

# STRAIGHT PINE'S SACRIFICE

*An Exciting Complete Story Dealing with the Adventures of  
a British Boy Amongst Redskins*

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Delaware Chief—  
Straight Pine—The  
Guarded Fire—Nat  
Wild—The Feud  
—Dick Wild.

UP on the branch of a pine a squirrel was calling; through the tops of the tall trees a restless wind rustled; down by the shingle of the lake the water rippled faintly like the falling of seeds; but the Delaware Whatawa, seated by his little fire of dry twigs, made no sound at all. Beside him lay his rifle, before him was the fire of dry wood—he had taken care that it should be dry, so that no tell-tale smoke should arise from it—and round both himself and the fire had been stretched two blankets.

Whatawa, or Straight Pine, to give him the name by which he was usually known, sat and stared moodily into the fire, a rather sad look in his fine eyes. He was a handsome man, judged by the Red Indian standard. His brow was high and slanting, the eyes rather near together and very bright, the nose aquiline, the mouth thin-lipped and



Straight Pine

determined. Only the lines and curves of paint on the face gave it the rather repellent look which it wore just now.

Ay, the paint showed plainly to those who knew the Indians that the Delaware was on the warpath.

Yet why was he alone in this great forest bordering the edge of that great sheet of water known to the Indians as Sheet of Sun—to the whites as Lake Quesna? He was a Delaware, and the tracts of this forest were given over to game and the ferocious Mingoos. If it was that he was seeking game, surely he could have chosen a safer hunting-ground. If he sought the scalps of Mingoos, the deadly enemies of the Delawares, would he have come on such an errand alone?

Whatawa stirred the embers of the fire with a moccasined foot, and drew the blankets closer together. The night was chilly, but even then he would not have lit a fire, had he thought that enemies were near. Now and again he rose, placed his body between the flames and the blanket, and stepped into the darkness without. On each occasion,

however, with a satisfied "Ugh!" he had returned to the fire.

After a final look round outside, Whatawa scattered the embers with his tomahawk, raked earth over them, and lay down on the hard ground. The state of his moccasins showed that he had travelled far, and the fact that he was almost at once asleep suggested that his mission was one which was giving him little rest.

By some chance Whatawa had not entirely extinguished the fire, and one twig of dry wood still smouldered. The flame travelled along it, eating it up hungrily, reached other twigs, which had been placed ready to replenish the fire, and caught them. A little flame shot up, throwing a fitful light over the enclosure and the prostrate form of the Indian chief.

Whatawa stirred uneasily, then, without a sound, without any jerky motion, but with that strangely silent action curiously Indian-like, sat up. His left hand dropped to where his rifle lay, but stopped half-way.

"Ugh!" he grunted, with his eyes staring straight before him.

"I guess ye're right," a deep voice observed. "I got the bead first."

Through a small opening, caused by one of the blankets being pulled aside, was thrust the barrel of a rifle. It was upon this that the Delaware's eyes, betraying no sign of emotion, dwelt. He had heard the approach of the man with the rifle too late, and had been covered before he could grasp his own weapon.

"My white brother should enter," Whatawa said calmly, in a deep, singularly mellow voice. "Without in the forest the winds are cold, but here there is warmth, and—a friend."

The blanket was drawn further aside, and a tall man, his rifle ready in his hands, though the butt was no longer pressed against his shoulder, entered the little enclosure. The faintest possible gleam of admiration showed in the eyes of the Indian as they rested upon the man.

He was certainly a fine specimen of manhood—in height a trifle over six feet in his moccasined feet, proportionately broad

of shoulder, and carrying himself with the air of one who fears neither man nor beast. His bearded face was tanned to almost as dark a hue as the Indian's through long exposure, and his dress showed that he was one of those hardy pioneers who forced their living, against considerable odds, from the forests and the plains of North America. His dress was of the skin of the buck, and slung across it by narrow thongs were his shot and powder flasks. In his belt was a bone-handled knife.

This man calmly seated himself on the ground opposite the Indian. There was a hard look in his eyes, and the set of his mouth was grim and forbidding. By reaching out a foot he was able to draw the other's rifle towards him. Even while doing that his eyes never left the Indian's face.

"It's war, Delaware?" he asked, in his deep voice. "I tho't your tribe had buried the hatchet an' taken to huntin' an' trappin'."

"My white brother has the eyes of the hawk," Whatawa answered in very good English, and with something of a sneer in his voice. "Surely he must have been many moons in the great forests, that he can tell the war-paint of the Delaware?"

"Your name?" the trapper growled.

"Whatawa," the Indian answered coolly, though he knew well enough that this interview was like enough to end in his death. The blood-feud between the whites and the reds was strong. The Government were always ready to pay a price for an Indian scalp, and this trapper was therefore not likely to let this opportunity of bloodshed pass without taking advantage of it. "Other chiefs know me as Straight Pine. My speech is straight as the upright tree of the forest, and my voice has been heard much in council by the camp-fire.

"What do they call my white brother?"

The white man snatched off his felt hat with a rather angry gesture, and bent his head just sufficiently for the light of the fire, which was burning up now, to shine upon the crown of it. The light revealed a curious thing. The man's head was covered by short, strong, curly hair, save on the crown. There, for the space of a circle some

inches in circumference, was a bald spot. A look of understanding showed in the Indian's eyes, otherwise his face betrayed no sign of emotion.

"My brother is the great trapper No Scalp," he murmured.

"Ay, No Scalp it is," the trapper growled. And his fingers gripped harder on his rifle. "And so it's bin ever since a thievish Mingoe lifted it an' left me for dead. But I had his'n," Nat Wild continued, for such was his name; "jest because he had mine. Fair deal, Straight Pine?"

"My white brother is just."

Whatawa moved a hand cautiously towards his tomahawk, but the action was detected, and the trapper's rifle went up to his shoulder immediately.

"See here, Straight Pine," he growled, "I'm not wantin' ter finish this little discussion jest yet, so jest keep your hands away from the tomahawk. Guess I'll feel easier in my mind."

The Indian gave an almost imperceptible shrug of the shoulders, and stared moodily into the fire.

"What would No Scalp do?" he asked.

"Larn the reason fer that paint, chief," the trapper answered readily. "Ain't there peace with all the tribes jest now—not as you can trust 'em if there's a chance of an easy scalp about—ain't there?"

Straight Pine raised his sinewy arms, and motioned with his hands towards the surrounding woods. One had stopped and pointed away to the north.

"The Mingoes?" Nat Wild asked sharply.

"My brother has a very grey head of wisdom beneath his dark hair," Whatawa answered. "The Mingoes have dug up the hatchet against the palefaces."

"An' your tribe, the Delawares?" Nat Wild asked, cocking his rifle.

Now he knew that the reds were going to give trouble again, he deemed it his duty to put this man out of the way. It was brutal, but nothing more than the wild teaching of the woods.

"We are at peace."

The trapper laughed, and raised his rifle to his shoulder. The Indian did not flinch

as it covered him, and his placid face showed no sign of anything but indifference.

"The war-paint?" Nat Wild demanded.

"I go to warn the palefaces at Fort Lara-bee," Whatawa answered coolly.

"You lie, you dog!" the trapper thundered, for he knew the artifices of these redskins. "Mebbe the woods round here are full of vermin like you. Guess I'll finish you, and——"

"And bring the Delaware's friends here," Whatawa sneered, "if, as the wise paleface says, the woods are full of them."

This was too much for Nat Wild, who, obviously, was not the best-tempered of men. His fingers gripped the rifle a trifle harder. The barrel became steady as the branch of a tree that has no breeze to sway it. Yet Whatawa looked down the muzzle without a sign that he knew death to be hovering near, waiting for the signal of the finger upon the trigger.

"Nat!" a voice protested sharply.

Startled for a moment, put off his guard, despite his long experience of the woods, Nat Wild turned his head in the direction of the voice, which had proceeded from a well-set-up lad of fifteen or sixteen, dressed as the trapper was, who, holding aside the blanket, was staring in, horror writ large upon his face.

Only for a moment did Nat Wild turn, but that was long enough for Whatawa. His hand shot out, the rifle was forced upwards, the jerk discharging it, and the bullet whizzed up among the branches overhead. At the same moment the Indian had regained his own rifle, and when the trapper, springing to his feet, swung his discharged weapon up, he stopped with it in mid-air.

Straight Pine still sat by the fire, but the butt of his rifle rested in the palm of his hand now. There was no trace of a look of triumph in his face.

"No Scalp will talk further with Straight Pine," he said; "and even the young paleface warrior shall have his seat by the fire."

Nat Wild's jaw dropped. All his life he had lived in the woods among the Indians, and he knew just what to expect now. He had attempted to take the Delaware's life, and it would be no more than an act of justice if

the Indian, now that he was top dog, reversed the tables. Just for a second the trapper's jaw was unsteady; then it set hard, and a calm look, with something of the Indian repose about it, took possession of his gnarled face.

"I guess you shoot," he drawled coolly.

"It is no time for the Delawares to turn against the palefaces," Whatawa answered quietly. "They will have enough fighting if they are to keep their scalps from the lodges of the Mingoos."

That the Indian really meant to spare his life, Nat Wild did not believe. He glanced sharply at Straight Pine, trying to read his thoughts; but the calm, impassive face told him nothing.

"Savin' me for torture, Straight Pine?" the trapper drawled, as if, anything in the nature of torture was quite ordinary and commonplace, and not to be troubled about.

Whatawa stirred the embers of the fire with his feet.

"No Scalp will listen as the brave harkens for the footfall of the enemy," he said, "for Straight Pine's words are no idle ones. Let Young Horse"—the chief had already found a name for Dick Wild, the trapper's young brother—"listen, too! He is fresh to the forest and the war-path, and it is well that he should learn soon."

Wild glanced at the Indian again, and motioned Dick, who was standing by, a look of determination on his youthful face, to keep near.

"I'm listenin', chief," he growled.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Straight Pine's Mission—Nat Wild Amazed —The Token of War—The Tree Fort.

STRAIGHT PINE, still with the butt of his rifle resting in the hollow of his right hand, smiled slightly at the youth whom he had named "Young Horse."

"Before another moon, Young Horse will have trod the war-trail," he said.

"You're sure?" Dick cried eagerly, evidently not at all alarmed by the prospect.

"The very shaddws of the trees are blacker, that the Mingoos and Hurons may be hidden by them," Whatawa answered.

Nat Wild, who had recovered a good deal of his self-possession by now, though he could not understand the actions of the chief, shrugged his great shoulders and laughed loudly. Straight Pine's eyes moved quickly to where the blankets did not quite meet, and he stared through the slit into the dark forest. The rifle moved slightly in his hands.

"No Scalp has the laughter of the fool," he said.

With an oath, Nat Wild took an angry step forward; then he met the calm, unflinching eyes of the Indian, and saw that the rifle still covered him, and he stopped.

"My paleface brother will be seated; and Young Horse will rest, too," Whatawa said; "for with the rising of the sun they will start on the long trail to Fort Larabee."

"Guess not," Nat Wild muttered, as he threw himself to the ground, lying close to the fire. Dick seated himself close to him. It was the first time that his brother had really allowed him to come out into the great forests after buck, and he hoped that it was true that the Hurons and Mingoos were——

"See here," Nat Wild said sharply, "What's all this talk, chief, about the Mingoos?"

Straight Pine moved his rifle a trifle, as if to place it beside him.

"Have I the white chief's word that it is peace?" he asked.

"Ay, that you have," Nat Wild agreed quickly, with a slightly eager look in his eyes.

Whatawa laid his rifle beside him, and even as he did so the trapper snatched his own up and covered the chief. There was a ferocious look in his eyes.

"Well, Delaware," he sneered, "where's yer friends now?"

With a slight cry, though certainly not one of alarm or fear, Dick threw himself between the Indian and his brother.

"Nat," he protested indignantly, "you promised!"

Covered as he was by the body of the gallant boy, Straight Pine could easily have plucked his rifle up again, but he did not make the slightest attempt to do so.

"Stand clear, you young fool!" the trapper snarled. "If it's the war-trail them reds are on, I'll send one of 'em to

the happy huntin'-grounds right now! Stand clear!"

"No!" Dick answered quietly. "The chief spared your life when he held it at his mercy, an' you gave your word that it was peace."

Still Straight Pine sat unmoved, his fine eyes staring into the fire. Apparently the conversation had no interest whatever for him.

With the quick action bred of a life among the dangers of the great forest, Nat Wild lowered his rifle, gripped Dick, swung him out of the way, and raised the weapon again. Straight Pine looked up, but did not flinch when he saw that the rifle was covering him.

"No Scalp should save his powder for his



Straight Pine slipped off his light robe, and, almost without rocking the frail canoe, plunged over into the lake. (See page 286.)

enemies," Whatawa said, "who lurk already in the woods, and whose eyes and feet are turned to Fort Larabee."

There was something in the chief's voice which began to impress the trapper, and he lowered his rifle, though still holding it ready for emergencies.

"Guess we might hear some more about this, chief," he said; then, reaching a hand behind him, touched Dick. That he was more than usually fond of the lad could be easily seen.

"Sit thee down, Dick," he said quickly. "I'm rough; but it's the woods does it. You won't be believin' all a chief tells you when you've lived long as I have wi' the muzzle o' my gun always turned towards 'em."

"Now then, Straight Pine, what's the trouble?"

Whatawa spread his thin hands towards the fire, and a flicker of a smile showed on his thin-lipped mouth.

"Is the paleface chief deaf?" he murmured, "that he cannot understand Straight Pine's words? Has he not already heard that the Hurons and Mingoes have dug up the hatchet and are on the war-path? Many have risen; the lodges are filled only by the children, the squaws, and the old men."

"A big fight?" Nat Wild muttered sharply.

"Black Hawk, the Mingoe, has sworn to capture Fort Larabee," Straight Pine answered. "Also has he sworn to add the scalp of every paleface in the woods to those already hanging dry from his tent-poles."

Dick had been listening more than a little eagerly. He had had some trouble in getting his brother to allow him to come from the settlements to hunt, and the prospect of a brush with redskins was almost too good to be true.

"Will there be a fight, chief?" he asked eagerly.

"Hist!" Straight Pine said sharply, and dropped forward across the fire, scattering the embers. He must have burnt himself more than a little, but he gave no sign. "Follow," he whispered.

There was a dead silence; then, from not far away, came the cracking of a twig. Nat

Wild instantly swung his rifle round in that direction, but Straight Pine touched him on the arm.

"Follow," he commanded again.

Lifting an end of the blanket, the chief crawled beneath it into the open. Dick came next, and Nat Wild last—all three with their guns cocked and ready. At this crawl, Straight Pine advanced for a few yards, then rose and touched Dick on the arm.

"Up!" he whispered, pointing to a great tree by which he stood; and the lad, even in the darkness, could see that notches had been cut in the trunk, at equal distances, with a tomahawk.

Without hesitation, guessing correctly what was required of him, Dick started to climb the tree, and behind him followed the chief and Nat Wild. There was no question of enmity between the last two now.

Thirty or forty feet the three mounted, and, reaching a part of the trunk where broad branches spread out from it, each lay down on a branch, Whatawa showing Dick the one which he was to occupy.

Up in the tree there was absolutely no light, and the two men and a boy, although they lay within a few feet of each other, were completely hidden one from the other. Not that they troubled about that; there were other things to think about. Straight Pine, lying like a part of the branch on which he was stretched, stared down in the direction of the little enclosure of blankets, and Nat Wild, on a branch near to him, looked in the same direction.

Once more a twig cracked, and the noise was followed by the click of the hammer of the chief's rifle. He had uncocked it while climbing the tree, but now he set it at full cock again. Nat Wild followed his example.

For the third time there came the noise of a twig snapping, and on this occasion it was much nearer. Almost as it snapped the rifle of Straight Pine altered its angle. There was a pause of a second, then the barrel belched its tongue of flame into the darkness of the night.

Up through the smoke, following close upon the heels of the report, came a wild shriek of pain.

# The Tragedy of the Topper

By JACK BLAKE

1

Take it up tenderly,  
Lift it with care;  
Fashioned so slenderly,  
Dainty and rare!  
Spread it out decently  
On the hall mat;  
It arrived recently  
Gussy's new hat!

2

Had it a sister?  
Had it a brother?  
Did someone twist her?  
Ask me another!  
Had it a brim with it?  
What silly lout  
Played in the gym with it,  
Knocked it about?

3

Who had a kick at it  
When it first came?  
Who shied a brick at it,  
Skilful of aim?  
Who tried to gratify  
Hooligan whims?  
I'll find out that if I  
Search all St. Jim's!



6

Stifle your merriment,  
Gussy draws near!  
As an experiment  
We'd better clear!  
Nothing can justify  
This sorry biz;  
But I shall bust if I  
See Gussy's phiz!

4

This sight will terrify  
Gussy, poor lad!  
I do not err if I  
Say he'll be mad!  
He will look sinister  
When this is found;  
And he'll administer  
Lickings all round!

5

Praps some one mangled it  
When it turned up;  
Praps Towser strangled it,  
Savage bull pup!  
Smothered with jam it is,  
Rent and forlorn;

Crowned with  
calamities,  
Rump led and  
torn!



“Ugh!” the Indian grunted softly, and, despite the awkwardness of his position, commenced to recharge his piece.

“You killed,” Nat Wild whispered with evident satisfaction.

“The wounded cries loudest,” Straight Pine answered. “The Mingoe dog hath life enough left to carry his scalp away on his head.”

“But you wouldn’t have scalped him, chief?” Dick protested hurriedly.

“Of what use is the scalp to a dead man?” Straight Pine answered calmly. “Without it the victory is not complete, and the brave shall receive no honour for it when he returns empty-handed to the wigwams of his tribe.”

Dick would have said more in protest against the old Indian custom, for he had not been long enough in the woods to understand that there were two laws governing the conduct of men, one for the red and another for the white, but Straight Pine reached back and touched him warningly, at the same time crouching closer to the branch on which he lay.

That there was reason for this caution the lad felt sure, though he could not understand it. It seemed to him that, lying on these branches, he and his companions were just about as safe as they could very well be. He was soon to learn something of the cunning of the foes against whom he was fighting for the first time.

Of a sudden Nat Wild raised himself a trifle on his broad branch, and his rifle spoke sharply. No cry followed the shot, which had been aimed at an upward angle, but something large and heavy came crashing down through the smaller branches of a neighbouring tree, to land with a thud in the heavy undergrowth.

“If it hadn’t bin for the white streak o’ paint between his eyes,” Nat Wild remarked coolly, as he reloaded his piece, “one o’ us might ha’ bin lying down there ’stead o’ him now.”

“No Scalp is right,” Straight Pine assented. “The rest of the night will pass in peace, and my paleface brothers may sleep as safely as if they were in the fort.”

Straight Pine proved to be correct. Throughout the night the two men and the boy lay up in the branches of the great tree, their ears strained to catch the slightest sound, but none came. With the dawn, too, there was no sign of the enemy, save the body that lay still, the light showing the paint marks of the Mingoes, in the undergrowth beneath the trees.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### To Fort Larabee—Nat Wild Suspicious —The Herd of Moose—Straight Pine in Time—Under Cover.

NAT WILD climbed down rather stiffly from the tree, and the others followed. Dick shuddered slightly as his eyes fell upon the body of the Indian, but it was not with fear. Never before had he seen blood shed in anger, though it was a common enough thing, even close to the forts and settlements, and the sight of it stirred him. He was glad that it was not the bullet from his rifle that had pierced the redskin.

“It was well, Young Horse—the will of Manitou,” Straight Pine said softly, reading the lad’s thoughts as easily as if he had put them into words, and then he hurried off amongst the trees.

Just for a second the trapper raised his rifle, covering the retreating form, then hesitated and lowered it. Dick stared at his brother in amazement.

“What made you do that, Nat?” he asked.

“When you’ve bin in the woods as long as I have, lad,” Wild answered, “ye’ll learn mistrust.”

Nat Wild peered among the trees in the direction that the chief had taken, but could see nothing of him. The birds were beginning to sing now, as the sun rose, and the air struck rather chill.

“Well, I’d trust the chief,” Dick persisted, with something of the dogged look of his elder brother coming into his face.

From the left came the swish of a branch swinging back after it had been brushed aside. As the sound reached him, Nat caught his brother by the arm, forced him behind



the trunk of a tree, and stationed himself behind another. Both looked to the priming of their guns. The chirp of a bird sounded, and Nat lowered his weapon, though without moving from the cover afforded by the trunk of the tree.

"'Tis the Delaware," he muttered.

From among the trees, and into the little natural clearing in which Nat and Dick Wild stood, stepped Straight Pine. His face was calm as ever, betraying no emotion or feeling of any kind. He looked round sharply, and a slight smile crossed his lips.

"The Young Horse is showing his head," he said. "It would be a mark for a Mingoe bullet."

Nat Wild stepped from behind the tree, and Dick, feeling rather disgusted that he had been spotted so quickly, followed.

"Well?" the trapper growled. "Found anything, chief?"

"Much and little," Straight Pine answered. "I have found the trail of the wounded Mingoe, who travels back towards the lodges of his people."

Nat Wild laughed, and looked triumphant.

"There you are, chief," he cried. "What did I tell you? It's jest one or two o' the young braves out huntin', tryin' to get a scalp. That's no digging up o' the hatchet by the hull tribe."

Straight Pine looked to his rifle, and freshened up the priming in the pan.

"Yet birds that are not birds call to each other among the trees," the chief said quietly.

"Meanin' them Mingoe hounds?" the trapper demanded.

"No Scalp speaks the words of wisdom. Truly he must be great among his own people," Straight Pine agreed. "We must journey to Fort Larabee before the bird-calls change to yells of triumph, I to take warning, and you that the Young Horse and No Scalp shall be safe."

"You reckon ter tote along with us, chief?" Nat Wild asked.

Straight Pine glanced uneasily at the shadows amongst the trees, as if, even now, there might be danger lurking there.

"Without Straight Pine," he said quietly, and there was nothing of the boaster in his

manner, "my paleface brothers would never reach the fort. I would not have their scalps at the belts of the Mingoes."

Nat Wild laughed angrily. He was no more than thirty years of age, but during the whole of that time he had practically lived in the forests, and flattered himself that he knew them as well as the redskins themselves. Therefore he was angry at the remark of the chief, which seemed to suggest that he had not the skill to escape the dangers which were supposed to be lurking near.

"Thar I'll prove you wrong, chief," he growled. "You go your way, we'll go ours—me an' Dick—an' I'll bet a pack o' beaver-skins that we're at the fort afore you."

Straight Pine turned quietly away, and, with his rifle at the trail, moved off towards the trees, going north, in the direction whence Fort Larabee lay. Before he had gone half a dozen steps, however, Dick hurried after him.

"Good-bye, chief," he said quietly, holding out his hand.

Straight Pine took the proffered hand, and looked down earnestly into the boy's face.

"Whatawa's scalp shall hang from the tent-pole if harm comes to the Young Horse," he said.

And disappeared amongst the trees.

Nat Wild had recovered from his outburst of temper now, and he smiled as he looked at Dick. He was very fond of the boy, and would have laid down his life for him.

"You shouldn't ha' done thet, lad," he said.

"But he's a friend, Nat," Dick protested.

"Thar ain't such a thing as friendship atween red and white," Nat continued doggedly. "An' Straight Pine's no more a friend, 'cept that he's warned us thet the Mingoes mean trouble."

"You do believe that?" the boy asked eagerly, his eyes glistening at the idea of fights in the future.

"Ay, I believe it," Nat answered. And it might have been seen that he, too, glanced round from time to time at the trees. "An' I'm gettin' you back to Fort Larabee as quick as we kin make the trail."

And the two started off through the wood

It was plain enough now that the big trapper had taken the Delaware's warning to heart, for though he moved fast, each step was taken with care, and scarcely a sound marked his progress. Dick, following close behind him, moved in his brother's footsteps, and so they stole away through the forest, some parts of which, owing to the thickness of the leaves overhead, were quite dark, making in the direction of Fort Larabee, which, with luck, they should reach in three days.

Throughout the morning the two travelled on without discovering the slightest sign of danger, until Nat, with a recklessness which was part of his nature, ceased to be so cautious in his movements, and strode on rapidly, brushing branches aside and letting dry twigs crack loudly beneath his moccasined feet.

It was shortly after noon that the man and the boy found the forest growing thinner, and presently they halted on the edge of a rolling prairie. Away to both right and left stretched the forest, to which they would keep if they wanted to make the fort, knowing that the open prairie before them would give them no chance in a brush with the Mingoes.

"Look—moose!" Dick cried excitedly.

Nat shaded his eyes with a great hand, and looked away to the right, the direction in which the boy was pointing. There, sure enough, but fully five hundred yards away still, were six large animals, undoubtedly possessing the curiously-rounded snouts and long antlers of the American moose.

"Ay, it's luck for ye, lad!" Nat said, almost as excited as his younger brother. "Ye'll be able ter see what ye can do with the rifle now."

An idea occurred to Dick, and he looked rather dejected.

"It won't be safe to fire, will it?" he asked. "There may be Injuns——"

"We've left 'em long since," Nat Wild answered, with his usual recklessness. "Come on, lad, an' we'll git ter windward, an' see what we kin do."

Moving back among the trees, Nat led the way to the right, meaning in this way to get to windward of the moose, which would then be about a couple of hundred yards distant.

From tree to tree went the two, Dick excited at the prospect of being able to test his skill

with the rifle, Nat almost equally pleased at the chance offered. Nearer and nearer they drew, until the trapper, seeing one of the animals throw its head up, as if scenting danger, stopped short and raised his rifle to his shoulder.

"Now, Dick," he said sharply.

Up went the boy's rifle, butt to shoulder; but before he could even take aim a sinewy hand, darting from behind the trunk of a tree, gripped him, and heaved him into cover.

Nat turned sharply to see what had happened, and was amazed to see Straight Pine looking out at him from behind the tree.

"Mingoes," the chief whispered.

And, quick to act on such warnings, Nat leapt behind the tree, too.

"Where?" he demanded, peering round quickly, and seeing nothing.

"The moose," Straight Pine said coolly.

Nat Wild broke into a laugh, then checked himself, and looked savage.

"See here, chief," he growled. "I didn't reckon to hev you round again, an' I don't want you. Guess I know moose when I see 'em, an' those ain't no Mingo hounds playin' the game as animals."

"Ugh!" Straight Pine grunted, and dropped full length to the ground.

Pressing his rifle forward, and resting the barrel on the trunk of a small fallen tree, Straight Pine took aim and fired. A little cloud of smoke rose between the two men and the boy and the moose, but it quickly lifted, and a sharp cry broke from Nat Wild.

The place where the supposed moose had been was empty, save for some dark skins lying on the ground, and six Indians, in full feather, were bolting for the shelter of the nearest trees.

"Will No Scalp hunt now?" Straight Pine queried calmly.

Nat Wild turned as the chief rose, and gripped him by the hand.

"Guess you've got us out of an awkward fix, chief," he said. "Not thet I'd keer for myself, it's Dick."

Straight Pine turned and smiled at the boy. "Straight Pine the Young Horse's friend," he said quietly. "Not let scalp dry at the belt of the Mingo dog."

## THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Teachings of the Woods—The Canoe in the Hollow Tree—The Wisp of Smoke—Down the Quesna Lake.

"BUT how did ye get here, chief?" Nat Wild asked curiously.

"Follow—plenty plain trail," the Delaware answered. "Palefaces move as if all Indians had gone to happy hunting-grounds."

"Ye're right, chief," the trapper admitted, rather shamefacedly. "Guess you made me wild, sayin' I couldn't git the boy through ter the fort, an' I didn't keer much."

He glanced towards Dick, who did not appear to be in the least bothered by the position in which he found himself.

"That why Straight Pine come back," the Delaware said quietly. "Know better way to the fort than through forest. Every tree hide brave and gun. No able to see them. The great lake lies smooth and still as the face of a young squaw, and across it we could hear the dip of the paddles, or the splash of the swimmer. No fight from trees there."

Nat Wild turned in amazement and said:



Straight Pine took the proffered hand, and looked down earnestly into the boy's face.

"Whatawa's scalp shall hang from the tent-pole if harm comes to the Young Horse," he said. (See page 277.)

"But, say, chief, ain't we miles from the Quesna Lake?"

Whatawa raised a hand towards the heavens, pointing at the sun, then moved his arm round, with fine dignity, to a point further to the westward.

"By then, No Scalp," he said, "we should be at the lake."

"Reckon you know this part, then, chief?" Nat said.

The Delaware smiled, and without further argument or talk the three set off through the woods. Straight Pine led the way, moving with all the caution natural to men of his colour, especially when they have enemies upon the war-path; next came Dick, imitating the movements of the chief as nearly as he could; while the big trapper brought up the rear.

For rather more than an hour the three journeyed on. Once the Delaware stopped, dropped to his hands and knees, and drew a damp

and soiled moccasin from the thick undergrowth. He grunted and handed it to Nat Wild. The latter turned it over a few times, looked puzzled, and returned it to the chief.

"Don't tell me much, Straight Pine," he said. "What do you know?"

"Yes, what does it tell you, chief?" Dick asked eagerly, ready to learn all he could of woodcraft from so able a teacher as the Delaware.

Straight Pine turned the moccasin over, and a sharp grunt, practically the only sign of emotion that he ever allowed himself, broke from him.

Nat Wild guessed that the Delaware had discovered something important.

"What d'you know, Straight Pine?" he demanded.

"Moccasin belong Lame Bear, the Huron chief," the Indian answered. "See, hide worn in one place only, where chief walk heavy. Only one chief among Huron do that—Lame Bear."

"Then things is bad," Nat Wild muttered, his brows knit; "and it ain't no risin' o' jest a few rascally Mingoos. What say you, chief?"

"All big fight," the Delaware agreed, dropping the moccasin back into the undergrowth. "Lame Bear only fight big fights. Make all speed to lake!"

Using more precautions than ever now, the three hurried forward, and less than two hours later, bursting from the trees, they emerged on to a shingly beach or clearing. Twenty yards or so ahead lay the waters of the great lake, the opposite shore only just visible, even under the fierce rays of the afternoon sun, and on both sides of the strip of beach, which was no more than a hundred yards from end to end, the trees closed it in, growing so close to the water that their branches dipped down until the leaves touched the glimmering surface. Here and there a tree, its roots undermined by the waters of the lake, lay out into the water, some of the branches above, others below, the still surface.

A buck, drinking just in the shade of the trees, lifted his head sharply, swung round, and galloped off, alarmed at the presence of man. The Delaware grunted with satisfaction.

"No Mingoos near," he said, "or buck not drink."

"Good for you!" Nat Wild answered, with a sigh of relief. "Reckon I'll feel easier in me mind when we're out on the lake. S'pose we'll hev to make a canoe?"

The Delaware touched Dick on the arm, and

waved a hand towards every corner of the clearing.

"Young Horse see canoe?" he queried.

Dick looked round carefully, but certainly could see no trace of a craft of any kind.

"No, there isn't such a thing about, chief," he said, with assurance.

With a smile on his lips, Straight Pine led the way to where the trees hung down towards the water. By the edge of the lake lay a great oak, its roots out of the ground. The Indian touched these roots, and a part of them came away in his hands. A minute later he had carefully lifted out a fair-sized canoe, which was fitted with paddles and everything complete.

"But how did you see it, chief?" Dick cried, in amazement. Then an idea occurred to him. "You've been here before, and it's yours."

Straight Pine shook his head solemnly, and helped Nat Wild to carry the canoe down to the water.

"Delaware never been here before," he said.

"Then it beats me how you found it!" Nat Wild said.

"Mingoos all like papoose, no sense," the Delaware answered, with a contemptuous gesture back towards the forest where the Mingoos lay. "One hide canoe in tree—all hide in tree. Straight Pine's eyes see roots been disturbed—know find canoe there."

Dick sighed; and looked rather dejected.

"I thought I was going to learn everything about woodcraft this trip, chief," he said; "but I see I'll never learn it all."

"Yengeese take longer," Straight Pine answered kindly, using the Indian term for white man; "but Delaware teach, learn all in time. Young Horse soon be great brave—change name to Eagle Eye!"

"Really, chief?" the boy said eagerly.

"Straight Pine has spoken, and Young Horse has heard," the Delaware answered with dignity.

The canoe proved to be in very good condition when launched, and the three stepped into it. Dick was placed in the middle, while Straight Pine stood in the bows, paddle in hand, with Nat Wild in the stern. In this

way the frail craft shot swiftly out towards the middle of the lake, for both the trapper and the Delaware were skilful with the paddle. Their rifles lay near to their hands, for there was no telling how soon shots might come whistling after them from among the trees. As they moved across the lake, the only dark object, apparently, on its polished surface, they made a splendid mark for any of the Mingoes who might be lying concealed in the forest.

When the canoe had reached a spot about two hundred yards from the shore, which was fairly well out of the range of the guns of the redskins, Straight Pine ceased paddling, and Nat Wild followed his example.

Dick stared away at the great stretches of forest, which seemed to be formed on the same great scale as the Quesna Lake. Right along the bank, save for a few little stretches of beach, stretched the magnificent trees, growing so close together that at a short distance the trunks looked like a solid wall of timber, and it seemed impossible that even a slippery Mingo would be able to find a path among them. The ground sloped upwards from the lake, making the tops of the trees look like a sloping green field on which shrubs—the top-most tufts of taller trees—were growing sparsely.

In the canoe lay several stout fishing-lines, evidently of Indian workmanship, with hooks ready fixed. Dick, noticing these, took one up to examine it.

“Good!” Straight Pine said. “May be on lake one day, may be”—he held up one hand with all the fingers spread out—“more. The Young Horse fish, that we may have food.”

“But the lad’s got no bait, chief!” Nat protested.

With neat fingers the Delaware removed a bright red bead, a rather large one, from his scanty attire, and fastened it to the hook.

“Lake fish great fool,” he said, “catch with bead.”

Just for once, however, Straight Pine appeared to be mistaken, for though Dick hung the line over the side of the canoe, and waited patiently for a bite, not a solitary one came. There was not even a nibble to cheer him up,

and he began to think that the bead could not be the best bait after all. This want of success did not, apparently, trouble either Nat Wild or the Delaware. The former smoked pipe after pipe, his eyes closed, half dozing; while the latter squatted still as a carved image in the bows, not moving a muscle. Only his eyes, which were particularly fine and bright, continually swept the edge of the lake. All through the afternoon, while Dick fished with diminishing patience, the chief sat in this attitude. A haze was already beginning to settle over the water before anything rewarded his watchfulness.

“Camp in forest,” he said, turning his head for a moment towards Nat Wild.

Shading his eyes with his hand, the trapper stared hard in the direction indicated by Straight Pine. Half a mile or so inland a faint line of smoke, almost white, was rising over the tops of the trees. Already it was nearly invisible in the darkness.

“Scarce like a Mingo to show as plain a trail as that, chief,” said Nat Wild.

“Mingo on war-path, but not near fort yet,” Straight Pine answered readily. “Young braves at fire sure scalp us, not trouble about damp wood like wise brave.”

“Perhaps you’re right,” Nat agreed, as the darkness hid the smoke from his eyes. “Reckon I’ll be glad when it’s dark eno’ter strike down the lake. Never knew the fort seem sich a long way off as it does now.”

Night fell rapidly; and as soon as the shores were quite invisible Straight Pine rose to his feet, paddle in hand. Nat followed his example, and the canoe began to glide swiftly across the water. What little current there was was in their favour, so that there was nothing to hinder them making rapid progress.

Mile after mile was covered in this fashion, the chief glancing round continually, as if even in the darkness he could see; though Dick, strain his eyes though he would, could not pierce the blackness for more than a few feet in any direction.

Midnight passed, but even then the Delaware called no halt, and for a couple of hours more he paddled on, showing no signs whatever that the exertion was telling upon him.

Yet Nat Wild, enormously powerful though he was, was fairly dripping with perspiration, though he said no word, either of complaint or suggestive of weariness. He knew well enough that if Fort Larabee was to be reached, it would be by the aid of Straight Pine. Unless—

Once again suspicious thoughts entered the trapper's head. All his life he had spent in the woods, and he knew the craftiness of the redskin. It was possible, even now, that the Delaware, although he had served them, was only awaiting his opportunity to take their scalps, their rifles, and any other trifles of value that they might possess. Nat remembered how easily the chief had found the canoe, as easily as if he had himself hidden it, and he stared suspiciously at the naked, sinewy back of the chief, as if expecting that it would tell him the truth.

Straight Pine turned his head a trifle and swung his paddle outwards, bringing the canoe half round, and almost stopping its motion.

"Good place for halt!" he whispered.

Then for the first time Nat Wild saw that the chief had guided the canoe to a spot where several flat rocks rose above the water, two or three to a height of about two feet. Many such rocks existed in the lake, most of them within a hundred yards or so of the shore.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### The Paddleless Canoe—The Drifting Bushes.

"LAND here," the chief whispered quietly, holding the canoe steady by keeping a hand on the rock.

Without the slightest hesitation—for he wished to show that he, at least, did not suspect the redskin—Dick landed, taking his rifle with him; but Nat Wild hesitated.

"What for, Delaware?" he demanded.

"Safe there, fight many braves," Straight Pine answered. "Straight Pine go scout in canoe, see no Mingo fish about!"

That there was wisdom in this suggestion the trapper could not help realising, and he landed on the rock. As soon as he was there the Delaware pushed the canoe off, took up a paddle and, standing in the stern of the frail

craft, disappeared into the darkness. He moved against the slight current, knowing that swimmers would most likely come down with it rather than force a passage against it.

Squatting on the rock, his rifle across his knees, Dick close beside him, Nat Wild stared moodily across the water, his ears strained to catch the slightest sound. The faint noise of the dipping paddle had already been swallowed up by distance, and not a sound broke the rather fearsome stillness of the night.

"Go to sleep, Dick," he said, a trifle gruffly, without looking towards the boy. "You'll be fresher on the morrow."

Dick laid his rifle down carefully, stretched himself on the rock, and was soon fast asleep.

It was not until the dawn that Dick awoke, stretched himself, and sat up hastily. Nat still squatted in the same position, his rifle ready across his knees, his eyes, rather red with their long vigil, roving round the surface of the lake.

"Keep down, lad," he said sharply, "or you may be seen from the shore. If the Mingo's know we're right here, you'd git a dozen bullets when you showed your scalp!"

That Straight Pine had not returned Dick could see, and he looked round anxiously, searching the lake for the canoe. A sigh of relief escaped him as he caught sight of it, not more than half a mile away. Then the sigh changed to a gasp.

There was the canoe sure enough, drifting down with the current, but to all appearances she was empty.

"He has been captured!" Dick cried.

"Not he!" Nat growled. "Trust a Delaware for bein' too cunnin' fer that! Whar's yer eyes, boy? Look to the side o' the canoe farthest from the shore."

Dick looked, and saw something had escaped him at the first glance. A dark arm was thrust over the side, and a hand was beating the water like a paddle. The speed obtained in this way was not great, the canoe simply looking as if carried along by a rather strong current; but it was quite enough to bring it perceptibly closer to the rocks, even as the boy watched it.

"But suppose it isn't Straight Pine?" he said suddenly. "He might have been cap-

tured, the canoe taken, and the man paddling it may be a Mingoe."

"Good for you, Dick!" the trapper answered, with a glance of pride at his young brother. "It's mebbe that, but it ain't likely. No more'n three o' the hounds could git into that canoe, an' they wouldn't attack if thar wasn't a clear dozen of them."

By now the canoe had drawn quite near, and the hand over the side, working more skilfully, steered the fragile craft to the rocks. Nat, holding his rifle ready, moved nearer to the edge of the rock to meet it.

The grave face of the Delaware chief was raised, and the Indian clambered out on to the rock.

"Ugh!" he said, with a slight smile at Dick, giving the customary Indian greeting.

"What news, chief?" the trapper asked.

"Fort too far away, No Scalp," the Delaware answered meaningly.

Nat Wild understood the Indian's words, and looked more than usually grave.

"The hounds mean business, then?"

"The Mingoe braves yearn for scalps as a young squaw yearns over her husband," Straight Pine answered. "Many of them are there in the woods, silent as the snakes lying among the grasses, and their paint is fresh as the scalps that will hang from their belts before they return to their lodges across the hills."

"Humph! Cheerful!" the trapper muttered, for he knew that the Delaware meant that the situation was more than usually grave.

He looked round, and was relieved to see how isolated the rocks were. They stretched away for fully twenty to thirty yards towards the shore, but a clear space of two hundred yards of water lay between the nearest rock and the land.

"Well, they can't attack by daylight, anyway," Nat Wild said, with confidence, "that's one comfort, for we'll be able to git further out into the lake when it's dark, an' run nearer down towards the fort."

Straight Pine turned towards the trapper and eyed him solemnly.

"Many years has No Scalp lived in the woods," he said, "but he has yet much to learn. Can he not see that the attack of the Mingoes will be soon?"

"I'll be hanged if he can!" Nat growled. "An' I don't believe you can, either, chief."

"Straight Pine will prove his words," the Delaware said composedly, with the air of a man who has no fear of being proved wrong.

The redskin looked to his gun and freshened up the priming, an operation over which he exercised care, but in this case he appeared to use even more than usual, and the trapper, noticing this, looked to his own weapon. Dick, always ready to follow the lead of the chief, was already doing the same. All three weapons were ready in the hands of their owners for anything that might happen.

Close to the edge of the rock sat the Delaware, his eyes fixed on a part of the shore, fully four hundred yards away, that he could see round the corner of the stone. His face was absolutely devoid of expression, and even his eyes, expressive though they were, told nothing.

"The Young Horse sees something on the lake?" he queried presently, turning to Dick.

The boy shaded his eyes from the glare, for the sun was getting up now, and looked hard in the direction indicated by the Delaware.

"Looks like bushes floating with the current," he said, catching sight of eight or nine dark objects fifty or sixty yards from the shore, which were floating towards the rocks, moving as leisurely as the current which bore them along.

"Young Horse's eyes are good," the Delaware murmured. "Does No Scalp see them?"

"Ain't blind!" the trapper growled. "Guess I know a bush when I see it."

Straight Pine bent his head with a stately gesture.

"Truly the paleface speaks wisdom!" he murmured.

And though the trapper glanced at the chief sharply, he could not detect anything suggestive of a sneer on the painted face.

Very slowly the bushes drew nearer, moving as surely towards the farther end of the rocks as if they were being pulled in that direction by a line; but it was not until they were within a hundred yards that Straight Pine appeared to take any more notice of them. Then he turned to Dick.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### Down the Lake Again—Anchored for the Night—The Floating Log—Dick Wild Captured.

"The Young Horse shall try his aim with the rifle," he said quietly. "Let him get behind that rock"—he indicated a fair-sized stone close at hand—"and see if he can hit the nearest of the bushes."

"Waste o' powder an' ball," Nat growled.

"Not so, No Scalp!" the Delaware continued. "The test of a hawk's eye should be sure, so that he may know its power against his enemies."

Nothing loth to try his skill with the rifle, Dick crawled to the rock indicated, rested the barrel of his rifle upon it, and took a careful aim at the nearest of the bushes. Straight Pine watched the bushes, and not the marksman.

"The Young Horse should fire low," he said. "Rather hit the body of a foe and wound it than miss putting a hole through the brain."

Dick slightly shifted his aim, and his finger pulled steadily at the trigger. The rifle cracked, and the bush at which it had been aimed moved as sharply as if a cannon-ball had brushed it. Not only did it move, too, for suddenly it disappeared beneath the water, and a muffled yell reached the ears of those on the rocks.

Then Nat saw how he had been deceived, and, dropping to full length on the rock, he aimed at the bushes. His rifle cracked the moment the sight was taken, and a shriek of pain followed close upon the heels of the report.

"Is it a waste of powder, No Scalp?" the Delaware asked coolly.

Nat looked up sharply from the reloading of his rifle.

"Why couldn't ye tell me it was them skunks o' Mingoes wi' bushes tied to their heads?" he demanded, eying the remaining bushes, which were now moving rapidly towards the shore.

"No Scalp has eyes," Straight Pine answered unconcernedly.

For a moment the big trapper looked wild, then he laughed heartily, and held out his hand to the chief. Once more it was not taken.

"Straight Pine has not proved his friendship yet, No Scalp," he said proudly.

"WHAT next, chief?" Nat asked, glancing round the lake, as if fearing that the Mingoes were likely to attack again, though it was not likely, as they had had two of their braves injured while trying to reach the rocks under cover of the bushes.

"It is no longer well to stay here," the Delaware answered. "We must push down the lake, and trust to finding the Mingoes asleep long enough for us to land. Only a turn of the sun will be between us and the fort then."

"True, chief," Nat Wild agreed, "thar don't seem any other way."

In a very few minutes the canoe was freed and the two men and the boy stepped warily into her. Straight Pine and the trapper took the paddles, and under their vigorous strokes she shot out from the shelter of the rocks into the lake. To take her out of sight of the keen eyes watching from the forest was impossible, as the Delaware knew, so he was content to travel along at a distance of some two hundred yards from the shore, which was well out of reach of the rifle of the average Mingoe, most of which were not to be relied upon at any distance over a hundred yards.

Working easily, so as not to fatigue themselves early, yet sending the canoe along rapidly, the two men worked as steadily and evenly as machines. Dick, his eyes always turned towards the forest-bordered bank, found it difficult to realise that there really could be bloodthirsty savages lurking there. Nowhere was there a sign of life, yet he knew, as well as his brother or the Delaware, that swift-footed Indians, forcing their way through the forest, were keeping pace with the canoe.

Right through the day the canoe was kept moving, save for one or two brief halts for rest. Dick took a turn at the paddle, too, only to find that his want of skill made the progress of the canoe much slower than it was under the hands of Straight Pine and his brother. And, curiously enough, as it seemed to Dick, never a Mingoe showed for an instant among the trees,





There was the canoe sure enough, drifting down with the current, but to all appearances she was empty. "Straight Pine has been captured!" Dick cried. "Not he!" Nat growled. "Whar's yer eyes, boy? Look to the side o' the canoe farthest from the shore." (See page 282.)

and the shore looked as deserted as if nothing but the animals of the forest came there to drink.

"I suppose they are following," Dick muttered, giving voice to his thoughts.

"Does the she-bear forsake her young," the

Delaware answered, "more than the Mingoe brave hankers for scalps?"

Nat paused in his paddling, wiped the sweat from his brow with his hand, and stared away at the trees.

"If we was ter run a hundred yards closer in,

lad," he said, "ye'd soon learn thet the hounds is thar. It ain't safe ter think o' them trees 'cept that each hides a redskin."

Once more the canoe moved on, and Dick, trailing a line overboard, for there was no chance of landing a Mingoe instead of a fish in broad daylight, caught three fair-sized fish, much to the satisfaction of the big trapper, whose huge form required a large amount of nourishment, though he could do without it when occasion demanded the sacrifice.

And so hour after hour passed, the forest slipping monotonously by, indented here and there by a strip of shingly beach, until day changed to dusk, and dusk to night. Before this hour had come, however, the shores of the lake had narrowed considerably, until they were little more than three hundred yards apart, and it was only by keeping right to the centre of the water that those in the canoe could keep out of range of Mingoe or Huron bullets. It was lucky for them that the redskins were unlikely to try shooting at a range greater than a hundred yards.

Under cover of the darkness the canoe still kept on, the two men paddling more carefully than ever, rising and dipping noiselessly, save for the occasional drip of the water from the paddles finding its way back into the lake.

Straight Pine swung his paddle in a wide semicircle, altering the course of the canoe, and was only just in time to avoid running into a heavy log, a collision with which might have sunk the frail bark canoe.

"Ugh!" he grunted softly, paddling on again, and making a sign to Nat Wild, who had opened his lips to speak, to remain silent.

The canoe still kept on, the water rippling back from her bows. The Delaware had changed his standing position to a kneeling one, and his head and shoulders were thrust forward, his luminous eyes peering sharply into the blackness ahead. From time to time he would cease paddling, the trapper always following his example without spoken order, and listen intently. Once he picked up his rifle and looked to the priming.

For the second time Straight Pine swung the canoe out of the way of a floating log, which showed suddenly in the darkness. He stopped paddling, and crouched low down,

his left hand resting on his rifle. Dick felt a hand on his shoulder, and his brother, clambering over him as surely as if he had been in a heavy boat, knelt behind Straight Pine. The boy promptly shifted back, so as to make the weight in the canoe more evenly distributed.

"Many logs about, No Scalp," the Delaware whispered, a curious note in his voice.

"Ay, I've noticed 'em," Nat Wild answered. "Question is, chief, air they jest logs washed from the shore, or air they some devilish work o' them Mingoe hounds?"

"Straight Pine will know if the logs drift," said the chief quietly.

At war-time the redskins are not given to the wearing of many garments, and Straight Pine was no exception to the rule. He now slipped off his light robe, and, almost without rocking the frail canoe, plunged over into the lake. He was quickly on the surface again, and resting one hand on the gunwale of the canoe.

"No Scalp will wait," he said, "and guard the Young Horse. Let him fire at anyone who approaches unless he give the call of the wren."

"I understand ye, chief," the trapper answered. "But aren't ye runnin' a mighty lot o' risk if them logs is—"

"The Young Horse must be saved," Straight Pine interrupted, glancing towards the boy, and, before further protest could be made, he had released his hold of the canoe and swum gently off into the darkness, his limbs working so smoothly that not a sound was made.

Dick, sitting in the stern of the canoe, watched the chief's head until it was swallowed up completely by the darkness, then he turned to his brother.

"Wish he hadn't gone, Nat," he whispered.

"Ay, ye're right in a way," the big trapper answered, "though I reckon I'd rather see Straight Pine lose his scalp than you. Redskins air built that way, and it's the usual manner fer them to take leave o' this world."

"He's a fine man, anyway," Dick continued enthusiastically. "Why should he trouble about us?"

Nat grunted doubtfully, then laughed.

"Guess you're right again," he muttered. "I mistrusted the chief—his colour's agin him—but I reckon he's provin' himself white-hearted."

The end of a log bumped the canoe, causing the frail craft to rock badly. Dick leant over the side to push it away, for fear that it might pierce the bark, and a cry of surprise broke from his lips.

Along the log, lying so close to it that he looked almost like a part of the timber, lay a Mingoe, his face hideous with the war-paint of his tribe.

As Dick cried out Nat turned sharply, but, quick though he was, the Mingoe was quicker. He rose on the log as surely as if he had been on firm ground, seized the surprised boy by the collar, and jerked him clean from the canoe into the water, into which they both fell struggling.

With a fierce cry of rage, Nat snatched up his rifle, meaning to aim at the bobbing head of the Indian as soon as he could be sure of not hitting Dick, but before he could do so he had other matters to occupy his attention.

Nine or ten more logs came gliding to the canoe, and tomahawks and knives glittered as the Hurons and Mingoes on them prepared for battle. Their awe-inspiring war-cry echoed across the lake, and, for the moment at least, the big trapper forgot about Dick's peril; not that he could have done much in any case.

Nat's rifle cracked, and a yell, rising even above the war-cry, showed that he had not wasted powder and shot.

"Thet's one varmint!" he growled, and swung his rifle by its long barrel as the nearest of the Indians aimed a quick blow at him with a tomahawk.

The butt of the rifle fell, true as a sledgehammer wielded by a sure hand, and the tomahawk fell into the water, the Huron's wrist snapped like a pipe-stem.

"Two!" the big trapper snarled, and ducked as a hatchet came whirling through the air. Quick though he was, it carried away his hat.

Keeping to his knees, so as not to risk the upsetting of the canoe, Nat swung the rifle like a flail. Once he reached a Mingoe, the

butt catching him on the side of the neck and flinging him into the water, then the rest, leaving their logs, swam away into the darkness. They were not the men to risk more casualties, but were quite ready to wait a chance to win without danger to their precious bodies.

With the instinct of the pioneer, Nat methodically reloaded his rifle, then searched the water with his eyes. His jaw was set grimly and his brows knit hard. A little pulse seemed to be beating furiously at the top of his head.

"Dick!" he cried hoarsely. "Dick!"

There was no answer.

"Dick!" the trapper cried again, his voice hoarse with emotion, but still there was no answer.

From the left shore of the lake came a wild yell, and Nat Wild knew what it meant; that Dick or his scalp had been landed. A shudder ran through him as he thought the lad might be already dead, and therefore past aid.

Past aid—yes, but not beyond vengeance. Nat's jaw set harder than ever, and, dropping his rifle, he seized a paddle. He would land, and force his way into the very camp of the savages. He would at least die as Dick had died.

The call of a wren came softly across the water, and the trapper, hearing it, paused with the paddle already in the water. It was a strange hour for the bird to be calling to its mate, and might mean—

Nat remembered that it was the signal arranged by Straight Pine, and remained still in the canoe, searching the water with his eyes in the direction from whence the call had come. Soon he caught sight of the head of the Delaware, then a hand gripped the canoe, and, with an agility that no white man could have equalled, he managed to enter the frail craft.

"Ugh!" he grunted dismally, as he sat down and panted for breath.

"Dick's gone!" the trapper cried wildly. "Scalped by them—"

"The Young Horse still lives," the Delaware interrupted.

A gasp of relief broke from Nat, and he bent forward eagerly.

"How d'ye know, chief?" he demanded. "Straight Pine swim in the lake," the Delaware answered, "his eyes see the fight and the fall of Young Horse. Straight Pine fought with Mingoe. Other Mingoe hounds come, make Young Horse prisoner; Straight Pine swim away that he may save to-morrow."

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

### On Parole—The Mingoes' Terms— Straight Pine's Sacrifice.

THE night passed very slowly to the two men, Nat showing it in his impatient, restless movements; the Delaware in the occasional discontented "Ugh!" which issued from his lips.

Dawn at last!

With the first flash of light Straight Pine looked sharply round, saw that the canoe had drifted to within eighty or ninety yards of the shore where he knew that the Mingoes and Hurons were encamped with their prisoner, and, taking up a paddle, he forced the canoe out into the centre of the water again. Running unnecessary risks would do Dick no good.

"What now, chief?" the trapper asked hoarsely as the Delaware laid down his paddle.

Nat Wild's face showed the strain that was upon him. It looked thinner, the eyes had a haggard look about them, and the lips were twisted grimly downwards. It was going to be hard for the Mingoe who came within reach of the big trapper.

Straight Pine's eyes were upon the forest, and he nodded to where a line of smoke was rising up among the trees.

"Great fire for braves on war-path," he said. "Chiefs holding council by the fire. Young Horse safe as yet."

Nat Wild picked up his rifle and renewed the priming. He stared hard at the smoke rising above the tops of the tall trees.

"See here, chief!" he said sharply. "We could land now, runnin' the canoe on ter the beach thar; an' I reckon we'd settle a few o' them hounds afore they got our scalps!"

"Aud Young Horse?" Straight Pine asked quietly.

The trapper groaned, realising what the Delaware meant. Any attack upon the camp would only too surely hasten the end of the boy.

"Can't we do anythin'?" he muttered. "I'd rather they had me ter torture than Dick."

"Also shall they have Straight Pine," the Delaware said, "if that would save the Young Horse. Wait for the fire to—"

"Look!" the trapper gasped in amazement, reaching out for his rifle. "Reckon I never knew a Mingoe risk his hide like that before!"

From out of the trees had stepped a solitary figure, carrying a small canoe on his head. He was moving straight down towards the edge of the lake.

"The't'll be one of 'em less!" Nat Wild growled.

And the butt of his rifle pressed against his shoulder. His eye glinted along the sights, his finger already bearing upon the trigger, but before he could fire the barrel had been forced up by the Delaware.

"Young Horse," he announced calmly, as if the words conveyed nothing out of the ordinary.

The man carrying the canoe lifted it from his head and lowered it into the water.

"Dick!" Nat Wild gasped, then turned in amazement to the Delaware. "They carn't ha' freed him!" he said. "An' he's not movin' slick enough fer a man escapin'. What's it mean?"

"The Young Horse paddles to us, No Scalp," Straight Pine answered coolly. "We shall learn."

The trapper would have seized a paddle and gone to meet his brother, but the Delaware restrained him.

"The Mingoes watch from the forest," he said warningly.

The other canoe, paddled swiftly by Dick, drew nearer, until Nat was able to see the boy's face. It wore a gloomy expression, and not one indicative of joy at being free.

"Safe, Dick!" Nat cried gleefully, caring about nothing more than that the lad, apparently unharmed, was coming across the lake to him.

The two canoes came together, and Dick was almost lifted by Nat into the larger craft.

"But how did ye get away, boy?" the trapper asked excitedly.

"I didn't," Dick answered; "they let me come."

"They let——"

"On parole," Dick added quietly.

"Ugh!" Straight Pine grunted, to show that he understood.

Nat turned towards him.

"What's it mean, chief?" he asked. "Never heard o' sich things bein' done afore by the Mingoes."

"It means," Straight Pine answered, "that Young Horse has won the trust of the Mingoe and Huron chiefs, and that he has been released for some hours to come out to us. At the end of that time he has given his word that he will return."

"Is that so?" Nat demanded, turning to his brother.

"That's it, Nat," Dick agreed. "I am free until sunset. As soon as the sun begins to sink I must go back to the camp."

The boy shuddered a trifle, but showed no other sign of emotion or fear.

"Will ye?" the big trapper snarled, glaring in the direction of the camp.

"Young Horse has given his word," the Delaware murmured. "But why did the chiefs let him come?"

Dick started, and did not meet the eyes of Straight Pine.

"Oh, just to say good-bye," he answered, with a catch in his voice.

Straight Pine bent forward and touched the boy on the arm.

"Young Horse cannot lie like a Huron," he said quietly; "the look of his eye betrays him. Why has he been sent to his friends?"

Dick hesitated, and his face flushed angrily. "I was told to give a message," he said slowly.

"What is it, lad?" Nat asked sharply.

"I would rather not give it," Dick answered.

"The words of Young Horse can do no harm," the Delaware said. "Let him not fear to let the ears of his friends receive them."

But still Dick hesitated. His face looked older than it had only a few hours back, and

the mouth was as hard set as that of a man who has lived in the face of danger, and who is ready to die with a stiff upper-lip when the time comes.

"The Mingoe and Huron chiefs say this," he said hesitatingly: "Young Horse is in their hands, and though the torture-fires burn low, the squaws already gather fresh fuel. But he is young, and has not been on the war-trail. On the lake is Straight Pine, a chief who has many scalps on the poles of his wigwams, and——"

The boy stopped, his teeth clenched.

"And Young Horse will be freed if Straight Pine will take his place," the Delaware finished quietly. "Are the words truth?"

Dick nodded his head silently, then looked up proudly into the chief's face.

"You would have the message, chief," he said, "or I shouldn't have given it. Neither would I have brought it, only that it gave me the chance of seeing you both again."

"Ay, an' stayin' with us, too!" Nat Wild growled determinedly.

"I have given my word to return, Nat," Dick said sharply.

And the big trapper flushed under the note of indignation in the boy's voice.

"Ay, but what is a word given to a Mingoe?" Nat persisted. "It ain't——"

"I shall keep mine, Nat."

"Young Horse speaks the words of the true brave," Straight Pine said. "But he shall not suffer torture at the hands of his enemies."

Nat wheeled round upon the chief, an eager look in his eyes.

"Ye don't mean to say as you'll take his place, chief?" he gasped.

"I have spoken," the Delaware murmured proudly.

"But you sha'n't!" Dick cried. "Why should you sacrifice yourself? You have only known me a short time, and——"

"The eye of Straight Pine is quick to see," the Delaware interrupted, "and he sees in Young Horse a great chief. He is too young to die; his hand has not yet done its work. The happy hunting-ground shall not be roamed before these forests have given their all to him." The chief waved a hand with dignity towards the forests. "Straight Pine

has been a warrior many years, and his name causes Mingoe and Huron dogs to tremble, even when they hear it whispored in their lodges. He has done his work; it is nothing to him that he should die."

Nat stretched out his hand, and this time the Indian took it without hesitation.

"I've wronged ye more than once in the past, chief," the big trapper said hoarsely; "but I won't hev ye do this now. It's my place ter go instead o' the lad, an' ye kin take him safe through ter the fort, an' mebbe keep an eye on him in the future."

"No Scalp is great warrior," the Delaware objected, with a shake of his head, "but more scalps hang at the belt of Straight Pine, and the Mingoes long to see him at the torture."

Dick Wild, as he had truly said, had only consented to bring the message in order that he might see his brother and the Delaware again, and he had no intention of allowing Straight Pine to make such a sacrifice for him. That the Indian was really prepared to do it he could see, but that did not influence him.

"The Mingoes shall pay more than the scalp of Young Horse for the life of Straight Pine," the Delaware continued quietly. "It shall take my paleface brother in safety to the fort."

"You will bargain with them that they let us go through free?" Nat asked quickly.

"I have spoken," Straight Pine murmured.

Dick turned upon his brother, a look of amazement in his eyes.

"You won't let the chief do this?" he cried.

"Mebbe I don't want to, boy," Nat answered huskily. "Heaven knows I'd take his place if them hounds would let me; but, as the chief says, I'm not big eno' game for 'em! I can't let you go, lad; and if the chief means this I kin only let him go. Sooner him than you."

"Ugh!" the Delaware grunted, with obvious satisfaction, for the knowledge of the tortures to which he was voluntarily going did not seem to worry him in the least, though he, as an Indian chief, knew quite well enough how awful they would be.

Straight Pine turned to Dick now, and laid a hand on his shoulder.

"The Young Horse will go back now," he said firmly, "and say that Straight Pine would talk with a chief." He took off his belt of wampum and gave it to the boy. "That will hold the chief's life safe when he comes to meet me."

Dick shook his head, but Nat, picking him up by sheer strength, dropped him back into the other canoe.

"It's the only way, boy," he said sternly. "You carries thet message, an' comes back wi' the chief, or I land now an' ha' a shot at them hounds afore they kill me."

Still Dick hesitated, but, boy though he was, he realised that it would be better for one life than three to be sacrificed. He would have been willing to let the one be his. He took up the paddle gloomily, and paddled back slowly towards the shore. More than once he hesitated, half bringing the nose of the canoe round again; but at last he reached the shore, beached his craft, and disappeared among the trees.

As the boy vanished from sight Nat turned to Straight Pine and once more took his hand.

"Chief," he said earnestly, "I've knowed many redskins since I first came to the woods, but never a lion-heart like ye."

"The words of No Scalp cheer the heart of Straight Pine," the Delaware answered quietly, "and the sacrifice is but the snapping of a dry and withered branch."

No more was said, both men sitting silently in the canoe, their eyes upon the forest. The big trapper could think of no more to say; the Delaware had stated his intention—that was enough for him.

From out of the forest, only a few minutes after Dick had gone into it, came the boy and a tall Indian, both of whom embarked in the canoe.

"Ugh!" Straight Pine grunted, a look of satisfaction on his face. "It is Flying Deer who answers the message of the wampum."

With Dick working the paddle, and the chief of the Hurons standing stiffly in the canoe, as motionless as a carved image, the craft drew near, the Huron motioning Dick to cease paddling when only a matter of twenty yards of water separated the canoes.



The call of the wren sounded softly, for the big trapper was as expert in such things as any redskin, and Nat, peering round the trunk of a tree, entirely hidden by the shadows, looked to see if his signal would be answered. (See page 297.)

"Greeting!" the Huron cried. "Flying Deer would speak with the Straight Pine."

"Is there anything to stop him?" the Delaware answered with the suggestion of a sneer in his voice, for he had no love for the Hurons or their chiefs.

"To-day the Young Horse is a prisoner in our camp," Flying Deer continued in his level voice; "but we would part with him,

knowing that No Scalp craves for him, if Straight Pine will take his place at the torture-stake."

"Flying Deer talks like a young brave who is not called to the council fire," the Delaware answered. "Straight Pine has a hundred dry scalps at the poles of his wigwams, the Young Horse has none. Is it a fair exchange?"

The Huron shrugged his shoulders, otherwise he showed no sign of emotion.

"It hath been decided that one must die," he said.

"It is but war," Straight Pine murmured.

"Yet is the Huron as merciful as Manitou," Flying Deer continued quickly; "for will he not set free the beloved of the paleface warrior and take in exchange the Delaware chief?"

"Flying Deer wastes breath," Straight Pine remarked. "Are his ears closed, that he has not heard? More than the paleface boy will be asked for Straight Pine."

Flying Deer's eyes glanced sharply into the other Indian's face, but he could read nothing there.

"Let Straight Pine speak," he said.

Straight Pine drew himself up to his full height.

"For this will I give myself up," he said. "The Young Horse shall be set free to join No Scalp on the lake. Also shall they be permitted to journey unmolested to Fort Larabee. I have spoken."

"And the words are but sounds," the Huron sneered. "Are we squaws, that we cannot come out on to the lake and take our enemies alive for the torture?"

"Where are the scalps of the braves who have tried?" Straight Pine demanded, touching his waist, where the ghastly trophies hung.

"They were but young," Flying Deer answered hastily; "but when Flying Deer and his braves come out, then shall there be three more scalps in the wigwams of the Hurons."

"Guess not," Nat muttered, smiling grimly, as he touched the bald spot on his head.

The two chiefs stood facing each other, neither showing any outward sign of emotion.

"The other chiefs shall hear," the Huron said at last, when it was plain to him that the Delaware did not mean to speak. "At sunset will he bring the word to Straight Pine and No Scalp."

Flying Deer spoke to Dick, and the boy, after waving his hand to his friends, dipped his paddle, swung the canoe round, and sent the light craft dancing back towards the shore.

Straight Pine stood watching it, only turning his eyes away when the man and the boy had disappeared among the trees.

"To-night Straight Pine will take the Young Horse's place," he said composedly, squatting down in the canoe.

"You think they'll do it then, chief?" the big trapper answered eagerly.

"Straight Pine great warrior," the Delaware answered coolly, without the slightest suggestion of boasting; "his scalp worth those of two palefaces to the Huron chiefs."

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

### Given Up—Nat Goes Back to the Camp— News of Lame Bear—The Sentry Silenced.

"THE Young Horse comes," the Delaware announced quietly hours later, as the dusk grew deeper, and only the keenest of eyes could have seen the canoe creeping out from the bank.

Straight Pine divested himself of his robe, touched his rifle as if saying farewell to it, and held out his hand to the trapper.

"Rear the Young Horse well, my brother," he said gravely. "Farewell! I go now, that he may not grieve over my departure."

Before Nat could answer a word, Straight Pine had slipped out of the canoe into the water, and was swimming with strong strokes towards the shore, travelling at a slant, so that he might avoid Dick's canoe, which was coming along rapidly.

"Where's Straight Pine?" the boy asked eagerly, as he came alongside. "I've come to tell him that I will not accept his sacrifice."

"Thou art too late, boy," Nat answered huskily, pointing towards the shore, which was still faintly visible. "Look!"

The boy turned, and his keen eyes just made out a solitary figure marching with great dignity towards the trees, to disappear in their shadows.

A yell of triumph, repeated again and again, came from the shore, and Dick knew that it really was too late. Already the Hurons and Mingoës were rejoicing over the capture of their great enemy, Straight Pine the Delaware. The boy's face turned hard, and lost much of its usually youthful look.



"Nat," he said quietly, "I must go back; I can't let the chief suffer for me!"

That the boy meant to do as he said there could be no doubt, and the trapper was only just in time to grip him as he swung the nose of the canoe back towards the shore.

"Don't be a fool, lad!" he said sternly. "'Tis no good both dyin', an' ye needn't think as them hounds would give Straight Pine up if they got you again. Compared with him you ain't so much as a twig. It goes against the grain I allow, but ye can't do no good by goin' back."

Once more the wild, triumphant yells of the Mingoe and Huron savages came from the bank, which was now no longer even faintly visible. Dick dashed his paddle into the water as they reached his ears, but Nat had him hard by the sleeve, and he could not move.

"Let me go, Nat!" he cried. "Surely you wouldn't have a brother of yours stay here at such a time?"

"I would hev him live," the trapper said huskily, then a gleam came into his eyes. "Come into the canoe, lad, an' we'll hev a fling at savin' the chief yet."

There was no mistaking the earnestness of Nat Wild's tones, and, without hesitation, the boy stepped into the larger canoe. The small craft was abandoned, man and boy took up the paddles, and the canoe stole away across the surface of the lake. Before them lay the waters that would lead them to within ten miles of Fort Larabee, which there now seemed to be every chance that they would reach in safety. The savages had promised not to molest them, and, strange though it may seem, such promises were sometimes kept. The great danger would be when the two landed to cover the last ten miles on foot, for there were sure to be small parties of braves roaming about, many of whom would not own allegiance to those who had made the promise to the palefaces.

But of none of this did Nat and Dick Wild think just at present, for their brains had only room for one thought—the saving of Straight Pine.

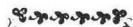
It was the trapper who guided the canoe, and he slanted away towards the shore, guiding himself by the stars, for even the dense

THE  
GREYFRIARS GALLERY  
IN VERSE

By Dick Penfold



No. 10: Harold Skinner



Who plays the game with might and main?  
(The game of "nap," to be quite plain.)  
Who hunts for pleasure, then finds pain?  
Why, Skinner!

Who, if he were a moneyed "star,"  
Would swagger in a handsome car,  
And proudly puff a fat cigar?  
Why, Skinner!

Who hets on gee-gees (when he can!)  
And thinks himself a "sporty" man,  
Then finds his horse is "also ran"?  
Why, Skinner!

Who gets up japes, but seldom scores?  
Who sits and smokes behind locked doors?  
Who's always getting in the wars?  
Why, Skinner!

Who's always full of bounce and brag?  
Who thinks himself a witty wag?  
Who makes us use the verb, "to scrag"?  
Why, Skinner!

Who, if he lives (no doubt he will!)  
Will end his labours, "lying" still,  
Within the walls of Pentonville?  
Why, Skinner!

# A SPORTS TRAGEDY

INTRODUCING SOME WELL-KNOWN NAMES AT GREYFRIARS AND St. JIM'S

By DICK PENFOLD

"Although I've only got WUN LUNG,  
I'm sure I can HOP HI;  
I'll POTTER home, too, in the  
mile,  
And beat the smaller FRY."

So spake young BROWN, a NOBLE  
youth,  
Whose heart was light and GAY;  
He meant to stand the CUTTS and  
KNOX  
That chanced to come his way.

Just then a BULSTRODE on the  
GREENE,  
BROWN promptly seized a RAKE;  
And said, "Great SCOTT! I'm feeling  
hot!  
My MERRY life's at stake!"

His TEMPLE throbbed; his head did  
SINGH,  
He floundered like a FISH;  
Said he, "I'll TODD-le right away  
From this absurd posish!"

But then the BULL, in fierce dis-DANE,  
Came forward with a roar;  
And BROWN could never REILLY WYNN  
The monster had his GORE!

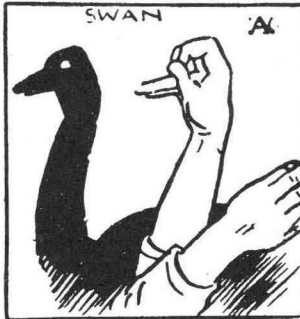
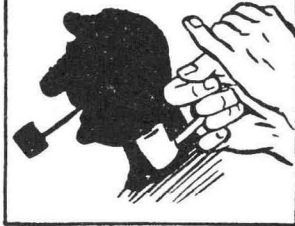
GREYHOUND.



## EASY SHADOWGRAPHS

Any boy or girl can  
perform these simple  
silhouettes with the  
aid of a small screen  
and a lighted candle.

MAN  
SMOKING



mass of trees could not be seen. It was a night for such a venture—for sudden death and snatching away from death—a night when a nervous man in the woods would have started and shivered at the cracking of a twig beneath his heel.

With a gentle, grating sound the canoe touched the slanting beach, and Nat, taking his rifle with him, stepped out into the shallow water. Dick would have followed, but his brother pushed him back into his seat, and whispered to him, his lips close against the boy's ear. There was no telling how near an enemy might be.

"Keep the canoe from the shore, lad," he whispered, "an' try an' make for the fort if I'm not back within the hour."

Softly as a panther, despite his bulk, Nat slipped among the trees, and stole along in the direction of the spot where the camp of the Mingoes lay. That he was taking his life in his hands he knew perfectly well, just as he knew that somewhere among the trees there were sure to be sentries, unless the savages, deeming themselves safe from attack in the woods, had not troubled to throw any out. It was unlikely that they had left the camp so unguarded.

Moving with the utmost caution, for the snap of a twig beneath his moccasined feet might have heralded death, Nat moved steadily forward, shifting from tree to tree, keeping behind cover as much as possible, and with his rifle ever ready to return the fire of an enemy. That was the last thing that he wanted, however, for even if he escaped, it would mean the finish and failure of the attempt to rescue Straight Pine.

Something rustled in the undergrowth away to the big trapper's left, and he stopped, stiff and still as a statue, the butt of his gun resting in the palm of his hand, his ears pricked to catch a repetition of the sound. It did not come again, and he once more moved softly forward.

Ahead, through the trees, a fitful flame glimmered, now coming, now going, as trunks of trees or little open spaces revealed or hid it from the trapper's eyes. Now he moved even more cautiously, if that were possible, and, reaching a kind of natural track, dropped full

length to the ground and wriggled along it like a serpent, forcing his rifle ahead of him.

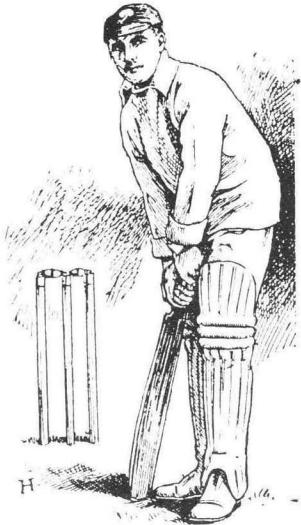
In this way, making slow but sure progress, Nat Wild approached the camp of the Hurons and Mingoes. At any moment he expected to feel the dull thud of a bullet against his head, but that did not deter him. Only once did he hesitate, and that was when he thought of Dick trying to get to Fort Larabee alone. He put the thought from him, however, remembering that the lad would most probably have been dead by now if it had not been for the Delaware, and crawled on.

The light from the fire soon showed more plainly, and Nat, turning off among the trees again, rose to his feet and crept forward to the edge of the small natural clearing in which the camp had been pitched. He reached it without interference, and stood, half behind a tree and half in the shadow cast by it, within eight or nine yards of the braves squatting round the camp-fire.

It was not a large camp, and the rough lodges, that had been built of thin boughs, showed that the savages had no intention of remaining long. Probably they were awaiting reinforcements before pushing on to attack Fort Larabee, which Straight Pine the Delaware had said was their intention.

Round the fire, or lounging near the lodges, were about a score of savages of the Mingoe and Huron tribes, each with his rifle close to his hand and his tomahawk at his belt. Over all these Nat just cast his eyes, which stopped attentively on one man, who sat, rather by himself, before the fire. All around him were painted men, who sat quite close to each other, yet on both sides of him there was a distinct gap. It was Straight Pine the Delaware, his fine eyes staring moodily and unconcernedly into the fire. His limbs were not bound, but he was as much a prisoner as if he had been loaded down by irons. One sharp movement would be enough to lodge a bullet in his brain. A white man in the same position would probably have contemplated a dash for freedom, but the chief knew that such a move could end in nothing but death. Still, a bullet in the brain would have been preferable to the tortures which were undoubtedly in store for him.

FAMOUS COUNTY CRICKETERS & THEIR AUTOGRAPHS



*H Rhodes*



*H Geo Gunn*



*Lenb Brand*



*W B Smith*



*H Broadwick*



*J Hitch*

Only a foot at a time, for the slightest slip would have had disastrous consequences, Nat moved round the clearing, keeping well back among the trees, until he had reached a spot exactly behind where Straight Pine sat by the fire.

His chief reason for doing this was that the trees ran to within a few feet of the fire here, and that the Delaware would be able to hear anything happening behind him in the wood. The riskiest part of the trapper's mission had now arrived. He had got to attract Straight Pine's attention.

How was he to attract the Delaware's attention? The braves round the fire sat in solemn silence, some smoking, most merely staring into the flames. The slightest suspicious sound would be heard by them.

Nat thought of the call of the wren, which the chief had previously used as a signal, and, knowing that the quick mind of the Delaware would probably at once grasp the significance of such a call, he decided to use it now, though what he was going to do even after the chief knew that he was among the trees he had not the faintest idea.

The call of the wren sounded softly, for the big trapper was as expert in such things as any redskin, and Nat, peering round the trunk of a tree, entirely hidden by the shadows, looked to see if his signal would be answered.

Straight Pine, sitting by the fire, his blanket round his shoulders, made not the slightest sign, nor did any of the other braves seem to attach any significance to the chirping of a bird.

For the second time the faint call came from among the trees, but still the chief gave no sign, and, almost in despair, Nat chirped for the third time.

Very gently, so slowly, indeed, that the trapper did not at first notice it, one of Straight Pine's hands stole out behind him. Only for a second or two did it remain there, before being withdrawn once more to his side. It was enough for the trapper, however, who knew that his signal had been understood.

What would Straight Pine do, that was the question? Nat felt sure that he would try to communicate with him, yet he could not see how he would do it. Knowing the Indian

cunning, and especially the craftiness of the Delaware, he waited quietly among the trees.

Five minutes later, when the calling of the wren had been forgotten, if it had ever been noticed by the Mingo and Huron, Straight Pine shifted slightly, and spoke, with his eyes still on the fire, in his curiously deep, mellow voice.

"Flying Deer rests long," he said, "as the bear sleeping through the winter. Is it that he fears the palefaces at the fort, and waits until his braves are many as the trees in the forest? Does he fear that the Delaware will escape under the torture, that he does not order his young braves to gather wood for the fire?"

Flying Deer, who was seated at the other side of the fire, answered without raising his head.

"The words of the Delaware are but the senseless falling of waters," he said. "The scalps of the palefaces at the fort await the knives of the Mingo. As for the torture, the fire burns low until *Lame Bear* shall have come into the forest. To-morrow night Straight Pine shall bend and crack like the old tree."

Nat had not been wrong in believing that the chief would manage to convey a message to him, for he had already done so. The trapper now knew that Straight Pine was not to be tortured until the morrow, so that there were now some hours in which to try to rescue him.

But how was it to be done?

The first thing, Nat decided, was to get back to the canoe, for otherwise he might be discovered among the trees, and that would mean the end of all plans for both himself and the chief.

Very softly Nat drew away from the clearing, moving as stealthily as any Indian, and it was not long before he had put a hundred yards between himself and the fire. A little later he reached the beach, the canoe ran silently forward across the water to meet him, and, clambering aboard and taking a paddle, Nat urged the frail craft out until she lay more than a hundred yards from the edge of the forest.

## THE NINTH CHAPTER.

### A Dash for the Fort—Over the Rapids— Claiming Help—To Save Straight Pine.

“WHAT have you done, Nat?” Dick asked eagerly, as soon as his brother stopped paddling.

“Nothing, boy,” the trapper answered moodily, “save learnt that the chief is not to be tortured until to-morrow night.”

“And why are they waiting?”

“For the arrival of Lame Bear,” Nat explained gruffly. “If I thought it could do good, I’d wait for Lame Bear, an’ see as how he never reached the camp.”

Dick touched his brother sharply on the arm.

“We’ve still got time to save the chief, Nat,” he said eagerly.

“Ye’re right, Dick,” he said sharply; “an’ we’ll try. That’s a way by which we kin reach the fort by water, though it means riskin’ our necks over the rapids. Air ye ready to try? If we git through we’ll be at the fort by dawn. None too soon, either, for those soldiers’ll need all the blessed day ter git up through the woods.”

“I’ll risk anything if there’s a chance of saving the chief, Nat,” Dick answered quietly. “He saved me, you know.”

“Then to the fort!” Nat said, between his teeth; and his paddle dipped into the water, throwing the canoe round until her nose pointed down-stream.

That there was no time to lose Nat knew well enough, or he would never have suggested the shooting of the rapids. Most parties bound for the fort left the water ten miles from that place, just above the rapids. Only a few of the hardest men had been known to shoot the rapids successfully, and there was a long list of the foolhardy who had tried and failed and met their deaths among the rocks and the broken water.

With the paddles working steadily and evenly, Dick finding extra strength in the knowledge of the mission upon which he was bound, the light bark canoe swept swiftly along the water, aided by the current, which was now fairly powerful as it reached the outlet of the lake, to dash on down the fast-

running stream and over the tumbling rapids, until it reached another lake.

Few men knew the waters of the Quesna Lake better than the big trapper, and he steered the canoe now as surely as if it had been broad daylight, swinging her round bends, and missing headlands that jutted out into the narrow water with a skill that was little short of miraculous. His blood was fired by his mission, and he would have faced more than the chance of death in the rapids to save Straight Pine.

And Dick, working like a man in the stern, had inspired him to it. Nat was a man of fine courage, yet if it had not been for the boy he would have given the Delaware chief up as lost. He knew it, and felt prouder of the lad than he had even been before.

Still, too, was there the chance that the Mingoës were waiting on the shores to take the scalps of the two palefaces. Many of the savage tribes were to be depended upon once they had given their word; but Nat knew that the Mingoës and Hurons were not of those tribes. Never once did he glance to the right or the left, yet at any moment he expected to hear the crack of the rifles and to feel the zip of the bullets through the air. Mile after mile was covered, and the trapper began to feel more confident. Most probably, he decided, the savages were waiting in the woods below the spot where travellers to the fort usually landed. Well, by sticking to the stream, the intrepid man and boy would pass them as easily as if borne on the wings of the wind.

Every mile, every yard almost, in fact, the current whirled the canoe on faster, until Nat’s efforts with the paddle were chiefly confined to keeping the head of the canoe straight. Already the waters were eddying and whirling in places, showing that the rapids were very near. The lake had turned into nothing more than a broad stream now, so narrow that men on either bank, even in the darkness, would have found the canoe a pretty easy mark. Thinking of this, Nat dropped his paddle for a brief second while he examined his rifle. Then to the paddle again, and the guiding of the racing canoe down the turbulent stream.

With a cry almost as savage as that of a Huron, Nat leapt into the open, and Dick followed.

(See page 301.)



“We’re past the spots where the varmints was likely to hev an ambush, Dick,” Nat said at last; but his voice betrayed no note of exultation.

“Then we’ll reach the fort all right, Nat,” the boy answered gleefully.

“’Tis more in the hands of Providence than ours, lad,” the trapper said. He stared hard

ahead now, his eyes always on the waters.

The canoe, seemingly at the mercy of the current now, raced on towards the rapids and falls, until the beating of the falling waters was loud in the ears of the man and boy. Dawn was just beginning to break, and Nat looked up eagerly at the sky, hoping that there would be enough light for him to see his way between the rocks.

Five minutes passed, and the thunder of the waters was so loud that it seemed to Dick impossible that the canoe could live through such a plunge as that which lay before it. He stared forward, able to see a few feet ahead now.

“Crouch down in the bows!” Nat cried, shouting to make his voice heard above the

roar; and at the same moment, with a lightness which was remarkable in a man of his build, he moved further back into the stern.

Like a bubble on the water the canoe raced on, and Dick caught a glimpse of a ragged rock right ahead. He was about to call out, but before he could do so the canoe's course had been shifted, and the rock flashed by, so close that it looked as if the bark of the canoe touched it.

The next few seconds held nothing clear for Dick. All around him the water roared and eddied. He caught glimpses of dark rocks, which the canoe appeared to dodge in miraculous fashion; then she lifted bodily, a spray of cold water swept into Dick's face, and the canoe was riding in comparatively smooth water.

A wild cheer broke from Nat, and Dick, realising that the danger of the waters was passed, echoed it heartily.

"An' thar's the fort!" the trapper cried, pointing to the right bank, where, through the growing light, could be seen a large palisade inside which rose several wooden roofs.

Straight to the shore Nat drove the canoe, and leapt on to dry land, followed by Dick. From the palisade a soldier, in red coat and leather stock, came running, his rifle at the slope.

"Halt!" he commanded.

"Is Captain Waring about yet?" the trapper answered sharply, advancing to meet the man.

"Nay, an' not likely ter be for a couple of hours," the soldier answered.

"There ye're mistaken, my lad," Nat Wild said coolly; "fer the Mingoes an' Hurons air out again, an' ye've got ter send me right through ter the cap'n now. He knows me, so send word to him."

The soldier led the way to the palisade, and Dick was able to see the wooden houses of the soldiers within, also the few huts built near to the fort, so that their inhabitants could take refuge with the soldiers once an alarm was raised. The message was sent to Captain Waring by another soldier, and inside five minutes Nat and Dick were sent

through to the presence of the officer commanding the fort.

They found him already half-dressed, while a soldier was busy sharpening his sword.

"So they're up again, Nat?" Captain Waring said, for he had met the trapper before; "an' there's a chance of death or glory for some of us?"

"It's dead right, cap'n," the trapper answered; "an' you an' your men 'll hev ter look sharp if they're ter save the life of the man who was comin' here to warn you."

"Who's that?" the officer asked sharply.

"Straight Pine, the Delaware chief."

"A redskin!" Captain Waring said indifferently.

"Ay, a redskin, cap'n," the trapper repeated earnestly, "with as white a heart as your own."

In as few words as possible Nat Wild told the story of the last few days, and of the Delaware's sacrifice. At the end the eyes of the officer were glowing, and he turned impatiently to the man who was putting the finishing touches to the edge of his sword.

"Haste ye, Saunders," he commanded. "Such a man must not be let die, whatever his colour."

## THE TENTH CHAPTER.

**Back Through the Woods—Nat and Dick Ahead—Awaiting Torture—The Wounded Mingoe — A Desperate Fight — The British in Time.**

ALREADY the sun had long passed the spot in the heavens, which showed that it was noon, hours since the soldiers, two score in number, had halted among the trees and made their midday meal as coolly as if they had been within the palisade of Fort Larabee; yet the camp of the Hurons and Mingoes still lay a full ten miles ahead. The soldiers were not used to this kind of warfare, despite the fact that some had been at the frontier fort for years, and they made but slow progress.

They just marched on, stolidly and silently, yet making enough noise to have reached the sharp ears of a savage a full half mile away. But then, they held the redskins in contempt



as mere savages, despite the fact that most of them had known men whose scalps were now drying on the lodge poles of the Hurons and Mingoes.

Striding ahead to show the way, Dick trudged manfully beside him, was Nat Wild. Despite all that the two had been through, they still walked faster than the soldiers—having, indeed, to halt from time to time to allow them to come up.

“Why not push on ahead, Nat?” Dick suggested. “We might be able to do some good if the worst came to the worst.”

Captain Waring made no objection, and the trapper and Dick, quickening their pace, yet moving noiselessly, as do all men long-trained to the ways of the woods, forged ahead, until within a pretty short time they could not even hear the advance of the soldiers, despite the noise that they were making.

It still wanted two hours to sunset, but that was none too long in which to reach the redskin camp, and Nat made the pace warm, so warm, in fact, that Dick more than once had to trot behind him. Still, the boy cared nothing so long as the Delaware was saved.

Nearly the whole of the two hours passed before Nat began to advance more cautiously, and the last mile towards the camp took close upon an hour to cover. It was dark as pitch when the man and the boy halted, hidden by the trees, at the edge of the clearing. That they were none too soon they could plainly see. A great fire was already burning in the centre of the clearing, and close to it a pile had been driven into the ground. To this the prisoner would be lashed, then the fire would be raked towards him.

For the present Straight Pine had not been subjected to the torture. He lay by the fire, bound now, and round him squatted a score or so of braves, their weapons handy.

“May the redcoats come soon, boy!” Nat whispered.

“They can’t be long,” Dick whispered back. “They must have gained on us in the the last hour, so that——”

A wild yell broke in upon the boy’s speech, and Nat half raised his rifle, thinking that they had been discovered. Then he saw his

mistake, and lowered it. Into the circle of light thrown from the fire a young brave, bleeding badly from a cut on the temple, had staggered.

“Paleface soldiers!” he panted, waving his arms towards the woods.

The alarm was thorough, and the redskins snatched up their arms, and would have fled to the shelter of the trees had not an order from Flying Deer stayed them.

“Let not Straight Pine escape!” he cried. “To the fire!”

Four men leapt upon the Delaware, and snatching him up, bore him towards the fire. A rifle cracked crisply, and one of the bearers fell to the ground.

With a yell almost as savage as that of a Huron, Nat leapt into the open, and Dick followed.

Under the swinging blows of Nat’s clubbed rifle two more of the Indians fell, while Dick accounted for a third. The suddenness of the onslaught, too, was in favour of the attackers, for the redskins, thinking that the soldiers had come, turned and bolted for the trees.

Kneeling down, and drawing out his knife, Nat quickly freed the Delaware, who, leaping to his feet, and snatching up a rifle that had fallen from the hands of a Mingoe, was ready to join in the fight, too. The terrible wailing of his tribe broke from his lips, and went echoing after the flying enemy. As it died away, Captain Waring and his men came dashing into the clearing.

“Where have the fiends gone?” he cried.

“The hounds run for their lodges,” Straight Pine answered, pointing away into the forest.

And the soldiers, led by the captain, at once started off in that direction, but neither Nat nor Dick nor the chief attempted to follow.

It was the last named who spoke now, a smile on his lips, his eyes upon Dick Wild.

“The heart of Straight Pine is glad,” he said, in his full voice, “for the Young Horse did not forsake him in his hour of peril.”

“Isn’t likely, is it, chief?” the boy protested, “seeing that you gave yourself up for me.”

Straight Pine smiled again, and laid a hand on the boy’s shoulder.

“Many are the palefaces who speak great words,” he said, “that are but as empty of

meaning as the wind that blows them from the lips. To them a promise means no more than the crack of a rifle to a buck who has long roamed distant from the grounds of the hunter. But Young Horse's words are those of the great brave, and Straight Pine holds him as a brother."

"That'll make two he's got, chief," Nat said, with a grin, squatting on the ground as coolly as if anything in the shape of Indians was certainly miles away.

"And his brothers shall teach him many things," the Delaware continued. "The best places for the buck, the following of the trail, the very call of the birds, until no such paleface brave shall there have been before."

"You will really teach me, chief!" Dick cried eagerly.

The Delaware laid a hand on the boy's shoulder again.

"I have spoken," he said.

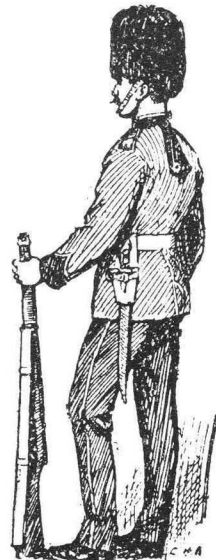
## THE END.



The King's Royal Rifles.



The Royal Horse Guards.



The Welsh Fusiliers.

## TYPES OF THE BRITISH ARMY