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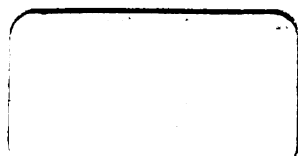
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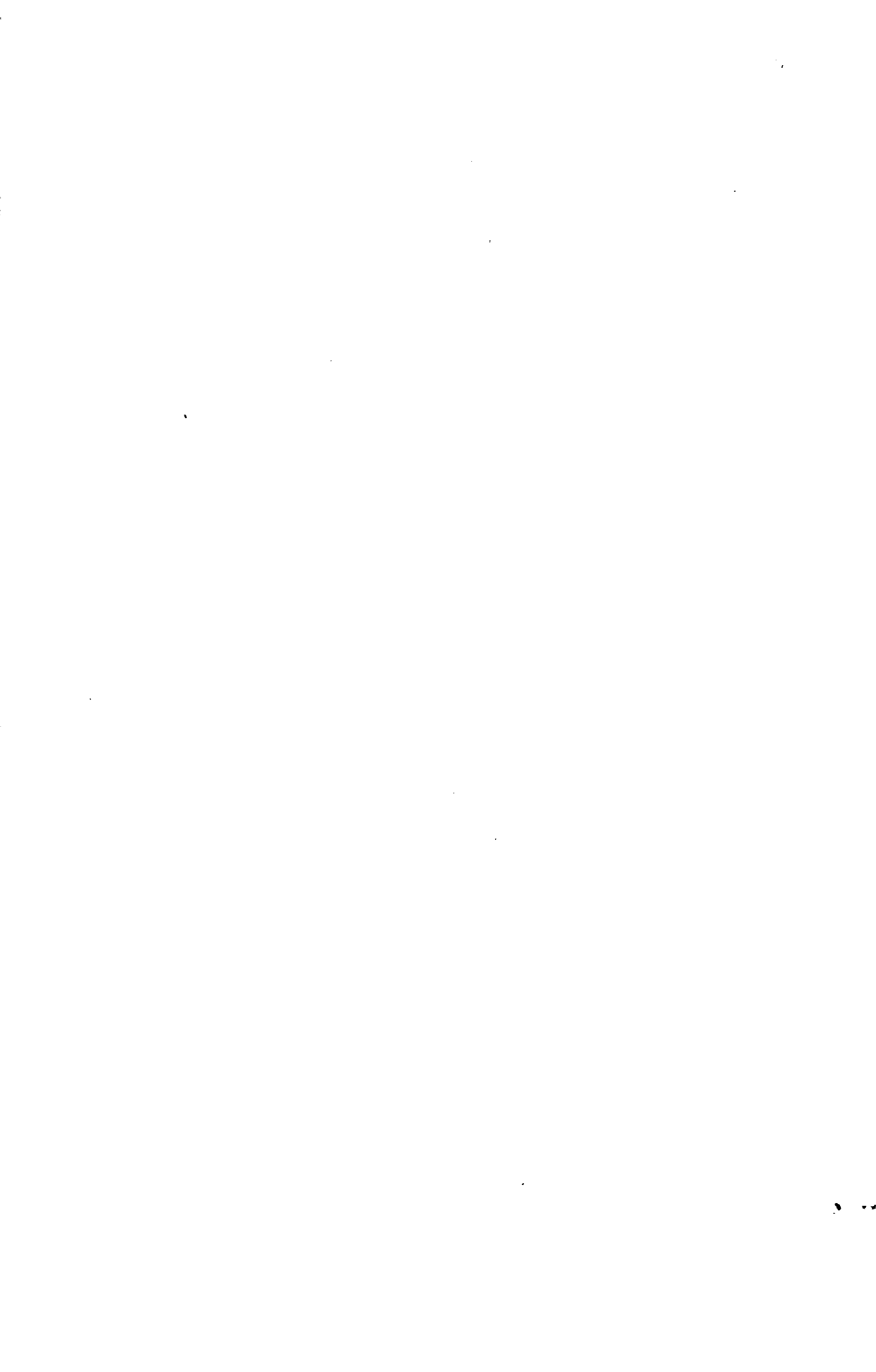
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# BACK-TRAILING P ON THE OLD FRONTIERS

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CHARLES M. RUSSELL

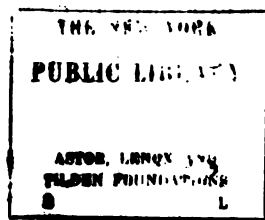
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*Seven Gables - June 7, 1951*



## FOREWORD

THE fourteen stories in this volume are taken from the series, <sup>✓</sup>Back-Trailing on the Old Frontiers, illustrated by Charles M. Russell, which have appeared during the past year in Sunday editions of daily newspapers in all parts of the United States. There have been so many demands for the publication of these historical sketches of the old west in book form that it was decided to put them forth in three volumes at a popular price. This is the first of the three. It is planned to publish the other two volumes during the next year.

In the compilation of these stories, which narrate briefly some of the outstanding incidents of dramatic interest in the pioneering days of the "Far West," we wish to acknowledge our indebtedness to such volumes as *Pathfinders of the West*, by Agnes C. Laut; *The History of the American Fur Trade of the Far West*, by Hiram M. Chittenden; *The Conquest of the Missouri*, by Joseph Mills Hanson; *Beyond the Old Frontiers*, by George Bird Grinnell; *Indian Fights and Fighters*, by Cyrus Townsend Brady; and *the Overland Stage to California*, by Frank A. Root and William E. Connelley.

The illustrations by Mr. Russell, because of their accuracy of detail historically, are well worth close study. He is generally recognized as the greatest living portrayer of the frontier life of the West, and is probably the foremost living authority on the Northwest Plains Indians, whom he has studied for more than forty years.

These stories are of much interest to children, and have been used freely in history classes in the schools of Milwaukee, Minneapolis and the many other cities where they have appeared in Sunday newspapers.

THE CHEELY-RABAN SYNDICATE.

Great Falls, Montana, December, 1922.

## Discovery of Rocky Mountains

**W**HEN France was mistress of half of North America the dream of the many bold spirits among her explorers and voyageurs was the finding of a northwest passage to the Western sea, as they designated the Pacific ocean, and to this end they devoted much valorous effort. It meant fighting their way across trackless wilderness for thousands of miles and the braving of countless dangers. These courageous men went forth into the haunts of wild beasts and the Indian country for the glory of France and adventure. The bones of many of them were left to bleach where they died, and all they left behind them was the record of a vain effort, as far as the finding of an outlet to the Pacific was concerned.

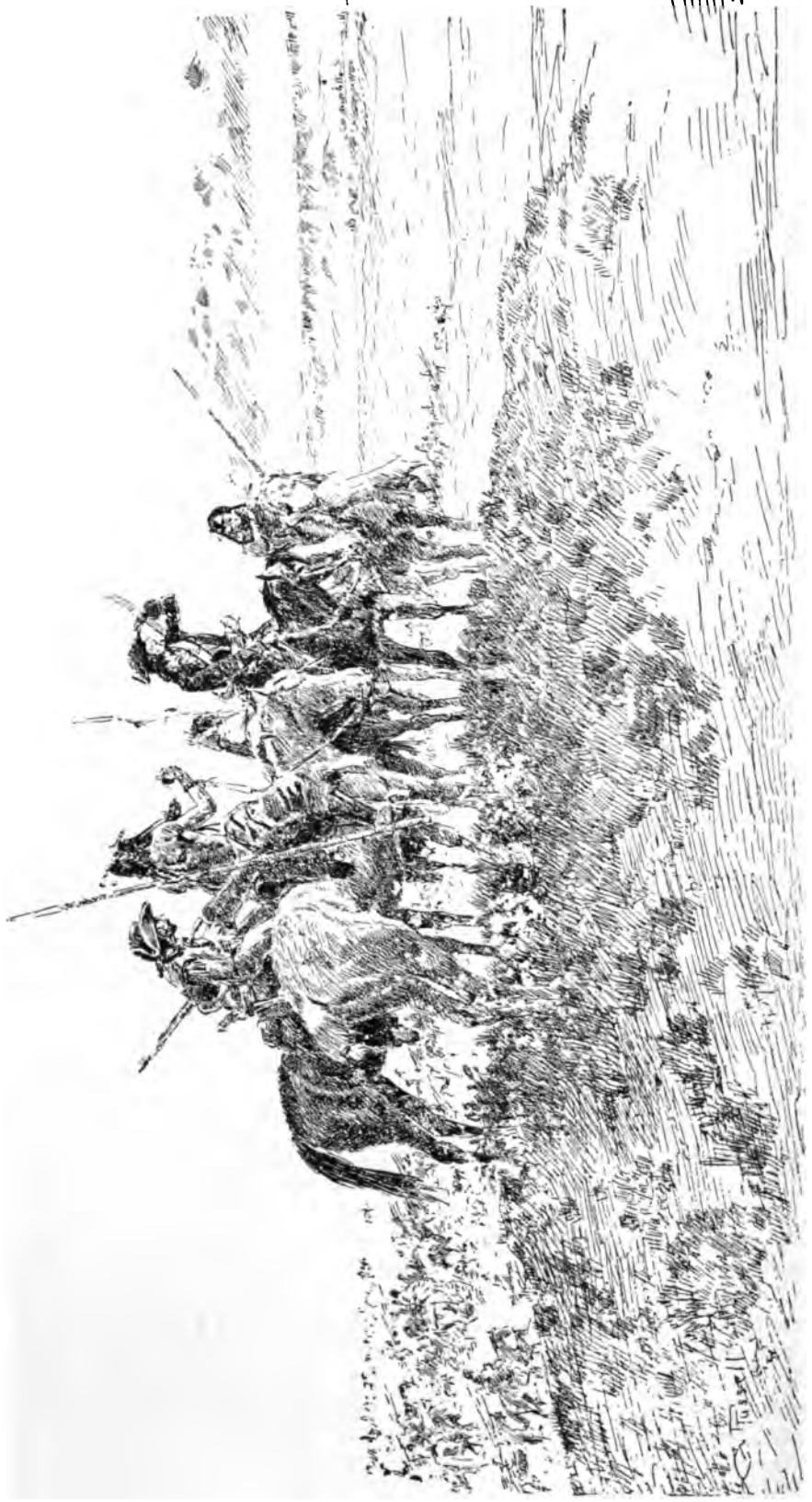
It was this quest that led to the discovery of the Rocky mountains. It seems singular that the great backbone of the North American continent, with peaks measuring three miles high from sea level silhouetting the sky for hundreds of miles north and south, was first seen by a man of the white race only 179 years ago.

Prominent among the gentleman adventurers and explorers of the New France of that day was the Sieur de La Verendrye. All his life he had ridden through the western wilds, going where no white man had gone before, seeking for that which he and his fellows could not find, and finally, in his old age, passing on the work of finding a passage to the west to his devoted sons, Pierre and the Chevalier, who had accompanied him on many of his expeditions. And although the La Verendryes failed to find a way to the sea of the west they carried the tri-color of France far into unexplored territory and helped to make possible the achievements and discoveries of those who followed them.

In one of his expeditions the elder La Verendrye went far into the west, reaching what is now North Dakota. There, on the Missouri river, he found the Mandan Indians and was the first white man to visit them. These Indians lived in comfortable huts and tilled fields and were far in advance of their red brothers of other tribes. La Verendrye established friendly relations with them, and it was because of the good impression that he made that the tribe afforded sustenance and shelter to many explorers who came after him, including Lewis and Clark.

The Mandans told La Verendrye of many things which interested him. They said that far to the west was a great body of salt water, a lake, the waters of which rose and fell, and on the shores of which abode white men who wore beards, and who worshipped the master of life in great houses which they had built for this purpose, "holding books, the leaves of which were like Indian corn, and singing in their worship."

From this La Verendrye assumed two things. Indians who had visited the Mandans had been on the shore of the sea for which he was looking, or had come in contact with Spanish settlements to the west. He thought perhaps the Spaniards were getting a foothold too far north and were putting French interests in jeopardy. So he made the long trip back from the Upper Missouri country to Montreal to acquaint his government with this important news and to get authority and money to lead an expedition farther west to block the Spaniard, and perhaps to find the Western sea. His tale was listened to by an indifferent governor, and no cash was forthcoming.



LA VERENDRYES DISCOVER THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS

By this time La Verendrye was in the winter of life, old because of the life of hardship he had led, and broken in health. He felt unequal to the task of continuing his work, which he must do on his own resources, and reluctantly passed his mission on to his sons, Pierre and the Chevalier, whom he had schooled in woodcraft, and who shared his enthusiasm for his purpose. Without means and with but two fellow countrymen, they went out into the west, their destination being the land of the Mandan nation, where, after a trip of great hardship, they arrived in the spring of 1742. Their purpose was to learn the source of the stories which the Mandans had told their father, and to continue the search for the passage into the west. The Mandans, their father's friends, received them most hospitably.

At that time the Mandans were expecting a visit from a tribe known as the Horse Indians, migratory redskins whom the Mandan chiefs believed could guide the French explorers to salt water. The La Verendryes waited for a month and then, with Mandan guides, started out in search of them. Instead, they found the Crows, who could but repeat the tale that had come to the Mandans, and sent them further west with Crow guides to the Bow Indians, of the Sioux family.

When the La Verendryes arrived at the Bow encampment they found these Indians about to go to war with the Snake tribe, and were gathering their warriors and those of their allies in great numbers. They knew nothing of the way to the Western sea, but suggested that the Frenchmen accompany them on their expedition against the Snakes, which meant traveling to the west and towards the mountains, where, from Snake prisoners or other western Indians they might be able to learn something of the much sought for passage. The Frenchmen gladly accepted the invitation, and the great force of warriors and their families moved slowly towards the country of their enemies, gathering strength as they traveled.

On January 1, 1743, a snow-capped mountain range loomed up before them, the peaks, in the far distance, scintillating in the bright sunshine like diamonds. The poetic Frenchmen named them the "Shining Mountains," as they are known in poetry and Indian legend to this day. For the first time the white race, through the eyes of the La Verendryes, was looking upon the great range of the Rocky mountains. Historians are agreed that the mountains which met their vision at this point was the Big Horn range, about 120 miles east of Yellowstone National Park. At that time the explorers and their Indian friends must have been near the northeastern boundary of what is now Wyoming.

In passing, it should be said that there was no battle fought between the Bows and Snakes at that time, as the tribes missed each other. The La Verendryes then parted company with the Bows and gave up their quest for a way to the Western sea. On an eminence, now generally supposed to be in South Dakota, on the banks of the Missouri river, they buried a leaden plate engraved with the arms of the king of France and built over it a cairn of stones.

At the end of 1743 they were back at the Assiniboine river. For thirteen years they had followed a hopeless quest. Instead of a Western sea they had found a sea of prairie, the Rocky Mountains and two great rivers, the Saskatchewan and the Missouri. On their arrival at Montreal the elder La Verendrye was decorated with the Cross of St. Louis and the two sons were given minor posts in the army. The father died in 1750, and after the English had conquered Canada, the eldest son sailed for France on a ship which was lost with all on board. The younger son remained in Canada.

## The Story of Fort Benton

**O**N the banks of the Missouri river, more than 3,500 miles from where the waters of that stream flow with those of the Mississippi into the Gulf of Mexico, stand a square bastion and fragments of the walls of old Fort Benton. The ruins of this old trading post of the American Fur company forms one of the points of greatest historic interest to be found between the Mississippi river and the Pacific coast. Before the ruins of the old fort the turgid waters of the Missouri flow calmly past a mile of embankment that is one of the most historic water fronts in America and the most remote docking place from the sea for steamboats on any waterway in the world.

Half a century ago the levee along the river bank here, which for 30 years from 1859 to 1889 was the terminal port for steam craft plying between St. Louis and Fort Benton, was the scene of the greatest activity, with steamboats arriving and departing amid much bustle of loading and unloading cargoes. Today the river bank is grass-grown, with not a trace of its old uses being evident, and it forms a small riverside park for the sleepy little town that lives much in the past and takes great pride in its traditions and history. During the three decades that it formed an inland port of real importance, handsome river steamers from down river unloaded during the summer months each season vast stores of merchandise for the gold camps, army forts and trading posts of the Upper Missouri country, while millions upon millions of dollars in gold dust were taken aboard for transportation downstream to the eastern mints. Along this strip of river front stepped ashore many of the pioneers and soldiers who were to become outstanding figures in the history of the west. It was here, too, that the ill-fated General Thomas Francis Meagher, illustrious Civil war cavalry leader, was drowned one night while serving as governor of Montana.

Before these days, however, the old trading post whose crumbling ruins now attract the interest of the tourist had a history of thrilling interest, for in the '40s and '50s Fort Benton was equaled only in importance among Indian trading centers by Bent's Fort in Colorado and one or two other of the southwestern posts. It was the greatest American rival of the Hudson's Bay Company's trading outposts, and before the day of the steamboat on the upper river shipped annually great quantities of furs down the Missouri to St. Louis in mackinaw boats manned by French and American voyageurs of the earliest pioneer type.

Fur trading on the Upper Missouri, which had its beginnings as early as 1807 at Fort Manuel on the Yellowstone river, centered in 1831 at Fort Benton, at the mouth of the Yellowstone, which became the headquarters of the great American Fur Company. Various other trading posts were built on the river above Fort Union in the Blackfeet country, and most of these had short-lived, tragic histories. Then, in 1841, it was decided to build an important fortified post as far up the river as practicable, and Fort Lewis was erected five miles above the site chosen later for Fort Benton, and on the south side of the Missouri. This proving an unfavorable point for trading, Major Alexander Culbertson, then chief factor for the American Fur Company, began the construction in 1846 of Fort Benton.

Major Culbertson, who for 30 years was a leading figure in Upper Missouri history, entered the service of the American Fur Company in 1833, journeying from St. Louis to Fort Union on the steamer Assiniboine in company with

Prince Maximilian of Wied, who was a guest at the post for some time. Developing great influence over the Blackfeet Indians in trade relations with this hostile tribe, Culbertson soon succeeded the first factor of the company, Kenneth McKenzie, in supreme command in the fur trade. Ten years later, because of the growing importance of the Blackfeet trade, it became necessary to remove headquarters higher up the river than Fort Union, and Fort Benton gradually grew into chief importance.

This fort had an enclosing wall 250 feet square. It was built of adobe blocks, or sun-dried bricks, for the manufacture of which Mexican labor was imported from the southwest. The walls of the fort were 32 inches in thickness, and at two corners of the enclosure diagonally opposite from each other, were two bastions, in which were mounted cannon which commanded the walls outside the fort.

Between 1846 and 1860 Indian trade at Fort Benton was carried on profitably to the American company, and until about this time the post continued to grow in importance as a receiving point for furs and robes, but in 1856 there was an incident outside of the usual routine of the garrison's experience that was destined to mark the beginning of a new period in the development of the west. This was the arrival of a mountaineer, one Silverthorne, at the post with a buckskin sack filled with gold dust, which he wished to exchange for goods. He said he had been prospecting in the mountains to the southwest and had made a rich strike. He demanded trade articles to the value of \$1,000 for the gold dust, and being finally given the goods, departed. The next spring the gold dust was sent east to the mint and the return realized was \$1,525. This was the earliest exchange of gold dust in the northwestern Rocky Mountain area, and no more was received at Fort Benton until 1860.

In 1859 the first steamboat arrived at Fort Benton from St. Louis. This was the Chippewa, and its coming signalized the coming of a new chapter in the history of the post, and it also marked the high point of the fur trading period. The late 50's and early 60's were the palmy days of that era at the fort. The Indians came from far and near. There were not only the Blackfeet, but also the Crows, Kootenais, Flatheads and Pend d'Oreilles. In those days a "trade" was the occasion of no little ceremony. A band of Indians, having been out on a hunt for a sufficient period to have made a good catch of skins, would return to the fort. The morning following their arrival the warriors, and even the women and children, would paint their faces, dress in the best of their barbaric costumes and move in a body to the gates. First came the chief, clad in buckskins and beadwork or porcupine-quill ornamentation. Usually he wore as ornaments bear claws, eagle feathers, weasel skins and elk teeth. He would be armed with bow and arrows, with a large, round and highly-painted shield and a lengthy hunting knife.

When close to the fort the Indians would begin to chant a song. Then from the cannon of the fort there roared forth a salute, the flag was run aloft and the portals were thrown open. The factor would emerge to greet the head chief, and the latter usually presented the factor with a fine horse or with some other valuable gift. The factor then served the chiefs with a meal and a dram of whisky, and after a lengthy and dignified silence, during which the pipe was passed, the trade would begin. In exchange for the furs, as they were counted, the Indian would receive trade balls of lead, weighing one-half ounce each, and these they presented at the store in exchange for goods, which usually were blankets, cloth, beads, knives, flint steels, bracelets, rings, etc.

One of the curious happenings at Fort Benton in 1862 was a "tobacco



BLACKFEET TRADING PARTY IN SIGHT OF FORT BENTON

C. Powell

famine." The supply of tobacco gave out early in March, and there was no hope of relief before the arrival of the first steamboat in May. At first little was thought of the shortage of this article, but soon the effects became evident.

The garrison at this time consisted of the governor, or "bourgeois"; a clerk, an interpreter, several carpenters and blacksmiths, cooks and hunters; and some 80 laborers. The fare was extremely plain, consisting usually of such game as the hunters might procure, and hominy, although the governor, clerk and other more important employes were also given rice, sugar, dried fruit and occasionally biscuits. As the men were quite closely confined to the fort, the quality of food served and lack of entertainment made their lives seem most monotonous. They were inclined to be discontented and quarrelsome, and when their tobacco gave out, they began to grow sullen and morose. Occasionally one of the garrison would bring forth a small amount, which he sold readily for \$10 per ounce in gold. By this time considerable gold dust was being received from the new diggings at Bannack. Old frontiersmen, who had often in emergencies in the wilderness gone for days without food uncomplainingly and had suffered all manner of hardships, seemed to forget their manhood under the insatiable craving for tobacco and surrendered themselves to spells of rage that resulted in many fights and several killings. It was found that the man who was occasionally producing and selling tobacco had procured his store by tearing up the floor and gathering the crumbs of the weed that had sifted through the cracks.

The first steamboat was eagerly watched for because of the tobacco it would bring, and the general misery was increased when word at length arrived that the boat had been held up by low water some 20 miles below the fort. Some of the garrison started out on foot to meet the boat and bought all they could carry at \$1.50 per pound. Hurrying back to the fort with this they reaped a good profit by selling it for from \$6 to \$10 per pound.

In 1864 the beginning of the end of the fur trade was foreseen by the American Fur Company, which sold Fort Benton to a private firm. In that year the building of the town outside of the fort also began. In 1870 Fort Benton became a military post, and continued to house a garrison for several years, when it was abandoned and its gradual decay started.

As Fort Benton's river traffic grew, its importance as a distributing center for an enormous area in the northwest increased. During the '70s the Diamond R and other freighting companies with headquarters there had hundreds of wagon trains, pulled by oxen, and mules hauling freight as far north as the Hudson Bay posts in Canada and as far south as Utah. Contracts for hauling all freight to Indian agencies and army posts in the northern Rocky Mountain region were let at Fort Benton. One firm of traders there supplied the Royal Northwest Mounted Police of Canada with equipment and provisions and even acted as paymaster to the force.

In those days Fort Benton was a booming and colorful frontier town. Its population included Mexicans and Spaniards from the south, French voyageurs from Canada, Indians and halfbreeds of every western tribe, Yankees from the Atlantic seaboard, Missourians, and gold miners from California. Fortunes were made there by merchant princes. It earned the reputation of being the richest town per capita in the world.

Then came the railroads and the end of river traffic. During the '80s the town began to lose ground. Gradually its population has diminished. But today, three-quarters of a century after the fort was built there, it remains the most interesting spot from a historic standpoint in the northwest, with a wealth of romance and tradition behind it that is equaled by few towns in America.



## Adventures of Hugh Glass

**T**HE king of wild beasts of the Rocky Mountains is the grizzly bear. While seldom encountered today excepting in the remotest and most inaccessible fastnesses of the Rockies, this monarch of the wilderness a century ago was the one animal which hunters and trappers considered really dangerous. Grizzlies were called by the earlier explorers "white bear," and many were the narrow escapes related by members of the Lewis and Clark party and other frontiersmen who were attacked by monsters of this species and threatened with death in a terrible form. There were few among the mountain men who had not had disastrous experiences with them at one time or another.

The grizzly bear is distinguished from other species of bear by a number of marked characteristics, such as facial profile, shape of anterior claws, color of hair and its lack of ability to climb trees. The color varies greatly, but there is usually enough white hair in its fur to give it a grayish color. In size the grizzly averages about six feet in length from nose to tail tip, although they have often been found nine feet, and some have measured as much as fourteen feet in length. A grizzly usually weights about five hundred pounds, but of course the larger specimens weigh much more. It is not only a most powerful brute, but is extremely tenacious of life. The male has the reputation of not being pugnacious, rarely attacking a man without provocation, and even when wounded often attempting to escape until brought to bay. The female, when her cubs are small, is savage and dangerous always. Either sex of the grizzly, when thoroughly roused, shows terrible rage and strength. Hunters have often noticed that when struck by a bullet, a grizzly will start instantly in the direction from which it comes without waiting to see its enemy.

The most notable story of an encounter between a white man and a grizzly was that of Hugh Glass. Possibly this true tale, which was one of the most sensational happenings of the frontier a hundred years ago, has survived in the annals of the fur days because of the amazing facts involved in it that have to do with treachery and a man's grim fight to live to be revenged.

Glass was born in Pennsylvania, but nothing is known of his life before he enlisted with the second Ashley-Henry expedition to the Rocky Mountains in 1823 and was wounded in a fight with the Aricaras on the Missouri river. He was then called an "old man," and was one of the best marksmen and hunters in the party. Under Major Andrew Henry a party set out to trap beaver and explore the Yellowstone river, and Glass was detailed as hunter, an extremely important duty. One morning he was in advance of the party, forcing his way through a thicket, when he suddenly came upon a monster female grizzly bear that rose and attacked him before he had time to "set his trigger" or even turn to fly. The bear seized him by the throat and lifted him from the ground. Then hurling him down, the ferocious beast tore off a mouthful of his flesh and lumbered to her cubs, which were close by. Glass now tried to escape, but the bear, followed by her cubs, attacked him again. Seizing him by the shoulder she crunched his hands and arms between her teeth.

Glass was in a terrible condition and had given himself up for dead when a companion, detailed also as a hunter, appeared and shot at one of the cubs. The other, a half-grown bear, drove him into the water, where he stood waist deep and killed his pursuer with a shot. Just then the main body of trappers arrived,

having heard cries for help. A dozen guns cracked and the mother bear fell dead over the prostrate Glass. It was found that he was still alive, but in an apparently hopeless condition. His whole body was mangled, he could not stand and suffered excruciating pain. No surgical aid could be given and it was impossible to move him.

Delay of the party in this hostile Indian country might mean disaster to all, and a lengthy council was held to determine what course to take. Finally Major Henry induced two men by a reward of eighty-two dollars to remain with Glass until he should expire, as not the slightest hope for his life was entertained. These men stayed with Glass for five days, when, despairing of his recovery and yet seeing no prospects of his immediate death, cruelly abandoned him, taking with them his rifle and all his accoutrements, so that he was left without any means of defense, subsistence or shelter. The pair then set out on the trail of Major Henry's party and when they overtook them reported that Glass had died of his wounds and that they had buried him in the best manner possible. They showed his belongings and their story was not doubted by any one.

But Glass was not dead, and although almost entirely helpless, he managed to drag himself to a nearby spring, over which hung buffalo berry bushes and a few branches containing wild cherries. When he realized the treachery of his companions he did not despair, but grimly determined to live to search them out and kill them. With the utmost effort he managed to pick enough berries and cherries to keep from starving. Gradually he nursed back his strength until he at first could crawl and then walk. His plan was a sufficiently desperate one, but offered the only chance for life. It was to strike out for Fort Kiowa, a trading post on the Missouri a hundred miles away. With hardly strength enough to drag one leg after the other, with no provisions or means of obtaining any, in a hostile Indian country, he started. Upheld only by the deep-set purpose of living to hunt out the men who had deserted him, he made mile after painful mile.

One evening he came upon a pack of wolves that had surrounded a buffalo calf and were attacking it. Glass waited until it was dead, and then shouted and brandished a stick, frightening the animals away. He had no knife and no fire, but he managed to tear off enough meat from the calf to make a meal, and eating sparingly, it gave him strength. When he felt able to go forward, he took as much meat as he could carry, and finally, after hardships and distress incredible, reached Fort Kiowa, where he rested for a few days. Before he was again in fit condition to travel, and with some of his wounds still in bad shape, he had an opportunity to join a party of trappers bound for the Yellowstone and seized it eagerly. He was willing to retrace his steps into the wilderness to the west on the chance of meeting Henry's party and the intended victims of his revenge.

Again fate played a strange trick. When the party were nearing the Mandan villages on the Missouri, Glass decided that he could save some time by going overland across a big bend in the river to Tilton's Fort, a trading post. Still possessed of the one overwhelming desire for revenge, he struck out alone. By doing so he saved his life once more, for the next day the Aricara Indians attacked the party he had left and killed every man.

As Glass near Tilton's Fort, he saw two squaws in the brush and recognized them as Arickarees. He tried to hide, but too late, for the women had seen him and at once notified their men, who started after him. Still feeble from his injuries, he made little speed, and just as the Indian warriors were coming within gunshot of him and he had given himself up for lost again, he was overjoyed and astonished to see two mounted Indians of the friendly Mandan tribe riding toward him. They seized him and carried him to the fort. The same night he



ATTACKED BY GRIZZLY BEAR

set out once more up the river. After traveling alone for thirty-eight days he at length arrived at Henry's Fort, near the mouth of the Big Horn river, on the Yellowstone. The amazement that his appearance occasioned may be imagined, as it was thought he was dead and had been in his grave for weeks. He was bitterly disappointed to find that the two men who had deserted him had left for Fort Atkinson, on the Missouri river near the present site of Omaha. Still intent on revenge he accepted service as a messenger to carry a dispatch to Fort Atkinson, and with four men left Henry's fort on the Yellowstone, February 28, 1824.

The route followed by Glass lay eastward into Powder river valley; thence southward and across into the valley of the Platte. Here they made boats of buffalo skin and floated down the river until they came suddenly and with much dismay upon an Arickaree band. The Indians pretended friendship and signed to the white men to come ashore. They had little alternative, so after landing they went to the chief's lodge, where they were welcomed and the pipe was passed. While they were smoking they saw squaws carrying off their weapons and other effects. They feared treachery and jumped to their feet, rushed from the tepee. Glass saw two of his companions overtaken and killed, but luckily there was some heavy brush nearby and into this he plunged. It afforded an admirable hiding place, and he crawled further and further into the scrub until the shouts of the Indians looking for him grew fainter.

Again he found himself alone in the wilderness, but this time not in such desperate straits as he had been on the first occasion, for he had with him his knife and flint and steel. Once more he turned his steps toward Fort Kiowa, four hundred miles away. The buffalo calves at this season were very young, and as they were plentiful he had all the meat he needed, for it was comparatively easy to catch them. In fifteen days he reached the Fort. At the first opportunity he left with a keelboat party bound down the river and reached Fort Atkinson in June. Here he found one of his faithless comrades, who had enlisted in the army. The other had gone and he never heard of him again.

Glass at first meditated killing the man, but after a talk with the commanding officer, he was persuaded that to do so meant immediate trial and death for himself. Martial law in the Indian country was swift and certain. The officer called in the man whom Glass sought and the latter nearly fainted when he saw in the flesh one whose bones he supposed were scattered over the prairie hundreds of miles away in the Upper Missouri country. Glass expressed his feeling of contempt for the man who had left him to die, but on being given a complete new outfit of rifle, ammunition and other necessaries, he relinquished his plan of revenge. Shortly afterward he left again for the fur country to the west.

Little is known of Glass' later life. The records of the American Fur Company show that he was at Fort Union, at the mouth of the Yellowstone, in 1830, and was for a time employed as hunter for the fort. The bluffs across the river from the site of the post are known to this day as Glass's Bluffs. His death was described by Prince Maximilian of Wied, a visitor at Fort Union in the winter of 1832-33, as follows:

"Old Glass with two companions had gone to Fort Cass to hunt bear on the Yellowstone, and as they were crossing the river on the ice all three were shot and scalped by a war party of thirty Arickarees."

## Three Musketeers of the Missouri

**T**HREE Musketeers of the River and Their Tragic Fates might be given as a title for one of the strange stories of the western frontier of a century ago that for fifty years formed a legend of the fur trade. Friendship, love, jealousy, bitter hatred, revenge and death are elements of a melodrama involving the lives of three of the extraordinary characters whose type the western wilderness knew. Official documents of the Ashley-Henry expedition of 1822 to the Rocky Mountains, now in possession of the Kansas Historical Society, contain the facts related, while accounts of the events described concerning the trio were also published in the *St. Louis Republican* of July 16, 1823.

About the year 1780 at Pittsburg was born one Mike Fink, of Irish parentage, who grew up to be a river boatman and was noted by the time he reached manhood as the best rifle shot in America, having also a reputation as a bully and rough-and-tumble fighter without peer. Fink weighed one hundred and eighty pounds, was five feet nine inches in height, square-built and with every muscle developed to the utmost. His somewhat short stature was more than made up for by his great strength, and he was supple and active as a cat. Of his remarkable marksmanship many stories are told. Once while on a river boat bound up the Mississippi, near the mouth of the Ohio river, he observed a small herd of pigs on the bank. "I want pig," he shouted, and took his rifle to shoot one. The boat's captain ordered him not to kill a pig, but Fink took aim and at a distance of fifty yards shot off the tail of a pig. He repeated the performance until every pig was minus its tail. The feat was so unusual that Fink escaped punishment and his reputation grew accordingly.

On another occasion, according to the *Missouri Intelligencer*, while on the levee in St. Louis in 1821, he saw a negro standing not far away who had a remarkably shaped foot peculiar to some African tribes, the heel protruding to the rear to such an extent that as much of the foot appeared to be behind as in front of the leg. Fink evidently thought he could improve the appearance of the foot. Lifting his rifle at thirty yards he shot the heel away. For this he was indicted and tried in the circuit court, and served a short time at hard labor. His excuse for committing the offense was that he wanted "to fix the boy's heel so he could wear a genteel boot."

When the water was too low for navigation, Mike spent most of his time in Pittsburg and in that vicinity, killing small game and shooting at a target for beef at the frequent Saturday shooting matches and company musters of the militia. So accurate was his marksmanship that he was known popularly as "Bangall," a nickname in which he took much pride. Because of his skill he was not permitted to take part in the matches in competition with others, but instead was allotted the hide and tallow—called the "fifth quarter"—of the beef contested for. His usual practice was to sell his share of the animal for whisky, of which he seemed to be able to drink any quantity without visible effect. It is said that he could drink a gallon of high-proof spirits within twenty-four hours and still shoot with his wonted skill.

Fink spoke with the barbarous jargon of the early American river boatmen, described as "half horse and half alligator." The river fascinated him and he never deserted boating for any other calling. He loved the music of the boat horn and could imitate it so closely that when he engaged himself for keel-boat

service on the Missouri, he could fill the place of trumpeter without any instrument. He was at home in any port on the Mississippi and Ohio rivers from New Orleans north, and boasted a sweetheart in every port. He frequently announced that he "loved the wimming and was chock full of fight."

There were two other boatmen who resembled Fink in many respects and were his closest friends. Their names were Carpenter and Talbot. Each was so nearly his equal in shooting, fighting and capacity for whisky that between the trio there existed a feeling of the warmest affection which was most unusual with men of their class. They were together whenever possible and were swayed by the spirit of the motto, "All for One and One for All." Carpenter, in particular, was noted as being almost as skilful with a rifle as Fink, and the pair often used to indulge in a startling test of marksmanship that required entire confidence in one another. It consisted of filling two tin cups with whisky and each shooting a hole through the other's cup at a distance of seventy yards. This feat they performed successfully scores of times.

When the three friends heard of the proposed expedition of General Henry and Major Ashley to the Rocky Mountains in 1822, they eagerly seized upon the opportunity for new adventure, taking service in the three-fold capacity of boatmen, hunters and trappers. After the long, hard journey up the Missouri, which took the greater part of the summer, they helped build at the mouth of the Yellowstone river a stockaded fort, which served as headquarters for the parties of trappers that were sent forth along various streams after beaver and other skins.

Fink and his two friends, with nine others, were dispatched into the Crow country and built for themselves on the banks of the Musselshell river a comfortable cabin in which to spend the winter. There were several bands of Crow Indians in the vicinity, the women of which tribe have always been noted for their good looks. It was one of these dark-skinned beauties of the wilderness, the daughter of the head chief of the Crows, who became the cause of a deadly quarrel between Fink and Carpenter. Both sought her hand in marriage from her father, according to Indian custom. The girl seemed to favor Carpenter's advances to the enagement of Fink, but finally neither won her and their differences were smoothed over for the time. In the spring the party returned to the mouth of the Yellowstone, and there over their cups they renewed the altercation. Talbot, who was much worried over the break in their triple alliance, interposed and once more restored an apparently friendly feeling. In evidence of their protested friendship, Fink proposed that they repeat the familiar feat of shooting through whisky cups on each other's heads. This, he said, would afford proof of their reconciliation and would be an expression of mutual trust and confidence.

Carpenter agreed to this proposal, whereupon arose the question of who should have the first shot. A coin was spun and Fink won. Carpenter at once drew Talbot aside and said he felt that he was as good as dead already. He knew the uncompromising character of Mike's hatred, once it was aroused, and he sensed treachery. He therefore bequeathed to Talbot his rifle, powder horn, pouch, belt, pistol and wages, and together they went out on the prairie near the fort, where Fink was sitting on the ground, awaiting them.

Carpenter filled his tin cup with whisky, and placing it on his head, stood erect and serene while Fink loaded his rifle and picked a flint. Striding to a point sixty yards from where Carpenter stood, Fink swung about and slowly leveled his weapon. Then, lowering it again, he smiled and said: "Hold your noddle still, Carpenter, and don't spill the whisky." Again he took aim and shot.



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**FINK KILLS HIS FRIEND**

Carpenter fell dead with a bullet through his forehead. Fink coolly set the stock of his rifle to the ground, blew the smoke out and again loaded it, looking all the while at Carpenter's body. Finally he remarked, "Carpenter, you've spilled the whisky."

Talbot rushed to the prostrate form of Carpenter, shouting, "You've killed him." Fink swore that it was all a mistake; that he had taken as fine a bead on the cup as ever he drew on a squirrel's eye. He cursed himself, his rifle and the bullet. No one dared to challenge his statement that he had not shot Carpenter purposely, and little was said at the time. But Talbot knew that another chapter in the drama of the three friends must soon come. He realized that either he or Fink must die. It seemed to him that Carpenter cried to him from the grave for revenge. Silent and moody, he awaited developments.

At last, one evening a few weeks after Carpenter's death, he bought a small keg of whisky at the fort and asked a number of trappers, including Fink, to help him drink it. Toward morning the party became hilarious, and then, suddenly and for the first time during the night, Carpenter's name was mentioned.

"What of Carpenter?" shouted Fink. "I shot him like I would a dog!"

At the words Talbot drew from inside his buckskin shirt the pistol Carpenter had given him and fired. Fink, who was struggling to his feet from the ground, fell dead. The other trappers, sodden from the night's carousing, slapped Talbot on the back and swore they would see him through. In fact, all of the men at the fort considered the act justifiable, and commended Talbot for killing Fink, who was feared by most of them.

But Talbot, as the days passed, grew more and more morose and taciturn. Volunteers being called for to go with a party into the heart of the dangerous Blackfeet country to the west, he asked to be sent. He seemed to court danger and several times took desperate chances of being killed by Indian war parties. The fact that Fink and Carpenter were sleeping in lone graves in the wilderness seemed to dull the feeling of hatred of Fink that had possessed him before he had killed his former friend. Brooding over the double tragedy, he forgot Fink's treachery and his own act of revenge. Once more the three were fast friends, as they had been for so many years. But now he was alone. Perhaps the solitude of the nearby mountains and the vastness of the plains stretching away from them preyed upon him and made him the more lonely. At last he must have decided to join Fink and Carpenter, for while hunting with another trapper on the banks of the Teton river, which was running swift and high, he suddenly plunged into the stream. His companion saw him swept beneath the rushing waters; saw his body once or twice again as it was hurried through rapids. He searched for some time in vain for Talbot, alive or dead. The next day a few of the trappers continued the search and found his body washed ashore on a bar. They buried him on the bank of the stream.



## Alexander Harvey, Bad Man

**T**HE history of the west contains the names of many "bad men," who feared neither God, man nor the devil, and whose records are written in the blood of their victims. The fur trade furnished its quota of this type, and of those whose names were held in terror along the reaches of the Upper Missouri nearly a century ago, the boldest and most reckless desperado undoubtedly was Alexander Harvey.

Harvey came up the river as an employe of the American Fur Company in the early '30s, about the time the western branch of that concern, including Fort Union, was sold to Pratte, Chouteau & Co., and was placed under the management of Major Alexander Culbertson, who later built Fort Benton, and who, more than any other trader, held the confidence of the Blackfeet Indians. Six feet tall and powerfully built, Harvey was wholly devoid of fear, and while often he was disposed to be fair and reasonable, he had a perverse and unruly temper which, once aroused, made him a brute. As an enemy he was relentless and unforgiving.

Major Culbertson, admiring the man's fearlessness, found a place for him at Fort McKenzie, the most remote of the company's posts, where he remained for several years and in 1840 was left in charge for a time. Here he committed his first murder, shooting an inoffensive employe of the company, Potts, after forcing his victim to kneel before him. Harvey reported that Potts had been killed by a Blackfeet Indian, and none had the temerity to contradict his statement.

Later in that year Harvey was sent to Fort Union with the accumulation of furs from Fort McKenzie. He had with him an employe of the company, Sandoval, with whom he quarreled. After reaching Fort Union, while in the company's store, Sandoval turned from a counter to find himself looking into the muzzle of Harvey's pistol. He begged for mercy, but received none. Harvey shot him through the head and he died in a few hours.

Returning to Fort McKenzie, his behavior toward the other employes of the firm continued to be so brutal and intolerant that all refused to remain there with him, and word was sent to St. Louis that he would have to be gotten rid of in some way. Pierre Chouteau, one of the members of Pratte, Chouteau & Co., sent him his discharge, and in order to insure his early departure requested Harvey to report in person at St. Louis.

It was Christmas time before the discharge arrived, and at that season of the year it was considered madness to undertake a long journey through the wilderness. But Harvey, in spite of the dangers of the lonely trail, prepared at once to start on the journey of 2,500 miles through a desolate country. Taking his rifle, and a large dog to carry his blankets, he set out and reached St. Louis early in March. Chouteau was so much impressed with the performance that he actually renewed Harvey's engagement. As it was then about time for the annual steamboat to start up the river for Fort Union, Harvey made ready to return at once. On his way up the river he remarked several times that he had several settlements to make with the gentlemen who had caused him his long winter's tramp.

Arrived on the Upper Missouri once more, Harvey kept on eye out for those whom he suspected of any complicity in the movement against him. He

found one man at Fort Clark and gave him an unmerciful beating. At Fort Union he found several more, and as fast as he could single them out he would knock them down and beat them almost to death.

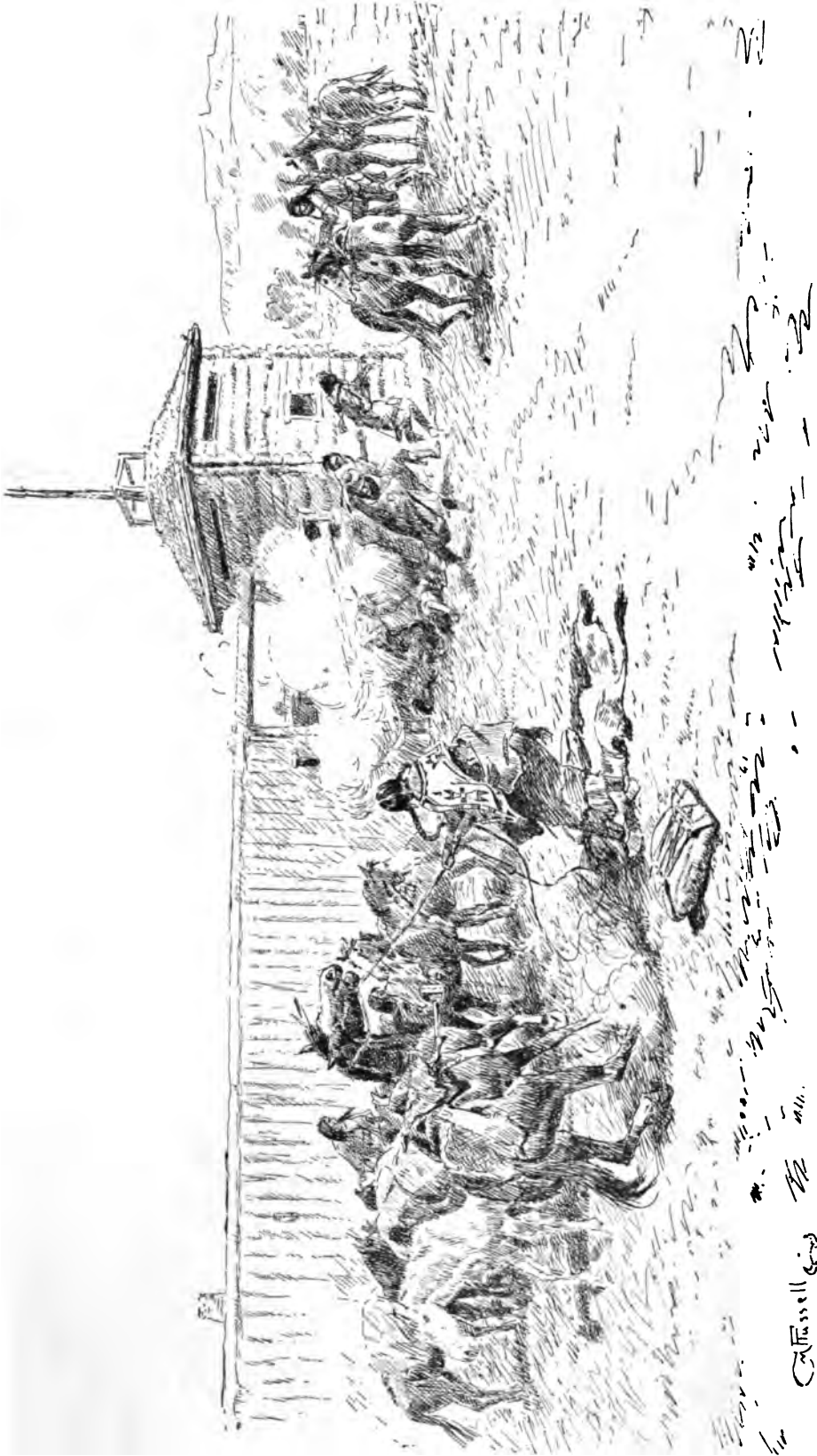
Possessing real ability as a trader, Harvey remained in the employ of the company for some years, but he had aroused the hatred of most of the other employes and there were no doubt numerous plots to take his life, all of which, however, failed. In 1841 he was sent down from Fort Union to Pierre with mackinaw boats laden with furs. With him was sent a Spaniard, one Isodoro, who was a bitter enemy of Harvey. The latter kept a careful watch on the Spaniard's actions and gave him no chance to carry out any plan to kill Harvey that he might have made. But on the return to Fort Union, Isodoro opened hostilities in earnest and threatened to shoot Harvey. Harvey, in the presence of Major Culbertson and others, shot and killed Isodoro while the latter was unarmed, and then challenged any one to take up the Spaniard's quarrel. No one dared to do so, however.

Later in the year Major Culbertson, who had been successful in the difficult task of building up a trade with the warlike and hostile Blackfeet, was ordered to leave the Upper Missouri and go to Fort Laramie to revive the declining fortunes of that post. He protested against being sent there, pointing out that he had the Blackfeet situation well in hand and that the valuable trade with that tribe might be easily lost if it was not given careful attention. His protests were not heeded, however, and his place at Fort McKenzie, where he was then established, was taken by an unscrupulous and desperate character, Chardon, who was a close friend of Harvey. Their murderous policy in dealing with the Indians almost wrecked the company's fur trade with the Blackfeet.

In January, 1842, a war party of these Indians, who were friendly to the whites, however, called at the fort and requested admission, but Chardon and Harvey locked the gates against them. Incensed at the treatment they received they killed a pig that had escaped from the fort. Harvey and Chardon, with half a dozen men, set out after the Indians. The latter waited in ambush on the Teton river, and when a negro servant of Chardon was sent forward to scout, the Blackfeet saw and killed him. Chardon at once planned a terrible revenge and Harvey gladly agreed to carry out the details.

The plan was to have the cannon on the bastion trained outward along the wall upon the door of the fort when the next band of Blackfeet came in to trade. Two or three of the chiefs would then be admitted, and while the door was crowded with Indians, the cannon would be discharged into the mass, and at the same time the chiefs would be shot down within the fort. The plan only partly succeeded. Chardon opened fire on the chiefs, but before Harvey could set off the cannon the Indians had begun to scatter. Three Indians were killed, including one of the chiefs. Harvey killed the wounded man with his knife and scalped him.

Another of Harvey's atrocious deeds was the killing of an Indian in a particularly brutal and cold-blooded manner. It happened that a party of five Indians were suspected by Harvey of having shot at some cattle belonging to the post. He took a horse and went in pursuit. Overtaking one of the Indians, he shot at him and broke the man's thigh. The Indian fell to the ground and lay there, and when Harvey reached him he sat down beside him. He then proceeded to light his pipe and made the wounded man smoke with him. He then said: "I am going to kill you, but before you die I will let you take a good look at the pleasant land you are leaving." The Indian begged for his life, but after a time spent in taunting his victim, Harvey killed and scalped him.



ATTEMPTED MASSACRE OF BLACKFEET INDIANS AT FORT MCKENZIE

C. F. Russell

*Handwritten notes:*  
The scene is a chaotic battle scene. The men on horseback are fighting. One man is on the ground. The building in the background is a fort. The scene is filled with smoke and the sounds of battle.

After the attempted massacre of the Blackfeet with the cannon, described above, Chardon and Harvey, knowing that they had started a bloody feud with the Blackfeet, prepared to abandon Fort McKenzie, which had been one of the most profitable outposts maintained by the company. They sent out a detachment to the mouth of the Judith river, some distance down the Missouri, to build another stockade. In six weeks it was completed and Chardon named it after himself, Fort F. A. Chardon. They then burned Fort McKenzie, the site of which is still known as Fort Brule, or Burned Fort.

Not a particle of trade was carried on the next winter with the Blackfeet, and after considerable difficulty Major Culbertson was persuaded to return to the Upper Missouri to straighten out the Blackfeet trade, which he finally was able to do. Harvey and Chardon were discharged and in 1845 Chardon died of scurvy.

Harvey went down the river and returned the following spring as a rival trader of the company. He was so despised and hated by the Blackfeet, however, that he was never able to build up a trade with them. He was constantly in fear of his life, both from Indians and whites. He sought revenge against Major Culbertson by informing the government that Pratte, Chouteau & Co. were selling whisky to the Indians. This caused an investigation that nearly ruined the company, but a compromise was finally effected by which a fine of \$12,000 was paid.

Harvey after that continued to skulk in the Missouri river bottom. He was known to have committed half a dozen more murders at various times, but he escaped punishment and died in 1853 in a small trading post he had built at Cracon du Nez, a few miles below the site of Fort Benton.

The old men of the Blackfeet tribe still remember the stories they heard as boys of Harvey's deeds, and his reputation survives as the worst white man the northwest knew in the fur trade days.

## Kit Carson

**C**COURTLEST, most self-effacing and modest, yet bravest in battle and wisest in council; purest of heart and mind, most just and slowest to anger, but quickest with trigger and surest of aim—such a combination of superlatives could be applied only to one man of all that host whom the trails of the old western frontiers knew. His name, Kit Carson, is blazoned on the pages of history as the paragon of frontiersmen and the greatest Indian fighter the west ever knew.

There is something in the character of Carson that suggests that gallant figure of English history, Sir Phillip Sidney, who, dying on the battlefield, gave his last drink of water to a wounded soldier lying near. Of natural nobility of soul, he was a man in all of those attributes that constitute the best in manhood—honorable, truthful, sincere—of noble impulses, a true knight-errant ever ready to defend the weak against the strong. His life was so filled with thrilling incidents that a recital of them becomes almost monotonous. From the Blackfeet country of the north to Old Mexico, and from the Mississippi to the Pacific, his name was known and his deeds of daring were told about campfires by men whose daily lives were filled with adventure and peril. People meeting him for the first time, who had read of stirring scenes, thrilling deeds and narrow escapes in which Carson had played the leading role were always amazed at the appearance of the quiet, modest, but dignified, little man. Carson was only five feet six inches in height. He had gray eyes and light brown hair. His head was large and his forehead high and broad. He was slender, but of good breadth of chest and wiry and compact of form. He was wonderfully quick and active, and what he lacked in strength he made up in agility.

Carson, christened Christopher, was born in Madison county, Kentucky, December 24th, 1809, his father being a hunter and trapper. In 1810 the family moved to Missouri, then known as Upper Louisiana. At fifteen, the boy was apprenticed to a saddler. He was then renowned as a rifle and pistol shot, and although small and slender, was of so determined a nature and displayed so strong a character that in spite of his youth he was universally respected. Work at the saddler's bench he found extremely irksome, however, and the trappers' stories he heard from the far west made him long for adventures in the fur country. When a party of traders, bound for Santa Fe, offered him a place, he gladly accepted, and so set out upon a career in which he was to become famous.

Arrived at Santa Fe, Carson determined to remain in that region, and alone pushed on to another Spanish settlement in the mountains. Here he met with a mountaineer, Kin Cade, a Spaniard, who invited him to spend the winter with him. Finding him a congenial spirit, Carson accepted. They trapped and hunted by day, and in the long evenings the boy learned Spanish, which he soon spoke with great fluency, being a natural linguist.

Within a year he had become a recognized authority on southwestern travel routes and was employed as guide, earning a reputation also as an Indian fighter.

Like his famous contemporary, Jim Bridger, Carson had a remarkably retentive memory and a wonderful aptitude for visualizing mentally the mazes of rivers, mountains and valleys of the whole stretch of the Rocky Mountains from the Canadian wilds to Mexico. In fact, in his geographical knowledge and ability as a guide he was second only to Bridger. The next few years of his life

were spent in trapping and trading over an enormously wide range of country. Encounters with Indians, many of a desperate nature, were of constant occurrence, and it usually was Carson's sagacity in frontier warfare and his personal daring that carried whatever company with which he happened to be to victory. Although attacked time and time again by hostiles in overwhelming numbers, Carson so successfully eluded or defeated the Indians on each occasion that he was considered by the trappers to be invincible as a leader and was regarded by the various tribes as a supernatural being. The Indians could never understand how this little white man could be so powerful in battle. One reason for his success was that he never lost an instant in deliberation, but acted instinctively with lightning-like speed, and the wisdom of his decisions was always proved by the outcome.

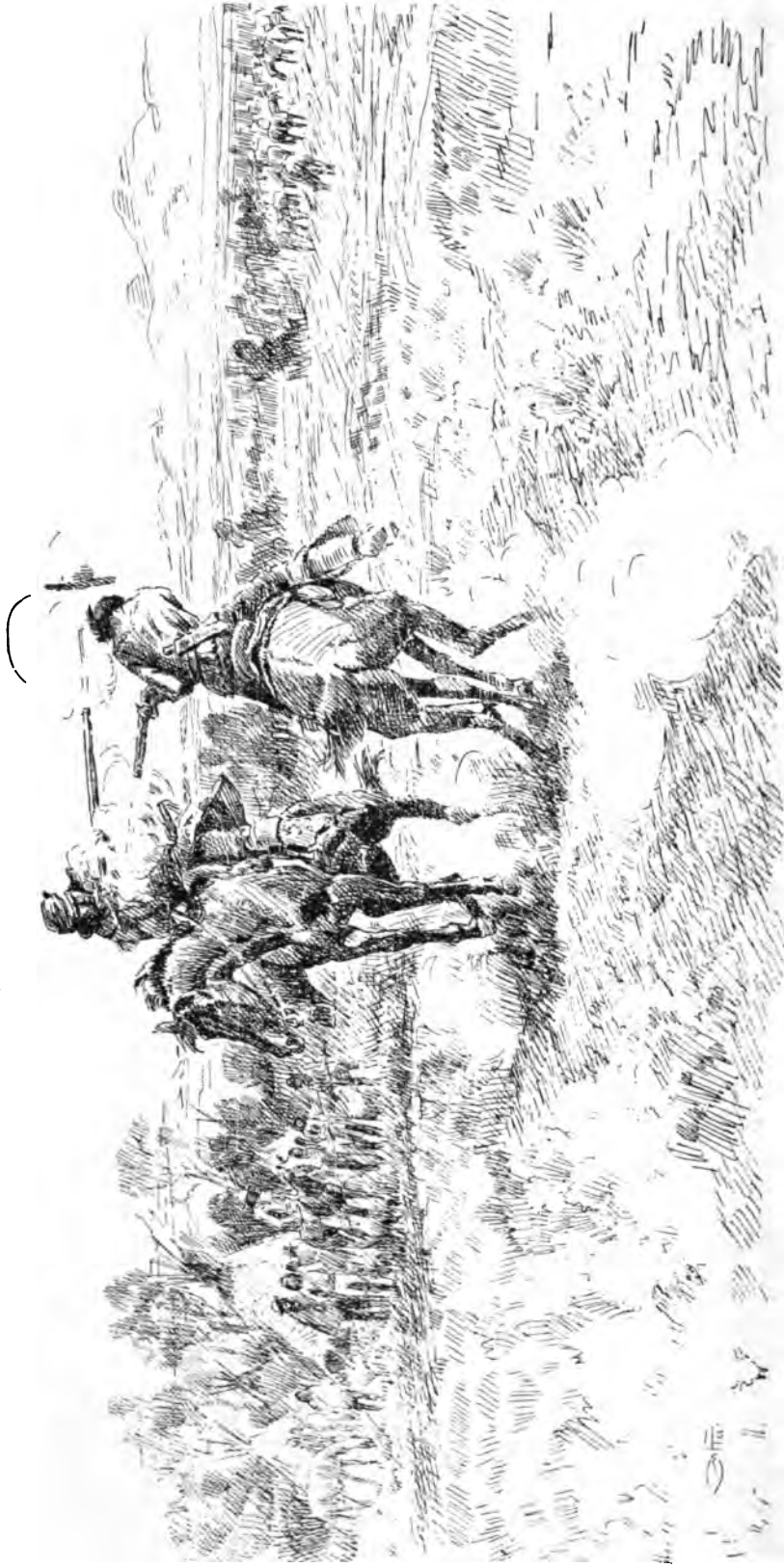
In 1835, while trapping with Jim Bridger and a number of others, a large party of French Canadian trappers of the Hudson's Bay Company was encountered, and a camp of more than one hundred men was established jointly for winter operations with a view to safety from Indian attacks. Among the Canadians was a Frenchman known as Captain Shunan, who had a wide reputation as a bully and a "gun fighter." He was particularly offensive in his demeanor toward the Americans and was jealous of Carson's reputation as an Indian fighter. One morning, after Bridger's men had swallowed many insults from Shunan, the latter declared in Carson's hearing that the Americans were cowards.

Carson quietly turned to Shunan and said: "I'm an American and no coward; you are a braggart and a bully. I am willing to fight you in any manner you may choose."

Shunan had some reputation as a knife fighter, and because of his powerful physique, Carson's companions held their breath for fear he would select knives as weapons. Instead, however, he dared Carson to fight on horseback in the following manner: The two were to mount their horses, armed with rifle or pistol, and starting toward each other from a distance of a hundred yards apart, were to shoot as they rode until one or the other was killed, but each of necessity would have to reload his weapon after the first shot.

Shunan had hunted buffalo with a rifle and was expert in shooting from his horse, so he depended upon this weapon. Carson selected his pistol and mounted a fine, active mustang. They faced each other at a distance of a hundred paces until the signal was given, when each spurred his horse forward at a gallop. Both held their fire until within a few yards, when they shot almost together. Carson's bullet struck Shunan's right wrist, shattering it. The shock slightly deflected Shunan's aim and his bullet grazed Carson's head, knocking his hat off. Shunan was crippled for life. The fight had been witnessed by most of the men in the camp, and the defeat of the hated bully was the cause of a celebration, in which, however, Carson did not join. He spent the time in trying to afford relief to his opponent.

In 1842 Carson visited St. Louis and was received with a public demonstration that he found a trying ordeal. He was by far the most popular figure in the whole trans-Mississippi country and his exploits had been heralded far and wide. General John C. Fremont was at the time organizing an expedition to explore the country lying between the western Iowa state line and the Rocky Mountains. He offered Carson the position of chief guide, which was accepted. The expedition left St. Louis, May 22, 1842, and with little excitement reached Fort Laramie, in what is now Wyoming. Carson left Fremont there and went to New Mexico, but the following spring, learning that Fremont intended to push



CARSON DEFEATS FRENCH BULLY IN HORSEBACK DUEL

his explorations to the Pacific coast, he rejoined him and spent that year as chief guide again.

In the middle '40s war between the United States and Mexico broke out in California and Fremont began operations by the capture of Monterey. Carson acted as his chief lieutenant in the first fighting, but upon Fremont finding it necessary to communicate with Washington, Carson volunteered to take fifteen men and push through to St. Louis with dispatches. After some exciting experiences with the Apaches he reached the grass plains, where he met General Kearney and a detachment of cavalry headed for California. Carson's dispatches were sent eastward by a fur trader and the scout was retained to guide the troops westward. Having reached California, Carson distinguished himself several times in the fighting incident to the capture of San Diego, and once he and a naval lieutenant, Beale, saved Kearney's command from starvation and capture by creeping at night through the ranks of the Mexicans, who surrounded the Americans in overwhelming numbers, and bringing relief from the naval detachment on the coast.

In March, 1847, Carson was again sent with important dispatches to Washington, making the journey of 4,000 miles in three months. His fame had preceded him, and he was lionized by official Washington and received at the White House by President Polk, who commissioned him a lieutenant in the United States Rifle Corps. On his return to California with important dispatches he led a detachment of fifty cavalymen and had several fights with Indians. On reaching Monterey with his dispatches, he was placed at the head of a company of dragoons to guard Tacon Pass, after which he was once more sent to Washington on an important mission. There he found that, because of party strife, the senate had refused to confirm his appointment as lieutenant. Carson at once left for his home at Taos, New Mexico, and became a farmer in one of the most beautiful valleys of the southwest, but in 1854, being appointed Indian agent for New Mexico, he was frequently engaged in campaigns against hostile bands. At the beginning of the Civil war, following the raid of the Confederate General Sibley from Texas into New Mexico, the Navajoes and Apaches took the war path, and Carson, commissioned as a colonel, was engaged for four years in almost constant fighting, in which he displayed as remarkable qualities as a military leader as he had previously as scout and frontiersman. He commanded a cavalry regiment and at the end of the war was highly complimented and given the brevet rank of brigadier general.

In August, 1865, at the request of congress, he was appointed special Indian commissioner with power to hold councils with the Comanches, Kiowas, Cheyennes, and Arapahoes. It was due to his recommendations that the reservation system for Indians was adopted. Later he was appointed agent for the Navajoes. He understood the Indians thoroughly and had their confidence and respect.

Carson's death took place May 23, 1868, at Fort Lyon, Colorado, at the army post, as the result of an injury to his chest some years before.



## Yellowstone Kelly

ONE of the most notable of the western plainsmen of the Indian fighting days of the '60s and '70s, and one of the last great scouts and guides of that period who are still living, is "Yellowstone" Kelly, or Major Luther S. Kelly, as his name appears on the records of the war department. At Paradise, California, on a little farm that he bought some years ago, Kelly is spending the declining years of his life in peaceful contrast to the stirring times that he lived through half a century ago. At the age of 73 he is still active and vigorous.

"Yellowstone" Kelly was the perfect type of plainsman, combining the picturesque appearance of the early day trapper and hunter with the reserved manner and quality of cool daring that marked the best type of frontiersman. He began his adventurous career at the age of 14, when, despite his youth, he contrived to enlist in the Union army and fought through the last year of the war, marching with his regiment in the grand parade in Washington in 1865. After that his battalion was ordered to Minnesota, and in 1866 relieved the garrison of Minnesota volunteers at Fort Wadsworth, Dakota. He then was honorably discharged from the service, and after visiting the Hudson Bay post, Fort Garry, on the Red River of the North, he rode alone through the wilderness to the Missouri river, encountering numerous adventures. One of these was a meeting with Sitting Bull, who then was becoming of prominence among the Sioux as a medicine man.

Arriving at Fort Buford on the Missouri, situated on the present North Dakota-Montana boundary line, his appearance caused something of a sensation, for although he was now 17, Kelly appeared much younger. In fact he could not make the post trader believe that he was older than 14 or 15 years. The trappers at the post spent a good deal of their time playing practical jokes on him, all of which he took in good part. He was quiet and retiring, and might easily have been mistaken for a timid boy who was very much out of place in a wild country where danger lurked on every side.

The Sioux nation, flushed with its success in ridding the country surrounding Fort Phil Kearney, Wyoming, of whites and forcing the abandonment of that post, was at this time arrogant and extremely hostile to whites. The country about Fort Buford was infested with these Indians, who made war on every occasion on the American trappers and traders along the river, as well as upon their hereditary enemies, the Gros Ventres and Arickarees. So dangerous was the passage of the trail between Fort Buford and the next army post down the river, Fort Stevenson, that mail between the forts had to be accompanied always by an escort of cavalry.

One day, not long after Kelly's arrival at the fort, the mail carriers from down the river had become considerably overdue and the post commander gave them up as lost. There was important mail to be carried to Fort Stevenson, but every soldier at the post was needed for other duties and there was none to spare for guarding the mail. It was then that Kelly, looking pathetically youthful, went to the officer in charge and volunteered to carry the mail to Stevenson alone. A group standing nearby heard the offer and a shout of laughter went up. Kelly was refused permission. He announced calmly that he was going to make the journey in any event, and was so persistent that the post commander finally decided to let him start to see what he could do. They therefore furnished him

with a pony, and with the mail in a sack he set out at dusk of a winter evening from the walls of the post.

Crossing the Missouri river on the ice he reached a winter camp of the friendly Mandan Indians at midnight, tarrying there for a few minutes only. Then he set out down the river again. Two days later he dismounted from his pony at the gate of Durfee & Peck's trading post, 200 miles from Fort Buford. His appearance there caused a real sensation, for not a white man in the post would have ventured forth on the river trail alone that winter, and so hostile were the Sioux that the fort, itself, was constantly being menaced by an attack of Indians in force. The following evening, however, Kelly set forth once more and at daybreak reached Fort Stevenson, where he presented the mail and dispatches to Colonel Philip Regis de Trobriand, of Civil war fame. Within two hours he started on his return trip to Fort Buford.

Fifty miles above Fort Berthold he camped with a famous Arickaree chief, Bloody Knife, who received him hospitably, but the next morning what the garrison at Fort Stevenson had foreseen happened. Kelly, turning a point in the trail suddenly, came face-to-face with two mounted Sioux warriors. One fired point-blank at him with his rifle and wounded Kelly's horse. The other let fly with arrows and wounded the boy in the knee. Kelly, however, was equal to the occasion. Throwing himself from his horse he shot almost as his feet touched the ground, killing one warrior at the first fire. The other jumped behind a cottonwood tree, and there followed a duel between rifle and bow and arrow. The Sioux brave was cunning in warfare, and while not exposing himself greatly, kept thrusting his blanket to one side of the tree to draw the fire of his enemy. As soon as Kelly would fire, the Indian would leap out, discharge an arrow and jump back to shelter again. Awaiting his chance, however, Kelly finally caught his man off guard and the Indian fell dead with a bullet through his throat.

Kelly's horse had stampeded, leaving him alone with the dead Sioux, so the boy retraced his steps to Bloody Knife's camp and told of his experience. The chief and some of his warriors went out and scalped the pair of enemy warriors. Kelly's friendship with Bloody Knife extended over several years. The chief became one of Custer's most trusted scouts in the Little Big Horn campaign and was one of the first to fall at the side of Major Reno on the fatal 25th day of June, 1876. In fact it was said that Reno first lost his self-control when the blood of the Indian scout spattered in the officer's face when a bullet crushed the Arickaree's skull.

Kelly went on to Fort Buford without further adventure and delivered his letters, and for some time thereafter he carried the mail regularly between that post and Fort Stevenson. His standing at Buford now was greatly changed. The Indians around the post were particularly admiring of his daring and named him "The-Little-Man-With-a-Strong-Heart." But Kelly soon wearied of so prosaic a calling as mail-carrying. His restless nature demanded new thrills, and in the early summer he set out up the valley of the Yellowstone, which was in the very heart of the hostile Sioux hunting grounds of that year. He spent months hunting and trapping, and grew familiar with every mile of the river valley and its tributaries for many miles up its course toward the Crow country.

In 1873 General George A. Forsyth, an aide on General Sheridan's staff, was given orders at Fort Lincoln, Dakota, to take military command of the Missouri river steamer Key West, and to explore the Yellowstone river as far as the mouth of Powder river. No steamboat had ever ascended the Yellowstone to that point, and the object of the trip was to learn whether it was navigable that far. This



KELLY'S DUEL WITH SIOUX INDIANS

C. Russell

was one of the military moves that led three years later to the Custer fight and the subsequent subjection of the Sioux nation.

Forsyth, as he was about to penetrate the heart of a hostile Indian country, expected an adequate military escort to protect the boat, and he finally obtained two companies of the Sixth Infantry at Buford, but he at first was utterly unable to secure the services of a guide who knew the Yellowstone. Captain Grant Marsh, who was skipper of the Key West, said that he knew of only one man who knew the Yellowstone thoroughly. That was "Yellowstone" Kelly, and he felt confident that they would come across him shortly in one of the river bottoms of the Missouri, where he was known to be trapping and cutting wood for sale to river steamers. Sure enough, the following day a log cabin was seen, partly hidden in the forest, and before it a figure whom Marsh recognized as Kelly. The boat tied up at the bank and Forsyth went ashore to talk to him.

Kelly was dressed in a suit of fringed buckskin and wore beaded moccasins, after the fashion of the mountain men of the day. His face, tanned by the weather, was smooth shaven, excepting for a slender, black moustache. A mass of black hair swept back from his forehead. Across his arm he carried a long breech-loading Springfield rifle, the barrel of which was covered from muzzle to stock with the skin of a great bullsnake, so tightly shrunk that it resembled varnishing. Forsyth questioned him briefly and realized in a moment from Kelly's replies and his quiet, confident bearing, that this was the man he needed. The two plainsmen formed a natural liking for one another that was strengthened by subsequent association, and which grew into a life friendship.

Kelly's services that summer were invaluable to Forsyth, who admitted that the important work of mapping the region for military purposes could not have been carried on had it not been for the knowledge of his guide concerning the region. Later the knowledge gained of the Yellowstone river was of the greatest use to the officers conducting the campaign against the Sioux, in which Kelly took part as a scout, successively, for Terry, Custer and Miles. His adventures during the 70's would compare with those of Cody or any of the other heroes of the plains who have survived in western history.

But Kelly, differing from the other plainsmen of his day, was destined to play a part in later army history after most of his associates of the Indian wars had long retired from active service. He was a scout in government service until 1883, when he became attached to the war department for service of various kinds. In 1898 he went to Alaska on exploration work. Later in that year he returned to the United States to take a commission as captain in a volunteer regiment in the Philippine campaign. There, after the war, he was appointed as treasury officer of one of the larger provinces. Four years later he was appointed United States Indian agent for the Apaches and Mojaves, with headquarters at San Carlos, Arizona. He continued as such until some 10 years ago, when he retired and went to live at Paradise, California.

The activities of "Yellowstone" Kelly probably cover as wide a range of time and as great a variety of service as any man who has been connected with the military establishment of the United States.

## The Pony Express

**O**NE of the most sensational developments of frontier days in the far west was the establishment in 1859 of the fast pony express line between the Missouri river and California, by which it was possible to send dispatches from any city in the Union to San Francisco in eight days. The idea was not a new one, for history relates that Genghis Khan, of Tartary and China, originated the pony express centuries before the American Indians had come into possession of horses from the Spaniards. Marco Polo wrote that he had stations every 25 miles, and that his riders occasionally covered as much as 300 miles in a day. The same system was in use in various parts of Europe at different times before the railroads came into being. In connection with the conquest of western America, few frontier enterprises can be compared with the pony express in the matter of public importance.

The enterprise was launched and financed by William H. Russell, the best known western freighting man of that day and a leading citizen of Leavenworth, Kansas, which in the 50's and early 60's was the most important Missouri river town in Kansas. Russell was an organizer of great ability, and as soon as he had determined to carry out this ambitious project he began quietly buying in California, Iowa, and Missouri, hundreds of horses of the type best suited to the work. Horse flesh in the 50's was valuable and many of the animals he bought cost as much as \$200. The utmost secrecy was maintained, and when, after only four months' work, he published in the New York Herald and the Missouri Republican of St. Louis an advertisement announcing the establishment of the fast pony express, the news created a sensation throughout the nation.

While buying horses for the express, Russell did not neglect the careful selection of experienced stage men for the enterprise or the employing of suitable men for riders. Among the capable transportation men whom he employed, all of whom were familiar with the western routes west of the Missouri, were Ben Ficklin, Jim Bromley, John Scudder and the afterwards notorious Jack Slade, who was hanged by the Vigilantes at Virginia City, Montana, four years later. All of these were frontiersmen of nerve and energy, and it was largely due to their services that Russell was able to launch his great enterprise, which preceded the daily four-horse stage-coach, opened the way for the telegraph, and, finally, for the railroad across the continent to the Golden Gate.

Most of the animals bought for the pony enterprise were distributed along the route at intervals of nine to fifteen miles, according to the nature of the country. Each rider was supposed to ride three animals in succession, traversing three "stages," and to go at least thirty-three miles. The riders were young and hardy, and were selected for their light weight. None weighed more than 135 pounds. The saddle, bridle and leather pouch used for carrying the mail were light and durable, the combined weight of the three being only 13 pounds.

St. Joseph was chosen as first point of departure for the Pony Express, and the start proper was made from the Patee House, a famous old hostelry. The signal for starting was the firing of a cannon and while the sound was echoing through the town the rider was speeding up the street on his way to the office of the company. Catching the pouch of mail, the rider, Johnny Frey, rode onto the ferry, and as the boat touched land on the other side the first messenger dashed off toward the setting sun. Thus was initiated an enterprise that did

much to hurry forward the spanning of the continent by telegraph wire and iron rail. The new schedule of mail delivery beat all previous records across the plains to California by nearly two weeks.

Frey's horse was jet black, and at the same hour he left St. Joseph another rider, Harry Roff, left Sacramento on the first stage eastward. While the event was celebrated with much enthusiasm at St. Joseph, the celebration at Sacramento was on a much more elaborate scale. The merchants subscribed a liberal amount and the streets were gaily decorated with flags and banners. Thousands of people came in from the gold fields and business was suspended for the day. From surrounding hills cannon boomed during the afternoon, bands played on the city streets and orators made speeches. It was the proudest day in the history of the Pacific coast for that decade. Roff dashed out of town and made the first 20 miles—two stages—in 59 minutes. He changed horses in 10 seconds and completed his run to Placerville, a distance of 55 miles, in two hours and 49 minutes. At Placerville Roff threw his pouch to the second rider, Boston, who was off like a shot on his 72-mile stretch. He climbed the western slope of the Sierras and pushed on across the range to Fort Churchill. The first express reached Salt Lake from Sacramento four days later, on April 7, while the first mail from St. Joseph arrived April 9th, two days later. There was great rejoicing there, for the citizens of Salt Lake had, up to this time, been accustomed to receiving news from six weeks to three months old. The most thrilling bit of intelligence transmitted by "pony" during the early days of the express was that war was imminent. Soon after news of the declaration of war came and the troops in Utah were ordered to the national capital. The first tidings of the firing on Fort Sumter reached Sacramento in eight days, 14 hours. From that time California business men and public officials subscribed to a bonus fund to be paid to riders for carrying war news as fast as possible. The riders along the route were given \$300 for carrying a bundle of Chicago papers containing news of the battle of Antietam to Sacramento a day faster than usual.

The fastest trip made by the express riders was in March, 1861, when Lincoln's first inaugural address was carried through from St. Joseph to Sacramento, a distance of 1,980 miles, in seven days and 17 hours.

In making their stages it was necessary, where the stations were not too far apart, for riders to keep their horses on a dead run continuously in order to get through on schedule time. Not to exceed two minutes was allowed for changing mounts. The route westward from St. Joseph lay south of west until it struck the old overland military road at Kennekuk, 44 miles out. Thence it diverged northwesterly across the Kickapoo Indian reservation via Granada, Log Chain, Sececa, Ash Point, Guittard's, Marysville and Hollenberg; on over rolling prairies to the Platte river and due west to Fort Kearney. Often the rider passed close to great droves of deer and antelope and vast herds of buffalo. The trail followed by the express riders was the one taken by the Mormons a decade earlier, and afterwards by the Argonauts who went overland to California after gold was found there.

The riders often had to grapple with sudden and unforeseen dangers, such as snowslides in the mountain passes, roaring torrents, terrific wind storms and blinding rain, but it was seldom that a stage was not completed on time. The schedule settled down to ten days for eight months of the year and 12 days for the other four months.

The most serious interruption of the express came within two months of its establishment, when an outbreak of Piute, Shoshone and Bannack Indians resulted in the burning of several stations and the murder of a number of station



A PONY EXPRESS RIDER ATTACKED BY INDIANS

keepers. The riders had several desperate races for life, but most of them were able to out-distance Indians who attacked them because of the unusual fleetness of their horses. For risking their lives on the prairie and mountain trails the riders received from \$50 to \$150 a month and board, the pay being graduated according to the nature of the country covered and the perils to be faced. William F. Cody, famous later as Buffalo Bill, and a few others, who rode through a dangerous country infested with Cheyennes and Comanches, were paid the larger figure.

The Pony Express lasted less than 18 months. It was followed by the daily Overland stage-coach in July, 1861. Four months later came the first telegraph, and in May, 1869, the first railroad was completed across the continent. The express, while successful in every other way, proved disastrous to its originators in a financial way. Russell and his associates lost more than \$250,000 in the enterprise. During its brief existence it proved to be of the utmost value to the government and to Pacific coast business men. The investment required to equip the line was very great and the cost of maintaining it was enormous, due to Indian hostility and the long distances necessary to carry supplies. Five hundred of the best saddle horses obtainable were in use and nearly 200 men were employed as station keepers, in addition to the 80 riders. One hundred and ninety stations were scattered along the route. Grain used to feed the horses between St. Joseph and Salt Lake had to be transported from Missouri and Iowa across the plains and over the Rocky Mountains at a freight cost of 25 cents a pound.

There are few of the pony express riders living today. Frey, the first rider out of St. Joseph, weighed only 125 pounds, but he was one of the bravest men who ever sat a horse. After the Civil war broke out he enlisted as a scout and was killed in 1863 in a fight with a company of Arkansas Rangers. He killed five men in a hand-to-hand encounter before he was shot and mortally wounded.

Buffalo Bill was the most famous of the riders in later years. His route embraced a ride of 75 miles on the north fork of the Platte through a region infested both with road agents and hostile Indians. The route was a long and extremely dangerous one. Once, after his 75-mile ride, he found the next rider dead and scalped by Indians, and he continued on the trail for 85 miles farther on schedule time. He then turned back and rode the entire distance again, making a continuous ride of 320 miles without rest at an average speed of 15 miles an hour. This is one of the most extraordinary rides in history. Another that was even more unusual, however, was made by Robert Haslam, known as Pony Bob, who covered 380 miles without resting when a station had been burned and another rider killed by the Indians.



## The Fetterman Disaster

**T**HERE is a spot in Johnson county, Wyoming, at the foot of the western slope of the scenic Big Horn mountains, far off the common routes of travel, which half a century ago held the same interest for the nation that the Custer Battlefield does today, and which, though now practically unknown and forgotten, deserves equal recognition with that other field that lies along the hills above the Little Big Horn. It is the site of Fort Phil Kearney, about which, in 1866 and 1867, waged the fiercest and longest-continued fighting, between the then powerful allied Sioux and Cheyenne nations and American soldiers, that the annals of our Indian warfare contain. Within an area a few miles square around the place where the post stood were fought two battles which in dramatic interest rival the Custer tragedy. In the first of these, on the 21st of December, 1866, Captain W. J. Fetterman and his command of eighty-one officers and enlisted soldiers were wiped out to a man after rescuing a wagon train that had been attacked on its way to the fort. The second was the Wagon-box fight, in which thirty-two soldiers and civilians from the fort withstood the repeated onslaughts of three thousand blood-crazed red warriors for four hours, killing and wounding, according to the Indians' own admission, one thousand, one hundred and thirty-seven, and thus avenging the death of Fetterman and their comrades who fell with him.

Fort Phil Kearney was established in the summer of 1866 by General Henry B. Carrington to protect the Bozeman trail, by which gold seekers from the east traveled through Wyoming northward to the newly discovered gold fields of Montana. Although a stoutly built and pretentious outpost, it was from the first under-garrisoned and lacked a sufficient supply of arms and ammunition. As soon as the first logs were in place, a great force of Sioux and Cheyenne warriors surrounded the soldiers and civilians, numbering three hundred and fifty, and during the two years of the fort's existence, kept them under a continuous siege. The Indians had between six and seven thousand braves, well armed and mounted. The toll they took from the little garrison was a terrible one, for in the first six month's fighting they killed one hundred and fifty-four soldiers and civilians, wounding twenty more, and captured nearly seven hundred animals—cattle, mules and horses. There were in that time fifty-one demonstrations in force in front of the fort, and every wagon train that entered or left the place was attacked and had to fight its way through.

There was much dissatisfaction among some of the officers at General Carrington's prudent policy. They had the idea that one white man, especially a soldier, was good for a dozen Indians, and although 1,500 lodges of Indians were known to be encamped on Powder river, and there were more than 5,000 braves in the vicinity, these officers were constantly suggesting expeditions of all sorts with their scanty force. Captain Frederick Brown and Captain Fetterman offered to take 80 men and ride through the whole Sioux nation. Carrington, however, understood the mettle of the Sioux braves and his consent to any such excursions was sternly refused.

The total force available at the fort, including prisoners, teamsters, citizens and employes, was about 350 men—barely enough to successfully resist an attack in force by the Indians should one be made. Besides this, details of troops were constantly needed to carry dispatches, to deliver mail, to get supplies, to relieve

emigrant and supply trains, and for other purposes. The force was woefully inadequate and the number of officers was constantly being lessened.

Ammunition was running low. There were at one time only forty rounds per man available.

At the end of six months there were only six officers left, and the garrison had been so reduced that General Carrington made repeated requests by letter and dispatches wired from Fort Laramie for reinforcements, modern weapons and ammunition, but these met with little consideration. Orders were therefore given the officers remaining to take no unnecessary chances in engagements with the Indians, and to conserve ammunition.

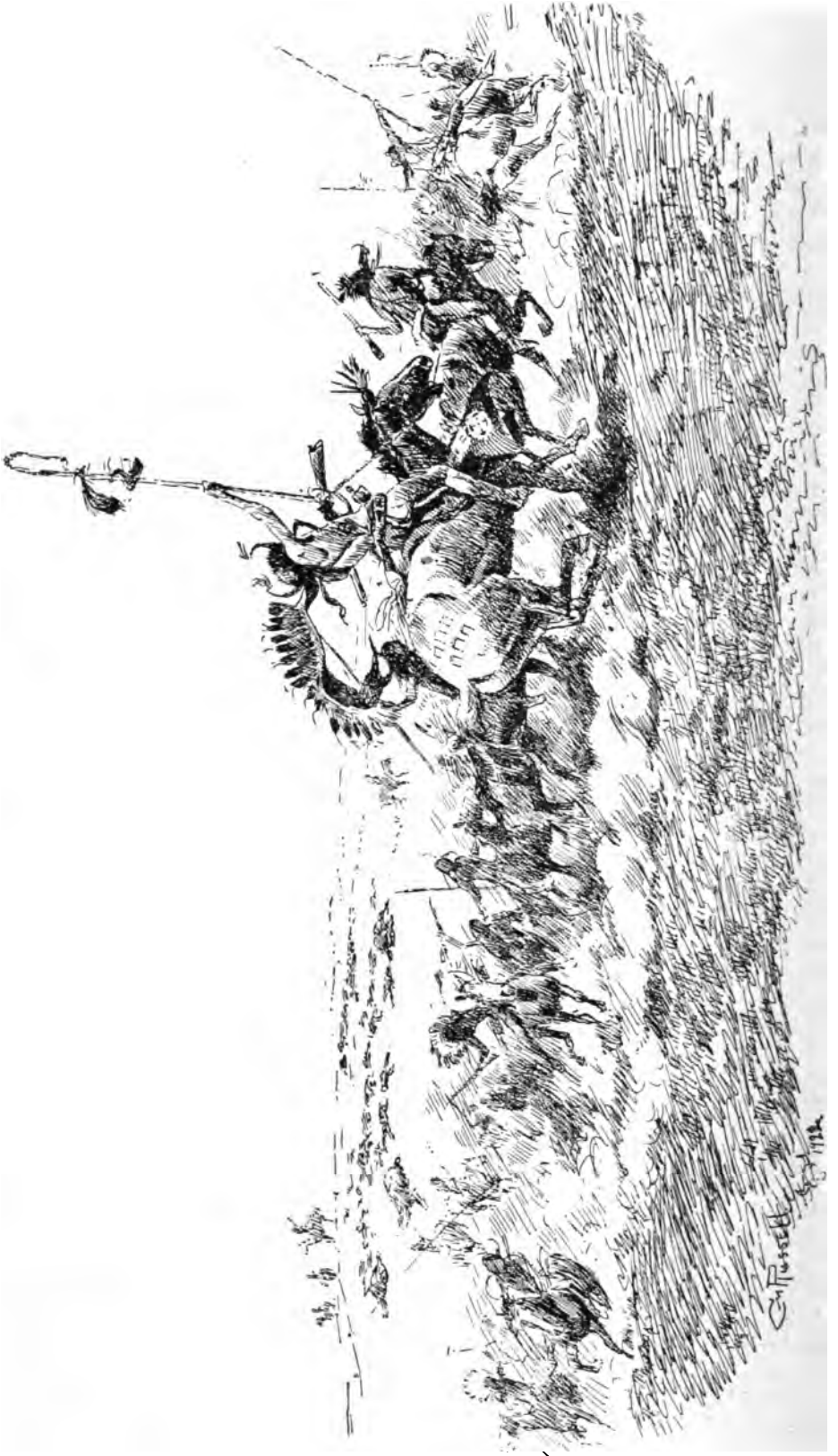
As the winter wore on the activity of the Indian warriors increased. Four days before Christmas a lookout signaled shortly before noon that the wood train had been attacked in force a mile and a half from the fort. A relief party of forty-nine men from the Eighteenth Infantry, with twenty-seven troopers from the Second Cavalry, was ordered out at once. These, with Captain Fetterman, Captain Brown and Lieutenant Grummond, the latter leader of the cavalry, and two civilian scouts made up the command. Captain Fetterman was given definite and repeated orders to relieve the wood train, but on no account to pursue the Indians beyond an elevation known as Lodge Trail Ridge.

As soon as Fetterman's relief party was observed by the Sioux and Cheyenne scouts, the Indians attacking the wood train withdrew, whereupon the wagons broke corral and continued on their way to their destination at the logging camp.

Shortly after Fetterman's command rode out from the fort it was discovered that no surgeon had gone with the troops. The assistant surgeon was sent out, therefore, with orders to join them, but returned soon after with the information that the wood train had gone on, that nothing was to be seen of Fetterman's men, but that Indians were swarming about Lodge Trail Ridge. Despite his orders, Fetterman must have led his men into forbidden territory. The alarm that this news caused at the fort was increased in a few minutes by the sound of firing from over Lodge Trail Ridge. General Carrington at once dispatched Captain Ten Eyck with the rest of the infantry, numbering fifty-four men, to aid Fetterman, although this left too few men to man the walls of the fort.

Late in the afternoon Ten Eyck's party returned to the post with tidings of disaster. In the wagons with his command were the bodies of forty-nine of Fetterman's men, the remaining thirty-two being so far unaccounted for. After crossing the ridge he had looked down on at least two thousand mounted Indians, who tried with taunts and insults to tempt him to fight. Ten Eyck had waited for some time until they withdrew, and then marched carefully to the lower ridge over which the trail ran, where he came upon a scene of carnage. On the end of the ridge, in a space not more than six feet square, enclosed by huge rocks, he found the bodies of the forty-nine men that he had brought back. After their ammunition had been spent they had been stripped, shot full of arrows, hacked to pieces and scalped. Fetterman and Captain Brown were lying side by side, each with a bullet wound in the left temple. Seeing that all was lost, they evidently had stood face-to-face and each had shot the other dead with his revolver.

The night was one of wild excitement and anxiety. Nearly one-fourth of the fighting force of the fort had been wiped out. Mirror signals, flashed from the hills during the day, and fires here and there in the night indicated that the savages were active and evidently planning some sort of campaign. The guards were doubled, the men sleeping with their rifles beside them. In each barrack a non-commissioned officer and two men kept watch. Carrington and the re-



ANNIHILATION OF FETTERMAN'S COMMAND

maining officers did not sleep at all, as they fully expected the fort to be attacked. The women and children were mostly in a condition of hysteria.

The next day was bitterly cold, with an over-cast and lowering sky that threatened a fierce storm. No Indians were in sight on the hills when day broke. Carrington determined to go out at once to ascertain the fate of his missing men. Although all the officers remaining advised against attempting to do so because they expected another attack, the commanding officer quietly excused them, told the adjutant to remain with him and the bugle call for assembly instantly disclosed his purpose in spite of repeated protests. He believed, and rightly, that the Indians would be much more elated over their victory if the bodies of the whites were not recovered, and he further felt it necessary to find out the fate of his men. His own wife approved his action and nerved herself to meet the possible fate involved. Mrs. Grummond protested strongly against the proposed expedition, saying that her husband was undoubtedly dead and she wished to avoid another disaster.

In the afternoon Carrington rode out of the post with a heavily armed force of 80 men, leaving orders for the cannon to be fired at certain intervals should Indians appear before the fort. The women were placed in the magazine, which was well adapted for defense, while an officer in charge was pledged not to allow the women to be taken alive if the general did not return and the reds overcame the stockade.

Passing the spot where the forty-nine dead had been found, the party found bodies strung along the road as far as the western end of the ridge. Here lay Lieutenant Grummond, leader of the cavalry detachment, with signs of a desperate fight around his body. All the dead cavalry horse's heads were turned toward the fort, and it appeared that Grummond had sacrificed himself in a vain endeavor to cover the retreat of his men. Behind a little pile of rocks nearby were found the bodies of the two civilian scouts, who had been armed with the modern Henry rifle. By the side of one fifty shells were counted, and nearly as many beside the other. These veteran frontiersmen knew that retreat meant annihilation, and they had held their ground when attacked, selling their lives at a heavy cost to the Indians. The losses of the latter had been heavy, but could not be determined definitely, as the bodies had been carried away.

However, in front of the last stand of the two scouts the searchers counted no less than 60 great clots of blood on the ground and grass and many dead ponies, while in every direction were evidences of the fiercest kind of hand-to-hand fighting. Ghastly and mutilated remains, stripped naked, shot full of arrows, lay before them. The body of one soldier had 105 arrows in it.

Captain Brown rode to his death on a little pinto Indian pony, and the body of the horse was found in the low ground at one end of the ridge showing that the fight began there before they could reach high ground.

Fetterman had disobeyed orders, probably most deliberately. He had relieved the wood train, and then instead of returning to the post, had followed the Indians over the ridge into the valley where he and his men were wiped out. Here he was caught in a cunningly contrived ambush.

The destruction of Fetterman's force led to a long investigation which resulted in the withdrawal of troops from that territory in accordance with treaties with the Indians, but before the handful of soldiers left they exacted a terrible revenge from the Sioux and Cheyennes in the Wagon-box fight.

## The Wagon Box Fight

**T**HE fight in which Captain W. J. Fetterman and his command of eighty-one were wiped out to a man by Sioux and Cheyennes near Fort Phil Kearney, Wyoming, a few days before Christmas, 1866, was up to that time the worst disaster that had befallen American soldiers in the Indian wars, and the only tragedy of the kind that over-shadowed it in later years was the Custer defeat. As a result of the victory of the Sioux and Cheyenne warriors over Fetterman, Red Cloud, a sub-chief, became the Sioux nation's leading war chief. As the spring of 1867 passed, he determined to clear the fine hunting grounds of the Powder river section of white invaders by capturing Fort Phil Kearney and exterminating the white soldiers. Early in the summer he assembled and trained three thousand warriors, the flower of the Sioux, who were armed largely with Winchester rifles, Spencer repeating carbines and army muskets captured from Fetterman's men.

Fort Phil Kearney had been in a state of siege before, but now it was more closely invested than ever. There was no relaxing in the aggressiveness and watchfulness of the Indians and the garrison was constantly prepared for battle. Attacks of all kinds were made with increasing frequency. The letters in those days from soldiers which reached their friends in the east described their perilous situation and often contained the statement, "This may be my last letter." Travel on the trail was abandoned.

As his preparations for a decisive campaign drew to a close, Red Cloud decided upon a direct attack upon the fort itself. He was tired of skirmishing, of attacks on the stock herds, attacking wagon trains, and that type of guerilla fighting. He determined to exterminate the white soldiers in one sudden and overwhelming attack. It appeared a comparatively easy task with the great number of well-armed warriors he had available, and his confidence was further increased by the fact that he was able to assemble his braves in the positions selected under the cover of frequent skirmishes, which made scouting by the soldiers practically impossible.

While he was preparing to strike, the post quartermaster contracted with civilians for wood for the fort, agreeing to furnish a guard for the wood-cutters' camp. The contractors sent their wagons out July 31st, and Captain James Powell, commanding C company, Twenty-seventh Infantry, was detailed to act as guard. Arriving at the wood camp with his company, Powell found the contractors had formed their men into two parties. One had headquarters on a treeless, level plain, where the mules were grazed. The other camp was a mile away in the timber. Powell sent thirteen men to guard the wood camp, and detailed fourteen to escort the wood trains. With the remaining twenty-six men and his lieutenant, John C. Jenness, he established headquarters on the prairie at the mule herders' camp.

The wood contractors were using wagons furnished by the quartermaster, and as only the running gears were useful in hauling, the wagon-boxes were left at Powell's camp on the open plain. Powell arranged them end-to-end in an oval, making a corral for defensive purposes at the highest point nearby. The spaces between the wagon-boxes were filled with logs, sacks of grain and other materials. All supplies were placed in this corral, as Powell expected an attack

very soon. His men were equipped with new Springfield breech-loading rifles, which were unknown to the Sioux and furnished them with a surprise later.

While Powell was completing his preparations coolly and without confusion, the hills round about his little fort were filling with hosts of painted and mounted warriors, numbering, it was later admitted by Red Cloud, between 3,000 and 4,000. Besides Red Cloud there were present all the great war chiefs of the Sioux and Cheyennes. They were so sure of a sudden and crushing victory over the whites that, contrary to their custom, they allowed their women and children to follow the fighting men to the battlefield to help in the work of mutilation and torture that always came after an Indian success in battle, and to carry away the plunder. The squaws, with their children, were massed on the farthest hills surrounding the little fort to watch the drama that was to take place on the lower ground beneath them.

It was early on the morning of August 2nd that the fight began. As the first streaks of dawn tinted the sky some two hundred Indians, in the face of obstinate defense by the herders, stampeded and ran off the mule herd, while five hundred braves fell upon the camp in the woods. This was at once abandoned by the soldiers and civilians there, who retreated toward the fort, keeping the Indians at bay with a hot fire. The mule herders, trying to join the wood camp party, were attacked, but a bold sortie by Powell and part of his men from the wagon-box corral drew the attention of the Sioux and allowed the junction of the herders with the wood party, which eventually reached the fort after hard fighting and some losses.

Powell's force at the corral now numbered thirty-two, four civilians having joined them. Among the latter was an old frontiersman of renown as an Indian fighter, who later was credited with killing more than a hundred Sioux. As a great mass of reds began forming east of the corral, Powell and his men made ready to sell their lives dearly. With odds of one hundred to one against them, not a man expected to survive but all were cool and determined. Some of the less expert marksmen were detailed to load rifles, there being two or three of these for each man. As the battle grew imminent, the defenders settled themselves before the loopholes in the wagon-boxes. Powell ordered that not a shot be fired until he gave the word.

Suddenly five hundred Sioux warriors, mounted on their best war ponies, detached themselves from the main body and charged toward the corral. Behind them a thousand more formed to follow as soon as an opening was made in the defenses. As the whooping, painted Indians thundered on, the little fort maintained an ominous silence. They were a hundred yards away and not a shot was fired. Fifty yards, and Powell spoke. The sides of the wagon-boxes were sheeted with flame as a withering storm of lead whistled and shrieked among the astonished braves. They had expected one volley, and then another—then silence. The rapid fire from the white men that mowed them down by scores threw them into confusion. The wave broke against the corral and swept around it, as the Sioux circled the enclosure at top speed, looking in vain for a weak place to attack. The blasting fire hurled them back until, in panic, they broke and galloped out of range. Around the corral dead and dying warriors lay thickly piled among the killed and wounded horses. Within the corral Lieutenant Jenness and a private soldier had been killed and two enlisted men mortally wounded. The thirty-two were now twenty-eight in fighting strength. Black with powder and sweating in the August sun, they broke open ammunition cases to be ready for the next onslaught.

In front of the corral, where the first force of the charge had been spent,



THE WAGON-BOX FIGHT

horses and men were stretched out in masses as though some gigantic mowing-machine had cut them down. Some of the red warriors who were wounded tried to crawl away, but as soon as one showed a sign of life a bullet from the vigilant soldiers killed him. The successful repulse of that first terrific onslaught of the reds served to nerve the defenders of the corral, but the great masses of warriors visible at a distance in all directions seemed to them to spell eventual annihilation, as they could not believe that it would be possible to defend themselves against a countless horde of Indians in a sustained, concentrated attack.

Red Cloud, puzzled and worried by the result of the attack, at once planned what he expected would be a crushing blow. He detailed seven hundred Indians to strip to their breech-clouts and creep forward to within easy range of the wagon-boxes, using every ravine or depression that offered as cover. These were to surround the corral and keep up a sustained fire. He then formed the remaining two thousand mounted warriors to make an irresistible charge while the whites were under the hot fire of the skirmishers.

The seven hundred sharpshooters reached their positions with some losses and began pouring bullets and arrows into the corral, but the defenders did not respond, excepting with an occasional shot at an exposed Indian. Under the galling fire of the Sioux the tops of the wagon-boxes were torn to pieces, but the bullets, crashing through the wood above the heads of the prostrate soldiers, did little vital damage.

Then came the order for the massed charge. Led by the nephew of Red Cloud, a superb young warrior, the Sioux horsemen came on in a wave. Stalwart braves, arrayed in varied and highly-colored fighting panoply and leaning forward on their galloping horses, they made a picture of fierce, barbaric might and splendor. Once more they swept on in the face of a terrible silence. Again, almost at point-blank range, came the sudden flash and continuous staccato of rifle fire that tore great gaps in their ranks. Powell's own weapon brought down the dauntless young chief at their head. Broken, but unchecked, they pressed the attack to the very sides of the wagon-boxes before they wilted under the shattering fire that no human being could face.

The Indians could only account for the sustained fire from the corral by the supposition that more white men were in the enclosure than its size appeared to make possible, but those who had forced their way nearest to the wagons believed that it was some extraordinary "medicine" of the whites. Nevertheless, in the hope that the terrific fire would diminish, they pressed forward in the face of the storm of bullets that laid them low by hundreds. Red Cloud, back on the hills with the women and some of his sub-chiefs, saw the attacks and the slaughter of his braves with sinking heart. Eagerly he watched the wave of riders for the second time press forward, for he knew that failure to overcome the whites in this attempt spelled ruin. Then he saw his warriors waver under the blasting fire.

They retreated in confusion, only to re-form, and such was their desperate courage that, despite their terrible losses, they made six charges before Red Cloud, heart-sick with the slaughter and the frustrated hopes of overwhelming Fort Phil Kearney, recalled his horsemen and threw forward most of the remaining warriors in skirmish line to engage Powell's men while he recovered his dead and wounded. The Indians considered nothing more disgraceful than to allow the enemy to capture bodies of those killed in battle.

The ground about the corral was a mass of Indian dead that formed broad mounds on three sides. But the slaughter would have been even greater had not the men in the little fort been in a critical condition after the frightful strain



of steady fighting for hours. With ammunition running low, Powell knew that one more charge would overwhelm his weakened garrison, for the men had reached the breaking point. He reserved his fire and allowed the Sioux to drag away their dead almost unmolested. Before they had finished this work a shell burst among them and a cheer went up from the soldiers, for relief from the fort had come. Soon a hundred men and a howitzer reached them and escorted them back to the post. Red Cloud could easily have retrieved in part the lost fortunes of the day by an attack on the relief party in the open. He was too much disheartened and dismayed to attempt it. His power was broken and he never took part in another important fight. He afterward admitted that his losses in the Wagon-box fight in killed and wounded numbered one thousand, one hundred and thirty-seven. Each defender, on an average, had accounted for thirty-six of the reds.

Further testimony as to the number of Indians killed and wounded is contained in a conversation between one of the civilian scouts and the department commander, some weeks after the fight, as reported by Colonel R. I. Dodge in "Our Wild Indians," as follows:

"How many Indians were in the attack?" asked the general.

"Wall, Givr'll, I can't say fer sartin, but I think thar were nigh onto three thousand of them."

"How many were killed and wounded?"

"Wall, Givr'll, I can't say fer sartin, but I think nigh onto a thousand of 'em."

"How many did you kill?"

"I can't say fer sartin, Givr'll, but give me a dead rest an' I kin hit a dollar at fifty yards every time, an' I fired with a dead rest at more'n fifty of them varmints inside of fifty yards."

"For Heaven's sake, how many times did you fire?" exclaimed the general.

"Wall, I can't say fer sartin, but I kept eight guns pretty well het up for more'n three hours."

On this occasion Powell received his third brevet for heroism and distinguished conduct on the field.

The next fall a new treaty was made with the Sioux, and Fort Phil Kearney was abandoned and burned. In memory there is associated with it one of the two most notable defeats of white soldiers by Indians and the most overwhelming victory of whites over reds.

## Chief Joseph

**O**N Snake Creek, near the Bear Paw mountains in northern Montana, is the historic battlefield where Joseph, chief of the Nez Perces Indians, surrendered to General Miles in 1877 and the last act in the drama of Indian warfare in the northwest was staged. A series of shallow rifle pits, grass-grown for many years, are all that mark the field where the plains Indians of the north fought their last battle with white soldiers.

Eighteen years ago Chief Joseph, greatest Indian general in history, died, old and heart-broken, on the Tongue river in Idaho, where he spent the last unhappy years of his life. General Miles once said of Joseph: "He is the whitest Indian I have ever known." When Joseph was told of this remark, he said: "General Miles cannot compliment me by calling me white. I could not insult a good Indian worse than by saying he was like a white man. All my life I have told the truth. I cannot say the same of any white man I have known."

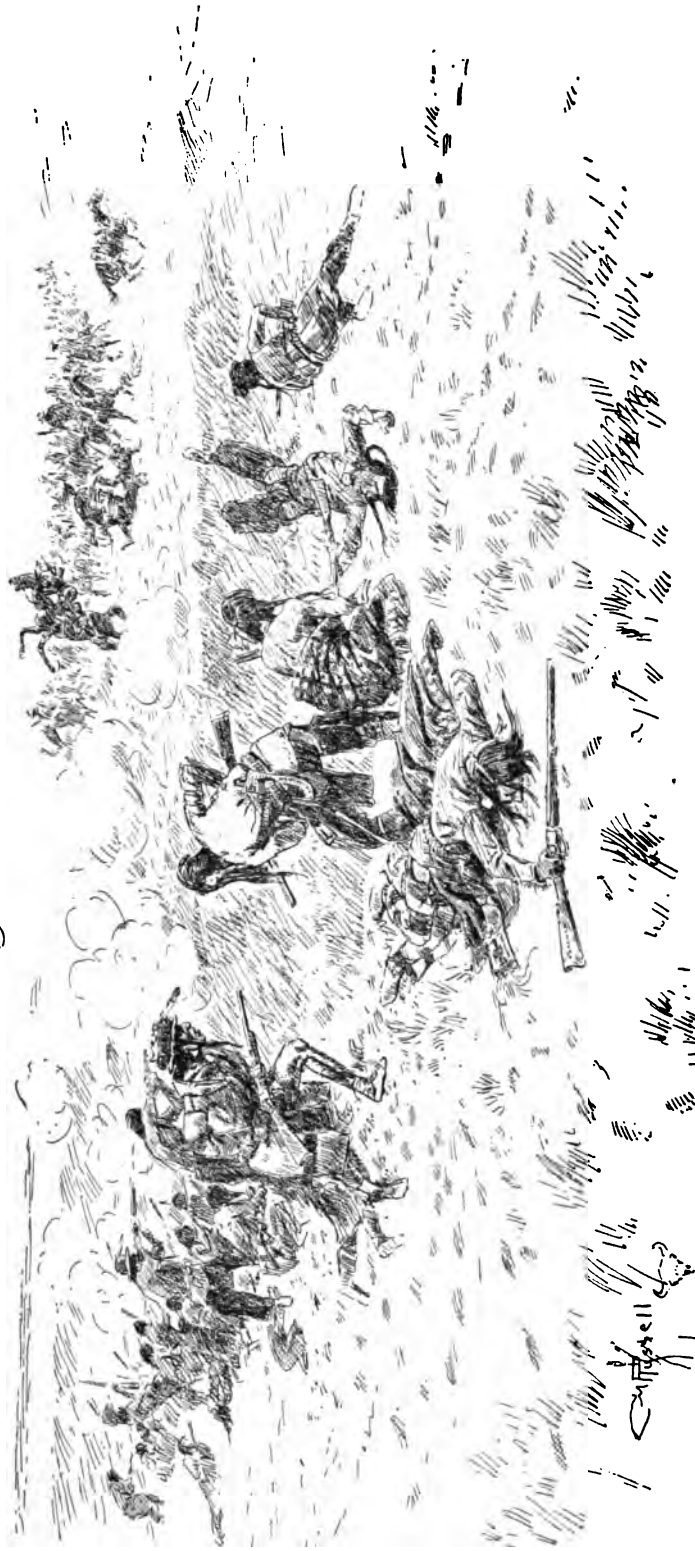
In spite of the fact that the Nez Perces were unexcelled as warriors, brave and wary in attack, determined and resourceful in defense, they were not in reality a war-making tribe. The history of the northwest shows that they only once took the war path against the whites and that was when they had been oppressed and deceived until they could stand the treatment accorded them by the government no longer. When the white men first came to the Rocky mountains, the tribe was powerful and populous and its people inhabited the valleys of the Snake, the Salmon and the Clearwater, westward from the Bitter Root mountains. Their men were brave, their women virtuous and their country had no superior in all the valleys of the west.

Of this people, Joseph was a worthy chieftain; strong, alert, intelligent; albeit disdainful and haughty at times. He was the idol of his people. When he led them out of the valley that had been their home for generations, it was not to give battle to the whites, but to find a new home for his tribe, for they believed that they had been treacherously dealt with by the agents of the federal government and wrongfully deprived of the valley to which they were so strongly attached by history and tradition.

The battles that occurred in this march, which has become historically famous, were not of Joseph's seeking; he had not crossed the mountains to fight the whites, but when it became necessary he and his warriors fought as Indians had never fought before and never have since.

General John Gibbon took the field to turn Joseph and his people back, and the first battle was fought on the Big Hole river in western Montana. Most of Gibbon's men were veterans of the Sioux wars and other campaigns, but never had they fought Indians who showed the courage and the resourcefulness possessed by Joseph and his warriors. In the first clash, when the whites made a surprise attack at daybreak on the Nez Perces, the Indians were driven back. They did not become panic-stricken and scatter, however, but under Joseph's leadership they fought so stubbornly and so gallantly that they turned the rout at the opening assault into what virtually was a victory for them. They compelled the white men who had driven them from their camp to take refuge behind breastworks and then they followed the whites, hemmed them in and harassed them for 24 hours, only desisting when scouts brought the news of the approach of strong reinforcements for the soldiers.

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THE BATTLE OF BEAR PAWS

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The fight was one of the hottest in the history of plains warfare, and Joseph compelled the admiration of Gibbon and his soldiers by his fine generalship. With the approach of reinforcements for the whites, Joseph took up his march down the valley, cumbered with his wounded and with the women and children, heading for the British line.

The story of Joseph's march across Montana is more remarkable than that of the battles he fought. Viewed from a military standpoint, this retreat was remarkable as its course all the way lay through an enemy's country, and it was accomplished with less annoyance to the people of the state than would have resulted from a similar march by a hostile white foe. As long as he could, Joseph paid for the horses and provisions he secured. When he could no longer do this, he took them, as any commander would do. But no brutality marked the course of the Nez Perces in their retreat.

Joseph had almost reached the Canadian line when General Miles overtook him near the Bear Paw mountains, where the second fight took place and where the Nez Perces chief finally surrendered. When he yielded to Miles he did so because of the suffering among the women and children of the tribe, who, deprived of the proper food and exposed to the chill of winter, were sick and dying. His surrender was complete. When he yielded it was with the promise that he would fight no more, and this promise he faithfully observed. In his latter days, Joseph was not a disturber; he remembered his promise and he kept it. He kept it, indeed, better than many a paroled white would have done. It was lived up to in spirit as well as in letter. Not only did he refrain from making any trouble himself, but his councils were always for peace. He realized the hopelessness of a struggle with the whites and he adopted the course that seemed to him wisest.

The battle on Snake Creek was a more remarkable affair than the Big Hole fight. Captain Henry Romeyn, one of the survivors of Miles' command, describes it as follows:

"Two battalions pushed on toward the Nez Perces at a gallop, but not till three or four miles had been covered were the first dropping shots noticed. As the troops drew nearer these were increased into a heavy fire. Captains Hale and Biddle were killed at the first volley at close range. Captains Godfrey and Moylan were wounded. This left but one officer with the three troops. All the first sergeants were also killed. The soldiers gained the bluffs east of the camp, but were met with a withering fire from the coulees opposite, making it impossible to plant the small Hotchkiss cannon there. The battle kept up until 3 o'clock, when it became evident that the attack on the camp must be prolonged into a siege. Troops A and D of the Seventh cavalry and company G of the Fifth infantry, tried to cut the Indians off from water, but the attempt was foiled with a heavy loss, the writer, who commanded the three companies, being put out of the fight with a shot through the lungs.

"The morning of October 1 dawned on a sad plight. Some of the soldiers had died during the night and many of the wounded were suffering terribly. Fifty or more wounded lay huddled together in a little hollow place. A storm set in and four or five inches of snow fell, adding to the torture of the stricken. In the evening the delayed baggage trains arrived and tents were raised for the wounded. In the morning the 12-pounder was put into action. As the sun sank a white flag was raised and Joseph appeared. His clothes were pierced with a dozen bullets but he was uninjured. He proposed that he be permitted to march toward Canada, his warriors armed and mounted, but the proposal was rejected. The siege continued until the third of October, when Joseph and Miles again

met in council and Joseph's proposal of a truce for his warriors with all the honors of war, they to retain their arms and property, was again rejected. On the morning of the fourth the gun was moved and the second shell fired from it killed and wounded a dozen Nez Percés. For the third time Joseph raised the white flag and this time it meant surrender."

The outstanding feature of this fight was the fact that Joseph had only 89 warriors. There were with him also 184 women and 147 children, the women and children greatly handicapping his movements in the battle. General Miles had approximately 600 troops. The Nez Percés lost 26 killed and 46 wounded. Miles lost 22 killed and 46 wounded.

Joseph had led his men, women and children for nearly 2,000 miles through the enemy's country and had fought several battles, all of which were to his credit. Here on the bleak plains, when the cold blasts of an early fall caused great suffering among his women and children, he had to give up. His indomitable spirit was broken because the assistance he expected from Sitting Bull had been withheld. Sitting Bull was then just across the Canadian border.

The humanity and generosity of the Nez Percés in caring for the white wounded on the battlefield furnish the brightest page in Indian history. The Nez Percés never mutilated a body or scalped a soldier.

Joseph surrendered to Miles on one condition; that he was to be allowed to return to his home in Idaho. The government refused to make Miles' word good. General Sheridan, ignoring the promise made on the battlefield, placed Joseph and some of his people in exile at Leavenworth and later moved them to Indian territory, where half of them died.

Joseph was later sent to Idaho, where he died in 1903.

## Tragedies of Gold Seekers

**S**UDDEN riches often lead to madness, say old prospectors. Often the mere idea that he has acquired a vast fortune unsettles a man's mind. Also, tragedy in some dreadful form stalks often at the elbow of those searchers for wealth in the hills whose picks have tapped deposits of extraordinary richness. One of the most striking instances of this kind—but only one of hundreds—was the story of Tabor of Denver, who became immensely wealthy overnight from a gold strike in the Cripple Creek district. He bought a seat in the United States senate and spent money like water. He built a magnificent theater in Denver, which he called the Tabor-Grand, under which name it was until recently operated. On the night of the opening, it is related, Tabor was entering the theater to the private box that had been prepared for him. He had with him a gay company of men and women.

Suddenly his arm was seized by a witch-like old woman, who clung to him while she cursed him shrilly for leaving his wife—the woman who had helped him bear the burdens of poverty—when he became wealthy. "Look there," shrieked the hag, pointing to the splendid curtain before the stage, on which was painted the ruin of an ancient temple, with the motto beneath:

"So pass the works of men;  
Back to the Earth again.  
Ancient and Holy Things  
Fade like a dream."

"Back to the earth again," she shrilled. "A year from today you will be dead—in a pauper's grave."

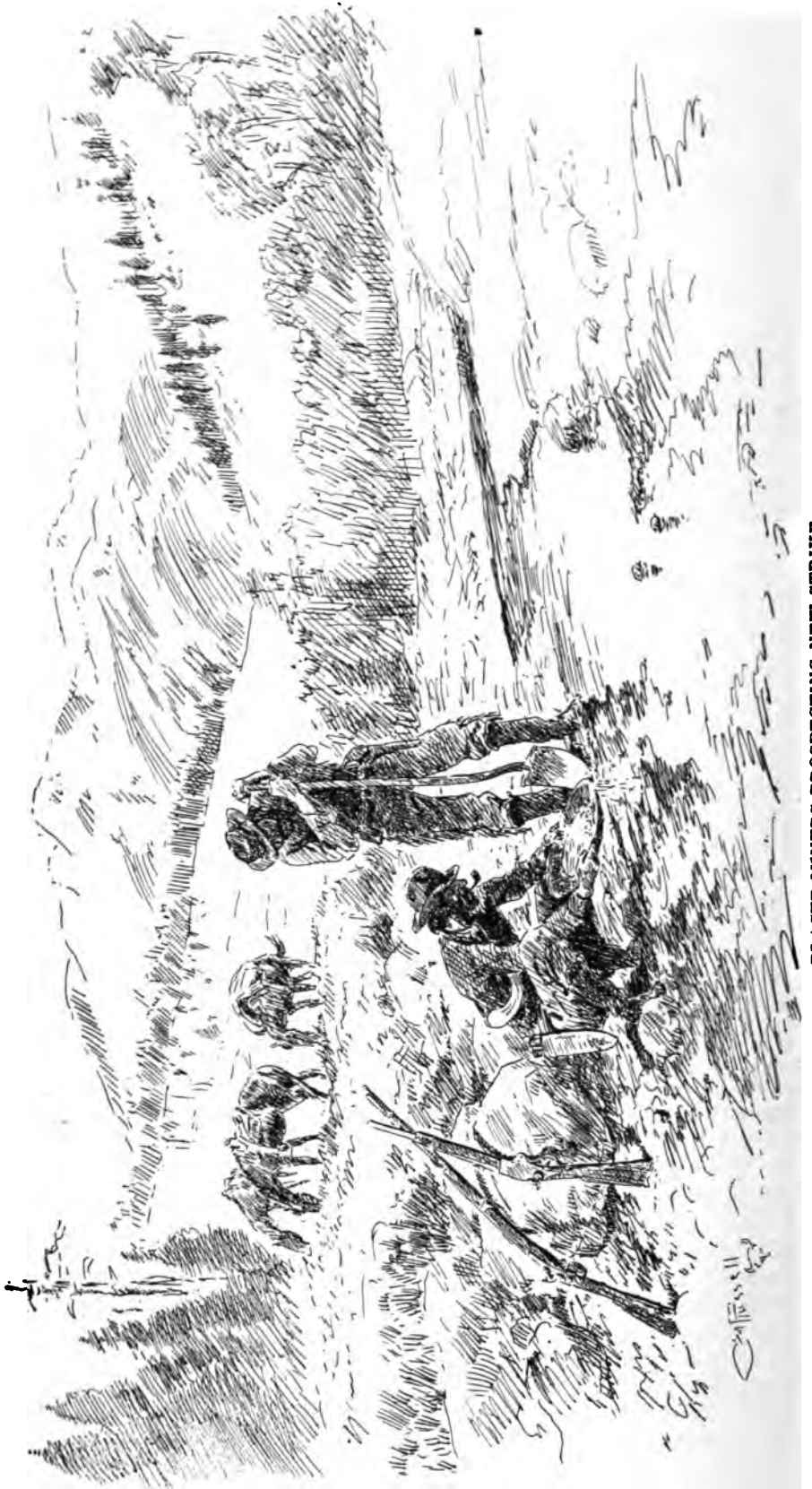
Her prophecy was a true one. Tabor lost his wealth nearly as fast as he made it, and within a year died in poverty and misery.

The other day the American Zinc Company took over the great Silver Dyke property at Neihart, Montana, a deposit of silver ore 200 feet in width. From it they expect to make great profits. But the two men who prospected the mine and bonded it are both inmates of the state insane asylum at Warm Springs. They are Dick Heidenreich and Peter Erickson, old-timers in the Neihart district.

There is a well-grounded superstition among miners that ill-luck or violent death is the legacy of all discoverers of hidden treasures. The original locators of some 35 or 40 of the richest mines in the west are known to have come to tragic ends.

July 1st, 1864, "Uncle Johnny" Cowan, Reginald Stanley, D. J. Miller and D. J. Crab, were returning to Virginia City, Montana, after a discouraging prospecting trip in the Big Belt mountains, when they came upon a gulch that gave promise of containing placer gold. They decided to make their last cast of fortune's dice there and sank a shaft in the bed of the creek, which they named Last Chance. They struck colors, and in four years' time gold to the value of \$20,000,000 was mined there. Three of the four members of the party died paupers. Stanley lived to an old age and ended his days in comfort in England.

Bill Fairweather, discoverer of Alder Gulch, Montana, in May, 1863, whose pick tapped a stream that yielded \$100,000,000 in gold, lies in an unmarked grave at Virginia City, Montana, within a few miles of where he and five companions drove their discovery stakes. Only one of the six had any money left at the



PLACER MINERS PROSPECTING NEW STRIKE

end. This was Tom Cover, one of the original owners of the townsite of Riverside, California.

In Sunset Hill cemetery, on a hill overlooking the city of Bozeman, Montana, a plain marble slab bears the following inscription:

"In memory of Henry T. P. Comstock, discoverer of the famous Comstock Lode, Storey Co., Nevada. Died at Bozeman, Sept. 27, 1870. Aged 50 years."

Beneath this piece of marble lies all that is mortal of the body of one of those adventurers of the early western gold strikes who discovered vast streams of golden wealth in mountain gulches, and who usually died in squalor, victims of the lurid life of the mining camps. On the date given on the slab of marble perished by his own hand, friendless and penniless, the man whose name is borne by the richest gold and silver-bearing lode the world has ever known—the famous Comstock lode of Virginia City, Nevada, which produced more than \$350,000,000 for its owners, and which was immortalized by Mark Twain in his story, "Roughing It."

The story of the discovery of the Comstock lode begins with the coming to Nevada of two brothers, Hosea and Allen Grosh, sons of a Pennsylvania Universalist minister, who struck rich silver ore on a portion of what afterward was called Comstock lode about 1855 or 1856, and realized that they had made an important discovery. They had no capital for quartz mining, however, and were forced to spend most of their time placer mining for gold to buy food meanwhile neglecting the rich quartz deposits.

There is a story to the effect that a rich stockman and trader of the name of Brown had agreed to supply them with funds to develop their silver mine, but just after he had sold his store and was about to join them he was murdered by road agents. Then Hosea Grosh pierced his foot with the point of his heavy pick, and a month later died in their rude cabin from blood poisoning.

Allen Grosh, heart-sick over the death of his brother, and discouraged by repeated misfortunes, at length decided to cross the Sierra mountains to California to raise money with which to develop the silver property, which he had proved by prospecting to be far bigger in size and richer than he and his brother had at first thought. But he fell a victim to what was called by old-timers the curse of the Comstock, and after being overcome in a mountain storm, he managed to drag himself to a mining camp, and died there from the results of exposure 12 days later.

When Allen Grosh started on his fatal journey, he cast about for some one to leave in charge of his effects. The most available man seemed to be the placer miner, Henry Comstock, who was working on a creek nearby. It is said that a contract was drawn up, by the terms of which Comstock was to have one-fourth interest in one claim for keeping the property from being "jumped" in the absence of Grosh. Comstock agreed to live in the little stone cabin that had been built on the claim by the Grosh brothers. However, Allen Grosh, who was a well-educated man and a thoroughly equipped prospector, did not take Comstock into his confidence or tell him anything of what he called his "monster vein." Instead, Grosh hid his assaying equipment and the memoranda of his discovery before Comstock came to the cabin, and long after his death, when his heirs searched for months to find evidence to bear out their claims to this rich mining property in court, little could be found.

There were so many claims made as to what really happened the following spring after Allen Grosh's death in the winter of 1856 that it is almost impossible to get at the true facts. The story generally accepted now is not the one told by Comstock, but concerns two Irish prospectors who were down on their luck—



Peter O'Riley and Pat McLaughlin—who had taken up an unpromising appearing claim for placer mining not far from the Grosh discovery claim. Getting little by placer mining, they decided to dig a trench straight up the hill from the small stream to cut through some hard, blue clay and yellowish gravel they had noticed on the hillside.

At a depth of four feet they came upon a deposit of dark, heavy soil, which sparkled with minute flakes of gold. Running for a gold pan, one of them tested the dirt. The pan contained many dollars' worth of gold. They had discovered the top of the famous Ophir claim, the northern end of the vast Comstock lode.

Just as they were finishing the last cleanup, up rode Henry Comstock. He had been looking for a lost horse, and now galloped down the ridge in time to see the prospectors looking at the gold in the pan and yelling with joy. Comstock shouted: "You've struck it, boys—but you're on my land."

Comstock, it is believed, had no claim of any sort to the ground, but he apparently was a foxy individual, and he had done some quick thinking. "Look here," he said to the two Irishmen, as he swung off his horse, "this spring where you're getting your water for placer mining was old man Caldwell's. You know that, for there's his sluice box. Well, Manny Penrod and I bought his claim last winter, and we sold a one-tenth interest to Old Virginia the other day. You two fellows must let Penrod and me in on equal shares with you if you're going to do any mining here."

The two prospectors had to agree.

Now occurred the first "freeze-out" the district had known. Comstock jumped on his horse and loped off swiftly to the little camp nearby, called Gold Hill, and found the character he had mentioned by the name of Old Virginia. This man was a drunken prospector and barroom loafer. Comstock quickly explained the situation to him and offered his horse and part of a bottle of whisky for a bill of sale to Old Virginia's alleged interest in the ground. After a few drinks the old man agreed and signed a bill of sale that Comstock wrote out.

Comstock later told a story about the matter that was an artistic piece of lying. He said in his account of the strike: "I had owned the greater part of Gold Hill and had given the prospectors working there their claims. O'Riley and McLaughlin were working for me at Ophir, and when they struck the gold I caved in the cut and went ahead to organize my company. I then opened the Comstock lode."

The little drama, as it really was played, was very simple. Comstock, one of the most ignorant and bombastic of men, managed by loud talk and pure "gall" to make himself the most important personage in the camp when the extent of the strike began to be realized. He had never in truth found anything, but he claimed everything in sight. In a few weeks when miners came from all points, the big man of the new bonanza appeared to be Comstock.

Comstock was wildly avaricious when mining, and as wildly extravagant with his gold when it was obtained. He bought whatever his fancy dictated and gave it away the next moment. His only pleasure seemed to be spending money like water, and most of his companions were like him in that respect.

McLaughlin sold his interest in the ground for \$3,500. O'Riley was more fortunate and hung on till he secured \$40,000, but he spent it all in stock speculation and died in an insane asylum. McLaughlin hung around the district and drank himself to death, being buried at public expense.

Two months after the ledge was struck, Comstock sold his holdings for \$11,000. After spending most of this in riotous living, he went north and prospected in Idaho, later drifting into Montana, where he died by his own hand.

## The Texas Trail

**O**F the dimming trails of other days in the old west none survives in memory with more glamor of romance than the old Texas Trail, over which the long-horn cattle of the southwest were driven from the Guadalupe river as far north, almost, as the Canadian line to stock the great grass ranges of the central west and the northwest and transform a vast buffalo country into an enormous cattle and sheep breeding range. For a decade and a half, from about 1870 to 1885, the Texas trail had its days of glory and served its purpose. Then came the "nester" with his wire fences around the water holes, and state quarantine laws, and the trail was closed to the longhorns and the cowpunchers. Today it lives only in the memories of a few fast-disappearing, grizzled veterans of the cow days. At the cow man's conventions that have succeeded the old roundups you may occasionally hear a couple of the old cattle men living over the trail days again, and if you listen you are likely to get a few thrills from the tales told, for never did peril and adventure, comedy and tragedy, follow one another more rapidly than on the trail across the continent from the southwest.

During the Civil war and for several years afterward cattle in Texas increased by the hundreds of thousands, but it was not till 1870 that the growers could find a market for them, following the settlement of the Indian question, whereby the red men of the southwest were forced to go either into Indian Territory or on reservations north of the Platte river. Then the Texas trail had its beginnings.

At first it started from southern Texas and ran north and east, the first herds striking the railroad at Caldwell, Kansas, and some going as far north as Lincoln, Nebraska, which formed the terminus between 1870 and 1873. In 1874 the end of the trail was moved farther west to Lovell, on the Platte river. In those days the cattle were either shipped in July from the Platte to Chicago or sold to settlers in eastern Nebraska for \$10 or \$12 a head, mostly on time payments. In 1878 the treaty with the Sioux Indians was made and in 1879 more than 300,000 cattle went up the trail and crossed the North Platte river into Nebraska and Wyoming. The trail then crossed the Red river, continuing to Dodge City and north to Ogalalla.

The first cattle outfits that took the trail in 1871 were described as "tough." In fact, the men had to be tough as hickory knots to stand the hardships. There was usually an old Confederate wagon with a negro cook and a span of work bulls. Little bedding was carried and no tents. The food taken along consisted of sorghum molasses, beans, bacon and plenty of salt, but no sugar. A few years later the trail outfits were considerably improved. The equipment usually consisted of a mess wagon with a four-horse team, bed wagons that carried the "tarps" and blankets, slickers, better food and—lots of salt. A trail outfit was made up of from nine to eleven men, including the wagon boss, cook, horse wrangler and six or eight cowpunchers, usually the latter number. Two of these rode on the lead, or point, two on the flanks, two on the "swing," and two "drag" drivers.

At his cattle ranch in Fergus county, Montana, known as the "Three Deuce" because of his brand, lives E. C. Abbott, better known as "Teddy Blue," who is probably the foremost living authority on the Texas trail and its history.

"Life on the trail in the early '70s wasn't exactly a bed of roses," said



A TEXAS TRAIL HERD

Chapman & Co.

Abbott, in telling of his experiences. "The boys would start north with from 1,500 to 2,000 cattle that were wild as buffaloes and take them a thousand miles through an unknown country. Sometimes a sudden electric storm at night or some other cause would start a stampede and then it was up to every man on guard to risk his life to hold the herd. Sometimes Indians or a gang of Mexicans would slip up near the cattle on fast horses, pop a blanket in the darkness to start a stampede of the longhorns and try to run them off. Not infrequently gun fights would follow and perhaps daybreak would show a few Mexicans or Indians dead on the prairie.

"When a stampede started, the cowboys guarding the herd would pull their six-shooters and begin shooting as they swung with the lead and tried to throw the fear-crazed cattle into a mill, which means to get them running in a circle instead of streaking off over the prairie. As they galloped along as fast as they could send their cayuses, the boys would sing cow songs, which were supposed to exercise a soothing effect on the cattle. This night work with a stampeded herd was dangerous and many men were killed. A horse would stumble and fall. In a flash the running herd passed over pony and rider. Next morning both would be found literally ground into the earth. A shallow, unmarked grave would be the last resting place of the unfortunate cowpuncher.

"Every cowpuncher realized the peril of trying to head a stampede, but I can say with truth that I never knew one to falter or shirk. It was often impossible to head off a herd that had started running, and daylight might find the cattle and their guards 10 or 20 miles away from camp. Then the tired punchers would have to wait till their relief came, sometimes for many hours. Of all the herds that came up the trail in the 15 years of its existence, I never knew of a herd being turned loose or lost. Nothing but death excused a cowpuncher for leaving his herd till his relief came.

"Loss of sleep was the worst thing on the trail. I've many a time rubbed tobacco in my eyes to keep them open. But some way, when you rode into camp finally and got a cup of hot coffee you'd forget it and even be ready for another guard without resting.

"The trail boss had to do more riding than any of the rest of the outfit, for he had to know where water was a day ahead of reaching it. As we were always going into new country, it kept him guessing, as all drives were made according to where water was. Some would be long and others short. We would have dry drives 40 miles long. After he had watered on a long drive like that, the boss would push his herd along the trail away into the night. The next morning, if the wind was in the north we were all right, for the herd couldn't smell the water we had left behind, but if it blew from behind we had our work cut out, for they would try to break back to water again. If the herd got away and back to water, we felt that we had lost our reputations. Cattle, when the wind is right, can smell water 50 miles away, old cowpunchers believe.

"Then there was another chance for trouble in watering a herd. The trail boss had to hit a big river just at the right time of day. If the sun reflected in their eyes and there was enough breeze to make waves the longhorns wouldn't take the water. In '83 a well known trail boss, Johnny Lea, was four days crossing the Yellowstone river with a herd because of a scare they got.

"It was a pretty sight to see a big herd strung out on the trail, the morning sun glistening on their long, bright horns—half a mile of cattle with horse herd and wagons in the lead. The silver conchos on spurs and bridles and the pearl-handled six-shooters of the cowpunchers flashed in the sun and they made a brave showing. Cowpunchers of that time wore the best quality of clothing and

took great pride in their outfit. They got to be a distinct type and class. They would go back to Texas after a drive north, work all winter gathering a herd in the brush and then start north again in the spring. Many a time I've heard a Texas cowpuncher singing that old song:

“We go up north every spring  
And come back in the fall.  
We are bound to follow the Lone Star trail  
Until we get too old—until we get too old.”

“Of course the cowpunchers thought it would last forever.

“As I said, a day's drive was sometimes as long as 40 miles, but the average was only 10 to 15 miles, according to the water. The straight steer herds made the best time for they were comparatively easy to handle. It was when an outfit moved all their range cattle north that the trouble began. The calves would get lame and play out and the slowest cow set the pace. The boys always took great pride in getting the herd through in good shape, though, and resented any slurs cast at their trail boss and the way he handled his outfit. They were surely loyal to their employers and to one another.

“Often the owner of a herd we were taking north would show up where we crossed the railroad, look the herd over and say, ‘So long, boys, I'll see you in Miles City.’ He would then take the train and go there, sit around the hotel, drinking whisky, playing poker and bragging about his outfit. ‘I've got the best damned outfit of cowpunchers on the trail,’ he would declare. ‘Why, that herd's good beef right now.’ Of course when we heard of such talk it made the salt taste better.

“Some owners new at the business occasionally tried to run their own outfits on the trail, but once was enough, for no one ever paid the slightest attention to them. The old timers among the owners would tell their range bosses to send an outfit somewhere to receive a herd and trail it to some place in Montana or Wyoming. The range boss would call a wagon boss, hand him a big roll of bills and say: ‘Fill up your outfit in men and horses when you take over the herd down south. Turn loose on the Big Dry in Montana. So long; the old man will meet you in Miles City.’ The job would be done and done right; just as well as if the trail boss owned the herd. The big rivers might run banks full, thunder and lightning might stampede the herd; every kind of trouble might come—but leave it to the trail boss to cross the Yellowstone on time.

“The longest drive ever made on the Texas Trail in one season was in 1884, when Johnny Burgess, now living at Rosebud, Montana, took a herd of 2,000 from the Guadalupe river in Texas to the mouth of the Musselshell river in Montana. That was only half of the herd, the second outfit being in charge of John Bowen, another well-known trail boss.

“There were few cowpunchers in the northwest who had not made a trip on the trail at least once, and many of them spent the greater part of 15 years traveling it. The proudest boast of any of them was, ‘We held the herd.’ Also, few of them ever quit a friend in a tight place. There are not many of them left. Many have gone with the longhorns, which are but a memory in the northwest today. A few are living on their ranches, mostly up and down the Rocky Mountains. They were a type, and that type has vanished from the west as completely as the buffalo.”

## Battles of Crows

**N**O tribe of American Indians is more surrounded by mystery than the Crows, whose hunting grounds, when white men first invaded the far west, stretched from the Yellowstone river in what is today Montana southward to the North Platte river. A century ago the Crows were noted for their handsome women and fine horses, and for the fact that some members of the tribe had blue or gray eyes and brown hair. It was this that caused much speculation concerning their origin, for no other prairie tribe of American Indians possessed this peculiarity. All manner of theories were put forth concerning the early history of the tribe. Many people firmly believed that the Crows were the descendents of a band of Welshmen who left their native country in 1170 under the leadership of Madoe, a Prince of Wales, and sailed across the Atlantic to the mouth of the Mississippi river and was supposed to have ascended that stream to the Upper Missouri regions. There, in the course of centuries, according to these antiquarians, the Welshmen intermarried with Indian tribes and finally took on all the appearance and characteristics of the red men of the plains, excepting for the presence in the tribe of occasional individuals with light eyes and hair.

Whatever their early history may have been, it is considered most probable, however, that the last migration of the tribe was from what they termed the "Flint" river in Kansas. This, it is believed, is the Kansas river. Almost all their traditionary history is embraced in the years after that migration, which took place about 1750, all that of earlier date being caught only in transient gleams.

The Crows were continually at war with the Sioux, Cheyennes, Blackfeet and other tribes, but they continued to grow in strength until shortly after the Lewis and Clark expedition they suffered a terrible epidemic of smallpox. They gradually recovered from this, but in 1822 they were victims of the most terrible calamity that ever befell the tribe, sweeping off in a single day about half of their number and leaving the survivors impoverished.

In the summer of that year a war fever seemed suddenly to have possessed the Crows, and party after party took the field until eight large bands had gone forth, comprising the greater number of their warriors and the flower of the tribe. While their main village was left in this comparatively defenceless condition, the camp was suddenly assailed by a combined force of Sioux and Cheyennes, numbering more than 1,000 men.

The Crows, panic-stricken, fled in wild confusion over the plain toward the neighboring hills. The Sioux and Cheyennes rode them down and slew the men as they ran. Hundreds were overtaken and killed in and about the village and hundreds more in the pursuit, which extended for miles. It proved to be the most terrible butchery that ever occurred on the western plains within the range of history. At least five thousand Crows were killed, a thousand of their lodges were destroyed and the victors drove away with them hundreds of horses and 400 young women and children. The Crows never regained the strength they had on the morning of that fatal day.

When the Sioux retired the miserable survivors gathered themselves together once more, and before the war parties returned some of the damage done had been repaired. The men hunted with success, the squaws tanned and sewed,



BATTLE BETWEEN CROWS AND BLACKFEET

Chapman & Russell

and new lodges, robes and clothing rapidly took the place of those that had been destroyed. As the various war parties rode into camp a scene of mourning became continuous. Not a man but had lost wife, children or relatives, but this was not all their punishment, for the camp resounded with upbraidings for their selfishness in deserting the village in a desire for glory. In bitterness and despair hundreds of the men wandered into the mountains, where they cut off their hair, gashed themselves with knives and nearly starved themselves while their wails and lamentations echoed through the hills.

Some years later, probably about 1835, there took place another bloody battle in which the Crows suffered severe losses, but this time the enemy were the Blackfeet instead of the Sioux. The story of this fight was told many years ago by a Blackfeet chief, Little Plume, who witnessed it as a young boy. His description follows:

"It happened that the chief of the Piegans, a mighty tribe of the great Blackfeet confederation, and a small party of his followers were camped on Sun river, or Medicine river, as we called it, when one morning a deputation of Crows came in, praying that a council be held, saying that they were weary of war and wished to make a treaty that would insure peace between them and the Blackfeet for all time to come. In those days the Blackfeet claimed all the territory between Belly river on the north to the Yellowstone river on the south as their hunting grounds, but the Crows, who were ever working northward, disputed their possession of a considerable stretch of country, including the Judith Basin and the prairie lying north as far as the Missouri. The consequence was that the two tribes had been for many years engaged in continual warfare, which was extremely costly to each, as they both were warriors of the first order and loved a fight.

"To the proposal of the Crow chief the head man of the Blackfeet readily assented, and he stated that on the morrow everything would be arranged for the council, which was to be an assembly of the leading chiefs of both nations.

"The council began and proceeded without a sign of hostility. Many orators of both tribes spoke eloquently, and it was determined that a course should be pursued that would make the Crows and Blackfeet friends, instead of enemies.

"Finally a treaty was arranged to the satisfaction of all, and the council adjourned to give place to feasting and dancing during the night, and to give time for the great Blackfeet medicine man, Skoon-a-taps-e-guan, or 'the Strong Man,' to arrive and be present at the final agreement. The feasting and merriment continued and the best of feeling existed between the ancient enemies as they awaited the coming of the Strong Man.

From time to time stragglers from the main Crow camp dropped in, and occasionally a belated party of Blackfeet would arrive. With one of these parties came an old Blackfeet woman, who sought out the chief and told him that she had found a bundle of Crow moccasins hidden in the bushes along the river, and in them she had found a freshly taken Blackfeet scalp. The Blackfeet chief quietly went out around the Crow camp, and soon was amazed to see, dangling from the neck of a Crow brave, the sun glass of the Strong Man, which the latter had secured some time before from a Hudson Bay trapper and used for lighting his pipe. The chief knew the glass and was certain that it belonged to the Strong Man, for whom he had been waiting so anxiously. He felt sure, too, that the Strong Man would never give his consent to a treaty of peace with the Crows.

"Going back to the council lodge, therefore, he told the Crows that it would be impossible for him or his people to sign the treaty of peace until the Strong



Man had given his consent, and further, until such consent was given, they would be considered enemies. Having thus delivered himself, he walked out, followed by several of the leading men of both tribes, who inquired the reason for thus breaking up the council. His only answer was to the Crows, whom he told to go to their camp and prepare for war.

"Later he called a council of Blackfeet chiefs, informing them of the murder of their medicine man and of the turn affairs had taken, and plans for action against the Crows were made.

"The council having been ended so suddenly, the Crows felt that it would be good policy to place as great a distance between the two camps as possible. They therefore hastily moved their camp down to what used to be known as the breaks of Sun river, some fifteen miles above where the village of Sun River now stands. Here they threw up fortifications somewhat after the manner of white soldiers and prepared to stand off the Blackfeet if pursued.

"The Blackfeet, on the other hand, sent runners to the different camps. When night came the host of Blackfeet warriors already assembled was increased by another thousand, and all night could be heard the constant hoof beats of war horses galloping to the council camp. The particulars of the murder of the Strong Man had been learned by several of the outside camps about the time the chief had discovered it. It seemed that the Strong Man had received the summons when it first went out and had immediately set forth, accompanied by his assistant. When they were a few miles from the council camp they were set upon as they were lighting their pipes, by a party of Crows. The Strong Man received his death wound from the first blow, but his companion was only stunned, and he recovered in time to see the murderous Crows making off with his scalp and that of the Strong Man. Knowing that to stir or to show any sign of life would be to bring sudden death, he lay quiet for a long time, not even daring to raise his hand to his aching head, from which his scalp had been torn. After lying thus for some time, he gathered strength to rise and stagger off to a Blackfeet camp.

"The next morning the Blackfeet war chief decided to pursue and attack the Crows, scouts having learned of their whereabouts and of their preparations for battle. Five thousand Blackfeet started down the valley and suddenly fell on the Crows, driving their outposts back into the trenches. Then commenced one of the bloodiest battles ever fought between two Indian tribes.

"The Blackfeet were constantly being reinforced by small parties of warriors who arrived from distant points, and while they were outnumbered by the Crows in the beginning, their strength was almost maintained in spite of their heavy losses.

"For two days the fight continued, the Crows giving ground all the time slowly. Twelve miles west of the present city of Great Falls they made their last stand, and here was the scene of the hardest fighting. When the last charge of the Blackfeet had been made the ground was heaped up with the killed and wounded of both tribes. When the Crows finally broke from their cover the Blackfeet were too badly crippled to follow them."



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