



THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES

ORIGINAL TALES OF BUFFALO BILL'S ADVENTURES

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No. 2.

Price, Five Cents.

BUFFALO BILL'S BEST SHOT

A STORY OF
WILD WEST ADVENTURE



BY *W. H. CHASE*
THE AUTHOR OF
'BUFFALO BILL'

BUFFALO BILL SAW HER PERIL, RAISED HIS RIFLE, QUICK AS THOUGHT, AND SENT A BULLET THROUGH THE UPRAISED RIGHT ARM.

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A Story of Wild West Adventure.

By the author of "BUFFALO BILL."

CHAPTER I.

THE CHIEF'S OATH.

"Dave, life is worth a good deal to me, whether it is to you or not, for I want to live for those I love."

Thus spoke Buffalo Bill, the famous American scout, to his bosom friend and long-time mate in many a wild hunt, Dave Estes, as they looked eastward from a peak in the great Wind River Gap of the Rocky Mountains, for they were in the heart of the Northwestern hunting grounds of the Sioux nation.

The two scouts, well-mounted and well-armed, had come thus far alone into this dreaded range to satisfy themselves on two points—one, a rumor that placer gold was wondrously plentiful in the deep gulches of the Wind River Mountains—the other, that for bear, elk, mountain sheep and antelope, this was a hunter's paradise.

They had learned that the rumors had good foundation. They had prospected for and found fine gold in the black sand, in small nuggets and in quartz ledges. As to game, they could have fed a brigade and not worried themselves in doing it.

"What are you growlin' about, Bill?" said Dave, in

reply. "The reds are all off on the plains and we've got the hills all to ourselves. We've seen a heap of new ground on this scout, and I'd like to look a little farther. Let's stay out one day longer."

"You said the same thing two days ago, Dave," said Bill, "yet here we are a day's ride nearer to sunset now than we were then. You never tire on a scout. Good reason why—you are at all the home you have, wherever you camp. But it isn't so with me. There're heart-strings pulling me toward home, where my loved ones are."

"Just so. This getting married ruins a man for scouting and plains life. It takes the game out of him."

"Look here, Dave! step light, or you'll wake me up!" cried Bill, and the anger light flashed from his eyes. "I'm as game now as I ever was, and you know it, or you ought to. Who saved your hair when you were down, and the Sioux crowding for you like a pack of starved wolves?"

"You, Bill—you! and God bless you for it."

"And wasn't I married then—a husband and a father?"

"Yes, Bill, and I take back all that I said. But I was

never in such a game country as this before, and there's just one range I'd like to look at to-day, and then I'm willing to go back."

"If you are bent on a scout to-day don't go far, and be in camp early. I'll take the horses down, and pack our specimens, and have supper ready when you come."

"All right!" said Dave, dismounting. "I'm going where horses can't travel—up that gulch we looked at yesterday."

The scout, a small, agile, wiry man, left Buffalo Bill to return, while he, shouldering his Spencer rifle, took a course along the ridge.

Bill called to the well-trained horse of his mate to follow, and turned Powder Face, his own favorite steed, in the direction of their camp, which had been pitched in a little valley, near a small lake.

He rode leisurely along, a Henry rifle slung at the rear of his saddle, but with his favorite needle-gun over his shoulder, ready for instant use.

Meat was plenty in camp, so he left the game in sight unmolested.

But a sight met his eye that made him draw his horses close in cover under a clump of dwarf pines, where he could see without being seen.

He saw, coming through the valley from the east, three figures on horseback, riding at a terrific pace.

He quickly got his fieldglass into focus, and by its aid discovered the riders.

Two rode side by side, several yards in advance of the third.

Of these the first was an armed Indian warrior, and he led the second horse, which bore an Indian girl, who seemed to be bound to the horse which the warrior led.

The third rider, so far in the rear, was also an armed Indian warrior, and he was lashing his horse furiously, as the first also lashed his.

"A race for life, it looks like!" said Buffalo Bill. "But I see no sign of any pursuer. If that was a white woman I'd take a hand in mighty sudden. If it is an abduction, why, it's their business, not mine."

The first warrior and the squaw dashed on through the gap, while, just as Bill reached the level, the horse of the other warrior fell, throwing its rider heavily against a huge boulder, and leaving him senseless on the ground.

Bill rode up, thinking, from the way he lay, that the Indian had fractured his skull or broken his neck; but he found him conscious as he halted by his side, though he was unable to rise.

"Paleface, I know you. You are Long Rifle, the great killer of Buffalo," said the Indian, as Bill reined in his horse.

"Yes," said Bill, quietly. "What is the matter with you?"

"Heap bad is the matter. Me got an arm and leg broke—my horse most dead, and Yellow Bear, the Black Foot chief, has gone beyond my reach with Dove Eye, my daughter, the Red Rose of my tribe."

"Dove Eye? Then you are Spotted Tail, the great war chief of the Big Horn Sioux?"

"Yes; I am Spotted Tail. Kill me if you like; I have taken scalps enough to line my lodge."

"Killing cripples isn't in my line," said Bill. "But

I'll make a bargain with you, Spotted Tail. If you'll agree to keep peace with all palefaces who come here to hunt and look for gold, I'll get Dove Eye back and bring you the scalp of Yellow Bear. Will you agree to this?"

"Long Rifle, I will."

"Swear it by the Great Spirit."

"I swear to be a friend to the palefaces if Dove Eye is saved from Yellow Bear, the Black Foot."

"Enough! Crawl to my camp, where you'll find meat and drink," said Bill; and loosing Dave's horse, he turned Powder Face on the trail of Yellow Bear.

CHAPTER II.

THE SCOUT'S BEST SHOT.

A handsome Indian woman is a rarity; but the daughter of Spotted Tail, Dove Eye, womanly, graceful, though but fifteen, was an exception. On all the plains, through the Black Hills, and in the great mountains, she was known as the Red Rose of the Sioux nation, as the most beautiful of Indian girls.

Already warriors of her own tribe had fought in jealous rivalry to gain a friendly glance from her eyes; already her father had been asked for her hand by some of the bravest and richest chiefs of his and other tribes; but his answer was:

"Dove Eye is the heart of Spotted Tail—he cannot part with his child!"

Yellow Bear, a dreaded chief of the Black Feet, a tribe at war with all around them, had not asked her parents or herself for her hand; with a great hunter's stealth he had crept into the village of her father when almost all the tribe were away on a buffalo hunt, and that father was detained by sickness in his lodge, and with a daring peculiar to him and his tribe, had seized and borne her away, bound on a captured horse.

Spotted Tail, sick though he was, had followed swiftly on the trail, and had come almost within rifle shot of Yellow Bear when his horse fell.

The Black Foot chief saw the mishap, and he rode on more leisurely, to save his horses for the long journey yet before him, for he did not see Buffalo Bill riding down toward his fallen pursuer.

The girl looked back, and a cry of joy broke from her lips. She saw that a pursuer was nearer than before, and she thought none but her father was on the trail.

Yellow Bear turned his eyes, and he saw that it was not Spotted Tail, but a well-armed and well-mounted paleface, who was coming swiftly on his track.

Quickly he lashed his horse and that which bore Dove Eye into furious speed once more—dangerous speed, indeed, for the rough route he was passing over grew rougher and more narrow as they ascended the pass; but there was a danger behind which the Black Foot could comprehend, for he had battled with palefaces before.

Nearer and nearer the pursuer came, and a low, scornful laugh broke from the lips of Dove Eye, for she deemed her rescue sure now.

Yellow Bear heard it, and his anger flamed up, and he resolved that she should first die, and then he would face his pursuer.

Checking his horse suddenly, he clutched her round arm, and, raising her form so as to bring her heart full before him, he raised his arm to drive the knife in her bosom.

As he thus raised his arm a terrible yell broke from his lips—a cry of defiance and hate.

Dove Eye, fearless and full of scorn, looked him defiantly in the face, expecting instant death; but suddenly his arm fell and the knife dropped to the earth, for Buffalo Bill, fully one hundred yards away, saw her peril, raised his rifle quick as thought, fired, and sent the ball through the upraised right arm.

Yellow Bear, helpless to use knife or rifle now, uttered a scream of baffled rage and pain, then leaping from his horse he plunged off into a thicket, where no horseman could follow him, just as Buffalo Bill dashed up to finish the work begun by the best shot he ever made.

"Dove Eye is safe!" he said, as he reined his horse back to its haunches and cut the thongs which bound her. "Her father is at my camp, waiting for her."

"Dove Eye thanks the brave paleface. Her life has been saved by him, and she will be his friend forever."

"Buffalo Bill needs no thanks," said the heroic scout. "But look to his horse. He promised to take your father back a scalp, and he must get it."

Bill threw the reins of his horse into the hands of the liberated maiden, and sprang into the thicket after Yellow Bear.

Dove Eye saw the form of her preserver disappear and her eyes gleamed with a new light.

"He is brave as the bravest," she said. "Dove Eye will be his slave."

She waited minutes, and they seemed long, for him to return; and then almost an hour passed before Buffalo Bill came back.

When he did return he looked flushed and angry.

"He can outrun a crippled wild turkey and hide better than a chick-pheasant. I've lost him and his trail, but I'll have his scalp yet, and keep my word with Spotted Tail."

Dove Eye did not speak. She never dared to speak to her father when his brow wore the anger cloud, and she thought she must be silent when the brave paleface was angry.

"We will go to the camp where your father is." She bowed her head and turned her horse, while Bill secured the other horse, so that the Black Foot chief could not find him and remount.

Buffalo Bill now led the way down the pass, closely followed by Dove Eye, whose eyes watched with admiration every movement of his manly, graceful form.

"There is no warrior like him in all the tribes!" she murmured, as she rode on. "Dove Eye must win his love."

CHAPTER III.

THE LITTLE SCOUT IN LOVE.

When Buffalo Bill, leading the captured horse deserted by Yellow Bear, and followed by Dove Eye, rode back to where he had left Spotted Tail, he found the chief seated on the ground, near his dead horse, for the animal had literally run on until its life gave out.

A gleam of satisfaction brightened the eyes of Spotted Tail as he saw his daughter free and unharmed; then his eyes looked to the belt of Buffalo Bill for the scalp which the latter had promised.

The scout knew why he looked, and said:

"Yellow Bear, crippled by a ball from my rifle, got away. I could not take his scalp this time. But I have given my word; I never break it. You shall yet have that scalp. There is his horse in place of your own."

"Long Rifle is a great brave. He has brought Dove Eye back to her father; and Spotted Tail for this will keep peace between his band and the paleface. When his arm and leg get so he can use them, he will hunt for the scalp of Yellow Bear himself. But now, he must be taken back to his own people, for he is no good with these broken bones. It is but a day's ride to the lands of the Black Feet, and Yellow Bear will get to his people, and, it may be, come back to try and steal Dove Eye again, and take the scalp of her father."

"A day's ride only? Then that smoke means something!" said Buffalo Bill, as a white pillar, made by the burning of moss, rose toward the sky away in the northwest.

"Yes. Yellow Bear is speaking to the eyes of his people. Make my broken leg and arm straight between pieces of wood, and put me on the horse soon, for if we stay here we will have the Black Feet like hungry wolves upon us. If they come before I am ready, take Dove Eye and go. She must never be taken by Yellow Bear."

"She never will be!" said the beautiful girl, and she knelt down by his side to aid Buffalo Bill to set the broken bones and secure them in the splints.

With such skill as men brought up on the plains almost invariably possess, the hunter proceeded to place the broken limbs in proper position, and then with the long, silken scarf which he wore, cut into strips, he bound the splints in place.

Dove Eye calmly aided in the work.

Indian nature may be human nature, but one who has seen how they can endure pain rather doubts it.

As soon as the surgical job was over, Buffalo Bill assisted the Sioux chief up on the horse which Yellow Bear had left, and then the three rode down to the camp.

"Why does Long Rifle stop here?" asked Spotted Tail, as Buffalo Bill came to the camp.

"Because I have a mate up in the hills who will not come in till night," said Bill. "I can't desert him."

"Long Rifle is right to be true to his friend; but the Black Feet will be on our trail before another sun is up."

"Then some of 'em will have a free pass to the Happy Hunting Ground above," said Buffalo Bill, in his quiet way.

"Let my brother make three smokes, a rifle shot apart, white, like that," said Spotted Tail. "If any hunters or warriors of my tribe see them, they will not let their horses rest until they are with their chief. Does Long Rifle know how to make the white smoke?"

And the chief pointed to the pillar of smoke in the northwest.

"I will make the smokes, while Dove Eye cooks meat for her father. There is plenty there."

The hunter pointed to birds, venison, and fish, all

hanging to branches near his camp-fire; and then he tore a large lot of moss from the trees near at hand, mounted his horse, and rode away to make the smoke signal.

Soon Spotted Tail saw three white pillars going up in the still air, and he hoped they might be seen by some of his braves.

Dove Eye, while the scout was gone on his errand, with the ready tact of a forest-born maiden, stirred up the embers of the camp-fire, and placed meat, fowls, and fish before the coals, on the forked sticks which had been used for that purpose before; then she peeled bark for platters, for she had seen palefaces use plates, and she wished to do all she could to please the brave man who had rescued her.

Buffalo Bill smiled when he saw not only how nicely she had cooked the meat, but how neatly it was laid upon bark plates, and he said:

"Dove Eye knows how to keep a lodge."

The girl knew he spoke in compliment. His pleased looks told that.

"Will Long Rifle and my father eat?" she asked.

"We will, Dove Eye, and so must you, for you need it as much as we."

"Dove Eye will wait till her father and his friend are done; then she will eat."

Buffalo Bill knew what Indian customs were too well to try to persuade her against them, and he joined Spotted Tail in a hearty meal.

When her father and the hunter had finished, Dove Eye showed that the late perils she had passed through had not lessened her hunger, for she ate heartily.

Suddenly the sound of footsteps aroused the attention of Buffalo Bill, who had been looking dreamily into the fire, on which Dove Eye had just thrown her dinner plates.

The eyes of the scout rested on Dave Estes, who had come suddenly into camp and now stood transfixed with wonder, gazing intently at Dove Eye, who in turn glanced at him, seeming to measure him from head to foot.

"Glad you're back, Dave, for we'll find these hot quarters before long, if we stay!" said Buffalo Bill.

"Where's that red angel dropped from?" asked Dave, still gazing at Dove Eye.

Dave had never seen so handsome an Indian girl as she was.

Buffalo Bill laughed as he answered.

"The girl is Dove Eye, the daughter of the great Sioux war chief, Spotted Tail, who lies there with a broken leg and arm. We've got to see them back safe to their village."

"I'm in for that. But how did she come here? What a beauty she is! Does she understand English?"

"As well as you, as you can see by the smile on her face. She was stolen away from her father by Yellow Bear, a Black Foot chief, and her father broke down here in the chase. I made a bargain with him to keep peace and then took the trail, got within shot of the Black Foot and winged him. By that I got her back safe, and here she is."

"Bill, you're a mean cuss! Why didn't you let me save the gal?" cried Dave.

"Why weren't you on hand so as to take my chance?

You were bent on prospecting, you know, and that took you out of the way."

"Cuss the luck! I'd rather do her a favor than the best-born lady. She is prettier than any picture I ever saw!"

"Dave, you're in love."

"I know it, Bill, and if she doesn't love me, it shan't be my fault."

These latter expressions were uttered in a tone too low for Dove Eye to hear them, for she had turned away from the too ardent gaze of the young scout.

Spotted Tail now spoke, addressing Buffalo Bill:

"Since the friend of Long Rifle has come back, would it not be better that we travel before the sun goes out of sight? The Black Feet may be near to answer the signal of Yellow Bear."

"Yes," said Buffalo Bill. "As soon as my mate gets a bite to eat we will start."

"Meat here, all ready," said Dove Eye, producing the store she had laid away.

"I'll eat as I ride," said Dave, "Start as soon as you like. We can make twenty miles afore dark."

"Little Brave has a good heart. Me like him. He is a brother to Long Rifle?" said Dove Eye, pleased at the readiness to go which Dave Estes exhibited.

"Not a brother, but a mighty good partner," said Buffalo Bill. "He isn't much on size, but he is keener than a whipsnake in a fight, and worse than a wolf on a hunt?"

Dave heard the words of the girl, and he sprang to get the horses ready, for he had an idea he would win her, even if he had no hand in her rescue.

"Does she know you're married, Bill?" asked Dave, in a low tone, looking back at the girl as she caught her own horse.

"Not that I know of. But you needn't fear for me. I think we'll have enough to think of to save our scalps before we are out of this. Help me to get Spotted Tail on his horse, as easy as we can, and then we'll be off."

The Sioux chief was in a bad fix to ride, but he knew that life depended on his getting out of that vicinity, and he bore his pain without a murmur when the two scouts lifted him into the saddle, and secured him so he would not fall if pain or weakness should overcome him.

Dove Eye arranged her own saddle, and was mounted before Dave could offer assistance.

With her usual forethought she cut a quarter of venison loose from the branch on which it hung, so that when they next halted there would be no necessity to kill meat.

"What a queen wife she'd make for a hunter and trapper?" said Dave, as he took note of her action. "Bill, I'm gone in. I never thought a red could take me; but I'm her prisoner for life."

Buffalo Bill smiled at this declaration from Dave, for the young scout had hitherto seemed rather averse to the female sex.

"Which course shall we take?" asked Bill, speaking to Spotted Tail.

"Go straight for sunrise," said the chief. "If we get to the Big Horn before the Black Feet are on our trail, we will get soon where they may lose their scalps."

Buffalo Bill took the lead; Spotted Tail rode next;

Dove Eye followed him, and Dave Estes brought up the rear, at his own wish.

It was late in the day when they started, but the horses were rested, and moved on at that pace so natural to the prairie horse—an easy lope.

Night was closing in, when Bill came to a sudden halt. He saw, as they rounded a point of thick forest near the river bank, a camp, close ahead—whether of red or white men, he could not tell.

CHAPTER IV.

SIGNAL FOR AID.

A hundred lodges ranged on either side of a brook, where it ran slowly through a valley, told of the power of Yellow Bear. This was his own village, and the occupants of these lodges were but a small part of his warlike tribe.

Prominent among the lodges was the large one in which he dwelt when in the village, and before it, on a tall lance, floated a yellow cloth, with a bear rudely drawn on it.

There were many warriors idling in groups, while women were busy about the camp-fires.

A large drove of horses fed in the valley, watched by a party of half-grown boys.

Suddenly a woman, tall in stature, in a headdress of feathers, with a robe of rich scarlet cloth about her form, came out from the lodge of the chief.

She was not a white woman, yet her complexion was very light for an Indian.

Her look was commanding, though the freshness of youth had left her.

Close behind her came two other women—one, an old, haggard creature, with one eye gone, while the other shone like a ball of fire. Her coarse, white hair hung loose.

The other, strangest of all, was very young and a white girl, with rich, curling hair, of golden hue, blue eyes, and regular features, dressed in the Indian style, a short skirt of cloth, fringed with fur, leggins and moccasins. Her head was bare, only she wore the single eagle feather, which told her to be a chief's daughter, and unmarried.

The tall woman stood for a moment outside of the lodge of Yellow Bear; then she turned to the young girl, and said:

"Wanda, the Queen of the Black Feet, will now listen to the dream of Cindah, the Sunflower. Then she will ride to look for Yellow Bear, her chief, and the father of Cindah, the Sunflower."

"He is not my father! The Spirit of Dreams came to me and told me that the skin of my father was white like my own; that I have a mother as beautiful as the flowers I love."

"The Spirit of Dreams has been speaking lies to Cindah, the Sunflower! No father but Yellow Bear can claim a smile from her, nor shall any but Wanda call her daughter!"

The one-eyed hag muttered something, but neither Wanda nor the girl understood what she said.

The blue eyes of the young girl flashed out a haughty look at the queenly-looking woman, as she said:

"The Great Spirit will not lie! The Dream Spirit must speak true words with a single tongue. I have heard Yellow Bear say that this is so."

"Yellow Bear has said foolish things, and he has dreamed bad dreams. He dreamed that he must go to the land of his enemies, to the hunting grounds of the Sioux, to steal him a new wife. It was a bad dream. I told him he would come back as he went, empty-handed. And he will. Were he to bring a strange wife here, the knife of Wanda would drink her blood!"

The young girl was about to speak, when a warrior, who had been looking away to the southeast, uttered a shrill shout.

In an instant every one in the village was attracted first toward him and then to a pillar of white smoke which rose suddenly above the hilltops in that direction.

In silence they looked a few seconds, and then it went out of sight.

Then again the white column rose to view. Then it faded away, and a third time it came in sight.

Wanda put her hand to her belt and took out a whistle made from the tip of an antelope's horn. This she blew with a loud, shrill call.

In a second the warriors were seen rushing to their lodges to arm themselves, while the guards in charge of the horses drove the herd in where the animals could be ready for use.

Wanda herself disappeared inside of the large lodge. When she came out she was clad in a short skirt, a hunting-jacket of fur, and with her limbs incased in leggins, while she carried a gun in her hand, and wore a knife and pistols in her belt.

As she came forth she cried:

"Yellow Bear has called for help. Wanda will go at the head of the bravest to answer his signal!"

A yell broke from every lip as Wanda spoke, and a young brave led a large, cream-colored horse, with mane and tail of jet-black hue, up for her use.

Before she mounted, Wanda turned to the one-eyed hag, and said:

"Kincatah, keep thy one eye open. Cindah dreams too much. She is under thy care while we are gone."

The old hag answered, with a hoarse, croaking voice:

"The Sunflower will not go out of sight of Kincatah!"

Wanda said no more, but springing astride the noble horse, dashed off at a swift gallop.

The warriors, in single column, followed at the same pace.

Cindah gazed after them a moment, and then re-entered the lodge.

The one-eyed hag hobbled in after her.

An instant later, a young brave came up in front of the lodge, and, looking cautiously around to see whether any one was near to notice his actions, advanced to the shield which hung on the center-pole and made three marks upon it with a piece of charred coal.

Then he uttered a cry like that made by a hawk, and hurried away.

He had not been gone a half minute when Cindah came hurriedly from the lodge, glanced around, then looked at the shield.

"A letter for me, from the strange friend, left in the hollow tree!" she murmured, as she looked at the marks

on the shield, and she brushed them away with the palm of her hand.

The one-eyed hag hobbled out, and glared suspiciously at the girl.

"What did the Sunflower come out of the lodge so quickly for?" asked Kincatah.

"Because she wanted to. She is as free as the wind that whispers among the trees. She will come and go as her will tells her to do."

"Not while Wanda and Yellow Bear are away will the Sunflower go out of sight of Kincatah, the One-Eyed!" said the hag.

"We will see!" cried Cindah, angrily.

She blew a small whistle made from a slender bone of an antelope's leg.

The call brought the young warrior who had made the marks on the shield.

"Red Plume will saddle his horse and mine. Cindah wants to ride," said the girl.

"Saddle a horse, too, for Kincatah!" cried the old hag.

"Let it be one-eyed and lame like herself," said Cindah, scornfully.

"Fool! Rain shall fall in a flood from your eyes for this!" screamed the hag.

Cindah laughed to see her eye blaze in furious light, while the young warrior hurried off to get the horses.

CHAPTER V.

DAVE ESTES' SUSPICIONS.

When Buffalo Bill made the sudden halt, seeing a camp-fire so close, he also cocked his gun for instant use, for he was in rifle-shot of the strangers, whoever they were.

Dave Estes rode to the front, with his rifle ready, while Dove Eye, now carrying her father's rifle, rode up in a line with them.

"White men, and a rough-looking set!" said Bill, a moment later, as about a dozen men sprang up from about the fire, with guns in their hands. "We may as well ride up and take things coolly, for we're in too close range to back out now."

So he rode boldly on, while those in front, calling to a couple of men to look out for the stock, stepped up in front of their camp and waited for the scout and his party to come up.

They were not regular hunters and trappers, though well armed.

Road agents they might have been termed also.

They were in number fourteen, and mostly men of middle age, bearded and long-haired.

One only had a different look, and he was the leader. His dress was superior to the rest—a kind of velvet hunting coat reached below his hips, while buckskin breeches met high calvary boots, on which he wore a pair of silver Mexican spurs.

His pistols were ornamented with silver mountings, and his large hunting-knife was nearly as long as an artillery sword.

He was young, with long black hair hanging in curls about his shoulders, and with a smooth, almost womanly face.

Yet his dark, sharp eye, his firm, close-set lips, and his

air of command, told, even before he spoke, that he was a person of firm and resolute nature, and that he held the rest under control.

"Which way, strangers?" he asked, in a bold, authoritative tone.

"We are bound east, to the village of this wounded chief," said Buffalo Bill, pointing to Spotted Tail. "He holds his headquarters on the Big Horn, if you know where that is."

"I only know that it is down on a map I travel by," said the other. "I'm new in these parts, though I've been over the plains twice."

"I should think you were new, or you'd be careful how you camped in the heart of a hostile Indian country."

"Why, you're two whites, and are friendly with the Indians, or is the girl held captive by you?"

"No; they are old friends, because I did the chief favors. Scalps would be in demand if you or I were met by any of his tribe, or by the Black Feet."

"They'd get more lead than hair from my party," said the other. "As you can't go any further before night sets in, camp, and we'll treat you as well as we can."

Buffalo Bill did not like the looks of the party, but it was best to keep on friendly terms with them if he could.

"We'll camp near by you; but we've meat along, and need no help."

"All right, stranger!" said the young man. Then, turning to his own men, who crowded rather close, he said: "Fall back to camp, men!"

The men obeyed, as under good discipline; but Dave Estes noticed that they almost to a man gazed with looks of admiration on the Indian girl.

Buffalo Bill rode on, and, about a couple of hundred yards above, halted on the stream.

"We'll pitch camp here and let our horses rest," he said, addressing Spotted Tail.

"Long Rifle knows what is best. Spotted Tail trusts Long Rifle and the Little Brave."

"We'll take as good care of you as we know how," said Bill, dismounting.

He now unfastened the chief from his horse, and aided by Dove Eye, who spread out blankets carefully, laid him down under the branches of a tree, and Dave Estes picketed the horses to grass close at hand, gathered dry fuel and kindled a fire.

Spotted Tail spoke a word of warning about this, but Buffalo Bill pointed to the other fire, and to the full moon, just up, and said:

"It will add to our comfort and not increase our danger."

Dove Eye at once began to cook supper, and Buffalo Bill took from his own stores some coffee and hung a small camp kettle full of water over the fire to boil.

While these preparations were going on, the leader of the other party came over.

"Got all you want here?" he asked.

"Yes—thank you—all we need," said Buffalo Bill.

"You're an old hand in camp life."

"Yes, born and brought up to it," answered the other.

"Yet you use good language—have better manners than the trappers I've met before."

"Good manners, like the measles, are easy caught. I've been a great deal with educated men, army officers,

and others," said Buffalo Bill. "It is very easy to be a gentleman when one knows how."

"What might your name be?" asked the stranger.

"I've no reason to conceal it. My father's name was Cody. I've earned the name of Buffalo Bill."

The stranger started.

"You were born in Kansas—your father was killed there!" he said.

"Yes—by border ruffians! I've wiped out the debt!" said Buffalo Bill, grimly.

"Yes. I've heard of you before," said the stranger. "But I expected to see a different man—a giant in stature and a demon in looks."

Buffalo Bill smiled as he answered:

"I'm only harsh when it is forced on me. Since you know my name, what might yours be?"

"Boyd—without any preface," said the other. "I left that when I took command of that camp gang over there. You can call me Captain Boyd for the little time we are likely to be together."

"All right, Captain Boyd. I may as well tell you that an early start on whatever route you mean to take, and a care to hide your trail, will most likely keep you out of a nasty Indian fight. We expect a band of Black Feet after us, and should they strike your trail, they'd strike hard for your hair, as well as your horses and weapons."

"Thank you for the warning. Why do you expect they will follow you?"

"Because I rescued the daughter of Spotted Tail, that wounded chief, from Yellow Bear, a leading Black Foot chief, this morning. I wounded him, but he got away. As soon as he can rally warriors for support, he'll come."

"She is good looking for a squaw," said the young captain, carelessly. "But I'm not fond of women, so I seldom cast a second glance at them. They're at the bottom of two-thirds of the troubles that men get into, and I steer clear."

"That's sensible," muttered Dave Estes, who now came in and joined the group; "I used to do it."

Dove Eye came from the fire where her meat had been cooking nicely, and told Long Rifle, as she invariably called Buffalo Bill, that supper was ready.

"Join us, Captain Boyd," said Buffalo Bill, in a courteous tone.

"Thank you—no; I have supped. I came over to ask you about the country ahead, and the best route for me to take."

"Come around after supper, and I'll tell you what I can."

"What is he?" asked Dave Estes, when the young leader went back to his men.

"Your eyes can tell you as well as mine can. He doesn't say."

By this time Dove Eye had her supper served on fresh bark plates, and Buffalo Bill took off his hot coffee to add to her fare.

After supper Buffalo Bill was joined by Captain Boyd, who came with the map he had been traveling by, and for an hour or more the two talked about the country and the trails. Then Boyd went to his camp, and the scout lay down to sleep till the midwatch came on, for he and Dave had agreed to take turns and stand guard.

The camp-fires had burned low and all was quiet when Dave Estes woke Buffalo Bill to take his turn as sentinel.

"Do they keep any watch over there?" asked Buffalo Bill, glancing toward the other camp.

"None that I can see. Nothing has moved but the stock since I've been on watch."

"Such carelessness deserves to lose hair," said the scout.

"You'll not have over two hours' sleep, Dave, so drop on your blanket at once."

Dave lay down near the embers of the camp-fire, while Bill went out to change the picket pins of his horses to a fresh grazing ground.

On approaching Powder Face, he found that animal with his fore feet planted close together, his head low-bent till the nose was close to the ground, and his ear pointed toward the west.

Buffalo Bill had seen the animal in this position three times before, and he had each time learned a lesson. Twice he had been attacked by Indians before the dawn, and the third time a column of mounted troops, making a night march, passed his camp before daylight.

"So! there's danger in the wind, old boy!" said he to the horse.

The animal, with almost human intelligence, raised its head, and, glaring off in the moonlight, snuffed the air.

Buffalo Bill did not pass these signs unheeded.

He at once took up the picket pins of all the horses and led them in to camp. Dave Estes was not yet asleep.

"Saddle up, Dave—saddle up. I think there's danger close at hand. An hour's earlier start will do no hurt at any rate," said Buffalo Bill, in a low tone.

Spotted Tail and Dove Eye were awake in a second more, and Buffalo Bill, without speaking his convictions that an enemy was near, said that he had made up his mind to an early start.

In less than five minutes the four were mounted and ready to move.

"Dave, lead the way and keep in the shadow of the timber," cried Buffalo Bill. "I will overtake you in three or four minutes."

"Why does Long Rifle stay behind?" asked Spotted Tail.

"To put out our fire and make a false trail," said the scout.

But he had another and nobler purpose. While feeling that danger was creeping up, he could not go off and leave the other party, strangers though they were, with death creeping up to surprise them.

The moment Dave rode on, followed by Spotted Tail and Dove Eye, the scout turned toward the other camp.

The animal, for a wonder, seemed adverse to go. It seemed to feel that peril was close at hand, and obstinately tried to turn in the direction that the others were going.

Buffalo Bill, angry at its perverseness, drove his spurs deep in the flanks of the noble animal, and it bounded swiftly toward the camp of the strangers.

Almost at the same instant the scout was made aware of the danger which the animal strove to keep him out of, for as it bounded on, it nearly leaped over an Indian who was creeping along in the grass, and Bill saw not only this, but a dozen more to his right and left, and

knew then that a large band was surrounding the camp of the sleepers.

To think and to act were with him one and the same thing. To insure the safety of Dove Eye, Spotted Tail, and Dave Estes, he would ride in an opposite direction from that taken by them, dash through the camp of the sleeping strangers, wake them to resistance, and make good his own escape up the river, or by crossing it.

With a wild yell of warning, firing right and left with his revolver, and sending two red men to their last sleep, he drove madly through the camp of Captain Boyd.

As he went, he shouted:

"Up and to arms! The reds are all around you!"

The next he was aware that another horse was close behind his, and as he dashed forward over another line of Indians, all now yelling and firing, he turned and saw that the Indian girl, Dove Eye, had followed him, and was close by his side.

"Ride, girl—ride as you never rode before!" he shouted.

At the same instant he saw a dark mass of horsemen directly in his front, and by the spears bristling in the air he knew that the main body of mounted Indians were before him.

"Turn—turn and follow!" he cried to Dove Eye, and he wheeled Powder Face directly to his left into the thick willows which fringed the river bank.

Dove Eye turned as quickly as he did, and the two went crashing through the brush, and in a few seconds both horses were in the stream swimming for the other shore.

Meantime a terrible fire from the breech-loading guns of the white party told that they had been aroused in time to make a deadly resistance, and the answering yells and rapid shots of the Indians indicated that it was a battle—for life on the one side, for scalps and plunder on the other.

The excitement favored Buffalo Bill and the Indian girl in their only plan to get away.

Buffalo Bill paused scarce a second after crossing. He only took time to change his needle-gun for the Henry rifle, which hung at the back of his saddle, so that he could have more than one shot ready, if pursued, and said, in a low tone, to Dove Eye:

"Keep close to me; I shall keep under cover and follow the river. If they do not strike the trail of your father and my mate, we will join them below."

"I will follow where Long Rifle leads," said Dove Eye.

"Ah, what is that?" cried Buffalo Bill, an instant later, as a wild, peculiar shout, followed by a succession of Indian yells, reached their ears.

"Spotted Tail, my father, is a prisoner in the hands of the Black Feet," said Dove Eye, mournfully. "I know his cry," she continued, "and I understand theirs. He turned to look for Dove Eye, who could not help following Long Rifle, and he has been captured. He is a big chief. He will die by the fire."

"Not if I can help it," said Buffalo Bill, as he checked his horse.

"You are but one. You can do nothing," said Dove Eye, sadly.

"But I can't let the Black Feet have things all their

own way. Hear 'em yell. They've wiped out or captured the party of white men, for the firing has ceased. Girl, will you obey my wishes?"

"Dove Eye will do all he tells her to do."

"Then Dove Eye, ride while you can, swiftly down the river, close under cover of the trees, till you reach the great bend below. Ride directly toward the first peak, which you will see where the sun rises. Keep on and stop as little as you can till you get to Fort Thompson. There you will find a young chief, a paleface, with long hair like mine. His name is General Custer. He has warriors and horses, and when he is told that I am in trouble, he will not rest till he reaches me. Now go, for I shall stay to watch the Black Feet, and to try to save your father."

The Indian girl hesitated, looked up pleadingly in his face, and said:

"Do not tell Dove Eye to go away from you."

"Alone I can hide and watch those demons and see where they go and what they mean to do. Dove Eye could not help me in this. The Black Feet shall not take me. When Dove Eye comes back with the white warriors she will find talking papers in the camp we left yesterday, and they will give news to the long-haired general. Go now, Dove Eye."

Dove Eye sighed, but she turned her horse down the river and in a few seconds was out of sight.

Buffalo Bill now led his horse into the water in the edge of the thicket, and, following the stream for several hundred yards, went up against the current so as to leave no trail. Then at a spot where the hard, shelving rock would receive no impression, he led the horse out, secured him in the thick grass near by, and stood and listened to the noise made on the other bank of the river by the Indians.

He soon became satisfied that they had several prisoners in hand and were looking for more. He could hear them riding up and down the stream, and he felt sure their search would be keen and enduring when Dove Eye and he were not found. If her trail was taken, nothing but the fleetness of her horse and its endurance could save her, for beyond the great bend she had an open country of at least a half day's ride to cross, where it was almost impossible to hide, and equally impossible to avoid leaving a trail. As to himself, Buffalo Bill knew his peril, but he had been too often in such scrapes to feel bad about it.

CHAPTER VI.

RED PLUME'S TRACK.

Anger fire shone in the eyes of Cindah, the Sunflower, when the young Indian warrior, Red Plume, was seen bringing not only her horse and his own, but another animal, noted for spirit and speed, for the use of Kincatah, the one-eyed watch keeper over Cindah.

"Ho!" cried the old witch. "The Sunflower sees how Red Plume obeys her wishes. Look at the horse he brings. It is neither one-eyed nor lame. Cindah may ride, but Kincatah rides with her."

Cindah did not answer as Red Plume led the horses up, but her looks told him of her displeasure.

"Kincatah should take her blanket. It will be cold on the hills!" said the warrior.

"Red Plume is good. He cares for the feelings of the old," said the hag, and she went into the lodge to get a blanket.

"Why did Red Plume disobey me?" asked Cindah, angrily, as soon as the other was gone.

"That she might be alone in her ride with Red Plume," said the young Indian. You will soon see why Red Plume brought that horse for Kincatah."

Kincatah came out, and Red Plume assisted her to mount the horse which he had saddled and bridled for her.

The old hag put on a great many airs, on receiving so much attention, and turned to Cindah, and said:

"We are now ready; Red Plume can wait on you."

At that instant Red Plume dextrously slipped one of the broad pods of the prickly pear, full of thorns, under the tail of the horse which Kincatah rode.

Cindah saw the action, and as the horse darted away with the old hag clinging to its back and tugging helplessly at the bridle, she understood the intentions of Red Plume.

Cindah could hardly mount the horse which Red Plume held for her, for she was watching Kincatah far off down the valley as the horse madly rushed on, stung by torture.

"It was good in Red Plume to get that old witch out of my way. I hate her!"

"Red Plume will die to serve Cindah."

"Red Plume is very good. But he must be careful and not show that he cares for Cindah. Yellow Bear will kill any one who looks on her with eyes of love, as he did the noble white captive whom he spared so long that he might teach Cindah how to read the speaking papers and to write, so that she could read the news to Yellow Bear when he captured the mailbags of the palefaces. Does not Red Plume remember?"

"Yes; the palefaced prisoner was killed by Yellow Bear in his passion, because the chief found him kneeling at the feet of the Sunflower."

"Yes," said Cindah, with a sigh. "I was sorry, though I felt no love for him. But this stranger, who writes to me. I might love him."

"Why? The Sunflower has never seen him. He is a mystery, like the sounds we hear in the forest."

The young Indian spoke eagerly, and seemed to wait her answer with impatience.

"The mystery is to me a delight," she said. "He writes and says he loves me. He tells me that he has seen me when I did not know that he was near; and he will never be far from me; that he will watch over me if danger should approach; that he will read my wishes and carry them out when I least expect it. Three letters, all left where I can find them, have reached my hand, and now I go for the fourth. Had Kincatah ridden with us, I could not have gotten it. But I know I can trust Red Plume. He has been my playfellow ever since I can remember."

"He will be true to the Sunflower," said the young Indian; "and though he may dare to love her, he will not be rash, as was the paleface who lost his life."

"That paleface was your friend, Red Plume."

"Yes, he was my friend because I loved to serve the Sunflower. But in his hour of doom Red Plume could not raise a hand or speak a word to save him. The an-

ger of Yellow Bear is like that of the storm. The lightning comes and kills before the warning is heard. The paleface died. He left but two friends to mourn him. One was Cindah, the Sunflower; the other was Red Plume."

"True. Halt here, Red Plume, and watch while I go on and see if there is a speaking paper in the hollow tree."

While Red Plume reined in his horse as she requested, the lovely girl rode on to an old tree, blasted by a thunderbolt years before, and dead and leafless.

Into a small hollow, as high as she could reach, she thrust her hand and brought out a roll of white, thin bark.

This she unrolled. It was full of writing, done in a plain hand, so like that of her paleface teacher that she could read it readily. Not only the writing, but the language was like his, and she could have fancied that these letters came from him, had she not seen him perish with her own eyes.

These letters were almost a transcript of such as he had written to her.

Cindah sat motionless on her horse reading the letter, while the young warrior watched her. It seemed strange, too, that he, by actions and words, professing love himself, should be pleased when he knew that she was reading of love from another.

He was about to join her, when he heard a crashing in the underbrush, and the next instant he saw the forms of a score of warriors breaking through at wild speed toward her.

He dashed forward to throw his body between her and peril. "The Sioux—the Sioux!"

Armed only with a spear, the young brave dashed on, while Cindah, apparently panic-stricken, did not even urge her horse into action, until it was too late, for, as she saw the lance of Red Plume broken and himself made prisoner, she found her own horse seized by a brace of warriors, while a chief, by his dress and arms, rode to her side.

"Who is this?" he asked, in the Shoshone tongue. "She is dressed like the red maidens of the land, but her skin is white and her eyes are blue!"

"She is your captive. Let him go!" said Cindah, sadly, and she pointed to Red Plume, who was held firmly between two warriors.

"You ask for him and not for yourself? He is not your brother. Is he your husband?"

"No. I ask nothing for myself. I can die, and that is enough."

"You are as beautiful as the Red Rose of the Sioux nation, whom we left far away on the banks of the Big Horn. We will take you there that you may see her."

"I have seen her. Her name is Dove Eye. But she is not there where you left her. I saw her last night. She was riding on a horse, fast bound, and Yellow Bear, the great chief of the Black Feet, led the horse. She was his captive!"

The Sioux chief looked at Cindah with a wondering eye. She spoke earnestly, as if she really had seen the Indian maiden.

"The White Flower speaks strange words. Can she say how Dove Eye looked?"

"I can. Her long hair flowed down her back. She

swept on, but her great, black eyes flashed like fire. She wore about her neck a string of blue beads and on her wrists armlets of gold!"

The Sioux warriors listened in astonishment while the white captive thus described one whom they knew so well.

"The White Flower says she saw Dove Eye last night?"

"Yes; the Angel of Dreams came to her with the picture in his hand. She saw it plain. But Yellow Bear has not come home. There is his village. He claims me as his child. But the Dream Angel says I am not."

The Sioux chief rode a little apart with all his warriors, except four left to guard Cindah and Red Plume.

From time to time they looked upon her while they talked, but in their looks there was respect.

After a short time the young chief, evidently a sub-chief, out on some independent scout, rode back to the side of Cindah, and said:

"I am Young Beaver, and the father of Dove Eye is my chief. If his daughter is in the hands of Yellow Bear the White Flower and the young Black Foot chief must go with Young Beaver and remain in his hands till we meet Spotted Tail, our chief. We will not hurt you—but you must go."

Cindah allowed the young chief to take the bridle of her horse in his hand. Red Plume rode next to her, and they skirted the hills and rode in the direction Wanda, with her warriors, had taken.

The party was too small to keep in the open valley where it might be discovered by a larger one, and Young Beaver was evidently a cautious warrior.

He rode on swiftly until night was close at hand, and then saw before him a well-watered valley where he could find a good camping ground.

He halted. Seeing nothing to alarm him, the young chief dashed swiftly down the hillside with his braves and captives.

Reaching the valley, they crossed at a gallop and entered a grove of cotton-wood trees on the river bank.

Young Beaver leaped from his horse and turned to Cindah.

As he did so yells from fully one hundred warriors broke upon his ears, and before he and his braves had a chance to raise a weapon many were stricken down in death, and the rest were captives.

They had ridden right into the ambush of those who waited for them.

CHAPTER VII.

BUFFALO BILL IN CLOSE QUARTERS.

It was but a little while after Buffalo Bill had got Powder Face stowed away in his new hiding place before it became light enough for him to think he could make out the movements of the Indians, if he was up in the top of one of the trees which seemed by its height to overtop the rest.

Leaving his guns below, and removing his hunting-coat and belt, he embraced the trunk of the tallest looking cotton wood, and soon reached the nearest branches.

It was darker up among the thick branches than he thought it would be, and he was certain he could not

distinguish things on the plains very clearly, so he would wait and take things easy.

Thicker grew the branches as he ascended, but that was all the better for him. There would be less danger of his being discovered from his lofty lookout.

He was almost to its top when he paused to rest again. And then he started, for he heard a strange purring noise close to him, and he knew, even without seeing it, that he was close to a panther, and that most likely her young were with her in the same tree.

Buffalo Bill wished then that he had at least brought his knife and pistols with him.

He looked cautiously around and soon saw two great balls of fire, and then a lesser pair in advance of the first, and as he kept his eyes fixed in that direction, he soon saw the shape of the animals as they crouched on a limb higher than that where he rested.

He could hear the purring noise made by the beast, as if to assure the young one of protection.

If he moved, either to go higher or descend, the animal might take it as an aggressive action and pitch upon him, and he did not wish to risk a rough-and-tumble fight with a panther up in a tree at least sixty or seventy feet from the ground.

He kept his eyes fixed on the fiery orbs of the larger animal and remained motionless, waiting for daylight to come, for he knew that such beasts, unless wounded, will not as a general thing face a human being in the light of day.

At last the animal began to get uneasy. It seemed to desire to get between him and its cub.

Buffalo Bill felt the limbs shake with its great weight, as it crept on until it had passed on over the cub and was almost up the trunk of the tree, and certainly within twice its length of him.

Here it stopped, and rearing up against the trunk of the tree, scratched against the bark with its long claws as if it would terrify its visitor.

Buffalo Bill was contented that it should use its claws in that way, as long as they did not come in contact with his bark. He could now see plainly the shape of his huge antagonist, and the animal reared up at its full height on the branch and peered from behind the tree trunk at Buffalo Bill.

It was war now—but a strange war. The human eye against that of the beast! Buffalo Bill knew well if his glance wavered he was lost. The animal would leap upon him in a second, if he but winked or lost the eye-charm with which he held it.

Thus for minutes the man and the panther stood; then the panther drew back, very slowly, still keeping its eye on him until an intervening branch broke the spell.

Then with a wild scream the panther leaped off into the braches of another tree, followed by its cub, and Buffalo Bill, drawing a long breath, said:

"Thank Heaven! 'Twas about the worst scare of my whole life."

The cry of the animal, as it leaped from tree to tree, was heard farther and farther away, and the hunter, now satisfied that his peril was over from that source at least, turned to see what the Indians were doing.

He gave but one earnest look at a scene almost within rifle shot, and then said, quickly:

"I'll stop that game if I die!"

CHAPTER VIII.

A DARING RESCUE.

When, almost at the start, Spotted Tail missed Dove Eye from his side, he halted and would not ride on, though Dave Estes, surmising she had gone with Buffalo Bill, declared that the scout would take good care of her.

Spotted Tail was obstinate and would not go on without her, and the consequence was that both were surprised and captured by the Black Feet.

On being brought back to the spot where Captain Boyd and his party had camped, Dave was rejoiced not to see either Buffalo Bill or Dove Eye there—neither did he see their scalps, though every man of Boyd's party, but the captain, had been killed and scalped.

Boyd, Spotted Tail and Dave Estes appeared to be their only prisoners.

A big fire was kindled at the camp when these were brought together, and then for the first time Dave Estes knew into whose power he had fallen.

A chief, past middle age, tall, and with his right arm bound in splinters, advanced to where Spotted Tail and his captive companions stood.

"Chief of the Sioux, do you know me?" asked this chief.

"Yes," said Spotted Tail, bitterly. "I know you. You are Yellow Bear, the thief who stole my child, my Dove Eye, away from me in the night like a coward. But Long Rifle broke the arm that would have slain her, and he has carried her back safe to her people."

"It is a lie. She is on the plains yet and my warriors will take her trail when the sun comes up, and she shall be brought back to see her father die. Then she shall be the wife of Yellow Bear."

"Never—you hollow-hearted cuss," cried Dave Estes, as careless of life as Spotted Tail himself. "She is safe with the best man that ever scalped a red."

"What dog are you, to bark so loud?" said the chief, angrily.

"I'm a sworn brother of Buffalo Bill, whose bite is worse than my bark, as that arm of yours can tell."

"Ugh! You are a brother to the paleface who took Dove Eye from me. Good, I will make you eat fire."

"Pile in, old cuss. I'm not afeared of fire. I've scalped your sort and I reckon I can afford to go on that."

"Who are you?" asked the chief, to Captain Boyd.

"I was captain of the men whom your warriors have killed. I am nothing now but your prisoner."

"A friend of Spotted Tail?"

"No—I never saw him before."

"What are you doing in the hunting grounds of the red men?"

"Passing over them from the great waters where the sun sets to the big sea where it rises. I have not warred on the red man—why has he warred on me and mine?"

"Because he hates the palefaces. He would sweep them away as the red fire sweeps the grass from the plains."

"They are as many as the leaves on the trees. They are rooted like the pines in the mountains."

"The red man's hate shall blast them if they are as the leaves on the trees. The fire of his anger shall burn them, if they be rooted like the pines in the mountains. Yellow Bear hates the palefaces. He has the scalps of many on his lodge poles. He will have more. The young brave may get ready to sing his death song as soon as he gets to the village of Yellow Bear. He shall go in company with Spotted Tail to the spirit land. This other dog shall die at sunrise."

"All right, old rooster," said the dauntless scout. "The sooner I'm out of your sight the better for my eyes. There is no love lost between us."

Yellow Bear ordered several of his braves to plant a stake in the open plain and to gather dry fagots so as to have all ready for the torture.

Meantime he had parties out in search of Buffalo Bill and Dove Eye.

The torture post was soon set in the ground, the wood gathered, and just at dawn of day, Dave Estes, who had been tightly bound from the start, was led to the spot.

The brave little scout showed no fear, and replied to the taunts and insults of the warriors in bitter scorn, telling them that they were squaws. He boasted of the scalps he had taken and of the dead he had left of their race for the wolves to feed upon. He angered them so much that they could hardly restrain themselves from killing him on the spot.

Indeed, this was what the gallant young scout desired. A sudden shot or blow to take him quickly beyond the power of pain, instead of the wild agony of death by fire.

But Yellow Bear had spoken his doom—the braves held back their weapons.

He was bound to the post, and the light of coming day grew stronger and stronger. The sun would rise and the torture would begin.

Spotted Tail looked with pride in the face of the young hero, while tears of pity fell from the eyes of Captain Boyd.

Dave paid no heed to either of these; he was thinking and hoping that Dove Eye and Buffalo Bill were beyond the reach of those who were about to sacrifice him.

The warriors now formed a circle about the post and began the dance of torture and the song of triumph. One brave stood near the post, with a lighted brand in his hand, and as the others circled around him he shook it before the face of the doomed captive.

Brighter and brighter came the light, the red reflection from the sun so nearly up.

Yellow Bear now came into the circle. His face expressed his hate, and in a tone of bitterness he said:

"The dog who is a brother to Long Rifle is about to roast in the fire which the Black Feet will kindle."

"I'll burn clear and go up like the sun, bright and shining," cried the scout. "Burn away—burn away, and don't spend a year in talking about it."

"The Father of Light is rising," said the chief, sternly. "Let the fire drink the blood of the paleface dog."

At that dread moment, as the brave bent down with his lighted torch, a bullet pierced his brain, and the next second a man mounted, leading another horse, bounded into

the ring of yelling demons, and before a second elapsed Dave Estes was free and upon his own horse.

It was Buffalo Bill who was by his side, and as he handed Dave one revolver, he used the other in the line of red men, and as both men rode swiftly away over the plain they left dead warriors in their trail, the rest, like Yellow Bear, utterly astounded, did not think of firing until both were beyond shot.

Away sped Buffalo Bill on the matchless Powder Face, while Dave Estes, on his own favorite Black Hawk, rode close on his heels, with his good Spencer rifle once more ready for work, for it had not been taken from his saddle, and when Buffalo Bill, crossing the river, came upon the horses fastened in the edge of the grove, he saw and secured the steed of Dave to aid in his bold attempt to save him.

"Let us take down the river—it is our best chance," cried Dave to Buffalo Bill, as they swept beyond rifle shot of the Black Feet.

"Not for the world, Dave," cried our hero. "Any route but that. Dove Eye has gone that way to get Custer and his men to come to our help. Our horses are good—we can lead all day and pick off the nearest at long range. We will bear off to the northwest, and they'll follow us, and none will take her trail."

"Agreed, Bill—agreed. I thought my time had come when that black-muzzled cuss bent down to set fire to the timber stacked around me."

"You were in close quarters, and if I hadn't dropped him so sudden and charged yelling, I doubt if I could have got you off with a whole skin. We have had better luck than I expected."

They were riding at the topmost speed of their horses, in a directly contrary direction from that taken by Dove Eye, and as Buffalo Bill looked back he saw the whole band of Black Feet in pursuit.

They had a long start, and though they slackened their speed so as not to tire their horses, they kept far in advance.

Before they had ridden a dozen miles they were obliged to change their course, for the quick eye of Buffalo Bill detected a fresh body of mounted men, whom he supposed to be Black Feet coming to join their chief.

This alteration, of course, took him from the direct line to the hills, hoping then in the night time to hide his trail and elude pursuit.

On rode the scouts, their horses yet fresh and strong, and as they left mile after mile behind, the more scattering became the line of those who pursued.

At noon, when they halted in a stream, not more than a dozen were in sight.

"We'll take it easier, Dave, from this on," said Buffalo Bill. "I don't want to get too far, for I am going to save Spotted Tail yet. We can use up these fellows at long range, and then choose our distance from the rest till Dove Eye brings Custer up; for I know she will—she is lightning when she rides."

"All right, pard. We can take the few that follow now without leaving this drink."

"We could, but we'll draw them a little farther, for if any turn back we might lose 'em."

"You're right again, Bill—always right. You've got

the coolest head and steadiest nerve of any man on the plains."

"That will do for you to say, Dave. But come on—I want to find cover."

Coming to a country with here and there a clump of rocks, they looked for cover, and soon found it.

Behind a clump of rocks and sage brush they dismounted, letting their horses nibble at some bunch grass.

When they came within very long range there was but few of the mounted warriors, and these came as if their horses were tired out.

"I wish there were twenty now, when we have such good cover," said Dave, as they drew nearer and nearer.

"I am not greedy," said Buffalo Bill, with one of his quiet smiles. "We will have more ammunition left for the next tussle."

The warriors were now in easy range, but the two scouts, sure of them when they chose to open fire, were in no hurry. They waited to see if any more would heave in sight.

When the first of these was within sixty or seventy yards and the hindmost not more than three hundred, Buffalo Bill quietly asked Dave if he was ready.

"Yes—which one shall I take?" said Dave.

"You take the nearest and I'll drop the laziest of the lot, the fellow in the rear. That'll bring the rest to a standstill, and end the job."

"All right, Bill. Say the word, for I've got my level."

"Fire as you hear the click of my gun," said the scout.

The next instant both rifles sent their unerring bullets forth and the two Indians singled out went from their horses at the same instant. The rest, as the brave scouts expected, halted, but it was too late for their safety.

Shot after shot, as quick as lightning, flew from the ready rifles, and the pursuit was ended.

Warriors lay dead upon the ground and tired horses turned away to rest and graze, free from their cruel riders' lash.

"Now, Dave, we may as well look for meat for supper, and then for a place to camp up toward the hills. I don't believe we'll be troubled much more, if at all, to-day, and we'll hide our trail when we get water."

"That is so, pard—and there is an antelope in reach," said Dave, sending a ball to the heart of the animal as it stood for an instant on a ridge.

He rode over, and in a few minutes a hind quarter, all he cared to carry, was hanging to his saddle, and then Dave turned with Buffalo Bill toward the mountains.

The scouts were determined to gain a point from which with their field glasses they could scan the country below and watch the movements of the Indians and see when the troops were on the march, for Buffalo Bill felt confident that Dove Eye had escaped.

CHAPTER IX.

CINDAH'S MYSTERIOUS COMMUNICATION.

It was not until her late captors were defeated and most of them stricken down, that Cindah, the Sunflower, knew who it was that had ambuscaded and attracted them, or realized whether she was only changing from one captor to another, or was once more free.

But now she found that it was Wanda herself who

CHAPTER X.

A PALEFACE RECOGNIZED.

headed this party, and who had remained there to rest while only her best mounted warriors had gone on with Yellow Bear, who had met her in this valley.

Wanda looked angrily at Cindah, and asked how it was that she had been captured with Red Plume.

Cindah, ever fearful of the wrath of this fierce woman, answered that she had ridden a little way from the village and was in sight of it, when these Sioux rode suddenly up and surrounded her. Red Plume had made a brave resistance.

"Where was Kincatah, the One-Eyed?" asked Wanda.

"She rode with us, but she would have a high-spirited horse, and it ran away with her," said Cindah, who could hardly restrain laughing as she remembered the way the old hag went flying out of sight.

"She was a fool. If her neck is broken it will be small loss," said Wanda, angrily.

"Yellow Bear came to me empty-handed, as I said he would, and with an arm broken. He now seeks revenge. But he will have no success. But I will give him these prisoners for the torture stake."

With a huge tree at her back, she sat and gazed into the fire, while near her Cindah reclined on the grass.

Red Plume stood with his eyes apparently fixed upon the moon in the clear sky, though at times he dropped a furtive glance upon the face of Cindah, as the firelight fell upon her.

At last Wanda closed her eyes, and her heavy breathing told that she slept.

Cindah drew from her bosom the roll of bark which she had taken from the hollow tree, and with a pleased look she read it over.

Suddenly she started, and a cry nearly broke from her lips, for another roll, almost like the first, dropped directly in her lap.

Cindah looked quickly around to see if any one had noticed this, but the only one near who appeared to be awake was Red Plume, and he was standing with his head turned, as if he was listening to some sound.

Cindah looked eagerly all around her, up into the trees, and in every direction.

She unrolled the bark, and, evidently written in haste, with a piece of charcoal, were these words:

"He who loves the Sunflower is near her now. She may sleep in peace, for he will watch over her safety. Dreams will hover about her and give her bright visions."

"Near me now?" she murmured. "Where can he be? And who? In what shape can I see him? A spirit cannot write and leave these signs. Oh, that I might see him!"

A sigh reached her ears. From whence she knew not. But she knew she heard it.

She looked up into the shadowy trees, she looked on the sleeping forms about her, at Red Plume standing silent and immovable as a statue. It could not be he. He could not write or use the language found in her letters.

"I will try to sleep. Maybe the Spirit of Dreams will help me," she murmured; "and I will ask the Spirit to show him to me, so I may remember him if he comes before my waking eyes."

Then she lay down on a blanket which Red Plume had spread for her, and soon she slept.

Before day dawned Wanda, the Black Feet queen, had her warriors astir, for the distant sound of guns had reached her ears, and she knew that Yellow Bear had met enemies.

At the first gleam of light sufficient to show a trail, she moved on at the head of her band, bidding Red Plume attend Cindah, the Sunflower, who rode farther back in the line.

A special guard was placed over the Sioux prisoners, whom Wanda designed as a surprise to Yellow Bear.

"Did Cindah, the Sunflower, see the blessed Spirit of Dreams last night?" asked Red Plume.

"Yes," said the girl.

"Is it right that Red Plume should hear what the Dream Spirit told her?"

"The Dream Spirit came to me as a young paleface, with dark eyes and long, flowing hair as black as night itself. He held a roll of white bark in his hand, and on it was written: 'I love Cindah, the White Rose of the Prairie.'"

"A paleface? Is Cindah sure that his face was white?" asked Red Plume, with a sad, disappointed look.

"Yes; he was young, and his voice was low, like that of the ringdove."

"The Dream Spirit is a lie!" murmured the young brave, in a tone too low for her to understand what he said.

But she saw that his face looked dark and troubled, and she said:

"Is not Red Plume, the good friend of Cindah, as well?"

"Yes. But a cloud is on his spirit. He, too, has had a dream."

"Will not Red Plume tell his dream to Cindah?"

The young warrior was about to reply, when there was a sudden commotion in the line and Wanda put the whole column forward at its greatest speed.

The other band, under Yellow Bear, were seen scattered over the plains as if in flight, and the daring queen, thinking that the chief had been attacked by superior numbers, hurried on to his assistance.

Red Plume and Cindah had no further chance to speak.

Then Wanda met Yellow Bear, who had remained with a chosen band of warriors while the rest of his braves had dashed away in pursuit of the two scouts.

Yellow Bear had his two prisoners with him.

When Wanda rode up and met her chief, she glanced at Spotted Tail and at the captive, Boyd, and asked:

"Are these all the prisoners Yellow Bear has taken?"

"All," said the chief. "Yet the belts of his warriors bear the scalps of many palefaces."

"Where is Dove Eye?" asked the queen.

"She is not here? Dove Eye, and Long Rifle, and another paleface are yet on the plains. But my warriors are on their trail. They will be mine before the sun goes down."

A smile of derision passed over her face, and Wanda was about to speak, when a cry from the lips of Cindah attracted the attention of all.

"Who—who is this?" she cried, as she rode up to Captain Boyd and looked earnestly in his face.

"A paleface doomed to the torture-stake," said Yellow Bear, sternly.

"No, no, he must not die! He is the Dream Spirit whom I saw last night!" she cried.

Had she seen the black, bitter look of hatred cast on that young, fair face by Red Plume, Cindah would have trembled.

"Cindah is a child. She dreams too much. Why is she not at home in the village of Yellow Bear?" asked the chief.

"She and Red Plume were captured in sight of your lodge by the Sioux. Wanda rescued them, and she holds Sioux captives as a present for her chief," said the queen.

At a signal from the woman the prisoners were brought into the presence of Yellow Bear.

Spotted Tail recognized Young Beaver, and asked him why he had let a woman become his captor.

"Because Young Beaver was blind and fell into a trap," said the young chief, bitterly. "The Great Spirit has willed that he should die with his chief."

"The will of the Great Spirit shall be done; and it is not for us to weep over it," said Spotted Tail, calmly. "We can teach the Black Feet how Sioux warriors can die."

Yellow Bear now ordered the column to move to a camping-ground, where he would wait for his warriors, who were out in pursuit of the fugitives. Seeing that Cindah looked with strange longing on the face of the young captain, whom she persisted in calling the "Dream Spirit," he bade Wanda to keep her close under her own eye and apart from all but Red Plume.

At noon the entire party was in camp on the banks of the river.

Here Yellow Bear waited for his scattered warriors to rally, sending up smoke after smoke to show where he was.

Spotted Tail looked grimly on while these smokes ascended, for he knew they would serve as signals to rally his warriors, too.

If Dove Eye had escaped, she would carry the news of his capture to those who would rescue him or perish in the trial.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PURSUIT OF DOVE EYE.

When Dove Eye rode away from Buffalo Bill, to whom unasked she had given her heart, she did not dread her peril. When she thought that the scout's safety would depend entirely on her success in carrying help to him and those whom he was determined to rescue—her father and the Little Brave—she nerved herself to hasten to carry out his wishes.

While darkness shielded her, keeping close under cover of the trees lining the bank of the river, she rode as swiftly as her horse would go.

She rode thus for miles before she came to the great bend in the stream, of which Buffalo Bill had spoken.

It was not yet daylight when she reached this spot, and she hastened to cross before the light should enable any one to discover her.

She crossed safely, and while the rosy light of the coming day allowed the peaks, of which the scout had spoken, to stand out boldly to her sight as a guide, she also felt that her danger was just beginning.

Heading directly for the distant peak, the brave girl gave her horse his rein, for she knew that every mile gained at this point would be the most important of all.

She rode for an hour before she dared to look back, and then it was on the crest of a knoll, that she glanced over her shoulder to see if she was pursued.

One eager look, and she knew that men were on her track. They were very far in the rear, but she could make out horsemen scattered along the plain.

She let her noble steed rest for a few minutes, for she knew that a long, cruel race was begun.

On over a treeless plain—on the brave girl rode, pausing not until a small lake came in sight.

Here for fully ten minutes she rested to let her horse drink from the cool water and lave his tired limbs.

Her pursuers gained while she thus halted, until she could count them easily. Only six were now in sight, but these seemed well mounted.

With her horse rested and refreshed, she again started forward; the wisdom of her act became at once apparent.

Her horse had gained renewed vigor and her pursuers were almost out of sight.

Now, with all the cool thought and courage that would have done credit to a warrior, she gave her horse its will. She would reach the range of her own people, or the fort where the white soldiers lived; and then, if her pursuers still followed her trail, their scalps should hang at her belt.

Once in a long while she looked back, and she became aware that her pursuers yet followed, though they, too, must have halted at the lake to refresh their animals.

But she still dashed forward, now urging her horse to do its best on a level stretch, then letting it breathe as it came to an ascent, confident that by management she could keep going until night, with its friendly shadows, would help her elude those who so persistently followed.

At last Dove Eye felt that her horse was weakening. When he reached an ascent, and she allowed him to slacken his speed for rest, she could feel his limbs trembling even while he walked.

And yet her pursuers, six still in number, were in sight and closer than they had been from the start.

She lashed her horse now to its last efforts; far ahead she saw trees, and if she could gain the forest she might elude those who were in chase.

Her pursuers, near enough to see her almost frantic exertions, now seemed as determined to prevent her success.

Their shrill yells reached her ears, and though she knew no fear of death, her heart was maddened at the thought of failure.

Her noble horse seemed to feel all that she felt. It leaped madly on, even though every leap seemed but a staggering bound which would be its last.

On—only a mile more and she would be under cover of the wild-wood. Her horse, though black as jet in its native hue, was now white with foaming sweat.

A few hundred yards more, and the girl would reach the forest shades.

While in reach of the deadly rifle shot, the brave horse made one fearful leap and fell—a ball had reached its vitals.

Yell after yell of triumph broke from the pursuers' fiendish lips.

The heroic girl was on her feet as her horse fell headlong, and, with her father's rifle in her hand, she turned to face her foes.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SCOUTS SEPARATE.

When Buffalo Bill and Dave Estes reached the hills which overlooked Wind River Valley, leaving no trail for some miles, because they rode up in the bed of a small stream, they had a fair chance to inspect the country below.

Through a powerful field-glass Buffalo Bill could distinctly make out the encampment of Yellow Bear, and see that he intended to remain there at least over night, for his hunters were seen killing and dressing game in the vicinity of the camp.

"I do believe the old cuss thinks his braves will find us and take us or our scalps," said Dave. "He wouldn't wait if it wasn't for that, when he must know the Sioux will rally to rescue their chief."

"He is waiting as much for Dove Eye as for us," said the older scout. "He has been smitten by her beauty, and it is hard for him to lose her. I hope she has got off safely. I shall not feel easy till I know she has. If she is captured, farewell to any hope for Spotted Tail. Yellow Bear would burn him before the Sioux could strike a blow to save him."

"How are we to find out whether she has got through all right or not?"

"We will know, if we see the troops coming, quick enough. But I doubt whether she knows the country. If she has been chased out of the line of peaks which mark Fort Thompson, she'll never find Custer. I feel very uneasy about it."

"So do I," said Dave.

"Uneasy enough to go and look for her trail and to follow it up?" asked Bill, in a careless tone, but with an earnest look in his eyes.

"And leave you here alone in the hills?"

"I'm better able to take care of myself alone than she is," said Buffalo Bill.

"That's true as preachin'. But how can I find her trail?"

"Easy, if she crossed the river at the Great Bend and steered due east for Brown's Peak, as I told her to. There is a good mark to find it by. Her horse, I noticed when I rescued her from Yellow Bear, was shod before—it had been shod behind, but the shoes were off."

"An Indian horse shod?"

"The Indian horse, I reckon, had been stolen from some emigrant train, for I saw a white man's brand on the haunch."

"That accounts for the shoes, then. But what will you do if I go and try to take her trail?"

"Wait hereabouts, and watch them down there. If they move—I'll move, and if I see a rocket at night, or three quick black smokes in the day, I'll know where you are and answer you."

"Bill, I've half a mind to go when night sets in."

"Go—Dave—go, and I'll feel the easier for it."

"You'll not run any extra risk and lose your hair?"

"Dave, how often must I tell you that I've done running any risks I can help!"

"Done running risks! That's rich!—when you faced a hundred deaths to get me clear this morning!"

"Well, Dave, my boy, I couldn't help it, for I know you would have done that for me."

"Yes, I would, Bill!" said Dave, earnestly. "I never could go back, and face your wife, if I had left your bones on the plains!"

"I hope you'll have no occasion to, Dave. But, come, while your horse is filling up on bunch grass, we may as well have some of that antelope over the fire. You'll need all your strength to-night and to-morrow. You must get far out of sight of any of the red scouts before day."

"That's so, if it is decided that I go."

"Of course it is."

Dave said no more, but at once went to slicing up some antelope steaks, while Buffalo Bill made a fire in a little hollow, out of small dry sticks, which blazed up strong and hot, without emitting any smoke.

In a little while the scouts had a good, hearty meal ready, and they enjoyed it.

Meantime, the horses luxuriated on the tender grass which skirted the stream.

After eating, the two men looked very carefully to their arms, inspected the amount of ammunition on hand, and planned signal marks, which Buffalo Bill would leave, if the Indians changed base and he had to follow them.

The moment night set in, Dave Estes mounted his horse, and, shaking Buffalo Bill's hand warmly, rode away, taking his course by the evening star.

Buffalo Bill was now alone. For a time he stood with folded arms, listening to the sound made by the horse of Dave Estes as the latter rode down by the brook; then, when that sound died away, he looked down at the twinkling lights made by the Indian camp-fires.

"I've a good mind to give them an almighty scare between now and daylight!" he muttered to himself.

Then, on second thought, he added:

"It is better not. It might make Yellow Bear hurry up to get rid of Spotted Tail and that youngster Boyd."

Powder Face now left the grass and came up where Bill was standing.

"How is it, old nag? All safe around here?" asked the scout, as if the horse could really understand the question.

The animal lay down close to where he stood.

"Tired and sleepy, and all is safe!" said his master, patting the faithful horse, and then he unrolled the blanket from the rear of the saddle, and, wrapping himself in it, he lay down with his head upon the side of the horse, knowing that, being as sensitive to sound as the best watch-dog, the animal would start at the slightest alarm, and arouse him should his slumber be heavy.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TIGER OF THE COMANCHES.

Never more fiercely did a tigress turn at bay than did Dove Eye, when, her faithful horse shot down, she found her hope of escape cut off.

With the loaded rifle in her hand, she stood a second while six Black Foot fiends came yelling on; then she shot the foremost dead, with a ball sent fairly through his heart.

The girl had no time to reload the rifle, for the other five came charging on; but the horse of the warrior whom she had killed, now lightened of his weight, gained on the others, and, as it neared her, she caught the loose and flying rein, and in an instant more had bounded to its back.

But the animal swerved as it approached her faithful steed, and a ball from one of the pursuing braves struck it in the side, and a second time the noble girl was unhorsed.

Clubbing the empty rifle, she turned to battle to the last without a thought of surrender, and the Black Feet were close upon her, when out from among the forest trees came the pealing yells of other Indians; and while the Black Feet drew in their horses close in front of her, a cloud of arrows hurled through the air on either side, and the astonished girl saw the Black Feet melt down in the agonies of death.

She knew at a glance that those were not Sioux warriors who rode out to scalp her enemies, whom they had just slain.

The bright serapes, the long bows and longer lances, told her that they were either Comanches from the far south on one of their far-extended forays, or else the savage Apaches.

A score of painted, yelling fiends dashed forward and tore the scalps from the heads of the slain, while as many more surrounded her, asking questions in a tongue she could not understand.

She faced them all fearlessly, for her heart was strong to its bravest tension; and when one, a large and hideous wretch, laid his hand upon her shoulder, she hurled him back with an indignant action which brought cries of applause from the rest, while it so angered him that he drew a knife from its belt and raised it to strike.

At the same instant a young warrior, with a plume on his head, caught the arm of the savage, and, wrenching his knife from him, threw it far out on the plain.

"Do you speak in the tongue of the palefaces of the North?" asked the young chief.

"I do," she answered.

"Who are you, and of what tribe?" he asked.

"I am Dove Eye, the daughter of Spotted Tail, the chief of the Big Horn Sioux."

"The Red Rose of the tribe. Klamat, the Tiger of the Comanches, has heard of you."

"Are you Klamat?" she asked.

"That is my name," he answered, drawing up his tall form proudly.

"Then you are a great brave. You will not make war on a woman?"

"No. Dove Eye is very beautiful—more beautiful than any maiden in the land of the Comanches. Klamat will make her his wife."

"No. It cannot be. Dove Eye has given her heart to another."

"Dove Eye will change her mind," said the Comanche, calmly. "He will not ask her to hurry. He will give her time to think."

"Dove Eye has something else to think of. Her father is a prisoner in the hands of the cruel Black Feet. Dove Eye escaped from them this morning, and was on her way to get help to rescue him."

"Yes, Klamat saw the deed of Dove Eye. And he said, 'Now have mine eyes looked upon a woman fit to be the wife of a great chief.'"

"Dove Eye cares not for life, if her father perishes."

"Where are they now?"

"In the great gap of the big mountain."

"Klamat will go there, and he will take Spotted Tail out of the hands of his enemies. Then he will bring her father to Dove Eye, and he will say I have done a good deed for you—then Dove Eye will be my wife."

Dove Eye made no answer.

Klamat interpreted her silence in his favor, and he said:

"An hour's ride from here, in the timber, we have a camp made strong as the palefaces make theirs. To that camp Dove Eye will be taken. Klamat will take all his warriors and find the Black Feet, and bring Spotted Tail away from them."

She could not ask for any further favor. She asked that she might ride back with him, for she thought if she could do no more, she might rejoin Buffalo Bill.

Klamat said:

"No. The Comanches will ride fast. Dove Eye is already tired. She looks like a flower that wilts and is ready to perish. She must go to the camp of Klamat."

She bowed her head, and when a horse was brought for her to ride, she mounted it. Handing Klamat the rifle of her father, she said:

"If the Comanche chief sees Spotted Tail, tell him there is his rifle. Dove Eye killed one enemy while she carried it."

CHAPTER XIV.

"HALT! WHO COMES THERE?"

It was a strange night. There were no storm-omens, yet every little while a mass of black, broken clouds would pitch up from the west and come rolling far up in the sky, as if driven by a gale; though down where Buffalo Bill lay there was no wind, and far down in the valley he could see that the fires burned steady.

Buffalo Bill, tired as he was, lay a long time thinking about Dave and Dove Eye, but at last he fell asleep.

He was wakened by the uneasy action of Powder Face.

The animal indicated that it had heard suspicious sounds, and Buffalo Bill felt confident that the danger, whatever it was, was very near. The animal did not make the slightest motion, but lay still.

Then Buffalo Bill heard sounds—very light, but distinct. It was plainly the sound of one or more persons coming up the hill among the tangled patches of sagebrush.

Neither horse nor man moved, for Buffalo Bill thought that the Indians were thus scouting the hills on foot to find him.

Nearer and nearer the scout heard them come.

He cocked his rifle, for he believed he would have to use it.

"Hark!" said some one in good English. "That was a strange noise!"

"A stick broke!" said another voice, low and soft—plainly the voice of a woman.

"It cannot be Dave, with Dove Eye—surely!" said the scout, mentally.

Whoever it was, they remained silent, evidently listening for a minute or more.

Then they moved on, and in another minute would be fairly upon him, when the scout, in a low, stern tone, cried out:

"Halt! who comes there?"

"Friend to any one not leagued with the savages."

"Ah, is it you, Captain Boyd? Advance," said Buffalo Bill, in his natural voice. "Who is with you?"

"An angel, I believe; one who has been a saving angel to me, for she cut the thong that bound me about two hours ago, and led me out from among those who meant to roast me alive. She is white and beautiful, though Yellow Bear claims her as his daughter."

"I have heard of a beautiful white girl among the Black Feet, known as the Sunflower," said Buffalo Bill. "She is supposed to have been stolen from the settlement when young, and raised by them."

"I am Cindah, the Sunflower," said the soft voice of the young girl, who now approached the spot where Buffalo Bill stood—he and Powder Face having both risen.

"Well, I am glad you are out of bad hands and in such good company, Captain Boyd," said the scout. "But there'll be a fuss down there when they know you have got away."

"Hark! They know it now," said Cindah, anxiously. "We must not stop. Yellow Bear will hunt us as the gray wolf hunts the wounded deer."

Fierce yells could be heard far down the valley.

"When daylight comes they'll follow you easily. We have a few hours to get a start, and we must play cunning. Both of you walk up the brook, then enter the stream and come down a little way in the water, then out on the other side and down to where I am."

Captain Boyd and Cindah obeyed without hesitation, and when they were once more by the side of Buffalo Bill they had gone nearly a quarter of a mile in distance.

"Now follow me; don't step out of the water after you enter it," said the scout.

And leading Powder Face, he started toward the plains. Going ahead of the horse, and followed by Boyd and Cindah, the scout went directly up the brook in the swift current.

Whenever they paused they could hear the noise of the excited Black Feet on the search far below.

As they ascended the stream the gorge through which it came narrowed, and the banks rose high on either side, and it became very difficult to proceed.

At last the glimmer of coming day began to show. A waterfall, which Powder Face could not pass, tumbled down from a lofty ledge.

"It seems to me as if we were in a trap," said Captain Boyd.

"We are, if our trail is discovered," said Bill. "But we are in a splendid place for defense. We must wait, and see how things look by daylight."

"We will not have to wait long," said Boyd.

In a short time sufficient light came to the scout to see

on his right a great chasm in the cliff where the water at some high flood had swept out huge portions of rock.

"We've a good resting-place in there," said Buffalo Bill. "A better hiding-place could not be chosen."

He at once led Powder Face into this great hall, and, tearing some grass from the roots in the water's edge, he threw it down for the animal to eat.

He now had time to take a fair look at Cindah, the Sunflower.

"Girl, you are beautiful!" he exclaimed, in astonishment, as his eyes wandered over her lovely face and form.

"Oh, if the Dream Spirit will but think so!" she murmured, looking at Captain Boyd.

"What does she mean by the Dream Spirit?" asked Buffalo Bill.

"That appears to be the name she has given me!" said Boyd.

"You are he who came to me in my dream; he to whom I have given my heart," cried Cindah. "You are he whom I have led away from death, that you may be mine," and the lovely creature threw her arm about the captain's neck.

He seemed as much embarrassed as a schoolboy getting hugged before all the school, but she did not notice it.

"A pretty clear case of love at first sight," murmured Buffalo Bill, "and, as it stands, rather useful, since it has gotten its object out of rather a tight place."

"If you and the Sunflower will remain here quiet and look out for Powder Face," he added, "I will go up above and reconnoitre."

"I will leave both my needle-gun and rifle!" said the scout. "They will only be in my way in climbing."

"I will take care of the weapons, and use them if necessary," said Boyd.

CHAPTER XV.

THE COMANCHES' CAPTIVE.

When Dave Estes left Buffalo Bill he kept down the stream until he reached the plain. Then, knowing that this was the line the scout had told Dove Eye to follow, Dave rode for the peak at a fair speed.

When day dawned Dave had left the timber on Wind River out of sight.

He rode on, but for a long time found no tracks. But at last he found some quite fresh. The horses were unshod, and they were in column, heading to the west.

"She must have met some of her tribe and returned," he said, as he examined the track carefully.

Dave went on a half-mile, and found a place where the column had halted, and, in a sandy spot, he found other tracks. These were of the horses going east, and one track was plainly that of a horse shod as Buffalo Bill had told him the horse Dove Eye rode was shod.

"I'll never leave this track till I find the girl or horse!" said Dave.

Nearer and nearer he came to the timber ahead. The day was well advanced when Dave saw several dark objects ahead of him.

He halted, took out his glass, and soon made out that men and horses, apparently dead, were scattered here and there.

"Indians, if alive, wouldn't lie about loose like that," he muttered. "There has been a fight!"

He spurred his horse to full speed, and in five minutes he was on the late battle-ground. He recognized the slain and scalped Indians to be Black Feet. He saw at once, by the peculiar arrows with which they had been killed, that it was the work of Comanches.

But when he came to the two dead horses, killed by rifle balls, and one of these the shod horse of Dove Eye, he was puzzled again.

The Black Feet had nearly overtaken Dove Eye, he reasoned, and she had shot one with her father's rifle, for Bill had told him she carried it. They in turn had shot her horse, and then the Comanches had charged from the woods and killed them.

He found where a large body, probably fifty or sixty mounted warriors, had ridden off to the west, crossing the trail of Dove Eye and her pursuers, and heading for Wind River Gap.

Looking farther, he found a return trail, with only a few horses, leading into the forest.

Taking this, he soon came to proof that Dove Eye was with this party.

He did not like to leave his horse, but when he came to a stream, he concluded he could reconnoitre best on foot, so he led the horse to a thicket out of sight of the main trail and left him.

"I smell smoke!" he muttered. "There is a camp-fire close at hand."

CHAPTER XVI.

RING-DOVE NOTES.

The moment that he smelled the smoke Dave Estes left the trail that he followed. Springing lightly over a low clump of bushes, he crouched down and listened.

Soon he heard a trampling of hoofs, which satisfied him that he was near a corral.

With form bent down, he crept cautiously on. He had not gone a hundred yards before he found feeding, without any visible guard, about thirty fine ponies—better stock than he had ever seen used by the Northern Indians.

While he gazed at them, and thought how easily he could stampede the herd, something like the sound of an ax came to his ears.

As the grassy spot was surrounded by dense timber, he could not see beyond it, but he concluded to creep around to the left without disturbing the animals, and see what he could discover.

It took him some time to get around, for the timber was dense and full of underbrush.

Once around, he passed through the thicket, until he became convinced by the sounds that he was close upon an encampment.

Concealing his rifle carefully, he ascended a tree.

He had only ascended about half way when he looked down directly into a small stockade, capable of holding about a hundred men.

It was built white man fashion, with posts set close together in the ground, and a narrow gateway through which but one could enter at a time. A few loopholes commanded the trail which led to it.

Some Indian warriors, of whom there were fifteen or twenty inside the stockade, were building a little shelter,

in the corner, evidently for the use of one on whom Dave's eyes rested with eager anxiety.

That one was Dove Eye, who, seated on a pile of buffalo robes, seemed to take her position quite coolly.

"She hasn't been abused—that is one comfort," said Dave, as he looked at her. "But she mustn't stay there to risk it."

He now looked at all the surroundings, and began to plan out future work.

He had no doubt that when it was finished she would be isolated in the shed from the Indians.

Dave looked at the pickets in that corner. They were as thick as his thigh, and it would be impossible to cut through them.

But where the soil was thrown up the young scout could see that it was of a loose, sandy nature. He might at night dig under it with his knife and hands, and thus approach her, if she could only be made aware of his presence.

He was screened among the leaves, and with a thick background, so he felt quite secure there perched up in the branches, within actual pistol-shot of the Comanches and their captive. He was so near that the scent of some buffalo meat roasting before the fire affected him most unpleasantly, for Dave was hungry. But to attract her notice must be his first thought.

Dave now tried the coo of the ring-dove.

Dove Eye started at the sound, listened attentively, and then looked up into the trees. The bird was her favorite.

Dave watched the Indians closely, and he saw that none of them looked up from their work; he repeated it, and gently shook a branch which extended toward the stockade.

Dove Eye saw the branch move, and her eyes became at once riveted on the tree.

Now Dave crept farther along, until he was sure she could see his face and form, and he took the red bandana, which he had worn loose about his neck, and held it up.

Her form was motionless, but the fixed eyes of the girl told him that he was seen, was recognized.

Quickly he bent his head down on the palm of his hand, then put his hand over his eyes, signifying as well as he could that when it was time to sleep he would help her.

She answered by bending her head forward into the palms of her hands as if asleep.

Dave nodded, and then he drew back, to watch and wait.

He now looked around him at every point, so as to familiarize himself with every bit of ground over which he must pass in approaching the stockade, and in getting away from it, if he succeeded in releasing Dove Eye.

The Indians had now roofed over the little cabin.

The head brave examined the work, and approached Dove Eye, and by signs gave her to understand that she was to lodge there, thus proving to Dave that she did not understand their language.

Dove Eye pointed to the meat, roasting by the fire, and to her mouth, then reclined her head upon her hand and closed her eyes.

She would eat her supper and then go into the lodge to sleep.

The Comanches assented, and one of them cut sev-

eral slices of the roast meat from the piece before the fire, and gave it to her.

Dove Eye reached out her hand for his knife to use in cutting it, and the brave handed it to her without hesitation.

Dave watched her as she ate slowly; he saw that she did not give the brave his knife again.

"Sharp—sharp as a new jack-knife in everything!" muttered Dave, full of admiration.

Night was not far off, and Dave got cautiously down from the tree.

He could hear the Indians as some went out to look after the ponies, go and return.

He crept closer to the corner where Dove Eye lay in her cabin, and gave out the quick, sharp chirp of the cricket.

It was answered in a moment. His heart beat fast. He was now within an arm's length of the Indian maiden, and only the pickets kept them apart.

With excessive caution, he began to dig a tunnel under the pickets.

When he paused to listen, he became satisfied that Dove Eye was doing the same thing from the inside.

Dave saw, to his great uneasiness, that a guard was set, and that several times he approached the little lodge where Dove Eye lay, to listen.

Dove Eye seemed to be fully aware of this, for at such times she snored like a low-pressure steamboat, much to the amusement of the scout, though he feared her absence would be the more quickly discovered from this.

He worked away manfully, and had got a cavity under the posts dug, and he expected soon to have it large enough, when a new peril approached.

CHAPTER XVII.

CINDAH ACTS AS COOK.

Buffalo Bill, having left a good supply of grass before Powder Face, cautioned Boyd to remain quiet in the hiding-place. There was no need to caution Cindah, for she was in her infatuation to remain where her "Dream Spirit" was.

The scout hurried forward to a point from which he could look down into the valley.

He saw, as far as his eye could reach, scattered parties of Indians, apparently in search of their fugitives.

What seemed singular to him was that there seemed to be a great accession in the numbers of the Indians, as if all the Black Feet in the nation, were coming to answer the signals of Yellow Bear.

But suddenly this was accounted for. He saw the scattered parties in the east riding westward with great rapidity—he saw, by wreaths of smoke here and there in the distance, that they were not all Black Feet that were in sight—that the Sioux, most likely, had come to answer the signal smokes of Spotted Tail.

"It is dog eat dog—let them fight it out!" he said.

With his glass he swept far and near, hoping to recognize Dave Estes.

Feeling as if he could relish a square meal, the scout made up his mind to have it, so he returned toward the hiding-place where his horse and Boyd kept company with the Sunflower.

Near the edge of the cliff Buffalo Bill gathered a bundle of dry sticks with which to make a fire.

"All comfortable here?" asked the scout, as he entered the cave, threw down his bundle of wood, and unfastened some meat from the strap which held it to his saddle.

"Yes, thank you. Have you any news from our anxious friends in the valley?" replied Boyd.

"Nothing that can serve us just now. They seem pretty busy there at present. I will take another look at them by and by. At present I propose to have some breakfast."

"Cindah knows how to cook, she will prepare the meat," said the girl.

"Thank you, my good girl," said the scout, kindly. "If you would rather do it than not, you may."

Cindah took the forked sticks which the hunter had provided, and soon had the meat in position, and then, while Buffalo Bill was relating to Boyd his belief that the Sioux had come in contact with the Black Feet below, she stood and listened.

She stood listening, when the sound of a stone dropping from the ledge at the mouth of the cave drew her quick eye in that direction. At the same instant, hearing the sound, Buffalo Bill darted a glance where she did.

His hand flew to his pistol belt, for there stood an armed Indian warrior, almost within a spear's length.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ESCAPE.

When it was discovered that the prisoner, the young paleface, had escaped, though he had lain bound hand and foot close to the shelter of branches made for Yellow Bear and his family, there was a tremendous excitement in the camp of the Black Feet.

The alarm was given loudly, and parties of braves were sent in every direction.

The discovery was made by the sentinel, who had been directed to patrol the camp.

Yellow Bear, excited to frenzy by the escape of one whom he intended to torture, drove his hatchet into the brain of the luckless sentinel without waiting to ask how the escape occurred.

A moment later, the voice of a young brave was heard, shouting:

"Cindah, the Sunflower, slept near Wanda, the Queen! She is not there now! Where has she gone?"

It was Red Plume who spoke.

Then he remembered that the fair girl had said the paleface should not die—that he was the bright spirit of her dreams, and in an instant he comprehended how the bonds of the pale face had been severed.

"Cindah, the Sunflower?"

Warriors shouted her name on every side, but there was no answer.

"She has gone with the paleface," said Wanda, bitterly.

"She has turned on the hand that fed her. Like all of the bad blood, she has been a she-wolf to steal away from those who raised her! When they are taken, let her burn by his side!"

Yellow Bear did not speak. He bowed his head in grief.

For he loved the girl as if she were his own child. He had ever called her so.

"Let not a brave rest till she is found!" he said. "But let not a hair of her head be harmed. Yellow Bear has spoken."

"Yellow Bear is growing old," said Wanda, bitterly. "Old and foolish. He lets his heart speak before his head takes thought. He is a child."

He stood and gazed at Spotted Tail, who sat upon the ground and looked at him.

"The Sioux saw the young paleface go off," said Yellow Bear.

Spotted Tail nodded assent.

"Did he go alone?" asked Yellow Bear.

Spotted Tail made no answer, and the Black Feet chief again asked the question.

"How, or when he went," said Spotted Tail, firmly, "I have no tales to tell. Yellow Bear must look to his guards, and not to Spotted Tail."

Yellow Bear for an instant placed his hand on his hatchet, and he felt like ending the days of the chief then and there. If he did so, he would not have the joy of seeing him tortured.

So he turned away and asked for Red Plume.

No one could tell where he was. He had gone with the rest to look for Cindah and the fugitive paleface.

Wanda, in her bitterness, said:

"All this has come, because Yellow Bear was not content with his own squaws, but must listen to dreams, like a fool!"

"Woman! Yellow Bear will not let even you call him a fool!" said the chief, angrily. "You will eat your words or lose your tongue!"

"May not a woman speak the truth!" asked the squaw.

"Wanda has spoken a lie! The Great Spirit comes and whispers in dreams, and he is not a fool who opens his ear to them. Yellow Bear does not want to quarrel with Wanda. He does not wish to forget she is his wife."

"He did, or he would not be here," said Wanda, bound, woman-like, to have the last word.

Yellow Bear made no reply, but turned away to see in person to the security of Young Beaver and the other captives. Having found them safe he came back to his own campfire, folded his blanket about his form, and sat down. Thus he remained until day dawned, when he sent all his braves and warriors, except a guard, to seek far and near for the fugitives.

CHAPTER XIX.

DISCOVERED.

Dave heard the sounds of something approaching stealthily in the bushes. He was startled, brave as he was, for at first he thought surely it was the tread of men walking lightly and carefully.

Could it be other Indians coming to surprise these? Or had he been overheard or discovered, and were the Comanches creeping up in his rear to surprise him?

He rose from the work so near completed, and, knife in hand, stood on guard. He heard the steps coming

nearer, and he knew there was more than one making them now.

He glanced through the pickets, and saw that the Comanche sentinel had heard the noise, for he, too, stood in a listening attitude.

Nearer and nearer, and Dave knew that it was made by animals.

"The smell of that meat has drawn 'em," he murmured.

A growl, low and snappish, told him that the large gray wolf of the prairie was his visitor. Answering growls also told him that a pack of them was at hand. He had no fear that they would attack him unless they were hungry.

He dared not make any noise to drive them away, for that would at once discover his presence to those inside the stockade. Neither did he dare to bend down and continue his work.

One of the animals having come within reach of his arm, received a severe prod from his knife, one so deep that the blood gushed out in a torrent.

True to their wolf nature, the other wolves instantly sprang on the wounded animal, and, amid horrible growls and snarls, tore it to pieces, and went to devouring it.

The noise woke every Indian, and as Dave peered through the chinks in the posts, he saw them stand and consult. They evidently feared a stampede among their horses, and were about to come out to attack the wolves.

To rush back through the pack of wolves, and get speedily into the thickest of the brush, was the work of a few seconds only, and not a second too soon; for the Indians, with burning firebrands in their hands, rushed out of the stockade, and while some sent a shower of arrows after the wolves, others threw the firebrands at them. Had Dave remained near the stockade, he would have been discovered.

The wolves fled in terror from the spot, and the Indians, seeing that their ponies were not disturbed, returned.

When all was still, Dave crept back. The warriors were crouched about the fire, talking in low tones. One of them went to the little lodge where Dove Eye lay and looked in.

The young girl was there, and she had so covered the signs of her work with her robes that the warrior saw nothing to excite his suspicions.

Dave began to work, for time had been lost during this interruption.

Ten minutes later he touched her hand with his. Then for the first time he ventured a whisper:

"Keep still, while I dig, lest I hurt you with my knife."

She did not answer, but she ceased work.

It was well she did. The Comanches seemed uneasy. Again the head brave came and looked at her. She was wrapped up in her robes in time, and he went back to his comrades satisfied that all was right.

Dave now worked like a beaver, and in a little while had a hole so large that he could raise his head inside the lodge. He was small, but he knew that she was not so large, as he.

"Come," he whispered, "come."

He drew back to the outside of the tunnel, and in a second after she was by his side. She had the knife of the Comanche brave in her hand.

And what pleased Dave just then, even more, she had a large piece of meat in the other hand, which she gave him.

He had fasted since the night before, and was faint with hunger. But he had no time or inclination to eat until at a greater distance from those Comanche braves.

He whispered: "Follow in my trail, and be still as death."

When they were at the edge of the little prairie, Dave halted to consult with her and to decide whether it was best to stampede their horses, or to try and get away without noise, and on his horse get such a long start that they might not be overtaken.

Half of the night was yet before them. A few whispered words and the latter plan was decided upon.

So Dave, followed by Dove Eye, crept out to where he had left his own horse.

Dave led him out to the trail, mounted, and bade Dove Eye take her seat behind him.

Then he took the route for the open plains, whence he would shape a course for the fort to which Buffalo Bill had first directed her.

When he felt free, he gave him the rein, and spoke out: "Dove Eye has had hard luck!"

"Yes," said the girl. "Did Long Rifle send you to help me?"

"He let me come. It was my own heart that sent me!"

"The Little Brave has a good heart. Dove Eye was a prisoner to Klamat, the Comanche!"

"What, Klamat, the Tiger? Was he in the stockade?"

"No—he left me there a prisoner, while he went to find my father. He said he would take him away from Yellow Bear, and then come back to make me his wife. But I would put this knife in my heart first. I love Long Rifle—I will be his wife."

"Buffalo Bill, or Long Rifle, as you call him, has a wife already."

"What of that? He is a great hunter, and can feed more wives than I have fingers on both my hands."

"We palefaces have a law, and one wife is all that law will let us have."

"That is a fool law. Suppose there are a heap more women than there are men: Must all but one go without a husband?"

Dave was puzzled, but he bravely answered:

"Yes, of course."

"Dove Eye is not a paleface. She loves Long Rifle, and if he has one wife, or a dozen, she does not care."

Dave was not good at argument. No man is, that is in love. And Dave was in love with Dove Eye.

They had paused to listen many times before day, but had heard no sound of pursuit so far; but now when day broke, they knew, of course, that the absence of Dove Eye had been discovered.

"We have every bit of twenty miles' start, and that is a big thing!" said Dave, when Dove Eye suggested that the Comanches would follow their trail.

"Two on one horse will tire him out. Dove Eye had better walk!" said the girl.

"Nary time. If there is walking to do, I'll go afoot!" said Dave. "My Black Hawk can carry 'us both and make eighty miles a day."

As they were now where a barren rocky ridge stretched out nearly in the course which they should follow, Dave decided to leave the stream.

They rode on a little way to a bit of timber, and now Dave thought it safe to rest for a short time, and to eat some of the meat which Dove Eye had been so thoughtful to save.

The two dismounted from the tired horse, which at once went to feeding.

The roasted buffalo meat, chosen from the tenderest part of the animal, was both tender and juicy, and Dave, as well as Dove Eye, speedily began to lessen the bulk.

While they were thus engaged, Dave noticed that his horse stopped feeding and turned his head with ears pointed toward the route over which they had come.

In a second the scout was on his feet. The next moment he was in the saddle, calling Dove Eye to mount behind him, for he saw not a half a mile off the lances of a band of warriors on his trail.

"Save yourself, Little Brave—the horse will not carry both!" she cried.

"It will carry both or none!" cried Dave, earnestly. "Mount with me, or I dismount, and fight it out here!"

"Little Brave has a good heart, but he is a big fool to risk his life for a squaw!" said Dove Eye.

"I don't think so," said Dave, as Dove Eye sprang up behind him.

The next second he sped away over the ridge, as fast as his horse could carry the double burden.

On rode the heroic scout, looking now only for some good place where he could halt, take cover, and fight for life.

Ahead there was a patch of trees, and if he could gain it before his pursuers came up, Dave thought that he could hold them in check while Dove Eye could escape.

On he sped, spurring his horse as he never had spurred him before.

But weight began to tell, and while the shelter ahead was yet a mile off at least, he felt that the noble horse was beginning to lose ground.

He did not speak, but he took one of the two revolvers from his belt and placed it in the hand of Dove Eye.

"If it comes to the worst," he said, in a low tone, "die with that in your hand, and don't have a load left while there is a Comanche before you. I'm good for a dozen if they don't hit me too hard."

Dove Eye took the weapon and looked back. The Comanches were strung along for half a mile in a line, and only seven or eight were very near.

One was within almost a spear's length, and he had an arrow drawn up in his bow.

CHAPTER XX.

NATOLAH, THE WOMAN WITH A TONGUE.

Dove Eye knew that life for one or both depended on her. Quick as thought she raised the pistol and fired directly at the face of the Comanche, and he apparently

at the same instant drew his arrow to the head and let it go.

The bullet must have been a second the quickest in its fatal mission, for the arrow flew just above the head of the scout, while the ball from Dove Eye's pistol pierced the brain of the Comanche, and he fell forward on his horse, but with a strange tenacity, still clung to his horse with his legs and arms.

The animal sprang forward with terror as he felt the death pressure, and in an instant was alongside of Black Hawk, and Dave raised his pistol to dispatch the closing enemy, as he thought him to be.

"The Comanche is dead?" said Dove Eye.

As she did so, Dave caught the rein of the other horse as it flew loose near his hand, jerked the animal in close to his, and pushed the Indian from his seat.

This took scarce a second, and with a bound he sat astride the other horse, calling to Dove Eye to take his saddle on the Black Hawk.

He turned while he was speaking, clearing his Spencer rifle from its sling, and, without checking the horse, he sent the next Comanche in the line to the Happy Hunting Grounds.

"Good for the Little Brave!" cried Dove Eye. "We can fight them all."

"But not what are ahead of us," cried Dave, gloomily, and he called to her to hold up. "The woods ahead are full of reds," he added. "We're cut off, and our time has come."

Dove Eye looked in the direction in which he pointed, and she saw fully a hundred painted warriors within a hundred yards, mounted and ready to charge.

One glance, and Dove Eye cried:

"They are my people! They are Sioux!"

And, waving a scarf, which she tore from her waist, she shouted out a shrill cry, which in an instant changed the hostile attitude of the Indians, and as they rode forth with weapons lowered, she pointed to the Comanches, who had halted.

Instantly a band of Sioux warriors darted away after the Comanches, who now turned to fly, and while they dashed on Dove Eye, bidding the Little Brave ride close to her and fear not, rode on to meet the others.

Among them sat an elderly Indian woman on a fine horse, with handsome trappings.

"My mother," said Dove Eye, and she rode up to the woman, taking her hand.

"Who is this paleface, and whence come you?" asked the wife of Spotted Tail, for such she was.

"He is the Little Brave. I was a prisoner in the hands of the Comanches. He got me away. You may thank him that I am here," replied Dove Eye.

"Where is Spotted Tail?"

"In the hands of the Black Feet. I was on my way to the great fort of the palefaces to get soldiers to help Long Rifle to take him away. Long Rifle has stayed to watch him and save him."

"Are there not enough Sioux to fight the Black Feet and to save their chief?" asked the wife of Spotted Tail. "Must we ask the palefaces to help us? Signals were seen two suns ago in the west, and I sent all the warriors who were in from the hunt to answer them. Then I went to find more, and they are here."

"Long Rifle knows better than we do, and he bade me go to the fort of the palefaces. The Black Feet are many, and they fight strong," said Dove Eye. "Let my mother go on with the braves if she will—Dove Eye will do as she promised Long Rifle she would—she will go for the paleface soldiers."

"Where is Long Rifle?"

"He is watching to save Spotted Tail, my father. He sent the Little Brave to save and help me."

The wife of Spotted Tail called two of the sub-chiefs to her side and held a consultation.

"Ah, look there!" cried Dave Estes, who had been intently watching to see the Sioux and the Comanches meet in battle. "Those who followed us have been joined by more, and now with your own people they ride this way. What does it mean?"

"I do not know. It is strange," said Dove Eye.

Then, as a warrior rode ahead of the rest, coming rapidly on, she cried:

"It is my father—he is free! But where is Long Rifle?"

CHAPTER XXI.

CAPTAIN BOYD MAKES A FRIEND OF RED PLUME.

When Buffalo Bill saw the dark face of the warrior in the mouth of the cave, he believed him to be only the leader of a band, for he had no thought one would dare to face two armed men, and he raised his pistol to end his career.

But, with the speed of thought, Cindah caught his arm.

"Do not fire!" she cried. "It is Red Plume, my friend and brother?"

"Let him shoot! Red Plume does not want to live any longer!" said the young Indian, coming forward and throwing bow and spear on the ground. "He has followed Cindah, the Sunflower, to see her with the people she has chosen as her friends—the people of her own color—to ask her if she is here of her own free choice?"

"Cindah is here because she wanted to come. She could not see the brave Dream Spirit die at the torture-post to which Yellow Bear had sworn to bind him."

Cindah pointed to Boyd as she spoke. Red Plume looked also at the young paleface, and turning to Cindah, asked, in a low, earnest tone:

"Has the Sunflower given her heart to this paleface, whom she calls the Dream Spirit?"

"Yes, I love him," said Cindah.

"Then it is time for Red Plume to die!" said the young warrior, and he drew his knife from its scabbard.

"The Red Plume loves the Sunflower and must lose her. He, too, learned to make speaking papers, for the white captive told him how.

"The Red Plume has made the talking papers tell his love for Cindah, for it was not her Dream Spirit. She does not love the Red Plume, and he will die."

He raised his knife with the evident intention to plunge it in his breast.

Boyd caught his arm and snatched away the weapon.

"The mind of Red Plume will be easy when he sleeps his last sleep," said the Indian, sullenly.

But Boyd drew him aside and whispered some words in the ear of the Indian which seemed to have a strange effect upon him.

He drew back, looked earnestly in the face of the young captain, then he took both of the captain's hands in his, and said:

"Paleface brother, we will be good friends. Red Plume will no longer grieve because the Sunflower loves you."

Buffalo Bill and Cindah were astonished at this sudden change, and the scout rather doubted its honesty; but it was better than he expected.

"Will Red Plume now say if he came alone, or are there others of his tribe on our trail?" asked Buffalo Bill.

"Red Plume came alone. No eye but his found the trail of Cindah and the palefaces. He would let none see where he went when he found it, for he lay down and crawled like a snake. Now Red Plume will stay with Cindah and her friends, and help them. He does not want to go back to Yellow Bear. The great chief is mad and he will kill Red Plume if he sees him."

"Is Spotted Tail yet safe?" asked Buffalo Bill.

"He will be watched till the death song is sung."

"It must not be sung for him," said the scout. "I have promised to save him, and I must."

"What is the Indian's life to you?" asked Boyd.

"As a pledged safeguard of my word, everything. I had an object when I made him a promise and extracted one from him. Spotted Tail promised peace for his people with ours, and I promised to see him back in safety to his people."

"How can we get away—let alone helping him?" asked Boyd.

"I don't know yet, but all will come right." I've been in some hard scrapes before, but I got through all safe in the end," said Buffalo Bill, quietly. "When night comes on I shall make a scout down toward the camp. I may see some way to get the old chief out of the clutches of his enemy."

"Red Plume will go and help you," said the Indian.

"What, and leave the Sunflower here with the paleface?" asked Buffalo Bill, rather surprised at this volunteer service.

"Yes. Red Plume knows that the Sunflower is safe. He is no longer a fool. He will not be jealous of the Dream Spirit, his white brother."

Buffalo Bill smiled, for he knew that Boyd had cunningly played upon the Indian's superstition, telling him a secret that he was Cindah's "Dream Spirit." This would make the Indian youth at once give up the girl to one the Great Spirit had sent.

Then Cindah said:

"Red Plume is wise. He shall be my good brother, as he has always been."

"We may as well think of something more necessary than dreams," said Buffalo Bill. "The elk steaks are rather overdone now, and I am hungry."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE LITTLE SCOUT'S BLOW.

When Yellow Bear had sent away nearly all his warriors in search of the fugitives, and Wanda had sunk sulkily down to rest on the couch of robes from which she had risen, the old chief called a medicine man to dress his broken arm.

The medicine man was not skillful, and the wounded chief groaned. Spotted Tail heard his captor groan and saw the color leave the cheek of Yellow Bear. It seemed to give him delight.

"Ugh!" he said. "Yellow Bear groans."

"Dog! Yellow Bear groans because the time goes so slow. He wants to get all his people together, so that they may see what a coward squaw Yellow Bear has found; that they may hear Spotted Tail cry out when the red fire licks up his blood."

"The Black Feet have not been born who will hear Spotted Tail complain. He is now in more pain than Yellow Bear, yet he does not whine like a sick child, as Yellow Bear does."

"Wait—wait! We will see!" said Yellow Bear, who did not wince again.

This done, he was about to return to his temporary lodge, when he saw a band of mounted warriors come sweeping over the plains, in the direction of his camp. He saw at a glance that they were strange warriors, and

he sprang upon his own war steed, which stood saddled close at hand, and dashed away.

The next minute this band, headed by a fine-looking young warrior, drew rein where Spotted Tail and his fellow prisoners were seated.

"Where is Spotted Tail, the father of Dove Eye, the Red Rose of the Prairies?" asked the leader of these strangers.

"I am Spotted Tail," said the Sioux chief, gloomily.

The stranger spoke to his followers, and one led up a horse, and the strange chief said:

"Klamat, the Tiger of the Comanches, told Dove Eye I would set her father free."

Dismounting, he cut the thongs which bound the chief, while two warriors lifted Spotted Tail upon the led horse.

"Away!" cried the Comanche.

And before the astonished chief could ask a question, or even set Young Beaver free, the Comanches swept off.

Spotted Tail saw, as they sped on, what seemed to be bands of his own people engaged in battle with scattered squads of Black Feet; but to his repeated questions the Comanche was deaf.

He would only say:

"Klamat has said to Dove Eye she shall see her father. He will keep his word!"

Spotted Tail knew not whether to rejoice at this freedom or not. The Sioux and the Comanches had not been friends for many years, though their hunting grounds were so far apart that they seldom met. If Klamat held him as a prisoner, he might live longer than he would have lived in the hands of Yellow Bear; but would he be permitted to go back to his tribe?

The party came suddenly in sight of a single Comanche.

This warrior, when he met Klamat, spoke to him in his own tongue, which Spotted Tail did not understand.

The eyes of Klamat seemed to blaze with fury when he heard what this warrior said. He paused by a moment, then the course of the party was changed, and they rode forward more swiftly than ever.

His speed, his looks and actions told Spotted Tail that he was after some enemy who was in that direction.

He looked ferocious, like the tiger that Indian fame proclaimed that he was.

Thus hours passed, and Spotted Tail wondered at the endurance of the Southern horses, which still carried them on.

Ahead they saw another band, carrying lances, like themselves.

They had just come to a halt, for beyond them still was timber, and in it there appeared to be many mounted Indians.

Klamat did not check his speed—he did not halt; but when he saw a large band of Indians coming at a charge he turned to Spotted Tail and said:

"These are braves of your tribe charging down on warriors of mine. I have saved the life of Spotted Tail. Let there be peace between our tribes."

"It shall be peace!" cried Spotted Tail.

He rode forward to check the charging braves.

"Who heads the Sioux to-day?" asked Spotted Tail of the sub-chief who led the charge, as he lowered his spear while Klamat and his warriors, with spearheads reversed joined the chief of the Sioux.

"Natolah, the wife of Spotted Tail, the mother of Dove Eye," replied the sub-chief.

"Where is Dove Eye?" eagerly asked Klamat.

"Answer him, Where is Dove Eye, my child?" said Spotted Tail.

"With her mother. She has just come in with a pale face brave," replied the sub-chief.

"Let us ride on. I would look upon Dove Eye," said the Comanche. "Yesterday she was my prisoner. I told her I would take her father from the hands of his enemy, and then I would make her my wife."

Spotted Tail made no answer, but he rode on side by side with Klamat, each followed by his own warriors until they were in the edge of the timber, where Natolah waited for her chief and husband.

"Where is Dove Eye?" was the first question, as he approached his wife.

"Here!" said the girl, who had drawn back out of observation, for she could not understand why the Comanches were coming in this friendly guise.

She stepped forward and laid her hands upon the mane of the horse which her father rode.

"Who is the paleface that is with Dove Eye?" continued the chief.

"The Little Brave, the friend of Long Rifle, who saved me from Yellow Bear, who waited to watch over you till I could call up the paleface braves to help you drive the Black Feet from your hunting grounds."

"The Little Brave is welcome in the tribe of Spotted Tail. He is a great warrior," said Spotted Tail.

"Who killed the Comanches that followed Dove Eye?" now asked Klamat, who had just been spoken to by one of his braves.

"I killed two and the Little Brave killed two," said Dove Eye, proudly.

Klamat seemed for an instant to struggle with anger. Conquering it, he said, as admiration of her courage shone in his eye:

"Dove Eye is fit to be the wife of a great warrior. Klamat, now at peace with her people—Klamat asks Spotted Tail to give him Dove Eye for a wife."

"What has Dove Eye to say?" asked the Sioux chief looking anxiously on his child.

"Let him take a wife from among his own people," said the girl.

Klamat's eyes flashed as he said:

"Does Dove Eye love the paleface dog who stole her from his fort?"

The Comanche had no time to listen to the answer of Dove Eye, if she had one to make, for Dave Estes, quick of anger and quick to act, struck him a stunning blow in the face, and as he fell stunned to the earth, cried out:

"No red cuss shall call me a dog and not feel my bite!"

The Comanches started in a body, with leveled spears to avenge the insult to their chief, while Spotted Tail shouted:

"No brave shall raise a hand, or it is war between the tribes."

"Spotted Tail is right. The tribes have nothing to do with this quarred," said Klamat himself, rising from the ground. "But," he added, turning fiercely on the young man, "there is war between us. One of us must die!"

"I'm agreed on that, and the one who dies will not be me," said the scout, coolly.

"Let Spotted Tail say how we shall fight," said the Comanche.

"You would fight as warriors fight and before all the eyes?" asked Spotted Tail.

"Yes, and before Dove Eye," said Klamat, eagerly.

"Let two horses be brought," said Spotted Tail. "Then let Klamat, the Tiger, and the Little Brave lay away all weapons but one—the knife which each one wears in his belt. Let them ride apart the distance an arrow can fly, and then come together as they will. Spotted Tail has spoken."

Klamat, whose stern face told his anger, bade one of his warriors to see to his horse, and then he turned to await the time set by Spotted Tail for the duel.

CHAPTER XXIII.

GENERAL CUSTER.

A body of cavalry rode in column over the beautiful, undulating lands which spread about the headwaters of the Big Horn River.

The main body—a full regiment—rode in a column of fours, with a small advance and rear guard, and a flanking body of men not in uniform, but evidently composed of that class of daring frontiersmen who rejoice to serve with the army as scouts.

With this advance, accompanied by a couple of staff officers, rode a man, with long, fair hair, whose shoulder-

straps, star-bearing, proclaimed his rank to be that of a general.

"It is time California Joe was back," said the general to a scout near him. "He said when we made our noon halt that he would ride ahead, look for an old camping-ground that he knew, and rejoin us by the middle of the afternoon."

"California Joe gen'rally keeps his word, Gen'ral Custer," said a scout. "But here comes California Joe, sir, on a lope."

"Yes; he rides fast, instead of waiting for us," said the general.

"He has seen reds. I'll bet high on that," said one of the officers.

"Column, forward! Trot!" cried General Custer; and he at once went forward at a more rapid gait.

He soon met California Joe, a middle-aged scout, almost too well known in the army to need a description.

Joe was mounted on a genuine mustang, about as red as his own whiskers, and as rough as his own hair, and the broad rim of his old slouch hat blew back from over his honest face.

"What is your hurry, Joe?" asked General Custer, as he reined in his horse.

"Gen'ral," said he, "we're goin' to have jest the nicest chance to wipe out a double-handful of red varmints that ever you did see. Oh, it's beautiful! I had a good peep at all in camp, and they never sot eyes on me!"

"Indians! How many, and where?" asked the general, impatiently.

"Sioux—about a hundred braves, mounted and ready for the war-path—in that timber over there to the north-west."

"Mounted, you say? Then they are gone before now."

"No, sir; not mounted, but with stock to mount."

"You are sure they didn't see you?"

"I am, or some of 'em would have been after me like wolves after a lame buffalo."

"Then ride forward with Little Buckshot and see what they are doing; while I follow with the column."

"Yes, gen'ral. Captain, will you jest let me feel the weight of your flask one minute before I go?"

Joe felt the weight of the flask. It was lighter when he handed it back.

General Custer now gave orders to his staff to pass word back for action, and allowed the column to close up in compact order.

When near the piece of timber which Joe had pointed out, the general halted the command, let the men dismount to breathe their horses, and waited for the report of the scouts.

He had not long to wait. California Joe came riding back even faster than he went.

Little Buckshot stated that there were nearer two hundred than one hundred Indians; that there were Comanches as well as Sioux, and that there were women among them.

California Joe told the same story, and both scouts joined in the belief that it was a war party, though it seemed singular that they should unite when the Sioux and Comanches had been long known to be on bad terms.

"They're all huddled on the farther edge of that narrow strip of timber," said California Joe. "They've got some kind of a talk going on. We can take a bit of a circuit to the right, and throw ourselves directly in their front."

"That is precisely the plan I shall adopt," cried the young general.

The orders were given, and the scouts, all with him as his own body guard, the gallant leader rode on.

After a gallop of a mile, General Custer drew rein, for a strange sight met his eye.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A DUEL ON HORSEBACK.

The preparations for the duel between Klamat, the Comanche Tiger, and Dave Estes were commenced. It was the sight of this duel at its commencement which made General Custer draw rein and halt his column on the march.

The sun was a little over an hour high when Spotted Tail told the two intended combatants to get ready.

"Take care of these, gal, and if I should go under in this fight, keep them for my sake."

That was what Dave said, as he took off his fringed hunting shirt, his bullet pouch and powder horn, and his belt, with its pistols and knife scabbard. He gave her his rifle also to hold, and if he fell to keep. The knife which he was about to use—a long, straight-bladed hunting-knife—required no scabbard now. But with careful forethought, the little scout took a slender thong of buckskin and attached it to the buckhorn handle of the knife, fastening the same to his wrist.

Naked to his waist, the knotted muscles of his white arms showing a tremendous strength for one so slight, his broad shoulders and full chest free from all incumbrance, with his buckskin trousers tight about his slender waist, and loose about his strong lower limbs, the young hero was ready to do battle with his brawny and gigantic antagonist.

The moment he had taken off his arms and hunting-shirt Dave gave a shrill cry, which brought his trained horse, Black Hawk, up to him on a trot.

"Old Boy, we've got some lively work before us," said Dave, patting his horse on the neck. "I may as well lighten you all I can."

He then took off the saddle and the blanket with it, he took the girth which had bound the saddle to its pommel and replaced it loosely on the horse. He took off the bridle entirely, for his horse, like Powder Face, knew the pressure of its rider's leg when and where that rider wished to turn, and by his voice when to go or stop.

"Is the paleface ready?" said Klamat, sneeringly, as he sat in savage pride on his horse, which was saddled and bridled as usual.

Turning to Dove Eye, Dave took her hand, and said:

"Gal, if I don't get another chance to say it—good-bye, I love you, and I'm goin' to fight like lightning to get that snake out of your way."

"Fight and kill him," said Dove Eye. "If he kills you, I'll kill him."

"That's the grit," said Dave, as he sprang on his horse.

The Sioux chief pointed to two spears, with red feathers on them, set in the ground about two hundred yards in front of the spot where all the Indians had congregated, and nearly the same distance apart.

"The Little Brave will take the one nearest to the Comanche chief the other. When Spotted Tail waves this lance, begin the fight."

"I am ready, but Klamat is not," said Dave. "I wear upon my breast a shield; mine is bare."

"It is the sign of my rank," said the Comanche, as he laid his hand upon a shield bearing an emblem of the sun.

"Bare your breast, coward, as I have done," cried the little scout.

With a look of gloomy hatred, the Comanche lifted the symbol from his breast.

"Now," he cried, as he waved his long, glittering lance.

Dave bounded to the back of his horse and rode to the spear which was set farthest east.

He had just reached it, when he saw, to his surprise, the mounted troops close at hand; but he had not a moment's time to inspect them. The Sioux chief, who did not lead the troops, gave the signal.

With a yell the Comanche dashed forward on a diagonal line for Dave, while the latter, with his horse at an easy gallop, rode on to meet the charge of the other.

As Dave rode, erect and easy, it seemed as if the Comanche, prone on his horse, with one hand clutching the mane, the other stretched forward with the knife point, would have a great advantage.

But when the horses were almost breast to breast, the black steed of the scout, touched in the flank by his rider's heels, bounded fully a yard to one side, and Dave, clinging with one hand to the girth on his back, reared far over and cut a deep groove in the back of the Comanche, who supposed himself out of reach!

Wildly yelling, the Indian drew rein and turned his horse in swift pursuit of Dave.

But, quicker than thought, the black horse, impelled by touch, wheeled, reared full before the flying steed of the Comanche, which fell back on its haunches, and both horses sat with their fore-feet in the air, furiously striking and biting each other, while the knives of the riders played like vivid lightning in alternate thrust and parry.

This lasted scarce a minute, yet to all who gazed it seemed much longer. Then, all at once, a knife was seen to fly high up in the air, and fall yards away from the combatants.

Dove Eye trembled now for the first time. One of the combatants was disarmed. If it was the Little Brave, his tom was sealed.

Dave was seen to touch his horse, which wheeled away from the front of the other, then take a short circle, waving his own knife high over his head.

Bending as he rode, he picked up the knife which he had struck from the hand of the Comanche, checked his horse in its impetuous flight before Klamat, who, bleeding from several wounds, as did his opponent bleed, also stood with folded arms beside the horse, which he had no more use for, waiting for the death-blow.

Dave looked at him as he stood there, yet fearless, and though he was at his mercy, he could not slay him. Crossing his knife toward the mortified chief, he cried:

"Take better care of your tools, Tiger of the Comanches. Mount and try your luck again."

"Klamat is not a dog, to accept life from a paleface!" shouted the maddened chief, for he heard the derisive laugh of Dove Eye. "He has made his life a shame, and he will throw it away."

He snatched the knife from the ground as he said this, and drove it to the heart of his trembling horse.

The animal, with a quiver, fell to the ground, and then, all as quickly, the haughty chief buried the keen, reeking weapon in his own breast.

He fell upon his horse, and the duel was over.

Spotted Tail and Dove Eye rushed forward to greet the Little Brave, and then the Sioux chief saw the cavalry formed on the plains, as he thought, ready to charge.

"Ho! The paleface warriors from the big forts are upon us!" he cried.

And he would have turned to either lead his band in battle, or fly, if there was a chance; but the little scout cried out:

"They are my friends, and there shall be no fight. I will ride to meet their chief."

"The Little Brave is right. There shall be peace, because I promised Long Rifle it should be so!" said Spotted Tail.

"But he must go to the palefaces quickly, or they will come to us!"

"I will ride at once, and as I am; but do not let one of your people move, lest the soldiers think they mean to fight, and charge upon them!" cried Dave.

And while Spotted Tail held up his hand to warn the Comanches to keep back, for they were about to ride forward to take up the body of their chief, Dave darted away to meet those whom he at once recognized—General Custer and his officers.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE COMANCHE'S THREAT.

"Who are you, and what does the scene mean which we have just witnessed?" cried the general, as Dave halted in front of him and saluted.

"You used to call me Little Dave, the Scout, general," said Estes, "I'm not in parlor rig just now; I've been busy a-butcherin'!"

"Dave Estes, the Scout!" cried the general. "What a terrible fight you have had! We saw it all."

"The bulliest fight and the bulliest little cuss that ever drew a knife," shouted California Joe.

"General, will you please raise a white flag to keep them Indians right where they are till I can make a full report," cried Dave, seeing how uneasy Spotted Tail sat on his horse watching what was going on. "They'll not stir till I tell 'em to, after the flag is seen. Buffalo Bill promised peace."

"I'll show the flag," said the general. "That can do no harm, while I hear who they are and what Buffalo Bill has promised."

Instantly a white handkerchief, raised on a drawn sabre, told the Indians that the paleface warriors desired peace.

"Now, Dave, tell me what Indians those are."

"First, a band of Comanches, that were under a chief known as Klamant, the Tiger."

"I have heard of him—a blood-thirsty savage."

"He is done for now. It was with him I had the little difference which you have been looking at."

"A pretty heavy difference, I should say. But go on."

"The rest are Sioux, under command of Spotted Tail. Mrs. Spotted Tail and Miss Spotted Tail, an angel in buckskin, are in the party."

"Spotted Tail—the deadliest enemy of the whites—worse than Red Cloud ever was!" exclaimed General Custer.

"Buffalo Bill has worked the old cuss over, general. He has promised peace, and you can bet your shoulder-straps he'll keep his word!"

"If he does it will be better than a dozen campaigns."

"If you will permit me to ride back, now, general, I'll tell the Indians to go into camp on one side of the brook, while you can take the other, and you can see Spotted Tail and his chiefs, and bind 'em down with a strong talk!"

"All right, my brave man. But it seems you fought a regular duel, a knife-battle with that bloodthirsty Comanche, Klamat. What was that about?"

"General, I almost hate to tell you, but I suppose I must. He was in love with Dove Eye, the daughter of Spotted Tail, and so was I. He called me a paleface dog, and I knocked him down. Then we fought it out, and I got the best of it!"

"Ay—that I saw, and how he wiped out his defeat."

Dave now went back to Spotted Tail, who received him with more respect than ever.

"You are no longer a Little Brave!" he said. "You are a Great Brave, and I adopt you for my son, and I name you E-to-nee—the Tiger Killer!"

"Do you hear that, Dove Eye?" cried Dave, delighted. "The old man says I'm his son."

"Dove Eye is glad that the Little Brave has conquered his enemy. Here are his weapons!" said the girl, without the least show of feeling, as she handed Dave his hunting-shirt, rifle, and belts, and the shield of the dead Comanche chief.

The scout now conveyed the orders of the general to Spotted Tail, and the Indians of his tribe at once went into camp. But the Comanches took up the body of Klamat, and, wrapping it in his robes, held themselves aloof in gloomy council.

When Dave was arranging with Spotted Tail for a "talk" to take place that night between him and the general, the oldest brave of the Comanches approached the spot where the scout stood.

"Paleface!" said he, "the Comanches will go back to their own land to bury their chief in the ground where his fathers have been laid. But the spirit of the great Tiger of the Comanches will never rest while you walk the earth. We go now because our chief shook hands with Spotted Tail, and we will not break his peace. But we shall come wherever you go, and we shall take your scalp!"

The Comanche turned away before Dave could reply, and a minute afterward the whole band rode away in the darkness.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE DYING CHIEF AND THE PORTRAITS.

Buffalo Bill could not rest after he had satisfied the hunger, for he wanted to see what was going on in the camp of the Black Feet. Telling Red Plume to remain with Sunflower and the captain, while he went to scout,

he left the cave and again clambered up the precipice and proceeded to his lookout.

When he got to the point, the scout adjusted his glass and commenced his observations.

"The Sioux are on the warpath!" was his first exclamation. "But they are fighting the Black Feet in square. There does not seem to be a general battle. Ah! one of the Black Feet is leaving in a hurry. A courier to rally the rest of the tribe. I'll spoil his game if he comes in on the side of a half-mile range!"

This last remark was made when Buffalo Bill saw a single Indian, mounted on a powerful horse, dash away from the camp and ride a course to bring him almost within rifle shot.

At once he left his position, and ran to a point which would bring him within shot of the Indian.

He did not get another sight of him until he had reached an abrupt point of rocks, where a pass through the mountain left a way easy to traverse.

"He'll come through here," said the scout.

An instant later the Indian came in sight.

Buffalo Bill drew back behind a cedar tree, and for the first time in his life took a rest. He generally scorned to take cover, always firing off-hand, as quick as thought, whether he raised a rifle or pistol. But he was all of a tremble from his run, and he knew all depended upon his first shot.

So he covered his man, as he came nearly head on, and fired.

He was almost sure he missed, for the Indian never swerved in his seat, and the horse bounded steadily forward; so he took another sight over his rifle and fired again.

Just as his finger touched the trigger the horse reared to leap over a fallen tree, and the bullet pierced his heart instead of the breast of the Indian.

The horse fell, and the Indian went with him.

Seeing that the latter did not rise, the scout, with his weapon cocked, approached the spot and found that his first ball had done its mission—had pierced the breast of the red man.

But what astonished Buffalo Bill most was that the Indian was Yellow Bear, yet alive, but dying.

The chief recognized him, and gasped his name—"Long Rifle."

"Yes," said the scout. "Yellow Bear's trail is ended. I did not know it was him when I fired, but I made my promise to Spotted Tail once, and I have kept it."

The dying chief did not seem to notice what the scout was saying, but with a spasmodic effort he tugged at a thong which was about his neck until he pulled a buckskin bag from under his hunting-shirt.

"Take and keep. This is for Cindah, the Sunflower

grasped the chief. "When she goes to the Happy Hunting Grounds, she will know her father and mother, if she keeps this."

The chief raised the bag in his hand, looked fixedly on the scout for a moment, and then his head fell back. He was dead.

Buffalo Bill looked at him with pity. Then he said: "I'm sorry I gave my word to Spotted Tail to take his scalp, but I did, and I must keep it. I don't like to lift hair—it is out of my line—but I must do it to keep my pledge. But this bag—I'll see what is in it."

The scout opened the bag, and found in it two morocco cases, containing two painted miniatures, done in ivory, facing each other. One was the portrait of a woman, with golden hair, blue eyes, and lovely in the extreme. The other was that of a man, young and handsome, but with a darker face and hair. Under the picture of the woman, written on the ivory, was the name, "Adele Benoit."

Under the picture of the man was written, "Edouart Benoit."

The astonished scout gazed for a moment on these pictures, and then opened the other case.

It contained the picture of an infant, with a wealth of golden curls, framing in the loveliest face that Buffalo Bill ever saw. He looked at it an instant, and muttered: "I've seen a face like that somewhere."

Under the picture was written, "Cecile Benoit."

Then a thought struck him.

"It is Cindah herself—it is Cindah, the Sunflower, as she was, and these are the pictures of her parents. I will take them to her. They may lead her to a happy restoration yet."

The scout placed the bag in his hunting-pouch, and then, with a sigh of regret at the act, he took the scalp from the head of Yellow Bear.

"I must keep my promise," he said, as he looked at the plaited scalp lock, trimmed with ochre-tinted strings. "Spotted Tail, if he ever sees this scalp, will know it." "I must go back to the cave, and tell Cindah what I have found."

The scout now put the scalp out of sight, and then turned back over his trail with much slower steps than those taken when he came.

He paused to look down on the plains, and he saw that the Indians appeared to be concentrated, and that the fighting had ceased.

"The Sioux came out ahead," he muttered, as he passed on.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DOVE EYE RECOGNIZES HER FRIEND.

Encamped, with good grazing ground for their horses, plenty of wood and water at hand, and game abundant all around, the cavalry under General Custer were having what Little Buckshot termed a "bully time," while the Indians under Spotted Tail, pleased with sundry presents, were glad to be at peace with warriors who were so much better armed and mounted than they.

Spotted Tail, his wife, and daughter were the recipients of marked attention from the officers of the command, especially the latter.

The girl seemed to pay no heed to these flattering attentions. Bright buttons and shoulder-straps were not attractive in her eyes. And that is more than can be said of the paleface sisterhood, as a general thing.

Dave Estes, though honored by the general and his officers, and an object of envious admiration among all the Sioux warriors, as well as the adopted son of her father, made no apparent advance in the favor of Dove Eye.

He had tried to give her presents. She had refused them—kindly, but firmly. The acceptance of a present means more with a girl of the red race of America than it does with the white ones.

He had asked her what he could do to please her.

"Go and find Long Rifle for me," was her answer.

Dave did ask permission of General Custer to go and hunt up his mate. But the general did not wish to spare him until a treaty had been concluded with Spotted Tail and the other chiefs, and, as smokes had been sent up to call them together, he told him no expedition could leave for the present.

The warriors of the Sioux nation began to come in in answer to the smoke signals, and General Custer had decided that on the third day from the time he encamped he would hold a council, or a "big talk," as Spotted Tail denominated it.

It was now the second day of the encampment, and it was well advanced.

General Custer said to his officers:

"Buffalo Bill must be found for this grand council."

"Let Dove Eye go," said the young daughter of Spotted Tail. "She will find Long Rifle if he lives, or revenge him if he is dead."

"I wish she loved me as she loves Buffalo Bill!" murmured Dave. "The gal is just crazy after him. I told her he was married, but that didn't make a bit of difference with her. She said he was a great hunter and could feed a dozen wives."

General Custer laughed, but the girl looked as grave as ever.

It was near sunset, and the soldiers were all gathering

together in anticipation of roll-call, when a large band of Indians were reported coming in from the west.

The command was put under arms as usual, until the character of the visitors was ascertained.

Suddenly, with a cry of joy, Dove Eye bounded upon the horse of the general, which stood saddled close by, and calling out one name, dashed off to meet the advancing column.

The name was—"Long Rifle."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A LITTLE SURPRISE.

"Well—that's cool," said General Custer, laughing, as the young squaw dashed away on his horse.

"She sees Buffalo Bill coming, general," said Dave Estes. "The gal has gone clean crazy after him."

"Let not E-to-nee grieve," said Spotted Tail. "He shall have the handsomest women in my tribe for his wives."

"Thank you, boss—but I'd rather have one, and that one my choice."

The attention of all was on the approaching party.

In front of the Indians was Buffalo Bill on Powder Face, while by his right side rode a white girl, so strangely beautiful in the picturesque dress of an Indian maiden, that the general and his officers spoke their wonder aloud.

On his left, Dove Eye rode, proudly managing the spirited horse of the general, while behind him came a Black Foot Indian—without war paint—it was Red Plume—and a white man, Captain Boyd.

Behind with their lances full of scalps, and uttering yells which victorious warriors only can give, came Young Bear and a large party of Sioux.

Buffalo Bill, rather abashed, with a girl on each side of him, of such different types, halted when near the spot where General Custer and his staff stood, and saluted.

"I am glad to see you, my brave friend," said the general. "You see that your peace treaty with Spotted Tail has not only been kept, but ratified. We will make it a formal treaty to-morrow, so as to send a report to Washington."

"I thank you, general, for your welcome. I hardly expected this pleasure an hour ago. But I have something here for Spotted Tail. I made him a promise when I asked him to keep peace with the white men. I told him I would rescue Dove Eye, and give him the scalp of her captor. There it is."

Buffalo Bill handed a scalp to the Sioux chief.

The moment the latter looked at it he pronounced the name of Yellow Bear.

"Yes, it is his scalp," said the scout. "My promise have been kept. Now keep yours—never let your tribe raise knife or hatchet to the palefaces while you live."

"Spotted Tail has given you his word and he will keep it," said the chief, firmly. "Then taking the hand of Dove Eye, who had returned the horse of the general to his orderly, he led her toward the scout, and said:

"She loves you. Take Dove Eye and treat her well."

Buffalo Bill blushed scarlet. Then he stammered out:

"Not for me, I thank you. I've got the sweetest, best and prettiest little wife that ever blessed a home. I want no other. Dove Eye—there is Dave Estes, as brave a chap as ever raised a rifle. He loves you. Take him and he will make you happy."

Dove Eye looked at the scout for an instant, without speaking.

Tears gathered in her dark, mournful eyes. Then she drew her robe up over her face and turned away toward her father's lodge.

"And now," said General Custer, "will you be so kind as to tell us who this beautiful white girl in Indian costume is?"

"I am afraid she cannot tell herself, general, and I am sure I cannot. She has been reared from infancy by Yellow Bear, the Black Foot chief. He called her his daughter, but when he was dying he gave me a bag with the miniature of a baby, a man, and a woman. By what he said, I am sure that they are the pictures of herself as an infant, and of her father and mother. She has them and will show them to you."

The girl reached out the bag, and General Custer took the picture and read the names aloud.

The general, turning to Cindah, said:

"You shall have a tent for your own occupation, until we can reach a point where inquiries can be made that may restore you to relatives."

"I will not stay anywhere unless the Dream Spirit is with me," said Cindah, in a determined tone, and she pointed to Boyd.

"Who's the gentleman?" asked the general, as he now took notice of the young man.

"You should know me, if your memory is good, general," said the captain, in a soft and pleasant tone.

"It seems to me as if I had seen you before," said General Custer, striving to think when and where.

"Do you remember making a capture after General Stuart was killed?" asked the captain, with a peculiar smile.

"Great Heavens! Yes, you were a rebel officer."

"Exactly, general. I came West to make my fortune after the war, and I have found a gold mine that will

an out rich, and better still, one I hope to claim as my ride some day."

"Yes," cried Cindah. "I love the Dream Spirit, and he will be my husband."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE COMANCHES' REVENGE.

Nearly two months passed away. The Sioux having pledged themselves to peace, were allowed to roam undisturbed over their extensive hunting grounds.

Buffalo Bill and his pard, Dave, were once more located in their pleasant quarters at Fort McPherson, near the junction of the North and South Platte.

Dave Estes, his almost inseparable friend, was the companion of every hunt and ride, and few men enjoyed life better—at least, in that desolate region.

In quarters assigned to her by those in power was Cindah, the Sunflower, who had taken to reading and studying, though she dreamed a great deal yet.

Cindah, believing her name to be Cecile Benoist, had assumed it, and dressed like other girls. She was very beautiful, though all said she seemed more so in her old costume.

Visited in a friendly way by the officers, who all treated her with profound respect, she was apparently happy.

Braxton Boyd, her lover, had gone East to interest rich investors in his mine, and then he could ask Cecile Benoist to become his wife.

* * * * *

"Pard, I'm going to get an antelope for Major Brown. He has some friends coming from North Platte to dinner!" said Dave Estes to Buffalo Bill, very early, on a bright, sunny morning after they had got settled in quarters. "Will you go along?"

"I can't, Dave," said Buffalo Bill; "not this morning, I mean. You know the boys outside the fort have elected me Justice of the Peace, and now two of 'em have got up a suit, I reckon, just to see what I know. But no matter what it is for—it is to come off at ten o'clock this morning, and I can't leave."

"All right. I'll knock over a couple while I'm about it, and bring one home for you!"

"All right, Dave! But look out for your hair, mate. Remember what those Comanches threatened you?"

"There isn't a Comanche within three hundred miles of here."

Two hours later an orderly from the fort came rushing in, booted and spurred, his sabre jingling, shouting to Buffalo Bill:

"You're wanted, sir—quick, too, at headquarters. Indians are in sight of the fort, and have just shot down a man! The troops are mounting!"

"Poor Dave!" groaned the scout, as intuitively his heart and head told him who had fallen: "The Comanches have killed and scalped him; I would wager life upon it."

In a minute he was armed, and mounting, he rode Powder Face at full speed to the fort.

In less than five minutes the troops were out. But, mounted on the best of horses, the Indians went like the wind over the plains, and pursuit was vain.

They found the body of Dave Estes literally riddled with Comanche arrows, and with his scalp torn from his head.

The body was brought in by Buffalo Bill, and it was given burial in the burying-ground attached to the fort, where now the visitor can see that the heroic young lover of Dove Eye has not been forgotten by those who knew him well, and loved him, too.

* * * * *

Fortune not only favored the young man, Braxton Boyd, who had gone to the mining country to find gold, and had found it, for he got backers in the East to aid him, and riches came rushing in, but Cecile Benoist also had luck, as General Custer discovered for her the parents she could not recall.

Her father had been an army officer, and on a gold trail with others, all had been murdered by Yellow Bear and his braves, the chief adopting the child as his own.

Going to dwell with her kindred, Cecile was sent to boarding-school for a year, and then became the wife of Braxton Boyd, and the two now live in a handsome house in Colorado.

Dove Eye returned with her father to their people, but the young girl refused all offers of marriage, and a year or two later died, true to her love for the great scout, Buffalo Bill, whose deeds continued to make his name famous throughout the world, and which will continue to live in history and romance for long ages to come.

THE END.

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