THE GREAT MIGRATION

wounded, however, could not get clear so easily; and the enraged bear, charging upon these, rushed from one to the  
other, knocking the breath out of each as he came up to it, with a single pat of his heavy paws. In less than seconds the  
ground was quite cleared of the ravenous wolves. Only the dead ones remained on it; while the others, having got off to   
a safe distance, halted in straggling groups: and, with their tails drooping upon the grass, stood gazing back with looks of  
melancholy disappointment. Bruin, meanwhile, having settled his affair with the wounded wolves, ran up to this mate; and,  
throwing his paws around her neck, appeared to congratulate her upon her escape and now did our hunters perceive   
that there were cubs instead of one that which still clung fast upon the mother’s back, and another which was seen under  
her belly, and which she had been aqually protecting against the crowd of assailants that surrounded her. Both the little  
fellows about as large as foxes they were now perceived that they were out of a danger which, no doubt, they had   
perfectly comprehended. That upon the shoulders of the dam leaped down to the earth; while the other crawled out from under, and both coming together began tumbling about over the grass, and rolling over one another in play, the  
parents watching with interest their uncouth gambols. Notwithstanding the well known ferocity of these animals, there  
was something so tender in the spectacle, that our hunters hesitated about advancing. Alexis in particular, whose   
disposition was a shade more gentle than that of his companions, felt certain qualms of compassion, as he looked upon  
this exhibition of feelings and affections that appeared almost human. Ivan was even touched: and certainly neither he  
nor his brother would have slain these creatures out of were wanton sport. They would not have thought of such a  
thing under ordinary circumstances; and it was only from the necessity they were under of procuring the skin that they  
thought of it at all. Perhaps they would even have passed this group; and taken their chances of finding another, that   
might make a less powerful appeal to their compassion: but in this they were overruled by pouchskin. The old grenadier  
was afflicted by no such tender sentiments: and throwing aside all scruple, before his young masters could interfere to   
prevent him, he advanced a few paces forward, and discharged his fusil, broadside at the biggest of the bears. Whether he   
hit the bear or not, was not then known. Certain it was that he in no way crippled the animal; for, as soon as the smoke  
had cleared out of his eyes, he saw the huge quadruped part from the side of his mate, and come charging down upon  
him. Pouchskin hesitated for a moment whether to withstand the attack, and had drawn his knife to be ready : but the   
formidable appearance of the antagonist his immense size and fierce aspect admonished pouchskin that in this case  
discretion might be the better part of valour, and he yielded to the suggestion. Indeed, the voyageurs in the canoe were   
already shouting to all to run for it warming them of the danger they were in by the most earnest speech and gesture.  
Ivan and alexis stood their ground till pouchskin had returned to where they were, and then both fired upon the bear.   
They may have hit him or not but the huge monster showed no sign, and only appeared to charge forward the faster. All   
together now ran for the boat. It was their only refuge; for had been a trial of speed and much ground to go over, the   
bear would certainly have overtaken them: and had a few wipes from his paw would have ended the life of one or the other  
perhaps of the whole trio. It was fortunate they had the boat to flee to: else pouchskin’s imprudence, in provoking the   
bear, might have led to a fatal termination. Quick as their legs could carry them they made for the canoe; and one after   
the other leaped into it. Without even waiting for them to seat themselves, the voyageurs pushed off from the bank,  
suddenly shooting the craft out into middle of the stream. But this did not stay the pursuit of the infuriated bear, nor  
even delay him for a moment. On reaching the bank, he did not make halt; but, launching out, sprang down with a   
plunge upon the water. Then, stretching his body at full length, he swam direct after the canoe. The craft had been   
turned head down the stream; and what with the help of the current and the impulse of the oars, it swept onward with  
arrow like rapidity. But for all that it soon became apparent that the bear was gaining upon it his broad paws enabling  
him to swim with the velocity of a fish while every now and then he rose above the surface, and bounded forward to a   
distance of several feet through the air the voyageur plied their paddles with all their skill and energy; there was the   
dread of death to stimulate them to the utmost exertion of their strength. They knew well, that, if the bear should   
succeed in coming up with the canoe, he would either mount into it, and drive all of them into the water; or, what was   
more probable, he would upset the craft, and spill the whole party out of it. In either case, there would be the danger of   
coming in contact with his claws: and that, they knew, was the danger of death itself. The hunters were all busy reloading  
their guns; and getting ready to fire before the enemy should be up to them. They were not in time, however. With the

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