White Cloud Kansas Chief.

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Choice Poetry.

THE GALLOWS GOERS.

BY THOMAS DUNN ENGLISH.

Up, and make ready, ye lovers of fun!
Do with your holiday dress, and be gay!
Now that the Sheriff has work to be done,
Business he mingles with pleasure, to-day.
Some may go hunting with guns; and a few,
Rods in their hands, little fish may pursue;
Ours is the sport which is sanctioned by law—
We go a hanging—a hanging! Hurrah!

Two months ago, on a rare, drunken bout,
Billy, his comrade, the criminal slew;
Murder's a deed that is vile, without doubt—
Ergo—the law will turn murderer, too.
As for the place where the liquor he got—
Liquor which maddened him—yonder's the spot—
Sammy, who keeps it, approves of the law—
He goes for hanging—for hanging! Hurrah!

Bright shines the sun on the place where you see
Yonder tall gallows, substantial and bare;
Wait a few hours, and a fellow will be
Dancing fandangoes of fun in the air.
Gathered in groups at the gallows, behold
Parents and children, maids, wives, young and old,
Waiting the time when the halter shall draw—
They go for hanging—for hanging! Hurrah!

Pickpockets plenty are—mark how they go
Slyly and coolly to work at their trade.
Business is business, and people must know,
Too much attention to that can't be paid.
Swearing, and fighting, and kicking—the crowd
Utter their blasphemous curses aloud—
Righteous example is set by the law;
Good comes from hanging—from hanging! Hurrah!

Look at the criminal! please ye to look!
Standing behind him, the hangman you see—
There is the priest, with his gown and his book—
Galloping gaily, they go to the tree.
Thanks to the priests who the hangman befriend,
Choking such knaves as 't were labor to mend.
Hanging, they say, is LEVITICAL law—
Cheers for the clergy—they're CHRISTIANS! Hurrah!

Firmly and proudly the culprit looks round,
Holding his head with a satisfied air;
Murmurs applauding go over the ground—
Down pops the priest with the felon to prayer.
"How interesting his looks are!" says Ann.
"Yes," answers Sal, "and he'll die like a man!"
Elegant talk for young maidens, but—pshaw!
Shout for the hanging—the hanging! Hurrah!

Prayers are all finished, and now for the fun!
Over his features the cap has been drawn;
Kerunch and his comrade, the preacher, get down;
Crack! goes the whip, and the wagon moves on.
Wonderful sight for the Christian to see;
Merrily dancing on nothing is he.
Though there's no fiddle a hornpipe to saw,
Light are his legs—he's a hanging! Hurrah!

After the rope has been severed in twain,
Home go the people, and joyfully sing;
Heaven will receive whom the gallows has slain—
Does not the clergyman settle the thing?
Home go the people, and talk of it all,
Children in nursery, servants in hall;
BUD hangs the cat, in the manner he saw
Hung at the gallows God's image! Hurrah!

Rouse, ye good clergymen, servants of God!
Stand by my side, while I fight for your fun!
Hanging, preserves us from shedding of blood—
Remedy like it, there never was one.
Rally your forces, thump pulpits, and be
Clerical guards of the good gallows-tree!
What if our Saviour denounces the law?
You go for hanging—for hanging! Hurrah!

Select Story.

NICK OF THE WOODS;

—OR,—

THE JIBBENAINOSAY.

A TALE OF KENTUCKY.

BY ROBERT MONTGOMERY BIRD, M. D.

(CONTINUED.)

CHAPTER XXV.

The morning-star, peeping into the hollow den of the wanderers, was yet bright on the horizon, when Roland was roused from his slumbers by Nathan, who had already risen and prepared a hasty meal resembling in all respects that of the preceding evening. To this the soldier did better justice than to the other; for, although feeling sore and stiff in every limb, he experienced none of the feverish consequences Nathan had predicted from his wounds; and his mind, invigorated by so many hours of rest, was more tranquil and cheerful. The confidence Nathan seemed to feel in the reasonableness and practicability of their enterprise, however wild and daring it might have seemed to others, was his own best assurance of its success; and hope thus enkindled and growing with his growing strength, it required no laborious effort to summon the spirits necessary to sustain him during the coming trials.

This change for the better was not unnoticed by Nathan, who exhorted him to eat freely, as a necessary prelude to the labors of the day; and the rude meal being quickly and satisfactorily despatched, and little Peter receiving his due share, the companions, without further delay, seized their arms, and recommenced their journey. Crossing the river at the buffalo-ford above, and exchanging the road to which it led for wilder and lonelier paths traced by smaller animals, they made their way through the forest, travelling with considerable speed, which was increased, as the warmth of exercise gradually restored their native suppleness to the soldier's limbs.

And now it was, that, as the opening of a glorious dawn, flinging sunshine and life over the whole wilderness, infused still brighter hopes into his spirit, he began to divide his thoughts between his kinswoman and his guide, bestowing more upon the latter than he had previously found time or inclination to do. His strange appearance, his stranger character, his sudden metamorphosis from a timid and somewhat over-conscientious professor of doctrines of peace and good-will, into a highly energetic and unremorseful, not to say, valiant man of war, were all subjects to provoke the soldier's curiosity; which was still further increased when he pondered over the dismal story Nathan had so imperfectly told him on the past day. Of those dreadful calamities which, in Nathan's own language "had made him what he was," a houseless wanderer of the wilderness, the Virginian would have gladly known more; but his first illusion to the subject produced such evident disorder in Nathan's mind, as if the recollection were too harrowing to be borne, that the young man immediately repressed his inquiries, and diverted the guide's thoughts into another channel. His imagination supplied the imperfect links in the story; he could well believe that the same hands which had shed the blood of every member of the poor borderer's family, might have struck the hatchet into the head of the resisting husband and father; and that the effects of that blow, with the desolation of heart and fortune which the heavier ones, struck at the same time, had entailed, might have driven him to the woods, an idle, and perhaps aimless, wanderer.

How far these causes might have operated in leading Nathan into those late acts of blood which were at such variance with his faith and professions, it remained also for Roland to imagine; and, in truth, he imagined they had operated deeply and far; though nothing in Nathan's own admissions could be found to sanction any belief save that they were the results partly of accident, and partly of sudden and irresistible impulse.

At all events, it was plain that his warlike feats, however they might at first have shocked his sense of propriety, now sat but lightly on his conscience; and, indeed, since his confession at the Piankeshaw camp, he ceased even to talk of them, perhaps resting upon that as an all-sufficient explanation and apology. It is certain, from that moment he bore himself more freely and boldly, entered no protest whatever against being called on to do his share of such fighting as might occur—a stipulation made with such anxious forethought, when he first consented to accompany the lost travellers—nor betrayed any tenderness of invective against the Indians, whom, having first spoken of them only as "evil-minded poor Shawnee creatures," he now designated, conformably to established usage among his neighbors of the Stations, as "thieves and dogs," "bloody villains, and rapscallions;" all which expressions he bestowed with as much ease and emphasis as if he had been accustomed to use them all his life.

With this singular friend and companion, Roland pursued his way through the wilderness, committing life, and the hopes that were dearer than life, to his sole guidance and protection; nor did anything happen to shake his faith in either the zeal or ability of Nathan to conduct to a prosperous issue the cause he had so freely and disinterestedly espoused.

As they thridded the lonely forest-paths together, Nathan explained at length the circumstances upon which he founded his hopes of success in their project; and in doing so, convinced the soldier, not only that his sagacity was equal to the enterprise, but that his acquaintance with the wilderness was by no means confined to the region south of the Ohio; the northern countries, then wholly in the possession of the Indian tribes, appearing to be just as well known to him, the Miami country in particular, in which lay the village of the Black-Vulture. How this knowledge had been obtained was not so evident; for although he averred he hunted the deer or trapped the beaver on either side of the river, as appeared to him most agreeable, it was hardly to be supposed he could carry on such operations in the heart of the Indian nation. But it was enough for Roland that the knowledge so essential to his own present plans, was really possessed by his conductor, and he cared not to question how it had been arrived at; it was an augury of success, of which he felt the full influence.

The evening of that day found him upon the banks of the Kentucky, the wild and beautiful river from which the wilderness around derived its name; and the next morning, crossing it on a raft of logs speedily constructed by Nathan, he trod upon the soil of the North-side, famous even then for its beauty and for the deeds of bloodshed almost daily enacted among its scattered settlements, and destined, unhappily, to be rendered still more famous for a tragedy which that very day witnessed, far off among the barren ridges of the Licking, where sixty of the District's best and bravest sons fell the victims less of Indian subtility than of their own unparalleled rashness. But of that bloody field the travellers were to hear thereafter; the vultures were winging their flight towards the fatal scene; but they alone could snuff, in that silent desert, the scent of the battle that vexed it.

Sleeping that night in the woods, the next day, being the fourth since they left the Piankeshaw camp, beheld the travellers upon the banks of the Ohio; which, seen, for the first time, in the glory of summer, its crystal waters wheeling placidly along amid hills and forests, ever reflected in the bright mirror below, and with the air of virgin solitude which, through so many leagues of its course, it still presents, never fails to fill the beholder's mind with an enchanting sense of its loveliness.

Here a raft was again constructed; and the adventurers, pushing boldly across, were soon upon the opposite shore. This feat accomplished, Nathan took the precaution to launch their frail float adrift in the current, that no tell-tale memorial of a white-man's visit should remain to be read by returning warriors. The next moment, ascending the bank of the river, he plunged with his companion into a maze of brake and forest; neither of them then dreaming that upon the very spot where they toiled through the tangled labyrinths, a few years should behold the magic spectacle of a fair city, the Queen of the West, uprisen with the suddenness, and almost the splendor, of the *Fata-Morgana*, though, happily, doomed to no such evanescent existence. Then handling their arms, like men who felt they were in a foeman's country, and knew that every further step was to be taken in peril, they resumed their journey, travelling with such speed and vigor, (for Roland's strength had returned apace,) that at the close of the day, they were, according to Nathan's account, scarce twenty miles distant from the Black-Vulture's village, which they might easily reach on the following day. On the following day, accordingly, they resumed their march, avoiding all paths, and stealing through the most unfrequented depths of the woods, proceeding with a caution which was every moment becoming more obviously necessary to the success of their enterprise.

Up to this period, their journey had presented nothing of interest, being a mere succession of toil, privation, and occasional suffering, naturally enough to be expected in such an undertaking; but it was now about to be varied by an adventure of no little interest in itself, and, in its consequences, destined to exercise a powerful influence on the prospects of the travellers.

Laying their plans so as to reach the Indian village only about nightfall, and travelling but slowly and with great circumspection, they had not, at mid-day, accomplished much more than half the distance; when they came to a halt in a little dell, extremely wild and sequestered, where Nathan proposed to rest a few hours, and recruit their strength with a warm dinner—a luxury they had not enjoyed for the last two days, during which they had subsisted upon corn and dried meat from the Indian wallets. Accident had, a few moments before, provided them materials for a more palatable meal. They had stumbled upon a deer that had just fallen under the attack of a catamount; which, easily driven from its yet warm and palpitating quarry, surrendered the feast to its unwelcome visitors. An inspection of the carcass showed that the animal had been first struck by the bullet of some wandering Indian hunter—a discovery that somewhat concerned Nathan, until, after a more careful examination of the wound, which seemed neither severe nor mortal, he was convinced the poor beast had run many miles, utuil, in fact, wholly exhausted, before the panther had finished the work of the huntsman. This circumstance removing his uneasiness, he helped himself th the choicest portion of the animal, amputated a hind leg without stopping to flay it, and clapping this upon his shoulder in a very business-like way, left the remainder of the carcass to be despatched by the wild-cat at her leisure.

The little dell, in which Nathan proposed to cook and enjoy his savory treasure, at ease and in safety, was enclosed by hills; of which the one by which they descended into it, fell down into a rolling slope densely covered with trees; while the other, rocky, barren, and almost naked, rose precipitously up, a grim picture of solitude and desolation. A scanty brook, oozing along through the swampy bottom of the hollow, and supplied by a spring near its head, at which the two friends halted, to prepare their meal, ran meandering away among the alders and other swampy plants, to find exit into a larger vale that opened below, though hidden from the travellers by the winding of the rocky ridge before them.

In this lonely den, Nathan and Roland began straightway to disencumber themselves of arms and provisions, seeming well satisfied with its convenience. But not so with little Peter; who, having faithfully accompanied them so far, now following humbly at his master's heels, and now, in periods of alarm or doubt, taking post in front, the leader of the party, uplifted his nose, and fell to snuffing about him in a way that soon attracted his master's notice. Smelling first around the spring, and then giving a look both up and down the glen, as if to satisfy himself there was nothing wrong in either of those quarters, he finally began to ascend the rocky ridge, snuffing as he went, and ever and anon looking back to his master, and soliciting his attention by a wag of his tail.

"Truly, thee did once wag to me in vain!" said Nathan, snatching up his gun, and looking volumes of sagacious response at his brute ally, "but thee won't catch me napping again; though, truly, what thee can smell here, where is neither track of man nor print of beast, truly, Peter, I have no idea!"

With these words, he crept up the hill himself, following in little Peter's wake; and Roland, who also grasped his rifle, as Nathan had done, though without perhaps attaching the same importance to Peter's note of warning, thought fit to imitate his example.

In this manner, cautiously crawling up, the two friends reached the crest of the hill; and peering over a precipice of fifty or more feet sheer descent, with which it suddenly dipped into a wild but beautiful little valley below, beheld a scene that, besides startling them somewhat out of their tranquillity, caused both to bless their good fortune they had not neglected the warning of their brute confederate.

The vale below, like that they had left, opened into a wider bottom-land, the bed of a creek, which they could see shining among the trees that overshadowed the rich alluvion; and into this poured a rivulet that chattered along through the glen, at their feet, in which it had its sources. The hill on the other side of the vale, which was of an oval figure, narrowest at its outlet, was rough and precipitous, like that on which they lay; but the two uniting above, bounded the head of the vale with a long, bushy, sweeping slope—a fragment of a natural amphitheatre—which was evidently of an easy ascent, though abrupt and steep. The valley thus circumscribed, though broken, and here and there deeply furrowed by the water-course, was nearly destitute of trees, except at its head, where a few young beeches flung their silver boughs and rich foliage abroad over the grassy knolls, and patches of paw-paws drooped their loose leaves and swelling fruit over the stream. It was in this part of the valley, at the distance of three or four hundred paces from them, that the eyes of the two adventurers, directed by the sound of voices, which they had heard the instant they reached the crest of the ridge, fell, first, upon the smoke of a huge fire curling merrily up into the air, and then upon the bodies of no less than five Indian warriors, all zealously and uproariously engaged in an amusement highly characteristic of their race. There was among them a white man, an unfortunate prisoner, as was seen at a glance, whom they had bound by the legs to a tree; around which the savages danced and leaped, yelling now with rage, now in merriment, but all the while belaboring the poor wretch with rods and switches, which at every turn round the tree, they laid about his head and shoulders with uncommon energy and zest. This was a species of diversion better relished, as it seemed, by the captors than their captive; who, infuriated by his pangs, and perhaps desiring, in the desperation of the moment, to provoke them to end his sufferings with the hatchet, retaliated with his fists, which were at liberty, striking fiercely at every opportunity, and once with such effect as to tumble one of the tormentors to the earth—a catastrophe, however, that the others rewarded with roars of approving laughter, though without for a moment intermitting their own cruelties.

This spectacle, it may be well supposed, produced a strong effect upon the minds of the travellers, who, not without alarm on their own account at the discovery of such dangerous neighbors, could not view without emotion a fellow white-man and countrymen helpless in their hands, and enduring tortures perhaps preliminary to the more dreadful one of the stake. They looked one another in the face; the Virginian's eyes sparkled with a meaning which Nathan could not misunderstand; and clutching his rifle tighter in his hands, and eyeing the young man with an ominous stare, he muttered—"Speak, friend—thee is a man and a soldier—what does thee think, in the case made and provided?"

"We are but two men, and they five," replied Roland, firmly, though in the lowest voice; and then repeated, in the same energetic whisper—"we are but two men, Nathan; but there is no kinswoman now to unman me!"

Nathan took another peep at the savages, before speaking. Then looking upon the young man with an uneasy countenance, he said—"We are but two men, as thee says, and they five; and, truly, to do what thee thinks of, in open day, is a thing not to be thought on by men that have soft places in their bosoms. Nevertheless, I think, according to thee own opinion, we being strong men that have the wind of the villains, and a good cause to help us, truly, we might snap the poor man they have captivated out of their hands, with considerable much damage to them besides, the murdering rapscallions!—But, friend," he added, seeing Roland give way to his eagerness—"thee spoke of the fair maid, thee cousin—If thee fights this battle, truly, thee may never see her more."

"If I fall," said Roland—but he was interrupted by Nathan:

"It is not *that* thee is to think of. Truly, friend, thee may fight these savages, and thee may vanquish them; but unless thee believes in thee conscience thee can kill every one—truly, friend, thee can hardly expect it?"

"And why should we? It is enough if we can rescue the prisoner."

"Friend, thee is mistaken. If thee attacks the villains, and but one of them escapes alive to the village, sounding the alarm, thee will never enter the same in search of the maid, thee kinswoman. Thou sees the case: thee must choose between the captive there and thee cousin!"

This was a view of the case, and as Roland felt, a just one, well calculated to stagger his resolutions, if not entirely to abate his sympathy for the unknown sufferer. As his hopes of success in the enterprise for which he had already dared and endured so much, evidently depended upon his ability to approach the Indian village without awakening suspicion, it was undeniable that an attack upon the party in the vale, unless resulting in its complete destruction, must cause to be borne to the Black-Vulture's ears, and on the wings of the wind, the alarm of white men in the woods; and thus not only cut him off from it, but actually bring upon himself all the fighting-men who might be remaining in the village. To attack the party with the expectation of wholly destroying it, was, or seemed to be, an absurdity. But to desert a wretched prisoner whom he had it perhaps in his power to rescue from captivity, and from a fate still more dreadful, was a dereliction of duty, of honor, of common humanity, of which he could scarce persuade himself to be guilty. He cast his eyes upon the glen, and once more looked upon the captive, who had sunk to the ground, as if from exhaustion, and whom the savages, after beating him awhile longer, as if to force him again on his feet, that they might still enjoy their enjoyment, now fell to securing with thongs. As Roland looked, he remembered his own night of captivity, and hesitated no longer. Turning to Nathan, who had been earnestly reading the struggles of his mind, as revealed in his face, he said, and with unfaltering resolution—"You say we can rescue that man.—I was a prisoner, like him, bound too—a helpless, hopeless, captive—three Indians to guard me, and but one friend to look upon me; yet did not that friend abandon me to my fate.—God will protect my poor cousin—we must rescue him!"

"Thee is a man, every inch of thee!" said Nathan, with a look of uncommon satisfaction and fire: "thee shall have thee will, in the matter of these murdering Shawnee dogs; and, it may be, it will be none the worse for thee kinswoman."

With that, he motioned Roland to creep with him beyond the crest of the hill, where they straightway held a hurried consultation of war to determine upon the plan of proceedings in the prosecution of an adventure so wild and perilous.

The soldier, burning with fierce ardor, proposed that they should take post respectively the one at the head, and the other at the outlet of the vale, and creeping as nigh the enemy as they could, deliver their fire, and then rushing on, before the savages could recover from their surprise, do their best to finish the affair with their hatchets—a plan, which, as he justly said, offered the only prospect of cutting off the retreat of those who might survive the fire. But Nathan had already schemed the matter otherwise: he had remarked the impossibility of approaching the enemy from below, the valley offering no concealment which would make an advance in that quarter practicable; whereas the bushes on the slope, where the two walls of the glen united, afforded the most inviting opportunity to creep on the foe without fear of detection. "Truly," said he, "we will get us as nigh the assassin thieves as we can; and, truly, it may be our luck, each of us, to get a brace of them in range together, and so bang them beautiful!"—an idea that was manifestly highly agreeable to his imagination, from which he seemed to have utterly banished all those disgusts and gaingivings on the subject of fighting, which had formerly afflicted it; "or perhaps, if we can do nothing better," he continued, "we may catch the vagabonds wandering from their guns, to pick up sticks for their fire; in which case, friend, truly, it may be our luck to help them to a second volley out of their own pieces: or, if the worst must come, truly, then, I do know of a device that may help the villains into our hands, even to their own undoing!"

With these words, having first examined his own and Roland's arms, to see that all were in proper battle condition, and then directed little Peter to ensconce in a bush, wherein little Peter straightway bestowed himself, Bloody Nathan, with an alacrity of motion and ardor of look that indicated anything rather than distaste to the murderous work in hand, led the way along the ridge, until he had reached the place where it dipped down to the valley, covered with the bushes through which he expected to advance to a desirable position undiscovered.

But a better auxiliary even than the bushes was soon discovered by the two friends. A deep gulley, washed in the side of the hill by the rains, was found running obliquely from its top to the bottom, affording a covered way, by which, as they saw at a glance, they could approach within twenty or thirty yards of the foe entirely unseen; and, to add to its advantages, it was the bed of a little water-course, whose murmurs, as it leaped from rock to rock, assured them they could as certainly approach unheard.

"Truly," muttered Nathan, with a grim chuckle, as he looked, first, at the friendly ravine, and then at the savages below, "the Philistine rascals is in our hands, and we will smite them hip and thigh!"

With this inspiring assurance he crept into the ravine; and Roland following, they were soon in possession of a post commanding, not only the spot occupied by the enemy, but the whole valley.

Peering through the fringe of shrubs that rose, a verdant parapet, on the brink of the gulley, they looked down upon the savage party, now less than forty paces from the muzzles of their guns, and wholly unaware of the fate preparing for them. The scene of diversion and torment was over: the prisoner, a man of powerful frame but squalid appearance, whose hat—a thing of shreds and patches—adorned the shorn pate of one of the Indians, while his coat, equally rusty and tattered, hung from the shoulders of a second, lay bound under a tree, but so nigh that they could mark the laborious heavings of his chest. Two of the Indians sat near him on the grass keeping watch, their hatchets in their hands, their guns resting within reach against the trunk of a tree overthrown by some hurricane of former years, and now mouldering away. A third was engaged with his tomahawk, lopping away the few dry boughs that remained on the trunk. Squatting at the fire, which the third was thus laboring to replenish with fuel, were the two remaining savages; who, holding their rifles in their hands, divided their attention betwixt a shoulder of venison roasting on a stick in the fire, and the captive, whom they seemed to regard as destined to be sooner or later disposed of in a similar manner.

The position of the parties precluded the hope Nathan had ventured to entertain of getting them in a cluster, and so doing double execution with each bullet; but the disappointment neither chilled his ardor nor, embarrassed his plans. His scheme of attack had been framed to embrace all contingencies; and he wasted no further time in deliberation. A few whispered words conveyed his last instructions to the soldier; who, reflecting that he was fighting in the cause of humanity, remembering his own heavy wrongs, and marking the fiery eagerness that flamed from Nathan's visage, banished from his mind whatever disinclination he might have felt at beginning the fray in a mode so seemingly treacherous and ignoble. He laid his axe on the brink of the gully at his side, together with his foraging cap; and then, thrusting his rifle through the bushes, took aim at one of the savages at the fire, Nathan directing his piece against the other. Both of them presented the fairest marks, as they sat wholly unconscious of their danger, enjoying in imagination the tortures yet to be inflicted on the prisoner. But a noise in the gully—the falling of a stone loosened by the soldier's foot, or a louder than usual plash of water—suddenly roused them from their dreams: they started up, and turned their eyes towards the hill.—"Now, friend!" whispered Nathan;—"if thee misses, thee looses thee maiden and thee life into the bargain.—Is thee ready?"

"Ready," was the reply.

"Right, then, through the dog's brain—fire!"

The crash of the pieces, and the fall of the two victims, both pierced through the brain, were the first announcement of peril to their companions; who, springing up, with yells of fear and astonishment, and snatching at their arms, looked wildly around them for the unseen foe. The prisoner also, astounded out of his despair, raised his head from the grass, and glared around. The wreaths of smoke curling over the bushes on the hill-side, betrayed the lurking-place of the assailants; and savages and prisoner turning together, they all beheld at once the spectacle of two human heads—or, to speak more correctly, two human caps, for the heads were far below them—rising in the smoke, and peering over the bushes, as if to mark the result of the volley. Loud, furious, and exulting were the screams of the Indians, as with the speed of thought, seduced by a stratagem often practiced among the wild heroes of the border, they raised and discharged their pieces against the imaginary foes so incautiously exposed to their vengeance. The caps fell, and with them the rifles that had been employed to raise them; and the voice of Nathan thundered through the glen, as he grasped his tomahawk and sprang from the ditch—"Now, friend! up with thee axe, and do thee duty!"

With these words, the two assailants at once leaped into view, and with a bold hurrah, and bolder hearts, rushed towards the fire, where lay the undischarged rifles of their first victims. The savages yelled also in reply, and two of them bounded forward to dispute the prize. The third, staggered into momentary inaction by the suddenness and amazement of the attack, rushed forward but a step; but a whoop of exultation was on his lips, as he raised the rifle which he had not yet discharged, full against the breast of Bloody Nathan. But his triumph was short-lived; the blow, so fatal as it must have proved to the life of Nathan, was averted by an unexpected incident. The prisoner, near whom he stood, putting all his vigor into one tremendous effort, burst his bonds, and, with a yell ten times louder and fiercer than had yet been uttered, added himself to the combatants. With a furious cry of encouragement to his rescuers—"Hurrah for Kentucky! —give it to 'em good!" he threw himself upon the savage, beat the gun from his hands, and grasping him in his brawny arms, hurled him to the earth, where, rolling over and over in mortal struggle, growling and whooping, and rending one another like wild beasts, the two, still locked in furious embrace, suddenly tumbled down the banks of the brook, there high and steep, and were immediately lost to sight.

Before this catastrophe occurred, the other Indians and the assailants met at the fire; and each singling out his opponent, and thinking no more of the rifles, they met as men whose only business was to kill or to die. With his axe flourished over his head, Nathan rushed against the tallest and foremost enemy, who, as he advanced, swung his tomahawk, in the act of throwing it. Their weapons parted from their hands at the same moment, and with perhaps equal accuracy of aim; but meeting with a crash in the air, they fell together to the earth, doing no harm to either. The Indian stooped to recover his weapon; but it was too late: the hand of Nathan was already upon his shoulder: a single effort of his vast strength sufficed to stretch the savage at his feet; and holding him down with his knee and hand, Nathan snatched up the nearest axe. "If the life of thee tribe was in thee bosom," he cried with a look of unrelenting fury, of hatred deep and ineffaceable, "thee should die the dog's death, as thee does!" And with a blow furiously struck, and thrice repeated, he despatched the struggling savage as he lay.

He rose, brandishing the bloody hatchet, and looked for his companion. He found him upon the earth, lying upon the breast of his antagonist, whom it had been his good fortune to overmaster. Both had thrown their hatchets, and both without effect, Roland because skill was wanting, and the Shawnee because, in the act of throwing, he had stumbled over the body of one of his comrades, so as to disorder his aim, and even to deprive him of his footing. Before he could recover himself, Roland imitated Nathan's example, and threw himself upon the unlucky Indian—a youth, as it appeared, whose strength, perhaps at no moment equal to his own, had been reduced by recent wounds—and found that he had him entirely at his mercy. This circumstance, and the knowledge that the other Indians were now overpowered, softened the soldier's wrath; and when Nathan, rushing to assist him, cried aloud to him to move aside, that he might 'knock the assassin knave's brains out,' Roland replied by begging Nathan to spare his life. "I have disarmed him," he cried—"he resists no more—Don't kill him."

"To the last man of his tribe!" cried Nathan with unexampled ferocity; and, without another word, drove the hatchet into the wretch's brain.

The victors now leaped to their feet, looked round for the fifth savage and the prisoner; and directed by a horrible din under the bank of the stream, which was resounding with curses, groans, heavy blows, and the plashing of water, ran to the spot, where the last incident of battle was revealed to them in a spectacle as novel as it was shocking. The Indian lay on his back suffocating in mire and water; while astride his body sat the late prisoner, covered from head to foot with mud and gore, furiously plying his fists, for he had no other weapons, about the head and face of his foe, his blows falling like sledge-hammers or battering-rams, with such strength and fury that it seemed impossible any one of them could fail to crush the skull to atoms; and all the while garnishing them with a running accompaniment of oaths and maledictions little less emphatic and overwhelming. "You switches gentlemen, do you, you exflictified, perditioned rascal? Ar'n't you got it, you niggur-in-law to old Sattan? you 'tarnal half-imp, you? H'yar's for you, you dog, and thar's for you, you dog's dog! H'yar's the way I pay you in a small-change of sogdologers!"

And thus he cried, until Roland and Nathan seized him by the shoulders, dragging him by main force from the Indian, whom, as was found, when they came to examine the body afterwards, he had actually pommelled to death, the skull having been beaten in as with bludgeons.—The victor sprang upon his feet, and roared his triumph aloud:—"Ar'n't I lick'd him handsome?—Hurrah for Kentucky and old Salt—Cock-a-doodle-doo!"

And with that, turning to his deliverers, he displayed to their astonished eyes, though disfigured by blood and mire, the never-to-be-forgotten features of the captain of horse-thieves, Roaring Ralph Stackpole.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The amazement of Stackpole at finding to whom he owed his deliverance, was not less than that of the travellers; but it was mingled, in his case, with feelings of the most unbounded and clamorous delight. Nathan he grasped by the hands, being the first upon whom he set his eyes; but no sooner had they wandered to the soldier, than throwing his arms around him, he gave him a hug, neither tender nor respectful, but indicative of the intensest affection and rapture.

"You cut the rope, stranger, and you cut the tug" he cried, "on madam's beseeching! but h'ar's the time you holped me out of a fix without axing! Now, stranger, I ar'n't your dog, 'cause how, I'm aungeliferous madam's: but if I ar'n't your dog, I'm your man, Ralph Stackpole, to be your true-blue through time and etarnity, any way you'll ax me; and if you wants a sodger, I'll 'list with you, I will, 'tarnal death to me!"

But how, in Heaven's name, came you here a prisoner? I saw you escape with my own eyes," said Roland, better pleased, perhaps, at the accession of such a stout auxiliary than with his mode of professing love and devotion.

"Strangger," said Ralph, "if you war to ax me from now till doomsday about the why and the wharfo,' I couldn't make you more nor one answer: I come to holp the aungeliferous madam out of the hands of the abberegynes, according to my sworn duty as her natteral-born slave and redemptioner! I war hard on the track, when the villains here caught me."

"What!" cried Roland, his heart for the first time warming towards the dispised horse-thief, while even Nathan surveyed him with something like complacency, "you were following my poor cousin then? You were not brought here a prisoner?"

"If I war, I wish I may be shot," said Ralph: "it warn't a mile back on the ridge, whar the Injuns snapped me; 'cause how, I jist bang'd away at a deer, and jist then up jumps the rascals on me, afo' I had loaded old speechifier; and so they nabb'd me! And so, sodger, h'yar's the way of it all: You see, d'you see, as soon as Tom Bruce comes too, so as to be able to hold the hoss himself—"

"What," said Roland, "was he not mortally wounded?"

"He ar'n't much hurt to speak on, for all of his looking so much like coffin-meat at the first jump: it war a kind of narvousness come over him that men feels when they gets the thwack of a bullet among the narves. And so, you see, d'you see, says I, 'Tom Bruce, do you stick to the critter, and he'll holp you out of the skrimmage;' and, says I, 'I'll take the back-track, and foller arter madam.' And, says he, says he—But, 'tarnal death to me, let's scalp these h'yar dead villains, and do the talking after! Did you see the licking I gin this here feller? It war a reggular fair knock-down-and-drag-out, and I licked him! Thar's all sorts of ways of killing Injuns; but, I reckon, I'm the only gentleman in all Kentuck as ever took a scalp in the way of natur'! Hurrah for Kentuck! and hurrah for Ralph Stackpole, for he ar' a screamer!"

The violation of the dead bodies was a mode of crowning their victory which Roland would have gladly dispensed with; but such forbearance, opposed to all border ideas of manly spirit and propriety, found no advocate in the captain of horse-thieves, and none, we are sorry to say, even in the conscientious Nathan; who, having bathed his peaceful sword too deep in blood to boggle longer at trifles, seemed mightily inclined to try his own hand at the exercise. But this addition to the catalogue of his backsliding was spared him, Roaring Ralph falling to work with an energy of spirit and rapidity of execution, which showed he needed no assistance, and left no room for competition. Such is the practice of the border, and such it has been ever since the mortal feud, never destined to be really ended but with the annihilation, or civilization, of the American race, first began between the savage and the white intruder. It was, and is, essentially a measure of retaliation, compelled, if not justified, by the ferocious example of the red-man. Brutality ever begets brutality; and magnanimity of arms can be only exercised in case of a magnanimous foe. With such, the wildest and fiercest rover of the frontier becomes a generous and even humane enemy.

The Virginian was yet young in the war of the wilderness: and turning in disgust from a scene he could not prevent, he made his way to the fire, where the haunch of venison, sending forth a savory steam through the whole valley, was yet roasting on the rude Indian spit—a spectacle, which, (we record it with shame,) quite banished from his mind not only all thoughts of Ralph's barbarism, but even the sublime military ardor awakened by the din and perils of the late conflict. Nor were its effects less potential upon Nathan and Ralph, who, having first washed from their hands and faces the stains of battle, now drew nigh, snuffing the perfume of dinner with as much ardor as they could have bestowed on the scent of battle. The haunch, cooked to their hands, was straightway removed to a convenient place, where all, drawing their knives, fell foul with an energy of appetite and satisfaction that left them oblivious of most sublunary affairs. The soldier forgot his sorrows, and Nathan forgot little Peter—though little Peter, by suddenly creeping out of the bushes on the hill, and crawling humbly to the table, and his master's side, made it apparent he had not forgot himself. As for the captain of horse-thieves, he forgot everything save the dinner itself, which he attacked with an appetite well nigh ravenous, having, as he swore, by way of grace over the first mouthful, eaten nothing save roots and leaves for more than three days. It was only when, by despatching at least twice his share of the joint, he began to feel, as he said, 'summat like a hoss and a gentleman,' that the others succeeded in drawing from him a full account of the circumstances which had attended his solitary inroad into the Indian country, and his fall into the clutches of the Shawnee party.

But little had the faithful fellow to impart, beyond what he had already told. Galloping from the fatal hill, the scene of defeat to the young Kentuckians, he sustained Tom Bruce in his arms, until the latter, reviving, had recovered strength enough to provide for his own safety; upon which Ralph, with a degree of Quixotism, that formed a part of his character, and which was, in this instance, strengthened by his grateful devotion to Edith, the saver of his life, declared he would pursue the trail of her captors, even if it led him to their village, nor cease his efforts until he had rescued her out of their hands, or laid down his life in her service. In this resolution he was encouraged by Bruce, who swore, on his part, that he would instantly follow with his father, and all the men he could raise, recover the prisoners, and burn the towns of the whole Shawnee nation about their ears; a determination he was perhaps the more readily driven to by the reflection that the unlucky captives were his father's individual guests, and had been snatched away while still in a manner, under, or relying on his father's protection. So much he promised, and so much there was no doubt he would, if able, perform; nevertheless, he exhorted Ralph to do his best, in the meanwhile, to help the strangers, vowing, if he succeeded in rendering them any assistance, or in taking a single scalp of the villains that had borne them off, he would not only never Lynch him, himself, but would not even allow others to do it, though he were to steal all the horses in Kentucky, his father's best bay mars included.

Thus encouraged, the valiant horse-thief, bidding farewell to Tom Bruce and Brown Briareus together, commenced making good his words by creeping back to the battle-field; when, arriving before Nathan, he struck the trail of the main party, and immediately pursued it with zeal and courage, but still with the necessary caution and circumspection; his hopes of being able to do something to the advantage of his benefactress, resting principally on his knowledge of several of the outer Indian towns, in every one of which, he boasted, he had stolen horses. Being but poorly provided with food, and afraid to hunt while following so closely the heels of the marauders, he was soon reduced to want and suffering, which he bore for three days with heroic fortitude; until at last, on the morning of the present day, being in a state of utter starvation, and a buck springing up in his path, he could resist the temptation no longer, and so fired upon it. The animal being wounded, and apparently severely, he set off in pursuit, too eager to lose time by recharging his piece; and it was while he was in that defenceless condition that the five Indians, a detachment and rear-guard, as it proved, of the very party he was dogging, attracted by the sound of his gun, stole upon him unawares and made him a prisoner. This, it seems, had happened but a short distance behind; and there was every reason to suppose that the buck, from whose loins the travellers had filched the haunch that destiny had superseded by a better, was the identical animal whose seducing appearance had brought Stackpole into captivity. He was immediately recognized by his captors, whose exultation was boundless, as indeed was their cruelty; and he could only account for their halting with him in that retired hollow, instead of pushing on to display their prize to the main body, by supposing they could not resist their desire to enjoy a snug little foretaste of the joys of torturing him at the stake, all by themselves—a right they had earned by their good fortune in taking him. In the valley, then, they had paused, and tying him up, proceeded straightway to flog him to their hearts' content; and they had just resolved to intermit the amusement awhile, in favor of their dinner, when the appearance of his bold deliverers rushing into their camp, converted the scene of brutal merriment into one of retributive vengeance and blood.

The discovery that the five human beings he had contributed so much to destroy, were part and parcel of the very band, the authors of all his sufferings, the captors of his kinswoman, abated some little feelings of compunction with which Roland had begun occasionally to look upon the gory corses around him.

The main body of maranders, with their prisoner, there seemed good reason to suppose, were yet upon their march to the village, though too far advanced to leave any hope of overtaking them, were that even desirable. It is true, that Roland, fired by the thought of being so near his kinswoman, and having before his eyes a proof of what might be done by craft and courage, even against overwhelming numbers, urged Nathan immediately to re-commence the pursuit: the Indians would doubtless halt to rest and refresh, as the luckless five had done, and might be approached and destroyed, now that they themselves had increased their forces by the rescue of Ralph, in the same way: "we can carry with us," he said, "these Indians' guns, with which we shall be mere than a match for the villains;" and he added other arguments, such, however, as appeared much more weighty to himself than to honest Nathan. That the main party should have halted, as he supposed, did not appear at all probable to Natha: they had no cause to arrest them in their journey, and they were but a few miles remov