The Red Moccasins

A STORY

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CHAPTER I.

Portrait of Our Hero.

Once, in the spring-green years of the good old times, when our great-grandfathers were great-grandchildren themselves, there lived in the land of green Kentucky a sprout of a man, some dozen years old, who went by the name of Sprigg. And "Sprigg," for aught I know to the contrary, was his real name; though it has so little the sound of a name, I sometimes wonder his father and mother should ever have thought of giving it to him, when any grandmother of common capacity for naming babies could have suggested a better one. "Jeems," for example, or "Weeliam." Be this as it may, "Sprigg" was the name to which our hero always answered, whenever addressed as cousin, or uncle, or friend; and which, before going the way of all good grandfathers, he left at the end of his will, where it was thought real enough, not only to make

that instrument good in the eyes of the law, but his heirs highly respectable in the eyes of the world. We have no choice, then, but to call our hero "Sprigg," just as everybody else did; though were we allowed to christen him more to our liking, we should certainly call him Jack. Jack, in our humble opinion, being the fittingest name in the world for giving pointedge and moral force to a juvenile novel. Especially would we be allowed this liberty in the present instance, where the hero, whose fortune we propose to follow, is described as being of a wild and run-away turn, and, hence, well fitted to figure as a warning example to all dissatisfied youngsters, who not content to stay at home and do their sliding on dry ground, go seeking for ice on a summer day at imminent risk of getting drowned.

Now green Kentucky, in the days of Sprigg, was *green* Kentucky, indeed! Mrs. Daniel Boone and her daughters had not yet distinguished themselves by being the first white women who ever set foot upon the banks of the Kentucky River, when Sprigg was already a three-years' child, the joy and pride of a home in a hewn log house in western Virginia; as merry and saucy, and every whit as well pleased with himself as were he the rising hope and promise of one of the "F. F. Vs." The eight or nine years of pioneer activity which had followed the historical event just noticed, had made many a wide gap in the forest, yet had not changed the general aspect

of the country so much but that the fields, as viewed by the eagle who sailed with the clouds, must have appeared no more than as the prints of man's feet, left impressed in the otherwise universal verdure. As you may well imagine, so wild and savage a region must still have been the home of a thousand wild and savage creatures, the like whereof we never dream of now-a-days, even in our loneliest woodland rambles. There, too, was the terrible red man, who, though he built not his wigwam in these wilds, made it his frequent custom of resorting thither, sometimes to follow the chase, but oftener to war with the whites, who lived in great terror of him the whole year round.

The Christian name of our hero's father, whom he called "Pap," was Jervis; the Christian name of his mother, whom he called "Mam," was Elster, and the surname was Whitney. They dwelt in a roomy cabin, rudely built of logs and boards, with a clay-topped chimney at each end, and a porch or shed on each side. Under the front porch Jervis hung his saddle, fishing tackle, beaver traps and the like. Under the back porch Elster kept her spinning wheel, crockeryware, garden seed, a big cedar water bucket, with its crooked-handle gourd, and the like; while in there, on the earthen floor of the kitchen, stood her huge, unwieldly loom. The cabin was situated in the midst of a small patch of cultivated ground, hemmed in on every side by dense and lofty

woods, which spread their waving shadows for miles and miles away to the north and south, to the east and west, with only here and there, at wide intervals, a similar clearing, or a natural glade to speck the boundless green.

Now Sprigg, you must know, happened to be an only child—a most uncommon circumstance in backwoods life—your backwoodsman, like your poor woodcutter, who makes such a figure in old-time story-books, rarely stopped short of a baker's dozen, as a replenisher of the earth. Such being the case, "Pap" and "Mam" must need, of course, do their very utmost to make their one chub as troublesome as six, in order to realize, so it would seem, how much kind Providence had done for them; *i. e.*, by overdoing the thing to make him happy; underdoing the thing to make him good enough to be what they most desired. To exemplify: If there chanced to be a little bread in the cupboard and a little milk in the springhouse (these were luxuries then in the Hunter's Paradise), all of it, though there might be quite enough for two, was sure to find its way to Sprigg's tin cup and pewter spoon; and Sprigg's pewter plate always received the tit-bits of venison and bear's meat. The best feather bed in the house was Sprigg's; so was the warmest place by the fire, which he would share with nobody, but Pow-wow, the dog—the only creature, four-footed or two-footed, with whom he could be in contact for a

whole day without coming to hard rubs. If a deer-skin proved, upon dressing, an uncommonly nice piece of buckskin, fine, fair and soft, straight, it was cut up and made into moccasins, breeches and hunting shirt for Sprigg; and should a fat raccoon take a fancy to quarter himself for the night in "Pap's" trap, its fresh, sleek skin would be seen in less than a fortnight thence on Sprigg's head, in the form of a cap, with the ringed tail left on behind, as ornamental there as a cue, if not more so. In short, there was nothing rare, or choice of its kind and within the bestowal of the Hunter's Paradise, which did not, sooner or later, find its way to the hands or feet, to the head or back, or to the selfish little belly of master Sprigg. But these were trifling indulgences compared with others, and would, in all likelihood, have left upon his disposition no other lasting evil effect than to render him overwatchful of his own ease and comfort. What was far worse, he was allowed to say, with his saucy young tongue, whatever he should choose to say; and to do, with his meddling young hands, whatever he should choose to do; and to go, with his wayward young feet, whithersoever his foolish young nose should choose to lead him; so that, by the time he had walked into his twelfth year, a worse spoilt boy, a vainer boy, a more self-conceited boy, a more self-willed boy than master Sprigg was not to be found in the land—ransack the Paradise from Big Bone Lick to the Mammoth Cave.

And yet, to put the question to such parents, as Jervis and Elster—though with little expectation of receiving an audible answer—what other result could reasonably have been looked for in a boy, brought up, like Sprigg, to know no will but his own? This was the very thing to render it next to impossible for him to know what his own will really was and how he should use it, not knowing that of his elders and wisers. This, in turn, was the very thing to keep him but ill at ease with himself, and iller at ease, if not at downright loggerheads, with everybody else.

Now, had Jervis and Elster been as wise as we are—you and I—they would, at the very outset of their son's existence, have laid their own will down, as the rule, whereby he should order his steps until the beard on his lip announced him qualified to follow his own nose, without too great danger of forgetting to allow that organ the help of his eyes and ears. But as it was, they would have done a wiser and more benevolent part by their boy had they given him a scalping knife, without sheath, for a plaything, or a young bear, without a muzzle and chain, for a pet. The knife might have cut off a few of his fingers, and the bear might have clawed off some of his flesh, but the mischief done would have been slight, compared to that of letting him have his will to play with.

So, it were hardly to be laid to poor Sprigg's charge that he was mad enough to figure as a warn-

ing example to juvenile evildoers; and it were but Christian in us to draw our sketch of him with a soft nib to our pen, softening down the lines with words from the law of love, which is, or ought to be, written on all our hearts. Had he been as wisely trained as he was affectionately cared for, there is no telling but that Sprigg, instead of being one of the worst boys in the world, he might have turned out to be one of the best—nearly as good, it may be, as a brave little George, the boy, you know, who cut his father's cherry tree with his little hatchet, and when the matter was inquired into, had the courage to own that he was the offender, even while fully expecting that his tender young legs would be made to smart for his adherence to principle. With so brave a start in life, our hero, when he and the time were ripe for it, might have figured as the hero of New Orleans, instead of General Jackson, and, qualified by that achievement, have made the American people just as good a President—kicking the national bank as unmercifully out of existence as ever Old Hickory did.

But leaving the might-have-been out of the question and taking things as we find them, Sprigg, by the time he had climbed to the top of his twelfth year, had more serious faults and more foolish ways than I feel willing to stop and take a list of, preferring to let them come out little by little of their own accord, which will seem less like telling tales away

from home. One of his faults, however, the most conspicuous, though, by no means, the most grievous, I must mention here at the outset, it being that trait of his character which imparts to our story its particular color and drift. I allude to his vanity, which displayed itself in a ridiculous fondness for fine clothes, not to mention that he was, in every way, a very handsome boy; and the fools, as usual in such cases, had blabbed this into his ears, until he had grown to be as strutty and vain as a peacock.

Now, you smile to think that a boy, who lived in a log cabin and ate his bread and milk with a pewter spoon, and dressed in buckskin breeches and a coon-skin cap, should fancy that he had anything to be vain of. But take the second thought; or, if you do not feel inclined to make the effort, I will, by a simple illustration of the point, save you the trouble. Is not turkey-cock just as proud of his homely feathers as peacock of his magnificent plumes? And after the battle fought, which leaves him but the tattered rag of a tail to display to the sun, will not turkey-cock spread that tattered rag of a tail as self-complacently, and strut as grandly and gobble as obstreperously as ever? Aye, that will he! And why? Because his tail—tag-rag or not—is all his own and nobody else's; though almost anybody else may have one which the sun would rather shine on. As with turkey-cock, so with an overwhelming majority of mankind.

CHAPTER II.

Our Hero Falls in Love.

It had only been three or four years since Jervis Whitney and his wife, Elster, had left their old home beyond the Alleghenies to find a new home here in the perilous wilds of green Kentucky, where they had built the cabin they lived in, and cleared the ground they tilled. Among their household goods, they had brought along with them quite a curious medley of such little notions as fancy ribbons and kerchiefs, books, big wood engravings, odd pieces of ware—china, silver and glass—odd pieces of family jewels, strings of bright-colored beads, and the like. Among the rest, were several locks of hair, some of which were gray, the others black or brown, golden-yellow, or flaxen, or white, as the case might be; locks of hair in those simple times being viewed pretty much in the same light that photographs now-a-days are, and, perhaps, even more highly prized and tenderly preserved.

As you have already anticipated, these little notions were gifts for dear remembrance sake from the loved ones they had left so far behind them and whom they were to meet no more for long, long years—perhaps, forever. Precious relics, which the lonely

young pair took out, from time to time, to look at them; when, with a smile and a tear, they would tell of the sweet recollections, which this lock of hair, or that piece of chinaware, this book or that old picture was conjuring up from out the lights and shadows of such days as no land but brave old Virginia—happy old Virginia—ever knew.

Now, in this same pack, along with these odds and ends of dear remembrance, there chanced to be an old show bill, which Jervis and Elster had brought along with the rest just to keep them in mind of the happy, happy day, when they two had united their hearts and fortunes for life. On that self-same day they had gone to the show, which was blazed by this self-same show bill; and the occasion made their bridal tour as complete a thing of its kind as nothing short of a centennial could make in these latter days do for the like excursions. On the show bill, in a variety of fancy colors, such as we sometimes see in pictures of Daniel in the den of lions, and the like, were the representations of the animals which were to be seen at the show; and more, you may be sure, than were seen there on that day, or ever had been seen in the land, or ever shall be seen in the world, unless, indeed, what African travelers tell us, backed by Barnum and the man in the moon, should some day turn out to be true. To lend their rustic home a more genteel and civilized appearance, as well as to keep them in mind of the ever-to-be-remembered

day just mentioned, Elster had tacked the show bill to the rough log wall of their best room, and against this, for a background, had hung their only looking-glass, with a comb case on one side and Jervis' jolly-faced silver watch on the other; while crowning the glass was a bunch of magnificent eagle feathers—a trophy of her husband's skill as a marksman.

Now, these pictures, flashy, extravagant and out of all nature, though they might seem to our age of chromo, crayon, perfection, had for this many a day been the delight of Sprigg's young eyes. But the one that charmed his fancy more than all the others was that of an Indian boy, apparently about his own age, riding a Shetland pony at a dashing gallop, with the right foot tip-toe on his charger's back, the left amusing itself in the air, the left hand holding the bridle-reins, the right hand flourishing aloft a savage little tomahawk. In the browband of the pony's bridle was stuck the staff of a small red flag, while the gallant young horseman himself was rigged out in leggins and hunting shirt of the fairest of buck-skin, trimmed with the blackest of bearskin, a hat of gay feathers upon his head, and upon his feet a magnificent pair of red moccasins.

There was scarcely a day in the week, not even excepting Sunday, that Sprigg did not go and, planting himself before the old show bill, take a long look at the Indian boy and his Shetland pony. And more than a few times, after thus feasting his eyes, had

he gone to his mother, where she would be plying her loom in the kitchen, when something like the following confab would take place between them:

"Mam, I do wish that I had a pair of red moccasins, such as the Indian boy in yonder has on!"

"And a red cap, too, such as Jack Monkey in yonder has on!" would his mother rejoin, as she paused in her work. Then resting her arm on the breast beam of the loom and regarding her rising hope with a half-fond, half-ridiculous smile, she would add:

"Still harping on the same old tune! Still hankering after the red tomfooleries! Well, suppose if a civilized white boy should happen to have a pair of red moccasins, what could he do with them?"

"I could wear them to quiltings and to log-rollings and to house-raisings and to shooting matches and to weddings—yes, and to church, too."

"Why, Sprigg, a church is the last place in the world where so outlandish a thing as a pair of red moccasins ought to be seen. How the old people would frown and shake their heads at you! How the young people would titter and point at you; and some would say: 'Just look yonder at Sprigg, strutting about in a pair of red moccasins, as if he were thinking himself so much finer than our bare-footed boys—the young monkey!' And, Sprigg, would you like to be called a monkey? I rather think not. You'd rather take a whipping any day than to be laughed at and ridiculed."

"No, but they wouldn't laugh; nobody would think of laughing. The boys would envy me and the girls would admire me, and everybody would say: 'Just look yonder at Sprigg! But isn't he fine? Oh, how beautiful! So beautiful in his red moccasins.'"

And the vain boy would fall to dancing and skipping about the earthen floor of the kitchen, as if the very thought of the moccasins had made him tipsy.

"Dandy Jim, of Caroline, might say all that of dandy monkey at a show," would Elster answer, "and dandy Jim might say as much of dandy Sprigg at church, but nobody else would—count on that! So, just leave the red tomfooleries to Indians and monkeys, my boy; and just make up your mind to be satisfied, and more than satisfied, too, with the nice boots, which pap has promised to bring you when he goes to our old home next spring."

But, let his mother picture him in whatever color she might, the vain boy would go on hankering after the red moccasins all the same; till, by and by, they took such hold on his fancy that his thoughts by day and his dreams by night assumed the same complexion, and became, so to speak, as red as the reddest of leather. Indeed, there were moments when it did seem to Sprigg as if he would be willing to part with one of his legs for a pair of red moccasins.

Now, you are thinking such a whim, out of all nature and reason, absurd, and I fully agree with you; yet, nave I known a few grown-up children in

my day, of high reputation for judgment, who in some of the fancies they have cherished, and in some of the bargains they have made, have exhibited not a whit more judgment than poor Sprigg. Distinguished personages, who, from the solid and dignified outward appearance they showed to the eyes of the world, would give you the impression that they had never entertained a foolish fancy, or mistaken the shadow for the substance in all their lives. I have known women who have given their hands—sacrificed the best of their hearts—to put their heads in other women's bonnets; and I have known men who have sold their very souls to set their feet in other men's shoes.

So, time went lagging by; lagging, perhaps, because his feet were not shod with a pair of red moccasins; or, it may be, because he was not mounted on a Shetland pony. At last, one night in April, as they were all sitting around a roaring log fire, Sprigg's dreams took a definite shape, as well as color. Jervis had sat for some time smoking his pipe in thoughtful silence, when he turned to his wife and thus addressed her:

"So, Elster, I am to set out on my long tramp for the Old Dominion; and with what a light heart I could do it, too, could I but take you and our boy along with me. But, as it is, I am beginning to feel already quite out of sorts at the very thought of leaving you behind me for so long, and I would give

up the trip altogether were it not for the business, which no one else can attend to but myself."

Sprigg was sitting directly in front of the fire, gazing with a fixed and dreamy look into the glowing embers before him; and, observing this, his father said to him:

"Come, Sprigg, let us have some of the pictures you are drawing there in the fire-coals! You can beat any boy of your size at that sort of headwork that ever I saw. What do you see in the coals?"

"I see," answered the boy, in a musing way, "I see an Indian boy standing tip-toe on the back of a Shetland pony, riding at full gallop, his head all waving with feathers, his feet so fine with red moccasins, and he is showing off before a great crowd of people, who seem to be waving their hats, as if they were shouting: 'Hurrah! Hurrah! Splendid! Splendid!' Oh, how I wish that I were an Indian boy, and had a Shetland pony; then might I travel from town to town and show off before the people, and be somebody, and so happy!"

Then, with a start, as if a bright thought had flashed out to him from the fire-coal, he exclaimed:

"Oh, pap! won't you get me a pair of red moccasins while you are gone, please? And coming over and laying his hand on his father's shoulder, he repeated his request—all in the softest, winningest way you can well imagine. For, whenever he had an object near at heart, and knew he could gain it by a

little palaver, Sprigg could appear as soft and winning as any young tom-cat you ever saw.

"But, Sprigg, why not the boots, which I have been promising you for a year or more? Black boots, with fair tops and brass heel-taps, that will make a gentleman of you as soon as you put them on."

"But I would not care for the boots half so much; and, if you will just only bring me the moccasins I won't say one word about anything else you have been promising me. I won't even ask you to get me the fur hat, nor the red waistcoat, nor the little hunting knife, nor the little tomahawk—nothing but the red moccasins."

The artful young rogue made this spreading display of self-denial merely to jog his father's memory, knowing perfectly well that he was running no risk of being taken at his word, and that by his offer of release he should be all the more certain of receiving what had been promised him.

"Then, red moccasins shall you have, my boy!" cried the fond father, giving his son a chum-like slap on the back. "Let me but find them in the Old Dominion, and the red moccasins shall you have—yes, and the boots to boot."

Of course, it never once entered Jervis Whitney's mind that so fantastic a thing as a pair of red moccasins was to be found in the Old Dominion, or anywhere else outside of a monkey show, though he

might search the world, with a will-o'-the-wisp, from Big Bone Lick to the Land of Nod. So, in saying, "let me but find them, and you shall have them," he thought he was hazarding his word no more than were he to say: "Let the man in the moon but give me the moon, and the moon, my boy, is yours."

"Yes, pap, get him the red moccasins—do, by all means!" here put in Elster, who had a vein of mocking pleasantry, in which she was wont to indulge, especially whenever, as now, her fingers were busy with yarn and knitting needles. "With a little practice he could play Indian every whit as well as Jack Monkey, if not better; and we ought to do all we can to bring out his talent, so that he may make a monkey of himself, and, as he says, 'be somebody, and so happy.' So you furnish the moccasins and the tomahawk and I will get up the rest of the rigging. I will trim his new buckskin breeches and hunting shirt with bearskin, and take those plumes from over the looking-glass up there, and make him as fine a feathered hat as ever grandmother Pocahontas fixed up for brothers. Nor shall the war paint be forgotten. I will streak and stripe and spot his face till he looks as savage and fierce as Big Foot, the Wyandot giant—scary enough to scare a scarecrow. Then, having so bedaubed and bedizened him that his own looking-glass couldn't tell him whose son he was, we will take him out, and, mounting him

upon old Blue Blaze, witness him make his maiden effort. To be sure, old Blue Blaze is not exactly what you might call a Shetland pony, but by that time she will have a colt a month or two old, so that while our monkey is up there, playing Big Injun on the old mare's back, coltie can trot along behind and play Little Shetland. Meanwhile, we must be making all the noise we can, clapping our hands and shouting: 'Hurrah! hurrah! splendid! splendid!' Should our demonstrations fall short of the desired effect, and we should happen to hear some of our red neighbors shouting and yelling over there in the woods, we will call them in to help us out. They will make noise enough to slack his thirst for applause, I warrant you. They will be so delighted with his performance that nothing will satisfy them short of taking him home with them—Blue Blaze, coltie and all—to old Chillicothe, where he shall be kept all his days to play Big Paleface for the reds, just as Jack Monkey is kept in the Old Dominion to play Dandy Nigger for the whites.

"Yes, pap, get him the red moccasins. Let him make a monkey of himself, and 'be somebody and so happy.'"

Now, you must know that our hero, though tough to reproof, was keenly sensitive to ridicule—a jimson weed to that, a snap dragon to this. Having discovered his weakness, his mother was much in the habit of playing upon it, as the only means of

persuasion or dissuasion within her command which was likely to make any impression upon his knotty young rind. So, while she was spinning out her rigmarole, Sprigg was making a great show of amusing himself with Pow-wow, slapping him over the muzzle with his coonskin cap, or setting that ornament in divers ways on the old dog's head; now with the tail over the right ear, then over the left, or over the nose; the young sauce-box the while keeping up, in a confidential undertone to his four-footed chum, a running commentary on his mother's burlesque of himself, for every word of which he should have received a sounding spank.

"Some folks think they are monstrous smart, don't they, Pow-wow?"

"You could bark up a tree and do better than that, couldn't you, Pow-wow?"

"Funny enough to make a dog laugh, isn't it, Pow-wow?"

"Some folks ought to be told what fools they are, oughtn't they, Pow-wow?"

"Ding-dong bell, when the fools are all dead,
Then we will have plenty of butter and bread,
won't we, Pow-wow?"

CHAPTER III.

Meets with the Object of His Love.

So, next Monday, Jervis Whitney set out on his long tramp, with Pow-wow for company, and with Black Bess, his rifle, to keep them supplied with game, their chief dependence for subsistence while traveling the five hundred miles of wilderness, which lay between them and their old home beyond the Alleghenies. While they were gone, Sprigg kept count of the months and weeks and days, and, as they went silently gliding by, he went silently dreaming on about the red moccasins. Silently, for never another word said he to his mother concerning the matter he had so near at heart. He knew she would laugh at him, and call him a monkey—our hero, bear in mind, being as touchy to ridicule as a raw mouth to ginger. You might scold him and rate him, sneap him and snub him, to a degree you would suppose sufficient to break the heart of any boy who knew his catchism, yet not a fig nor a flint would he care for it all. Perhaps, he would kick up his heels in the very face of your reproof; or, it may be, merely

wrinkle up his saucy young knob of a nose, thereby saying as plainly as words could say it:

"Thin! thin!
When the wise waste words, then fools may grin,
So, save your breath for a rainy day,
Or the wind will blow it all away;
Bottle it up and cork it fast,
The longer you keep it, the longer 'twill last."

The month of May was drawing near its close. Night was spreading its dusky shadows over the lonely forest home. The turkey-cock had gone to its rest; so had the red-bird, so had the jay-bird; so had Sprigg. Elster had heard her boy repeat his prayers and was now singing him to sleep with a hymn; a pious custom which, in all sincerity, she had faithfully observed from his infancy up; doing her best, from night to night, to make him a Christian, while suffering him, from day to day, to become more and more of a heathen. Such parental inconsistencies were rare in the days of Mary Washington, but are so common nowadays that no one excepting himself or herself can find an exception to the rule except at home. The last line of the hymn had just been sung, and Sprigg was making his last big sleepy wink at the cradle before fairly off for nodland, when they heard, first, a glad yelp out there in the yard, which they thought they knew; then a brisk, firm step on the loose board floor of the porch, which they were certain they knew. Up from her chair sprang Elster; up from his bed bounced

Sprigg, and by the time the door, with a ringing click of its wooden latch, swung open, both were there, and both hugged tight in the long, strong arms of husband and father.

"Heaven be thanked!" exclaimed Elster, kissing her husband for the ——, but I must not say what number of times.

"The moccasins! the moccasins!—where are my red moccasins?" cried Sprigg, who had not kissed nor hugged his father once.

"You young feather-pate! you jay-bird!" exclaimed Jervis. "Can't you give your poor pap some little sign of welcome first?"

"Oh! then, you have got them! You have got them!" And now, assured that such was the case, Sprigg could find it in his heart to hug and kiss his father, which he did as sleekly and lovingly as any he-kitten. But Sprigg paid for this bit of selfishness, and that dearly, too. Having laid Black Bess in the rifle-hooks over the fireplace, and hung his bear-skin cap on the hook to the left and his ammunition pouch and powder horn on the hook to the right, Jervis hugged and kissed his wife again. Then, from the capacious game bag which, slung by a strap from the shoulder, he wore at his side, he began drawing out slowly and with great show of carefulness a small package, which Sprigg instinctively knew to be the object of his heart's desire. The next moment, held high aloft in pap's right hand,

there they were at last, in plain view before his eyes, the long dreamed of red moccasins. How beautiful looked they. Trimmed with the finest of fur and glittering all over with the brightest of beads, to say nothing of the color—red, as the reddest of leather could be, not dyed in blood. You would have laughed, or, perhays, felt more like crying, to have seen the poor, vain boy, as he stood there, with his heart in his eyes, gazing gloatingly up at the moccasins as if the very shine of them had charmed him out of his senses. Thus he stood for several moments till, giving a quick turn of the head, he glanced sharply up at the Indian boy on the show bill, as if half expecting to find the young horseman stripped of his moccasins and now performing his equestrian antics in bare feet.

"Jervis," said Elster, grieved and provoked, "I am so surprised that you should indulge our boy in so ridiculous a fancy, as were he, after all, the monkey he would make himself. I had no idea that you would ever give the whim a second thought. Why did you not get him the boots you have been promising him? Throw the moccasins into the fire and let us be rid of the nuisance at once! If you won't, I will!"

"Mum, Elster! Mum! I neither bought them nor sought them. They were sent as a present to our boy by some one, who said that he was one of Sprigg's very best friends; and that he could not do

a better part by our boy and ourselves, too, than to let him have them and wear them, a little experience being all that he needed to disenchant him of his fancy. 'Our boy's case,' said he, 'was like a man's case, whose heart is set on matrimony—a little lively experience being all that was needed to cure him of his hankering and set him right with matrimony, so with moccasins.' Quoting, Elster; understand me, now, only quoting: Thirteen years of lively experience, and here am I, just as far from being cured as I was the day we went to the show, and your case every whit as desperate. But here stands the boy like one bewitched. Sprigg!"

The boy giving a big start, the spell, which the moccasins, or his own fancy, or, it were hard to say what, had thrown upon him, was snapped in a twinkle, and recovering the use of his tongue, he cried out: "Let me try them on! Let me try them on!" and on they were in a trice. "Look, look! Do but see how nicely they fit! Oh, what beautiful shoes!" And the boy began dancing about the room in a fashion so fantastic as were enough to make one fancy that what he had on his feet were medicine moccasins, which could carry him whithersoever and in what manner soever might please him, or might please them. In the extravagance of his delight he ran up to Pow-wow, where he sat on the hearth, and gave him an affectionate hug; then, taking the old dog's paws in his hand and shaking it heartily,

said: "How are you, old pard, and did you bring your Sprigg the red moccasins? Yes, that you did, and you shall have a good meat-bone for it, too; that you shall." And going to the cupboard, like old Mother Hubbard, to get the poor dog a bone, Sprigg found there three ribs of a bear, and so the poor dog had plenty.

"Sprigg," said Elster, in a grieved and reproachful voice, "are all your thanks for the dog? Have you none for pap? Poor pap, who has been gone so long and traveled so far, and has come home so weary, and has been so kind to bring you the moccasins, which, of all things else, you have most desired! Shame upon you! Who would have thought that our boy could have shown himself so thankless!"

Sprigg stopped short in his capers; looked first at his mother and then at his father, and, perceiving that pap also seemed hurt and grieved, he hung his head, but not this time to look at the moccasins. It was to hide the blush of shame, which, redder than they, burst up from his heart and burned in his cheek—the first that had ever been seen there. They had hardly observed the change and wondered thereat when the boy burst into tears, and drawing off the moccasins crept back to bed. Nor could they get another word out of him that night, though they tried hard to do so—harder, indeed, than was wise. So, at last they gave it up and allowed him to sob himself to sleep.

But all night long, to and fro and up and down, were the red moccasins walking about in his dreams. Sometimes he felt as if they were treading upon his naked heart and brain, as though feet were in them—cruel feet, which took a delight in trampling upon him, and once or twice it seemed to him as if some wild and fearful shape of the night were clutching at his toes, when he had cried out in a fright: "Oh! the red moccasins! How they hurt my feet!"

CHAPTER IV.

He Has Them—What Shall He Do With Them?

But the first broad stare of the day's bright eyes drove all these dark dreams and wild shapes of the night from his mind; and nimble and fresh as a jay-bird—nimbler and fresher, indeed, than was his wont—Sprigg sprang from his bed and donned the red moccasins. Yes, shod his feet the first thing; and, leaving his breeches to cover the naked legs of the stool, he went out on the front porch, there to take his morning airing and see what color red moccasins were by daylight. Here, at the end of an hour, he was found by his mother, strutting to and fro like a poung peacock in the pride of his first tail feathers. The morning breezes briskly fluttering his only garment and doing all they could for his health. Provoked to find him at so late an hour, in such a guise, which was full six inches too short for any guise at all, Elster gave the "rising hope and promise" a spank, which would have done you good to see and hear, and bade him go and finish his toilet and perform his morning ablutions—all in a hurry, too, or she would give his bread and milk to Pow-wow. Whereat the hopeful youngster kicked up his heels, and, as it pleased him for once to be obedient, ran

and did as he was bidden, and in a trice was ready for his bread and milk, which, in the glee of the moment, he shared with Pow-wow.

The day succeeding pap's return chanced to be Sunday, so Sprigg, as a matter of course, was allowed to wear the red moccasins from morning till night, just by way of making him sensible. How much better and more dearly to be remembered that day was than Monday, or any other day of the week. But a too full Sunday makes an empty Monday, as Mother Goose herself has covertly hinted in the well known lines:

"As Tommie Snooks and Bessie Brooks
Were walking out on Sunday,
Says Tommie Snooks to Bessie Brooks:
'To-morrow will be Monday.'"

The next day, not being permitted to wear the red moccasins, our hero grew tenderfooted and ill at ease with the ground he needs must walk on, and more than once, with a moccasin in each hand, did he go to his mother and lay before her his trouble of mind.

"Mam, I do wish that I could go to grandpap's house to-day."

"And why do you wish to go to grandpap's house?"

"To wear my red moccasins to church next Sunday."

"I have set my foot on your moccasins there, my boy!" and Elster, for once, laid down the law, with a look and tone of decision which put it in force right there on the spot. "To church your red tom-fooleries never shall go while I have a membership there!"

"Well, then, if not to church, to grandmam's quilting?"

"I rather think you will have to wait for the day. Grandmam will hardly get up a quilting just to give you a chance of showing off your moccasins."

"And how long shall I have to wait for the day?"

"Monday—Wednesday—eight—ten days," replied Elster, counting them off on her fingers.

Giving a backward jerk of the heel, expressive of impatience, the spoilt boy exclaimed: "Oh, how long a time to wait! Where's the use of a feller's always waiting?"

"A kick in the ribs may make old Blue Blaze quicken her pace, but if you want Old Time to quicken his you must neither kick him nor seize him by the forelock, but catch him by the tail and do your best to hold him back; then he'll go fast enough, I warrant you! So go along with your moccasins and put them away in the chest, or the rats and mice will gnaw them, as rats and mice are always sure to do with everything of the sort we set our hearts too much on. Then go to the woods and play like a bird. Pow-wow will go along with you and show you how—be glad to do it."

Sprigg and Pow-wow went out to play, but the dog was more like a bird than the boy. The glad light was gone from his heart. His heart was in the chest with his treasures—his treasures denied him as too precious for every day and Sunday too. Barefooted and out of sorts, he dragged along through the idle hours. He should have been hoeing corn; and, when the night was come and the jaybird went to his nest with a thankful heart, Sprigg went to his with nothing of the kind, and, therefore, had no pleasant dreams. Nor was this all. That night, for the third time in his life—the second being the night before, and the first the night before that—Sprigg went to his rest without saying "Now I lay me down to sleep," the sweet old words his mother had taught him to speak when he could scarcely speak at all, and which he could never fitly and truly speak again, so long as the red moccasins and the like vain fancies filled his heart. The next day, iller at ease than ever—all but desperate—he went to his mother, where, banging away at her ponderous loom, she was just finishing a nice piece of flax linen for him and pap, thus renewing the subject:

"Mam, wouldn't you like to know how the old folks are at the fort to-day?"

"Yes, indeed; that I would!"

"And wouldn't you like for me to go and see how they are?"

"And wear your red moccasins?" added his mother, with a mocking smile.

"I could carry the moccasins in my hands."

"And who would carry your feet?"

"Shank's mare can carry my feet, for Shank's mare can carry double."

"But Shank's mare is tenderfooted, and there are twenty miles of stony hills and shaggy woods between here and the fort. Besides, Shank's mare could never find the way."

"Yes, but I can! You first go by the hunting camp, then by the Lick, then by the sugar camp, and the next thing you know you are there."

"Now, what did I tell you? The Lick comes before the hunting camp, and there is no sugar camp at all. So the next thing you know you are not there, but lost. Besides all this, there are a thousand wild things in the woods, which even a strong man without his gun and knife would not be willing to run the risk of meeting. So just content yourself to stay at home, my boy, until to-morrow week, when we shall all be going to grandmam's quilting, and you will have somebody to keep you out of harm's way."

"I could go now and get back in time to go then, too," urged Sprigg, who was in a fair way of sliding off into one of his pets.

"But Sprigg, have you so soon forgotten what pap was telling us last night of his adventures between here and our old home? Once he was by three Indians chased far into the night, and pressed

so closely that he only saved himself by leaping from a high bank into a deep river, where, as good luck would have it, a thick growth of rushes fringed the water's edge, thus affording him a hiding place until the savages gave up the pursuit. Then there was that other adventure with the two Indians, in which he should certainly have lost his life but for the timely assistance of brave Pow-wow. Now, Sprigg, what would you do miles and miles away from home, in the dark and lonesome woods, were you to see one of these terrible red men running to meet you, yelling like a demon—all hideously painted, rifle in hand, belt stuck full of tomahawks and scalping knives, eh?"

"I would scamper away as fast as Shank's mare could carry me," promptly rejoined our hero, who, though vain as a young peacock, was as bold as a young game-cock. Elster continued:

"And, Sprigg, there are bears in the woods, who have such a fancy for little boys that, should they find one astray too close to their den, they would hug him, and hug him, till there would not be enough breath left in his body to carry him home. So he stays just there; and when he is found, if ever he is found at all, the grass and the weeds and the dead leaves of the trees have gathered about him and covered him up—nothing left but his bones and his buttons to tell you whether his name was John or Sprigg. And, Sprigg" here Elster lowered her

voice as if he of whom she would speak might hear her—"there is one bear in the woods so large and strong and bold that five dogs as large and strong and bold as Pow-wow would be no match for him in a fight. Hunters who have lived much alone in the forest—red hunters, as well as white—say that neither arrow nor bullet has power to kill him. Though the eye of the marksman be as keen as that of a lynx, and his hand as steady and firm as the limb of an oak, and his bullet as swift as the red bolt shot from the edge of a storm cloud—all will avail him nothing; for, in a flash of time, where but the moment before appeared a bear, the hunter now sees nothing but a vine-clad rock, or a moss-grown stump, or a low, thick bush, waving its green head to the forest winds. Sometimes no shape whatever appears, and when this is the case, while yet the blue rifle smoke is curling up over his head, the hunter will hear, just there in the empty air so near that he could lay his hand on the spot, a low laugh—He-he-he! A wild, low laugh of scorn and derision, which causes the strong, bold man to quake and quail far more than were he to hear the loud, fierce growl of a bear behind him. Saving the red man, no one knows who or what this terrible shape of the wilderness is—where he dwells, nor how he exists; whom he loves, nor whom he hates; but white men call him 'Nick of the Woods.'"

CHAPTER V.

Who Gave Sprigg The Red Moccasins?

"Will-o'-the-Wisp.
Some would wear our moccasins red,
Though the road should lead to the dead.
Some would wear our coronals green,
Who would keep themselves unseen!
Jervis Whitney! Jervis Whitney!"

So sang a wild and musical voice out there in the woods; and halting suddenly and cocking his gun, Jervis Whitney stood on his guard.

"Will-o'-the-Wisp!
None shall wear our moccasins red,
On the road that leads to the dead.
None shall wear our coronals green,
But to see themselves as they are seen!
Jervis Whitney! Jervis Whitney!"

Again sang the voice out there in the night; and looking straight before him, his eyes upon the spot where a speaker should be, Jervis Whitney saw never a living thing; saw nothing but the moss-grown trunk of a tree, where it lay on the ground, not ten paces distant, with the moonlight shining full upon it.

What I am now telling you happened last Saturday night, on which, as you will remember, Jervis Whitney returned from their old Virginia home.

He was within a mile of his journey's end, and had reached a glade in the forest where there was scarcely a tree or bush to break the clearest of moonlight with a shadow, when his ear was caught by the voice of the invisible speaker.

"Who calls Jervis Whitney?" now in his turn cried the White Hunter, looking in wonder all around him, far and near, still seeing never a shape of life that could call a man by name.

"I do!" answered the voice. "I, the king of the Manitous; or, as you white men call me, Nick of the Woods." And with these words there seemed to perch on the tree trunk, whence the voice proceeded, what seemed a magnificent bird of bright green plumage, and there beside it, visible, stood the mysterious speaker.

It was a manikin, scarcely more than a yard in height, but beautifully formed, with limbs as round and strong as those of a roebuck. In color and feature, the style of his face was that of the Indian, as was, indeed, his whole external appearance, excepting that, instead of the characteristic scalp-lock, he wore all his hair, which, straight, thick and long, fell in a sable gleam to his shoulders. He wore a bear-skin robe, which, secured at the throat by a clasp which seemed to be a pair of claws interlocked, hung gracefully about his form; on the hair side, fresh and sleek; on the flesh side, smooth as satin and red as blood. His airy little feet were shod with a pair of

red moccasins, all agleam with bright-colored beads, which shone like rubies and diamonds in the glistering moonlight. The object, which the white hunter at first glance had supposed to be a large, green bird, now proved to be a kind of feathered hat, or coronal, resembling those worn by Indian sachems when in full dress. The red mist-cap of the fairies possessed the magic power of rendering the person who wore it—man, as well as elf—invisible to mortal eyes. That the white hunter might use his eyes as well as ears, and thus stand on equal terms in the interview, which had opened at a disadvantage to him, the elf had laid aside his magic headpiece, and now stood as plainly revealed to bodily vision as the brightest of moonlight could show him.

"And what can Jervis Whitney do for Nick of the Woods?" at length said the hunter, after eyeing the manikin over from top to toe for some moments in silent wonder, as well he might.

"For Nick of the Woods," replied the elf, "Jervis Whitney can do nothing; nor could he were he king of the earth. But for Jervis Whitney, Nick of the Woods can, and is willing to, do much." And the elf paused.

"Well, say on," said the hunter, as, uncocking his rifle and setting it on the ground, he propped his chin upon the muzzle, thereby signifying his readiness to listen. The elf resumed:

"You have a son, who goes by the name of Sprigg, I think."

"Yes, that have I; and a rare young buck he is. As antic at times in his capers as were he kin to an elf."

"Has he not teased you much of late for a pair of red moccasins?" And pat to the question, the manikin thrust out one of his small moccasined feet. "And did he beg you to get him a pair while you were gone to the land of Pocahontas?"

Jervis started. He had never given the matter a serious thought, there being no monkeys as yet in the country to create a demand for the article in question. After musing a moment he answered:

"Yes, it is even so, though I must confess that the thing had quite escaped my memory. But granting it to be as we say, how does the circumstance interest Nick of the Woods?"

"Listen!" replied the Manitou king. "I also have a son, who goes by the name of Manitou-Echo, until you white men christen him more to your fancy. Now my son Manitou-Echo has fallen in love with your son Sprigg, Sprigg being a boy more after his own heart than any young human being he has known for more than a hundred years. Of all fleet-footed fairies, Manitou-Echo, be it known, is the fleetest, and it is the chief delight of his existence to run races with fast boys. Sprigg, he says, is the fastest boy that has skipped upon the green earth since the days of Little Winged Moccasin, the boy who ran to the setting sun in quest of his shadow,

which he had lost at noonday. So, then, my son Manitou-Echo is burning to run a race with your son Sprigg."

"Well, and how is my son Sprigg to run this race with your son Manitou-Echo?" and the hunter crossed his legs, still with his chin propped on the muzzle of his gun, an attitude characteristic of hunters, from Robin Hood, in the cross-bow days of Merry England, to Daniel Boone, in the rifle days of green Kentucky.

"True," rejoined Nick of the Woods, "Sprigg, with merely his own bare feet to go on, would stand but a slender chance in a trial of speed with Manitou-Echo. Therefore, to put him on an equal footing for the feat, Sprigg must be furnished with a pair of red moccasins such as we elves wear." And the elf again thrust out his moccasined feet, by way of exemplification.

"But, while we shall be doing so much to please the whim of your son Manitou-Echo, what shall we be doing to please or benefit my son Sprigg?"

"Pat to the point!" quoth Nick of the Woods. "The very thing I was coming to next—the main thing, indeed, which has led me to seek this interview with Sprigg's father. I should hardly have come a thousand miles out of my way, since set of sun, had it been merely to gratify Manitou-Echo in an elfish whim. In brief, then, and in sweet earnest, too, the object we have in view is intended mainly

for Sprigg's own good; and, as the means to this end, my son Manitou-Echo has sent, as a present to your son Sprigg, a pair of red moccasins, to put him, as I have just said, on an equal footing in the trial of speed between them. Refuse the gift, and nothing shall follow therefrom, be it for good or for evil. Accept the gift, and good—nothing but good—shall come of it, sooner or later."

Here, with the air of one who has had his say, and now but awaits your final answer to take fair leave of you, the Manitou paused. Jervis Whitney did the like, remaining silent for many moments, half in doubt, half in debate, his eyes bent fixedly the while upon his companion. At length, very dubiously, indeed, he answered:

"I must confess, were we to drop the matter just here, I should be left as much in the mist as if you had kept your mist-cap on your head and allowed me only the use of my ears. Will you please enlighten me, sir, with a few more gleams of your moonshine?"

"Certainly, sir; certainly!" rejoined Nick of the Woods, with an obliging smile and a courteous wave of the hand. "I perceive you are something of a philosopher, by wishing to view the subject in that light. Know, then, that Sprigg's fancy for red moccasins has grown to be the one idea of his mind—a hankering, so to speak; and the best cure in the world for a hankering, as everybody knows, is a strong, sudden, overwhelming dose of the thing so

hankered after. Sprigg's case is like that of a man's case, whose heart is dead set on matrimony—a little experience, tough and lively, being all that is needed to cure him of the hankering and restore him to a healthy condition of mind. As with matrimony, so with moccasins."

"I am glad that Elster is not present to hear that speech; else should I feel constrained to send a bullet through your bearskin, just by way of giving you the lie, and of satisfying her that I am the truest of husbands, as she is the best of wives, although I am perfectly aware that it would be a waste of powder and lead, having once or twice in my time sent my bullet after a bear, and found that, without missing my mark, I had shot nothing."

"And I should esteem you all the more highly for doing so much to please your wife," rejoined Nick of the Woods, with increased complacency; "and my wife, Meg of the Hills, were she present, also, at the time, would cordially join in my expression of commendation. When I say, 'as with matrimony, so with moccasins,' it is merely by way of illustration, and is not to be understood as an expression of my private sentiments. Our married life—Meg's and mine—began with that of Adam and Eve, and our honeymoon is not yet on the wane. Just here, I should be tempted to go off at a tangent into wide digression, had long observation not taught me that there is nothing so galling to a hunter's patience as

a hang-fire gun. As with a gun, so with a speaker. Then, in fine, I will say, 'trust me, and to the latest day of your life you never shall rue it, though you should live until the Indian, the deer and the Manitou cease to exist.'"

Then, as if he had, indeed, made an end of his say, the Manitou king picked up his crown of plumes and placed it upon his head, when straight he was no more to be seen than the transparent air around him. The next instant, with a magnificent somerset curve, full ten feet aloft in the air, a pair of red moccasins plumped themselves, as if firm little feet were in them, square in front of the hunter, where he stood—with his chin still propped on the muzzle of his gun and his legs still crossed? I rather think not! "Leave, and lose! Take, and gain! But leave or take, it is all one to Nick of the Woods!" And hardly were the words spoken, just there in the empty moonlight, when a whirr in the leaves and flutter in the air announced that the elf was gone.

For many moments Jervis Whitney stood there gazing down on the moccasins, debating within himself, with a look of great perplexity, whether to take them or to leave them. He went over, in his mind, all that had been said by the elf, and so well said, too, it needs must be as well meant, odd and fantastic though it might seem. He recalled the Manitou's aspect—so clear and bright, so free from disguise; and, withal, as beautiful, while so Indian-like—as

well could be the eyes of a white man, who, for some years past, had had a hard scuffle to keep his scalp.

Then, too, there was Pow-wow's behavior on the occasion to be taken into consideration. There was not a dog west or east of the Alleghany Mountains who had a sharper nose than Pow-wow for detecting an ill wind; yet, all this while, he had set there on his haunches, without betraying the least sign of uneasiness or distrust, nor even of curiosity, as if a Manitou to him were a sight as familiar as a jay-bird, and no more to be barked at. Now, the real state of the case was this: Foreseeing that the dog, dog-like, would be for putting in his jaw to help his master out, the prudent elf had thrown a spell or charm upon him, hoodwinking not his eyes only, but also his ears and nose, thus making one side, at least, of the interview as blank to him as the middle of next week. Therefore, not a glimpse nor a sniff of the elf had Pow-wow caught; nor had he heard a word of what the elf had said from "Will-o'-the-Wisp" to "Nick of the Woods." His master, he could see and hear, and doubtless marveled much that a husband and father, who had traveled hundreds of miles to be with his wife and child again, should thus hang fire within dinner-horn call of home, merely to hold a pow-wow with a rotten log. As Jervis could no more see the charm on the dog than the dog the charmer on the log, he must needs regard the orderly deportment of his dumb com-

panion—in whose sagacity he had unbounded confidence—as the strongest additional evidence he could wish for confirming him in the favorable view; his own senses had already inclined him to take off the Manitou and the matter between them. At length his thoughts shaped themselves into a conclusion, which he thus expressed aloud:

"I have never known a dog of Pow-wow's blood whose instinct did not tell him when there was an enemy near his master. I have never known that man to deceive me, nor try to deceive me, whose eye spoke with his tongue, and before it and after it, as did the eye of the strange being here but now. To doubt the word of such a one, were to do him a wrong. To refuse the gift of such a one, might be to withhold a blessing from me and mine. I will take the moccasins and trust this Nick of the Woods."

CHAPTER VI.

Temptation and Flight.

"It was the first of June, the day on which
It is as easy for the heart to be true,
As for grass to be green, or for skies to be blue."

But Sprigg's heart was too full of red moccasins for the laughing gladness of the green fields, or the smiling delight of the blue sky, to find any place there. What his mother had told him of the wild shapes which haunted the forest had, for the time, caused his heart, bold as it was for one of his years, to quake with a nameless dread, which seemed to dog his shadow wherever he went. When the shades of night and the hours of sleep were come, these wild remembrances took the form of wilder dreams, which vexed and scared his slumbers till break of day. But next day was the first of June; and the sun was too bright, and the sky too blue, and the earth too green, for ugly dreams to linger long in the mind, and by the time the shadows stood still at noon Nick of the Woods, chasing Indians, hugging bears and the like terrors of the forest were remembered only as frightful pictures seen in a book.

Sprigg had dined; and a healthy young cub of a bear never cleaned out a hive of honey with a keener appetite than our hero his bowl of milk and bread.

For the seventh time that day he had looked at and tried on the moccasins, just to reassure himself that they were made for his feet and nobody else's, and to take a few quiet turns in them about the room, just to see if they felt as easy as they fitted well. Now, with greater liveliness and earnestness than ever, his thoughts returned to the matter he had so near at heart; nor would they let him rest until he had answered the question which, for the seventh time that day, he had put to himself: "Shall I on with the moccasins and go to grandpap's house to-day?"

The good voice in his heart said: "No, Sprigg! No! Don't you do it! Don't even think of such a thing! It is not mam's wish; it is not pap's wish, that you should venture so far away, through the wild and dangerous woods all alone! It would vex and grieve them a thousand times more than it could possibly gratify you. So stay at home, Sprigg; stay at home, and have a care how you let red moccasins tempt you astray! Wait, like a good boy, until you can go with pap and mam to grandmam's quilting."

But quickly spoke up the bad voice in his heart and said: "Go, Sprigg! Go! By all means go, and a delightful time you shall have of it—be sure of that. The old folks won't care so much—not so very much! When did they care so very much for anything you had done, even though it might not have been exactly right. So up and away to grandpap's house! and never a fear that a pair of red moc-

casins could take you anywhere it pleased you not to go."

The good voice spoke soft and low; the bad voice loud and high. Sprigg heard the bad voice best, because he liked it best. Still, he could not fairly make up his mind. Perhaps the moccasins could help him to decide. He went to the chest and, for the eighth time, took them out, that the very thing that was tempting him to do wrong might tell him what were best to be done. As he stood there, holding up the red temptation in the fairest light before his eyes, he thought he heard a noise, coming, he could not tell whence, which caused him to set the moccasins hastily down on the chest lid and look about him. Nothing was there to be seen that he had not seen a thousand times before. In a little while the noice shaped itself into something almost like a voice, which seemed to come directly up from the moccasins, saying:

"Are we not beautiful things for the feet, Sprigg? Oh, but we are! You can't deny it! On with us, and away to grandpap's house!"

With startled eyes the boy looked all around him —not a living thing was to be seen in the room. He rubbed his eyes and looked again. The Indian boy on the show bill was the nearest approach to a shape of life that met his gaze. He clapped his hands to his ears to make sure they had not played him a trick. His ears were all right; so was his coonskin

cap, the rim before, the tail behind. What seemed a voice began again, and, for the life of him, Sprigg could not determine whether it came from the moccasins or from his own heart.

"Who plies her loom, with shuttle and beam, and sings at her work with so blithe a heart? Elster Whitney. And her shuttle shall fly, and her beam shall bang, from hour to hour, till the day is well nigh done. Who roams the forest, with dog and gun, and follows the chase with heart so bold? Jervis Whitney. And his dog shall bound, and his gun shall bang, from hour to hour, till the day is well nigh done. So, Sprigg, the day is clear, and you have the half of a long, bright, summer day before you. Make the most of it! There, near the fort, where grandpap lives, lives young Ben Logan. Ben, when he sees you coming, all by your own lone self, will shout: 'Hurrah! hurrah! what a brave boy is Sprigg!' Yet, let him admire your bravery ever so much, he will be ready to die of very envy, because of your beautiful moccasins. And there is little Bertha Bryant, too, at the fort; blue-eyed little Bertha, laughing little Bertha, dancing little Bertha! And Bertha will admire your bravery even more than Ben, and love you to very distraction, because of your beautiful moccasins. On with us, then, and away to grandpap's house. We know the road; we can take you there safely enough. Let us alone for that! and Sprigg is a brave boy! Who said our Sprigg was not a brave boy? He-he-he!"

Sprigg thought he heard a low laugh; the queerest little laugh he had ever heard. A laugh he did not exactly fancy, because it made the chills come creeping up his back and set his flesh to creeping, and caused the most peculiar sensations about the roots of the hair you can well imagine. So, to keep up his spirits, he forced out a mechanical sort of a sound, meant for a laugh, after which he felt considerably better, because it made him imagine it was he who laughed but now, and that the words he had heard were but the thoughts of his own heart.

Sprigg's mind was made up: He would go to grandpap's house that self-same day. But he dared not put on the moccasins there in the house, lest his mother should see him as he was making off and put her foot on his little pet project. "I have it!" said he to the moccasins, for he felt that they knew what was afloat, as well as himself. Pat to the word, he slipped out to a bench in the yard, where Elster had set her household vessels to sun. From these he took their large, oak-bound cedar water bucket and brought it into the house. In this he concealed the moccasins, and, with a cat-like step, stole out by the way of the front porch. But just as he was climbing the yard fence, his mother, who had left off her work at the loom for a few minutes, came to the door to throw an old hen and her brood of young ones some dough, and seeing her boy on the fence she called out:

"Where now, Sprigg, so brisk and spry, with my big cedar bucket?"

"I am going to our best spring, down yonder in the edge of the woods, to fetch dear mam a good, cool drink of water."

"Our boy will be a credit and a blessing to us yet, let the wiseacres predict as they will!" and Elster returned to her work with a glad heart, that her son, for once, of his own accord, had bethought him of doing a kind turn for his mother.

Sprigg sped down the hill till he reached the hollow in the edge of the woods, where their favorite spring, screened from the rays of the noon-day sun by thick, overhanging trees, came bubbling up from under a mossy ledge of rock. Here, in the dark, cool shade, he sat down on the ground to put on his moccasins. But why so trembled his hands? Why trembled he so all over? And why did he fumble so long at the moccasin latches? It was the guilt of that ugly lie, which he had sent back to his mother, and with which his mouth and heart were now all hot and foul.

"Quick! Quick!" There it was again at his side. That sound so like a voice. "Right and tight! Brave! Brave! Who said our Sprigg was not a brave boy? He-he-he!" And, while the voice was yet speaking, the moccasins seemed to adjust themselves to his feet of their own accord. Now he was up, and now he was speeding away through the

forest; his road, one of those buffalo-traces, which, in those days, formed the only highways through the wilderness; the road of all others to lead a young runaway wide and wild of his mark. Soon, too soon, was Sprigg—vain Sprigg, bad Sprigg, poor Sprigg—far out of sight of home, the one place under the pitiful heavens where the young and the aged, the weak and the helpless, the untried and the overtried, should look for happiness and peace and safety!

He fled with his face toward Sunset-land; but never once thought he of Little Winged Moccasin. Elster had often told her son of the little Indian boy, who ran to Sunset-land in quest of his shadow, which he had lost at noon-day. The legend ran thus:

"There was a Cherokee boy, who discovered one morning at sunrise what a long shadow he cast on the ground. Whereat, greatly delighted, he cried out: 'Look! look! see what a shadow I make! See what a giant I am!' But as the sun rose higher and higher his shadow grew shorter and shorter, until, at noon, it had dwindled to scarcely a span's length. Whereupon, he set up a loud lamentation, when suddenly a Manitou appeared before him, who wore on his feet a pair of winged red moccasins.

" 'What grieves you, boy?' said the Manitou.

" 'I have lost my shadow!' cried the boy.

" 'Wait until sunset, and you shall find it again,' said the Manitou.

" 'But I have not the patience to wait so long!'

whined the boy. 'Could I but get there, I would go to Sunset-land, to live forever, where the shadows are always long!'

"'Look!' said the Manitou, 'I have no shadow at all; never had, neither in Sunset-land nor anywhere else. Yet am I perfectly satisfied.'

"'Maybe I would be satisfied, too, without one, had I never had one,' put in the boy.

"'Well,' quoth the Manitou, 'since you are not willing to wait for your shadow till sunset, and must need go to Sunset-land, where you think the shadows are always long—here, I will lend you my moccasins, which, being winged, will enable you to keep pace with the sun, and arrive at Sunset-land as soon as he.'

"The boy put on the moccasins; and, in a trice, he was flitting away over the face of the green earth at ten times the speed of a wild goose chased by the winds. He ran and ran, nor ceased to run, even when come to the land he was in quest of. All unwitting where he was, or whither going, on—right through with might and main speed—on and on, until he had put the Land of Sunrise as far behind him as the Land of Sunset was before him; nor yet had found the object of his heart's desire. And why? because he had gone the wrong course and the wrong speed to keep himself in the right light for the long shadow. Suddenly, to his astonishment, he found himself once more at the self-same spot

whence, but the day just gone, he had set out on his wilder than a wild goose chase; and there was the Manitou waiting for him, who, with a twinkling smile, said:

"'Boy, have you found your shadow?'

"The poor shadow-hunter pointed to the insignificant figure he still made on the earth and remained silent.

"'Foolish youth!' exclaimed the Manitou, 'had you but been content to remain where you were and abide your time, you would have found your shadow, not only at sunset, but also at sunrise; and little enough worth the seeking at that! Thus, have you cheated yourself of your happiness twice from being unwilling to wait for it once!'"

No! Poor Sprigg never once thought of Little Winged Moccasin.

CHAPTER VII.

Met—and Only His Shadow to Be Seen.

Sprigg ran for more than a mile with all his might, and was astonished to find he was not in the least degree weary or short of breath. Then he thought it must be the moccasins making his feet so light, and little dreamed he how swift; and he was all the more certain that they would carry him straight to grandpap's house, as they, or the voice, or his own heart—it were hard to say which—had promised. With this discovery, he need have no fear of now being overtaken and carried back home before he had made his way to the fort; and, once there, fairly nestled under grandmam's wing. He well knew from pet-boy experience he could spin out his visit until it should please him to remount Shank's mare and trot back home of his own free will. His mind thus eased from the apprehension of pursuit, there was nothing to hinder him now, even while moving so swiftly along, from feasting his eyes on his beautiful moccasins—so red, so light, so fleet—so brave with their glittering beads.

The light-footed fawns were skipping, like lambs, in the sunlit glades of the forest. The glad-voiced birdlings were singing, for joy of the summer, in

every tree. The bright-eyed flowerets were smiling in every sunny spot by the wayside, and doing their utmost to make the wilderness lovely. But the flowerets might smile, and the birdlings sing, and the fawns, like lambkins, skip—they skipped and sang and smiled in vain for Sprigg! His eyes were on his moccasins, and his heart was in his eyes.

The boy was moving along in this half-dreamy state of self-admiration, when his ear was caught by a noise, as of feet, which stirred the leaves and came on with a quick, quick tramp. He started and looked up. Started again, then stood stock still. What think you Sprigg saw there, in the wild and lonesome woods? A gaunt-ribbed wolf, with teeth so long and sharp? No, not a wolf. A shaggy-coated bear, with claws so long and sharp? No, not a bear, nor panther, nor yet a wild-cat! Then it must have been an Indian, as Elster had pictured, all hideously painted, with a tomahawk in his right hand, a scalping knife in his left, and, by this time, yelling like a demon! No, nor an Indian either. Only pap and Pow-wow; pap, rifle on shoulder, not ten paces distant, and Pow-wow so near that Sprigg could easily have laid his hand on his dear old play-fellow's shaggy head.

The boy's first impulse was to slink aside and hide himself in a thick clump of bushes which grew by the wayside; but it was too late, his father's eyes were already fixed, or seemed to be fixed, directly

upon him. So he remained perfectly motionless where he was, standing, too, in the very midst of a bright spot of sunlight—the only one which, just there, broke the sombre shade of the forest. Pow-wow trotted on by, nor wagged his tail in greeting to his young master, nor even so much as raised his nose from the ground to sniff at him. His father passed on by; passed within arm's length of his own flesh and blood, nor yet extended his hand to touch him, nor even so much as moved his lips to speak to him. What might this mean?

"He-he-he!"

And a low, wild laugh went out on the air. All three jumped—the boy, the man, the dog—and, with startled eyes, all glanced behind them. The dog slunk cowering back to the side of his master, who, with a glance of his keen hunter's eye, which comprehended every object around them, said, addressing his dumb companion:

"What! frightened, my brave old fellow? Frightened for the first time in your life! What could it have been? for not a thing do I see." Yet his eyes, as also those of the dog, were turned directly toward the spot where, as though he were a bush and his feet roots, the boy still stood, the sunlight shining full upon him. Sprigg felt a strange thrill come creeping through his veins, to find that, though he was looked at, it was with a look as if he were not perceived. A discovery, which caused his heart to

quake with a terror he could not have felt, had his father actually seen him and called to him in a loud, stern voice, to know what he did there, and to command him to go back home.

"No, Pow-wow," again said the hunter to his cowering dog, and still glancing keenly about him, "not a thing do I see that could either laugh or cry; and yet, just there on the ground, in that spot of sunlight, I do see something which looks for all the world like a boy's shadow." And lifting his eyes to the branches of the trees above him, Jervis scanned them narrowly to discover the particular bough to which the freak might be ascribed. Then lowering his eyes against to the shadow on the ground, with a look of no small wonderment, he added:

"It seems, Pow-wow, that our ears and eyes have a plot among them to play us a trick. But, come! Let's push on home. The day grows late, and we still have ten long miles to trudge; and Sprigg, you know, must have a good, broad edge of daylight for looking at and playing with the young black fox we found in our trap this morning. How our boy will kick up his heels when he comes out to meet us, finding we have brought him so rare a pet! But won't he, though? So up with your tail, my brave old fellow! Up with your tail and lead on!"

But Pow-wow did not up with his tail; nor, till now, when they were turning to go, had he ceased to glare at the spot where his young master was stand-

ing, and whence had come that low, wild laugh. Sprigg watched them till he could see them no longer. Then he laughed, as he had done at home, to pluck up the spirit he had lost; laughed in such a way as to make him imagine that, after all, it could only have been himself, who but now had laughed. But that his father and Pow-wow could have passed right by him without seeing him, or discovering his presence in any way, was a circumstance certainly far from pleasant to think of; even while the young runaway felt quite assured that had he been found there, so far from home, he should, for that one time, at least, have been severely punished. But there it was coming again! That sound, so like a voice shaping in words the thoughts of his own heart.

"Pluck up, Sprigg! Pluck up! Ten long miles from home, and the old hen and her chickens still with their bills in the dough, which Elster threw out to them as we were climbing the fence. And now, Sprigg, don't you see that with these red moccasins on your feet you are as swift as a young wild goose, if not swifter? Better still, you are no more to be seen in them, even when met by your own father, face to face—no more to be seen than the thin air you stand in! Then, what can catch you? What can hurt you? Sprigg, this is fine! It is splendid! Only see how high the sun is, and we already here at the old hunting camp, exactly half way between

your house and grandpap's. You heard pap say to Pow-wow that you must have a good, broad edge of daylight for the young black fox, but you shall have that for better things than black foxes. You shall, in the first place, go by young Ben Logan's house, only a mile or so out of your way, and letting him have just one broad stare at your brave moccasins—set him to dying of envy at once. This done, you will have time enough, and to spare, for going by pretty little Bertha Bryant's house; although, to do this, you will be obliged to pass by grandpap's first. But I would do it; and I would walk directly through the yard, and allowing Bertha just one flitting glimpse of your beautiful moccasins, set her, there on the spot, to losing her senses for very admiration and love of them. Then, pluck up your heart, my boy! Pluck up heart! Oh, what a brave boy is Sprigg! Who said our Sprigg was not a brave boy? He-he-he!"

Poor Sprigg! Why did you not cast off the terrible moccasins then and there? And, all in your naked feet, unmindful of tearing stones and piercing thorns, speed you after your father, and confessing all, implore him to beat you, ere he had forgiven you? He might have done so; rebuked you sternly, punished you sorely, but far easier and better for you had been all that than the fearful delight which was now charming you out of your better nature. For, had he done so, would he not have taken you, with your

feet all torn and bleeding as they were, your body all bruised with the stripes of his chastising rod—taken you up in his strong, loving arms and borne you home? Home, the one place under the pitiful heavens where the young and the aged, the weak and the helpless, the untried and the overtried, should look for happiness, peace and safety!

CHAPTER VIII.

Awakes to Find that He Is Lost.

Again the poor, vain boy was speeding him on his lone and perilous way. His flight was as swift as the wind, yet so smooth and lightsome that he could gaze upon his moccasins and delight his eyes with their glitter and gleam, as completely at his ease as were he perched on his three-legged stool at home. Of course, then, rambling on thus, with neither eye nor thought but for the red allurements on his feet, he must, ere long, lose sight of the road he set out to follow. This will surprise you the less when told that from the time he had put them on at the spring, it had seemed to the poor boy's fancy that the moccasins knew, as well as himself, whither they were bound, and that they would take him there by the shortest and easiest route, did he but yield himself to their guidance. The road to be followed, thus lost sight of—what wonder, then, if the place to be reached should at last be lost sight of also!

In this strange plight, the young wanderer was pursuing his way, when he was aroused from his walking dream by a broad, red glare, which struck full upon his downcast eyes, and for the moment left him blind as night. Soon, however, his vision re-

turned to him strong and clear, when he found himself on the top of a lofty hill, just where a gap in the forest let in the flood of sunlight; and this it was which had dazzled him into transient blindness, as, too suddenly, he had entered it from out the sombre shadows, in which he for long hours had been wandering.

Now had you seen that hill, how lofty and steep it was, and marked with what ease and swiftness our hero scaled it, you would have said at once that the red moccasins had more to do with the feat than Sprigg's own legs. The gap in the forest proved to be a long, lane-like opening through the trees, which covered only the sides of a round-backed ridge. Through this opening Sprigg had an unobstructed view toward some distant hills in the West, and could see that the sun had well nigh run his daily course. The ridge ascended gradually till it reached it greatest elevation where the boy was standing, and here ended abruptly in a promontory-like hill, which overlooked a wide sea of waving verdure far below. The brow of the hill and the crest of the ridge were not so bare of trees but that, here and there, a lofty oak tree might be seen; but the face toward the East was much too steep and smooth to offer a foothold for trees, being covered instead with a dense growth of low bushes, whose twisted twigs and crisped leaves had, from a distance, more the appearance of moss than of verdure.

Upon waking from his reverie, and turning to look behind him, Sprigg had found himself on the very brink of the declivity. Could it be possible that he had climbed it without conscious effort? Or, indeed, without any effort at all of his own! A bear climbing, paw over paw, might have been equal to the feat; but even a bear, were he minded to scale the hill, would have chosen a more circuitous and less laborious route. There was not the sign of a path made by man or beast anywhere to be seen, either up the steep or along the ridge. Even of his own footsteps, Sprigg could not discern a single trace, whether in crushed leaf, or bruised weed, or print of his moccasins left in the soft soil. The spot was utterly strange to him; it could not have been more so, had he been taken and set down on a hill in the land of Nod. He looked around. There were hills far, far beneath the one on which he stood. And beneath these valleys and plains, while one unbroken forest spread dark and sombre over all, not a token of man or savage could he discover, whether in house, or field, or road, or column of smoke curling up from among the trees. Nothing but woods, woods. Woods! Then, like a sudden awakening from a wild dream, it flashed upon his consciousness that he was lost.

"Where am I?" cried the poor boy. "How came I here?"

"He-he-he!"

Sprigg jumped. This time, the sound that seemed so like a laugh was too completely outside of himself; too little in harmony with his present thoughts for him to fancy it was himself that laughed. First on this side, then on that. Quite near at hand he looked—not a thing of life could he see. He looked far forth; a herd of deer was grazing in a blue-grass glade, a great way off to the right; and a great way off to the left, a herd of buffalo, browsing on the tender shoots of a cane-brake, which skirted the banks of a beautiful river. Behind him, toward the setting sun, a few birds of prey were wheeling and screaming aloft in the crimson evening sky. Saving these, not a thing of life or sound was there to be seen in all the wilds. Lost! Lost! Lost! To find himself lost is the only discovery your waking dreamer is apt to make.

Then Sprigg looked down and scanned the red moccasins. They showed not a grain of dust, not a speck of mire, not a stain of grass, or weed, or water, although he had walked in them—or, if you please, they had walked with him—through many a mile of grassy wood and reedy swamp, where path was none, that had ever been trodden by foot of man. As clean and bright and red were they as when he had drawn them on in the shade of the spring trees there at home. A rather singular circumstance, certainly; and only to be explained upon the ground that, as the boy had submitted himself entirely to

their guidance, the moccasins had daintily picked out the road which suited them best, and such roads, I warrant you, as common shoes were not at all in the habit of traveling.

Yes, the red charms had beguiled the young runaway, and, without any motive or knowledge of his own, had brought him to that remote and solitary spot—how, or to what end, he could not imagine. Of one thing he was certain, they had not brought him to grandpap's house, as they—for so it had seemed to him—had promised they would, and he had been so foolish as to believe they could. At last, but when it was too late, the scales were beginning to fall from his eyes. In other words, the red fog, in which he had so long been chased by the shadow he sought, was beginning to grow a little transparent, so that he could view his case in a somewhat clearer and more natural light. Apparent enough was it now that the red moccasins had deceived him, mocked him, laughed at him—in short, made a fool of Sprigg completely. This discovery brought a twinge to his self-love, far more severe than any pain of conscience he felt at the thought of the foul lie he had told, or of his shabby flight from home; even while he could not help but be aware of the grief and shame and distressing apprehensions he must thereby be causing his dear father and mother. In a pet of wrath, plump down he sat, this poor, vain boy; and, jerking the moccasins from off

his feet, flung them, one after the other, over the brink of the steep, as far as his sturdy, young arms could send them.

"Curse the red moccasins!" cried the boy, as now in his bare feet he stood, the hot tears jumping suddenly out of his eyes. "You mocked me, fooled me, lost me! Curse you! and may I never——"

What more he might have said was cut short by a noise, which, while he was yet speaking, had caught his ear. A noise as of answering voices, mingled with peals of wild and mocking laughter, heard from several directions at once, and ringing out clear and shrill upon the still evening air. These sounds abruptly ceased—the more abruptly from leaving no echoes behind them, where echoes were wont to be left. But straight were they succeeded by another sound, caused, apparently, by a pair of light feet, which, with a hop, step and jump, by way of a start, were now coming in through the leaves and grass with a slow and measured tread; and so near at hand that he who walked would have been in plain view just there. At first Sprigg looked too high to see what was to be seen, but soon lowering his gaze he saw——

But close the book for a minute and guess. Can not? Try it again! Not yet? No—nor could you, were you to try from New Year's morn to New Year's eve. Wonderful, as you may think it, Sprigg saw there on the ground, not a dozen paces from

him, his cast-off moccasins, coming slowly toward him—first the right foot, then the left—without so much as a pair of knee buckles to show for legs, till they had set their toes within easy speaking distance, squarely confronting him. The boy stood stock still, staring before him, with no more power to move from the spot than the bushes around him. So great was his astonishment, not to say terror, he felt at the sight of this fantastic apparition.

CHAPTER IX.

Finds the Red Moccasins Whole-souled Friends in Need.

"Are we not beautiful things for the feet, Sprigg? Oh, but we are! You can't deny it! On with us, then, and away to grandpap's house! Who said we couldn't take Sprigg to grandpap's house? Who said we couldn't take Sprigg to young Ben Logan's house? Who said we couldn't take Sprigg to pretty little Bertha's house? If Will-o'-the-Wisp said so, he lied! He lied, too, if he said our Sprigg was not a brave boy! He-he-he!"

The boy knew well enough, for he heard it distinctly enough this time, that the voice did not come from his own heart, nor yet from the moccasins, but from a point in the air, about as high up from the ground as his own mouth, as if he who spoke were standing in the moccasins, face to face with him, though not even so much as a shade of a shadow could he see.

"An elf! An elf is in the moccasins!" cried the boy, and tearing his feet from the ground, where he had stood as rooted, fled for his life, the moccasins following right at his heels and mockingly keeping step for step with him, till down in a swoon he sank

at the foot of an old oak tree. How long he lay thus he never knew, but when he recovered his senses, there before him were the red moccasins, side by side, the toe of the left one turned slightly outward, as if he who stood in them were taking it quite at his ease. A self-assured air, well suiting the self-assured voice, which, in tones quite new and strange, pronounced these words, with an emphatic pause at the end of each brief sentence:

"You may run to the green earth's end, my boy! To the sea, where the bright sun soon shall set! To the sea, where the pale moon soon shall rise! But, step for step, come we at your heels, though borne you be on the wings of the wind!"

The poor boy cowered down at the foot of the old oak, and burying his face in his coonskin cap, remained for a long time mum and motionless. With the red moccasins, which, in a pet of disappointment and wounded self-love, he had flung from him, had departed the marvelous stoutness of heart and strength of limb he had felt while his feet were in them. And now, all weak and spiritless, was he left to shift for himself, with such resources only as a bare-footed boy, alone in the midst of a vast wilderness, might be supposed to have at his command. Sitting thus, he began gradually taking in some idea of the sad condition to which he had brought himself by his vanity and disobedience, though his remorse for the wrong of the thing, and for the sorrow

it must occasion the dear ones at home, was by no means as lively and decided as his regret for the unpleasant consequences thereof to his own particular self. There he was—he knew not how far away from home, sweet home!—all alone in that wild and solitary spot, and the darksome, dismal, terrible night soon to come creeping, creeping over his houseless head. There he was, and no dear mam—so loving, so cheerful—to give him his bowl of bread and milk! No dear pap—so kind, so merry—to tell him wild stories of Indians and Will-o'-the-Wisp and Nick of the Woods! Yes, and no good, old Pow-wow, brave old Pow-wow, to come trotting up to him, in the dear old wag-tail way, to thrust his shaggy head into his little master's hand for a pat or a hug! It was too much for the poor, young runaway's heart, and out came a passionate burst of tender home-sick feeling, though he did it as well as he could, smothering it up in his coonskin cap. But soon again, bethinking him how he had been mocked and fooled by the imp in the moccasins, he summoned back the pride of his young heart and the strength of his young will, and checked his tears, lest his weakness of feeling, like his vanity, should be made the provocation of derision. In this condition he sat for many moments, quite motionless, saving when the sobs, which needs must follow his tears, came heaving up from his breast and shook his crouching little figure. Yet he did but sulk as one

who, while glum with all the world besides, is far from being at peace with his own heart. His tear-wet face he still kept buried in his cap, not daring to remove it from his eyes, lest they should encounter those of the thing who stood in the moccasins, whom he felt to be watching him all this time from up there in the clear, unshadowed air. At the end of less than half an hour he was roused from his unquiet thoughts by the sound of a slow, heavy tramp, at no great distance off, followed immediately by a slight stir in the leaves and grass near-by, which caused him to start; and, before he was aware, he had dropped the cap from over his eyes. The moccasins had turned quite 'round, with their toes another way, as if the ear of him who stood in them had been caught by the same sound, and he would inform himself of the cause. Sprigg looked in the direction thus indicated, when an object met his gaze, which caused his eyes to grow big and round, then stand fixed in their sockets.

What the boy and the thing in the moccasins saw there was a bison bull—and a huge beast he was. That bull of the wilderness, and of as wild and savage an aspect, too, as you would care to behold, even within the secure enclosure of a menagerie. His hair was long and curled, and of dun or tawny color. A hump he had on his shoulders, which gave his neck a downward slope to the head, and his back a downward slope to the tail—his tail, but a short

brush of a thing, scarcely reaching to his hocks. Horns, he had, too—black horns, long and strong, and tapering to a sharper point than is the case with horned cattle, generally speaking. But the feature to which the monster chiefly owed his singular wildness of appearance was his mane, which, in shaggy luxuriance, flowed from neck, shoulders and breast, covering the legs to the knees, and veiling the face almost to the very nose.

Now, had he seen all this in the yard at home, himself stationed on the porch, with pap on one side, Black Bess in hand, ready to shoot; Pow-wow on the other, ready to spring at the first intimation of hostile design on the part of his bullship, our hero would have clapped his hands and pronounced it a grander sight than any the old show bill could boast, always excepting, of course, the Indian boy and Shetland pony. But there, in that desolate spot, with not a living soul a-near, unless, indeed, the thing in moccasins might have a soul, a bison bull were hardly the object to awaken pleasant wonderment and lively admiration in the mind of a lost boy, who, against a pair of long, sharp horns, could oppose no weapon but a jack-knife, no shield but a coonskin cap.

When the boy first caught sight of him, the bull was already within easy viewing distance, and was soon so near that, in his turn, he could not fail to catch sight of the boy, where he still sat crouched

at the foot of the tree. This was plainly to be seen, by the way the monster stopped short, turned square 'round, and lowered his huge, black front to stare at the little stranger. Bright eyes, wild eyes, Sprigg now saw a bison's eyes to be.

The fringe of mane, which veiled the face, obstructing his vision, caused the animal, when he stared at you, to roll his eyeballs downward till their colored circles were half hid by their lower lids, thus leaving the upper whites exposed to view in the form of a new moon, with the points downward. To be squinted at with the side whites of the eyes, to a naughty boy like Sprigg is anything else but pleasant; but to be stared at with the upper whites of the eyes, as the bison bull was now staring at Sprigg, were enough to make you feel as if you had a wide-awake nightmare in broad daylight.

Evidently his bullship was greatly surprised to find so small a boy, at so late an hour, in that out-of-the-way place, without even so much as a dog and gun to show for the business which had brought him thither. Then, as if feeling that he had a right to investigate the matter, the bison, with short, slow, soft steps, began shortening the distance between himself and the object of his curiosity. Closer and closer he came, still with his huge, black front lowered, and his crescent-like eyes gleaming wildly out from the depths of his overshadowing mane, with a look as if he were saying within himself: "And

what wee thing is this, up here in my bluegrass pasture?"

Sprigg could not draw his eyes from those of the beast; nor had he the power to rise and flee from the spot, though it was well that he had not the power to run, as in that event the bull might have been tempted to give him chase, as things with horns are apt to do when we are trying our best to get out of their way. Overtaking him, the bull would have run his long, sharp horns directly under the young fugitive's arms, and, giving him a toss high up in the air, let him drop down a-straddle of his back, just behind the hump, for a pleasant evening ride. Understand me, now—I am not positive in saying that this is precisely what the bison would have done had our hero taken to his heels. Though the thing may have happened once or twice since time began, I have never heard of a runaway boy being chased by a bison bull; and, therefore, can only guess how such a beast would deport himself under the circumstances. But I am rather inclined to think he would hardly do anything more dreadful than play the savage antic just suggested; because, a moment's reflection would show him that to use his horns to a greater length, were to frighten the young runaway out of his wits, and thereby incapacitate him from being made to see and feel the error of his way. Though, I must confess that, for my own part, I should not be willing to trust the savage fellow a single horn's length until I had subjected him to a

certain old-fashioned test—I would first take care to see how far I could fling the bull by the tail, and make the result the measure of my confidence in his good intentions.

Step by step, still came the monster slowly on, and now was come so near that the boy could feel his moist breath warming the air around him. Another step, and their noses had been all but within touching distance of each other. But just at that moment—just as the cry of pap! pap! rang affrightedly out on the still evening air—the red moccasins, which, up to this time, had remained perfectly quiet, seemed to be seized all on a sudden with an animated interest in what was passing. With a hop, step and jump, they were, in a twinkling, right at the bull's nose and pouring upon it a shower of kicks, so rapid and stunning that the beast, huge and powerful as he was, staggered backward several paces, with a look of utter bewilderment. Nor did the pertinacious little stunners let him off till they had forced him back to the very brink of the steep; when, with a roar of fright and pain which shook the lonely wilds, the monster wheeled about, and making a blind leap, vanished over the precipice. This done, the red moccasins quietly retraced their steps, and, with the same air of easy self-assurance, adjusted themselves before the boy, who, not so fearful now as sullen, buried his face once more in his coonskin cap; and never a word of thanks to them, nor to any one else, that Sprigg was in the land of the living.

CHAPTER X.

Still at the Foot of the Old Oak Tree.

The roar of the bison bull was hardly out of his ears, when the boy heard another slight rustling in the leaves and grass near-by, and peeping out from behind his cap, he saw that the moccasins had again shifted their position. Looking in the direction toward which their toes were turned, he saw an object more to be dreaded, by far, than a bison bull.

A wild-cat it was, already too near at hand, creeping up in that soft, sly way peculiar to animals of the cat family whenever they have a victim in view. A wild-cat—fat; sleek sides, all ribbed with stripes of black and white; white teeth, very long and sharp; black claws, longer and sharper still; ringed tail, very long and very lithe, waving softly all the time from side to side, with a sort of quivering eagerness in its motion, as if the owner were trying his best to hold it still, and for the life of him could not do so.

By this time, the handsome savage had slipped himself within easy springing distance of his intended quarry. Here he paused, and fixing his wild, sly eyes on those of the boy, began purring in a soft way, and licking his red chops with his long, red tongue in a soft way—

that uncontrollable tail still waving from side to side in the same soft way—all in the softest, slyest way that you could well imagine, as if he were saying within himself: "But won't a wild-cat pap and a wild-cat mam and their wild-cat kittens feast and be merry to-night?"

All this took the boy but three winks of the eye to observe; though, in the time, he had not winked once, so fascinated was he by the gaze of those wild, sly eyes, which shone like balls of green fire, rather than eyes. Now was Wild Tom of the Woods making his squat for the long spring, and the poor little runaway screaming again to pap for help. But just then, in the very nick of time, with a swiftness that left a red streak in the air, the red moccasins darted directly at the wild-cat's face, and kicking the green fire out of his eyes, spoiled their charming expression in a twinkle. With a scream of amazement, fright and pain, which struck on the ear like the shriek of a terrified woman, the nimble creature spun lithely 'round, and, like the bull, reckless of all save the unseen foe behind him, made a blind leap sheer over the brink of the precipice, and in a moment sank out of sight.

This happily accomplished, the moccasins, precisely as they had done before, returned to their post; and the boy, precisely as he had done before, hid his face in his coonskin cap. Nor even yet one word of thanks for timely rescue from untimely end.

Now, had you been in our hero's place, you would have up and made friends with the moccasins, there on the spot, for so kindly stepping in betwixt you and peril—shaken hands with them as whole-souled fellows, with whom it was to a bare-footed boy's behoof to stand on a good footing. But Sprigg was the worst spoiled boy in the world; which, unless I am mightily mistaken, you are not; and it still rang in his foggy young noddle that it was all the red moccasins' fault that he had been brought to straits so sad and desperate. Therefore, he owed them no thanks whatever for helping him out, let them kick as they might. Such being the case, Sprigg would not have made friends with the moccasins, had it been to save their soles.

So, there sat the boy, with his face in his coon-skin cap; and there stood the thing, with its feet in the moccasins; and there flung the sun his last red beams, then went his way, unrecking who wept to see him go.

Now, shade by shade, with foot as stealthy and soft as the furred paw of the gray cat, came the gray twilight, creeping, creeping on. The hour, when the gray owl, with a whoop, from his hole in the tree; and the gray wolf, with a howl, from his cleft in the rock, come forth in quest of their prey. And woe to the fawn! And woe to the birdling! strayed from home for the first time, should the shadows of night, that tempt the famished foe abroad, find him still

far from the old one's side; for chased shall he be, and caught up by the claws, or dragged down by the fangs of the dread destroyer!

And Sprigg—poor child! How weak and helpless to be in a spot so lonely and dreary and perilous, and so far away from the dear old hearts of home! Hearts, by this time, so overburdened with grief and distressing apprehensions—all for him! How weary, too, and faint he felt! And how he longed to lay him down to sleep and be at rest! But this, he dared not, lest he should awake but to find long, sharp horns at his breast, or long, sharp teeth at his throat. Or, if not this, he might, while yet asleep, be borne away to some spot, still more distant and lonely, by the strange being, who stood just there in the moccasins, the gaze of whose unseen eyes he now felt in his inmost heart.

At last, in spite of all his efforts to keep awake, the weary child was dropping off to sleep, when his ear, as yet but half closed, was caught by a dog-trot sort of a noise in the leaves quite near at hand. Rousing with a start and looking out, the boy saw there a wolf—gray, grim and gaunt, with eyes that glared upon him through the dusky shades, like balls of red fire, rather than eyes. Sprigg was on the point of screaming again to pap for help, when he bethought him of the moccasins, and glancing down and perceiving that they had turned their toes toward the monster, he choked himself into silence.

Though he still feared them, he had, by this time, learned to trust the red moccasins, and now felt assured that they would defend him against the wolf as they had done against the bull and the cat. Nor was he mistaken. Just as Wild Tray of the Woods would have made his spring and sprang on the boy, the moccasins made their spring and sprang on the wolf, driving directly at his ugly eyes, with a kick into each, which brought the red fire flashing out into the darkness. Back, with a terrified howl, cowered the monster, and spinning swiftly 'round, vanished like the bison and the wild-cat, with a blind leap over the precipice. But this time, when the moccasins came back, a voice came with them; a new voice, whose tones, gentle and kind, reminded the poor boy of his mother's, and thus the new voice spoke:

"Now our Sprigg must feel assured he may trust us. Then sleep, poor boy! You are weary, faint and sick at heart, and have but too much need of rest! A friend is here, who will watch over you and keep you safe from harm. Then, sleep, poor child, sleep!" And with these words the forlorn little castaway felt a tiny hand laid upon his head, and with a touch so gentle that a gush of soft, warm, grateful tears came welling up from his overburdened heart; and straightway a sense of rest and slumber stole over his spirit, and he sank into a deep sleep. Just then the moon wheeled up from behind the forest-bound

East, and shot her first silver arrows, long and level, against the shaggy breast of the giant hill. Round-faced, she was, and as bright as moon could well be, not to make day of night; for, be it borne in mind, that it was still the first of June, though gone the joyous sun, who had been blazing the thing to the world the livelong day.

The boy had slept but an hour or so, when he was aroused by a voice, whose tones seemed those of his father's, which said:

"Up, Sprigg! Up! They come!" as if he who spoke were in haste. With a wild start the boy sprang to his feet, and the first thing he knew he was standing bolt upright, looking straight down the vista, which ran along the crest of the ridge, as if his head had been turned by him that had spoken on purpose that way, that he might see what there he saw. And had Sprigg seen the bison, the wild-cat, the wolf, all there in a row, the sight could hardly have daunted him more than did that of the object which now met his eyes. A sight, it was, which brought to his memory all that his mother had told him concerning that terrible thing of the wilderness —the Indian mystery—Jibbenainesy, called by the white men, Nick of the Woods.

Yes, fancy it out as you please—it was a bear, with black hair, so shaggy and long that his legs could scarcely be seen, and his tail not at all.

Sprigg's first thought, after the hundred thoughts

which the object before him had awakened, was to reassure himself that the moccasins still stood guard. He looked! Dire to relate, the red moccasins had deserted their post—abandoned their trust! Nothing —no one left him to look to now for help! Down he crouched again at the foot of the old oak tree, hiding himself in its deepest shadow, in the forlorn hope that the monster might pass by without discovering his presence. On came the huge bulk of shaggy blackness—now in the shadow of a tree, now in the belt of moonlight, slowly, steadily, trudged he along —his head bent down with the air of one who, while he walked, is absorbed in profound thought. When his deliberate pace had brought the bear to the third or fourth belt of light, Sprigg spied an object, which, for the moment, in spite of the terror he felt, caused his young heart to burn with indignation, reminding him, as it did, how he had been made a fool of, by something, or somebody, he had not fairly decided yet what or who. But the moment after, remembering the voice, which, so like his mother's, had lulled him to sleep with words of rest and peace —this feeling gave place to one of joy and trusting reassurance.

Side by side with the bear, and keeping exact step with his sloomy pace, Sprigg saw his cast-off moccasins, coming quietly on, as if with the sole intent of guiding the monster directly up to the tree, in whose dark shadow he had trusted to find a hiding

place. Thus leading, thus led, composedly on they came together, step for step—now the three right feet, now the three left feet—each as pat to the other's movement as were they walking arm in arm. The next broad patch of moonlight gained, brought them square abreast with the boy; and here, within easy speaking distance, they came to a dead halt—the red moccasins and the bear.

CHAPTER XI.

An Agreeable Disappointment.

"Sing a song of moccasins,
Pockets full of rye.
Four and twenty black bears.
Sniff! I smell a lie!"

So said the bear, in a nursery, sing-song tone of voice; then fetching a quick sniff at the air, began peering about him—first this way, then that way, then another way—every way, indeed, but straight at Sprigg.

"First behead the headsman,
Then we'll fry the friar;
Next we'll hang the hangman.
Snuff! I smell a liar!"

Again said the bear, still jingling out his words, and still stiffly sniffing the air. He now looked down at the earth, then up at the moon, then straight at Sprigg.

"Holloa!" he cried, abruptly modulating his voice into quite a different key, "who sits here, at this late hour, on Manitou hill, hiding himself from my moonshines?" And with these pleasant preliminaries to their better acquaintances, his bearship seated himself upon his stump of a tail, with his amiable muz-

zle directly confronting the boy, as though he were in for a good, long talk and meant to be at his ease while so engaged. He had the look of one who was conscious of being the possessor of immense wisdom, and was accustomed to seeing whatever he might choose to let drop from his sagacious jaw waited for, snatched at and borne away as precious bits to be treasured up for lifelong use.

The moccasins daintily adjusted themselves beside the bear, the toe of the left foot resting on the ground, with the heel turned upward, as if the wearer were standing with his legs crossed, and with the left arm thrown carelessly over the bear's shoulders. The attitude was, doubtless, an easy and graceful one; too fine, indeed, to be all lost in the air. But it pleased Sprigg exceedingly just as it was. It made him feel that the bear could not be such a terrible fellow after all, if the moccasins could make themselves so completely at home in his presence.

"Who, I say?" repeated the bear. "Who sits here at this late hour on Manitou hill, hiding himself from my moonshine? What's wrong about my moonshine?"

But Sprigg said never a word, moved never a limb, winked never an eye.

"I say, what's wrong about my moonshine? If you have a tongue, speak!"

Poor Sprigg had a tongue, but it stuck fast to the roof of his mouth, and when he would have told the bear as much, it stuck still faster.

"Speak, I tell you! None of your mums with me!" the bear's voice terribly gruff by this time. "If you don't ———"

"Sir!" gasped out Sprigg at last.

"Sir!" mockingly echoed the bear. "Sir! and is 'Sir' all a boy has to say for himself, who dodged my moonshine? I knew that much before. Now, sir, to the purpose, and tell me something I don't know."

"Yes, sir," which was as near to the purpose as anything the boy could think of just then. His grim questioner looked at him with so hard a countenance that it kept his scared wits from performing the very office demanded of them.

"Now, there is some sense in that," remarked the bear, with a grim smile and with a nod of the head to the right, as if the comment was intended for his ear, who stood there; and Sprigg could see that the moccasins shook, as if the wearer were laughing heartily.

"Having discovered that he has a tongue," continued the bear, "we will now take a fresh start and find out, if we can, what stuff the cub is made of. Now, sir, what's your name?"

"Sprigg," replied the boy, glad to have an opportunity, at last, of saying something to the purpose.

"Is that an English name, or Indian name?" inquired the bear.

"It is my name, sir; and you can see that I am not an Indian, by my coonskin cap."

"Bless a body!" exclaimed the bear, "but that was well turned. Now, sir, as you are getting a little glib, will you go still further and tell us how old you are?"

"Twelve years old, sir, next June-day come a year," replied the boy, in the peculiar sing-song way in which old-fashioned children were wont to answer the question.

"Why, that's to-day, you young gump!" cried the bear, "and your answer still leaves me in the fog as to your age—whether it's eleven or twelve.'

"I was eleven years old the last time, and I was to be twelve years old the next time, whenever that might be."

"Better and better," quoth the bear, with an approving nod, "and now I shouldn't be surprised if he were prepared to tell us whose son he is. Can you tell us that?"

"Oh, yes, sir, very easily!"

"Then why don't you, and prove it?"

"My pap's name is Jervis Whitney, and my mam's name is Elster Whitney;" and the poor little runaway choked as he pronounced the dear names.

Whereupon, as if musing on what he had just heard, the bear made that peculiar sound, which, uttered through the nose, with the lips closed, amounts to a doubtful, undecided yes: "Oo-hooh"—then a pause—"he says his pap's name is Jervis Whitney."

"Yes, sir, and my grandpap's name is Jervis

Whitney, too," added Sprigg, thinking that the fuller he gave his pedigree, the more satisfactory might prove his information, "and I have an uncle who goes by the name of Benjamin Whitney, who was shot through the knees at the battle of Brandywine, so that he now goes about on wooden legs."

"And the better husband for his pegs, too, I warrant you," quoth the bear, "for he will stick by his wife so long as she will stick to him."

"Yes, sir, and I have another uncle, who goes by the name of ——"

"Ooh-hooh," said the bear, relapsing into his musing mood, "he has another uncle. But, Jervis Whitney—now, where did I ever hear that name? It sounds as familiar to my ear as the hum of a bee. Ooh-hooh—Jervis Whitney. Yes, yes! Now I have it! I know the man; know him like a book! It's the white hunter, whom Will-o'-the-Wisp and I fell in with one moonshiny night last week; and a very pleasant sort of a fellow we found him, too. Yes, and I gave him a pair of red moccasins for his little son. Yes, and he told me his son's name was Sprigg. All as clear as moonshine now. Sprigg!"

"Sir!" The urchin would have said "what" to pap and mam.

"A particular friend of yours sent you a pair of red moccasins one night last week—did your father deliver them to you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you worn them yet?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you worn them to-day?" To which, after a pause, Sprigg owned that he had.

"Did you have them on when you left home?"

"Well, no, sir; not exactly."

"But I want it exactly—yes or no."

"Well, I was barefooted when I left the house, and wasn't barefooted when I left the spring."

"What particular place did you have in your mind, as your journey's end, when you set out from home?"

"Grandpap's house, sir."

"And did you ask permission of your father or mother, sir?"

"Yes, sir."

"And did you obtain their permission?" The bear's eyes, by this time, as sharp as gimblets; as piercing as sprig-awls. Sprigg made a long pause before answering this question; and when, at last, he did do so, he pulled out the words, as a dentist pulls out teeth—with a twist and a wince—"No, sir, I didn't."

"Did any one see you as you were taking your departure?"

"Yes, sir; mam saw me as I was climbing the fence."

"And what did your mam say to you, as you were climbing the fence?"

"She asked me where I was going with the big cedar bucket."

"And what did you tell her? Now, have a care, Sprigg! Be certain you come square up!" and the bear raised his right fore-foot paw with a warning gesture, awful to see, at the same time showing a double row of teeth, which gleamed like crooked little dirks in the moonshine.

"Oh! Please, sir, don't look at me so with your teeth! I don't like to see you look that way!" and our hero mashed up his face for a cry.

"Oh, you don't like my looks, hey! Hold your brine! You don't like my looks! Aye, and bad boys never do! Never did! So, when bad boys find fault with my looks, I just say: 'If you don't like 'em, you can lump 'em.' That's what I say. 'It's your own fault, if my looks don't please your fancy.' I say that, too. 'You see right, and I'll look right,' that's something more I say. Now, sir, out with it—straight as an arrow, plump as a bullet—what did you tell your mother, as you were climbing the fence?" And the bear again raised his right fore paw, and showed the double row of crooked little dirks.

"Oh! if you please, sir, don't look that way," said our hero, still with his face mashed up for a cry. "Please don't look at me so with your long, sharp teeth! It scares me all but into fits! My name's Sprigg!"

"And who said it wasn't?" growled the bear; and then in a mocking tone added: "Oh, he is trying to dodge me, is he? His name's Sprigg, is it? With this for a fresh start, we'll pass on again to his age, and from that to his pedigree; when he will tell us how his Brandywine uncle took to preaching, because of his wooden legs. Speaking of preachers, up comes his catechism, which, when well said, good little boys get the pat on the head and go out to play. Thus, he was going to lead us by the nose from point to point, till the point in point was clean lost sight of. No, no, my sly cub; you don't bamboozle an old bear so easily as all that. Then out with it at once, and mind how you blink it again! What did you tell your mother?"

Sprigg would have blinked it still, but when he had looked this way and that way at the bear, and down at the moccasins and up at the man in the moon, he saw that to dodge the question longer were but to hide his head, so to speak, under a fence rail, like a goose, or a pig, and fool himself into thinking he was safe. So, with a great gulp, to keep his heart down, which would come heaving up to his throat, he at last cried out:

"Oh, I told her a lie! I told her a lie!" and bursting into tears, he hid his face in his coonskin cap for shame.

The bear paused for a moment; then, in a voice quite soft and gentle for him, said:

"But you mourn in your heart for having done this thing?"

"Yes, indeed; that I do!" and the little prodigal shook from top to toe with the violence of his sobs.

"And for why?" asked the bear, in the same gentle way, only more so, almost fatherly.

"Because," sobbed the boy, "had I not done so, I should not be here now, in this dark and lonesome place, with nobody for company, nobody to give me my supper, nobody to put me to bed, nobody to—to—"

"And nobody to sing you to sleep with a hymn, hey!" put in the bear with a mocking grin, his fatherly manner gone in a twinkling. "No, no, my laddie! You are showing me the matter wrong side out, giving it to me wrong end foremost. You must mourn in your heart for the little lie you have told, before you put up such a pitiful mouth for the ills you have thereby brought upon yourself. Viewed in the right light, these ills are precisely what you deserve; precisely what you need for your own good. But come, quiet down and cheer up, and take a fresh start; go on and make a clean breast of it by telling us the whole story. You climbed the fence——"

Thus put to it, Sprigg fell to and told the whole thing, from beginning to end—all just as it had happened. Indeed, he made so clean a breast of it as to confess that he had cursed the moccasins on flinging them away in his pet of wrath. When he had ended,

greatly surprised was that little sinner to find how much better he felt that, for once in his life, he had told the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. The grim confessor had kept his eyes the while fixed full and hard on those of the young delinquent, without saying a word. Now he turned his head to the right, with a look as were he inquiring of him who stood in the moccasins if what they had heard were true. This look must have been answered by an affirmative nod from the head in the air, which Sprigg could not see; for, with a soft "Ooh-hooh," long drawn out, the bear bent his eyes to the ground, as if he must needs meditate awhile on what he had heard before he could fairly make up his mind what to say or do next. Thus he remained for some moments, absorbed in thought; then, looking up at Sprigg, he gravely shook his head—took several little spells of shaking it before breaking the awful silence.

"It's a bad case, Sprigg; a mighty bad case, indeed. But before we proceed any further, you may as well tell me how you like the looks of the bull and the cat and the wolf—as well as do you mine?"

"Oh, no, indeed, sir! Not half so well!" And Sprigg was perfectly sincere in the compliment. The bear improved the looks so complimented by a beaming smile of gratified vanity; and the boy could perceive that the moccasins were again agitated, as if the imp, or elf, or whatever it was that stood in them, were laughing in his sleeves.

"It is true, Sprigg," resumed the bear, with a look of bland self-satisfaction, "quite true that I have a rough coat and a rough voice, and, it may be, a rough way with me sometimes, but they who know me best can and do testify that my heart is in the right place, for all that; and that it is a truer and kinder heart than many a one that beats under wool, or fur, or even buckskin. But I am deviating and bearing rather too near upon the unpardonable. A person may sooner hope to find forgiveness for speaking ill of his neighbor than well of himself. Vice versa, he who speaks to his own discredit, as you, Sprigg, have just been doing, gains more credit thereby than were he to speak in the highest praise of another. And why? Because those who listen to such a person are sure to begin thinking of their own merits, while he is confessing his demerits; and to think of them is to discover how immense they are. This is a fact, for which we need not go one step out of our way to find an example. We have it right here. The bad account you have given of yourself had set me to thinking the better of myself. Your confession of fault, putting me in a good humor with myself, puts me also in a good humor with you. My merits, then, and your demerits are on the best of terms. In short, Sprigg, to sum it all up in a nutshell, I am not only one of the best fellows in the world, but one of the best friends you ever had, or ever shall have; which assurance,

though you may doubt it now, I will prove to your entire satisfaction, even while yet the month of June is young and rosy."

"Sprigg!" The boy said, "Sir," and the bear went on: "You have been a bad boy to-day; indeed, you have been a bad boy all the days of your life. You have never yet seen that day, Sprigg—neither winter nor summer—when, eating a Christmas pie, you could put in your thumb and pull out a plum and say: 'What a good boy am I!' Yet, to be just, you are a boy of excellent parts in many ways, which encourages us to hope that we may yet be able to bring out the good that is in you, and, at the same time, bring out the evil; at any rate, crumple it up where it is, which amounts to the same. How this desirable end is to be attained is not yet quite clear to my own mind. So you will have to go home with us to-night, where you shall make the acquaintance of our cubs, who will gladly share their bed with you. And pleasant bed-fellows shall you find them, too—so soft and warm! So affectionate, too! Only you mustn't let them hug you too hard. Meanwhile, I shall consider your case, which, being a peculiar one, I shall lay before my wife, that I may have the benefit of her good advice. This she will gladly give, believe me; for there is nothing in the world that pleases a wife more than for her husband to beg the benefit of her good advice. Though I fear it is the misfortune with some husbands—I won't say how

many—to have wives so overstocked with the treasure in question that they can not wait to be called on, but must give it gratis, whether anybody wants it or not. Like giving a man a bottle of bear's grease for his hair, when his scalp is already sufficiently oily by nature; or by giving a boy a bearskin cap, when he has already a coonskin one of his own, which answers every purpose, especially if the tail is left on. These are the wives who save their husbands' grindstones from being eaten by the cows, and thereby keep their scissors sharp, to say nothing of their tongues."

CHAPTER XII.

Will-o'-the-Wisp.

"Sprigg!" said the bear, and rose from his tail.

"Sir!" said the boy, as he rose from his seat.

"Can you ride a bear?"

"I don't know, sir; I never tried it," said the boy, dubiously.

"Come, and try it now," said the bear encouragingly. But being by no means perfectly sure, even yet, of the burly monster, our hero was in no hurry to accept the invitation.

"Come and try it, I tell you!" repeated the bear in his old, gruff voice.

"You won't bite me with your long, sharp teeth, will you?" whined the boy.

"No," growled the bear.

"And you won't scratch me with your long, sharp claws?" again whined the boy.

"Scratch you with my long, sharp claws! No!" again growled the bear.

"And you won't, like the bull and the cat and the wolf, go a-jumping over there, at that steep place in the hill?" still urged the boy, though a little less whiningly.

"Do like the bull and the cat and the wolf? No!" rejoined the bear, a little less growlingly.

"And you won't kick up, and rear up and cut capers, like a horse?" The boy, by this time, not whining at all.

"Kick up, and rear up and cut capers, like a horse? No! Spur me, if I do!" And this time, so far from growling, the monster actually chuckled—so funny could he be when he tried.

"And now, having felt around on every side, you have, I hope, succeeded at last in finding out on which side of your mug your nose is, and are ready to come up and take me at my offer. And Sprigg, my boy, for once and for all—of this be assured—that so far as you trust me, so far are you safe. Perfect your trust—perfect your safety."

Sprigg was by no means of a confiding nature; people prone to lose sight of the truth never are. But on receiving this reassurance of good faith, he walked up boldly enough to the bear, who, as his young rider drew near, swayed his back to enable him, with the greatest ease, to mount.

"But I have nothing to hold myself on by," said our hero, now fairly astraddle of his strange steed, though pressing as lightly upon it as possible.

"Take a lock of my hair! If a lock of hair is good for keeping one's mind on a friend, why not as good for keeping his body there, too?" Here he chuckled a little again, then added:

"But the young human thing, brave as he is, may not have as much faith in a lock of hair as some people have, or pretend to have. So, up with you, Manitou-Echo, and give him a lock of your arms."

Whereat, fetching first a nimble flounce, the red moccasins, as if their wearer made a pivot of his head in the air, described a circular flourish aloft, and in a twinkle, there they were at the bear's flanks, each with a toe at one of our hero's naked heels. In another twinkle Sprigg felt himself clasped tightly around the waist, by what seemed to be a pair of small arms; small, but, bless me! how strong, as the boy was but too glad to discover the moment after.

"All right?" To which, receiving an affirmative kick from the moccasins, the bear, to Sprigg's dismay, made directly for the brink of that horrible steep, where the bull, the cat and the wolf had vanished. Here, on the dizzy verge, bear-like, he wheeled about, that his tail might take the lead in the descent, which he evidently meditated. The boy glanced fearfully over his shoulder. The top of the tallest trees which grew at the foot of the hill were hundreds of feet beneath him, and so directly beneath him, it seemed to him that were he to fall from the bear's back he would drop like a stone into their branches.

In one long, smooth, unbroken slide, down they swept, from summit to base of that tremendous steep. Well it was for Sprigg that the little arms

which held him on were so firm and strong, else must he inevitably have slipped from the bear's back and found his way to the world below by his own natural gravity, instead of by somebody else's supernatural power.

The descent accomplished, the bear changed ends, that his nose might take the lead. With a slightly waving motion, as were he swimming in the air, now was he gliding swiftly onward at a speed which soon brought him and his riders to the edge of a wide swamp, where the forest foliage became so thick as wholly to exclude the moonlight. Here he paused, and in a loud voice called out:

"Will-o'-the-Wisp! Will-o'-the-Wisp!" A voice so tremendously loud that it must have been heard through all the wilds around; yet never an echo it left to tell it had sounded.

Had an echo awakened, it could hardly have fallen asleep again before the boy espied approaching them swiftly through the gloom a large ball of light, which shown with a phosphorescent gleam, so dead and dim, that the luminous circle it made in the pitch-black darkness of the swamp seemed scarcely to exceed its own circumference. Without any preliminary abatement of motion, the glimmering ball, as were it a lantern borne by an unseen hand, came suddenly to a pause in the air directly before them. Then followed an odd sort of a dialogue, made up of questions on one side, with motions for answers on

the other, the wisp-light moving up and down for "yes," from side to side for "no," and for "I don't know," 'round and 'round.

Bear. "Will-o'-the-Wisp, have you lighted the robber's feet to the pit-fall?"

Wisp. Up and down.

B. "Did he swear?"

W. From side to side.

B. "Did he pray?"

W. Up and down.

B. "Will he be less of a thief for the pit-fall?"

W. 'Round and 'round.

B. "Has Friar's lantern lighted the hypocrite's feet to the quicksands?"

W. Up and down.

B. "Did he swear?"

W. Up and down.

B. "Did he pray?"

W. From side to side.

B. "Will he be the less of a scamp for the quicksands?"

W. 'Round and 'round.

B. "Has Jack-o'-Lantern lighted the bad boy's feet to the frog-pond?"

W. Up and down.

B. "Did he swear?"

W. From side to side.

B. "Did he pray?"

W. From side to side.

B. "Then he must have swum?"

W. Up and down.

B. "Will he be the less of a rogue for the frog-pond?"

W. 'Round and 'round.

The questions duly answered, and evidently to his entire satisfaction, the bear wound up the dialogue thus:

> **"Then, Will, lead on, over mire and clay,**
> **And when you come where the dead men lay,**
> **Hold your lantern close to the mound,**
> **That we may keep on Manitou ground."**

With Will-o'-the-Wisp now at their head, again were they speeding swiftly onward. Of their guide, Sprigg could at first see nothing, saving his big, dim lantern; but, soon chancing to look a little lower, there, directly under the light, he saw, strange to tell, a pair of red moccasins, gliding on over the tops of the rank swamp weeds, and so lightly that the long, lithe sedge, swaying to the slightest breeze, bent not under their tread. The boy glanced quickly down at his heels to reassure himself that the wispy elf had not stepped into and walked off in his own moccasins. But there they still dangled, just the same, each with a toe at one of his heels. Then flashed it upon his mind that he had not really seen his own moccasins since he had flung them from him up there on the Manitou hill; and so, for aught he or anybody else could tell, red moccasins, if peo-

ple could only see them, might prove to be as plentiful in the world as Yankee shoes.

How long, how far they traveled Sprigg, of course, had no means of judging; but the moon had well nigh climbed to the top of the sky, when, having left the morass far behind them, they came to the foot of another lofty mountain, where, under the shadow of a beetling cliff, yawned the rocky jaws of a huge cavern, into which Will-o'-the-Wisp led the way, his big, dim lamp beginning to brighten the moment it entered the subterranean gloom. Hardly had they crossed the threshold when Sprigg could perceive that they were descending as steeply as, but now, they had been rising. Deeper and deeper into the heart of the mountain they sank; deeper and deeper into the heart of the earth; the ball of light no longer a phosphorescent gleam, but a flame of living fire. But it was not long before they had descended again to the level ground, which they traversed for some distance, then, for the first time since quitting the farther side of the swamp, came they to a pause.

Sprigg looked around him. Nothing could he see, saving the bear, the red moccasins behind him, the red moccasins before him; and just over the latter the ball of light, which was now burning with such brilliancy that the luminous hemisphere around it formed a wide and lofty dome in the solid darkness of the cavern. For some moments past he had

heard a murmuring sound, as of abundant waters rippling over a rocky bed; and filling all the air was a delectable perfume, as if flowery fields and fruitful groves must be blooming and waving not far off. By this time nothing amazed him. Nothing frightened him. He moved and felt and thought as one in a dream; and so, indeed, had it all appeared to him from the moment he had lost sight of his father, there at the old hunting camp.

CHAPTER XIII.

Meg of the Hills.

"Meg of the Hills! Meg of the Hills!" So called the bear in a loud voice; very loud, indeed, yet in the tone of the voice was something which Sprigg had not before observed there, so deep and mellow and musical was it. In answer to the summons, forth into the luminous circle, from some mysterious depth of the cavern, soon came gliding a bearess, who seemed in every way a match for the bear, excepting that she was of a smoother, gentler type.

"Meg of the Hills, have all come home,
From mountain climb and forest roam,
From river mist and ocean foam,
From moon-rise white and sun-set red,
From elk-stag lair and bison bed,
From panther ambush still and dread,
All, all returned?"

To which the bearess answered:

"Yes all returned to Manitou den,
Save those who walk by night with men,
To bring the deeds in darkness done,
To the dread light of the tell-tale sun."

Then suddenly assuming a tone of voice as different from the former as fiddle from violin, and with a particular eye to our hero, where he still kept his

seat on his charger's back, or rather was kept there by the unlocked arms of Manitou-Echo, the bearess added:

"And you did find the little runaway, sure enough, Nick?"

"Aye, that did I, and a stiff-necked, strong-backed, hard-muzzled cub of a human thing do I find him, too! Tough! Tough!"

"Then all the accounts we have heard of him are but too true," sadly observed the bearess, whom the bear called "Meg."

"But too true!" echoed the bear, whom the bear-ess called "Nick."

Meg. "Is it really a fact, then, that his thoughts by day and his dreams by night are so taken up with red moccasins that he is in a fair way to make a monkey of himself?"

Nick. "Really a fact."

Meg. "A fact, too, that he had no thanks in his heart for the beautiful moccasins, which his kindest of fathers gave him one night last week?"

Nick. "A fact, too!"

Meg. "A fact, also, that his thoughts are so wrapped up in the moccasins that he has none left for his prayers?"

Nick. "A fact, also!"

Meg. "And, likewise, a fact that he sneaked off, like a spit-thief dog, when his best of mothers had told him and told him, times and times, that he ought not, and he should not?"

Nick. "Like—wise—a—fact!" slowly pulling the words, as if he could hardly find it in his heart to testify to behavior so shabby.

Meg. "But, Nick," and she looked earnestly at her lord, as if hoping that for this one time, at least, he would vary his affirmative echoes just a little, "that slip of the tongue on the fence, which Manitou-Echo reported to us—surely, now, you can't say 'yes' to that?"

But Nick said neither "no" nor "yes." He answered never a word! All mum, he hung his head, and but for the hair on his face he would have been seen to blush up to the very eyes.

Meg. "I spare you the verbal answer. I read it but too plainly in your looks. Hard is it for us poor Manitous to imagine how a boy—a Christian, human boy, who knows his catechism—could be so false to the mother that bore him! Using the very breath she gave him to tell her a lie! Then we can no longer doubt that, in addition to all, he did actually curse the red moccasins, when he spurned them from him up there on Manitou Hill. The beautiful moccasins he had so earnestly longed for, and which had been procured for him at such cost, and had borne him so bravely through wood and swamp, over hill and dale!"

Nick. "My dear, to give the round sum of the matter, it is all precisely as Manitou-Echo has reported. But, if you need additional evidence to set

your doubts at rest, know, then, that the boy himself has made a clean breast of it to me, and the two stories tally from beginning to end—tally as nicely as our two tails."

Meg. "What! Not to leave out those secret designs on—what did Manitou-Echo call them—the boy and the girl?"

Nick. "Young Ben Logan and little Bertha Bryant."

Meg. "Not to leave out his secret designs on young Ben Logan and little Bertha Bryant? The boy to lose his life for envy; the girl her senses for love—all because of the beautiful moccasins!"

Nick. "Well, well, Meg, mum's the word just there. He's human, remember, and you know they say that 'Adam's fall made fools of all;' and so, with their tails up, here they come; and, with their tails down, there they go—in that respect resembling dogs, who, in their turn, acquired the habit from their human masters. But I am deviating, and I perceive that you are wishing to make some further inquiry. What is it, my dove?"

Meg. "I was longing to ask if—what's his name?"

Nick. "Sprigg."

Meg. "If Sprigg has not manifested the deepest sorrow and repentance for what he has done today. Does he not mourn to think of the pain and distress which, by his most undutiful conduct, he is causing his dear father and his dear, dear mother?"

Nick. (With a sad shake of the head.) "Not with heart-grief, I fear; not with heart-grief! He mourns over the ills which he has brought upon himself by his undutiful conduct, rather than over the wrong thereof, or because of the pain and distress which it must be causing his dear mother and his dear, dear father!" And again Nick shook his head, as were it a desperate case almost beyond hope.

Meg. (With almost as hopeless a shake of the head as Nick.) "Ah, me! who would have thought it? Who could have thought it? Why, Nick, he is as bad as Robinson Crusoe, is he not?"

Nick. "Oh, worse than Robinson Crusoe. Robinson Crusoe, it is true, ran away from home against the command of his father and the prayers of his mother. But he used no deception in the matter. Robinson did not go a-sneaking off, with a lie in his mouth and his shoes in the water bucket; a-sneaking off like a spit-thief dog, to use your own expressive words. And yet, even his case was considered serious enough for a putting through on a desert island. Yes! A good deal worse than Robinson Crusoe, else no need were there of putting him through so."

Meg. "But come, now, Nick; you can't stand there and tell me that Sprigg is as bad a boy as Jack Bean-Stalk?"

Nick. "Well, no; not so bad as that. Not so bad as Jack Bean-Stalk. Jack Bean-Stalk was so near the very tipping-over edge of total depravity

that I have often wondered since—in fact, wondered at the time—that it did not require a more tremendous putting-through than sliding up and down, between earth and moon, for developing such a hard case of a boy into an honest man. Perhaps, the man in the moon, while the rogue was up there, lent us a helping hand, not suffering him to come down to earth again, excepting on condition that he would thenceforth keep his shadow, as much as possible, in the sunshine; as little as possible in the moonshine; sow no more wild oats, plant no more wild beans."

Meanwhile, the subject of this moral confab remained comfortably seated upon his charger's back. The matter and the manner of the confab smacked so much of the kind he was used to, that he was beginning to feel himself quite at home, and fancied that he could have little to fear for life or limb, so long as he found himself in the company of people, with feeling so home-like in their hearts, and with words so home-like on their lips. Therefore, the more home-like grew the moralizers, the more Sprigg-like grew the subject. But, bearing in mind how sensitive he was to ridicule, you can well imagine how he winced to hear himself compared to a "spit-thief dog;" and how he squirmed to find his secret designs on young Ben Logan and little Bertha Bryant, which he had not openly owned to himself, thus come popping out into the tell-tale light of Will-o'-the-Wisp. The wispy lamp was now not

only burning as a living flame, but twinkling like a living eye, which winked or blinked or stared at the boy, as were it perfectly cognizant of all that was passing among them. But if it was all a dream, as Sprigg by this time was half persuaded it must me, what mattered it, though Will-o'-the-Wisp did snuff his lamp into a tell-tale brightness, for Meg of the Hills to show a "spit-thief dog" in, or for Nick of the Woods to hold up a bug-bear lie in? It was only a dream, which, coming soon to an end, should be wondered over for a moment, then forgotten. Yes, and in the like sense, so is life.

"Then, dear Nick," answered Meg at length, after they had shaken their heads for some moments in silence, "as Sprigg's case is not so bad as Jack Bean-Stalk's, it is not yet too late to bring the poor, stray cub back to his milk again. But he must first be made, not only to see, but to feel and acknowledge the error of his ways before we can hope to amend them. Now, how is this to be brought about? How is this case to be treated?"

"My dear Meg, that is the very question I have been asking myself all this time, and to find the answer I must be allowed a few hours' privacy for thinking the matter over. So you and the children go to bed and leave me to my reflections, and in the morning we will hold another consultation."

So saying, the bear, with the look of one preparing himself for deep thought, and all unconscious

of what he was doing, seated himself upon his haunches. Whereat, Manitou-Echo suddenly quitted his seat, when, with a swift, sleek slide down his charger's back, plump to the ground came Sprigg, still in a sitting posture, his straddled legs as nicely adjusted to the bear's broad rump as spur to heel.

"Bless a body," cried the bear, glancing 'round at our hero, where he sat with his face all crumpled up for a cry; not that he was hurt in the least, but that Manitou-Echo and Will-o'-the-Wisp were laughing at him, as he could see (for he could not hear them) by the fantastic capers of their moccasins and by the lantern bobbing up and down. "Bless a body! But it had quite slipped my mind that the cub was on my back. There, now! Don't rub so hard, and save your brine for your sins."

"He-he-he!" laughed Manitou-Echo, now aloud.

"Ha-ha-ha!" laughed Will-o'-the-Wisp.

"Ho-ho-ho!" Elfin laughter resounding now from every side. The boy looked quickly about him. To his astonishment, he found the floor of the cave, as far as the light of the bobbing lantern allowed him to see, alive, so to speak, with red moccasins, all dancing about on tip-toe, or kicking gleefully into the air.

"Hush, children, hush!" cried Meg of the Hills, in a voice of gentle remonstrance. "Do you not see how it hurts the poor boy to be laughed at? Hush, I charge you!"

The elfin laughter ceased at once. But straight, the void thus left was filled by a long, calf-like howl from our hero, who, now that he had found there some one capable of understanding what a human boy could suffer, must need give vent to his wounded feelings—laugh who would. His lamentation had not reached the modulating point, when, from the hollow depths around, there came, first, a big buzz, then a hoarse hum, and then a mumbling, rumbling, grumbling sort of a noise, which striking his ear as no empty echo, caused him to cut short his longest howl in the middle, to listen and glance about him.

"It's only a trick," drily observed the bear. "Our old house is in the habit of playing our guests, when they sing or laugh too loud."

"Or, rather a fashion," gently observed the bear-ess, 'our old house has of reminding us when it is time we were putting our weary guests to bed. Here, Will-o'-the-Wisp and Manitou-Echo, show our young guest to bed, and be so courteous as to allow him the choice side, and charge the cubs not to crowd him or hug him, as he is an only child, and not accustomed to our litterish way of sleeping."

So, with Manitou-Echo on one side and Will-o'-the-Wisp on the other, the young guest was shown, in quite a stately style, to bed. The bed he found to be as nice and snug as the cleanest of leaves and grass and the most velvety of moss could make it, and was already occupied by three or four young

bears; while close beside it, ranged in a row, were three or four pairs of red moccasins. At first this circumstance struck the boy as somewhat curious, but on perceiving that Will-o'-the-Wisp and Manitou-Echo had kicked off their moccasins, and set them in the same row with the others, and now, in the likeness of two young bears, were lying side by side in bed, the mystery was made as clear to him as the light of Will's lamp, which still hung in the air where he had left it.

As Sprigg stood hesitating whether to turn in or not, Meg came up behind him, and with a gentle push of the nose against his back, said: "There's your bed, and there are your bedfellows. So in with you, my stout one, and make yourself comfortable." As he still hesitated, the bearess brought him a soft dab of her paw on his back with a somewhat stronger push, which left him no alternative but to turn in as he was bidden and make the best of it. Then, humming a low, lullaby sort of a tune, Meg went 'round the bed, softly pushing up and smoothing down the grass and moss, all in a motherly way, which was so like dear mam that it brought the tears to the lost boy's eyes—the softest, the sweetest tears he had ever shed. He would fain have kept them back, but in spite of all he could do they would come stealing out and trickling down. But Meg was glad to see them, hailing them as precious indications that, hard as he seemed, there was still enough of human affec-

tion in his nature to encourage the hope that he might be easily won over to the side of love and truth.

With the blossom-like odors and the water-like murmurs still in the air around him, the little cast-away was dropping off to sleep, when that voice, so like his mother's, which he had heard on the hill at twilight, came again to his ear, repeating the same words: "You have but too much need of rest! Then, sleep, poor child, sleep!"

CHAPTER XIV.

The Manitou Voices.

It was the hour when good boys, with cheerful hearts and innocent thoughts, are wont to rise to the cheerful duties and innocent pleasures of the day, that Sprigg was awakened from a sweet dream of home by a voice close beside him, which came to him like his mother's gentle morning call. He opened his eyes, but could see nothing, save a dense, red mist, bright and luminous, yet as impenetrable to sight as the blackest darkness. But when, on reaching out his hand, he had felt the moss and grass of the bed he lay on, and the hairy coats of the bears he lay with, then knew he but too well that his sweet thoughts of home—his mother's gentle morning call, his father's jolly laugh, and Pow-wow's loud, heroic bark—were all an empty dream. And yet, hardly more assured was he that what his senses were insisting on telling him were not things just as empty and unsubstantial.

What the voice was saying when it woke him, the boy could not recall, but it left a feeling in his heart as if pitying tenderness had been the burden of the words it had spoken. Tones were still lingering in his ear, and with effect so soothing that he should

probably have fallen asleep again; but in answer to it he heard another voice, so abrupt and stern that he started up wide awake, and, in an instant, was all attention. What passed between the invisible speakers, whom we shall distinguish as the "Stern Voice" and the "Soft Voice," ran, word for word, as follows:

Stern Voice. "He must run the Manitou race."

Soft Voice. "Is that terrible ordeal his only chance?"

Stern Voice. "It is. Though so young, his heart is already so proud and deceitful and hard that we must all but break it, to bring it to the good for which it is destined, and of which it is capable."

Soft Voice. "But he can hardly as yet have strayed so far from good as to need so severe an experience for bringing him back. There were tears on his face last night when he fell asleep—soft, sweet tears—and there are fresh ones upon it now. May not these plead for him?"

Stern Voice. "True, there is something of human affection in these tears. But apart from this, they are shed, not in contrition for the sinfulness of his course, but in grief for the pitiful plight to which it has brought him. Being the tears of self-pity, and not of repentance, they are not the kind to divert us from our fixed purpose—that purpose, our highest duty."

Soft Voice. "But, then, he is so young yet!"

Stern Voice. "But, then, he is so bad already!"

Soft Voice. "But, bethink you, how much it lacks of being wholly his own fault? Indeed, he is scarcely at all responsible for being what he is, and it seems hard that he should be made to suffer for the folly of others."

Stern Voice. "That is very true; and just there is represented to us a mystery, not ours to fathom! We are the Manitous of the Great Spirit, and what he bids be done, he bids uncounseled, and would have done unquestioned. They, who reared this boy to be the false young self we find him, should and shall be made to suffer, also; and even more than he, though the fond love and the indulgent kindness with which they have spoiled him, and thereby wronged him, be never so tender and unselfish. Having so erred, they must be made to feel the consequences of their error, to be made sensible of its sinfulness; and thus, through suffering, brought to a knowledge of the duty they owe their maker, their offspring and themselves. So, then, what we propose doing, or, rather, what we are charged to execute, shall redound to their good no less than his."

Soft Voice. "But may we not postpone the trial for a season, till he be stronger to endure it?"

Stern Voice. "Then shall he have but the more to endure and the less to be hoped for. Thus, 'by and by,' might be too late, when 'now' is none too soon; and the hope of to-day becomes, by postponement, the despair of to-morrow. Last night we

marked him well, and perceived that our running commentary upon the evil of his way, with the gentle rebukes couched in them, had little or no other effect upon him than to make him feel at home and easy in his strange position. And yet he could set up the pitiful howl at being ridiculed, as were it the worst, grievous injury that a human boy could be made to suffer. Yes, his heart is so proud and deceitful and hard that we must all but break it, to bring it to its better nature."

Soft Voice. "Oh, Nick of the Woods; but you are stern! So stern!"

Stern Voice. "But, Meg of the Hills, you are merciful! So merciful! Your mercifulness and my sternness temper each other, and the result being justice, makes the mission we are pointed to fulfill a labor both of use and love. You plead for postponement. This indulgence, without some sign of repentance on his part, we can not show the culprit. Yet, to satisfy you, I will give him one more chance of exhibiting his repentance, should there be any in his heart. I will tempt him once more with the red moccasins. Should he manifest no disposition to renew his acquaintance with them, then but too gladly will I defer his day of reckoning, according to your desire. Or, even should he show the least sign of diminished affection for them, diminished and just in that proportion shall be the severity of his punishment. On the other hand, should it appear that, in

spite of the wholesome lesson his yesterday's experience should have taught him, he would still take pride and pleasure in the red vanities, to the exclusion of better thoughts and things, then there is nothing left for it but to put him through at once; no alternative but the Manitou race."

Soft Voice. "Well, well! So be it! But I greatly fear the test shall prove too severe for the virtue of the poor, vain boy. He has a lively fancy, and the moccasins are very beautiful; their glitter and gleam would dazzle—have dazzled older eyes than his! Yes, so be it! And, after all, why deplore it? For——

"When the Manitou race is run,
Which shall be ere set of sun,
All is ended, all well done,
And Wahcondah smiling!"

Then, after a momentary pause, the two voices joined and sang, or chanted in cadences weirdly, musically, the following song:

"Manitou Lords of birds and beast,
Hark to the voice that comes from the East!
Great Wahcondah calling you forth,
Some to South and some to North,
Some to meet the rising sun,
Some to the setting moon to run,
Each to creature he hath in charge;
Govern their way, their lives enlarge;

Make them less than beastly rude,
Teach them more than instinct rude,
Lead them on to Manitou-Land,
Where Wahcondah's powerful hand
Waits to give them Manitou-being,
Manitou-hearing, Manitou-seeing,
Him to know, and knowing, adore,
Manitou all forever more.
Up and forth to meet the day,
Over the hills and far away;
Many a race must be begun,
Some be finished ere set of sun,
All in Manitou fashion run,
All in Manitou mercy done,
Great Wahcondah wills it!"

CHAPTER XV.

The Manitou Eye.

The song had hardly begun when Sprigg could hear a huge stir in the cave, as if the call had awakened a multitude of living things from the slumber of the night. The hubbub was neither boisterous nor loud, yet it seemed to come, not only from near at hand, but from far and wide. It was an infinite mingling of confused, indistinct sounds, like the inarticulate murmurs rising from innumerable voices—talking, singing and shouting, intermixed with laughter and with the cries of beasts and birds.

On hearing the commotion around him, the boy had risen to his feet, and now, with strained eyes, was vainly striving to pierce the red mist in which he was enveloped. Before the song was ended, the multitude, from whom the hubbub rose, were evidently in rapid motion, and all in the same direction, sweeping past him so that he felt as if he were standing upon a rock, in the midst of a wide and swiftly flowing river, on whose waters rested an impenetrable fog. Closely intermingled with the voice-like sounds were now to be distinguished a variety of other noises, resembling the sharp, light clattering of cloven hoofs, the muffled pattering of hairy paws, or the wind-like whirring of fluttering wings.

As the song closed, Sprigg felt something placed in his hand, which, becoming visible the moment it came in contact with him, proved to be a coronal of bright green plumes, such as we have seen described in the interview between Jervis Whitney and Nick of the Woods. It was then remarked that his head-piece possessed the magic property of rendering the person who wore it—fairy or human—invisible to mortal eyes. Nor was this all; it had also the power of making the sights and sounds of Fairyland as clearly perceptible to the senses of the mortal who should chance to get it as to the fairies themselves, whether the wee folks were willing or not, he should pry into their mysteries.

This fantastic ornament, the only object visible to him in the red mist—his own hand that held it up to his admiring gaze not excepted—Sprigg thought even more beautiful and desirable than ever were the red moccasins. He was wishing it was his, and debating within himself whether he should venture to put it upon his head, when a voice, which he recognized to be the same he had heard at home and in the woods and on the hill, and now knew to be that of Manitou-Echo, said:

"Am I not a beautiful thing for the head, Sprigg? Yes, beautiful! You can't deny it; nobody can! Put me on your head! What's to hinder? Put me on, and you shall see what we do with wild dreams and wild dreamers, here in Manitou-land."

In a twinkling the vain boy had doffed the coon-skin cap and donned the feathers. The magic coronal was hardly adjusted to his head, when suddenly the luminous red mist condensed itself high aloft into a globe of living light, leaving all surrounding objects clearly revealed to sight, as were the crystalline sheen of a June day resting upon them. What Sprigg saw there was, indeed, a cave; but far more the appearance had it of a magnificent temple, so vast and lofty it was; so mazy with multitudinous columns and arches, and so resplendent with the light of that living lamp, which found reflection in a million star-like points, as if wall, floor, ceiling, column and arch were studded with gems of every rich and brilliant hue. The hubbub which he had heard around him, the individual sounds whereof were now more distinct to his ear, Sprigg found to proceed from an innumerable multitude of diminutive people, sweeping by him in a continuous stream, and in the same direction, as if a common impulse or purpose swayed them all.

The manikins, in complexion, cast of features and fashion of dress, resembled Indians, and, though so red and outlandish, were beautiful to behold. For a robe, each wore the skin of some wild animal, which, on the hair side, showed as fresh and sleek as if the quondam owner had just walked out of it; while, on the flesh side, it as as smooth as satin and red as blood. The robe was secured at the throat

by a clasp, which seemed to be made of the claws or hoofs of the beast to whom the skin had once, and, perhaps, still belonged. Many wore red moccasins and coronals of green feathers, and here and there in the throng might be seen one who wore the wings of some bird, between which and the skin, forming the robe, there seemed to be some sort of affinity, very suggestive, yet difficult to explain. Though but the miniature of men, these elfin folks were of superhuman activity and strength; and in the aspect of each was something that strangely reminded one of the beast or bird to whom he owed his robe or wings. This latter peculiarity was especially noticeable in the gait, in the play of the limbs and in the shape and glance of the eyes; yet, in the resemblance, nothing was there of deformity or unsightliness, but rather a weird beauty—fantastic, or wild, or savage, or terrible—according to the beast or bird suggested thereby—stalking elk or rolling bison, gloomy bear or rounding panther, jog-trot wolf or gliding wild-cat, nodding jay or fluttering pigeon, swooping hawk or sweeping eagle.

Sprigg had hardly time to note all this, when the weird procession had swept past him, and the last lingerers were now vanishing to the distant shadows of the subterranean temple. Though myriads had departed, many still remained—several of every order—as if, while their fellows were abroad, each fulfilling his special mission, these had some correspond-

ing office to perform here at home. Somewhat apart from the rest stood a group arrayed in the skins of bears, and among these two who, by their lofty port and commanding gestures, were evidently the king and queen of this strange realm. The aspect of the king was dark and stern; that of the queen fair and mild. The latter, as, indeed, all the other elfin women, wore upon her head, instead of the feathered coronal, a wreath of intense crimson flowers, marvelously beautiful; whence came stealing forth the delectable perfume, which the boy had perceived in the air from the moment Meg of the Hills had made her appearance the night before. As he stood there, surveying them, Sprigg felt in his heart that these were the two whose voices he had heard in such earnest conference relative to his particular case.

The young guest now looked about him for the young bears with whom he had slept, but not only his bedfellows, but the bed itself had vanished. Then he knew that they must be among those who wore the skins of bears, and that, instead of having been littered with cubs, he had shared the couch of princes.

In saying that the magic coronal enabled the mortal who wore it to see the sights and hear the sounds of Fairyland as distinctly as the fairies themselves, a slight mistake was made. Although he could not perceive them, Sprigg had his reasons for suspecting that other boys, beside himself, were

there in that underground world; yes, and men, too. Girls and women—all waiting, like himself, to be "put through," though what that might mean the poor boy could, of course, have little or no conception. Invisible though these fellow mortals were, he could see their shadows cast with marvelous distinctness upon the floor of the temple; and, strange to say, spotted were all these shadows! Some in a sitting posture, some standing, some walking, some gliding swiftly to and fro. Many, after remaining motionless for a time, would, all at once, begin dodging, skipping, flitting about among the columns in the most fantastic manner imaginable; then would they come to a pause, and, after again remaining motionless for a brief space, suddenly vanish.

The large majority of these airy figures were not sufficiently marked for safe conjecture as to the manner of persons to whom they were referrable, but many were too apparent to be mistaken. Some stood, with magisterial dignity, staff in hand. Some, with military stalk, moved slowly to and fro—swords, epaulets, plumes—all distinctly traceable. Here sat one, with the likeness of a kingly crown upon his head; while not far off, incongruous, as it may seem, appeared the picturesque silhouette of an Indian warrior, moving onward with a majestic pace, scalp lock, plumed, bow in hand, quiver on shoulder.

But it was a spectacle stranger still to observe how the elves, or, more properly speaking, "Mani-

tous," were busying themselves about these shadows —now approaching them, now receding from them; sometimes standing beside them, earnestly gesticulating, as if engaged in conversation with the unseen, unheard personages who cast them. While watching these mysterious movements Sprigg became cognizant of another curious circumstance—the very counterpart of the shadow mystery. He perceived that, while those invisible mortals were shadowed forth with such distinctness, the Manitous themselves, with the light thrown full and strong upon them, were as shadowless in that light as air itself. Noting this, he glanced upward to see what manner of light it must be that could shadow forth the unseen, and shadowless leave the seen. How the boy started! Then backward shrank, till abruptly checked by a column, against whose base, as were he an effigy carved upon it, he stood, gazing cowcringly upward. That globe of living light was a living *eye!* An eye immensely large, of calm and terrible look, which Sprigg felt to be bent directly upon himself, piercing his very soul and laying it open, stripped of all disguise. Though so bright that it illumined the vast temple to its uttermost bounds, that wondrous eye did not blind, nor even dazzle, the sight; for it imparted to the mortal eye, that need must meet it, strength to bear its light and behold the things it would reveal. To have been dazzled into blindness had been far more tolerable than

to endure that terrible scrutiny. So felt the guilty young human thing as, with increasing awe and dread, he perceived that, while the eye was never turned from him, it seemed to be watchfully observant of all that was passing beneath it, however distant the objects, diverse, multitudinous. No secret, then; no guilty deed or thought, could be hidden in that light. The boy started! That lie he had sent back to his mother as he was slinking away from home! Did the eye see that? Aye, and the hundred others he had told, and was showing upon his soul a smutch, a smear, a spot for every one! Back, again, he shrank and hid himself behind the column. The column was far loftier and more massive than those which uphold the dome of mighty St. Peter's, and was hewn out from the eternal granite; yet the light of that terrible eye came gleaming through it, as if it had been of the clearest crystal. He ran to another, then to a third, fourth, fifth—tenth. In vain! Interpose what he might, still was it all as airy transparency between himself and that piercing glance. There are X-rays for the soul, as well as for the body. He turned his back upon it; there it was still! Look where he would—in the depths above—and the eye was ever before him, its calm and terrible look unchanged. Yet it did not seem to follow him. It was simply *there!* Everywhere!

The self-convicted young offender was still dodging and flitting about among the columns, when the

voice of the Manitou king—the first sound he had heard since the procession had vanished—came to his ears, with the somewhat startling words:

"Manitou-Echo and Will-o'-the-Wisp, come, conjure up, now, the red moccasins' dream! By this time our light has purged the young dreamer's eyes sufficiently clear of the red mist for him to see what stuff his dream is made of, and to what it is tending."

Whereupon a bareheaded elf, extremely fantastic in appearance, yet beautiful, too, and recognized at once by his voice, Manitou-Echo came flitting up to Sprigg, and, with a bland smile and light wave of the hand, thus addressed him:

"Sprigg, how are you this morning? Fresh and spry? Glad to hear it. Our brave Sprigg ran a fine race yesterday—splendid! Everybody said so! You shall run another to-day, if you much desire it. You have just been playing at hide and seek, I see. A nice little game all to yourself. That's merry; that's brave! Everybody plays at hide and seek who comes to our house, and we like to see it; it looks as if our guests were making themselves at home. One would think the old house had been designed expressly for that game, so many nooks and crannies and other out-of-the-way corners has it, where everybody thinks of hiding himself, and nobody thinks of seeking for himself. And, Sprigg, you would be astonished, were we to tell you, who have been here before you! Still, still more aston-

ished, were I to tell you who are here at this very moment; all, like yourself, playing at hide and seek with—strange as you may think it—their own shadows! But no one ever hides from his shadow here, nor finds it. And why? Because the light in which his shadow is cast keeps continually before his eyes, so that, let him spin himself about as he will, still is his shadow ever behind him.

"Doubtless, we Manitous would play at the same game, and as merrily, too; but, unfortunately, as you see, we have no shadows to play with—never had. This deficiency, however, is to some extent atoned for by our being allowed to conjure with the dreams and fancies of you mortals, in which we find our chief entertainment, and the wilder your dreams, the more extravagant your fancies, the finer our entertainment.

"Now, to exemplify the point in question on a more diminished scale, allow me to present to your consideration a dream, in which I happen to have personal interest. When you have considered it attentively, will you please favor me with your opinion as to the stuff it is made of and what it is worth. Here it comes on six legs! Witness."

Sprigg looked. Incredible! The Indian boy and the Shetland pony displayed before his eyes, not as a motionless picture, but as living, moving things —careering 'round and 'round, within what seemed a magnificent amphitheater, crowded with human

spectators—all conjured up out of Manitou mist. Yes, there they were—the pony with a small, red flag stuck in the browband of his bridle. The boy decked out in all his Indian bravery—tomahawk, feather hat, red moccasins—executing a bewildering variety of tip-toe, neck-or-nothing, superhuman antics, along the back and neck, over the head and tail of his fairy little charger. Anon, the wild young equestrian was the Indian boy no longer, but the very semblance of Sprigg himself, throwing his red predecessor completely in the shade, as one might well infer from the plaudits of the thousands and thousands of admiring, astonished spectators, all clapping their hands, waving their hats and shouting: "Hurrah! hurrah! Splendid! splendid!"

Sprigg rubbed his eyes and looked again. Just the same. He closed his eyes; it made no difference, he could see it as plainly through his eyelids. He opened them again. His semblance was fading into a shadow, so was that of the pony—fading like a cloud picture at sunset. Nothing distinctly visible, save the red moccasins, which, from the last fading outline of the pony's back, threw a prodigious summerset, and when they alighted upon the ground, there! in them again, Sprigg saw his semblance. Manitous, temple, amphiteater—all had vanished—a forest of lofty trees appearing instead, through whose glimmer of lights and shadows the boy now saw himself, or rather his wraith running with in-

credible swiftness, and glancing furtively over his shoulder at every bound, as if death were a present fear behind him; life a distant hope before.

But his pursuers, who and where are they? Ah! Yonder they come, and here they are, and there they go. Sweeping swiftly onward—a bear, a wolf, a panther and a bison bull—and his pursuers are gaining upon him at every bound, now treading upon his very shadow.

Meanwhile, the real Sprigg is conscious of a peculiar sensation, as if he were moving glidingly onward, borne along by invisible hands to keep pace with, and see the wild chase to the end. The end has come. He sees his wraith stop suddenly, poised on the very brink of a frightful precipice, those terrible shapes behind; a yawning, mist-hid gulf before. A moment, that semblance of himself stands reeling on the dizzy verge, then flings away, or is flung away into the misty void! His brain spins 'round and 'round; sight and sensation forsake him. The boy has swooned away! Will he be warned? Let us see!

CHAPTER XVI.

The Manitou Race.

Sprigg awoke. Bolt upright, all unharmed he found himself standing in front of the old hunting shanty; in the self-same sun-spot where he had stood when his father and Pow-wow, all unconscious of his presence, had passed him by. Yes, and the self-same hour, too, of the day, as he could judge by the length of his shadow in the sunshine, which he remembered as having been traced on the landscape at that conjuncture. Was that yesterday, or the moment gone but now? He could not tell, so like a dream appeared it all. He ran his eyes along the buffalo-trace, that led in the direction of home, half expecting to catch another glimpse of his father's retreating figure. Thus he stood, for many moments, in a state of dreamy bewilderment, gazing about him far and wide, until his wondering thoughts and wandering eyes reverted directly to his personal self. He looked down; his feet were bare. Where were the red moccasins? Red moccasins! They were but a part of the dream; or, rather, the very master-fancy of it—the incubus! Never had he seen such things in bodily form. Assuredly, he must be at home, aflat of his back on the floor, asleep and dreaming.

He was still looking about him, trying to make something of his strange experiences, when his eye was caught by a glitter and a gleam in the grass, which caused him to spring affrightedly backward, as from the glittering eye and gleaming crest of a rattlesnake. But no serpent was there. The more the pity! Only the red moccasins, adjusted side by side, with their old air of easy self-assurance, and now in open view before him. Yet, but the moment previous his look had chanced to be resting on that very spot, and naught but the tufted grass had he seen there! With their familiar sheen in his eyes, all came flashing back to his memory—the terrors of Manitou hill, the wonders of Manitou cave. Yet what assurance had he that these things also were not dreams? Let all the rest be as unreal as it might, the red moccasins were there in bodily form, and his own identical pair, too, as he could easily distinguish by a certain peculiar token, which was wanting in those he had seen on the feet of the elves. Upon all of theirs, between toe and instep, was the figure of an arrow traced in blood-red beads. Upon his own was the same figure, thrust through that of a human heart, but the whole device wrought in colorless beads. As he stood there gazing upon them, a twinkling light came glancing out of their beads, which met his look amazingly like a smile of familiar recognition. Then came it again, stealing upon his ear, that sound, or fancy, so like a voice;

but whence, whether from the moccasins, or from some airy tongue, or from his own heart, perplexed him as much as ever to decide.

"Our brave Sprigg, in a pet of wrath, flung us from him up there on Manitou hill. He thought that we had deceived him. He had only deceived himself. So bemisted were his eyes from gazing, and gazing, and gazing at us, that he could see nothing as it really was. Therefore, without being aware of it, he passed on directly by his grandpap's house; directly by young Ben Logan's house; directly by pretty little Bertha Bryant's house—the very places whither he was so bent upon going when he set out from home. Now, at any of these houses we should have been perfectly willing to stop, at pretty little Bertha's in particular, only he did not seem inclined to turn our toes that way, but went on, and went on, and never stopped going, until the first thing he knew he found himself lost. Whose fault? Sprigg's; nobody's but Sprigg's. Yet he blamed us for it; blamed us for keeping along with his feet! What else could we do? We can't walk backward; we can't walk sideways—never could. We can only follow our toes, and their course is determined by the feet that are in us. Right their course, right ours. Then to fling us from him, like a pair of slip-shod shoes, when we had done our very best to speed him on his way! Thus spiting his toes by biting his nose, as the bull and the cat and the wolf soon

showed him. Had he kept us under him, we could have kept him at easy distance from the monsters and made ourselves merry at their expense. But, as it was, we could only stand by and kick them out of the way, whenever they came uncomfortably near; and precious little thanks we got for it, too! But here we are, ready and willing as ever to serve our young master, his whole-souled friends to the last!

"Sprigg, this old hunting shanty, as you know, stands exactly midway between your pap's house and your grandpap's house. There's the road home; you know every crook and turn of it as well as we. You are free, perfectly free, to go that way if you prefer it; we shall say nothing, do nothing to hinder you; only, if you choose that road, you shall have to travel it without our good help, without our pleasant company, barefooted—ugly hills, cutting stones, scratching briars, piercing thorns! There's the road to grandpap's house—level and smooth, shady and pleasant! You may not know every crook and turn of it as well as you do of the other, that is true; but we do, so what's the difference? We can take you thither, be assured; and that, too, by set of sun, just at the time when Ben Logan, the bold young hunter, shall be coming home from the forest with the spoils of the chase; just as Bertha Bryant, the pretty little milkmaid, shall be coming home from the bluegrass glades with the cows. Then shall they see us and admire us—you and your beautiful shoes

—admire us, fit to die—the boy of envy, the girl of love! Only, you must have a care, Sprigg, to keep your eyes clear of the red mist, else you will go a-gawking by them, as you did yesterday evening, when, off we are kicked again, like a pair of slip-shod shoes.

"Yes, Sprigg prefers that road, and so do we; suits him better, suits us better, for we never turn back, nor does a brave boy! And Sprigg is a brave boy! Who said our Sprigg was not a brave boy? On with us, then, and away!"

The boy was again bewitched. His old love had returned upon him with exaggerated force. He seated himself upon a stone, and placed the moccasins down on the grass before him, their eye-like beads all atwinkle, as with conscious light. Hark! What is that? Those mysterious sounds again, so like the murmuring, whispering voices, which had been haunting the air around him ever since his leaving home.

Sternly. "Home, false boy! Home to your father-er-er-er-er!"

Softly. "Home, poor child; home to your mother-er-er-er!"

'Twas but the whispering wind, with leaves for lips. Only the murmuring brook, with echoes for words. Wind can whisper and wail; water can murmur and laugh.

The boy took one of the moccasins in his hands,

a thumb and two fingers on each side; yet still he hesitated—that terrible Manitou eye!! Might it not be as present in the depths of the sky above as he had seen it in the depths of the earth beneath, and at that very moment looking as piercingly through his secret soul? He was on the point of dropping the moccasins, when a jay-bird in the nearest tree before him, and a red-bird in the nearest tree behind him began chattering in a noisy, commonplace, wide-awake way, which made him laugh and say to himself:

"Foolish boy! Thus to sit listening to water and wind, and the lengthening shadows telling how swiftly the day is waning! On with the moccasins! Up and away!" And on they were in a twinkling. But now they were on, why was the boy not up and away? There he still sat, his eyes fastened upon the red temptations, bigger with wonder than ever before! The colorless beads, describing the arrow and heart, had grown, in an instant, red as blood.

"Bleed, poor heart! bleed!" cried a soft voice close beside him. "Bleed! or be to your mother forever a sorrow!"

"Bleed, false heart! bleed!" cried a stern voice close behind him. "Bleed! or be to your father forever a curse! You have chosen! Abide by your choice! Up and away!"

With a high spring, the moccasins lifted their wearer bodily up from the ground, and began exe-

cuting a variety of fantastic antics, as completely foreign to any design or will on the part of the boy as if he had been but a wire-worked puppet. Whereat peals of elfish laughter came ringing out, with explosive abruptness, from every side—from the leafy heart of the forest, from the rocky breast of the hill, from the empty depths of the sky, from the solid depths of the earth—wild and mocking laughter, mingled with cries of "Put him through! Put him through!" Then, as suddenly, the laughter ceased, when, with a hop, step and prodigious jump, by way of a start, the red moccasins bounded off through the forest, no more to be guided or curbed than the feet of a wild and unbridled horse. Through darksome wood and glimmering glade, over rugged hill and tangled vale, with incredible swiftness sped they on; nor turned aside for bramble covert or reedy brake, but right through the thick of them dashed, till the boy was covered with scratches from head to foot, and his garments all torn into rags.

"Stop! stop! I pray you, stop!" cried poor Sprigg, in piteous accent, at every new peril which seemed to threaten his destruction. At length, as if in spite, the moccasins stopped, so abruptly that he was thrown forward upon the ground, with a violence that left him stunned for several moments. Then, with hands that shook, did he assay to free himself from the accursed things. Too late; they clung to his feet, as if they had grown to the flesh,

and the harder he tugged at them the closer they clung. In fear and rage he stamped with them upon the ground, and they, in revenge, squeezed and pinched his toes, till he screamed outright with the pain inflicted. Then, again, they were off at the same wild speed, and with no more regard for any purpose or wish of his than had he been but a dead load in them, and they had taken into themselves all part of his life and all his will.

By and by, of their own accord, the moccasins came to a halt; and weary and faint, and sick unto death, our unfortunate little hero threw himself down at the foot of a tree to die. But scarcely had he stretched himself along the ground, when his ear was caught, first, by a rude roar, a far way off in the forest; then by a hoarse howl; then by a shrill scream; then by a gruff growl; and now, nearer at hand the roar, the howl, the scream, the growl—all heard at once in a savage chorus. He knew them but too well, and their sound struck a terror into his heart, which even the thought of approaching death had not awakened. Up again he sprang, exhausted as he was, to fly for the life which, but the moment before, he would fain have resigned. As he turned to flee he threw a fearful glance behind him, and through the chinks of the forest caught sight of a bear, a panther, a wolf and a bison bull, coming swiftly on and making directly toward him. For more than this he waited not, but, with a despairing

cry to his father for help; to his mother for—it were hard to say what—away he sped, as if his moccasins had taken the wings of the wind.

Through darksome wood and glimmering glade, over rugged hill and tangled vale, the Manitou race went on—the sky all blue and serene above them; the setting sun all bright and smiling before them. At every fearful glance cast behind him the young fugitive could perceive that his pursuers were gaining upon him. Anon, they were so close upon him that he could see their eyes, glaring like balls of fire. And now were they treading upon his very shadow, their smoking breath blown hot upon his ears and neck. Again went up the despairing cry to father; to mother. And they did hear it; would have heard it had they been in their graves!

The cry was still in the air, when a young bear shot forward, wheeled about, and rearing himself up square before him, snatched his cap from his head. His cap was still in the air, when it was replaced by a green coronal, at whose magic touch the whole scene assumed at once a totally different aspect. The grisly shape before him was not a rampant bear, but Manitou-Echo himself, bareheaded, somewhat excited, but not in the least degree short of breath. His other pursuers, appearing now in their true shapes to the fugitive, proved also to be but elves, each wearing the skin of the beast, whose whole likeness he wore but now, and showing an aspect, wild

and savage enough, yet which would not have been unbeautiful to innocent eyes. With a bland smile and light wave of the hand, thus speaks Manitou-Echo:

"Bravely done, Sprigg! Bravely done! You have run a magnificent race! We never saw a young human thing acquit himself in handsomer style! Why, sir, we were beginning to think your shadow was all we were likely to catch! But here we are, one and all, coming out at the goal at the same instant! That's brave! We promised to speed you on, and show you in style to grandpap's house by set of sun! And like true Manitous, too, have we kept our word! You can't deny it! Nobody can! Look!"

Sprigg looked. The Manitou race, after stretching its length for many a zig-zag mile, had brought them to the hour of sunset, and to the top of the lofty hill, where stood the small stockade fort, under the shelter of whose wooden walls his grandfather and the other pioneers had established their cabin homes. But these, with the loving human hearts he had trusted to find there, were now behind him, utterly beyond his reach. Out before him was a depth of airy emptiness! Down beneath him—horrible! A tremendous precipice, and his feet on the very brink! Back he shrank, aghast! But the elves were behind him! His brain spun 'round! The mystic coronal was snatched from his head. The next in-

stant the Manitou moccasins, with a wild leap, sheer over the dizzy verge, had flung him away, like a waif! Down the frightful declivity, whirling, he went, dropping from ledge to ledge like a lifeless lump, whirling and dropping, till into the dusky depths of the forest that shagged the foot of the hill he rolled and vanished. And peals of elfin laughter; weird and mocking laughter, beginning at the brink of the steep, far up there, and keeping pace with the whirling body, now in the edge of the wood, far down there, subsiding into an elfin wail, a weird and pitying wail, then suddenly ceased. A dell, it was, where echoes were wont to linger and answer each other; but never an echo lingered now to lead in the deathlike silence that settled at once on the glimmering evening scene.

CHAPTER XVII.

Missed.

With Pow-wow, now before him, now behind him, trotting out many a short, irrelevant digression from their general course, Jervis Whitney, rifle on shoulder, came trudging cheerfully homeward, all unwitting of the young feet that had met him, the young eyes that had seen him, the young ears that had heard him—heard the very rustling of his garments—far back yonder in the heart of the lonely forest! He was still a half mile or more from home—the bright June afternoon by this time wearing an evening cast—when from among the trees a little way off to one side, the voice of Elster reached his ear, calling Sprigg in a tone of anxiety and alarm. Surprised to find his wife so far from the house, and evidently in quest of their boy, Jervis, somewhat alarmed himself, hastened forward to meet her and inquire into the occasion of so unwonted a circumstance.

"Ah! dear Jervis!" cried she, with tearful eyes and tremulous voice, while yet her husband was coming, "You are returning, and our boy not with you! I was hoping he might have heard the report of your rifle or Pow-wow's bark and had gone forth

to meet you, as he often delights in doing!" Then she went on to tell how Sprigg, about 1 o'clock, had left the house to fetch a pail of water from their favorite but more distant spring, down there in the edge of the woods. Her mind becoming wholly occupied with her work at the loom, she had quite lost sight of the little circumstance, when, all at once, it had struck her that it had now been several hours since Sprigg had left the house, nor had yet returned. Whereat she had left off her weaving and gone forth to see what had become of him. She had searched the clearing all around the house, and the woods all around the clearing; yet not a trace of him had she discovered, saving the empty bucket at the spring.

By the time the story was ended, which she told with many an anxious detail, they had passed on by the house and reached the spring. In the course of the day's chase the hunter had come upon a fresh Indian trail, which made him at first apprehensive that the boy, while thus out of sight and hearing of home, might have been crept upon and captured by some lurking band of savages. But there were no traces at the spring, nor near it, to justify his apprehension; nor yet that of his having fallen a prey to wild beasts—the two sources of danger being, in those days, always coupled in the minds of our pioneer progenitors. The prints of the boy's bare feet were plainly enough to be seen in the path that led

down the hill; but here, at the spring, without any sign of their having retraced themselves, they suddenly vanished. For once the hunter's clear-seeing eye and his dog's keen-scenting nose were utterly baffled. Those Manitou moccasins being, as you must remember, charmed, could be worn and leave no trace of their wearer behind them that sight of man or scent of dog could discern, be it footprint on the ground or odor in the air. What manner of disappearance might this be?

All in a state of wonderment now, as well as distress, they hastened back to the house, if, happily, some nook or corner had been overlooked, where the boy had lain down and fallen asleep. They were pursuing this forlorn hope, when Elster found herself standing, without any will or volition of her own, directly in front of the old show bill, with her eyes fixed upon it, as if it had been an object she had never seen there before. Then it all came back to her mind, how that picture of the Indian boy and his Shetland pony had charmed Sprigg's fancy and set him to dreaming about red moccasins, and how strangely the whim had possessed him to go to the settlement, where he might make a display of his fantastic finery. This she told Jervis, and together they ran to the chest to see if the moccasins were really playing a part in the mysterious matter.

Pale as death turned Jervis Whitney when he discovered they were gone. Backward the strong man

staggered some paces, as had he been struck on the breast by a heavy fist, and, sinking down upon an oaken settee, exclaimed in a voice of horrified astonishment:

"Oh, Nick of the Woods! Nick of the Woods!" That elfin scene in the forest had come flashing back to his memory, like a prophetic dream, the interpretation whereof was now to be looked for. "My son Manitou-Echo is burning to run a race with your son Sprigg." Thus had spoken the Manitou king; and fantastic as the words had seemed at the time, evident enough was it now that, couched in them, was a meaning or purpose deeper by far than the hunter had divined. Perhaps the trial of bodily strength, or moral virtue, or whatever it was, at which they hinted, had already begun; and their boy now the subject of some elfish freak for his follies, or the victim of some elfish retributions for his transgressions.

Elster stood gazing down on her husband, where, with his face buried in his hands, he sat, repeating the singular exclamation which had escaped him on finding the moccasins missing. As yet, for some whimsical, elf-prompted reason or other, Jervis had told her nothing of his interview with Nick of the Woods, and whenever she had questioned him touching the moccasins he had answered that they had been sent to their boy from Fairyland, thus dodging the truth by telling the literal fact, knowing that

she would treat it as a pleasantry. She was beginning to fear that the stroke had proved too much for the poor man's strength of mind, when, after remaining quite silent for some moments, he raised his head, and looking at her sorrowfully but calmly enough, addressed her:

"Dear Elster, I have not broken my fast since morning. Let me have something to eat and I will set out for the fort at once. It is but four or five miles to the nearest house on the way, and you can easily walk with me that far, there to remain until my return. At present I see not what better course is left us to follow."

A cold supper was set before him at once. While he was eating it Elster went and busied herself about the house, preparatory to their departure. The meal was soon dispatched, and when he had looked carefully to his rifle and hunting accoutrements, to reassure himself that all was in good order for service, Jervis went to assist his wife in making such disposition of their little household concerns as their absence should render necessary. To his surprise, he found her preparing to accompany him all the way.

"Hardly, dear Elster!" said he. The horses have leaped the fence and strayed out into the woods, so that I shall be obliged to go afoot, and for you to walk with me is quite out of the question. Twenty long miles—many of them rough and steep, all of them dark and dangerous! You could hardly endure it to the end."

"If the child has walked it," rejoined Elster, "so may the mother; and if he has not, and is lost to us forever, then this lonely house is our home no longer! I return to it no more."

Though of a gentle and yielding nature under ordinary circumstances, Elster could meet a great trial, like the present one, with a spirit firm and courageous enough; and knowing this, her husband forbore any further remonstrance to her determination. The sun had set and the moon was rising, when, having made their solitary dwelling as secure as possible, they set out on their melancholy journey. In those days the buffalo traces, as they were called, formed the only highways of the wilderness, and the one our poor friends were now following led, for the greater part of the way, through a dense and tangled forest, where the moonlight showed itself only in straggling beams and shed but a ghostly glimmer. At intervals the sombre wildness of the scene would be relieved by a bluegrass glade, all agleam with moonbeams and glistering dew drops, saving where flecked with the shadows of clumped or scattered trees. Pleasing, however, as was the contrast they presented to the savage solitudes around them, these bright spots left upon the spirit an impression of sadness quite peculiar. Each had so much the appearance of a well kept park or woodland pasture that the lonely wayfarers would sometimes find themselves all but expecting that the next turn of the

road would bring them in sight of the stately mansion or comfortable farmhouse to which these beautiful grounds pertained. Nothing of the kind appearing there, the spot, from the very suggestiveness of the homelike, would seem to them more desolate than the most unhomelike parts of the forest.

Often would they pause and call out loudly the name of their boy; the bare possibility that he might be near and hear them seemed too precious to be slighted. Saving this, and, from time to time, an inquiry of affectionate solicitude on the part of the husband, with the wife's answer of patient reassurance that she was not weary, the two poor hearts pursued their way in silence. In the course of every four or five miles they would come to a solitary cabin home like their own, where they would stop and rouse the sleeping inmates, to inquire if aught had been seen there of their boy. Twice or thrice they heard, a far way off in the darkness, sounds that came to their troubled ears like the cries of a child in distress or terror. But when they had paused to listen, and had sent the name of their loved one ringing far and wide, naught had heard they, but the screaming of a night bird wheeling high aloft, or, peradventure, the distant howling of a wolf abroad on his nightly foray. At such times, with a look of dumb, distressed perplexity, first up into their faces, then all around him, old Pow-wow would give a plaintive whine, as if fully conscious that all was

not going well with his human friends, and that this unwonted journey had a sad reference, in some way, to his little master. Sometimes dropping down upon his haunches in the path, some distance in advance, and turning his muzzle pitifully up to the moon, the affectionate old fellow would howl outright, long and loud, nor leaving off until his master and mistress were well up with him again. Thus, in his poor, dumb way, would Pow-wow testify that he was their fellow-sufferer, grieving and sympathizing with them and longing so earnestly to do something to help and comfort them—only but show poor dog how he might set about it.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Pow-Wow Finds Him.

The gray dawn was beginning to take the sun-red glow of morning, when, quite worn out with so long a walk, the anxious parents arrived at the stockade station—the center and rallying point of the settlements in that quarter of Kentucky. They had been indulging themselves in the forlorn hope that their boy, by some strange chance, might possibly have found his way to that place; but this vanished with the first look of wondering inquiry that greeted their coming. Though no tongue could give them any tidings of the lost one, kind and sympathetic hearts were there for comfort, with willing hands and swift feet for help. Among the latter were several hunters, cunning in woodcraft, who could follow a trail, whether of man or beast, the livelong day; and over ground where nothing might be distinguished by the inexperienced eye but grass or leaves, sand, pebbles or solid rock.

Forth on the humane errand they sped them, one and all, some to the northward, some to the southward; many to the eastward, but none to the westward. The little runaway's starting point had been in the East; he might have strayed away toward the

North or toward the South, but it seemed hardly possible that he could have passed on by toward the West. They little imagined how far the wayward young feet had followed the setting sun!

All day long they beat the tangled wilds. Of savage beasts, traces, more than enough, could they find, turn whither they might; and of savage men, two or three recent trails, one of them leading directly across the buffalo highway that traversed the forest between the settlements and Whitney's distant cabin. Late in the afternoon the questers began returning to the fort, dropping in, weary and disheartened, one after one. Some had pushed the search to the very threshold of the deserted home, and had observed how the boy's footprints, after tracing themselves along the path down the hillside, suddenly vanished, there at the spring, and never a sign anear the spot of living things besides, which could suggest an explanation of the mystery. What manner of disappearance might this be?

That morning, after having snatched a brief repose from the fatigues of a day's chase and a night's journey, Jervis Whitney had started forth for a few hours after the rest to renew the search, taking leave of Elster at the fort gate. At sunset he returned, purposing that, if no tidings had been gathered, to beat the forest toward the West until dark. He found his wife where he had left her—where, indeed, she had remained through all the weary, dreary in-

tervening hours—waiting and watching for his return. As the questers had come dropping in, she had read in each dejected face the answer to the question which her own had ceased to ask. She hastened forth to meet her husband, and as he sadly, tenderly folded her in his arms, she laid her head upon his rugged breast, and gave her pent-up sorrow relief in tears. But scarcely had her tears begun to flow, when suddenly she checked them, and with singular decision in manner and voice, exclaimed:

"Come, Jervis! Come!"

"Whither, dear Elster?"

"I know not," replied she. "I have heard no voice, yet I feel that we are called! Come!"

They went at once, as in obedience to a summons, which must be answered then or never. They went as led by a hand, which, to resist, were to tempt their own destruction. They saw themselves drawing—felt themselves drawn toward that side of the hill where, not a stone's throw in the rear of the fort, it abruptly ended in the lofty precipice, before mentioned. A few steps more and their feet had been on the very verge, when, between it and themselves, rang out a cry of thrilling horror, followed by peals of wild, unearthly laughter, which, beginning at the brow of the steep, swiftly descended along its sides, till in the edge of the forest, afar down there, they subsided into a wild, unearthly wail. Then in a moment all was still—not a teli-tale echo awaking to

help the listening ear to determine what manner of sounds had broken the silence.

Harrowed with horror and anguish, Jervis and Elster stood, and with no more power to move from the spot than the senseless stones that lay around them. Not a sign of life had they seen, where sounds of life they had heard. It was as if the vacant air had cried; then laughed, to mock itself for crying; then wailed, to chide itself for laughing.

Old Pow-wow had followed cowering behind them. Now he bounded forward, and straight came bounding back again, with something in his mouth, which he laid at their feet. Pitiful heavens! The little coonskin cap! The next instant the dog had flung him sheer over the brink of the steep, and now, in a succession of huge leaps from ledge to ledge, was making his zig-zag way adown its sides, till, in the forest shadows far below, he disappeared. One moment more and his bark came ringing joyfully up to his friends—the sweetest, welcomest sound that had ever greeted their ears.

"Pow-wow has found him! Wait here, Elster!"

So saying, and moved by a will, not all his own, and sustained by a power, no more his own than had he been a child in his father's arms, the father followed the dog, making his way in the same zig-zag manner adown the perilous hill, till, in the dusky shadows at its base, he, too, had plunged. A few long, rapid strides, and he was at the spot whence

Pow-wow's joyful barks had continued to resound. What found he there? The body, indeed, of his child; but whether as a waif unto life, or as a prize unto death—it were hard to tell. Stretched out on the ground, all ghastly it lay; the head toward him, and just beyond the naked feet—adjusted side by side, with their old air of easy self-assurance, the Manitou moccasins. As the father approached, the elfish little horrors, fetching a summerset aloft, as he had seen them do the time before, plumped themselves directly between him and his child, though vanishing the moment they touched the ground. But, with the vanishing, came a voice of more than mortal tenderness, and with the voice a perfume of more than earthly sweetness.

"Jervis Whitney—

Whom we lend our moccasins red,
Them we show how the erring are sped.
Whom we lend our coronals green,
Them we show how the erring are seen,
When the right begins to fall,
Hearts must bleed or lost is all."

They who watched from above—for, by this time, many were there with Elster—had scarcely drawn the long, full breath, which follows a moment of breathless suspense, when the father, bearing a burden in his arms, reappeared at the base of the precipice. They called to him and pointed to the path that led

obliquely around the hill, as being that by which he should ascend. A moment he paused and ran his eye along the circuitous way; but looking upward again to the group above him, and seeing Elster leaning over the dizzy brink, with arms outstretched, in piteous eagerness to clasp their loved one again to her heart, he paused no longer. To their unspeakable amazement, right up that huge and difficult steep, all burdened as he was, came the bold, strong man, with steps so light and swift that his ascent appeared as smooth and uninterrupted as the gliding shadow of a flying bird. Bold and strong, indeed, but that were a feat, if not beyond all human courage to dare, at least beyond all human strength to perform.

"Oh! God of Love!" exclaimed the mother, as the father gained the summit. "But our child is dead! Our child is dead!"

And with a piteous moan, the poor heart swooned away. Kind hands stayed her fall, and taking her up and bearing her into the fort, there laid her on a bed in grandpap's house. The same kind hands took the boy, whom, up to this moment, the father had held tenderly clasped to his rugged breast; took and laid him beside his senseless mother, his garments all torn to tatters and red with blood, which still trickled from many a wound.

"After all, the child may not be dead," said a kind voice—young Ben Logan's mother. "See how he

bleeds." And she laid her hand upon the unheaving breast, in the forlorn hope of finding the heart still beating. Then, after a moment of suspense, came the joyful announcement: "It beats! It beats! The child still lives!"

The cry aroused the mother to consciousness. Clasping her child to her bosom, in an agony of pitying love and hopeless sorrow, again and again she cried: "Oh! God of Love! But our child is dead!"

"No, Elster, dear, your darling is not dead," said another kind voice—little Bertha Bryant's mother. "Give him to us and we will wash and lave his wounds and bind them up with healing salves. See how freely they bleed. That could not be the case if he were dead."

She suffered them to take him and do with him as they would; for herself, she still believed him dead. At the end of half an hour Jervis, who had gone with the women to assist in the work of resuscitation, returned to her and bade her be of good cheer; that the wounds, though many and grievous enough, did not seem to be deep and dangerous, and the signs of reviving life were growing every moment more and more apparent. Thus reassured, Elster arose, and from that time forward performed her part as beseemed the mother of the sufferer.

CHAPTER XIX.

Young Ben Logan.

That morning, when the quest had begun, foremost of all the questers had gone forth young Ben Logan. Throughout the anxious day no one, saving the father of the lost boy, had shown such unremitting, unwearied diligence in the search as Ben, and that he had desisted at all was because the gathering shadows of evening had rendered further efforts unavailing.

Young Ben Logan, it will be remembered, was the boy to whom poor Sprigg had been so eager to make a display of his red moccasins, even while confident that their glitter and gleam would set his young friend—the best young friend he had in the world—to dying of envy the moment they met his dazzled eyes. Ben was a big-bodied, soft-hearted, slow-thoughted lad, about sixteen years of age; bigger already, indeed, and stronger than the majority of grown-up men. He could handle a rifle like a veteran marksman, and, in the ways of forest life, could make himself as completely at home as a young Indian. He was greatly attached to Sprigg, and although the older by three or four years, considered his little friend as, in every way, his equal, excepting

as regarded size, marksmanship and woodcraft. In return, Sprigg loved Ben as much as a boy so humored and spoilt, and, consequently, so wayward and selfish, was capable of loving anybody not exactly necessary to make Number One all comfortable and snug. He was perfectly aware of the high esteem in which his mental parts were held by his big chum and master's every look, word and act told you over and over that he was exactly of the same opinion, if not more so. Nor can we ourselves deny, having had frequent occasion to note the fact, that our hero was a boy of uncommon sprightliness of mind and liveliness of imagination, while Ben was somewhat heavy and slow in all his ways, except when all agog in the chase, and then he was as light and elastic as an Indian bow; as quick and keen as an Indian arrow. Such being the difference between them, the two cronies chimed as smoothly together as a pair of well agreeing fiddles, each, in turn, taking the lead of the other—Ben, when they were roaming the perilous solitudes of the forest; Sprigg, when they were besporting themselves within the safe precincts of the fort.

Evening had deepened into night, when, all alone, weary and very sad, Ben Logan made his way back to the fort. Here, at the gate, being informed of the marvelous manner in which the quest had terminated, he hurried on to grandpap's house to see his little friend and learn what further particulars he might of

the mysterious affair. His mother, hearing that he was coming, hastened to meet him at the door; hastened, because her son, being intended by nature for a man of huge proportions, was already provided with the full-grown foot to meet that end. Consequently, his fashion of traveling over the loose, board floors, we usually see in backwoods cabins, was of that horse-like kind peculiar to overgrown boys, and against which quiet old ladies are wont to protest as more in keeping with barns and bridges than with human dwellings. And now that she was a nurse, his mother must needs protest against the habit in question more earnestly than usual, representing the necessities of the case in a way so affectionate and anxious that the tender-hearted Ben felt himself growing tender-footed, even while yet he stood on the solid earth. It took her but a few minutes to tell him all she knew of Sprigg's story, and it was as much as Elster knew, or any one else, indeed, excepting Jervis Whitney himself. When he had heard it, the young hunter, big with wonder and pity, leaned his rifle against the wall beside the doorway, and, treading the floor as lightly as were he walking on thin ice, followed his mother into a back room, which had been assigned to the little sufferer.

There, pale as the dead, and as senseless, he lay, and as motionless, saving the slightest breathing, which might encourage the hope that, in the contest between them, life still held the advantage over

death. Every now and then a tremor, somewhat more perceptible than the breathing, would play for a moment over the lacerated limbs, like the flickering flame of an expiring lamp. Ben could remain no longer than just sufficed for one good look at his unfortunate little friend, as that was enough to call forth a blubbering outburst of pitiful feeling much too boisterous for a place like that, and quite as much to be protested against by the doctors and nurses as his horse-like tread. So he conveyed himself away with as little noise as a rumbling, puncheon floor would well allow a half-grown boy with full-grown feet. And gathering up his rifle as he passed out at the door, went crying home. Some people, especially the harder cases among the boys, may regard such an exhibition of feeling as more beseeming a faint-hearted girl than a bold-hearted young hunter. But you and I know too well what human nature ought to be than to think anything of the sort. We know that this tenderness of feeling—let them call it weakness if they will—was the best part of young Ben Logan's strength, and that, without it, the son of a white man's wife would have been no better than the son of a red man's squaw.

Next morning, at rise of sun—you all know what a desperately early riser the sun is in the busy month of June—Ben was again at grandpap's house to learn how it was faring with his little friend, and to offer such help in the case as a boy might ren-

der. His mother, who, with Bertha Bryant's mother, had watched all night, met him at the door and told him that Sprigg, although still unconscious, showed some signs of improvement; his breathing was stronger and more regular, and the tremor about his limbs had nearly disappeared. Ben wished to know if it would not be advisable for him to go to the lick and shoot a fat, young buck for Sprigg. Sprigg's favorite dish was a venison ham chopped up and made into a pie, with rich, brown crust and plenty of good, cream gravy, and he ought to have it for his dinner to-morrow. His mother smiled at the suggestion, and answered that it would be many a day, she feared, before his little friend could be equal to such a strong diet. Well, he would go and shoot a buffalo for Sprigg. Sprigg was uncommonly fond of buffalo tongue, and might like to have some for his supper that night. No; buffalo tongue was not more to be thought of than venison pastry. Well, then, a fat, young bear; what could be more tender and delicate than the fat of a young bear, especially when the woods, as now, were full of wild honey? No; all too rich and strong for the present demands of the case. Should the little patient be found able to swallow just a few spoonfuls of weak squirrel broth, right glad and thankful should they be. So "Benjamin" might go and fetch a squirrel for Sprigg.

"Benjamin went and did as he was bidden, bringing down a squirrel within gunshot of the fort and

sending it in forthwith to his mother. But this was far from satisfying "Benjamin," and he believed it would be far from satisfying Sprigg. As the station here had resulted in a settlement of considerable extent, game of the larger sort had grown very scarce in the immediate vicinity, thus obliging the hunter, who would pursue the chase on a scale beseeming the hunter's paradise, to betake him to the more unfrequented parts of the forest. So, to the distant lick went young Ben Logan, leading, Daniel Boone-like, a horse by the bridle to help him home with the spoils of the chase. He had taken counsel with himself and was resolved that Sprigg should have a fair start in the direction of recovery to health, and to this benevolent end a fat, young buck or buffalo must that day bite the dust; or, better still, as the woods were full of wild honey, a fat, young bear. Squirrels and birds might do well enough for people in full health, where nature had only to hold her own; but in a case like Sprigg's where nature was exhausted, it was only the larger quadrupeds which could yield the nourishment sufficiently strengthening for certain and speedy recuperation. According to Ben's theory, a given quantity of bear's meat, for example, afforded some ten or twelve times as much nourishment as an equal quantity of squirrel's meat.

That day a fat, young bear fell a sacrifice to Ben's physiological heresy; the next day a fat, young buck; a lordly buffalo on the third, and so on, and so on, for

more than a week, with a smart sprinkling of squirrels and birds looking to the special wants of the doctors and nurses. Every morning he would furnish the squirrel or bird required of him; which, having done by way of compromise between his better judgment and his duty as a son, then away to the lick would he hie himself on his own responsibility for something better worth a hunter's notice. The good fellow had evidently taken Sprigg's case into his own hands, under an abiding conviction that nothing less than an heroic course of wild meat could bring it to a happy issue. Thus, while he was devoting all his powers of body and mind, and the shiny parts of a fortnight to the sustenance of one little sick boy, young Ben Logan had well nigh foundered the whole settlement on wild meat—the backbones, tongues and spareribs themselves being enough to surfeit the fort, consisting, though it did, of some ten or twelve families, all well stocked with children and dogs.

How could poor Sprigg have ever imagined that a pair of red moccasins, or anything else, indeed, which might be named as very attractive to juvenile fancy, could stir up envy, to the dying extent, or to any extent whatever, in the simple, unselfish heart of his friend Ben? Ben would have admired the moccasins exceedingly; pronounced them beautiful, fine enough for the son of a Shawnee Sachem; fine enough, indeed, for Nick of the Woods himself; but to envy Sprigg for his finery would no more have en-

tered his thoughts than to envy a redbird for his tail feathers, or a red man for his head feathers. Ben could have put those Manitou moccasins on and worn them whithersoever he pleased, and his guileless feet been as easy and safe in them as had they been shod with unenchanted, merchantable, split-leather, Yankee shoes. Ben could have followed the chase in those moccasins day after day, till he had rubbed and kicked them bare of all their gaudy beads; till he had snagged them full of holes and covered them over with barbarous patches of his own needlework, and never, in all that time, have missed his aim, or lost his way, or forgotten to say his prayers, for aught he could have seen in their glitter and gleam to daze and cheat him out of his sober senses.

And why? Because Ben Logan was not a wild dreamer. In other words, because he was one of the best boys that ever lived; so good, indeed, that he could not have been more invincible to Manitou spells, even had he been armed with Tom Walker's pocket bible and worn it perpetually in his bosom. Nick of the Woods himself could never befuddle the wits of such a boy, even were he, too, minded to make the trial and exert his Manitou utmost to that end; though, to do him justice, the Manitou king was perfectly willing—glad, you may have it—to let Ben Logan alone. He knew very well that he could do nothing for the bettering of such a boy, which nature —best of mothers—had not done for him already.

No need to set Ben's heart a-bleeding to develop the good that was in it, or to crumble up the evil.

Now, there are people who, though given to swallowing their own camels, are just as given to straining at other people's gnats; and these, of course, being incredulous as to what I have just affirmed, must need some further proof to remove their doubts. They shall have only to read what follows.

One pleasant afternoon, as Ben Logan was ranging the wilderness, catering for his little sick friend, Nick of the Woods caught Will-o'-the-Wisp and Manitou-Echo amusing themselves at the young hunter's expense. They would set the trees and bushes to waving their tops and fluttering their leaves, where there was no wind; smoke to rising, where there was no fire; fire to burning, where there was no fuel; shadows to flitting and dodging about, where there were no visible forms; echoes to calling and answering each other, where there were no audible voices. Then would the elfish rogues fall to laughing and skipping about in the most extravagant manner to witness the big, young mortal's demonstrations of amazement; how he would open wide his eyes to stare this way, and wider still to stare that way; how he would cock first one ear, then the other, to listen; yes, and how he cocked his gun, too, ready to let fly the unerring bullet, the moment whatever it was—man, or varmint, or goblin—might dare to expose but so much as the head or tail of itself for a mark.

"Imps!" cried the Manitou king, "let Ben Logan alone! There's nothing in the dreams of such a young mortal which calls for any of your good help. Were Ben a boy of a wild and brilliant fancy, say, like Sprigg, whose case we are putting through in a somewhat novel fashion, why, these pranks you are playing might not be deemed unseasonable, might even be approved; but you forget the nature of Manitou duty and go beyond the bounds of Manitou privilege, when you turn aside to bedevil a thoroughly honest human thing like Ben. To be sure, as I have just hinted, Ben is not a brilliant youth, nor shall ever be one, even though he should live to see his second childhood, and from that stage of mortal existence take a fresh start; nor is he likely ever to make a conspicuous figure in the world. What, though, does this signify to us Manitous? Such considerations, smacking, as they do, of human folly, are not the sort to influence the true Manitou way of viewing mankind, or the true Manitou way of dealing with human concerns. 'Tis enough for us that Ben is right-minded and true-hearted; that he keeps his dreams and fancies within beseeming limits, never letting them go gadding wide and loose from home; or, if he lets them go abroad at all, depend upon it, the ends he proposes to himself are well meant and unselfish, be they wise or simple. Therefore, it behooves us, as true Manitous, to treat this humble, honest lad with just as much consideration and respect as we were

showing the boy Washington, some forty years ago, and are now showing the boy Tecumseh.

"Then away with you, now, to Meg of the Hills and join her in her attendance on Little Bertha Bryant, the pretty young human thing, whose mind is so free from foolish fancies, whose heart so full of loving intentions that we can make her, and are making her, and shall continue to make her, an instrument to the good and happiness of the less worthy with whom her lot is cast. Away, ye imps! But mark ye before ye go, if ever I catch you making another innocent mortal the object of your impertinent pranks, I will reduce you, sure as fate, I will, to your original fog and moonshine, with just so little of you left as shall barely serve for echo and wisp."

CHAPTER XX.

Little Bertha Bryant.

Who, with pretty, young eyes overflowing with soft, sweet tears, stood gazing at Sprigg and his mother, where they lay side by side together? Little Bertha. Who, with pretty, young hands, so kind and deft, hung the kettle over the fire, and, when the water was warmed, carried it to her mother to wash and lave Sprigg's wounds? Little Bertha. Who, with pretty, young hopes and fears, all in a bird-like flutter, hovered around till the latest grown-up bedtime, wishing and wishing that she might do something to make Sprigg open his eyes and smile—part his lips and speak? Little Bertha. Who, with pretty, young feet, so willing and nimble, ran to the gate next morning, and every morning thereafter for more than a week, to receive from Ben the squirrel or bird for Sprigg's broth; then to the spring to fetch a pail of good, cool water; then to a neighbor's house for some balsam; then somewhere else for something else, and so on and so on throughout the livelong summer day, and all for Sprigg? Little Bertha all the time; nobody but little Bertha!

And who was little Bertha? Well, the answer to this question can only be given in superlatives, and

even then it must still fall short of full expression. For little Bertha, you must know, was the sweetest-tempered, the truest-hearted, the clearest-headed, the purest-minded, the most helpful-handed, the most willing-footed—in short, the best and the nicest little backwoods damsel that ever wore linsey-woolsey frocks and homemade shoes in winter, and homespun cotton frocks and nothing at all on her feet in summer. But I see that, in this list, I had well nigh forgotten the most popular of all superlatives—"prettiest." So accustomed am I to squaring my estimate of beauty by the good, old adage, "he handsome is who handsome does," or "she beautiful is who beautiful does"—to employ a gender more appropriate to the case. Well, then, "the prettiest," withal, as you may easily believe when I tell you that her hair was so gold-like, her eyes so sky-like, her brow so lily-like, her cheeks so rose-like, her lips so cherry-like, and her form and motions so fairy-like, that Sleeping Beauty herself—of course, I mean before she fell asleep—would have envied little Bertha, even to the extent of wishing that she had been born in a backwoods cabin, instead of a royal palace.

From what has just been said, it may fairly be inferred that, young as it was, little Bertha's life was already largely made up of daily duty, and that she found in them such real delight as to make her quite unconscious of deserving credit for performing them. But the duty in which she took the greatest delight

was that of going every evening to the bluegrass glades, a mile away from the fort, to fetch the cows home to be milked and secured for the night. The glades, which were well set in grass and thickly mottled over with patches of white clover, both the spontaneous products of the soil, were separated from each other by narrow belts of forest growth, converging, for the most part, toward the base of a grass-coated, tree-crowned, exceedingly pleasant-looking hill, of sufficient height to command a fine view of the neighboring country. To the top of this hill, no matter where the cattle might be, Bertha always climbed before quitting the spot.

I would not be understood as meaning that backwoods-man's daughter did this because she was a great admirer of fine landscapes. Intellectually, she may have been almost unconscious of their beauty; and yet it made her happy simply to sit up there for a half hour every evening and let the gladness in her young heart go forth to mingle itself with gladness of nature around her. The universal mother and friend, thus looked directly down upon, seems to assume a smile more directly responsive to the thoughts and emotions in the beholder's mind than when viewed from the general level. The little girl may have had but the faintest intimation of such an interchange; yet, depend upon it, had it not existed, she never would have troubled herself to clamber up the hill, excepting when the cattle were up there and too perverse to come down at her gentle call.

On the evening following Sprigg's mysterious reappearance, Bertha, on going to the glades and climbing to the top of her favorite hill, found there an altogether unfamiliar object, the sight whereof made her two blue eyes dilate with wonder and delight. Beside the moss-grown tree trunk, where she always sat when up there, stood a small but exceedingly luxuriant bush, which must have been the growth of a single day, as she had not seen it there on the previous evening, nor the like of it in all her life. Upon the bush, besides foliage of vivid greenness, grew in in the greatest profusion a large flower of marvelous beauty, both as to its shape, so heart-like, and to its color, so blood-like. But what more especially still distinguished the flower was its perfume, which, though powerful enough to be perceptible all over the hill, was yet too delicate, too lily-like to be easily referred to a plant of such tropical richness, which had more the appearance of bleeding than of blooming. It was a sweetness so peculiar, so foreign to all common experience that to inhale it were enough to make you fancy that fairyland was blooming near, and fairy florists experimenting with their plants in mortal soil.

The moment Bertha caught sight and scent of the flowers, there came, first into her mind, a vivid image of Sprigg, as she had left him lying at home, less like the living than the dead; and then, into her heart, a feeling that they were blooming there to no other end

than for his restoration to life and health. Thus impressed—bespelled, it may be—the little girl, instead of lingering about the spot as usual, hastened to fill her apron with the offered good, stripping the bush to its last blossom. Then, bringing the cattle together in the shortest time the thing was ever done, without the help of a dog, she sent them trotting homeward with all their awkward might, leaving the patriarch of the herd, who was too stately or too stubborn to be stimulated out of a dignified walk, to follow on or stay behind, as suited his sulky old fancy best. Briskly had they started, more and more briskly on they went, the grandmotherly cows hobbling along in that peculiar, cross-legged trot, rather suggestive of rheumatism in the hocks and hips, and which limber-legged little boys, who follow at their heels, are mighty apt to mimic. Set were their big, mild eyes, all glassy with amazement—the sun a mile too high for milking time, not a sign in the sky to show for a coming thunder storm; not a yell, not a howl, not a scream in the forest to tell of Indian, wolf or panther.

Arrived at home, Bertha turned the cows into the enclosure, where they were wont to be milked and secured for the night. Then hastening on to grandpap's house, she entered by a back door, which opened directly into the sick room, and stealing quietly up to the bedside, began softly strewing the fragrant contents of her apron, handful by handful,

over and around the form of the unconscious boy. Scarcely were the flowers strewn, their perfume filling the room, when, slowly over the wan, young face, which until this moment had worn the fixed and pallid cast of death, came stealing a smile of solemn, innocent sweetness, such as we often see on the faces of sleeping infants. Faint, it is true, was the smile, yet perceptible enough to betoken that the spirit was still at home, and only waiting for its doors to be reopened, when it would again reveal itself as a living presence. All in the room observed the change, wondering and rejoicing; rejoicing, for, when it passed away, which it did more slowly than it had come, they could see that the smile had been there, by the more life-like expression it left upon the face. But Jervis Whitney was moved to wonderment more than all the rest; for the moment he caught the scent of the flowers, he remembered it to be the same as that which had met him at the foot of the hill the previous evening.

Next afternoon, Bertha was off to the glades an hour before the usual time, and climbing at once to the top of the hill, was delighted to find that the bush had put forth fresh blossoms on every twig she had stripped the evening before, and evidently to no other end than to be stripped again for Sprigg's especial benefit. So it seemed to little Bertha; so it seems to us. The folks at home had hardly taken the second thought that she had gone for the cows, when here

was Bertha back again, her cheeks as brightly red from her loving haste as the flowers she was strewing broadcast over and around her unconscious patient. Yes, and there it came again—that smile, less faint and sweeter still—and when it had passed away more slowly than before, more perceptible still was the life-like cast it left upon the countenance. Every evening, for seven days, was this repeated, the life-giving plant as often renewing its blossoms, and their vivifying effects on the patient becoming more and more apparent. Toward the third evening Sprigg had so far revived in body as to be able to toss himself about on the bed, and, in mind, so far as to be able to speak. And these manifestations of returning strength became each day more and more decided. When he spoke, however, it was to give utterance, in short and broken sentences, to wild and incoherent fancies, incomprehensible to those who listened, taking, as they did, shape and color from his present experiences; first, as an object of Manitou retribution, now as an object of Manitou regeneration. But always, the moment Bertha, returning all odorous from the glades, entered the room, the tossings and the ravings would cease and he would sink into a deep and peaceful sleep, and so remain throughout the livelong night.

At length the imprisoned spirit became so susceptible to the mysterious flowers that the brightening of the wan, young face would begin ere Bertha, returning with a fresh culling of them, had well-nigh

entered the house. Of course, this susceptibility comprehended Bertha, too, else she never could have been made the medium of such administration. While engaged in discharging her floral office, she appeared as one in happy trance, never speaking and apparently as oblivious of what was passing around her as Sprigg himself. Always, when she had finished strewing the flowers, she would take her station at the foot of the bed, where, with pretty little arms folded together and resting on the footboard, she would stand gazing fixedly into the unconscious, spirit-like face before her, with a look of dreamy, tender, solemn wonder in her innocent blue eyes, beautiful to be hold.

How could poor Sprigg have ever imagined that he had but to put on a pair of red moccasins to captivate the fancy and win the love of such a little angel as Bertha Bryant? Had she seen him so bedizened—"Fop-Indian!" "Jack-Monkey!" would have been the first thoughts to pop into her judicious little head, and Sprigg might have chased her till he had worn his red moccasins slip-shod, and no more have caught her had he, indeed, been a monkey, chasing a dove or a bird of paradise. That he was spared such a humiliation was because he had become by strange chance an object of Manitou interest, and was not allowed to carry out the ridiculous programme he had proposed to himself. What a pity it is that many of us grown-up Spriggs can not become objects of similar interest, to be dealt with in the like manner,

even to the bleeding-heart degree, and made to abandon, perforce, many a purpose in life, which, when it is too late to escape the humiliation of its failure, or, worse, still, of its success, proves to be not a whit less paltry or preposterous than the programme our little hero had in view when he donned his red moccasins.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Manitou Butterfly.

On the evening of the seventh day, hardly had Bertha deflowered the bush, when suddenly it burst again into bloom more glorious than ever before. Hardly had the flowers unfolded, when they resolved themselves into a blood-red mist, which quickly enveloped the whole bush, and when it had cleared away the Manitou arbor vitae had vanished—a thing too beautiful to be seen again in a lifetime.

But now, when the last culling of that mysterious life-giving flower was strewn upon him, Sprigg not only smiled with brighter, more present intelligence than at any previous time, but opened his long-closed eyes. And how beautiful his eyes had grown! As uncloudedly clear, as innocently sweet, as those of an infant awaking from a long and untroubled slumber. Raising himself, unassisted, to his elbow, he began gazing about him, though with too dreamy a look for any clear perception of his surroundings. "I am going," said he, talking as dreamily as he looked, and beginning with the falsehood which he had sent back to his mother as he was running away from home—"I am going to our best spring, down there in the edge of the woods, to fetch dear Meg of

the Hills a good, cool drink of water. Then I am going to grandpap's house with Nick of the Woods. But where is the fence, and the trees—where are they? And the bright sun? I am still asleep and only dreaming."

So concluding, he lay quietly down again, and closing his eyes, remained perfectly still for some moments, as if to assure himself that he had concluded aright and was really asleep. In a little while, however, he recommenced his dreamy talk, which, with his eyes still closed, and occasional intervals of sleep-like silence, he kept up for many minutes. His words, to those who listened, seemed but the incoherent wandering of a feverish fancy.

"They kiss me, embrace me—weep over me as though I were going to die. I think they mean it for Sprigg; but Sprigg is dead already—passed away into nothing. They have lost him and found me, though they do not seem to know the difference yet. That is the way, I think; or why should they keep on calling me for him? They shall never see their old Sprigg again. Never! Never!" A sleep-like pause.

"Sprigg had a pair of red moccasins—long, long ago, when I was a little, a very little boy. I think he had them; and I think he put them on and wore them, far, far away, when he had been forbidden to do so. Yes, I am sure of it now; for I remember telling him how wrong he was doing, and that he ought not to think of such a thing. But he wouldn't

listen to me; he would have his own way. Whither he went, he never knew to his dying day; for his eyes and thoughts were so bewitched by his moccasins that he quite forgot everything else; and, so, soon got completely lost. It was a wild and lonely place where Sprigg found himself when he came to his senses. A great hill, whose top was in a sky all burning and red with the light of the setting sun. Sprigg blamed the moccasins for his mishap; was very angry at them—jerked them from his feet and flung them away. But here they came right back again, walking, walking straight up to him. With the red moccasins came a red mist; and out of the mist would frightful shapes, with long, sharp claws, or long, sharp horns and fiery eyes, come stealing forth, one after one. They scared Sprigg almost to death, and would have torn him to pieces; but ever, just as they would be making to spring upon him, would the red moccasins dart in between—kick them in their ugly eyes and drive them back into the mist.

"By and by Sprigg was moving swiftly through the dark forest—borne onward, he knew not how; and ever before him a great ball of dim, white light. The ball of light sank into the earth, growing brighter and brighter. Sprigg sank with it, deeper, deeper, till far down there he found himself in a world where there was no sun, no moon, and yet was it very bright. Thousands and thousands of little people, all going one way, went gliding swiftly by; so swiftly

that they seemed to be on wings. Some of them were very funny to look at; some wild, some savage; but all were beautiful, and all were terrible. Sprigg was desperately afraid of the little people—'Manitous,' they called themselves. Though he need not have feared them; for, let them look as they might, they had no thought for him but love and to do him kindness. I told Sprigg the Manitous were loving him all the time, but he would not believe me. He was too bad to trust them or anybody else.

"Sprigg was a liar—with a lie in his mouth had he sneaked off from home—sneaked off 'like a spit-thief dog.' The Manitous said so; I heard them say it.

"And the Manitous told me how it had happened that Sprigg was such a bad boy; it was because his father and mother had loved him unwisely; and, as they had loved him, so had they trained him. They had made a fool of their boy by making a pet of him, as if he were a pretty little animal, and not a little human creature. They had humored his every whim, excused his every fault, until they had made him so vain, selfish and false that his heart must be made to bleed to bring him to his better self. Yes; and their hearts, too—all must be made to bleed before they could look for happy days again.

"And there on the ground were the shadows of men and women, boys and girls—standing, walking or flitting about, or, all on a sudden, melting away into nothing—and never a human creature to be seen

dead or alive. Sprigg's shadow was among them—and a spotted thing it was; so, indeed, were they all. How could such shadows be cast? Sprigg looked up. I tell you, he jumped! What was it he saw? Up there in the sky, where the sun ought to be, there he saw an eye—a great and terrible eye—that looked directly down on him—through him—for, though his body cast a shadow, it was no more in the light of that eye than the clearest glass. Not only through his body, but such a light it was, it shone through his very soul, and showed what a spotted thing it was—spotted all over with lies. To see that eye was to feel that it had been upon you all the days of your life. Yet, terrible as was its glance, love was in it, as well as light—love even for such as Sprigg; but that made him fear it all the more. I told Sprigg to trust the eye; and that he could not do so was because he was too bad a boy to put his trust anywhere. We are all afraid of the love which, without telling us, shows us how wicked we are.

"Sprigg tried to hide from the eye, but he could put nothing between it and himself, which it could not pierce and make no more of than air. Then, in greater terror than ever, he ran from the eye—ran from the Manitous—ran, ran and ran; and now the red moccasins were again on his feet. He could turn them neither this way nor that, nor stop them, nor pull them off; they did with him as they chose. They fled, with the setting sun before them, and with

frightful monsters following close behind. The monsters ran more swiftly than the moccasins; they chased Sprigg up into the sky—to the very edge of sunset—and there the moccasins leaped with him from a horrible brink, down, down into the shadows of death. Sprigg was dying, almost dead, when came old Pow-wow and barked over him for joy—licked his bloody face—licked his bleeding wounds. But Sprigg heard not the glad barking, though I did. And I heard something else that Sprigg did not—a tender and beautiful voice close beside him, that said: 'Bleed no more, poor heart! Bleed no more!' Then Sprigg died—passed away into nothing—chased by the Manitous out of the world. That is the way they do. You shall never see your old Sprigg again. Never! Never!! Never!!!"

Here follows an interval of sleep-like silence, longer than any before. In silent wonderment, not unmixed with awe, they stood around him gazing upon his face, which, while so oblivious of outward things, was yet so brightly expressive of a purer, higher intelligence awaking within. It has been remarked that he was, in every way, a handsome boy, even when his face was wont to be more expressive of evil than of good. But with the great inward changes his whole nature had undergone, an outward change had taken place, which amounted almost to transfiguration—so spiritually beautiful now was his appearance. His words, however fantastic and in-

coherent they may have seemed to the others present, came burdened with a deep significance to his father, and to his mother, also; for, by this time, Jervis had told Elster of his singular interview with Nick of the Woods. A significance the deeper, since every word struck home to hearts, conscience-stricken and full of self-upbraiding.

Long before the period of our first acquaintance with them had Jervis and Elster begun to feel and acknowledge to each other the grievous mistake they had made in the training of their son, bestowing upon him their abundant affection, untempered by that judicious and habitual exercise of controlling will, without which, parental love but forestalls the very ends it has nearest at heart—the good and the happiness of the offspring. Gold can not be too rich, where only ornament is the object in view; but it needs to be alloyed with silver to be made firm and consistent enough to meet the ends of uses. Their love, from very richness, had been of too soft and yielding a nature to fashion the character of their child into the thing of beauty for which its maker had designed it. Now, had he returned, as it were, from the dead, to upbraid them with the wrong they had done him. All unwittingly had he ministered the rebuke; perhaps, on being restored to his normal self, should never remember what he had done. Yet, for that very reason, all the more bitter was the reflection, since it showed how deep the wrong was, if his

innermost soul could be cognizant of it and speak out in his vindication, while his more external nature was as yet incapable of knowing or comprehending it. What remorse they felt at the thought of the sore affliction, which, by their folly, they had brought upon his young life; what good resolutions they formed, looking to atonement and recompense; what prayers they offered up for forgiveness of the past, and for guidance in the future—must be left to the heart and conscience of every judicious parent to conceive.

After some minutes the boy resumed, still with his eyes closed, the windows of the tenement shut, but the light from within shining through the translucent walls.

"Some one is here, who goes and comes as goes and comes none else. Her step is light, her touch soft, her voice gentle and low. I love to have her near me. Where she is can come no evil thing. Wild dreams stand at the door, waiting for her to go away, when they come slipping in to dance around me, to laugh at me, to point the mocking finger at me—sometimes, to scowl and frown upon me. They are after Sprigg, to vex and frighten him, and think that I am he. But the moment she comes back, out they go skipping by another door—make all the haste they can to get away. They are afraid of her, as is every evil thing, because she is as God, in the beginning, made her—all love and truth.

"Sometimes she comes, bringing with her the pleasant smell of the woods—the fresh, green, beautiful woods I love so much. She seems to bring with her the sky, too, so sunny her presence makes all around me; and once more I am happy—so full of rest and sleep. That smell of the woods—it never comes, but I feel as if Meg of the Hills must be near, with her crown of crimson flowers; so wonderful—it is bliss to see their beauty, life to breathe their sweetness. Surely she who goes and comes must have found these flowers and brought them to me! Else I had never been here where I am, this what I am. I think she must be near me now. I will see."

So saying, and before he had fairly reopened his eyes, our Manitou butterfly, now nearly ready to spurn the chrysalis, raised himself again to his elbow and took another dreamy survey of the room. His eyes, however, seemed to find no object to rest on, until they met a pair as dreamy as themselves—the innocent, blue ones, there at the foot of his bed, through which a soul was looking so directly into his own that he could no longer but be cognizant of a fellow creature's presence.

"Yes, there she is. But she looks like Bertha, and Bertha is not a little angel, like the one who goes and comes. Though, if she is not, it must be because the good angels have not yet taken her to themselves; for, now that I see her better, she looks enough like an angel to be the one who goes and

comes. Can it be that Meg of the Hills has sent Bertha to me with these flowers, but for which—the life that is in them—I must have died. Yes, that's the reason why; at least, I think it is.

"But, who are these?" Beginning at last to have some dim perception of his actual surroundings. "These are they who have kissed me, embraced me, wept over me, as though I were going to die. Will they do so still? I think not; for they mean it for Sprigg, and Sprigg is dead already—passed away into nothing. They shall never see their old Sprigg again—never, never, never! But they may call me Sprigg if they like. And this pretty woman here, who is laughing and crying both at once, I will call her mother. And this big man, who looks glad enough to laugh and sorry enough to cry, and can't do either, I will call him father."

Sprigg never called them "pap" and "mam" again, the longest day he lived. Neither did Jervis and Elster ever again, the longest day they lived, say "my dear son," without putting in the fond words as much silver for will, as gold for love.

"Yes, and that is just the way it really is, after all! Father, mother; yes, and grandpap, too, and grandmam, and others whose names I ought to know, but do not. All are here—none missing. No, not all, either; I do not see dear old Pow-wow. And I must see him. He will make me laugh, and I must laugh, or I may die yet. I thought I heard him bark but now."

CHAPTER XXII.

Pow-wow.

Pow-wow had not barked within hearing of the fort since the evening he had found his little master down there at the foot of the precipice. He had gone and come, hastening back when he went, lingering when he came—a silent, sad and thoughtful dog. By some inscrutable operation of instinct he had soon discovered that the errands which led Ben and Bertha daily abroad had a reference in some way to the wants of his unfortunate little friend, and that, therefore, it was his bounden duty to lend a helping hand. Accordingly he had divided his time about equally between the two young people; helping the one about the wild herds of the forest, the other about the tame herds of the field. In the morning he would follow the young hunter to the distant lick, and, having acquitted himself in the chase, with his wonted address, he would hasten back to the fort, leaving his companion to follow at that plodding pace peculiar to two-footed animals, and so irksome to dogs, to accommodate themselves to which they must needs trot out, on a magnified scale, the ground plan of a straggling worm fence, with wide digression to right and left; now to sniff at a stump, then to bark down

a sinkhole. In the afternoon he would accompany Bertha to the bluegrass glades, where he would take her charge so completely upon himself as to leave her nothing to do but clamber up the hill for a fresh culling of flowers, then follow him, as homeward he drove the cows.

When not occupied thus, he would station himself on the porch at the door of the sick room, looking up wistfully into every face that passed him, in the poor, dumb, asking way, which so endears a dog to us when the shadow of death is on our home. He had never ventured to intrude himself into the house, but now that he was called, the grateful look and humble alertness with which he answered the summons testified how earnestly he had wished to do all along. Setting his feet as carefully on the floor as were he shod with heavy shoes, that, too, without a warning whisper in the ear from Ben's mother, he slowly walked up to the bedside and softly ran his huge head under the little hand, so white and wan, extended to greet and caress him. Pow-wow licked the hand in the dear old way, and the familiar sensation helped, not a little, to reassure the boy of his own identity and make him more present to the state of things around him. And it was strange how much more natural his voice and manner became the moment he began speaking to his old play-fellow; though what he spoke was hardly less fantastic or more coherent than the greater part of what he had spoken already.

"Pow-wow, is it really you, old pard, and no mistake? And are we all alive and here at grandpap's house, and no dreaming about it? (Pausing to pat the old dog's head.) Pow-wow, did Nick of the Woods ever give you a pair of red moccasins? No, he never did, because he knew you weren't a fool. (Here closing his eyes and seeming for a moment to forget the dog.) Pow-wow, were you ever chased by the Manitous? No, you never were, for you never sneaked away from home with a lie in your mouth, like a spit-thief dog. (Again closing his eyes for a few moments, to open them again and add:) The Manitous chase nobody but bad people, and chase them only to make them good. (Pausing to play with the old dog's ear.) And so they have chased your old Sprigg, Pow-wow; chased him out of the world! You shall never see your old friend Sprigg again! Never! Never! Never!" (Now giving the old dog's ragged ear a certain pluck which had always been well understood between them.)

At each repetition of his name the only part of his little master's speech which had any sound of English to his ear, Pow-wow would fall to wagging his tail in a hearty, emphatic manner, as were he, Chinaman-like, shaking hands with himself over the glad event of the day. But on receiving the pluck of the ear, in the dear old way, the dear old fellow, quick to take the hint, gave vent to a sort of double yelp, peculiar to him when in a waggish humor—a smothered

nasal "boo-woo," so irresistibly ludicrous that it had always made Sprigg laugh, as now it did, right heartily. This is but the prelude to what needs must follow. Up he rears himself on his hind legs, snaps at the imaginary bone thrown up by an imaginary hand, catches it in his mouth, drops with it to the floor, and, stretching himself out at full length, pretends to gnaw what he pretends to hold between his paws. But this was Pow-wow's only accomplishment—fancy accomplishment, I mean—for he was a finished hunter and a finishing fighter, and we have seen for ourselves that he knew exactly what do do with cows when he went with a nice little girl to the pasture to help her drive them home. Therefore, finding himself at the end of his programme sooner than the occasion seemed to demand, he raised himself to his haunches and looked around him with a deprecating air, as if he would fain apologize for his deficiencies.

Hardly, however, could the apology have been expressed in words, when up he bounces again to his hind feet and begins executing a series of antics, so fantastic and undog-like that they who witnessed them were quite as much astonished as amused. Jervis Whitney himself, than whom there was not a man in the hunter's paradise more deeply versed in dogs and their ways, and who thought he knew his own dog from head to tail and back again, was even more astonished than the rest. Had old Mother Hubbard and her far-famed dog risen from their

honored graves and, presenting themselves before our friends, repeated the dear old programme, from the cupboard so bare, to the bier so sad, with the fruits and the flue, the tripe and the pipe, the wig and the jig, and all the other fondly remembered marvels between—scarcely could the effect have been more startling.

Now, Pow-wow's antics on this occasion, unaccountable as they seemed to those who witnessed them, and must seem to the more sober class of my readers, admit of perfectly rational explanation, give them only Manitou ground to rest on. Nick of the Woods and Meg of the Hills, who knew as well as anybody—better, I fear, than many a human body—that there are few things more wholesome for us poor mortals than hearty, unrestrained, unrestrainable, innocent laughter, had decided between them that, in order to put his case beyond all human or superhuman possibility of relapse, Sprigg should have some hearty laughter. Accordingly, they had sent one of their dog-robed, dog-natured elves to tinker and conjure with Pow-wow's tail, and through that sensitive member, as a medium, telegraph, as it were, such fancies to his sober old noddle as should, for a brief space, set him quite beside himself. In other words, set him to acting the human, according to the monkey conception of the character. A conception so nearly suits an occasional specimen of the model race as scarcely to be deemed caricature.

And Sprigg did laugh—laughed till his sore sides ached—laughed "fit to die," as they say, when they mean the very opposite—"fit to live." After such a laugh, Sprigg was in no more danger of dying than had all the doctors, with their doses; all the preachers, with their prayers, stood between him and the grave. Of course, everybody else was laughing; not but that they felt still more inclined to cry, so touching was it to witness the old dog's clumsy playfulness and the little sufferer's spasmodic merriment—for spasmodic it needs must be, as yet, though so hearty, heart-easing and wholesome. Indeed, there are few things more pathetical than the innocent mirth of the young heart, over whose dawning existence has already fallen, though but for a brief space, the shadow of the inevitable hour. And I will venture to affirm, upon the strength of my own experience and observation, that if you, my gentle reader, had been present and witnessed, without both tears and laughter, the scene I am describing, you would be as fit a subject for a "putting through" as ever was poor Sprigg; and that, sooner or later for your fuller humanizing, you must run the Manitou gauntlet. And whether you run it in red moccasins or in split-leather Yankee shoes, all one will it be to Nick of the Woods!

CHAPTER XXIII.

Young Ben Logan.

Pow-wow was still performing, Sprigg still laughing, the rest of the company still in a maze of delighted bewilderment, when, home from the forest, in came rolling young Ben Logan. He had heard the good news at the gate, and now, as if feeling there was no further need of his being tender-footed, he came lumbering through the house, making every loose board he trod on a speaking witness to the joy of his heart. "Actions speak louder than words," so they say; and yet it does so happen sometimes, but very rarely, mind you, that what they say is a good deal louder than what they do. At sight of the young hunter, Pow-wow had cut short his antics, or, rather, was made to cut them short—the Manitou inspiration, to which they had been due, departing from him as suddenly as it had entered; and subsiding to his haunches, he became in an instant as quiet and solemn as a tumbler between cues. In the joy of the moment, Ben had forgotten to leave his rifle at the door, and now, with it in his left hand rested on the floor, he stood by the bedside of his strangely fated little friend, a heroic smell of gunpowder and buckskin boisterous in the air about him, and on his face

a look of benignant wonderment, as he gazed down into the newly reopened eyes, whose light had so well nigh been lost in the shadows of death. Bright and clear as were the eyes turned up to his own, they were still hardly capable of more than a dreamy perception of what they looked on. Taking the little hand, so white and wan, in his own huge, powder-begrimmed paw, and shaking it gently from side to side, in a wag-tail way, Ben, after some moments of silence, said:

"Howd'y do, Sprigg?"

"My name is Sprigg, then, sure enough?"

"If it isn't I don't know the man I'm talking to; never did—stranger to me."

"And is your name Ben Logan?"

"If it isn't I don't know the man that's talking to you; never did—stranger to me."

"And these two pretty people here, are they my father and mother, really, now?"

"If they ain't so now, they never were so and never will be so, in this world." Delivered with much solemnity and some stress on "now" and "this."

"And this place, where we all are, is it really grandpap's house, and no mistake?"

"If it isn't you can't prove it by me. It's just where I left just such a house this morning, though it doesn't look much like the same place, either, with you wide awake in it, and old Pow-wow on his hind legs in it, and both so jolly."

"And that little girl there, at the foot of my bed, is her name Bertha?"

Here Ben paused before answering, regarding the person referred to with a look of some perplexity. "Well, she used to answer to that name, but here lately she don't answer to any when I call her; goes about like one in a traveling dream. There she stands, a-gazing at you with a far-off look in her eyes, as though you were on the other side of the Kentucky river, and not a living thing anear you. Bertha!" Here Ben elevated his voice a little. Bertha turned her eyes toward the speaker, though apparently with as little perception of his actual presence as though he were lying at the bottom of the river he had named. "There, you see how she does, and that's the way she's doing all the time. When she wakes up she won't know any more for a minute where she is than you did, before I told you. She's either in love, or fixing to be a ghost."

What young Ben Logan meant by this concluding remark were hard to imagine; unless, indeed, he had in his mind the idea of a little angel, when he said "ghost." After receiving each answer, Sprigg would pause for a few moments to consider what he had heard and assure himself of its meaning before proceeding further. Now, after a somewhat longer pause than before, he put the startling question:

"Ben, did you ever see Nick of the Woods?" To which he received the equally startling answer:

"Well, if I didn't see him to-day, it wasn't because I didn't stare with all the eyes I had. I never saw the woods behave so in all my life before. There a tree, just one tree, would fall to waving its limbs and shaking its leaves, making the liveliest flutter, and all the rest of the trees as still as mice when the cat's about. And there went smoke a-rolling up in puffs as big as feather beds, and not a sign of fire to show for it, that I could see. And there went fire a-shooting up in flames higher than my head, and not the sign of a stick of wood to show for it, that I could see. And here went shadows, skipping and dodging about, and not the sign of a living thing to do the skipping and dodging, that I could see. And there were voices all about me—some on this side, others on that; some close at my ear, and others far away—all talking the strangest gibberish, and not the sign of a living thing to do the talking, that I could see."

"Weren't you terribly frightened, Ben?"

"Well, at first I did feel queer—just a little queer, up and down the back and about the roots of my hair—but just as I had cocked my gun, and was looking about me for something to let fly at—plump! It was all gone as quick as the blowing out of a candle. Then I felt a little better, and after a short while a great deal better—real good and easy. I don't know why, but it's just so."

Each time, after giving his answer, and while Sprigg would be pausing to consider it, Ben would fill

up the interval with another wag-tail shake of the hand he still held in his own, thereby lengthening out his answer with something he had omitted to express in words. Now, after two or three of the supplementary shakes, he did bethink him to put the something else in words.

"But, Sprigg, you are looking a great deal better than I expected to find you. Though I needn't wonder so much at that, either, for they wanted to feed you on trash—squirrels and birds, and I wouldn't let 'em. Tell us—me and Pow-wow—how you liked the buffalo we brought home for you yesterday?"

"Oh, very much, I am sure."

"And the fat, young bear we brought you the day before yesterday?"

"Better still, I am certain."

"And the fat, young buck we brought you the day before that?"

"Best of all; and if I didn't tell you so at the time it was because I was asleep and thinking about something else. And now I am beginning to find out what my heart has been trying to tell me all this while. I see it in Bertha's face. I see it in Ben's face—in the face of every one here—how good and kind you have been to me since I have been lying here; and I so undeserving. I should be thankful you had kept me alive, were it but to tell you how I love you all as I have never loved any one before."

Now were the tears in his eyes, which, up to this moment, had been so bright and clear—tears that went on telling the gratitude and love which the lips had left but half expressed. Ben had already had some two or three little spells of filling up and choking down; of feeling soft and breathing hard, so touching was it, so touching is it always to witness the gratitude of the poor human heart to poor human love for poor human life; and this was just more than the good fellow could bear without some noise. Abruptly checking himself in the midst of another wag-tail shake, he laid the little hand on the bed as carefully as you would a glass of water on the table, right side up, and hurried out of the house like one who had overstayed his time and must rush to make ends meet. He went no farther, however, than just out of doors, where, finding room for his heart to expand in, roared out in a voice perfectly tremendous for one of his age:

"Hurrah for General Washington! Hurrah for Colonel Boone! Hurrah for Sprigg!" And bang! went his gun.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Little Bertha.

Up to this moment Bertha had remained a delighted, though half-unconscious, spectator of what was passing. While Sprigg was unbosoming, all unwittingly, his Manitou experiences, her innocent eyes, without losing their look of dreamy, solemn wonder, had gradually brightened with unwonted intelligence, mixed with delight, as were she beholding, in their truer and more benign aspect, the marvels which had revealed themselves to him in shapes of terror and retribution. Of course, what Bertha saw and heard she only comprehended in part what had been revealed; yet was she and ever would be the wiser and the happier for the seeing and the hearing.

But now, with the young stentor's uncouth roar of joy, shaking the infant settlement from center to circumference, snapped was the Manitou spell, broken the Manitou dream. Gliding out of the house; away, like a bird, to the woods she fluttered, there, all unobserved, she fell to dancing about for very thankfulness and joy, the evening sunbeams dancing with her, as were she a sunbeam, too in human likeness.

"Oh! could I but tell him, who loves little chil-

dren, how thankful, how happy I am! But I'm only a little girl, and don't know how!"

Thus spoke innocent Bertha, dancing all the while, and dancing all the blither for not knowing how to tell it—so ready is heaven to compensate our lackings when love is in our hearts. And yet she had told it better than she knew; for, though the body was dancing, the soul was kneeling; and such a soul, so lovely and so bright, that the good Manitous—those who were crowned with the crimson flowers, and those who wore the wings and plumes of beautiful birds—came flitting to her, drawn by sweet attraction. One minute, they joined hands and wheeled their unseen ring around the human innocent, their presence filling the air with perfume delectable to breathe. Then, suddenly parting, each at a tangent to the whirling circle, away they flew to bear the good news far and wide. And the good news went to many a father and many a mother; and, though it came from unseen lips, in unheard words, it left a shining in the eyes, a burning in the heart, which told it had been spoken; and many a son and daughter of the red race, looking westward, whispered:

When thus smiles the setting sun,
Lo! a Manitou race is run;
All's well ended all's well done—
Wahkontonka wills it.

Ever thus still sets the sun,
Ever thus the race is run,
Ever thus all things well done—
Wahkontonka wills it.