

TWO  
WILDERNESS  
VOYAGERS



FRANKLIN WELLES CALKINS



TWO  
WILDERNES  
VOYAGERS



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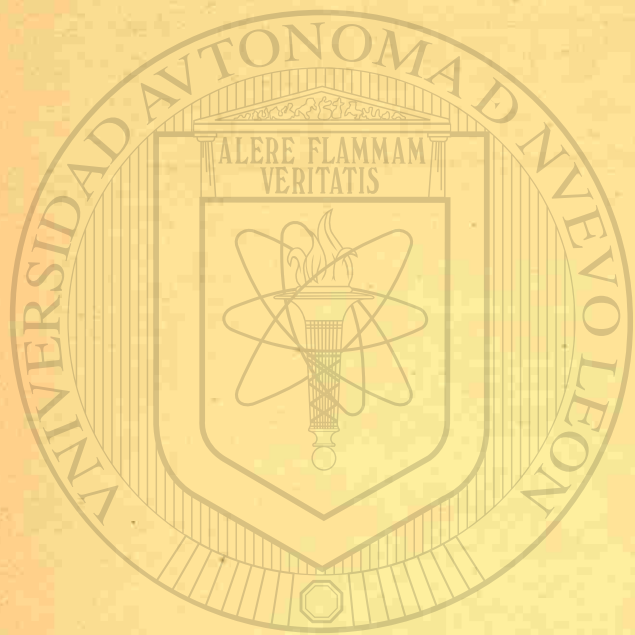


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VOYAGERS

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BY

FRANKLIN WELLES CALKINS

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NEW YORK

TORONTO

# TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

A TRUE TALE OF INDIAN LIFE

BY

FRANKLIN WELLES CALKINS



FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY  
CHICAGO, NEW YORK, TORONTO  
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TO  
MY "LITTLE SISTER"  
OF THE DAKOTAS

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NOTE

If the reader will kindly take note of the few helps offered below, the Dakota words used in this story may be pronounced with a degree of confidence.

No vowels are silent. a=a as in father, e=e as in mate, i=e as in me, o=o as in wrote, u=u as in rule. c has the sound of ch, as in march. h and g are gutturals, ś is sh, j=zh and n is nasal. All other consonants are sounded practically as in English. Zintkala, for instance, is pronounced Zēnt kah' la, and Etapa, Ā tah' pa. The pronunciation of Ojibwa words is indicated in the spelling.

F. W. C.

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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### CHAPTER I

#### A SPRING AWAKENING

The crows had gathered at their rookeries among the tall pines of a bluff which overtopped an Ojibwa village. Snow had melted off the bark roofs of the wigwams and in their front—if they may be said to have had a front—lay a far stretch of blue-green ice shimmering under the April sun. To and fro above this ice-field the solemn harbingers of spring flapped their black wings. They scanned its barren space in vain search for open water and the float of winter killed fish. The occasional remonstrant Ääl-ääl-ääl! of one of these winging specters sounded a lean and melancholy note of hunger. Now and then, too, within their range of vision, a wolf, bare of rib and thin to the semblance of a shadow, loped, a flitting wraith, across an arm of the lake. Save for the scream of a scolding jay, the chirrup of a surviving bunting, or the chatter of a red squirrel, the spaces of the skeleton woods had been as the aisles of the dead.

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At the village, after moons of semi-hibernation, the warming April sun stirred the people to some impulse of animation. Muffled figures shuffled to and fro between the lodges and their fishing-holes in the ice. Lean wolf dogs skulked from lodge to lodge or yapped dismally as they were kicked away from hanging about the doors. Upon the outskirts a bunch of skeleton ponies rustled in the snow, hardy pigmies browsing upon the remains of last year's vegetation. Here, too, the crows came and perched in the tree-tops—safely beyond the range of small shot—expectant of the annual feasts which spring-poor ponies furnish.

The starving moons are cruel in the far north lands. The manido people get very angry; bad spirits prevail. At times Arctic hurricanes come sweeping the woods, one after another, and the angry wind-gods cast down trees in such dreadful fashion that the hunters are appalled and the moose and deer are driven to the coulées of the highlands for shelter, where none but the wolves dare go after them. And so a half-starved people hail the swiftly returning sun with sober manifestations of joy. Fearing lest his progress may be obstructed they make many prayers and smoke offerings to Ki-tshe Manido.

At Tall Gun's village the people had begun to take the fish which will not stir out of deep waters until the sun's rays begin to glimmer

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## A SPRING AWAKENING

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through the ice. Laboriously the women had worked for several days chopping channels beside the crevasses, which here and there ran far out upon the lake. Into these openings the tribal nets had been lowered. These nets the hungry ones visited frequently. Equable division of small catches had several times been made and there had begun to be heard a low hum of renewed life in the wigwams.

During three starving moons no fire had been built in the long lodge, no drum had been beaten, no gourd rattled, no song chanted. But, as the sun mounted one still forenoon, the tinkle of rivulets of water was heard, pools glittered upon the blue ice-field, and suddenly the roll of the conjurer's drum throbbed, the sound of his rattle clicked upon the still air and his voice was heard chanting in a strange tongue. The people were made glad; their pulses quickened for they knew that the medicine of Ghost Moccasin and their own prayers had prevailed.

Tum-te-tum-tum! at last they heard him beating it—the medicine drum of Dzhe-bi-o-mok-ké-zin! A thrill of unexpressed excitement ran all through the wigwams. Low it began, the music, then increased to a muffled roar like the drumming of a partridge's wings in foggy weather. ®

The conjurer was alone in his lodge and soon his voice was heard in strange cries calling

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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upon the manidos; and when the medicine rattle was shaken some people were sure that spirits were arriving. Their arrival became a certainty when the noises of drum and rattle were drowned in a medley of appalling sounds, heard nowhere outside an isolated Indian camp. Thumpings and groanings, strange thrilling cries, rumbling, thunderous noises as if Anemeke himself were speaking, the grumbling, coughing notes of Makwa the bear, lugubrious hootings of Gu-ko-ko-o the owl—a very war of contending manidos seemed to rage inside Ghost Moccasin's wigwam.

Surely this was the greatest conjurer of the Awanse tribes. Very old men could not remember when the spirits had more undeniably manifested themselves. Yet there were those among Tall Gun's wigwams who smiled sourly behind clouds of tobacco smoke.

Tall Gun sat in his lodge well content with his faithful conjurer's performance. The head man's stomach was filled with fish, the season of plenty was at hand, and there was a comely new wife in his wigwam. If his mind held a taint of suspicion as to the origin of the superhuman thumpings, groanings and frenzied cries which issued from Ghost Moccasin's lodge it was hidden behind the mask of gravity which sat upon his face while he blew volumes of blue smoke from his nostrils, turning the stem of his

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## A SPRING AWAKENING

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*casse tête a calumet* to all points of the compass and reverently skyward. Suddenly the noises of the warring spirits ceased, and for a long time a kind of breathless silence reigned in the village. Even the dogs seemed driven to somnolence by this weird stillness broken only now and then by the harsh startling cry of a crow.

Suddenly out of the sky there dropped a clear booming call—*ga-ungk! ga-ungk! glunk!* The spell was broken—the answer to silent prayer had been given. The people rushed eagerly outside their wigwams. They looked up at aun-ah-quod the sky, shading their eyes with their palms. *Gaa-ungk!* Deliberately the clear call rang down out of the blue ether. Quickly one pointed a hand and the blinking eyes saw high—high above all things—a v-shaped file of moving birds, the advance skirmish line of mi-kah, the wild goose.

While they were yet watching delightedly their conjurer suddenly appeared among them, and his assistant began violently beating a drum. Ghost Moccasin himself was painted and arrayed in his most gorgeous and effective manner.

He began a chant, pointing skyward as he sang of the wonders Manabozho had wrought through his prayers and the working of his powerful medicine. When the people saw that the wings of his new head-dress, stained a vivid green, were those of mi-kah, the wild goose,

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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they looked at each other in astonishment, and when presently one came running from the nets to announce a great catch of the maskallonge, they marveled in their joy. Truly it was wonderful!

That afternoon there was feasting and a fire was lighted in the long lodge. The people gathered early in the evening, seating themselves around the edges of the big wigwam, where they waited in decorous silence for the great men to appear. Tall Gun came first and seated himself in the place of honor upon a skin reserved for him. As many great men do, Ghost Moccasin kept his audience in waiting until some of them yawned in sheer impatience. For an hour or more the older people sat, and the younger stood in a packed ellipse about the outer circuit of the smoothly worn ground floor of their primitive town-hall.

Now and then the elder men turned to each other with some low-voiced remark, but even these refrained from smoking. The younger ones maintained a decorous silence, their eyes only shining with the light of impatience or of expectancy.

The conjurer's success had that day been so manifested that he thought fit to announce himself by a crier. His approach was therefore solemnly chanted from outside the lodge. There were old men and some younger folk whose

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## A SPRING AWAKENING

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eyes twinkled, but they looked discreetly down their noses. Ghost Moccasin came in, his assistants bearing the sacred drum and medicine pouch. The conjurer had arrayed himself fantastically and carried a powerful medicine fetich and a wondrous rattle.

His assistants began to drum and the medicine man, seating himself before a bright fire of fagots, began a series of public incantations, smoking to all the manidos and mumbling strange incoherences. After a sufficient length of time, during which the younger people were in a great state of suspension, the medicine man began an intelligible chant, and this is what he sang:

I do not know where I am going.  
I depend upon the clear sky.  
Ho, you sugar maple, fast your sap is flowing,  
O my friends, I thank you,  
O my friends, I thank you.

The first two measures were chanted very slowly with impressive hiatuses and amid silence, but the last lines rolled off his tongue quickly and were responded to by a general and joyous hand-clap that was like the scattered volley of a skirmish line.

First the young girls came forward and danced. To the barbaric double time of the tom-tom and the rhythmic jangle of its bells

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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these moved modestly, their elbows at a slight curve, their moccasined toes turned inward.

Ho, In-ne-na-tig! E-shig-o-ma-e-oosh,  
Ho, ni-ki-ni-ka-na, migwetsh, ni-ki-ni-ka-na.

The weird cadences of their chant imported in shrilling tones the thrill of awakening nature, the joyous prophecy of plenty, of content and good will among men.

Louder beat the tom-tom, more fiercely jangled the bells, and the voice of Ghost Moccasin, raised in crying repetitive, was like a clarion call to action. Young men took the place of maidens in the dance and the action grew fast and furious until the timed rhythm of those swaying, leaping figures whirled the brains of the on-lookers into its mad, magnetic current. Wild cries of encouragement were shouted by the women and young folk. The feet of the young men beat upon the floor, their sweating, painted bodies writhed, their faces grimaced as they rivalled each other in shouting the cadences of the chant.

There were only two persons who were not apparently pleased with this dance and these were small unnoted people—a boy and a girl, of near a dozen years each, who stood behind an ugly woman, crowded between the inner posts of the big wigwam. These two were thinly clad

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## A SPRING AWAKENING

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and with no attempt at ornament save an unsuccessful face decoration.

The faces of these were indeed flushed but not with pleasure. The girl had disdainfully wiped from her cheeks the red earth with which 'Lizbet, Tall Gun's squaw, had stained it. Her blue strouds sleeve carried most of this adornment, but some faint streaks yet remained to accentuate the hot blood of resentment and disgust which showed in her small round face. She stood erect against a post, her hands dangling, a keenly intelligent and scornful little critic of this Awanse fête dance.

The boy, of the same height, stood on the other hand of their mistress, who was no other than Tall Gun's old wife 'Lizbet. He had a shoulder crowded between two upright stakes as though he would have burst through the thin partition. This one looked out from under a mat of unkempt hair and scowled a Sioux scowl upon the whooping moving crowd.

'Lizbet Tall Gun was of an excitable nature. She stood partly in front of her charges and, in her eagerness to egg on the dancers to some new grimace or contortion, the hostile faces of the boy and girl went unnoted.

For the first time in many weeks, so close had been her surveillance, these children spoke together in their own tongue. As the excited woman crowded forward the better to lose no

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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movement of the dance, the girl spoke behind her back, taking care not to look at her brother.

"Younger brother," she said, "younger brother, let us soon go homeward."

"The arrows of the Cree fellows," returned the boy, scowling more deeply under his mop of hair, "and the bow of my grandfather and some buckskins are hidden in a hollow-wood."

"Waste, mi sun!" said the girl, struggling to hide the satisfaction in her face. "Waste! I also have done something. Secretly I have hidden the awl of this she creature and two bundles of thread."

"Good," muttered the boy, "therefore we shall not go with these good-for-nothings to boil the sweet water of their trees."

He was about to speak further, but some accent of his despised and unknown tongue reached 'Lizbet's ear and she turned, giving the girl and boy each a fierce slap upon the cheek, shrieking Ojibwa maledictions.

When he could see her back again the boy scowled up at her with the face of a small fury. A young *meti* woman at his right hand saw the blow. She noted the look upon the boy's face and she shrieked with laughter, but the kindly French blood in her veins prevented her from exposing him further to the old wife's fury.

The alien boy and girl, however, had said enough. They spoke not again during the dance.

## CHAPTER II

### THE SIOUX SLAVES

Mahpiya-peta, or Fire Cloud, was a war-chief of the Oglalas. Prior to 1860 he fought frequently in wars against the aggressive whites, the Ojibwas, Pawnees, and Crows, and in defence of the narrowing frontiers of his nation. He was a soldier of renown and, being a person of importance, was chosen as one of a delegation of Northwest Indians who visited the Great Father at Washington.

From that trip he returned to his town upon the Smoky River a changed man.

"I will no longer fight the white people," he declared to his soldiers. "We make ourselves ridiculous. We must become as they are or perish."

In the following spring he took his children, Zintkala-Zi (Yellow Bird) and Etapa (The Right Hand), to the mission school at Traverse des Sioux in order that they might be educated to live after the manner of the conquerors.

For these, he said, would soon despoil his nation and pen the wretched remnant of its tribes upon narrow tracts of land to be held as prisoners of war—to be slaughtered, if they

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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should resist, as the buffalo are slaughtered in a surround.

How much his heart was wrung in obedience to his judgment, when he left his children at the mission, no one can tell. His Isanti wife mourned for them almost as she would have mourned for the dead. To her it seemed an incredible and cruel thing that she should be asked to part with her children, little more than babies, to be reared and taught among a strange people—to forget their own kindred and perhaps their own tongue. But she could not gain-say her lord and master, Fire Cloud.

The children were not less rebellious in spirit than their mother. They were cruelly homesick from the first. The little girl was obedient to her teachers for some weeks, but when Etapa proved intractable to discipline, and was punished for running away to play with the children of "blanket Indians," she, too, grew rebellious. At the end of four months it became evident to the better judgment at the mission that Fire Cloud's young belligerents would better have stayed among the Oglalas.

One night in September the boy and girl took matters into their own hands, seized an opportune moment and fled, intending to make their way across to the Missouri River, where their mother's people were then living. Once among these they felt very certain their father would

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## THE SIOUX SLAVES

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send for them when their wrongs should have been recounted to him.

So fierce was their home hunger, these children trusted themselves to the boundless prairies without food and with no weapons save a horn-tipped bow which the boy's grandfather had made for him and which he had clung to with a persistence not to be denied. But, though he had the bow, he had no arrows save the reeds he was able to pluck from the creeks and sloughs.

So for three days this boy of ten and girl of eleven traveled steadily westward subsisting upon the roots of the teepsinna which they dug with half a clam shell and ate raw.

They had reached the buffalo country when a party of Assiniboin hunters—men and women—swooped upon them and bore them northward as captives. The Assiniboins at this time were nominally at peace with the lower Dakota tribes and, when this party had reached a trading-post on the Red River, they had so far repented of their rashness as to offer their captives in private sale to some Ojibwas who were on a trading expedition.

Thus, for two dumpy ponies and some other property, Tall Gun, of a village in the far eastern woods, came into possession of the Oglala boy and girl. When Tall Gun's party had trailed back to the Red Lake country the chief set up another wigwam and took to wife the comeliest

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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maid of his village. In propitiation he gave to 'Lizbet, a half-caste, who had kept him in monogamous estate for a quarter of a century, the Sioux captives, that she might with honor set up a household of her own. With the possession of these strong children, the boy already an efficient hunter of small game and the girl able to do most of the work required in her wigwam, with a husband still willing to provide meat and skins from the hunting, 'Lizbet was very well content. Thereupon the wily chief congratulated himself upon the opportune stroke whereby he had grasped the horn of a dilemma. Such are the odd and accidental forces which go to the shaping of destinies where war and plunder obtain.

Zintkala-Zi and Etapa, after the first poignant terrors of capture, accepted their captivity as became the children of warlike people. Had they been taken into a wild tribe whose ways of life were similar to their own, or had they been kindly treated by adoption, it is very possible they might never have attempted to escape and would in time have lost their identity as Dakotas.

But neither of these things happened to them. The son and daughter of a war-chief of the Oglalas, whose mother was daughter of a Yankton chief, had been children of some distinction among their own folk. They were now

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## THE SIOUX SLAVES

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slaves to a woman of nondescript people whose every mode of dress and of life they detested.

Their mistress was a virago. She was not thoroughly vicious but tyrannical, which was quite as galling to the Sioux children. As they were—from policy—obedient to her behests, so far as they understood them, it was some time before 'Lizbet laid violent hands on one of her chattels. This happened when she discovered that Zintkala-Zi had cunningly concealed a splendid necklace of polished elk teeth and was unwilling to give it up.

In her irksome prison-pen among the missionaries little Zintkala had been reprovved for wearing "heathen ornaments" and so she had hidden her double chain, sewing a strand inside either of a pair of buckskin leggins. These leggins she had worn when captured by the Hohé (Assiniboins). Within their winter folds the valuable ornaments remained hidden until the shrewd eyes of 'Lizbet detected their outlines beneath the worn buckskin. The strings of polished ivories were promptly ripped from their fastenings, and 'Lizbet took possession of the child's beloved ornaments with a scream of delight. Because Zintkala cried, when she hung the chains about her skinny neck, 'Lizbet beat her severely with switches. After this the Sioux children never compromised with her for an instant in their hearts.



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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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At first some Ojibwa youths made an attempt to deprive Etapa of his bow, which they said was too big and strong for so small a boy. They told 'Lizbet that the lad should trade it for one better adapted to his years. But shrewd 'Lizbet, making him understand their criticism, procured some fairly serviceable arrows and sent Etapa into the woods. When he returned with three rabbits and a grouse the bow was secured to him.

The boy, however, unable as yet to converse in Ojibwa, did not understand and, when boys—out of hearing of 'Lizbet—still urged him to trade his bow, he was much alarmed lest they should take it from him by force.

Just before the snow came, a party of Crees, traveling through the country, camped at Tall Gun's village and stayed for a day or two to gamble and to "swap" for such property as could be traded. On the day after their departure Etapa's bow was missing and, although 'Lizbet gave him a severe beating for carelessness, it was generally believed that the Crees had stolen the weapon because of its superior quality. To appease the angry old wife Tall Gun made the boy a bow of dry ash. It was a contemptible weapon in Etapa's eyes yet, needing food, he made effective use of it so long as there were birds and rabbits to be shot.

In 'Lizbet's wigwam the Sioux children, who

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## THE SIOUX SLAVES

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were recognized as her property, her slaves in fact, graduated in a stern discipline. She continually talked to them in Ojibwa. After some days, when she had taught them a few necessary words and had established a sign language in aid of their understanding, she never again allowed them to speak to each other in their own tongue. A word in the Sioux was the signal for a blow with a dog whip. In all that dismal winter they had no opportunity to speak together apart from their argus-eyed mistress. 'Lizbet kept one of them beside her constantly. She never allowed the two to pass outside her lodge together and, if she stepped across to a neighbor's wigwam, she took Zintkala with her. How bitterly irksome this life became to these children of the plains the subsequent chapters of this history will reveal.

### CHAPTER III

#### AT THE SUGAR CAMP

On the morning after the fête dance there was confusion indescribable at Tall Gun's village. The weather had come off uncommonly warm and the wigwams were turned inside out in a mad scramble to make hasty exit toward a sugar-camp.

Their skeleton ponies could not travel in the snow nor drag travois packs over the ice; so there was tying and untying, packing and repacking of blankets, skins, clothing, kettles, pans, cooking utensils, axes and fishing tackle to meet the limited capacity of a limited number of dog sledges.

Women and children hustled to and fro, yelling themselves hoarse, while men seized upon half-trained wolf-dogs and fought with the snarling, vicious brutes to get them into harness. There was need of frantic haste, for already there was much water upon the ice and, by noon, or a little later, the lake would be impassable for sledges and the slush snow of the woods equally so.

Ho-ho-ho! E-shig-o-ma-e-oosh! Fast the sap is flowing! People ran hither and thither in a

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#### A T T H E S U G A R C A M P

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frenzy lest they should overlook some necessary dish, chipping adz, or other utensil. As fast as a family had its dogs or its women loaded with packs the members set out at a dog trot upon the sloppy ice. Every rivulet of a hundred miles and more of shore-line was pouring its flood out upon that bottle-green waste.

So they ran, slopping in shallow pools, with sweating shoulders and icy feet, women and papooses chattering and screaming, and men belaboring dogs and swearing strange French oaths. When one slipped and fell, getting a shower-bath from the splash, shrieks of laughter greeted the mishap. By holding to the ice-ridges they were able to keep their feet out part of the time, else the ice-water would have proven intolerable long before the twelve-mile stretch was crossed.

Numbers of crows and ravens followed this long file of bipeds and four-foots over the ice. Where these shouting creatures should stop the winged caravans knew that many fish would be taken and out of a wasteful abundance the empty craw could be filled. So the funereal birds flapped alongside, alighting upon the ice-ridges to utter hoarse, anxious notes, stalking singly or in solemn files just far enough from the movers to be out of range of a boy's blunt-ended arrow.

Of all the scurrying, human crowd only two

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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were utterly discontent. These were the young Dakotas. During the rigors of an Arctic winter they had not dared to attempt escape, for they could not have survived a march in the awful cold.

But now that spring had come both were eager to fly and they had only awaited an opportune moment to seize such things as they needed and had hidden. By secret signs, made when 'Lizbet's back was turned, they had agreed that some dark night when the "she creature" was asleep, they would steal from her wigwam and take to the woods. Not only did this early flight across the lake carry them further into the unknown country, but they were compelled to carry burdens which nearly crushed their young backs before the goal was reached. 'Lizbet had no dogs, not being able to support them, and so she loaded herself and her slaves with such effects as Tall Gun's sledge could not accommodate. And she forced the burdened children to travel in her front, shrieking at them French and Ojibwa maledictions or threatening the dog whip when their tired legs lagged. The impulse to fling down their hateful packs and speed with swift feet to the nearest dark line of woods was strong upon them. But this rash prompting was resisted and finally the dreadful journey came to an end.

At high noon the sledges were gathered at the north rim of the lake where, at a well-known

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## AT THE SUGAR CAMP

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inlet, fish were slaughtered in such numbers as justified the wisdom of the attendant crows. The open current of the brook had tolled the finny ones out of winter quarters until, within its narrow channel, they were crowding upon each other. There men and boys, armed with all sorts of spears, attacked them in hilarious excitement and soon the snow on either bank was heaped with the slain and, like a miniature battle ground, stained carmine. This carnage continued until the fish were run out of the open brook.

The Ojibwas had also reached the country of In-ne-na'-tig, (the sugar maple). Along both banks of the small stream were many groups of the tall, shapely trees. Hundreds of trunks bore rings of fissured scars where the tomahawk or the chipping adz had tapped them.

At some distance up the brook, hidden away amid ranks of tall maples, stood the skeleton frame-work of a huge wigwam, the Ojibwa sugar camp. Its poles were yet partly covered with the bark of last year's laying. Many hands make light work and by night the ragged roof and sides were snugly pieced with freshly peeled birch-bark. ®

This camp, after the manner of a Huron long house, was arranged to accommodate a large number of families, only in this instance each family hung up blankets or skins to partition off

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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its section. This was done not so much for the sake of privacy as to mark a line which should divide each family's household goods from those of its neighbors.

Notwithstanding the bustle of their hurried dash from village to sugar-bush the Indians discovered quickly that the sap was not flowing—that Ghost Moccasin was not wholly infallible. In this far north land the frost sets its teeth deep into the ground and many days of warming sun are required to start even the volatile sap of the sugar maple flowing.

But there was much to do in the days of waiting. Every year they must make a new set of birch-bark sap-vessels and spouts, *casseaux* or troughs for catching the sap, buckets for carrying, and the *gaujé*, a yoke which was borne across the shoulder. For, with the improvidence of nature's children, they took no care of these things but left them scattered about, where they were used last, to be burned or buried in snow and forest debris. Upon only one set of the implements of their sugar-making did they bestow absolutely necessary care. They kept within their wigwams the several large brass kettles, which a post trader furnished them for the sake of the trade they brought him. These kettles were religiously scoured, polished and guarded with the care bestowed upon sacred articles.

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## AT THE SUGAR CAMP

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Their sugar-making was a profitable industry, and annually they sold many mococks, of a brick-like consistency, at the upper Red River post—and the article brought them three-point blankets, red strouds and trinkets more than the skins they took. And besides, in the season of making, there was the delicious diet of syrup and sugar of which they ate enormous quantities.

In their days of preparation for the sap catching, of tapping trees, whittling *gouttières*, making and setting the *casseaux*, and repairing the stone furnaces, abundance came to them from the south seas. Overhead the near blue sky was flecked with clouds of geese, brant and ducks, and, stretches of open water having appeared along the lake shore, the birds tumbled into these spaces in myriads.

The noise of their wings, their flappings, splashings, gabble and quacking, the murmur of a multitude, sounded far through the still woods.

Among the bush alongshore the hunters secreted themselves and with small shot secured an overabundance of meat and feathers.

During a slow migration of weeks these birds, because of their vast numbers, had fed, almost undisturbed, upon the wheat and corn fields of the lower and central Mississippi countries. In these early years of western settlement we indeed furnished to the Indians, in fat and juicy migrators, our only ungrudging supplies.

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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The people of the sugar camp took on flesh visibly during these days of abundance. The fat goose flesh and the maple syrup and sugar gave their brown skins a healthy glow and put spirit and sparkle into their eyes. A new and vigorous life possessed them, and the hum of it ran as a pleasant murmur in their camp. The sounds of the drum, of weird Ojibwa chants and French roulades, mingled oddly with the medley of the lake, the cawing of crows, the screams of jays, and the piping of blackbirds.

During the morning hours women, girls and boys were busy at gathering sap and again in the late afternoon. To and fro they shuffled in and out among the tree trunks, each carrying the *gauje* with a birch-bark bucket at either end. All day and all night the kettles boiled merrily with women or girls taking turns in constant attendance.

'Lizbet Tall Gun was in her glory. She had charge of the great brass kettle which was the head man's chief possession and article of distinction. And she had his young wife, a niece, and the Sioux boy and girl to do her bidding. She was thus high priestess of the sugar-making and she made a large show of authority. She sat upon a colored mat, smoking and giving commands, though she arose occasionally to examine critically the bubbling contents of the kettle. Occasionally, also, when it appeared that the

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## AT THE SUGAR CAMP

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syrup was too low or too high or that there was a suspicion of burning about the rim of the kettle, she snatched the hemlock paddle from the Sioux girl's hand to bestow a sounding thwack upon her shoulders.

Zintkala-Zi bore this with impassive face, and went about her task as before. As became a daughter of the Dakotas she accepted the inevitable without a show of emotion. She even laughed at times when something amusing occurred; and, when the sap was not running and the big kettle had been scoured, she played with the young girls of the camp and made for the little ones wooden dolls with carved heads, dressing them with bits of bright clothes and cast-off buckskins.

In all this demeanor 'Lizbet read submission and the growth in the girl of an Ojibwa heart. Etapa, too, seemed to have undergone a change. At times during the winter he had been sulky and ill-mannered. It was especially difficult to teach him the Ojibwa words. In six months he had barely learned enough of the tongue to know what was required of common necessity. When 'Lizbet was not at hand he sometimes taunted the Ojibwa boys with their babbling tongue. He spoke of it contemptuously as "bi-wab-ik-shik-wik!"—a name which the young mimic had invented.

However, at the sugar camp, in the midst of

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excitement and of plenty, with as much of the sweet as he chose to eat—for no one was stinted at the boilings—Etapá seemed to have shed his surly disposition. He brought wood for the furnace, carried his *gaujé* with cheerfulness, and took on flesh and a shining skin.

'Lizbet was much pleased at the apparent change. She had conceived a secret liking for the boy, who was a keen hunter and quick to see things. "See," she said to her husband, who daily honored her by lighting his pipe at her fire, "see, how it is with my children."

Zintkala had gone a little distance after wood and Etapa was coming along a path bearing buckets of sap. "They are now of our people," boasted 'Lizbet and Tall Gun was also pleased. He seated himself upon 'Lizbet's mat and smoked contentedly the while her charges came and went. He had noted that 'Lizbet's kettle was continually filled to the boiling point and that her furnace never lacked wood. As a great number of trees had been tapped, that all the boilers might use as much sap as they could reduce, he foresaw that 'Lizbet would this season much surpass her former tale of cakes and mococks. Thus he did not hesitate to express tacit approval by sitting a decorous length of time at her fire.

His complacent sitting so pleased the elder wife—who saw signs of jealousy in the younger—that one afternoon she grew quite hilarious and

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## AT THE SUGAR CAMP

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excited and drank a great deal of warm syrup. She also made a delicious wax for her lord. She was thus attending the kettle herself to serve Tall Gun, and her boiling ran low.

It was about sunset, after the sap-gathering time, when she noted her remissness and to make amends she called the young wife to see after the kettle—and incidentally to take the blame which would attach to burning on—put a *gaujé* upon her shoulders and, with Zintkala and Etapa, went out to collect sap from any drippings which might remain.

Thus they hurried, going on parallel lines and within sight of each other, from trough to trough.

They were a good distance from camp at dusk, and still their buckets were not filled, when 'Lizbet was suddenly taken with fearful pains and fell upon the ground, spilling her sap and shrieking in agony. She rolled upon the earth, writhing to and fro and howling like a mad thing.

Awed and astonished, the Sioux children stood gazing for a moment. Some evil spirit had seized upon this woman. Doubtless it was in answer to the prayers they had offered in secret. They were quick to seize upon this probability. For many days they had been praying to Waniyan Tanka to help them to escape.

'Lizbet was plainly hors de combat, senseless,

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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shrieking with pain. Zintkala was first to act. She ran to the groveling woman, snatched her long knife from its sheath and, seizing the strings of elk teeth about her neck, struggled with the frantic creature until she had cut away their fastenings and secured the treasure.

"Younger brother," she said, in great excitement, "let us now go homeward! Hither let us run among the trees, taking the canoe with which a man has arrived."

A hunter, who had returned to the village by way of the woods, had that day paddled a birch-bark vessel across the lake. It was the first thus far to be brought to the camp. Etapa looked at 'Lizbet, whose contortions and screams did not cease. Very evidently an evil spirit had been sent to attack her.

"Ho, Tanké," (older sister), said the boy, "we shall run toward these people, crying that some enemies have arrived. We shall take some parflèches to make us proper clothing."

Seeing the wisdom of this very young warrior, his sister ran with him. They shouted: "The enemy! The enemy! Those wicked ones have attacked 'Lizbet!"

Keen ears at the sugar-making had heard 'Lizbet's screams, and presently, catching the purport of the Sioux children's cries, the camp was thrown into an uproar. Men, old and young, seized their weapons and, supposing that

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## AT THE SUGAR CAMP

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a bear or a cougar had seized upon 'Lizbet, ran through the woods to her succor. Women and girls, not deeming it prudent to go into the darkened woods, gathered in excited groups upon the outskirts of the camp.

The little Sioux, so soon as they heard the footfalls of the runners, ceased their cries, and, avoiding the Ojibwas in the darkness, passed around them, and so on swiftly to the rear of their camp. Seeing no one on that side of the big wigwam, they dodged in at an opening and seized such things as they needed or could lay their hands on in the semi-darkness. In 'Lizbet's and Tall Gun's apartments they knew, in particular, where the household goods were stowed, and they thus secured two parflèches of buckskins, a small bag containing hanks of thread, bundles of sinews and other needful things, with a light and convenient tomahawk which belonged to the young wife of the chief.

They had no difficulty in stealing away from the camp in its rear for all was hub-bub and confusion out beyond the furnaces. Their first difficulty was encountered upon reaching the canoe which had been drawn out upon the creek bank. There were no paddles at hand. It was some minutes before they found a single broad-bladed one concealed among some bushes. With this Etapa made such haste as he could, but they were not out of the creek channel when they

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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heard the sharp gasp of a fleet-footed runner in pursuit.

Frightened, they were about to leap from the boat when the man broke from cover near at hand. It was too late to escape by running, and Etapa thrust his paddle upon the bottom and gave the boat a fierce shove. At the same instant the runner leaped at them from the bank. Even as he jumped the light craft shot away from under him, and the man sprawled his length in the shallow brook.

When he recovered the canoe was darting out upon the waters of the lake. This runner had no fire-arm, but he yelled frantic directions to those who were chasing in his rear and, a moment later, the beach alongshore was ablaze with popping guns.

It was too dark for rifle shooting, else this story could never have been told. Bullets skipped and whizzed about the receding canoe and small shot struck it and the occupants repeatedly. Undoubtedly, when they had discovered the ruse of the young Sioux, the Ojibwas immediately connected their flight with 'Lizbet's attack and they were fierce to capture or slay them.

Though feeling the sting of small pellets upon the arm and shoulder, Etapa plied the paddle with all his strength and, in two or three minutes, the canoe had slipped out into the darkness and beyond the range of shots.

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## AT THE SUGAR CAMP

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"Tanké," said the boy, inquiringly, "those people have hit me with some shots."

"I also am struck in my hand," said Zintkala, simply. "But, younger brother, it does not hurt greatly."

"It is nothing," said Etapa and in their greater anxiety to steer their course aright they did not again mention their hurts. Without the bow and arrows, which Etapa had hidden in a wood at the village, they could not hope to make the long journey which lay between them and their own country.

Therefore the canoe's prow was turned southward. The night was clear and, as all Indian children know "The Seven Dizzy People," who swing nightly around the pole star—these and their native instinct for direction guided the Sioux children, who took turns in plying the paddle and who worked as those work who race with death upon their heels.

They knew perfectly that two lines of runners, one upon either shore of the lake, would be launched after them to take up their trail wherever they should come to land; that they must fly—fly—fly if they would live.

The night favored them, for there was no air stirring. There were no ripples upon the lake save those made by the water-fowl which rose flapping and squalling in their front.

The one who was not paddling sat in the bow



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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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watching for the ice-floes which endangered their frail craft. Zintkala's wound bled freely. A swan-shot had passed through her palm and lodged under the skin upon the back of the left hand. She trailed the hand in cold water until the blood ceased to flow and thereafter the hurt troubled her little.

Two hours of swift paddling brought them under a bluff behind the Ojibwa village. By no possibility could runners coming around the lake reach this point before morning. The young Sioux had often heard the Ojibwas say it was a long day's run by the shore and one way they could not come at all without boats because of a wide neck of water which connected with a very long lake.

So Zintkala and Etapa were very cautious in approaching the village. An old man, his wife and their lame son, had been left to guard the wigwams. While the children were not afraid of being caught by these, the family might yet be on the alert and so prevent them from securing the necessary bow and arrows.

However, they had no difficulty at all. The wigwams were silent and fireless when they arrived. Etapa recovered his bow and the arrows which he had cunningly stolen from the Crees, and Zintkala, from behind a certain piece of bark in the roof of 'Lizbet's lodge, took the awl, thread and small articles she had hidden.

## CHAPTER IV

### INTO THE UNKNOWN COUNTRY

When they returned to the canoe Etapa and Zintkala bore each a light strong paddle, much easier to handle than the heavy one they had used and had needed to use alternately. Their progress was now rapid. They sped faster than anyone could have made his way through the woods and tamarack swamps alongshore. They were elated. The night, the long lake and the wilderness were before them and when they were far beyond ear-shot of the village they talked freely and excitedly of their recent experiences. Etapa counted the little "mosquito bites" where the small shot had hit him and found that ten or more of them had gone through his skin in various places. He felt proud of these wounds and thought that he should be able to show the scars when he had arrived at home.

And he would not have been a genuine little Sioux had he not boasted greatly of how he had darted the canoe out from under the leaper who sought to jump down upon them from the creek bank, and also of his exploit in stealing a quiver of arrows from the Crees—he had seven, finely toothed and feathered, and of superior wood—

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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and of his adroitness in hiding his bow so that the Ojibwas had believed the Crees had stolen it.

And Zintkala, riding upon the smooth water, listened, well pleased with the sound of her own tongue again. So they paddled on, keeping The Dizzy People upon their right and, most of the time, a faintly outlined shoreline upon the other hand.

They were not alone—far from it. On every hand were the puddling, quacking, squalling water-fowl. These rose at times in such numbers that the noise of their wings was as the voice of Wakinyan the thunder god. There were many flashes of white wings sailing by and strange voices, which startled them, came out of the night.

The steady dip-dip of the light paddles did not cease for an instant and after a time the land shadows disappeared upon their left and appeared upon their right. By this token they knew that they were entering the channel between the two lakes, and so turned their course southward. When they had left the headland they did not see the shoreline again and they had paddled until their arms were very weary when a fog began to rise upon the lake. Soon this mist became so dense that the stars were obscured, and the little voyagers were literally at sea as to direction.

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## INTO THE UNKNOWN COUNTRY

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They paddled about for a time much puzzled and distressed. This fog might well mean death to them, for, unless the lake were very long indeed, the Ojibwa runners might come within sight of them when the mist should lift with the rising sun. Soon the folly of continued paddling became apparent—for they might even be going back into the teeth of the enemy. Therefore they remained silent in the midst of silence, for the water-fowl seemed to have gone asleep; only now and then a pair of wings flapped or a faint, contented chuckle sounded within their hearing. Soon, in spite of anxiety, sleep overcame the little voyagers and with blankets closely wrapped they lay upon the canoe's bottom.

When they awoke the sun had begun to glimmer from a height into the low mist which lay upon the lake. Instantly they seized their paddles and steered their canoe southward.

As the sun rose higher a light fog still hung over the lake and overhead the sky was hazy also. This made the hearts of the paddlers glad, for they knew the atmosphere would not clear until a breeze came. There would be opportunity to land their canoe without danger of observation if they should arrive at the shoreline within a reasonable time. Though their canoe could still be seen at a long bow-shot's distance, the chance that an Ojibwa should be within sight was too small to give them uneasiness.

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The rise of water-fowl in its front as the canoe advanced would, in clear weather, have marked its progress for many miles to keen eyes on the lookout. At a little distance, however, the mists swallowed all these hurtling crowds of birds.

After paddling for some length of time the voyagers were alarmed by hearing a medley of strange noises in their front. Shrill outcries, whoops of wild laughter, screams, groans and gruntings, came to their ears out of the fog.

At first the children were much alarmed, fancying that they heard a multitude of the strange manidos of the Ojibwas. They ceased paddling and were in doubt as to what course they should pursue. They were thus hesitating in silence, fearing to converse together, when a bevy of big white-winged birds appeared, skimming low over the water. These screamed and laughed in a manner which left no doubt as to the origin of the alarming noises. Whole tribes of these strange whoopers, white, gray and black, now came yelling through the fog. Some of these birds alighted upon the water, cocked great red and yellow eyes at the canoers and then rose and flew away with odd cries and yells of shrill, mocking laughter.

All this was most astonishing to the Sioux children to whom these noisy Arctic birds, their sudden appearance and disappearance, their transient gavaeian medley—annual events in the

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## INTO THE UNKNOWN COUNTRY

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north lake country—were wholly unknown. In the unknown there is always mystery to the Indian, and the boy and girl looked at each other, and spoke in low tones, in much amazement.

They resumed their paddling and held their direction mechanically while their eyes were for the birds. Presently they began to encounter ice-floes, and upon these melting, spongy masses the strange birds were gathered in great numbers and their antics gave fresh cause for wonder. They certainly acted strangely. Some fluttered their wings, holding them grotesquely aloft as buzzards do, while their huge bills gaped threateningly; others seemed to be executing a dance, crooking their necks and hopping from one foot to the other, while others strutted with a great show of fierceness; and each seemed to vie with another in screeching, laughing, scolding or grunting, until the ears were pierced with their outcries. Barring the fact that they wot not of the comparison the onlookers might have fancied themselves sitting in a gallery of the Inferno.

"Do look, younger brother!" Zintkala exclaimed, presently. "On this one side the people are really dancing the buffalo dance."

Etapa turned his face, as directed, toward an ice-field upon his left and, near at hand, a group of birds were certainly prancing, hopping, jumping and posing their wings and bodies in such

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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impossible attitudes as suggested a violent dance of the Dakotas. The birds were very probably quarreling over the carcass of a fish which each wished the privilege of pecking out of the ice for its individual benefit.

"Older sister," said Etapa, with conviction, "these people will surely go to war. It is the buffalo scalp dance."

The children spoke naturally of these birds as "people." All animals, to the Indian, in his native state, are a mysterious folk. Some are sent by the Great Spirit to furnish food and clothing, others to harass and annoy and perhaps to cast an evil spell, and yet others to furnish warning and instruction.

"It may be, brother," ventured Zintkala, "that Wakinyan has sent these strange warriors to protect us from the enemy."

"Ho, Tanké!" cried Etapa, "I think that is so."

At any rate, they declared, it was evident that these scolding birds were debating what should be done to some very bad people, and there could be none worse than the Rara-ton-wan (Ojibwa).

Thus, seeing the birds apparently well disposed toward themselves, they took comfort from their mysterious conduct, supposing it might mean confusion to their enemies. Therefore Etapa addressed the terns and laughing gulls as follows:

"Ho, you birds, you strange ones, you are very

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## INTO THE UNKNOWN COUNTRY

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mysterious. Anyone can see that you have a great medicine. Therefore we desire greatly that you shall help us, so that you shall all shout very mysteriously at the enemy. If you will do so for us he shall not find our trail."

When a whooping outcry arose among some gulls, at the close of this speech, the children were quite certain these birds had understood and would try to help them.

Thus, with hearts comforted, the little voyagers paddled on amid a whooping tumult until suddenly there loomed in the fog a line of skeleton tree-tops and shore was near at hand. They hastened joyfully to land, for they were getting woefully hungry, and must travel, hiding their trail, a good distance in the woods before they would dare to stop and build a fire.

The shore they now approached was gorged with ice, a high north wind having driven the ice-fields upon it, piling huge white masses on the beach and hoisting fresh walls of sand and gravel.

Very cunningly the voyagers came to land amid this debris. They left the canoe overturned at the edge of a gorge, that it might drift with wind and wave, and scrambled over the honey-combed masses until they could pass to hard ground upon the trunk of a fallen tree. Then, bearing their small bundles, they launched themselves into the wilderness of woods.

## CHAPTER V

### THE DANGER OF DELAYS

Through alternate growths of hard woods and pines the little voyagers passed on until they walked unsteadily from fatigue. As much as possible they kept to the hard ridges and stony ground, avoiding spots where moldy vegetation or moist earth might leave a trace of footprints.

They had no set plan other than to travel southward with all the speed possible, for in that direction lay the Minnesota River and a narrowing strip of territory still occupied by Dakotas. They knew nothing of the country which lay before them, for the Assiniboin had carried them over the prairie regions far to westward, and the Ojibwa had brought them eastward over a country partly wooded.

Despite hunger and weariness they felt a mounting sense of freedom with each step which carried them further from a hated drudgery among a despised people. They did not feel that they were alone for squirrels barked and birds chirruped among the trees. Now and then a startled deer stood at graze for an instant and then sailed gracefully away among the tree trunks. Overhead, too, a myriad folk called down to them out of the hazy sky and

### THE DANGER OF DELAYS

there was a cheery whistle of wings above the tree-tops as flights of small ducks passed from one wild rice lake to another.

After a time they neared one of these marsh lakes where there was a deafening uproar of water-fowl tumbling in and out of the reedy swamp.

"Younger brother," said Zintkala, "I think you must now kill some birds. I faint with hunger."

"Stay here, sister; I will do so," answered the boy. He dropped all burdens but his bow; then, breaking some straight, hollow reeds from the edge of a bayou near at hand and selecting some pebbles from the lakeshore, he sat down and with the aid of some pieces of pack-thread manufactured several arrows. This he did by fitting small stones into the split ends of his reeds.

These were primitive weapons, yet the lad passed around among the bushes, approached the lakeshore near to where flocks were feeding, and easily killed a couple of fat ducks.

Zintkala had, in their raid upon the sugar-camp, secured 'Lizbet's small hoard of matches as well as flint and steel and she had a small fire going when Etapa returned.

Although desperately hungry Etapa was the warrior in miniature. He allowed Zintkala to dress the ducks and roast them the while he

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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whittled at a bit of hardwood, with tiny transverse holes, fitting one hollow with a reed stem that he might have a pipe wherewith to smoke to the earth, the sky and thunder spirits. He had no tobacco, but pulverized willow bark makes a sweet smoke and is thus a proper incense offering.

By the time his pipe was finished the ducks, spitted upon two sticks, were roasted and the children attacked them smoking hot. Ah, how good to bury the teeth in that sweet meat! They ate ravenously, panting with enjoyment, until every bone was clean picked.

"Younger brother, you should have killed another," said Zintkala.

Etapa looked at the scattered bones regretfully.

Just then a squirrel barked near at hand. "See, brother, shoot—shoot!" said Zintkala, pointing her finger to a tree beyond him.

Etapa turned about and saw a large gray squirrel upon a limb near to the ground. The saucy creature was barking at five or six steps' distance. The boy cautiously took up his bow and a reed arrow and, a few minutes later, bunny was spitted over a bed of embers.

While the squirrel was cooking, the brother and sister took account of their bundles of effects. Each had come off with a gray blanket and a parflèche (whole-skin sack) of buckskin.

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## THE DANGER OF DELAYS

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Etapa besides had secured, with the tomahawk, a roll of pieces of buckskin, tanned moose hide, bundles of sinews and of pack thread. Zintkala had retained 'Lizbet's long knife and had seized upon various small and useful articles in her apartment at the sugar-camp—a bag of work threads, odds and ends and ornamental bits, a hank of buckskin strings, and, best of all, a small metal basin in which she would be able to cook meat and roots when they should really make a camp.

When they had finished the squirrel they were very tired and sleepy. They reclined upon their blankets intending to rest a brief time longer. Sleep seized upon them in a twinkling and the sun had passed the zenith before either pair of eyes had opened.

They were rather cross when they awoke and each was inclined to find fault with the other for remissness. But they packed their small bundles quickly and, strapping them to their shoulders, hurried away from a camp which hunger and fatigue had certainly made an imprudent one.

The unknown lake stretched for an unknown distance upon their left and they were thus compelled, much against their will, to turn to the east. They avoided the lakeshore and kept to the woods.

They had walked a considerable distance

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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when they came upon a fresh difficulty—a black and barren tract, recently desolated by a forest fire, lay before them. Across this they must go or turn back and attempt going around the lake to westward. Thus there was but a choice of evils and the little voyagers, after sage counseling together, elected to go ahead.

They could not fail to leave tracks upon the dust of the burned ground, but they took what precaution they might to alleviate the danger of being seen by some trailer or stray hunter while they were crossing. Etapa climbed a tree upon the edge of the tract and scanned the reaches of the burned district closely. Seeing nothing to alarm he descended and the two made up their bundles and wrapped their blankets in a peculiar way about their bodies. Then, stooping until their heads were low to the ground, half walking, half crawling, they went one behind the other, imitating the movements of mato-sapa, the black bear.

By this means they hoped to escape the dangers of a chase should any hunter come within sight. For at this season the black bear was little but skin and bone and ill-temper and the Indian hunter usually avoided the animal. There was no one there to judge of their imitative performance, yet it may be set down as certain that the average hunter, seeing at a distance those dark gray figures ambling among the

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## THE DANGER OF DELAYS

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blackened stumps, would have adjudged them bears and would have passed on to the chase of more desirable game.

A half hour of this kind of going proved a wearisome business and the little Sioux were overjoyed when they had again safely reached the shelter of woods and bush, where they could straighten the kinks out of their backs.

They were yet for a time forced to travel eastward by the trend of the lakeshore. They did not know it, but they were now entering a region famous for its wild rice lakes, and never in one day had they seen so many water-fowl. Great flights were passing to and fro overhead and the murmur and spatter of them came up from the lake in continuous accompaniment to their walk. Now and then, in response to some sudden alarm or impulse, clouds of birds would rise from the water with a roar of wings which was simply astonishing.

"Hoye, Tanké!" Etapa would shout, forgetting caution in this tremendous din. "Magakšíkca ota-ota!" (Hey, older sister, ducks are wonderfully plenty!)

An hour or two before sunset the children reached a southward trend of the lake and, coming upon a low ridge, saw before them another burned tract which had been swept bare of trees. But this district had been desolated some years previous and was grown to young jack pines



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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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and other bush to an average height above the voyagers' heads.

They betook themselves to the bush joyously. It was exactly such covert as they would have chosen until assured of safety from pursuit. Within this copse they felt the security of rabbits in a warren of hazel bush.

Toward sunset they came upon an open grass plat where the last year's dry "fog" lay thick upon the ground and a small clear brook ran through the midst. Here they were tempted to rest and, having carefully examined the thickets near by until they had found dry and charred wood which would make little or no smoke, they determined to camp for the night. It truly seemed that no one could find them in this bush land.

Yet they were soon startled by a crashing among the small pines and were about to scud away when they distinguished the footfalls of some large animal and, squatting upon the grass, awaited its appearance with anxiety. The creature came toward them and broke from cover at a little distance. It was a huge and hornless bull moose, which, catching sight of strange creatures upon the grass, stood at gaze with its ungainly muzzle reared, and half-grunted, half-snorted, mingling fear with threat.

Zintkala feared the big animal was about to attack, and counselled flight in alarmed panto-

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mime, but Etapa stood up boldly and addressed the moose.

"I know you, bull moose," he said. "You are a good fighter, but you have no horns and I do not fear you. With my knife, should you attack, I could cut your skin in small pieces. We are not at war at this season, O bull moose! Your flesh is poor and you have no back fat, therefore let us make a peace. I will cut some willow bark and you shall smoke with me."

But the moose did not stay to smoke. He stood throughout the harangue gazing in continued astonishment, then, having concluded that there was nothing to fear or to further interest in these small bipeds, he moved indifferently away.

"Older sister," said Etapa, "we shall not build a fire until after Wi (the sun) is hidden, therefore make yourself to rest. I will make some arrows and kill geese."

So the sister lay at ease upon a luxurious bed of dry grass while the brother cut straight willow rods for his arrows and searched the bed of the brook for fitting stones with which to head them. When he had weapons enough the boy approached the lakeshore, creeping among the shrub and the still standing grass. Some white-faced geese which he had heard continuously flapping their wings and gabbling, were sitting upon the sand or puddling in the shallow water near at hand. Etapa succeeded in stealing

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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within a few steps of one of these and buried a jagged shaft in its side. Before the bird could struggle into the water and while a hundred others rose flapping and squalling above his head, the lad pounced upon his game with a little whoop of triumph. It was the first time he had killed magá, the wild goose.

Zintkala also was highly pleased with the young hunter's success. An hour or so later, while they were making savory roasts of their goose meat, their evening was rounded out by another adventure.

While eating and talking in low tones their acute ears caught a light patter of footfalls and, looking about, they saw a shadow figure flit across the fire-lit grass plat. It was sung-manitu, the wolf, and the brother and sister looked at each other inquiringly.

"Why is this one come to us?" they asked each other and neither could give an answer. They were not afraid. The wolf does not attack people at their campfires—never at all unless driven by maddening hunger. Neither, in the Dakota belief, does this animal, which is invested with sacred and supernatural qualities, approach near to human beings except to convey information or warning from the higher powers of intelligence.

Therefore these children ceased eating and sat in hushed expectancy, awaiting the further

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## THE DANGER OF DELAYS

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movements of sung-manitu. Every slightest rustle of bush or twig fell upon their ears as the animal moved now here, now there, keeping within the toss of a stone of their campfire. Occasionally the wolf stopped stock still, as if listening intently, and their ears were filled only with the distant spatter and gabble of water-fowl. Then sung-manitu moved again, and they heard nothing else.

Presently the animal came into the open upon the side opposite to where it had just been seen and, sitting upon its haunches, looked intently toward the silent watchers and their fire. Its gray outlines, its lighter-colored forelegs, its pointed nose and ears, and a fire flicker of reflection in its eyes, were plainly visible. Thus it sat, solemn and motionless, seeming to convey to the voyagers some occult message of the wilderness. So they accepted its action, listening and looking with all their souls to interpret the signs.

When the wolf finally trotted into the bushes, going away from the lake, and passed beyond earshot, the brother and sister again looked at each other with deep inquiry. "I think—" said Etapa. "I think—" repeated Zintkala, but neither of them got any further, and they resumed eating in a ruminant mood. They finally rolled themselves in their blankets, saying nothing and much puzzled by the conduct of sung-manitu.

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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Their bed was dry marsh grass, their roof a low sky set with stars, and their lullaby the tumultuous murmur of a million water-fowl.

They awoke in the pale twilight of a morning which the pen hesitates to set forth—a spring morning of the north land—a morning with a clear, near sky, a soft, cool air, pine-scented, fresh with the breath of pure waters and beat upon by the wings and cries of a myriad of migrators. The emotions of any creature with five senses are stirred by such a morning. Its air is breathed as a tonic and the pulse is quickened with a desire for exertion.

As by common impulse the Sioux children separated and, each seeking a bath pool, stripped and splashed in the cold water of the brook with an enjoyment whetted by long abstinence from the privilege. When they returned to their camp each was filled with elation and excitement, and they would dearly have liked a noisy race upon the lakeshore, but there was caution to observe and breakfast to obtain; for some sly creature had made away with the remains of their goose during the night.

Upon going to look for game Etapa found the birds all out at sea. But there were many fish running in the brook and, affixing Zintkala's long knife to the end of a pole, the boy quickly killed enough for a breakfast.

During the meal some ducks alighted, squal-

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## THE DANGER OF DELAYS

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ling, upon the beach where he had looked for them. As that day's journey must take them into the woods again, where there might be no lakes and streams harboring game, Etapa stole to the waterfront to try for a shot.

His first arrow was effective in knocking over two small ducks, but when he ran to pick them up the lad made a discovery which turned him cold from head to feet. There were fresh moccasin tracks upon the sand of the beach!

Three men had passed that morning, doubtless before himself and Zintkala were awake, certainly before the light had come, else they would have discovered his own tracks where he had chased the goose. When he had recovered from surprise and dismay Etapa stepped quickly back to the cover of overhanging bush.

This boy was possessed of a keen intelligence and the gifts of intuition which the wilderness bestows upon its children. Therefore the situation quickly shaped itself in his mind. From a slight elevation the evening before he had noted that a bog marsh, leading back to a tamarack swamp, extended as far as the eye could reach upon his left. He had perceived that he was making his way along a neck between this swamp and the lake. What if the marsh were merely an arm of the lake crooked back from some point in advance!

His eye scanned the shore-line. Yes, it was

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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so—away down the nearly regular inward curve birds were flying to and fro, apparently going in and out of some tall pine woods. Those birds were following an arm of the marsh. How foolish he had been not to think of this before! He had run into a trap. He had been trailed across the burned ground and marked down as hiding somewhere between swamp and lake. At that moment he hazarded no guess in the swift conclusion that he and Zintkala-Zi were hemmed in by Tall Gun's Ojibwa trailers.

## CHAPTER VI

### AS THE RABBITS HIDE

Even as the boy stood, considering how he might best cover his tracks in the sand, two men appeared, not five bow-shots distant, walking down to the water's edge. Nothing but instant flight and a cunningly blinded trail could save the little voyagers.

Etapá sped back to camp and, as he burst into the opening, Zintkala read the evil tidings in his excitement. She had already buried the embers of a smokeless fire of charred wood, had packed their blankets and other articles in two small, tight rolls, and she looked at her brother with a scared, inquiring face. He put up a warning hand until he had come very near.

"The Raratonwan!" he said. "They are coming—we must go quickly."

As by a lightning stroke the sister's mind reverted to the mysterious visit of the wolf. "Brother!" she said, as Etapá seized his pack, "sung-manitu said thus—go in this direction!"

"It is so," said Etapá, struck by the thought, "we should have gone more quickly." He looked at the ducks in his hand. It would not do to leave so much as a feather upon the trail they must make and he flung his birds into the

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brook. "Come," he said. They did not run; they slipped into the bushes at a light and hurried walk. The sister followed the brother and their feet almost unconsciously sought the bare, hard spots, their bodies weaved from side to side to avoid a telltale contact with the ever-green bush.

A swift change had come over the buoyant, hopeful children of the morning. All the helpful spirits, the birds and animals, had seemed to be aiding in their escape from the Ojibwa. Suddenly the enemy had come upon them and they were flung upon their own resources in this desperate case. The flushed and confident faces of so late a moment were drawn and pinched, and a pair of bloodless, breathless waifs, like ephemeral shadows, flitted from bush to bush.

In this swift, silent walk they progressed in a general direction toward the tamarack swamp; yet Etapa was continually taking sharp, zigzag courses, now and then going back upon his trail as the fox-chased rabbit does. He had no possible doubt that the upper reaches of this neck of bush land were guarded closely by watching, listening Indians, or that the men below would, within a brief time, discover their night camp and their line of flight. Therefore he and Zintkala must keep going, if need be until night fall, unceasingly dodging and warily listening for hostile sounds.

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## AS THE RABBITS HIDE

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Suddenly a gun boomed in the rear. To their scared ears the sound was as if a shot had been fired at them from the bush near at hand. But far away to northward another gun answered, and they knew the first shot had announced the discovery of their tracks or their camp, and the second had been fired in answer to a preconcerted signal. Then a still more distant gun report told them that at least three parties of the enemy hemmed them in upon the neck.

Instinctively, Etapa changed his course, going—as ear and eye decided—in a straight line in the direction of the second gun shot. On this track they advanced swiftly until the boy's instinct told him it was time to stop and listen. Then they squatted under the bushes and, with ears close to ground, remained silent for some minutes.

Suddenly there was a rustling of the young pines and a snapping of twigs which told of the rapid approach of some creature. A brief moment of listening decided the matter. A man was coming! How the young ears were strained and the little hearts ceased to beat that the direction of those footfalls should be accurately judged! And what faint, long sighs of relief were breathed when it became evident that only one man was within hearing and that he was going by upon one side, paralleling their course.

Etapa then considered. If there had been

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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several men and they had all passed, making no discovery, he would have gone straight forward, at least for a considerable distance. But that way lay danger even greater perhaps than in the rear, and so again he turned their course toward the tamarack swamp and again resumed the tactics of zigzagging and doubling. And no hunter, merely crossing the trail thus made, could have discovered it except by accident or a prolonged and infinitely patient search. But the best tracker of Tall Gun's band would doubtless shortly be put upon their trail at the other end.

After making their way in laborious fashion for some distance toward the marsh the fugitives came upon a slight stony ridge the far slope of which extended to the open swamp. Etopa turned to his sister with a sudden light of animation in his eyes. Zintkala's pale, drawn face responded with an eager flush of comprehension, and again their hearts beat hopefully.

Here, where the bush was not so thick, they made their way more rapidly, stepping from stone to stone, very certain that no human enemy could trail them upon such ground. This tract of rocky soil continued, lying along the marsh, for a considerable distance.

Etopa led the way to within a short distance of the marsh's edge, then followed where the stones were thickest, taking a course parallel to its irregular curves. Thus they actually traveled

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## AS THE RABBITS HIDE

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for a considerable distance back toward their night camp. This course they followed so long as the stones lay thick upon the ground. They had to stoop low at times to keep their bodies under cover.

When they were at the end of the stony tract they had reached a point well down toward where the bog marsh connected with the lake and had made nearly a half-circuit of their camp. Beyond the two gun shots, and the man running among the bushes, they had heard nothing of their enemies.

Etopa now cast his eyes about for an inconspicuous place of hiding. He finally selected a thin strip of shrub pine, upon the verge of the bog land, where the bush was barely sufficient to cover the prostrate body from prying eyes.

Within this thin fringe of bush—the last covert that a civilized person would have chosen—the Sioux children took to cover after the manner of the rabbits. They chose, with the instinct of wild things, each a spot sheltered by slightly raised boulders and a thin veil of pine foliage. Each spread a blanket in double folds and lay at full length upon it. And here they rested silently, with watchful eyes and wary ears, well knowing that a number of Ojibwa hunters were at the other end of their morning's trail and following with more than the persistence of a wolf pack. The children were now wholly dependent

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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for safety upon their success in having made a blind trail. As to immediate danger, they were not much worried, yet, as the sun rose high and beat warmly upon their covert, each fought a mental battle with drowsiness. They lay thus wearily until the afternoon was waning, seeing or hearing nothing to alarm.

Then their still alert ears caught slight sounds as of some creature walking in the shallow water of the bog marsh. Soon a softly-measured tread, marked by the light plash and drip of water as a foot was lifted or immersed, told the intent ears that a man was approaching, wading along shore. With bated breath, with animation suspended save as nature concentrated it upon the sense of hearing, the fugitive waifs lay inert as the stones beside them.

Both, as it happened, and chiefly for interest in passing flights of water-fowl, had their faces turned toward the open swamp. As their eyes thus rested upon a space veiled lightly by the pencil growth of pine, a man came within their range of vision and so close at hand that a hiding deer would scarcely have held its covert in their places.

Yet these two did not stir so much as an eyelid while an Ojibwa, who could almost have touched the bush fringes with his gun, waded softly by, stepping in shallow water between the

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first bogs of the wet ground. The man was young and a stranger to the voyagers—thus they knew that Bimidji's young men, of another pine-woods village, had joined with Tall Gun's in the chase. In the same instant their torture of fear was lightened by noting that the hunter's eyes were intent upon the tufts of grass which clothed the bogs and drooped into the water. Evidently their trail had been lost when their enemies reached the stony ground!

This man supposed they might have crossed the marsh somewhere about this point where the reach of open bog and water was narrowest, and he was keenly scanning the feathered float of grass for sign of any fresh displacement. In fact, he was looking into the shallow water for their tracks! The man was very cunning—such was the thought of his breathless watchers, and it was with intense relief that they heard the last drip of water from his moccasined heels.

The trail hunter passed so close that had he turned his head to peer intently for an instant into the feather-like fringe of pines he must certainly have discovered the hiders. But, such was the wisdom of these prairie children, it is almost equally certain the hunter would have been astonished at their choice of covert. Again, had the hunter's faculties been less intently engaged and those of the fugitives less utterly repressed, he might, by his wilderness



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instinct, have felt their near presence and so have turned his eyes upon them.

Such was the ordeal through which the Sioux children had consciously yet instinctively passed. The rebound of joyful emotion when the danger had gone by was almost more than either could endure in silence. The little girl even found humor in the situation, and she almost laughed outright as she recalled how the man's toes had curled each time as he lifted them from the water. Evidently there was ice at the bottom.

Etapa's elation ran very high, for he felt very certain this man's report would keep any whom he should meet from going over the same ground. But there was also a sobering second thought in the knowledge that other Ojibwas had joined Tall Gun's young men in the pursuit. This might very well mean that 'Lizbet was dead and her people (relatives) bent upon revenge.

So wearily he lay, as did his sister, breathing with soft regularity, relaxing no whit of vigilance. It was a matter not only of life or liberty, but of honor now, to foil these hated Ojibwas. Again, however, their faces were turned to the swamp where flocks of ducks hurtled by in almost continuous flight. Blue wings, green wings, black and white with flashes of red and gold—swiftly the procession passed, whistling upon the wind like swift flights of missiles.

Now and then a flock of white-faced geese

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## AS THE RABBITS HIDE

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skirted the edge of the marsh, flying low—so low that their dove-colored breasts and great spread of wing seemed, for an instant, to hover protectingly over the hidden voyagers. Yet the wary watchers well knew that in these close flights there was an element of danger to themselves. Should any suspicious stir or glint of color catch the cocked eye of the wary leader of one of these flocks his whole herd would go hurtling and squalling skyward, as plain a signal to the watchful Ojibwa as the red light of a campfire. So, hungry and bone-weary, the little voyagers lay close in covert until night gathered its curtain close about them and they were free to move with little danger of being seen.

## CHAPTER VII

### INTO THE TAMARACK SWAMP

Wicarpikin, the stars, were glimmering here and there out of a hazy sky, but all the bush land lay mottled in thick darkness, and the open stretch of bog and water showed only as a faintly seen and uncertain space, hemmed with a black wall which marked the line of the tamarack swamp.

This swamp, if it were passable for the feet, offered a line of retreat from the surrounding bush land, where certainly no trail could be followed beyond the extreme edge, and not there if the steps were taken with proper care.

Etapa was not certain of the depth out where the bog had showed only tufts of grass above the water's surface, but the wader had taught him as well as Zintkala that at the bottom of the bog was solid footing of ice and frozen ground. The marsh ice had been covered early with an overflow of melted snows, and it so lay thawing by degrees.

The boy spoke to his sister in low tones, the general confusion of night sounds in this season of bird migration making it safe to do so.

"Older sister," he said, "we shall go hither far

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### INTO THE TAMARACK SWAMP

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among those thick trees and there hide for another sun."

They rolled their blankets and effects in close bundles and tied them to their backs about the waist, Zintkala saying nothing.

Etapa led the way and they stepped from some close-lying boulders into the water, where there were few bogs and little grass. They walked very carefully, lifting their feet high and putting them straight down to displace as little as possible of the dead vegetation. They had not waded long until they were sure that no one would follow them far into the swamp. The water was much colder than that of the lakes, and the ice at bottom soon benumbed their feet.

The water was nowhere more than knee-deep, but even so its chill became well nigh unendurable. No man could here have waded for a great length of time. But there was capture or death behind the little voyagers and they pushed ahead with cramping feet and chilling bones. When they reached the tamarack trees they were compelled to seek low-lying limbs, of the larger growth, and to stand upon them, beating their moccasined feet until the blood returned to them.

Then, hungry and still shivering, they began to thread their way into the depths of a swamp where the growth of small tree trunks was so dense as sometimes to compel them to turn

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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their bodies edgewise, pulling their bundle rolls after them, in order to advance. The water was everywhere half knee-deep and the gloom intense. Now and then, through the skeleton web overhead, one particularly bright star glimmered and its fitful twinkle was all the guide they had. For the most part they made their way by feeling. Etapa trailed his unstrung bow and bundle in one hand and with the other searched the spaces in his front, and Zintkala followed, treading as closely as possible upon his heels, never daring to drop beyond arms' reach. Thus, slowly and with infinite patience, they advanced into the heart of a perilous swamp. Wherever they could find a limb of considerable size thrust across their path they endeavored to climb upon it in order to beat warmth into their feet. Sometimes this was possible and sometimes, because of the thick growth overhead, they were compelled to creep beneath or to pass around. In spite of these occasional respites from the biting cold of ice-water their feet in time became so numb and their legs so cramped that they groped their way stumblingly, nerved only by the necessity of foiling their enemies. Doubtless the unspoken thought of each was that they might easily perish in this unknown swamp—but it was better to die here than again to fall into the hands of the Ojibwa.

How many dreadful hours were passed in

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## INTO THE TAMARACK SWAMP

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threading the mazes of the tamarack swamp cannot be known. The voyagers' feet and legs at length became so numb and useless that they were barely able to drag them over the rough under surface, pulling themselves forward by grasping the limbs or small trunks of trees. They could no longer pound life into their legs, even upon a fallen log which they attempted to stand upon.

"Brother," said Zintkala, after a weary time, "brother, I perish. I cannot walk." Her teeth were chattering so that she could hardly speak the words.

"Come, Tanké, let us go on yet a little longer," urged Etapa. "We shall find some large fallen tree and lie upon it to rest."

They did not find the tree but, after painfully dragging their limbs some little distance further, they came suddenly upon a small open plat of marsh grass—such as is often found, a little oasis in the tamarack woods—where the ground lay quite above the water's level. Half-frozen, faint with hunger and dizzy with fatigue, they stumbled upon this dry grass as those who are drowning clutch the plank of safety.

Zintkala fell in a heap, her limbs cramping, her teeth chattering, too exhausted for a warming exercise. She had clung to her blanket roll mechanically. Etapa, though he shook as with a fever chill, was yet able to keep his feet. He

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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stamped about clumsily but manfully, crying out to his sister that she should do as he did. In thus tramping and attempting to jump he stumbled backward over a dead tree which had fallen across the opening. As he crashed among the branches some animal of the cat tribe sprang from its warm nest spitting and growling angrily. This creature scrambled into a near tree-top and continued to menace the intruders with angry snarls.

Somewhat frightened by the threats of the cat, Etapa decided to build a fire. As there was no wind blowing he knew that the smoke must go upward and could hardly carry a telltale scent to the enemy.

Following the dead tree to its broken tops, he soon secured an armful of fagots and, with a wisp of dry grass for kindling, speedily had a snapping fire going. As the blaze crept out upon the grass he stamped it out with his wet moccasins and so prevented the disaster of a tale-telling light upon the sky. The tamarack sticks burned briskly, and Zintkala crawled on her hands and knees into the grateful warmth.

Seeing her condition, Etapa piled on more sticks and both sat with their benumbed feet thrust almost into the flames. Ah, how good was the heat! It was truly waste-ste. But they were no sooner warm than hunger pinched them anew.

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## INTO THE TAMARACK SWAMP

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While they sat warming their feet they heard the wildcat scramble away among the trees, but soon a saucy owl, perched near at hand, shrieked at them mockingly, "Hu-hoo! hu! who-who!" and had they understood English they might have answered after the manner of the lost son of Erin—"None, sor, that yer honor should be envyin'."

After a long time, when they were thoroughly dry and warm, they wrapped themselves tightly in their blankets and, in spite of a gnawing hunger, slept.

It was not yet daylight when the chill air awoke Zintkala, who sat up to draw her blanket more closely around her and instantly was stricken with fright. The sky was obscured and the darkness intense. None who do not know by experience the oppressive blackness of a tamarack swamp upon a rayless night can imagine its effect upon the mind of this Indian girl. It was a weird, dank darkness which carried a positive conviction of the reign of under-world spirits. She was smitten with the fear of the water-god of the Dakotas, the fabled monster of the wakan-wicaša or medicine men.

"Hoye, younger brother," she called, in a sharp, low voice, "awake quickly! I am afraid of Unk-té-hi." She thrust out a hand and shook him, repeating her appeal.

"He-hee, why do you thus wake me?" he

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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grumbled. "Shh-te!" she warned. "Unk-té-hi will hear you and the under-water people will surely devour us."

At this the boy sat up, shivering. He, too, was stricken with the fear of Unk-té-hi and his under-water beasts.

"Let us keep very still," he murmured, "and pray to the thunder spirits. Perhaps they will keep the evil ones from finding us. Do you not think, older sister, that they have made it very dark against the under-water beasts?"

"It is very dark," she muttered, "but do not speak further, younger brother."

An unwonted and, as it seemed to these children, a dreadful silence had fallen upon the earth. They did not know it, but a fog had risen and hung densely in the woods and upon the waters. The migrating birds and woodfolk, seeing nothing, had fallen to rest. A dead stillness reigned save that now and then an intermittent, rasping shriek seemed to pierce all the black depths of the woods and once a hollow, terrible laugh fell out of the sky. The children were too much frightened to recognize the cries of the swamp owl and of that unerring swimmer, diver and flier, the loon. They heard only the voices of Unk-té-hi and his evil ones, who they doubted not were seeking to devour the invaders of their dismal swamp.

They snuggled, trembling, close together and

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## INTO THE TAMARACK SWAMP

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could only whisper the hope that Wakinyan, the spirit of thunders, enemy of Unk-té-hi, had cast a black robe over the woods to blind the evil one. Fervently, but with scarcely audible voices, they prayed to the spirits of the upper air to protect them.

With the coming of light they felt that their prayers had been answered and their fears passed to give place to the gnaw of hunger. Because of the fog there was in the swamp no living thing to be seen or heard.

"Come, older sister, let us go from here," said the brother, and with a hopeless face the little girl packed her bundle. There was no mark of land or sky to guide them, but they felt that they must go while they yet had strength to withstand the cold wading.

Etapa found traces in the dry grass of their tracks in coming in upon the opening and they left, going in the opposite direction. Again the dismal wading with water from ankle to knee deep and the same wedging and winding amid rough, close standing tree trunks and with the barest flicker of befogged skylight overhead.

There was a single element of cheeriness amid the gloom, for again they heard the whistle of wings overhead, the booming call and the far-off murmur, of innumerable water-fowl.

In order to keep a single course, Etapa would fasten his eye upon the farthest tree trunk to be

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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seen ahead and when this was reached would look on to the next. But there were spots where the small growth stood so close he could only have made a straight path, laboriously, with his hatchet. So the small trail-maker would turn, as he supposed, at a direct angle, until he could pass the thick growth and take up his former direction. Even to a forest-bred Indian the tamarack swamp is an intricate puzzle, and the prairie-bred boy was no match for its mazes.

On and on waded the fugitives, veering to this direction or that as necessity demanded, becoming more and more confused, cold and thoroughly wretched as no outlet from the swamp appeared. They were rejoiced when rarely they found a fallen or a leaning tree upon which they could beat their cold feet and rest.

After a fearful length of time, famished with hunger, and ready to drop from the cold-water cramp and fatigue, they came out of the dreadful woods to set their feet gladly again upon dry ground, but to find, to their later amazement, that they had performed the miracle of the lost, and had returned exactly to the starting point. Again, of necessity, they built a fire of the dead tree's branches to warm their chilled legs and dry their clothes, and here they knew they must stay until the sun should shine.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE EAGLES PROVIDE

They felt quite safe from search of the Ojibwa, for who would risk life wading in this dreadful swamp upon the mere chance of discovering his friend or his enemy? Therefore, seeing that the smoke went upward, they piled wood upon their fire without fear of the trail hunters. But, having eaten nothing now for more than twenty-four hours, they were desperately hungry. Etapa fashioned some blunt-end arrows from young tamarack—for he would not use his "war arrows" except in defense—and, walking about the small oasis, scanned all the tree-tops in search of squirrels or small birds. The only sign of life the boy could discover, however, was at the far end of the grass plat, where several dead trees stood upon the dry ground. In the top of one of these trees there was a huge stack of small sticks so interwoven among the limbs as to impress upon the Indian boy a permanent dwelling of some large animal. For, though he had seen many bird's nests—the eagle's among others—built of sticks, he had never seen one anything like so large, or with an appearance so solid and permanent.

Despite the gnaw of hunger, the lad was curi-

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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ously interested in this immense tepée of the tree-tops, and he sat upon the grass for a long time considering it. He finally reached the conclusion that mato sapa, the black bear, might have built his summer home where he could lie and enjoy the cool winds and perhaps at times there were young bears living in the stick wigwam.

He was thus sitting and puzzling in his mind when a big bird of white breast came flapping heavily out of the fog, flying low over some young tamaracks, and struggling with a large live fish in its talons. The bird dipped downward, evidently having a hard time of it—for the fish was wriggling violently—then soared upward, in an attempt to alight upon the stick house.

In doing so the captor struck its prey heavily upon the edge of its nest and the fish, suddenly wrenching itself free, fell to the ground. Doubtless the eagle would have recovered it, but Etapa pounced upon the God-send with a cry of wonder and triumph.

He forgot all caution and ran through the fog shouting with gladness. "See—see, sister," he cried, "what a bird has brought! It is certain Wakinyan has sent this fish!"

And Zintkala, too, cried out with wonder and joy, saying that surely they must now know that the thunder spirits had heard their prayers. "Younger brother," she said, "it is signified that

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## THE EAGLES PROVIDE

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we should not go from here until Wi (the sun) gives his light."

Reverently, this child of nature prepared and broiled the fish and in no less devout spirit, though tortured with hunger, the two ate of it. Who shall say that He whose ravens fed Elijah was less mindful of these truer children of the wilderness?

When they had finished eating Etapa procured some bark from a cluster of willows upon the grass land and, filling his wooden pipe, smoked to the spirit of thunders, pointing the pipe's stem toward the huge fish-eagle's nest as he exhaled the vapor. As if in answer to his prayers, the bird returned presently bearing another fish in its talons. This time the eagle alighted without difficulty upon its nest. A moment later a piercing scream sounded out of the fog and the bird's mate swooped across to the nest, also bearing a fish.

Etapa and Zintkala approached with awe in their faces. They wished to speak to the birds and to show a humble and grateful spirit before them. But the eagles both flew away. The one bore its prey, the other left a fish upon the great nest.

By means of a pole which he cut, Etapa climbed into the branches of a tree which stood alongside and, after much difficulty, succeeded in poking the fish off its perch. It was now

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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quite evident to him that a pair of fish-eagles had built the "house tepée," but he none the less devoutly believed that the birds were obeying some wakan-waste, or good spirit, in bringing and leaving the fish. Doubtless the eagles had thought that two fishes were enough for two small Dakotas and so had carried one away for their own eating.

"Ho, Tanké," said the boy, when he had descended, "we shall stay here a long time, I think, for the Ojibwa can not find us. They will say the Dakotas have perished."

"The smoke goes upward to the abode of Wakinyan—it is so," said Zintkala.

"Hoye, sister, let us make here a small tepée, so that rain will not fall on us," urged the boy.

"We have no skins for the covering," objected Zintkala.

"You shall see how it is," said Etapa. "I will put my blanket above the top." And forthwith he seized his tomahawk and attacked some young tamarack growth to secure his poles. Zintkala now produced a working kit from her parflèche and began to make a pair of moccasins, for those they wore were nearly ruined by wading and rough usage. In a little time the boy had set up a number of stakes and fastened his three-point blanket in the form of a tepée covering about the top.

"See, sister, go into your lodge and there

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## THE EAGLES PROVIDE

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work," pleaded the lad, and Zintkala was obliged to smile approval at the tiny affair. She sat under the covering which came perhaps one-third of the way down and was barely sufficient to have fended a light rain off her head and shoulders. Still, this bit of shelter made her feel more at home than she had done since leaving her own Oglala village. She spread her work about her and unconsciously assumed the air of a housekeeper.

Zintkala had been well taught at home. Although small of her age, and yet a mere child in appearance, she had seen eleven winters when taken from her mother's tepée, and she had been taught to do all kinds of work, housewifely and ornamental, which falls to the lot of an industrious Dakota girl.

She had no cutting-board or patterns but she went very handily about making a plain pair of moccasins. As she worked, she desired to be entertained, as was so often done at home, by some pretty, thrilling or humorous story. Therefore she said to Etapa, who had seated himself to watch and to criticise her cutting and stitching, "Ho, young warrior, you who have dreamed many curious things, tell me a story of Ikto'."

Etapa was already the story-teller of Fire Cloud's family. He had two older half-brothers who had been to war, but he, Etapa, on account



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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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of his influential Isanti relatives, had been chosen to succeed to such hereditary distinctions as the Dakotas recognize. He was to be a medicine chief and keeper of records and he had been drilled by his grandfather (father's uncle) in much of the Oglala folklore. There are no more vivacious or entertaining story-tellers than may be found among Dakotas of good memory and a lively manner. Their method is the method of nature, imitative in voice and gesture. Etapa was by nature a mimic, and he had been drilled in story-telling from the time that his vocabulary would permit.

Many of his stories were of Iktomi the spider, a fabulous character, half-goblin, half-fairy, and a pitiful devil into the bargain. Iktomi and his escapades serve quite often a sober and instructive purpose, pointing a moral to the giddy, the dishonest or the evil-minded.

Etapa liked now and then to give an exhibition of his narrative talent, and he had not for a long time had an opportunity. He was not above flattery, and the sister's complimentary address pleased him, and so he told this Dakota legend of

### HOW IKTOMI COUNTED A COUP.

"Some people had mentioned to Iktomi that he should now go to war. 'Heretofore,' they said, 'we have urged you to do so. You have

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## THE EAGLES PROVIDE

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become very slothful and your enemies are lying in wait to attack. Unless presently you shall kill a buffalo bull, or strike the dead, you can not lead the people of this village. 'At the least,' they said, 'you should take horses of our enemies, the Scili.'

"Iktomi retired to his lodge. He sat a long time considering. He was much concerned lest the people should regard him with contempt. On the following day he went away and hid himself for a long time in a wood.

"He returned, singing: 'Something I have killed—something I have killed! Hiwo! iho! Dakotas, why followed ye not your partisan?'

"The people came forth from their tepées. Iktomi continued to sing very boastfully. As he walked about he shook his medicine rattle, making a loud noise. He spoke very highly of himself. He had no bow and arrows and no war-club.

"'Perhaps he has a knife,' said some one. Some one went behind, cutting off Iktomi's belt. This one held it up exclaiming, 'Oho—this man has no weapon whatever!'

"'I have slain an enemy with my magic,' boasted Iktomi. 'Fiel oh fiel!' cried all the people. 'Hear this man—is it not ridiculous? Let us soldier-kill him. Let us burn his tepée and cut his blankets.'

"The chief person of this village was a woman.

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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'Ho, my children,' said this old woman, 'give ye weapons to my grandson, who may yet prove himself a warrior. See, I have made for him a war-bonnet.'

"Then one ran quickly and brought a bow and arrows. So another fetched a coup-stick, and yet again one came bringing a war-shirt.

"So, here is your armament, great war-chief. Go ye forth and slay our enemies,' said the people.

"Therefore Iktomi took the vapor bath and purified himself. He danced the circle-dance and shot the wolf-image. In the following morning he went forth, walking a long way. After a time he came to a stream where there were a number of trees. 'These are my soldiers,' said Iktomi. Therefore he addressed them. He boasted greatly. 'Behold your war-chief,' he said. 'When have I run from the enemy? Only this winter I have slain a white rabbit!'

"Now the badger and the coyote and the skunk were sitting in the tall grass. They laughed.

"Ho-he—ho-he!' they said. 'Hear ye; this warrior has slain Maštinska, the white rabbit.'

"Iktomi supposed that these people were the trees speaking highly of his deeds. He became violent and shouted with a loud voice. He walked treading heavily and displayed his war-shirt to the trees. He flourished his coup-stick.

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'Last year,' he cried, 'I counted coup upon Itunkasan, the weasel—two coups upon the grasshopper—'

"Hopidansni! Wonderful!' exclaimed the coyote, the badger and the skunk; 'he has counted a coup upon the weasel and the grasshopper!'

"Only last year,' shouted Iktomi, 'I—I—I saw a buffalo bull!' He looked about fearfully to see if any buffaloes were near.

"Hun-hun-he!' cried the voices, 'he saw a live bull.' Hearing his words thus repeated, Iktomi became very boastful indeed. He made a long speech, bragging greatly.

"Presently the coyote said to the skunk: 'Hiwo, my friend, go forward now and lie down upon the grass. Iktomi will come forward to count a coup.'

"Do ye thus, this one time,' urged the badger.

"So the skunk went forward and stretched himself and Iktomi, seeing him lie thus, supposed that he was dead. He rushed forward very courageously. He struck with the coup-stick and the skunk arose and threw a vapor upon him.

"Iktomi ran homeward, crying, 'I have struck the enemy!' He ran crying thus to the village of the old woman. The people rushed forth. 'Behold, I have struck the enemy!' whooped Iktomi. The people came near.

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"'He-he-he!' they cried; 'Iktomi has struck the enemy!' and they ran away, holding their noses. That is all."

Zintkala laughed. "Younger brother," she said, "you indeed dream strange things."

"At any rate," declared Etapa, "my grandfather has told me of this."

Thus for a time the two enjoyed their new-found liberty and the undisturbed use of their mother tongue. Just before dark Zintkala held up a pair of rough moccasins she had finished. "See, brother," she said, "they are for you. I know, however, they are very awkwardly done, for I had no try-pieces nor cutting-board."

Etapa accepted the gift, as younger brothers are wont to do, without comment.

This night, remembering the terrors of the night before, they had supplied themselves with a goodly heap of fire-wood. The flicker of the fire was better than no light, although their little blaze but emphasized the intensity of the darkness which shut them in.

For a time, after they had eaten the last of their fish, they sat close to their fire, talking in low tones and shutting fears of Unk-té-hi out of their minds. Again the rasping shrieks of the swamp-owl pierced their ears, but they now recognized the voice of the bird. The hollow night-jarring notes of a bittern came to them from the far end of the grass plat and the trill-

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## THE EAGLES PROVIDE

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ing of numerous frogs began to be heard. The distant howl of a timber wolf was welcomed, for it admonished them that there was, somewhere in the direction they wished to go, an end to the swamp water. They knew that sung-manitu would not wet his feet in cold water overmuch.

Still, with these friendly sounds and the light of their fire to cheer, night brought to them the terrors of their primitive beliefs. They suffered so much from their fears of the unknown that they took turns in keeping the fire going. Indeed, who may guess at the depths of suffering within the soul of each little lone watcher sitting by that solitary campfire? Yet the composure of each was effectively stoical.

CHAPTER IX  
THE SPIRIT WOODS

The watcher slept at daylight and when both awoke the sun was shining. They had no meat for breakfast and the birds had not returned since both had flown away together; so they prepared at once to leave the swamp and continue their flight southward.

Yet, while they were tying their blanket rolls, the far-away scream of an eagle was heard, and, feeling sure that the bird was bringing a fish, they sat upon the fallen tree and watched with expectant faces.

It was but a moment when the eagle appeared, again flying heavily and bearing a large fish. It swooped downward and was about to alight upon its nest when up from the center rose a creature with hunched back, hair standing on end, and a snarling miaul of remonstrance.

The startled fisher dropped its prey to the ground and darted upward, wheeling high and screaming angrily at the intruder upon its nest. The bird poised for an instant and then, with whistling wings, swooped down to the attack. The cat bounded upward with a fierce snarl and a wild sweep of its paw. Some feathers were struck from the eagle's breast but the bird

THE SPIRIT WOODS

passed on, wheeling upward again, with continued shrill screams.

Suddenly there were two great birds poising above the angry wildcat which held its ground, or rather the nest, with bristling back. The cat was a big gray lynx with pointed ears and a wicked spread of jaws. It had no mind to give up the comfortable perch it had chosen for a sun-warmed nap.

And now the excited little Dakotas watched a combat the like of which it has been given few to see—a strange and thrilling sight, a beautiful game of fence played by accomplished hunters and fighters of the wilderness. The cat upon the nest, each bird in the air, sought by its peculiar tactics to inflict without receiving injury.

One after the other the poised eagles swooped down, seeking to strike the bouncing, spitting lynx. Several times the cat leaped upward, turning cunningly in mid-air and with an upward stroke of one forepaw which, fairly delivered, would have finished the charging bird. And each time the four-foot alighted easily at the point from which it had jumped. But the birds had timed and calculated too many flights from aloft to be caught by such wiles.

Suddenly, as the lynx leaped higher than ever to meet its attack, an eagle flattened its wings, retarding its progress the brief part of a second, then darted on with lightning speed, and struck

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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its talons into the scalp and ear of the vaulting cat, as the latter spent its stroke.

Like hurled projectiles, lynx and bird were borne over the edge of the nest and shot downward, the cat squalling frightfully, the eagle beating its wings and, for a moment, almost bearing up a creature of several times its weight. Bird and beast had almost struck the ground together when the eagle loosed its hold and again, screaming defiance, soared spirally aloft.

"Ho, igmu hota," (gray cat) "you are a coward!" shouted Etapa, as the lynx leaped away among the dense tamaracks.

"And you, eagles," cried the boy, arising and looking up with great admiration, "you are very brave. I have seen that you fight well. I also consider it a great favor that you have brought another fish."

And forthwith he secured the fish, which was quite large enough to furnish a good breakfast. Very gravely, however, the two considered the wisdom of building a fire now that the sun was shining. It hardly seemed, after canvassing the matter, that the Ojibwas had so long lingered in their vicinity, and there were some dry sticks scattered about which would make a fire with not much smoke.

So, in a little time, they had a breakfast of broiled fish smoking hot and, greatly cheered

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## THE SPIRIT WOODS

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by this comforting meal, they took their bundles and again waded into the swamp.

Etapa's keen ears had taken strict account of the howlings of a wolf during the night. Many times he had turned himself facing the sound, listening intently, noting the position of his fire and the mimic tepée as he stood. Where the wolf sat howling was dry ground, open timber, and at no great distance.

The position of the sun appeared a secure guide, for the skeleton tops of the tamaracks were nowhere thick enough to wholly cut off its light. Their progress was slow but certain. Their course, for the most part, led them through a thick growth of young trees where there was much stooping and even crawling over the bogs but fortunately very little water after half an hour or so of advance. By this token they knew that, at last, they were passing out of the dismal swamp which had both terrorized and protected them.

Of a sudden they came out upon dry ground among tamaracks of thinner growth and larger body. Above and in advance of these sturdier trees there loomed the immense tops of skyscraping evergreens, and in a moment the little voyagers were launched into the marvelous spaces and the stillness of a forest of Norway pines.

The children had neither seen such trees nor

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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heard of them. They stood with awe and great wonder in their faces and their eyes turned upward, following to dizzy heights the lines of magnificent trunks which towered eighty or a hundred feet before giving off a limb.

The ground upon which these trees stood was quite level in surface with a slight rise away from the swamp. It was covered with a carpet of pine needles and cones and was bare of small growth save here and there, where the midday sun filtered a flickering light, there stood a pencil-like growth of sickly ferns and conifers. The pale yellow-green foliage, the tall wand-like stems of these plants, standing under a faint web of sunlight, frail, spiritual, delicate as the tracery of old lace, gave a fairy-world appearance to the solemn trunk-grown spaces.

To the prairie children this was indeed a wonderland. They trod softly, certain of stepping upon sacred ground. This might even be the abode of the Wakan-Tanka of their mother's people, the Waniyan Tanka of the Oglalas—the Great Spirit of all the world.

They were in doubt as to whether they should go forward boldly. Such conduct might be displeasing to the Maker of these wonderful trees, and this spirit land in no way fitted for their rude presence.

"See, brother, these little ones," breathed Zintkala softly. She stood at a little distance look-

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## THE SPIRIT WOODS

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ing upon some frail baby pines and she spoke reverently as one does before the new-born mysteries of life.

"Are they not wonderful?" she asked.

"Indeed, they are truly so," murmured Etapa.

For a time they forgot all else save the mysteries before them, and went forward hesitatingly. Among the vast aisles of tree trunks there was no sign of life, no stir of twig or leaf—there never could be stir of vegetable life while those mighty trees stood—and there was no breeze to rustle the dense foliage of their far-away tops.

Although the children advanced ever so softly they were startled by their own footfalls which crackled upon the forest mast, each little snapping twig and cone sounding its report like the breaking of a fire-fagot. When they stood still their own heart throbs oppressed them, strumming upon their ears as plainly as the beats of a conjurer's drum.

Slowly, seeing nothing to alarm or to stay them in this wonder country, the voyagers gained in confidence. They became accustomed to the marvelous silence, the awe-inspiring shadows, the frail wood-folk, and they went forward more boldly.

But they walked slowly, their eyes often lifted to the vast heights of the tree-tops. Silently they prayed to these trees, which they thought

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might reach upward to the abode of Wakinyan, the thunder god.

Occasionally Etapa stopped to exclaim, "Ece tuwe kakésa!" (Who would believe it!) Then, startled at the explosive sounds of his own voice, the lad would go on marveling. At this use of her mother's favorite expression of wonder or disbelief Zintkala would for the moment forget the presence of the mysterious woods. Quickly in imagination she saw the inside of a large Oglala tepée—a tepée always covered with the best of skins, ornamented with colored figures of beasts and men and of an armored horseman, a war-chief and hunter of his nation—a tepée whose floor was strewn with soft skins and mattings, whose walls were hung with ornamental work, and wherein want and hunger had seldom entered.

In that beautiful retrospect a figure moved, a straight and always neatly dressed woman—a woman with a low, broad forehead, a wealth of black hair and the whitest teeth and kindest smile in all the Oglala towns. Oh, how the little heart longed for that dear Sioux mother!

With her lips Zintkala murmured a prayer to the tall trees. "O trees, O you wonderful ones, help ye these little ones to go safely homeward. You that reach so high, you may talk with Wakinyan, ask the thunder spirits that they shall take us by the hand."

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## THE SPIRIT WOODS

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The two had quite forgotten their enemies, the Ojibwas. They seemed, indeed, to have reached a strange country far, far removed from the hated Chippewa village. It is doubtful if they would have been greatly astonished had they suddenly emerged from this mysterious world to find their native sage-bush plains and the tepées of the Dakotas waiting to receive them.

Presently, as they were looking ahead, a whirring brown thing arose from the ground and hurtled like a whizzing missile into the high tree-tops. The thunder of its wings, a hollow droning roar that was re-echoed from all the vast walls of tree trunks, nearly stunned them. The bird was a ruffed grouse, and the first thing of life to startle them among the giant pines. It settled upon a branch but so high above their heads as to seem a mere brown speck upon a field of green.

When their eyes returned to earth Etapa was astonished to see a cock grouse walking in his front but a few steps distant, its ruff and tail spread as it uttered a faint and warning little "kroo—kroo—kroo."

"It is for us," said the boy, and fitting an arrow to his bow he shot the bird. He picked it up in the devout belief that the bird was a gift from a beneficent spirit who ruled in the mysterious woods. "Older sister," he asked, "do you not think that we should smoke to these trees?"

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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"I think that you should make a smoke and that we should pray to them," replied Zintkala.

Etapa hesitated, seeing no dry wood at hand. He could scrape together fallen twigs, but, though fire is sacred, there was the chance that it might displease Wakinyan to burn wood upon his silent and holy ground. He struggled plainly with this doubt, so that Zintkala read the emotion in his face.

"Let us go farther, younger brother," she counseled. "If there be dry wood it will be for our fire."

When they came at last upon a fallen giant, with broken limbs flung far and wide, they no longer doubted. While Zintkala built a fire and dressed the bird Etapa went somewhat apart and smoked reverently, turning his pipe-stem often to the trees.

Neither of the voyagers gave further thought to the Ojibwa—so far did they seem removed from all things human. They ate their bird gratefully, strong in the sense of protection in this land of spirit trees.

## CHAPTER X

### ETAPA COUNTS A COUP

For a good part of the day the voyagers walked among the gigantic pines. The sun had passed its zenith when they came suddenly to the edge of the woods and into the open, lighted world.

Again they entered upon a burned-over tract of unseen extent. But this time the young growth stood much higher than a man's head. A tremendous fire had raged some years before, and a rain had fallen before its work had been quite completed. Immense blackened stubs loomed everywhere above the young pines and hardwoods, and the charred and half-burned trunks offered continuous obstruction to the walking. It was an uncanny kind of country where the young took vigorous root upon the ashes and among the half-consumed skeletons of the dead.

The travelers would gladly have avoided crossing this forbidding and difficult piece of bush land, but there was no way around for, on the outskirts, lines of dead tree trunks with only their tops burned off, like an army of cloud-touching flagstaves, extended as far as the eye could reach.

It was with a sense of loss, almost of desola-



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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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tion, that they passed out of the clear spaces of the great trees, but once within the burnt-wood jungle they gave themselves wholly to the task of making their way across. There were tangled thickets, heaps of charred refuse, briar grown, and there was rough ground, and dark holes tumbled with dead wood and debris, to weary the body and depress the spirits. But the sky was cloudless and the sun their guide and again they heard the aerial cries of migrating geese, swans, brant and cranes. This talk of the upper world served in a degree to balance the dismal features of an irksome travel.

It was near mid-afternoon, and they were slowly working their way for perhaps the hundredth time over a raft of fallen trees, scaling the obstructions as noiselessly as a pair of foxes, when they came upon a huge tree trunk, a fallen giant, scarred with many fireholes, so immense that they paused to gaze at this new wonder.

Etapa was about to speak when they heard a stir among the bushes and upheaved tree-roots upon their right. Some person! An Ojibwa! With fluttering hearts they sank to the ground. But their fears were quickly relieved, in part, for the sounds of claws scratching upon wood admonished them that a large four-foot was close at hand.

And quickly thereafter the big one heaved itself, scrambling heavily, upon the fallen tree

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## ETAPA COUNTS A COUP

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near its roots. Peering fearfully from under bushes, the children saw the shaggy hulk of mato-sapa moving leisurely along the top of the great log. Keeping on he would pass almost within arm's reach and Zintkala stirred as if about to run. She was greatly frightened, but Etapa knew that it was now too late to run and he laid a warning hand upon her shoulder.

The bear advanced, a gaunt, ragged creature, with humped shoulders and swaying head, until its sharp snout and wicked little eyes were brought to bear directly upon the half-hidden bipeds beneath. Doubtless the animal had been disturbed by the slight sounds of their approach and, supposing some small animal had come near its lair, had mounted the log to investigate.

The beast gave a sniff, a little "whoof!" of discovery, and glared down upon the unhappy voyagers apparently minded to pounce upon them in a twinkling.

Then Etapa, who was nearest the bear, believing that his last moment had come, was seized with a fierce thrill of emotion. He leaped to his feet and struck the astonished four-foot a hard rap with his bow.

The result was two sharp surprises. The bear, frightened beyond measure by this strange and unexpected attack, turned a back somersault off the log and lunged away among the bushes, grunting with fear and the pain of a keen stroke

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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upon its snout. Etapa, unbelieving that he could have won a victory so easily, climbed upon the log to see if truly the bear had run away. When he realized that the animal had wholly fled and would not return to attack, his fortune seemed yet quite too great for belief. He turned slowly to look down at Zintkala.

She was gazing at him wonderingly and with an understanding of his emotion. "Younger brother," she asked gravely, "is it indeed true that you have struck mato-sapa?"

The boy's face flushed. "I did indeed strike him strongly upon the face," he said, his eyes glowing. He leaped to the ground and took the position and posture in which he had delivered the stroke. "I hit mato-sapa thus," he said, striking the log with his bow.

But Zintkala had both seen and heard the blow, and she did not need further proof. "Ho, young warrior, you have counted coup on mato-sapa; henceforth choose ye a name," she said. And it may be safely said that no moment of greater pride or elation was ever reached in the lives of the little voyagers.

From the point of view of the plains Indian, to strike a dead enemy with the coup-stick or a weapon of war was more honorable than to slay him. For, they said, if you are near enough to strike the dead you must have advanced within the enemy's lines or have driven him from his

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## ETAPA COUNTS A COUP

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position. You can shoot and kill your foe from a safe distance or when you are in retreat.

But the highest honor to be attained in a single exploit was to strike a living enemy and to hit a live bear with a weapon in hand was an event to give even a tried warrior a new name.

Etapa was a very human boy of eleven years and, when the full significance of his deed came to him in the grave words of his sister, he gave a whoop—his war-whoop—of elation.

"It is so," he cried; "I have done thus, and when the Oglalas are told of this they shall call me Strikes-the-Bear."

"Waste, it is a good name," said Zintkala. And, as an hereditary chief, this boy had indeed begun well.

"My father will not now wish to make of me a white man," said Etapa, exultantly. "He will wish me to go against the enemy."

As they plodded on with high hearts over the debris a thirst came to dampen their ardor after a time. They had found no water since coming upon the brush land. They suffered greatly before night came on but, as the sun was about to fall behind the bushes, they came upon a small pond with tracks of deer and moose leading to and from.

As Etapa had killed two grouse and a squirrel, by the way, they had wherewith to serve their hunger. They built a cheerful fire for they no

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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longer had fear of Tall Gun's trailers. They reasoned that these had never taken up their tracks after losing them upon the stony ground, and how could any one find them in this land of the bush?

To the hoot of the owl, the jarring of the bittern, the chatter and gabble and the far cry of incessant migrators, and the distant mournful cadence of the timber-wolf, they fell asleep each upon a fragrant couch of young pine boughs.

In the night, after their heaped-up fire had smouldered low, a bull moose came to the pond to drink. This ponderous creature stalked silently, considering his bulk, out of the jungle and had reached the water's edge when, probably, the expiring snap of an ember exposed a glow of firelight, and the monster gave a shrill snort of surprise. Instantly two small electrified specters stood upon the sands and the moon looked down upon three startled wild things, all, for the instant, too much scared to take to flight.

To the Sioux children that colossal, shadowy figure, barely outlined against the shadows of the jungle, seemed indeed that of some underwater monster arisen from the lake to devour them. Perhaps it was Unk-té-hī, from whom flight is impossible, or it might be I-ya, the giant whose mouth gapes to swallow all things.

Their awful fears were only relieved by a second snort of the big bull who, having thus

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vented his utter amazement, crashed away among the young trees.

Then these children of habitual alarms lay down and fell asleep again. Later they were several times partly aroused by deer which came to drink and, catching sight or scent of the sleepers, whistled their shrill snorts of warning. Just before daylight a herd of tired geese settled upon the pond. The birds talked to each other in undertones for a time, and the voyagers, having been awakened by the beating of their wings, listened contentedly to their low gabble.

When daylight began to appear and he could no longer hear their sleepy voices Etapa cautiously raised his head and took note of the newcomers. There were scores of them sitting upon the sands, with heads under their wings, and a single watcher riding upon the rippling surface of the pond. Silly creatures! How easily the wolf or the fox could pounce upon them from the cover of the bushes! But there is individual safety in numbers and even wary geese, when tired from a long flight, exhibit this universal feeling.

Etapa uttered just the slightest hiss of warning to Zintkala whom he knew by intuition rather than by evidence to be awake and listening. Having thus put her on guard the lad cautiously shed his blanket and, with bow and arrow in hand, flattened himself like a big turtle and

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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moved with as little noise upon the sands until he had entered the cover of the jungle.

Amid the bushes he trailed with the gliding caution of a cougar until he had approached to within ridiculously short arrow range, when he fitted one of the Cree arrows to his bow and spitted two dozing geese upon a single shaft. The herd rose squalling in late alarm.

When Etapa returned, dragging his heavy game along the sands, Zintkala was putting sticks upon some uncovered embers.

"Nakaes, younger brother, you that are a hunter, you are very cunning, it seems," said the sister.

Etapa was secretly elated. This older sister was usually a very quiet and dignified little person and, like most Indian maidens, sparing of compliments. Yet twice now she had openly acknowledged his bravery and skill. He felt that she really depended upon his sagacity as a hunter and acknowledged him as leader in meeting the difficulties of their long trail.

When they had first set out Zintkala had spoken of digging edible roots with a long stout knife, and now the brother reminded her—"You do not now speak of digging tinsela, older sister." Whereupon the sister began with preoccupation to take the skin from a goose.

The roast goose flesh was delicious, and they ate an enormous quantity. Still there was much

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remaining and this they half broiled in thin strips and carried with them. They had wholly forgotten their enemies.

Yet, far away, upon the outskirts of the burned tract, a cunning Ojibwa had laboriously climbed a tall pine. At the height of one hundred feet he stood upon a limb, an arm holding to the slender trunk, looking out over a wide belt of brush land. He had taken his position at daylight and some time later his shaded and scanning eyes were rewarded by the sight of a thin and distant smoke wreath floating upon a blue horizon.

He, too, built a fire upon descending, and, from green pine which he piled thick upon his blaze, a black column arose higher than the tree-tops. He smothered this black smoke, fanning it down with his blanket, and three times let it rise in a vertical column, and then he kicked the burning heap apart and scattered its embers far and wide.

## CHAPTER XI

### THEY DANCE TO GRANDFATHER INYAN

Wi, the sun, had passed his meridian when the little voyagers emerged from the jungle and came again, with a great delight, under the protection of the giant trees—upon the friendly trunk-grown spaces where there were no bushes, briars, nor jagged, hidden stones to bruise the feet and tear the moccasins.

But this time they did not walk through silent aisles. No air stirred the under-world, but its high canopy of evergreens was shaken by a strong west wind. The voyagers stopped often to gaze at these mighty swaying tree-tops and to listen to the roaring song of Wakinyan as his wind blew among them. Now and then a limb, thickly feathered with green needles, was broken from its parent stem and fell, top downward, floating gently like the dropping of a prairie tumble weed.

Where the lower spaces were so still, where there was such a fragrant incense, and the earth was pleasant to the feet, the children did not think that harm could come to them.

When they found a little dip containing good water they built a fire fearlessly. Very sweet and good the goose meat tasted and again they ate a large quantity, all they had, in fact.

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## DANCE TO GRANDFATHER INYAN

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About mid-afternoon they came to a country of sand hills, where the trees were scattering and the sloping sun shone among them cheerfully. Among the hillocks, too, they came upon a fine pool of water with sunny sand banks and where small game was abundant.

They were weary with their long tramp through the jungle but here they rested quickly and after a time they reveled in the sands, enjoying their sunlit warmth and shiny whiteness. Here they remembered indeed the dunes of the Niobrara, where they had builded sand heaps for tepées and villages, where sticks thrust in the ground represented soldiers and people and horses—forked sticks were for the Scili or Pawnees. And they had traced in tiny finger trenches the winding courses of streams, and with little punches of the finger ends the cunning and devious trails of the men—and the boys—who had gone to war.

And the pony stealing! How exciting that had been! Sticks, ringed and streaked by bark peelings, and usually long enough to bestride, represented ponies. How elaborately they had planned their mimic raids against the herds of mimic hostiles, and how their own soldiers always came riding home in triumph with many horses which they generally gave away to poor people! And sometimes, too, these warriors bore upon poles some curiously-tied tufts of

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prairie grass, which represented the scalps of the Hohé, the Scili, or of white men, and there was triumph and dancing indeed.

For is it not patriotic and glorious to slay the enemies of one's own nation, those who would wrest from a people not only their lives but their homes and their hunting grounds—who would wipe them off the face of the earth? And do not the children of everybody's dear native land march under banners, with uplifted eyes and devout faces, singing the songs of victory; and are the tomahawk and the scalping knife less merciful than the bayonet and the exploding shell?

The little voyagers were daughter and son of a patriotic soldier and a patriotic mother, children of a federation which for centuries controlled a magnificent empire of territory, whose men, aye, and whose women, have fought for every inch of its ground with a heroism and despair never exceeded in the annals of history.

But this is a digression from a simple story of the wanderings of Zintkala-Zi and Etapa. The little maiden did not long forget the needs of the moment which were patching and moccasin-making. Her coarse cloth skirt was torn and needed repairs and her moccasins and leggins were much the worse for wear. So her parflèche was again emptied of its contents and her jacket of open sleeves was spread upon her lap to be darned. Etapa's buckskin capote and string-

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## DANCE TO GRANDFATHER INYAN

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wound leggins had thus far suffered but little, save that they had to be rubbed dry and soft after their wettings.

While she worked Etapa set his wiles to capture a pair of red squirrels which presently appeared—wrong-end-up—barking from the near tree trunks. The Indian boy disdained to use a bow and arrow upon creatures so small and of such temerity, for he had already sufficiently proved himself a hunter. He therefore sought to distract the small, saucy animals with strange maneuvers, to fill them with still greater excitement and, when he had succeeded, left his blanket hanging upon the bush where he had played his antics and stole away behind its shelter. He thus wormed himself silently away till he had gained the cover of a hillock when he stole softly around behind the oak tree trunk where, only a few feet from the ground, the little up-ended fellows were "sqwukking" themselves hoarse.

With an owl-like swoop of his capote the lad actually swept one of the squirrels off its perch but, in falling, the nimble creature evaded his quick pounce and so escaped. He did not succeed in catching either squirrel although he chased them to another tree. There were hundreds of wild pigeons in these woods. Several of these birds and a grouse he killed in skirting the little lake.

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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In one of these short excursions the boy came upon a venerable gray boulder which stood as high as the surrounding trees and was many steps in circumference at its base. Except where the moose had eaten them off this towering rock was thickly grown with lichens which gave it a hoary appearance of great age.

Etapá stood for some minutes, his eyes cast upward, venerating this aged and eternally-enduring one which knows not time, seasons nor change. Then the boy went softly back to Zintkala. "Come," he said, "I have found Grandfather Inyan—the very aged one. Let us smoke and pray to him."

So they went together softly among the sand hillocks until they confronted Grandfather Inyan. While Etapá prepared his pipe and willow bark for smoking, Zintkala stood—as a small devotee before a shrine—looking devoutly up at the everlasting one, the vast sentinel and guide set so mysteriously among the trees.

"It is taku-wakan," (something wonderful), she said. While Etapá smoked, offering incense to the rock, sky and trees, she prayed thus:

"Behold us, small ones, O Grandfather Inyan. You are doubtless very old and wise, therefore you, O Grandfather Inyan, and ye trees, assist us greatly that we may find our way homeward."

Fire is sacred to Inyan, therefore under the

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## DANCE TO GRANDFATHER INYAN

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shadow of the great rock they built one of dry sticks and gathered a heap of fagots to keep the blaze going until far into the night. Then alternately they returned to the pond and bathed and purified their bodies, for, they said, "We will make a feast and dance to Grandfather Inyan, and so he shall help us."

After they had eaten they combed their hair, greasing it with pieces of goose fat which Zintkala had saved, and then braided and tied their tresses becomingly.

After a reasonable time, by the light of the fire they had built to him, they gave a sacred dance to Grandfather Inyan and his protecting pines. Upon a little plat of level ground, facing a broad scarp of the rock and embowered in dark-topped evergreens, these little brown children danced.

The girl with close drawn blanket, with rapt face and serious air, performed her part in measured dainty movements, dancing with her toes turned inward.

The boy, with less grace but no less reverent face, sprang lightly from foot to foot chanting low ejaculations of prayer.

Had the rock and the trees, sheltering their small circle of light and their brown swaying figures, possessed the ears, hearts and powers attributed to them, they must have moved even their roots to respond to the appeals for pity

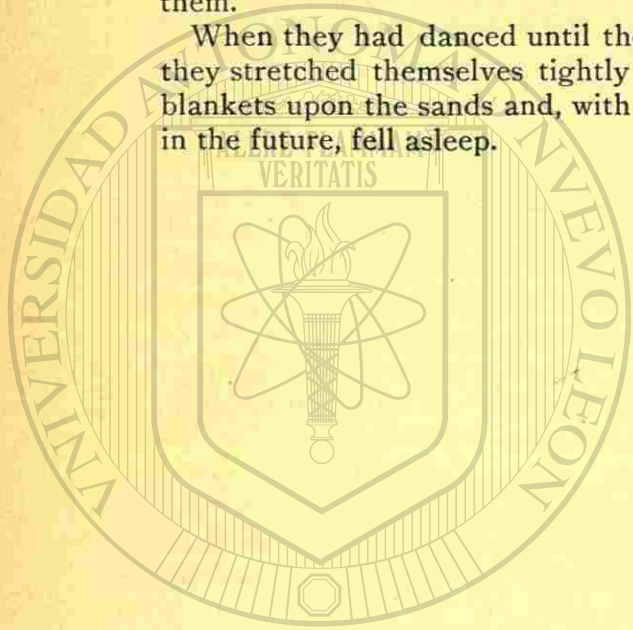
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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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which these lost and revering waifs addressed to them.

When they had danced until they were weary they stretched themselves tightly rolled in their blankets upon the sands and, with renewed trust in the future, fell asleep.



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## CHAPTER XII

### FLIGHT

Again a balmy spring morning with no stir of wind and the woods silent save for the scream of a jay or the chirruping of pine-inhabiting birds.

It was nearly sunrise when the voyagers crawled out of their blankets. After the first buoyant breath they remembered that the plentiful pigeons had flown away at sunset of the evening before and, in their feast to Grandfather Inyan, they had eaten all the birds they had.

There was nothing to regret, but they were so hungry and there were no birds in sight. There were red squirrels in these woods and, though they were very small, a number of them would make a suitable meal—and so Etapa strung his bow to hunt for them.

“Hoye, sister,” he said, “if any birds arrive at these trees, cry out to me and I will come to shoot them.”

He was about to go after the squirrels when he saw in Zintkala's face the dawning sense of fear and uneasiness which, for no apparent cause, he himself was beginning to feel. When he finished speech he failed to move in the direction he had intended. Both children stood in listening attitude.



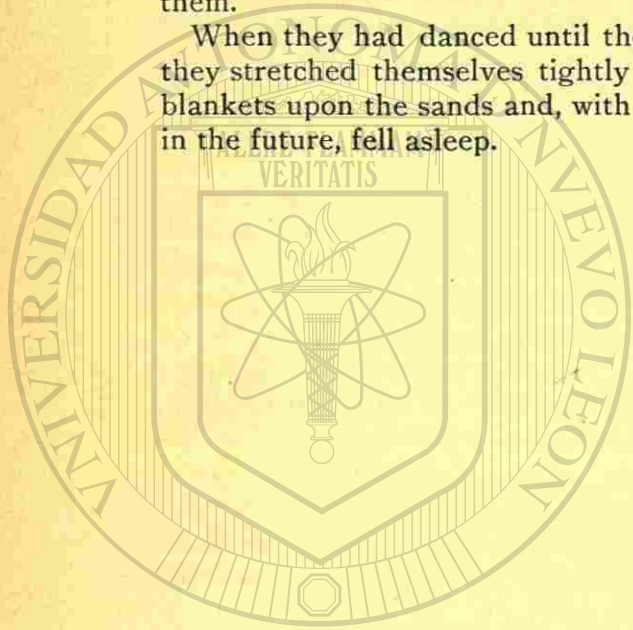
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At first they looked away from each other as though to search for the game which Etapa would kill. Far away and from some distant lake they heard the quavering cry of a loon. Deep within the woods a bluejay shrieked, repeating a trio of screams several times.

What was it suddenly chilled the blood in their veins? Not the cry of the loon nor the whirring call of a crane, dropping from the sky, neither the frantic shriek of the bluejay.

No, it was a stirring of the sixth sense of the wilderness child—the sense of long-range personal contact whereby the magnetic force of one being is acted upon—at surprising distances—by the electric aura of another. Given an undisturbed environment, a perfect condition of the atmosphere, and the “untutored savage” will infallibly discover—long before it is due to appear—the approach of a hostile or of a friendly presence.

The enemy! Coming—coming—coming—this was the message, borne upon the still morning air, which reached the consciousness of the little voyagers and froze them in their tracks. They only waited to make certain of the impinging of a hostile force and they seized upon their bundles of effects and fled, as certain of pursuit as the deer which flees a baying hound.

They ran as they had never run before, a breathless, skimming, dodging flight, throwing

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tree trunks, hillocks, bushes behind them, instinctively and unerringly as the partridge flies to foil the gunner's aim.

They heard presently, too, and with scarcely quickened pulse, the baffled and unguarded whoop which announced the discovery of their abandoned camp and their sudden flight therefrom—though the Indian's yells might have been intended as a signal and thus the enemy would arrive in force upon their trail.

On—on—on they fled. Reaching hard, even ground, among the tall pines again, they turned at a right-angle to their former course and ran toward the east, the direction which they might least be expected to take.

The eyes of an eagle, the nose of a fox, these alone could have followed their tracks at the pace they took. In that brief, tense moment before their flight the attitude of all things was changed for them. No bird, beast, tree or rock now offered them its protection; there was another sky and another earth, and the face of Wakinyan himself was turned from them.

They glimpsed furtively the spaces in front as they sped—each tree, each bush, each rock was suspected of hiding an enemy in wait. The aisles of the tall pines were gloomy and threatening spaces, embittering the frightened souls, withholding the atmosphere of protection, giving sweeping views to the hidden foe. With

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a sense of desolation in the heart, each throbbing, panting little creature fled, seeking any fate whatsoever, save a return to slave captivity—on—on—on—scudding like the hunted hare.

The sun rose high above the tops even of the tallest pines and found them running with scarce abated speed. Noon came—the weary legs still carried them forward, going now at the swinging trot which the hunted man or the chased wolf finds best adapted to a lengthened run.

Now and then they halted at some pool or running brook to quench a raging thirst. They only stopped running when the stout boy, not the slender girl, dropped and from sheer fatigue could not regain his feet.

For eight hours or more they had run to the eastward, a good part of the way over ground clear of undergrowth, through a vast forest of white and Norway pines. The distance they had covered without food would seem incredible to any who have not actual knowledge of the Indian's powers of endurance. A strong adult would have made sixty miles in such a run, and with less fatigue; and it is hazarding nothing of truth to say that Etapa had fallen finally at forty miles or more from their morning's camp.

The voyagers could go no farther. They lay upon their blankets and slept the sleep of exhaustion. The chill night air alone awoke

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them. Zintkala was first to open her eyes upon the blank darkness of the pine forest. The woods were still, with the silence which can be felt.

Suffering with hunger, but more from fright, the little girl drew her blanket close about her head and shoulders, that she might shut out the black vacant space and its terrors. Thus she sat for a long time with suppressed breathing, a shapeless little bunch which the keenest eye of a night prowler might have passed unnoticed.

Then Etapa awoke and stirred, shivering with cold.

"Tanké!" He spoke in a scared whisper. The "big sister" heard as in a dream and gave no answer. "Tanké!"—this time aloud and with affright.

"I am here," Zintkala answered simply, in a voice muffled in the folds of her blanket. The boy's terror, but not his whole misery, abated.

"I want something to eat," he pleaded. "I am hungry. I suffer very much."

He was again the "little brother" appealing to the wise, older sister for succor. Somewhere within her parflèche, which she had clung to in her long flight, Tanké (older sister or big sister) should have preserved some pieces of all the birds they had cooked. His tone implied as much, and the sister's heart smote her for providence, but she answered in the same far-away, indifferent tones:

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"I have nothing—there is nothing until Wi gives his light. Thereafter I shall dig some roots, presently."

Then for the first time since the night of their capture Etapa wept. "I want my mother," he said, and cried bitterly for a long time. The sister sat in silence, while the hitherto stout-hearted boy, lost within the vast wilderness, a thousand miles from his own Oglala village, bone-weary, shivering, half-starved and desperate, gave way to his grief.

At length, out of fear, Zintkala spoke. She hitched herself toward the weeper and laid her face against his.

"Younger brother," she murmured, "do not cry thus loudly. Heretofore you have not wept, and now I fear some wicked wolves may come to devour us."

This admonition checked the boy's crying aloud. His head fell forward upon his sister's lap, and he sobbed himself asleep while she warmed his shoulders with her blanket.

The little girl felt worn and old—oh, so old! All her muscles were stiff and sore and, in the miseries of hunger and the ache of bones, she forgot her terrors of the unknown and so kept a weary vigil until daylight came.

Gaunt, hollow of cheek and hollow of eye and limping painfully, the little voyagers took up their march so soon as they could see among the

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dim aisles of the trees. They were still within the depths of a great pine forest—the greatest of all the northland. They traveled now—in such fashion as they could—toward the south, again finding their course from the source whence the sun's light came.

Deep draughts of cold water, at the first pool they came to, revived their lagging vitality for a time, and they pressed on more eagerly, looking for squirrels or grouse or even some small birds to shoot, or perchance to discover the dead top of some edible root.

But they looked in vain. They had penetrated into the heart of a forest lacking in insect and vegetable life, and therefore shunned of the life which preys upon life. There was only growth-room for the sky-scraping trees. The children in this desperate strait gathered and chewed, occasionally, bits of resin and the seed scales of the pine cone. These served, in a small measure, to appease the incessant gnaw of hunger.

After several hours of walking, however, hunger so asserted itself that they might even have surrendered themselves to Lizbet's clutches for a mouthful of meat. If by going in that direction they could have been assured of finally getting out of these gloomy pine woods and into the land of game again, they would readily have traveled toward Tall Gun's village. Not knowing, they kept on toward the south or as nearly

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so as occasional glimpses of the shifting sun would permit. They ceased to look for game or roots, but stumbled on with ears open for signs of life in some outer world. But neither whistle of wing nor honk of goose fell out of the still sky.

At midday, both exhausted, they fell upon the ground and slept again. Thus they were enabled to rest for two or three hours, forgetting the pangs of hunger. And again they plodded on and in a little time were overjoyed to discover the glimmer of a lake in their front. But they were astonished and further disheartened, in coming upon its rocky shore line, to see no signs of life—just a placid deep blue sheet of water hemmed with interminable lines of cloud-touching trees. A pair of loons were finally sighted, the sun glimmering upon their flapping wings far out in the center of the lake.

Although they scrambled wearily among the rocks to look down into deep waters, there were no fish to be seen. The only animal they found upon this lakeshore was a huge turtle, upon a flat stone, getting the sun's heat upon its back, and which craned its neck in amazement at the unwonted noise of their approach.

This edible creature they might easily have secured and, with the aid of knife and hatchet, have gained an abundant supply of food. But it did not occur to them to kill it, for the turtle was the taboo of their gens and they would no

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sooner have eaten of its flesh than of their own.

They passed hopelessly around this desert lake and again were about to drop from exhaustion when they came upon a tiny inlet. In the shallow water of this brook they saw some small, sickly-looking fish.

Instantly, with all faculties alert, the voyagers set their cunning to match that of the finny ones. They could only get these little fish by a strategic surround. To this end they shed moccasins and leggins, and prepared to sacrifice their blankets to a wetting.

Zintkala went above to get securely around the fish, while Etapa stopped in the brook below. The boy weighted two corners of his blanket with stones and also laid some small weights about the center so that one-half or more of its surface was submerged, and the whole quite blocked the brook's narrow channel.

Thus prepared he awaited eagerly the movements of his sister. Zintkala also tied stones in the corners of her blanket. Holding this before her so as to sweep the bed of the creek she walked slowly and cautiously down the stream. Soon the little fishes, six or seven of them, were fairly cornered between improvised drag-nets. A sudden easy swoop of the boy's fish trap captured four of the finny ones, and the others escaped in a swift flight into the lake.

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These thin, small fish, half-roasted on a smokeless blaze of dry twigs, were barely sufficient to stay the keenest pangs of hunger, and Etapa was too nearly exhausted—he shivered miserably from his wetting in the brook—to attempt further travel, fishing or hunting.

Something, in the bones perhaps, told them they must, at all hazards, rest by a warm fire until another morning. A huge dead pine, uprooted by a wind, lay across the brook. To this they repaired and made a camp. Zintkala regarded her shivering brother furtively and with solicitude. She built a hot fire against the log and bade him sit close to the blaze while she staked their blankets on either hand to dry.

This was quite a reckless proceeding in view of the persistent chase of Tall Gun's Ojibwas, but the pinch of hunger, cold or illness shuts out other considerations. Zintkala knew that if the Ojibwa possessed the skill and patience they had shown as far as the camp in the sand hills, nothing now could save herself and Etapa from capture. If they had, as was equally probable, given over the chase upon discovering the wary flight from that camp, there could be no necessity for extreme caution. The voyagers had done their utmost to foil and to outrun the Raratonwan, and the evil spirit had prevailed thus far. It remained to see what might yet happen.

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Etapa slept for a time, while the blankets were drying. He awoke hollow-cheeked and heavy of eye. "Why do you not sleep?" he asked.

"The wicked wolves might come," the sister suggested, "and—and the fire will keep those evil ones away."

"Then I shall keep the fire. I have enough sleep," he said. "I am not any more hungry."

This was a bad sign, and Zintkala looked at the brother uneasily. But she had nothing to oppose to his suggestion, and so wrapped herself in her blanket.

When she awoke the sun had arisen, and she found Etapa, with a strange flush upon his face, stumbling along the brook toward the lake. She called after him to know what he would do and, as he did not answer, she hurried on to inquire. It seemed that he wished to find some fish for her breakfast. He was not hungry, he said, but older sister must be very much in want of food.

"Come," said Zintkala, "I will do without food. Let us go on quickly to some open country."

The brother yielded without remark and again they took up their journey. Etapa disclaimed hunger, but he had a strange feeling at the pit of his stomach which caused him to draw in his belt until he resembled some giant, ambling insect.

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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It was mid-forenoon when the plodding and nearly lifeless children came at last out of the lifeless woods. Suddenly they emerged into a world of plenty, upon the shores of a great lake so wide as to reach to a far, unbroken horizon. This lake was flecked with herds of water-fowl. There was a wall of sand and a wide sand beach as far as the eye could reach along the shore line.

The woods were small and again there were wild pigeons, grouse and squirrels in abundance. But all this life now mocked at the Dakota boy, for when he had succeeded in stringing his bow he had not strength to bend it for a shot. He made several unsuccessful efforts, and then looked at his sister with a drawn and pitiful face.

"Rest, brother," she said. "Lie upon these sands and I will go to dig some roots." She drank a great deal of cold water and then took her knife and went into the woods. She could shoot with the bow and arrow, but not well enough to hit birds unless they were very close indeed. So she betook herself to the resort of a hungry Indian woman, who will find roots and berries where all others fail to find them.

"I must look also for medicine roots," said Zintkala to herself, thus compelled to admit that Etapa was ill or about to become so. She found the dead leaves and stems of many plants strange to her; but when she dug and tasted

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them they seemed neither medicine nor good to eat.

After a time, however, in a well shaded spot among some young, hardwood trees, she found the dry foliage of some plants which she recognized as belonging to a delicious kind of root which the Ojibwa had dug during her march with them in autumn.

The plants were ginseng, and Zintkala used her knife eagerly in uprooting them. She found quite a quantity, and they were waste-*ste*—good, good. She scraped the earth from several large pieces of root and ate them ravenously. Anything which tasted good could not fail to allay the fearful gnaw of hunger.

She thrilled with the thought that these roots might make a good medicine for Etapa, and so she passed out of the woods onto the beach to make haste in getting back to him. As she walked over a slope of gravel and loose stones her eyes fell upon a heap of freshly opened clam shells, and near at hand she saw tracks of *matosapa* upon the sands. So the bear had found many clams. These were not much eaten by her people, but she knew that hungry folk sometimes ate great quantities of them raw.

So she dropped her roots, stripped her feet, and waded among the stones to explore. Clams, and big ones, were indeed plentiful and she had no difficulty in securing all she wished.

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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Then, without waiting to clothe her feet, her eye sought the line of beach until it fell upon a little gray object lying in the sunshine under a wall of sand. Making certain that Etapa slept, she seated herself and, cracking the shells of clams between two stones, devoured the tough but edible mollusks until she had, as nearly as she dared, appeased her hunger. Doubtless no epicure of modern days ever tickled his palate with "Little Necks" of a more delicious flavor. They were fat clams of the full-fed sort found in lakes which abound in vegetable and animal life.

Etapa was sleeping heavily when Zintkala reached him and she did not wake him at once, for she wished him to rest and then to have some clams, roasting hot. So she made a fire and, while the clams were baking, she built a "sweat house" by digging a pit with a draft, lighting a fire within and piling some large stones upon the burning wood.

Then she awoke Etapa and put roast clams, nicely opened with her knife, before him. But his hunger had gone. He ate one or two of the brown lumps because she urged him. But his face was burning, his eyes shone with a strange light, and he complained of pains in his head and side.

So, when the stones in the pit were sufficiently heated, the sister laid poles on them and made

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## F L I G H T

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the boy sit over them while she folded parflèche and blankets about him and piled sand upon the edges so as to retain the heat.

The Dakotas, like other people, are divided upon social and religious customs and practices. A class, nearly always those of larger natural abilities, have little or no faith in their conjurers and medicine-men. Many diseases are known to them, in a way, and they go about curing them with such genuine remedies as nature provides. Zintkala's people—on both sides—were of this sort. The cures which they had faith in were largely of the well directed powers, sweating, herbs, dieting and many simple and universal remedies.

Therefore Zintkala did not wish for a wakan-wicaşa (medicine-man) to treat her brother with his drummings, his chantings and his mummeries. The little doctress gave her patient a thorough sweating, then raked away the ashes of her cooking fire and made him lie upon the heated sands rolled tightly in blankets.

Then, tired though she was, she selected a shelving, sunny bank against the lake wall of sand and proceeded to build a wickiup. Against the scarp of the wall she began operations, digging away the slope with a clam shell to make a level spot, yet pulling down dry sand finally for her floor. Then she took Etapa's hatchet and attacked some young growth near at hand.



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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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She drove two crotched stakes and laid a pole upon them parallel with the top of the bank, laying sticks thickly across from this pole and again slanting from the pole to the ground beneath. A cross pole and more sticks inclosed an end of the structure and the other was left open for entrance and exit. The roof of this framework she covered thickly with young pine boughs, thatching them cunningly with vines and strips of tough bark.

By the time the energetic little maiden had her roof finished night was coming on. So she built a swift fire of dry leaves and sticks upon the floor of her wickiup until the sands were heated. Then she raked out the embers, awoke Etapa, half dragged and half persuaded the stupor-ridden lad inside and put him to bed with a parflêche drawn over his feet and another about his shoulders.

Fortunately for this small nurse and her plans, spring comes quickly in the northland. The weather had come on warm; buds were swelling upon the trees; bluebirds, thrushes and other warblers sang joyously, with promise of summer, among the small woods. And the sun sank in a great red glory beneath the waters of the lake.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE LITTLE NURSE

Zintkala built a large fire at the opening of her wickiup. She dragged a number of dry limbs in place and chopped them into fagots, for the air was yet chill after nightfall and she wished to keep a fire going until morning.

It was after midnight, and Etapa was yet breathing heavily, when the little nurse composed herself to sleep with only a parflêche covering for her shoulders. She slept until the sun was shining when Etapa in delirium awoke her with his mutterings. She knew that he wandered in mind, for he said things which were witko (foolish and incoherent).

She rebuilt her fire and sat near her patient with a great fear in her heart. With an almost fierce insistence, however, the little girl shut out of her mind a thought of the end which might come to such illness. Such fevers were frequent among the Indians, but with the violent sort they were ill-prepared to contend. So, despite her brave spirit, the sister listened with a pinched face and heavy heart to the brother's mutterings and watched his restless tossing, well understanding how powerless she was to do for

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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him. After a dark hour of despair, Etapa again fell into a deep sleep.

Then his nurse aroused to action. She ate a hasty breakfast of baked clams, then very carefully passed some thongs around the boy's ankles and tied them so that he might not get up and run off in one of his witko moments. Then she took her knife and his hatchet and went to the woods. Diligently she searched for the roots and herbs known to use in her mother's family. There was as yet no green vegetation, and her search was tedious in the extreme, compelling her to dig much under the dry leaves and stems of such weeds and wood plants as the melting snows or the wild creatures had left undisturbed.

At last she chanced upon a bed of mandrakes, and her face lighted with a great joy. Ah, this was indeed waste-ste (very, very good)! She dug many of the roots. With these and some freshly peeled bark of the wild cherry she returned to her wickiup.

She looked in upon her patient with anxiety. He was sitting up with fevered face, sullenly trying to untie the thongs about his feet. She assisted him and, after walking about upon the sands with unsteady legs for a moment, he came back to his couch and turned his face to the bank.

Zintkala now took her basin and two extra

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## THE LITTLE NURSE

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large clamshells and shaved into these receptacles small bits of the root and bark she had gathered. She longed for some of the bitter sage leaves from her mother's bundle of dried herbs. But there was no sage bush in all this northland, and so she did what she could with what she had.

She set her dishes, filled with water, upon some stones which she had placed to heat upon the embers of her fire. She knew the roots and bark must not be freely boiled and arranged her dishes so as to keep the water gently simmering. She now fished for clams, and it was a long time after she had roasted some mollusks and eaten them before her teas were bitter enough for medicine.

Etapa would not eat although she urged him, hoping to thus prove to herself that his illness was not a serious matter. She was encouraged that he did not get violent and beyond her control. In one of his rational moments, after a time, she succeeded in getting him to drink, with a wry face, a basin of mandrake tea. After this he again fell into a stupor of sleep.

Zintkala kept her brews going, setting away in shelter clamshells filled with bitter teas until she had enough to last for hours. Then, knowing that her patient was too weak to wander off, she went to look for food. She was tired of the tough clams.

In a little exploring expedition she discovered

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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a marsh bayou where many large fish were to be seen feeding among the reeds in shallow water. Ehé-ho! Here was good meat in plenty. She affixed her long knife to a pole and went spearing. After some adventures, and several hard struggles, she succeeded in killing two large catfish and lugged them to her wickiup in triumph. Her elation in this exploit would have been very great but for the anxious heart she bore.

Oddly enough, it was but a little time after she had dressed these fish and hung the meat upon curing sticks that she found three unsuspected fishhooks in her own roll of belongings. The hooks were concealed within a bundle of colored threads and pieces of trader's twine which she undid to further her mending. This was great good fortune, for she was an expert fisher and the possession of these cunning little weapons settled the question of food supply where there were fish to be caught.

She had thought some of hunting with Etapa's bow, but the Cree arrows would every one be needed when they should take up their journey homeward.

Most of that day she sat upon the sands in the sunshine mending clothes, leggins and moccasins. Rents in her jeep (skirt) she darned by sewing in soft pieces of buckskin, ornamenting them with stitches of red and blue packthreads. This occupation was varied with brief visits to

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## THE LITTLE NURSE

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the invalid, who was several times induced to drink of her bitter teas. All day the boy lay, burning with fever, taking no nourishment but water and the bitter drinks.

Upon the sister there settled at length that strange aloofness and preoccupation which seizes upon the Indian, as a defense against the ravages of emotion, in times of suffering and grief.

Zintkala spent a busy day. Among other work she finished thatching her wickiup, which thus became a prominent feature of the immediate beach, an oval hummock setting its vivid green against the sand wall. She went about all these duties with the intent air of a small housekeeper.

Now and then, however, her eyes strayed, as she sat, seeking the calm and placid blue waters of the lake where the sun beat warmly, and a light glimmer of radiation arose in which, as in some far-removed ethereal world, there floated great white swans and pelicans amid armies of smaller water-fowl. There sang in her ears also in gentle undertones a murmur of puddling and quacking, which seemed to come from a far country, a drowsy dreamland, where people moved with slow reluctance and yawned and stretched and flapped their wings protestingly.

Across this placid mirage country the little maid looked in vain for sight or sign of land. The sheen of misty water, with its herds of

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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birds vanishing to mere specks in the distance, seemed illimitable, and she wondered indeed if here were not the end of the earth at that distant sunset sea which she had heard of among her people.

At night, however, this illusion was dispelled. After the sun had set redly, falling into the water, clouds obscured the stars, and, as darkness came on, a red sky light appeared across the lake, a cloud glow which her vision—associated with many prairie fires—could not mistake. The red sky meant a forest fire across the water. Woods were burning there, and the lake was not as wide as it had appeared. And there were people over there, too. As night advanced the dash of scarlet upon the clouds became a broad band, and its ruby light was reflected upon the ripples of the lake until beach and shore line were visible as by moonlight.

Zintkala was not sleepy. She sat in the opening of her wickiup for a long time looking out upon the wonder world of fire-lit night and with the fascination of a child of whatsoever complexion. The now dancing ripples, the white birds and the dark ones with the fire's glow upon them, the far-seen herds of fowl moving in a red dusk like war-parties of horse-men going upon a level plain to strike their enemies, all the curiously peopled water-world, held her imagination.

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## THE LITTLE NURSE

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It was not a still world, neither of woods nor lake. Out of the sky came now and then the reed-like piercing laugh of the loon, the bugle note of the arctic going swan, the harsh squawk of the night heron, and, from the tree-tops near at hand, two owls mocked at the puddling ducks which presently they intended to pounce upon.

Once, startlingly close, a crackling of bushes caught the watcher's ear and brought her heart fluttering into her throat. At last the Ojibwa! But no, a dark hulk moving upon four legs came out upon the sands and she understood that mato-sapa had come to his clam fishery. She shrank within the door of her tepée and peered fearfully forth.

The king of the woods, it appeared, was not hungry. He simply wallowed in shallow water, rolling himself about like an agency pig, and then shuffled away into his bushes. Once only he lifted his head and stood at gaze, appearing to be mildly interested in her domicile against the sand wall.

Once Etapa spoke asking for water and again after she had given him a drink and fallen asleep, he awoke her with the persistent cry. He drank more greedily than before. Lacking desire to sleep, Zintkala again sat in the opening of the wickiup. And while she looked out over the water and upon the red sky, lo, a wonder happened. It began with forked lightning

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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which paled the fire's glow and then a far-off deep mutter shook the earth, announcing the approach of the thunder birds. These vast and powerful creatures came nearer and ate up the fire in the sky. They played upon the water with their brilliant forked tongues, and the waves began to lash the rocks and sands and the wind to roar in the trees, and, in the crackling tumult of their wings and the blinding light of the bolts they shot, terror seized upon the little brown girl. She forgot her patient and cowered, her head wrapped in a *parflêche*, in the darkest corner of her wickiup.

Though the rain fell in bucketfuls, and the waves rolled high, and the wind howled the wicked song of *Unk-té-hi*, no harm came to the little voyagers who, so well was the wickiup lodged and thatched, were not even wetted.

In the morning *Etapa* was at the height of his fever. He raged and tossed and muttered strange things. He was quite out of his head. The little nurse went about with compressed lips. She cooked several pieces of fish. "He will be very hungry this morning," she said. She set a basin of the broiled catfish at the side of his couch, and then went out and ate her morning meal, sitting with her back to the wickiup. When she had finished she went in and took away the basin, pretending that *Etapa* had eaten most of the fish. She threw the con-

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## THE LITTLE NURSE

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tents of the dish among the bushes, saying to some birds that they could have what was left. Then she set about brewing bitter teas again. This herb drink she gave to the sufferer in large doses when he cried out for water, and at mid-day he again fell into a heavy sleep.

The day was very warm and pleasant. Many large flocks of water-fowl left the lake and flew northward, honking and squalling with much uproar and fuss.

Seeing that *Etapa* was not likely to awake soon, his nurse cut a slender pole and with hook and line and some fresh clams went fishing at the bayou. The big pike and pickerel snapped at her tempting baits so greedily that they almost frightened her, and she returned with as many as she could carry.

When she came to the heap of clamshells she left two of her fish upon the stones. "They are for you, O *mato-sapa*," she said, turning toward the bushes and addressing the bear quite as though the animal were facing her. "Perhaps you will see that my heart is good, and thus you will not enter my *tepée*."

The Indian child speaks always the language of its elders, and, if it be not stupid or lacking in brain quality, will, at eight or ten years, have attained a vocabulary capable of more effective speech than the average child of similar age among English-speaking people.

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At ten Zintkala had been accomplished in her own tongue; in five months at a missionary school she had learned enough of English to converse with her teachers about ordinary matters, and six months' tutelage among the Ojibwa, in a tongue differing as widely from her own as Latin from Hindustani, she had learned to speak Chippewa readily.

When she again turned toward the wickiup Etapa was outside staggering and stumbling, making a half-crazed effort to reach the water. She ran to him in a great fright, for she thought that now he was surely witko and about to become violent. Partly carrying, and partly forcing him to walk, she got him back to his couch and supplied his wants with bitter drinks.

On the whole, she was glad—not knowing that the fever gave him strength—that he was able to stand on his feet. When, after more drink, he fell into another sleep, she became quite cheerful.

The afternoon was really hot, and the water around the edges of the lake had lost its winter chill. Zintkala shed her Ojibwa dress and, stripped to the breech-clout, a little brown water fairy, puddled and swam in the lake with as much apparent ease and enjoyment as the ducks.

Afterward she played upon the beach as she had done among her native sand hills, building conical tepées, setting up medicine poles and

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## THE LITTLE NURSE

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small twigs for people, rigging mimic ponies with mimic travois poles and loading them with mimic swaddled babies and camp effects.

For a time she seemed to be at home again on the Smoky River. In her ears there hummed sweetest music, low-voiced talk of women gossiping in front of their tepées, the sounds of mortar and pestle, the whinny of ponies and bark of dogs, cries which greet the return of the hunting party, and shouts of young men playing the haka game.

Thus she was pleasantly absorbed until awakened to bitter reality by Etapa's cry for water. She ran to obey the call and, when she saw his face, deep fear and depression again took possession of her.

That night Zintkala hardly slept, and for three days thereafter Etapa required her constant care, giving her only snatches of rest. The patient was violent at times, and it required all her strength to keep him within the wickiup.

During this time she ate only the fish which she had partly cured and preserved, and made but one excursion to the woods after roots and cherry bark for her brews. On this occasion she had the good fortune to kill a rabbit, which she hit with a stone. This game she dressed and hung near the fire to make soup for Etapa. Some of this, very weak, she gave him when he craved water. Some of the meat, too, she had

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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on hand, with bitter cherry bark, when the fever left him.

This happened on the sixth morning of his illness.

When, upon awakening from a better sleep than she had had in several days, the little nurse no longer heard her patient's heavy breathing, but saw an emaciated figure with face turned away, with blanket unmoved where she had last tucked it around his feet, she caught her breath with a little gasp and ran outside, not daring to look at the features of that still one.

Distract and wild-eyed, she wandered for a time. She gazed far across the lake where the fire had burned and where, upon the horizon line, a mere speck, she had one day seen a canoe pass. There were people, there was a village over there, and she almost made herself believe that she ought at once to go around the lake and find these folk. Maybe their medicine-man, like Ghost Moccasin of Tall Gun's village, was a very great wonder-worker. Perhaps such a wonderful one would come and cure Etapa.

She raced away from the specter in her mind. She hastened to the pool of the bayou to see if there were indeed fish swimming there. Once there she noted that a pair of ducks flew out of the rushes upon the opposite edge, and she thought that she must now hunt along the reedy banks of this stream for the eggs of magak'sica.

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## THE LITTLE NURSE

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Duck's eggs were delicious, yet she felt no hunger for them.

She turned her attention to the great white herds of pelicans upon the lake. All the wild geese and many of the droves of ducks had vanished, but it did not occur to her to wonder where they had gone. She kept her eyes upon the immense white birds with big red pouches under their bills. She thought that she should have one of those pouches. They were very convenient. She had heard that the birds carried fish in them.

Yet something kept saying to her that she must go back to the wickiup—go back—go back—go back.

She hurried along the beach; her little feet stumbled among the stones; her breath, now suppressed, again came and went in spasmodic gasps; a strange misty world danced in her eyes; a tattoo of drums throbbed in her ears.

She approached the wickiup with halting steps and wavering eyes; her small round face was pinched and bloodless, white as one of the dead. Some compelling force drew her to the opening. She peered inside. Ah, waste-šte! The sick one had moved—his thin face was turned partly toward her!

She bent over him with all her soul in her face. One look and her energies and faculties returned in a single throb. She flew outside,



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uncovered the embers of her fire, snatched her basin and ran for water. A large leg of the rabbit! This she had saved for a nourishing broth. Ah, Etapa must very quickly take some of her soup. He would like it; he would drink it eagerly perhaps. He must now be very hungry—they were always so. All her energies were concentrated upon the cooking of that broth, with nursing it with just enough of fire. She had a bit of salt and that she put in to make it very good indeed.

In a brief time she was bending above her scarcely breathing patient, clamshell spoon and dish in hand, and when the weak boy made a little strangling noise in his throat she almost laughed. When she saw that he had really swallowed two mouthfuls of broth, and that his hollow eyes had opened and he seemed to know her, she glowed with energy, a little dynamo of nature to give to the weak one life and strength.

Two or three times, within a little while, she succeeded in getting her patient to swallow broth, and then, to her great delight, he fell into a soft and natural sleep.

The rabbit soup—such a little bit—would soon be gone, and now to kill a bird! She would not have hesitated to undertake to catch one with her hands, but she took the bow and two of the precious arrows and sallied into the woods.

Any kind of birds would serve her purpose,

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## THE LITTLE NURSE

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but some better than others. Many times during her vigil she had heard the vigorous drumming of cock grouse near at hand. The thunder of their wings had sometimes startled her as the mutterings of Wakinyan. But she had heard the bird before, and she had seen many during her recent tramps. She now listened for their loud whirring roar as eagerly as the hawk which sought to peer into the depths where the birds were hidden.

Presently, as she stole on breathless tiptoe among some young trees, there burst upon her ears a thunderous humming which sent electric thrills prickling over her skin. Ah, the bird was located with a glance. Only a little way off the sprangled roots of a fallen tree protruded above some small growth. Upon that old dry log, deep within the shadows of evergreens, the cock pheasant had his parade ground.

With bated breath, and motionless, she stood until the bumming of wings began again; then she fitted an arrow to her bow and stepped, moving with infinite caution, toward the dead tree's roots. When the whirring ceased, a statue of an Indian girl stood among the young pines. Thus, with the sure instinct of a fox, she alternately approached and shrank to the stillness of her surroundings until, at last, in the midst of an ecstasy of whizzing vibrations, she crouched behind the upheaved tree roots.

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There was another interval of suppressed animation during which the huntress heard the cock's cooing kroo—kroo—kroo, as he spread his ruff and strutted, displaying his plumage, while awaiting the appearance of some coy female.

Bhum—bhum—bhm—n—d—r'r'r'! Mercy, what a noise! The shy little huntress arose, popping up like a jack-in-the-box, and aimed an arrow at that blinded puff-ball of conceit. At three steps even she, Zintkala, could not miss, and an instant later she ran at full speed bearing in triumph the still fluttering bird.

Very likely no strutting cock of any sort ever passed from dress-parade into a delectable broth with greater expedition.

## CHAPTER XIV

### GOING TO THE ENEMY

Violent fevers of the swamp and woods are emaciating and usually leave the system deranged for a time. Etapa did not mend rapidly and, though after some days he was able to walk about, it was evident that he would not be stout enough to travel for a long time. He resembled only the half-animated framework of the stout boy who had escaped from the sugar-camp.

He no longer spoke of going homeward. He seemed content to be provided for, to lie upon the sands and watch the white herds of pelicans. The sister saw how it was, and she pondered the matter gravely. Twice she had seen an elongated speck, almost upon the rim of the sky, move across the lake from a far-off headland. On one or two still, clear mornings, also, there were smoke indications hazing the sky above a dimly seen shore line of bluff and woods. That there was a large village in that direction she could have no doubt, and somehow she had arrived at the conclusion that the people were a peaceful sort of folk, who lived in a wonderful land of plenty and were generous to friends and strangers alike.

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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True, these people might not feel kindly toward those of the Dakota nation, but it seemed quite certain to her that they were not a cruel folk, on the lookout to do others harm, or they would have discovered and set upon her little camp long since. The Ojibwas of Tall Gun's village were almost forgotten, so distant was their country and so long it seemed since her escape from them.

She remembered that once in her home village a young Pawnee—a Scili—had thrown himself upon the mercy of the Oglalas. He had been lost, and had come upon their tepées in a violent snow storm. This young man had been well received. He stayed with his benefactors many moons, hunting faithfully for them during the buffalo killing season, and then returned, unmolested, to his own people.

So Zintkala determined to seek the strangers across the lake and ask for hospitality for a season.

She now used her buckskins—the parflèche and loose skins—making moccasins and garments and in mending. She had much colored pack-thread and some pretty beads among her pickings, and she fashioned herself an overskirt of Sioux pattern which she ornamented with many fringes. When she had donned this skirt, her elk-teeth necklace and some real Dakota leggings and moccasins, she felt as much like some

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## GOING TO THE ENEMY

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genuine person as a Sioux waif might in that wilderness.

In these days of Etapa's slow recovery Zintkala took on new life and capability. She was the camp's fisher and hunter, and her larder was well supplied with fresh fish and duck's eggs, upon which diet, and a daily swim in the lake, she thrived as a healthy animal. Her plump, round face and snapping black eyes glowed with animation.

She did not after that one time see mato-sapa, who, it seemed, preferred a more solitary haunt. Yet some creature, which left strange tracks upon the wet sands, came one night and stole fish which she had hung to a pole for safe keeping. Thereafter for a time she kept her meat in the wickiup, and still the marauder came regularly, eating the fishheads which she threw upon the beach and leaving those queer tracks all about her domicile.

Then she hit upon the expedient of carrying her refuse out to the heap of clamshells, and there the strange creature came and devoured it. She again hung a fish upon the cross-stick she had arranged, and that same night, when the moon was shining, she was awakened by a snapping sound as of a fagot broken across the knee. Peering out she saw a black creature, about the size of a common dog, eating her fish.

More angered than alarmed, she seized Etapa's

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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bow and arrows and discharged a shaft with all her might at the range of three or four paces. The animal was hit in the neck and sprang high with a fierce whistling snarl. It whirled about and about upon the sands, growling and striking at the slender shaft which had gone through its throat, and then, making curious leaps along the beach, disappeared from sight.

On the following morning the voyagers found a big brown carcajou lying dead upon the sands near the bayou. When she saw what a savage creature she had slain Zintkala was almost as much frightened as elated. The body was so heavy that all her strength was required to drag it to the wickiup. Etapa praised her skill in shooting. "How, big sister," he said, "that was indeed well done. Now you shall make me a chief's garment."

With what strength he had, the boy helped his sister to take off the carcajou's skin. It was a beautiful pelt, and they left a very pretty black bush of tail pendant.

Zintkala at once set about fleshing this fine skin in readiness for tanning, which process was completed by aid of wood ashes, fresh brains, and by much rubbing with the hands. The fur was long and thick, of dark brown, with two bands of cinnamon and, when she had sewed the flaps of the forelegs into sleevelets, Etapa was truly furnished with a "chief's

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garment," which he wore hanging down his back with the tail ornament brushing his heels. And the Sioux children thought it a very beautiful dress. Zintkala was so struck with the wearer's appearance—despite his thin face and pipe-stem legs—that she immediately set about ornamenting the turned-down head-piece and his moccasins with what remained of her beads.

It was more than half a moon after Etapa had been taken with the fever before they left the invalid's quarters and took up their journey along the eastern coast of the lake. In all this time no human being had been seen, only the far specks of canoes. There was, however, the warm, blossoming, spring-inhabited world which catered to all their needs except the longing for home. They did not hurry in their departure, for Etapa was far from strong, and Zintkala carried the small burden of their belongings.

The sister had said nothing to the brother of her plan of going to the strange people. She did not wish to seem to think him unwell and that he might not be able, for a long time, to travel a great distance. The length of the way homeward was only measurable in her mind by recollections of the seasons of her travels away from the Oglala country. She guessed that it would require two moons of walking for them to reach their home, and she now felt that they

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might have to wait until another melting of the snow.

Zintkala had developed physical strength with self-reliance, and she carried her pack, hatchet, basin, bows and arrows, a leaf or two of dried fish, a bundle of pieces of skin and thread, with lightfooted ease.

As they made their way along the lakeshore, walking wherever they could upon the sand and gravel beaches, Zintkala often said, "Stay, younger brother, I think there are some of the sweet roots" (ginseng) "in this wood. I will go a little way to dig it," or, "Whi! sunkaku! Let us have the eggs of maga-win. I saw her fly from those reeds."

Thus, while the lad rested without seeming to rest, Zintkala would go exploring. Sometimes she found the nest of a goose or duck upon a muskrat's conical dwelling among the rushes, but the eggs were no longer good to eat, as a glance at their shiny shells easily convinced the wader.

The children had grown weary of seeing the great herds of pelicans which floated at lazy ease day and night, and the loons and grébe everywhere specking the water, but there had lately arrived a myriad of new birds, piping creatures of spindle legs and slender necks, with feather dress of browns, drabs, grays and whites, which continually ran upon the sands or flew back and forth along the beach.

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These birds, of several varieties new to them, excited their wonder and comment. One small variety was seen in places in immense numbers. These were stupid, nodding little birds which settled in clouds at the water's edge and almost ran under the voyagers' feet.

"Hoye, sister," said Etapa, when their curiosity had been satisfied by observation, "shoot arrows among these little birds. Shoot the war-arrows, thus," and he showed her how she could skip an arrow low down along the water's edge, without danger of losing.

The ruse was successful. Zintkala tried several shots before getting the range and the level well, then a single arrow knocked over four of the birds, and afterwards she killed them at will. They found these small snipes delicious when the breasts were broiled, and Etapa ate heartier at midday than he had done since falling ill.

There were many large turtles and pretty snakes where there was mud and reedy shores, and there was particularly one green snake which Zintkala admired greatly. She would have liked the skin of this one dressed and tanned for a bracelet. All these creatures and many more commanded their interest as they sauntered leisurely upon the wave-washed sands and gravels or walked along high or muddy shores.

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Toward night they passed around a bluff bank to descend again upon a very wide sand-walled beach. Upon this broad belt of shore line, as evening came on, they saw a number of deer come down to drink, and once a cow moose and her yellow-headed calf trotted away in their front.

As Etapa had slept a long time after the mid-day meal they traveled but a little way that afternoon. They camped at the mouth of a sedgy creek where there were many ducks' nests, and here Zintkala secured fresh eggs enough for the evening's and morning's meals.

The second day's slow travel was very much a repetition of the first, save that it rained a part of the day and they spent several hours in the shelter of a cliff of rocks. During the afternoon the dim southern shore line which they had seen very indistinctly from the wickiup took clear shape as a bold bluff which seemed to extend far out into the lake. The foot of this high land they reached before sunset and camped in the shelter of some bushes under a rise. Here there was a plain path made by fishermen and hunters coming off the bluff to the lakeshore. It was very evident that there was a large village near at hand.

When Etapa saw the path he pointed to it inquiringly but said nothing, and Zintkala said nothing that evening. At sunrise they had

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broiled snipe and a fish for their breakfast; then Zintkala set about making such toilet as she could, having no colored earths to paint her cheeks. She combed and braided her hair with much care, and, at the point of her elk-teeth necklace, she fastened the scarlet wings of a bird which a hawk had killed.

Etapa looked on without comment. He understood that they were to approach the strange village. He was listless and unable to offer serious objections had it occurred to him to do so. He donned his carcajou skin and put a feather in his braid to denote that he had struck an enemy, and so made an end of his toilet.

Thus arrayed, they went forward upon the bluff. As they were aware that they might be seen by hunters or fishermen at any moment, they made no attempt to conceal their movements. They advanced along a plain path traversing an oak ridge for a mile or more.

Presently a droning hum of sounds announced that they were drawing near to a very large village, and in a few minutes they were able to look down upon a broad open plat, with patches of brush here and there, upon which a great number of wigwams were newly erected.

From the temporary appearance of these lodges they knew that they had come upon a summer camp of woods Indians, pitched upon a favorite hunting and fishing ground. The bluffs,

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also, far down their bases, were fringed with berry bushes. The children could not doubt that this was indeed a land of abundance, and the people moving about among the tepées on the flat a folk highly favored by their manidos. The village was pitched near to the lake shore, and they could see two or three canoes moving across a bay. On the beach, where it showed in yellow patches beyond the bush fringes, dark figures flitted chasing to and fro. The strange people's children were at play running races, perhaps, upon the sand.

Presently, as they began descending the hills, they heard the voices of women among the bushes near at hand, but could not tell what was said. They thought these women were digging roots.

They did not draw near to this Indian town without fear. But they had once more accepted the inevitable, and they took comfort from the appearance of things. They knew by shrewd instinct and observation that these were real Indians, like themselves, people of the wild lands unmixed and unmixing with the white folk of the agencies.

They halted for a time upon the bluff path within plain view of the village. Then, as no one appeared to be on the lookout to detect the approach of strangers, Zintkala said, "Come, younger brother, let us go among these people."

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They set forward at once and soon emerged from the bushes upon an open flat. A little way out from the nearest wigwams they met a woman with a large fat baby peeping over her shoulder, and this person uttered a slight exclamation of surprise.

The woman indeed stared at them in a rather unmannerly way. Yet she looked upon an unusual sight, for plainly by their dress the strangers were Sioux children and the foremost a young girl of erect bearing, with an earnest, intent face and quite the air of a chief's daughter and of having come upon an important errand. She had halted in the path in her surprise, but she stepped aside and the Dakotas passed on without seeming to take note of her.

Some wolf-dogs came from the near wigwams and barked, but these, too, fell away before them. Children ceased to play, and some shy little folk ran behind shelter to peep at the newcomers. Older people, within and without the open lodges, also glanced curiously at the strangers; for the most part these regarded them with a kindly gravity which made itself felt and brought a faint glow into the girl's round face.

Zintkala was looking for the lodge of the chief soldier, and expected to find some totem or decoration to distinguish his wigwam. This she searched for with reason, for these Indians lived and dressed after the native fashion and not as



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mixed bloods and agency people. Several skin tepées bore flags and ornamental designs, but none seemed to indicate the rank of its dwellers.

No one spoke to them, and Zintkala was much puzzled and even distressed to know to whom she might properly apply for hospitality. The children had passed the center of the village thus looking at the lodges and were feeling very much embarrassed when an old man confronted them.

"Ho, young Dakotas, you are come a long distance, it appears," said this one. The man spoke in Ojibwa, and Zintkala answered hesitatingly, her face reddening at her own temerity.

"We are Dakotas, therefore we wish to speak to the head soldier of this large town."

With a gesture the man bade them follow. He walked toward the lakeshore. When clear of surrounding wigwams he pointed to a large conical lodge which stood against a cluster of water willows near to a gravel beach.

"The man is there," said the old man simply, and he strode away and left them. The children approached the tall lodge as hesitating pilgrims approach a shrine. It was difficult to come near so great a man as this chief must be, unannounced. Therefore, at some unobtrusive paces, they halted to wait for some sign of recognition.

They saw before them—which gave their

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hearts encouragement—a big tepée of buffalo skins and upon its front, newly painted, the totem of a blue fish and an otter. For some minutes they stood, growing more embarrassed and very red of cheek.

They talked together in low tones to relieve their distress and, while they stood thus with their faces near together, a young woman came from the darkened interior of the lodge and stood in front of its triangular opening. This person regarded the strangers gravely and with evident inquiry. Zintkala saw the woman, but seemed to be looking straight beyond her, and Etapa turned his face toward the lake and shifted the carcajou skin to a shoulder. They were visibly ill at ease.

The young woman saw this and went into her tepée. She spoke something in low tones and a man's voice answered her. This talking continued for a moment, and a man came forth with a nervous shuffling stride and approached the newcomers. He was a young man with a mop of hair upon his shoulders and a fringe covering his forehead to the eyebrows. He wore no paints. He had a striped blanket about the shoulders, and his buckskin leggins had many-colored fringes, and his moccasins were beautifully decorated with turquoise beads. He had a keen face with shrewd eyes that seemed to look through one.

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"How, how, Dakotas," he greeted, reaching a hand. They shook hands with him gladly, the boy following the girl.

"We are the children of Fire Cloud of the Oglalas, and we are come a long way," said Zintkala.

"How, I know that man. He has fought my people a number of times," said the young man grimly. He looked at them with a glance so searching that their little souls shrank within them. For an instant they felt far removed from this strange village and their faces were cold and lifeless.

Zintkala spoke in a far-away voice. "We were taken to the agency at Traverse des Sioux," she said. "We were to learn to be like white people. We did not like to do so. When we ran away from those people the Hohé came upon us very suddenly. They took us to a far country from whence we escaped, and one of us is not able to travel."

The man regarded her face keenly again, but he asked no embarrassing questions. "Come," he said, and led the way into his tepée.

"Some Dakotas have escaped from their enemies," he said to the woman they had seen. "Give them meat." He seated himself upon some skins and waved his visitors to some mats opposite. His wife immediately went out and put some fish in her kettle and set it cooking.

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Gravely, but with no other sign of emotion, the little voyagers took seats, squatting with legs decorously crossed. The man lit his pipe and smoked. A small child, affixed to a board which leaned against a bunk bed, blinked solemnly at the strangers.

There were a number of guns hung to the tepée stakes, also powder horns, bullet pouches, fishskin ornaments, tobacco pouches, pieces of unfinished work in braided buckskin, pelts of otter, mink, sable, white weasel and other small and beautiful animals. And there were bales of blankets and skins under the bunk, with saddles, trappings and various articles of furniture lying about. Evidently this man was rich.

Their eyes took in these things casually as they waited. They knew their host would not again speak to them until they had eaten, supposing them to be too much exhausted for conversation. Thus was maintained the etiquette of the lodge. Yet the little strangers, of impassive face, awaited with no small anxiety of heart. They were glad when the woman came in with a pleasant countenance and set a bowl of cooked fish before them. They ate slowly until satisfied, and the woman quietly removed her turtle-shell dish.

Then the man spoke.

"I am Black Otter," he said, "of the Awanse Pillagers. My father was Esh-ke-bug-e-coshe.

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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He fought with your people and overcame them at Bear River."

He spoke simply, without boasting, cleaning his pipe bowl meanwhile with a small sharp tool.

Esh-ke-bug-e-coshel! The little voyagers' faces grew pinched and cold again, and their eyes held the wavering, far-off expression. For the name of this man's father was a hated one among the Dakotas. Zintkala and Etapa had often, too, heard the old men speak of two suns of fierce fighting at Bear River, where the Raratonwan had wrested from their nation a great hunting ground.

No wonder that fear gripped their hearts, yet they sat motionless, saying nothing. After a time their unbidding host looked at them earnestly and his words were good.

"We are now at peace with the Dakotas," he said. "We have fought each other enough heretofore and we wish the Dakotas well. I shall give you some presents, and I will treat you well so long as you shall stay in my wigwam."

He who imagines that the Indian and the Indian's child are stoics, void of the ordinary emotions, should have seen the young Sioux's faces light up and shine with a great joy.

## CHAPTER XV

### IN BLACK OTTER'S CAMP

The little voyagers had indeed chanced upon Black Otter's village at an opportune moment. Although they knew nothing of the truth at the time, less than a moon had passed since Little Crow's Sioux scouts had visited the Awanse winter towns, and had gained the promise of this Chippewa soldier and his young men that they would soon join the Dakotas in a war of extermination to be waged against the settlements and posts of the Upper Mississippi.

The reception of Zintkala and Etapa among these hereditary enemies was, without doubt, colored largely by their recently formed alliance. These children were treated with truly distinguished consideration, quite as the son and daughter of a friendly chief would—from natural kindness and motives of interest as well—have been treated.

When the sister and the brother had gained confidence Zintkala told to Black Otter and his wife the whole story of their misfortunes after running away from the missionary school, their capture by the Hohé, the "sleeps" they had traveled with them, the meeting with Tall Gun's

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Ojibwa near the traders' fort, and of how Tall Gun had traded with Gauché (Left Hand), giving two spotted ponies, one with white hind legs, in exchange for themselves; they were small ponies also, but he had given the Hohé also a fine green blanket and an ax and many fishhooks and beads. She told, too, how she had hidden her necklace of elk's teeth, and of the cruelty of 'Lizbet, who had beaten her because she had clung to the strings. Then of the sugar-making and of the flight, and how Tall Gun's soldiers had shot at them. They showed the little white scars of the small shot, and Black Otter and his wife put their fingers upon the swan-shot under the skin of Zintkala's hand.

The young chief and his wife were filled with interest. Narratives of the true incidents of war, the chase, and adventure made up a large part of the interest of life to the Indian of those days, and a tale of escape from captivity with so many incidents of varied character was absorbingly entertaining.

When Zintkala told of Etapa's striking the bear the chief was much pleased. "Hu-hul!" he exclaimed, "that was indeed very brave. How, that was well done, how, how!"

Etapa had begun to feel some life and animation among these new friends, and so he showed in his mimic way how he had struck mato-sapa a hard stroke upon the snout. And Zintkala

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came in for a share of commendation when she told of what she had done for her brother in his illness, and of the killing of the carcajou. Black Otter and Other Bird, his wife, much admired the carcajou's skin as an ornamental garment, and they quite regarded Zintkala as a person of consequence, saying that what she had done was how, how, very well done of a truth.

The chief said that he was very much disappointed in the Assiniboins, who were his friends, that they had done so badly in a time of truce among Indians, and when all must be considering what they should do to save their lands from the white men. As for Tall Gun, he was not surprised. The man was a distant relative, but he had mixed with white people and agency folk, and had drunk of their red waters till he was very nearly as bad as they were. Tall Gun and his men had come to be very much no-account Indians, and they were no longer considered as true Awanse. Zintkala and Etapa had done well, he told them, to run away from such folk.

Yes, indeed, said Other Bird, she knew 'Lizbet Tall Gun very well, and she had always been a very disagreeable woman. Twice her husband had turned her out of his wigwam, and he would not have taken her back only she had many half-breed relatives around the posts, and these had supported her in the quarrels. Once, too,

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'Lizbet had stolen from her—Other Bird's—mother a beautiful pair of moccasins ornamented with stained porcupine's quills and blue beads. Certainly that was very bad among one's own people.

Other Bird quickly became much attached to her young guests. She took that vivid interest in them as strangers' children which is common to young mothers the world over. Zintkala's ability to talk the Awanse and thus to tell of her life among a strange people, lately become Ojibwa allies, gave her an extraordinary attraction.

Having naturally a shrewd turn of mind and an alert intelligence, the young Sioux girl talked well.

Etapá also warmed into life among these friendly folk. A dry lodge to sleep in, a variety of nourishing food, and a new interest in life, these things added daily to his strength of body and mind. Soon he was able to play with boys that came, shyly at first, to get a peep at the strangers, and finally, as his strength improved, to admire his feats with the bow and arrow, a weapon which had fallen into disuse save as a plaything among the Awanse. The Sioux boy taught them new games and learned to play at theirs.

Many older people, too, took a lively interest in Black Otter's protégés, and they brought

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many small gifts and listened again and again to Other Bird's account of their adventures. Zintkala soon had quite a pouchful of colored beads, bits of bright ribbon, stained feathers and the quills of porcupines, one of those bracelets she had wished for wrought from the skin of a green snake, and other ornamental and useful trinkets such as girls delight in.

Other Bird was delighted that her guest should receive these gifts appropriate to a chief's daughter. She herself made for Zintkala a pair of highly ornamented leggins and a short blue skirt of trader's cloth.

These Pillagers were then an independent and showy people, living upon magnificent hunting and fishing grounds. They were never in actual want of food save from sheer improvidence. In berry seasons they had a surfeit and they dried and stored large quantities for future use.

Though in ill-repute as material for the missionaries of civilization and intractable to the cast-iron military discipline of a U. S. Indian agency, these Indians are to this day the most independent and nearest self-supporting of those who cling to the old life. It has been their fortune quite recently to chiefly accentuate the beginnings of another "Century of Dishonor." ®

Their reception and treatment of the little voyagers were, after all, in keeping with the spirit they had before manifested toward any

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who claimed their aid and friendship. They had fought the Sioux for many generations and finally, by the aid of firearms furnished by the British traders, had wrested from that warlike nation a great region of woods and lakes and rich prairies. Yet, in the midst of this long war, a band of Dakotas, driven from their own country by a tribal feud, and starving in winter upon a fire-swept prairie, came to the Awanse, bringing the captives they had taken, their women and children, saying, "We perish from hunger and our enemies seek to destroy us. Do as you will with us. If you shall save us we will ever after remain your friends—if you slay us we die at any rate."

Immediately the Pillagers took these poor people into their lodges and fed and clothed them, and, when safer times came, sent them back to their own country. There has been no quarrel between the two tribes since. This is history confirmed to the writer of this narrative by aged and honorable men among the northern tribes and by the marriages which yet take place between the northern Sioux and the Chippewas.

For a time these friendly people made Zintkala and Etapa forget their homesick longings. Besides their genuine hospitality and the blossoming of their wonderful spring season, there were fishing and swimming, canoe racing, drum and flute music and dancing, and, not the least

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## IN BLACK OTTER'S CAMP

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of pleasures, the gathering and eating of fat young pigeons—"squabs," as the white settlers have called them.

There was also a war excitement. The young men of this large camp were preparing to take up the hatchet, and there were strangers coming and going who had entered a league forming against the encroaching whites. It appeared that Black Otter was not the chief of these Awanse, as the Sioux children had at first been led to suppose, but only a partisan and war leader of the young men.

After a time, seeing all this preparation for war, and that Etapa was becoming strong again, Zintkala thought of going homeward. One evening she spoke to Other Bird about this. Black Otter's wife sat thoughtful for a time, then she got up and went outside her tepée to see if anyone was within hearing. When she came in she spoke.

"You have seen," she said, "that our young men are going to war. Men from Little Crow's towns of your people have come among us urging war against the white folk who have taken our lands. So there will soon be fighting in the lower country. It may be that they are fighting now. It will not be good for you to leave us yet until we can safely send you to some of your people who will assist you homeward. What I have said is as the bird sings, and my husband

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would be angry with me if he should hear that I had spoken thus unwisely."

Zintkala said nothing, but these words gave her great uneasiness. She wanted more than ever to go home. She was not capable of logical reasoning, but she felt that now her father must surely wish his children to be at home and not among the toka (enemy). With all her little soul she detested the conquering race, but she did not believe that her father would wish to go to war against the white people. Fire Cloud had said to his family, "My children, the wasécunpi" (white ones) "are countless. We are nothing. It is very silly for us to think of going to war against such."

Zintkala knew that this father, however, would send for his children very quickly if there were to be a war against the agencies. She was very much troubled and spoke to Etapa of these things when she could do so privately. "Let us go homeward secretly and quickly, older sister," was his response.

"Younger brother," she replied in reproof, "what you have said is very wrong indeed. We should not escape from these people as from the enemy."

It was but a day or two later that they played for a long time in the afternoon upon a gravel beach, gathering pretty pebbles and especially hunting for small colored stones with holes in them. They were hunting these at sunset when

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some young men came down to swim, and as these passed them they heard a familiar voice and, looking toward the group, saw several of Tall Gun's young men. Instantly the two bent low over their search, turning their backs toward the swimmers. They slipped gradually away from the vicinity and, getting quickly behind some bushes, ran swiftly to the lodge of their host. Black Otter had gone away in the morning. Other Bird had taken her baby and gone to gossip with a neighbor.

The Sioux children did not stop to consider the usages of hospitality. All these people were become once more the enemy. The head chief of this village they did not really know. He had never spoken to them. Doubtless when Tall Gun should demand the slaves whom he had purchased of the Hohé this man would deliver them to him and, according to all Indian custom, they were the property of Tall Gun until they should be ransomed or make good their escape.

Therefore they gathered their blankets and the few weapons and effects they had brought with them and, placing their presents in a heap upon a mat, as soon as darkness came on, crawled under the skin at the rear of the tepée, silently crept away among the bushes which fringed the lakeshore and bluff, and so passed unmolested around the village and into the wood beyond.

## CHAPTER XVI

### IN THE COUGAR'S LAIR

It may be that they fled from the camp of Black Otter unwisely. This can not be known, as there was no discovered attempt to follow them. They ran as they had once run before, until their legs refused the office.

After an hour or so of early semi-darkness, Wimima, the full-moon, dropped her brilliant webs and skeins of light into all the trunk-grown spaces. So, where there were not bushes to hinder, the chase away from fear was almost as if they ran in daylight. Much of the way they passed through pine woods. Two or three times an arm of the big rambling lake was thrust across their front, turning them aside at wide angles. Then they slipped into woods beyond its shore lines and came upon a hilly country of small pines with frequent open tracts of burned over lands.

They had become hardier voyagers than those of the tamarack swamp and "spirit woods." The novel fears of the first nights—the first they had ever spent alone—in the forests had been in a measure schooled out of their minds. To the weird night cries, the strange silences, the influ-

### IN THE COUGAR'S LAIR

ences of the shadows, they were becoming inured by experience.

Yet startling things befell and frightened them. The ruffed grouse whizzed from its covert and they caught their breath, stunned by the thunder of its wings. A wolf heard the light pit-pat of their footfalls and lay in wait for some easy quarry. Its gruff snarl of surprise and chagrin as it sprang away at the point of contact brought them to stand with prickling skins. The hoarse squawk of a bittern which sprang from the marsh grass at their feet, the hushed swoop of an owl across a moonlit space, the star-fire of a decayed log, the ghostly arms of a dead white birch, the near shrill yapping of a red fox, the lighted flash of a deer's white flag—all these things and many more gave them momentary terrors.

At last, when the moon had outridden its zenith, and their legs were extremely weary, they came upon a prairie with a soft carpet of grass, and a huge elk, with great black clubs of antlers, confronted them, stamping and snorting as if minded to attack. They stood close together, panting and talking in low tones while hehaka threatened. They could not run away; they were too tired. Presently, however, the big bull trotted off, and they walked on. They could no longer run, and it was Zintkala who first spoke of stopping.



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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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"Younger brother, let us lie down," she pleaded. "I faint from weariness."

"Not so, sister, come ye on to the woods again, lest the enemy shall find us when we are awakened," said the boy, who was again the hardy leader he had been.

Against so sound advice the sister could not protest, and so she plodded on, her little feet dragging and stumbling in the grass, her eyes closing now and then from sheer fatigue. Etapa led the way for some time over a high prairie country, when they came suddenly upon a coulée stream, sunken deep in the bosom of the level lands, gurgling and tumbling through a sharply-cut and wooded ravine.

On the bluff looking down to this shadow gulch they walked for a little way, hesitating to take the plunge into its abyss-like depths. They could not know that they might cross the stream, rumbling among the rocks below. At last, however, they were too weary to longer hesitate, and at the head of a dark, rocky and bush-grown coulée they paused for a moment confusedly.

"Tanké," muttered Etapa, sleepily, "I think we should rest here, where the thick bushes will hide us from the enemy."

"I wish to lie down," murmured Zintkala, staggering as she spoke. So they began to descend the steep, ragged ravine, the sister

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## IN THE COUGAR'S LAIR

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clinging to the brother in order to keep her feet upon the steep scarps of the bluff. From the first descent was arduous. Rough rock ledges, sudden steeps, dense growths of bush, were all hidden from the moon's light by a beetling bluff above.

As they dropped lower into the coulée the blackness became intense. Nothing could be seen below. They would gladly have retraced their steps but for the arduous and well nigh impossible effort of the climb.

Overcome by sleep and fatigue they were thus toilsomely descending when Etapa's feet slipped and he fell. Involuntarily he seized upon Zintkala's skirt, and the two, whirling over and over, dropped to the bottom of an almost perpendicular notch.

"O younger brother," muttered Zintkala, "I fear that we die." Yet the little girl lay upon a bed of leaves and debris and, despite her bruises, turned herself upon her side and almost instantly fell asleep. Etapa sat up for a time trying to collect his battered senses; then he, too, fell back upon the leaves and slept the sleep of exhaustion.

But for the weary stupor which was upon them the two would doubtless have noted a musky and peculiar odor in the dark pocket into which they had fallen. If their ears also had not been deaf to all sounds in the sleep-ridden jar of their fall,

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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some faint little hissings, from the darkest corner of the crevasse into which they had fallen, would have driven them speedily to another shelter. As it was they lay unheeding, a blanket roll here and another there, the boy's bow caught upon a bush part way up the steep, his arrows, thrown from their quiver, scattered among the rocks below.

If the moon could have shone at a certain angle into this crevasse, a deep, bush-grown triangular notch in a rock-ledge, its light would have fallen upon two pairs of innocents. One, unconscious of peril, lay as motionless as the cleanly gnawed bones of the dead which were scattered on every hand; the other, with recently opened eyes, cowered within the deepest corner of their lair, amazed and distressed at the ominous and disagreeable odor which filled their sniffing nostrils. These two crawled over each other, hugging an earth bank beneath a shelving rock. They buried their small noses each beneath the other's body or between its own furry paws. Unable to shut off the offensive smell they bared their pin-pointed fangs and hissed and spat in faint sibilant breathings like the warnings of a harmless snake.

In the meantime a cougar dam trotted stealthily among the bush-grown ravines of the coulée. During all the long day she had lain alternating between the luxury of sleep and the pleasure of

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## IN THE COUGAR'S LAIR

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suckling and caressing her babies. She was now very hungry. She had been out since midnight, perhaps, but the moon's light was too brilliant for good hunting. The hare was abroad and alert, sitting nowhere long enough to give scent for the still hunt. The grouse whizzed from cover far beyond reach, as keen of eye as in the daytime; and the wood duck and her young moved calmly out from shore, dipping their bills and nodding wisely. Two or three insignificant and stupid ground birds, snapped from their nests in the upland grass, served only to whet the appetite. So as meat must be had to nourish her young kits, the huntress of the long claw repaired to a deer's runway, to play the waiting game.

Upon the coulée's bluff, at the head of a ravine which was traversed by a narrow and hard-trodden path, she concealed herself among the low bush. She lay at the edge of the prairie where her eye could sweep a wide half circuit of grass land. A number of deer were feeding, scattered here and there, but, though she waited patiently and cunningly after her wisdom, none of the animals came to the creek for water. A heavy dew had fallen, and the succulent, wet young grass offered food and drink in abundance.

Daylight came, the sun arose, and found her lying in wait. Most of the deer moved away

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toward a highland. Only one, a yearling doe, lingered near. This one lay down and chewed the cud. Its back was turned to the cougar, and now the sly one stole forth upon the chance, against long odds, of taking the shy one unawares. Flattened to the semblance of a huge yellow snake, her tail following like a smaller snake, her back barely showing above the short grass, the great cat wormed her way inch by inch toward the ruminant.

Fortune favored her, for the long ears of the young doe were lopping lazily, thus cutting off the line of vision of one eye, which must have noted unusual movements across her shoulder.

Doubtless yet she might have escaped had not her face for one fatal moment been buried under her flank to bite at some offending insect. In that instant the cougar dam gathered all her whipcord muscles into knots and launched herself. Too late the fawn's ears caught the sibilant sounds of that skimming, whizzing rush. She leaped wildly in air, and the cougar struck home her talons deep into flank and shoulder. The animals rolled together like a ragged yellow ball, and the fawn's neck was broken with a snap. After tasting the blood of her quarry the hungry one remembered her kits and hastened back to her lair.

The hot scent of blood in her nostrils and the blind savagery of triumph prevented her dis-

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## IN THE COUGAR'S LAIR

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covery of the voyagers until she had leaped from a rock, half tumbled and half dragged her prey into the mouth of the notch.

Then her threats, suddenly launched, would have electrified any but the dead. At the first rattling vibration of snarls the little Sioux leaped to their feet with nerves strung for flight. But there was no line of flight open. The cougar dam had flattened herself as if for a leap, with bared fangs and claws tearing at the soil, within the one narrow pass from her lair.

Zintkala sprang to an opposite rim of rock and cowered, her hands shielding her face. "Oh, brother, we die," she wailed.

Etafa was scared. His knees shook and his teeth chattered with fear. Yet the boy, seeing no chance of escape, looked instinctively for his weapons. Only his tomahawk was within reach, and this lay half-way between himself and the cougar. As he dared not take a step toward the threatening creature he backed away to where Zintkala cowered and drew her long knife from its sheath.

The spirit within him was braver than the flesh, for his hand shook as he raised the weapon and his voice was thin and quavering as he cried, after the manner of his kind, to the snarling beast, "If you come to fight I will cut your skin, igmu-hanska! I will make holes in your flesh!"

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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As the boy had receded the cougar dam advanced, now standing upright, with distended jaws and deep chest roarings, whipping her tail to and fro, the incarnation of savage ferocity.

She halted midway in her lair, and the notch rang with her threats. Yet, though her muscles were knotted in a half-crouch, her yellow-green eyes ablaze and all her fangs bared, she hesitated to attack.

The boy saw this hesitation, and his nerve came back in a reactive shock. Again, as when the bear had threatened, he flared into savagery. He shouted an Oglala war-whoop. "Hi-yi-yih! yi-hi! Come on, igmu-hanska! I will cut your skin. Yih-hi! It is even so. I will do it." He made his knife blade whirl before him, and the rocks re-echoed his fierce shouts.

Suddenly, as he whooped at her, the beast before him ceased her threats. The hair fell upon her skin, the tail ceased to snap, and she craned her neck with a hoarse whine of anxiety. She seemed to be calling, and the mother solicitude was written so plainly in her intent gaze, her eager, anxious face and piteous whine, that a child could not have mistaken.

The boy unconsciously followed the line of her gaze, directed to a point under the rock rim against which he had planted his back. He stooped and looked obliquely into a pocket within a step or two of his feet. He saw the

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## IN THE COUGAR'S LAIR

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reason for the "long-cat's" threats, the object of her yearning anxiety.

"Ho, igmu-hanska!" cried the boy, "you desire your children's safety. I will not hurt them. See, I will give them to you." And without an instant's hesitation he thrust his foot into their nest and poked her hissing, spitting kits out into the open. Then he seized and tossed them one after the other quite over the old dam's head and into the mouth of the notch.

The cougar's eyes followed her kits, and she eagerly sprang after them, stooping over them with strange inquiring cries. Then she gathered both tiny creatures in her mouth and slipped into the depths of the coulée.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE CANOE OF THE WASÉCUN

"Wan ho, Tanké, see what igmu-hanska has left for us!" cried Etapa. His fear had vanished, and he pounced joyously upon the carcass of the young deer. His hunger was now keen and here was fresh meat in abundance.

"Inama! It is wonderful!" said the girl. Her face had not regained its color, and her legs yet felt shaky, but she was very glad of this good meat.

"I am very thirsty, but I can not yet go down to the water," she said, "and I am also afraid to stay," she added.

"The long-cat will not come back," Etapa assured her. "Look for the Cree arrows, sister," and he took her basin and descended to the stream. He returned in two or three minutes, and then, while he took the skin of the fawn, Zintkala gathered some dry, tender fagots and lighted a little blaze which gave off but a tiny wreath of smoke. Thin strips of venison, scorched over this flicker of flame, tasted wonderfully good and they ate until their girths had visibly increased. They then gathered their few effects and, carrying the "saddles" of the fawn, toiled out of the coulée. At the edge of the

### THE CANOE OF THE WASÉCUN

prairie, where the grass was still wet with dew, they came upon the cougar's trail where she had dragged the young doe. In the direction they wished to go they followed this plain trace, and at the point of attack Etapa examined the ground with a young hunter's intense interest. There he read the story of her lying in wait and of her successful still hunt.

They had now set their faces westward, and they walked upon the prairie, scanning frequently the north horizon, ready to plunge into the coulée at sight of any suspicious figure in the distance. For a little way the course of the stream was eastward through prairie and woodlands. Then, until noon, they plodded through a belt of pine country and again came upon the open prairie to a region of beautiful wooded lakes, a land of rich grasses, abloom with a great variety of prairie and wood flowers, and a hunter's paradise.

It was the country their ancestors had fought over for more than two centuries, perhaps for ten of them. This land they had held for at least a century against the combined efforts of Ojibwa, Crees, Assiniboins, fur traders and white adventurers, and with chiefly the bow and arrow to oppose to flintlock guns!

A little after noon the voyagers passed into a great hardwood forest, and in the depths of the woods built a fire and cooked all their meat so as

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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to preserve what they could not eat. After they had eaten they were attacked with sleep and fell upon their blankets.

They were awakened some hours later by volleys of thunder, and arose to find the sky darkened and to hear a great roar of coming wind and rain. Few are the Indians who do not feel fear in a thunder-storm. In their native state they begin to pray fervently at the first mutterings of the thunder god or thunder bird as the belief may run.

Zintkala and Etapa had been taught a prayer which Dakota children should offer to Wakinyan when lost in a storm. With scared faces they looked at the blackened spaces of western sky and saw clouds and tree tops transfixed by jagged red bolts, and they stepped a little apart and, with faces turned skyward, prayed piteously.

And these are the words they used and the interpretation thereof:

Wakinyan, mi me meya ukiya lo! Wakinyan, mi me meya ukiye lo! Wanyanka yo! ni wak-pahte cin tokel yacin ecamon kta. Heon, ni meyaye ni to waśake-tanka kin on napatayus amayaye, hecel waki-hunni kta.

"Thunder Spirits! Whirlwinds! Ye are coming. See me, pity me! You have great powers. Therefore take me by the hand and lead me homeward. Thereafter I shall do your will."

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## THE CANOE OF THE WAŚÉCUN

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Thunder, wind and rain, however, were deaf to this appeal for pity. A terrific storm fell upon the woods. Overhead was a swaying, mighty uproar. The tree tops were lashed together as grass blades. Big oaks were snapped off as though stricken by cannon balls. The crash of these, the incessant rattling volleys of thunder, the awful roar of wind mingled with the deafening beat of rain, might well have appalled the coolest brain or the stoutest heart.

The Sioux children flung themselves face downward upon the ground and suffered the terrors of those who expect a violent death. The rain fell as in a cloud-burst until every gully and runlet gurgled or rumbled with its flood. Inches of water fell and the storm passed as quickly as it had come. The little voyagers could hardly believe themselves alive when they faced each other, with sunlight filtering through the torn branches, upon the drenched and leaf-strewn earth.

The life came back into their faces and they laughed joyously. "Inama!" exclaimed Zintkala. "Wonderful! It appears that Wakinyan has spared our lives."

Laughing happily, they squeezed the water out of their soaked clothing and dripping braids. With the best wringing they could give them, their blankets were very heavy. They wished to dry their clothing and so packed their bundles

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and trudged on to find an opening where sun and wind could do the work most quickly.

There were fallen timbers and swollen brooks to stay their progress. Several times they were compelled to go up or down a torrent-filled ravine to find crossing on the inevitable fallen tree. But fortune favored them. While the sun was still shining hotly they came out upon an open prairie and, at the edge of a hazel thicket, where they could spread their blankets to catch both wind and sun's rays, they made camp for the night. As they had an abundance of meat they had only to lie at ease drying their clothes.

Yet Zintkala, with a keen scent for wild fruit, soon discovered a patch of strawberries, and the two feasted, eating of the delicious fruit until their hands and faces were stained a vivid red and their stomachs could hold no more. Upon the warm, damp grass they slept until morning. They breakfasted as they had taken supper in the berry patch. They were loath to leave the abundance of strawberries but finally tore themselves away upon the chance of finding more en-route.

They now crossed a prairie and traversed the walled sand beaches of several beautiful lakes. Among these sands they found, upon a number of stretches, the new-laid eggs of some long-legged birds which ran before them, ducking their heads and incessantly piping a single

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## THE CANOE OF THE WASÉCUN

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querulous note. The eggs were very good, and they dined heartily off them. Also, toward night, in one of the lake outlets, they came upon a run of the big buffalo fish—a large variety of suckers—and in the shallow water where the fish's backfin cut the surface they captured a scaly monster about as large as either of themselves.

Upon this big fish they feasted that night and the following morning, and they further cooked and cured their supply of venison, knowing it must be heated often or become sour and stale and, as they wished to travel fast, they could not guess how soon they might need this supply.

Their forethought was justified. The sun had just begun slanting toward the west when they came upon a wooded stream with a deep, rapid current which ran to the southwest. They were trudging along the bank of this river when they stepped from thick brush into an opening and without warning came plump upon a log cabin with a dirt roof, standing by an oak tree newly riven and splintered by wind or lightning. The voyagers were not greatly alarmed. They knew this familiar half-roofed hut for the tepée of a French fur hunter, a domicile seen at all the trading posts and at many Indian villages.

As they stood, undecided whether to go forward or retreat, their eyes fell upon the figure of a man's arm stretched out upon the bare ground

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and reaching half its length beyond the corner of the cabin. Was the man sleeping? Softly Etapa stepped forward at an angle which would give him a front view of the hut, and slowly the full figure of a man came into view. The boy did not need to look closely at the swollen upturned face to know that the man was dead. He had been stricken by lightning, or a fallen limb, directly in front of his door. Etapa knew that there could have been no other persons at hand or the dead one would have been buried.

"This wasécun" (white man) "is dead. I think Wakinyan has slain him," he said, in a tone hushed with awe. Zintkala came forward on tiptoe and looked.

"Nakaes, younger brother, it is so," she said, and then turned her eyes to the river bank. "There is the canoe of this dead one. I think we should take it."

The prow of a birch-bark vessel showed plainly against some bushes and hastening to it they found the canoe moored, with paddle inside, in a sort of bayou notch. The voyagers were glad to be speedily whirled out of sight of that still figure before the hut. The man would not need his canoe further, and they were glad of its aid for what distance the river might run to westward.

The current of the stream was deep and strong, and the paddle was only needed for

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steering. When they had flung off the gruesome feeling which a view of the dead man's distorted face had excited they were happy to be borne swiftly past woods and prairie.

Often both prairie banks were massed in wild roses, and as the children descended between the hedges of color they forgot caution and shouted at each other, each as if the other had no eyes, "See, see!" "Oh, do look!" "Nina wašte!"

Now and then they shot rapids that would have wrecked their slight craft at another season. But the water was very high from recent heavy rains and, though the current bore them at a dizzy speed, its center was usually as smooth as glass. At one narrow pass, however, where there was a sharp bend, the waters were rolled together as a scroll. They saw the danger too late to avoid it, and with breathless speed their light craft whizzed through the foaming tumble of waters. The canoe was half filled and the voyagers were drenched to their skins but they suffered no other hurt than a momentary fright.

They brought the craft to land, turned the water out, and again wrung their blankets and clothing with laughter at the mishap. Thereafter they approached sharp curves more cautiously.

When night came they had probably voyaged fifty miles or more to westward, and they



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ascended a low bluff to find themselves upon a prairie where no timber could be seen save the narrow fringe which skirted their waterway.

They were overjoyed. This was indeed their own country. They knew the prairie literally "as seamen know the sea." Here were the teepsinna and other roots which Zintkala loved to dig. And here were the whistling antelope which stood at gaze stamping their feet saucily, but safely beyond arrow range. And, yes, almost at their feet there lay the horned skull and bleaching bones of tatanka, the buffalo bull.

For a time these wild children ran about, care-free upon the prairie, reveling in its tonic, untainted breeze, pouncing with joyous exclamations upon familiar flowers and plants. They gathered handfuls of red lilies and yellow moccasin-flowers, and they ate wild turnips and potatoes until they could hold no more.

They would gladly have camped upon the high prairie, where they felt so much at home, but caution forbade and at night they returned to the river's bank. Lighting their fire was now a more serious matter than it had been. Zintkala had hoarded her little store of matches, and the remainder, rolled tightly in buckskins, had even come dry through the rain. But the afternoon's canoe drenching had soaked her tiny bunch and spoiled them. As they had neglected

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in daylight to search the river woods for dry and powdery punk, and all the old fog of grass was wet with dew, they were fireless until morning; though they would gladly have made a little blaze for the cheer of it.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### AT THE BIG RIVER

Their first greeting at daylight made them laugh with delight. On the river's bank a bird of yellow breast sat upon a tall, dry willow top and sang, Kola ni Lakota! Kola ni Lakota! (Friend, you are a Dakota). And they interpreted its familiar accent in the plural sense. The bird was *tašiyaknonpa*, the meadow lark, which Dakotas did not kill because of its reiterated claim to kinship.

Zintkala and Etapa cried out joyously that they were indeed Dakotas, and the bird flew away apparently well content. That morning they also saw other old friends—*šungila*, the swift and crooked-bill, the squalling prairie curlew. They ate of the cooked venison and did not build a fire, although Etapa secured tinder from the woods.

For another day the swift, full-fed stream carried them out into the plains country. There was danger in this daylight canoeing, for, at any moment, they might shoot into view of a hostile camp or village. This peril had not impressed them until they knew that they had been launched into the level country where timber is not to be found save along the streams. They

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could only guard against surprise by keenly scanning every reach and bend of the river in their front. They felt at ease, however, when, as frequently happened, there were deer, elk or antelope feeding upon the bluff slopes. In the unscared attitude of these four-foots they read the sign, "No hunters near."

For the rest the canoe needed only steering and much of the way it ran, for speed, as the elk trots. Low bluffs continued along the river, and often enough for fresh surprises they were banked in red roses and the atmosphere between them was laden with a delicious fragrance. Thus the voyagers sped joyously homeward, going so fast and so far that it seemed to them the river must keep on until they should reach their own Oglala town.

But at midday they came to the end of this waterway, so far, at least, as it ran to the westward. Their canoe, at a sweeping turn, was discharged quite suddenly upon a wider and discolored current which ran to the north almost as the crow flies. Much disappointed that canoeing should so soon have ended, they crossed to the west bank of this large river and climbed its low bluff to find a beaten road at the top and a trader's post, with out-buildings, in full view a mile or two to the northward.

Immediately they knew this river for the Mini Luta, or Red River of the North; for down this

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stream and past the very fort which they now saw the Assiniboins had carried them to captivity. They had arrived at a country hostile to Dakotas, but they were well out of a strange and trackless wilderness. They looked at each other joyously. In the language of seamen, they now had "plain sailing." They had only to follow up this river to its lake head to reach Sioux territory.

They returned to the canoe and for a little time Etapa paddled up the stream just to see what progress he could make.

"Tanké," he said, "I think we should now go nights in the canoe."

But a half-hour's slow progress disposed of this plan, and the two, packing their bundles, trudged along the river's bank. They dared not go upon the level prairie for fear of being discovered by people from the fort.

Their wisdom was justified at evening. They were lying at rest among some bushes when their ears caught a familiar sound, a snatch of the song of Canadian boatmen:

*"Printemps . . . petits grands . . . Lon lon laridon daine"*—these last words sung by several voices in unison.

The two looked at each other, their white teeth gleaming in grins of approval. They liked that rollicking boat song, which they had often heard on the Missouri and at Traverse

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des Sioux. Although they did not know the meaning of the words, either could have repeated the lines:

*Touts les printemps,  
Tant petits que grands,  
Lon lon laridon daine,  
Lon lon laridon daine.*

The song and its resonant chorus came nearer, and presently the creak of oar-locks admonished the voyagers to lie low in cover. They did not dare to risk discovery in peeping at the strangers; for there might be Hohé (Assiniboins) in that large boat, and these would shoot or capture young Sioux with little regard to the jolly boatmen. So the bateau slipped by, and its thrilling chorus ceased to charm the hiders.

The voyagers dared not build a fire that evening, but ate their cooked venison and betook themselves to their blankets. They lay in a low thicket of hazel bush.

They had not yet fallen asleep when they heard hoof-beats upon the bluff. They sat up with hearts in their mouths and peered cautiously up at the hill's black rim outlined sharply against a starlit sky. The figure of a horseman, halted, loomed upon the crest. He sat as if waiting for some one, and presently they heard again the distant muffled thud, thud of hoofs.

After a bit the second pony rider halted and the man upon the bluff lifted his voice and

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shouted at the loiterer. "Coo'e'e!" he called. "Hok'sida! Cohan, cohan!"

Zintkala and Etapa understood these words, yet they were not as they should have been spoken in their own dialect. Their shrewd ears detected, too, that the man said "hello" and "boy" differently from the Assiniboin, but that he said "come on" just the same. This man was evidently a Dakota, but not of the Assiniboin tribe. Perhaps he was a friend who would gladly assist them to go homeward. He might even lend a pony. Yet they dared not call out to him, and the man and his boy rode on and passed beyond hearing.

They were much puzzled to know what they should have done, and they talked, speaking in low tones, for a long time about this. They were no little depressed at the thought of having let a friend go by; for they knew that there were northern Sioux who were friendly with both the Hohé and their own people. Yet they did not see how they could wisely have attracted this man's attention.

For a long time they did not sleep. It was very warm. The mosquitoes attacked them, and they covered their faces with green leaves. Thus lying, they listened to the night murmur of the river, the hoots of owls, the booming of the night-jar, the pop-plop of the diving beaver, and the whizzing of a myriad of June-bugs.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE PONY STEALERS

The morning was very still and clear. After eating of their venison the little voyagers debated for some time as to whether they should now travel by day. The river thoroughfare seemed a dangerous route. On the other hand the prairie as far as the eye could reach was level as the extended palm. Plainly it would not do, day or night, to walk on the plain, at least until they should get far beyond the traffic of the trading-posts.

Zintkala favored travel by day along the river, where there seemed always willows, bushes or trees for hiding. True there might be villages or tepées along the streams, but the sister argued that they could discover approach to these best by the sun's light, and so avoid them. In the night, she said, if one were not very careful, one might suddenly come upon people where there were dogs to alarm, and how could escape be made in such a narrow valley?

Etapa was for night-going, and he held out for a long time, saying they could walk upon the prairie in darkness, keeping close to the bluff, so that they might hide at once if they should hear anyone coming. ®

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The sister's earnest persuasion prevailed finally, and they took up the burden of a cautious and difficult march. For most of the way the river ran through a coulée which was like a deep, rough canal cut in the prairie. Occasionally this rather narrow pass widened to give room for a belt of timber or a loop of willow-fringed meadow.

Everywhere the voyagers followed closely the stream's bush-grown bank. They were not fearful lest anyone should make suspicious discovery of their trail, for this waterway was a highroad of Indian and half-breed travel. Once that forenoon they lay in hiding while a caravan of two-wheeled wooden carts creaked and groaned over the prairie road. They did not see the *metis* who drove these carts, but they heard plainly their voices and the cracking of their whips as they urged the slow oxen forward. They were glad that the train was passing down the river instead of up.

They lay a long time hidden in the bushes lest they might be seen by stragglers. The need for caution in their travel had become very apparent, and their progress was tediously slow. They peered from hidden covers across every opening, and into every bluff coulée.

They stole across such openings, stooping low, keeping to the tall grass where possible, and often imitating the movements of animals.

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## THE PONY STEALERS

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They flitted from cover to cover among the bushes and tree trunks, treading noiselessly.

It was near noon and they were just entering a wood, having approached the river bank after a detour and by way of a dry run, when they heard a splash in the current below. They turned their faces to see a man, an Indian, wading near the edge of the water. This man's back was toward them, and he held a spear poised in one hand. Like startled partridges the two sank to the grass and squatted motionless until the wader had passed beyond hearing.

Then they looked at each other with uneasy inquiry. They were plainly between the fisher and his *tepée* or village, and it appeared equally perilous to go up or down the narrow valley.

They were yet undecided what to do, and sat listening intently when they heard the tinkletinkle of pony bells upon a bluff. A number of animals were soon sighted, several bow-shots distant, coming over its crest and descending the bush-grown scarp of the coulée. Also behind the ponies several black heads appeared above the bush, dusky dots upon a shield of green, and the voyagers saw that some young Indians were driving the little herd.

The village was thus plainly located at a point up the stream within the coulée and near at hand. Their own position was one of immediate peril. At any instant a straggler from the camp might

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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chance upon them. They could not of course wade the river; they dared not go forward, and the man with the spear might at any instant mount the bank below.

They chose the safest line of retreat. Entering the woods in front they turned to the right and walked leisurely to the foot of the river bluff. They moved slowly, that they might not rustle the bushes, and carelessly, so that if seen at a distance they might be mistaken for children of the village or camp.

The coulée scarp was grown thickly to small bush. Making sure they had not been seen, they crawled cautiously upward until they reached a point near the crest. Here they took refuge under a low hedge of wild grape vines and where they could peer safely down upon the valley. A long stretch of the river could be seen fringed with trees and hemmed, in the distance, by converging lines of bluffs and—almost under their eyes—beyond the grove they had entered were four conical tepées pitched upon the open flat and close to the stream. Beyond the lodges a herd of ten or a dozen ponies were grazing lazily.

The children who had brought these animals down from the prairie had caught two of the runaways and were tethering them at a bow-shot from the camp. Some women were apparently cleaning fish upon the river's bank. Near to

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## THE PONY STEALERS

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them were several upturned canoes. Three men were lying upon the grass, and one of them was making gestures as though telling a story.

It was startling now to see how nearly they had come to running plump upon these people. Evidently their camp had been newly made, else there would have been more sign about to give warning. Zintkala was now convinced of the wisdom of night travel along this river.

For a time the voyagers dared not talk lest someone might be near at hand. At length, however, after they had scanned all the reaches below and noted that a breeze had begun to rustle the bushes and trees, so that no sound, not even of pony bells, came up from the tepées, they spoke together in undertones.

"Older sister," said Etapa, "it appears that these people are very slothful. I think that they are good-for-nothing agency Indians. I would not be afraid to steal all their ponies, and I think that we should take horses of them to-night."

Zintkala's eyes snapped approval. These people were certainly a silly folk, or they would not allow strangers to approach so near to their tepées unnoted. The spirit of daring seized upon the girl and she spoke in eager tones.

"Let us do so, younger brother," she said. "I will assist you to drive away their ponies. We shall arrive at home afterward very quickly."

Thereafter they talked, planning with enthu-

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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siasm a night campaign against the sleepy camp. After a time they saw two persons, a man and a woman, plodding along the river's bank directly below. These were returning leisurely to camp, and the woman bent under a back-load of large fish which she had strung upon a willow hoop. The man bore a spear upon his shoulder with a single small fish dangling from the point.

The Sioux children marveled that they had escaped discovery. Naturally they took credit to themselves for the shrewd caution of their march along the river. From the appearance of their tepées and the fact that they traveled both by canoe and travois the voyagers judged these Indians to be Hohé, Assiniboins of the river, and not of the dry plains. They were of the sort who dwelt about the trading posts and agencies, and perhaps some were of mixed blood. But they were toka (the enemy), and, therefore, it would be highly honorable to take their horses from them.

So the young Sioux plotted deeply. They noted every movement of the Hohé camp. Before nightfall they had counted the inmates of the tepées, the number of dogs—there were three—and of ponies and colts. They traced in plan every foot of their approach to the pasture ground from a detour of the prairie to descent of a bush-grown spur of the coulée and a wary retrograde along the river's edge.

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## THE PONY STEALERS

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They had still a store of hard cooked, stale venison, enough to last three or four days at a pinch, and they could ride, ride, ride until hunger should compel a halt. They ate but sparingly that day and awaited with impatience the slow setting of the sun.

Yet it was a long time after the stars appeared before they stirred from cover. They were rather stiff and weary from long lying under the low vines when they finally ascended to the prairie.

Upon the level ground they sat long enough to tie their blankets and all the articles they were to carry in tight rolls. Etapa included bow, quiver of arrows and tomahawk in his bundle. These light packs they secured on their backs by buckskin strings and thongs.

Thus equipped they walked around to a spur of bluff which was perhaps a mile below the Assiniboin camp. Here they stopped for a time. They sat upon a bare spot where they could study all the darkened spaces of the coulée and thus fix upon lines of escape should discovery follow their undertaking.

The night was quite dark, with only starshine to light the depths of the river gulch, and when the two had reached the stream, under the shelter of its fringe of bush and trees, they had little fear of making advance toward the pony herd.

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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Though they walked with extreme caution their hearts beat high with expectancy.

When, in the growing dusk, they had last seen the Hohé ponies they were scattered upon a narrow strip of bottom at a considerable distance from the tepées. Some three or four of the leaders were tethered to long picket ropes. Unless some untoward thing should happen to arouse the camp it would seem a matter of no difficulty to lead these ponies away.

From tree to tree and bush to bush, carefully they approached the herd ground. At last as they knew by a certain thick cluster of young trees, which stood near the river's edge, they should have come opposite the tethered ponies. Close scrutiny of the level land disclosed only one animal. This pony was grazing but a little way out from the trees. And the occasional tinkle of bells, which for some minutes they had been noting and trying to locate, now sounded far down toward the camp, even below it perhaps!

This was very discouraging, for those belled ponies had been tethered right there, opposite the trees. Certainly it would not be wise to go to or to pass the camp after the horses. They held a whispered consultation. It seemed best to take this one horse, which they could do with safety, and go with it. They had buckskin enough for a halter, and they could both ride

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## THE PONY STEALERS

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the animal without overburdening. Perhaps the Hohé would not chase a great way for just one pony. They might even think it gone astray, and, where there were so many tracks, be led to search at random up and down the stream.

So they quietly walked out from the trees toward this animal, which they supposed to be picketed; for doubtless the unruly bell ponies had pulled their pins. They were much surprised when the lone horse kept stepping away in their front and feeding on toward the camp. The animal was loose. They yet hoped to catch it, going one on either side and approaching carelessly. But the pony still slipped away, feeding toward the Hohé camp, as though drawn by a magnet.

Presently, as they made a wide circuit to get around the wary one, another pony appeared, a small one lying down. This one arose and came toward the larger, and then both slipped past the children and melted into the darkness.

The large timber below the tepées now showed tall and black, and from where they stood nothing could be seen within its shadows. The tinkle-tinkle of bells now sounded very close. It was evident that those old run-about were picketed between their position and the camp. They listened intently. There was nothing to be heard save the murmur of the stream, the rustle



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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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of tree foliage, the jingle of the bells, and the stamping of the mosquito-bitten ponies. The horses were certainly near at hand, and so were the Hohé tepées. The campers and the dogs were evidently sleeping.

A spirit of covetous daring had come upon the young Sioux. They simply could not go away and leave all these ponies to graze undisturbed. They came near together and Etapa signified by gesture that they should go on, cut loose the picketed horses, mount and drive away the herd. Zintkala put aside all thought of peril and agreed to the plan.

They now walked forward, going around the ponies as they came to them. They went on until they had passed all the horses as nearly as they could reckon.

Suddenly a dog began to bark, and immediately all the curs they had seen came out and set up the familiar ki-yi-yap of the Indian wolf-dog. Instead of running away the young Sioux seated themselves upon the grass and began to busy themselves as if cleaning fish or skinning game. As the curs continued to yelp they stretched themselves in the bottom grass as though disposed to sleep. The grass was tall enough to cover their bodies. The cowardly dogs did not run at them, but continued to bark and howl around the tepées.

Presently a man came out and spoke to the

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## THE PONY STEALERS

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dogs. This was a trying moment. Had the curs yelped with increased excitement and run at the hiders, like good watch dogs, discovery and capture must have inevitably followed. But they were Indian dogs, and the Dakota boy and girl knew their ways. When the man came out these dogs expected to be kicked or whipped and, while still yelping and howling, exerted themselves only to keep out of harm's way. In the end the Indian ran at them throwing sticks and shouting angrily until the pack had scurried into the woods.

In the midst of this excitement Zintkala and Etapa crawled away and approached the nearest tethered pony. The stolid animal, having seen them all the time, payed them no attention. Etapa cut its picket rope and the two crawled slowly on to the length of the string. There they sat in the grass for a long time, letting the ponies get used to their presence, and waiting for the people and dogs to fall asleep again.

They waited till a faint light above a western bluff warned them that the moon was rising. Then they led their captive gently forward to where the second pony was picketed. At the same time they gradually moved the loose ponies before them. They wished to leave no chance of pursuit behind.

Adroitly, almost inch by inch, the little bunch of Hohé ponies faded away from their picket

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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grounds. Before the cunning "rustlers" had passed the point of descent a misshapen moon, which perhaps the mice had gnawed, was looking over the river bluff and into the coulée.

Suddenly an incautious voice was heard in the rear, the voice of a man, who had heard the fading tinkle of bells, and who supposed the ponies had pulled their picket pins and were wandering off.

"Sohe-e! Sohe-e! Ksōōk-ksōōk!" the man called in a remonstrant resonant voice, which filled all the coulée behind.

They did not wait to look back, but mounted their lead animals and whirling their rope ends dashed upon the herd in their front. The cracking strokes, the sharp "huh-huh-huh!" of their urging quickly set the small bunch of ponies off at a gallop. Once they got going it was easy to make them go faster. In a minute or two they had swept around a point of bluff, up a coulée descent, and out upon the illimitable prairie.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE GRIEF OF FIRE CLOUD AND CRANE'S CRY

The same grass-growing moon, which saw the little voyagers launched upon the prairie country, brought the first news of their capture to Fire Cloud's village of Oglalas.

As the warm days had come on and the grass was making good feed, Fire Cloud had said to his wife, Pehan-ho-win or Crane's Cry, "After a little time now we shall pack the travois and go to your relatives at the Missouri River. There we shall visit until the buffalo killing. I shall send for our children, and they shall remain with us during two moons."

Then Crane's Cry was glad. The heart of the mother sang within her. Two little sloe-eyed girls also were delighted. Although it seemed to them a great age since older sister and brother had been taken from home, the little ones ran off to some sand hills to chatter their joy and to play at "drag-the-travois" on a trail to the muddy river.

And the happy Sioux mother immediately set to work to prepare for meeting her children. She had many things to do. She had wished to make clothing for her absent ones and not that

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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the missionaries should clothe them. Now that she was to have them with her for a time she would make them many garments. During the summer, too, she would make them beautifully beaded moccasins. Her dear little daughter should have a valuable dress of the finest fawn-skin, with shield and sleeves done in stained porcupine quills, and with many bright colored fringes upon the skirt. And Etapa, her mimic, the story-teller, her stout-hearted little hunter, whose sturdy voice every day rang in her ears—how her heart laughed at thought of him! Well, he should have a war-bonnet, not a mimic head dress, but a real bonnet with feathers trailing to his heels.

With deep interest and dancing heart the mother undid her bundles and parflèches of fine skins and ornamental work. And she joyfully called in a young married sister, who was deft at making designs and patterns, to assist her in planning the various garments. The sister was only too happy to be of use in her favorite pastime, and Crane's Cry's tepée was speedily converted into a workshop, which might be said to combine tailoring, dress-making and millinery with fancy work.

As the days went by her two little brown girls watched with delight the growth of gorgeous garments. And there was no envy in the hearts of these well-dressed mites, who dearly loved

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## THE GRIEF OF FIRE CLOUD

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their tanké and sunkaku. Whatever the Sioux father may have thought of these things he said nothing. He was apparently content that his wife should find happiness in working for her children.

Matters were thus in Fire Cloud's tepée when the day drew near that he began to think of taking the trail to eastward. He sat upon the ground at midday and smoked and meditated. Quiet had settled upon his village. Men were lying about asleep or reclined upon the grass lazily playing at simple games of chance. Women gossiped in low tones within their open tepées. Many children were wading or swimming in the shallow river, which ran over a gravel bed near at hand. Across the stream, upon a flat bottom and upon the hill slopes beyond, large herds of ponies dotted the surface. Some were grazing, a large number lay at full-fed ease. Upon a high point above these a man stood erect, a pigmy figure etched upon the deep blue of a June sky.

The eyes of this watcher were keen and far-seeing, and the scope of his vision the limit of their range upon the levels. Presently this man picked up a blanket at his feet and whirled it three times about his head with a peculiar circular motion. Then he waved it up and down once, and once from east to west. Immediately a man in the village cried that the scout was sig-

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naling the approach of a single runner coming from the east and that the courier was on horseback with two lead ponies.

This news put the people on the qui vive. Some of their own young men had gone among the pine coulees to hunt the deer that morning, but none of them had taken more than a single horse, so they knew that a stranger was coming. A stranger with two pack animals must have come from a long distance, and thus might be bearer of important tidings.

As with other folk, there is nothing of greater interest to the Indians than news from abroad, or from distant relatives. The arrival of a runner from another town is an event in village life, and if he has some stirring narrative of a war expedition, of some successful or disastrous exploit, or if he bring news that the buffalo are uncommonly plentiful in the country from whence he has traveled, there will be a new date in the tribal calendar, a fresh entry that will determine the name of that year's "winter count."

But Indians do not often run to meet the news bearer nor show, as a rule, any outward interest in his arrival. Although he well knows that his approach has been noted from afar, and that news of his arrival is spread in the village, the newcomer will see no evidence of the undercurrent of excitement which his coming has set in motion.

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## THE GRIEF OF FIRE CLOUD

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When the man with three ponies descended into the river valley and dismounted in the outskirts of this Oglala village to picket his animals there was no one at hand to make curious inquiry. No one seemed to take note of him as he walked, very straight, with a blanket over one shoulder, in among the tepées. He was a man of middle age, with a keen sharp face, scarred cheek and thin figure, and several furtive pairs of eyes recognized him for a soldier of the Wapetonwan—Cut-Face, who had fought a duel with two Ojibwas and who bore in consequence a number of knife scars.

In a very brief time this man discovered the tepée of Fire Cloud and walked straight to where its chief was sitting upon a grass plat. He had news for which there could be no ceremonial delays. "How, my cousin," he greeted, "I have been glad to find you here. I am come to bring you bad news. Your children were taken by the Hohé. They went away from those white people, and were coming homeward and thus the Hohé took them."

"My children are dead!" said the chief with conviction. He had not stirred as the messenger spoke, but his face had undergone a subtle change. It had suddenly become shrunken and thin, and his eyes were turned inward. Inside his tepée a little smothered exclamation, a sharp

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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catching of breath, told that Crane's Cry had heard her husband speak.

Then the father bowed his head upon his breast and the mother fell face downward in her tepée, and so lay as one dead, while the runner sat upon the ground and told his story.

The children of Fire Cloud had fled from the mission, he said, during the dry-grass moon. Men had been sent to trail them, and had come back after five suns, saying that the Assiniboin had carried the children northward. These men had been too few to follow and attack so large a party. The Indians at Traverse des Sioux were not agreed as to what should be done, but the missionaries had hired a young man to go to Fire Cloud's village with the news.

This runner had come as far as the Missouri, and there learning that the Pawnees were hunting to westward, had tarried at a Brulé town, not daring to go on. This young man had acted very badly. He had stayed all winter among the Brulés, who told him that they did not see that anything could be done to recover captives taken to such a far country among enemies so powerful. This unfaithful runner had not come in at Traverse des Sioux until the grass had started, when he, Cut-Face, who had been away from home in autumn, had packed his own ponies and traveled very fast to inform his cousin of the evil thing which had befallen.

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## THE GRIEF OF FIRE CLOUD

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"I am a broken man," said Fire Cloud at the close of this recital. "I have done wrong, and Waniyan Tanka has punished me. Etapa is no more. My daughter is dead—henceforth there is nothing."

"I have yet something to say," said the messenger. "The Dakotas of the agency will make war soon. They will destroy those who have taken our lands. Petit Corbeau of the Wapeku-ton-wan has sent to ask if the Oglalas will assist in this war. I will not talk further to-day." And the messenger arose abruptly and left the father to his grief.

Fire Cloud passed into his tepée. His wife yet lay as one dead with her face to the earth. She had heard all, and hope was gone out of her. His little ones were away at play. The man stood motionless inside his lodge for a time. Then, wishing to be alone, he blackened his face, drew his blanket around him, and passed out and walked far away from his village.

Quickly the news spread throughout the encampment. People did not speak to the chief as he went out from them. They did not go to his tepée, for they respected the grief of Fire Cloud and Crane's Cry. They said, "Lo, our friends are deeply affected. After a time we shall go mourn with them."

The sister of Crane's Cry took her brother-in-law's little girls into her own tepée. Gently she

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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told them of their loss and that they must abide with her for a time. The broken-hearted wails of these little ones were the first sounds of grieving for the lost Zintkala and Etapa. The children's open grieving, however, was hushed, long ere that of the stunned mother began.

During three suns Fire Cloud stayed out alone upon the prairie. He sat under his blanket fasting and praying. At night he stood upon a high hill that the spirits of the upper world might see him and thus consider as to whether his prayers should be answered. He desired to go against the enemy, and that, in fighting them, he should meet an honorable death.

When darkness came on also Crane's Cry and her immediate relatives retired to a hilltop, where they bewailed the lost ones. Crane's Cry wore a black blanket and put earth and ashes upon her head. She cried continually during the night, and in daylight lay upon the floor of her tepée with her face in ashes.

With most Indians the captivity of their children, without hope of rescue,—and there seldom is such hope—is a calamity more bitter even than death. For the children will, if not put to the torture, be reared as strangers and enemies. They are known no more to their own people, and therefore they are dead, and it is thus that their relatives speak and think of them.

When his period of fasting and prayer had

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## THE GRIEF OF FIRE CLOUD

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expired by exhaustion, Fire Cloud returned to his tepée and ate meat.

On the following day he attended a council of the Oglalas, who were met to consider the message of Little Crow, chief of the Minnesota Sioux. This man who had proven his quality as a leader was planning a war against the settlements, which had pushed his Indians off their prairies, and because the Great Father at Washington had failed to keep his people from starving. This soldier asked the Oglalas whether they would join him in the fighting, and he had urged strongly that they should do so.

Many Oglala soldiers spoke at this meeting which debated the matter for several days. Some talked in favor of going with their brethren in the war, others opposed the plan altogether. Fire Cloud, though nominally outranking any present, was one of the last to speak. His speech is preserved to this day in the traditional lore of his people. It ran as follows:

"My friends, you see in me a desolate man. The light is gone out of my tepée. I am as one who walks alone and in darkness. When I reach out my hand to touch those who should be my support when the hairs are white, they are gone. My children are dead, and I am punished for my folly in sending them to be taught by the enemies of my race. Henceforth there are only the garments of mourning in my lodge.

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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"Hitherto I have not talked in this council of wise men. I have said in my heart, 'My people know better than I what should be done. Let them, therefore, decide.' I have listened to what has been said. Some of my partisans have spoken well, and I have considered. I know this soldier of the Wapekutas (Little Crow), and I have listened to the words he has spoken by the mouth of Cut-Face. The man is brave, but he is very foolish. Doubtless he and his soldiers will kill some white people, and we shall lose a larger piece of land in consequence.

"Listen, my friends, my partisans, and ye old people. The white soldiers are as the gnats which sting at sunset. As fast as we shall kill some, others will come, bringing a greater company, to suck the blood from our veins. Already they have taken the best portion of our possessions. Now we shall lift our tomahawks and by our folly ask them to come and finish despoiling us! My friends, you have all seen the wounded bull turn upon the hunters. He might withhold himself and escape, but he wishes to inflict an injury and so dies. I think the Dakotas are like this bull. They destroy themselves in wishing to gore the enemy. When they have caused the white people to strike us in Minnesota and to pursue us hither, and when these have burned our towns and scattered our numbers, then shall our enemies, the Hohé, the Crows, and the Scili

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## THE GRIEF OF FIRE CLOUD

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come to pick the bones which the Great Father's soldiers shall leave behind them.

"Heretofore I have said it is foolish to fight the white people. I will not now go to seek them, but if they shall come after me whither I am going I shall fight them. I desire greatly to give my body to the enemy that when my arm is tired striking he shall count coup upon it. But I will strike at the Hohé, who have despoiled me of my children. These fighters of their kind and eaters of their own offspring I wish to cut off from harassing my people. I will not take part in Little Crow's war. I will go to the Bad Lands and make a stronghold, and there I will fight any who come against me. I desire that my partisans and my soldiers and their people shall follow me. I have spoken my thoughts."

This speech was effective in causing the Oglalas to reject Little Crow's overtures. In the end a number of villages of the western Sioux packed the travois and followed Fire Cloud.



## CHAPTER XXI

### A STRANGE BUFFALO

For nearly three days, and riding much at night, the little voyagers had traveled over a prairie country to the southwest. When they had secured ponies they had no further thought of going up the Red River to the agencies, where people might be fighting, and themselves again be taken by the enemy.

One by one, from sheer exhaustion, the ponies had dropped out of their captured band, until there only remained the two strongest and swiftest which they had finally selected to ride. There had probably been no pursuit, because there could be none, and the travelers had seen no person, white or red, to cause them alarm.

While they were unable to point out exactly the direction in which lay their own country, they knew that they must travel south and west, and finally further west than south, and that, keeping to that general course, they must come to the Missouri River.

On the fourth day of riding, at probably more than two hundred miles from the starting point, ponies and riders were sadly in need of rest.

Their food had given out and the children had now to collect a fresh supply.

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### A STRANGE BUFFALO

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They stopped before midday among some coteaus, where there was a long marshy lake, and a breeding ground for geese, ducks, sand-hill cranes, curlews and other birds. Many young of the land birds were just feathering out, and could not fly.

When they had watered and picketed their horses and slept for a time, the brother and sister set out to chase these young birds. It was not easy to get them, for they began running at the instant of alarm, and it was well nigh impossible to hit them with bow and arrow. Catching them was simply a matter of the swifter pair of legs or the greater endurance. Now that the children had gained rest and sleep they enjoyed the sport. A couple of ungainly young cranes gave them a hot chase across a wide stretch of corn-stalk grass. The legs of the pursuers were frequently tangled, and they fell over unseen bogs whooping with laughter and shouting encouragement to each other. The cranes had nearly escaped by running out upon a miry piece of ground and coming to a stand, when Etapa swam a bayou to a stony bank, and caused them to run into the grass again by throwing pebbles at them. The birds were finally captured and, as they were nearly half grown, fat, and heavy of breast, the young hunters had reason, as they did, to lug them to their camp in triumph. They also caught some young curlews. which

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furnished them with all the meat they could eat at one time, and this was no small quantity.

They had made a mighty march, and they knew they had no longer to fear pursuit from the men they had despoiled of horses. They had thus far scarcely given themselves time to talk, so fast they had ridden and so sore and overcome with sleep were they when they halted.

But now, full-fed, and having shed weariness, they were filled with elation and chattered like a pair of magpies. They had each an excellent riding pony, and with the Sioux love of horses, they took delight in recounting the good points of their animals. Zintkala's pony was of a creamy buckskin color, with black mane and tail, markings much admired by the plains Indians. The one Etapa rode was a "calico," spotted red and white, and both were hardy runners of undeniable wind.

The children enjoyed in advance the sensation they would create when they should ride into their Oglala town and tell how they had taken these ponies from the Hohé. In this happy perspective they quite lost sight of the significance of their own home-coming. The ponies were now all they had room for in their thoughts. They had already named the animals, *Sunkaska*, White Dog, and *Wicarpikin-sa*, Red Stars. They spent the balance of the afternoon in securely picketing and admiring these four-foots.

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## A STRANGE BUFFALO

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There was a patch of dry willows near at hand, which made excellent fires with almost no smoke. There was also a knoll, or small butte, which commanded a wide reach of plain, and from its top they could scan the prairie stretches for a long distance. As there was good water and grass and plenty of game they decided to camp for two suns at this place. In this time they proposed to catch and cure enough meat to last them until they should reach home. They also wished to make girths, "catch-ons," and pack-straps for their blankets, which they had inconveniently used, folded twice, as saddles. For this purpose, and in making bridle-halters, they used the remainder of their stock of buckskins.

On the second day of their stay at this camp they had fine sport catching birds. They were now reinvigorated, and could follow the chase with both zest and endurance. Spring had come on early and warm in this region, and the young of every sort of birds were advanced in growth.

The pursuit of young cranes was especially exciting, and there were numerous families of them, scattered among the low hills. Some of these were nearly ready for flight. These were strong, swift runners, but when closely pressed, they would flap their half-feathered wings to the hindrance of their legs, and so make fun for the hunters. While the children were running

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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them, too, the old cranes would fly about trumpeting crazily, and so add much to the excitement.

In chase of the cranes the voyagers found themselves at midday at a considerable distance from their camp. They had made several captures, and were returning laden when, in crossing a low ridge, at one end of the marsh lake, they saw what they supposed to be a buffalo approaching.

Etapá was first to see the humped creature shuffling along with head down, apparently much exhausted.

"Hoye, Tanke," he cried. "Look, yonder is a bull coming. I think he has come from a country where there is no water, and he is very poor and weak."

Zintkala looked at the ambling creature with interest. Her eyes were as keen and sometimes more observing than the boy's.

"Younger brother," she said, "I do not think that is a buffalo. This one coming does not appear to have horns."

"Whi, Tanké, how foolish!" exclaimed the lad. "Look what a long distance he is coming."

"It appears, however, that I can see the legs," persisted the sister, and this answer won the point of inserting doubt into the brother's mind.

"Let us sit up on this high ground and wait," said Etapá. "At any rate I am tired." They

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## A STRANGE BUFFALO

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deposited their long-legged birds, and squatted comfortably with crossed legs. As it appeared evident that the creature approaching was a four-foot, coming to the lake for water, they had no fear in sitting to let it pass near at hand.

Before they could decide as to whether it were a buffalo or a tall and hornless elk the object of their curiosity dropped out of sight upon lower ground. But it must pass—to reach water—over the ridge upon which they sat, and so they waited, talking and watching. When the plodding creature came within sight again it was mounting the ridge near at hand. A single glance showed a brown pony with a man upon its back and lying forward with an arm grasping its neck.

A moment of wild alarm followed this discovery, but native instinct saved the voyagers from taking to their heels. If a cunning maneuver had been planned its success was already certain.

They arose with palpitating hearts and stood awaiting the man's approach. They were quickly relieved of any feeling of fear. As horse and rider drew near it was evident that the man was either sick or wounded, that his lying upon his pony's back was not a ruse, but of necessity.

He raised his head feebly, showing an emaciated face, and waved a hand in token of amity. "How, how, cola," he managed to ejaculate, as

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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his animal halted, fronting the little voyagers. They looked at the stranger, pityingly, quickly forgetting their fears. He was evidently a Dakota and in great distress.

Painfully the man raised himself upon his small flat saddle. He was half naked, having on only a pair of leggins and worn moccasins for clothing. His hollow cheeks, sunken eyes and prominent ribs spoke of great suffering from wounds or illness.

"My children," said this man, "you see me about to die. I desire to be led to the tepées of your people."

The voyagers were appalled at the soldier's need, and they stood hesitating and abashed for a moment. They knew now that he had seen them from a distance, and that he had turned to them for help, supposing they could lead him to a camp of their people where there were doctors or medicine men. It is very embarrassing for an Indian, young or old, to lay bare his poverty of resources when appealed to for aid.

Etaapa essayed to speak, but stammered painfully. Zintkala answered the stricken man at length, speaking simply and earnestly.

"It is very bad that we have no tepée. We are trying to go back to our country whence we were taken. We are taking meat to the place where we are stopping. I will cook some for you," she said.

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## A STRANGE BUFFALO

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"Lead ye thither," said the stranger. "I may yet go a little distance."

That they might not go before him, but follow, Zintkala pointed out the high knoll which stood above their camp. "It is there we are curing meat," she said. "The hill is very near."

"Good," said the stranger. "I wish to die at that place, and that ye shall cover my body with stones."

## CHAPTER XXII

### A WARRIOR'S DEATH

Walking behind the stricken rider, who again leaned forward upon his pony's neck, the little voyagers saw that this man was a warrior returning from the enemy's country. The man had three scalp-locks securely tied to his belt. Slung to his saddle were a short rifle, a large powder horn and bullet pouch and his blanket roll, and he carried a long knife, with a deer's horn handle and iron guards, in a sheath. It appeared also that he was wounded badly in one thigh, which seemed to be much swollen.

When they had arrived at their camp by the willows the sick man asked for water, and Zintkala immediately ran to the lake and filled her basin. The man drank eagerly all she brought, and again she filled the dish for him. When he had quenched his burning thirst the stranger seemed a little revived. He still remained sitting on his pony, steadying himself by clinging to his saddle. His eyes wandered restlessly about. He seemed unwilling to dismount at that spot and the children stood waiting, much distressed in mind that their camp did not seem to please the sick warrior. He had appealed to them and thus established a claim upon them for all the

### A WARRIOR'S DEATH

aid they were able to render. He could have two blankets to lie upon, meat and soup to eat; they had, in their poverty, nothing else.

The man's eyes rested at last upon the stony knoll above their camp, and his face began to show animation.

"Ho, my children," he said, "assist ye me hitherward. It is good that I should die upon that hill."

Glad to render aid, even in such melancholy state, Etapa and Zintkala did as they were directed in helping to mount the butte. At the crest where there was a flat rim, like a cap to the hill, it was necessary for one to pull and one to push in order to enable the weakened pony to climb.

Upon the top of the hill were many boulders and broken stones; at one place and at the highest point there was a heap of loose stones, which appeared to have been anciently collected for a purpose, perhaps to serve as a sign in the Indian signal service. The warrior's hollow face lightened and his eyes shone as he looked upon this so fitting place to die.

"How, my children, this is indeed very good. Build ye a heap of stones that I may sit looking upon my country."

Perfectly understanding his wishes the children hastened to obey. They rolled a large boulder out upon the scattered pile and faced its square

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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side to the east. Upon this they laid some flat stones and piled others behind for support. They then arranged a ridge of stones on either side the heap, parallel with the boulder's flat surface, and thus made a resting place and laid a foundation for the warrior's tomb. Inside this niche they spread his two blankets, one folded over the boulder, that he might rest his back and head.

"Waste!" exclaimed the sick one, evidently well content with their labors. They now assisted him to dismount, and saw that he could not use one leg or stand without help. It must, indeed, have been a long time since he had been off his horse. It was with great difficulty that he was put into position upon his blankets, and for some time he sat gasping for breath and sternly repressing any other expression of pain.

Children as they were, Zintkala and Etapa saw that this man's time was drawing near. Presently he again asked for water, and Zintkala ran to fetch it. She knew now that the man was too near to death to require food, and she did not offer it to him.

After he had drunk again and was somewhat revived the warrior began to talk. He wished to tell the story of his exploits. It was for this he had ridden, with no hope of life and in desperate straits, many days' journeys. Death

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## A WARRIOR'S DEATH

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would have been very bitter to him had it come at a time when all record of his recent deeds must have perished with him. Now, with respite enough to tell his story, he welcomed its approach. Here were those who would carry his trophies, and eagerly repeat his narrative, to their people. His name and fame were thus secured among Dakotas.

"How, my children," he began, "sit ye here by me and look upon the face of a warrior. Behold, we went forth from the Leaf People six strong soldiers. We went against the Crees to do them injury, and lo, I only have returned thus far. You see me, Maza Akicita, Iron Soldier of the Sisséton-wan. I am about to die and I speak the truth. Left Hand, Smoke Maker, Husan, Bear Robe, Sees the Day, these were soldiers of the Sisséton-wan, and they are dead. There is none left, only me, to speak to our people of these men.

"Listen, my children, last year the Crees attacked us at the buffalo killing. They came against us a large company and overcame our soldiers. They slew some of the Sisséton-wan; shooting at them with very long-shot guns. They had also many strong, swift horses; therefore, they killed our men.

"These people live in a country where there is much snow (in the far north), and thus we wished to strike at them when their horses were weak.

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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Therefore, when the grass came with us the chief of the Sisséton-wan spoke to his men. Cloud Man spoke to his partisan Left Hand. He said, 'How, my chief soldier, choose ye five men, tried in war, and strike the Crees at Souris River. Do so if you will and take their horses from them. Be very cunning, and very secret, and when their horses are poor inflict an injury upon them.'

"Thus we went against the Crees, these men, as I have said. As the grass grew we traveled northward. We rode slowly, hunting as we went. After a time we passed a number of lakes and creeks. One day we arrived at the great bend of the Souris River. We approached the river to look for signs of the enemy. It appeared that there were no people at that place. Thus we went northward, keeping among the hills. Every day some scout went to the top of a high hill to look for the enemy.

"We moved slowly, and as we were going there were some mountains which met the rising sun. Here we saw many elk. We stopped to kill some. We were chasing these elk and so came to the Souris River, in a valley where there was much good grass.

"It seems that we were very careless this one time. We stayed at this place two suns, cooking meat and making a feast. We danced the knife dance and ate much good meat. Suddenly some Crees came upon us. They were riding war

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## A WARRIOR'S DEATH

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ponies, and they were more than the fingers of two hands. We ran to get our ponies which were picketed. When we were putting on our saddles the Crees rode about us in a circle, shooting. One rode nearer than the others, singing. This one inquired if a Dakota could be found who would come out to fight him. He made this apparent by signs to us.

"'Ho, my soldiers!' thus said Left Hand. 'Stand ye here and I will go out to fight this man. Do not shoot anyone so long as this one man comes against me.'

"Left Hand mounted his horse and rode forward to fight the Cree soldier. They hastened to meet each other. They came shooting at each other. It appeared that they escaped, and thus they rushed to attack, swinging the war-club. They came very near together, and because they made strokes at each other their horses became frightened. So they pitched about, dodging continually. The Crees did not come on to attack. They ceased shooting at us. They sat upon their horses looking at these men fight.

"The men continued to fight. They sought each to take an advantage. Left Hand fought very cunningly. He continued to ride in a circle, seeking to strike the Cree as he passed. The Cree repeatedly rode straight forward, wishing to force his pony upon the other. He was very

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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brave, but he was not wise. He rushed his pony, using the quirt, and so came very close. Left Hand struck the Cree's pony upon the head, crushing the skull, and thus the man and his horse fell together. Left Hand leaped from the saddle and counted a coup upon the living body. Then he killed the Cree with his war-club.

"He was taking the man's scalp, and those Crees which were nearer began shooting at him. Left Hand held the scalp aloft and the Crees shot him.

"I said to our soldiers, 'Let us go against these dogs and slay some of them. Come, I will lead you!' Four Crees were together in one place. They were separated. We rode very swiftly toward these men. Seeing us making ready to shoot they rode away, each one man by himself. Thus they sought to bring us immediately into fighting the Crees, who were pursuing. Our horses were very swift. We came upon two Crees very quickly. Husan shot one of them. I shot one with my gun touching his body. One of the Crees shot Bear Robe's horse, and the pursuers came up and killed this soldier. We were presently surrounded, and were loading and firing very rapidly. All the Dakotas which were left had buffalo guns, which made a great noise, and the Crees were afraid to come close. They rode around us and continued to shoot at us.

"When I saw that the Crees feared to come

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## A WARRIOR'S DEATH

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close to us, I said, 'Ho, my soldiers, when ye shall see the enemy ride somewhat apart, going around us, mount very quickly and attack some that are on one side.' We wished to make the Crees think that we were afraid. Thus we began withdrawing toward a hill. Some of the enemy ran their horses very fast to intercept us. When they were near to the hill I said to my warriors, 'Now let us mount and attack them in that place very quickly.' We leaped upon our horses and rode swiftly to overtake the enemy. These endeavored to escape our attack. We killed three of them. Sees the Day was killed at this time.

"We were now three, and seven Crees were pursuing us. We wished to kill more of them. Thus we stopped in a coulée to fight. We wished the Crees to surround us that we might attack some apart. This they did not do, but continued going to a high point where they sat upon their horses. They supposed we wished to escape, and waited to pursue us when we should come out. We saw that they did not wish to fight in that place, and we rode forward upon the prairie. We dismounted and waited for the Crees to attack.

"The Crees came slowly toward us, singing. One of them rode in advance.

"This one shook his war-bonnet, riding his horse to and fro before us. He was shouting.



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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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We understood that he wished to fight one of us. We refused to fight in this manner. Taking good aim at the boastful one I shot him. He fell off his horse and was dead.

"I raised the war-club. 'Come,' I cried, 'let us count coup upon this man's body.' We rushed very quickly upon this man and took his scalp. When we counted coup, I struck first. Husan was second to strike. But the Crees had shot Smoke Maker. He was holding to his saddle. He was very badly hit. Husan now shot one of the Crees, who had approached near to fire at us.

"They shot Husan's horse. He was now on foot. We stood together to fight them. They came very close shooting at us, shouting scornful words. They shot Smoke Maker's horse which fell upon him. Smoke Maker was dead.

"Husan spoke to me. He said: 'Hoye, chief warrior, you have a swift horse; ride very fast and escape, so that one shall live to tell the Sissétowan of this battle. Behold, I am wounded and cannot escape.' He had fallen. Seeing yet four Crees I aimed very carefully at one and killed the man. Having a good horse I fled toward the river. The Crees pursued me, shooting for a time. I rode to the river and crossed. Having gone faster, I was further from the Crees, and these stopped at the river's bank. They fired some shots and I shot at them. Then the Crees returned to their dead.

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## A WARRIOR'S DEATH

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"I rode a distance, crossing the river, and seeing some high hills I rode among them. I picketed my pony and ascended the topmost of these hills, going carefully. I lay upon this high ground and watched the Crees. These men put circles of stones around the dead bodies of their warriors. They wished to keep off the wolves, and thus doing they rode homeward to fetch a company to bury them.

"It was now nearly night and, seeing the Crees go down to the river, I followed them. As soon as it was dark I rode after them. I could not see the Crees, but I went along the stream looking for their village. It seems that these people lived a long way off, for I came suddenly upon the camp of the three Crees. These men had become tired and hungry. They had taken meat of the horses they had killed, and so they were cooking and eating. They had a very bright fire, which I saw a long way off.

"I wished to kill these men, so I approached, having picketed my horse. I walked very softly in the grass. I came near the river and approached, keeping behind some willows. When I had come near to their camp the Crees were eating meat.

"As they were sitting there I rushed suddenly upon them. One I shot immediately. I attacked the other two with my war-club. One contended with me strongly. While I was fighting

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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this one, the other Cree placed his gun against my thigh and shot me, wounding my flesh. I struck the man with my war-club, and so killed him. The other one, who had shot me, ran away. He mounted his horse and escaped. Doubtless this man was a coward.

"I took the scalp trophies. I was very tired, contending so long. Therefore I ate some meat and slept for a time. When I awoke it was day and I made haste to go homeward. My wound was troublesome in walking so I was glad when I came to my horse. I would have stopped to scalp those Crees we had slain yesterday, but I saw horsemen approaching upon some hills; therefore, I made haste to come homeward. I have ridden for six suns and have eaten no meat for three suns. Now, my children, my wound is very bad, and I must die. Go ye, therefore, among the Dakotas and tell them where my bones lie, and speak to them about the death of those soldiers who went with me."

The warrior's last sentences were spoken with great effort and his gestures, which his summoned strength had rendered animated at first, had become feebly inexpressive. Thus, however, was finished and told to retentive ears, the story of one of the most stubbornly contested fights of which the Sioux annals give account. Heroic six, they were indeed "tried soldiers"! and according to their lights were true patriots,

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## A WARRIOR'S DEATH

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servicing reprisal upon the enemies of their country.

Eagerly the Sioux children had listened to this story of brave deeds, and Etapa, the mimic story-teller, trained to remember and repeat, to him this story meant a great opportunity. The dying soldier had, indeed, met with good fortune in being able to tell his story to this lad. Yet there was a reasonable doubt whether the boy might live to reach a Dakota village.

When the warrior had been again revived with water and the voyagers had told their story in turn, the man became eager to direct their course.

"Listen, my children," he said, speaking feebly, but earnestly, "since there is to be war against the white people it is best you should go to a Yanktonais village. The lower villages of your people will be involved in this war more quickly, for they are nearer to the big towns of the whites. Go, therefore, straight in this direction," indicating the west, "until you come to the Big Yellow River. Go down the river before crossing, and you shall find the Yanktonais villages. If these villages are removed, because of the war, you can easily follow and overtake them in the country where they are gone. These people will not take their women and children through an enemy's country, therefore you can safely follow them. Ho, my children, do thus as I have told you."

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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These were not the last words of Iron Soldier, but he speedily grew weaker, and his breath now and then came in gasps. He spoke occasionally to give some further directions, and to ask for water. Until sunset he sat with a rapt expression, looking out over a vast expanse of prairie to eastward. When the world of night fell he aroused and chanted his death song. The children brought up wood and made a fire that the man's spirit might not go out in darkness. In the night the soldier ceased to breathe, and they saw that he was dead. In the place of relatives who should mourn for him Zintkala blackened her face with earth, and drew her blanket close about her head. She went out upon the hillside and cried, wailing piteously for the death of a great warrior.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE BIG YELLOW RIVER

When morning came, Etapa and Zintkala raised a heap of stones over the body of Iron Soldier. Thus they gave him the monument which his warrior's heart had craved. His war-club, his knife and his pipe they placed at his hands.

His short "buffalo gun," the trophies he had taken in evidence of his prowess, his powder horn and bullet pouch were made fast to his saddle, which Etapa put upon his own horse, in order that this property of the soldier's might be sent to his relatives.

The children would gladly have taken the warrior's pony but the animal was too poor and weak for continued and fast travel.

They now changed their camp to the far end of the marsh lake, where they stayed for another two suns, gathering and curing meat. Upon the rich grasses of the upland their ponies recovered heart and strength, and they departed for the Missouri River, well provided for a long journey.

Two days of uneventful travel across flat prairies and the river hills brought them to the bluffs of the Missouri. There was no mistaking

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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the deep valley, with its broad winding ribbon of yellow water and gray sands. The children chattered delightedly at sight of this river which ran through their own country, that broad belt which still belonged to their nation. They camped upon its banks, feeling that, at last, they were near to the towns of their own people, and secure from the attack of foes.

They knew that they must go down the river several days' journey to arrive at the Yankton village, where their mother's people lived. They had plenty of cured meat left for this travel, but they had been riding hard and both their animals and themselves needed rest. They had become much attached to their hardy ponies, White Dog and Red Stars, and they picketed these animals carefully where there was the best grass. It was mid-forenoon when they stopped, and they passed a share of the day lying within the shade of some cottonwood trees in refreshing sleep.

When they awoke they sat happily for a long time on the river bank. Looking upon this familiar yellow current they felt much at home. They had only to follow its course for a little time to get among their own people. Yet now that they were, as they supposed, so near to Yanktonais villages they were not impatient to advance, as they would have been toward their own Oglala town.

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## THE BIG YELLOW RIVER

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They had gained in courage and self-reliance, and the possession of two strong ponies and a supply of cured meat gave them a stout feeling of independence. They did not move from their camp among the cottonwoods until the following morning.

They then went down the stream, following its eastern bank, for on that side lived the Yanktonais. They traveled in the valley, except where bluffs came to the river's brink. Much of the way they followed ancient beaten trails, which had been used from time immemorial by Indians, traveling up and down the river. Here and there they passed the sites of villages long since abandoned. The beaten earth, the buffalo skulls, decayed antlers of deer and elk, and old, charred tepée stakes were additional and welcome evidences of a Sioux country. Even tumble-down scaffoldings, from which the remains of the dead had been removed, were cheerful sights to these returning voyagers.

Yet this was an almost gameless country. Already the buffalo had been driven far to the westward, and they were not often seen along the Missouri. Far up the river, too, trading posts had long been established, and the trappers, voyageurs, and Indian fur and robe hunters had stripped the river of its game animals; hence so many abandoned villages. In a day's ride the children saw no more than a half-dozen fleet-

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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footed antelope and they saw no other animals larger than ground-squirrels. Their own buffalo country lay yet five or six days' hard riding to west of the big river. But they knew that route up and down the Smoky River, from the Yankton village, whither they were going. They did not know for just how many suns they must travel down the river, but the assurance of reaching their own people in safety was now very great.

So they rode joyously and carelessly. On the second day after crossing the mouth of a stream they came upon the site of a newly vacated village, where there was every evidence that a large number of people had lived for a long time, and that their removal had been undertaken and accomplished in haste. Very few of the tepée stakes had been pulled. These stood just as the covers had been stripped from them. Lying about were old pieces of skins, rope, articles of household furniture, odds and ends, which ordinarily Indian families would not have left behind.

Evidently these people had moved their village in a hurry, and were intending to go a long distance, and to travel fast. They had crossed the river right there, too, swimming their horses to a dry sand-bar, upon which a trail could be distinguished from a high bank near the abandoned town. This was doubtless one of those

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## THE BIG YELLOW RIVER

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Yanktonais towns of which Iron Soldier had spoken.

This evidence of a hasty leaving gave the children some uneasiness. Yet it was getting on toward the buffalo killing season, and if people heard that there were plenty of buffaloes a long way off they would, of course, make haste to go to that country, for sometimes the people had to travel many suns before they could find the buffalo, and they must start early.

This was Zintkala's reasoning. But after careful examination of the ground, Etapa came to another conclusion.

"I think, older sister," he said, "that these Yanktonais folk have heard about the war people are talking of, and they were afraid the white soldiers would come to attack their women and children. Therefore, they are moving rapidly to take them a long way off."

"Then let us go across the river, too, younger brother," urged the sister. "I fear to stay on this side lest the enemy come."

"No, let us not do so yet," replied the boy. "We can at any time swim across the river with our horses. I do not see that anyone has been here since these people went away. They have been gone five suns, I think." ®

They passed on from this point another day's journey upon the east side of the river. They saw nothing to alarm them, but on the second

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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day came upon another abandoned village, bearing the same evidence that people had moved across the river and gone off in haste. Without doubt runners had come to these villages recently, bearing news of great importance.

The children had again only the choice of two conclusions. Either the soldiers of the Great Father were coming to destroy these towns or there were a great many buffaloes a long journey to the westward, and the herds perhaps moving farther away.

They were filled with alarm and uneasiness. As the country directly west was unknown to them they felt that they had need to travel on to the Yankton village, where their mother's people lived, in order to find their way homeward. They now feared that they would find that town also abandoned—and their anxiety was very great.

They still kept to the east side of the river for Etapa reasoned, with admirable judgment, that if an enemy were surely coming to attack the Indians of those towns, they would at once cross the river and take up their trails. Therefore the voyagers were already traveling upon the safest side.

On the third day, at near noon, they found themselves upon a high bluff looking down upon a country which they suddenly recognized as familiar. This was the country of the Yank-

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## THE BIG YELLOW RIVER

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tons, and, in a strip of timber, not far down the river, the tepées of their mother's people should be found if these had not, like the Yanktonais, suddenly removed.

Instinctively the little voyagers scanned the flats and hill slopes, on both sides the river, for the pony herds or at least some scattered animals which should be grazing. There were none to be seen. Nor was there any smoke curling above the trees, nor any person or living object on all the stretch of river bars and open valley.

"They are gone," said Etapa. "They are gone," echoed Zintkala, and they turned their faces away from each other.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE BOAT WHICH WAS NOT STRAIGHT TONGUE'S

The little voyagers had told each other that perhaps they should find the Yanktons and Santees gone from their village. Nevertheless, each felt an overwhelming sense of disappointment when the fact of removal was made apparent. They rode down the bluffs, along the valley, and into the timber without speaking. Doubtless the lump of homesickness and desolation which each of these children was trying to swallow was quite as big and ached quite as hard as though they had been German, French or English.

When they reached the deserted village grounds they sat for a time upon their ponies, looking at the skeleton tepées, the empty pony corrals, the familiar trees, the well trodden grass plats and shady places, where they had played with their young relatives. They neither spoke to nor looked at each other. They rode slowly and silently down the river to an old swimming ford, where their trail showed that the Yanktons had crossed some days since.

Here the voyagers stripped to the breech-

### BOAT NOT STRAIGHT TONGUE'S

clout, tied all their clothing and effects securely on top of their blanket saddles, and drove their ponies into the current. They swam behind, holding to the animals' tails, and thus guided their course. After they had swam and floated with the current for half a mile or so, they reached shallow water and waded out upon a bar of dry sand which extended in a pointed neck into the current. This long shifting bar the Yanktons and Santees had used many years for a landing in crossing to the west. In its sand they were also obliged to travel up stream again a considerable distance to gain ascent of the bluff bank on that side.

Upon this bar, near the point, Etapa and Zintkala stopped to dry and rub their clothes, which, as their saddles were low, had been wetted more or less. Their ponies, with dragging picket ropes, stood in the sand and lazily switched at occasional flies. It takes a long time to dry buckskins properly. They need to be rubbed vigorously to keep the skins from shrinking and becoming rough and uncomfortable to wear. The children had been engaged in this work for some time when they heard a noise which suddenly filled them with excitement. Chuff! Chuff! Chuff! It was the hoarse grumbling cough of a river steamer! These sounds came from up the river, and Zintkala and Etapa leaped to their feet and clapped their hands joyfully.



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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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"Straight Tongue's boat! Straight Tongue's boat!" shouted the delighted little Sioux. They made haste to put on their clothes. The only steamer they had ever seen had stopped the spring before to leave at the Yankton village a man whom all the Dakotas, who knew him, loved. The bands whom he had visited had given him the name of Straight Tongue,\* because they had found that his words were true, and that he kept his promises. This man was indeed the true friend of Indians, and a missionary who did everything within his power to assist these poor people in their struggles to obtain justice. Something he was able to do—though but little—here and there to stay the tide of ruthless and lawless invasion which overwhelmed them.

Zintkala and Etapa knew this man, and, better still, he knew them as the children of Fire Cloud of the Oglalas. Once, when they had been visiting the Yanktons, Straight Tongue had stayed among these Indians a number of suns. His boat had brought him up the river and had come down to take him away. He had talked much with the people, and they had been very sorry to see the good man go. They would gladly have kept him with them.

While the brother and sister were at the mission school, also, Straight Tongue had visited that place. He had spoken kindly to them, Zint-

\* This man was Bishop H. P. Whipple.

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## BOAT NOT STRAIGHT TONGUE'S

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kala and Etapa. He had remembered their names and had taken each by the hand.

As these children had seen but the one steamboat—which was very mysterious and wonderful—they had supposed there was but one such, and that was Straight Tongue's. They had always spoken of this boat as Taku-wakan-tanka, (something-mysteriously-wonderful).

They stood out upon the bar near to the water's edge, that they might easily be seen when the boat should pass. They hoped that it would come near enough so that Straight Tongue would see them, and that he would wish to inquire whither the Dakotas of the village were gone. Or, they thought, it might be that Straight Tongue knew this, even that he had sent these people away, and could tell where they were. This good man spoke their language, and they wished very much that he would land his boat there. He could, no doubt, tell them whether the Great Father's soldiers were coming. Thus they reasoned with hope and joy.

"Brother, I think Straight Tongue will surely see us," said Zintkala. "Do you think he will be in the boat tepée? He will surely remember the Yanktons and come out to see them?"

"Straight Tongue's boat is coming very fast—I do not see him—see what a great smoke he is making," answered Etapa, with excitement.

Absorbed in the wonder of this coughing,

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churning, smoking vessel the little voyagers stood, all eyes and ears, until suddenly the ranks of wood upon its fore-deck swarmed with men, having guns in their hands, as they could see by the glint of the sun upon the barrels. These men immediately began to shoot and yell.

Not until they saw the water spattering in their front and heard the whining yeun!—yeun!—yeun! of bullets passing overhead did the astonished children realize that the men upon that boat—Straight Tongue's boat!—were shooting at them. When convinced they were terribly frightened, but certain there had been some dreadful mistake. They looked wildly about for some avenue of escape. There was none, for the flat sand-bar was raised scarcely a foot above the water's edge. Seeing their hopeless situation the voyagers waved their arms in frantic appeal. They shouted their names—the name of their father. They called to Straight Tongue, "Do not shoot at us!"

Their appeals were answered by a storm of shots. Hoping against hope, that when the boat came nearer, their signals and cries would reach friendly or pitying ears, the little Sioux took refuge behind their ponies.

Still thinking Straight Tongue's men were shooting by mistake, they continued to wave their arms above their heads. They shouted piteous appeals. "No shoot! No shoot!" they

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## BOAT NOT STRAIGHT TONGUE'S

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cried in English. "Ho! cola! cola!" (friends! friends!).

The boat had now come within more accurate range. Etapa's pony was stricken dead and dropped at his feet. He ran behind his sister's horse, and the two redoubled their frantic hand-wavings and shouted appeals for pity.

But more men—a packed crowd—had climbed upon the wood ranks. In wild excitement these were shooting with rifles, revolvers, all sorts of firearms. It was rare sport for them, this opportunity to kill a couple of hated redskins.

Zintkala's pony was struck twice and, mortally hurt, broke away and plunged erratically about in the sand.

The little voyagers now ran, still holding up their hands in vain appeal. Half way across the bar Zintkala fell. Etapa reached the shallow water a few rods from where they had stood and flung himself face downward.

Wild and savage whoops and cheers greeted the little girl's fall, and these were repeated when the boy dropped; but, seeing his black head move upon the surface as he attempted to swim or crawl to deeper water, the boat's pitiless crew assailed him with a fresh storm of bullets. Then either the nature of the channel demanded retreat from the bar, or the boat's pilot was not void of heart, for the steamer drew rapidly away

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toward the opposite bank of the river and passed beyond bullet range.

Etapa, in sudden fear lest the boat should round the bar, and thus the shooters should attack him from that side, retreated to the sand. He looked fearfully after the steamer until it had passed around a bend and out of sight. He had supposed his sister was dead, having seen her fall, but, upon turning to the bar again, he saw her sitting upon the sand with her hands clasping her head. With a joyful cry the boy ran toward her.

"Hoye, Tanké," he shouted. "It appears the wasécunpi have not killed you!"

Zintkala did not answer nor appear to hear him until the boy ran to her, shouting her name in great anxiety. As he came up the little girl lifted a blood-streaked face and gazed at him dazedly for a moment. A bullet had grazed her head, cutting the skin upon her temple, and joyfully the boy saw that her hurt was neither mortal nor very dangerous.

He ran to her dead pony, secured her tin basin and fetched it to her filled with water. She had now begun to realize what had happened. She bathed her bloody face and hands and so collected her senses and came fully to herself.

Her eyes turned toward her fallen pony. "Why did Straight Tongue's men kill our horses?" she wailed, beginning to cry.

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## BOAT NOT STRAIGHT TONGUE'S

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The boy's eyes followed hers to the dead ponies, and he struggled with his desolate feeling of loss. But he answered with that sense of justice and acceptance of the inevitable which characterizes individuals of the American race.

"Older sister," he said, "it was not Straight Tongue did thus to us. It was the white soldiers. They have taken his boat from him and are going up and down the river killing our people. So it is that we find them all fled from their villages."

This seemed a very reasonable solution of the calamity which had befallen them. The little girl visibly brightened. At least there was comfort in the thought that Straight Tongue could not have so betrayed and ill-treated his friends.

"How, I think that is true," she said, ceasing to cry. "It was the war soldiers who came. It seems that we were very careless to stand thus near."

After a little time her wound ceased to bleed, and the two went to their ponies and unpacked such things as they wished to carry with them. They took what cured meat they had left, their blankets, the gun, powder horn, bullet pouch, and scalp trophies of Iron Soldier, the basin and such pieces of buckskin as they had used for packing purposes. They left behind Etapa's hatchet and all cumbersome articles. Thus lightly equipped they took up their march again on foot.

## CHAPTER XXV

### A LONG TRAIL

War is far-reaching in its consequences and often lays its unsparing hand upon the innocent. Our civil strife for the liberation of slaves set in motion, to the farthest frontiers, those native tribes, whom, on account of coveting their vast possessions, we have unceasingly robbed and oppressed and enslaved, and thousands of whom we hold to-day, the innocent with the guilty, as half-starved prisoners of war.

When we struggled, brother against brother, these tribes shifted ground, eagerly watching to strike at the hosts of invasion when opportunity should offer, and also to inflict injury upon the ancient enemies of their kind.

The story of the little voyagers must have ended at the Yankton village had not war made for them, of their own country, a wilderness more bewildering and more dangerous than even the vast woods of the northland. They might have followed the Yanktons but for the loss of their ponies. On foot, however, there could be but little chance of overtaking these people before the rains or the trampling herds of buffalo should obliterate their trail. There was no certainty in the minds of these Sioux children that

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they should find the Oglalas at their town, but, child-like, they tried each to hide this fear from the other.

They were at least upon familiar ground upon the Smoky River trail, and this they followed day after day with plodding but untired feet, and they chattered joyously whenever they could point out the exact spot where their own tepée had been pitched in their eastward journey of the year before. Once even they found the forked stakes, with a willow pole resting in one of the crotches, where their kettle had hung to boil, standing exactly as their mother had left them when she had slipped the bail of her pot from the cross-piece.

Although it was not yet night they stopped to make camp at this place. They had not felt so much at home for a year and, after they had eaten a meal of roasted ground-squirrels and wild turnips, they were very happy.

They sat under a fringe of willows as night came on, with a tiny blaze of dry sticks before them.

"Younger brother," said Zintkala, "why do not those people over there build a fire and tell stories as they did that other time?"

"I think those people will do so very soon," said Etapa. Thereupon the mimic, whose mood could always be depended upon for a real make-believe, collected some fuel and made a fire at

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the point indicated. He also made several other fires, so that there appeared to be quite a large camp of people about. When he returned to their secluded nook the two were very happy. They spoke often of the folks camped about them and whither they were going. It seemed that somebody had come into the village saying there were a great many buffaloes to westward, and so the people were all feeling very good indeed, and they were all going to the killing, men, women and children. There would be much to do in the morning in packing the travois and getting ready for the start, but at this time the people were all sitting in front of their tepées, talking and smoking.

"At High Wolf's wife's tepée there are some people telling stories," said Zintkala after a time. "I heard some one laugh because a foolish one got the porcupine's needles in his fingers. He supposed that he had caught a rabbit."

Etapa laughed. "I do not know that story," he said. "I would like to hear those people talk. Did you hear the story a man on this side was telling about Iktomi? They were talking, sitting at the fire of Standing Buffalo's women."

"I did not hear that story, younger brother," said Zintkala, "pray do tell it to me."

And so Etapa told about:

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### IKTOMI AND THE MICE

"One time Iktomi was walking in the long grass. He was very tired, and as he walked he was wishing to be entertained. Suddenly this one thus desiring heard very beautiful music. This music was very mysterious and wonderful, and Iktomi was astonished. The voices of many strange people singing fine and very soft he heard everywhere. Sometimes it appeared that these people were in the sky, and then Iktomi thought surely they were in the grass, and then he said: 'Certainly, they are on the water.'

"He became very much confused, listening to these strange people. 'Ho,' said Iktomi, 'this is indeed mysterious. Some one has surely made a great medicine. I will discover about this. If I can find this medicine I shall sing very acceptably indeed. I shall marry the daughter of a rich person, who will not be able to resist this singing.'

"Because he was very ugly to look upon no young woman would marry Iktomi. Thus he was anxious to learn the secret of this wonderful singing.

"He ran about in the grass. He stopped often to listen. No one came to tell Iktomi about this singing. Once Iktomi ran, looking upward. He expected to see some people in the clouds. He prayed to the clouds, 'Ohé-ohé, Mahpiya-sá,

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teach me this beautiful singing and I will do your bidding. Thirty pieces of skin I will cut from my arm when I am arrived at home.'

"Then as he ran, thus looking upward, Iktomi fell over something.

"'He-he-he!' cried Iktomi, 'now I have hurt myself upon this worthless buffalo skull.' Iktomi sat groaning—'Yuh-huh! winswi! this is indeed very bad.'

"Suddenly he heard wonderful singing—many voices singing very fine came out of the buffalo skull.

"'Oho,' said Iktomi, 'it seems that these mysterious ones, after all, are in this old buffalo skull.' Iktomi made a light of some dry grass and looked in at the large hole in the back of this skull. It was very dark in there, but the people were much disturbed. There were mice dancing and singing in there. They cried with very fine voices, 'Do go away, Iktomi. Do not bother us, for we wish to finish our dance.'

"Nevertheless, Iktomi, wishing to see these people, thrust his head in at the larger opening, and the mice ran out of the smaller holes, very much frightened. Thus Iktomi's head became fast inside the buffalo skull. He could not remove it. So he arose wearing this old skull. He cried out with fear because his eyes were in darkness.

"'O good spirits,' cried Iktomi, 'assist ye me to

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get out of this evil place!' But no one came to help Iktomi; therefore he ran, crying for assistance. He came to the river, where there were many trees. Iktomi wished to find some water, for he was very thirsty, having run about and cried a great deal.

"He ran against a tree. 'What tree is this?' Iktomi asked this one. 'I am the oak tree,' said this one. 'O yes, I know you,' said Iktomi. 'You stand apart somewhat from the water.'

"Iktomi ran forward again. He came against another tree. 'What tree is this?' Iktomi asked this one. 'I am the elm,' said this one. 'O yes,' said Iktomi, 'I know you. You stand, indeed, quite near to the water.'

"Iktomi ran forward. Yet another tree stood in the way. This tree bruised Iktomi. 'He-he-he!' bawled Iktomi, 'now indeed I have lost some pieces of my skin. What tree has done this to me?' 'I am the cottonwood,' said this one. 'Why do you run thus carelessly, seeing that I stand in this place?'

"'Oho,' said Iktomi, 'I know you. You stand very near to the water. Now I shall truly quench my thirst.'

"So Iktomi ran quickly and suddenly he fell head downward into a muddy stream, which ran by there. Iktomi's head was fast in the bottom of this stream. He was drowning. Pehan, the crane, came by that place. He was wading and

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he wished to find some fat snails. Pehan was thus looking into the water when Iktomi's great toe appeared moving. Iktomi's moccasin was torn; therefore, his toe was seen moving.

"Pehan seized Iktomi's great toe and pulled very hard. He drew Iktomi out of the stream, leaving the buffalo skull in the mud. Iktomi ran homeward. His face was bleeding and very muddy."

The sister was pleased with this story. She smiled with a rapt, far-away expression, which the flickering firelight converted into a look of most flattering attention.

"It appears, older sister," said Etapa, "that you like to hear stories of Iktomi."

"Yes, indeed, younger brother," she murmured. "Who does not?"

So Etapa again told a story of

### IKTOMI AND THE NIGHT-JAR

"Once Iktomi wished very much to be a night-jar. He wished to dart downward, holding his wings so," and the mimic sprang lightly to his feet and ran forward several steps with a swooping motion and with his arms akimbo.

"Iktomi felt deeply about this. He went about watching the night-jars. 'Gh-o-o-o-g!' said the night-jars. They darted upward and soared aloft very prettily.

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"O some mysterious one, do make me a night-jar. I wish to dart downward, making a loud noise with my mouth," said Iktomi.

"He cried aloud and often to the night-jars. One of these birds heard Iktomi speaking. This one took pity on Iktomi.

"Thus I understand," said this one, "you wish to be a night-jar, that you wish to dart downward, thus. Gh-o-o-o-g!" said the night-jar."

The mimic was upon his feet yet. He darted to and fro, imitating the movements of the birds with lively gestures. One not seeing him and understanding would have thought that several crazy night-jars were trying to outdo each other with their outlandish noises.

"Gh-o-o-o-g! gh-o-o-o-g!" said this night-jar. "Come ye thus, Iktomi. Lie here upon your back upon this rock—gh-o-o-o-g. I will make a great wind—gh-o-o-o-g—gh-o-o-o-g—ek-kek, ka-a-a-ak," said the night-jar. "Thus the wind shall go into you, gh-o-o-o-g," said the night-jar. "Gh-o-o-o-g,"—he indeed made a great wind. Iktomi felt this wind blowing all about him. Suddenly he felt himself borne aloft. "Gh-o-o-o-g, ek-kek, ka-a-a-ak," said Iktomi; and thus, they say, he became a night-jar." ®

This story, because of its mimicry, was very amusing and, though she had often heard it, Zintkala laughed delightedly.

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The little voyagers did not leave this camp until long after sunrise in the morning. It was with difficulty they could tear themselves away, and, while they were still within range, they turned more than once to look back at the fringe of willows which marked the spot where a mother's kettle had hung.

Day after day they followed the river's course across the prairie country—a prairie of rich grasses and flowers, abounding in small life. There was no lack of food, edible roots, ground-squirrels, young grouse, curlews and river birds and wild currants in abundance. A native boy with bow and arrow, and a string for snare, must indeed have been a shiftless lad to have gone hungry in this country in the summer time. But Zintkala did her share in the providing. She had a positive genius for discovering things good to eat, and so, upon the whole, the voyagers lived rather luxuriously. Now and then they met with elk, deer or antelope, but Etapa was not strong enough to drive an arrow through one of these large animals, and, as he now had but five of the Cree arrows left, he could not afford to risk losing them. In Iron Soldier's ammunition pouch, also, there were not many bullets, and in his horn but little powder. His gun, which the boy secretly hoped might finally become his own property, was of a peculiar model. The weapon known in the '50's as the

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"buffalo gun" was made especially for the robe hunter, and was designed for horseback hunting. It had an ordinary rifle, or rather musket, breech and stock, but the barrel was usually but fourteen inches, and never exceeded sixteen inches in length. It had no sights—the hunter simply ran his eye along the smooth, round barrel—and was intended chiefly for single hand use when the horseman was in swift pursuit of buffalo or elk. However, the gun was a strong shooter, carrying but twelve bullets to the pound, and was effective when carefully aimed at long range. This weapon was almost as noisy as a small cannon, and was also expensive to use where bullets were accounted as currency.

Etapa regarded this gun with awe, and carried it proudly. Only the great hunters among his people were able to afford such guns, and when Zintkala, longing for a piece of juicy venison, would urge him to shoot at elk or deer, the boy would answer, "Whi, Tanké! the gun of Iron Soldier makes a very great noise. Thus people a long way off might hear me shooting and so the enemy would come to take us."

To tell the truth, the boy was somewhat fearful of firing so powerful a gun, which sometimes bruised the shoulder, and with the manner of loading of which he was not well acquainted.

As they traveled westward the voyagers gradually left the rich green of the fertile prairies



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behind them, and climbed the plateau of the arid plains, into the country of sagebush, cactus and buffalo grass; but they were still traversing a land of plenty; the ground-squirrels were yet abundant, and there were sage hens, grouse and marmots in great numbers. Now and then, too, a fat badger, wandering away from its burrow, was overtaken and pierced with an arrow. These furnished juicy meat, and the oil ran down the brown chins of the voyagers as they stuffed themselves to repletion.

Having outworn their moccasins, and with no buckskins to replace them, the children were now forced to go with bare feet. Though their soles were toughened by long travel, they were not impervious to the keen spines of the cactus and their way was sometimes difficult and painful.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE VALLEY OF DESOLATION

One morning the little voyagers came suddenly upon the mouth of a creek, which was a favorite resort of the Oglalas in the seasons of small fruits and of plums. The children, on account of extreme heat, had been traveling of nights for two days and had not realized, having kept within the monotonous river valley, how far they had advanced into the heart of their own country. Etapa was first to discover familiar ground.

"Hoye, Tanké!" he shouted explosively. "Here are the plum trees of the Wakpala where we indeed used to gather plums. Ya-la! Ya-la!" and he ran whooping to the crest of a low bluff. Zintkala followed, unbelieving, but in a whirl of excitement.

Once upon the highlands there burst upon them, in the clear atmosphere, familiar sights on every hand. Upon their left was a gray mound of neutral tint which they knew as the Hill of the Porcupine. Upon their right, to north and west, there stretched, in dark, irregular outlines, the wonder country of the Mini-skanskan, or god-waters, the sacred ground of the Black Hills. In their front there extended the

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ragged-edged tablelands of the upper Smoky River, lying like a dense and convoluted cloud along the horizon.

Joy convulsed the little voyagers. They stretched out their arms to this beloved land and, with streaming eyes, cried to their people that they, Zintkala and Etapa, were indeed coming back to them.

"Ina! Ina! Até! Até! We are coming! We are coming! Etapa—Zintkala—your son—your daughter!" they cried, with the joy of home arrival already in their hearts. It seemed to them that the beloved mother and father whose names they shouted must surely hear their voices and that these anxious ones would hasten to meet them.

Only one long day's march with the travois lay between them and the tepées of their people. After the first transports of discovery, in which their eyes drank in every detail of the familiar land, the fierce home hunger gripped their hearts, and they were instantly impatient of everything which could impede their progress.

With one accord they ran back to the plum thicket, and there, in a secure place of hiding, deposited their blankets, the carcajou skin, the gun and accoutrements of Iron Soldier, every article they had carried save the light bow and arrows of the boy. They divided these, Zintkala carrying the five arrows, Etapa the bow in

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hand. These light weapons, as they held them, were rather a help than a hindrance in running.

Thus equipped for speed they set out going at a swift trot across the open plain. They had a perfect guide in a certain bold prominence of the Smoky River breaks. This cloud-touching bluff was but a half-hour's walk from the Oglala village and its crest was the lookout point of scouts who watched for the appearance of buffaloes, of enemies or strangers, or of parties returning from the chase.

Ardently the little voyagers hoped that keen eyes upon that bluff, toward night, would discern their own approach and at a great distance, and that some one with ponies would come out to meet them. In all their long durance they had never so burned with impatience.

On and on they ran. With eight hundred miles of successful journeying behind them, with perfect health and unconquerable wills, their muscles had grown to a hardihood of endurance which was nothing less than astonishing.

Simple children in mind and heart, innocent as the birds and animals of their wilderness, they had, with these, attained the supreme command of those forces of body and brain which make for the "survival of the fittest." Truth compels the admission, however, that they were not, at this time, as enticing in appearance as most of

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the wild things of their wilderness. They had lost 'Lizbet's comb in crossing the Missouri and their hair hung in tangled, unkempt braids. Their buckskins were worn, torn and dirty, their leggins in tatters. But they had kept their bodies clean, as healthy Indian children always do where there is water to swim in.

The soles of their feet had become toughened by barefoot travel until only the keener spines of the cactus would penetrate them. Bristling patches of these needle points they avoided with a sub-conscious dexterity, as they ran. They had eyes for the ground, although their gaze was fixed with intent and passionate longing upon a certain sharp projection against the southwestern horizon.

Noon came and found them still going at a swinging trot. They had stopped but once to drink sparingly—they knew better than to fill themselves with water—at a small stream. They were again burning with thirst when they came upon a little creek which marked the longer half of their run. Joyously they halted here to drink water—a few swallows at a time—to rest, and finally to eat some hard and tasteless strips of dried meat which they had saved with the providence (I say it advisedly) of their kind, for an emergency.

This rest and refreshment revived them. Like a pair of tireless foxes they were up and off

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again. And now as they came upon the highlands, their goal, in a shimmer of heat radiation, loomed large and specter-like against the sky line. Two hours more of running and they could plainly see the pine trees upon the breaks opposite the Oglala town.

Home—home—home, their rapidly pounding hearts beat to this rhythm, and their muscles grew more pliant, their feet lighter as they sped. Their eyes sought the crest of the hill of look-out for the figure of a lone watcher. Surely there was no scout posted, else they would have seen him making signals. But they did not pause to consider or to ask each other questions. They were too near to home. In their eager drumming hearts there was no room for doubts or fears.

Not until they had rushed over the crest of a rise which commanded a wide view of the river valley did they realize to what vain purpose they had run so far though so tirelessly.

Upon all the river's reach which lay before them there were to be seen no tepées, no grazing ponies, no signs of life. The Oglalas were gone, and above their deserted village site black vultures soared, casting ominous eyes of inquiry upon the bleaching, shredded bones of their abandoned camp.

Who shall describe the desolation of those young souls? My pen cannot attempt the task.

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With a wild home hunger in their faces, with black despair in their hearts, they ran forward with arms outstretched in piteous yearning. "Ina! Ina! Até! Até!" They fell upon the sacred ground, once sheltered by a mother's tepée, and buried their faces in the earth.

Thus they lay, with heartbroken cries and bitter wailings, mingling their tears with the dust. And thus night found them, exhausted with weeping, and merciful sleep descended and clothed them with unconsciousness.

Naturally there came reaction to their healthy natures in the morning. Zintkala was first to awake, opening her eyes at the touch of the sun's rays upon their lids. She looked about her in bewilderment. She had been dreaming and was playing within her mother's tepée with all the cheerful sounds of an Oglala camp in her ears. The rude call to reality, to the drear prospect of the deserted valley, like the stroke of a whip, wrenched a cry of pain from her lips. Etapa leaped to his feet in alarm, and stared about him for an instant in bewilderment. Then he, too, realized where he was. But his stomach was empty and hunger instantly asserted a claim paramount to that of grief.

"Hoye, Tanké," he cried, "let us at once go back to the village of the pispiza, that we may have good meat to eat. Also we must get our blankets and the gun of Iron Soldier. I think

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that we should stay at this place until the Oglalas return from the buffalo killing."

Immediately the little girl responded to his more cheerful mood. "Nakaeś, younger brother," she said, "what you say is indeed wise. I think, also, that the Oglalas may have returned when we shall come back from the wakpala."

"Ho, they will come back soon," asserted the boy stoutly. "They will also bring many ponies which they have taken from the enemy. We shall thus obtain better horses than those which the wasécun killed."

Their long exhaustive run and the paroxysm of grief which followed were speedily forgotten in hopes born of the morning and of reinvigorating sleep.

They only stopped to examine the trail of the departed villagers, and, when they had learned that their people had surely gone to the northwest, they were certain—seeing that women and children had been taken—that all had gone in pursuit of the buffaloes which they had discovered were a long way off at this season.

So they turned their faces toward the creek of the plums again. Upon the highland this trail soon brought them to the "village of the pispiza," a prairie dog town, of wide extent and a numerous population. The cunning hunter approached the outskirts of this commu-

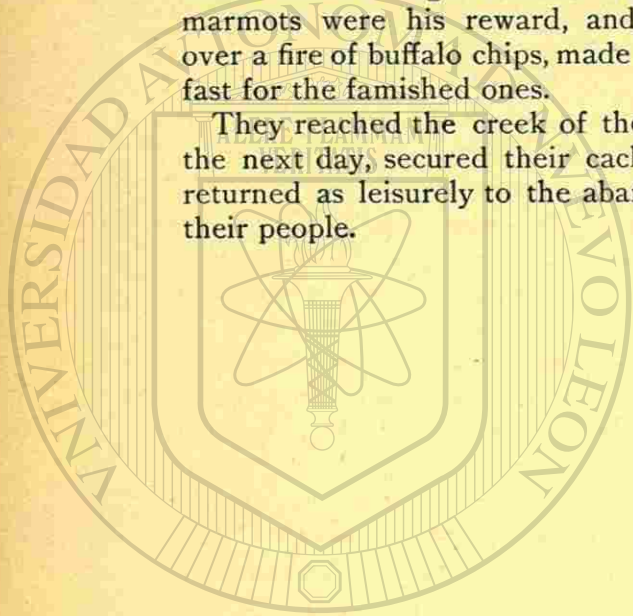
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nity with great caution, creeping for a long distance behind sage bushes. A brace of fat marmots were his reward, and these, roasted over a fire of buffalo chips, made a savory breakfast for the famished ones.

They reached the creek of the plums at noon the next day, secured their cached effects and returned as leisurely to the abandoned camp of their people.



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## CHAPTER XXVII

### “SCILI! SCILI!”

Among the breaks at the mouth of a walled cañon where a small brook trickled through a deeply worn slash in the sand-rock, opposite the site of their deserted village, the little Sioux made their camp. There was shelter from storms under a jutting rock and their retreat was hidden by a dense fringe of low scrub pine.

There was only one open way of ingress or egress, and from their elevated niche they could, if awake, hear or see the approach of any unwary creatures. At their rear there was a precipitous crevasse which led, in a tortuous and somewhat perilous ascent, to the heights above. Thus, with the judgment of wild things, they chose a lair for their hiding. They did not build fires in this place. When they wished to cook meat they crossed the river valley and used the stone-covered fire-hole of their mother's tepée.

Every morning they took the precaution of mounting to the crest of the butte upon the tableland, where they could scan leagues of surrounding country for signs of friends or foes. Often they lingered for an hour or two upon this elevation, breathing with delight its buoyant rarefied atmosphere and enjoying the keen sense

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of exhilaration which a great height inspires. The prospect from this outlook was indeed magnificent. To the north there lay, at a depression of more than one thousand feet, sixty miles of undulating plains, stretching to black elevations of pine-clad hills. Looking down upon this country the eye could trace, for many leagues, the winding courses of timber-fringed creeks. In that marvelous atmosphere single trees stood, clearly defined, at the limit of a day's journey. To south and west of the butte, closely touching its elevations at points, a high tableland extended to the valley of the Running Water. It would have been a shrewd enemy indeed who could have crossed this country unobserved when they were on the butte.

From this point of vantage the little voyagers watched, with vivid interest, the now gathering herds of antelope, bands of elk, and the movements of black-tail deer going in and out of the coulée below. All these creatures seemed to realize fully that the country was cleared of its hunters. Their movements were leisurely, natural and restful. Their plentiful numbers and their unsuspecting attitudes fired Etapa with a desire to kill one of those big elks, or at least a fine black-tail buck.

One morning, just as they had mounted to the crest of the highlands, the children came face to face with an antlered bull about to descend into

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## 'S C I L I ! S C I L I !'

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the cañon. As this big fat elk, at a few paces distant, wheeled to trot away, Etapa drew his bow. The excited lad would surely have launched an arrow into the animal's flank, and so have lost it, but for the wise action of the sister. Zintkala leaped forward, caught the shooter's arm and so deflected the shaft from its aim. She ran quickly after the arrow that Etapa might not scold her.

Seeing that, after all, he was not displeased, she spoke her mind freely on returning the weapon.

"That was very bad indeed, brother, to shoot at hehaka when you could only wound him," she chided. "It is not thus that a hunter should do, needlessly making pain and losing his arrows."

"Ho!" cried the boy, in pretended surprise, "do you not think my arrow would have gone through hehaka's two skins?"

"That is foolish talk," replied the sister flatly.

"But see, look, look!" He fitted an arrow and swiftly drew his bow-string until the head of the shaft touched his fingers. He aimed straight overhead and let fly the arrow. It passed nearly out of sight but was deflected by a stiff breeze, fell into the cañon behind, and was splintered upon a rock.

"Now that was indeed careless," grieved the boy, when he had recovered the useless shaft;

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and seeing him thus repentant, Zintkala said nothing. "I will save the tooth," said Etapa. "See, sister, only the wood is broken. I have only four of the Cree arrows left," he added, sorrowfully. "I must now be very careful lest they be lost."

"Why do you not use the gun of Iron Soldier, seeing that you wish to kill some large animals?" Zintkala asked. "I do not see that there are any people in this country who will hear you shoot."

"Whi! Tanké! That is what I will do," cried the boy. "It was very silly that I did not bring that gun this morning. Only think, I could have sent a bullet—z-z-z-zan! straight through that bull."

"Then," admitted the sister, "we could have some buckskin for moccasins."

"Always after this I will carry the gun," Etapa declared, never doubting that he should meet another bull at that same place.

Upon returning to their camp, Etapa examined the buffalo gun for the hundredth time—very carefully. There was no ramrod attached, as these guns were usually loaded in the saddle while the hunter's horse was in motion, and a rammer could not be used.

The horseman carried his powder in a graduated horn or flask, the mouth of which would fit the muzzle of his weapon. When the powder

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was in he took a wet bullet from his mouth, slipped it into the smooth-bore opening and chucked his gun-stock heavily upon his saddle pommel. Then he put a percussion cap upon its tube as best he could and was ready for action.

Etapa, however, whittled a short ramrod from a piece of iron-wood. Then as Iron Soldier's powder horn had no charger attached, he guessed at a proper amount of powder, pouring it out in the hollow of his hand. He knew the gun was not loaded, for he had tested it, as he had seen Indian hunters do, by raising the hammer and blowing through barrel and tube. There was a box of caps in Iron Soldier's bullet pouch, and so—for an Indian boy has not the self-assurance of his paleface brothers—Etapa found the loading of a "sacred-iron" not so formidable a task as he had supposed. He was, in fact, very proud of the feat, and made no little parade of his exploit.

"Sister, I have put a great charge in the gun of Iron Soldier," he bragged. "Now let us see if mato osansan (grizzly bear) will dare to show himself at these pines. Huh! I think he does not care to have a hole made in his head, therefore he does not appear."

The sister, who was mending a fresh rent in her skirts, smiled as the lad paraded his gun with the swaggering airs of a young hunter.

The next morning he carried the weapon on their trip to the butte, but they met no bull elk

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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at the head of the cañon trail. On their way down, however, and near the foot of the cañon, a half grown bear cub suddenly reared itself, with a grunt of surprise, among some low bushes close beside their path.

In frantic haste the plucky young hunter cocked and leveled his weapon. The gun exploded with a roar which echoed like a clap of thunder through all the gulches. The boy turned a back somersault and the gun flew far over his head. The bear rushed away, grunting in great affright, and Zintkala screamed in terror, supposing for the instant that Etapa had been killed. With a hand upon his face the lad lay, dazed for the moment. Then he arose with a bruised and bleeding cheek.

"Alas, older sister," he said ruefully, "I have put too much strong fire-dust into the barrel and now the gun of Iron Soldier has gone upward and escaped. I do not know where the sacred-iron has gone."

But Zintkala had seen the gun fall among the bushes a few yards distant, and now, having recovered from her fright, she ran and picked it up. Etapa forgot his hurt in his delight at finding the weapon uninjured. He had merely discovered one of the peculiarities of the stout and doubly effective buffalo gun.

"Waste! Waste!" he cried joyfully, when he had examined lock, stock and barrel. "Now I

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will load this gun more carefully." This he did upon returning to camp, not charging with more than half the powder he had used before.

For several days he carried the gun to and from the butte, but saw no more big game on the trail. During this time the children subsisted upon marmots and grouse, killed with bow and arrow, and upon such berries and edible roots as they could find. They longed for some fat venison, but Etapa yet lacked confidence in his ability to handle the buffalo gun. He went several times after elk or antelope which strayed into the river valley, but somehow, while he was getting ready to shoot, each time the animal saw him and ran away.

Zintkala said nothing about these failures; but the young hunter, in losing confidence, lost something also of self-respect, and so began to be cross and disagreeable. He fretted because the Oglalas were so long gone on a buffalo hunt. He wished to change their camp. He did not like the place. The mosquitoes were very bad—they had scarcely felt a bite among their pines—and he thought there were some very poisonous snakes in a hole which ran under the ledge.

"Younger brother, it appears that you are very tiresome," Zintkala said one morning. "I know where there are some very fine red raspberries. They are a long way off, but I think we should go to-day and camp in that place, where we can



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gather a very large quantity. I can dry some also on the stones. There are many small deer there, very tame, and perhaps we can take skins to make us parflêches."

Immediately the boy became all animation. He was filled with delight at the prospect of change and the taste of red raspberries was already in his mouth.

"Ho, I will kill some of those deer, surely," he boasted. "I will shoot them with the gun of Iron Soldier."

So they decamped, carrying their effects twenty miles or more up the Smoky River valley to a deep slash in the mountain tableland, which has since become known, to freighters and ranchmen, as "Salt Pork Cañon." This deep cañon furnishes the only pass for many miles by which the breaks can be surmounted except by an expert climber.

Several miles in length, many hundreds of feet deep at its mouth, the steep slopes of this wedge-like gap are thickly clothed with pine and are cut with intricate mazes of deep ditches, cañons and ravines.

There is no water in this cañon save in a wet season, but the river runs under the rock ledges at its mouth, and its own dry run, having a sand bed at the bottom, furnishes an easy trail for nearly the whole length of the gap.

Upon a little bench, sheltered by a cluster of

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bullberry bushes, the children made their camp, and in the morning went afield in search of berries. Zintkala had timed the appearance of ripe fruit very well indeed. They were just in season to find raspberries in the first sugary stages of perfection, and they returned from the heights, where the best bushes grew, with faces and hands stained a carmine pink, painted in fact in such delicate hues as no art of their own could have equaled.

They were very happy at this place. They made baskets of willow splints to use in gathering the berries, and Zintkala cured a large quantity of them, which the dry heat of mid-summer enabled her to do perfectly. When Etapa actually killed a fine young doe with the buffalo gun their cup of happiness was well filled. They now had juicy venison in plenty and the tanned skin—a feat of leather-making which they accomplished in a few days—made an excellent parflêche in which to store and carry the dried fruit.

Doubtless they would have stayed in this cañon contentedly as long as the berries lasted, but, when the ripening of these was at its height, some other people, who knew of the Oglalas' absence, came also to gather fruit.

The brother and sister had one morning mounted nearly to the head of the big cañon, and were picking berries under a rock-ledge,

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within view of the trail above, when a number of people, on horseback, suddenly rounded a point and came jogging down toward them. There were men, women and children among the riders, and at first view the brother and sister shouted with delight, believing that the Oglalas were returning. They even started toward the newcomers, when an Indian, wearing a strange head-dress, appeared upon the trail directly below. This man's approach, because of the sand in which his pony had traveled, they had not heard. He was sitting his horse, gun in hand, looking directly up at them, a scowl of suspicious inquiry upon his painted face.

"Scili! Scili!" This cry of terror was wrung from Zintkala, and instantly the little Sioux turned and fled along the steep slope.

A shot followed by a shrill war-whoop stirred the deep cañon's echoes, but the shooter's bullet aimed at a pair of flying squirrels would have been about as certain of hitting its mark. With every nerve thrilling with a just horror of those Pawnee enemies, the little voyagers sped, scudding like hunted rabbits among the rocks and trees. Zintkala had dropped her basket of berries, but Etapa clung to his gun and so fell behind at the start.

As they ran they heard the rider below yelling fierce instructions to those in his rear, and then, casting a scared backward glance,

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Etapa saw him disappear in a flurry of sand dust as he dashed down the cañon. Instantly the Sioux boy understood. While his followers divided their forces, scaling the level heights to watch the race and give signals to those below, and others followed directly upon the heels of the pursued, this painted one would ride into the mouth of the first deep cross-cañon to intercept or shoot the runners as they passed. It seemed that only a miracle could prevent the Pawnees from surrounding and capturing himself and sister. The boy's mind acted with that quick instinct or intuition which is the gift of the child of nature and which was his in large measure.

Yet the ruse he adopted was simple—too simple to have been conceived by a yelling horde, even of Indians, in hot pursuit. The boy exerted himself to the utmost in a sudden burst of speed, and in spite of his impediments overtook and passed the swift Zintkala.

"Tanké!" he gasped, "do not run ahead!"

The sister heard and heeded, and so followed close at his heels. At a turn they descended the steep slope of a gulch, leaping from rock to rock, among a sheltering growth of scrub pine. Half-way down the scarp the boy turned sharply to his right and ran directly toward the cañon trail below. With reckless leaps, which Zintkala followed with the temerity of a mountain

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goat, Etapa led their flight, quartering the precipitous steep until they had nearly reached the bottom of the ravine. Here, in the shelter of a cluster of pines, he halted and the two dropped to earth like hunted foxes.

They suppressed their hard breathings and listened. Upon the sand bed of the cañon, they heard the muffled thumping of hoofs; upon the slopes above, the sounds of footmen in pursuit. Only for a minute dared they wait. As they heard the lunging ponies go by below they slid to the bottom of the ravine, shot across the cañon trail and into the opening of an opposing gulch.

Thus for the moment they had dodged the whole pack of pursuers before any even had time to reach the tableland heights and thus to mark their progress. All would be thrown from the scent until some keen searcher for their trail should discover their tracks across the sand bed. This the fleeing ones feared must soon happen, for their only hope of escape lay in keeping out of sight, in covering their trail and securing a hiding place until night should fall upon the mazes of the big cañon. They could not pass out at its mouth, nor over the heights above, without instant discovery and certain capture.

Worse than death, they dreaded capture. Among all their enemies they knew of none so wicked and terrible in torture as the Pawnee.

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## "S C I L I ! S C I L I !"

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Scili! The very name, quickly spoken, had always tingled their nerves to the finger tips. It had been their tepée bug-a-boo, and so great was their horror of the Pawnee, these children would have welcomed death in any form, would have met it in a leap from some precipitous height, sooner than be taken alive.

Thus with wild and frantic energy they fled, keeping to the rough bottoms of ravines, scrambling over boulders, through dense thickets of green bush, under sheltering rock-ledges and over pine-clad scarps. They knew that their trail could and would be followed, that their only hope was to make it long and difficult and to dodge their enemies until the coming on of darkness. Upon the middle heights of the cañon the pines grew thickly wherever there was footing of soil. To reach these, without being seen by their enemies upon the opposite slopes, was the cunning problem they had to solve before they could even hope for surety of escape. With the eyes of running partridges they kept to that cover which would hide them from the hunter's line of vision. In this winding course they passed into a cross-ravine and so mounted and descended into another.

This feat they performed three times with no yells from the opposing bluffs to announce discovery of their maneuver. They had just reached the bottom of the third gulch, which,

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like the main cañon, had a dry channel of sand at the bottom, and they were hesitating to make tracks across this when a yell greeted their astonished ears, and from above a horseman spurred at them in a furious rush and flourishing a war-club.

Zintkala turned to run, but Etapa, seeing the uselessness of flight, raised his buffalo gun as the enemy was almost upon him, and fired. Horse and man pitched forward and rolled in the sand. The pony, which had a bullet in its head, landed upon its side and on top of the rider. The Sioux boy uttered a whoop of triumph, and, as the Indian struggled to get out from under his horse, sprang forward and dealt the Pawnee a crushing blow with his gunstock. Again and again he struck until the man ceased struggling and lay as the dead. Then the shrill clear note of the victor rang through all the cañon and was repeated by the rocks.

"I have struck a Scili! I, even I, have struck a Scili! E-e-e-yih! Yi-hiii-yuh!" For the moment he was wild with excitement, and his barbaric little soul was lifted to the clouds in triumph. Then his sister descended upon him. She seized him by an arm and fairly dragged him away from the fallen Pawnee.

"Let us fly quickly!" she urged in frantic undertone. "All the Pawnees will come and we are lost!"

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Thus brought to his senses, but with bursting pride in his breast, the lad followed Zintkala. "I am a soldier—I am a soldier," his heart sang, and his brain whirled, while his ears were humming as to the rhythm of a hundred war drums. His throat became dry and hot from choking his desire to shout his own name and proclaim his deeds to the enemy. All that prevented him whooping thus rashly was the swiftly speeding figure in his front, a reminder of the peril behind and of the horror of capture.

Zintkala led the way, dodging the sand bed, upward to the first cross-cañon, which had a rock bottom. Into this she darted, Etapa following. Though her ears were open to all sounds she heard no yells on the other slope of the wide gap, and hope took possession of her.

Intuitively her mind grasped the situation. The man whom Etapa had killed—if indeed he had killed him—was a hunter who had traveled much ahead of his fellows, and so knew nothing of the chase they were making. Etapa's war-shout had sounded so strangely that the Pawnees might well have thought some one of their number was hallooing, nor might they know from what direction such strangely repeated cries had come. ®

So with increased confidence she sped on, following the tactics they had already used in taking their line of flight. The lay of the cañons

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and cross-ravines now favored them, and they were able to make their way into the pine belt without further danger of exposure. They now breathed more freely. They would be shrewd trailers indeed who could catch them within these wide copses of evergreen. Here was the hard silent ground, and they threaded the pine-clad ravines, walking swiftly, but with great caution until, at last, in joyful surprise they found themselves looking down upon the ledge which sheltered their little camp.

"Waste! Waste!" they breathed to each other. "Stay, Tanké," said Etapa, speaking in a low dry voice, "I myself will go secretly to get our blankets and the bow and arrows and some meat. I will truly leave no trail."

The sister nodded her assent, then she whispered, "There is good water in the basin and I am so thirsty."

"I will not drink it all, surely," the lad assured her. "I will fetch you some."

Etapa then slipped down the slope, keeping among the pines, dropping in light leaps from rock to rock. He was obliged to go in a round-about way, but at the end of an hour or so he returned, bringing all their camp effects and perhaps a half-pint of water in the basin.

"Waste, younger brother, you have indeed done well," murmured Zintkala, and she swallowed the water like a famished creature.

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In all this time they had heard nothing of the enemy. Doubtless the Pawnees were making a still hunt, but the young Sioux felt security in their hiding place. No creature could approach them without being seen or heard, and they would soon be refreshed by rest and ready for instant and silent flight among the dense pine copses. With excellent reason they trusted much to the speed of their well tried legs.

So they reclined upon the pine needles with ears and eyes keenly alert. They dared not talk, but the boy leaned against a rock and fondled his buffalo gun. He felt sure that he should now be allowed to retain the weapon. His cheeks were aglow and his eyes snapping with the recollection of his deed, which he lived over again and again in imagination.

Overhead the pines, rustling in a stiff cañon breeze, sang to him, and the burden of their souging was, "Akicita—soldier—soldier of the Oglalas."

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### THE BUFFALO GHOST WOMEN

Whether the Pawnees failed to find the trail of the fleet runners, or whether they became fearful lest an Oglala camp was hidden near at hand, cannot be known. Very likely they discovered the body of the dead hunter and were incredulous that either of the young Sioux they had seen should have killed him. At any rate the little voyagers saw no more of them. Night came to them in hiding and found them refreshed with alternate "sleeps" had during the afternoon.

Under cover of darkness they descended to the river bottom, and traveled swiftly all night up the Smoky. They followed an ancient buffalo and Indian trail, which was also the route their people had taken in moving from their village. They ran upon this deeply rutted road all night, and morning found them many leagues from the big cañon and near to the sources of the Smoky River.

When daylight came they found cover in a bush grown coulée at the head of which they could command a good view of the river valley and of the upland plains for many miles. At this camp their native religious instincts stirred

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them deeply. They were in doubt as to whether they ought not to dance a sacred dance to the Waniyan Tanka; but they did not know that this would be acceptable to the Great Spirit. So they slept but little, and spent the day, somewhat apart, in prayer and fasting. They were very grateful to all the good spirits for their deliverance from the Pawnees, and they prayed very earnestly that they might be guided by a spirit-hand in following the Oglalas, and that they might safely arrive among their people.

They well understood the dangers of plunging into an unknown country, even upon a fresh and well worn trail, for who could tell how soon the Oglalas might become separated into small bands and so scattered, in the chase of vast herds, that all traces of their march should disappear. Worse still many war parties of enemies might be on the watch to cut off any stragglers who should seek to overtake them. This had frequently happened on their marches. Again the Oglalas might make a great circuit, returning to their own country from another direction, and so the voyagers be compelled to travel on foot until the snows of winter should overtake them. Truly the brother and sister had need to pray for guidance.

On the following night the trail led them away from the river and across the more level plains. They no longer had the plainly marked and

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often deeply rutted buffalo paths to follow, but the Oglalas who had moved were more than a thousand strong and their herds of horses, and their numerous travois drags, had worn a broad smooth trail upon the prairies. This beaten roadway made good walking for the bare feet, else they could not have traveled at night on account of the cactus spears.

Wimimi, the full moon, also gave assistance. Her yellow light made weird shadow pictures upon the rough ground, and ghost people flitted hither and thither, giving one a sinking at the stomach now and then. Even so her light was better than darkness. The grass trail of the Oglalas could be seen for many steps ahead. Upon this gray fading ribbon of road the voyagers trudged until they sank, at a water course, from sheer exhaustion.

They slept until nearly midday, when they set forward again, feeling that they were now clear of danger from the Pawnees, who would not be likely to follow upon the trail of a great number of Oglalas. For several days they now traveled over a rolling plain, cut with numerous small dry runs and timber-fringed creeks.

For three days the trail led them steadily to the north, and they passed, at no great distance, the Sacred Ground of the pine clad hills where there were wonderful streams of boiling water—the springs of Mini-skanskan. The eyes of the

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## THE BUFFALO GHOST WOMEN

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voyagers were often turned upon that mysterious, silent country, where no tribes inhabited, no hunters intruded, and which was sacred to those good spirits who were able to control the thunder people and prevent them from doing damage. In that silent country the earth was red and the rocks were of many colors and very beautiful, and there were such flowers of brilliant hues as could nowhere else be found. There, too, were many wonderful birds and animals, whom no one hunted, and who lived at peace with each other. There igmu hanska (the cougar) and mato osansan (the grizzly) ate only berries and sweet herbs and did not kill for meat.

It was not a good country for hunters, but it was very beautiful and mysterious.

The voyagers passed beyond this country, going down a wide, flat river valley. On this flat valley one day they saw some marvelous ghost people, who frightened them very much at first. The earth appeared that day to be covered with a dense, low cloud, which lay very close upon the ground, and all standing things seemed to be oddly distorted and misshapen. The young Dakotas had seen these effects of the medicine of strange and freakish spirits before, and they knew that no one, who did not foolishly follow some beckoning ghost into danger, was ever harmed by these queer people.

But on this occasion, at midday, there sud-

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denly loomed out of the flat low fog some strange and monstrously distorted figures, giant ghosts who stood against the sky and assumed such threatening proportions that it seemed they might, if they should choose, drive off or devour all creatures on the earth.

Zintkala saw these mysterious and fearful ones first, and cried out in alarm. "O brother," she quavered, "do look—do look! We are surely lost!"

She pointed directly toward the river, which ran, at quite a distance, upon their right but which had been swallowed in the cloud. Etapa turned and indeed beheld a strange sight. Out of that low wavering mist, which obscured the earth, shifting colossal figures were reaching toward the sky. Some very tall shadow people seemed to be lifting others upon their heads or shoulders, and these climbing ones were trying to touch the cloud spaces.

The boy dropped his bow and gun and gazed in awed amazement. It did not occur to either of the children to run, for only very silly persons would expect to escape if these giant people should choose to come after them. So the two stood trembling, astonished, and scared. While they stared, the immensely tall ghosts moved in a very mysterious manner. They shifted positions, grew larger or smaller, and their misty bodies moved to and fro in a peculiar fashion.

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## THE BUFFALO GHOST WOMEN

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As the frightened boy watched, with open mouth, a sudden conviction, born of recollection, seized upon him.

"Ho, older sister," he announced, "these are indeed the buffalo women of whom my grandfather has told me. I do not think that they intend to harm anyone. They appear to be dancing the grass dance."

"Is it indeed so?" asked Zintkala, with a great burden lifting from her palpitating heart. "I think truly, younger brother, now you have spoken of it, that those very large ones are surely dancing. Heretofore I have seen no people like them anywhere."

"It does not appear that they come toward us," assured the boy, "therefore they certainly are those people whom I have mentioned."

"It seems that they already have eaten the trees which we saw in that place," suggested the sister, yet feeling much uneasiness.

"I think also that they have eaten them," assented the boy, "but these people usually avoid coming near to Indians. They flee away and take the buffaloes with them."

"Younger brother, there is a hill on this other side; therefore let us hasten thither to watch these buffalo women dance their dance," urged Zintkala.

Here and there upon the flat valley arose lone knobs or small buttes, affording excellent view



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points from which to overlook a great scope of country.

"We will indeed go to that hill," said Etapa. They picked up their effects and walked rather hurriedly toward the butte. As they looked behind now and then their lingering fears began to fade. The huge bobbing ghosts were at least not following. When they finally reached the top of the lone hill a fresh surprise awaited them. The mysterious tall people had vanished, and in their places stood a thin fringe of cottonwoods, their tops showing quite clearly above the shimmering fog of radiation. These were the trees they had supposed the buffalo women had eaten.

The little voyagers were much amazed and mystified. They wished to look further into this strange business and to talk about it, and so they seated themselves cross-legged upon the knob.

"Whither do you think those people have gone, brother?" asked Zintkala, her round face filled with wonder.

"It is very warm," suggested Etapa, "and perhaps the buffalo women are swimming in the river."

This seemed not unlikely, and so the two, all eyes, sat for a while in silence, expecting to see those colossal ghosts arise from their bathing. After a sufficient time, however, they were

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forced to conclude that the buffalo women had vanished as mysteriously as they had appeared.

"They have seen us and thus have gone to give warning to their grandchildren, the buffaloes," asserted Etapa with conviction.

"Nakaeś, younger brother, it may indeed be as you say," admitted Zintkala. "Nevertheless I see other people yonder who, it appears, are very strange also."

She was looking down the valley in the direction they had been traveling, and Etapa's eyes, following hers, alighted upon some queer figures. A number of misty creatures, whose legs seemed to have been cut off near to their bodies, were moving across the clouded land. These ghost animals were very large in appearance, but their necks were no more than the size of one's finger, and their heads were far removed from their bodies. Some of them had queerly elongated horns, but all—and there were a dozen or more—were ambling toward distant hills in a curiously familiar fashion.

"Ho, I know those people!" said Etapa, after careful study of the legless figures. "They are the ghost antelope. Heretofore I have seen these, and they are very harmless, wishing indeed to meet no one."

"Younger brother, do you not think we may have come into the Sacred Country?" asked Zint-

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kala with anxiety. "Therefore these strange ones may wish us to go away very quickly."

"It may indeed be that you speak truly," said the boy, struck with the thought. "Nevertheless those large ones whom we saw yonder were certainly the buffalo ghost women, and I have not heard that these live in the black pine country."

"Do tell me about the buffalo women," urged Zintkala. "Hitherto I have heard nothing of these people."

"My grandfather only knows about them," said Etapa. "He only of all the Oglalas has seen these buffalo women, who are indeed grandmothers of the different tribes of buffaloes."

"My grandfather saw these people many winters ago, when he was a young man. The Oglalas were living in a distant country, and beyond their village, there was a very big wide river where the buffaloes crossed, going two ways. The Oglalas took a great many robes and much meat each year, for the buffaloes had always come to that country during the dead grass moons. Nevertheless one year pté stayed away; only three old bulls came to that country. When the Oglalas went out to hunt they found only these old bulls.

"They came to the river and the hunters went away in two parties, some going up and some going down the large river. My grandfather

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## THE BUFFALO GHOST WOMEN

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was of those who went up the river. These traveled very far in search of the buffaloes. They did not find them. They only found very mysterious paths. These trails were such as to make the Oglalas marvel indeed. A cloud lay on the earth, and the trails of the buffaloes went through this cloud. Their feet did not touch the ground. This was very mysterious. The Oglala hunters could not understand this matter.

"'Come,' said they, 'let us go homeward lest an evil befall some of our party.' They were afraid to stay in that country, for they said, 'In the night what is to prevent these spirit buffaloes from running off our ponies? Then surely the *Susuni* (Shoshonies) will come and take us!'

"But my grandfather would not go back. He said, 'Ho, ye Dakotas, I have seen these things before, and no harm came. Do as you will, but I will go on to find the buffaloes.'

"So my grandfather went on to find the buffaloes. Having a great medicine he did not fear to go on. He went a long way up the large river. He was going, thus traveling upon the flat land, and again a cloud descended upon the earth, lying very low and resting on the grass.

"My grandfather indeed saw very strange things. He saw trees dancing. They were dancing in the midst of the cloud. Doubtless they prayed to this cloud that they might not be cut off from the earth. Also a ghost elk ap-

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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peared, walking in this cloud. My grandfather prayed very earnestly to this large bull's ghost. He desired to know where the buffaloes were.

"Very soon thereafter he saw the buffaloes. There were many of them on some high hills. My grandfather's horse was tired, nevertheless he rode swiftly after the buffaloes, desiring greatly to secure some meat.

"The buffaloes ran down off the hills. They were going in the cloud, which was lying on the grass. Then my grandfather saw very mysterious things. The buffaloes were running in this cloud and some very tall women appeared driving them off in a hurry. These women were taller than the trees, and my grandfather knew that they were the buffalo ghost women. They were truly the buffaloes' grandmothers. They wished to keep the hunters from shooting their grandchildren, therefore they chased them swiftly out of that country. They caused a cloud to cover their grandchildren, so that the buffaloes disappeared. My grandfather did not see them again. That winter the Oglalas suffered greatly for lack of meat."

"Truly those people are very mysterious," murmured Zintkala.

She felt no little relief, however, in the assurance that the buffalo women only desired to protect their grandchildren, and were not likely to chase and devour two small Dakotas.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### THE BUFFALOES—A VOYAGE BY BULL BOAT

The trail of the Oglalas led through a land of plenty. Elk, deer and antelope were seen in large numbers every day. Of marmots, bush rabbits and sage hens there was never lack in the warm seasons. On this trail the little voyagers were never in want of meat.

After leaving the flat valley they crossed a high rough country and came to a stream which ran beside a low range of mountains. Among the coulées of the foot hills they now found plums ripening in great abundance. Here for a number of days—probably during the last weeks of August—they lingered, feasting continuously. It now appeared that, as the buffalo killing season had approached, the Oglalas would, if indeed they were coming back that way, soon return upon their trail. If they were to return by some other route it would be impossible for people on foot to overtake them.

The voyagers did not reason this out together, but it was the unspoken thought in their minds. To tell the truth each was fearful of further advance into an unknown country upon an aging trail. So they spoke together quite often about the return of their people, saying that they must

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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look for them to appear during the next moon. A cold rain fell for several days, and drove them to the rock covert of a coulée. In this coulée, after the rains, they discovered a lair of the big yellow cats; and as these great flesh eaters were very mysterious in their actions the wandering ones moved on again, going slowly down the stream. The now dim trail of the Oglalas led directly along this river, but so it had followed two streams before and the distances between camps showed that the tribe had abated nothing of its hurry to go to some far country.

Thus the voyagers loitered aimlessly. Their only cheer was found in the abundance by which they were surrounded. The numerous plum thickets of the river ravines were red with luscious fruit. The young of the sage grouse were so numerous and so tame that one could, at any time, kill a number by knocking them over with sticks. The cow-men have dubbed these unsuspecting and apparently witless birds "fool hens." When quickly dressed, after killing, the meat of the young is excellent.

In spite of disappointments and desperate uncertainty the little voyagers grew plump and vigorous upon their diet of fruit and birds. Yet, as the days wore on, they became surfeited with eating and the home hunger again gripped their hearts. They feared to go back to the Smoky River even more than they dreaded to

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## A VOYAGE BY BULL BOAT

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go forward. The dim Oglala trail still lay along the river's course.

"Wan, older sister," said Etapa, one morning, "we must now go quickly on to find the Oglalas. Because of the war it appears that they have gone, and they will stay all winter at that place where they have arrived. They have surely gone far down this river."

Zintkala had been thinking of this also, and she acceded with energy to the proposal to go on with more speed.

"It appears that we have indeed stayed too long at this place," she said.

All that day they traveled with expedition upon the old trail. During the next forenoon they passed beyond the low range of mountains and suddenly found themselves among the buffaloes. The trail had led for some time through a narrow pass of the river valley and, at a sharp turn, the travelers were startled by a mob of huge brown cattle which lunged down the steep slope of a near bluff.

"The buffaloes! The buffaloes!" they shouted joyously. "Now we shall surely find the Oglalas!"

Some big bulls ran off the hill directly toward them. As these lunged downward they bellowed and kicked up a great dust. They were evidently young bulls having a frolic. But they were leaders, and a whole herd plunged after them, roar-

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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ing and leaping amid clouds of dirt. They acted so crazily that the voyagers became alarmed. They sped swiftly across the river—drenching themselves thoroughly—and ran out upon the highlands beyond. Fortunately the buffaloes checked their mad stampede and filled the channel of the stream, jumping against and over each other, to get into the water. The animals drank eagerly of a current thick with the mud of their trampling.

A little way out upon the highland stood a sharp knob or butte of red earth. The voyagers ran swiftly and climbed this high hill. Upon its cap they stood and whooped and exclaimed in joyous wonder. They had seen many bison but never such herds as now greeted their eyes. The buffaloes were mostly at that moment to west and north. Over a great stretch of rough plain—as far as the eye could reach—their masses extended. Brown patches upon the hills and hill sides, dark moving lines on the prairies, thin veils of dust hanging upon the far horizon, told of bison, in countless herds, moving into the river country. It appeared indeed that all the tribes of buffaloes must have agreed to meet at this river.

“Wan ho, I think that all the Indians will have to come to this river to hunt the buffaloes,” shouted Etapa. “Therefore there will be much fighting unless they make a peace.”

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## A VOYAGE BY BULL BOAT

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“They will not wish to fight,” said Zintkala, with conviction. “They will wish to take much meat and many robes for the tepées. I think now, younger brother, that we may travel safely to find the Oglalas. I do not think that any Indian hunters will pay attention.”

This seemed so reasonable, when one came to think of it, that Etapa whooped with elation.

“Whi, Tanké!” he cried, “they will see nothing but these buffaloes. I also will shoot some of those very large bulls. It is so. If any come up here I will make big holes in their skins. I will make holes thus large!”

And with the ends of thumb and forefinger touching he showed the sister what perforations the great bulls might expect. He flourished his buffalo gun and pranced about excitedly, pointing the weapon at one or another of the nearer herds. For the time they quite forgot that the trampling of such numbers must blot out the trail of the Oglalas. Indeed it would seem that no one could have thought of anything but the vast panorama of animal life.

The armies of Xerxes were doubtless of insignificant numbers as compared to the far-reaching multitudes which spread upon the plains under the eyes of these wandering children. From the top of the red butte they could command a vast scope of rough lands and everywhere soon,

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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except to southward, were to be seen the mighty increasing throngs of the bison.

"All the buffaloes are coming!" shouted Etopa.

"All the buffaloes are coming!" repeated Zintkala.

Upon their height the wet and ragged waifs, unheeding the packs upon their shoulders, stood for hours, with eyes and ears for nothing but the march of innumerable herds. Like a vast tidal wave the throngs of brown humps spread until only a narrow strip of unoccupied country lay, in a fading gray belt, to southward. Still the herds came on from north and west in undiminished numbers. They filled the valley of the stream, plunged down its steeps in roaring, bawling mobs and converted the river's current to a flow of mud in which thousands wallowed in huge enjoyment.

The Sioux children were filled with strange and thrilling emotions. Their faces were as the faces of those who stand above armies. They were no longer alone. The world was suddenly peopled with such mighty and crowding hosts as no hunter's tale had enabled them to imagine.

"All the buffaloes are coming," they repeated again and again. A breeze which had been blowing abated, and a fine dust arose, veiled the sky and hung upon the horizon. Into this haze the sun descended and became a vast ball of blood red fire.

The voyagers, at last tired of standing, sat

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## A VOYAGE BY BULL BOAT

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upon the butte. The buffaloes did not attempt to climb the steep cap of its knob, but nowhere else in all the world—save upon such high points—did there seem room for two biped travelers. It became apparent as they watched the approaching multitudes, that the two must spend their night upon the butte. Presently the pangs of hunger and thirst began to be felt and, as the red sun was about to go under the earth, Zintkala spoke.

"Younger brother," she said, "I think you should now go down and fetch some water and some sticks. I have two birds in my parflêche. See, there are not now many buffaloes at that place," and she pointed to a turn of the river below.

"Ho, I will do as you have said, for I indeed can shoot with this gun," said the boy. He felt timid about descending the butte, but wished to appear brave, therefore he seized Zintkala's basin and his gun and ran, going in careful leaps on account of the cactus, down to the river. A band of buffaloes which had stopped to graze ran away as he approached and, thus encouraged, the boy lingered to dip the clearer water and to gather a good bundle of dry fagots. He returned in buoyant spirits and assured his sister that all the buffaloes were very much afraid of a hunter, and especially of one who carried a buffalo gun.

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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So upon the red butte, which glowed in a ruby sunset like a huge and dying ember, and in the midst of marching hosts, the voyagers made a tiny blaze of willow sticks and ate much meat. As long as the light lasted, however, their eyes were but little turned from the throngs of buffalo people. As they ate and gazed, Zintkala was struck with an alarming thought.

"Younger brother," she asked with anxiety, "may it not be that those buffalo women are driving their people far, far away from the Oglalas?"

"Yuh-huh, Tanké!" cried the lad in amazement, "those old women cannot drive their grandchildren off until they have made a cloud to lie on the earth. My grandfather said thus."

The round face of the girl lost its anxious curves and she finished her meal in content. She was very sure that the Oglalas would be found in this buffalo country.

As darkness came on the voyagers, wrapped in their blankets, fell asleep to the roar and murmur of trampling herds.

In the morning there were many buffaloes grazing upon the plains and hill slopes as far up and down the river as the eye could reach, but the vast armies of the day before were scattered, leaving again the calm and peaceful plains.

The voyagers rejoiced greatly for, they said, "Now indeed, if the Oglalas are not already upon

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## A VOYAGE BY BULL BOAT

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this river, they will come to hunt the buffaloes—so we shall surely find them."

They ate a hurried breakfast and, at sunrise, again followed the river to northward. They did not try to keep to the Oglala trail, for the rains and the armies of buffaloes had nearly everywhere obliterated all trace of it. They kept rather to the winding river's course, looking at every turn to see the tepées of their people or to meet with Oglala hunters out in chase of the bison. They ran—where they had not to avoid cactus—much of the time, shouting now and then to frighten off big bulls which grazed in their front. Sometimes the old leaders of a band were saucy and would stand, with shaggy fronts reared, pawing up dust and snorting defiance at the small bipeds, and then these would dodge behind the river's bank, wade the stream and follow on upon the other side.

Once they came upon two bulls circling about each other, each roaring a challenge. They stopped to watch and presently these angry ones came together with a mighty bump and their horns clicked like the rattle of bones at a medicine dance. With swollen muscles and shrunken flanks they heaved and tugged, ripping the sod with their hoofs. Then, in sheer impatience at useless expense of energy, they parted and again sparred for advantage. Again they bounced together and their horns cracked and they



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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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weaved to and fro in frantic buckings. One, the heavier, seemed now to gain an advantage, and pushed his antagonist slowly backward, but, when the latter broke away suddenly, he did not chase him.

Again the combatants circled and the weightier bull roared and threatened quite as though assured of victory. His confidence was vain. As he pawed and bawled he exposed an incautious flank and, like a stroke of lightning, the lithe antagonist caught him amidribs. He was bowled over by the shock and, in a twinkling, his entrails were ripped from his body and wound upon the victor's horns.

The Sioux children looked upon this bull as a great brave—an expert and valiant fighter—and they would gladly have addressed him paying their compliments, but prudence forbade and they dropped behind the river's bank and passed on out of sight.

Now and then the voyagers climbed a solitary height to take observations and everywhere they saw the bunches of brown cattle, but no sign of human presence. Toward noon the herds began to come to the river for water, and the children several times ran narrow races before bands stampeding off the bluffs. The buffaloes seemed possessed of a craze to leap, roaring and bouncing, off the river hills.

At something after midday the voyagers

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## A VOYAGE BY BULL BOAT

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stopped to cook some young sage grouse, for they were ravenously hungry after so much running. They made their noon camp upon a high bank, where there were plenty of dry willows. They had nearly finished eating when they heard the muffled thunder of hoofs which told of another stampede.

They leaped to their feet to see presently a wide front of heaving humps forge, in a cloud of dust, over the hills to westward. Like an avalanche this mass of animals rolled over and down upon the river flats. They were running as such great herds run when the hunters are upon their heels and not as creatures at play.

The voyagers looked wildly about them for some place of refuge. There were some trees down the river, but these were too far away. The buffaloes were almost upon them and, in sheer affright, they seized their belongings, ran into the river and took refuge under an overhanging bank, fringed with willows.

Almost instantly the thundering rout rolled over their heads. Buffaloes, plunging after and upon each other, rained into the river's channel throwing water and mud upon the hidiers, who were half-choked in the dust which fell. The edges of the bank above their heads caved and huge chunks of earth fell upon them. They cowered in this ruck and confusion, hiding their faces against the bank.

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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Doubtless the network of willow roots above their heads alone saved them from destruction, and the blind heaving mass passed over and around, leaving them uninjured.

They were muddy, bedraggled and sorry looking waifs who emerged from the debris of the caving bank. But their half-blinded eyes fell upon creatures in yet more piteous plight. A number of buffaloes had been trampled to death in the stream, and still others, mortally injured, struggled to keep their noses above water. One large bull, with a broken shoulder, was trying to leap upon the low bank opposite. He gave it up presently and stood sullenly upon a dry bar with horns pushed into the earth in his front.

It seemed that the hunters must have been after these buffaloes, but the voyagers neither heard nor saw any horsemen, therefore presently they went above where the stampede had passed and washed their clothes and bodies clear of mud. The gun of Iron Soldier had been wetted, but Etapa wiped it dry with the inner folds of his blanket and put a fresh cap upon the tube.

Hitherto they had scarcely spoken, but had taken account of the dead and living buffaloes, and performed their ablutions in a dazed and mechanical fashion. But now the boy awoke to animation.

"Hoye, Tanké," he said, "there is much meat in

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## A VOYAGE BY BULL BOAT

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the river, but we can not easily get it. I will now shoot that big bull. I do not think any Indians are at this river now."

"Nakaes! younger brother, do so quickly." cried the girl. "Shoot tatanka so that he bleeds, for then the meat is best. It appears at any rate," she added, "that we must camp at this place to rub our clothes. I will also cook much good meat."

Approaching the bull carefully the lad gave it a shot behind the shoulders and ran away. The animal fell upon the bar and struggled, bleeding freely.

While the pair stood upon the bank waiting for the bull to die, two magpies alighted upon some willows near at hand and talked very strangely. These birds appeared to be speaking to them, Zintkala and Etapa, and the young Sioux watched and listened intently while these noisy ones flitted from willow to sage bush and from bush to bank and so passed clear around where they stood.

After the strange birds had done this, both alighted upon the bull, which had ceased to breathe. Sitting upon the dead buffalo they again called to the boy and girl and acted very mysteriously. Then, while the two looked and listened wonderingly, the magpies flew away down the stream.

These birds were known to be friendly toward

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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all Dakotas. They often conveyed mysterious information to hunters and to people on the trail and, as the pair disappeared, a light broke in upon Zintkala's puzzled brain.

"Wan, younger brother," she cried joyously, "these birds have indeed told us to make a bull boat of this bull's skin and the willows and to go thus to find the Oglalas!"

"It is so! It is so!" shouted the lad, dancing with excitement. "Now we shall surely arrive at that place where they are, very quickly. I indeed know how to make these bull boats."

Instantly the two were alive with energy. They attacked the carcass of the bull with their knives which they had kept sharpened by whetting often upon pieces of sandstone.

Etapá, though less expert than his sister, gave directions, and cautioned frequently, "Do not cut the skin, Tanké; it is to make a bull boat."

They had flayed one whole side of the carcass before the necessity and the difficulty of moving its huge weight occurred to them. By good luck, however, the bull had fallen at a point where its back rested upon an incline of the bar, and, by a fierce tug at the feet with the legs for leverage, they were able to roll it more than half way over, and so to take the immense pelt whole. As they succeeded finally without making a cut in the body of the skin they were filled with elation.

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## A VOYAGE BY BULL BOAT

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They now made a fire and ate broiled steak and sweet back fat until their stomachs were well rounded. For more than a year they had not tasted buffalo meat, and it was good—good.

For two days they camped, feasting, dressing the buffalo's skin and making a frame-work of stout willows for their bull boat. On the third morning their tub-like craft was launched.

Recent rains upon the mountains had swollen the stream until its mid current ran waist deep and they were easily able to keep afloat save, here and there, where they were obliged to wade over rapid shallows. A light pole served in place of a paddle and they were able to make as good, and much less tiresome, progress than by following the river's windings as they had done afoot.

For five suns they voyaged without much adventure, making perhaps one hundred miles as the crow flies. The buffaloes were plentiful, but not so numerous as they had been. Now and then these animals, coyotes, and other four-foots appeared upon the river's bank and scurried away at their approach. Once they caught mato osansan at his bathing. The grizzly reared its great hulk and floundered in affright, scrambling up the nearest bank, but turned about to look down upon the strange craft whirling by.

Still they had but once seen—at an old river camp—signs of the Oglalas, although they had

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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frequently climbed the river's banks to look. Several times, however, the magpies had talked to them and flown on down the stream. The birds thus evidently beckoned them on to find the Oglalas.

The face of the country had changed, and the voyagers found themselves in a strange land, a country of tall buttes and gaping cañons, of wonderful high rocks of many colors, of colossal formations which appeared to be immense tepées of earth and stone. The stream had increased in volume but, with a courage not less than sublime, they steered their bull boat over rapids and into the dark forbidding shadows of the cañons.

## CHAPTER XXX

### A PARADE FIGHT

Fire Cloud's village of Oglalas together with several bands of Yanktonais and Brulés had gathered in a semi-military encampment in the Bad Lands. Hither they had come because of the war cloud which had gathered over all the land. Their soldiers had not fled to this country from fear, but to gain a stronghold for their women and children, and where they might fight to advantage should the armies of the blue coat come against them.

Too well they knew that a Sioux was a Sioux to be killed or captured without discrimination when the Great Father sent his angry soldiers into their country, and that to be captured was to suffer—worse than death—disease and slow starvation. And here was much good fighting ground; here were many cunning hiding places and covered lines of escape.

Being a large company of many hundreds, the Sioux did not seek to hide their village nor to pitch their tepées within natural defences. They depended rather upon their scouts to inform of the approach of enemies, and held themselves in readiness to fortify or to break camp and scatter upon short notice should necessity demand. So they were camped along the

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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river, where there was wood and grass, upon an open flat, surrounded by castellated buttes and the eroded heights and washouts of the Bad Country.

This open plain, which extended for several miles along the stream, became the parade ground and riding school of their young men. Here they raced their ponies and practiced the arts of war. Many posts of half-decayed cottonwoods and willows were set in the earth, and every day riders hurled themselves past these lines of dummy men, shooting their arrows and throwing the lance. Some became very expert in "hitting the post," and were commended by their elders who often looked on, enjoying the sport. The makers of bows and arrows, lances and other material of war, were uncommonly busy at this season.

Many antelope and elk also were killed by the large parties of hunters who, on account of their numbers, went out fearlessly to the chase. The summer days at this camp were really gala-days and the people had not been happier for a long time. Early in the dry grass moon, too, buffaloes trailed in large bands, across the Bad Lands. The Sioux took meat and robes until their women could no longer handle the stores. They had enough to furnish meat and clothing for no one knew how long. When they had considered this good fortune they said:

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## A P A R A D E F I G H T

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"Now indeed we know that we have done well to come to this place, for the Waniyan Tanka has evidently sent the buffaloes against a time of need."

The hunters gave feasts to their friends and made many smoke offerings. After the hunting the young men and some of the middle-aged resumed the games, the races, and sham battles.

Some weeks before the buffalo killing a large village of river Crows, living in the valley of the Yellowstone, discovered this new town of the Sioux. The Crows were much alarmed lest a large war party should come against them. So they sent runners to the up-river Crows and to their cousins among the Mountain People saying, "A very big village of Sioux have arrived near to us. Come quickly and help us fight them, lest we be destroyed!"

These people, who lived but a few days' ride distant, immediately sent large war parties. So many Indians gathered at the Crow village that they fetched their women and children, lest these should be surprised and scattered. A camp formed on the Yellowstone even larger than that in the Bad Lands. The wise men of these bands held many councils considering how best to proceed against the invaders, and their young men, too, practiced the sham fights and vied with each other in feats of horsemanship.

The allies sent out their most cunning scouts

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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to spy upon the Sioux, and these reported great preparations for war among the enemy. They were about to go against the Sioux when the buffaloes came. After a great killing and many feasts the head men said, "Now we must attack those people and destroy their town."

They again sent scouts to see if the Sioux remained. Three of these approached the Dakota town from some heights. They were mounted upon fleet horses, and wished simply to look down upon the river valley from some secluded elevation. They were riding upon the scarp of a bluff in a gorge, when they heard voices of strangers. Looking to the opposing bluff they saw two riders, who sat upon their ponies, making signals. The men were Sioux, and the Crow scouts were fearful at first lest themselves had fallen into a trap.

But their alarm was quickly disposed of, for one of the strangers shouted at them in a tongue which they understood:

"Ho, Kangi! you indeed imagine that you are very cunning. You are like your relatives, the real crows, who fly squalling with a loud noise so that everyone sees them. If your soldiers are not all cowards and skunks you will come on to fight us. If you do not come soon we will send some of our old women to beat your men with switches."

This speech, flung at them from across a deep

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cañon and beyond arrow range, exasperated the Crow scouts greatly. They shouted their war cry and retorted with bitter taunts.

"You Dakotas will see us soon enough!" cried one at length. "You had better send your women and children and your herds home quickly. Even then, after we have given your bodies to the coyotes, we will follow and take your property."

The answer of the Sioux to this harangue was certainly irritating. These scouts simply sat on their ponies cawing "haw! haw! haw!" and doubled themselves with laughter.

The Crows returned to the Yellowstone and reported the impossibility of taking the Sioux by surprise. They also told faithfully of the challenge of the Sioux scouts and, learning of this, the young men of the allies were eager to go against the Dakotas, and their elders said, "If these Sioux think we are afraid, all the Dakotas will come to take our country and thus they will give us much trouble. Come, let us adventure our bodies against them!"

The next day many hundreds of men in full war dress set out for the Bad Lands. As this large war party approached their stronghold its movements were noted and reported by the Sioux spies.

At their encampment the tepées were pitched together in compact rows and this solid village was surrounded, at a safe distance, by a row of

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willow posts with stout poles laid against them and attached with rawhide ropes. Thus they raised an effective barricade against charging horsemen. They also built large corrals to protect their herds from a night stampede. The posts and poles for this work they had cut at their leisure during the summer.

When the Crow spies reported this fortified village to their war leaders and partisans some said, "We cannot take this Sioux town, therefore let us make a stronghold from which we may harass them."

This counsel was agreed upon and the Crows and Mountain People camped upon an easily defended elevation where there was water and feed for their horses. This war camp was made above the Sioux town overlooking the river flats, and where the party could keep open communication with their people on the Yellowstone.

After a day or two of expectant waiting the Sioux, seeing the enemy hesitate to attack, went out as before and resumed their games and shooting at the post. Only now they donned their war shirts and feathered bonnets.

This open contempt nettled the allies and they, too, sent their young men down, bedecked and painted, to display themselves in the valley above and on the other side of the stream. A party of Sioux approached some of these within hailing distance and signaled across the river.

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"Koo-ée, Kangi!" they shouted. "Come down on this plain and fight us. Let us fight in the large circles that none may take advantage. We shall see who are the best soldiers!"

This challenge to a fair fight in open field, pleased the Crow and Mountain soldiers, in fact fired them into enthusiasm.

"Good—good!" cried their leader after they had digested the matter. "We will surely venture our bodies in battle. Come forth from your willow pen to-morrow and we will go against you. See that you do not hide in your corrals!"

True to their promises the allies rode down from their heights in the morning and forded the stream to a wide open ground. When they saw these squads of horsemen really coming off the bluffs a great shout ran through the Sioux town. They had scarcely credited the boast of the Crows whom, on the whole, they had bested in years of predatory fighting. The big village was thrown into an uproar as men ran for their horses or rushed into the tepée to don paints and war dress. In an incredibly brief space of time crowds of pony riders, as gay and fantastic in appearance as masqueraders at Mardi Gras, went clattering out upon the river flat. They were armed mostly with the bow and arrow, but many carried lances decked with streamers of vivid colors.



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Though the writer has been eye-witness to such scenic display of wild riders as followed, no pen is adequate to description. These hostile war parties were not gathered from agency imprisoned creatures of broken and dependent spirit. They had never known the rule of an autocrat who might—or who might not—issue rations to their starving families as one throws bread to a dog.

They rode to battle as athletes meet upon the arena, hardy and daring in spirit and of iron endurance of body and limb. The foremost troops of the opposing bodies approached each other singing in loud minor strains to the beat of drums and clack of medicine rattles.

At a point perhaps two miles from the Sioux town the fighting began. There was no plan of battle to be noted. Groups and squads of horse-men, scattered hither and thither, were apparently riding aimlessly. Still others were coming singly and in strings from each of the hostile camps.

Suddenly, as flocks of birds scatter, a wild chaotic rout of flying riders spread upon the plain. Each frantic yelling horseman scurried at racing speed and each seemed bent upon his own business, quite regardless of the stampede before and behind.

Chaos reigned, but out of it came order in a twinkling. As by some trick of legerdemain the

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scurrying formless clouds wheeled into wide oblong rings of riders. Viewed from the heights about, the rims of these rings, revolving in opposite directions, might have seemed to run together. At the nearest point of contact they did not, in fact, vary much from fifty yards. For a quarter mile or so the hostile lines, riding in the same direction, ran nearly parallel to each other. No better arena for individual feats of riding, of daring and of marksmanship, could be devised.

In this fair and open field-fighting the Crows and their cousins of the mountain met the Oglalas, Yanktonais and Brulés and, despite any prejudice to the contrary, without purpose or thought of treachery to their young men's agreement.

Theirs was a parade battle which indulged to the fullest extent the native love for display and excitement. The faces and bare legs of the wild riders were streaked with brilliant paints. Gorgeous and trailing war-bonnets were the marks of men of distinction, while the flying braids of others, their saddle and bridle trappings, and even their horses' tails were decorated with gay streamers.

Seven-eighths of each wheeling circuit was ridden out in safety and, to save the wind of their ponies, the fighters rode at an easy gallop, displaying feats of horsemanship and whooping

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and yelling until their noise filled the ears of all the anxious watchers at the Sioux village.

As each rider approached what may be termed the firing line, unless he wished to make a brave show by sitting upright, he threw himself upon or alongside his animal's withers and rode at top speed shooting his arrows over or under the pony's neck. Not many arrows could be discharged in a single dash by even the most expert of shooters, and usually these flew rather wide of the mark. But now and then a ruck of riders massed, and the feathered shafts flew thick and fast. In these *melées* happened most of the casualties. Here and there a pony was bowled over or a rider stricken and carried, living or dead, across the circuit on which he fell.

If a man's horse was killed and himself uninjured he loped away, inside his own lines, to secure a fresh one. As a pony could not run many times the circuit of these wide rings, and keep the pace, strings of horses were continually going to and fro between camp and battlefield. Many riders replenished their quivers by riding inside the fighting line, hanging from the saddle, and plucking the enemies' shafts from the ground. Some did this, with most admirable nerve and dexterity, amid a flight of whizzing missiles.

Thus passed several hours of glorious exercise and good fighting. A number had been killed

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and wounded on either side, but at midday neither circle of fighters had shown any marked superiority, and suddenly signals ran along the lines and the rings were broken and the riders fell together, at their centers, as by magic.

The crowds thus grouped flung themselves off their tired ponies and stretched their bodies upon the grass for rest and to smoke and eat and tell of brave exploits. Here food and water was brought by boys and young men, eager to be of service. And so for several hours the hostile armies reposed over against each other.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### THE VOYAGERS ARRIVE

The bull boat had slipped out of a gorge wherein it had whirled over rapids until the voyagers were dizzy, and was floating, between high and caving banks, well out into some bottom lands.

Etapa lay curled like a young fox upon the bottom of the craft and, within the small remaining space, upon the blanket rolls which supported the sleeper, Zintkala sat upon her knees. She did not try to propel the boat but used a light pole merely to keep it from grounding.

Wi, the sun, had sloped half way down in the west and the day was warm, quite too warm, within the river's channel, for exertion. Here and there for a little way the big skin tub would sail along quite rapidly, whirling around and around like a floating turtle shell. Again drifting as an autumn leaf drifts it floated, barely moving against the gray earth banks; and the young girl's head would droop, nodding sleepily, until it rested upon her bosom.

Then the pole would drop from her nerveless fingers and she would awake with a start to stretch a small brown hand out upon the current.

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In one of these quick catches after the pole the bull boat dipped water, drenching Etapa's face; and this so pleased Zintkala that she laughed herself awake. The boy grumbled sleepily and turned his wet cheek under an arm.

Zintkala did not land the boat to climb the steep banks, for she had done this many days until she was weary of continued disappointments. She knew that if the Oglalas were camped in this strange country they would be found very near to the river—for most small streams were dry at this season—and so there could be no danger of passing their village unawares. For days they had seen no sign of human creatures and they were drifting now almost aimlessly, their thoughts and labors confined to present needs.

Indians, or people of any sort, were farthest from the sister's mind when her bull boat bumped over a shallow rapid and ran plump upon a washout runway, where a great number of animals had recently forded the stream. At first Zintkala supposed a big herd of buffaloes had crossed the river, but she stopped the boat and her shrewd eyes detected pony tracks—unmistakably Indian ponies; a great number of them had very recently passed that way.

"Mi sun!"

The word was spoken in an undertone, but there was in the tone a thrill of startling import

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which the sleeper's ears responded to, and Etapa arose, nearly upsetting the bull boat. The boy's eyes quickly fell upon the trampled sloping banks of the washout, and he leaped to land with a sharp exclamation of elation.

"Han! han!" he said. "I think perhaps the Oglala hunters have been after the buffaloes—thus we shall very quickly find our people!"

After a moment's keen search he spoke again more guardedly.

"Hoye, Tanké!" he said. "I think indeed these may have been the Oglalas. I do not see the travois trail nor any moccasin tracks, therefore these men were hunters or a war party."

"Let us be very careful, younger brother, lest we be seen suddenly by some strange people," urged the sister, and her breath came quick with excitement and suspense. She hoped these many riders had been Oglalas, but she feared they were enemies.

The boy, despite his mounting hope, exercised an Indian's caution. He did not mount the bank upon the pony trail but reëntered the bull boat.

"Tanké," he said, "let us go on further, that we may climb out in a secret place and see if any persons are in sight."

So in keen suspense of expectation the two poled their craft along until they had passed a curve of the river's bank. Then they landed

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and scrambled up to the cover of a cluster of green willows. From out this covert they peered with caution, but could see nothing of human import save the broad dusty trail which stretched over a little rise, that formed a second bottom to the river lands.

"It appears there are no people near this place," said Etapa, after he had scanned the lower reaches, "therefore let us go forward to look at this trail."

They approached, keeping upon the untrod ground, and examined the trampled surface carefully, and this time they discovered what they had missed before—pony tracks leading back upon the trail.

"Ho! I do not think these men have gone far from their village," said Etapa. "I think their town is among those hills yonder. It appears that a war party has gone out to meet the enemy."

"Do you think these people are the Oglalas?" asked Zintkala, doubt and perplexity clouding her round face.

Before the boy had reflected sufficiently for answer a clatter of rapidly approaching hoofs fell upon their ears. A light breeze blowing from the northwest rustled the willows and the tops of nearby cottonwoods, and the startled pair could not tell from which direction the horses were approaching. A moment of inde-

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cision, as they held their breath and listened, cost them an opportunity to hide.

Two horsemen suddenly appeared upon the rise in their front. These were strange Indians in paint and war dress, armed with shields and long lances, and one with bow and quiver of arrows at his back.

To run would have been imprudent as well as useless, and the voyagers, with hearts pounding at their ribs, not knowing whether these were friends or enemies, stepped back some paces from the trail. The boy carried his buffalo gun and, under pretense of shifting the weapon from hand to hand, secretly drew its hammer back in readiness to fire. His quick eye noted that one rider, a young Indian, had neither bow nor firearm, and that the other, a large and fleshy man, had but few arrows in his quiver. He would shoot this last man if shoot he must.

The strange riders showed no surprise. They reined in their ponies at some rods distant and sat looking at the bare-legged, sun-scorched, wanderers, who must, at this time, have resembled Feejees rather than Sioux. The horsemen were evidently puzzled as to the tribal identity of the pair. They rode forward upon the trail a little further and suddenly wheeled and faced the voyagers.

"How?" said the big man, inquiringly. "How," answered Etapa, in a far-away voice. The stran-

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gers looked at each other. Something in the boy's voice or manner had decided them. The larger man rode forward, indicating by signs that he wished to examine the buffalo gun.

Etapa and Zintkala drew back quickly, and the boy shook his head in decided refusal. The big soldier suddenly poised his lance as though to attack.

Etapa uttered a fierce yell, and leveled his gun. The man quickly yanked his horse backward and dodged behind his shield. The younger spurred his horse further beyond range.

"E-e-yi! Yih!" yelled Etapa.

His shrill defiant war-cry instantly warned the wild riders that they had to deal with no ordinary Indian lad. This boy was a fighter, a tactician. He had not expended his bullet, but was saving it for a close sure shot if they should charge. The warriors looked at each other with appreciative grins. This boy's war-shout had proclaimed him a Sioux. They would, therefore, kill these two and wear notched feathers in their braids. They circled about in a quick dash to cut off retreat to the river's bank.

The man with the bow and arrows then leaped from his saddle and half concealed himself behind his pony. He fitted an arrow and drew his bow as if to shoot. The frightened Zintkala started to run, but Etapa checked her with a sharp note of warning.

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"Hoye, Tanké! Do not run!" he cried. "Keep looking at this man. Jump quickly on one side if he shoots!"

The sister faced about palpitating with fear.

"These men will surely kill us if you do not give them the gun!" she said imploringly.

But the boy stood his ground, aiming carefully at the bowman. Again the wild riders grinned appreciation of the young warrior's shrewdness. They knew his buffalo gun had no sights. They wished to draw his fire at a distance.

But Etapa began to back away. He was frightened enough, but he was all Indian, and he preferred to fight rather than yield to capture. He did not believe these two men, soldiers though they were, would rush upon the muzzle of his gun. Let the bowman shoot his arrows!

The man, as if in response to his thought, suddenly, and with a fierce yell, launched a shaft at him. The boy's leap to one side was apparently instantaneous. The shaft struck into the higher ground behind him.

"Run quickly, Tanké, and get the arrow!" shouted Etapa. Zintkala plucked courage from her bold defender and obeyed with swift feet.

The strange soldiers spoke to each other and laughed wickedly. They had begun to enjoy the prospect of fighting these quick-witted ones. Though they wot not of Tatars this pair filled the place in their barbaric minds. The bowman

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## THE VOYAGERS ARRIVE

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now sprang upon his horse and rode around the voyagers in a sharp circle; he threatened frequently to launch his arrows.

"Do not let him hit you, Tanké!" shouted Etapa. "If I shoot him, get his bow and arrows quickly!"

The sister understood fully, and the blood of the fighting Sioux was roused in her. She ran about in a dizzy kind of maze, leaping like a dancer. Etapa sprang from side to side, and kept his gun pointed toward the wheeling horseman. This fellow spurred his pony suddenly in a straight line and, passing within a few paces of Etapa, let fly an arrow under his horse's neck. Again he missed, and the young Sioux ran swiftly backward and secured the shaft.

The bowman gave a whoop of chagrin and surprise. Shooting at these spindle-legged dodgers was like throwing pebbles at swallows. Adroitly the young Sioux led their enemies—the young warrior followed to watch for an opening—away from the river bank lest they should discover the bull boat and so secure Etapa's bow and arrows!

The two well nigh forgot their fears in an exciting game; their powers were engaged only to outwit that rapidly circling pony rider. Again and again, like a wheeling hawk, the big soldier rode around the dodging voyagers. The man often made feints to shoot. Although the two

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leaped tirelessly to foil his aim, the suspense and uncertainty, the peril of those swift close dashes across his circuit, was like to dizzy and confuse the young brains.

As they dodged and ran backward the children kept near to the base of the little elevation which marked the river's second bottom. This prevented the rider from shooting at them, save as he aimed downward or against the rise, and as he missed one seized, or kicked and broke, the well lodged shaft. Each time the big man failed the younger gave a whoop of derision. The wheeling horseman grew bolder, his sudden attacks more difficult to avoid, and the voyagers were tiring. When they were near to despair Zintkala suddenly found her feet among stones. Instantly she stooped and caught up several heavy pebbles. As the soldier again rushed at them she flung the stones with all her might. His pony was hit upon the face and nearly pitched its rider off as it sheered suddenly to one side.

"Waste-šte!" shouted Etapa, and he, too, shifting his gun, began to throw stones. No horse would face such a battery, and in vain the rider tried to force his animal within the circle of their effective hail of pebbles.

In his anger the fierce bowman halted and launched two shafts in a fury at the boy. Etapa was nearly transfixed. An arrow passed

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on either side and one of them was splintered on his gun stock.

The shooter reached a hand to his quiver to find that he had expended all his shafts. As Zintkala seized and broke his last whole arrow across her knee, the soldier showed his chagrin so deeply that his companion again whooped with derision; he slapped his bare thigh and gave vent to guffaws of laughter.

The voyagers ceased exertion and looked about them for some line of flight to cover.

"Tanké," said Etapa, pointing up the river, "let us go thitherward to yonder high bank. If this man attacks I will surely shoot him."

"Let us do so quickly," replied Zintkala, and they now mounted the rise, the boy turning to threaten the horseman with his gun, if they should follow.

"Mi sun!" Zintkala's voice was raised in a shout of wonder and gladness, "I think, indeed, the Oglalas are here!"

The boy wheeled and his eyes followed his sister's. Out upon the prairie, within plain view were two large camps or armies of soldiers, at rest. They were not within hailing distance, but could be seen distinctly. Some were walking about, others sat upon the ground and still others held or tended herds of horses. One series of groups was nearly opposite the other, some bow shots removed from them and further up the

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river valley. And again, beyond these, the voyagers' eyes fell upon the distant conical points of many tepées—a big village.

"Tanké!" exclaimed the boy, with sudden conviction, "those far ones are indeed the Oglalas who have been fighting these others!"

"But these will take us!" said the girl, in a voice of yearning and despair.

Etapá could not answer. His heart sank. He knew why these two, who had come to the river, were so fierce to kill him and his sister without calling upon their fellows for help. They would not seek assistance so long as they could hope for success, but when they could not, what chance was there for escape!

"Let us walk, going backward, pretending not to know anyone," said the boy, in this desperate strait. "Let us go upon the lower ground to reach the high bank."

They stepped easily down out of sight of the soldiers upon the prairie, who had probably taken no note of them as yet. The voyagers now walked quickly backward, with their faces turned toward the two horsemen, their hands filled with stones to throw if these should chase them.

The soldiers immediately unslung the bull's hide shields attached to their saddles; then they talked together earnestly for a moment. Soon the younger turned and rode along the river's

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bank, and the larger man started directly toward the nearer soldiers' camp.

"Tanké! Run!" cried Etapá, and the two turned and sped along the base of the rise, running as they had never run before. Their days of rest in the bull boat, and their fears, lent wings to their supple and much tried legs.

In a dash of three hundred yards or more the horseman who pursued along the river did not gain more than a third the distance though he urged his pony at top speed. He passed the fleet runners, apparently intending to get between them and the high bank, at which they were aiming. Suddenly he wheeled, lowered his lance, covered his body with his shield and charged directly at them. In the same instant they heard a clatter of hoofs over the rise beyond. The soldiers were charging from opposite directions to confuse and destroy them.

Neither dared turn either way to throw stones, lest a hurled lance should transfix the thrower! The runners halted instantly; with the instinct of hunted animals, they leaped aside at the point of contact. The horsemen came together in a flurry of dust to find the dodgers again escaped, and some cracking strokes upon the ribs, as the voyagers hurled their stones and ran, set their ponies prancing.

The soldiers gathered themselves and their



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weapons for a fresh attack, and now the young Sioux sped up onto the prairie. They knew they must be nearly as close to the upper war party as to the enemy, and they ran toward those whom they believed were friends.

Zinkala raised her voice in a shrill appealing cry, "Até! Até! Até!"

The enraged horsemen wheeled again and charged them recklessly. These wily and incredibly fleet young Sioux would bring disgrace upon them should their rabbit legs now permit them to escape.

For another time breathless dodging saved the voyagers, and still the gun prevented any other tactics than the cross-charging. There was a moment of delay in recovery, and again the riders swiftly circled to position. The voyagers were feeling the tremendous strain of their efforts. Frantic terror had seized upon them. It was impossible for Etapa to use his gun—if he should turn upon one rider the other would run him through. It was impossible also for the fleet, less-encumbered Zinkala to leave his side. They had to hold together.

Again the wicked lancemen charged with shields in front and spears poised to hurl; and somehow out of the mêlée the agile ones again escaped; but a catastrophe happened—the boy's cocked gun was accidentally discharged. He gave a shrill cry of despair, and fled with both riders

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after him as quickly as they could gather themselves. Each was bent upon securing the buffalo gun for himself. They rushed together and hindered each other.

The boy dodged their lance thrusts again and again and the girl, running just ahead, continued to cry,

"Até! Até! Até!"

Suddenly a vast chorus of whoops shook the air and the lancers, with a tired quarry and in the moment of success, were startled into drawing rein. They saw before them the two big war parties, mounted in groups, watching their game, and they saw also a single horseman from the Sioux columns coming with the speed of a prongbuck. He was half way to them, in fact, a chief in plumes and war-bonnet, lying low upon a buckskin horse, which ran as the coyote runs; and they saw the children they had chased stretch their arms toward this horseman and heard their shrill cries, which rang above the clamor—

"Até! Até! Até!"

As the Sioux warrior whistled down the wind also they heard his strong voice crying its challenge.

"I am Fire Cloud of the Oglalas—fight me! fight me!"

And they understood that they must fight this famous war-chief to the death, or be stricken

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as they ran like fleeing dogs. They knew that in all those watching throngs no hand would be raised to help or hinder. Their fighting blood prevailed and they wheeled apart to meet the attack.

"Come on, dog of a Sioux!" they shouted, affixing their shields to protect their bodies from his arrows.

The flying rider passed his glad children without so much as a glance at them. He reined his horse at fifty paces from the enemy and loomed large in the saddle, painted, gaily bedecked, cool of manner and keen of eye, but carried only a war-club slung at his wrist. He had not even a bull's hide shield to protect his half-naked body!

"Ho, Kangi! My cousins, who it seems are enemies, since you wished to kill my children, who have arrived; I, their father, am here." He spoke calmly but with deep fire of excitement in his eyes.

The Crows looked at each other and laughed. They understood that this man had heard the cry of his lost children, had discovered them pursued, and had leaped his horse without waiting to arm himself; that all the others had seen him come forth and supposed the man wished merely to adventure his body in battle. Very well, they would count coup upon his body and kill his dodgers also if these should stay to wit-

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ness his death. They began to circle rapidly around him, no longer afraid.

The chief sat his horse, making no move at first, but as the Crows drew nearer, suddenly began to whirl his war-club. The stone head of the weapon swung about his body so that he seemed encircled by an unbroken ring.

The wheeling riders charged him, one from either side, thrusting at him with lances. Both their weapons were flung aside by his whirling club, and the chief executed a swift demi-volt and again impassively faced them. From the crowds of onlookers shouts of approval greeted his successful maneuver.

Out on the prairie a little way Zintkala stood, with clinched hands, panting from exertion, her eyes fixed with mingled longing, love and terror, upon the figure of that bold Sioux chief. And, squatted cross-legged upon the ground, Etapa, without a ramrod, worked frantically trying to fit a bullet to his buffalo gun.

The two Crows again circled, wheeling like birds of prey about the Oglala, and again charged him from opposite sides. The encounter was sharp and fierce; the Sioux's war-club seemed to play on all hands at once. Out of this encounter the big Crow emerged with a broken lance, but the smaller, with a yell of triumph, carried away, strung upon his spear, the Sioux chief's gorgeous war-bonnet.

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Yet the Oglala soldier faced his enemies a second time unscathed, and the prairie was shaken by the vast shrill chorus which greeted his exploit.

As the Crows again wheeled into position for attack the larger, who had exchanged his broken spear for the tomahawk, yelled a sharp note of warning to his fellow.

The smaller turned his pony in a sharp circle to see the boy he had so lately chased rush at him with a leveled gun. There was no moment to spare—to retreat was not to be thought of, and with a wild yell he lowered his shield and charged.

When the horse was almost upon him, aiming at the center of that shield, Etapa fired. As when he had shot at the bear, his gun exploded with a mighty roar, and knocked him backward off his feet. The Crow's lance, hurled downward, struck deep into the ground where he had stood. But this Indian did not stop to fight further. His shield fell to the ground, an arm dangled at his side, and he galloped away to his fellows, only bearing the war-bonnet, which had fallen across his saddle pommel.

This time the kicking buffalo gun had saved Etapa, and very likely the chief and the girl. The boy leaped to his feet, seized the fallen shield and wrenched the lance from its hold.

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"I have taken war weapons of the enemy!" he shouted in a shrill exultant treble, which reached to all the crowds of horsemen; and these greeted his success with cloud-touching yells.

For the first time the Dakota father turned to one of his children.

"How—how—my son!" he said, and instantly rode to attack the big Crow, who now waited his turn.

Fire Cloud rushed his pony at this man without regard to tactics, and they came together in a duel, such as delighted the souls of a thousand wild riders.

The two wheeled rapidly about each other, striking, dodging, turning demi-volts. The Crow warrior had an advantage in his tough bull's hide shield, and again and again turned aside swift and dextrous strokes which would have maimed himself or horse.

As he wheeled about, this soldier saw that the chief's son was not reloading his gun, and so took heart and fought manfully; while the voyagers shouted to their father that now indeed he should overcome the enemy. Their faith was justified. Suddenly as Fire Cloud charged, hurling his horse against that of the big soldier, the Crow's tomahawk flew from his hand, and his shield was crushed by a swinging stroke, which flung him out of the saddle and measured his length upon the ground.

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The Sioux chief leaped from his horse and set his foot upon the helpless enemy.

"Ho, Kangi!" he cried. "Now, indeed, I might easily count a coup upon your body and give your flesh to the dogs, but I will not do so! My children have arrived. My heart is glad, and I wish to kill no one."

The bruised and astonished Crow struggled to his feet and stared unbelievably at the victor.

"Hoh!" he exclaimed, "hoh—hoh!"

The Sioux stepped back. "Yonder is your horse, Kangi," he said, "now go."

The man's pony had stopped to graze quite as though fighting were a daily incident. The Crow walked slowly to the animal and mounted. He rode away, shaking his head and muttering.

"Hoh—hoh—hoh!" he said. He could not understand.

Fire Cloud's children now stood together. They would not approach their father until he bade them. But their faces shone with such joy as those may feel who look upon angels.

The victor looked after the retreating Crow, and intently toward the hosts of astonished horsemen for a moment—for the air was rent with shouts of surprise, of anger, of approval. Then apparently satisfied that no one would advance to molest, he mounted his animal and turned to his children.

"My son—my daughter!" he said, and he

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stooped and swung the boy with his war weapons up in front, and lifted the girl to a seat behind his saddle.

"My children," he spoke again, "you have come a long way?"

And into his glad ears the voyagers began to clamor, "Até, the Hohé took us!" cried Zintkala.

"We escaped from the Ojibwas!" shouted Etapa.

"We ran a very long way in the woods—"

"The Ojibwas chased us—"

"We were in a swamp!"

"The eagles brought fish!"

"We escaped—"

"Brother was very sick—"

"Han—han—han!" said the chief.

"We stole many ponies from the Hohé!"

"Han—han!"

"I indeed struck a Scili! I also struck mato-sapa!" the boy raised his voice to a shout.

"How—how, my son—my daughter—my children!"

To their bewildering cross-fire of adventures the glad father could only answer by exclamations.

He rode slowly with his double burden, past the squads of wondering Sioux, but none came forward to question, though many must have shrewdly guessed the truth about these slim young strangers, little as they seemed to

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resemble the small boy and girl their chief had lost.

When nearly half way to the Sioux town, Fire Cloud set his children's feet upon the earth.

"Long enough there has been mourning in your mother's tepée," he said. "Run ye hither quickly." And he turned and rode back to his soldiers.

At the Sioux village many women, old men and young people were gathered about the willow railings which surrounded their town. Others sat in groups out upon the prairie at a little distance. Many of these were women who had sat cross-legged and immovable for hours, and despite the heat, with blankets close drawn about their heads. Among these were anxious mothers, wives and sweethearts, and a number had already lifted their voices in wailing. They had been glad when the fighting ceased. As the afternoon wore on and no more runners arrived it was said among these groups that now it was evident, of a truth, that the Crows and Mountain Indians were afraid of their soldiers. "Ho, ho," they said, "our warriors have indeed defeated those wicked Kangi!"

Presently, however, they heard a great shouting which seemed to indicate that some exciting move was on foot among the armies. But away off there on the prairie all the groups of

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## THE VOYAGERS ARRIVE

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horsemen appeared as blurred patches with no movement of an intelligible nature. The shouting arose several times like the swell of shrill far-away music, then all appeared to be quiet again.

At length a young man, standing upon a high cedar post and acting as crier for the home groups, shouted in a loud voice that a runner was coming—a large man upon a white horse. There had been no message since a large number of young men had returned to the soldiers, bearing loads of dried meat.

There was a hush of expectancy—the people patiently waited. Presently the young man cried again that three persons had ridden the white horse, that one was going back with the pony and the other two coming on foot. These two were running very rapidly. In a little time all who craned their necks above their fellows' heads could see two slim figures leaping toward them.

"These are strange soldiers!" shouted the lad upon the post. "One has a gun and the other a lance and shield."

The runners came nearer. They appeared to be running with marvelous speed, and eagerly, with tangles of matted hair flying, their thin bare legs skimming the ground with rabbit-like ease.

"Hoh!" shouted the crier presently, "these two are very young. One is indeed a girl!"

There were exclamations of incredulity. As the strangers drew nearer they seemed to

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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belong to black people. They were certainly very dark—they were also illy clothed. Suddenly the voices of these two loping ones were raised in shrill, joyous notes.

"Ina! Ina! we are coming—Zintkala—Etapá—your son—your daughter!"

There was a moment of dead silence then a chorus of exclamations, which expressed the single emotion of amazement.

Then there fell upon the ears of all a wild yearning cry—a mother's cry—and a woman rose from one of the outer groups. Her blanket dropped from her shoulders and she staggered for a moment, clasping a hand to her forehead. Then she ran, though unsteadily, toward the fleet newcomers, and two wee girls, with arms and hair flying, sped at her heels.

The voyagers dropped their weapons and came on more swiftly.

"Ina! Ina! Ina!"

They leaped, panting like blown hares, into the mother's arms. The woman strained them to her bosom. She lifted her face and cried, "My children!—my children!" She could say nothing more.

Two little sloe-eyed girls flung themselves upon the voyagers' bare legs and clamored piteously for attention, shouting that now indeed they knew that tanké and sunkaku had come back to them.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### THE WARRIOR FATHER'S APPEAL

The Oglalas among the Sioux had reached a conclusion. They had seen Fire Cloud go homeward with the rescued children, having spared a man who had tried to kill them—his own children doubtless—and they knew that their chief soldier's heart had become very soft. They feared even that some evil spirit, suddenly in the moment of victory, had made him witko.

Yet they held themselves in readiness to fight so soon as the Crows and Mountain Indians should make a move in their direction.

While the head soldiers were consulting together, Fire Cloud wheeled his horse and came swiftly back to them. A group gathered about him.

"My children have arrived," he said simply. He removed the war-club from his wrist and tendered it to one nearest. The man took it and others looked on wondering.

"I wish to talk to these Kangi and Mountain Crows," he said. "How, how, speak to them," said some of the older warriors, well pleased.

Immediately Fire Cloud rode toward the enemy, who were moving about in a restless fashion. The chief approached half way, and

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made a sign of amity. Getting no answer, he shouted his name, and soon the Crows and their allies understood that this was the war-chief who had spared a Crow soldier.

A head partisan of the Crows rode out presently to meet the Oglala. This one halted within a few paces of the chief.

"Ho, you that spared the life of War Dog, what do you seek of us?" he inquired.

"If your chief men will come forward and talk I will tell them why we are come into this country," answered Fire Cloud. "We did not come here to fight, unless an enemy should seek us."

"How, I will tell them what you have said," and the partisan turned and rode back to his fellows. After a while the Crows and others signaled their willingness to come forward, and Fire Cloud passed the word to his Sioux. He also arranged, by signs, for the numbers of each which should approach.

After a decorous length of time some two score of the chiefs and partisans of each war-party were seated—while young men held their ponies in the rear—in opposite groups upon the prairie. They did not smoke the peace pipe. None offered it. They wore the dress and paints of fighting men, and held their weapons in hand.

"We will listen to the One-Who-Spares-His-

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## THE WARRIOR FATHER'S APPEAL

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Enemy," was the dictum of a Crow chief, and in a tone which implied that none other need talk.

Fire Cloud arose and walked into the space confronting the allies. He was shorn of his war-dress, and carried no weapon. He wore leggins and moccasins and a tall white feather stood aslant from his scalp lock.

He spoke to the Crows and the Mountain People present in Dakota, which was their mother tongue, both being apostate tribes. Yet, had they understood no word of his tongue, these children of the wilderness could have followed every thought in his vivid sign language.

"Ho, Kangi, and you Mountain Soldiers, whose name should be Dakota, I did not think when you came to attack us that I should indeed wish to speak with you.

"Listen, last year I sent my children to be taught of the white people at Traverse des Sioux. These people treated them with rigor, trying very quickly to give them white skins. This was folly, and I have now seen how foolish I myself have been. My children ran away from their school and the Hohé took them. These sold them into a far country.

"When a runner came this spring and told me this, my spirit was broken. I did not wish to live. But this runner who came said also that some of my people in Minnesota were foolishly going to war against the white people. I said, 'Though I



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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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wish to die, yet my people and their children wish to stay upon the earth,' therefore, I urged them that we should come far into this broken country; that we might not be implicated in war, and that we might as long as possible stand against our enemies.

"When I was yet young the Dakotas lived in a land of great abundance. From the falls of the big river to the Missouri we had all that land. When the white people came among us we always treated them with kindness. We gave them food and many presents. Their settlements seemed a long way off, and we thought they must be destitute, having come so far. What happened? Before my younger children were born, these people had spread across the great river and taken our best country from us. They gave us nothing for the land. They forgot our kindness, and rudely thrust us out.

"Ho, you Kangi and your cousins, you have all seen the locusts which fly upon us and spread themselves upon all the land in the grass moons; how these build their round tepées in the ground, covering all the earth and destroying the grass, so that the buffaloes are indeed driven away, and your hunters cannot find them, and there is hunger and want in your lodges. So do these white people spread; but each one builds his tepée of wood or stone, and abides

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## THE WARRIOR FATHER'S APPEAL

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upon his piece of ground and there is no room for anyone on the earth.

"These are indeed moving upon all the earth toward us. I myself have seen them. They will destroy the trees and grass and kill all things that live with us. We cannot resist them. Who is so witko as to believe it?

"How silly it appears that we should be fighting each other, and thus give to these enemies of all Indians better excuse to seize our property! Very soon we shall have nothing to fight about. We shall be searching for the graves of our dead, and shall not find them. We shall inquire whither we may pitch our tepées and no one can tell us. We shall ask of those who have despoiled us where we may find meat for our children.

"Ho, Kangi and you Mountain Soldiers, do you indeed wish it thus? Do you wish to crawl upon your bellies that others may feed your women and children?

"To-day my children arrived, having escaped from captivity. Because of this battle between us they were near to death. But the Waniyan Tanka has indeed saved them, and my heart is glad. I no longer desire to die. I wish to live. I wish my people to be at peace, so that we may save some of our land whereon we may raise our children and bury our dead.

"Listen, Kangi and Mountain Soldiers. When

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## TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

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the buffaloes came was there any lack of meat and skins for you and for us? Are your children hungry? If so, we will give them meat. If anyone among you is in want let him come to my tepée and I will feed and clothe him. Thus say all these my colleagues and partisans. I have finished."

The Crows and their friends were much astonished at what this Sioux chief had said. They considered the matter gravely and apart for a time. At length an old chief spoke.

"How, Dakotas," he said, "let us indeed prepare the peace pipe. We did not understand why you had come into this country, or we would not have acted thus rudely. You are very welcome to stay all winter at this place."

"How—how, good—good!" cried the Sioux. Immediately these war-chiefs began to approach each other and to shake hands. Pipes passed among them, and they talked for a long time, telling each other such news of distant wars as they had heard.

After they had sat, until nearly sunset, thus talking, two young men of the Crows approached, bearing a covered vessel between them. They set this burden at the feet of Fire Cloud, and removed their blankets, discovering a rude bull boat.

The chief arose to look at this craft, an oblong

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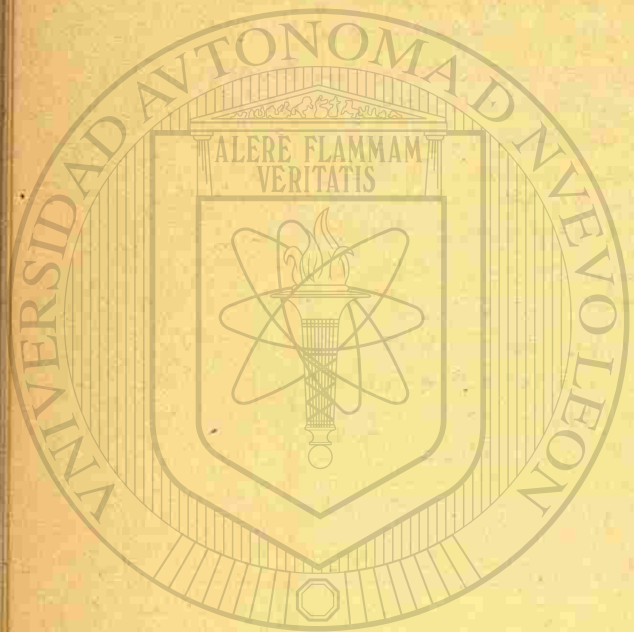
## THE WARRIOR FATHER'S APPEAL

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tub, with frame-work of bent willows, covered with a half tanned buffalo pelt. Inside he saw two small blanket rolls, a parflèche filled with small articles and pieces of dried meat, a carcajou's skin, a long knife in a leather sheath, a metal basin much blackened by use, a boy's horn-tipped bow, and a quiver containing three strange arrows.

"Han! han!" said Fire Cloud, "it was thus that my children arrived!"

It is said that these tribes have not fought each other since, except when treacherous ones have been hired to go in search of some village of women and children, which the Great Father's soldiers wished to attack.



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