INDIAN CUNNING.

The Blackfeet Indians' Story of the Great White Horse.

All Indians who use horses are very fond of horse racing, and not only race their own horses against one another, but they race their own against those of other tribes-and used to do this even in the wild era of the buffalo and of constant warfare. Even at that time friendly tribes and bands joined in the two grand buffalo hunts of each year, and, after the hunting was over, pitted the fastest horses of the various bands one against the other. At one time, not so very long ago, the Blackfeet had the very fastest horse that any one knew of; the fastest horse of which any one could tell, or which any one had seen. He was a source of wealth to the tribe, for Indians are very fond of betting, and this animal always won everything that was bet against him. You can imagine how proud the Blackfeet were of this creature. You can also imagine how envious were the Stoneys, the Crows, the Sioux, the Crees, and all the other Indians of the plains.

Stealing is considered fair between tribes, and if it can be successfully done those savage people think it very honorable, even glorious. The Blackfeet, therefore, kept the wonderful race horse in a tent at night. They did not dare leave him out with their other horses. They bought a string of bells at the Hudson Bay Company's nearest fort, put the bells around the horse's neck, tied him to a tepee pole inside a big tepee, and set four men to sleep in the tent with him. This was the rule every night, and on no night did the men forget to close the door of the tepee and "einch" it tight with thongs of buckskin. Whoever could steal that big white beauty of a horse had to be a very clever thief, they thought; but, in truth, they never dreamed that he could be stolen.

The smartest thief among the Crow Indians told his chief and the head men that he was going to try to get that horse away from the Blackfeet. One evening he crawled through the grass to the tall bluff along the Bow River (north of our Idaho, I think, was the locality), where the Blackfeet had their camp. He saw the noble horse led into a certain tent, and he saw the four watchers go in and close the door. Night fell, and he crept down the slanting bluff into the camp. The only thing he had to fear was the barking of some dog. If a dog saw or heard him and barked, that would set all the other dogs barking and he would be obliged to run for his life. Stealthily, as only an Indian can move on his softly moccasined feet, this arch-thief of the thieving Crow nation crept into the Blackfeet camp. He had to step over several sleeping dogs, and he did not awaken one. He came to the tent of the white horse. He looked it all over. He went to another tepee and took a travois from its side and carried it and set it up against the horse's tent.

A travois is the wheelless wagon the Indians use in the summer. It is made of two long poles with the upper ends near together; the lower ends spread apart and drag upon the ground. You see by this description that if a travois is stood on end, it can be made to serve as a sort of ladder. Thus the arch-thief of the Crows used the one he put up against the horse tent. On it he climbed to the top of the tepee, and from there he got a view of the interior, looking down between the tent-poles that form the sides of the chimneyhole. He saw the horse dimly, and even more dimly he saw the four men beside the horse, all asleep. He climbed upon the tent-poles; he poised his body very nicely in the chimney-opening; he dropped fairly and squarely upon the white horse's back!

The instant he felt himself on the back of the beast, his knife, which was in his hands, swept through the cord that tethered the horse. His heels shot in against the horse's sides, the bells rangs out sharp and clear, and the horse snorted with surprise. But the pressure of the thief's heels urged the animal forward, and as he took one step the man reached out and slit a gash straight up and down through the fastened door, which was only buckskin. The four Indians leaped to their feet, but the horse and his captor were now out in the open groud and like the wind shot away from the camp. The watchers ran and yelled, the dogs barked, the whole tribe rushed out of the tents, and every man sprang to horse! But what was the use? There was no horse that could catch the animal, and so they all turned sadly home again after a mad ride of a mile or two. The thief rode in triumph home to the tents of the Crows, and from that day his tribe owned the great white horse, and his fame and their riches increased .--From Julian Ralph's "Stories Told by Indians" in August St. Nicholas.

Character is man's inalienable possession. Death does not destroy—nay, does not even change it.—Rev. E. H. Ward.

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