

HE MASTER OF BALLANTRAE.

BY ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON. The Celebrated Novelist,

Author of "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde."

CHAPTER XXIV.

OF THE JOURNEY IN THE WILL what pretext be took. Sir William Johnson had a diplomatic erran in these parts; and my lord and I (from

curiosity, as was given out) went in his company. Sir attended and liberally supplied. Hunters brought us taken for us daily brandy ran like ceeded by day and nped by night in the military style tinels were set and changed; every man had his named duty; and Sir William was the spring of all. There was much in this that

might at times have entertained me, but for our misfortune, the weather was extremebarsh, the days were in the beginning open, but the nights frosty from the first. A painful keen wind blew most of the time, so that we sat in the boat with blue fingers, and at night, as we scorehed our faces at the fire, the clothes upon our back appeared to be of paper. A dreadful solitude surrounded our ps; the land was quite dispeople I, the was no smoke of fires, and save for a single at of merchants on the second day, we no travelers. The season was indeed late this desertion of the waterways impress Sir William himself, and I have heard him more than once express a sense of intimida-tion. "I have come too late, I fear, they must have dug up the batchet," he said, and the future proved how justly he had reasoned. I could never depict the blackness of my soul upon this journey. I have uone of those minds that are in love with the unusual; to see the winter coming and to lie in the fields so far from any house, oppressed me like a nightmare; it seemed, indeed, a kind of awful braving of God's power; and this thought. which I dare say only writes me down a coward, was greatly exaggerated by my pri-vate knowledge of the errand we were come

Sir William, whom it fell upon me to enter-tain, for my lord was quite sunk into a state bordering on pervigilium, watching the woods with a rapt eye, sleeping scarce at all, and metimes not twenty words in a That which he said was still coberent, but it turned almost invariably upor the party for whom he kept his crazy look-He would tell Sir William often and always as if it were a new communication, that he had "a brother somewhere in the woods," and beg that the sentinels should be directed "to inquire for him," "I am anxious for news of my brother," he would say. And cometimes when we were under way he would water, or a camp on the shore, and ex-hibit painful agitation. It was impossible but Sir William should be struck with these singularities, and at last he led me aside and hinted his upensiness. I touched my head and shook it, quite rejoiced to prepare a little testimony against possible dis-losures. "But in that case," cries Sir William, "is

it wise to let him co at large!" "Those that know him best," said I, "are persuaded that he should be humored." "Well, well," replied Sir William, "it is none of my affairs. But if I had understood.

you would never have been here," Our advance into this savage country bad thus uneventfully proceeded week, when we encamped for a night at a place where the river ran among considerable mountains clothed in wood. The fires edge; and we supped and lay down to sleep in the customary fashion. It chanced the night fell murderously cold; the stringency of the frost seized and bit me through my coverings, so that pain kept me wakeful; and I was afoot again before the peopof day, eroughing by the fires or trotting to and fro at the stream's edge, to combat the aching of

At last dawn began to break upon boar woods and mountains, the sleepers rolled in their robes, and the boisterous river dashing among spears of ice. I stood looking about me, swaddled in my stiff coat of a bull's fur, and the breath smoking from my scorched nostrils, when, upon a sudden, a singular, eager cry rang from the borders of the wood The sentries answered it, the sleepers sprung to their feet; one pointed, the rest followed his direction with their eyes, and there, upon the edge of the forest and betweet two trees I the figure of a man reaching forth his hands like one in costasy. The next mo-ment he ran forward, fell on his knees at the

side of the camp and burst in tears.

This was John Mountain, the trader, escaped from the most herrid perils; and his word, when he got speech, was to ask if we had seen Secundra Das

en what?" cries Sir William, "No," said I, "we have seen nothing of him

Nothing?" says Mountain. "Then I was right after all." With that he struck his lm upon his brow. "But what takes him ck!" he cried. "What takes the man back among dead bodies? There is some damued mystery here.

This was a word which highly aroused our curiosity, but I shall be more perspicacions if I narrate these incidents in their true order. Here follows a narrative which I have compiled out of three sources, not very consistent all points: First, a written statement by Mountain, in

which overything criminal is cleverly smuggled out of view.

Second, two conversations with Secundra

Third, many conversations with Mountain bimself, in which he was pleased to be entire-ly plain; for the truth is, he regarded me as

accomplice. CHAPTER XXV spensie.

NARRATIVE OF LET THE TRADER, MOUNTAIN. HE crew that went up the river under the joint com

mand of Capt. Har ris and the master numbered in all nine persons, of whom (if I except Secundra Dass there was not one that had not merit ed the gallows From Harris down ward the voyagers

that colony for desperate, bloody minded miscreants; some were reputed pirates, the most hawkers of rum; all ranters and drinkers; all fit associates, embarking together without remorse, upon this treacherous and murderous design. I could not hear there was much discipline or any set captain in the gang; but Harris and four others, Mountain elf, two Scotchmen-Pinkerton Hastic and a man of the name of Hicks, a drunken shoemaker, put their heads together course. In a material and agreed upon the tense, they were well enough provided; and the master in particular brought with him a tent where ne might enjoy some privacy and belter.

Better.

Even this small indulgence told against him
a the minds of his companions. But indeed Even this small indulgence told against him in the minds of his companions. But indeed he was in a position so satirely false (and even ridiculous) that all his habit of command and arts of pleasing were here thrown away. In the eyes of all, except Secundra Dass, he figured as a common guil and designated victim, going unconsciously to death; yet he could not but suppose himself the contriver and the leader of the expedition. He could scarce help hut so conduct himself, and at the least

nint of authority or condescension his deceiv ers would be laughing in their sleeves. I was se used to see and to conceive him in a high, authoritative attitude that when I had conceived his position on this journey I was pained and could have blushed. How soon he may have entertained a first surmise we cannot know; but it was long, and the party had advanced into the wilderness beyond the

reach of any help ere he was fully awakened It fell thus. Harris and some others had drawn apart into the woods for consultation, when they were startled by a rustling in the brush. They were all accustomed to the arts of Indian warfare, and Mountain had not only lived and hunted, but fought and earned some reputation with the savages. He could move in the woods without noise, and follow a trail like a bound; and upon the emergence of this alert, he was deputed by the rest to plunge into the thicket for intelligence. He was soon convinced there was a mah in his close neighborhood, moving with precaution but without art among the leaves and advantage, he was able to observe Secundra Dass crawling briskly off with many back ward glances. At this he knew not whether to laugh or cry; and his accomplices, when he had returned and reported, were in much the same dubiety. There was now no danger of an Indian onslaught; but on the other hand, since Secundra Dass at the pains to spy upon them, it was probable he knew English, and if he knew English it was certain the whole of their design was in the muster's knowledge There was one singularity in the position. I Secundra Dass knew and concealed his knowl edge of English, Harris was a proficient in several of the tongues of India, and as his career in that part of the world had been a great deal worse than profligate, he had not thought proper to remark upon the circum-stance. Each side had thus a spy hole on the counsels of the other. The plotters, so soon as this advantage was explained, re-turned to camp. Harris, hearing the Hindoestance was once more closeted with his master, crept to the side of the tent, and the rest, sitting about the fire with their tobacco, awaited his report with impatience. When be came at last his face was very black! He had overheard enough to confirm the wors of his suspicions. Secundra Dass was a goscholar; he had been some days fully informed of the conspiracy, and the creeping and listening, the master was now

at a carrying place and plunge at a ven ture in the woods. What, then, was to be done? Some were for killing the master on the spot; but Harris assured them that would be a crime without profit, since the secret of the treasure must die along with him that buried it. Others were for desisting at once from the whole en terprise and making for New York; but the appetizing name of treasure, and the thought of the long way they had already traveled dismaded the majority. I unagine they were dull fellows for the most part. Harris, indeed, had some acquirements, Mountain was no fool, Hastie was an educated man; but even these had manifestly failed in life, and the rest were the dregs of colonial rascality. The conclusion they reached, at least, was more the offspring of greed and hope than reason. It was to temporize, to be wary and watch the master, to be silent and supply no further ailment to his suspicions, and to de pend entirely (as well as I make out) on the chance that their victim was as greedy, hope-Ad and irrational as themselves, and might, after all, betray his life and treasure.

Twice, in the course of the next day, Se-cundra and the master must have appeared to themselves to have escaped, and twice they were circumvented. The master, save that the second time he grew a little pale, displayed no sign of disappointment, apologized the stapidity with which be had fallen aside, thanked his recapturers as for a service, and rejoined the caravan with all his usual gallantry and cheerfulness of mien and bearing. But it is certain be had smelled a rat; for from thenceforth he and Secundra spoke only in each other's car, and Harris listened and shivered by the tent in vain. The same night it was announced they were to leave the beats and proceed by foot; a cirnstance which greatly lessened the chances

of escape. And now there began between the two sides a silent contest, for life on the one hand. for riches on the other. They were now near that quarter of the desert in which the master himself must begin to play the part of guide and using this for a pretext of prosecution, Harris and his men sat with him every night about the fire, and labored to entrap him into some admission. If he let stip his secret, he knew well it was the warrant for his death; on the other hand, he durst not refuse their questions, and must appear to help them to the best of his capacity, or he practically published his mistrust. And yet Mountain

issures me the man's brow was never ruffled. Indeed Mountain confessed to me they yould soon have disbelieved the captain's story, and supposed their designated victim still quite innocent of their designs, but for the fact that he continued (however ingeniously) to give the slip to questions, and the yet stronger confirmation of his repeated of forts to escape. The last of these, which brought things to a head, I am now to relate. And first I should say that by this time the temper of Harris' companions was utterly worn out; civility was scarce pretended; and for one very significant circumstance the master and Secondra had been (on some pretext) deprived of weapons. On their side owever, the threatened pair kept up the parade of friendship handsomely; Secundra was all bows, the master all smiles; and on the last night of the truce be had even gone so far as to sing for the diversion of thuscom pany. It was observed that he had also eaten unusual heartiness, and drank deep, doubtless from design.

At least, about 3 in the morning, he came out of the test into the open air, audibly mourning and complaining, with all the manner of a sufferer from surfeit. For sen while Secundra publicly attended ares on his patron, who at last hear surveying, on his phantices; and some more easy and fell asleep on the frosty ground behind the tent, the Indian returning within. Some time after the sentry was changed; had the master pointed out to him where he lay in what is called a robe of buffalo; and thence forth kept an eye upon him the declared) without remission. With the first of the dawn a draught of wind came suddenly and tilew open one side the corner of the robe and with the same post the master's hat whirled in the air and fell some yards away

CHAPTER XXVL THE MASTER REGINS ANOTHER LONG CON

TEST. H E sentry, remarkable the sleeper should not awaken thereupon drew near, and the next moment, with a great shout, in formed the camp their prisoner was escaped. He has He had left behind his in dian, who (in the first vivacity of the surprise) came near pay the forfeit of his life, and was

in fact, inbumant mishandled; but Secundra, in the midst of threats and cruel ties, stuck to it with extraordinary loyalty that he was quite ignorant of his master' plans, which might indeed be true, and o nner of his escape, which was demon strably false. Nothing was therefore left to the conspirators but to rely entirely on the skill of Mountain. The night had been frosty, the ground quite hard, and the sun was no sooner up than a strong thaw set in. ntain's boast that few men could have

tollowed that trail, and still lower even of the native Indians found it. The master had thus a long start before his pursuers had the scent, and he must have traveled with sur-prising energy for a pedestrian so unused, since it was near noon before Mountain had a view of him.

a view of him.

At this conjuncture the trader was alone, all his companions following, at his own request, several hundred yards in the rear, he knew the master was unarmed, his heart was besides heated with the exercise and lust of hunting; and seeing the quarry so close, so defenseless and seemingly so fatigued, he vaingloriously determined to effect the capture with his single hand. A step or two further brought him to one margin of a little clearing; on the other, with his arms folded and his back to a huge stone, the master sat. It is possible Mountain may have made rustle, it is certain, at least, the master raised his head and gazed directly at that quarter of the thirties where his hunter lay. "I could not be sure he saw me," Mountain said. could not be sure as saw inc., addition and, "the just looked my way like a man with his mind made up, and all the courage ran out of me like rum out of a bottle." And presently, when the master looked away again, and appeared to resume those meditations in which he had sat immersed before the trader's com ing, Mountain slunk stealthily back and returned to seek the help of his companions.

And now began the chapter of surprises, for the scout had scarce informed the others of his discovery, and they were yet prepartive, when the man himself expeared in their midst, walking openly and quietly, with his hands behind his back.

"Ab men sayen on us beholding them."
Here is a fortunate encounter. Let us get

Mountain last not mentioned his own weak ness or the master's disconcerting gaze upor the thicket, so that (with all the rest) his re turn appeared spontaneous. For all that, a hubbub arose, onthis flew, fists were shaken and guns pointed. "Let us get back to camp," said the master.

"I have an explanation to make, but it must be laid before you all. And in the mean-while I would put up these weapons, one of which might very easily gooff and blowaway your hopes of treasure. I would not kill tays he, smiling, "the goose with the golder eggs.

The charm of his superiority once more triumphed; and the party, in no particular order, set off on their return. By the way, e found occasion to get a word or two apar with Mountain. "You are a clever fellow and a bold," says

he, "but I am not so sure that you are doing urself justice. I would have you to cor sider whether you would not do better, ay and safer, to serve me instead of serving so commonplace a rascal as Mr. Harris. Consider of it," he concluded, dealing the man a gentle tap upon the shoulder, "and don't be Dead or alive, you will find me an ill man to quarrel with.

When they were come back to the camp where Harris and Pinkerton stood guard over condra, these two ran upon the master like viragoes and were amazed out of measure y were bidden by their comrades to "stand back and hear what the gentleman had to say," The master had not flinched be fore their onslaught, nor at this proof of the ground he had gained did he betray the least sufficiency.

"Do not let us be in baste," says he, "Meat first and public speaking after With that they made a hasty meal, and as soon as it was done the master, leaning on one elbow, began his speech. He speke long addressing himself to each, except Harris. finding for each (with the same exception some particular flattery. He called them "bold, honest blades," declared he had never seen a more jovial company, work better or pains more merrily supported "Well, then," says he, "some one asks me 'Why the devil I ran away? But that is scarge worth answer, for I think you all know pretty well. But you know only pretty well. That is a present I shall arrive at presently, and be you ready to remark it when it comes There is a traiter here—a double traiter. will give you his name before I am done, and let that suffice for now. But here comes

some other gentleman and asks me 'Why in the devil I came back? Well, before I answer that question I have one to put to you It was this cur here, this Harris, that speaks Hindoostanee?' cries he, rising on one knee and pointing fair at the man's face, with a gesture indescribably menacing, and when h had been answered in the affirmative, "Ah! says he, "then are all my suspicions verified, and I did rightly to come back. Now, men, hear the truth for the first time." Thereupon he launched forth in a long story, told with extraordinary skill bow he had all along sus-ported Harris, how he had found the confirmation of his fears, and how Harris must have misrepresented what passed between Secundra and himself.

At this point he made a bold stroke with excellent effect. "I suppose," says he, "you think you are going shares with Harris, I suppose you think you will see to that courselves; you would naturally not think so flat a rogue could cozen you. But have a care! Those half idiots have a sort of cunnion, as the skunk has its steach; and it may be news to you that Harris has taken care of himself already. Yes, for him the treasure is all money in the bargain. You must it or go starve. But he has been paid before hand; my brother paid him to destroy me look at him, if you doubt-look at him grin ning and gulping, a detected thief!" having made this happy impression, he ex-plained how he had escaped, and thought better of it, and at last concluded to come back, lay the truth before the company, and take his chance with them once more; per suaded, as he was, they would instantly de pose Harris and elect some other leader. "There is the whole truth," said he; "and with one exception I put myself entirely in your hands. What is the exception? There he sits," he cried, pointing once more to Har-ris; "a man that has to die! Weapons and conditions are all one to me; put me face to face with him, and if you give me nothing but a stick, in five minutes I will show you

sop of broken carrion fit for does to roll in. It was dark night when he made an they had listened in almost perfect silence. but the firelight scarce permitted any one to judge, from the look of his neighbors, with what result of persugaion or conviction. In-deed, the master had set himself in the brightest place, and kept his face there, to be the center of men's eyes, doubtless on a profound calculation. Silence followed for a while and presently the whole party by decame involved in disputation, the Genter lying on his back, with his hander knit under his bead and one know fler across the other, like a person uncan scheerned in the result. And here, say, his bravado carried him too far and prejudiced his case. At least, after a

east or two backward and forward, opinion settled finally against him. It's possible he hoped to repeat the business of the pirate ship, and be kimself, perhaps, on hard enough conditions, elected leader; and things went so far that way that Mountain actually threw out the proposition. But the rock be split upon was Hastie. This fellow was not well liked, being sour and slow, with an ugly glowering disposition, but he had studied some time for the church at Edinburgh collego before ill conduct had destroyed his prospects, and he now remembered and ap-

died what he had learned. Indeed, he had not proceeded very far, when the master rolled carelessly upon one side, which was done (in Mountain's opinion) to conceal the beginnings of despair upon his countenance. Hastie dismissed the most of what they had heard as nothing to the matter; what they wanted was the treasure. All that was said of Harris might be true, and they would have to see to that in time. But what had that to do with the treasure? They had heard a vast of words, but the truth was just this, that Mr. Durie was damually frightened and had several times run off Here he was-whether caught or come back was all one to Hastie: the point was to make an end of the business. As for the talk of deposing and electing captains, he hoped they were all free men and could attend their own affairs. That was dust flung in their eyes,

and so was the proposal to fight Harris. "He shall fight no one in this camp, I can tell him that," said Hastie. "We had trouble enough to get his arms away from him, and we should look pretty fools to give them back again. But if it's excitement the gentleman is after, I can supply him with more than is after, I can supply the for I have no inten-perhaps he cares about. For I have no inten-tion to spend the remainder of my life in those mountains, already I have been too lor and I propose that he shall immediately tel us where that treasure is, or else immediately be shot. And there," says he, producing his weapon, 'there is the pistol that I mean to

"Come, I call you a mun," cries the mas-

ter, string up and tooking at the speaker with an aim of admiration.

"I didn't ask you to call me anything," returned Hastie; "which is it to be?"

"That's an idle question," said the master.
"Needs must when the devil drives. The truth is we are within easy walk of the place, and I will show it you to-morrow."

With that, as if all were quite settled, and settled exactly to his mind, he walked off to his tent, whither Secundra had preceded him. I cannot think of these last turns and wrigeles of my old enemy except with admira-

gles of my old enemy except with admira-tion; scarce even pity is mingled with the boldly resisted his misfortunes. Even at that hour, when he perceived himself quite lost, when he saw he had but effected an exchange when he saw he had but effected an exchange of enemies, and overthrown Harris to set Hastie up, no sign of weakness appeared in his behavior, and he withdrew to his tent, already determined (I must suppose) upon affronting the incredible hazard of his last expedient with the same easy, assured, genteel expression and demeanor as he might have left a theatre withal to join a supper of the wits. But doubtless within, if we could see there, his soul trembled.

Early in the night, word went about the

Early in the night, word went about the ramp that he was sick; and the first thing the next morning he called Hastie to his side, and inquired most anxiously if he had any skill in medicine. As a matter of fact, this was a vanity of that fallen divinity student's, to which he had cunningly addressed himself. Hastic examined him; and being flattered, ignorant, and highly suspicious, knew not in the least whether the man was sick or the least whether the man was sick or malingering. In this state, he went forth again companions; and (as the thing which would give himself most consequence either way) announced that the patient was in a fair way to die.

all that," he added, with an oath "and if he bursts by the wayside, he must bring us this morning to the treasure. But there were several in the camp (Mount an among the number) whom this brutality revolted. They would have seen the master pistoled, or pistoled him themselves, without the smallest sentiment of pity; but they seem

to have been touched by his gallant fight and unequivocal defeat the night before; perhaps, too, they were even already beginning to op pose themselves to their new leader; at leas they now declared that of the man was sick he should have a day's rest in spite of Hastie's

The next morning he was manifestly worse, and Hastie himself began to display some thing of humane concern, so easily does even the pretense of doctoring awaken sympathy. The third, the master called Mountain and Hastie to the tent, announced himself to be dying, gave them full particulars as to th position of the cache, and begged them to set out incontinently on the quest, so that they might see if he deceived them, and (if they were at first unsuccessful) he should be able to correct their error.

But here arose a difficulty on which he doubtless counted. None of these men would trust another, none would consent to stay behind. On the other hand, although the mas ter seemed extremely low, spoke scarce above a whisper, and lay much of the time insensi-ble, it was still possible it was a fraudulent sickness; and if all went treasure-hunting, it might prove they had gone upon a wild-goose chase, and return to find their prisoner flown. They concluded, therefore, to hang idling round the camp, alleging sympathy to their reason; and certainly, so mingled are ou dispositions, several were sincerely (if not very deeply) affected by the natural peril of the man whom they callously designed to murder. In the afternoon, Hastie was called to the bedside to pray: the which (incredible as it must appear) he did with unction; about eight at night, the wailing of Secundra an nounced that all was over, and before ten the Indian, with a link stuck in the ground, was

toiling at the grave, Sunrise of next day beheld the master's burial, all hands attending with great decency of demeaner; and the body was laid in the earth wrapped in a fur robe, with only the face uncovered; which last was of a waxy whiteness, and had the nostrils plugged ac-cording to some oriental habit of Secundra's. No sooner was the grave filled than th lamentations of the Indian once more struck concern to every heart; and it appears this gang of murderers, so far from resenting his outcries, although both distressful and (in such a country) perilous to their own safety, roughly but kindly endeavored to consol

But if busing outpra is even in the worst of men occasionally kind, it is still, and before all things, greedy; and they soon turned from the mourner to their own concerns. The cache of the treasure being hard by, although yet unidentified, it was concluded not to break camp; and the day passed, on the part of the voyagers, in unavailing exploration of the woods, Secundra the while lying on his master's grave. That night they placed no but lay all together fire, in the customary woodman fashion, the heads outward, like the spokes of a wheel.

Morning found them in the same disposition; only Pinkerton, who lay on Mountain's right, between him and Hastie, had din the ours of darkness) been secretly butchered, and there lay, still wrapped as to his body in his mantle, but offering above that unand horrific spectacle of the scalped head. The gang were that morning as pale as a company of phantoms, for the pertinacity of Indian war (or, to speak more correctly, In-dian murder), was well known to all. But they laid the chief blame on their unsen tineled posture; and, fired with the neighborgood of the treasure, determined to continu where they were. Pinkerton was buried hard the master; the survivors again passed the day in exploration, and returned in a mingled humor of anxiety and hope, being partly certain they were now close on the discovery of what they sought, and on the other hand (with the return of darkness) were nfected with the fear of Indians.

Mountain was the first sentry; he declared he neither slept nor yet sat down, but kept his watch with a perpetual and straining vigilance, and it was even with unconcern that (when he saw by the stars his time was up) he drew near the fire to waken his succes-This man at was Hicks, the shoemaker slept on the lee side of the circle, somewhat further off in consequence than those to wind-ward, and in a place darkened by the blowing smoke. Mountain stooped and took him by the shoulder; bis and was at once smeared by some ach, nesive wetness, and (the wind at are moment veering) the firelight shone upon

the sleeper and showed him, like Pinkerton, dead and scalped. It was clear they had fallen in the hands of one of those matchless Indian braves, that will sometimes follow a party for days, and in spite of indefatigable travel and unsleeping watch, continue to keep up with their advance and steal a scalp at every resting place. Upon this discovery, the treasure seekers, already reduced to a poor half dozen, fell into mere dismay, seized a few necessaries, and, deserting the remainder of their goods, fled outright into the forest. Their fire they left

still burning, and their dead comrade unburied. All day they ceased not to flee, cating by the way, from hand to mouth, and since they feared to sleep, continued to advance at random even in the hours of dark But the limit of man's endurance is soon reached; when they rested at last, it was to sleep profoundly; and when they woke, it was to find that the enemy was still upor their heels, and death and mutilation had once more lessened and deformed their com By this they had become light headed, they had quite missed more path in the wilder-ness, their stores were already running low. that I should swell this narrative, already

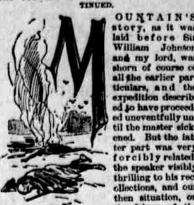
With the further horrors, it is superfluous prolonged. Suffice it to say that when at length a night passed by innocuous, and they might breathe again in the hope that the murderer had at last desisted from pur-Mountain and Secundra were alone. The trader is firmly persuaded their unseen enemy was some warr or of his own acquaintance, and that he himself was spared by The mercy extended to Secundra be explains on the ground that the East Indian was thought to be insane, partir from the fact that, through all the horrors of the flight, and while others were casting away their very food and weapons, Secundra con tinued to stagger forward with a matteck on his shoulder; and portly because, in the last days, and with a great degree of heat and fluency, he perpetually spoke with himself in his own language. But he was same enough when it came to English.

You think he will be gone quite away?" he asked, upon their blessed awakening in

"I pray God so, I believe so, I dare to be lieve so," Mountain had replied almost with incoherence as he described the scene to me. And indeed he was so much distempered

that, until he met us the next morning, he could scarce be certain whether be had dreamed, or whether it was a fact, that Becundra had thereupon turned directly about and returned without a word upon their footprints, setting his face for these wintery and hungry seitudes, along a path whose every stage was milestoned with a mutilated corpse.

CHAPTER XXVII. THE JOURNEY IS THE WILDERNESS CON-



OUNTAIN'S story, as it was laid before Sir William Johnson william Johnson
and my lord, was
shorn of course of
all the earlier particulars, and the
expedition described to have proceeded uneventfully until the master sickcored. But the jatened But the latfor cibly relates

then situation, or the fringe of the ame desert, and the private intere gave him an audience prepared to share in his emotions. For Mountain's intelligence not only changed the world for my Lord Durrisdeer, but materially affected the de-signs of Sir William Johnson.

These I find I must lay more at length be fore the reader. Word had reached Albany of dubious import; it had been rumored some hostility was to be put in act; and the Indian diplomatist had, thereupon, sped into the wilderness, even at the approach of win-ter, to nip that mischief in the bud. Here, on the borders, he learned that he was com too late; and a difficult choice was thus prescated to a man (upon the whole) not any more bold than prudent. His standing with the painted braves may be compared to that of my Lord President Culloden among the chiefs of our own highlanders at the five; that is as much as to say, he was, to these men, reason's only speaking trumpet and counsels of peace and moderation, if they were to provail at all, must prevail singly through his influence. If, then, he should re-turn, the province must lie open to all the abominable tragedies of Indian war—the houses blaze, the wayfarer be cut off, and the men of the woods collect their usual disgust-ing spoil of human scalps. On the other side, further forth, to risk so small a party deeper in the desert, to carry words of pene among warlike savages already rejoicing to return to war: here was an extremity from which it was easy to perceive his mind re-

"I have come too late," he said more than once, and would fall into a deep considera tion, his head bowed in his hands, his foot patting the ground.

At length he raised his face and looked upon us, that is to say, upon my lord, Mountain, and myself, sitting close round a small fire, which had been made for privacy in one

corner of the camp.
"My lord, to be quite frank with find myself in two minds," said he. "I think it very needful I should go on, but not at all proper I should any longer enjoy the pleasure of your company. We are here still ure of your company. We are here still upon the water side; and I think the risk to southward no great matter. Will not your-self and Mr. Mackellar take a single boat's

crew and return to Albany P My lord, I should say, had listened to Mountain's narrative regarding him through ont with a painful intensity of gaze; and since the tale concluded, had sat as in a dream. There was something very daunting in his look; something to my eyes not right ly human; the face, lean, and dark, and aged, the mouth painful, the teeth disclosed in a perpetual rictus; the eveball swimming clear lids upon a field of bloodshot white. I could not behold him myself without a jarring irritation, such as (I believe) is too frequently the uppermost feeling on the sickness t those dear to us. Others, I could not but remark, were scarceable to support his neigh-borhood—Sir William eviting to be near him, Mountain dodging his eye, and, when he met it, blanching and halting in his story. At this appeal, however, my lord appeared to recover his command upon himself

"To Albany?" said he with a good voice, 'Not short of it, at least," replied Sir Will-"There is no safety nearer at hand." "I would be very unwilling to return," my lord. "I am not afraid—of Indians." he

"I wish that I could say so much," returned Sir William, smiling; any man durst say it, it should be myself. But if you are to keep in view my responsi bility, and that as the voyage has now be come highly dangerous, and your business— if you ever had any," says he, "brought quite to a conclusion by the distressing family telligence you have received, I should be hardly justified if I even suffered you to proceed and run the risk of some obloquy if anything regrettable should follow."

My lord turned to Mountain, "What did be pretend he died of?" he asked. "I don't think I understand your honor. said the trader, pausing like a man very much affected, in the dressing of some cruel frost

For a moment my lord seemed at a full stop, and then, with some irritation, "I ask you what he died of; surely that's a plain question," said he. "Oh, I don't know," said Mountain. "Has-

tie even never knew. He seemed to sicken natural and just pass away." "There it is, you see!" concluded my lord, turning to Sir William.

Your lordship is too deep for me," replied Sir William. 'Why," says my lord, "this is a matter of succession; my son's title may be called in doubt; and, the man being supposed to be

dead of nobody can tell what, a great deal of suspicion would be naturally roused. "But the man's buried!" cried Sir William 'I will never believe that," returned my lord, painfully tretileling. "Fil never befeet, AfDid he look dead?" he asked of Moun-

"Look dead?" repeated the trader. looked white. Why, what would he be atf I tell you I put the sods upon him." My lord caught Sir William by the coat with a booked hand. "This man has the name of my brother," says he; "but it's well

name of my brother, was never canny."
understood that he was never canny."
What is "Canny?" says Sir William. that f" 'He's not of this world," whispered my lord, "neither him nor the black deil that serves him. I have struck my sword throughout his vitals," he cried; "I have felt the hilt ring on his breast bone and the hot blood spurt in my very face, time and again, time and again!" he repeated, with a gesture inde-scribable. "But he was never dead for that," said he, and I sighed aloud. "Why e' uld I think he was dead now? No, not tall I see

him rotting," says he. Sir William looked across at me, with a ong face. Mountain forgot his wounds, star ng and gaping.
"My lord," said I, "I wish you would col-

lect your spirits." But my throat was so dry, and my own wits so scattered, I could

"No," says my lord, "it's not to be supposed that he would understand me. Mac-kellar does, for he kens all, and has seen him buried before now. This is a very good servant to me, Sir William, this man Maccellar; he buried him with his own handshe and my father-by the light of two siller candlesticks. The other man is a familiar spirit; he brought him from Coromandel. I would have told ye this long syne, Sir William, only it was in the family. These last remarks he made with a kind of melancholy composure, and his time of aberration seems to pass away. "You can ask yourself what it all means," he proceeded. "My brother alls sick, and dies, and is buried, as so they say; and all seems very plain. But why did the familiar go back! I think ye must see for yourself it's a point that wants some

"I will be at your service, my lord, in half minute," said Sir William, rising. Macacliar, two words with you," and he led me without the camp, the frost crunching is our steps, the trees standing at our elbow coar with frest, even as on that night in the Long Shrubbery. Of course, this is mid-summer mathematic said Sir William, so soon summer mathesar same as we were gotten out of hearing.

as we were gotten out of hearing. The man is

"Why, esettainly," said L. mad. I think that manifest." "Shall I seize and bond him!" asked Sir William, "I will upon your nutbority, If these are all ravings, that should certainly be

prolonged a silence, it started the can an elarm of transpets. He I had breath Sir William was builde me, the part of the voyagers clustered at his intently giving ear. Methought as I at them across my should ness other liam's face. "Sir William," said I at last, "I think my "Sir William," and I at last, "I think my lord not sake, and have long thought him so. But there are degrees in medness; and whether he should be brought under restraint—Sir William, I am no fit judge," I concluded.
"I will be the judge," said he. "I ask for facts. Was there, in all that jargon, any word of truth or sanity! Do you hesitate?"

intently giving ear. Methought as I glanced at them across my shoulder there was a whiteness other than moonlight on their cheeks, and the rays of the moon reflected with a sparkle on the eyes of some, and the shadows lying black under the brows of others, according as they raised or bowed the head to listen, gave to the group a strange air of animation and anxiety. My lord was to the front, crouching a little forth, his hand raised as for silence—a man turned to stone. And still the sounds continued, breathlessly renewed, with a precipitate rhythm.

Suddenly Mountain spoke in a loud, broken-whisper, as of a man relieved. "I have it now," he said; and, as we all turned to hear him, "the Indian must have known the cache," he added. "That is he—be is digging out the treasure." word of truth or sanity! Do you besitate?" he asked. "Am I to understand you have

he asked. "Am I to understand you have buried this gentleman before?"
"Not buried," said I; and then, taking up courage at last, "Sir William," said I, "unless I were to tell you a long story, which much concerns a noble family (and myself not in the least, it would be impossible to make this matter clear to you. Say the word, and I will do it, right or wrong. And, at any rate I will say so much that my lord. at any rate, I will say so much, that my lord is not so crazy as he seems. This is a strange matter, into the tail of which you are unhap-pily drifted."

"I desire none of your secrets," replied Sit William; "but I will be plain at the risk of incivility, and confess that I take little pleasure in my present company."
"I would be the last to blame you," said I

"I have not asked either for your censure or your praise, sir," returned Sir William. "I desire simply to be quit of you; and to that effect I put a boat and compliment of men at pliment. What say you, gentlemen, shall we have a moonlight hunt?"

It was so agreed; dispositions were made to surround Secundra at his task; some of Sir William's Indians bastened in advance, and, a strong guard being left at our had-quarters, we set forth along the uneven bottom of the forest, freet, analysis, is a smalling less were pointed.

your disposal."
"This is fairly offered," said I, after refle tion. "But you must suffer me to say a word upon the other side. We have a natura curiosity to learn the truth of this affair: I have some of it myself; my lord (it is very plain) has but too much. The matter of th

Indian's return is enigmatical."
"I think so myself," Sir William interrupt ed, "and I propose (since I go in that direc-tion) to probe it to the bottom. Whether or not the man has gone like a dog to die upon his master's grave, his life, at least, is in great danger, and I propose, if I can, to save it. There is nothing against his character.
"Nothing, Sir William," I replied. "And the other?" he said. "I have heard

my lord, of course; but, from the circum stances of his servant's lovalty, I must sur pose he had some noble qualities. "You must not ask me that," I cried. "Hell may have noble flames. I have known him a score of years, and always hated, and always admired, and always slavishly feared

"I appear to intrude again upon your se crets," said Sir William, "believe me, inad-vertently. Enough that I will see the grave, possible) rescue the Indian. these terms, can you persuade your master to

return to Albany?"
"Sir William," said I, "I will tell you how it is. You do not see my lord to advantage; it will seem even strange to you that I should love him; but I do, and I am not alone. If be goes back to Albany, it must be by force, and it will be the death warrant of his rea-son, and perhaps his life. That is my sincere belief; but I am in your hands, and ready to obey, if you will assume so much responsibil-ity as to command."

"I will have no shred of responsibility; it is my single endeavor to avoid the same," cried Sir William. "You insist upon following this journey up, and be it so! I was

With which word he turned upon his beel and gave the order to break camp; and my lord, who had been hovering near by, came instantly to my side.

"Which is it to be?" said be You are to have your way," I answered. "You shall see the grave."

Our boats we left under a guard upon the

river; it was, indeed, probable we should re-turn to find them frozen fast; and the small

equipment with which we set forth upon the

expedition, included not only an infinity of

furs to protect us from the cold, but an ar

senal of snow shoes to render travel possible, when the inevitable snow should fall. Con-

siderable alarm was manifested at our de-

parture; the march was conducted with sol

dierly precaution the camp at night sedulously

chosen and patroled; and it was a considera-

tion of this sort that arrested us, the second

day, within not many hundred yards of our

nent, the spot in which we stood well quali-

Before us was the high range of mountains

toward which we had been all day deviously

dawn, their silver peaks had been the goal of

our advance across a tumbled lowland forest.

thrid with rough streams, and strewn with

monstrous bowlders; the peaks (as I say) she

snow fell nightly; but the woods and the low

ground only breathed upon with frost. All

day heaven had been charged with ugly va-

pors, in which the sun swam and glimmered

lika a shilling piece; all day the wind blew on our left cheek, barbarous cold, but very

pure to breathe. With the end of the after-noon, however, the wind fell; the clouds, be-

ing no longer re-enforced, were scattered or

drunk up; the sun set behind us with some

wintry splender, and the white brow of the

the forest lay in heights and hollows; above

rose the white mountains, and higher yet,

the moon rode in a fair sky. There was no

breath of air; nowhere a twig creaked, and

the sounds of our own camp were hushed and

swallowed up in the surrounding stillness.

Now that the sun and the wind were both

gone down, it appeared almost warm, like a

night of July; a singular illusion of the sense,

when earth, air and water were strained to

My lord (or what I still continued to call

by his loved name) stood with his elbow in one hand, and his chin sunk in the other, gaz-

ing before him on the surface of the wood. My eyes followed his, and rested almost pleas-

antly upon the frosted contexture of the

pines, rising in moonlit hillocks, or sinking in

the shadow of small glens. Hard by, I told

myself, was the grave of our enemy, now gone where the wicked cease from troubling,

the earth heaped forever on his once so active

how fortunate, to be thus done with man's

anxiety and weariness, the daily expense of

spirit, and that daily river of circumstance

to be swum through, at any hazard, under the

penalty of shame or death. I could not but

hink how good was the end of that long travel;

and with that my mind swung at a tangent

to my lord. For was not my lord dead also

A maimed soldier, looking validy for dis

charge, lingering derided in the line of but-tles. A kind man 1 remembered him; wise,

with a decent pride, a son perhaps too duti

ful, a husband only too loving, one that could

to press. Of a sudden, pity caught in my

windpipe with a sob; I could have wep

alond to remember and behold him: and

standing thus by his elbow, under the broad

moon. I prayed fervently either that he

should be released or I strengthened to per-

to me and to himself, and now I shrink from

broke with sorrows; these are but his honor able wounds that we begin to shrink from

Oh, cover them up; oh, take him away, be fore we hate him!"

I was still so engaged in my own bosom

"Oh, God." said I, "this was the best man

He did no wrong, or not till he was

sist in my affection.

suffer and be silent, one whose hand I loved

I could not but think of him as some

bursting with the extremity of frost.

mountains shared its dying glow,

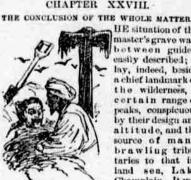
ver, for already at the higher altitudes the

drawing near. From the first light, cf to

sudden thought, arresting our advance.

tination-the night being already immi-

CHAPTER XXVIII.



than sixty.

black upon the frosty ground, the creature's shadow repeated and parodied his swift ges-HE situation of the master's grave was ticulations. Some night birds arose from the boughs upon our coming and then settled back: but Secondra absorbed in his toil easily described; i lay, indeed, beside heard or heeded not at all. a chief landmark of I heard Mountain waisper to Sir William: "Good God, 17's the gravel He's digging him the wilderness, s up!" It was 'hat we had all guessed, and yet to hear it put in language thrilled me. Sir William violently started. certain range of peaks, conspicuous by their design and altitude, and the cried. "What's this?" brawling tribuland sen, Lake

Secundra leaped in the air, a little breathsery temped him, the tool flew from his grasp, and he stood one instant staring at the speaker. The next, swift as an arrow, he sped for the woods upon the further side; and the next again, throwing up his hands with a therefore possible to strike for it direct, instead of following back the bloodstained trail violent gesture of resolution, he had begun or the fugitives, and to cover, in some sixteen already to retrace his steps. turbed wanderings had extended over more

"Well, then, you come, you help"- he was saying. But by now my lord had stepped beside Sir William; the moon shone fair upon his face, and the words were still upon Sec dra's lips when he beheld and recognized his master's enemy. "Him!" he screamed clasping his hands and shrinking on himself.

"Why, to be sure!" exclaimed Sir William

"We were goese not to have supposed so

"The only thing is," Mountain resumed,
"the sound is very close to our old camp.
And again, I do not see how be is there be

"Greed and fear are wings," remarked Sir William. "But this rogue has given as an

alert, and I have a notion to return the com-

tom of the forest; frost crackling, ice some times lously splitting under foot, and over-

hend the blackness of pine woods and the broken trightness of the moon. Our way led

down into a hollow of the land, and as we descended the sounds diminished and had al-

most died away. Upon the other slope it was more open, only dotted with a few pines and several vast and scattered rocks that made,

inky shadows in the moonlight. Here the

could now perceive the ring of iron and more exactly estimate the furious degree of haste with which the digger plied his instrument.

As we neared the top of the ascent a bird or two winged aloft and hovered darkly in the

moonlight, and the next moment we were gazing through a fringe of trees upon a sin-

gular picture.

A narrow plateau, overlooked by the white

mountains, and encompassed nearer hand by woods, lay bare to the strong radiance of the

moon. Rough goods, such as make the wealth of foresters, were sprinkled here and there

upon the ground in meaningless disarray. About the midst a tent stood, silvered with

frest; the door open, gaping on the black in-terior. At the one end of this small stage tay

Without doubt we had arrived upon the

scene of Harris' encampment; there were the goods scattered in the paule of flight, it was

in you tent the master breathed his last; and the frezen carries that lay before us was the

tody of the drunken shoemaker. It was al-ways moving to come upon the theatre of

any tragic incident; to come upon it after so many days, and to find it (in the seclusion of

a desert) still unchanged, must have im-pressed the mind of the most careless.

And eyet it was not that which struck us

into pillars of stone, but the sight (which yet

wo had been half expecting) of Secundra an-kle deep in the grave of his late master. He

had cast the main part of his raiment by; yet his frail arms and shoulders glistened in the

moonlight with a copious sweat; his face was,

contracted with anxiety and expectation; his

blows resounded on the grave as thick sobs, and behind him, strangely deformed and ink

"You damned sacrilegious hound!" he

what seemed the tattered remnants of a n

ids began to reach us more distinctly; we

fore us, unless the man had wings!"

"Come, come," said Sir William, "there is none here to do you harm, if you be innocent; and if you be guilty, your escape is quite cut off. Speak, what do you here among the graves of the dead and the remains of the unburied?"

"You no murderer!" inquired Secundra.

You true man! You see me safe!" "I will see you safe, if you be innocent," returned Sir William. "I have said the thing, and I see not wherefore you should fled to be a strong camp for a party of our numbers; and Sir William, therefore, on a doubt it."

"There all murderers," cried Secundra, "that is why! He kill-movderer," pointing to Mountain: "there two hire murderers"pointing to my lord and myself--"all gallows murderers: Ah, I see you all swing in a rope. Now I go save the sahib; he will see you swing in a rope. The sahib," he continued, pointing to the grave, "he not dead

He bury, be not dead." My lord uttered a little noise, moved nearer to the grave, and stood and stared in it.
"Buried and not dead?" exclaimed Sir Will-"What kind of rant is this?"

"See, sahib," said Secundra. "The sahib and I alone with murderers; try all way to escape, no way good. Then try this way; good way in warm climate, good way in In-dia; here in this dam cold place, who can tell! I tell you pretty good harry: you help, you light a fire, help rub."

"What is the creature talking of!" cried Sir William. "My head goes round." "I tell you I bury him alive," said Secundra. "I teach him swallow his tongue. Now

It was dark ere we had supper; we eat in silence, and the meal was scarce dispatched dig him up pretty good hurry, and he not before my lord slunk from the fireside to the much worse. You light a fire. margin of the camp, whither I made haste Sir William furned to the nearest of his men. "Light a fire," said he. "My lot seems to follow him. The camp was on high ground, overlooking a frozen take, perhaps a mile in its longest measurement; all about us

to be cast with the insane." "You good man," returned Secundra. "Now I go dig the sahib up." He returned as spoke to the grave, and re-sumed his former toil. My lord stood rooted,

and I at my lord's side; fearing I knew not The frost was not vet very deep, and pres ently the Indian threw aside his tool and be

gan to scoop the dirt by handfuls. Then he disengaged a corner of a buffalo robe; and then I saw hair catch among his fingers; yet a moment more, and the moon shone on something white. Awhile Secundra crouched upon his knees, scraping with deli cate fingers, breathing with puffed lips; and when he moved aside I behold the face of the master wholly disengaged. It was deadly white, the eyes closed, the ears and nostrils plugged, the cheeks fallen, the nose sharp as if in death; but for all he had lain so many days under the sod, corruption had not ap proached him and (what strangely affected

smooth as a baby when we laid him there! "They say hair grows upon the dead," ob-served Sir William, but his voice was thick and weak. Secundra paid no heed to our remarks, digging swift as a terrier, in the loose earth; every moment, the form of the master, swathed in his buffalo robe, grew more dis-tinct in the bottom of that shallow trough; the moon shining strong, and the shadows of the standers by, as they drew forward and back, falling and flitting over his emergent

all of use his lips and chin were mantled with

"My God!" cried Mountain, "he was as

a swarthy beard.

countenance. The sight held us with a horror not before experienced, I dared not look my lord in the face, but for as long as it lasted, I never observed him to draw breath; and a little in the background one of the men (I know not whom) burst into a kind of sobbing "Now," said Secundra, "you help me lif

Of the flight of time I have no idea; it may have been three hours, and it may have been five, that the Indian labored to reanimate his master's body. One thing only I know, that it was still night, and the moon was not yet set, although it had sunk low, and now barred the plateau with long shadows, when Secundra