun and bite of insect, undisturbed by the twang of the cruel bow or the crack of the murderous Winchester.

Unconsciously Bruce sighed deeply. What senseless, wicked waste there had been when the monarch of the prairies was hurried out of existence! Despite his adventure with the bull at Silver Heights, no sight would have been more welcome to his eyes than that of a herd of bison. But they were not to be seen out of the books, and he had to content himself with gazing at the plains over which they had once roamed in plethoric regiments.

As he went back through the car, the conductor stopped to say:

"They've got a fine bear at Medicine Hat you mustn't miss seeing. He's down past the end of the platform. Be sure and look at him."

Both boys pricked up their ears at this bit of information, and Arthur promptly responded:

"We'll look at him, you may depend, and the bigger he is the better we'll like him."

About the middle of the afternoon they got to Medicine Hat, a thriving town situated on the bank of the South Saskatchewan river, and the moment the train pulled up they raced off to see the bear.

They found him a little beyond the railway platform, securely confined in a large pen fenced with strong pickets, and having a stout platform in the centre, and a strong cage at one end for his bear-ship to retire into when he felt sulky or

sleepy.

He was a superb specimen of a grizzly, of great size, and many hundred pounds in weight; his fur was very thick, and of a dark-brown color, slightly touched with gray.

So big a bear the boys had never seen before, and they watched him for some time with lively admiration while one of the residents of the place told how fierce the creature was, and how he had torn out the arm of a man and bitten off the hand of a woman who had been so incautious as to put them within reach of his pitiless claws.

Some of the people were feeding the bear with biscuits, which he evidently relished, and Arthur, not to be outdone, ran off to a neighboring shop, and procuring a quantity, amused himself tossing them to the insatiable monster.

After a little of this he took the notion of getting the bear to stand on his hind legs, as he wanted to see how tall he was in that position. So, going round to the other side of the pen he got on top of the pickets, and, despite the warnings of the others, held up a biscuit for the bear to rise to.

Bruin responded promptly, reaching up his huge paws, and snapping at the biscuits, as Arthur let them drop from his fingers.

Thus standing on his hind legs and straining up as far as he could, the bear made an imposing picture, which the spectators heartily applauded, and Arthur was feeling rather proud of himself, when, in changing his position on the pickets, he lost his balance for a moment, and lurched forward just as the bear flung up his right paw in quest of another biscuit.

The great curved claws that projected from the paw, by an unfortunate chance caught in the boy's coat-sleeve, and the next moment, amid a chorus of horrified cries from the on-lookers, he was dragged over the pickets, and tumbled headlong in the mire at the grizzly's feet.

"The great curved Claws that projected from the Paw caught in the Boy's Coat-sleeve."

Had the bear been endeavoring to seize him, and been counting upon his fall, it is likely that a most pitiful tragedy would there and then have taken place. But he had not exacted anything more than a biscuit, and Arthur's sudden descent so startled him that with a strange compound of grunt and roar he shambled hurriedly off towards his cage.

Then did Bruce's calm good sense manifest itself in brilliant fashion. Arthur's respite from attack was perhaps only momentary. For him to attempt to climb back over the lofty pickets might mean that the bear, recovering his wits, would be upon him ere he was out of reach. But in the middle of the enclosure was the stout platform, and underneath it Arthur might be safe until the brute could be secured.

So, while others were shouting all kinds of foolish advice, Bruce's voice rang out steady and clear:

"Get under the platform, Arthur, quick!"

Arthur heard him, and, without waiting to straighten himself up, scuttled under the platform on his hands and knees.

He accomplished it just in time. Turning at the door of his cage, the bear, having got over his first fright, hurried back to the spot where Arthur had fallen, and was evidently much surprised to see nothing of him.

A little nosing around, however, told him whither the boy had fled, and he began to circle about his refuge, rubbing his nose against the planks, and reaching in his great paws.

Happily, while the planks were too close together to let the bear get more than his head through, there was sufficient space to allow Arthur to move about freely, and keep out of reach of the creature's claws. Unless, therefore, he had the sense to rip off the planks, Arthur was safe enough from him for the time being.

But how long would it take the shrewd animal to find this out, and in the meantime how was Arthur to be rescued from his perilous position?

There were almost as many suggestions as there were anxious spectators, and a furious shower of sticks and stones descended upon the bear's back, in the hope of driving him to take refuge in his cage.

But neither the multitudinous suggestions nor missiles accomplished anything, and rifles and revolvers were being called for when a couple of cow-boys from the Fort Macleod district appeared on the scene with their lassos in hand.

They at once took in the situation, and proceeded to work as coolly as if lassoing a bear was quite in the ordinary routine in their lives.

Mounting the pickets, they tried one after the other to get their ropes over the bear's head, but the clever brute, rearing on his hind legs, parried their most artful throws with his fore paws as skilfully as a practised boxer could have done.

Again and again it seemed as if the noose must settle down over the shaggy head only to be astutely evaded, and even the cow-boys began to despair, when one of them bethought him of going to the opposite side of the pen, and then having the two lassos flung simultaneously.

The plan proved successful. In parrying one rope the bear missed the other, and it fell around his neck, while a glad cheer went up from the excited crowd.

The next moment the second rope was in place, and then, both being hauled taut, the great creature, in spite of his enormous strength, was practically powerless.

The moment Bruce saw this he called to his chum:

"Now, then, Arthur, this way, quick!"

Arthur instantly crawled out of his shelter and darted across the pen to where half a dozen hands were eagerly extended from the top of the pickets. He sprang up to grasp them. They caught his wrists, and he was hauled up and over the palisade, while the half-choked bear was still struggling with the lassos.

Bruce gave him a hug almost worthy of the bear itself, and the people crowded around to clap him on the back and wring his hands, and otherwise express their relief and delight at his fortunate escape, until Arthur broke away from them in order to get to the cow-boys and thank them for their timely service.

While all this was taking place the time spent by the train elapsed, and as it could not, of course, be detained for the benefit of the boys, it rolled away without them.

But they were not very deeply concerned. They had saved so much time by the run from Regina that to lose a day did not matter, so they let the train go without regret, and went up to the hotel with the cow-boys, who showed a desire for closer acquaintance.

They were fine, manly fellows, whose air of good-breeding rather surprised Bruce, until he learned that they were both gentlemen by right of birth, and had taken to the ranching life because they liked it, not from necessity.

A basis of good-fellowship was quickly established between them and the boys as they took their evening meal together, and the result of a long talk afterwards was that Bruce and Arthur agreed to accompany the cow-boys to their ranch, near Fort Macleod, which lay to the south of the railway, returning to the railway at Calgary.

The cow-boys, whose names were Cochrane and Harper, promised to supply bronchos for the boys, and they regarded the prospect of the long ride across the prairies with lively delight.

Soon after breakfast the following morning the horses appeared before the hotel, and, full of pleasurable anticipation, the boys essayed to mount.

But they found the doing so a great deal more difficult affair than it had ever been before in their experience.

The bronchos had been shut up in the stable for several days, and were consequently as wild as colts. In spite of the commanding shouts of their owners, they refused to stand still for an instant, rearing and plunging and lashing out with their heels whenever their would-be riders attempted to get into the saddle.

Had Bruce and Arthur been made of softer stuff, they might have given up in despair, but the former's stern resolution and the latter's fiery temper were roused to the utmost, and they were both in the spirit to hazard broken necks rather than acknowledge defeat.

It did not take long for a deeply interested crowd of spectators to gather, some of whom were disposed to be merry at the expense of the two "tenderfoots," as they were pleased to regard the boys.

But the ranchmen quickly put a stop to that. They would not allow their friends to be laughed at before their faces, although they were quite ready to enjoy the humor of the situation themselves.

The bronchos certainly did behave most outrageously. More than once they tried to bite the boys, and, failing that, to trample them under their feet, but their vicious endeavors were deftly evaded, and the lads stuck to them resolutely.

At last the wild creatures sobered down a bit, and almost simultaneously Bruce and Arthur succeeded in springing into their saddles with shouts of exultation.

But if they thought their troubles were all over, they were sadly mistaken. Their triumph over the bronchos were not yet by any means complete. Having got into the saddle, the difficulty was to stay there, and this proved to be a no less trying feat than the getting in, for, before they were fairly settled into the stirrups, the provoking animals began to buck.

Now, the boys had read many accounts of "bucking bronchos," but they had never witnessed their performance before, much less been made the subject of it, and that it transcended all their expectations, is to state the case very mildly.

This was the way the horses went about it: Bounding high into the air they gathered their feet closely together under them, with the legs rigid at every joint, and, arching their backs so that the rider had nothing before or behind him, came down on the ground with a thud like that of a pile-driver.

The shock that went through the boys' bodies at this made them feel as though their spines were being driven up through the back of their head. It was more than electric—it was well-nigh paralyzing.

"Oh, heavens!" gasped Arthur, gripping the front of his saddle to save himself from an ignominious tumble, "this is awful."

Bruce said nothing, but his face whitened, and a thin, red line running down his chin told that his teeth had been driven

into his lip.

Yet both of them held their seats, and the cow-boys shouted approvingly:

"Well done, boys! Stick to them. You'll get the better of them soon. Give them the whip."

In their right hands the boys held stout rawhide riding-whips called "quirts," which they had not let drop in spite of the horses' struggles, and, acting upon the advice given, they began to ply these vigorously.

Again and again the animals bucked, but their riders refused to budge, and responded to each vicious effort with fresh blows of the quirts, until, at last, stung into forgetfulness of everything but their own suffering, the bronchos put up their heads, and dashed off at a mad gallop down the street.

Putting spurs to their own horses, Cochrane and Harper made after the boys, and thus the quartet vanished from the town in a cloud of dust, if not of glory.

The runaway bronchos were happily going in the right direction, so their owners, seeing that the boys held their seats firmly, gave themselves little concern, knowing that the burst of speed was only temporary, and that they would soon be able to catch up.

As it proved, the boys' animals only went about a mile at top speed, and then came under control sufficiently to enable their riders to bring them down to a moderate canter, which made the riding easy and comfortable.

When the cow-boys came up they congratulated Bruce and Arthur warmly on the way they had stuck to the bronchos through all their antics.

"No one who saw you would ever think of calling either of you a tenderfoot," Cochrane said. "I don't think I ever saw fellows who were new to bucking keep their saddles as well as you did. You were certainly cut out for cow-boys, both of you."

"You're just right," assented Harper heartily. "They did us proud, and no mistake, and"—turning to the boys—"if you'd like a job at looking after cattle, just say so, and I know a rancher that'll hire you right off on our recommendation. Isn't that so, Cochrane?"

As Cochrane nodded affirmatively, Bruce, with a well-pleased smile, replied:

"It's ever so good of you to say such kind things about us, and I'm sure we'd both like to try it for awhile, anyway, but we couldn't spare the time. We've got to be in Shanghai by the end of October at the latest, you know."

"Oh, well," responded Harper, "perhaps you'll be along this way again some time, and if you do come, be sure and look us up at Fort Macleod. Shall probably be there for some years yet."

The long ride to Fort Macleod was rendered very delightful by the pleasant companionship, and the beautiful country through which the little party passed.

The prairie was not so monotonous as it had been between Regina and Medicine Hat. Many streams diversified its character, while ponds and lakes, much resorted to by wild-fowl, were not uncommon.

The bronchos the boys bestrode having realized the futility of attempting to get rid of their riders, behaved very well, and proved most comfortable mounts.

One feature of this region, that was new to the boys, interested them keenly, to wit, the antelopes, of which small bands were visible from time to time. Arthur was full of the idea of chasing some of them, and although the more experienced cow-boys laughed at him, saying that he might as well try to catch his own shadow, he kept hankering after the making of at least an attempt, until finally his ardor would no longer be restrained, and a band of four suddenly springing up from a hollow just a little in front of his horse he dashed off in hot pursuit.

Bruce shouted to him to come back, but the ranchmen said:

"Oh, let him alone. He'll soon find out that he's on a wild-goose chase."

Away over the prairie the antelopes flew in long, light bounds as if they had wings to help them, while Arthur galloped after, his horse entering into the spirit of the chase, and putting forth its utmost speed.

As it happened the course taken by the antelopes was in the very direction the party was travelling, so that even though Arthur got nothing for his pains he would not be going out of his way to have his sport.

Quickening their pace so as to keep Arthur in sight, the ranchmen watched the progress of the chase with amused interest, but Bruce felt a little anxious.

The prairie was by no means as smooth as a tennis-lawn. There were lots of holes into which if a horse should put its foot a tremendous tumble would be inevitable, and Arthur was at the best of times anything but a careful rider.

However, for a time it seemed as if his fears were groundless. Arthur kept bravely on, and indeed seemed, so far as could be made out, to be positively gaining on the antelopes. His horse certainly was a good one, and was doing its level best.

"Why, look!" Bruce exclaimed. "He's catching up to them, isn't he? Do you think he'll run them down?"

"Not much," laughed Cochrane. "They're only fooling with him. They'll let out a few more links in a minute, and then you'll see how they'll leave him."

Sure enough just as he spoke the antelopes manifestly increased their speed, while Arthur could be seen digging his heels into his horse's sides and plying his quirt with unstinted vigor.

The next moment the broncho dropped as if he had been shot, and Bruce gave a cry of horror as Arthur described a long parabola in the air, and landed violently upon the prairie sod, where he lay motionless.

CHAPTER XII.

FROM THE PLAINS TO THE PEAKS.

Putting their horses to the gallop the three were soon beside Arthur, and while Cochrane and Bruce sprang to the ground to lift him up, Harper went after the horse, which had scrambled to its feet again, and seemed disposed to bolt.

Arthur lay as still as though dead, the fact being that the shock had knocked both the wind and the senses out of him.

Bruce felt greatly alarmed, but Cochrane reassured him. To be thrown in that fashion was no uncommon experience for a cow-boy. He had been in precisely the same situation himself more than once.

"Just get your cap full of water," said he, pointing to a pond near by, "and if there are no bones broken I'll bring him to in no time."

Bruce ran off and got the water, which Cochrane dashed vigorously into Arthur's face, and almost at once the latter revived sufficiently to ask in a faint voice full of bewilderment and pain:

"What has happened to me? My head hurts so."

"You're all right, old chap," responded Cochrane cheerily, for Bruce somehow could not find his voice at first. "You've had a bad toss, that's all. Just stay where you are until you feel better."

Arthur lay still a little longer, and then he woke up completely, saying brightly:

"I did have a toss, didn't I? Serves me right for not taking your advice and letting the antelopes alone. But I'll know better next time, I tell you."

With Bruce's assistance he got on to his feet, and it was a relief to all to find that he had not even a sprain, let alone a broken bone, and that after the dizziness passed away he would be none the worse for his tumble.

"You may thank your stars you lit on a nice soft bit of our prairie, and not on the hard ground, my boy," said Harper, as he led up Arthur's horse for him to remount.

"Yes," replied Arthur, "that's so. But if I had been riding on hard ground my horse wouldn't have put his foot in a hole and pitched me over his head, you see."

The ranchmen laughed at the ready response, and Arthur, having got into his saddle, the party set off again, and in due time reached Fort Macleod without further mishap.

The cattle-ranch to which Cochrane and Harper belonged lay to the westward of the settlement, almost in the shadow of the foot-hills, and after a couple of hours' stay at the fort they pushed on thither, arriving at their destination in time for supper.

"Here we are," cried Cochrane, throwing himself off his horse. "This is Bachelors' Hall. You mustn't expect any luxuries of a first-class hotel here. We'll give you the best we've got, but you mustn't be too hard to please."

"You needn't worry about that at all," said Bruce, looking about him with a pleased smile, for he was delighted to be at a real ranch. "Don't take any trouble on our account. We'll just share pot-luck with you."

There were four other young men at the ranch, to whom the boys were duly introduced, and then they all sat down to a plain but bountiful meal, for which they had rare, good appetites.

Two very happy days were spent with their kind hosts, during which the boys were in the saddle nearly all the time, riding over the ranges to see the cattle as they were scattered in bunches here and there, and visiting some of the neighbors, if that term could be accurately applied to people living from five to ten miles distant.

It was during the second afternoon that Bruce had an adventure which made a deep impression upon him. They had been away off to a distant range, and on the return he had fallen behind the others, because his interest in flowers moved him to study them more closely than was possible while riding rapidly.

In a little dell he caught sight of a flower he had not seen before, and determined to pick some blossoms. So he dismounted, and slipping the bridle rein over his arm was walking towards the flowers when his horse suddenly started, and, jerking the rein free, ran off a little distance, then stopped, and looked back at him, as though to say:

"Catch me now, if you can."

Bruce glanced in the direction of the others, but they had disappeared beyond a swell of the prairie, and even his vigorous hail fell short of them, so, with an exclamation of vexation, he started after his horse.

The provoking animal, without running far from him, would not permit him to approach near enough to grasp the reins, and kept moving towards a large herd of cattle that were grazing quietly a couple of hundred yards away.

"You miserable sinner!" cried Bruce angrily, "once I get on your back again, I'll make you pay for playing me such a trick."

But his threat of punishment had no effect upon the horse, which certainly laughed, or, at all events, curled its lip in derision at his vain efforts to overtake it, although he pursued it almost to the edge of the herd, around which it circled in manifest enjoyment of the situation.

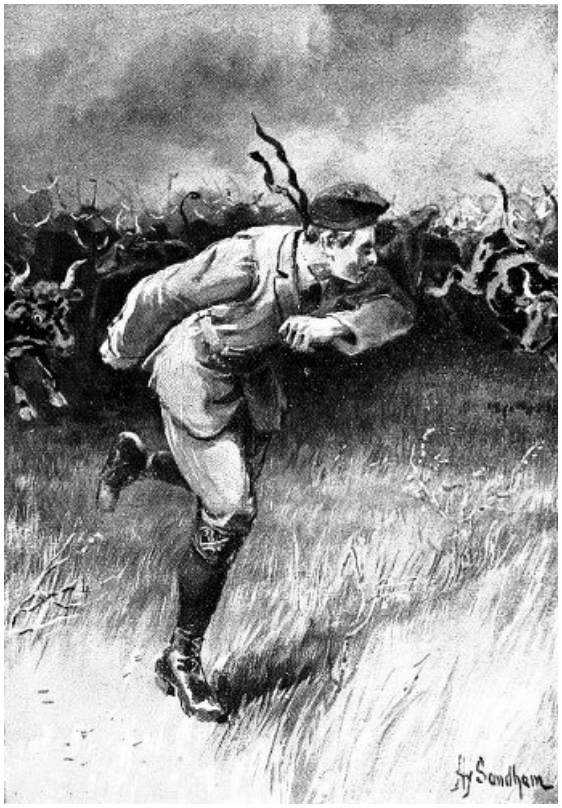
Bruce was not many yards away from the herd, or "bunch," as the ranchmen call it, when some of the big steers lifted their heads from the buffalo-grass they were lazily munching, and looked at the intruder with wonder in their big, dark eyes. They were not accustomed to seeing human beings on foot, and the sight aroused their curiosity.

They presented so fine an appearance that Bruce paused in the pursuit of his horse for a moment to look at them, and then he became aware that the interest was mutual. The cattle were all returning his stare, and, more than that, were moving towards him as if for a closer inspection.

They had come within ten yards of him, moving slowly yet steadily, before Bruce realized his danger. Alone and on foot with that great mass of cattle, full of curiosity concerning him, unless he got away from them at once he must inevitably be borne down by their irresistible advance, and crushed out of all life and recognition beneath their heavy hoofs. They would not mean him harm, but in their ponderous ignorance they would kill him as surely as if they thirsted for his blood.

"Heaven help me!" the poor boy cried as this flashed into his mind. "How can I escape them?"

There was but one way—to run for his life, with the certainty of starting a stampede among the cattle, and then having to keep ahead of it until some avenue of escape presented itself.



"He had run many a Race before, but never anything Approaching this One."

Ejaculating a prayer he began to run in the direction of the ranch, bending his head, and putting forth his whole energy. He had run many a race before, but never anything approaching this one, for, the moment he started, the cattle quickened their pace until they broke into a gallop, and, with tossing horns and flying tails, came thundering after him.

He had the advantage of the start, and gained a clear fifty yards by it; but once the cattle were fully under way they got through the long grass far more quickly than he did, so that it could be only a question of time when they must over-run him.

Bruce could see them gaining upon him as he cast anxious glances over his shoulder, and the fear of death fell coldly on his brave young heart.

To attempt to evade the great creatures' onset by a sudden dodge to one side was out of the question. As they ran they had broadened out so that they presented a broad front which could not be thus avoided. He could do nothing but keep straight on, praying for deliverance he knew not how.

It was difficult running, the grass being rank and strong, so that more than once he narrowly escaped a tripping, and soon his breath came short, and his head seemed as though it wore nigh to bursting.

Nearer and nearer drew the mob of cattle, excited by their own foolish action, until its original cause was forgotten in the frenzy of their charge. They were not really pursuing Bruce now. They were running, simply, because having got started they knew not how to stop until exhausted by their preposterous efforts. *But Bruce was right in their path, and that meant an awful death for him unless he could get out of their way.*

He felt his legs failing beneath him, and his lungs refusing their office, when there came a shout from the swell of the prairie just ahead, and Harper and Cochrane appeared galloping at full speed toward him.

Another minute and they would have been too late. They had just time to race up and place themselves between Bruce and the herd, waving their hats and shouting with all their might, before the bovine regiment thundered down on them.

The horns of the front rank were almost touching the horses' breasts before the brutes swerved aside, and those behind following their example, a lane was opened through the mob which then swept on, leaving Bruce and the horsemen unscathed.

"Oh, what an escape I've had!" panted Bruce, looking the gratitude to his rescuers that he felt no words could adequately express. "It was perfectly awful to have all those cattle rushing down on me, and not to be able to get out of their way. It was like a dreadful nightmare."

"You had a close call for it, certainly," said Cochrane. "They're clean crazy when they get running like that, and if they'd got on you they'd have trampled you as flat as a pancake. I saw one man that had been disposed of that way, and I tell you I never want to see such a sight again."

Bruce shuddered at the idea, and, Harper having brought his horse up, remounted, and rode on for some time in silence. The flowers had for the time lost all interest. His thoughts were engrossed with the thrilling experience through which he had just passed.

The boys would have been glad to spend some time at the ranch, where they were being so hospitably treated, but felt bound to make further progress in their journey, so the following morning they bade "good-by" to their kind friends and set off for Calgary, mounted upon horses which they were to leave there at an appointed place for the ranchmen to get them back subsequently.

The road ran along the valley at the edge of the foot-hills, and allowed distant glimpses of the higher peaks of the Rocky Mountains. The picture was very beautifully illuminated by the full rays of the summer sun, and the boys' hearts grew full of eagerness for a closer acquaintance with those glorious mountains.

"We must take our time going through the Rockies," said Arthur. "I don't want to be whisked along in a railway train at the rate of thirty miles an hour. We'll walk it, won't we, Bruce?"

"I'm quite agreed," responded Bruce. "We still have three weeks before we take the steamer at Vancouver, and we can't do better than spend the time among the mountains."

Being thus of one mind they laid out their program as follows: Starting from Calgary they would foot it as far as Banff without delaying on the way, and there spend several days, proceeding thence by easy stages, according to the interest of the route, until their tramp ended at salt water.

"We'll find the walking a good deal harder through the mountains than it was anywhere else," said Bruce; "but we needn't hurry, and there'll be plenty of places to stop at when we are tired."

They rode to Calgary without mishap or adventure, left the horses at the stables appointed, and, having got their trunks from the station, went to the hotel, for general refitting.

Having the evening on their hands they spent it looking about the city, and were much impressed by the many signs of wealth and prosperity. The streets were lined with fine stores and handsome residences; they were well paved and brilliantly illuminated by electricity, and were filled with throngs of well-dressed, well-mannered people, among whom the boys felt thoroughly at home.

"Who would ever have thought of seeing such a fine city as this away out on the prairies?" said Arthur. "Before we came out here I used to think that the people lived in tents and little log-huts. Wouldn't they laugh at us if we were to tell them that!"

"You may be sure they would," replied Bruce, "if the idea of it didn't make them angry. We certainly are getting our eyes opened on this trip in a way that I never imagined."

It was a perfect morning when they set forth from Calgary with their faces toward the white peaks of the Rockies, which would thenceforth dominate their route for many a long mile. In the clear, calm air the mountain range seemed far nearer than it really was, and Arthur, in his usual sanguine way, predicted that they would be at the base of the great barrier, which lifted itself so proudly above the plateau, before nightfall, if they put in a good day's work.

But Bruce took a more cautious view.

"There are more miles between us and the mountains than you imagine, Arthur," he said. "My own idea is that we will do very well if we get to them by mid-day to-morrow."

Arthur laughed jauntily, and stepped out as though he would keep right on to the Rockies without stopping; but, as the sequel showed, both he and Bruce were out in their estimate of the distance, for it was not until the evening of the second day that they reached Kananaskis station, where the mountains really began.

The scenery through which they had passed was of exceeding beauty and remarkable variety, and they appreciated it all the more after the vast monotony of the plains.

Each mile they tramped they were getting higher up in the world, passing through the region of rounded, grassy foot-hills, and up the river "benches" or terraces where the ranchmen with their multitudinous animals held sway; great herds of horses grazing in the lower valley, thousands of cattle upon the terraces, and flocks of sheep sprinkling the hilltops, every creature of them looking well-fed and contented, although they spent the year round in the open air, and had never fed from crib or stall.

Just beyond Cochrane station they crossed the Bow river, a rushing mountain stream in which they would have liked to have taken a bath but that its waters were so turbulent, and, had they known it, too icy-cold to be endured for more than a moment.

Presently they reached the top of the first terrace, and got a glimpse of the glorious panoramas in store for them, as, looking toward their left, they saw the foot-hills rise in successive tiers of sculptured heights to the snowy range beyond.

It was at this point that Arthur developed a taste for landscapes that he had not previously manifested. He liked to halt from time to time and look around him, taking a comfortable seat on a bowlder or tree-trunk for the purpose.

Bruce, who had hitherto shown the most interest in the beauties of nature, was very glad to recognize this new phase of his companion's character, yet his exultation over it was somewhat dampened by a lurking question in his mind as to whether a desire to rest a bit had not something to do with it.

In fact, he could not help gently hinting as much to Arthur, who therefore fired up, and asserting that he was not tired in the least, strode away at a pace that would soon have left Bruce far in the rear had he kept it up for any length of time.

But he didn't. After a mile or so of rapid walking he came upon a lovely little spring of water bubbling clear and delicious from the breast of the cliff, and it gave him an opportunity to cool his indignation, and to wait for Bruce to catch up.

At Morley station, where they stopped for dinner on the second day, they saw something of the red-men in what was to them a new relation; namely, as tillers of the soil. It was the headquarters of the Assiniboine reserve, and under the teaching of Wesleyan missionaries, and the fostering care of a considerate government, these roamers of the plains had settled down to the prosaic occupations of farming and stock-raising.

Arthur could not conceal his feeling of disappointment at seeing the Indians thus domestic. They did not look at all so natural or interesting in red woollen shirts and gray homespun trousers as in feathered buckskin and brilliant blankets.

But Bruce took a more practical view of the matter.

"If they hadn't taken to farming, they'd just become extinct like the buffalo," he said. "There's hardly anything left for them to hunt, and who was going to support them in utter idleness?"

"That's so," assented Arthur, recognizing the irresistible logic of his chum's argument. "But it seems a pity all the same that they've had to choose between dying out, and turning into such scarecrows as that," and he pointed at two Indians who certainly might have done good service in a wheatfield.

Bruce laughed, and the Indians, noticing this, smiled and bowed in return, their dusky countenances lighting up so pleasantly that Arthur felt quite ashamed of having spoken in such disparaging terms of them.

As they drew near Kananaskis, the mountains towered right up before their face, and seemed to offer an impenetrable barrier to further progress, looking very grand and beautiful, with their purple-tinted bases, and their white and gold flecked flanks, while high above, dimly showing through a veil of mist, soared their snowy peaks.

"This alone is well worth coming all the way to see," said Bruce, with a deep sigh of content, for his eye was one that lost nothing of nature's varied beauty; "and if the beginning is so fine, what must it be like in the heart of the mountains? But hark! what is that deep roar coming from below there? It sounds like a big water-fowl. I should like to have a look at it."

They were just crossing the Kananaskis river on a high, iron bridge when Bruce said this; and Arthur, being always ready for anything that offered variety, they followed the sound, which led them away from the Kananaskis, and up the Bow river for half a mile, where they were rewarded for their tramp by getting a view of the great falls of the Bow, vouchsafed to none of those who travel by train.

"Do you happen to see any ferns growing anywhere out of reach that you'd like to have a try for?" asked Arthur, giving Bruce a roguish look.

"No, thank you, my boy," responded Bruce, smiling back at his companion, "no more Montmorency experiences for me, if you please. Once is quite enough. But these falls are grand, aren't they? I suppose we shall see lots of cascades in the next two weeks."

The falls deserved their warmest admiration, but they could not linger long beside them, for the sun was setting, and they had to arrange for accommodation for the night at the station.

In this they had no difficulty, finding both board and bed very comfortable and welcome, weary and hungry as they were.

Making an early start the next morning, they soon came to the Gap, where the railway, taking advantage of the portal prepared for it by the Bow river, ran boldly in between two almost vertical walls of dizzy height, and keeping steadily along on the track, which indeed offered the only pathway, they presently passed through this glorious gateway into the precincts of the Rocky Mountains.

It took them all that day to get to Banff, and when they reached the big hotel there, which the railway company maintained so luxuriously, their eyes were as tired as their legs, for every turn of the track had opened up some fresh vista of grandeur and beauty.

Wind Mountain, its summit wreathed in writhing clouds, and bearing on its shoulder that projecting spur so strangely resembling the bull's head, after which it is called; the Three Sisters, rising into the azure side by side, and overhanging the valleys in terrific precipices laden with snow that was ever melting yet never lessened; Cascade Mountain, its perpendicular massive front streaked with a multitude of varied tints glowing in the sunshine, and marked by a slender water-fall, glacier-fed, trailing almost from brow to base; the tongues of tree-growth creeping up the gulches, the broken outlines of the ledges, and the snow-white torrents splashing down the ravines,—of these, and a thousand other wonders, the boys missed nothing as they tramped along, Arthur finding it delightfully easy to call a halt whenever he felt disposed, for Bruce could not get enough of the ever-changing panorama of nature's magnificence.

CHAPTER XIII.

BY MOUNT AND STREAM.

The boys had not been an hour at Banff before they were both entirely of one mind as to remaining for several days. The hotel was the acme of comfort, the views in all directions were superb, there were mountains to be climbed, rivers to be boated upon, lakes to be sailed over, and fish to be caught to their hearts' content. Their portmanteaus had come on all right from Calgary, and they could dress like gentlemen or like tramps, according to their humor. They had ample funds in their purses, having drawn on their letter of credit at Calgary. Therefore, they had nothing to prevent them from putting in a thorough good time, and this they were very determined to have.

"We must see all there is to be seen, and do all there is to be done, before we leave this place," said Arthur, "and then we can hurry over the rest of it if we want to."

And this way of putting it expressed Bruce's idea as well as his own.

The first thing, of course, was to map out some sort of a program, and with the assistance of Mr. Mark, the hotel manager, this was presently accomplished to their satisfaction.

In accordance therewith, their first undertaking was a trip to the Vermilion lakes. Going down to the boat-house in the Bow river, they came near to having a serious falling out over the question as to what kind of craft they would take.

Bruce wanted to take one of the boats. They were light, graceful affairs, easily rowed and safe to manage, and the current running swiftly, and the course of the stream being entirely unknown to them, his natural caution declared in favor of the boat.

But Arthur would have none of it.

"Why, Bruce," he exclaimed, "the very idea of taking anything but a canoe! Isn't this the country of the canoe, and aren't we right out in the midst of it? We can have boats anywhere, but this is the place for canoes, and we'd be just disgracing ourselves to take anything else."

It was all very well for Arthur to adopt this exalted line of argument, but the simple truth was that the taste of canoeing that he had enjoyed at the Nepigon had been so pleasing that he was delighted to have another opportunity of wielding a paddle, and the question of the risk involved counted for nothing.

The canoes were not the broad, deep birch-bark affairs of the Nepigon. They were of the wooden variety, lighter, stronger, and prettier than their bark prototypes, but quite as cranky, if not indeed more so.

"That's all well enough, Arthur," responded Bruce, "but let us take a boat first, anyway, and if we get along all right, then we can try a canoe." But Arthur was obdurate. He must have a canoe at the start, and the boat-keeper supporting him (for the excellent reason, which, of course, he kept to himself, that he charged more for the canoes than for the boats), Bruce reluctantly yielded, taking his place in the ticklish craft with a good many misgivings.

Fitted out with cushions and paddles, they pushed off from the platform into the stream, and at once realized that, as the saying is, they had their work cut out for them, if they wanted to go far up the river.

The current of the Bow ran strong, swift, and silent, and to propel a light canoe against it meant the expenditure of much elbow-grease.

Bruce, who had the stern paddle, being the heavier of the two, smiled grimly as he plunged his blade in deep, and put his whole strength into each stroke.

"I guess Arthur will soon get tired of this," he said to himself, "and then he'll be quite willing to take a boat."

But Arthur did not get tired, or rather, if he did, he successfully concealed the fact, toiling away resolutely, stroke after stroke, while the perspiration poured down his face, and his breath went out in sharp pants like those of a high-pressure steamer.

Of course such exertions had to tell. Steadily, if slowly, the canoe crept up stream, Bruce holding her straight in her course, and presently they came to a point where there were two courses to choose between. On the left lay a long stretch of river like that over which they had passed, while on the right was a narrower stream, flowing more slowly.

"Which way do we go, Arthur?" asked Bruce. "Did you ask the boatman?"

In some confusion Arthur answered that he had not done so, and Bruce was about to poke fun at him when he joyfully cried:

"Oh! there are the directions. See!" and he pointed out a wooden arrow stuck upon a tree, and bearing the legend, "To the Vermilion lakes."

Obeying this sign they turned to the right, and found themselves in a narrow but deep stream, whose water was as clear as crystal, that of the Bow river having been turbid and milky.

"What beautiful water!" Arthur exclaimed. "I must have a drink of it."

There was a tin cup in the canoe, and, picking this up, he leaned over the side to fill it, when, in some way or other that Bruce did not understand, he overbalanced, and, with a cry more of vexation than of fright, plunged head first into the water, almost overturning the canoe, which Bruce, however, by a sort of miracle, kept from altogether upsetting.

As soon as Arthur's mouth appeared above the surface, there issued forth from it a wail whose sincerity could not be doubted.

"O-o, O-o!" he groaned. "It's awfully cold. It's regular ice-water. Help me out quick, or I'll have the cramps, sure."

Bruce could not forbear laughing a little, although it did seem somewhat cruel. But, then, Arthur had been so obstinate about the canoe that this being tumbled out while Bruce was left in had such a look of just retribution.

"Oh, you needn't laugh," gasped Arthur, who was making his way towards the canoe, which the current had carried from him; "it's no joke, I can tell you. Keep her steady, now, till I get hold of her."

When he did grasp the gunwale, the temptation came upon him strongly, for a moment, to tip his companion out, so that he might feel for himself how cold the water was. But he magnanimously resisted it.

"Paddle to the bank, now, as hard as you can, Bruce," he directed. "I can't climb in without upsetting you, so you have to tow me ashore."

A mere tyro as Bruce was at canoeing, he found it no easy task to do as he was bid, with Arthur hanging on to the side, and the current running strongly against him. But by dint of heroic exertions he worked into shallow water, and as soon as Arthur could touch bottom, he scrambled out of the icy flood and threw himself down on the grass, saying:

"That's the coldest dip I ever had in my life."

Beaching the canoe, Bruce jumped ashore, and, with an amused glance at Arthur's dripping condition, asked:

"Shall we go back to the hotel?"

Arthur at once fired up. The suggestion of defeat touched him to the quick.

"*You* may, if you like," he shouted, springing to his feet; "but I'm going right on to the lakes, if it takes me the rest of the day to get there."

It was well for the boys that they were the opposites of one another in disposition, for, had they both been as hot-tempered as Arthur, they must certainly have had a quarrel then and there that would have cast a serious cloud over their friendship.

But one of the finest features in Bruce's character was this: his spirit was ever most under control when the temptation to anger was strongest. He could be angry enough at the right time and place, but he understood perfectly how to remain cool when to be irritated was inexpedient.

And so, instead of flinging back at Arthur some sharp retort that would only have inflamed him further, he was silent for a moment, looking thoughtfully westward, where the Vermilion lakes lay, before he said, quietly:

"You're satisfied to be your own clothes-horse, then?"

"What do you mean?" asked Arthur, in a puzzled, suspicious tone, still thinking that his chum was having fun at his expense.

"Why, that you're going to let your clothes dry on you, and not get fresh ones at the hotel," replied Bruce, with unruffled placidity.

"Oh, as to that," laughed Arthur, his wonted amiability all coming back to him, as he realized that he was quite misjudging his friend, "I don't mind being wet on this lovely, warm day, and it won't hurt the clothes, so we'll go right on, if you're agreed."

They accordingly relaunched the canoe, and followed up Forty-mile Creek, into which they had turned from the Bow river, until another sign-board directed them to turn to the left into a narrow waterway, almost choked with wild rice and overhung by low bushes, which they would otherwise have passed unnoticed, and yet which was the only passage into the lakes of which they were in search.

Any child could have managed the canoe in these still, smooth waters, and they were able to give themselves up to the full enjoyment of the romance and grandeur of their surroundings as they paddled lazily along through a path so narrow at times that they could touch either bank with their blades.

"Do you know, Arthur," said Bruce, whose clear, far-seeing eyes had been ranging north, south, east, and west with ever-growing wonder and appreciation, "this is nearer to being in Paradise than anything in my life before. If we could only spend a whole summer here, and leave not a single one of those glorious mountains unscaled!"

They had reached the first lake now, and, floating on its placid bosom, the whole marvellous panorama was open to their vision.

On their left rose the green terraces of Sulphur and Bourgeau mountains; northward, the wide slopes of Squaw mountain were over-topped by the crags of Cascade and by the broken turrets of Hole-in-the-Wall, while westward was the most inspiring prospect of all.

There, stretching in superb array, the monarchs of the Rockies stood before them robed in a royal ermine of snow, and crowned with coronets of ice. Rising in domes, pyramids, cubes, and spires of every shape, "tinted and shaded by pencils of air," the sharply cut summits in front showing firm against the remoter peaks revealed behind, they composed a picture that was a miracle of beauty, and stirred the admiration of the boyish travellers so profoundly that they were silent from sheer inability to express their feelings.

"Poor, dear old Scotland!" Bruce murmured presently, as if speaking to himself; "how would your Ben Nevis and Ben Macdhui look beside these giants? Little better than foot-hills, and yet, Arthur, do you remember how proud we were the day we reached the top of Ben Nevis?"

"Indeed I do," responded Arthur; "but I'll be a good deal prouder when I get to the top of that big fellow," pointing at Mount Rundle, whose bare limestone ridge glowed golden-brown in the sunshine.

"We must try that to-morrow morning," said Bruce. "We'll take our lunch with us, and give the whole day to it."

"That's the idea," assented Arthur, to whom the plan at once approved itself.

Paddling to the south end of the lake they landed for a ramble on shore, and while roaming about, Bruce found himself on the banks of the Bow river, which just there came close to the Vermilion lakes. The current was sweeping swiftly downward, and the thought flashed into his mind—why not make use of the very force that had at first opposed their progress, to help them homeward. They had only to portage the canoe across the meadow that separated the lake from the river, and then, launching it on the rapid stream, to glide back to the boat-house at their ease.

The moment he mentioned his thought, Arthur gave a whoop of delight.

"Why, what a genius you are, chum!" he cried, clapping his companion enthusiastically on the back. "We'll get even with that provoking river now, and I'll forgive it for all the bother it gave us, not to mention the dousing it gave me."

It was an easy task to transport the light canoe from the lake to the river, and once launched in the milky current of the latter, no further exertion on their part was required than an occasional stroke of the paddle to keep the graceful craft in its course.

"Isn't this the very poetry of motion?" said Bruce, as they glided with the smoothness of a dream past the low green banks with their almost unbroken palisade of trees, whose cool shadow came far across the water.

Silently and swiftly the canoe slipped down-stream until all too soon the boat-house came into sight, and the end of their delightful voyage was at hand.

"Oh! it's too soon to land yet," protested Arthur. "Let us go down to the bridge, and paddle back."

The carriage road crossed the river by an iron girder bridge a couple of hundred yards below the boat-house, and Bruce had no objection to prolonging their paddle that far.

There was no one at the boat-house when they passed it, but on the bridge were several people who watched the boys with evident interest, for it must be confessed a glance was sufficient to show that they were but inexperienced canoeists.

The rapidity of the current took a decided increase below the boat-house, and Bruce was congratulating himself that he had not consented to go any farther than the bridge, when a man who was standing at the middle of that structure called out:

"Say, young fellows, you'd better turn round. The current's mighty strong about here."

Believing the counsel good, Bruce gave a stroke that was intended to turn the canoe up-stream, but for lack of skill he overdid the thing, and the canoe veered suddenly from its course in such a way as to swing her bow perilously close to one of the abutments of the bridge.

"Look out, Bruce! What are you doing?" cried Arthur, making a fierce stroke with his paddle so as to avoid the danger.

But the canoe was now in the full force of the current, and only an expert canoeist could have kept it under control. Swaying this way and that, it rushed right at the abutment, and in desperation Arthur thrust out his paddle to avoid the collision.

In some way the blade got caught between the bow and the abutment, so that the handle was torn from his grasp, and the paddle fell into the water beyond his reach.

"Good heavens! my paddle's gone!" he groaned. "What am I to do?"

What was he to do, indeed? In a trice the canoe had been swept under the bridge, and was speeding on as lightly as a chip, Bruce being powerless to restrain or direct it with his single paddle.

"Make for the shore! make for the shore!" shouted the man on the bridge, as he dashed across it to the right bank of the river in order to follow after the canoe.

The direction was easy to give, but, so far as Bruce was concerned, impossible of being carried out. He could do nothing at all with the canoe, which went dancing down with ever-increasing speed toward a series of rapids that began not far below the bridge, and grew more and more turbulent, until they ended in a roaring water-fall, to go over which meant inevitable death.

"Stop her, stop her, or you'll go over the falls!" shrieked the man, who was racing along the bank, in benevolent though unavailing sympathy.

At this warning the faces of both boys blanched. They knew nothing of the falls, but they could easily understand how such rapids as their canoe was now tossing in would lead to something of the kind.

"Oh, Bruce!" exclaimed Arthur despairingly, "this is awful. How can we save ourselves?"

"Keep as steady as you can, Arthur," Bruce replied, his countenance firm though pallid, and his eyes looking steadfastly ahead. "There are plenty of chances yet."

Although he could not check the speed of the canoe he did manage to direct its course sufficiently to keep it heading with the current, and at the same time to work it a little nearer the bank along which the man was running.

The rapids were growing rapidly rougher, and the light craft bobbed about in them most vivaciously; but the motion was far from giving pleasure to the imperilled occupants, whose ears already caught the roar of the falls toward which they were being borne against their will.

"The falls! do you hear them, Bruce?" shrieked Arthur, in terror. "They must be just ahead."

"Be still, Arthur, it's our only chance," was Bruce's reply, given in a tone whose steadiness astonished himself.

By taking a short cut through the trees the man had got some distance ahead of the canoe, and as it turned a bend in the river the boys saw him standing knee-deep in the water, and stretching out his hands toward them.

At the same moment they saw beyond him the snow-white billows which marked the beginning of the fall.

"The rope! throw me the rope!" the man shouted at the top of his voice. "It's your only chance."

By desperate strokes of his paddle Bruce forced the canoe towards the man, while Arthur gathered together the rope at the bow of the canoe, which fortunately was of a good length, and prepared to fling it.

"Now! Throw it now!" cried Bruce, when he had got the canoe within five yards of the man.

Arthur flung the rope, which was indeed no more than a stout cord, so straight at the man that its loose end struck him full in the face. But he did not flinch, and caught it fast in both hands, bracing himself for the strain when the rope tightened.

So great was the impetus of the canoe that the jerk of its sudden stopping nearly dragged the man off his feet, and the boys had a narrow escape from being tumbled into the water.

But happily they held on to their seats, and the man to the rope, and in another moment they had sprung ashore, and all danger was over.

"By Jupiter! but that was an escape!" exclaimed Arthur; "and but for you, sir," turning to the man and holding out his hand, "we'd have been over those falls, sure. You've saved our lives."

"Yes, indeed," said Bruce, holding out his hand, "and I don't know how we can thank you enough. We had no business to go past the boat-house when we're such poor hands at managing a canoe."

The man smiled pleasantly as he returned the grateful hand-shakes.

"I was thinking ye hadn't much practice at it as I was watching ye from the bridge. No doubt ye've had a close call, but a miss is as good as a mile, ye know, and ye'll just have to be more careful next time. How's ye goin' to get your canoe back to the boat-house?"

"I suppose we'll have to carry it," answered Bruce.

"That'll be rather a tough job," said the man. "Jest leave it here a little, and I'll bring my cart down, and tote it back on that."

This suggestion suited the boys admirably, and so, having rewarded their friend in need for his timely services, and settled with the boat-keeper for the hire of the canoe, they returned to the hotel, which they reached just in time for lunch.

Having had their fill of excitement and adventure for the day, they spent the afternoon quietly at the natural sulphur baths, which were one of the wonders of the place.

They first visited the cave, a beehive-shaped pit in the limy deposit that had grown up through the ages around the spring, and which was formerly entered by a hole in the top. But some years previously a short tunnel had been driven from the outside right into the cave, and it was through this they made their way, hardly able to see for the steam that filled the

atmosphere.

The tunnel brought them into a grotto some thirty feet high, and twice as wide, the domed roof of which was adorned with glittering stalactites, while the floor was of water, clear as crystal, and of an exquisite aquamarine tint; from the rippled surface the steam was rising in unceasing whiffs.

A plank-walk extended around the wall, and from it steps led down into the water, which was not more than five feet deep at the most. Pure quartz sand lined the bottom of the pool, and looking down carefully, the water could be seen bubbling up with constant vigor.

The temptation to have a plunge in so novel a bath was not to be resisted, and the boys wasted no time in doffing their clothes and donning a bathing-suit.

They entered the water gingerly, fearing it might feel too hot at first, but soon were rolling and splashing about in its luxurious depths, for they found the temperature just right, and the taste not unpleasant, charged with sulphur though it was.

"Isn't this perfectly delicious!" exclaimed Arthur, floating lazily on his back, "I'd like to stay here all the afternoon, wouldn't you, Bruce?"

"I'm afraid we should be pretty limp creatures if we did that," replied Bruce; "and then, we've got the Basin to see yet, you know."

"That's so," assented Arthur, with a sigh; "but we needn't hurry over there. It can't be much better than this."

When, however, after dressing again, they did go on to the Basin, Arthur was inclined to modify his opinion. Here was the same circular pool of pellucid water, that came bubbling up through the same white quartz sand, but instead of being closed in by high walls of limestone that permitted only a glimpse of the sky, it was wide open to the sky, so that the steam escaped at once, and the atmosphere was entirely free from it. Thus, flooded with sunlight, it was a veritable Naiads' bath, and looked so irresistibly attractive that although his hair was not yet dry from his sousing in the cave, nothing would satisfy Arthur but that he must have a dip in the Basin also.

Bruce would not be bothered undressing again, and lounged comfortably on a bench, while Arthur amused himself trying to stand on the places where the water gushed up, the force of the springs being sufficient to send him floating off in spite of all his efforts.

The afternoon was well spent before they came away from this enchanting place, and the idea of being able to have such a bath every day if they liked increased their desire to spend at least a month in this wonderland, had it been at all practicable.

The next morning they set forth to scale Mount Rundle, whose massive front filled half the landscape as one looked from the rear balcony of the hotel.

They prepared for a day's outing, and, on the advice of the hotel-manager, took with them as guide an Indian boy rejoicing in the nickname of "One Cent," probably because of the coppery tint of his complexion.

Mr. Mark guaranteed that One Cent knew the easiest way to the top of the mountain, and his services were well worth the half-dollar he demanded for them, so the boys were only too glad to have him.

In his impatience to reach the mountain's foot, and begin the climbing, Arthur started off at a lively pace, that caused One Cent to shake his head sagely and murmur:

"Better go slow. Get plenty tired soon, you bet."

"Good advice that, Arthur," said Bruce, smiling. "He knows what he's talking about. There's more work ahead of us than you imagine, perhaps."

And so it proved, indeed. In the first place the mountain turned out to be a great deal farther from the hotel than it looked, and in the second place its lower slopes were much steeper than they appeared.

At first they had to make their way through dense masses of scrub pine, which grew thinner as they ascended, until they disappeared altogether over wide spaces, leaving the rock bare, to be beaten upon by the rays of the hot summer sun.

The heat was trying enough, but the mosquitoes were worse. They came in clouds, blowing their tiny trumpets for joy at having such fine, fresh victims, and leaving One Cent almost untouched, while they devoted themselves with striking unanimity to his white brothers.

The boys had not accomplished more than one-half of the ascent before they realized that the undertaking was no mere holiday task, but one that would test their endurance and strength to the utmost.

As might be expected, Arthur was the first to cry out for a halt. A tiny stream of water, gushing cool and clear from a gray crag, furnished a good excuse, of which he was not slow to take advantage.

"Let's stop and have a drink," he suggested. "I'm as dry as a lime-kiln."

The pause gave them a chance to look back over the way they had come, and to take in the view from their elevation. They could command the whole valley of the Bow, and the grandeur of the picture inspired them to renewed effort.

"If it's so fine from here, Arthur," said Bruce enthusiastically, "what must it be like from the top?"

The remaining portion of the climb proved exceedingly difficult, in spite of the intelligence shown by One Cent in picking out the most practicable way.

There was no pretence of a path, but the Indian instinct for the right direction never failed him; and although their line of progress was much after the manner of a cork-screw, they had the constant satisfaction of realizing that, if the top was not drawing rapidly nearer, the bottom was certainly falling farther beneath them.

The mosquitoes contested every inch of the way. It seemed as if they must be the guardians of the mountain, commissioned to oppose intrusion upon its solitary state. Arthur was driven nearly frantic by their stings, and his hands were going continually in furious, though futile, endeavors to protect himself.

Higher and higher the three boys worked their way until only the curious saddle-back which forms the topmost ridge of Mount Rundle was left to be conquered.

"Must take plenty care now," said One Cent, looking very grave. "Heap easy get bad fall."

The difficulty was that the steep slope which led to the crest of the mountain was composed of a soft rock that crumbled and broke away under the foot, and the footsteps had to be planted slowly and with much circumspection.

At the last the boys had to crawl painfully on their hands and knees, One Cent setting them the example. But when they did reach the summit, and, seating themselves upon it, were able to sweep the whole superb amphitheatre of mountain peaks with unchecked vision, they at once forgot all the toil and torment of the ascent.

One Cent knew the name of every mountain within sight, and pointed them out one after another, pronouncing their names in his quaint Indian way that was not always entirely intelligible.

Right across the valley of the Spray the broad tree-clad flanks of Sulphur Mountain were bathed in sunlight, while at the right the round shoulders of Tunnel Mountain showed gray and bare. Northward, the huge mass of Cascade Mountain was streaked with snow-drifts, and farther away Mount Inglesmaldie and Mount Peechee towered above all their fellows, the one falling a little short of, and the other exceeding, ten thousand feet in height.

Away below them lay the hotel, looking little larger than a summer cottage; so close beneath them, it seemed, that Arthur pretended he could throw stones upon its roof, and wished he had a parachute to try a flying descent to it, after the manner of the aeronaut at the exhibition.

They remained for over an hour at the summit, Arthur being in no hurry to leave it, because there was a most refreshing breeze up there, and, moreover, the mosquitoes had ceased from troubling, having been parted company with some hundreds of feet below.

When they did set out upon the return journey Arthur would not consent to retracing their steps.

"No, sirree," he exclaimed emphatically, "I'm not going to let those pestiferous mosquitoes have another feed off me. I'll let a fresh lot have a chance, if there's no help for it. But I believe if we go down the side of the mountain where the wind's blowing we shan't be bothered half so much. It's worth trying, anyway."

As they were not pressed for time Bruce had no objections to taking another way down, but One Cent shook his head, saying:

"Better go back same way. Other side plenty steep."

"Oh, come now, One Cent," responded Arthur in a bantering tone, "you're just lazy, that's all. You're anxious to get back to the hotel. But you're not going to do it, so start ahead down this other side and we'll follow."

With a decidedly glum look One Cent did as he was bid, but so slowly and reluctantly that Arthur, growing impatient, pushed past him, saying rather roughly:

"Tut! you're slower than a funeral. Let me show you how to move along."

This he did so recklessly that Bruce had for the second time warned him to be more careful, and was just hastening forward to lay a restraining hand upon him when the rock crumbled underneath Arthur's feet, and, uttering a shrill cry of terror, he went sliding down a sharp declivity which led towards a tremendous chasm.

CHAPTER XIV.

BANFF, AND BEYOND.

Had it not been for the timely interposition of One Cent Bruce would have gone sliding down after Arthur. But the sharp-witted Indian laid hold of him just as his feet were slipping, and by a quick, strong jerk threw him back in a sitting posture that enabled him to retain his place.

"Plenty fool chap that," said the Indian with a significant shrug of the shoulders as he watched the unfortunate Arthur making frantic though futile endeavors to stay his fall.

"But we must save him," cried Bruce in a tone of agonized anxiety. "Oh, what can we do?"

Down went the boy, stirring up a small avalanche of loose stones in his descent, and it seemed as if nothing could save him from the fatal plunge over the precipice, when happily his course was arrested by a projection of harder rock than the debris which composed the slope.

He came upon this projection in such a way that one leg went on each side of it, and he got astride of it, so to speak.

The instant he felt the firm rock underneath him his self-control, which had deserted him in the first fright of his fall, came back to him, and, clasping the friendly pinnacle firmly, he turned his head towards where he had left Bruce, and shouted back:

"I'm all right! This thing's solid."

"Thank God!" exclaimed Bruce fervently. "He says he's all right. Now, how can we get him up out of that?"

One Cent had no suggestion to offer. He was glad Arthur had not gone over the precipice, but, that danger being past, he felt no especial concern about getting him out of his uncomfortable, if not dangerous, situation. Bruce could see about that.

And Bruce did proceed to see about it without a minute's delay. His clear, active brain quickly had a scheme of action devised.

"Look here, One Cent," said he impressively, laying his hand upon the Indian's arm, "I'm going to stay here to keep Arthur company, and you must hurry back to the hotel and get help. Bring back a good strong rope and a lantern, for it may be dark before we all get away from here. Hurry up now, and be back as quick as you can."

One Cent looked sulky. The idea of racing down to the hotel, and toiling back again, was not at all attractive, and he hung back in evident reluctance to start.

Bruce's first impulse on noting this was to wax wrathy, and express his indignation at such cold-blooded indifference to another's peril in no measured terms.

But he checked himself promptly; a more politic method of dealing with the phlegmatic red man was imperatively necessary. He therefore adopted a different style of argument. Taking out his purse he extracted a two-dollar bill, and waved it before the Indian's avid eyes, saying:

"See, now, One Cent. Bring me what I told you as soon as you possibly can, and this money is yours."

Not another word was necessary. After a longing look at the note, One Cent darted off, descending the mountain side in long leaps from ledge to ledge which no white man would have dared attempt.

When he had started Bruce shouted cheeringly to Arthur:

"You'll be all right soon, chum. One Cent has gone back to the hotel for a rope, and we'll pull you up out of that before long. Keep a tight hold there, and be as patient as you can."

"You'll stay there, won't you, Bruce?" Arthur called back in a most pitiful tone. "It would be awful to be left here alone."

"Of course I will," responded Bruce heartily, "if I have to stay all night; and, say, Arthur, couldn't you manage to turn round so as to be facing up this way? It'll be more sociable than having your back to me."

"I'll try," said Arthur, and he began to squirm around very carefully, moving only a few inches at a time, for the loose stones had a startling way of getting dislodged, and making mimic avalanches.

After some minutes of anxious work he succeeded in changing his position, so that his face was turned towards Bruce.

"Ah!" said his companion, "that's better now. We can talk to one another properly."

It was certainly a curious situation in which to sustain a conversation, and little wonder if it flagged during the long minutes that dragged themselves on so slowly, while One Cent was on his mission.

Arthur's position was both awkward and wearisome, and he gave many a groan of tribulation as the afternoon slipped by, and still there was no sign of One Cent.

"Do you think he'd leave us here, and not come back for us at all?" Arthur asked with pathetic anxiety in his voice.

"Not a bit of it," replied Bruce in his most positive tone. "He hasn't a chance to make a couple of dollars very often, and he'll be here before another half-hour's gone."

Nor was Bruce's judgment in the matter at fault. The half-hour had about elapsed when One Cent appeared, his face shining with perspiration and pride, and over his arm a coil of rope, while in his right hand was a lantern.

"Me get 'em all," he panted, as he put the lantern down at Bruce's feet, and let the coil of rope drop from his shoulder.

"Well done, One Cent!" cried Bruce, not until that moment realizing how terribly anxious he had been, the load being now lifted from his mind. "You couldn't have done it better. Here's your money. You've earned it nobly."

One Cent's dusky fingers closed exultantly over the note, but with not a whit less joy did Bruce's lay hold of the precious rope which meant his companion's release from peril.

"Here's the rope, Arthur!" he shouted gleefully as he gathered it in a coil, and then flung it down the slope.

The first throw fell short, but the second earned it within Arthur's reach, and he grasped it with a hearty "hurrah!" that showed he had plenty of vigor still left.

"Now, then, Arthur," Bruce called out, "take a turn of the rope around your waist, and grip it with all your might. We'll have to pull you up slowly, for fear of your starting an avalanche."

Settling themselves firmly against the rock so that they could not possibly overbalance, Bruce and One Cent joined forces, and proceeded to haul Arthur up hand over hand.

It was slow work, but, with characteristic caution, Bruce would not allow of any haste, and all in good time Arthur was brought back to safety, with only some slight injuries to his hands, and a big rent in his trousers, to show how narrow an escape from death had been his.

After resting a little while they set out for the hotel, and before the journey was more than half completed Bruce's foresight in having One Cent get the lantern was amply justified, as it grew so dark that without it even the Indian could not have kept the trail, and they would have been compelled to remain out all night.

When they did reach the hotel they found Mr. Mark and many of the guests awaiting their return with a good deal of anxiety. In fact, a volunteer relief expedition was already in process of organization, some of whose members seemed rather to regret that this opportunity to distinguish themselves was not allowed them.

When the story of the escape had been told, the general opinion was that Arthur bad been extremely fortunate, as if that projection had not stopped his fall he must infallibly have gone over a precipice hundreds of feet in height, to be dashed to pieces on the pitiless bowlders below.

The interest this incident awakened, combined with the novelty of the boys' method of travelling, led to their receiving an invitation for the following day which they were not slow in accepting.

Among the guests at the hotel was a prominent member of the Canadian Parliament, and the inspector of the Mounted Police in charge of the National Park at Banff had offered to take the member and a limited number of his friends for a drive to Devil's Lake in a four-in-hand turnout.

The member, having taken a fancy to the boys, was moved thereby to offer them seats in the big wagon, and they, of course, jumped at the chance, which was one that fell to few of the many tourists visiting Banff.

They were sitting in the shade of the veranda the following morning when the four-in-hand appeared, and as it came up the hill at full gallop, and swung round in the narrow space before the door, coming to a stop at exactly the right spot, they could not refrain from expressing their admiration aloud, it was such a superb piece of driving.

"Wasn't that splendidly done?" cried Arthur, clapping his hands. "It will be grand fun having a drive with a man who can manage his horses like that."

The driver was the officer in command of the Mounted Police, Inspector Taylor, a magnificent specimen of manhood, to whom the control of four strong, spirited horses was a mere holiday task.

The conveyance, which was a kind of long, heavy express wagon with four seats, quickly filled up, the boys being put in the rear seat with the member's daughter, a bright, attractive young lady, with whom they were soon on excellent terms.

The seat of honor beside the whip was given to a bride spending her honeymoon at Banff, while the other seats accommodated the member of Parliament and his friends.

It was a merry, noisy party, and without any anticipation of the exciting time in store for them they rolled away amid a cloud of dust, and a round of cheers from the other people who were not lucky enough to be with them.

"They say we go over some roads that will make your hair stand up," said Bruce. "I suppose we've got a good, strong brake on the wagon."

"Oh, you may be sure of that," replied Miss Montague, with a sunny smile. "It's a Government turnout, and my father's a member, you know, and they're bound to take the best of care of *him*."

The boys both laughed, as it was evident their fair companion was speaking more in jest than earnest.

"Your father, then, is our guardian angel," said Bruce, "and we shall be all safe so long as we keep close to him—is that it?"

"If you like," returned Miss Montague. "He's my guardian, anyway, and he'll take good care that nothing happens to me that he can help."

As they were thus pleasantly chatting the heavily freighted carriage rattled down into the valley, crossed the iron bridge, and began the series of ascending curves by which the height of Tunnel Mountain was scaled.

The road, admirably built, albeit somewhat narrow, made long loops in the mountain-side, and it was collar-work for the horses every inch of the way, but the glorious views that successively opened out made the passengers content with the slow progress.

Indeed, as they climbed higher and higher, and yawning declivities opened out on their right, they were glad enough to creep along rather than hasten, since a slight diversion from the road might be attended with such disastrous effects.

They had all but completed the ascent, and were just turning a sharp bend where the road was built out by trestle-work on a shoulder of the mountain in such a way that one had a clear look into the rapids of the Bow river hundreds of feet below, when the bride, who had been evincing a good deal of nervousness, gave a shrill cry, and, throwing up her hands, would have pitched forward out of the carriage in a dead faint had not Mr. Taylor, rapidly shifting all the reins into his right hand, cleverly caught her with his left, and held her firmly.

It was a critical moment, not only for the helpless woman and the inspector, but for the other occupants of the wagon. The strain of the steep climb having ended, the relieved horses had started off briskly, and needed the full attention of their driver. But this he could not give, because of being encumbered with his fair burden. Yet, no one could take either the woman or the reins from his hands until the horses had been brought to a halt, and this could not be done at once.

Happily Mr. Taylor's wonderful strength and self-possession proved equal even to so trying a dilemma. Keeping his left arm around the bride, he skilfully reined up the horses in a favorable place, and the moment he did so, the lady's husband sprang to the ground and lifted her out of the wagon.

She was not long in recovering her senses, and then, his anxiety being relieved, her husband was fool enough to feel indignant at Mr. Taylor for having put an arm around his wife, instead of being deeply grateful to him for having saved her from injury.

The lady showed considerably more sense on that point, but vowed she would under no circumstances reënter the wagon, and the result of it all was that the newly wedded couple decided to walk back to the hotel, leaving the remainder of the party to continue the drive without them.

As the wagon rolled on, leaving the couple standing in the road, Arthur remarked, with a significant laugh, to Bruce:

"Tied to his wife's apron-strings, eh, chum? We won't be in any hurry to get into that scrape ourselves, will we?"

"Oh, you ungallant young man!" cried Miss Montague, with a well-pretended pout, "to say such a thing before me. You deserve to become nothing but a crusty old bachelor, with the gout to plague you, for being so horrid."

"Perhaps that wouldn't be any worse than having a wife to henpeck you," suggested Bruce demurely.

"Oh, dear! and you're just as bad," sighed Miss Montague. "I did expect better things from you, you seemed so staid and sensible."

With such like harmless banter the young people amused themselves while the four-in-hand went rattling down the mountain road, often turning corners so sharply that the leaders disappeared from sight until the wagon swung round after them. Inspector Taylor's handling of his handsome team was a revelation in driving. He rarely spoke to them above a conversational tone. His hand on the reins was as soft as velvet yet as firm as steel, and although he cracked the long whip over the horses' heads it never touched their shining flanks. They fully understood its music, and needed not to be startled by its sting.

"How in the world should we manage if we met another team on this road?" asked Bruce, looking thoughtfully down into the abyss below. "There's certainly not room enough for us to pass each other."

The words had barely left his lips before the precise problem he had been pondering over presented itself. Swinging around a sharp corner they came upon a light phaeton drawn by a single horse, and containing two people, a man and a woman, whose faces blanched with fright as the four-in-hand bore down upon them.

There was but scant space in which to bring the heavy wagon with its impetus to a full stop, yet Mr. Taylor did it as easily as though it were nothing at all difficult, the wheels ceasing to revolve just as the leaders' noses touched that of the horse in the phaeton.

"Please keep quite still now," Mr. Taylor called out to the frightened couple. "There's no danger if you do so."

The lady was just about to spring from the phaeton, but fell back on the seat on hearing these reassuring words, and Mr. Taylor, handing the reins over to Mr. Montague, who took his place on the box, jumped down, and after patting his own horses, and telling them to stand steady, went to the head of the other animal.

Then, bidding both the lady and gentleman to get out, he carefully backed the team until it came to a place where the road had been widened by cutting into the bank so as to make room for passing; crowding the phaeton against the bank, and directing its driver to hold the horse there, he went back to his own seat, gathered up the reins, released the brake, and drove gayly past the other carriage, saying as he did so:

"Good-by—and keep a sharper lookout ahead next time."

The boys had followed every move of the inspector with growing admiration for his coolness and resource, and when the difficulty was over, Arthur exclaimed enthusiastically:

"Well, if Mr. Taylor isn't equal to anything!" little imagining that before the drive was ended a crisis would develop which would put his powers to a far severer test than either of the previous incidents.

After the crossing of Tunnel Mountain, the road ran through a valley, and then by hill and dale to Devil's Lake, where it ended at a pretty little vine-covered hotel, before which the party alighted.

There was a small steam-launch moored to the end of a long wooden pier, and this the visitors hired for a run up the lake, which they all found extremely pleasant after the drive along the hot, dusty roads.

Arthur took care to secure a place in the launch near the bow, but Bruce was content with one at the stern; and while the former had the best of it at first, on the return trip he would gladly have exchanged places, for a fresh breeze having sprung up, the waves rose sufficiently to send many a liberal splash over the bulwarks, and by the time the pier was regained Arthur had got pretty well drenched.

The views obtained while on the launch were very impressive: the mountains rising sheer from the water's edge in beetling crags, and sky-piercing pinnacles, their many-colored sides made white with snow wherever the drifts could linger, and here and there ribboned with glacier-fed streams that came cascading down to add their waters to the volume of the lake.

There were fish to be caught in the lake, if the tourists had had time to try for them, but, much as the boys would have liked to do so, they could not tarry for that purpose, and after partaking of some refreshments at the hotel, the wagon was filled up again, and the return drive begun.

They went back over the same road, and quite uneventfully, until they came to the famous Corkscrew, as it was called, on Tunnel Mountain. Going out, they had ascended this, and it was not a very difficult matter, but returning they had to descend it, which was a very different affair.

This Corkscrew was certainly a remarkable bit of road-building. It would seem as if the engineer of the road, getting tired of overcoming the heavy gradient by long loops, had determined to make a great gain in a small compass by attacking the steep slope with a series of short curves, that made of the road a gigantic double letter S lying upon the mountain-side.

So sharp were the turns, that, going up, the wheelers had to practically pull the wagon by themselves, there not being room for the leaders to make their traces taut, and the consummate ease with which Mr. Taylor managed his spirited team had drawn forth unqualified tributes of admiration from the passengers.

On the return trip they were just in the middle of the Corkscrew, and with reins held firmly and brake pressed hard Mr. Taylor was skilfully turning the dangerous corners, while every one in the wagon was scarce breathing with suppressed excitement, when the off wheeler stumbled over a loose rock, and went down in a heap, almost dragging his mate with him.

For one thrilling moment there was harrowing suspense as the good horse strove to recover his footing, and then came a crash that startled even the iron-nerved driver. The wheeler did succeed in getting up again, but in the struggle the pole was somehow snapped in two, just a little in front of where it was set into the fore-axle.

Here, indeed, was an emergency calculated to test the most superb self-control. The safety, if not the lives, of half a score of people depended upon the action of the next minute. Were the horses to break away and dash down the mountain-side, it could mean naught save horrible injury, and perhaps death, to the helpless beings behind them.

But not for an instant was Inspector Taylor flustered or dismayed. Putting his whole vast strength upon the brake, so that the hind wheels skidded until the wagon came to a full stop, he spoke quietly to the horses, bearing hard upon the reins, yet not jerking them nervously, and thus retaining perfect control over the frightened animals.

"Now, then, ladies and gentlemen, will you please jump out as quietly as possible while I keep the wagon steady?" he said, without taking his eye off the horses, and in as calm a tone of voice as if there were nothing unusual in the situation.

The boys were the first to touch the ground, and Miss Montague promptly sprang into their arms. The others followed in good order, and in a trice the wagon was empty.

Actuated by a common impulse, Bruce and Arthur, as soon as they had set down Miss Montague, went to the leaders' heads, receiving from Mr. Taylor a nod of quick approval of their forethought.

Mr. Montague showed similar wit by blocking the front wheels with stones, and thus the peril was met and provided against without one of the party complicating the situation by displaying great excitement, or making any blunder. The members of the party certainly well merited Mr. Taylor's brief, yet comprehensive compliment:

"You're a lot of bricks. You couldn't have done it better."

After complimenting their driver on his perfect mastery of the situation, and congratulating each other on having escaped so handsomely, the next thing in order was to contrive how to fix the pole so as to complete the drive home.

Here, again, it was the inspector that filled the breach. With the aid of a tough young fir-tree, cut down with a jack-knife, and sundry bits of rope, the broken pole was so spliced as to do, with careful management, and, after the delay of an hour, the drive was resumed, to be completed without further mishap ere sundown.

Next day, the boys bade good-by to Banff.

Very gladly would they have lingered there for many days longer, but Bruce felt bound to move on, as there were many things yet to be seen and done before they reached the ocean-side, so they set out in the cool of the morning for more tramping along the railway track, which here furnished the only pathway through the wilderness of mountains.

They were anxious to get as far as Laggan station before nightfall, and to accomplish this meant very strict attention to the business of walking, as the distance exceeded thirty miles.

"We shall have to peg away like good fellows, Arthur," said Bruce, setting his companion a good, steady pace. "We can get to Eldon, anyway, even if we don't make Laggan."

The road ran alongside the Bow river, for some distance, through a densely timbered valley, with stupendous mountains guarding it on either hand, one of them bearing the curious name of Hole-in-the-Wall, because of a big cavern high up its craggy side, which was reputed to be a great resort of the wild goats and big-horn sheep.

The boys could see the mouth of the cavern quite plainly, and Arthur would have liked very much to try the climb up there.

"It would be splendid to be able to say that we'd really seen some of those strange animals," he said, "and I wouldn't mind staying over a day for the sake of it."

Bruce looked thoughtfully up at the cavern.

"We'd need a regular outfit of guides, provisions, and things to get there," said he. "We couldn't possibly manage it by ourselves. Let us wait until we get to Laggan. That's a better place still for sheep and goats, they say. We shall have a chance to get a sight of them there, perhaps."

This suggestion satisfied Arthur, and they plodded on steadily with occasional pauses for a refreshing drink from the ice-cold waters of the Bow, reaching the station at Castle Mountain not long after mid-day, and remaining there for dinner and a good rest.

Their stopping-place was at the base of the great peak whose name it bore, and which towered up five thousand feet above it like some vast giant's keep, with turrets, bastions, and battlements complete.

In every direction rose ranges of snow-covered peaks, and when the boys resumed their tramp, fresh vistas of grandeur and beauty opened out at every turn of the road.

Pilot Mountain, Copper Mountain, Mount Temple, and beyond it, standing supreme over all, the prodigious, isolated, helmet-shaped mountain named Lefroy, the loftiest and grandest in the whole panorama. Such were the glorious objects upon which the young pedestrians feasted their appreciation of the sublime and beautiful, the varied tints of the scarred and splintered mountain-sides contrasting finely with the absolute whiteness of the snow-wreaths about their summits.

As the afternoon waned the boys began to weary with the steady walking. It was five o'clock when they reached Eldon, and Laggan was still ten miles ahead, so that they had pretty well made up their minds to stay there for the night, when Arthur noticed a couple of the section-men getting a hand-car ready to go in the direction of Laggan.

"I wonder would they take us on," he said to Bruce. "I'll ask them, anyway."

"Certainly, if you'll work your passage," was the prompt reply when he had preferred his request.

To this condition the boys readily acceded, and the next minute they were off for their first ride on a hand-car.

For some time they were permitted to be simply passengers, and they found the experience highly enjoyable, the hand-car running along smoothly and steadily while the sturdy section-men toiled at the handles of the motive power, which worked up and down like those of a vessel's pump.

To sit on the front of the platform and command a perfect view of the glorious landscape while thus being carried on their way pleased the boys immensely, but when, after one-half the distance had been accomplished, one of the section-men suggested that they might now take a hand, they found that the work of pumping out motion was no child's play.

The perspiration was soon pouring down their faces, and aches that were increasingly hard to endure developed in their arms and backs. But they would have persevered until they dropped in sheer exhaustion, rather than cry out for relief, and so they kept valiantly at it until the man, taking pity on their evident distress, said, good-humoredly:

"You've got lots of sand, you have, young fellows, but I guess you're pretty sick of that pumping. Let us take the handles for the rest of the trip."

Right gladly did the boys resign their places and resume their seats on the platform, where the cool evening breeze fanned their heated brows luxuriously as they rode at their ease to Laggan.

By great good fortune they found Mr. Ashdown, who kept the Châlet Hotel at Lake Louise, which was their objective point, just about to leave the station, and lost no time in securing seats in his express wagon.

A rough and rather tedious ride over a newly made road, which climbed the mountain-side by cautious curves, brought them to the margin of the lake by nightfall, and, thoroughly tired with the day's undertakings, they were glad to dispose of a bountiful supper, and tumble into bed immediately after.

They were up with the sun next morning, and were well rewarded for their enterprise by a spectacle the like of which had never greeted their eyes before.

Before them lay the full expanse of Lake Louise, the first of the famous lakes in the clouds, a beautiful sheet of water set in the midst of towering mountains, whose wonderful variations of tint and outline were repeated with marvellous fidelity in its unruffled bosom.

On their right, the tree-clad steeps slanted sharply up, until their peaks seemed to touch the clouds; on their left, a mighty mountain rose right from the water's edge, two thousand feet or more, its precipitous face glowing in the bright morning sunshine with gorgeous hues of red and brown and yellow, while off at the far end of the lake there was an opening as of a vast proscenium, revealing range upon range of gleaming glaciers and snow-wreathed cliffs.

The almost supernatural beauty of this scene awed the boys into silence, and they had been looking long upon it before Bruce broke the stillness by saying, as he drew a deep breath of admiration: "This is fit for the home of the gods!"

"The almost Supernatural Beauty of this Scene awed the Boys into Silence."

Arthur, assenting to his chum's classical suggestion, added, one more practical, as he gazed at the aquamarine-tinted water, "Let's have a dip. It looks lovely."

Seeking out a secluded cove, they stripped off their clothes and plunged in, without waiting to try the temperature of the water.

The first splash was instantly followed by howls of pain and dismay. The lake, fed by melting snows, was deathly cold, and to swim in it was utterly impossible. Chilled to the very marrow, both boys struggled frantically ashore, and had to lie in the warm sun for some minutes before they could reclothe their numbed bodies.

"Jerusalem!" chattered Arthur, "that was a cold reception with a vengeance. No more dips in mountain lakes for me."

As soon as breakfast was over, they proceeded to make arrangements with Mr. Ashdown for the day.

"We want to do two things here," Bruce explained. "We must see all the lakes, of course, and, if at all possible, we want to get a sight of the mountain sheep and goats. We don't want to shoot them, but simply to see them."

"Well, I can't just promise you that I can manage the sheep and goats for you," replied Mr. Ashdown, "but I'll do my best. It'll be an all-day job."

A bright-looking Indian lad, who could be trusted as a guide, was placed at the boys' disposal, and, taking a good supply of sandwiches, they set out, having no other arms than their revolvers, although Mr. Ashdown offered them one of his own rifles. They expected to be away until evening, and they impressed upon their host to have a good dinner awaiting their return, for they would assuredly be as hungry as wolves.

Fifty yards from the house they plunged into the dense pine woods, through which a rough trail crept in an undulating fashion up the steep ascent. There was no pretence of a path. Roots of trees, rocks, and fallen trunks had to be avoided as best one could, and, sturdy as they were of limb, the boys soon realized that they had a tough job, seeing that the third lake lay some two thousand feet above Lake Louise, and that from its margin the mountains and glaciers rose to still

loftier heights.

But the climbing was not half so bad as the insect pests. There were mosquitoes in troops, gnats in myriads, and "bull-dogs" in battalions. The bull-dogs were the worst, when they got their work in properly. They were large, powerful flies, something like blue-bottles, which took a piece right out whenever they bit, the pain inflicted being intense for a while, but soon passing away, as there was no poison in their fangs.

It was not until the boys bound up their faces in their handkerchiefs that they got any relief from their persistent tormenters; yet the Indian lad stepped lightly along without the slightest discomfort.

"Look here, Brownie," said Arthur, giving the guide a name off-hand, not knowing what he ought to be called, "how is it the flies and mosquitoes don't bother you when they're biting us as if they've been starved for a month?"

"Wah! that's all right," was the grinning reply; "they got plenty tired bitin' me. Give it up for a bad job. But you—you're fresh. They glad to get you, um! um!" And he smacked his lips as if he could fully enter into the insects' appreciation of new victims.

"Confound the pests! what on earth were they created for?" cried Arthur, swiping savagely at a bunch of buzzing bull-dogs. "Why can't a fellow be left in peace?"

"They're to teach us the virtue of patience, I suppose," said Bruce consolingly, "and to prevent our getting too fond of this beautiful world."

As he spoke the forest opened before them, and they found themselves at the edge of Mirror Lake, a smaller sheet of water than Lake Louise, yet no less lovely in its way.

So deeply was it sunk amidst the spiky pines that not a breath of wind rippled its waters, and every detail of the mountains towering above it was photographed upon its crystal surface.

Thence the trail, ever growing steeper and rougher until finally it became almost perpendicular, led up past the tree limit to the third and last of the lakes in the clouds, Lake Agnes, filling a great cup, carved out of the mountain-top, with its dimpling azure-hued waters.

The boys had accomplished the main part of their climb, and were glad to throw themselves down beside the outlet, and have a good rest, while the brisk breeze not only cooled their heated countenances, but blew away from them the provoking mosquitoes, which were on hand even at that height.

CHAPTER XV.

GOOD LUCK IN THE MOUNTAINS.

From their lofty eyrie the boys could look down upon both the other lakes, Mirror Lake showing little more than a gleam of blue amidst the dark green of the pines, but Lake Louise spreading out its smiling breadth, with the Châlet nestling cosily in a cove at the lower extremity.

A couple of sandwiches, washed down by the ice-cold, crystal-clear water that tumbled joyously past them, made a refreshing lunch, and they were then ready for further explorations.

Bruce, who had great faith in the potency of the "almighty dollar," held one up before Brownie's eyes as he said:

"Bring us within sight of some sheep or goats, and this dollar is yours, besides your wages for the day."

Brownie's eyes glistened. He was a very intelligent-looking chap, and had quite a pleasing countenance.

"You want to shoot 'em?" he asked, with a doubtful glance at the revolver at Bruce's hip.

"No," Bruce replied. "Not to shoot them, but simply to see them. You bring us as near to a band of them as you can, that's all you've got to do."

"All right, boss," responded Brownie. "Me do it, you bet, but," and he gave both boys a scrutinizing look, "you'll have plenty climb."

"Oh, we'll do the climbing right enough," said Arthur confidently. "You just show us the way, and we'll follow you."

They accordingly set off along the left-hand shore of the lake, picking their way carefully over the bowlders which King Frost had hurled down from the heights above. Near the upper end of the lake lay a great snow-bank, and on reaching it, Brownie, his dusky features lit up with excitement, pointed to a line of tracks plainly marked in the snow.

"Bear!" he exclaimed eagerly. "Big bear make that."

The announcement sent a curious thrill through the boys. It was the first time in their lives that they had seen the actual foot-marks of a wild animal nearer acquaintance with which might be dangerous, and their feelings at first were by no means innocent of fear. In fact, either of them would have been rather glad if the other had suggested going no farther.

But they were both too proud to be the first to speak, and, moreover, there was a twinkle in Brownie's dark eyes that helped to close their lips.

By way of concealing their temporary embarrassment, they proceeded to give the bear tracks as close an inspection as if thereby they would be enabled to pronounce upon the exact variety of bruin that made them, and the length of time that had elapsed since they were made. Of course, as a matter of fact they had to depend upon Brownie for information on both points, and in response to the inquiring looks they turned to him, he said, with a kind of chuckle:

"Yas, plenty big bear that. He make tracks last night. Gone away now, verra far," and he gave an expressive sweep with his arms in the direction of the distant peaks.

"All right. We'll follow him. Go ahead!" said Arthur, putting a bold face on the matter, and Brownie starting off with a smiling face, they completed the circuit of the lake, and attacked the terminal moraine of the glacier at its head.

It was hard climbing, the bowlders being heaped upon one another in wild confusion, and they could make but slow progress; but they kept at it sturdily until they had overcome the moraine, and reached the rocky slope beyond.

Not being provided with proper appliances for mountain-climbing, such as hobnail boots and alpenstocks, they had to proceed very cautiously, and they were fortunate in having an unusually intelligent and careful guide in their dusky companion.

Onward and upward they made their way, taking in little of the majestic and awe-inspiring scenery around them because of their intense absorption in the search for the animals they hoped to see.

Such manful energy and enterprise deserved success, yet it was not until long after mid-day that there seemed any hope of the boys being rewarded. Indeed, they were growing quite discouraged, and were in the mood to give up the chase, when Brownie, who had climbed a sharp ridge in advance of them, suddenly drew back his head, from the summit, and beckoned vigorously to them.

Creeping to his side as silently as shadows, they peered expectantly over the edge, and their hearts simultaneously leaped for joy at what their eager eyes beheld.

Beyond the ridge lay a wide cleft in the range, and on the farther side of this, too distant even for rifle-shot, a fine band of mountain sheep was going slowly in single file led by a superb ram whose massive horns were fit to adorn a ducal mansion.

The boys drew deep breaths of grateful admiration as they saw this monarch of the mountains moving in his pride from one pasture to another with his docile following of ewes and kids, and it seemed almost too good to be true when the sheep had hardly disappeared before a pair of goats, white and shaggy, bearded like ancient Druids, and looking quite as wise and solemn, came up over the other side of the ridge beyond the valley, and picked their way deliberately downward as if to cross to where the boys were concealed.

"Oh, if they will only come right close to us!" whispered Arthur, trembling all over with excitement.

It really seemed as if his desire would be granted, for the curious-looking creatures had advanced one-half the distance when suddenly they stopped, sniffed the air suspiciously, and, the larger one giving a peculiar whistle of alarm, the two dashed away up the steep slope at a rate that soon carried them out of sight.

"See!" hissed Brownie, grasping Bruce's arm; "big bear scare them, and there was a strange expression in his eyes, whether of fear or mere excitement it was not clear."

Sure enough, lumbering lazily along as if nothing were farther from his thoughts than a supper of mutton chops, a great brown bear came into sight at the upper end of the valley. He was apparently looking neither to right nor to left, and the three human spectators watched him with bated breath until he went on past them, and vanished in the direction taken by the sheep.

"Upon my word," exclaimed Arthur, when Bruin had undoubtedly disappeared, "what an afternoon we're having! Sheep, goats, and bear on view almost at the same time. Brownie, you shall have an extra dollar from me as well as from Bruce."

"And now," added his cool-headed companion, "let us start for home. We've no time to lose in getting there."

Bruce's statement was true enough. In the ardor of their search for the sheep they had not taken into account either the flight of time or the distance traversed, and now that their ambition had been gratified, and their excitement had subsided, they were rather dismayed to realize what a long way it was back to the Châlet Hotel, beside Lake Louise.

However, it was a case of the less said the sooner mended, and off they started, resolved to spare themselves no exertion until they had come within hail of Mr. Ashdown, who would, no doubt, ere long be looking out for them.

But the fates, which had been so propitious hitherto, betrayed them shamefully ere they had got more than half-way back to Lake Agnes, for a mountain mist, arising as if by magic, enveloped them in its bewildering folds, so that even the shrewd, sagacious Indian lost his bearings, and, after wandering about for some time, refused to proceed any farther for fear of falling over some precipice.

Their situation now became decidedly serious. They were practically lost on those wild, bleak mountain-tops, where they stood a fair chance of having to spend the night without fire, food, or shelter, and moreover, besides all the risk of injury through such exposure, there was the well-grounded fear of bears which might see fit to attack them for daring to intrude upon their hunting-grounds.

They were brave enough boys, as has been already shown, but such a state of affairs was sufficient to try the stoutest heart, and it must not be put down to their discredit if at the first they both gave way to a kind of petulant despondency that was not at all like them, and made Brownie regard them with wondering looks.

But they did not allow this mood to hold them long.

"Tut, tut!" exclaimed Bruce, jumping up from the bowlder upon which he had been seated, and shaking himself as if to be rid of something. "There's no use in our acting like children even if we are in a bad fix. Try again, Brownie, and see if you can't make some headway in the right direction."

"That's the idea," said Arthur, brightening up in his turn. "Go ahead, Brownie. You'll hit the trail soon again."

Thus encouraged Brownie began again to work out a way home, the boys cautiously following a little behind him. It was an arduous, dangerous task, and one that tested the Indian's native instinct and intelligence to the utmost, but he persevered in it until even his sinewy frame had to yield to fatigue, and still Lake Agnes had not been reached.

"We've got to stay here all night if that mist does not disappear soon," said Bruce, in a tone more of resignation than despair.

Brownie nodded affirmatively, while Arthur groaned; and just at that moment, as if the fates were satisfied with the sport they had made of them, the enfolding mist began to roll up towards the peaks, and in a few minutes there was not a whiff of it between them and the sky, already crimsoned by the setting sun.

"Hurrah!" shouted Arthur gleefully. "Now we can see where we're going. Fire ahead, Brownie, we'll follow you!"

Brownie led off at the best pace possible under the circumstances, and the three youths slipped and scrambled and slid and jumped from ledge to ledge and over bowlders, taking all chances rather than lose time.

It was really remarkable how rapidly they progressed; nevertheless, so far had they to go that darkness closed in around them, ere they made Lake Agnes, and only the subtle instinct of the Indian enabled them finally to reach its rocky margin.

There was no moon—only the jewel-like stars gave light, and although Brownie seemed perfectly confident of his ability to guide them safely down to the hotel, whose lights they could just discern twinkling like fire-flies in the dim distance, Bruce thought it best to spend the night beside the lake. There was wood at hand in plenty. They had matches, and no harm could befall them with a blazing fire for comfort and protection.

This plan commended itself to Arthur, more because of its romantic aspect than as a measure of prudence, and he heartily assented to it, while Brownie had no particular objection.

Accordingly, the wood was gathered, the fire started, and, basking in its genial warmth, the boys quickly forgot weariness and cold.

That night on the mountain was a wonderful experience. Their camping-place was a broad, turf-covered ledge that formed the boundary of the lake, and through a channel in whose centre the waters rushed musically down the mountain-side. Behind them lay the lake itself, reflecting in its placid bosom every antic of the leaping flames, while before them opened out a stupendous amphitheatre, now filled with darkness, but displaying by daylight a scene of unsurpassed majesty and beauty.

Brownie took first watch, while the tired boys stretched themselves out for a sleep, and they had got well into the Land of Nod when a moving light appeared in the darkness below, and presently a strong voice shouted up:

"Hullo, is that you, Brownie?"

The Indian sprang up joyfully, and going to the edge of the cliff, replied:

"It's me, boss. We's all right."

So soundly were the boys sleeping that they did not awaken until Mr. Ashdown shook them, saying:

"Wake up, gentlemen, and I'll show you the way back to the house."

When they did get their eyes open, they both felt somewhat reluctant to leave so romantic a sleeping-place, but in view of Mr. Ashdown's kindness in coming for them, and of the attractions of a good dinner, followed by a more comfortable bed than the best of turf, they decided to go back with him. Guided by his lantern, the descent of the mountain was made rapidly and safely, and they got to the Châlet in fine fettle for the substantial repast Mrs. Ashdown had awaiting them.

They amused their host very much by an account of the day's adventures, and he congratulated them warmly upon their rare success in getting a good view of the wild creatures of the mountains.

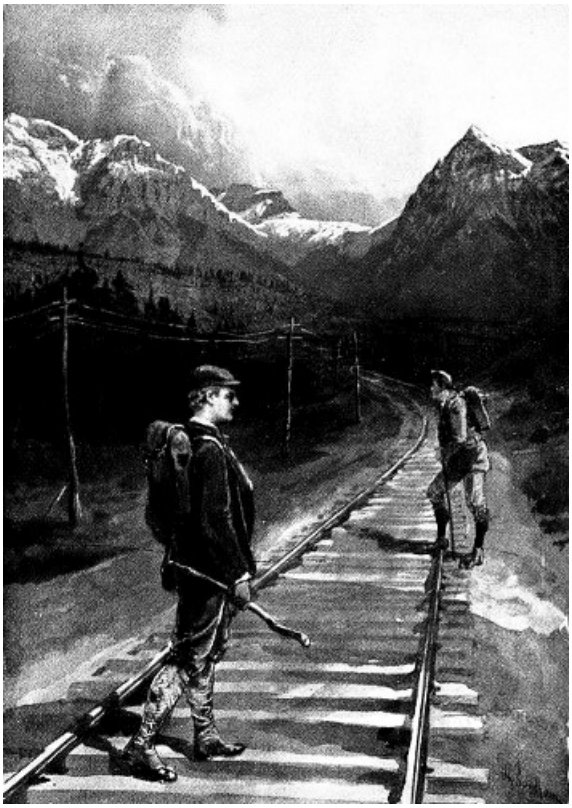
"I can tell you, my young friends, that many a chap has come up here with a full climbing and hunting outfit, and has gone away again without a sight of a horn or hoof. The goats and sheep are getting shyer every year, and soon they'll disappear altogether, I suppose."

The boys slept late the following morning, for they were thoroughly tired, and the sun had got well on its way toward the zenith ere they left Laggan behind. But this did not matter seriously, as they were not going to make a hard day's tramp of it, Field Station, less than a score of miles ahead, being as far as they planned to get before night.

Seven miles steady walking brought them to the highest point reached by the railway in crossing the Rockies. Thenceforward they would be on the down grade until the ascent of the Selkirk Range was begun.

A little beyond the summit they came to the beautiful Wapta Lake, on whose margin was Hector Station, where they were able to get a satisfactory lunch. From this point the scenery became almost terrible in its sublimity, and the boys were glad that they had not to hurry through it behind a panting engine.

The railroad track was cut into the mountain-side at the left, while on the right the valley dropped sharply away with the Kicking-Horse river foaming furiously at the bottom, and showing a ribbon of snowy white through the dark green of the close-set pines.



"All that Afternoon they walked in the Shadow of Mount Stephen."

All that afternoon they walked in the shadow of Mount Stephen, the monarch of the range, whose mighty dome, glowing with many colors, soared high above the nearer peaks, and upon whose broad shoulder they noted with admiring wonder a huge glacier, nearly a thousand feet in thickness, pressing forward and over a dizzy precipice, its translucent green contrasting finely with the stern gray rock.

Arriving at Field Station just as the sun sank behind the mountain-tops, they were delighted to find there a pretty little hotel, fitted up in the most modern style of comfort and convenience, where they secured a room, and hastened to brush up for dinner.

This meal was served to them in the same style as if they had been in Montreal, instead of in the midst of the mountains, and they relished it all the more on that account.

"I tell you, my boy," said Arthur, at the end of the fourth course, laying down his knife and fork and looking about him with an air of supreme content, "this tramp of ours is the greatest scheme we ever hit upon. Why, we've been having simply no end of fun, haven't we? And we're not by any means through with it yet."

"We'll have to be through with it by the end of a fortnight at the most," responded Bruce, who never allowed present enjoyment to make him oblivious of duty. "If we miss the steamer at Vancouver we shall have to wait a month there, and that would never do. But a fortnight's long enough to walk the rest of the way, and, of course, if we should get pressed for time we can take the train, and hurry up that way."

They were up betimes the next morning, and had despatched breakfast and settled their bill before the west-bound train rolled into the station. While its passengers were having breakfast at the hotel, the boys got into conversation with the engine-driver, who was standing by his engine, and Arthur, with his wonted communicativeness, told what they were doing.

The engineer showed a good deal of interest in them on hearing this, and after asking a number of questions, which they readily answered, said:

"You're a bright pair of lads and you've got lots of grit. How would you like to have a ride in the engine with me, as far as Donald, where my run ends?"

Arthur looked at Bruce, and Bruce looked at Arthur, and they each read eager assent in the other's eyes.

"Oh, thank you!" they answered together. "We'd like it ever so much."

"Climb up, then, and take seats on the left side of the cab. We'll be starting right away."

In a veritable ecstasy of delight, for a ride on an engine had been a long-cherished dream with both, they disposed themselves on the narrow bench that ran under the windows on the left side of the cab, and with a delicious sense of superiority, watched the passengers hurrying into the cars.

Presently the bell rang, the engineer opened the throttle-valve, the wheels began to revolve, and they were off for a two-hours ride in the cab of a locomotive, without a doubt the two happiest boys in the country.

CHAPTER XVI.

THROUGH THE ROCKIES TO THE SELKIRKS.

The engineer was a highly intelligent man, who took as much pride in the scenic splendors of his "run" as if they had been his private property, and he was careful that the boys should miss nothing that ought to be seen.

The Ottertail Mountains on the left, and the Vanhorne Range on the right, bearing glaciers high up on their massive shoulders, shut in the valley through which the train sped, the line now rising from the flats beside the Kicking-Horse river, and again descending to follow its impetuous course until it reached Mount Hunter, where the famous cañon began along whose narrow bottom the daring constructors of the road had disputed for room with the furious torrent.

The ride through the cañon was a wonderful experience, and the boys, having at Palliser Station with some difficulty obtained permission to ride on the cow-catcher in the very front of the engine, were glad beyond description at having such an opportunity for sight-seeing.

Just beyond Palliser the mountain-sides became absolutely perpendicular, rising straight up for thousands of feet, and so close together that a school-boy's throw would have carried a stone from one to the other.

Down this stupendous chasm went railway and river together, the former being carried on ledges cut out of the living rock, and twisting and turning like some gigantic serpent, every minute or two diving through projecting angles of the crags that were easier to tunnel than to build around.

With the towering cliffs almost shutting out the sunlight, beautiful, bright day though it was, and the roar of the train and of the river that seemed to be competing with each other, echoed and reëchoed from the mighty walls, the full sublimity of their situation revealed itself to the boys, and they made no attempt to speak, but clung to their precarious seats in silence.

It was not until the train suddenly emerged into the bright valley where the city of Golden stretched itself beside the broad Columbia that either of them found speech.

"Wasn't that a glorious ride?" exclaimed Arthur. "We may never have a chance like that again in our lives."

"I shall never forget it as long as I live," responded Bruce. "But say, Arthur, what would have become of us if we had run into something on the track? We should have been done for, sure, shouldn't we?"

"I suppose we should," assented Arthur; "but I never thought of that, I was enjoying myself too much."

"Well, I'm very glad I've been through it," rejoined Bruce, "but I don't think I should care to do it again. We must get back into the engine cab as soon as the train stops."

When the train pulled up at Golden they resumed their seats, and remained there during the rest of their friend's run, which terminated at Donald, a little before mid-day.

After a good dinner at the hotel they resumed their tramp, being minded to make Bear Creek Station by evening, and there spend the night.

Crossing the Columbia river they left the Rocky Mountains behind, and began the ascent of the Selkirk Range, which looked supremely beautiful as bathed in the afternoon sun it rose from forest-clad base to ice-crowned peak, presenting a radiant warmth and glory of color that made it seem more like an outlying province of fairy-land than a section of British Columbia.

Indeed, it was this aspect of them that impressed Bruce most deeply.

"Just look, Arthur," said he, sweeping his hand across the unbroken line of mountains, matchless in form; "how perfect they are! and how easy it is to imagine them the home of some marvellous genii such as we used to read about in our old fairy-books."

As they advanced they ascended rapidly, the grade of the railway being as high as one hundred and sixteen feet to the

mile, and the river sank almost out of sight in the densely forested valley below.

By keeping op a steady pace they got to Bear Creek Station in good season for supper, and secured quarters for the night, which were comfortable, if not particularly commodious.

The next day brought them to so many new wonders that it was in some respects the most memorable of the whole tramp.

Making an early start from Bear Creek, the road took them away from the Beaver river, which had now diminished to a silver thread one thousand feet below, and they went up the gulf-like gorge of Bear Creek, with majestic trees,—Douglas fir, spruce, and cedar,—casting cool shadows on their path.

In this portion of the railway the tremendous difficulty the brave builders had to overcome was that caused by the numerous torrents, many of them indeed splendid cascades, which pitched furiously down the steep slopes, cutting deep gulches in the mountain-sides.

These had to be spanned by iron-girder bridges, or lofty wooden trestles, whose construction called for the highest skill and the most liberal outlay. The most remarkable of all was the one at Stony Creek—a single arch of superb sweep, springing clear across a gorge but little short of three hundred feet in dizzy depth.

When the boys came to it they thought it the most beautiful bridge they had ever seen, and they halted a while to look down from its centre to the foaming torrent beneath, and to have a little chat with one of the section-men whose cabin stood at the western end.

"How did they ever manage to get that bridge across?" asked Arthur in a tone of mingled wonder and admiration. "It looks to me as if the builders must have been hung from balloons, or something like that."

The section-man laughed. He had small knowledge of balloons, but he knew that they had not been called into requisition for the construction of Stony Creek bridge.

"Oh, they managed it right enough, with false work, and all that; but, look ye here, young strangers, how long do ye think it took them to put that bridge up?"

Bruce studied the iron viaduct, as graceful as a spider's web, but as strong and enduring as the crags which it united, for some moments in silence, and then hazarded a guess.

"Three months at least," he said, feeling sure that he had kept well within the mark.

The section-man slapped his thigh, and chuckled until he got quite alarmingly red in the face, for he was inclined to aldermanic proportions.

"Three months!" he exclaimed, and then, after another violent chuckle, he repeated it, "*three months!* and would ye believe me if I told you it didn't fairly take *three days*?"

The boys suddenly found themselves between the horns of a dilemma. To express incredulity would not only be a very rude proceeding in view of their short acquaintance, but it might be a perilous one. The section-man might be as ready with his cuffs as he was with his chuckles.

Yet he had directly challenged them as to belief in his statement, and they certainly could not conscientiously accept it without some further explanation.

"It seems hardly possible," began Bruce cautiously, "but"—

"I knew ye wouldn't believe it at first," rejoined the section-man with a fresh chuckle, for he was evidently enjoying this little bit of a "gossip" very much, his opportunities for such social relaxation being very limited at his lonely post; "but it's true all the same. Ye see," he went on, "there used to be one of the biggest and highest bits of trestle in all the world across that there Stony Creek, and it was costing a pile of money to keep in order, and to guard it from fire, so the Company decided to tear it down and put an iron bridge in its place; and now I'm telling you the God's truth, that great big trestle was pitched out of the way and the new bridge all put together in its place, and the trains were delayed not much more than twenty-four hours!"

There was no doubting the man's sincerity, and marvellous as his story seemed, the boys felt bound to believe it, yet Arthur had to ask one more question.

"And how did they do it all so quickly?"

"Well, you see it was this way," was the ready answer. "Every bit of the bridge, every girder, and bracket, and panel, and plate, had its number, and every man knew just what pieces he had to handle, and what he was to do with them, and they were all drilled aforehand, and so they went to work just the same as so many soldiers, and not a slip did they make. Oh, it was a fine job, and no mistake. It's not easy to beat the Company when it means business."

The boys were quite convinced by this time, and having delayed as long as they had intended, they thanked the section-man for his courtesy, and continued their walk with an increased admiration for the company whose extraordinary enterprise made such engineering achievements possible.

But they had not long left the bridge behind before a new wonder broke upon them, to wit, the first of the snow-sheds.

These remarkable constructions, which might indeed be more fitly called artificial tunnels, had been devised to save the railway from destruction by the avalanches that all the way from Bear Creek to Glacier are a fruitful source of danger in late winter and spring.

They were built of heavy squared timber, dove-tailed and bolted together, backed by rock, and fitted into the mountain-side in such a manner as to bid defiance to the most terrific "snow-slide" that could possibly occur, because the roof of the tunnel formed a continuous line with the slope of the mountain, so that the mass of snow would shoot across it and plunge harmlessly into the valley below.

Never having seen anything of the kind before, the boys were at a loss to fathom the purpose of the shed, but this did not daunt Arthur from avowing his purpose to go through it.

They found the cool shade of the interior very grateful after the heat of the sun, and were walking leisurely along, noting the tremendous strength of the structure, and speculating as to its purpose, when a thunderous sound in their rear warned them of the swift approach of the train.

Yielding to a sudden impulse of fear, they both started to run, in the hope of reaching the end of the snow-shed before the train overtook them. Skipping two ties at every spring, they put forth an admirable burst of speed, but it proved a vain effort.

The dark, heavily-timbered tunnel was far longer than they imagined, and the train, coming on with an appalling roar, overhauled them with unpitying rapidity.

"We can't beat it," gasped Arthur, his breath being pretty well spent. "On which side shall we stop?"

Bruce looked to right and left. On the one side was the scarped rock, so close to the track that there could be no safety there. On the other, the sharply slanting side of the snow-shed.

"Let us get in there," he panted, pointing to a nook where two massive beams made an angle.

Stopping short, they went down on their hands and knees in this refuge just as the locomotive dashed by like a thunderbolt, sending out a jet of steam that blinded them for an instant, and following it with a dense volume of smoke that nearly suffocated them.

But that was all the harm it did them, and when the cars had all rolled by, the boys crept out of their corner, and looked at one another, laughing.

"Well, what a precious pair of fools we've been," said Arthur. "We were in no danger at all, and instead of getting ourselves all out of breath we might just as well have stayed where we were when we heard the train first."

"Oh, we'll be wiser next time," responded Bruce, taking a philosophical view of the matter.

"There'll be no next time, so far as I'm concerned," rejoined Arthur. "The next one of these affairs we come to I intend to take an outside ticket. It may not be quite so cool."

"But we won't miss any of the scenery," interjected Bruce, whose appetite for fine views was insatiable.

After that, accordingly, whenever they came to a snow-shed,—and they passed a good many of them before they were done with the Selkirk Mountains,—they walked along the top, unless, as in some places, there was an extra railway-track outside for summer use.

They were much struck with the abundant provision against fire in connection with these sheds. At nearly every one of them a stream had been captured on the mountain above, and led down by wooden channels so as to run the whole length of the roof, and every day during the heat of summer the section-men would drench the roof so that no spark would find a ready reception there.

Between Stony Creek and Glacier Station, where they made a halt for the day, the boys passed through the grandest scenery of all the route. The gorge of Bear Creek deepened into a tremendous ravine, with Mount Macdonald towering up on one side to the height of a full mile and a quarter above the railway track, its base being but a stone's throw distant, while it rose sheer into space, a bare, stupendous monument of surpassing grandeur; on the other side of the ravine, and scarcely less lofty, stood Hermit Mountain, to whose base the line clung carefully, until through the majestic portal formed by these mighty mountains it ventured into the famous Rogers' Pass, whereby the crossing of the Selkirks was achieved.

Continuing on through this narrow valley, with mountain monarchs looking down upon them at every turn, the boys presently reached Selkirk Summit, an unimportant station, where they rested a few minutes, and then, resuming their tramp, made no further halt until they arrived at Glacier Station, a little before mid-day.

There was a good deal to be seen here, so they decided to remain overnight at the very comfortable railway hotel provided for the accommodation of tourists.

Dinner would be served upon the arrival of the west-bound train in the course of an hour, and while waiting for it they amused themselves playing with a brown bear which was chained to a post at the rear of the hotel.

Being a very tame, good-humored creature, and only half-grown, the bear had the range of a bit of lawn, so far as his chain would allow him, and readily responded to the boys' overtures of friendliness.

They procured some pieces of biscuit and lumps of sugar from the hotel, and were still engaged with their new acquaintance when the train rolled into the station.

Among the passengers was a globe-trotting Englishman, duly attired in knickerbockers, checked stockings, Norfolk jacket, and deer-stalker hat, who came up to have a look at the bear before going in to dinner.

"Ah!" he drawled, regarding boys and bear through his monocle as though they were all three of the same order of creation, "what a rum little beggar, and quite harmless, of course? By Jove! but I must bring him something after dinner."

Sure enough, as soon as he had finished his dinner he filled his pockets with sugar lumps and sweet biscuit, and returned to the bear. The boys were also on hand, and were rewarded by witnessing one of the most ludicrous sights they ever beheld.

After emptying his pockets for the insatiable creature the Englishman began to maul him about, and to try his strength, not noticing that this proceeding brought him well within the circle round which the bear had ranged.

Indeed, he was not far from the post when the conductor's "All aboard" summoned him back to his place on the train. Exclaiming "By Jove! I must cut and run for it," he let go of the bear and started for the train.

But Master Bruin had found him quite too generous and genial an acquaintance to be willing to part with him so hurriedly, and accordingly, as the Englishman turned to leave him, he rose suddenly on his hind legs, and threw his fore-paws around the man's waist.

Somewhat startled by this unexpected demonstration, and fearful of missing the train, the Englishman strove to wrench himself free, and, after a momentary struggle, succeeded.

But, alas! the bear's claws had sunk too deeply into the soft cloth of the knickerbockers to be readily loosened, and as the creature, not, of course, with any malignant intent, but simply in affectionate zeal, held on the more tightly, the

consequence that was inevitable ensued.

There was a sound of rending cloth, a volley of by no means edifying oaths from the Englishman, a chorus of uncontrollable laughter from the many spectators, and then, with the whole back of his breeches left in the bear's possession, as some consolation maybe for this unceremonious leave-taking, the unfortunate tourist dashed madly down the slope, across the platform, and disappeared in the Pullman car.

The two boys, whose proximity to this most comical scene had given them a perfect understanding of it, threw themselves down on the grass and fairly rolled over one another in paroxysms of laughter. The broad humor of the whole affair was perfect in its completeness, and it was some time before they regained composure.

Then Arthur went up to the bear, who, after pawing over the fragment of cloth left in his possession in a puzzled way, had evidently come to the conclusion that he had no use for it, and, patting the animal on the head, said effusively:

"Oh, Brownie, you did that to perfection! It was the funniest thing I ever saw in my life."

Whereupon Brownie, seeming much pleased at the compliment, rubbed his nose lovingly against the boys' hands, and they had a good time of it together.

But the bear was not the main attraction at this station. Only a mile and a half away, the great Glacier showed white and vast above the thick green forest between it and the hotel, and a visit to this wonder—whose bulk was said to be equal to that of all the Swiss glaciers combined—was to be the business of the afternoon.

It was a comparatively easy matter getting to the foot of the Glacier, for a good path led through the forest, along which the boys could walk at their ease.

But when they reached the terminal moraine, their difficulties began. Here were piled in riotous confusion a multitude of bowlders of all shapes and sizes that the irresistible might of the icy monster had torn from the mountain-side, and carried down with its slow advance.

Over these bowlders, many of them smooth and slippery, and across the numerous torrents that got their vigorous life from the Glacier's decay, the boys had to pick their way with exceeding care.

More than once they narrowly escaped a nasty fall, and Arthur did, by a sudden slip, plunge one foot into an ice-cold bath.

This, however, was the worst that happened to them ere they reached the fore-foot of the Great Glacier, and, after a brief rest, ventured upon its ascent.

CHAPTER XVII.

DOWN THE GLACIER AND INTO THE CAÑON.

Not having provided themselves with crampons or ice-sticks, both of which they could have obtained at the hotel for the asking, the boys were in no wise fitted out for climbing glaciers, and their enterprise was a foolhardy one, had they known it.

But of this they had no suspicion, and there was no one at hand to warn them, so, without taking much thought about it, they began the ascent.

At first they had not much difficulty. The lowest portion of the Glacier was, of course, the oldest, and the ice which composed it was seamed and scored with cracks and wrinkles which afforded good foothold for the boys' feet, and enabled them to make promising progress.

"Why, it isn't so hard as I thought it would be," cried Arthur exultantly. "We shall be able to get right up on to that beautiful white place, and see the whole glacier, shan't we?"

"It looks like it," said Bruce, "and I shall be very glad if we do, for I should like to see the view from there. It must be very fine."

The higher up they climbed the more difficult became the work, for they came to fresher ice, and their feet were prone to slip, still the slope was comparatively slight, and by digging their heels in well, and not pressing on too fast, they continued to progress.

But presently, after they had ascended some hundreds of feet, they came to a place beyond which Bruce's caution would not allow him to go. The slope grew suddenly steep, and what he feared was that even if they should succeed in getting up some part of the way, a slip of the foot might send them sliding back again at imminent risk of broken bones.

Arthur did not want to stop. He quoted some verses of "Excelsior" as illustrating his spirit, and vowed he would go on alone. An argument ensued which soon waxed warm enough to endanger the happy relation which had hitherto existed, and which Arthur brought to a close by exclaiming in a tone of mingled indignation and content:

"You're just a coward, Bruce! You're always thinking of your precious neck, and afraid of its being broken. You can stay where you are, and watch me, if you daren't come along," and then he continued the climb.

Bruce's face blanched, and then flushed. Hot, stinging words of retort sprang to his lips, but by a heroic effort he held them back, and stood in silence, the same power of self-control which had closed his mouth enabling him to resist the temptation to respond to his companion's challenge.

For a little distance Arthur, by dint of digging his toes deeply into the crumbling ice, managed to make headway, and feeling proud of his success, he glanced back to see what Bruce was doing.

That moment both feet slipped from under him, and falling over on his back in a frantic effort to recover his standing, he glissaded down the slippery slope, gathering speed with every yard, until he carromed violently against Bruce, who had stood his ground hoping to stop him.

Then a curious thing happened. The collision did check Arthur sufficiently to enable him to get his fingers into a convenient crack, and thus bring himself to a full stop. But the headway he had acquired transmitted itself to poor Bruce, who, all unwillingly, was sent spinning down the slope towards the foot of the glacier, while Arthur watched him with helpless horror and concern.

"Oh, Bruce, Bruce!" he cried, "can't you stop yourself?"

The question seemed superfluous. Short of a miracle no chance appeared of Bruce's swift descent being checked, in spite of his frantic endeavors to find something to grasp with his eager hands, until he was dashed against the pitiless bowlders at the glacier's foot.

Reckless of consequences to himself, Arthur began to scramble down the treacherous slope in the wake of his chum

without any definite plan for helping him, but determined to share his fate, whatever that might be.

Now, it happened that a hump in the ice changed the course of Bruce's descent and sent him off to the left, where there was a kind of hollow half-filled with water.

As he was going down feet first he could not see what was before him, and knew nothing of this icy bath until he plunged into it with a splash that sent the water flying up on all sides.

The sensation was far from pleasant, yet that pool of water undoubtedly saved him from injury, if not from death, for it acted as an effectual check upon his perilous slide, and he was able to bring himself to a full stop on its farther edge.

Arthur noticed this with a joyful relief, and changing his direction, took a coast down towards the pool that carried him right into it, so that he got nearly as wet as his companion.

But he recked nothing of this. Bruce was safe, and that was all he cared, and he felt so glad about it that he threw his arms about him and gave him a great hug, while saying, in a voice that had more than a hint of a sob in it:

"You're all right, aren't you, Bruce? and I'm so sorry for acting as I did."

"Well, I'm not much hurt, but I'm pretty wet, and so are you, for that matter," responded Bruce, shaking himself to get rid of some of the superfluous water. "But," he added cheerfully, "it might have been ever so much worse, and we mustn't grumble, but get back to the hotel as quickly as possible."

The remainder of the descent of the glacier was safely accomplished, and once across the troublesome moraine, they raced back to the hotel, where they had to go to bed until their clothes were dried, as they had no change of garments with them.

They did not mind this, however, for they were both very tired, and the long rest quite fell in with their inclinations, so that they stayed between the sheets till early the following morning.

After breakfast they were idling about the station, not being in any hurry to set out again, when a hand-car came down from the Rogers' Pass with two men on board and stopped at the station.

Remembering the pleasant trip they had enjoyed on the other side of the Laggan, the boys looked at the car with longing eyes, and when the men, after a brief talk with the station-master, resumed their places. Arthur made bold to speak to them.

"Would you mind taking us with you as far as you're going?" he asked in a most beseeching tone.

The men grinned and glanced at each other.

"Take you to Illecilliwaet for a quarter a piece," said one of them curtly.

"All right," responded Arthur, springing on to the car. "Come along, Bruce," and in a trice they were both seated on the front edge of the platform as composedly as if they belonged there.

The men started the car immediately, but that was all they had to do, for once they were beyond the level stretch in front of the station their business was to check its speed rather than to increase it, and they gave their attention to the brakes instead of to the "pump."

As it chanced, the boys could not have chosen a finer bit of the road to traverse on a hand-car, for they were about to make the descent of the famous Loops, the most remarkable piece of engineering on the whole route, by means of which the extraordinary difficulties here presented by nature were successfully surmounted.

The Loops began around the mountain-side, and as the car whirled swiftly down the gleaming rails, turning now to the right and again to the left, rattling over long and lofty trestles, and across strongly timbered bridges, the boys were astonished to see that their course was much like that of the well-remembered Corkscrew on Tunnel Mountain, only on a greatly enlarged scale.

First crossing a valley leading down from the Ross Peak glacier and touching for a moment the base of Ross Peak, the line doubled back upon itself a mile or more to the right, until hardly a stone's throw separated the two tracks; then

sweeping around to the left, it brushed Cougar Mountain on the other side of the Illecilliwaet river, and, crossing again to the left, went on down the valley, parallel with its former course.

"Look, Arthur, look!" exclaimed Bruce, as the car spun around the final curve; "that's the way we came down. Isn't it wonderful?"

It did indeed seem wonderful, for far above them were two long gashes in the mountain-side showing plainly against the splintered crags, and running parallel to each other, that were the handiwork of man, indicating where he had ventured to build the iron road down which the car had swiftly sped.

The ride over the Loops was a memorable experience. Seated comfortably at the front of the hand-car, and having absolutely nothing to do but to hold on and gaze about them, the boys were enabled to enjoy it all to perfection. So smoothly and steadily did the car roll along that they took no thought of the distance traversed, and when they reached the end of the descent, and ran into Illecilliwaet Station, they were no less surprised than sorry.

"I wish we could do it all over again," said Arthur, after they had paid and thanked the section-men. "It didn't last half long enough."

"That's so," responded Bruce. "But it was splendid while it did last." Then, glancing back over the way they had come, he added with a quiet smile, "But just think, Arthur, what a job it would be working back again! I'm afraid it would take us as many hours as we were minutes coasting down."

Arthur shook his head very decisively. Such an undertaking had no attraction for him, even to walk up that steep grade would have more than contented him.

Losing no time at Illecilliwaet, they kept on until they reached Albert Cañon, the most striking of several deep fissures in the mountain whose edges the track skirted.

Here they halted for a good look at this remarkable rift in the solid rock, many hundreds of feet deep, and at the bottom holding the river within such narrow limits that it boiled and foamed like a caldron as it forced its way through into larger space.

As they stood near the edge of the chasm, Bruce challenged Arthur to a contest in stone-throwing. The other side of the cañon seemed within easy range, and there was plenty of small stones lying at hand.

"Do you think you could throw a stone across there?" said Bruce, indicating the widest part of the chasm.

"Of course I could," answered Arthur confidently, "I believe I could jerk one over," and he stooped to pick up a stone.

"Don't be too sure," rejoined Bruce. "The distance is greater than it seems."

They had some difficulty in finding just what they wanted, but soon were suited, and after Arthur had made a couple of vain attempts to jerk a stone across they both threw with all their might.

To their great chagrin the missiles fell short, Bruce's hitting the cliff far down, and Arthur's not going even that distance.

This naturally roused them to greater efforts, and in his eagerness to accomplish the feat Bruce forgot his wonted caution, and went so near the edge of the cliff where it was scaly and soft that a piece of it broke away beneath him, and with a wild cry of fright he disappeared.

Arthur had his back turned at the moment, being engaged in looking for a stone, but, hearing the cry, he wheeled around just as Bruce's head vanished.

Uttering an exclamation of horror he rushed to the spot, fearing nothing less than the sight of his companion falling headlong into the boiling torrent far below.

But, happily, Bruce's case, though desperate enough, was not so hopeless as that. By a marvellous piece of good fortune his fall had been arrested by a stunted spruce tree which was making a brave struggle for life on a narrow ledge, and he was clinging to this precarious hold with the strength that is born of despair.

"Oh, Bruce!" cried Arthur, with a sob of relief, "can you hold on there till I help you up?"

"I can hold on all right," was the calm reply, for in spite of his appalling situation the boy had not lost his self-control, "but I'm not so sure about this little tree. Get help as quick as you can."

Arthur looked around with anxious eyes. Bruce was too far down to be reached without a rope or a long pole, and neither was at hand. He hated to leave him for an instant, but he must do it if he would help him.

"Hold on tight, Bruce, dear, and I'll try and hunt up something," he said, and darted back to the railway track.

Not a human being was in sight, nor could his sharp eyes discover anything to suit his purpose. His anxiety was intense. He was desperate enough to attempt the impossible, if it would do poor Bruce any good.

A little way up the track there was a railed platform erected by the railway company to enable the passengers to get a good view of Albert Cañon, the trains always stopping a few minutes for that purpose.

The sight of this gave Arthur an idea. Darting to it he strove to wrench off the rail. It would not budge. But he was not to be foiled. Taking a short run he hurled himself against it with all his force. His shoulder got a cruel bruise, but his expedient succeeded. With a crash the rail broke away from the posts, and, shouting for joy, Arthur dragged it over to the chasm, calling out:

"I've got it, Bruce! I've got it!"

The rail was amply long, and letting go his hold on the tree, which, indeed, could not have borne him many moments longer, Bruce grasped it firmly and strove to pull himself up.

But now a new peril presented itself. The side of the cliff was too perpendicular to allow him to get any sort of a purchase for his feet, while Arthur had not strength enough to pull him up to the top, Bruce being much the heavier of the two.

All that poor Arthur could do was to keep Bruce suspended against the cliff side, and this for but a few minutes, the strain being too great to be longer endured.

Neither of the boys spoke, but they looked into each other's face with a pitiful expression of passionate anxiety.

Arthur's strength was waning, and it seemed as if he would have to let go, or himself share his companion's doom, when there broke upon his ears the whistle of an approaching train.

"Hurrah, Bruce!" he gasped, for he was well-nigh exhausted, "there's a train coming. Keep your grip, and you're all right."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE END OF THE TRAMP.

It was well for both boys that the passenger trains made a rule of pausing at Albert Cañon, since to this circumstance alone did Bruce owe his escape from an awful death that would have thrown a dark shadow over Arthur's life.

The moment the locomotive appeared Arthur began to shout for help, and soon the brakemen and conductor were running towards him.

They did not require the situation to be explained. They took it in at a glance, and relieving the exhausted boy of the strain he had borne so nobly, and encouraging Bruce to hold on "like the ——," they drew him up slowly and carefully to the top of the cliff, where he sank down at their feet limp, and almost fainting.

The passengers quickly gathered about, and many were the questions which Arthur had to answer, and very hearty the congratulations showered upon both boys at the fortunate termination of their adventure.

Being too wearied for further walking that day, the boys boarded the train ere it started again, and went with it as far as Sicamous Junction, which they reached shortly after sundown, remaining there for the night.

Thoroughly set up again by a good night's rest they took to the road in good time, and for the following two days had most delightful walking along the south shore of the great Shuswap Lake.

This superb sheet of water, which, as Bruce aptly said, was just like a Scotch loch magnified many times, lay among mountain ridges, filling the intervening valleys with its placid, pellucid waters, and the builders of the railway had thought it more economical to run around the numerous arms than to bridge them.

The road, therefore, turned and twisted like a mighty serpent, but always had the lake on the one side and the mountain on the other, and the view was ever changing, as point after point was rounded and new vistas opened up.

The boys did not hurry. Twice each day they halted for a bathe in the inviting water, and frequently they came upon flocks of wild ducks, which they amused themselves by scaring with stones, sending them off with a wild whirr of beating wings.

They were always able to obtain some sort of a meal when they got hungry, and they met a good many people by the way with whom they would stop and chat for a little while.

And so they came to Shuswap Station, where, to save time, for they now had not many days left, they took the train as far as Savona's, thus getting through the Thompson valley, where the scenery was least remarkable, at a rate that left them more time for the wonders which were to follow.

Just beyond Savona's the mountains drew close to the railway, and the series of Thompson-river cañons was entered, which led westward through marvellous scenery.

Their first day's tramp ended at Ashcroft, a busy little town, which was the point of departure for the Cariboo and other goldfields in the northern interior of British Columbia.

Here they were much interested by the big freight wagons, drawn by six, eight, or even ten span of sturdy oxen, which took the place of the railway train over the difficult mountain roads; and where there was no road at all, but merely a trail, the patient, sure-footed mules bearing heavy packs went in long trains which were made up at Ashcroft.

And then there were the Chinamen, met with for the first time in numbers, who worked away as busy as bees, and quite as oblivious of the curiosity with which the two boys studied them.

"They're funny little fellows, Bruce, aren't they?" said Arthur, after watching their ceaseless activity, and listening to their incomprehensible chatter. "They don't seem to be quite the same kind of beings as we are. They're more like some sort of educated monkeys."

Bruce laughed, for a similar train of thought had been running through his mind.

"I must say I don't feel much inclined to call them my brothers," he responded. "Although, of course, they are all the same. But they know how to work, don't they, and to talk, too? Wouldn't you like to be able to make out what they're saying to each other? Perhaps they're making remarks on us."

"I'd be inclined to pound their pig-tailed heads if I thought so," exclaimed Arthur with assumed indignation. "Come along, or they'll think we're admiring them."

Leaving Ashcroft the boys kept on steadily, and presently came to Black Cañon, a winding gorge cut by the Thompson river, of almost terrifying gloom and desolation, by which they were reminded of Albert Cañon.

The marvellous skill and daring shown by the builders of the road in combating with the tremendous difficulties of this cañon, called forth their constant admiration. They felt glad they were on foot, if only to get a full view of what had to be done to make a smooth, solid highway.

Emerging from the cañon they saw before them, arising rank upon rank, and peak upon peak, the glistening pinnacles of the Cascade Range, the last mountain barrier between them and the Pacific Ocean, and they gave a loud hurrah, and waved their caps at the sight, for they were growing weary of their long journey.

A little beyond Black Cañon they got their first sight of the famous old wagon-road built in the days of the Cariboo gold rush to connect the mining camp with the coast, and as soon as Arthur's eyes fell upon it he exclaimed:

"Look here, Bruce, let us take that road. It will be ever so much better fun than this tiresome track. Don't you think so?"

Bruce looked long and carefully at the road. It certainly had an attractive appearance, as it wound along the rocky bank of the rushing stream, and, knowing nothing of its ruinous condition farther on, he said:

"All right, Arthur. We can try it for a while, anyway, and if we don't like it, we can come back to the track by one of the bridges."

So they deserted the railway for the road, and were delighted with the change, the old highway, although considerably the worse for wear and neglect, still affording excellent walking, even if entirely unfit for the four-horse coach that used to be driven over it at a reckless rate in by-gone days.

The scenery of this part of the Thompson valley was full of interest. The river whirled down its winding course as green as an emerald, when not lashed into snowy foam, and on either side of it the hills were carved into infinite variety of form, and decked with constantly changing colors.

Sometimes the banks were rounded cream-white slopes; then came cliffs of richest yellow dashed with maroon, followed by masses of rust-red clay or slopes of brilliant olive-green grass.

As the mountains drew together, and the valley deepened into another cañon, the scenery grew wild beyond description, so that the boys marvelled at men having the daring to run a wagon road, not to speak of a railway, through such a place.

Yet there, just across the gorge, was the iron highway cut into the face of the crags hundreds of feet above the struggling river, and by means of tunnels bored through the solid rock, or iron bridges flung across yawning ravines, or abutments of massive masonry so securely fastened to the cliffs as to become part of itself, overcoming every obstacle stern nature had presented.

Nor was the road upon which they were walking much less worthy of admiration. Twisting and turning around the corners of the cliffs it sometimes descended to the river's edge, and then climbed again far up the inhospitable crags, seeming rather to beg its way along rather than force it, as did the railway.

No portion of their long tramp made so deep an impression upon the boys as this, and had they not been so near the end of their time limit they would gladly have lingered over it instead of pressing on.

At the small trading town of Lytton, whose population seemed to consist chiefly of Indians and ranchmen, they put up for the night, and the next morning's walk took them into the famous Fraser Cañon, where that greatest of British Columbian rivers, coming down from the north between two great lines of mountain peaks, had cut for itself a strangely jagged and contorted passage through the rocky barrier.

The clear green waters of the Thompson were exchanged for the turbulent yellow flood of the Fraser, which surged and splashed its way downward with fearful velocity.

"Not much temptation to take a swim here," said Bruce, as he stood watching the furious torrent from a projecting point. "I suppose Captain Boynton himself could not live in it many minutes."

"And to think that it's going as hard as that all the year round," said Arthur musingly. "How tired you would get of its everlasting noise if you had to live close to it! I'm sure I couldn't stand it for a week."

"Oh, you'd get used to it in a little while," said Bruce, "and then it would be a sweet lullaby for you, to sing you to sleep. Don't you remember how delightful it was at Banff to have the water-fall just below our window?"

"Oh, yes, but that was very different," responded Arthur. "There was music in that water-fall, but there's none in this tremendous roar."

They were close by the river as they talked, but soon the road mounted again, and went on climbing higher and higher, until at length it reached an altitude of a thousand feet above the yellow flood, being fastened to the face of a gigantic precipice by succession of timber trestles that were fast rotting away, rendering extreme care necessary in passing over them.

Their attention was now attracted by small parties of Indians stationed on projecting rocks at the waters edge, and spearing or scooping out with dip-nets the salmon which abounded in the eddies.

"That's a funny way to catch salmon, isn't it?" said Arthur. "I wonder if we could do anything at it."

"I'm quite sure we couldn't," responded Bruce so decidedly that it nettled Arthur sufficiently to make him reply:

"Well, if you are, I'm not. It doesn't seem so very difficult."

"If you think so, you'd better try it for yourself," rejoined Bruce, with a smile.

"So I will if one of the Indians will lend me his scoop-net," retorted Arthur. "I'll ask them, at all events;" and so saying he made his way down to where a stumpy, swarthy Indian was balancing himself in what seemed a very perilous position upon a point of rock, and sweeping the boiling whirlpool below him with a large scoop-net at the end of a long, elastic pole.

Arthur watched his dexterous movements for some little time in silent admiration before he plucked up courage to proffer his request. Then he said in a humble, hesitating voice, for the Indian had anything but a prepossessing appearance:

"Would you please lend me your scoop-net for a few minutes? I want to see if I could catch a salmon with it."

The Indian's only response was to give Arthur a suspicious, searching look, and with an expressive "Ugh!" to resume his fishing operations.

This put rather a damper upon Arthur's ardor, but when he saw the brown-skinned fisherman deftly land a big salmon he was stirred up to a second attempt to get the scoop-net into his own hands.

This time he bethought himself of trying the effect of money as an argument, and putting a quarter of a dollar in his palm, held it out, saying:

"I'll give you this if you'll lend me your net."

The aborigine's eyes sparkled in their circle of dirt like stars in an ebony sky, and, making a quick snatch at the quarter, he thrust the pole into Arthur's hands, grunting out:

"Take him—try little while; all right."

Arthur grasped the pole, his cheek flushing, and his eyes flashing with excitement, and, taking the Indian's place, plunged the net into the foaming eddy fifteen feet or more beneath him.

It was no easy task to balance upon that narrow, jagged point of rock, and to sweep the swirling waters with the big scoop-net, which became so heavy the moment it sank beneath the surface.

But when, by a strange freak of fortune, two heavy salmon were enmeshed simultaneously, and the strain upon the slender pole became so great, that the Indian, fearing for the precious apparatus by which he got his livelihood, sprang forward to Arthur's assistance, the rashness of the boy's undertaking was manifest.

The Indian, grown expert through long practice, would have landed both salmon without much difficulty, but the achievement was one beyond Arthur's powers, and it would have been better for him if he had given it up at once, and resigned the pole to its owner.

To do that, however, was not according to his nature. His blood was up, and he would at least make a brave attempt at the feat.

In spite of Bruce's warning cry, "Take care, Arthur, let the Indian have it," he took a firmer grasp upon the pole, and, thinking he saw better footing on a projection slightly below him, tried to leap down to it.

Just at that moment the salmon gave a violent bounce in the net, sufficient to impart a twist to Arthur that made him miss the projection with one foot.

Encumbered as he was he could not regain his balance with the other, and down he went into the whirlpool, just missing by a hair's breadth smashing his skull against the ragged edge of a shattered bowlder.

Both Bruce and the Indian uttered cries of horror at the sudden accident. The latter, perhaps, thought more of the scoop-net than he did of the boy, but as they were equally imperilled he was no less eager than Bruce to effect a rescue.

Poor Arthur had disappeared completely at the first plunge, and the waters were so turbid, as well as turbulent, that there seemed small chance of his reappearing.

Indeed, full half a minute of harrowing suspense passed before there was any sign of the boy. Then his hand showed above the gray foam, followed by his pale, frightened face, and he gave a faint cry for help.

With a sure-footed agility, such as no white man could have shown, the Indian had already leaped down to the edge of the eddy, and by a happy chance just at that moment the long handle of the scoop-net, having been let go by Arthur, swung toward him.

He made a gallant dash for it, and caught it cleverly, his face lighting up with manifest relief as he drew it in.

Seeing this gave Bruce an idea.

"Reach it to him! reach it to him!" he shrieked at the top of his voice

For a moment the Indian hesitated. He had already run one risk of losing his scoop-net. Would he take another even to save a white boy's life?

But the hesitation was only momentary. Relieving the net of its finny captives by one quick turn he thrust it out again into the midst of the eddy, where Arthur's head was just showing as he battled mightily for his life.

The drowning lad felt the touch of the iron hoop and seized it with the grip of despair. Very carefully, just as though the net had won its usual prize, the Indian drew it in, and thus was Arthur brought safely to land, ere the merciless flood of the Fraser could add him to its long list of victims.

But he had not been permitted to get off unscathed. When he slipped from the little shelf of rock upon which he had endeavored to jump he wrenched his right ankle so badly that he could not put his foot to the ground, and in the struggle with the whirlpool his head had come in contact with a jagged rock, causing a nasty cut close to his left temple.

Thus disabled, it was with no little difficulty that Bruce and the Indian succeeded in helping him back to the road, and when that was accomplished a fresh problem presented itself for solution.

How was the remainder of the tramp to be accomplished? Arthur was suffering too severely in his head to make any further progress that day, even had he been able to walk. He must rest until morning, anyway, and then—?

The disused road along which they had been making their way was in worse condition from this point on than it had been hitherto. In fact, in many places it practically disappeared, leaving hardly a trace of its former existence. No conceivable kind of a conveyance, had such been procurable, could be used over it. The most sure-footed of mountain mules would have found it a critical task to proceed along it with anything of a load.

While Arthur was drying himself as best he could before a fire made by the Indian, Bruce deeply pondered over the situation, and at length came to this conclusion:

They would remain at the Indian's camp that night. Squalid and repellent as the accommodation was, they must needs make the best of it. Then in the morning they would resume their journey, engaging two Indians to help Arthur along as far as the suspension bridge at Spuzzum, where they could cross the river, and get the train at the station.

Bruce had just got this program mapped out when a question from Arthur aroused him to the sense of a new course of concern.

"What day is it the steamer leaves Vancouver for Shanghai?" he asked.

"On Friday, according to the time-table," replied Bruce.

"And this is Thursday. Why, look here, Bruce, we've got to catch the train to-morrow morning, or we'll run a good chance of missing the steamer," said Arthur, an expression of anxiety coming into his face.

"That's so!" cried Bruce, springing to his feet; "and if we miss this steamer we shall have to wait a whole month, and that would be dreadful."

The boys looked anxiously into each other's faces as the full difficulty of their situation became manifest to them.

By the time-table which Bruce had in his pocket the train for Vancouver would pass Spuzzum at eight o'clock in the morning, and Spuzzum was on the other side of the cañon, full ten miles farther on.

Arthur was the first to speak.

"Bruce," said he in a resolute tone that was at marked variance with his haggard look, "we must catch that train."

"But how is it to be managed?" asked Bruce, with a glance at his companion's swollen ankle and bandaged head.

"There is only one way," responded Arthur. "We must hire a couple of Indians to help me, and get along just as fast as possible, and we must start at daybreak."

"You're right," assented Bruce, after a moment's reflection. "It's the only way it can be done, and now you must rest as comfortably as you can for the night."

There was not much comfort to be had in that squalid, dirty Indian camp, but Bruce made the most of what there was, and spent nearly the whole night applying cold water to Arthur's ankle so as to reduce the swelling and inflammation, in which he succeeded remarkably well.

With the dawn of the day they began their toilsome journey, the offer of a dollar apiece having quickly secured the services of two sturdy Indians, who agreed to act as crutches for poor crippled Arthur, and help him on with the utmost possible speed.

If ever the resolution, endurance, and courage of two boys was put to the test, it was during that fearful journey in the cool, calm hours of the early autumn morning.

The condition of the old ruined road was bad beyond description. At best it was sufficiently rough and stone-strewn to give trouble to the stoutest pedestrian. But in many places it had been altogether carried away by winter avalanches and spring slides, leaving only a treacherous slope of *débris* to serve as a means of passage.

Here it was necessary to descend right to the edge of the roaring, foaming torrent, and there to ascend high above it, and then, maybe, to cross a deep gorge on a trembling bridge the rotten timbers of which threatened to break asunder at every step.

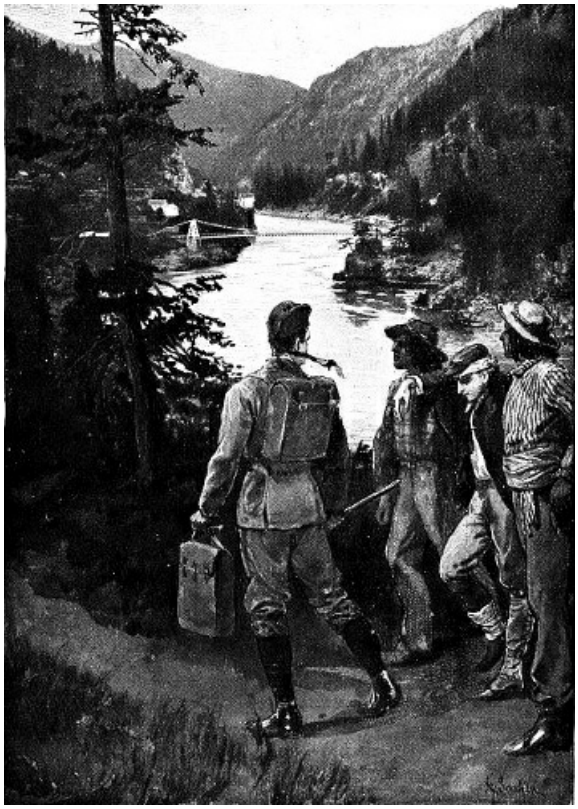
And through all this Arthur could put only one foot to the ground, having to lean heavily upon his human crutches on the level places, and allow himself to be practically carried by them over the bad spots, Bruce being ever prompt to bear a hand when his help would be of service.

What Arthur endured cannot readily be described, nor could it have been estimated from his own actions. Bent upon getting to Spuzzum before the train, he bore all the strain and suffering with a degree of composure that was simply heroic, only now and then would some specially acute pang extract from him a groan, and yet, in response to Bruce's affectionately anxious inquiry, he would always manage to say cheerily:

"Oh, I'm all right. It does hurt a bit, you know. But I'll not give in."

And he was as good as his word.

Thus toiling painfully yet persistently onward, the miles were one by one overcome, and at last a glad shout from Bruce, who had gone on ahead a little, announced that the suspension bridge at Spuzzum was in sight, while nearly an hour of their time still remained.



"Thus toiling painfully, the Miles were one by one overcome."

Pressing forward they soon reached the bridge, which indeed was in little better condition than the road had been.

But they did not stop to consider chances of injury now. Creeping along the side supports where the platform was broken away, hanging on by their eyelids almost at one or two points, they succeeded in effecting a safe crossing.

Then came the rush for the station. Summoning all his strength for one final effort, Arthur bravely hopped along with the aid of his dusky supporters, and reached the station platform just as the engine appeared around the point not fifty yards away.

It was a narrow victory, but it was sufficient. The Indians were paid and thanked, the boys clambered into the car, and Bruce had just time to get Arthur to a seat when the poor lad, exhausted as he had never been in his life before, collapsed in a faint.

But he soon recovered from this, and was able to share with Bruce the enjoyment of the wonderful scenery which marked the remainder of the run through the Fraser Cañon, the great river being forced between vertical walls of sullen sombreness, where, repeatedly thrown back upon itself by opposing cliffs, or broken by ponderous masses of fallen rock, it foamed out its fury with unceasing thunder.

The railway was cut into the side of the cliffs two hundred feet or more above the raging torrent, and the jutting spurs of rock were pierced by tunnels that followed so fast upon one another that the boys got tired counting them.

On through the morning the train sped, flying past Yale, the head of navigation on the Fraser river, and Port Moody, which once hoped to be the ocean terminus of the road, and at last coming to a full stop at the fine new city of Vancouver, which marked the end of its transcontinental journey.

The railway station was on the pier, to the outer side of which the superb white steamship "Empress of China" lay moored, and the boys had only to cross the wharf in order to change their quarters.

Having helped Arthur aboard, Bruce bustled about, looking after their luggage, which was found intact, and seeing to the securing of staterooms, and so forth, in all of which he found the president's letter of immense assistance.

That afternoon the stately steamer began her voyage to the far Orient, and as the boys sat on the upper deck watching the Canadian shore recede, they were glad that their long tramp was over, but gladder still that in the main they had so faithfully adhered to their program, and that they had so interesting a story to tell to their parents anxiously awaiting them beyond the broad Pacific.

[The end of *The Boy Tramps, or Across Canada* by James Macdonald Oxley]