

being unusually early for the regular seasonal spell, only the 30th October, we all crept into our damp beds, trusting that in its fury it would expend itself ere morning. But morning came, and brought with it no cessation. Down, down it flowed in perpendicular streamlets, as thick as an ordinary ramrod, puncturing the ground, which was not as yet mashed into mortar, as if the points of that instrument were inserted into it with mathematical precision. The select few who had stoves could alone make the "sparks fly upwards;" the remainder, with their waggon-covers, endeavouring to construct a species of hearth umbrella to shield them from the water. Noon came, and still down it came, and up rose the Sacramento, turbid and turbulent, its rapid centre and quiescent edges sheeted out into the bush, forming quite a contrast. You could see all hands digging deep channels round their tents, and carrying in limbs of timber and hurdles to elevate their couches from off the cold damp earth. Every one was wet through, and everybody's bedclothes were so thoroughly saturated with damp, we turned in without divesting ourselves of our wet garments.

A second night, chilly and cheerless, converted us to the belief that the rainy season had arrived, and set us cogitating how we should employ ourselves during its continuance. The lighting of fires in the morning was quite a prolonged and doubtful experiment in the ash-pools—no longer pits—where the crackling wood was wont to revel. We built them as close to our tent mouths as possible, prepared to suffer any inconvenience from the smoke for the faintest countervailing glow of heat; all insufficient, however, to dry our dripping clothes or bed covering. Our knives,

we tried a discharge of **buck-shot** against their shins, which produced a highly saltatory and salutary effect—such a **one** precisely as we desired, for they retired in double-quick time, discharging obliquely in their retreat a flight of arrows, none of which took effect; but as we did not follow up the fire, they took courage, and halted on a rise about five hundred yards off, from which they kept yelling and gesticulating at a furious rate. The prisoner, when he saw them retiring without effecting his liberation, set up such an infernal howling we were only too glad to liberate him, giving him a sort of postscript that contained the pith and essence of our feelings.

Well acquainted with their vengeful disposition, we put on an extra guard that night, who could plainly observe the dusky forms of our enemies prowling round in the gloomy shadows of the contiguous trees; but as they saw we were on the alert they did not trouble us. From this we foresaw there would be an absolute necessity for a constant nightly watch, and, as this was most harassing to men faring badly, with insufficient clothing, with our provisions, too, nearly exhausted, the weather inclement, and the gold not over-abundant, together with divers and sundry other persuasive reasons, we commenced our retreat—I should, perhaps, have said, our return to the camp at head-quarters—on the following day, the trail being so affected by the constant wet weather, that it was far advanced in the second night before we got to ~~our~~ destination.

Two mornings after our return Captain S——r went to the door of his tent, from which there was a good view across the river to the mouth of Rock Creek, where a fine

old gentleman named Colville, together with his son, a most promising young man, and a respectable Swede named Mansfeldt, had been camped by themselves about a mile from the main settlement, when he immediately remarked that their tent was not observable as heretofore, although there was light in it late the previous night. He called us all to look; but no one could discover any trace of it, nor could we frame a conjecture as to the cause of its sudden disappearance. Feeling some sad misgivings, and having a high esteem for the party, three of us paddled over, and on coming to the site of the tent saw that it was assuredly removed in haste, some slight marks of blood being apparent; but the rain had so effaced them it was difficult to determine, and the space immediately about was in such a puddle it retained no marks of any sort. However, on extending the sphere of our searches, we found at a little distance the iron portion of a pick, with blood and light hair on its point the colour of the Swede's, while further on there was something resembling clotted brains, together with a crowd of Indian footprints, amongst which was one of immense magnitude.

It was now clear a foul and bloody deed had been perpetrated, so we made an active and anxious search, tracing down the footmarks to the river edge, where it was evident they crossed; and a little below, to our great horror and dismay, we discovered the leg of a corpse sticking out of the water in a bunch of willows, which, on being taken out, proved to be that of young Colville, most shockingly mutilated; the head battered to a mummy, seven large knife wounds on the back, and two in the abdomen. There was not any trace of the others, but we conjectured that all

must have been thrown into the river after the murder, some eddy of which brought one body to the shore. We immediately assembled the people in the encampment to hold a sort of general inquest into all the circumstances and appearances connected with the deplorable affair, at which but one opinion prevailed as to who were the perpetrators of the slaughter. A rude coffin was next made and the remains interred; and then a consultation was held as to what course should be pursued with regard to the Indians, who, from the footprints on the side where the body was found and those on the opposite shore, most assuredly came from the eastern side of the river; instigated, we sadly concurred in thinking, by feelings of revenge for our late chastisement of them, and the shooting of those who attacked the party of exploration.

It was unanimously agreed that a party should be enrolled forthwith to proceed to their village, and by inflicting summary punishment teach them a lesson that would deter them from again attempting a deed of such bloody treachery. Fifty-two gave down their names for muster and march next morning, but only twenty-seven came to roll call, alleging as their excuse the state of the day, which was certainly awful; but as the prompt retribution would enhance the effect of our vengeance, we set out, nothing daunted, either by the fierceness of the weather or the defalcation in our forces; having arranged our packs on as light a scale as we could safely or prudently venture with, taking only a single blanket each, and four days' provisions measured scant, in order that our movements might be as little hampered as possible with incumbrances.

By great exertions we reached within about a mile of their village the night of the second day, which was piercingly cold; but rather than forewarn them of our proximity, it was agreed to forego the comfort and advantages of a fire, supping, and breakfasting next morning on bread, water, and raw bacon. We thus managed to get within view of the enemy's quarters a little after sun up, which, as I before partly described them, were on an elbow of land, formed by a bend of the creek, that was now so swollen and swift as to leave them very poor chances of retreat, rendering a stubborn fight inevitable. Their men, as we calculated from the number of huts, must have been close upon 200—a very large disproportion to our small band; and what rendered our position more serious, was the fact that, if at any juncture in the affair we slackened, paused, or exhibited the slightest symptom of weakness or repulse, our doom would be sealed; for, hemmed in as they were, they would certainly rush in and overwhelm us; but our mission, we one and all agreed, should be accomplished, as far as in us lay, even should annihilation be the consequence.

We were observed before we came within rifle range, and a wild whoop simultaneously emptied the wigwams of all their male inhabitants, who, with their bows in their hands, were hurriedly slinging on their quivers. We could hear a humming noise of earnest conversation, as if they were advising with each other how to act; during which they often anxiously pointed to the huts, as if in doubt what course to adopt with regard to their squaws and children, whose only mode of escape would be across the creek, where the flood at the time would test the

powers of the best swimmer. In the centre of the horde was discernible a savage of overtopping stature, who we set down as the one that left the large footmarks at the scene of the murder. We continued to advance slowly but steadily, under a blinding sleet shower, and as we raised our arms to the word "Ready," they discharged a full flight of arrows, which, however, either fell short or reached us so languidly, that they were easily dodged, as, indeed, most of them can, if well watched, after sixty or seventy yards. Immediately after the discharge, the big Indian rushed to the front, changing the bow into the left hand, and brandishing a tomahawk in the other as if to head a charge; but a discharge of nine rifles, with deadly effect, checked them as they were in the act of bounding to his call.* We still continued closing and reloading, and were met with a second discharge of arrows, the big Indian and a large group following their flight, bent upon coming to close quarters, and approaching with hellish yells within short pistol range; when they received a volley of balls and buck-shot from the other eighteen guns, that stunned, staggered, and turned their advance. Once turned, the flight became general and tumultuous, all rushing back amongst the wigwams, and many plunging into the stream, followed by women holding little children in their arms, who were soon swallowed in its curling eddies. We fired a few more shots into their bark tenements, and, from the howls that followed, I should say with fatal results; but deeming that our measure of retri-

* Our arrangement was to fire by sections of nine, thus making three of the whole. There were two double-shot guns assigned to each section, and unless under necessitous constraint a second section was not to fire until the first reloaded—the third never; our ammunition being made into cartridges for despatch.

bution was amply filled, we ceased firing, and retired in a cool deliberate manner, after having counted twenty-three bodies on the ground.

It was only then it became generally known that two of our men, William Freeman and Thomas Coyle, had been wounded, the former in the arm through the biceps, the other in the thigh a little below the groin. There was an artery severed in Freeman's case, and the bleeding was so profuse as to produce syncope, notwithstanding all our efforts to stanch it, even with the aid of a tourniquet; leaving us in an anxious state of suspense as to whether we would be able to get him alive to the settlement, where surgical aid, such as it was, could be obtained; indeed, it was a great oversight in the expedition to set out without a surgeon, where there was every reason to anticipate the want of his services, there being, too, so liberal a sprinkling of that profession in our community.

We constructed a sleigh of stout branches and brush, on which we placed Freeman, every man giving up his blanket to make him as comfortable as possible. We made traces and breast-straps of vine tendrils, by means of which six at a time attached themselves to the rude vehicle: it was a most fatiguing undertaking, and slow almost to total discouragement, while it sleeted and stormed without mercy. Never shall I forget the wretched night we passed; without any fire, and all our covering around the poor sufferer; without the slightest shelter either, as the heavy dripping from the trees drove us for choice into the open space, with uncooked food and short commons for our fare. The pipe and cigar, which were ignited with difficulty, seemed to afford the only

resource or comfort, and, for the first time in my life, I made an abortive attempt to smoke. The raw, penetrating sleet all but stopped the circulation as we stood knee deep in the mud huddled around the sleigh, to see and concentrate a glow of animal heat around the wounded man; but long before the approach of day we became so wofully benumbed, it was physically unbearable; so we determined on getting into motion, taking chance for the trail, in order, by exertion and exercise, to counteract the paralysing effects of the cold, three of the most active amongst us going forward to the camp for help and provisions, who sent out a relief corps that found us halted, early in the day, from sheer inability to drag the sleigh any further, in consequence of our exhaustion, arising principally from want of food and clothing. We were enabled to light a fire this evening, the rain and sleet having ceased, and were also cheered with warm coffee, or brandy for those who preferred it, which revived poor Freeman, who was at a very low ebb; but he did not survive many days after he reached home, mortification having set in, and soon putting an end to his sufferings. Coyle, too, who foolishly persisted in taking part in the sleigh drawing, found his wound inflamed violently, and, a bad fever setting in at the same time, he was carried off; so that, after all, our victory was rather dearly earned.

men devoid as much as possible of salt, grease, or sugar, and moderate in quantity. He interdicted the use of tea or coffee, allowing in their stead a decoction of sassefras and the leaves of the spruce, or (as it is there called) the hemlock-tree, which made very palatable substitutes, and proved their sanitary efficacy in scurvy in every instance where they were regularly used.

It was on the 21st of December we recrossed the river, favoured with a fine day for our task; the weather in its change looking as if it took a deliberate turn, not a rapid transition, as on former occasions, a genial mildness pervading the shade as well as the sunshine, which was not of that glary character so little to be relied on, but of a mellow ruddy hue, producing comfort without inconvenience, tempering the air with a salubrious mildness, so that even the most enfeebled invalid could not complain the winds of heaven "visited him too roughly." The grass and herbage began to sprout and peer up from the soil under its vegetating influence, and by Christmas morning this state of atmosphere seemed so completely confirmed and established, we all gave way to the hope that the unusually early winter had passed away to give place to a very early spring.

I was truly delighted to find that the miners, without an exception, had come to the resolution of observing the great Christian festival, which was now close at hand, if not with a devotional reverence, at least by an abstinence from all labour on that day, which, from earliest childhood at home, we are taught to look forward to with a rapturous eagerness, and hail with a pious pleasure a pure, tranquil delight, that day so fraught with family hospitality,