

THE WAR-TRAIL!

CHAPTER LXXXVIII-(CONTINUED.)

I have said that at the first glance it was difficult to tell whether the old man was gazing into the barrel of his gun or beyond it.

For a long time he kept up this singular process of conjuration, alternating his glances in equal distribution between the hollow cylinder and the small circle of vision that covered the Indian camp.

The others began to grow impatient; all were interested in the result, and not without reason.

So far, however, none had offered to interrupt or question the queer old man. None dared. One or two of the party had already had a taste of his quality when fretted or interfered with, and no one desired to draw upon himself the sharp "talk" of the earless trapper.

Garey at length approached, but not until Rube, with a triumphant toss of his head, and a scarcely audible "whoop" from his thin lips, showed signs that his consultation had ended, and that the "joss" who dwelt at the bottom of his rifle barrel had vouchsafed an answer!

I had watched him with the rest. I liked that expressive pitch of the head; I liked the low but momentous sibilation that terminated the *seance* between him and his familiar spirit.

Garey and I drew near, but not to question him. We understood him too well for that. We knew that he must be left free to develop his purpose in his own time; and we left him free—simply placing ourselves by his side.

"Wal, Billee!" he said, after drawing a long breath, "an' yerself, young fellur, what d'ee both think o' this hyur bizness—looks ugly, don't it—eh, boyees?"

"Taint ugly," was Garey's laconic answer.

"Tho' so meeself at first."

"Thar aint no plan o' fightin' into thar camp," said the young trapper, in a desponding tone.

"The h—thar aint! What greenhorn put that idee inter yur brain-pau, Bill?"

"Wal, thar are a plan, but taint much o' a one. We've been talkin' it over hyar."

"Le's hear it," responded Rube, with an exulting chuckle; "le's hev it, boyee! an' quick Bill, fur time's dodrotted precious 'bout now. Wal?"

"It's jest this, Rube, nyther less nor more—the capt'n proposes to take the Injun's horse, and ride straight into thar camp."

"Strait custrut in do'ee?"

"In course—it ud be no use gwine about the bush—they kin see him a comin' from any side."

"I'll be darned if they kin—that I'll be darned. Wag! they cudn't a see me—that they cudn't, ef every nigger o' 'em hed the eyes o' an Argoose—that they cudn't, Billee."

"How?" I inquired. "Do you mean to say that it is possible for any one to approach yonder camp without being observed? Is that what you mean, Rube?"

"That ur preezactly what I mean, young fellur; no, not adzactly that, cyther. One o' you I did'n't say. What I said wur that this hyur trapper, Rube Rawlins o' the Rocky Mountains, kud slide inter yauter campmint jest like greased lightning through a gooseberry-bush, 'thout e'er an Injun seein' 'im; and that too of the red skinned varmint hed more eyes in thur hed than they hev lice; which, accordin' to this child's recknin, ud give ivery squaw's son o' the gang as many peepers as thur ur spots in a peacock's tail, an' a wheen over to breed, I kalkerlate. No plan to git inter thur camp 'thout bein' seed! Wag! yur gettin' green, Bill Garey."

"How can it be accomplished, Rube? Pray explain. You know how impatient?"

"Don't git impaysent, young fellur! that ur's no use whetsomdever. Yu'll need payshuise, an' a good grist o' that ur, afore ye kin warm yur shins at yander fires; but ee kin do it, an' in the nick o' time too, ef yu'll go preezactly accordin' to what ole Rube tells ye, an' keep yur eye well skinned, an' yur teeth from chatterin'—I knows yu'll do all that. I knows yur weasel to the back o' yur neck, an' kin whip yur weight in wild-cats any day i' the year. Now, yur agree to foller my dereekshuns?"

"I promise faithfully to act according to your advice."

"Ther ur sensible sayed—durnation'd sensible. Wal, then, I'll gi' ye my device."

As Rube said this, he moved forward to the edge of the timber, making a sign for Garey and myself to follow.

On reaching its outer edge, but still within cover, he dropped down upon his knees, behind some evergreen bushes.

I imitated his example, and kneeling upon his right, while Garey crouched down on the left.

Our eyes were directed upon the Indian camp, of which, and the plain

around it, we had a good view—as good as could be obtained under the light of a too brilliant moon.

After we had surveyed the scene for some moments in silence, the old trapper condescended to begin the conversation.

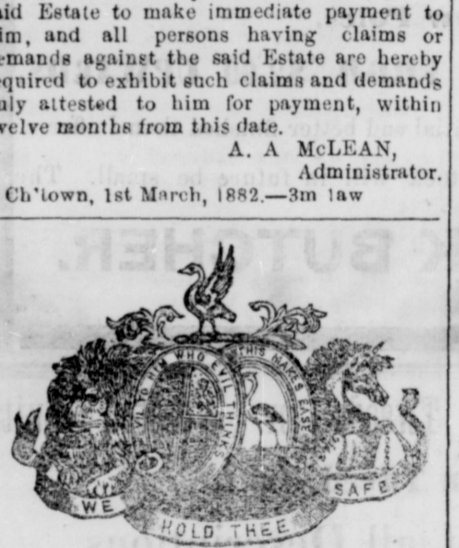
TO BE CONTINUED.



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A. A. McLEAN, Administrator. Ch'town, 1st March, 1882.—3m 1aw



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Table with 3 columns: STATIONS, MIXED, MIXED. Lists train times for stations like Ch'town, Royalty, N. Wiltsh', Hunter R'r, Bradalbe's, Co'ty Line, Freetown, Kensington, Summ'side, Wellington, Fort Hill, O'Leary, Bloomfield, Alberton, Tignish.

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L. B. ARCHIBALD, Superintendent. Railway Office, Charlottetown, Nov. 29, 1881 [6f, 8k1f]

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[mar 29 law w, wkly]

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