

EVERY "BOY SCOUT" SHOULD READ THIS

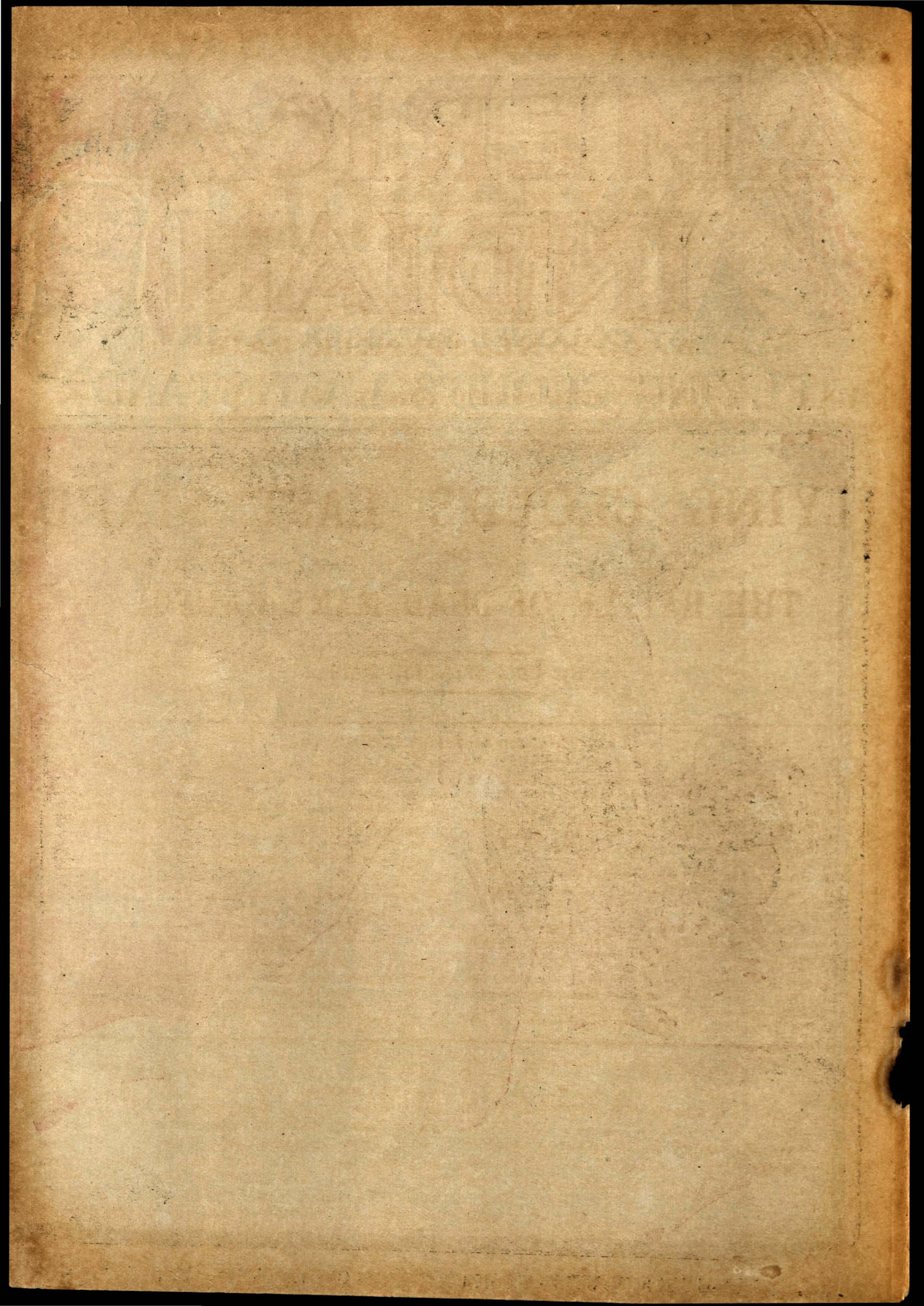
# AMERICAN INDIAN

BY COLONEL SPENCER DAIR

## FLYING CLOUD'S LAST STAND



"STAR-EYES, WE MUST DIE.  
THIS IS FLYING CLOUD'S  
LAST STAND."



# AMERICAN WEEKLY INDIAN

BY COLONEL SPENCER DAIR

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## FLYING CLOUD'S LAST STAND OR THE BATTLE OF DEAD MAN'S CANYON

By COL. SPENCER DAIR

### PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS IN THIS STORY.

**FLYING CLOUD**—A Great Chief of the Blackfeet Indian Nation. A man in spite of his red skin, whose love for his country and his people, was far greater than his love of self.

**JOHN GORDON**—Postmaster of the Hudson's Bay Company post at Fort McPherson in British North America. A sterling man of business but who knew little of the spirit of the Red Man.

**EVELYN GORDON**—The sweet and beautiful daughter of John Gordon, who was transplanted from Merrie England to face a whirlwind of danger on the wonderful North-West frontier.

**CHARLES PYM**—Better known as "Charlie," trapper, hunter, employee of the Hudson's Bay Company in whose undaunted heart was the stuff that makes a hero.

**STAR-EYES**—An Indian maiden of the Blackfeet's. She was a girl with a tawny skin, but a "white heart," and who loved her people with "the love that passeth understanding."

**FRITZ HARZ**—A hero of trackless miles of snow and ice, who

modestly carried out his mission of danger and who faced death with a smile of courage.

**COLONEL JOHN PARKER**—An old Indian fighter, and leader of the Snow-birds. He was in command at the fearful Indian massacre which brought on the historic "Blackfeet Indian War."

**PETER PARELLA**—A modern Samson, and a member of the Snow-birds a secret organization of North-West trappers and hunters, who were banded together to sweep every Indian from the hunting and trapping districts about Peel River, British North America.

**"THE MOOSE"**—A half-breed, whose exploits as a "gun-fighter" made him a terror of sudden death.

**"THE ROSE OF THE FRONTIER"**—The Indian wife of "The Moose," and a Hurdy-gurdy girl in Indian Jack's dance house, at Fort McPherson.

**BEAR-HEAD**—Father of Flying Cloud, and who held in youth his son's office of Great Chief of the Blackfeet. He was an Indian whose life was one great effort to improve his people.

### CHAPTER I.

"KILL ALL."

"Halt! Form in line behind the shadow of those big white pine trees."

The command came smartly from the lips of Colonel John Parker.

"There is the enemy! Make no noise," he almost whispered a moment later.

The motley crowd of men came to a pause at the word of command.

A trapper clad in deer-skins, trimmed with rare beaver fur, stooped and tightened his snow-shoes.

A youth, hardly yet of age, but who knew the great, wild, trackless country where the Peel River empties into Mackenzie Bay and then flows to the Arctic ocean, in British North America, as well as a city dweller knows his labyrinth of streets, examined his rifle.

Trappers and hunters from a wilderness, made up the little band of one hundred, which faced Colonel Parker. Each man a law unto himself, yet every man willing to be a fighting unit of the command.

Colonel Parker swelled with pride as he glanced over the ranks.

"Ugh! It's cold," muttered one of the men as he blew his chilly breath into the frozen atmosphere.

"Forty degrees below zero," replied a companion. "I noticed the readings on the thermometer when we left Fort McPherson early this morning."

"And ten feet of snow on the level. Whew! you bet it's cold."

"Good fur weather. This hard winter means money for trappers and hunters, my boy."

"Money? Not for us. It will all go to that gang of red men down there."

The speaker pointed with his revolver which he held in his outstretched hand, through the splendid forest weighted down with snow, to the peaceful valley which lay beneath.

There, in the bend of the river bank curled the smoke from an encampment of Indian braves.

The smoke from their queer shaped lodges, like tea cups upside down, floated in the still, frosty air.

Women and children could be seen outside the tepees, with here and there an old man toddling along, with feeble step.

It was a peaceful scene.

"Sixty lodges, eh?" the first speaker muttered.

"About three hundred in the band."

"It's Flying Cloud's band," came the reply.

"The Great Chief of the Blackfeet Indians, eh?"

"Yes."

"What is he doing here?"

"It's 'debt-time' at the Hudson's Bay Company headquarters here, you know."

A nod was the only reply.

Each man in the band knew the system of the great Hudson's Bay Company in rating each Indian trapper or hunter, according to his record of fur catches in winters past, and upon this record giving him credit for supplies in advance of his catch for the present winter.

"That is it," growled another member of the watching band. "The Postmaster at Fort McPherson gives so much credit to the Indians, that we white hunters, and trappers, have to stand back and see the Indians get the best of it all the time."

A growl went along the ranks.

"The Indians last, we first," yelled a tall man, a big game hunter from the Arctic Red River country.

"Kill the red dogs," cried another man.

"Sweep them off the face of the earth."

The men brandished their rifles, or drew their revolvers, which they flourished in their anger.

"Hold! Be careful, boys," said Colonel Parker.

"Do not alarm the enemy."

The admonishing words calmed the angry company.

"It's nonsense boys, to make so much noise. You will defeat the plans we have made, if you do not keep quiet," Colonel Parker added.

"He is right," a member of the party spoke up. "Keep quiet, everyone."

"We are here to exterminate that band of Indians, down there," added Colonel Parker. "The rights of the whites, to hunt fur-bearing animals in the great North-West, above those of any infernal Indian, are

what we are after. We don't go much on law out here. We just make our own law. The code we are going to write, just now, will be written with blood."

"Hurrah," cried the band, but in low tones. "That is the kind of talk."

"We must teach Flying Cloud, and his band, down there in that valley, that the further they keep away from a white man the better for them."

"Hurrah!"

"Our watch-word is 'kill all.'"

"That is the talk. Hurrah!"

"Now separate into two parties. One attack from one side—the other from the rear. The tepees are facing the river. Let Pete Parella, lead one party; the one to attack from the rear. I will lead the van."

Colonel Parker's face was filled with pleasure at the oncoming battle.

"You remember, boys," cried Pete Parella, a gigantic trapper, "that we are all to yell, 'Kill All,' as we make our attack."

"Our battle cry; good!" cried the band.

"Don't let one Indian escape," cried Colonel Parker. "Once and for all teach them the fact that they must keep off our toes. We make all the first catches, sell our furs first, and they must come second."

"Hurrah," again yelled the band.

"Forward," ordered Pete Parella, who had been forming his party at one side.

"Forward," echoed Colonel Parker.

Swift as the winter wind the two bands hurried to their respective stations.

Not the slightest news of the projected attack reached the fated Indians. They were engaged in their peaceful vocations, when the first shot came from the attacking party.

Its note roared the warning as Peter Parella sent the death dealing bullet from his rifle.

A sixteen year old boy, standing in front of his father's tepee, received Parella's shot, and curled up dead, with a great ugly wound in his throat, through which his life blood ebbed in a crimson flood.

A dozen rifles flashed, and spat their venom in the form of a whirl of bullets upon the defenceless village.

Women with children in their arms fell, and died, while the shots soon sent the little ones they were carrying to quick death.

Old men, who had in younger days been Chiefs of renown in the Blackfeet nation, rushed to weapons, but they were killed before they could hardly fire a shot.

It was an awful scene.

Corpses piled high upon each other lay in every direction. The village was a shamble. Blood ran down into the snow, and turned it crimson. Men and women died without a murmur, like the Indian stoics they were.

Children closed their eyes in death, at the revolver's ringing summons, with a smile of triumph over King Death.

Nowhere in the terrible massacre was there a coward; not an Indian showed the dreaded "White Feather."

"All follow me," yelled Bear-Head, once Great Chief of the Blackfeet tribe, as he tried to form his dying people in some sort of battle array. "I will try to save some of us."

With not a sound the survivors limped, crawled, or ran to where their leader stood.

In vain he waved above his head the "Written Paper" of his tribe, or certificate of the Canadian government, that Flying Cloud's band was its ward.

No one paid the slightest attention to him. Instead a leaden hail of bullets came from the attacking force that lay in a sort of semi-circle around the beleaguered Indians, and picked them off without danger to themselves.

Wounded in his arm, shot twice through his shoulder, a great red line on his scalp showing where a bullet had torn its way, Bear-Head, managed to get three youths, himself, two Indian women, and two children together, and with lightning speed, hurried across the river, which was frozen, and vanished into the great snow-clad mysterious forest.

To his stricken people he could make no answer. Over and over they asked why he was flying.

"It could not be whites that attacked us," said one of the Indian women rescued. "We are at peace with all the whites."

"Great Chiefs were those that shot at us," cried another of the rescued women. "I saw Colonel Parker, from Fort McPherson, leading the men in front of our village."

"They yelled, 'Kill All,'" whispered a boy.

Bear-Head nodded.

"My children," he said, "this is an attack on the part of the Snow-birds."

"The Snow-birds?" came the horrified reply.

"Yes. That terrible white-men's organization, banded to drive every Indian trapper and hunter out of the North-West, is behind that attack on our people."

"There must be help for us, somewhere," whimpered a girl.

It was Star-Eyes, pride of the Blackfeet nation, a tall, lithe, beautiful Indian maiden, with a clear bronzed skin, and long black-hair, which shaded a wonderfully melting pair of black eyes, which changed so as her moods changed, even in baby-hood, that her fond mother had named her "Star-Eyes."

Bear-Head sadly shook his head in the negative.

"Where can the Indian look for help?" he inquired sadly. "Here is my Written paper, issued at Ottawa by the government of Canada. It shows that the band of Flying Cloud are in receipt of bounty from the government and were entitled to respect from the pale faces. You saw me wave that paper above my head so that all those white men could see?"

"Yes, Great Chief," said Star-Eyes, who had the Indian's veneration for aged, and past greatness well inculcated in her mind, by her mother. "Yes, we saw you wave the paper."

Bear-Head pointed to the bloody bandage he had hastily wrapped about his forehead.

"That wound was the white men's answer to that Written Paper. It is a cheat, a lie."

Bear-Head tore the certificate into a thousand bits. He threw it with an eloquent gesture of hatred upon the snow, through which he and his tiny party were stumbling.

"The pale faces cried," added Bear-Head, "some—you know, Star-Eyes,—some battle-cry. Did you hear what they said?"

"They yelled, 'Kill All,'" replied the maiden. "And

some cried, death to all Indians. Teach the red men to keep off white hunter's territory."

"What?" roared Great Chief Bear-Head. "Say that again."

Star-Eyes repeated her words.

"It's as I thought," rejoined Bear-Head. "It's an attempt of the white man to drive all Indians out of the North-West. It's a trouble that has long been brewing. The white men claim we have been doing too well, as fur trappers and hunters, and that we get more game than they do—"

"And why not?" cried Star-Eyes. "Is not any Indian the superior at trapping or hunting, of any white man. It is all we know; all we have to live upon."

"For the white men have stolen our land," rejoined Bear-Head. "They now want to take our only way of making a living away."

"How dastardly," said Star-Eyes. "How cruel."

"It is," replied Bear-Head. "But for some time I have known that the Snow-birds, that secret organization of the whites, was talking over the question of driving us from the North-West. But I did not think they would dare to attack us here, so near Fort McPherson, under the protection as we are, of our employers, the Hudson's Bay Company."

"The Snow-birds then made up that attacking party?" said Star-Eyes.

"Yes."

"Is Colonel Parker their chief?"

"He is."

"He led them?"

"He led one party."

"Which one?"

"The one that attacked us at the entrance to our lodges."

"Who led the other party—the one that came in the rear?"

"Peter Parella, the big trapper who told Flying Cloud at the fort last week, that he was a sneaking Indian, and would have to get out of the North-West, or the white man would."

"Then—well, why talk of the past. Our people are dead by hundreds. Of the three hundred souls that arose in our village this morning, only eight are now alive."

Across Bear-Head's wrinkled face, came a shadow of deep regret.

"But back hidden far away near the great Rocky Mountains are two thousand of our people—of which eight hundred are great warriors," sneered Star-Eyes. "They will revenge the dead of our people."

"Child, child," said Bear-Head, "we count ourselves by hundreds. The white men are like the leaves of the forest in the summer time. If we kill every Snow-bird in the North-West, there is a forest of white men left to come and take their places. But we—a few hundred shots, a few thousand shots—and like the breath of the morning fog that rises after the sun goes down, and flees away as it arises, the Indians are gone. And there are none left to take their places."

The aged head of the speaker fell upon his breast as he spoke.

He well knew what a battle to the death would mean to every member of Flying Cloud's band.

"We can die with our faces to the foe, then," spirit-edly answered Star-Eyes. "Just as our people have died back there."

Through the forest came the ruddy hue of the burning tepees of the Indians.

"There burns our homes," said Bear-Head. "Like a breath they are gone forever. So, like a breath, will we go, when we oppose ourselves to the white people. I am old, and I know."

"Better a hero death than a cow's end," gasped Star-Eyes.

"Better a death for the Indian than a long life of battle with the Snow-birds," rejoined Bear-Head.

The little band pressed onward.

Through the snow for miles they hurried. Half clad the progress was slow. All suffered greatly, but all knew that there was no alternative. They must meet Flying Cloud and his band of hunters, which had left the village a few days before, and which an Indian runner had announced was returning to the village, before succor could be accorded them.

At length through the forest they met Flying Cloud.

"What means this?" he asked in astonishment when he saw the weary party.

Bear-Head, his father, and his predecessor in the office of Great Chief told him of the massacre of the Indian village.

Except for the turning of a shade darker in color, Flying Cloud made no visible showing of his feelings.

He was a splendid picture as he stood before old Bear-Head.

Tall, strong, with great black eyes, long black hair that swept his broad shoulders, with a torso that showed his great strength; dressed in a long garment of rabbit skin, pointed at each side that came to his thighs; a pair of deer-skin leggings, dressed with the hide or fur, on the outside; with heavy moccasins, ending in snow-shoes on his feet, Flying Cloud, was a martial figure.

His cap of musk-rat skin, shielded his fierce face. On his hands were deer skin mittens. He carried a long rifle, and bore a brace of revolvers in his belt. A keen knife peeped from his bosom, across which was a string of gay beads.

Around him crowded the members of his party. Astonishment was depicted on every face.

"Then we braves, fifty-five in number, are all that are left?" was asked. "We here are all that is left of our happy village."

"Yes," replied Bear-Head. "Sixty-three souls in all."

A great cry for vengeance went up from each savage throat. In a moment all traces of intercourse with the whites was lost, instead the Red Man thirsting for white blood, was all that was left.

The braves drew around Flying Cloud.

"I have lost my father and my mother," said one. "I ask for revenge."

"I have lost my wife," chimed in another brave. "I ask you for my revenge."

So, each in turn demanded of the young Great Chief, the toll to be paid in blood for the death of friend, wife, or relative.

"What think you, Bear-Head," at length asked Flying Cloud. "I know as well as you the terrible odds we must face. It is *Flying Cloud's last stand*."

"It is," briefly answered Bear-Head. "But we must exact the toll of blood or our race is forever shamed."

Flying Cloud took from his totem bag, the emblem of all that is sacred to a Blackfeet Indian, three long feathers.

A fierce, wild exclamation rang about the band of young warriors surrounding the Great Chief, who like Bear-Head, once elected to this office was always known by its title.

"War! War!" the warriors yelled. "Death for death. Blood for blood. Flying Cloud has taken from his totem bag, the great gray Eagle three feathers; the feathers that when sent to the white men, is a signal for war to the death."

"Take these feathers to the Postmaster at Fort McPherson," cried Flying Cloud. "They mean bitter war till the last Blackfeet Indian is dead, or the last white man is swept from the great North-West. Tell the Postmaster that I will kill two whites for every one that fell to-day in my village. Tell him that I, Flying Cloud have spoken."

With arrow like speed, from the band of warriors, a fleet runner, with snow-shoes of his kind on his feet, separated himself from the party, and at great speed hurried away toward Fort McPherson.

"There goes the brand that will set this entire country a-flame with war's red banner," cried Flying Cloud. "Snow-birds, I take your battle cry for mine — 'Kill All.'"

With fierce eyes the Great Chief looked about upon his band.

His eyes sparkled.

Every head bore the War signal, the three feathers from the wing of a great gray Eagle.

"War! war!" cried Flying Cloud. Then he gave the blood freezing war cry of the Blackfeet nation.

It went echoing down the corridors made by the trees of the forest.

Each warrior joined in the horrible sound.

\* \* \* \* \*

Away back at the Peel River bend, where smouldering and flickering embers was all that was left of the Indian village, Col. John Parker glanced over the heaps of dead.

"Ah! ha!" he shouted. "This is a lesson for the Indians, eh?"

But his blood froze a second later, when Peter Parella and his band joined him. Peter whispered one word in his ear. Colonel Parker turned livid beneath his coat of tan that shielded his face.

"Not a buck Indian, except old ones, were killed," Parella hissed.

"What?" roared Colonel Parker. "Then where is Flying Cloud and his warriors?"

As if in answer to the question there came flying from the forest an Indian runner.

He sped to where Colonel Parker stood.

"Take this to the Postmaster of the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort McPherson," he said.

Then at the feet of the wondering white he dropped a little bundle, and like a wraith vanished in the forest.

"Three feathers from the great gray Eagle," said Colonel Parker. "War to the knife that means. Yes, Flying Cloud and his band of warriors were not in the village when we attacked it. We have only killed old men, and women and children. I fear we have made a great mistake."

"We have certainly lighted the flames of an Indian war in the North-West," rejoined Peter Parella. "We must hurry back to the Fort. It is not well manned now that we are away."

Through the woods came the war cry of Flying Cloud's band.

The roar of rifle, a curtain of flame, burst from the woods. Two of Colonel Parker's band fell, dyeing the snow with their blood.

"The war is here now," yelled Colonel Parker. "To cover boys. Fight them from cover."

As his band disappeared in the underbrush Colonel Parker sighed.

"God help the men, women and children at the Fort if we are beaten," he muttered.

The canopy of flame had burst into a great conflagration.

"War! War!" yelled Flying Cloud's band. "Kill All!"

The Blackfeet nation had risen against the whites, and the secret organization, the Snow-birds. And the whites had only themselves to blame.

## CHAPTER II.

### CHARLES PYM DANCES TOO LONG.

"Forward and back."

The "caller" at Indian Jack's dance house at Fort McPherson was busy this night.

For the trappers and hunters were out in force.

There had been a summer in which game had not been very plenty which was followed by an early fall. Then came the significant early winter, when every fur bearing animal in the North-West seemed to have gotten ready for the greater cold of the mid-winter, by adding to fur on its back.

Thick, glossy fur, brought much more than the thinner kind that came in the milder winters, and there was corresponding glee in the hamlet of Fort McPherson, where the Hudson's Bay Company, held full sway.

The trappers and hunters could not have been so happy if it was not for this great fur trading company. Chartered in the time of Charles II to help the cousin of the English King, Prince Rupert, it had grown, and grown, until now it about dominated the fur trade of the North-West.

Its business method was simple. Hunter or trapper, Indian or white, had his rating, and upon it, was given credit.

Every man nearly, in Indian Jack's dance house had received his credit that day from the company, and so he was in funds. What cared he if to pay the advance in supplies or in cash he had received he must go to the great wilds where often the foot of white man had not pressed the soil, and wrest his debt from wily animals?

Enough for every man that he was in funds, and that there was warmth and hospitality at Indian Jack's.

The fact that he had to pay for it all never dawned upon a single man in the room.

The bar at the far side was liberally patronized.

Spinning around in a waltz in the center of the room were various men and women, the women, the floating kind that congregate on the frontier.

At the sides of the room quadrilles were being danced for which the "caller" gave his rasping voice.

Dancing with an Indian girl was Charles Pym, better known as "Charlie," trapper and hunter, good fellow, trader for furs, employee of the Hudson's Bay

Company, or in hours of leisure, a frequenter of about the only place of amusement in Fort McPherson, Indian Jack's dance hall.

Charlie did not know his Indian partner. Except that she was trim in figure, wore a gown that East had been fashionable ten years before, but passed muster in Indian Jack's resort, as the latest dream in dresses, and waltzed like a fairy, he did not care.

He had paid five Canadian dollars to Indian Jack, a low browed half-breed, standing near the bar for the ticket necessary before joining the dancers, and it did not make the slightest difference to him, as to whom was his partner.

The Indian girl, Rose of the Frontier as she was called, could not speak much English, and Charlie Pym could not speak fluent Indian, but each laughed a great deal, danced with much unction, and enjoyed themselves.

Between each dance as was the rule Charlie treated his partner at the bar, and although each treat separated him from a Canadian dollar, he was quite sure that he was getting full value for his cash.

Hours thus sped.

The dance room was constantly being added to every moment, so by the midnight hour it was filled almost to suffocation.

Pym liking the girl whom he had first selected extremely well kept dancing with her, which was a violation of frontier etiquette, although he did not know it.

It was not until his boon companion, Fritz Harz, had held up his ham-like hand several times that Pym saw him.

"What is in the wind," he cried to Harz, as he left his partner for a moment.

"Getting weary of life, eh?" Harz asked cordially.

"Not yet," replied Pym. "Why do you say so?"

"Oh, nothing. Just thought that if you had not made your will you had better do it."

Pym was astonished.

"Kick me if I know what you mean, Harz," he said. "What's all this stuff you are handing me?"

It was the turn of Harz to look astonished.

"You don't mean that you are such a bleary idiot that you don't know what you are doing?" he asked.

"Why no. I am dancing."

"Of course you are, but with the Rose of the Frontier for at least three hours."

"What of it?"

"Oh, nothing, but the man who says he is her husband, is outside with a great long gun, with which he has informed the entire hamlet, he is about to blow your fool head off with."

"Thunder."

"Likewise lightning," added Harz. "That young woman has been pleading with you for the last hour to let her join her hubby in the choicest Indian dialect."

"But I don't speak any of her Indian dialect."

"So I now see. Well, if I were you I'd hitch that Army revolver of yours ahead a point. You will probably need to use it in about four minutes. I am of the opinion that you have danced a trifle too long."

Pym was serious in a moment.

He knew what a sudden brawl over a girl meant in Indian Jack's dance house.

It meant an appeal to the revolver.

Pym further knew that while the woman he was dancing with was a mere lay figure so far as he was

concerned, that no one in the crowded room knew this fact, and that if he was challenged to a revolver duel, he would have to accept, and fight it out to the death as some one said, "in the bloody arena of the dance hall."

"Curse me for an addle pated idiot," Pym thought. "This affair will be pretty bad for me."

For "Charlie" Pym, was a trusted runner of the Hudson's Bay Company. His duties required the presence of mind of a very brave man.

Once in the dead of each North-West winter it was Pym's duty to visit every Indian encampment within three hundred miles, there to gather from each the peltries, or skins each trapper or hunter had caught, to credit the result on their "debt" books, and to make his way alone back to the Hudson's Bay Company with his valuable freight.

But Pym had not been entirely frank with Harz in telling him that he knew no Indian dialect. He had known it better for his purpose not to confess that for a long while he had indirectly understood what the Indian woman was talking about, and had laughed at her fears, although he had not fully understood exactly what she said.

His knowledge of Indian language was entirely among the various dialects of the several branches of the Blackfeet tribe; while the girl with him was a Navajo.

He knew enough of her conversation to cause him to wish he had heeded what she was saying.

But to Fritz Harz, Pym was the same as ever; gay, jolly, fear free and careless.

"Oh, ho!" whistled Pym. "Does the wind set in that quarter! By what gay husband am I accused of stealing away his pretty wife," he quoted.

"By 'The Moose.'"

"Wow! By the Blackfeet Indian, gambler, trader, 'bad-man,' gun fighter, better known by the name of 'The Moose,' eh? Well, that's bad," replied Pym. "But I will take mine weapon as my arbitrator and do me a battle with this man, who eats-us-whites-alive."

"Charlie, old Chap, be serious for once," entreated Harz. "This is serious. This man will kill you if you don't kill him."

"But if I kill him who will support his widow, the Rose of the Frontier?"

"What is that to you?"

"Nothing."

"Then why prate of it?"

"I don't unless you force me to do it."

"You are in an extremely awkward position."

"Guess I will run."

"Run? And be disgraced forever."

"That's so."

"Better remain here and fight it out."

"That's what I am going to do."

"Are those guns of yours ready—are you heeled?"

"Sure. Do you think I don't know better than to venture in here without being ready for trouble."

"Charlie, do you know that since you have been dancing here more than what is going to happen to your fool neck, has been in the air."

"Tell it, old man, tell it. It's disagreeable and I see you are dying to tell it."

"All right! The Snow-birds cleaned up Flying Cloud's encampment this morning."

"What?"

"And killed all but eight people."

"Ye, Gods and great fishes. There's music unless they got Flying Cloud—did they kill him?"

"No. The fools killed only a few old men, women and children."

"My Moses, but that's bad. There is not an Indian in the territory that won't rise after that—killed women and children, the idiots."

"Yes! Some one told Colonel Parker, head of the Snow-birds, of the encampment. You know how impetuous he is. He turned out the fighting legion of the Snow-birds at once and went and cleaned up the village of Flying Cloud."

"Where was Flying Cloud?"

"Out with a hunting party."

"Ah."

"And now there has just come a messenger from Colonel Parker to the Fort."

"Well?"

"It was to say that an Indian lad had pressed his way into the camp of the Snow-birds, even before they had gotten away from the slaughter they had made, and had dropped three feathers from a gray Eagle, at the foot of Colonel Parker."

"Thunder."

"Of course that is the Indian way of a declaration of war to the death, and a messenger was hurried to the Fort to give us time to prepare for the trouble. Flying Cloud is a great warrior. He may attack the Fort any moment."

"Am I needed at the Fort?"

"You are."

"To do what?"

"The Postmaster wants you to go out and try to make a treaty of peace with Flying Cloud."

"A treaty of peace with an Indian when he has just declared war—why not ask me to make a treaty with a rattlesnake when he is rattling showing he is just ready to spring."

"But you have got to go."

"Not I. It's like a confounded Londoner like the present Postmaster here, to ask me to do such a thing. Why man, I would be killed in a minute."

"Probably. But you know John Gordon."

"Otherwise the Postmaster?"

"Yes."

Pym nodded.

"What he says is pretty liable to go with you?"

"Or I go, as we are both employed by the Hudson's Bay Company, and he knows that he is my superior."

"And he has a daughter, Miss Evelyn."

"Oh fudge."

"You will go and try to make a treaty with Flying Cloud, Mr. Pym, you may rest assured," jeered Harz.

"Even if you are scalped as a result of your fool bravery. And when you are wanted, here you are, about to engage in a fight with an Indian, over his wife—oh, you idiot."

Pym laughed.

"All right," he said. "It's a fool position for me to be in, but if I don't fight I will be branded as a coward everywhere. I must needs fight."

"Look out!" cried Harz, "there comes 'The Moose.'"

As he yelled the warning the crowd broke and fled. The Moose advanced. He was a half-breed. His face was distorted by passion. In his hand he carried a large revolver.



With deftness absolutely surprising, the revolver of Pym was twisted from its holster by its owner.

Both weapons gave their dreaded explosion at the same time.

The two heavy caliber shots went flying through the air.

### CHAPTER III.

#### FLYING CLOUD'S REVENGE.

"We have them safe. I shall be revenged."

Flying Cloud with these words turned toward Star-Eyes, just as the Indian band fired its first shot at the Snow-birds.

The keen military sense in this half savage man told him that he would win the victory in this, the first brush of what was to go down into history, as "The Great Blackfeet War."

"Are you confident?" swiftly replied the Indian maiden, as she drew nearer to the warrior. The couple spoke in the soft, poetic dialect of the Blackfeet in which a few words make what would be a long sentence in our language.

"Absolutely," returned Flying Cloud. "They are in a coop. Look! They can not escape up the mountain side."

"True."

"We have ten of our best young warriors led by The Deer, that great fighter, there in those woods at the left."

Three wreaths of flame and smoke burst out of the point indicated by Flying Cloud as he spoke.

Three whip like snaps told of the explosion of three rifles.

"Aha!" continued Flying Cloud. "There spoke the weapons of our young men. See, there goes a pale face to his end."

A waving arm showed from a thicket behind which a Snow-bird was hidden that the bullets had gone home.

"Kill All!" roared Flying Cloud to his men.

His face was transfigured by hatred. He used the battle cry of the Snow-birds first, to incite his men; then from his lips rolled the long, shrill, terrible battle cry of the Blackfeet.

It held the wild note of revenge in its blood curdling significant rude diapason.

Blood-lust, Indian duplicity, hatred of white domination, desire for freedom all came in that untamed war cry.

It was one long story of a fated race told in a single sustained scream.

From every Indian warrior the cry was flung back.

Even Star-Eyes, with her education at the Indian mission of Fort McPherson at once became all savage; like a cast off glove her veneer of civilization left her; she was only an eager Indian thirsting for white blood.

As Star-Eyes joined in the battle cry of her race, Flying Cloud's face was lighted by great pleasure.

"Again!" he shouted.

"Again!" cried Star-Eyes. "Our cry shoots deadly fear to the hearts of the Snow-birds."

Once more pealed out the Indian war-whoop.

Shots then pattered like rain about the Snow-birds. Here and there a man sagged backward as a deadly

bullet killed him. Red badges of battle began to show on many brawny shoulders, as wounds were received.

"We have lost four men," reported Peter Parella, to Colonel Parker, to whom he crawled under a withering fire, which thrice wounded him slightly.

"How many wounded?" inquired the commanding officer.

"Nearly everybody," replied Parella.

"Bad! Bad!" answered Parker. "Peter we have brought down a hornet's nest on our head—why did we not make sure that we got Flying Cloud before we made this raid."

"True," grunted Parella. "But what is the use of post-mortems? What we did not do is not half as important just now as what we are going to do."

"Right you are. But what can we do?"

"Fight it out, just now."

"That is all very well. But Flying Cloud has our range perfectly. He is picking us off every moment."

"We have got to stand that. If we try to retreat we are surely done for. Flying Cloud's band would make dead men of us all in ten minutes."

"Can we not escape up the mountain?"

"Impossible."

"Why?"

"Look up that snow clad mountain side."

Colonel Parker glanced in the direction of the steep mountain. He saw a floating cloud of smoke proceeding from a forest of splendid pines.

"The enemy are there in force," Colonel Parker said mournfully.

"You bet!" answered Parella. "This Flying Cloud can not have as many men as we, but he is a warrior all right. He has disposed his men so we are under a cross-fire."

"He has cut us off from escape by the mountain."

"He has."

"His braves are in the woods there at the left."

"Yes; hear the whine of the rifle bullets?"

"We can not advance because his main fighting force is there, right ahead."

"Yes."

"There is the river?"

"That is our only present chance of escape."

"Can you get word to all the Snow-birds to crawl back toward the river?"

"Yes, if I do not get killed. If I do, send on another man to take up the message after I am dead from the point I leave off," whispered Parella.

Colonel Parker nodded. He bitterly regretted his attack on the Indians, for he saw that he had underrated the situation, a grave fault in any commander.

"They have every advantage in point of position," Colonel Parker cried aloud. "We in our foolish pride after the attack on the village, were so sure that we had destroyed Flying Cloud and all his warriors, that we did not take any precaution for our own protection. Now we are hemmed in on every side, and are in a fair way to be slaughtered."

Peter Parella seemed to sink into the deep snow as he left the side of Colonel Parker. He wormed his way along, taking advantage of every tree, shrub, root, or hollow in the ground.

Flying Cloud from his position on a thickly wooded hill, which gave him a clear view of the battle field, saw Parella almost immediately and sent Star-Eyes, who had self appointed herself an aide-de-camp to

Flying Cloud, to the firing line of his braves, with instructions to turn their rifles upon Parella.

"Ping!" went the Indians' weapons.

Little white sprays of snow sprang up all around Parella, but he seemed to be protected by an invisible spirit as the bullets struck.

Like some great snake Parella swung to the right, where he told some secreted Snow-birds to escape toward the river.

The next step would be a long burrow to the left, marked by shots from the enemy.

Then there would be a detour to the rear, and finally both sides suspended all hostilities except that which raged around Parella.

Colonel Parker was in a fever heat each moment for fear that the enemy would end the life of his brave follower, and second now, in command of the endangered Snow-birds.

"Good boy, Peter," Colonel Parker shouted. "Get behind that tree there. That is the way. Now burrow like a rabbit way down deep in the snow. My! that was a close call."

Colonel Parker had seen a shot rip up the snow right where had rested Parella's head a second before.

"That is the way, boy," the Colonel cried hardly a second later. "Hip, Hip, Hurrah!"

Parella had gained the shade of a great tree, and was seen hugging the earth for dear life.

"All right, Colonel!" Peter then called across the space that now separated the couple. "Everybody has been told."

"You are a brave man," cried Colonel Parker, in high admiration.

But in carrying his brave act to completion Parella found himself in a dangerous place.

His only hope of escaping the fire of the Indians was to crawl to every point of shelter. In doing this he had arrived at a place far toward the enemy and much nearer to it than he was to the Snow-birds.

Fortunately he was sheltered from the weapons of the Indians on the hill side and had only the shots from the enemy directly ahead of him to watch out for; but to return to his comrades meant that he must retrace his steps, and it was hardly possible that he would meet with the same good fortune again.

To rise and run backward to Colonel Parker would mean that Peter would be riddled by a dozen bullets before he had progressed ten feet.

"I'm in a pretty tight hole," Parella cried to Colonel Parker. "But I am pretty comfortable here, thank you, at least for the present."

Peter examined his revolvers and loosened his great Bowie knife in his belt.

Flying Cloud, scanning the scene with critical eyes quickly sensed the dangerous position Parella found himself in.

Flying Cloud turned to Star-Eyes.

"Creep back to our braves," he commanded. "Tell one of our young men that out there lies the head-dress of a Blackfoot Chief. Tell him to steal out and kill that white man."

It was a deed that appealed to Star-Eyes. She laughed in her low, musical Indian way.

"And if the young brave dies," she called clearly, "we women will sing of his bravery in our lodges for all the ages."

Flying Cloud looked at Star-Eyes with his admira-

tion stealing from his eyes, and the soft rich, blushes of the girl mantled her beautiful face.

"Ah, Star-Eyes," Flying Cloud said quickly. "With you, and a few more warriors I would sweep the white man from the North-West."

Flying Cloud watched the tall, fine form of the girl hurrying along upon her dangerous mission, for the enemy seemed to be trying to fill the lonely woods with bullets in hopes some would take effect in an Indian heart.

Star-Eyes wore a long tunic of beaver fur, rare, and costly. This reached to her knees, where it met a shot skirt of fine deer-skin, with the skin tanned, and which was decorated in fantastic design, picked out with parti-colored beads.

Long fringed leggings, of deer-skin, terminated in high moccasins, attached to snow-shoes. The leggings were heavily trimmed with dyed porcupine skins. Upon her black hair was a peaked rabbit skin hat, which could be pulled down far over her ears in bad weather, but with a clear day, plenty of snow, and extreme cold, Star-Eyes did not think that she needed any such protection; forty degrees below zero to this Indian girl was not thought to be a surpassing weather condition.

Flying Cloud saw that his message had been delivered within a short time.

For the fire of his warriors suddenly became tremendous. The bullets skimmed the snow, and seemed like magnificent blasts from the grave itself, to all the beholders.

Great clouds of smoke also began to float from the woods.

Flying Cloud knew when he sent Star-Eyes away on her mission that not only would his orders be obeyed, but every trick of Indian duplicity, would be carried out as a matter of fact.

In less time than it takes to describe the action, the Indians had dug deep in the snow, raked out a lot of soft, dry, wood, and had started a half dozen little fires, which gave out a great smoke.

The order of Flying Cloud was about to be carried out under the dense canopy of the smoke.

But the trick was quickly understood by Colonel Parker.

"Look out," the old Indian fighter called to Parella. "They are making that smoke to get some one out to kill you."

Parella nodded. He knew he could not try to take advantage of the canopy of smoke because as soon as he showed himself erect, the Indians on the hill side would shoot him; his was an extremely perilous position.

But he answered by a cheery "let 'em come," and looked at his weapons with the greatest care for he knew that his slightest neglect might mean his death.

Next with equal care not to expose his body to the Indians' rifles Parella looked about him to take in all the inequalities of the ground. He patted down the snow with feet and hands, so that it would give him a firm footing.

Even through his heavy clothing the powerful muscles of the white man's broad chest could be seen, as they played with absolute freedom. The cords on his wrist seemed to be made of great knots. Parella was one of the strongest men in the North-West.

"I wonder which way the attack will come from," Parella thought. But almost before he could move;

before he possibly could get his revolver in motion, he saw a shadow dart by him, stop, turn, and with a fierce yell, the doughty white man threw his arms about the straight, splendid form of a young Indian.

The youth had unseen, dashed through the smoke, and had stolen a watch upon the white man, who in getting ready for the battle had tried to get the battle ground ready, not thinking that the foe might be coming while he was preparing to meet him.

The butchery began.

The Indian was equally surprised because the sudden clutch of the foe had not allowed him to use the revolver which he held in his right hand or the tomahawk in his left.

But with great address he dropped both weapons and caught Parella by the throat.

The great muscles in Parella's head seemed to be swelling to bursting. So far as the pressure on his throat was concerned, the Indian might as well have tried to crush a pine tree between his hands as to attempt to strangle the white man.

This the Indian soon saw. So he tried another plan of attack.

His arms began to slowly swarm down Parella's back in an effort to reach the trapper's back low down; then with a quick upward movement the Indian hoped to snap the white man's spinal column.

Parella blocked this movement by bringing his forehead down upon the Indian's nose. Blood flowed in a stream.

"Ugh!" cried the Indian not relishing this mode of attack.

"I'll give you plenty much, 'ugh,'" cried Parella. "It's 'lo, the poor Indian' for yours, you sneaking red man."

"White man, he-got-die," panted the Indian, but who had stopped the effort to get a spinal hold on his antagonist.

A dozen rifles had been leveled at the two fighting men, for now they were in clear view of each side of the conflict, but Colonel Parker's men feared that while the two forms writhed hither and thither in such deadly communion, a shot might kill Parella.

Flying Cloud's band was equally fearful of shooting their champion, so the splendid wrestling match became the center of attention for each of the opposing forces.

"Splendid," encouraged Colonel Parker as he saw Parella frustrate the attempt to break his back.

"Catch him lower down," in turn advised Flying Cloud, who in his anxiety to have his Indian champion win the struggle had left his post and could be seen waving encouragement to his men from the underbrush of the firing line.

Star-Eyes, who was as excited as was Flying Cloud, managed to pull the enthusiastic Chief back from where a chance shot might end his life but she also, encouraged the young Indian by her cries.

To the watchers it looked as if the battle had raged for hours; but really it had only been going on for a few moments when a most wonderful thing happened.

Parella's face was seen to be distorted by his effort to break loose from the Indian.

His feet dug deep into the snow. His back, arched and strained until it seemed as if every muscle could be seen to be in magnificent play.

In the eyes of the on-lookers the battle was a wonderful exhibition of strength.

The Indian was a strong man also. He held his own against the white with great address for several minutes.

Then came a great change.

With one long effort of his entire strength, Parella whirled the gasping Indian away from him, breaking his fierce hold upon his body.

Then the white man with a tremendous long leap, jumped backward.

"He is going to turn a somersault," said Colonel Parker to one of the Snow-birds, who had crept over to him, "no, he isn't—look, just look."

Parella had jumped six feet in the air by a long spring. Both his feet shot up when he was on a level with the Indian.

The white man's moccasins crashed into the Indian's face. The blow was delivered with such force, such wonderful address, that the Indian's face was crushed in as if his countenance had been a bit of paper.

The blow sank directly into the Indian's brain. His face, was covered with blood, and his crushed nose, and mouth with all the teeth pressed inward gave him a terrible expression.

Reeling from the blow the Indian was helpless.

With a swift gesture Parella grasped his enemy by the arm. One blow with his Bowie knife went clear to the brave's heart; he stumbled, fell forward, dead, while around him the snow ran red with his life blood.

"Retreat to the river, boys!" cried Parella without awaiting the storm of shot which he knew would come when the Indians saw that he had been victorious.

"That's the order, follow me," replied Colonel Parker. He led the way toward the Peel River, thinking to escape across its frozen surface.

"The way is clear for a moment," yelled Parella, with speed meanwhile hurrying along. "Look here. I got that young buck's three feathers of war."

As he spoke Parella fastened the feathers in his cap.

The shots now began to patter like hail through the underbrush the hotly pressed white men were forcing their way through.

While every advantage was taken as to cover several of the Snow-birds were wounded.

"I hate to be made a target of by those infernal wretches," Colonel Parker shouted to Parella.

"Never mind," the latter replied. "It is not time to talk over that side of our troubles. Rush along fast for the river. If we can get there ahead of the Indians we may be able to cross it, gain the underbrush over there, and change our battle front."

"Then when they tried to cross, they would be attacking instead of being under cover."

"Of course. Then we would stand a better chance out of this deadly cross-fire, where Flying Cloud has all the benefit of the better position."

The Snow-birds a war worn party; wounded, battle torn, yet still fighting hurried after the two weary leaders.

"The river! look! the river, now boys hurry across," cried Colonel Parker as he ran down the river bank.

Then a terrible cry came from his lips.

"Hemmed in," he yelled. "Look."

Instead of the clear, snowy, icy space of the great river, with its densely wooded shores hardly a mile on

the other side, Parella saw great uncouth, gigantic forms, hurrying toward the frightened white men.

"What are they?" Parella asked in agony.

"A great colony of white Polar bears, that fiercest of all North-West animals," cried Colonel Parker. "See there are ten of them."

"We must kill them."

"That would be easy, but while we are killing the bears the Indians will kill us."

A great yell of joy was heard from the band of Flying Cloud. They saw the terrible position the white men were in.

"Now for my revenge," cried Flying Cloud. "Charge!"

Drawing his keen tomahawk, with great long leaps through the deep snow, he, followed by his blood-thirsty band, dashed in a wild charge upon the little band of white men, who seemed ready to break into a wild panic, at the horrible situation they found themselves facing.

## CHAPTER IV.

### A GREAT SHOT.

Charles Pym felt that when his shot left his revolver that it would be the last one he ever fired.

The crowd in the dance hall had crept clear back to each side of the room. Indian Jack stood with both arms widely outstretched as if trying to keep the crowd back.

The Moose, with his great revolver in his hand, poised lightly, as if about to belch forth its shot again, seemed to Pym to be twice as large as the room.

The form of the cowering Rose of the Frontier also swept across the brain of Pym, but he did not really grasp it all. The entire scene he afterward recalled, was like a fleeting glance one has of a sylvan view from a fast railroad train's window.

It was Charlie Pym's first gun fight.

In the rude life of the North-West he had had his troubles; he had taken his chance of living with the rude men and women about him, and had fought Indian outbreaks, or had charged with his fellows upon the dangerous Wapiti, the great gray moose, or American elk, and had fought out hand to hand conclusions with many a wild beast.

But this was the first time that he had faced one man, alone, in a wild combat with revolvers, when quickness in shooting made life possible; the least slowness meant sudden, and horrible death.

These thoughts surged through Pym's brain.

They came in the absolutely unmeasurable time between the report from his own weapon, and that of The Moose; so absolutely instantaneous had been the two reports that to all in the room it sounded as if one man only had fired his weapon.

"Fleck!"

Like the sweep of a gigantic hand over his forehead, Pym felt an intangible something or other pass over his forehead.

He threw back his head.

Then the whirling room came back to his eyes as ever. He could see the hushed crowd on each side; Indian Jack still standing with outstretched arms, but what was this in the center of the room?

It was a tottering man, reeling back and forward.

It was The Moose.

"Ha!" thought Pym. "That touch upon my forehead must have been the bullet from The Moose's revolver."

Pym's hand hurried to his temple. It came away wet with blood.

"It just grazed me," Pym thought.

"Look out, Charlie," Pym heard the voice of Fritz Harz calling as if from an immense height. "He is going to shoot again."

Pym jumped backward his entire thoughts now clear. He was, he knew, still fighting for his life.

The Moose, was now down on his knees. On the bosom of his hunting shirt a rapidly growing shadow showed where the blood was ebbing from a wound through his lungs.

The Moose was trying to raise his revolver.

Pym raised his. He waited to see whether the wounded man could get strength together to fire again. If he could Pym knew he must kill the fellow before he could shoot again. It was nature's law, self preservation.

Standing still and tense Pym watched his antagonist.

The Moose straightened up, tried to rise, tried to raise his revolver; but his life blood was leaving him too rapidly.

After a magnificent effort, The Moose gave it up. His revolver dropped from his nerveless hand; he fell forward on his face with a gentle sigh.

The battle was over. Charlie Pym had won his first gun-fight against the most dangerous gun-man in the North-West.

The crowd roared its appreciation.

"The best gun fight I ev' se', Mon Dieu," congratulated Indian Jack, of French-Indian extraction. "*Pas a pas on va bien loin.*" (Step by step one goes very far.)

The Moose lay very still as the owner of the dance hall spoke.

"You so cool, Monsieur," continued the speaker. "No one ver' bit 'fraid, joost so splendid. Ah, it was grand."

Fritz Harz drew Pym gently away.

"Is The Moose dead?" asked Pym. The two men had left the dance hall and were hurrying away under the bright stars which in these high latitudes are extremely shiny, and bright.

"I do not know," answered Harz. "You got him for fair, Charlie. You hit him in the middle of his broad chest. I saw the little puff of dust fly up from his jacket, when your shot hit him. I knew then you had him if he didn't hit you in a fatal spot—what's this, are you hurt?"

Harz pointed to the long bloody mark on Pym's forehead, where the bullet of the Moose had plowed its way.

"Oh, that," answered Pym indifferently. "That is nothing. It is only a flesh wound."

"You are lucky."

"I suppose so. But I do not like a gun fight."

"Nor I. They are so sudden. It is a case of be quick or you are dead."

"Anyway," added Pym, "the fight is over. Where are we going?"

"First to clean up your head; next to Fort McPherson."

"Why to Fort McPherson?"

"To see Postmaster Gordon."

"Well."

"And also to see his fair daughter, Miss Evelyn—"

"Oh, shut up. Why drag her in always when you speak to me."

"Nothing," replied Fritz as he winked at a star. "But anyway it's a case of go to the Fort for us both. My orders are to bring you immediately to the commander. So let us hurry and get your face washed. Then we may go to the fort, and to the fair —"

Fritz ducked just then to escape a fair aimed blow from Pym. But that worthy followed Harz to his lodging where some warm water and a long strip of court-plaster, erased the signs of the conflict from Pym's head.

"You are quite the presentable young man," remarked Harz, after a close inspection of Pym. "We may now hurry to the fort."

At Fort McPherson all was bustle and hurry. The fort was one of those half office, half fort, wooden buildings, where the business of the great Hudson's Bay Company was carried forward.

It was strongly built enough to withstand any ordinary Indian siege being three stories in height, built of very heavy elm trees, and covered over with heavy iron plates, that made it impregnable except for some high explosive which no Indian would be liable to secure.

The fort proper was surrounded by a high stockade, or walled in yard, the walls being at least fifteen feet in height, and well supplied with small cannon, of rather an old fashioned pattern, but of strength enough to cope with any ordinary attack, it was hoped.

Along the stockade was a walk placed two-thirds of the way up the steep timbers. A sentry in the rough costume of a trapper, but with an extremely able rifle on his shoulder walked along this platform, and now and then peered through peep-holes to the waste of snowy forest that surrounded the fort.

Through the great iron bound gate, that was swung shut at night, hurried Pym and Harz.

"It seems to me that this fort is something of a bluff," Pym remarked, as his eye traveled over the stockade.

"Why?" asked Harz.

"When Charles the Second, of England chartered the great Hudson's Bay Company, to help his cousin Prince Rupert make money, I guess these cannon were sent here. Do they ever fire them?"

Smiles twinkled in Harz' eyes. He knew that most of Pym's life was passed in the lonely woods, and that his visit to the fort was the first he had made in several years, or he probably would not have been so free with criticism.

"They pop those guns, anyway, on King's Birthday, or on Dominion day, the two great Canadian holidays."

"Any of 'em ever bust-up on 'em?"

"Not as I heard of. But you know I will admit that these cannon aren't much good. Originally the Hudson's Bay Company owned all this great territory way out here, and began in dire peril the work of gathering furs."

"Yes, I know that."

"But about forty years ago the Hudson's Bay Company sold all its land rights, generally speaking to the Dominion of Canada, except that it kept all of its old forts, and ten acres of land about each one. The forts were mostly old trading places, fortified well enough

to beat off Indians—hence, my boy, what you see here of Hudson's Bay Company property is the fort, the stockade and ten acres of land; the rest is all Canada's land."

"So the Hudson's Bay Company think the armament it has had for so many years is good enough to defend the fort, and the hamlet of Fort McPherson being Canada's property, can be defended by Canada."

"Exactly."

"I think both sides are 'in wrong.' A man like Flying Cloud could shoot up the village of Fort McPherson in two days; why there are only about 250 men, women and—no there aren't many children, I'll admit."

"No this isn't a child's part of the world. It's a place for men that can fight, and will fight, and for women of the same breed, this spot 'about latitude 68 degrees, longitude 134,' as they speak of it in the school maps."

"But that doesn't tell of the cold, the great snow, the meager fight for just warmth and food up here, eh?"

"To say nothing of the pleasing little dance hall episode you just passed through."

"Oh, shucks! Will you let up?"

"Certainly. But I will admit that the fort is not really well provided with arms, and that it would be in a dangerous position if Flying Cloud attacks it; as for the hamlet about the fort, it's made of flimsy buildings, and no fighting organization exists there except among the Snow-birds, and they are very busy just now trying to get away from the tangle their foolish attack on Flying Cloud's band has caused."

"Say you must know Flying Cloud pretty well?"

"I know him exceedingly well. I have been with his band winter after winter for six years getting the furs the band have caught in the early winter, and toting 'em back to the Hudson's Bay people, for whom Flying Cloud hunts, and traps."

"What kind of a man is he?"

"The best of his kind. He is a Blackfeet Indian; he and his band settling about the Peel River country some thirty-five years ago, or about the time he was born. His father Great Chief Bear-Head, had settled here because of a compact with the Hudson's Bay Company to do hunting and fishing for them."

"How did it get on—the compact I mean?"

"Fine. Great Chief Bear-Head made the band noted for its catches. No white party, or red either, can touch Great Chief Bear-Head's record for work. He brought his son up to the same line of duty, and although the office of Great Chief of the Blackfeet Indians is not an inherited one, Flying Cloud won the place, about ten years ago."

"How did he do that?"

"I heard the story from his father, Bear-Head. Flying Cloud, who was only known as 'Great Chief Bear-Head's boy,' when fifteen years old, went to gain his totem. This means that an Indian lad goes alone, with only his knife, his rifle, and tomahawk, to a tepee placed in the solitary woods. There for twenty-four hours, with no food, he fasts, and prays. He asks the Great Spirit to send his totem to him in a dream."

"His totem. What is that?"

"It is his totem, or God, his personal protector from all the evils of this merry world. Not only does the young Indian have a totem, but so does a tribe, to which the tribe appeals for aid in time of trouble."

"Fine! Go ahead, my boy."

"A tribe may have as its totem the Wolf or the Bear or any other animal—it worships this great tribal emblem, you see, and carries as the tribe crest the rudely drawn figure of the animal which is its totem."

"Shut up! When a boy gets to making totem, after a long fast, with much prayer, he goes to sleep. Then the Great Spirit sends in his dreams something that makes the totem."

"What dream did Flying Cloud have?"

"Bear-Head told me that the lad dreamed that he saw himself sitting on a great cloud, floating through the blue sky of a summer day. He felt that he was really a cloud, but while he soared in air, a great white brant flew up to him, and he jumped upon the back of the snow-white bird, and was brought to earth."

"So when he touched old Mother Earth, he at once took the name of Flying Cloud?"

"Not at all. The lad awoke in the lonely tepee, and taking his rifle, knife, and tomahawk, sorely puzzled by the dream started back to the encampment of his father, to ask what his dream could really mean."

"Did he find out?"

"Wait, my impetuous friend. On the way back, when near the camp, and in plain view of everyone a great white polar bear rushed from the forest and attacked him. He fired his rifle at the animal and only wounded it."

"Wow! A wounded polar bear is a fearful beast to face."

"Is it not? Well, the boy had no time to reload his old muzzle-loading rifle, or get to his old style revolver, so he drew his knife and went at the bear like a fiend incarnate."

"What? A fifteen year old Indian lad engaged in a hand to hand combat with a wounded white polar bear?"

"That is right. That is just what the boy did. They say that the boy and beast whirled about in the snow until it arose in a great cloud. Through this cloud could be seen the lad, racing back, and forth, dodging, attacking, being chased hither and thither, but with the regularity of a trip hammer striking his knife deep into the bear."

"Say, go on, that's fine."

"An old Indian woman who saw the fight yelled: 'Flying Cloud: that boy will be a great warrior. Hail, Flying Cloud.' With these words the boy killed the bear with a lucky knife thrust its heart, and when he told his dream, the Medicine Man of the Blackfeet, said his name was thereafter to be *Flying Cloud* and that his totem emblem was to be the great white brant, you know the beautiful white bird, of our latitudes."

"Yes."

"So, after that a deer-skin bag, filled with soft moss, and which bears on its outside the figure of a white-brant, burned there by the Medicine Man, was given Flying Cloud. That is his personal totem. He carries it always suspended about his neck with a deer-skin thong. All else besides the moss in the bag, are the three gray eagle feathers which are never touched unless war is declared, and which can never be returned to the totem bag unless they have been dipped in the life gore of the enemy."

"Well."

"That is why the sending of the three great eagle

feathers means such a grave situation to every one involved. Further, Flying Cloud was quite well educated at the mission school at the fort, summers, when there is no trapping to be done."

"He is an educated Indian?"

"Quite so for an Indian. He was elected Chief ten years ago, in place of his father, Bear-Head, his band never forgetting his brave fight with the white bear, and he has been busy in raising his race. He has armed all his band, just as well as we are armed. He has taught them much of the better work of civilization. They are now as a band way above all the other Blackfeet, or any other tribe I ever heard of."

"Well, in other words they are dirty dangerous when they declare war."

"That is it. Flying Cloud knows he can not win in the long run. This is *Flying Cloud's last stand*, but before he is beaten he will take care to make those who attacked his village pay a terrible price."

"You think we are in for a bad Indian war?"

"I do. The worst we have had in the North-West in many, many years. But let us hurry onward."

Pym spoke with such gravity as to make light hearted Harz pause for he well knew that Pym spoke of Flying Cloud from a personal knowledge.

"Do you think that Flying Cloud will dare attack the fort?" asked Harz.

"Flying Cloud dares anything. That is why I spoke of the antiquated defense of the old fort. It would be sorely tried if Flying Cloud attacks it."

"And as to the village?"

"It is absolutely defenseless."

"Can not the war be stopped?"

"I fear not. The Snow-bird attack has made it impossible, I fear."

"Where did Flying Cloud gain the enmity of the Snow-birds?"

"It is the same old story of the non-successful man, against the successful one. Flying Cloud gets too much 'debt' from the Company to please the white men that make up the Snow-birds; so Flying Cloud must be swept off the face of the earth."

"That is so."

"Of course it is. That idea makes the bottom of most of the frontier Indian fights. But you see this war is worse than most of those of the past because it is a war of frenzy."

"How do you make that out?"

"The early life of Flying Cloud, his totem dream, the white brant bearing him from a cloud, to earth, has made him in the minds of his people a supernatural figure, a super-man?"

"That is they think he is a creature of another world, come to aid them in sweeping the white man from their hunting grounds?"

"Yes. Then they all think that his killing the white bear when a lad was shown them to prove his descent from another world. They argue that no Indian ever before had seen a lad kill a wounded bear with a frail knife."

"So this war is really a sort of Indian religious one?"

"Exactly. And on top of that put the unprovoked slaughter of the helpless old men, women, and children, in the Snow-bird raid, you have a terribly vexing problem."

"And you are asked to go out and settle it by a personal visit to Flying Cloud's camp?"

"Yes."

Harz scratched his head.

"I am like the purple cow of fame; 'I'd rather see than be one.'"

With this remark Harz followed Pym to the main room in the fort, where John Gordon, Postmaster, for the Hudson's Bay Company, stood awaiting them.

Things not often seen on the frontier faced Pym as he and Harz entered the room. There was a piano, some mission furniture, several good water colors on the wall; with a profusion of magnificent and costly furs, as rugs on the floor.

John Gordon, had no easy position as Postmaster for the great company of which he was head. His jurisdiction was over 500 square miles of territory, most all of it absolutely unbroken in its wide expanse of forest, mountain and plain.

Possibly a thousand white hunters, and trappers, as many more Indians with a sprinkling of half-breeds, and French Canadians, the *voyageurs* from the French-English part of the dominion about Ottawa, and Quebec, made up the entire population of his district; and nearly all were working for his company, in trapping fur bearing animals, and selling the peltries or skins which John Gordon saw were shipped back to civilization for furs for all the great world of the settled.

John Gordon was a Londoner, of London, England. He never forgot that, nor that his family was one of the oldest in the tight little Island.

But while honest, a good Postmaster, he did not get far down into the complex life about him. That was his gravest fault. It was bound to make him trouble some day.

This was what Charles Pym, trapper, scout, runner, thought when he faced his superior.

"I want you to see what you can do about settling this unfortunate complication we are met with, between Flying Cloud's band, and the whites," Gordon said in measured tones.

"So I understand," replied Pym.

"But while I wish you to settle the matter, the Hudson's Bay Company must not be compromised in the slightest degree. It knows nothing officially about this trouble between the organization known as the Snow-birds and must take no steps as against it, or as for the Indians."

Pym regarded Gordon steadily for a short space.

"In other words," he said slowly, "You are asking me to act as a peacemaker, but I must not be an official one; I must win but on my own responsibility?"

"Yes. We can not take sides in this matter. We must not offend either side."

"I beg your pardon for butting in," remarked Fritz Harz, "but is our friend Pym to lose his life, officially on this mission, or unofficially?"

Pym's lips twitched. He wanted to laugh but really thought he had better not, as Gordon did not seem to relish the joke.

"There can not be much danger in this mission," replied Gordon.

"Not a bit of danger," replied Harz, "as the monkey remarked when he put his head in the lion's mouth."

Gordon opened his eyes very wide.

"What a foolish thing to do, now wasn't it?" he asked. "Of course the monkey was killed. No lion would stand for such treatment."

Harz winked at Pym.

"Nor will Flying Cloud stand for any messenger of peace when he has taken the three great eagle feathers from his totem, and sent them to his enemy," Harz added.

"Is it as bad as that?" rejoined Gordon.

"Yes," replied Pym. "But I quite agree with you that there is no other way to go but the one you have pointed out. There must be nothing official in my visit to Flying Cloud. He would see me if he will see any white man, but Indian nature is peculiar. He isn't near white now; he is just plain Indian, revengeful, treacherous, savage. Just how he will receive me I can not judge."

"The proof of this pudding is the eating thereof," answered Harz before Gordon could speak. "If Pym is not killed and makes a treaty of peace, he will return; if he doesn't return we will know he is dead; good-bye old chap."

Pym laughed this time heartily.

"Does Flying Cloud's band eat their enemies?" added Harz in a low tone. "I hope not; they will find you rather tough."

Gordon looked as if he did not know whether to get angry or not as the remark, fell about his ears.

"Anyway," he said at length, "you had better start away at once. Here is money; take all the stores necessary to help you. Let me hear from you as soon as you can. Harz remain with me here, for a time, I wish to place you in charge of defense plans for the fort. I understand there may be danger of an attack upon it."

Without a word Pym left the room, not appearing to notice that Harz was pretending to wipe mythical tears from his eyes, with an unseen pocket handkerchief.

"It is a mighty fine detail, this," Pym muttered to himself. "I am not in love with it, but it is a soldier's duty not to 'reason why, but to do and die' at the call of his commander."

So saying Pym ran gaily down the long hall toward the store-room of the fort.

Half way down the hall he halted as if shot. He heard a soft, and most musical voice call his name.

"Mr. Pym, oh, I say, Mr. Pym."

Charlie turned and blushing to his long brown hair that fell over his broad forehead, bowed low before Evelyn Gordon, daughter of the Postmaster, a very pretty girl, of twenty years of age, with a pair of roughish brown eyes, and a neat figure that made Pym's heart beat very fast.

"Yes, Miss Evelyn," Pym finally managed to stutter. "What can I do for you?"

"Much not only for me, but us all," replied the girl, in a serious tone. "My father tells me that you are to be sent to make peace with Flying Cloud, are you not?"

"Yes."

"Can you do it?"

"I can try."

"I think you will. But there is one thing I want you to do. You know that I taught in the mission school here quite some time in the past?"

"Yes, Miss."

"Well, Flying Cloud was one of my pupils. And once when he was ill I got my father to take him some food from us."

"That was good of you."

"Never mind that part. But anyway, later he sent

a girl of his tribe, we used to call her Star-Eyes, to school at the mission. And we liked each other, that Indian girl and I very much."

"Well."

"The day the girl and Flying Cloud left the school for good, they both came to see me."

"Yes."

"They expressed much gratitude for what I had done in teaching them, and finally Flying Cloud gave me this bit of stick."

The girl handed Pym a short willow stick, about ten inches in length, carved with many curious Indian designs from the bark, and which bore at one end a rude carving of the white brant, in full flight.

Pym's brows drew together in deep thought as he turned the stick about from end to end and in his mind translated each picture; for it was as he saw, a fine specimen of the rude Indian hieroglyphic form of writing.

"Flying Cloud gave you this?" Pym questioned.

"Yes. He said when he did it, that if I ever was in trouble that all I had to do was to show that, or send it to him wherever he might be, and that it meant that I would be protected, and most any wish I asked would be granted me, by him, or by Star-Eyes."

"He told the truth," answered Pym. "This is what is known as the Great Pledge. It means that any request save one will be accorded you. You may ask Flying Cloud for his property, or his life; he would be in honor bound to give you both under that gage. Next to its totem, it is the Blackfeet Indian's most sacred gage. It is very, very valuable just now."

"It will not stop this war?"

"No. That is not to be stopped by the Great Pledge. It may be after Flying Cloud has 'dipped his grey eagle's feathers in the blood of his enemy,' he will consent to return the feathers to his totem bag, but not one thing can be done toward peace until there has been death enough on both sides, to conclude a peace pact upon. Indian ways, you know, Miss Evelyn are not our ways."

Evelyn Gordon nodded. Then she blushed.

"I want you to take this gift of Flying Cloud with you," she said in a charming manner, "and see if it will not in some way help you on your dangerous mission."

Pym's eyes sparkled.

"I thank you," he replied simply. "I will take your gift of the Great Pledge and will try and make it serve our purpose of peace."

Evelyn drew nearer and laid her white hand on Pym's arm.

"There is one thing more," she said earnestly. "Be careful of yourself. Don't get killed."

Then with many blushes the girl darted from Pym's side and ran up the hall, to vanish in her own doorway.

As she disappeared light as a feather, Pym felt something fall to the floor, where it had been resting on his arm.

He stooped and picked up a little piece of blue ribbon.

Pym's face lighted with pleasure.

"It's Evelyn Gordon's favorite color," he whispered. "She left it for me and I will try worthily to bear it to Flying Cloud's encampment."

Pym turned with a softer light in his steel blue eyes than had been there in years.

As he did so a tremendous explosion rocked the stockade and the fort to its very foundations.

Then there came shrieks of wounded men, panic stricken cries for help, and the hall was lighted up by the red glow of a great fire.

"Help! Help!" came a woman's voice.

It was Evelyn Gordon crying for assistance.

"I am coming. Evelyn, where are you," roared Pym in the tones of a wounded lion, as with drawn revolver in hand he dashed in the direction of the voice, now growing fainter and fainter as he hurried onward.

## CHAPTER V.

### "THE GREAT WHITE DEATH."

No master of the art of war could have done better than Colonel John Parker, when he saw the terrible position in which he, and the Snow-birds were placed.

Hemmed in between a pack of fierce white polar bears, and a horde of equally fierce and merciless Indians, Colonel Parker had but a moment in which to act.

"Ten men attack the bears," he yelled at the top of his voice. "The others face about and meet the Indians. Get under cover, all."

Then Colonel Parker gazed over the field to see if he could do more.

All seemed to have been attended to with splendid celerity. The trappers and hunters among the Snow-birds were a trained body of men, who for years knew that direct obedience would often save their lives.

Colonel Parker saw the ten white men hurrying with rifles poised toward the snarling bears. He could see the leading brute standing high on its hind-legs, while its deadly fore-legs waved in the air, ready to grasp and hug an enemy to death. The brute's jaws were dripping with froth, and its snarls of rage as it saw the white men approaching were calculated to snap the best nerve.

The wild war-whoops of the Indians, running through the snow in a direct line toward him assailed Colonel Parker's ears with fateful forebodings.

"Foes equally savage coming from either direction," remarked the Colonel to Peter Parella.

Then there happened the most surprising event.

Under the gaze of the Snow-birds trying hard to get a clear aim at either the Indians or the bears, the entire scene was made an absolute blank.

It was as if a white curtain had been drawn between all eyes.

Nothing could be seen in either direction.

Instead of the band of hurrying, leaping Indians there was a great dead white expanse.

Where the polar bears had been seen growling in fierce anger, nothing but a dead white wall appeared.

So suddenly did the scene change from active, fighting life, to this white uncertainty that all the Snow-birds stood absolutely frozen to the spot with amazement.

"What is this," yelled Colonel Parker in answer to questions. "Do you not see? It's snow, you idiots."

"Snow?" cried Peter Parella. "I never saw snow come down like this."



"It's one of those old time blizzards, that come with absolutely no announcement. Instead of a terrible wind, blowing a great snow-fall hither and thither," explained the Colonel, "we are face to face with the 'white death,' that fearful snow-storm that tells no one when it is coming, and comes so suddenly that death gets you before you even know he is near."

"I have heard of this kind of a storm," answered Parella, "but they seldom come down here; although in the great Arctic circle they are common enough."

"We can thank God that this storm came, Colonel," one of the Snow-birds put in. "If it hadn't either the Indians or the bears would have made mince-meat of us."

"Sure as you are born," another trapper replied. "But if we do not hustle we will be frozen to death. We are all wounded more or less, several of us have been carrying our dead comrades, to save them from being scalped by Flying Cloud's band, and we are really in bad shape."

"We must try to help each other out of this," replied Colonel Parker. "Now Parella, you set some men making snow-huts. Others had better aid in the binding up of wounds. Lay the dead decently aside where they will be safe from the Indians."

All was now activity.

The trappers dug deep into the snow, piling up in a semi-circle the snow taken out of the center of a little circle, until it made a sort of rude hut. There was no way of covering the tiny structure, but in its depths there was a surprising amount of warmth.

A half dozen of such places were soon constructed one of which being named the hospital. Into this the wounded were hurried, and all the simple ways of binding up superficial wounds practiced by trappers and hunters was brought into play.

As a result the party soon took on a better air. Parts of clothing torn into strips made good bandages, but what was more serious than anything else just then was the lack of some food.

"I do not know what we can do," said Colonel Parker, to Peter Parella. "There is nothing to eat here. We are ten miles from the fort, and we have only this white blizzard to aid us."

The speaker pointed about to the rapidly falling snow.

"At this rate," suggested Parella, "there will be ten feet more of snow soon on top of the ten feet already on the ground."

"That will mean suffering for animals, and they can not dig down through this deep snow to get at roots, or old bits of frozen grass."

"It means further, that there will be a hard season ahead for us all. We ought never to have mixed in this thing. Most of us won't be able to get off to the Mackenzie River territory at all this year; we are all in debt at the fort—I wish we had not attacked Flying Cloud."

"So do I. But we can not stop now. We needs must continue. We are not out of our troubles at that. And how about the Indians? They are just as much in trouble as we are."

"Don't you worry about Flying Cloud. Who ever heard of an Indian being in danger from rain, or snow. They are just as safe as the white polar bears. Both savages are all right, you can rest assured. We are the ones in danger."

"Where are our companions, the boys that went after the bear?"

"I don't know. They are out there somewhere in that white wilderness, behind that white wall there. We can do nothing for them; they can do nothing for us."

"Do you advise any special course?"

"There is only one to take. Wait till this blizzard lets up a bit, then try and march out of this as far to the fort as we think we can get, and then camp until the storm lets up."

"Which way is the fort?"

"You can't prove anything like that through me. I do not know. I care less. My plan is to get away from here where the Indians are and to thank God for this blizzard. I shudder to think what our fate would have been if it had not been for this blizzard."

"We were in trouble all right. And come to think of it your plan is the best. Let us all wait about two hours and then try to steal out of this."

The unhappy party of Snow-birds waited the full two hours. All were hungry, half starved indeed, cold, weary, and war-worn, but they were cheery and brave through all their troubles, and no one seemed to fear anything but a short series of discomfort as the result of their mad quest.

"Most of the boys think this is a joke," Colonel Parker said to Parella privately.

"It is a bitter joke, they will find. We are in hard stress. It's only a fighting chance that we ever see the fort again, and yet some of our boys appear to think it all a day's pleasure."

"I fancy that is the best way to take it all. What is the use of repining?"

"Well, I guess we can start now," answered Colonel Parker. "You go Peter and get everybody in line."

There was some difficulty as to the disposal of the five dead men, killed in the fight, but there was nothing else left to do but to bury them deep in the snow, and erect a tall monument from saplings near at hand over their temporary graves.

"That will keep wild beasts away," Parella announced, and then at the word of command the little band, now reduced to ninety-five men, hurried off through the impalpable white cloud of fast falling snow.

"Keep together, boys," cried Colonel Parker. "A straggler has absolutely no chance of life. He would be swallowed by the 'white death' in a minute."

Expecting every moment to hear a shot, and to see the Indians come charging down upon them, or to meet face to face the dreaded pack of bears the party hurried forward.

"Halt," cried Parella after the march had continued for several minutes. "See? What is this?"

Parella was pointing at the ground.

There could be seen a deep furrow as if some large party had passed only a few moments before the arrival of the Snow-birds.

"Indians," said one Snow-bird.

"Bears," remarked another man.

"Neither," said Colonel Parker. "It is our own missing party of ten men."

"Take up their tracks," shouted a Snow-bird from the little circle that surrounded the tracks. "We ought to rescue them."

"Or they ought to rescue us. We are all of us in pretty great need of rescue," replied Parella.

A vote to follow the tracks was quickly taken, and the party deflected the course more to the left.

For ten minutes they made very good speed. Their snow shoes in the new soft snow that was so rapidly falling sank deeper than they could have wished but after all they managed to cover the ground pretty swiftly.

"Here they are."

These words burst from the lips of Colonel Parker who was far in advance of his command.

The fear of the Indians did not stop the wild hurrah, with which the men greeted this announcement.

"What is the matter?" questioned Peter Parella. "See there. That is 'Big Tom' Cassidy, the foreman of the timber land of the Canadian Timber Company, lying out there in the snow. Is he hurt?"

"Overcome by the cold," ventured Colonel Parker. "The cold, surely not—why, oh, Colonel look,—Isn't that blood on the snow there by Cassidy's head," gasped Parella.

"Why how could blood,—yes it certainly is. Hurry man hurry!" replied the Colonel.

He ran to the form lying in the snow.

It was that of a man. The man was lying on his face.

The top of his head was absolutely hairless.

It was a raw, bleeding, horrible mass.

"Scalped," cried Parella. "Flying Cloud's band did this. Where are the other men of the party?"

"This is Cassidy," Colonel Parker answered as he more closely examined the body. "Flying Cloud's band did this murder. Of that I am sure."

Parella drew Colonel Parker aside.

"How do you know that Flying Cloud's band did this?" he asked.

"The Blackfeet cut the joints of all their enemies after they kill them. It's the Blackfeet brand of death. I saw that the joints of poor Cassidy's arms and legs were severed by a hunting knife. Then I knew who had killed him."

"Where are the other men in that party? You sent ten men to meet the bears," said Parella with white lips.

"I do not know," almost sobbed Colonel Parker.

A shout marked the discovery of the second body of those among the missing party.

The Snow-bird had been killed, scalped, and all his joints cut by the Indians.

"Then the awful journey was continued.

Every few hundred steps and the party now almost frantic with rage and sorrow found a body of their companions.

Each body had been scalped; each body had been cut at all the joints by the implacable savages.

"Ten of my men dead here, five left behind under this fearful snow," sobbed Colonel Parker, who did not think it unmanly to weep over the fate of his companions. "We left the fort with one hundred men there are only eighty-five of us left."

"Few of these of us left here, will ever get back to the fort," whispered Parella.

"I fear so," answered Colonel Parker, "but we will fight for our lives as long as life is left."

After a conference of the survivors all the bodies of the dead were placed in snow graves.

Whether they would ever be recovered again was problematical. But there was nothing else for the survivors to do.

With sad hearts the band hurried forward. The situation was now more desperate than ever.

Cold and hunger was beginning to do its work.

One man lay down in the snow and refused to get up.

"Leave me alone," he said to all pleadings. "I am happy now. I am not hungry. I am warm and comfortable."

"Get up, you fool," roared Parella, "you are freezing to death."

But his efforts were useless.

Before the eyes of his companions the man literally froze to death.

His face grew whiter and whiter, he gasped, gave a weary little sigh, and was dead.

Tears were streaming down every man's face when the poor chap died.

One other Snow-bird unable to stand the strain laughed with the frenzy of a maniac, and throwing down his rifle, raced off into the implacable white death.

Several made effort to give chase.

"Stand fast with us," ordered Colonel Parker. "That poor fellow is as good as a dead man, no more. We can not risk other lives in a vain effort to save his."

The party staggered forward.

The march for a few miles maintained some order.

Then it became a helpless rout, a riot of aimless wanderings. Men fell and died of hunger, as they tried with their last breath to dash forward. Others in insane rage blew out their brains with their revolvers. Several died after a bitter battle with Bowie knives over some fancied injury.

There were not fifty men in the party.

A wild attack from white timber wolves lessened this colony to twenty men.

Meanwhile there had been no cessation in the downward fall of the snow. Softly falling, steadily, it wiped out tracks, drew a pall over any familiar land-mark, and in six hours after the start had been made Colonel Parker led his men into the shelter of a clump of giant beech trees, now half way to their tall tops, lost in the snow.

"How many are left?" Colonel Parker asked weakly.

"Ten men," replied Parella.

"Ninety of our band are dead in this awful waste of snow?" queried the Colonel.

"Yes."

"Only the strongest of our band have survived?"

"Yes."

"Flying Cloud has taken his revenge, I think," the commander said, as he sank fainting at the feet of Peter Parella.

"Forward, boys," yelled Parella. "Forward, once more into the white death."

The thin line of indomitable men hurried forward.

Ten feet further, Parella who was carrying the senseless form of Colonel Parker, saw a huge bulk come out of the white wall of the dread snow.

"Halt!" cried Parella, "or I will fire."

## CHAPTER VI.

## CHARLIE PYM MEETS HIS FATE.

Charlie Pym shrewdly guessed the nature of the trouble as he dashed toward the room where Evelyn Gordon was calling.

There had been an explosion in the powder room of Fort McPherson, and a great part of one end of the old fort had been blown to atoms.

The wreckage had then taken fire, and he knew that there was imminent danger for every one in a fire in the fort, itself old, and not able to withstand fierce heat, for every timber in it was as dry as so much tinder.

"Is Flying Cloud behind this?" Pym thought, as he ran onward.

"Help! Help!" called Evelyn Gordon as he rushed into the room, which he knew was the main dining room of the private apartments in the fort, used by the Postmaster.

"Where are you?" asked Pym, for in the pitch darkness he could see little, the door not admitting the light of the burning débris.

"Here," cried a faint voice.

Pym found the girl pinioned beneath a heavy table which had been overturned by the force of the explosion.

He held Evelyn up and found that she was not much hurt, although she had been painfully bruised.

"My father! Where is he?" the brave girl asked immediately.

"Safe, I hope," replied Pym. "We will see in a moment."

"What has happened?"

"I don't know. There has been some kind of an explosion."

"Is the fort on fire?"

"It seems to be. I don't really know. There was an explosion and I heard you cry for aid. So I started back here to help you. That is all I know so far."

Evelyn looked with eyes of admiration on her rescuer. She saw that he had hurried to her aid first of all, and appreciated his action.

"I thought it was an Indian attack," she continued. "It seemed to me when I was held fast under that table that the next minute an Indian might burst into the room and scalp me."

"It may have been. I do not yet know," replied Pym.

"I am certain that I heard, just as that terrible explosion rent the air, an Indian war-whoop."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

Evelyn gave a scream of dismay.

"Look here," she cried. "There! There is an Indian. He is trying to get in that window."

Pym saw that the girl was right.

The face of an Indian was looking through the window of the dining room. It was a horrid face. Right across it were three great wide strips of vermilion paint. The paint was of the crimson war-red color.

The black hair of the Indian hung far down his shoulders. Entwined in it over the forehead were three feathers from a gray eagle.

"A young Blackfeet buck," thought Pym. Then

he raised his revolver to put a bullet through the Indian's brain.

But a thought stayed his hand. With a great bound he dashed over to the window.

One strong hand grasped the Indian by the neck. The other caught him by his long, carefully oiled hair.

Then with an herculean heave Pym literally tore the Indian through the window.

It was a fine exhibition of strength. The Indian weighed easily one hundred and eighty pounds. The window was one of ordinary size and yet he came through it exactly as if he had been a child's doll.

The Indian's face smashed against the floor with the terrible force of the rush of Pym's steel-like muscles. The red man's temple struck a chair as he tumbled into the room headlong, and he was knocked senseless as easily as if he had been a bullock dropping beneath the sledge of a butcher.

Pym sat down on the prostrate Indian and turned toward Evelyn.

"Can you get me a bit of rope," he asked of the frightened young girl.

Evelyn could not help but laugh. The coolness of Pym under the circumstances excited her admiration as well as her laughter.

She had only recently come to the North-West from her school in England and in that staid land of beer and beef, she did not remember seeing a bronzed young man, of strength, who had stood blushing before her only a little while ago, drag an equally stalwart young Indian, through a window, with the ceremony one accords the dragging of a cat out of a dairy window.

When the white man proceeded to sit on the Indian, and then asked her for a rope about the way he would ask for a glass of water, Evelyn felt it was time to giggle, even if her laugh was a trifle hysterical.

But she ran for the rope. This was all that Pym needed. He triced up the Indian in many bonds in a surprising short time, relieved the red man of his arms, thrust a big revolver into the shaking hand of Evelyn, and with a sharp command, "if that fellow tries to escape, kill him" vanished from the room.

Evelyn had some knowledge of the uses of a revolver. She held the weapon at arm's length, and heartily hoped that the Indian before her would not have the heart to become sensible until she was again reinforced by Pym's presence.

She could hear outside the yells of men, and high over all could hear Pym shouting orders.

"He is a man," she thought. "At all events he is the man needed out in this wild country. I wonder how some of my London men friends would meet this call upon their energies."

Evelyn giggled again as she thought of this phase of her career.

Then she heard hurried steps and her father, John Gordon dashed into the room, followed by Pym.

"What's this," said Gordon, as the strange scene passed before his eyes.

There sat his only child, Evelyn, with a big revolver grasped in her hand. A lusty insensible young Indian securely bound lay snoring his life away on the priceless white-bear skin rug, while a shattered room, filled with débris was all that was left of the sightly dining-room, where he and his daughter had just had luncheon.

"What is what,—Oh, you mean this man here. Oh, this is an Indian," quite calmly replied Evelyn.

"I see he is an Indian but where did you get him?"

"I didn't get him at all; he got into the window and Charlie Pym was good enough to help him make a most dramatic arrival."

Evelyn giggled as she thought of the flying arrival of the Indian.

"Hum! Ah! Do you know his name?"

"He appears not have brought his visiting card," replied the girl as she smiled up at her father. "But after his somewhat unintentional *début*, Mr. Gordon, my esteemed and respected sir, your capable aide, Mr. Pym thrust this large revolver in my hand, with a stern command to 'kill this fellow if he moves,' and bolted off somewhere. Anyway, he is gone, and I am left here alone with this lordly representative of a dying race."

There was a sense of humor left in John Gordon, in spite of his English strain. The situation contrasted with the staid sober life of a girl in an English school, to a marked degree.

Gordon burst into a great bubble of laughter.

"Anyway, Evelyn," he said, "I remember you always complained that life in England was 'slow,' will you not confess that there is not a dull moment in life in the North-West?"

"I confess," replied the girl, "but here comes our commander—and about the only man I ever met who dared order me about as if I didn't amount to anything."

Pym was so full of his subject that he did not stop for many bits of ceremony.

"I say," he shouted, "they have got the fire under control but the West side of the fort is a sad wreck."

"Indeed it is," replied Gordon. "Do you know just what has happened?"

"As near as I can judge from a quick examination," replied Pym, "the powder room of the fort has been entered, and some one has set off the two kegs of gun-powder in it."

"I had all the remainder of the powder and shot removed only yesterday to the other side of the stockade," replied Gordon. "It was my intention to have the old powder room repaired."

"That is very lucky," answered Pym. "We will not run short on ammunition."

"No danger of that."

"What am I to do with my Indian, Mr. Pym," asked Evelyn. "Am I still to 'shoot him on the spot?'"

Pym colored.

"I beg your pardon," he rejoined quickly. "I had forgotten that we had this fellow on tap, in my anxiety about the powder."

Gordon and Pym exchanged glances.

"It was my idea, Gordon," went on Pym, "that this Indian might be the key to the explosion."

"You mean by that in your opinion he could explain all about it?"

"Not exactly. He could explain if he would, but being an Indian he will not. He would die now gladly, before he would tell a single thing that would aid us."

"I suppose so. But what use can he be to us if he will not talk?"

"There is mute testimony that many an unwilling witness can be made to give. So here goes at this chap."

Pym pulled a pocket-knife out of his jacket. Evelyn shuddered and covered her face with her hands.

"Oh, I am not going to hurt the brute," Pym smiled. "There is no blood going to be shed. I am just going to clean the chap up a bit."

Suiting his actions to his words, Pym quietly took a saucer from the table near at hand.

With his knife he deftly began cleaning the finger nails of the Indian in the manner of the most approved manicure.

"Well of all—," began Evelyn.

Then she stopped. The Indian had opened his eyes. If Evelyn expected the savage to betray his surprise at finding himself a prisoner, with a white man engaged in cleaning his finger nails, she was mistaken.

The young brave did not allow a single expression of surprise to appear upon his face.

Nor did Pym stop in his work until he had cleaned the Indian's nails and had a tiny pile of scrapings in the saucer for his pains.

"Now, Miss Evelyn," said Pym, "will you please get me a microscope from your father's office; I mean the large one that he uses in his examination of furs."

Without a word Evelyn brought the microscope.

"What is in the wind, now?" curiously asked Gordon.

"Wait, please."

Pym for several minutes made careful examination of the scrapings. Then he took a tiny particle of them, and touched a lighted match to the mass.

There was the instant flash that betrayed the inflammable character of some of the scrapings, followed by a slow igniting of the other particles.

A wee smoke with the pungent odor of burning gun-powder crept up from the scrapings.

"This chap need not tell us anything," Pym smiled. "His finger nails are a witness against him. He was the man who was in that powder room."

"But you know," objected Gordon, "this fellow has a gun-powder belt about his shoulder. His belt is filled with cartridges. Why is it not possible for the gun-powder grains in those scrapings to come from his own supply of the stuff?"

"Granted," replied Pym. "Your point is well taken. Only there is one thing to add to my evidence."

"What is that?" asked Evelyn who was intensely interested.

"The two kegs of gun-powder in the room were as I am told, filled with powder used in your cannon. Am I right?"

"You are," replied Gordon.

"Now the kind of powder used in the cannon is what is known as the slow firing kind. It ignites when a match is placed to it, lighted, but it does not explode with a quick rush, as does common gun-powder used in our small arms. Am I right so far, Gordon?"

"You are."

"You will remember that while a bit of the scrapings exploded with a quick rush of tiny flame, there was another portion that burned with great slowness?" added Pym.

"Oh, yes, I remember it all," cried Evelyn.

"Then all I have to tell you is that the slow burning particles of powder shows to my mind, that this red man is the fellow who was in the powder room just prior to the explosion, and who undoubtedly set fire to the kegs."

"I think you are right," rejoined Evelyn. "Nowhere else in this country could this Indian have gotten slow firing powder grains under his finger nails, except——"

"Except in our powder room," put in Gordon, conclusively.

Evelyn's smile at Pym was eloquent in its admiration of his powers.

"All proved, ship-shape, and conclusive," she added. "Mr. Indian you have much to explain."

The Indian blinked in a most unresponsive manner.

"He won't confess," merrily said Pym. "But I am going to ask him a few questions. Here, you, hold up your head."

The savage glanced proudly at his captors.

"Oh, ho, ho!" Pym. "Why, Miss Evelyn, I know this chap. Say, you, your name is 'The Fox.'"

The Indian bowed without a movement of a muscle save those used in the affirmation.

"This chap, as I have said is 'The Fox,'" went on Pym. "I know him now. He is a brave from Flying Cloud's band."

The savage replied with a sniff of disdain.

"He knows you, I see," Gordon ventured. "I can see he does by his general attitude."

"Oh, yes, he knows me all right," answered Pym. "I have hunted with him, joined in his sports, saved his life once when he might have drowned, but all that is as nothing now that he is out for his revenge. A red man, in spite of all the novelists in the world, is once and always a red man. He now would forget all my friendly acts in a moment, all my good intentions on his behalf, and would slit my throat with a right good will had he the power."

"But you forget this savage has been bitterly treated by the Snow-birds," replied Evelyn. "He, mayhap, has suffered the loss of friends, family, home, in the foolish attack made on Flying Cloud's band. You can not blame him for seeking his revenge."

Pym was lost in thought.

"When I was a school-boy," he said at length, "I was taught that 'revenge is an insatiable desire to sacrifice every consideration of pity and humanity to the principle of vindictive justice.'"

"That is revenge means a settled desire to inflict pain or injury in retaliation," answered the girl.

"Yes. And both of these definitions are summed up in the attitude of this Indian. He loses all sense of proportion in his desire to be revenged. He does not see that killing us is no real retaliation for the killing of his friends."

"Of course it is not," answered Evelyn.

"Nor does he see that the very character of the retaliation in killing us is bound to cause his own death; that civilization for its own protection must kill him, to wipe off its unwritten law-book, the very principle that he stands for."

"In other words you mean that this fellow in this war is bringing on his own head all the powers of the Hudson's Bay Company on the one hand, and the Canadian government on the other; and between the two he is bound to suffer."

"Yes," replied Pym. "This fellow is brighter than he appears. I am going to try an experiment upon him. He has followed what we said closely, you may rest assured. He may not understand all we have been saying but he has the gist of it in his memory. He

will give Flying Cloud a pretty good idea of our attitude, and what this horrid war means to the Indian if Flying Cloud continues it."

Pym turned toward the Indian. He dropped into the poetic, soft drawing dialect of the Blackfeet.

"The Fox knows his white companion of the hunt?" Pym questioned.

For the first time a gleam of understanding shot into the Indian's eyes.

He nodded in affirmation.

"Then take this message from Charles Pym, white brother, to Flying Cloud."

Again the Indian nodded in surprise.

"Tell him that I, Charles Pym, request him to smoke the pipe of peace with me, acting for all the whites. Tell him John Gordon, will see that the Snow-birds are punished. Tell him that justice will be done. That he will be amply paid for the loss of his property. That we, the white men, not of the Snow-birds oppose their slaughter of his people and that we will bring to justice every Snow-bird that attacked him."

A wild, fierce light beamed in the face of The Fox. Drawing himself up to his greatest height he spoke.

"For my Great Chief, Flying Cloud, I speak," he said. "White brother, you can not bring the Snow-birds to justice that attacked our encampment, and murdered our people. We have taken our justice from them. Lo, they are dead in the fight. Lo, they are dead in the grasp of the great 'white death.' Lo, they die like the Buffalo calf under the knives of our warriors. White man, know that Flying Cloud does not look to you for his revenge; he has taken it already."

Pym's face was a study.

"I fear that a great disaster has overtaken the Snow-birds. This Indian tells me terrible things. I fear that he is telling me the truth," said Pym in English as he rapidly counted all that The Fox had told him.

"What shall we do?" helplessly asked Gordon.

"I will show you," rejoined Pym.

With rapid words Pym sketched in Blackfeet dialect that now that the three eagle feathers of war had been dipped in blood there would be no cowardice on Flying Cloud's part if the feathers were returned to his totem bag, and a peace was signed.

"You are now free," concluded Pym. "Go your way in peace."

Not even nodding his head, with the speed of the frightened antelope The Fox vanished through the open window.

It was as if he had never been in the room.

"How did he ever loose his bonds," cried Evelyn.

"No white woman can ever understand the red man," replied Pym. "When I entered the room before my words were spoken, I saw that he had freed himself from the bonds. Probably when you thought he was snoring in insensibility he had cunningly cut his bonds, and was free just as I entered the room."

Evelyn turned pale.

"If he had attacked me, I would have had to shoot him?" she gasped.

"Yes, or he would have murdered you," Gordon spoke up.

"But why did he not attack us anyway? He was armed and free. He could have shot us all any moment."

"He could," replied Pym. "But there comes your

red nature again. When I made a messenger of him to Flying Cloud he felt in honor bound not to kill us. I knew that and made no attempt at our protection. Red nature is red nature; white is white."

"How often has that been said," replied Evelyn, "and how little did I understand it."

"Exactly," rejoined Pym.

"And what is our next duty?" asked Gordon.

"To wait. The hardest duty of all," snapped Pym. "If I am not mistaken this young Indian fired the powder room too quickly for Flying Cloud, who ought to have attacked the Fort the moment the powder exploded. That was why he sent the young Indian into the Fort. I had expected the attack to follow right after the explosion. When it did not I knew the plans of the Indians had miscarried."

"Luckily for us," said Gordon.

"Very," added Pym. "If they had not we would none of us be alive now because this is a 'three eagle feather war,' which means that 'no prisoners are to be taken.'"

Through the open window there came a heavy object. It fell at Evelyn's feet.

The girl screamed in terror.

"A bomb!" shouted Gordon. "Look, see it smoke. We are all to be blown to atoms."

Pym darted forward and picked the smoking shape from the floor.

## CHAPTER VII.

### FLYING CLOUD'S ANSWER.

"Be careful Charlie, it may explode in your hands." Evelyn Gordon thus spoke.

Pym noted with pleasure the use of his Christian name. The girl who in her terror was off her guard saw Pym's attitude and colored.

"Never fear," Pym said. "This is not a bomb."

"What is it then?" queried Gordon. "Look at it smoke."

"It is Flying Cloud's answer to my message," replied Pym.

As he spoke he held up to view a pipe.

All saw that the pipe was four or five feet long, about two inches in width, and was wound with a braid of porcupine quills. The quills were dyed in various colors. The pipe itself was of willow.

The bowl of the pipe was filled with tobacco, still alight.

"Why, what is that?" asked Evelyn.

"This is a Chief's pipe," replied Pym. "It belonged to Flying Cloud himself—see here on the bowl is engraved his totem sign, the white-brant."

All crowded around to see, for the room by this time was filled with men from the Fort guardians, who had heard of the departure of The Fox.

"What does it mean?" asked Gordon, who was not versed in the way the red man sent his messages.

"You noticed that this pipe was filled with smoking tobacco all alight when I picked it up?" questioned Pym.

"Yes, that is why I thought it was a bomb," rejoined Gordon.

"The sending of a lighted pipe, with the totem of the Chief to whom you have sent a message to appeal to his sense of justice, and hold a peace conference, is

the Indian way of saying, 'I will listen to your plea.' This means that Flying Cloud will see me; that he will talk over the question of peace. The Fox has delivered my message."

"Are you safe to go to Flying Cloud's camp?" anxiously asked Evelyn.

"Quite so. I could not be safer if I had a thousand soldiers about me."

"There is one thing I do not like about all this," said Gordon. "That sneaking Indian got in here right into our strong-hold, at the suggestion and order of Flying Cloud. He set fire to our powder, blew up a considerable section of our Fort, and if it had not been for the mercy of God, we would have been attacked, and murdered, for in the explosion my entire force seemed to have no head."

"Yes," replied Pym. "You see as I told you at first Flying Cloud is a great warrior. It is going to take all our powers to stop this war now. I doubt that we can with Flying Cloud yet alive. But while I am away, Gordon, I beg of you to get all repairs made with speed. Fortify the Fort at every point. And one thing more—"

"What is it?"

"Send to the village and have all the women in it, removed to the Fort. Tell every man that Flying Cloud is up, and that he may attack us any time. They are in equal danger with us, and had better either come to the Fort and join our forces or fortify the hamlet against an attack by the Indians."

"Do you think you will be successful in your visit to Flying Cloud?" asked Evelyn.

"Frankly I do not know. We have been the greatest friends in the past. I admire Flying Cloud exceedingly. As an Indian he is the straightest of all Indians; but he is an Indian. What he will do now that the Snow-birds have opened this war, by the killing of three hundred of his people I do not know," replied Pym.

"But rest assured that he will do his best," remarked Gordon to his daughter.

Pym drew Gordon aside out of ear-shot of all the others in the room.

"Don't delude yourself with the idea that I can accomplish much," Pym whispered. "I do not think at present we can hope for any peace. The score of death is large when you think of the three hundred Indians, save eight, which the Snow-birds murdered. At best Flying Cloud can not have killed more than one-third as many whites, even if he has killed the entire Snow-bird war party of one hundred souls, which I fear he has, from what The Fox told us."

"Well."

"That means we must look out for an attack on the Fort, as well as on the village, or hamlet surrounding it," Pym went on. "It's your duty to see while I am away, that we are all ready to meet the siege of the Fort, which I fear failure to conclude a peace, will result."

"I will mount the cannon to control all passes," said Gordon. "I will repair the break in our fortifications. I will get in plenty of food and water to stand a long siege—"

"And send to all the surrounding country for aid. Get every man you can here from anywhere," cried Evelyn. "That is your next duty."

"She is right," replied Pym. "We must have all the help we can get to put down this uprising. Curse those fool Snow-birds."

"Oh, don't," said Evelyn. "If The Fox tells the truth, they have been terribly punished for their misdeeds."

"It will save a lot of trouble if they are killed. Then the law will not have to deal with them. It's rather hard to explain, this killing of unarmed old men, women and children, of the Indians," gravely answered Pym.

"Are you not afraid to go out in the teeth of the white blizzard," asked Evelyn.

"No! Because The Fox will be awaiting me before I have taken ten steps from the Fort gate. Trust an Indian for holding himself safe in the worst blizzard that ever swept the North-West; he will keep me as safe as himself, for after he threw that pipe within this room, he knew I was the guest of Flying Cloud."

"You think that The Fox threw that lighted pipe in this room?" asked Gordon.

"Who else knew of the Indians that we were here together," rejoined Pym. "But I must start. Good bye."

When Pym left the Fort a half dozen steps plunged him into the great white silence of the blizzard.

The trapper could not see his hand before his face. The Fort was utterly obliterated as if a child had wiped it from its slate, where it had been drawn.

"By George!" remarked Pym. "This is certainly a big blizzard. I wonder where The Fox is to be found."

His answer came immediately.

A hand was laid on his arm; a shape from the white wall approached.

"Ugh!" said The Fox, in the accepted salutation of the red man when he first meets the white.

"Which way?" asked Pym perfectly willing to leave all question of direction to the savage.

"Follow red man," said The Fox. "Heap snow."

"Yes," replied Pym. "Is it far?"

"Not ver' far," replied the Indian.

Under their snow shoes the distance was passed quickly. Pym judged that he was less than a mile away from the Fort, when The Fox ran down a slight hill into the Peel River bottom.

There in a bend of the river, sheltered by overhanging trees of willow was a cluster of the tepees of the warriors of Flying Cloud's band.

Pym could not help but admire the generalship of the Indian. For here were tepees, warm and comfortable in which to shield the band of fighters, although Pym well knew the Snow-birds had so recently burned up the main village of the red men.

"Trust Flying Cloud to get new tepees, to make his warriors comfortable. No white commander could look out after his commissary department as well as this, after his entire resources were destroyed by an enemy."

This thought passed through Pym's mind.

But without outward expression of his thoughts he followed The Fox.

Flying Cloud's camp had been laid out with great skill. The willows utterly shielded it from view from the surrounding hills, or the more lofty mountains in the back-ground.

The tepees were all of deer or antelope skins, with the hides on the outside, and were thrown over a tent-like frame of willows.

The skins were drawn tightly and fastened to tent pegs just the way a soldier pitches his canvas home.

Each tepee was placed as a part of a circle, and the circle radiated about a central tent.

In front of this tent was a tall sapling of willow, from which the bark had been peeled, and half way up this pole, and about at the top of the tepee was a great shield of ash, from which had been carved the rude figure of the flying-brant.

"That is Flying Cloud's home; his totem sign is there for all to read," thought Pym.

The Fox halted at the entrance to the tent or tepee.

Flying Cloud's voice could be heard calling to Pym to enter his home, and Pym hurried to take advantage of the invitation.

The interior of the tent was fitted up with a great degree of comfort. Pym saw that there was a table in the tent, shading the fire, which was in the center of the tent, but instead of being the savage fire of the usual red man, made of dry sticks, and built on the ground, it was contained in a sort of contrivance of iron that looked like a Dutch oven.

A couch of willows draped with a wonderful white bear-skin robe stood on one side; there were chairs of rudely bent willow, while everywhere were furs, of every imaginable kind to be found in the places where Flying Cloud had haunted; a rare and costly gathering of furs from all over the North-West.

Flying Cloud was standing near the center of the tent when Pym entered.

"I greet you, Charles Pym," he said with stately courtesy.

"I join hands with yours," replied Pym with equal politeness.

Flying Cloud disdaining further civilities plunged immediately into the conversation's reason for existence.

"Your message given to my young warrior, The Fox, came to me duly," began Flying Cloud.

"And you sent me your pipe to show that you would hear me?"

"Yes."

"Flying Cloud, you are more than a common Indian; you are an educated one, and I am not going to talk to you in your dialect, nor as an Indian but as an Indian with the white man's gifts."

"Proceed."

"I do not blame you, and no one at Fort McPherson blames you for your action in taking revenge upon the Snow-birds for their unprovoked attack on your band."

"The Blackfeet nation thank you in my thanks now given you."

"We therefore do not blame you for the blood payment that you have taken, The Fox tells me from the Snow-birds."

A flash of joy passed over Flying Cloud's face but he made no answer.

"Having taken your revenge, if not in full, at least nearly so, we all feel that you have gone as far as you ought to go," added Pym.

"By that you mean that I must return the gray eagle three feathers of war to my totem bag."

"Having dipped them deep in your enemy's blood—yes."

"The whites feel that I have had my revenge and that they propose asking me through you, to declare a peace in this war?"

"Yes."

"How do you feel personally about declaring peace?"

"I think you have done all that any Chief could do. You have shown it is not meet for any white man to attack your people; now I think is the time for you to withdraw from the battle. Declare peace at once, is my personal opinion as to the course you should take."

"My people numbered three hundred; all are gone save eight."

"I know. It was bloody hard. But if you kill twice as many whites as your dead, you can not bring those that are gone back to life again."

"But I can send many white men to the Great Spirit, and He can make the blood toll balance."

"That is your Indian view of it. But ten lives will not bring back to life, one dead man or woman."

"You ask too much."

"I ask only justice."

"And if I do not declare peace?"

"The white man will sweep you from the face of this earth."

"He has not swept clean so far."

"No, because here as matters now stand you red men outnumber the whites but back there, way back in the white man's land, he is strong and lusty and his kind are like the grasshoppers that obscure the afternoon sun at times here; he will send back from the Fort for his kind, and when they come you and all your band will be killed."

"What of it? We will die fighting our foe. You white men have always been the Indians' curse. If we die, we Blackfeet, we will know that those that are left still sing of our valor for ever and ever."

"What good will that do you when there is six feet of earth over you. What good is a song in your praise when you can not hunt the beaver, the lynx, the Moose, or the great Buffalo?"

"None."

"When the breath of the Spring is in the air, and your young men are calling with rich voices for you, their Great Chief to come and hunt the deer and the antelope, what good is a song if you are dead?"

"None would care then to hear the song."

"Precisely. Then awake to the folly of continuing this war."

"But suppose on the other hand that in the good hunting time of the winter no one calls for this Great Chief, Flying Cloud. If instead of the song of praise for him from the lodges there is nothing but a wail of hatred and pain for the Great Chief who would not fight for revenge, even when his people had wished it. The Great Chief Cowardly Flying Cloud?"

Pym cleared his throat once or twice but could find no words ready for the answer he wished to make.

"Suppose in the early Spring hunting time, when the flowers were just peeping through the snow that Flying Cloud's young men called to him in rich tones,—'Coward Great Chief, we do not want to hunt with you?'"

Pym was speechless.

"Would not six feet of earth be better then for Flying Cloud?" the Great Chief asked softly.

Pym stood up.

"I am not a tepee lawyer enough to argue that out with you," he said, "but if your people know your heart, and know theirs, and you feel that you are in honor bound to continue this war, I would not ask you

to stop for I never asked white man or red man to drop any fight in which his honor was bound."

"Charles Pym," solemnly answered Flying Cloud, "I am not blind to my danger, nor to the dangers of my people. I know that while at first we may seem to win that we will not win in the end. Our doom is sealed sooner or later. But knowing that, I will not stop this war. I will not make a peace with your people. It is my duty to fight you until the final shot lays low my last warrior, and I trust to be that last man. This war is *Flying Cloud's last stand*."

Pym was carried away by the Indian.

"I take your answer," he said. "I know that you are right. Tonight we part for the last time as friends. Tomorrow we will continue the war. But I hope that before it has gone further that there may be a relenting on your part."

"Quite impossible I fear. But I will lay your mission before our young men and see what decision they make once more."

Flying Cloud stepped to one side of his tent.

There a great circle of polished brass hung.

He raised a small steel hammer. Then with force he smote a single blow upon the brass.

The crash that ensued had not ended when wild forms burst into the tepee.

Ten stalwart young Indians armed to the teeth dashed into the lodge and with fierce cries asked Flying Cloud why he summoned them.

"It is a fine display of your young warriors," said Pym. "It shows them eager to be at your side when a summons comes from you."

Flying Cloud bowed. Then in a few words he told the warriors of the request of Pym.

"When the white man has given back life to my mother and my father," one brave said. "Then will I say, 'make peace.'"

"When my wife comes back to life, dead now by a Snow-bird's shot, then will I say, 'make peace,' put in a second warrior.

So one after the other spoke every brave.

"That is our answer," said Flying Cloud simply, as each of the ten warriors vanished behind the deer-skin flap, which made up the door of the tepee.

"I do not blame you," said Pym, "I can not see that you can take any other course than you have done, but I am sorry that you must die, with all your band, as a result of this decision made tonight."

As he spoke he heard outside a long yell of triumph from the Indians.

Then there came a terrible shriek of agony. There was no mistaking the agony, the hopeless terror of that voice.

"What is that, Flying Cloud?" asked Pym. "Was that not a white man crying for help?"

The face of Flying Cloud was that of a cruel panther. His lips were drawn back into a snarl of rage. His eyes flashed the fires of deep hatred.

"Look," he shouted as he drew back the tepee flap. The intense horror of the scene turned Pym sick and faint.

Not fifty feet away, chained to a great iron stake was a helpless white man.

He was naked.

His broad breast was covered with ugly wounds from which the blood was pouring.

About the lower part of his body a great fire was raging. Its hideous flame was licking up the limbs of



the man, who screamed under his deadly torture until the woods rang again and again.

Higher and higher leaped the flames. Smoke curled about the dying white man. His hair caught fire and his head was wreathed in a great upward draft of hot flames.

Around his body the terrible fire drifted.

His screams were growing fainter and fainter; now they were drowned in the yells of the dancing line or circle of Indians who with ear splitting yells danced in wild frenzy around the burning man. Now and then a young brave dashed through the smoke and flame and buried his knife in the burning body.

He took care not to touch a vital spot.

The flames leaped higher. Soon the dying man's screams drifted to low moans.

His head fell forward, and the wild flames charred his dead body, and licked great wide spaces in his dead flesh.

Half dead himself Pym glanced at Flying Cloud. His face was that of an avenging fiend.

The Indian strode to the dead man. He made one great cut with his knife.

Then he returned to Pym.

"Messenger from the white men," sneered Flying Cloud, "take this charred dead hand that one short hour ago belonged to one of the Snow-birds, and not long since pressed the rifle trigger that killed one of my people; take his hand back to the white dog that sent you, and tell him when he can put the life into that hand that I have taken, then will I make peace with him. Tell him that that dead hand is Flying Cloud's answer to his request for peace."

Flying Cloud's face was that of an incarnate fiend as he spoke.

## CHAPTER VII.

### "SNOW-BIRD COME HOME."

Peter Parella raised his rifle to shoot the dread shape that was hurrying toward him through the snow.

But his half frozen hand could not find the trigger to his weapon. He knew he was at his enemy's mercy, and sank forward, a huge wreck of a man on his knees, dropping the form of his commander, Colonel John Parker as he did so.

Behind him struggled the remainder of the little party. Only ten now left of the band of confident Snow-birds. The rest—dead.

The shape cried out in horror.

Through the dark depths of exhaustion it seemed to the benumbed brain of Parella that a familiar voice was calling him.

He struggled to a sitting position.

"Who are you?" his half frozen lips asked.

The answer came when a great draught of potent liquor went flying down his throat.

"Who am I?" repeated a cheery voice. "It is Charlie Pym. Here, take another ball."

Pym had met the grim party of half dead Snow-birds when on his way back from the meeting with Flying Cloud.

The blizzard was over. He saw the men struggling onward from a distance, and hurried to their aid.

His great canteen of liquor was quickly passed from man to man. Its contents gave renewed life.

Colonel Parker was soon revived.

The others of the party soon began to take on human looks. They had so often faced grim death in so many startling forms that they soon got back their grip on events. Life in the North-West has so much that is terrible at all times, that now that they were alive they drifted into their usual fatalistic attitude, and despite the terrors through which they had passed, were still a fighting force.

Colonel Parker, old Indian fighter of merit was the first to speak.

"They got us good and plenty," he said to Pym.

"It is evident," replied Pym, "that something has happened."

"If I ever get my eyes sighted along a gun at that Flying Cloud, there will be the deadest Indian you ever saw," continued Colonel Parker.

"Oh, you will get him some day," answered Pym, "but if you do not want him to get you quick, you will hurry out of this. His entire force is camped hardly a mile from here."

"Let us go and have a scrap with him now," Parella put in.

"Scrap nothing," snapped Pym. "You fellows are about as badly a whipped crowd as ever I saw. You get a move and come back with me to the Fort. We are needed there. There's not enough men there to man the cannon, let alone the siege we will all probably have to stand."

"Is it as bad as that?" asked Colonel Parker.

"Yes. You have kicked up a pretty muss this time, with your confounded Snow-bird raids. What in the name of everything good did you go out and shoot up Flying Cloud's band for? Don't you know that you have started an infernal Indian war?"

"Why, Charlie," put in Parella, "we didn't go for to do that. We just went out comfortable like to stop the Indians from stealing away our way of making a living. The game was all right but we got in wrong, because we did not get Flying Cloud at all. See?"

"You got your entire band shot all to bits. You got all your friends in trouble. You have raised all kinds of red deviltry, and it's going to take half the fighting force of the Canadian government to put down the riot your foolishness has started."

Parella scratched his head.

"That is not all," added Pym, "don't you know that those Indians are under the protection of all Canada. You are in the sweet position of having incited them to rebellion. Why, you all may be hanged for your part in this affair."

Colonel Parker whistled in shrill notes the marching song of the secret organization, "Snow-Birds Come Home."

"Well, boys," he said, "we are in for it all right. Get together, now and rush for the Fort. We are needed to protect it, and the certain little village about it. I wish in my heart we were well out of this business, but as it is we must face the music. I just wish the red gang over there would attack us. That whisky has warmed the cockles of my heart. I'm good for one more fight with Flying Cloud's band, right now."

Pym saw that the Snow-birds from commander to private was a force of utterly reckless men. While

he deplored the attitude of the organization, he could not help admiring their fearlessness.

"Right or wrong," he thought, "the Snow-birds are brave, and no matter if there is but one man left, he will fight to the final passing of the breath from his body. It is that spirit that has been met with on the firing line of all the great frontiers of the world, which civilization is slowly but surely pressing backward day by day. Some day there will be no frontier. Will there then be no such brave fools as these?"

Every man whistling the marching song of the organization the entire party hurried onward to Fort McPherson.

Not a sign was heard of Flying Cloud or his warriors. He did not care to attack men keyed up to meet him in open warfare; that was not the Indian way of fighting.

A rushing surprise where the Indian was the probable winner, was the favorite mode of fighting of Flying Cloud, Pym knew, but in spite of his knowledge he kept a sharp look-out on the march back to the Fort, and was not without care until he saw the party march through the great gates and draw up at attention under shelter of the frowning cannon on the stockade.

John Gordon, his face dark with anger met Colonel Parker immediately.

"It is my duty to order you under arrest," he cried, "but we are so much in need of men that I shall ask you to give me your parole and shall then assign you and your men to the duty of defending the Fort in case Flying Cloud attacks it."

Colonel Parker did not try to justify his actions, but took up the new duties that faced him.

First he saw that his men were fed. Then he secured dry clothing for them, and after wounds and frost bites had been dressed by the post surgeon, Colonel Parker took up the work of aiding in preparing the Fort for the expected attack with vim.

Pym meanwhile had reported his conversation with Flying Cloud, and when he showed Gordon the dead hand with which the Great Chief had punctuated his final message of defiance, Gordon went as white as a woman who sees blood for the first time.

"This is horrible," Gordon said. "It passes belief."

"Oh, nonsense," replied Pym. "Torture of prisoners is the usual thing in an Indian war. That poor Snow-bird is out of his misery. We have no time to devote to the dead. We must fight hard to save the lives of those that are now living."

Pym then hurried to pay his respects to Evelyn Gordon. He expected at least a compliment as to his attempt to carry out his mission, and possibly an expression of pleasure over his safe return.

But he found a veritable fury of a young woman, who hardly spoke to him when he entered the living room where Evelyn sat.

Pym was puzzled.

"I say," he asked, "what is the riot?"

"I fear I do not understand your rather common language," remarked his divinity.

"Huh?"

"I say I don't understand you?"

"You don't,—understand me, why, really," poor Charlie was in the air in a moment.

"I certainly don't," snapped Evelyn. "Possibly if you spoke in the Indian dialect of the Rose of the Frontier, I might understand you more clearly."

Then with a most unsatisfactory bounce the irate young girl vanished from the room leaving Pym in a whirl of conflicting emotions.

"Now what do you think of that," he remarked with much pathos. "Here I am caught with the goods on me? Like the remark of a certain Eastern policeman, 'what's the use of kicking or squealing then?'"

But nevertheless Charlie wished the little episode of the dance hall in which he had shot the Indian husband of the Rose, The Moose, had not happened.

"I always was a dunder-head," remarked Charlie, "but I don't think Miss Gordon has given me a fair deal. I seem to be ordered out for execution, having been tried and convicted by the girl in advance. Except to dance with the Rose, and shoot up her husband when he tried to kill me, I was extremely innocent of any ill intent; and where in thunder can a man get any amusement here except in such places as Indian Jack's dance hall? Oh fudge!"

Shaking himself together Charlie walked down the hall to Gordon's office singing at the top of his lungs, "If she be not fair to me, what care I how fair she be," a proceeding that added to the thunder and lightning effect brooding about the undeniably fair, Evelyn Gordon.

But his whistle stopped when he saw directly in his path the Rose of the Frontier.

"Aw, say now," Charlie stuttered. "What do you want here; say this is playing it low down on a fellow."

The Rose stepped aside showing that with her was a tall Indian youth and then said:

"He spik, me no savez Een-glees."

Which the youth who was to act as translator said meant that the Rose was unable to speak English and would translate what she said.

"She doesn't say one blooming thing to me here," vehemently replied Pym. "You tell her to come along quick."

So speaking Pym led the way direct to Gordon's office into which he burst without ceremony.

Gordon was considerably surprised to see Pym walk in followed by the two Indians but he listened to Charlie's tale of the dance hall nodding now and then.

"Oh yes," he said. "There were all kinds of stories floating about regarding your duel with The Moose, so I sent for your friend Fritz Harz, and he told me all there was to the matter; but you ought not to keep that kind of company, and then you would not be in this kind of trouble. But what does your Indian partner want here?"

"Bless me if I know," replied Pym.

"Ask her."

"What you want here?" said Charlie to the woman. "She says her husband is not dead," replied the youth.

"Well I don't care," answered Charlie. "He tried to kill me, and I got to it first."

"She say he no angry at you," the youth added. "But he feel good to you for he no forget when you hit him you could hit again, and kill him, and you did not."

"Sure not," replied Charlie, opening his eyes very wide. "I had not a bit of a grudge against The Moose, but only shot him to save my own life."

"The Moose he send his woman here, to tell you

look out tonight for Flying Cloud band," the boy continued. "You know he half-breed Blackfeet Indian."

"What?"

The lad repeated his words slowly.

"The Moose says that Flying Cloud is going to attack the Fort tonight. He wants to put me on my guard as a return for my not shooting a second time and killing him, when we fought in Indian Jack's?" questioned Pym.

"Ugh," laconically bowed the head of the boy in response.

"I see. When are we to expect the attack?" added Pym.

"The Moose no tell. Flying Cloud kill him if he knew he tell so much mighty queek," replied the boy.

"We are ready for him to attack any old time," replied Pym.

"Everything, ready, eh, old chap?"

Gordon smiled and nodded his head.

"No attack," continued the lad. "Trouble come from inside. See?"

The boy's words lengthened the faces of Gordon and Pym to extreme gravity.

"An inside attack? Treachery?" the two white men cried in apprehension.

"Murder! Murder!"

The cry came from without.

Pym dashed to the door.

Along the hall way came running a panic stricken trapper.

"What is the matter?" anxiously asked Gordon.

"Tom Lesseaux, the French Canadian *voyageur*."

"Well, what of him?" cried Pym. "He is on the morning and afternoon alternate guard watches. I saw him standing at the stockade gate when I came in today. He was guarding the entrance."

"He will guard no more. He is dead," cried the messenger.

"What?" roared both white men.

They hurried to the stockade gate.

There lay poor Lesseaux on his side. A great gash through which his red blood was still slowly dropping directly across his throat showed how he had died.

Pym leaned over and began examining the body.

"Murdered, how could he be murdered in our stockade, with none but our own troop here?" questioned Gordon. "This looks more like suicide than it does like murder to me."

Pym shook his head.

"See here Gordon," Pym said, "poor Lesseaux has been killed by one of Flying Cloud's band."

"What?"

"No question of it."

"How do you reason that out?"

Pym picked up the chilling limp arm of the dead man.

"See?" he said. "The Blackfeet always leave their mark behind on a body. They always cut each joint of a corpse with a keen knife after the victim is helpless. See? Here! The arm of Tom Lesseaux has been severed almost, at the elbow joint?"

Gordon's face was white with apprehension.

"There is a traitor here in our stockade. Where is The Rose of the Frontier and that Indian boy?" he said.

The Indian couple had vanished.

"They warned us, but the warning came too late. Treachery is what we must now face, and where can we begin our search for the traitor?" replied Gordon.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### "WHO IS THE TRAITOR?"

"No trace of the traitor has been found?"

This question was eagerly asked by John Gordon, after he and Charles Pym had thoroughly canvassed the conditions, and had made a thorough examination of the entire force in the Fort.

"Not a clue," replied Pym dejectedly.

"The question that we have a traitor in our camp is settled in the affirmative without a doubt in my mind," said Gordon.

"There is none in mine as to there being a traitor; but as to who the traitor is, I am at a loss to understand."

"We must be on our guard always. We must never let up in our watchful care."

"True. There is further another thing to remember. As long as the traitor is not discovered we are safe from outward

attack by Flying Cloud for he will take the usual secret way of the Indian in carrying on war, and will rely on the traitor in our camp."

"Possibly you may be right."

"I know I am. Flying Cloud is a great warrior from an Indian system. He can fight his men under cover better than most white men. He can plan wily tricks, for Indian duplicity and craft is in his nature. But in an open attack on the Fort, he will not dare the risk. At first we were all in danger here. We were not fully protected. We had no great supply of food, but now we are well fortified, and have plenty of food. Danger from an open attack is over."

Gordon admired the logic of Pym greatly. He had begun to lean on the young man to a great extent; himself a good business man, he did not pretend to great wood-craft or knowledge of Indian war methods. The defense of the Fort he left entirely in Pym's hands. And the hands were capable.

"It is all in your charge, Pym," Gordon replied. "You have the entire fighting command here."

"There is one thing yet to tell you. And it is important."

"Tell it quickly, then."

"Eight hundred Blackfeet warriors joined Flying Cloud's band last night. An Indian spy, a young Sioux, brought me this information at dawn today. I sent him out last night on a still hunt."

"Whew."

"The Sioux lives in the hamlet of Fort McPherson. He goes to the mission school, and he hates a Blackfeet Indian as intensely as an Indian can hate; you know the Sioux and Blackfeet for ages have been clashing in Canadian-American border disturbances?"

"Have they, eh?"

"So this information is liable to be straight. In dealing with an Indian it is wise to go back of what he tells you, and try to learn his motives. In this case I think the Sioux information is correct."

"Will not Flying Cloud now attack us?"

"He might, but I think he will not. What he is trying to do is to get the traitor in our gates, to open the stockade to a night and secret attack, when all the odds would be on Flying Cloud's side. But to manfully attack us by a siege—that is not Indian nature. The crooked way for the Indian, always."

"Have you any plan?"

"Yes."

"Would you mind telling it to me?"

"It's simple. Just sit tight and await the arrival of the reinforcements you have sent for from Fort Good Hope and Fort Franklin. It's a far cry for the help to come to us, over such an awful stretch of country, but I figure we ought to have a thousand men here shortly, which added to the force we have, will make us able to meet Flying Cloud."

"Do you know where he is encamped?"

"Most of his force has been sent to *Dead Man's Canyon*. He maintains his old band of warriors about where I went to him, to induce him to make peace. This force is a sort of flying legion, which will spy on us, dash in and cut out any of our stragglers, while the rest of the body lies snug in the other encampment."

"What will you do when our reinforcements arrive?"

"March directly to *Dead Man's Canyon*, and give Flying Cloud the battle of his life. Then it's man to man; he can not escape me then."

"What is your plan meanwhile?"

"To catch that sneaking traitor just as soon as we can."

"How?"

"I do not know. We must let things take its course. I can not even imagine—now what do you want here—?"

The latter question was put to a wild eyed messenger, whose face was white with fear, and who entered the room in a panic.

"Hum!" Pym answered his own question, "who has been murdered next?"

"It is Bannack Jim, the old trapper from Montana way," the frightened messenger said.

"What? Poor old Bannack Jim?" asked Gordon.

"Yes, sir. We found him dead in his bunk. He was on the guard watch from midnight to dawn, and was sleeping when I went to call him for his breakfast."

"You found him dead?" asked Pym.

"Yes, stabbed to the heart," replied the messenger.

"Anything else?" asked Gordon.

"Every joint in his body was cut through and through."

"One more success for Flying Cloud," said the deep voice of Pym. "It may be our turn next."

Gordon and the messenger hurried from the room to look at the body of the dead scout.

Pym at speed hurried in turn to the outer gate fearing that the inner traitor after hearing the alarm over Bannack Jim's death might try to let in some of Flying Cloud's band.

But there was no sign of any thing untoward there.

Pym then ran back to Gordon's office. Just as he was entering the door, in a dark spot in the hallway, instinctively he saw a lurking figure. His glance was so fleeting that he did not pause; merely having an impression that some one was hiding behind the door.

The rush of soft moccasined feet then assailed his ears.

Before Pym had time to look he was aware of the sudden soft patter, and in a quick breath threw up his arm, at guard.

Why he did so he never could explain.

But the movement saved his life.

His left guard arm came in contact with another arm, a knife slipped across his upper arm, and cut a long welt in his trapper's jacket, but did not enter his flesh.

Then the soft patter fled down the hallway. Where the light made a band of white way at the upper end of the hall from a window, Pym caught sight of the hardly defined form of an Indian.

"By George!" Pym remarked to himself. "An Indian, sure as I am alive."

Gordon found Pym a few moments later stupidly looking at a long cut in his sleeve.

Pym told him of the attack of the half seen assassin.

"I will order the Fort searched from top to bottom," cried Gordon at once.

Every available man was sent to make a strict canvas of every nook and cranny in the old Fort, but not one single clue could be found.

The traitor who was assassinating the Fort's garrison, one by one could not be found.

When this news was reported to Gordon great beads of perspiration stood on his face. He was cold also with apprehension.

"They will get us both, Charlie," Gordon said in excitement.

"Begins to look that way," replied Pym. "Almost got me that trip."

"Can you not give us some description of the Indian that attacked you?"

"Very little. He was tall, young I think, because he was slight; slighter than the average man of twenty-five or thirty years. He looked to me like a young buck, in this desperate work for the laurels that would come in the way of promotion if he was successful. An older warrior would hesitate at the chances against him. Is there any concealed passage way that could possibly lead to the Fort?"

"Not one. I have had every inch gone over; even the ground has been dug up in the stockade."

"How often is the main gate opened?"

"Only once at early dawn. Then twelve men escort five laborers to the water hole, right across from the Fort by the Spring house, and so far removed that no Indian could reach us with any rifle bullet, for the forest has been cleared back far out and there is no cover left for an Indian to shoot from."

"Yes? How is the water carried in?"

"In a great hogshead. This stands on a sleigh and is pulled over the snow into the fort. We take one hogshead out say this morning, and sink it far down in the spring. Then after it is full we bring it back, leaving a second hogshead in the spring to fill up during the night."

"What do you do that for?"

"Because the spring is not a very productive one."

"That is it is not deep?"

"Not very. The spring falls from a pipe we have drilled into the mountain, but with the heavy snows of this winter and the extreme cold the little pool of water that makes quite a deep spread of water in the summer, underneath the piping, is frozen up, so we sink the hogshead which we leave nights at the spring, down deep in the frozen icy snow, where the pool usually stands; then in the night time the hogshead fills up and is ready for us next day. If we did not do this we would have to wait hours before the spring water trickled slowly through the piping."

"Any one guarding the spring nights?"

"Why no. Why should they?"

"Man, you would make a fine general. I wonder that Flying Cloud has not poisoned us all through your system of getting water, long since. There is where he didn't take up his bet."

"I will put a guard about the place tonight."

"Very good. Now where is the hogshead?"

"In the stockade, near the kitchens."

"Have the hogshead emptied at once."

"Are you crazy?"

"No, but you are. The idea of your not telling me of this manner of getting your water supply long ago."

"I do not see that it is important, at that. What difference does it make as to how we get our water supply, and all that, as long as we get it."

"Come with me and I will show you."

The two leaders stood by the hogshead until it was emptied by a force of several men.

"Now, boys, turn over the hogshead," commanded Pym. "Stand back all of you; give me room as it tumbles over."

As he spoke he flashed his revolver from his belt.

"Whang!"

Its report sounded a second later as the great hogshead fell on its side.

There was a whirling struggling shape in the yard beneath the hogshead a strangled yell, and in the horrified sight of every man present a lithe Indian, was seen, in dying agonies, where a moment before there had been standing, the great hogshead.

No magician ever made a more startling transformation scene.

Hardly had the dying moan of the Indian ended when from all over the fort there sounded shots and wild imprecations, screams, and yells of defiance.

"We are attacked," shouted Pym. "To the walls, boys, The Indians are here. I was wrong. They are attacking the fort. But we have killed the savage who has been killing our men inside the Fort."

In the twinkling of an eye the battle began.

## CHAPTER IX.

### EVELYN GORDON'S VICTORY.

"Girl, you must die."

Evelyn Gordon stood frozen with horror in her room. She could hear the cries of besiegers and besieged in the out-part of the Fort but she saw that she was helpless now, and that she could not hope for aid from any of the Fort's defenders. The Indian's words were her Death warrant.

A tall, fierce Indian warrior had swarmed over the stockade wall, she saw, and was now about to bury his tomahawk in her brain.

Evelyn's white lips refused to perform their office. She wished to call for aid, but she could not.

She sank to her knees expecting every moment to feel the deadly pang of the keen tomahawk, and gave an inarticulate moan as she realized that her death was near.

She closed her eyes.

Then she fainted under the terrible emotion tearing at her heart.

How long she was insensible she did not know.

She came to herself out of a wall of dark silence, tinged with violet rays, to find herself reclining on her couch and a form bending over her.

Who was it? Was it her father? Had Pym come to her rescue? No?

Evelyn sat up with a start.

"Star-eyes," she said. "Oh, is it you?"

"Yes," replied the Indian girl.

Evelyn saw that Star-Eyes had changed greatly since she saw her last.

Her face was thinner, her eyes larger and very pathetic in their hopeless mournfulness. She was care worn, and not happy, but the same pleasant smile wreathed her face as when she was a student, under Evelyn in the mission school.

"Oh, Star-Eyes," continued Evelyn, "what has happened?"

"The Fort has been attacked by Flying Cloud," the Indian maiden said.

"Is he killing my friends?"

"If he can he is. This war is to the death."

Evelyn sobbed.

"How awful it all is. Why, why can it not be stopped? Oh, Star-Eyes can you not induce Flying Cloud to make peace?"

"I could. But I would not. He is right. I know what a hopeless fight this is for the Indians but we will at least make the price of peace a bloody one."

"Why are you here?"

"To save you."

"To save me?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because it is your due. When the plan was made to gain access to the Fort by several of Flying Cloud's warriors through a clever ruse, I asked Flying Cloud to let me go with the first attacking party. I wanted to hurry to your aid once I was in this Fort. You were good to me once; I intend to repay that kindness by shielding you from harm."

Evelyn was utterly surprised.

"It is not like an Indian girl, I know," added Star-Eyes, "to take this pains to save the life of the girl that is the daughter of one of our bitterest enemies. But you remember I gave you once, with Flying Cloud a Great Pledge?"

"I have the Pledge here with me," replied Evelyn, as she rose and went to her jewel box, extracted the Great Pledge and held it up so that Star-Eyes could see it.

Its curiously carved surface shone in the dim light in the room.

"That is it," went on Star-Eyes. "When we gave it to you it meant that any request you made of us save that of making a war-peace, would be granted."

"Yes."

"I knew that you would forget the mission of the Great Pledge and would not send for me or for Flying Cloud, or would demand anything from us and yet I knew also, that when this attack would be made you would be in peril of your life."

"Why?"

"Because it is our plan in making an attack to engage the warriors of the white race, while his women folk are killed by a second attacking party that steals into his Fort, while he is engaged in fighting off the first corps of invaders."

Evelyn shuddered in fear.

"That was why that warrior came to this room, and stood over me, with the terrible tomahawk in his upraised hand?"

"Yes. Had I been a moment later in reaching your room he would have killed you."

"Star-Eyes," said Evelyn, "I do not know what to say. You have saved my life. How can I thank you? You risked your life to save mine, for if we are surprised here together by my people, I know they would not refrain from slaying you at my request, as did the member of your band, when you commanded him not to murder me."

"I know that," replied Star-Eyes, "the despised Indian at times is more just than the vaunted white-man."

"But Star-Eyes, can you not leave the band of your people and come here to the Fort and let me protect you?"

A wrathful expression passed over the Indian girl's face.

"Leave my people and put myself under your protection? Leave the race of Flying Cloud and ask the white race for my life, and my future? Why, girl, I would rather die in torment, and never see the land of the Great Spirit after death, than be such a traitor to my people," replied Star-Eyes.

"You are right," Evelyn said quickly, "and I was wrong."

"I am right, I know. Under happier days I had hoped to have been the bride of Flying Cloud. But now—now—I know I am destined to be only the Bride of Death."

"Oh, Star-Eyes, Star-Eyes," cried Evelyn.

"I know I am right," the Indian girl added. "This war is hopeless for us, and we must die before it is ended. But it is our duty to continue it. The blood toll must be as heavy as we can make it ere we pass to our Happy Hunting Grounds, where there will be no white man to steal our lands, and try to drive us from the hunting grounds of this earth, which we held, we and our long dead people, for centuries."

"If only I could be of some use to you. Is there nothing I can do for you, now you have done so much for me?"

The Indian girl held out her hand.

"Just say, 'Good-bye,' I know the course you are taking is the only one a true red maiden could take," said Star-Eyes.

Evelyn with tears streaming down her face faltered the words after the Indian girl.

She buried her face in her hands. It seemed so awful that this young girl in the full flush of health and strength was so calmly facing her death.

When Evelyn looked up, Star-Eyes had vanished.

With her she took the Great Pledge.

It had fulfilled its mission when Star-Eyes saved the life of Evelyn Gordon.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE FIGHT ON THE STOCKADE WALLS.

When Charlie Pym and John Gordon reached the walls of the stockade the exterior and interior of the Fort seemed to be alive with howling Indians.

The affrighting cries of the red men came from all points to be answered by the hearty hurrahs of the Fort defenders, while over all could be heard the battle cry of the Snow-birds, "Kill all."

Colonel John Parker did yeoman service that day.

He was a statue of the God of Battles as he poured shots from his revolvers hither and thither, and with each report from his arms an Indian fell headlong to death.

Pym was everywhere.

He flashed like an avenging demon from one point to the other.

His cries incited his men to further endeavor, and his example as a fighting force nerved the arm of every defender.

John Gordon, methodical and businesslike, stood behind a long rifle which at intervals, exactly two minutes apart, he presented to the foe, took careful aim, and fired a shot that in every case went home to its mark.

"Fighting Cloud has turned loose his entire force," cried Pym to Gordon in a lull in the battle. "I was wrong, old chap, he did have the sand to attack the Fort."

"But he hasn't got the sand to take it," cried Gordon, as he fired his rifle at the head of an Indian that appeared over the stockade wall. The Indian struck in the eye by the bullet fell like a log to the ground, a distance of ten feet.

"Give it to 'em, Peter," cried Pym as he saw Peter Parella run toward a point that was seriously assailed.

There was imminent danger there, Pym saw.

The Indians fighting with bitterness, had availed themselves of the white knowledge of Flying Cloud. They had secured a ladder and had raised it above the top of the stockade wall.

If the great tide of red men now swarming up the ladder got into the Fort it would mean a hand to hand encounter on the walls of the structure, with the besiegers inside the Fort on equal terms with the imperiled defenders.

"Keep that ladder gang out of the Fort if you value your life," cried Pym to Peter. "If they get in we are lost. The red men are in greater numbers by far, than we are."

Peter sped to the rescue.

A tall savage had reached the top of the ladder and was fairly in the air making the downward jump that would land him on the stockade walk, that ran around the top of the walls, but far enough below them to make a sort of rampart to shield the besieged.

Peter did not wait to draw his weapon when he saw the savage make the leap.

He just raised up his two great hairy arms, caught the Indian in mid air around the waist, and literally plucked him out of the atmosphere and flung him head first out of the Fort.

With a crash the Indian struck the ground head-first. His neck was broken in the shock and he died instantly.

Right behind this savage came a second one.

He was a young lad of eighteen, like all of his race tall, but not weighing more than one hundred and fifty pounds.

Peter leaned over and caught this brave by the throat. Under his great fingers the neck of the Indian snapped like a pipe-stem under the pressure of the fingers of an ordinary man.

Peter raised the dead form over his head.

Using it as a thresher does his flail, Peter began coolly banging the third Indian on the ladder on the head with the dead body of the second one.

One or two blows was enough.

The Indian from his perch on the ladder could not do more than hang on for dear life.

Peter belabored him for a few minutes; then he dropped the dead Indian he was holding, leaned over and threw the ladder backward with its line of savage freight hanging to it.

There was a fearsome yell as the ladder toppled over burying itself in the brain of a savage underneath, and leaving those who were grasping it to land with many broken bones, or fractured skulls on the frozen earth beneath.

"Great work," cried Pym, who had witnessed this work of the modern Samson. "That is the ticket, give it to them hard."

At this point in the fight a new danger threatened.

Through the air began to be hurled great pine knots of fire.

"They are trying to set the Fort on fire," cried Pym. "Watch out that none of the firebrands ignite the old timbers of the Fort."

This danger was a serious one, Pym knew. The Fort was old, the timber in it was like a lot of tinder, and would burn like a flash of gun powder ignited by a match.

There was no snow to be got at to dash on the flames, should they start, because no man could leave the Fort to get outside after the snow; and what made the peril the greater was that for fear the recent heavy snow would crush down the old Fort

roof, Gordon had the day before had all the snow on the roof shoveled off.

"Flying Cloud is cute," Pym said to Gordon. "Those fire-brands have been dipped in pine resin, and they are thus about as fierce a bit of flame as can be thrown at us."

"We can't get the cannon to work," said Gordon, "or I would shell out the gang."

Pym remembered his criticism to Fritz Harz. He laughed grimly.

"Oh, I never depended much on the cannon," he asserted. "Have you heard from Harz?"

"Not a word since I sent him back to Fort Good Hope and Fort Franklin for succor."

"He can't get help any too quick. We are in trouble, my boy. If we don't beat off this gang, they need not send reinforcements at all."

"That is so."

"Instead they will need a new Postmaster, a new scout, in our places, eh?"

"Guess that is no merry jest."

"And the Snow-birds won't have to be tried for inciting this war."

"Peter Parella's act in stopping that gang of red devils has gained them their pardon, at that. Do you know what I am going to do as to the Snow-birds?"

"No. What?"

"If we are alive when reinforcements come, we will give the few members of the Snow-birds a quiet tip that they had better 'skin' for the trackless wilderness and forget us all for awhile."

"And bye and bye they will be forgotten, eh?"

"I hope so. Will you stand for some supplies for the ten men left and a little cash on the side?"

"Officially I say no, sir, they must face their music."

"But what do you say unofficially?"

"I say to the Snow-birds, unofficially, 'Skip, by the light of the moon,'" replied Gordon.

"How about the parole you put them all under?"

"You tell them for me that while officially I must deprecate their violation of paroles, that unofficially I think they are careless of life if they don't violate it. They will all be hanged sure if they do not get away quick after reinforcements come."

"Great is red tape, eh? You business men are as hide bound as a Spanish girl who has seventeen thousand bits of etiquette to remember before she can ask for a piece of pie."

"Well, that's my idea of the Snow-bird situation. If you don't mind you can tell Colonel Parker what I say."

"That is what I will do, and in case we are not all killed here, he is at liberty to vamoose any old time he wishes."

"Exactly. And if we don't get out of this the fate of the Snow-birds is sealed along with ours."

"Right you are."

While the two men were laying plans for the future when it looked as if there was to be no future but the grave for them all, Colonel Parker, bound to vindicate the Snow-birds so far as their fighting ability was concerned had thought of a way to save the Fort from the danger of a terrible fire.

He had formed a bucket-brigade from the stockade walls, to the big hogshead standing beside the dead Indian, whose killing had begun the battle. The water in the hogshead had very fortunately been saved.

He knew without explanation that a false bottom had been made in the hogshead, and in that an Indian had been secreted.

Instead of a traitor in the Fort as Pym and Gordon had feared this young savage had been introduced into the defenders midst, through concealing him in the false bottom made by Flying Cloud, who had learned the manner in which the Fort defenders secured their water supply.

It was Colonel Parker's plan to use the very false bottom of the hogshead as the shield of the besiegers, and thus turn Flying Cloud's plan against himself.

The bucket brigade stood in line waiting the buckets of water which each man thought he would take from the man at his rear, and pass forward to the man ahead of him.

There were shouts of pleased surprise when a gang of men were seen slowly pushing the hogshead up, up, toward the roof.

After much labor the great cask was seen to be placed on the roof.

"What was the next step?-" asked all.

"What is Colonel Parker going to do?" asked Pym. "Where is he?"

No one seemed to know.

"What is that long snake like thing coiling back from that

hogshead?" questioned Gordon, as he pointed to a line of wriggling substance.

Pym looked closely.

"Well, I'll be blowed," Pym cried. "Of all the queer contrivances. Say, Gordon, don't you see what Parker has done?"

"I don't."

"He has put a heavy sheath of iron from the store room about the outside of that hogshead."

"Well."

"That makes the hogshead a sure tiny fort. No rifle bullet can get by that sheet iron and the heavy wood in the hogshead."

"Of course not."

"Then Colonel Parker has cut holes about the height of his up-stretched arms, about the hogshead's top."

"Yes."

"Then he has had a hose put in, that stretches from the bucket brigade down there sheltered from shots, behind the stockade wall."

"Yes."

"The bucket brigade sends forward water to the last man there in the line. He under cover, carefully hangs up his bucket on that hook here, on the wall, and the water flows by its own gravity down into the hogshead."

"I see. But where is Colonel Parker?"

"In the hogshead, you idiot," cried Pym. "He has a pail there and he takes the water in pail by pail, having the false bottom made by Flying Cloud to kneel on."

"Well, what next?"

"Oh, nothing. But he catches the water in a pail inside the hogshead and then when a firebrand comes, he just squirts enough water through another bit of hose he has inside the hogshead, and he quenches the flame without using very much water."

"Great. Why the water we have here in the Fort will do to quench the flames for a long while."

"Yes. Or until Flying Cloud's band sees that they are foiled and give up the plan to set fire to the Fort. Now watch."

Pym and Gordon watched the work of Colonel Parker with careful eyes.

The plan was a perfect success.

From outside the Fort a great pine knot, ablaze, with a fierce flame, would shoot in a great curve from a stalwart savage's arm.

It would alight on the roof.

Then Colonel Parker from the interior of the hogshead would turn a stream of water directly on the blaze through the hose.

He would be perfectly shielded and the flame at first would burn with great vigor, but then it would die away under the careful aim of the Snow-bird who under the shelter of his improvised Fort, made the efforts of the Indians impossible of success.

The watching defenders would shout in glee every time a brand hurried in a great semi-circle from a savage hand, to the roof.

"Hurrah for the Snow-birds," cried Peter Parella in great good humor.

"Hurrah!" cried the defenders.

"No danger from the firebrands after all," laughed Pym.

"Somehow or other we have been pretty lucky," replied Gordon. "Every time it looked as if we were done for, something has turned up to save us. I begin to feel that we are destined to get out of this hole."

"Don't brag. Hold fast is a better dog than old brag," rejoined Pym.

Just then Pym felt a touch on his arm.

He turned to meet Evelyn whose face was anxious and the moment he saw her, Pym knew that she had an important mission to perform.

"Hush!" Evelyn said softly, "come with me, a terrible danger threatens us."

## CHAPTER XI.

### FLYING CLOUD'S LAST CAST.

Pym followed Evelyn with anxiety.

He well knew that she would not have called him back from his duty cheering on the defenders, and ordering their efforts to the best advantage unless there was some vital reason behind her summons.

"Steal in here softly," Evelyn said in a low tone as she paused at her boudoir door.

Pym followed gently.

"Come here," the girl said.

Pym followed her over toward a window commanding the rear portion of the Fort.

"Look there," Evelyn said, "what are the Indians doing?"

Cautiously Pym gazed out.

A strange sight met his eyes.

There were at least fifty Indians around a great uncouth something that towered high in the air.

The thing seemed to be moving; or else it was being moved, just which Pym at first could not see.

From the high straight arm-like sort of thing that went towering into the sky there shot up a white shiny substance.

It went whirling into the air with a queer faint humming sound and then after describing a long arch, came thundering down upon the roof of the Fort, which trembled under the shock as if it would give way, and crush all beneath to a terrible death.

"Well of all the contraptions," remarked Pym in utter surprise. "What is it? It looks like an infernal machine. What is it?"

"I do not know," replied Evelyn. "When the battle began to rage I was confronted by a savage who tried to kill me."

"What?"

Pym's eyes resembled peeled onions.

Evelyn then narrated her conversation with Star-Eyes, and told how the brave Indian girl had saved her white friend's life.

"This beats me," snapped Pym. "My, but isn't this an awful position for us all?"

"It is. But after Star-Eyes left me, and I can not understand how she got out of the Fort, she was a weight on my mind. It does seem so hard that such a bright girl must go to her death due to her savage feelings, for we know how utterly foolish is Flying Cloud's idea of sacrificing himself and his entire band, in this dreadful and foolish war."

"I know, Evelyn, but as I have so often told you, white girls can not understand red girls. They are too far apart to have their feelings meet on such questions of honor as have been presented to Star-Eyes. It is impossible to end this war now. If we can escape with our lives we are lucky."

"I fear that is so," answered Evelyn. "But to get on to my discovery of this queer thing the Indians have built."

"Yes. Please tell me."

"I stood near this window looking out after Star-Eyes had left me sorrowing over the fate of the girl, when I saw a dark form steal out from yonder forest."

"Yes."

"They were pushing that queer thing there. They seemed to be pointing it at the Fort, so I hurried out to tell you of the matter. It was to my mind serious enough to demand your attention."

Pym nodded.

"Have you your field glasses handy?"

Evelyn hurried over and handed them to Pym.

"How stupid in me not to remember them before," she said.

Pym began studying the queer thing around which several savages were grouped.

Then he broke into a merry laugh.

"That fellow, Flying Cloud is all right," he said. "He has brains. If the loss of this fight don't mean the loss of my scalp I would almost hope he would win."

"How terrible you talk," said Evelyn. "Please tell me what you have discovered."

"It is about the cleverest bit of work I have ever seen," said Pym. "That Indian has taken a big ash sapling which he has had hewed into a form of an old fashioned cross-bow."

"Yes."

"This cross-bow, he has bound with great strips of moose thongs, which by the way are pretty nearly as tough as iron, to a great center stick. That makes a sort of cross-bow."

"Yes."

"This cross-bow he pulls back by means of other great twisted strands of moose thongs. Say what do you think of that?"

"Wonderful. But I am to blame for it all."

"You to blame? Miss Evelyn are you crazy?"

"Not a bit. I remember when I was teaching in the mission school that I told Flying Cloud and the other Indians in the class how the old cross-bows were made."

"Ho! Ho!"

"Yes. We had quite a spirited argument over just how such a great cross-bow can be made here, out in the frontier." Flying Cloud claimed that he could make a cross-bow big enough to throw great stones quite a distance, and thus to crush an enemy."

"And he has made his words good by building this cross-bow.

It is only proving what I always have said, that the average red man, when he is educated by the whites is sure to put the knowledge he gains from them to a use in killing them, if any trouble breaks out between the Indian and the white."

"I fear you are right."

"The education of a savage unless you can at once place him in the guarding lines of civilization is useless," added Pym warmly.

"I fear you are right," sighed Evelyn. "I never shall teach another Indian."

"There comes another shot," cried Pym.

As he spoke a great white substance hurtled awkwardly through the air and landed again on the roof, amid a mighty splinter of timbers of the upper support of the Fort."

"What in the world are they firing at us?" asked Evelyn.

"Great chunks of solid ice," replied Pym.

"What?"

"Yes. So you see they are able to go further than you taught. Your idea was to have the Indians throw heavy stones from this cross-bow but as the ground is frozen and a heavy snow covers the ground, stones can not be readily secured."

"So they are flinging great chunks of ice."

"Yes. I should say that one of those big chunks will weigh five hundred pounds. This fort is old. How long do you think that roof will stand the battering of five hundred pounds of ice upon it every five minutes, descending with terrible velocity from where those Indians can shoot it?"

"Not long, I fear."

"And when they have sufficiently battered down our roof, and steadily fought us at the walls, they will swarm over the stockade, for they outnumber us greatly, and it's then 'farewell to friends.'"

"Well, I am not afraid to die."

"You are a brave girl, but wouldn't you rather live?"

"Of course."

"As Mrs. Pym?"

Evelyn laughed although her face colored.

"You are the kind of a man that would court a woman even as you descend into the grave."

"That is no answer to my question."

"That is all you will get, just now. Why can you not wait until this war is over?"

"I suppose I will have to," Pym replied, overjoyed at not receiving a direct refusal.

"But can you not stop that engine of destruction? Must we stand here while a lot of savages batter the Fort to bits?"

Pym put on his thinking cap.

Then he ran out of the room, returning in a moment with a fine repeating rifle. It belonged to Evelyn's father and was a trusted weapon, and as Pym put it, "shot close."

Pym carefully calculated the distance to be 250 yards.

Adjusting the sights to the instrument he knelt down, using the window sill as a resting place for his weapon.

A burly savage was just getting ready to release the trigger-like affair to the cross-bow, that would send another five hundred pound chunk of ice through the air, to shake the Fort to its foundations.

The shot from Pym's rifle struck him exactly in the space between his two eyes.

The Indian was killed so instantaneously that his hand was still outstretched when death seized him.

"Two little Indians playing with a gun; gun went off then there was one."

Pym sang these words in great glee.

Evelyn smiled and nodded in appreciation. She could not help thinking how a habit forms. Six weeks ago, if she had been told she would calmly watch the killing of an Indian by an excellent shot, from an excellent rifle, and would make a joke of it, she would have been very indignant.

"You are an excellent shot," Evelyn simply said, as she looked through the field glasses. "How those Indians scatter to cover. But look out, there comes another one."

Again the shot from Pym's rifle struck the savage.

Again the Indian fell dead, but in a twinkling; in a half part of a second, a third man took his place.

The shot from Pym's rifle sent him to follow "The Happy Hunting Ground Trail," and this seemed to satisfy the Indians. They drew off and made no effort to further fire the great rude cross-bow.

Still watching the enemy Pym sent for Peter Parella and handed over to him the duty of keeping the Indians from using their original weapon.

"Look out, Peter," Pym said. "Don't let those fellows use that machine again."

"If any one of those Indians use that thing," replied Peter, "he will be the most wonderful Indian on earth. He will pull the trigger of that ice boat, after he is dead by my shot."

After advising Evelyn to remain and assist Peter by a watch through the field glasses of all the enemy's movements, Pym hurried forward to the ramparts again, where Gordon was still methodically shooting his rifle and the remainder of the defenders were fighting on as when he left them.

"I say, Gordon," said Pym, "did you ever think that we have been five hours fighting here?"

"Is that all?" asked Gordon. "Seems to me as if I had been here a week."

"That is just it. The Indians will wear us down. There is nothing like their system to get us at all time, on all sides. We are kept busy every second. They can relay their forces, but we, outnumbered as we are, must keep all our men at work. The time will surely come when we can not keep all at work."

"Then the Indians will break into the Fort," replied Gordon. "I've been thinking of that fact for some time."

"Where are those defenders? Where are the reinforcements that Fritz Harz went after," cried Pym in agony.

"Br-br-br-br-br."

Exactly like the noise a great boy makes by hurriedly running by a picket fence meanwhile pressing sharply on the fence with a stout stick, came this noise from the woods.

Intertwined with the noise came the roar of rifles, the shrill whistles of the North-West Mounted Police, and Pym leaped to the ramparts and waved his hat with a ringing shout of gladness.

"There comes my answer," he yelled. "Hear that Gatling gun. Hear that shrill whistle. We are saved. Victory! Victory!"

Through the forest was seen hurrying the forms of a horde of men, reinforcements for the beleaguered garrison.

In the lead was Fritz Harz, waving his cap, and yelling like a madcap youth.

Through a great trackless wild, alone he had hurried to save the Fort. His act was fully as heroic as those of the brave defenders of the fortress.

## CHAPTER XII.

### FLYING CLOUD AT BAY.

With more than a thousand men in his wake, Charles Pym hurried on the quest for Flying Cloud and his warriors on the following day.

With him was Gordon, although Pym was in command of the expedition.

To hold Flying Cloud at bay, with a superior force, besides conducting the campaign so that he, wily Indian as he was, had been absolutely outmatched had been met with a due reward.

The combined forces at a meeting at Fort McPherson soon after their arrival had voted to place the command of the punitive expedition to be formed at once against Flying Cloud.

"Well, where do you suppose Flying Cloud is to be found?" asked Gordon as he strode along by Pym.

"He is still encamped in *Dead Man's Canyon*," answered Pym.

"How do you know?"

"I sent my Sioux spy to determine that fact after the arrival of the reinforcement party last night."

"One would think Flying Cloud would fly to the Rocky Mountains to organize a sort of predatory warfare from there."

"He wished to do that but he can not."

"Why not?"

"His provisions are about gone. You see he has had to feed more than 800 warriors from day to day, while we were feeding our small force."

"Yes."

"There has been no Fort McPherson for him now to be a point where he could replenish his supplies."

"Oh."

"Further than that he has been handicapped by lack of game. The big blizzard recently, and this extremely heavy snow fall all winter, here, has driven game deep into the forest. He has had

no chance to do much hunting in his anxiety to make us capitulate."

"So he is in great stress and peril."

"Yes."

"Wouldn't it be better to get him to drop this war now, and call it all off, rather than to chase him to *Dead Man's Canyon*. A battle there means his finish, but it also means that many of our men would bite snow before we could whip the Great Chief."

"I tried that," replied Pym. "I sent a messenger to Flying Cloud at dawn today, telling him that he might rest assured that if he wished to smoke the pipe of peace with me that I was willing still to do it."

"What was his reply?"

"He refused my offer."

"Any other message?"

"Yes. I offered to assume charge of Star-Eyes, if she wished, with a promise to see that she was protected, and well cared for, if he would send her back in charge of the messenger."

"Did she come?"

"The messenger said that Flying Cloud sent for Star-Eyes. When she reached his tent he told her of my offer."

"What did she say?"

"She refused absolutely to even think of accepting. She sent word that she had told your daughter, Evelyn, how she felt, and why she must hold to her decision to die with Flying Cloud."

"Gee, but I hate this mission," said Gordon. "It seems tough that we must go and attack such people as Flying Cloud and Star-Eyes."

"It seems so to me. It's a duty I would rather shirk than meet. But it is a duty. We must punish these Blackfeet or else there would be no safety from any other tribe or nation, as they call themselves, for any white man in the North-West."

"That is very true. But just the same it is hard that we have to do the punishing. I wish Flying Cloud had made peace."

"So do I."

"Now, what is your plan of campaign?"

"I have divided our forces."

"I see."

"I will command one side or portion."

"Yes."

"You will command the other."

"Thank you, you are bound to make me get into this game, although you know how I feel about it."

"I am. Then while I attack from the front, you and your forces will go around Flying Cloud and flank him."

"Exactly. What will you do with the Gatling gun?"

"Use that to shell out all Flying Cloud's outlying pickets."

"Then under cover of the gun you will charge him and apply cold steel."

"I will."

"That plan ought to work."

"I think it will work better than any other, and with less loss of life."

"We have had a pretty heavy death list."

"Fierce."

"The enemy have lost many."

"Worse than our list. They must have suffered terribly in their attack on the Fort. My spy told me that Flying Cloud's camp was filled with his wounded warriors."

"There is no danger of a flanking movement on the part of the enemy toward the Fort, is there?"

"I left it well garrisoned. Evelyn is well protected."

"Are the Snow-birds with us?"

"Oh no."

"Where are they?"

"They left the Fort early today. I gave them plenty of provisions, a good supply of money, and your messages."

"What did they say?"

"They were overwhelmed at their good luck. They had expected to be hanged."

"Then the Snow-birds who caused all this trouble are out of it at last."

"That is the usual fate of trouble mongers. They get away from the result of all the trouble their folly has made."

"There is one bright spot in it all."

"What is that?"

"The Snow-bird faction is no longer a secret trouble-making organization in the Northwest."

Shots directly in front caused Pym to hurry forward.

He found that the Indian pickets had engaged his advance.

Pym halted his forces quickly and began arranging the plans for *The Battle of Dead Man's Canyon*.



"You take this last two hundred men," Pym said to Gordon, "and hurry across the canyon. Fight your way through if necessary but flank Flying Cloud. Keep messengers flying to me constantly to tell me how you are getting on."

Gordon soon vanished with his men in the thick under-brush which in spots peeped out of the deep snow. He had no trouble in advancing as his command were all equipped with hunters' snow-shoes, which if not as given to fast time like the shoes of the runner, were extremely serviceable.

As Gordon was working his way along he heard the Gatling gun open fire on a hill above him.

He could see Pym's signal men waving flags and got out his signal book and translated the wig-wagging.

"Keep far to the left," Gordon translated. "Enemy awaits you in front."

Gordon sent back a man to tell Pym that he had read and was following his order.

The br-br-br-br of the Gatling gun, with its long steady hail of bullets soon drove the Indians in a compact mass.

The carnage was dreadful.

The Gatling mowed whole ranks of red men down in a breath. In vain did the Indians try to seek cover.

The gun searched their hiding places as if its guiders read every thought.

It was the first time the Indians had ever faced a machine gun. They did not know what to make of it.

Its rain of bullets; its steady br-br-br, its avalanche of death giving explosions was a mystery to them.

Brave as lions they charged the gun.

Great mounds of dead was the result as the machine played its stream on the unfortunate red men.

Great Chief Bear-Head leading a forlorn hope in a wild, desperate charge was swept to death at the muzzle of the gun.

The gray head of the old Indian was shot into bits.

When he fell Pym, from his perch on an adjacent hill, stopped the firing for a moment, until he had the body of his foe rescued, and laid at one side for future burial.

"He was a dead square Indian," said Pym as he ordered the conflict to be continued. "I could not bear to feel, that he was not going to be buried like a white man."

While the gun was doing such splendid service there was many feats of valor from both Indians and white men.

In the deep snow of the canyon, men fought to the death.

On the slippery sides of the great canyon men fought and gave no quarter.

White man and Indian suffered in silence.

The canyon was soon filled with smoke.

The noise of the explosion of rifles was like the sound of great waves beating the sands in a storm of wild energy.

Now and then Pym could see Flying Cloud in the thickest of the carnage urging on his indomitable men.

"How he fights," thought Pym. "He is a grand hero today. Surely will his name go down into the ages of the Blackfeet lodges; if there are any lodges left to the nation when this splendid battle is over."

Soon Pym heard the ring of the shots of Gordon's men come floating from Flying Cloud's rear guard.

He could see the commotion this new attack was making.

"All charge," cried Pym, as he led his little personal staff down into the great inferno raging about him, from the hill where he had gained, he knew, a great victory.

It was a wondrous scene.

The Indians were disheartened and were beginning to break, when the flanking movement of Gordon and his men began.

Then the fight became no longer an organized resistance.

The Indians knew they were beaten.

They ran frantically hither and thither, some throwing down their arms and vainly asking for the quarter that was not given them; the whites were bent on extermination of the red men, once and for all.

Flying Cloud, wounded by many bullets, a spectre of a man, was hemmed in by half a dozen trappers at the apex of a tiny hill.

The Great Chief was fighting with stern brows drawn deep over his eyes, and with grinding teeth, and undimmed eyes; the eyes of the great warrior that he was.

At his feet lay Star-Eyes. Her face was ashen. She was dying. The track of a bullet through her lungs could be seen plainly, as she had torn open her tunic and had tried to staunch the frothy red blood that came from the mortal injury.

She was just gasping her last breath when Pym caught sight of the fight.

He hurried to the scene.

"Star-Eyes," he shouted, "ask for quarter. Surrender."

The dying girl raised herself almost to her feet.

Her pale lips spoke.

"Never!" she cried, and sank back a corpse.

Flying Cloud grasped his shield with his totem of the great white brant upon it.

He whirled it about his head.

With all the strength of his supple body he hurled it at a big trapper.

Under the force of the blow the man went down like a bird before the rifle of a hunter.

From the lips of Flying Cloud there rang, clear, like a trumpet call over the fearful battle field, the splendid war cry of his nation.

Like a tree that is shivered by the lightning blast in a great storm, he fell forward on his face, across the body of Star-Eyes.

"Hold your fire," cried Pym. "The man that dares strike Flying Cloud again dies like a dog."

Pym dashed to the side of the Great Chief. He raised him up. The face of Flying Cloud bore a smile, fearless and sweet.

"He is dead," said Pym, "Gentlemen, there died a great warrior, and if he was not a man, then I never met one."

Some of the party went to raise the man who lay under the shield of Flying Cloud.

He also was dead.

"What a blow," said Pym. "The last cast of Flying Cloud sent a white man ahead of the Indian down the road to dusty death."

All marveled at the wonderful blow.

But Flying Cloud lay peaceful in their midst, a red man, who died in defense of his honor.

"Carry him to the Fort," Pym ordered. "He has fought a great fight. I will give him and Star-Eyes a Christian burial."

\* \* \* \* \*

It was a solemn procession that attended the burial from the Fort next day of the Great Chief, his father Bear-Head, and Star-Eyes.

The three Indians were laid together in a grave dug with infinite toil out of the frozen ground.

A firing squad from the white men had fired a last salute, as Charles Pym and Evelyn stood by the grave watching men fill it up.

"After all," said Pym, "it is all over. Everything in this world ends this way sooner or later. Evelyn, when we go may we have as sincere mourners about us as Flying Cloud and Star-Eyes have."

"It was *Flying Cloud's Last Stand*," softly said the girl.

As she did so, from the early morning sun a single beam tried to struggle forth and cast its light over the grave of the devoted people who had died for the uphold of their birthright of freedom.

## CONCLUSION.

With the battle of *Dead Man's Canyon*, the great Blackfeet nation's glory departed forever.

The power of the race was broken. It never recovered from the lesson it had been given.

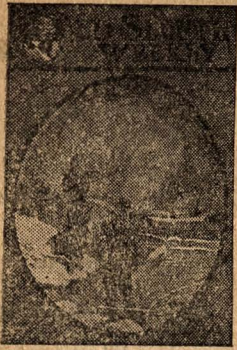
Never again did it raise its hands against the white man.

Charles Pym, entered the Hudson's Bay Company service as a Postmaster in the place of John Gordon who decided to retire from active business life, and after his marriage to Evelyn Gordon, Pym rose high in his chosen path of life.

Often in the star nights of the great North-West, would Pym and his wife speak of Flying Cloud and the devoted Star-Eyes.

And in the few lodges of the Blackfoot nation left, the story was also told, and the women and the men sadly heard the tale of *FLYING CLOUDS LAST STAND OR THE BATTLE OF DEAD MAN'S CANYON*.

THE END.



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99. The Shadow Detective; or The Mysteries of a Night.
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106. The Mystery of Room 207; being the sequel to The Hotel Tragedy.
107. Gardemore, the Detective; or the King of the "Shadows."
108. The Fatal Chair; being the sequel to Gardemore, the Detective.
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110. The Twisted Trail; being the sequel to the Mask of Mystery.
111. Booth Bell; or The Prince of Detectives Among the Indians.
112. The Beautiful Captive; being the continuation of Booth Bell.
113. Booth Bell's Twisted Trail; being the sequel to The Beautiful Captive.
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115. The Banker's Secret; being the sequel to The Wall Street Detective.
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117. The House of Mystery; being the sequel to The Wizard's Trail.
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134. The League of Four; or The Trail of the Man Tracker.
135. The House of Fear; or The Young Duke's Strange Quest.

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- Feb. 3—136. Foiled by Fate; being the sequel to The House of Fear.  
 Feb. 10—137. A "Dash for Millions; or Old Ironsides Trail of Mystery.  
 Feb. 17—138. The Trail of Three; or The Motor Pirates' Last Stand.  
 Feb. 24—139. A Dead Man's Hand; or Caught by his Own Victim.

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