

**THE
TRAPPER'S SON**

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The Trapper's Son by William H. G. Kingston

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WILLIAM H. G. KINGSTON

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"Cheer up, boy," said the old trapper, "a few steps farther and we'll get a full view of the fort."—p. 24.



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BY

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CONTENTS.



	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	
The trapper's camp—Beavers caught—The horses killed by wolves—Traps to catch the wolves.	5
CHAPTER II.	
Pursuit and capture of a white wolf—Laurence's dream—Journey to the fort over the snow—Friendly reception at the fort—Laurence falls sick.	17
CHAPTER III.	
Anxiety of the trapper about his son—Jeanie tells Laurence about the Bible and God's love to man—Laurence out of danger—The trapper leaves Laurence with his friends—Jeanie tries to teach Laurence to read—History of Mrs. Ramsay.	30
CHAPTER IV.	
Dangers in the fort—The winter sets in—Scarcity of food—Mr. Ramsay's account of his first meeting with the old trapper—His journey across the prairies—Attacked by Dakotahs—Death of his companions—Rescued by the old trapper—Prairie on fire—Hide for life.	42
CHAPTER V.	
Stock of provisions at the fort still further decreased—Reports of Sioux being in the neighbourhood—Preparations for defence—Children's amusement of coasting—Sioux seen in the distance—The hunters caught by them—Camp fires of Indians seen in the distance—Fresh bands join them.	56
CHAPTER VI.	
The Indians blockade the fort—Laurence recognises the Sioux as old friends—Obtains leave to go out and meet them—Induces the Sioux chief to retire—Obtains presents for the Indians—Accompanies them—Laurence finds his old nurse—Laurence bids farewell to his friends at the fort.	70

CHAPTER VII.

PAGE

- The life of Laurence among the Indians—Shooting the buffalo—
The hunters' camp and feast—Laurence in the wood—The Sioux
hunters shot by Crees—Laurence lies concealed—His first prayer
—Passes a fearful night—His encampment attacked by wolves
—Journey over the snow—Falls into a snow-drift. 81

CHAPTER VIII.

- Laurence in the snow—Discovered by Crees—Rescued—Conveyed
to the chief's tent—Kindness of the old chief—Escorted to the
fort—Fears as to his reception—Kindly welcomed by Mr. Ram-
say—Laurence again falls sick—Mrs. Ramsay explains the Gos-
pel to him—Laurence begins to understand it. 88

CHAPTER IX.

- Arrival of Mr. Martin the missionary—He preaches the Gospel to
the Indians—Laurence listens with attention—Learns more of
the truth, and expresses his wish to make it known to others—
The spring returns. 102

CHAPTER X.

- Laurence learns what it is to be a Christian—Gets leave to set out
in search of his father—Starts on an expedition with Peter, a
Christian Cree—Discovers two of Michael's traps—A party of
Blackfeet—Blackfeet wound old Michael—Blackfeet captured—
Laurence goes to his father's assistance—Peter preaches to the
Blackfeet, and invites them to the fort—The Blackfeet set at
liberty—Laurence explains the Gospel to the old trapper, and
conveys him to the fort—Trapper narrates to Mr. Martin his
former life—Mr. Martin tells him that the Queen has pardoned
him—The old trapper at length believes the truth—Returns with
Laurence to Canada—Laurence restored to his parents—Revisits
the fort as a missionary. 109



THE TRAPPER'S SON.

CHAPTER I.

The trapper's camp—Beavers caught—The horses killed by wolves—Traps to catch the wolves.

IN the far western wilds of North America, over which the untutored red-skinned savage roams at liberty, engaged throughout life in war or the chase, by the side of a broad stream which made its way towards a distant lake, an old man and a boy reclined at length beneath a wigwam, roughly formed of sheets of birch bark placed against several poles stuck in the ground in a circular form, and fastened together at the top. The sun was just rising above a wood, composed of maple, birch, poplar, and willow, fringing the opposite bank of the river; while rocky hills of no great elevation formed the sides of the valley, through which the stream made its way. Snow rested on the surrounding heights, and the ground was crisp with

frost. The foliage which still clung to the deciduous trees exhibited the most gorgeous colours, the brightest red, pink, yellow, and purple tints contrasting with the sombre hues of the pines covering the lower slopes of the hills.

"It's time to look to the traps, Laurence," said the old man, arousing his young companion, who was still asleep by the side of the smouldering embers of their fire.

The boy sat up, and passed his hand across his eyes. There was a weary expression in his intelligent and not displeasing countenance.

"Yes, father, I am ready," he answered. "But I did not think the night was over; it seems but just now I lay down to sleep."

"You have had some hard work lately, and are tired; but the season will soon be over, and we will bend our steps to Fort Elton, where you can remain till the winter cold has passed away. If I myself were to spend but a few days shut up within the narrow limits of such a place, I should soon tire of idleness, and wish to be off again among the forests and streams, where I have passed so many years."

"Oh, do not leave me among strangers, father," exclaimed the boy, starting to his feet. "I am rested now, and am ready."

They set out, proceeding along the side of the stream, stopping every now and then to search

beneath the overhanging bushes, or in the hollows of the bank, where their traps had been concealed. From the first the old trapper drew forth an animal about three feet in length, of a deep chestnut colour, with fine smooth glossy hair, and a broad flat tail nearly a foot long, covered with scales. Its hind feet were webbed, its small fore-paws armed with claws, and it had large, hard, sharp teeth in its somewhat blunted head. Hanging up the beaver, for such it was, to a tree, they continued the examination of their snares.

"Who would have thought creatures so easily caught could make such a work as this?" observed the old man, as they were passing over a narrow causeway which formed a dam across a smaller stream falling into the main river, and had created a back water or shallow lake of some size. The dam was composed of innumerable small branches and trunks of trees, laid horizontally across the stream, mixed with mud and stones. Several willows and small poplars were sprouting up out of it.

"What! have the beavers made this?" asked Laurence.

"Ay, every bit of it, boy; each stem and branch has been cut down by the creatures, with their paws and teeth. No human builders could have formed the work more skilfully. And observe how they thus have made a pond, ever full of