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31/  
"BUFFALO BILL,"

AND HIS

# Adventures in the West

BY

NED BUNTLINE.  
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**KITTY STOOD WITH HER ARMS AKIMBO, LOOKING HIM SQUARE  
IN THE FACE. (Page 96.)**

*Frontispiece.*



# BUFFALO BILL.

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## CHAPTER I.

AN oasis of green wood on Kansas prairie—a bright stream shining like liquid silver in the moonlight—a log house built under the limbs of great trees—within this humble home a happy group. This is my first picture.

Look well on the leading figure in that group. You will see him but this once, yet on his sad fate hinges all the wild and fearful realities which are to follow, drawn, to a very great extent, not from imagination, but from life itself.

A noble-looking, white-haired man sits by a rough table, reading the Bible aloud. On stools by his feet sit two beautiful little girls—his twin daughters—not more than ten years of age, while a noble boy, twelve or thirteen, stands by the back of the chair where sits the handsome, yet matronly-looking mother.

It is the hour for family prayer before retiring for the night, and Mr. Cody, the Christian as well as

patriot, always remembers it in the heart of his dear home.

He closes the holy book, and is about to kneel and ask Heaven to bless and protect him and his dear ones.

Hark! The sound of horses galloping with mad speed towards his house falls upon his ear.

"Is it possible there is another Indian alarm?" he says, inquiringly.

Alas! worse than red savages are riding in hot haste toward that door.

"Hallo—the house!" is shouted loudly, as a large cavalcade of horsemen halt before the door.

"What is wanted, and who are ye?" asked the good man, as he threw wide open the door and stood upon its threshold.

"You are wanted, you black-hearted nigger-worshipper, and I—Colonel M'Kandlas—have come to fetch you! And there's the warrant!"

As the ruffian leader of the band shouted these words, the pistol already in his hands was raised, levelled, fired, and the father, husband and Christian fell dead before his horror-stricken family.

"If them gals was a little older—but never mind, boys, this will be a lesson for the sneaks that come upon the Border—let's be off, for there's plenty more work to do before daylight!" continued the wretch, turning the head of his horse to ride away.

"Stop!"

It was but a single word—spoken, too, by a boy whose blue eyes shone wildly in a face as white as

new-fallen snow, and full as cold—spoken as he stood erect over the body of his dead father, weaponless and alone.

Yet that ruffian—aye, and all of his mad, reckless crew—stopped as if a mighty spell was laid upon them.

"*You*, Jake M'Kandlas, have murdered my father! You, base cowards, who saw him do this dark deed, spoke no word to restrain him. I am only little Bill, his son, but as God in heaven hears me now, I will kill every father's son of you before the beard grows on my face!"

"Hear the little rooster crow. He'll fight when his spurs grow, if we don't cut his comb now," cried the leader, with a mocking laugh, and he raised his pistol once more.

"Monster, you have robbed me of a husband; you shall not kill my boy," shrieked the mother, as she sprang forward and drew her son up to her bosom.

"Colonel, there's a big gang of men comin' over the prairie. We'd better git," cried a scout, riding in at this moment.

"Aye! For I don't want to kill a woman if I can help it. Column to the right, boys, and follow me."

In a minute, at full speed, the party dashed away after their leader, and the wretched family were left alone with the dead.

Frozen with terror and awe, the beautiful twins, Lillie and Lottie, crept out to the doorway, where their mother and brother knelt over the stiffening

form of him who had been so good and kind—their dear father.

Oh, what a picture! Grief was still. Nor sob, nor tear, not even a moan arose. They were dumb with agony—paralyzed with a sense of utter bereavement.

They scarcely raised their heads as a noble-looking officer, in the United States uniform, rode up, followed by a body of cavalry.

"Who has done this foul murder?" he cried, as, springing from his horse, he advanced to the mournful group.

"Jake M'Kandlas, and may God, in His just vengeance spare him for *my* hand!" said that pale boy, in a tone so low, so deep, and with a look so wildly stern, that the officer looked at him in wonder.

"Heavens, how savage!" muttered the officer, as he marked the look of ferocity which accompanied the words.

"Tell me, madam, if you please, how this occurred, and which way the murderer or murderers went. My name is Sumner, and I serve a government which will avenge, if it cannot always prevent outrage," continued the officer, addressing the poor widow.

Tears and sobs now came to her relief, and amid them the sad tale was told.

The officer detailed a small party to assist her in the last sad offices for the dead; but himself, heading the rest, dashed away over the prairie, in the hope to catch and punish the murderers. Vain hope!

Mounted on the best stock in the land—the most of it stolen—M'Kandlas and his party were already miles away, speeding to coverts known to but few, and those few of their own kind.

All this occurred in those dark days when the struggles on the border were the theme of conversation and dispute all over our land, and it was but one of a thousand, or even more, such cases—*real*, terrible, and unnatural as it may seem.

"Mother, don't cry any more," said little Bill, when, with his two young sisters, he stood beside the new-made grave. "Tears will not bring him to life. You have these to look out for at home. You need all your strength now."

"You are not going away, William?"

"Not far, mother—not far. But there were thirty of them beside old M'Kandlas, and it may take me some time to kill them *all*."

So quietly, almost gently, did the boy speak, that one would hardly think his young mind capable of studying out, his small hand of doing such deeds as he contemplated.

Ah! little do the thoughtless know how character is formed, how destiny shapes our course, how circumstances forces us, as it were, upon a tide from which we may not turn.

In years a boy, in mind, in a preparation for a wild, desperate, eventful life, already a *man*.

Such was the hero of our story then, and now our prefatory chapter ended, we must leap over a lapse of years and spring into the full interest of our story.



## CHAPTER II.

IT is now 1861. The old log house has disappeared, but in the same noble grove a pretty white cottage is seen. Around it trellised bowers of vines and climbing roses, a lovely flower garden, and in the foreground not far away, are fine grain fields, broad acres, well stocked with sheep, cattle, and horses. Barns and haystacks all tell a story of good farming and profitable results.

On the embowered porch of this cottage sits the widow, still in her mourning garb, worn for him whose death we pictured in the first chapter, and near her stand two lovely girls—the twin sisters, Lillie and Lottie, now in the early bloom of beautiful womanhood.

They look alike, are dressed alike, and are exceedingly beautiful.

I will not waste time in description—just imagine hazel eyes, dark brown hair, slightly brunette complexion, figure of perfect symmetry, and you have them before you.

Lillie held a letter in her hand which the mounted mail carrier had left as he swept by, adding in hurried words:

“The war is begun—the rebels are fortifying posts all over the South and threaten Washington from Manassas.”

Lillie's loving eyes sparkled as she read the letter, and she cried out:

"Oh, mamma, mamma! brother is coming home! He says he will be here before the sun sets on the twenty-fifth! The letter is from Fort Kearney, and has been long in coming."

"Is not to-day the twenty-fifth?" asked Lottie.

"To be sure it is, and he will be here. Our William is wild, but he never tells a falsehood. He is too proud for that! Heaven bless him!" said the mother, in a low, earnest tone.

"He is not coming alone," said Lillie. "One whom he calls 'Wild Bill'—I wonder if he has become tame himself—he speaks of as a very dear friend, one who has three times saved his life. The other one he calls Dave Tutt, says he is handsome and brave, but I know he doesn't like him, for he doesn't speak of him as being good at heart and true as steel, as he does of the other."

"It lacks scarce a half hour of sunset," said the mother. "Tell our good Kitty Muldoon to put on the tea-kettle and hasten preparations for supper. Tell her how many will be here, and to let nothing be lacking. Thanks to my good son and that Providence which has smiled on his efforts, our home is ready to welcome him to comfort when he comes!"

Lottie called out in her clear, ringing voice:

"Kitty Muldoon!"

"Here, miss, here fresh as a daisy and three times as natural," cried a plump, cherry-cheeked young girl, with just enough of the brogue on her tongue

to tell most likely that sweet Erin's Isle was her birthplace. Dressed as well as the sisters, she looked more like a companion than a servant.

"And what is it, me darling Miss Lottie, that Kitty can be after doing to plase you?"

"Mamma wants you to hurry and get the supper, good Kitty, for my brother and two of his friends are coming here to-night."

"The young master and two of his friends?"

"Yes, Kitty—so make haste!"

"Are they young men, Miss Lottie?"

"Yes, to be sure they are."

"And are they half as handsome as the young master and as tinder of heart as he is."

"Oh! botheration, I expect so. What is it to you, Kitty."

"Sure, miss, to me 'tis nothing. But to you and swate Miss Lillie, it may be something, since it's a beau apiece for yez, if they're but worth the looking at and spaking wid."

"Oh you good-for-nothing—"

Kitty did not wait to hear the rest of the not angry expletive, but ran laughing away to carry out the wishes of her mistress.

At the same instant Lillie, who had been glancing through an avenue which led westward in the grove, cried out:

"They are coming! They are coming!"

And three minutes later, their horses frothy and hot, three riders at full speed dashed up to the gate fronting the cottage.

“Oh brother! brother!” cried the two sisters, joyously, and all heedless of the stranger eyes now looking on them, they rushed out to embrace and kiss him.

Buffalo Bill, for this was he, had learned to hide all his feelings, but with a gentle tenderness he shook himself out of their embraces, and, presenting his two friends by name, hurried on to meet the dear mother, who, with glistening eyes, waited to greet her idol and her pride.

“My good mother!” was all he said, as he pressed his manly lips to her white forehead.

“My dear son!” was all she said, but pages would not describe the reverence in her tone, or the undying love in her look.

Bill now presented his friends in more form to his mother than he had deemed it necessary in the case of his sisters.

“This, mother,” said he, presenting a young man who, in form and appearance, resembled himself very closely, though he was an inch taller, and hardly so muscular, “this is my mate—this is Bill Hitchcock, the best friend I ever had, or ever will have, outside of our own family. Three times has he saved me from being wiped out. Once by the Ogallalas, once when I was taken with the cramps in the ice-cold Platte, last winter, and once when old Jake M’Kandlas and his gang had a sure set on me. He and I will sink or swim in the same river, and that’s a safe bet. Bill, that’s my mother, and a better never trod the footstool!”

Wild Bill, with a natural grace, bent his proud head, and took the hand of the lady, saying, in a tremulous tone :

"I'm glad to see you, ma'am, for I've a good old mother that I haven't seen this many a day, and this rayther brings her up afore me !"

"And this other," continued Bill, "is Dave Tutt. He is good on a hunt, death on the reds, and as smart as bordermen are made now-a-days. Now, boys, you're all acquainted, make yourselves at home. The darkey out there has got the horses, and he'll see them all right. I know that mother will soon have a good old supper for us."

"Yes, Kitty is getting it ready as fast as she can, and I'll go and help her," said Lillie, who did not like the wild, passionate gaze which Dave Tutt seemed to fix upon her.

I don't like to use time or space for description, but as the three men now before us are *real*, not fictitious characters, I think it due to them and the reader to paint pen-portraits of the trio.

Three more perfect men, in point of personal beauty, never trod the earth.

Wild Bill, six feet and one inch in height, straight as an ash, broad in shoulder, round and full in chest, slender in the waist, swelling out in muscular proportions at hips and thighs, with tapering limbs, small hands and feet, his form was a study. His face, open and clean, had regular features, the nose slightly aquiline. His large bright eyes, now soft and tender in expression, were a bluish gray in color,

shaded by lashes which often dropped over his bronzed cheek as he looked down, somewhat confused in female society, to which he was unused. His long brown hair fell in wavy masses over his shoulders, but it was fine, soft and glossy as silk.

The same picture will do for Buffalo Bill, only this difference noted. The eyes of the latter were nearly a blue in color, his height one inch less, and his hair a little more wavy and a shade lighter.

Dave Tutt, nearly of the same height, was equally well formed, but here the resemblance ceased.

His eyes were black as jet and deeply set, though his features were perfect, and, when he chose, his expression soft and winning. His hair, curling slightly, was black and glossy. But with all his beauty, there was a sensual expression about his mouth so utterly different from that in the other two, and a fierce, passionate longing in his eyes, which made the two girls, instinctive in their purity, shrink from him.

Lillie, toward whom his glances seemed from the first to be directed, especially felt, and scarcely could conceal, an aversion.

Now this most unpleasant picturing duty is over, and I can heave ahead on my story.

Pretty Kitty Muldoon was busy setting the table in the dining-room when Buffalo Bill, unobserved, came slyly in and, bending his tall form over her shoulder, suddenly touched his lips to hers.

Bounding aside, quick as a fawn with a bullet in its heart, she wheeled and brought the palm of her fat,

chubby hand into contact with his cheek with a force that made him see stars, and brought unbidden tears into his laughing eyes.

"Bad 'cess to yez, Master Bill, and it's at yer ould thricks ye are!" cried Kitty, laughing at the woful look he put on. "Sure haven't ye sisters as swate as honey, purtier than the wild roses, to be kissin' wid, instead of slobberin' over a bit of a wild Irish girl like meself!"

"Why, Kitty, I hadn't seen you for so long, I couldn't help it. Thunder and whip-stalks, but you hit hard! My cheek tingles yet!"

"Faith, then, it'll make your memory better, sir, but maybe I did hit a little harder than I had rason for, sir, for you're a good son and brother, and I know you'd cut your right hand off before you'd harm a poor girl like me, or see harm come to her."

"That is so, Kitty, that is so, and now here's something to wear I brought from the traders. It's a new dress, and if it isn't just like those I brought for mother and sisters, it is just as good and cost as much."

"Thank ye, Master Bill—thank ye for your kind thought of the poor girl that has no one to think after her but you and yours. Sure the angels sent me here when I came, and I hope they'll keep me here till I die, for it's like heaven to work for them that's so good to me. But call your friends, Master Bill, for the supper is all ready, and it's nice enough for a king and a king's people, sure!"

## CHAPTER III.

THERE was no piano in that Kansas cottage, but two sweeter voices, alto and soprano, never thrilled a human ear than filled the sitting-room with melody as Lillie and Lottie sang song after song to please their brother and his guests after night set in.

The good mother with her knitting, and Kitty already engaged in sewing on her new dress, listened while they worked. The young men smoked, for in the Far West the pipe seems *apropos* everywhere, and from time to time expressed themselves warmly in praise of the treat they were receiving.

The night was lovely. A gentle breeze rustled through the leafy trees, the moon shone out brightly, though passing clouds at times obscured it for a minute or two, the air was soft and balmy. In through the open window came the delicious perfume of rose and honeysuckle, taking away at least a part of the tobacco-taint in the atmosphere.

That sweetest of all songs, more dear to the writer than any song ever sung, "Thy bright smile haunts me still," had just been sung by the twins, when Mrs. Cody, whose face was toward the window, screamed out in sudden terror, and rose to her feet with a face so deathly pale that it seemed as if she was death-stricken.

"What is it, mother?" cried Bill, springing to her side.



"The window—*he* was there!" she gasped, and then swooned away.

"*He?* Girls, look out for mother! I'll see what *he* was at the window!" cried Bill, and he sprang to the open casement.

As he did so a bullet whistled passed his ear, and struck the opposite wall, while a hundred wild yells proclaimed that Indians had surrounded the house.

Wild Bill, cool and collected, instantly blew out both the lights, exclaiming:

"Darkness here and moonlight out thar! We'll be all right in a shake. Jump for your tools, boys; mine's handy! Gals, lay down out o' range; we'll soon let the reds know old hands are here."

The three young men, reinforced by three negroes and one white man, the farm hands, were ready for work in less than a minute, and as the Indians did not seem disposed to make a rush for the inside of the house, crept quickly to points where from the doors and windows they could pick the fiends out from their coverts among the trees around.

Meantime the twins, aided by Kitty Muldoon with a pitcher of water, had succeeded in restoring the mother to consciousness, and to the hurried inquiry of her son as to whom she had seen at the window, replied that she had recognized the face of Jake M'Kandlas, the murderer of her husband, glaring in with a look so full of hate and vindictive cruelty that she was completely horror-stricken.

"There's too many reds out there, or I'd rush out and settle his hash!" said her son. "If he'll only

stay till we thin 'em down a few, I'll accommodate him with a private entertainment. Look out for yourselves, girls—the boys are giving 'em Jessie, and it's about time my hand was in."

A rapid fire had been going on from the moment Wild Bill got to the door, the Indians shooting at random, for all in the house was dark except the flash of the guns, but every now and then a yell of agony told that the attacking party were not going unpunished.

They could only be seen as they sprang from tree to tree for cover, but their terrible yells ringing through the air told that in numbers they were at least ten to one of the attacking party.

"Whar's the stock? Won't they try to run that off?" asked Wild Bill, as his mate, standing by his side, sent a red to eternity with a shot from his favorite long rifle.

"I expect they will. I would almost as soon lose my hair as to lose Powder Face, for the insect has carried me through more bad scrapes than I've time to count," said Buffalo Bill, referring to his favorite horse.

"And I will lose my hair afore I'll lose Black Nell, for she never deserted me. She'll kick the head off any red that tries to mount her. But can't we get to the horses? If I was on Nell, I know I'd be good for a dozen out there where I'm getting one a skulkin' in here. If the mare is where she could hear me, I could have here in half a minute."

"Yes, and they'd plant a dozen arrows in her

hide, or pepper her with lead as she came through 'em. Wait till I give Dave and the boys in here their orders, and then you an' me will get to the horses and come in on 'em like as if we were fresh hands in the fight."

"That's the talk, Bill—that's the talk. Only let me and Black Nell and you and Powder Face give 'em a charge in the rear and they're gone in."

"Pepper into 'em, then, till I tell the boys here where we're goin', so they'll be keerful how to shoot when we're a comin'."

Buffalo Bill now hurriedly told Dave Tutt and the men, who were firing at everything they saw among the trees, what he and Wild Bill intended to do. The girls and his mother were to know nothing of it till it was all over, for the two Bills felt as sure of driving off the foe by their plan as if they were already in full chase of them.

Dave Tutt did not express any wish to go along, which rather surprised Buffalo Bill, for it was a duty that brave men would surely court. But there was a reason for this, as there is indeed for everything, as the reader will learn by and by.

According to instructions, Dave and the other white man, with the negroes, now increased the rapidity of their fire, moving from window to window, but firing high and avoiding one direction—that which the two brave bordermen had taken.

The two friends, carrying their arms and bending low in the shadow of the garden bushes, crept away from the house until they reached a grain-field

beyond the trees, into which they moved swiftly. They had but a little distance now to go to reach the stock pasture, and they got to the last in the very nick of time.

A half-dozen dusky figures were already there, and the horses, disturbed by the firing, were very uneasy as these advanced.

Two shrill calls, understood well by the animals for which they were intended, brought two noble animals, "Black Nell" and "Powder Face," to the edge of the grain-field. The next instant, needing neither saddle nor bridle, the two men were mounted, and, without a word, both dashed forward upon the Indians who were after the stock.

So suddenly and unexpectedly were they overwhelmed—not a shot being fired, only the tomahawk used—that there was no alarm in the grove. Then the two men sped on, not noiselessly now, but whooping and yelling in wild concert, and urging their steeds faster by their cries, till they were upon the rear of the astonished redskins, pouring out shot after shot with deadly effect on the enemy.

Wheeling and circling here and there, never missing a shot—it seemed as if there were twenty, rather than two—Wild Bill and our hero dashed on, carrying death at every leap.

The Indians, who were Cheyennes, supposing this to be a reinforcement to those who had defended the house so well, soon gave way and fled in every direction, but not before full half their number had fallen.

"Curse them, why do they shoot so careless from the house—this is the second graze I have had from there!" cried Wild Bill, as he wiped the blood from a wound grazing his cheek.

"There's a hole in my hat from the same quarter," said Buffalo Bill. "I'd like to know what they mean. It can't be but they know where we are. Never mind—I must hunt up old M'Kandlas now, for if mother saw him he must be here. Let's chase them, Bill, as long as we can."

The two men dashed away, and again a bullet, evidently from the house, passed so close to Buffalo Bill's head that he felt the wind.

The Indians scattered far and wide, but the two men succeeded in knocking over a half-a-dozen more, when the thought struck them that it was better not to go far from the house lest some lurking behind would continue the attack, and they rode back.

The search for a white man among the bodies of the slain was unsuccessful, so Bill decided in his mind that if M'Kandlas had been in the party he had escaped this time.

As they approached the house they took pains to make their individuality known by signals which could not be misunderstood, therefore they were spared the perils which it seemed friends rather than their foes had cast upon them during the charge.

In a short time, their horses left close in the shadow of the house, the two brave friends were in it once more.

"You can light up, I reckon," cried Buffalo Bill,

when he entered. "The reds, or what's left of 'em, are off to their tribes on the run. But I'd like to know who in thunder it was that was shootin' so careless from here while we was wipin' 'em out in the grove. Me and my mate both got grazed, and it wasn't from none of them close by. It was long shootin', and as close as if 'twas done on purpose."

"I don't see how it was. I shot for Indian, and nothin' shorter than Indian," said Dave.

"Well, it's no matter; we're here now, and our hair is on. I reckon there's a pretty good lot o' reds lying around loose for crow-bait, as we'll see when day comes again."

"Thank Heaven, you are safe!" said Mrs. Cody, as she heard the voice of her son. "I hope you and your brave friend are unharmed?"

"All right, mother, but a scratch or two that cold water will heal; but are you sure you saw the face of Jake M'Kandlas at the window?"

"Yes, my son—I never can forget his face. I surely saw it."

"Then he has got off this time. I knew most of his gang had gone under, but I didn't think he had taken up with the Cheyennes. They say that every tribe in the West but the Pawnees are going with the South. If they are, we border folks will have our hands full. But we're good for 'em, aren't we, Bill?"

"I reckon we are, if we know ourselves," said Wild Bill. "Was the gals much frightened, ma'am?"

"No. They were so busy at first in getting me

out of my faint that they forgot to be scared, and after that they had to think who was here to take care of 'em, and they'd blush to be his sisters if a few Indians could scare them," said Mrs. Cody.

"That's the kind of grit for me. Oh, but they're game!" cried Buffalo Bill, as his eyes glanced proudly at the sweet girls. "And here's Kitty Muldoon, as fearless as they, I'll bet a horse. Isn't it so, Kitty?"

"Faith, sir, it's not meself that'll tell a lie. I was scared out of a night slape, I'm sure, and that's somethin', when one is sure to drame swate drames, as I do. But what do you think, sir, one of them red haythens has shot forty holes in my new dress, that I'd folded up and put on the window-sill when I run for water for the mistress in her faint."

"Never mind, Kitty; there's more where it came from, and so long as the dress wasn't on your own body it's small harm that is done. And now all hands of you be off to bed, but us men that are used to watching. It isn't likely any of the reds will come back to-night, but we'll keep our eyes peeled and be ready for 'em if they do. When morning comes we'll see about their trail."

"I thought you was in such a hurry to get to St. Louis to join Fremont and his men," said Dave Tutt, his tone quiet, but the slightest gleam of sarcasm in his eye.

"Not while there's any danger hangin' about them I love, if I know myself," said Bill. "If you're so hard put for whisky that you can't wait, why you can start as soon as you like. I told you that my

dear old mother never would have the pisen in the house, nor cards either, so them that want to drink or play must keep a fast while they're here, or go where they can get sarved more to their likin'."

"I neither wish to drink or play," said Dave, blushing, for the keen eyes of both the girls had been fixed upon him while their brother spoke. "And I reckon when there's danger about, I'll be as loth to leave the helpless as any one that wears shootin' irons in his belt."

"Well, that's right. I didn't mean to hurt your feelings, Dave, but I'm more touchy here than I be out on the prairie or on the hills."



## CHAPTER IV.

THE moon had gone down before day dawned, but the repulsed Cheyennes never bated in their headlong speed until a couple of hours after sunrise, when they had reached a thick cottonwood grove on the south bank of the Republican River.

Here, at the call of their chief, they dismounted and gathered around him. By his side, with a scowl of anger, and some show of distrust, too, in his face, stood Jake M'Kandlas, the white ruffian who had planned this foray.

Looking sternly at him, after counting the warriors left, the old chief said:

"There will be a great cry among the squaws in the lodges of the Cheyennes. Many warriors have gone down—their scalps are in the belts of our enemies, and we have not a scalp to show that has been taken in return for ours. What has the Hawk of the Hills to say to this?"

"That which the Great Spirit wills to be, will be!" said M'Kandlas in reply. "Two nights ago I went to the cottage on the plains, looked in, and saw only women there. There was stock, meat, plenty of goods. I told Big Maple, the chief of the Cheyennes, that he could get these and not lose a man. But while I was gone the fighting men came—we know not how many—I saw but three. If we had fought

as white men fight and charged right in on them, we would now have their scalps in our belts. Big Maple would not listen to my words. He fought his way and lost half his warriors. It is not my fault. I have spoken."

The old chief knew that so far as the advice was concerned M'Kandlas had spoken the truth. He had overruled the wish of the latter to charge, when it was found men were there who would fight to defend the women. For he said: "We can kill them in our way best, and then the women and the plunder will be easy to take."

"The Hawk of the Hills has spoken with a single tongue. His words are true. But the faces of the tribes will be black when we go back without scalps. What has my brother to say to that?" asked the chief.

"That if we go back without scalps we are fools!" said M'Kandlas quietly. "If the gun of Big Maple misses fire, does he throw it away, or pick the flint and try it again? There are more days and nights than one, and plenty of palefaces are scattered about the plains. The Hawk of the Hills knows other settlements which we can reach in two or three days' journey. We can go there for plunder and scalps, and then come back here, and when the fighting men are not here, or are asleep, we can sprinkle the bones of our dead with the blood of vengeance where they fell."

"The Hawk of the Hills speaks like a man. The heart of Big Maple was weak. It is strong

again. The warriors will cook meat and eat while their horses rest and feed. Then we will take the war-path, and the Hawk of the Hills shall lead the way. Big Maple is his brother, and will follow where he leads."

Light blazing fires, emitting scarcely any smoke, were now made from dry twigs, and the warriors made a hearty meal, the first for twenty-four hours. It was not finished when an alarm was given by a scout. White men mounted and armed were coming in from the south.

"They are not those we fought last night!" said M'Kandlas. "They have not had time to get to this side of the river. I will ride out alone and see who they are. Let my red brothers remain where they are, ready to fight or to flee if they see that I am among their enemies."

"The Hawk of the Hills is a great brave. His words are good and his deeds go with them," said the Cheyenne chief.

M'Kandlas now mounted his horse, put a bit of white cloth on the ramrod of his rifle, and rode out from the shelter of the grove toward the group of advancing horsemen, some ten or a dozen in number.

They halted as soon as he was observed, and seemed to look to their arms.

He rode boldly on until within two or three hundred yards, when a shout of recognition rose on both sides, and men rode rapidly to meet him.

They were his own men from the Black Hills,

whom he had left there to carry on his business of pillaging emigrant trains, while he came down on an expedition on his own private account.

"Why are you here?" he asked, as they rode up. "What did you leave Cave Canyon for?"

"Because we got sarched out, and scorched out, and whipped out!" said one, who seemed to head the party. "That gal you took from the Mormon train, and made so much of 'cause she was likelier than most gals in face and figure, got away and went down to Laramie in the night. The next thing we knew the troops was right in amongst us, and we got away—that is, half of us, for the rest went under in the fight. We got off afoot, and had to go clear down to the Border for horses, and we were on the look for you, when here you turn up."

"Well, we'll make the blue-coats pay for this. A war has begun. I heard 'em talkin' about it when I was on a scout last night, and we'll have every Indian on the plains and in the hills with us in it. We'll sweep the borders, and have no end of plunder I'm glad you are here, for now I'll do the work I failed in last night. That infernal fiend, Buffalo Bill, with Wild Bill and Dave Tutt, wiped out over twenty Cheyennes that I piloted down to the Cody place last night."

"Dave Tutt? Why he is one of us—one of our sort at any rate!" said Frank Stark, the one who had spoken first.

"Yes—he used to be, but he's with them now. I couldn't get no chance to see him alone, or I would

have known what it meant. I had my own idea that he was after one of the gals, for they're purtier than any pictur that was ever painted, and I know he's death after that kind of game. But ride on, boys, and get something to eat, and then we'll plan for a nice bit of work to-night. There's between twenty and thirty Cheyennes left, and they'll fight like blazes for revenge."

M'Kandlas now turned and rode back with his men to the grove, so busy in talking with them that he did not notice a single person on a hill beyond the river, who had evidently seen all his movements, and who rode off swiftly when the ruffian leader entered the grove.

"These are warriors from my band in the Black Hills, come to fight by the side of their chief!" said M'Kandlas to the Cheyenne chief, as he and his men rode up among the camp-fires.

"They are welcome as the rain when the earth is dry. Big Maple is glad to see them here. There is meat, let them eat. There is water, let them drink."

"Here's something better than water, boss. Take a pull out of that and it'll make your eyes snap. It is prime old whisky—I got it from the last train we took," cried Stark.

"Whisky is not better than water," said the old chief, as he pushed back the proffered bottle. "The Great Spirit made water for good. The Bad Spirit made whisky for evil. In every bottle there is one song and a hundred fights. It is the enemy of the red man, and he is a fool if he shakes hands with it."

"Well, there'll be the more left for me and the colonel," said Frank Stark, as he proffered the bottle to M'Kandlas, who did not refuse it.

"Now cook and eat, boys, and let your horses rest and feed till we are right. We'll then wipe out Buffalo Bill and his party, and make a raid down the river as far as we can, and then strike for the Platte for a rest."

## CHAPTER V.

AFTER breakfast the morning following the attack, while the negroes were burying the dead Indians, Buffalo Bill and his companions held a consultation in regard to what they had best do.

It did not, in their judgment, seem likely that the Indians, especially if under the influence of a bad white man, would rest submissive under defeat, and this being the case, they would return reinforced, bent on destruction of both life and property.

There were no settlers very near them, though scattered farms and houses could be met all around in a day's ride—no fortified place to which sudden retreat could be made. Only in the villages where numbers insured safety could they find refuge if the red men made a determined raid over the borders.

"They may have got enough last night to sicken them of coming again," said Buffalo Bill. "I believe the best way is to find out what kind of a humor they're in, and whether they're mad enough to try for our hair again or not. I believe I'll get on my insect, Powder Face, and follow their trail and see what they're about. You boys stay here on the watch, and mother and the girls can pack what they need for moving with, if I find that it will be best to move. And you may be sure the old place won't be given up without good reason."

"Why can't I go along?" asked Wild Bill.

"For this, Bill; I'd rayther you'd stay here to look out for the gals. One is as good on a scout as twenty, 'specially when he has got such an insect as my Powder Face under him, for that pony can out-smell, out-see and out-hear any livin' thing, be it man, dog, or catamount, that ever yelped. Look at him standing there, one eye open and t'other one shut—but see how his ears pint. He knows I'm talking about him. Come here, Powder Face, and let the folks look at you."

The horse, a rather large-sized pony of full Indian breed, in color a regular light buckskin, with long black mane and tail, walked up to the porch and rested his nose on the shoulder of his young master.

Clean-limbed, deep in the chest, heavy in the arms and quarters, full of muscle, he was a splendid specimen of that breed.

"Isn't he a rare insect? He can run ten hours and never flag, swim any current this side of the big hills, and he knows as much as I do about hide and seek. Powder Face, go bring your saddle and bridle—we're going on a scout."

Just as if he really understood human speech, rather than the slap which Bill laid gently on his back as he spoke, the pony turned and trotted away, but soon came back with the saddle and bridle in his mouth.

"Isn't that gumption?" said Bill, as he patted the animal's head and proceeded to saddle and bridle



him. "I only put these on because it's easier to him and to me, and in the fashion. But when I hunt buffalo I toss them out of the way, and him and me go in light, just to kill, and we do kill, don't we, Powder Face?"

The pony nodded with a look of intelligence, which made the sisters smile and Kitty Muldoon roar with laughter.

Mrs. Cody came out at this moment with a spy-glass slung in a leather case, which her husband formerly owned.

"Take this with you, my son," she said, "and you can reconnoitre parties at a distance before they can see you with the naked eye."

"That's a fact, mother, and I'll take it along with thanks to you for thinking of it. Kitty, put me a bite to eat in my saddle-bags while I belt on my arms. And mother, I'm thinking you may as well have all ready for moving down to where the settlements are thicker. If the Indians and Missouri men go in on the Southern side in this war there will be no safety here for you and the girls till it is all over. I'd have to stay here all the time if you did, and I want to be where *men* are needed, if the war does go on. So be ready, if what I see while I'm gone makes me think we'd better shift our quarters."

Bill said no more, but sprang on his pony and was off at a gallop in a moment.

"Better son never blessed a mother, wild as he is," said Mrs. Cody, with love in every tone, as her glance followed his form. "Rough he may be to others,

but to us he is kind and gentle as the breeze of a summer eve."

"Yes, ma'am, Buffalo Bill is just as good as was ever made, no matter whar you find him. I've been his mate now goin' on three year, and I've tried him in all kinds of weather," said Wild Bill. "There isn't a bit of white in his liver, nor no black in his heart. What he says and does is as open as day, and when he goes in for a fight he don't ask to see the hand he has got to play against, but he makes 'em show afore he's through. Bill is ahead of wild cats, twenty to one, and I'm jist the man to bet my pile on proving it."

And Wild Bill looked around as if he would really like to have some one try to disprove it. His eyes fell on Dave Tutt, who sat on a corner of the porch, grave and gloomy, studying with his eyes the graces and beauties of form and face as exhibited by Lillie, for upon her he seemed to have bent all his regards.

"What makes *you* so dull here, Dave?" he asked, in a bantering tone. "In the hills or out on the prairie, you're as full of fun as a squirrel in nutting time. What's up—if you wanted to go along with Bill, why didn't you say so?"

"I did not want to go with him. I'm sure it's no harm for me to be quiet in a little haven like this, such as our sort isn't used to. I'm always still when I hear the birds singing, and we hear better than bird-music here."

"That's so, Dave—but there's sort of game out

there—antelope, sure's yer born! Let's have a couple, what d'ye say?"

"I'm ripe for that, for we will not have to go out of sight of the house!" cried Dave.

Wild Bill gave a chirrup—it sounded like the call of a bird to its mate, and his beautiful black mare galloped up and stood with gazelle-like eyes, looking her pleasure at being needed.

"That's my Nell. Oh, isn't she a treasure!" he cried, as he seized his gun, and sprang on her back without saddle or bridle.

Dave had a noble horse, but he was not trained like the "insect" of Buffalo Bill, or like "Black Nell," to come at his call.

But he was soon mounted, and the two rode off side by side at full speed toward the herd of antelope that had just shown their slender forms a mile or two away.

"What a handsome man that Mr. Tutt is?" said Lottie, as the two men rode off.

"Handsome in face and form, but oh so ugly in his heart and soul, something tells me!" said Lillie. "He looks at me and my spirit shrinks from him, as if I could see a fiend instead of a man before me. I cannot say why, but I fear him and I hate him!"

"It is wrong for us to hate any one, especially wrong to hate those that do no harm to us!" said the mother, gravely.

"Please, ma'am, if I'm not too bould, will ye answer me one question?" asked Kitty Muldoon.

"Certainly, my good girl; I never refused to answer you any question, I am sure!"

"But, ma'am, maybe I'm not mindin' my own business by askin' the like, but I mane no harm, sure. Don't ye think if Misthress Eve, in the garden of Aden, had hated the purty snake that tould her to ate the apple of badness, she'd been a hape better off, for she'd have tould the decavin' sarpint to thravel his way and she'd take hers!"

"That would have been better surely, my good Kitty."

"Well, ma'am, I'm jist like Miss Lillie in belavin' that there's a hape o' badness in that man, forbye all his good looks. Sure when his eyes are set on me, I shiver all over. And last night when the young master said that bullets from the house went all too nigh him and his friend, I saw a shadow come on that man's face, and there was no good in it!"

"Then must we watch him closely after this, my dear girls. For one traitor or enemy in the house is more dangerous than fifty outside. But see—they have dismounted and left their horses. They will creep up within shot of the antelope."

"No, mother, Wild Bill is too good a hunter for that!" said Lillie. "Now both the men sink out of sight in the grass. But see! there is a red handkerchief gently waving in the air. Bill has taken it from his neck and tied it to his ramrod. Notice how the antelope watch it. They begin to come closer and closer. Caution is strong, but curiosity is stronger. They will come until in easy range, and

then two of them will surely fall. Brother has often told me about this way of hunting. See!—nearer and nearer the poor things keep coming, and will come till the fatal bullet ends life and curiosity at once."

In silence the family now watched the little herd of animals as they came on toward the decoy, pausing at times, and seeming to yield to fear and turn aside, but again coming on, until at last the flag went out of sight.

Then two puffs of smoke were seen, and long before the reports of the rifles reached the ears of the watchers, two antelopes were seen to leap high in the air and fall to the earth in the death-struggle, while the rest sped away swiftly over the prairie.

The two hunters now mounted their horses, which had dropped from sight as well as themselves, and riding up to their game prepared it for bringing in.

This, as they were in no haste, took them several minutes, and when they were on the way back to the house, a third rider was in sight beyond them.

## CHAPTER VI.

THE two hunters came on leisurely, each with the slain antelope before him on his horse, but the third horseman—first visible in the distance when they started for the cottage—came so fast that before they reached the house the females had recognized the son and brother.

"Hurry and have the men put the teams to our wagons, and help me pack clothing and provisions!" cried Mrs. Cody to her daughters and to Kitty. "My son is riding at full speed, and he would not do so without he had good cause."

All was bustle, therefore, about the house when Wild Bill and Dave Tutt returned with their game. But the preparations were made without excitement, and carefully, so that when Buffalo Bill came in and sprang from his horse, if he had said the word, the family could have moved in a very few minutes.

"I'm glad to see you getting ready to start, mother!" said he, as he met her at the door. "Me and the insect have traveled fast for a couple of hours, not that we had good news to bring, but for fear bad news might get here afore we was ready to start. Your spy-glass did me some service this day, you can bet your bottom dollar on that. I saw Jake M'Kandlas more than three miles off, as plain as if he was right afore me. He has got a reinforcement

of eleven hang-dog wretches, white men like himself, and I've no doubt intends to try us again to-night. If we stay here we can hold the house, maybe, but he'll get all our stock, and then we can't move. I reckon the sooner we are away the safer our hair will be. For myself or the boys I've no fear; but for you, mother, and the gals, there's more to consider. You'd better all be dead than in *his* power."

"Oh, yes—indeed, yes!" murmured the mother. "We are nearly ready, my son. Bedding and clothes, and the money, and what provisions we can carry, are ready in the wagons. I was afraid to put the powder in till you came; it is in the cellar."

"How much, mother?"

"Four twenty-five pound kegs, my son, that have never been opened."

"Good! Two of those kegs we will take with us. The other two will do for a present for Jake M'Kandlas and his friends."

"A present, my son! Are you crazy?"

"Not quite, mother. But I have an idea that they will be so mad when they get here and find we've left our castle, that they'll set fire to it and dance around it while it burns. At least that is one of their ways. Now, if they do, and this powder is hid where the fire will find it before they do, it will make some of 'em dance the hornpipe on the downward road."

"Well, my son, do as you think best. The men are driving in the stock, the teams are ready, and so are we."

"Have you packed all you can carry that you need, mother. They may leave things alone, but it isn't likely."

"Yes, my son, all but the powder."

"I'll see to that, mother."

It took but a short time to make final preparations, and in a half-hour after Bill's arrival, the cottage home was deserted, and the cavalcade of horsemen, wagons, and stock was moving eastward over the prairie.

The first wagon, with the white laborer driving it, contained Mrs. Cody and the three girls, and Dave Tutt, without being specially told to take the post, rode near it. A negro was driving each of the other wagons, and the horses and cattle were driven up by Buffalo Bill and his mate, who closed the rear, having given directions for the course.

It was late in the day when they got away, and they could not make very rapid progress through the tall grass; therefore, when night came on, they were just passing a low range of sandy hills not more than ten or twelve miles from the farm.

They were slow in getting over these, but after a couple of tedious hours they reached the summit.

Buffalo Bill, just as they were starting down the opposite decline, looked back, and instantly saw a bright light, which indicated too plainly the fate of their recent home.

"One more debt for Jake M'Kandlas to pay before I am done with him!" he muttered in a low



tone, for he did not wish his mother to know the work of destruction was going on.

But her eyes had noted the direction of his glance, and she looked back, just as a vivid flash lighted up the whole country in the rear.

"The powder has exploded!" she exclaimed.

"Yes," said Bill, after listening till a heavy report came booming through the air. "I reckon if they were anywhere near the house, they got more powder than they wanted all at once. But we must move on lively. We haven't got any too much start, and we're a good way from help yet. Drive up rapid, boy—drive up rapid. The reds can follow a trail as broad as ours by such a moon almost as well as by day."

"We shall not have a moon to see by long. Look yonder—there's the wildest kind of a storm brewing!" said Wild Bill, pointing to a range of black clouds swiftly rising in the northwest.

"Yes—yes, and I'm glad it is coming," said Buffalo Bill. "It will be nasty for us outdoors, but the women will be all right under the wagon covers, and the rain will wash our trail so the reds can't follow. Old Jake is as good as a hound, but he can't smell a trail in the track of a Kansas thunder shower, or see it either. Let the wind and the rain come, and the sooner the better. We'll keep going while we can, and then park the wagons and corral the loose stock inside.

"That's the idea, mate—that's the idea for a match game!" cried Wild Bill, putting a water-proof

blanket over his shoulders more to shield the arms than his person.

The wind now came sharp and spitefully in blasts, over the hills and plains, and as the clouds rushed up from the far-away horizon, they rapidly overspread the sky, until at last the moon and stars were so nearly obscured that the travelers could see but little around them.

Hastily the wagons were parked—that is, drawn into a square so as to leave a space in the quadrangle. Then the cattle were put inside, the harnessed horses hitched around outside and secured as well as they could be in the now utter darkness.

The three border men agreed to remain mounted and to ride slowly around outside the wagons in turn, so as to keep a continual guard against any hostile approach, although any one not used to the deviltry of Indians would not apprehend an attack from them in such weather.

The females in the covered wagon conversed cheerfully with their protectors, for the storm, instead of being a terror, was looked upon as a Providential thing, calculated to favor them.

Louder and more fiercely blew the wind—none but those who have been on the prairie or on the ocean know how it can blow.

The darkness was so intense that only by the sense of hearing could the young men know where the train was, as in their turn each made his regular circuit.

At last the rain came pouring down in torrents,

and every now and then a vivid flash of lightning lit up for a brief second the entire group of wagons, men, horses, and cattle.

Then would follow deafening peals of thunder, almost shaking the earth, causing occasional cries of alarm from the twins and poor Kitty, for there are few women who can quietly stand the excitement of such storms as one meets on the prairies of our Far West.

Crashing thunder, hissing lightning, and pouring rain seemed to have deadened the wind for a time, but it was only a lull, for once in a while its shrill diapason rung wildly in the watchers' ears.

But suddenly a fearful scream rose from one of the girls in the wagon—one wild cry for help, that fairly rent the air as well as the hearts and ears of those who heard it.

Buffalo Bill was on the circuit, Wild Bill was on his return, and both by the same lightning flash got a bare glimpse of a girl struggling in the arms of a man on horseback, and then all was darkness.

Both dashed toward the spot where they had seen the man—another flash lit up their own forms and faces, but nothing else could they see.

"Lillie! Oh, Heaven, where is our Lillie?" screamed Mrs. Cody.

"Lillie—swate Miss Lillie is gone!" cried poor Kitty Muldoon, at the top of her voice.

"Dave Tutt—where is he?" shrieked Lottie. "He was here and asked how we were, not a minute ago, and Lillie answered him."

"Dave Tutt!" shouted Buffalo Bill. "Dave Tutt, where are you?"

No answer came.

"The curse has carried Miss Lillie off!" cried Wild Bill. "It was him we saw with her in his arms."

"Oh, my child—my child!" moaned the unhappy mother. "You had indeed reason to hate and fear that man!"

"Do not try to move the wagons while we are gone," said Buffalo Bill, in a hoarse tone, to his mother. "Wild Bill and me must go after Lillie. We will keep between you and harm if we can. I never should have trusted that man. I knew he was a gambler, and out here *they're* always close kin to a robber. Lillie, Lillie darling, we'll save you yet. Come, Bill—keep in hearing of me—*come!*"

And the speaker dashed off over the hills.

## CHAPTER VII.

OUT into the utter darkness—on in the pelting storm, only knowing his course by feeling that he was going up hill, the maddened brother led the way, and Wild Bill, giving his mare head, followed, knowing she would by her keen hearing follow the other.

On until the crest of the hill was gained, and then faintly, for it was far off, could be seen the light of the yet burning cottage.

"Come on," shouted Bill, "his horse is as fast if not faster than ours, and he will go to them, I know. Come on, mate, and ride as you never rode before."

Wild Bill made no reply, but each lightning flash showed one to the other, close and near, and on they went at a speed which no horses but those used to the prairie could have kept up in the gloom.

Soon the rain ceased, the thunder was heard no more, the lightning did not flash. The wind again swept wild and unrestrained over the plains.

The light of the fire became plainer as they neared the old farm, though it was actually going down. This told them how swiftly they cleared the way. On—on until they were so near that they could see men grouped close to timbers and rails that had been heaped on the fire for fuel.

"Let us creep up and see who and what is there," said Wild Bill, as he rode up alongside of his mate.

"No—no!" thundered the other, completely madened by his feelings. "The murderer of my father is there! My poor sister, too. Ride on as I do, and let your revolver do your talking!"

Wild Bill saw that argument would be lost and used no more. Setting his teeth, his revolver in hand, and his eyes fixed on the group not now a hundred yards off, he urged Black Nell up to the side of Powder Face, and both horsemen at the same instant dashed into the circle of light.

Jake M'Kandlas sprang to his feet as a hoarse voice shouted his name, and fell the next instant with a bullet through his body, while dashing on and over them, firing as they came, the two riders swept, shooting down Indians and white men side by side as they passed on. In an instant, wheeling, with fearful yells, back they came, but found few either of the white or red men waiting for the onslaught, for all but three or four had already fled away into the protecting darkness.

These fired only two or three random shots before the surer aim of the bordermen sent them to death, and then there were none to resist.

"Oh, Heaven, where is Lillie—where is Lillie?" shouted Bill. "She is not here—back to the prairie, mate—back to the prairie—the moon is coming out, and we'll find her yet. Follow me—she is not here—waste no time on the dead, but follow me!"

Away again, swift as the driving clouds, the



HE URGED BLACK NELL UP TO THE SIDE OF POWDER-FACE.  
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brother and his wild prairie horse sped, and Wild Bill kept faithfully on the track.

Away over the plains, now in shadow, then in light, as the moon looked down through breaking clouds—away once more toward the wagons where the other dear ones had been left.

“Have you found Lillie?” was the cry of the mother, as her son rode up to her side.

“Not yet, but I have slain the murderer of my father!” he cried, sternly. “His dead body lies roasting by the embers of our ruined home. Go on due east when day dawns—Bill and me will be scouting the prairie for the trail of Dave Tutt. We will not rest till our Lillie is found and his body left to sicken wolves!”

And again he and Wild Bill rode off.



## CHAPTER VIII.

BUT a few moments after the two bordermen rode away from the ruins of the cottage, where their reckless charge had produced a panic as well as a fearful carnage, another horseman rode within the circle of light.

It was Dave Tutt, and on his saddle before him, limp and lifeless in appearance, he held poor Lillie.

Leaping from his horse he lifted her down, and drawing near the fire, looked in her face anxiously, as if he really feared she was dead.

A tremor in her pale lips, a long faint sigh, told him that this was not the case.

"The swoon was so like death!" he muttered. "She would soon come too if I had any restoratives. Hallo—where are you all! Some dead and the rest all run away from only two men. If I hadn't had the gal to bother with, I'd have fought 'em alone. They went by within twenty feet of me in the dark. Hallo—here! Jake M'Kandlas, or Frank Stark, where are you!"

"Who calls Jake M'Kandlas. Here's what's left of him, and that's pretty much run out, I reckon!" said the ruffian himself, as he tried to rise from among three or four bodies that lay stretched on the ground, but failing, sunk back with a groan.

"It is me, Dave Tutt, colonel—are you hurt bad?"

"Yes—I've got a heavy dose, Dave, but draw me away from the fire. I don't want to roast till my time comes, and then I'll have no choice in the matter."

Dave laid his helpless burden down with her head on a saddle, and hurried to place the wounded man in a more comfortable position.

As this was done the eye of M'Kandlas fell on Lillie.

"Who have you got there, Dave!" he asked hastily. "Isn't it one of the twins?"

"Yes, it is Lillie, and her destiny is to be a robber's bride. She turned the cold shoulder on me, or I'd have been less rough in my courting—but the storm came up and I lifted her, and here she is."

"Then it was her them two, Wild Bill and her brother, were after when they charged on us here?"

"Of course it was, and as they found she wasn't here, they didn't wait to be particular and lift hair, but put out to scour the prairie after me. They passed me twice within half pistol shot, and if she hadn't been still in her faint, I would have had to have stilled her. But where's all your men? There's not over half dozen, red and white, stretched here."

"No, there's more, but they've scattered. Blow this whistle, Dave, I'm too weak."

Tutt took a large whistle from the neck of the wounded man and blew a long, shrill call. It was answered a second later by another whistle.

"That is Frank Stark," said the robber chief.

"He will be here soon, and he carries what I need

now, for I'm as weak as a sick chicken. There's a bad hole in my carcass. I've stuffed a bit of my hunting shirt in to stop the bleeding, but I'm afraid from the feeling it bleeds inside."

"We'll soon see—here come the boys."

"Hi, here's Dave Tutt and a gal too, by the Big Elk. Snakes and reptiles, what a beauty!" cried Frank Stark, as he strode in from the darkness, followed by a half dozen more white men and a few Indians.

"Never you mind the gal—tote out your whisky flask and 'tend to the colonel, for he is pretty nigh gone under. She is my property, and I reckon I can take care of her without help," said Dave Tutt, moving to the side of poor Lillie, who began to show signs of reviving consciousness.

"I reckon it won't spile her to be looked at," said Frank snappishly, as he went to the assistance of M'Kandlas. "Are you hurt bad, colonel?"

"Give me a pull at that flask of yours, and I'll soon know!" said the chief. "I've bled a good deal, but if the shot has dodged my lung, I reckon I'll crow again. The ball went clean through, and it's a close call if it is no worse!"

A draught of liquor stimulated the wounded man so that he rose to a sitting position and was able to have his wound examined. It was a bad one, but without internal hemorrhage not necessarily fatal. A bandage on and another stimulating draught and he felt much better than a dying man.

"Frank," said he to Stark, "count noses and see

how many of us is left! Them two Bills are the boys on quick work!"

Stark looked around, questioned the living, and soon found that four white men and five Indians, among the latter Big Maple the chief, had been killed, and two more beside the colonel wounded.

"Bad, by thunder, bad, and only them two to do it all!" muttered the colonel. "But we'll pay him for it. One of the gals is here, and that's worse than death to him. And I'll have the other yet. I'll wring the core of his heart out in that way. How is it over there, Dave, is your prairie rose coming to?"

"Yes—her eyes are open—but she does not speak!" said Dave, who gazed almost in alarm on the wild, stony look of horror with which poor Lillie gazed on him and the scene before her.

"Give her a drop of bourbon—that will start her tongue!" said Frank Stark, tossing over his liquor flask.

"Try a little—it will take the damp chill off!" said Dave, as he uncorked the flask and offered it to the girl, who now sat upright.

"Wretch! Take me back to my mother!" she said, in a low, angry tone, as she pushed the flask away.

"Not yet—not before our honeymoon is over, my pretty wife that is to be!" said Dave, trying to smile into the face of her look of scorn and hate.

"*Your* wife? Fiend! I will die a thousand deaths first. I hated you from the first moment I saw you! And now, coward, dog, I loathe and despise you!"

"Go on—go on, my beauty. Spit your spite while you're before folks, and you'll be more tender when we are alone. That's the way with women, I've heard. But you'd better take a drink from this flask to keep your courage up."

"You'll need it, Dave Tutt, more than I. My brother will soon find me, and then your life will pay for this cruel, unmanly act!"

"Your brother has been here, gal—there's some of his marks left layin' around, and if these red Indians find out you are kin to him that killed their chief, it may be more than I can do to keep them from roasting you!"

"I don't care. I had rather die at their hands than to live in yours. You say my brother has been here?"

"Yes, he and Wild Bill rode in here in the search for you, and laid out nine of the party. They couldn't find you, so they took the back track. I had you snug in my arms, and they passed close by without knowing it. So, my beauty, you are all safe for a home in the Black Hills with one that will treat you well if you behave yourself. If you don't—"

"Will you only kill me?"

"Kill you, gal? Kill you with such a face and form? I reckon not. No—you'd be worth too much in an Indian trade to make the killing profitable. I could get fifty head of horses for such a gal as you any day among the Sioux. It's getting to be a fashion for a big chief to have a white wife to set

up over his red ones. I'll find offers enough if you don't keep quiet and take your fate easy."

Poor Lillie shuddered and looked around upon the rough faces of the other men, to see if there was even one that looked humanely upon her. Alas, there was not, and her heart sunk as she thought that perhaps she had gazed on her mother, sister, and brother for the last time.

Until now she had not recognized the place to which she had been brought, but the fire-light glaring strongly against a great elm tree near by, made her think she had seen it before. Glancing around she saw tree after tree with whose gnarled limbs she was familiar, and she now knew that the cottage was in ashes.

The storm was over, and a consultation was held as to the next movements of the party. Frank Stark wanted to follow up the wagons. But Jake M'Kandlas could not, and Dave Tutt would not go. M'Kandlas could only be moved slowly and with care, so it would take a part of the force to attend to him.

Therefore a pursuit which would be attended with the certainty of a hard fight was given up, and as soon as day dawned the route for the Black Hills was taken up.

Lillie was placed in a light wagon which had been saved from the flames, and the wounded colonel and his two injured men were also laid on a heap of straw in the same vehicle.

With their usual disregard for the decencies of

humanity, the robbers and Indians left their dead to the tender mercies of the wolf and buzzard, without a thought of burial, careful, however, to bring away their arms and ammunition, for these were valuable. Dead men were worthless.

Before sunrise they were miles away, Dave Tutt now taking the leadership of the party and hurrying them on, for he dreaded pursuit from the two men whom he knew but too well, once on his track, would not leave it while he lived.

## CHAPTER IX.

TO and fro, making wide circles over the prairie and hills, rode the two bordermen, until the day dawned, and yet they found no sign of the lost one.

When the red sun threw its light upon the earth, they found it so washed with the heavy rains of the night that had ten thousand buffaloes marched over it the night before, not a track could now be seen.

Rapidly on, one circling here and the other there, meeting only to communicate, they rode all the morning, but found not a single track.

"What can we do? She is somewhere, and in the power of that fiend, Dave Tutt!" said Buffalo Bill. "He did not make back to the M'Kandlas party, for he would have been there ahead of us. Where can he have gone?"

"He has most likely made for the Black Hills. I've heard him brag how he knew every canyon and rock in 'em, and tell how friendly him and the Ogalala Sioux were who live in that section," said Wild Bill.

"Then we will follow him there. If a hundred tribes, instead of one, were at his back, I'd have her from him and my knife in his heart! It maddens me to think she is in his power. If he wrongs her by an insulting word, much less a rude touch, I'll



kill him by inches! Bill, let's bear for the Black Hills."

"Hold on a bit," said the other. "I'm just as hot for her rescue as you can be, Bill. But there's reason in the worst of cases, as well as the best. We are but two, and though we could ride over and through twenty, red and white, in the dark, we two couldn't get to the Black Hills and back, no way, let alone bringing her off. We must have help. And there's your other sister, your good mother, and Kitty Muldoon. Would you leave them till they're safe?"

"No—it isn't right. But my poor Lillie! It drives me wild to think how she may suffer. But what do you propose, Bill?"

"That we hurry the train into the nearest settlement where we can leave the family safe. Then gather as many men as we can and start for the Black Hills. If we move fast he'll not have over a couple or three days' start, and we'll be sure to find his trail. His horse has a good mark—shoes forward and none behind. That I noticed when he first joined us, and I kept still about it, for I never did trust him fully. And now I feel just life-sure that I'm the man picked out to put him under. And when I feel that way about a man, he's dead sure to come to me when I want him. I felt so about Dick Hawley, and you remember that he rode up and picked a quarrel with me when I no more expected it than I did to go up in a balloon. He came after his gruel, and he got it. Now what do you say, Bill—shall we make for the wagons?"

"Yes; your plan is the best," said Buffalo Bill. "Though were I on his trail, nothing on earth should take me off from it till my hands were on his throat. I'll try to wait, Bill—I'll try to wait."

The two friends now rode eastward rapidly, and before the sun reached its meridian were once more with the wagons.

"Have you given up the search for your sister?" asked Mrs. Cody, when she saw her son and his mate ride up.

"No, mother, no, nor will we until she is found. But we can strike no trail—the rain has washed it away. We know this, however, that Dave Tutt has friends among the fighting Sioux in the Black Hills, and he's most likely making for them. We must have more force than us two to go there with any chance to get her away—so our plan is to get you all in safety to the nearest post, then collect a party and start for the hills. Dead or alive, we'll find her."

"Better dead than alive if she is his victim, or in the hands of the heartless Indians," said the mother bitterly. "But why wait for us—we go too slow. Ride on and raise men—ride on, and do not mind us."

"Mother—your life, that of Lottie and poor Kitty too, must be thought of. We do not know who is moving about the border. Missouri is close by, and a thousand—yes, ten thousand such men as Jack M'Kandlas will swarm into Kansas on the least pretense to fight out old quarrels. We must see you safe first, and then we will take the back track."

"Then get up the riding horses and put on saddles for me and the girls. The wagons go too slow. We can reach the settlements by night if we ride."

"That is true, mother, if you can stand it."

"I *will* stand it, my son—I will stand it. Hasten and saddle the best horses. The wagons can follow at the best rate they may."

In a short time the mother, Lottie, and Kitty Muldoon were mounted on good horses, and soon the wagons were left far behind. For, like nearly all of the hardy, noble women of the West, they were not only used to the saddle, but to swift and fearless riding, and had no need of that tender care which some of our more delicate equestriennes on the Boulevard or Central Park drive require.

Before the setting sun had sunk behind the western horizon a settlement was reached, and soon, on fresh horses, to let their own rest, Buffalo Bill and his mate were riding from house to house gathering men for the expedition to rescue Lillie.

## CHAPTER X.

It was a sickening ride for poor Lillie, with no music but the groans of the wounded men, as the wagon, driven so fast, jolted over the uneven prairie. And yet hope was in her heart, for often did she strain her eyes looking back to see if help was not coming.

This was noticed by Dave Tutt, who kept urging his party to its utmost speed, and a sarcastic smile would now and then light his face.

"They're but two that would follow," said he, "and when they've had time for a second thought they'll not leave the other women till they get to a safe place. That is what took 'em back so quick last night. Now, it'll take 'em at least two days to drive to the settlements, and a full day if they get men and start right back, before they can by any chance get on our trail. Then we will have from three to four days' start, and by the time they're where we are now I'll be close to the Black Hills, where I've red warriors enough, who are *my* friends, to wipe out a hundred such men as they. Yes, a thousand braves will jump on their horses at the call of the Eagle-Eye of the Hills. So, gal, dismiss all hope, and make up your mind to be mine willingly. It will be your fault if I'm rough."

A bitter answer was at Lillie's lips, but at that

instant she caught a glance from the eye of Frank Stark, who rode along on the other side of Dave Tutt—a glance expressing his admiration so plainly that a new idea entered her mind.

Could she not use this man against the other? Through him might she not effect her escape? She would try it. It would be hard to assume what she could not feel, but life and that which was even yet more dear—her honor—was at stake. She would try.

A look—ah! how much a look can say!—told the lesser ruffian of the two that the captive liked him better than she did her captor, if no more. His eyes met hers again and again, and a glow of strange pleasure flushed his face, for he certainly saw in her look an encouragement of hopes which were but too pleasing.

“By all the reptiles that ever crawled, Dave Tutt goes under if she says I can take his place,” he muttered to himself. “And if I can read eyes, that is what she means.”

Lillie saw that her plan was beginning to work, and the air of deep despondency which she had been wearing passed away.

Tutt did not penetrate the cause; but he noticed that she was more cheerful, and it rather pleased him, for he had feared she would in her desperation try to take her own life.

Their route now tended more to the north; for, leaving the Valley of the Republican, the leader wished to strike the South Platte, and follow it up to the region where his friends were thickest.

When night came on a halt was made on the open prairie by a pond made by the rainfall in a buffalo-wallow. But only a couple of hours were allowed for the men and animals to get food and rest, when they again moved on by moonlight.

Lillie saw and rejoiced at the thought that Dave Tutt anticipated pursuit, and she believed it would be more eager than he dreamed, and that they would surely be overtaken by her friends before he could reach his allies.

Frank Stark, encouraged by her glances, had made several attempts to get a word with her, but Dave Tutt, while they were stopping, remained near her all the time, and when they moved on rode continually where his eye was upon her.

Once, when his attention seemed drawn away, she made a sign as if she was writing, and Frank answered it by an understanding nod, but neither sign nor nod had missed the keen eye that was on them.

"Look here, Frank Stark," said Tutt, in a savage tone, "if you've lived long enough, try, just *try* to cross my path. You know me, and I'm in no humor just now for trifling. Come within twenty feet of this wagon again till I give you permission, and I'll put six ragged holes in your carcass with my revolver. Now to the rear, and stay there."

Stark, physically, was no coward, but there was something in Dave's eye just then which told him that silence and obedience would be politic, if nothing more.

So, with but a single angry glance, he fell back, and poor Lillie thought that he was too much of a coward to help her, and felt ashamed of herself for, even by a look, having tried to encourage him.

Hers was a very expressive face, for Tutt read her feelings in the glance of contempt which followed Stark as he fell back, and a bitter smile illuminated his own countenance in place of the cloud of anger which had darkened it.

"If you want to coquette, find a *man* and not a sneak to try the game with," he said, in a low tone. "You'll find *me* worth a hundred such cowards if you are but half kind. As to your ever getting away from me alive, don't think of it. I wouldn't like to hurt you, but I'd kill and scalp you before another should glory in possessing you, or them get you back from whom I've taken you."

Lillie made no answer. She was weak and weary. Hope was indeed faint in her sad heart. Yielding to fatigue, she leaned back against the curtained side of the wagon and slept.

How long she slumbered she did not know, but she was wakened by the sound of rushing water, and looking out, saw that it was light and they were fording a river, broad but shallow, and full of willow-covered islands.

"Oh, had it been night," she thought, "what a place for concealment, if I could only have slipped out of the wagon unseen!"

Dave Tutt was ahead testing the depth of the water before the wagon followed, and on looking

out she saw Frank Stark riding close by the hinder wheel.

A glance from his eyes told her that he was yet her friend and meant to do something for her, what it might be she could not comprehend.

As Tutt neared the opposite bank of the river, it became deeper, and it was evident that the team would have all it could do to get the wagon through over the quicksand bottom, for the water would reach to the wagon-bed, if not higher.

"Put your whip to your horses and make them drag through here lively!" shouted Dave to the driver, and the latter obeying, urged the team on.

But a heavy lurch of the wagon while it was in the deepest part told that something had given way, and the next second nearly half the hinder end was submerged, and the team came to a complete standstill. One of the wheels had come off, most probably from a lost linch-pin. Lillie in an instant thought how the linch-pin was lost, and repented of her precipitate condemnation of Frank Stark.

Delay was everything, and this must cause delay.

Dave Tutt rode back, cursing awfully. The four horses ahead of the wagon plunged fearfully. The treacherous quicksand washing from under their feet terrified them. The wagon itself began visibly to settle deeper and deeper into the water.

In vain the driver, assisted by Tutt, who lashed the horses until it seemed as if they must break from the harness, tried to move the wagon on.

Deeper and deeper, until the wounded men



shrieked out for help to save them from drowning.

Then, and not till then, did Dave Tutt give up a hope of getting the wagon out.

Now he took Lillie on his own powerful horse, and called upon Frank Stark and others to get the helpless men to the land in the same way.

The harness was then cut, the team got to the shore, and the wagon abandoned.

To M'Kandlas, the rough removal was terrible. His wound bled externally afresh, and blood coming from his mouth made matters appear even yet worse for him.

A halt was now imperative. The colonel could not be moved at all in his present condition, and when moved it must be on a litter, or another wagon must be procured; for this, within a half-hour, went entirely out of sight.

Stark proposed that the whole party should camp, throw up a cotton-wood stockade, and be ready to fight it out if their pursuers came up.

"I, for one, will never desert my old leader while life is in him," he said. "The colonel has been true as steel to us, and we're worse than cowards if we desert him."

This was loudly applauded by the men, and Dave Tutt, who, in his own utter selfishness, would have gladly gone on with all the able men, leaving the helpless behind, did not dare propose the measure.

But he did not like to remain there, even for a

short time, for he dreaded the pursuit of two such men as Buffalo Bill and his mate. He knew that death, worse than mere death, beside the loss of his prize, would be his fate.

"Yes," said he, deeming it best to chime in with the man whom he had hated in all the bitterness of his heart from the instant he saw him exchanging glances with Lillie—"Yes, I think we'd better make a stand here until we can move our wounded. I go in for it. So, Frank Stark, you take all the men that can be spared from horse, guard and fit up as good a stockade as you can with the tools we have. There's some drift-wood around, and sod can be cut with a hatchet as well as a spade. And as them who may come can't overtake us for a day or two yet, why I'll ride on and get the gal out of the way, so that they can't get her no way, and then if they find out she isn't here, why, maybe, they'll take another track and let us alone. I can do this and be back before there's any fighting."

"I don't like Dave's plan a bit," cried Frank Stark.

"Who was it asked you to like it? I didn't expect you would!" said Dave, grinding his white teeth ferociously together.

"We can't afford to lose a single rifle when such men as Wild Bill and his mate are after us. And we don't know what minute they may heave in sight. As for the gal, she can be hid right here—put on one of them islands where she can't git away, and where bullets won't hit her in the fight, and

when we've whipped the enemy, Dave can go and fetch her and tote her off to the hills."

If Dave Tutt could have killed Frank Stark with a look while this was being said, Frank would never have finished his speech. But he got through, and was rewarded by a really grateful look from poor Lillie, who trembled lest she should indeed be carried on alone by her ruffianly abductor.

This glance, detected by Dave, almost set him wild with angry jealousy. But his was one of those, not human, but almost infernal natures, which can conceal its hottest passion—just as the tiger is stillest ere it leaps. His white face wore a ghastly smile, as he said :

"Since Frank Stark seems to have so much to say, I will yield up the leadership of the party entirely to him. I only took it because the colonel here asked me to, but I now resign. So, Mr. Stark, you are now captain! I hope you'll prove your ability to take care of this party and get them off to the hills in safety."

"I will, with your help," said Frank, coolly.

"You'll not have much of my help, my brave fellow. I'm going on my own hook, and the gal is going with me."

"What! Desert your comrades in the hour of peril? You dare not, and you shall not. You say I am captain. Then, by the Big Elk of all elks, I'll show you that I am. Offer to leave us now, and half a dozen bullets shall pierce your carcass. Am I not right, men?"

"Aye, aye—hurrah for Frank Stark; he carries a full hand with every ace in the pack!" shouted one, and his words were applauded and echoed on every side.

"Scoundrel, I'll cut your heart out for this!" cried Dave, no longer able to restrain himself.

"Wait till I get this party to the Black Hills and I'll give you the best chance you ever had," said Frank, who, encouraged every instant by the approving eyes of Lillie, began to feel every inch a hero.

Talk of magic—talk of power. The approval of a woman whom he loves will do more to make a man manly, or even a coward brave, than anything else that can be named between heaven and earth.

"It may be a long time, but, curse you, I'll wait. And now build your camp and its defenses. I suppose your captainship has no objection to my taking the young lady, in whom you seem to take so much interest, over to one of the islands, and after I build a brush house to keep her from the night dews and the day breezes, standing guard to see that she does not run away? I can shoot as well from an island, if our enemies try to cross, as from here."

"The young lady will be quite as safe inside of the stockade as on an island under your *gentle* care," said Frank, urged by an appealing glance from her eyes to prevent the plan which Dave now laid to have her alone in his power. The compan-

ionship of ruffians was more safe than solitude with him.

“Well, have everything your own way now. But remember, Frank Stark, when we get to the hills, it is you or me and with *knives!*”

“All right, Mr. Tutt—I’m your man then, but now we’ve got work to do.”

## CHAPTER XI.

ALL night long, without a thought of sleep or even a sign of fatigue, Buffalo Bill and his mate rode around, gathering men and making preparations for the expedition in search of his lost sister.

By sunrise they were all assembled, had breakfasted and were ready for a start.

Not uniformed, scarce one dressed or armed alike; some mounted on noble thoroughbreds, others on hardy, wild-eyed mustangs; some young and slender; others tall, weather-bronzed, all bone and muscle—they looked like *true* fighting men, but no more like the holiday soldier of the city than a painted Grecian-bender on Broadway looks like a whole-souled, rosy, bright-eyed, full-formed country lass whose very glance makes you *dream* that angels drift along life's dark tide some time.

There was a slight pause after these men, some thirty in number, were ranged in the line ready to take column of march.

It was when Bill's mother and sister stepped forward to say good-by.

"Heaven bless and aid you and your friends, my dear boy!" said the good, Christian mother. "We women can only pray for your safety and success. A mother's prayers and hopes go with you!"

"And a sister's too, dear brother!" said Lottie, tears in her eyes as she spoke.

"And Kitty Muldoon says the good-luck be wid yez all, and bad luck to the wicked 'uns, that's got Miss Lillie wid 'em. Bring wan home wid ye jist, so I may scratch the eyes out of his ugly head!"

A shout of laughter followed this outburst from Kitty, and before it fairly subsided, Buffalo Bill, who had a good deal of the soldier in him, sung out:

"By fours—column right and forward at a trot!"

There was no sound of bugle—no gay pennant fluttered in the air, but there was material for deadly work in that small, compact body of men.

The red men of the plains dread such men more, even in small bodies, than they do an army of thousands, moving with pomp and show—parks of artillery used only for noise, wagon trains and fluttering banners.

They know by many a sudden onslaught, many a brief, wild fight, how bordermen fight, and their dread of them—is wholesome.

Away at a sweeping trot, changing to a walk only when they ascended some steep pitch, and frequently a gallop as they went down, steering as true by the sun as if he had a compass, Buffalo Bill now headed for the farm where his mother's home had been.

- It was almost night when they reached the spot, but there was plenty of light and time left before

darkness to examine the unburied bodies of whites and Indians.

That of Jake M'Kandlas could not be found.

"He either is not dead or else they have carried his body along to bury it," said Buffalo Bill.

"They've got a wagon—here's the tracks," cried Wild Bill, whose eye had been more on signs than on the bodies.

"There was one in the old barn that wasn't burned," said Bill, riding to the spot where the wagon had been loaded.

"And here's more, mate—she, your sister, is with them. Look at that track," cried Wild Bill, as he sprang from Black Nell and examined a small footprint in the soil.

"Yes, yes, it was her foot did that," cried the brother. "Look for the track of Dave Tutt's horse further on, Bill."

"I've found it right here," cried Wild Bill. "We're on the right track now, and it is only a matter of time to get to 'em. We've got to reach 'em careful, or they may kill poor Miss Lillie for spite. Jake M'Kandlas, if he is alive, is mean enough for that, and I don't believe Dave Tutt is a bit better."

"Yes," said Buffalo Bill, "we must be fast and careful too. Loosen girths, boys, and feed your horses. There's corn and oats in the old barn, and hay in the stacks. We'll all get a bite and rest for two hours, and then go ahead by moonlight. The



wagon trail will be easy to follow in the grass or over the sand."

The men now put their horses out to feed and then went to getting supper, while the two Bills for the first time in sixty hours dropped on the ground to get a little sleep before starting again.

## CHAPTER XII.

WITH no tools but their camp-axes and tomahawks, the men under Frank Stark built for themselves a really formidable stockade from drift-wood and the trunks of small cotton-wood trees which grew along the banks of the Platte.

It was built on a kind of point which jutted out into the river with bold, precipitous banks, so that it was only assailable practically from the rear, for if horsemen should ford the river in front, or approach it on either flank, they could not get up the bank or over the walls of the stockade.

These were lined inside with rods cut from the prairie, where the coarse blue grass grew thick and matted near the water. Holes left for use by the marksmen were plentiful.

To enter it a rude ladder had been made, so that without an appliance not to be expected or easily made on the plains, it could scarcely be scaled.

Inside, for the comfort of the wounded, and with a special apartment for poor Lillie, a house sheltered with a thatch of grass, and walled with willow twigs, had been made.

Near the stockade, and completely under rifle cover, was a corral of stakes, into which the stock could be driven at night, or on the approach of danger.

These arrangements showed that Frank Stark was capable, to say the least, of taking the command which Dave Tutt, more from spite than any other cause, had resigned into his hands.

Dave had assisted in the work, but took particular pains never to go out of sight of Lillie, and to keep such a watch on her that she could not hold an interview unobserved by him with Frank Stark.

But the latter had seen from glances of Lillie what he believed to be an encouragement, not to improper advances, but to a friendly understanding; for amid those lawless men she was in look and act pure as a lily fresh blown on the wave.

He determined to have an unobserved interview with her, and to effect it called off a regular stock and picket guard for the night, assigning to each man a special post. That farthest from the stockade—and it was a six-hour watch—was given to Dave Tutt.

The latter was about to moodily refuse the duty, but on second thought, realizing that it would be best for the present to yield to authority he had been instrumental in creating, he expressed his readiness to do the duty.

Hunters who had taken a ride of scarce a mile from the camp brought in several fat antelopes; and had there been no anticipation of attack there would have been nothing but hilarity among the men.

The night set in not quite as clear as on the preceding one, for floating clouds frequently swept athwart the sky, and shut out the moonlight. The

sentinels were all posted, the reliefs had turned in to sleep till their time came on, and all was still inside the stockade.

Now Frank Stark determined if possible to find out how Lillie regarded him, and if, as he hoped, his conduct in regard to Dave Tutt had pleased her, to avow something more than a mere interest in her.

Approaching the separate apartment which he had built for her, and seeing her seated near the door on an improvised bench he had himself made for her use, he asked, in a low tone, if she would not like to look out on the river.

"Thank you, sir, you have been kind to me; I will be glad to do so," was her reply.

And she followed him to a part of the stockade where, from a bench of turf, they could look out on the river and its bush-covered islands.

Frank was silent for two or three minutes after they reached this spot, allowing her to look out on the water and the prairie beyond without disturbing her reverie. Even in his rude nature, lawless and full of evil, there was a reverence for the purity which made him silent, until she chose to speak. At last her voice fell on his ear.

"I ought to be very grateful to you, Mr. Stark," she said, "for interfering with that wretch to keep him from carrying me off to the hills. And I am. From my heart I thank you."

"Lord bless your sweet face, Miss Lillie, I haven't done half what I'd like to do for you!" he said, ea-

gerly. "I have never in all my life seen any one half so good or half so pretty as you, and it makes me feel wild and wicked to think any harm should come to you, and I'll die before I see you wronged."

"Oh—thank you, thank you, Mr. Stark. You do not know how your words comfort me. If you only *could* get me back to my poor, broken-hearted mother, I believe you *would*! Wouldn't you?"

And her dark hazel eyes turned on him with a look which thrilled every nerve in his frame.

"Wouldn't I? Miss Lillie—I—I don't know what to say. I hate to leave them that trust in me, but since I have met you, I don't want to lead a wicked life any more. Them that I serve with now are determined to fight against the old flag that I was born under, and to entice the red fiends of the plains to do the same, and to carry fire and carnage along the border. I don't want to do it. If I can manage to get you off and back to your friends, will you try to have them receive me, not as a robber and a bad man, but as a soldier who will fight for his country?"

"I will—I will, and my brother—but forgive me, sir, if I ask one question. Were you one of the men who were with Colonel M'Kandlas when my poor father was murdered?"

"No; I have only been with the band for two years."

"Then I can promise for my brother. He has sworn never to touch hands with one of those men but to kill him."

"I don't blame him, for I've heard old Jake boast how the cowardly deed was done. Miss Lillie, I will help you, because I love you better than life. I don't ask you to love me, but when you see how I am ready to risk all, and, if need be, to die for you, I know you will not despise me."

"No; I shall honor and respect you, Mr. Stark, and hold you as a dear and noble friend. In such a time, and in such a situation as I now am in, you can expect no more than this."

"No, Miss Lillie, and it is more than I deserve. But, now that we understand each other, you had better go back to your quarters and rest all you can. I will lay my plans to get you away from here either to-night or to-morrow night, and, when they are laid, I will carry them through. Rest while you can, for when I call on you all your strength and courage will be needed."

"I will be ready, and I will pray for the good Father above to help you in all your good intentions, and to frustrate those whose thoughts are evil. Good-night, Mr. Stark."

"Good-night, Miss Lillie."

"She is an angel, if ever one walks the earth!" murmured Stark, as he watched her gliding away toward her quarters. "I never meant to leave the boys, but for her I'd die twenty deaths. She *may* love me for it yet. A woman who knows a true heart beats only for her, must think of it some time, and not unkindly, either."

## CHAPTER XIII.

WITH only a couple of hours rest, the party under Buffalo Bill started on from the ruins of the cottage home, the trail made by the wagon being quite easy to follow.

While it led toward the valley of the Republican the two leading bodermen were rather surprised, for the sinuous windings of that stream led far away from the direct route to the Black Hills, in which it was known the M'Kandlas gang had their secret haunts and hiding places.

But when it made a sudden turn toward the northwest, leading toward the valley of the Platte, then Wild Bill exclaimed:

"I know now the very spot the varmints are heading for. If they wasn't so rascally tricky and might change their course after taking it, I could take a nigh cut and head 'em off."

"They've got Cheyennes with 'em, and there's no knowin' what bend they might take," said his mate. "We had better follow the trail. They can't reach the hills ahead of us—not with a wagon to drag; and till they do, we're enough for twice their number."

"That's so; but we mustn't wear out our horses," said Wild Bill. "A man without a good horse isn't

half a man in a fight on the plains, and that we all know."

"That is so; but I hate to think how my darling sister must feel as she goes further and further away from those she loves. But she knows I'll be on the trail. I'll not fret any more, but hold my spite till I can draw a bead on Dave Tutt."

When the party reached the first halting-place on the plains, where the robbers had made a temporary rest, they looked in vain for the foot-tracks of Lillie. She had not been allowed to descend from the wagon here.

They had now come so far and so fast that a halt for the entire night was necessary, or their stock would be used up too much for active service.

No fires were made—they had cooked provisions sufficient; therefore the buffalo-chips that lay thick around the little pond were undisturbed.

The dawn of another day found men and horses fresh and ready for a vigorous start. The trail freshened as they went on, and the bordermen felt sure that unless the wagon was abandoned, they would overtake those whom they pursued inside of thirty or forty hours.

They moved at a steady, sweeping gait until afternoon, and then Buffalo Bill brought them down to a slower pace. He saw trees which grew along the Platte rising on the horizon, and he deemed it best, lest he might be ambuscaded, to approach that river in the night.

For over the plains the eye can detect objects at



an immense distance, while concealed among the tall grass, bushes and trees that skirt the river banks, hundreds might lurk unseen, their vicinity unknown until it was felt.

Halting in sight of the river-growth, the party had another long rest. When night with its shadows came on, they moved again. The moonlight enabled them to see the trail and yet it was not sufficiently vivid for the party to be discovered at any great distance.

It is doubtful if any discovery of the rovers would have been made by our bordermen, had not one of those incidents occurred which no camp with animals in it can be guarded from. The neigh of a horse or the braying of a mule can be heard as far as a trumpet, and the latter sound reaching the ears of the bordermen as they approached the river on their third night out, put them at once on their guard.

There had been no fires lighted by the M'Kandlas party at night, but they could not keep their animals still.

When this sound was heard, the party at once came to a halt and dismounted, while Buffalo Bill rode on to reconnoiter. They left orders for their party not to move till they returned, without they heard firing, and if they did, then to hurry in and take a share in what might be going on.

The two bordermen rode swiftly on toward the river, during a brief time of comparative darkness while a cloud bank obscured the moon, then as the

clouds moved by they dropped with their well-trained horses to the earth, for with the coming light they saw that they were very near the river.

It was well for them to do so, for when the moon came out clearly, they distinctly saw the stockade looming up on the other side of the river.

What it meant they could not understand. Why a party like that of which they were in pursuit should halt and fortify a defensive position, was something they could not comprehend.

Buffalo Bill was the first to speak.

"That's a fort—and by the way it rises from the bank, a pretty strong one I'm thinking," said he.

"Yes, but have they had time to build it, or are they in it?" said Wild Bill. "If it is their work, and they are there, they mean fight, and to do it with all the advantages. We could charge 'em on the plains, but charging a fort won't pay without we know we can get into it on a jump."

"That's so, Bill. And we must know all about that place before we go any further—that is with the party. You stay here till I cross and see what's there."

"No—you stay, and I will go. It's a risk and your life's worth more than mine," said Wild Bill.

"That's no such thing, Bill—your life is as dear to me as my own, and where's the risk it's my right to go, for I've got more at stake in this game than you. My poor Lillie is over there in the power of Dave Tutt. I couldn't stay here if you went."

"Then let us both go."

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"Then let us both go."

"No, Bill; and I'll tell ye why. If by any accident they should get us both, our party without one or other of us to lead, would never do anything in a fight with such scoundrels fenced in. So now stay till I come back, or you know by hearing a shooting that they've got me. Do it, Bill, if you love me!"

"It is about as hard as drawin' sound teeth, mate, but if you say so, I suppose I must. But be careful and get back. We haven't got a great deal more of night ahead of us, so you'll have to be lively,"

"I'll be all that. Keep Powder Face and Black Nell out of sight, for I'll foot it over."

Buffalo Bill now in a crouching position passed on toward the river, while his mate with the two horses lying down waited for what might turn up.

Wild Bill watched his friend as long as he could see him, until he was lost in a thick clump of bushes on the edge of the river.

Shortly after he saw quite a log of drift-wood moving slowly down the current, but as it neared the other shore very fast while it went down, he comprehended the plan of Buffalo Bill to get across unobserved, if they were on the watch in the stockade.

When the log stranded near a steep bush-crowned bank on the other side of the river, he knew that his friend was safely on the other side, and that now the most dangerous part of his work was to be done.

Anxiously he watched the stockade — hardly

breathing aloud lest he should lose a sound, he looked and listened for some token of Buffalo Bill.

A full hour passed in this way. He began to glance often toward the east, for he knew that the dawn could not be far off.

"What can Bill be about?" he muttered. "He has had time to scout all around there and get back. I don't like this layin' here like a fool and doing nothing, a bit. But he'd make a noise if they'd got him. I can't make it out. Ah! there's the log in the stream again. He is coming at last."

## CHAPTER XIV.

IN the settlement where Mrs. Cody, Lottie, and Kitty Muldoon were left for protection, there was much anxiety after the departure of so many of the men with Buffalo Bill. For it was too near two borders, the Missouri and Indian, to be considered safe, if all the fearful rumors regarding rebellion and war were true which had been reaching them through various sources for weeks.

In truth there was not ten men capable of bearing arms left in the place, though there were full a hundred women and children.

The widow and her daughter were quartered at the small and only tavern in the place, kept by a crippled octogenarian, whose constant boast was that he had "fit" the British in 1812, and could do it "agin," if they'd only come where he was. As his only weapon of defense was a crutch, there was not much danger of his injuring anybody in his exhibition of the manual of arms, which were frequent when the war humor was on him.

The tavern only contained four rooms and a garret, so that what occurred in one part was pretty sure to be soon known in another.

The first floor rooms were the bar and general smoking-room, the dining-room, and kitchen all in one—the landlord's family room, and the best bed-

room—the last of which, with two beds, was occupied by Mrs. Cody, her daughter, and the irrepressible Kitty Muldoon.

The presiding genius of the bar-room was Major Williams, the landlord—the presiding genius of the kitchen and boss of the whole house was Molly Williams, his young wife—that is, young compared with him, for she was only five and thirty, while he was eighty years old, if a day.

Late on the afternoon of the same day on which Buffalo Bill left with his party, two smart-looking strangers, well mounted, but with no arms visible, arrived at the tavern. They carried saddle-bags on their horses, as western travellers generally do, wore rather superior clothes, and carried themselves as men do who think themselves above the “common herd” of humanity.

Directing that their horses should be well fed and well groomed, they ordered supper, and stated that they should remain all night.

Major Williams hobbled about on his crutch quite delighted at this acquisition of custom, especially as the strangers patronized the tincture of aqua-fortis which was labelled “old rye,” in his decanters, and to a very quiet system of careless questioning gave a perfect statement of everything regarding the population of the place, absence of the men, even to the presence of the mother and sister of the famous scout and Indian hunter, Buffalo Bill.

The two men, both young and stalwart in form, keen-eyed, and with rather a military look, ex-



changed meaning glances from time to time as the garrulous old man chatted on, but his eyes were dim, smoke-clouded too from his ever active pipe, and he did not notice it.

Supper was served for them with the whole family, and the widow, with her beautiful daughter and Kitty Muldoon, occupied one part of the table.

The eyes of the elder of the two strangers, a dark-complexioned man of probably twenty-eight or thirty, flashed with a wild, passionate glance as it fell upon the perfect form and lovely face of Lottie, while his companion seemed more impressed with the less soulful look but plump proportions and rosy face of bright-eyed Kitty Muldoon.

The widow, ever reticent to strangers, took scarcely any notice of these persons, though the elder, very conversationally inclined, sought to introduce several topics of interest to attract her notice.

From his talk it appeared that he and his companion had been up the Missouri river purchasing a large tract of land with the intention of settling.

When the major asked questions about the coming war they appeared to be very poorly informed, but Mrs. Cody, with that quickness of perception peculiar to her sex, made up her mind that they knew more than they cared to disclose. Also, that when they chose sides, if they had not already done so, the Southern, and not the Northern, was where they would be found.

As soon as the supper was over, the widow and her child retired to the bedroom, followed by Kitty

Muldoon, while the strangers returned to the bar-room, into which, with the coming of night, the most of the male population of the place found its way.

To make themselves popular with these people, the strangers were quite liberal in treating, and it was not long before nearly all were more or less under the influence of the vile beverage which was vended at the bar.

The strangers pretended to drink quite as freely as those whom they treated so often, but they poured out scarcely anything for themselves, and so diluted what they did take with water that they felt none of the effects which they were producing on others.

Poor Mrs. Cody trembled while she listened to the foolish speeches and maudlin songs which proclaimed that the few men left to protect the settlement were becoming each moment less and still less capable of doing service. She almost felt relieved when the night wore on and comparative silence told that those who were not helpless from drink had staggered away to their homes.

The old major hung out as long as he could, but at last sank down helpless in his chair behind the bar, and then the two strangers were alone.

An eye was on them, however, for Mrs. Molly Williams though perfectly willing to see the money come into the drawer did not believe in its going out again, so when she saw her old husband sink down into helplessness, as she did through a crack

in the kitchen door, she took post where she could observe the actions of her guests.

She saw that, with their heads close together, they were talking low and quite earnestly, and she tried hard to catch some idea of what they said. But this was not possible, though she once heard the elder say "*the girls*," as he glanced toward the interior of the house.

She felt confident that they were planning some mischief, for now that they believed themselves unmolested, they exhibited a brace of revolvers and two huge knives, which hitherto had been hidden under their clothing.

She was not a woman of timidity—few border women are—and she was thinking how she should act to secure the money in the drawer, inform them that it was bed-time, and drag her drunken old husband to his nest, when the tramp of horses' hoofs reached her ears.

"The boys are coming—we're all right now!" said the elder of the strangers, springing to his feet at this sound. "The plunder and the girls first, and a big blaze afterward!"

## CHAPTER XV.

IT was almost daylight when Buffalo Bill got back to where Wild Bill and the two horses had been left.

"Quick, Bill," said the former—"quick, mate, and get out of sight. We've got work to do over there, but we can't do it by daylight. They're too well fixed. Mount and let's get back to the boys and out of sight and then I'll tell you all I've seen."

The two men mounted and sped away swiftly, and in a few minutes had rejoined their party. These were also put in motion, and when day dawned they halted behind a low range of pebbly hills, about seven or eight miles from the river.

Here the first act of Buffalo Bill was to post a dismounted man where he could just look over the crest of the hills and see the river and bushy growth along its margin, without exposing his own person to observation from that direction.

The horses, picketed with a guard to look out for them, were put among the low ravines where the Buffalo grass was finest, and a half dozen men taking turns with a spade which had been brought along set out in the lowest place to dig a well so that they might have water. No fire was allowed, and silence was enjoined—at least so far as loud talk or halloing was concerned.

All this was seen to by Buffalo Bill before he would relate anything to his mate or to any of the party of what he had seen over the river. In truth, there was enough of the Indian in his nature to enable him to conceal even in his looks as well as in his silence all information until he thought fit to impart it.

This time came when the party was properly settled and concealed.

Then calling Bill and the others to his side, he said :

"I was right in among the cussed varmints over there. They're fixed up in a strong stockade, with a good corral for their stock, and playing an open game wouldn't pay for us. They're fixed to stay till they can move their wounded men, for they lost their wagon some way in crossing the river. Old Jake M'Kandlas is alive, with a hole through his body from my revolver, and there are two or three more as bad off as he is that can't be moved!"

"Your sister—you havn't said a word about her," said Wild Bill anxiously.

"No—but I'm coming to that. She has made a friend there some way, and Dave Tutt has got his master. Frank Stark bosses the crowd and I heard him tell Dave Tutt that he should not disturb her. She has her own room in a house they've built inside of the stockade, and I heard Frank Stark tell Dave that neither he or any other man should intrude on her. Dave was fighting mad, but it seems that Frank has got the men with him, and Dave has

to bottle his mad for a while. I tried to get a word with her but it was too risky, so I gave it up for then, satisfied no harm would come to her before they move from there. And if you'll all stand by me to-night, we'll get inside of their works before they know it, and then good-by to every one of the cusses but Frank Stark. I'll save him for the good turn he has done for Lillie. So take things easy to-day, boys, and rest—we can't do anything till night comes on."

"What do you suppose makes Frank Stark take the part of Lillie?" asked Wild Bill. "Thought he was as bad as the worst of the gang?"

"I can't tell. He spoke as respectfully of her as you would, and talked as if he meant what he said. It seemed to me that he had been quarreling with Dave about her before, for Dave reminded him that it wasn't the first time he'd promised to cut his heart out on her account, and he would keep his promise, if it was the last act of his life."

"Well, I'm glad she isn't no worse off; but this is going to be a long day, waiting for night to come to go in and wipe 'em out. Is there many reds among 'em?"

"No—not over eight or ten, if so many. I couldn't get to count noses, for it was ticklish work creeping over the walls and in among 'em when a good part of 'em were awake. The quarrel between Dave and Frank helped me some, because they made so much noise. I took a good look at the corral where they put their stock at night, because that

must be stampeded at the same time we pitch in to save Lillie and wipe them out so not a cuss out of the crowd can get away. I don't mean to kill old Jake if I can help it. I want to take him back to the spot where he murdered my father, and roast him there over a slow fire. Death—a mere man's death—is too good for him. He wants, and shall have, a taste here of what he'll get when he is dead!"

"Mate, you're as bad as the reds, by thunder you are!" said Wild Bill.

"Yes, when I think of him and his gang, I am. Why should I not be? Can the memory of my good father, butchered in cold blood before his poor wife and helpless children, ever pass away? No, Bill, never—never! I will never feel that he rests easy in his grave while one of them is alive to boast of the black deed he has done. I have with my own hand killed two-thirds of them, and until all are gone—and by my hand, too, I will not feel content. I heard the wretch groaning from pain this morning. It was music to my soul. Oh, how I wanted to whisper in his ear, '*Fiend*, the pursuer is at hand! Your time is drawing near; the spirit of the murdered hovers near to exult over your tortured end!' Bill, I could glory in every pain that racked his frame. I could see his eyeballs start in agony from his head—the beaded sweat, blood-colored, ooze from his clammy skin—each nerve and tendon quivering like the strings of a harp struck by a maniac hand. Oh, how I could gloat

over his howling misery! And it is coming, it is coming—his time. When it *does*, mercy need not plead to me—not a throe, not a pulsation would I spare for the wealth of all the world!"



## CHAPTER XVI.

MOLLY WILLIAMS stood still and trembled when she heard those ominous words from the lips of the eldest of the two strangers, and saw the fiendish look which accompanied the expression.

She trembled yet the more as she knew by the thunder of the hoofs that a large body of horsemen had galloped to the front of the house.

"Open the door, Hubert, and tell the boys that I, Alf Coye, am here!" cried the elder stranger. "There's nothing to fear. Every man in the place is drunk or asleep."

The younger man threw open the door wide, and when the men outside saw him and his companion, their cheers rang out clear and hearty on the night air.


"Hurrah for Captain Alf!" yelled one.

"Hurrah for the Southern Confederacy!" cried another.

"Down with the Yankee interlopers!" shouted a third.

"Dismount, men, and come in. Eat, drink and be merry. The best in the land is not good enough for you, but it is free as you are free."

"There's neither free drink nor free provisions here, I'd have you to know, sir," cried Mollie Williams, now thinking it time to assert her rights.



"You've made my poor old husband drunk and helpless, but he isn't me, and I'll soon show you that!"

"Whew! Our pretty hostess is getting warm in the cool of the evening," cried the captain.

"Warm enough to scald you if you don't keep your ruffians out of my house," screamed Mrs. Molly, as she sprang behind the bar, and, first securing the money from the drawer, gave her old husband a sound box on the ear which partially awoke him.

"Surround the house—let no one leave or enter besides our own men, without my permission," cried the captain.

This order was given because, fully dressed and ready for departure, Mrs. Cody, her daughter Lottie, and Kittie Muldoon made their appearance in the back room.

"What does this mean?" asked the widow, pale, but not terrified.

She addressed the question to Mrs. Williams, but was answered by the man who called himself Captain Alf Coye.

"It means, madam, that a part and parcel of the Southern Confederacy has made a raid over the Kansas border, and as one Buffalo Bill is arrayed on the Union side, we shall deem it a good policy to hold his mother and sister in our hands as hostages for his future good behavior. I am glad to see you are dressed, ready for travelling, for my men will only remain here long enough to collect what

plunder they want and to make a bonfire of the rest. We will then head for Missouri, and you will accompany us."

"Never, monster, never!"

"Oh yes you will, madam, and I would advise you to spare such opprobrious terms, lest I be tempted to deserve the name by some act which your own rudeness may provoke."

"Fiend, I defy you and your vile followers!"

"Madam, the beauty of your daughter may tempt me to deserve the name. Beware! I am not a man to pause or trifle if I make up my mind to any course, good or bad!"

The poor lady sunk with a shudder into a chair, while Lottie, weeping, knelt by her side. That threat, so quickly understood, was more terrible than the thought of death.

But there was one yet left to face the bold, bad man, who had no such thing as fear in her composition, and but little care for the anger she might excite.

It was pretty, brave-hearted, good Kitty Muldoon.

"You are a dirty big blackguard, you are, to thry to scare a poor lone widdy woman, when the son is away who'd bate the very sowl out of ye, big as ye are, wid one hand tied behind him and a glove on the other!"

Kitty stood with her arms akimbo, looking him square in the face as she said this. Her eyes flashed like sparks of fire and her cheeks were all aglow with passion.



**KITTY STOOD WITH HER ARMS AKIMBO, LOOKING HIM SQUARE  
IN THE FACE. (Page 96.)**

"By the gods of war, girl, you're almost as pretty as your young mistress. If my lieutenant, Hubert Stanley, hadn't taken a fancy to you and spoken first, I believe I'd have had you for my sweetheart."

"Divil the one, you or your listenant, will make a swateheart of me!" cried Kitty, madder than before. "I'll be a sour and bitter pill for the best of ye to swallow. Lay but the weight of a dirty finger on me, or on them I serve and love, and I'll scratch the eyes from yer heads."

"We'll see by-and-by," said Coye, coolly. "My men will soon get through with their work, for they understand it. Hubert, find a good carriage or wagon to put these women in. I shall carry them over the border, and if Buffalo Bill comes after them I'll have a rope for his neck!"

"Sure an' 'twill fit yer own better," said the indignant and unterrified Kitty. "I could make a better man out o' mud than you are, wid all yer fine clothes on yer crooked back. You're not fit to kiss the ground that young master Bill treads over. It is him that will pay you for this—not in silver or in gould, but in cold lead and blue steel. Worra the day that the likes of yes came up from below, to bother good Christians like them that's before you."

"Girl, you have said about as much as I want to hear. If you care for the comfort of your mistress and her daughter, get their clothes and blankets together. For they are about to start on a long and hard journey, with little chance for getting comforts after they leave here. No more impudence

now, or I'll turn you over to those who know no mercy and never dream of pity."

"Yes—hush, my good Kitty," said the poor widow. "You only excite his anger without bettering our situation. Heaven will not desert us, child, and though it is very, very dark now, light will come by-and-by. We are in the power of these men now, but I trust will not be so for a great while. They will not dare to wrong us, for a fearful retribution will follow as surely as light follows darkness when day succeeds night."

"I'll do yer bidding, ma'am, but these haythens had better sing small if they don't want to know what a bit of an Irish girl can do wid her nails and her teeth."

## CHAPTER XVII.

BUFFALO BILL and the men whom he led noticed with pleasure as night drew near, while they almost counted the minutes which must elapse before they could with prudence attack the robber stockade, that the clouds began to overspread the sky, indicative of an approaching storm.

This, while it would tend to lessen the vigilance of the enemy, would conceal their movements and be likely to save them men and trouble.

As soon as night came on, every man was mounted, his arms having been carefully inspected and loaded while there was light. The wind, coming from the west, fresh and fitfully, was favorable in two points of consideration.

First, if there were dogs with the Indians or white wretches, they could not scent the approach of the pursuers. Next, the wind, sweeping in mad blasts over the prairie, made sufficient noise to drown all other sounds.

The leader of the bordermen had carefully laid out his plan of attack, and explained it to his followers, detailing the men for the two points of action, so there should be no error when the work began.

Wild Bill, with five picked men, was to shoot

down the stock-guard and to stampede the animals from the corral.

Buffalo Bill, with the rest, only two men being left with the horses on the east side of the Platte, was to enter the stockade, and, at a signal given by himself, the attack was to commence.

Every precaution was taken, even to the wearing of a white mark around the left arm, made from white shirts torn in strips, that the party might distinguish their own people in the fray.

Moving up to the river with silent caution, it took the party full two hours after they started to reach the fording-place. And when they did so, the moon was completely hidden by the black clouds which flew like lost spirits overhead.

The rumble of distant thunder, and a kind of heavy dampness in the air, indicated the approach of rain.

"Boys," said Bill, in a low tone, to the men close grouped around him, "when we take to the water to cross I shall lead the way. You might follow in single file, careful to keep so close to your file leader that you can touch him. Take care of your arms and ammunition, and keep perfect silence."

A low murmur of assent told him that the orders were heard and understood, and then he moved on.

The ford was only deep in mid-channel, and to footmen the quicksand was not so bad as it was to heavy animals. The current was rather rapid, especially in the channel, but in about half an hour every man of the party was on the west side of the Platte,



about two or three hundred yards above the stockade.

The louder sounds of thunder, as well as now and then flashes of distant lightning, told them they had but little time to wait for the outburst of the storm, so the order for the stampeding party to move to their post was at once given.

Away in the darkness went Wild Bill and his men, taking a course from the river-bank.

Two or three minutes after, Buffalo Bill, with his men, carefully followed the river down to reach the walls of the stockade.

It was an exciting moment, for it was yet so early that the enemy could be heard talking in their camp. Now and then a coarse laugh, following some jest, would reach the ears of the bordermen, thus assuring them that their close proximity was a thing undreamed of.

On, until at last the stockade was reached, kept Buffalo Bill and his party. And now the young leader, before getting over the wall at the only assailable spot which he had discovered the night before, gave the signal agreed upon, which was to inform Wild Bill of his readiness to begin.

This signal was the peculiar cry of a small owl which is found all over the Western prairies, and is heard only at night.

Bill was an adept in imitation, and the cry came so natural from his lips that the oldest bordermen of the party would have believed it came from the bird itself had they not known differently.

At the same moment that Bill gave the signal there was an alarm at the corral—a loud challenge—first a single shot, and then several more, followed by the sound, not of a general stampede, but of one, or at most two, horses making at full speed toward the river.

Buffalo Bill was puzzled at this, for Wild Bill had a return signal to make, which had not yet been heard, and he was not to fire a gun until the attack inside of the stockade commenced.

But he had no time for thought now. The garrison of the stockade was alarmed, and the hoarse voice of Dave Tutt was heard shouting:

*"Where is Frank Stark?"*

## CHAPTER XVIII.

"WHERE is Frank Stark? Where is the girl prisoner?" shouted Dave Tutt, with an angry voice from inside the stockade. "*Now* who is the traitor—who deserts you *now*? Your famous captain is gone, and that is what the row at the corral is about. I hope they've got him there. I'm going to see!"

And Dave sprang upon the wall of the stockade.

As he did so a vivid flash of lightning, followed by an instantaneous crash of thunder, lighted up the whole place, and he saw at a glance that a body of armed men were on the point of entering the stockade, while just entering the river at the ford was a man mounted on his own horse, close followed by a female on another animal.

A dozen shots were fired at him at the same instant, and he fell back wounded into the interior of the stockade, as he shouted:

"They're here, men—they're here. Fight as you never fought before, or we're all wiped out."

There was no further hope for concealment, no use now in a second of delay, and though Buffalo Bill felt sure that his sister had escaped from that gang, he was not now the less inclined to punish them.

"Over the works, boys, and let your revolvers and knives tell the tale!" he shouted, and sprang up the

ladder which was kept for general use by the garrison.

Up and over, as speedily as thought, close followed by his men, into the darkness, soon to be made light by the firing of a tent, went Buffalo Bill, and hand to hand, with revolver and knife, amid the yells and whoops of white men and Indians, the fearful work went on.

It could not last long, for with the blaze of the tent the brave bordermen could see where to shoot and strike, and now the victorious shouts of Wild Bill and his men, with the thunder of the stampede, reached the ears of the terror-stricken defenders of the stockade.

"Mercy—we surrender!" shouted a huge villain, already down with a bullet in his brawny breast.

"Take the mercy your gang gave my father!" shouted Buffalo Bill, and his knife clove through the villain's skull.

A minute more and Wild Bill was over the wall, another minute and, except a few wounded wretches on the earth, not one of the Indians or robbers was left.

These would have been at once dispatched, had not Wild Bill sung out with a chivalrous generosity peculiar to men of his class:

"Boys, it's a shame to butcher them that can't raise a hand to defend themselves. Let's hold up—let's hold up! We've our own wounded to look to!"

"It is poor policy, but excepting old Jake

M'Kandlas, the rest may live for all me," cried Buffalo Bill. "As for him, he shall live until I can hang him over the grave of my murdered father, or roast him to ashes on the ground stained by his blood. But my sister—she is safe from here, but is Frank Stark to be *trusted*?"

"Yes, just as you could have trusted me, if I had got her off," said Dave Tutt, with a feeble voice; for, terribly hurt, he lay yet living among the wounded. "He is off for the Black Hills with her."

"That's a lie, for I saw him and her crossing the river by the light of the same flash which revealed you to us, and us to you, you mean sneak," cried Buffalo Bill. "If I wasn't sure you'd suffer more by being let alone, I'd cut your throat where you are, you infernal spy and deceiving cuss! Look out for him, men, and for old Jake M'Kandlas—I am going across the river to find my Lillie."

"You need not cross the river to find her, for she is here," cried Frank Stark, coming over the wall, followed by the fair girl. "We met the guard on the other side of the river, and nearly lost my number, too, for one of 'm shot my horse. But we found out you were here and knew you'd be all right, too, so here we are."

Lillie was already in the arms of her noble brother, while Frank Stark stood looking at the pale, angry face of Dave Tutt, who gnashed his teeth in impatient rage.

"Oh, curse you, you traitorous dog. If I could

only live to cross knives with you, I would ask no more," cried the wounded robber.

"Gentlemen, do doctor that poor thief up. I want him to live till I can show him how good I am at carving," said Frank Stark in a tone of bitter sarcasm. "But I suppose I'm a prisoner myself, and have no right to talk."

"You are not a prisoner! Your kindness to my sister entitles you to my friendship," cried Buffalo Bill. "And if, as she says, you wish to join the Union men in the work just commenced, you shall have the best of chances. I was on my way to join the Union army at St. Louis when Dave Tutt, like a black-hearted scoundrel that he is, tore my sister away from her mother's side."

"I will go wherever you lead, and fight to death for the dear old flag I was born under," cried Frank.

"Good on your head! There's my hand, and my heart is as free as it for one of the right sort," cried Wild Bill.

"Heap up a bonfire—there's no danger now—and let us have light," cried the happy brother. "When day comes we'll be on the back-track, for my poor mother will sleep little until she hears from Lillie. Hallo! where have you come from? You look as white as a ghost, man! Speak out—what is the matter in Corinne?"

"Matter, Bill?" gasped the new-comer, as he sank exhausted to the earth. "There's matter enough to drive us all mad. There's not a house left standing

in town—all are in ashes. Worse yet, every man but myself, I think, is killed, with some of the women, too—and the youngest and fairest carried off. I crept away, ran miles on foot, then caught a loose horse, got on your trail, and am here. I've neither eaten nor drank since the massacre."

The man was well known to them all. He had been one of those left to take care of the settlement.

"Who did this?" asked Buffalo Bill, hoarsely.

"One Alf Coye, at the head of a hundred bushwhackers from Missouri."

"My mother and Lottie," gasped Bill.

"I saw them in a wagon under guard as I crept away," said the man. "For mercy's sake, give me some food and drink—I am almost dead."

"Attend to him, some of you," said Buffalo Bill.

"And now, men, we have work to do. Frank Stark, for the good heart you have shown, I am going to trust you as I'd trust no other man on such short acquaintance. I shall take all but five of my men and the best horses, and make after the party that have carried off my mother and sister, and we know not how many more. With those five and this man here, guard my sister Lillie and get her to St. Louis just as quickly as you can. I will meet you there if I live. Not a word, my dear sister. You never could stand the mad riding that me and Wild Bill must do now. I feel that I can trust you with this man, for he risked his life to get you out of the clutches of Dave Tutt. Heaven bless you, darling—trust him and be my own brave sister until we

meet. Come, men, all but the five who have no families in Corinne. Come ; we must over the river and to horse like kinked lightning on a tear."

One brief embrace between brother and sister and our hero was off on his new course to endeavor to rescue his mother and Lottie.



## CHAPTER XIX.

By the time Buffalo Bill and his men had made their hasty preparations for starting in chase of Alf Coye and his gang, the storm fairly broke over them. The rain came down in torrents, while the rolling thunder and flashing lightning added wild grandeur to its wierd effect in the midnight darkness.

This forced a delay until the dawn of day, for in the wind, rain and utter gloom the keenest scout and most accomplished guide could not have kept a true course over the plains.

The time flew swiftly by, for the brother and sister had a brief opportunity for conversation, and the messenger from the settlement, revived by food and drink, was able to give a partial account of the fearful outrage which had left most of his hearers homeless, and even worse off, if their fears were verified as to the loss of loved ones.

When the dawn came, though the storm had not abated, a course could be laid, and the young leader at once called his men to horse.

The animals had all been brought over, and now the men mounting, the cavalcade was put in motion, the two bordermen leading the way at a gait which only the literally tireless steeds of the prairie can keep up, swept over the stream and far away toward the southeast.

Lillie, not heeding the pouring rain or chilling wind, stood by the side of Frank Stark on the parapet of the stockade, and watched her dear brother, as he rode away with his companions, sad that he must leave her, but feeling that it was *his* duty to fly to the rescue of her mother and sister, and hers to be brave and hopeful, trusting in Him who is strength to the weak, for her own safe delivery from impending perils.

She watched her handsome, noble brother, until his form was out of sight, beyond the grassy hills, and then with a sigh she turned and asked her companion how soon they could start upon their journey.

"Were it only ourselves to go on we could start at once," said Frank Stark. "But your brother wished me to carry Jake M'Kandlas and Dave Tutt in as prisoners, that they may swing from the gallows tree in the presence of a multitude, as they should, for to die as men who are soldiers or brave frontiersmen die, will be no punishment to them. To carry out his desire and to keep them alive until the proper hour of doom arises, they must be moved with care, I shall have litters made, and when they are ready move on."

"You surely will not fatigue brave men by carrying the worthless bodies of such men?" said Lillie, in surprise.

"Oh, no—we will collect the animals that were stampeded, for they have not gone far, and will swing each litter between two mules. It will be

rough travel for the wounded wretches, but as they never knew mercy for any one else, I think they have no right to expect it from others. Go beneath the shelter, for we will be ready in a little while to travel. I do not wish to stay here a moment longer than can be helped, for the Sioux and the Cheyenne hunt along this stream, and the force left by your brother is too small to resist a large party of them with any hope of success. I will have a talk with Jake M'Kandlas and Dave Tutt while the rest are getting the litters ready."

Lillie at once went into her little room and began to make preparations for her journey, while Stark went into the place where M'Kandlas and Dave Tutt were lying.

Both men eyed him with a bitterness of expression far more speaking than words. They were powerless to do more than look their hate, but if looks could kill, his life had not been worth a thought.

"Traitor!" hissed M'Kandlas at last.

"Treason to the devil is duty to God," said Stark, quietly. "There is no use for either of you men to put on airs—you are down, and you'll never get up in this world until you are lifted up by a rope."

"Dog! down or up, we're higher than you are!" cried Dave Tutt.

"That is a matter of opinion," said Stark, smiling. "But I've no words to waste. I came in to see how you looked, and if you required any fixing up before we started."

"Started? What do you mean?" asked M'Kandlas.

"That we start in a little while for the settlements. I am having mule-lifters fixed for you and Dave. It will be rather rough, but I reckon you can stand it. It's only a short delay, for you'll swing when Buffalo Bill gets back from punishing Al Coye."

"He'll never get back from that bit of business," said Dave Tutt, scornfully. "Alf Coye is not the man to get away from, and Buffalo Bill will learn that if he crosses his path. Ah! your new sweetheart is in trouble, Mr. Frank Stark—and so are you! Here is Raven Feather—the Ogallala, and my friend."

Even as these last words passed the lips of Dave Tutt, caused as they were by a wild scream from Lillie, the opening in the brush house that served as a door was darkened by the presence of several Indians, hideous in their war pant.

Foremost of these was a tall warrior of most ferocious look, with a cap composed of black raven feathers on his head. The silver crescents, three in number, on his breast, proclaimed his rank as a great chief, even had not his haughty, commanding look done so.

"What is the matter with my brother, the Eagle-Eye of the Black Hills?" asked the Ogallala chief, as he looked on the reclining form of Tutt.

"My body has eaten too much lead. A false friend brought the enemies of the red man and of the Eagle-Eye upon him, and he is weak from many wounds," replied Tutt.

"It shall be well with Eagle-Eye. Raven Feather will bind up his wounds and punish his enemies," said the chief.

"There is one—the worst of all. Let him be bound!" said Dave, pointing to Frank Stark, who had stood till now almost paralyzed with surprise at this sudden appearance of an enemy which had stolen in unseen by his sentinels, or at least without an alarm reaching his ears.

But now, life and liberty both endangered, his native courage came back, and quicker than thought his revolver was drawn from his belt.

Twice had he discharged it, a death among his dusky foes following each report, when with a bound Raven Feather sprang to his rear, and hurled him to the ground before he could turn his weapon on him.

In a second his arms and feet were secured with hide lariats, and then in agony he was forced to listen to the taunts of Jake M'Kandlas and Dave Tutt.

But even this was not his deepest trial.

Poor Lillie was brought in, her white arms clutched on either side by a grim and hideous warrior, while with reeking scalps uplifted, others pressed forward to tell Raven Feather that the other pale-faces had been slain.

"Ugh! A pale-face squaw. Heap handsome, like the wild rose of the valley. Raven Feather will make her his wife! She shall bead his mocasins and cook his meat. His other squaws are old and ugly

in his eyes since he looks upon the face of the prisoner!" said the chief, as his eye rested eagerly on Lillie!

"Will Raven Feather listen to the words of his brother, the Eagle-Eye of the Black Hills?" asked Tutt, anxiously.

He did not wish to lose the prize for whose possession he had risked much and suffered also.

"The ears of Raven Feather are always open when his brother speaks. Let the Eagle-Eye talk."

"The pale-face squaw belongs to me. I brought her from among the pale-faces. In trying to get her back they wounded me—made me their prisoner. My red brother will not be unjust. He will not take from Eagle-Eye his property which has cost him these wounds!"

Dave Tutt knew who he had to deal with in talking thus to Raven Feather. Justice in an Indian is less a name than a fact. Would we Christian people could say as much.

And to render impartial and strict justice in a chief, is held as the highest virtue. To render justice the chief of a red tribe will order the death of his nearest friend, his own son, father, or brother. Claim from him a favor, he will deny it, without his inclination is for it. Claim from him justice in the name of right, and he will yield it.

His wild, fierce eyes looked lovingly on the beautiful, trembling girl, but he said:

"Raven Feather will not rob his brother. The Pale Rose is very beautiful. The eyes of the chief

feed upon her loveliness, but he will shut them up. He will not look at her again. She shall be kept safely for my brother until he is strong and able to take care of her himself, and my brother, Eagle-Eye, and the old chief of the pale-faced warriors of the hills shall be lifted up and carried back to the village of the Ogallalas, where the swift river that is red\* with the golden earth runs its race toward the great waters in which the sun sleeps. But this pale-face who has slain two of my warriors must now die."

And drawing his hatchet from his belt he turned toward Frank Stark, his face gleaming with fiendish ferocity.

- "Let Raven Feather hold his hand till he hears the word of Eagle-Eye," said Dave Tutt, who now sat upright on the ground, so much had the change in affairs strengthened him. "There is no pain when by a single blow the spirit of a warrior is set free. The pale-faced prisoner is not a warrior, that he should die a warrior's death. He is a dog who tried to steal the squaw of Eagle-Eye from his arms. Keep him bound, so that Eagle-Eye may punish him when he gets strong, and after Eagle-Eye has had his fill of vengeance, then let the warriors of the Ogallala dance around the fire which shall drink up his blood and reduce his bones to ashes."

The chief returned his tomahawk to his belt.

"The words of Eagle-Eye are wise. The Raven

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\* The Colorado River.

Feather will wait; his warriors will keep the prisoner until it is time to sing his death-song."

All this time poor Lillie stood silent, her eyes dry from excess of terror, her cheeks white and cold with fear. Frank Stark, fearless for himself, careless of his own fate, thinking of her whom he had so quickly learned to love with a love which made him hate his past wickedness and his vile associates, stood also still as a marble statue, trying to hope against hope—for there was no light now for either of them.

Buffalo Bill and his companions were already far away, each minute increasing the distance between them—and it surely would be long before he could hear of their fate—indeed it might be never.

Poor Lillie, silent with her lips, even speechless in the stony gaze of eyes that oft had spoken in their swift glances, was so hopeless that she had even forgot to pray.

Dave Tutt, with malignant joy in his face and look, said:

"Let the red warriors put the pale-face squaw here on the ground beside Eagle-Eye—he will watch her himself. And let the dog of a white man be taken out where the rain will wash the dirt from his coward face and show how white fear makes him."

"It is not fear of you—no, nor of them, which will ever blanch my face, Dave Tutt," said Frank, proudly. "I hate and defy you and them. You fear me and that poor helpless girl, and must keep us bound because you fear us!"



"I do not ask to be unbound," said Lillie; "but take me where I cannot have *his* serpent-eyes burning into my very soul, for I loathe and hate the very sight of the dastard wretch who fed at my mother's board, drank from my brother's cup, and then forgot even what an Arab would remember, the due that the receiver of hospitality owes to the giver. Chief of the brigands, I would rather die than live among you, or belong even in thought to the enemies of my people. But the man whom you call Eagle-Eye, like the other wounded wretch beside him, is a thief and a murderer. Their hands are red with the blood of my father and his people. I would rather be your slave than his. Take me from his sight!"

Lillie uttered those words with a wild vehemence of tone, a look of fierce hate, an expression of utter abhorrence of Tutt, which fairly maddened the latter.

"Girl," he cried, "I will soon be strong, and for every word you have now uttered you shall suffer. Raven Feather will not interfere between you and me. You are mine—*mine* as I will, and no fiend from the shades below will rejoice as I in my power, and no one could use it more mercilessly than will I. I loved you once—now I hate you; but I own you, body and soul, and you shall—as the fawn in the hands of the panther—be toyed with, that in the end you may perish miserably. Let the pale-faced dog of a man be cast out in the rain, and there watched over; but place the squaw here by my side!"

The Indians, after a glance from their chief indicating obedience, took Frank Stark away, while poor Lillie, with hands and feet both bound, was placed in a sitting posture on the ground near Tutt and M'Kandlas.

The pelting rain, the bleak wind, told how the storm yet raged without, but it was not heeded—nor aught else now—by poor Lillie. Tears had come to her eyes at last, and prayer to her lips.


## CHAPTER XX.

FOR four days after having struck it, across the Missouri border, Buffalo Bill, with a force increased by volunteers to about fifty men, had followed the trail of Alf Coye, and he was again in Kansas, the route of pursued and pursuers tending toward the Rocky Mountains, or that part of them known as the Black Hills.

His force was small in numbers, but it was composed of men whose hearts were filled with hate of the fiends who had burned their houses, insulted and outraged—and in some cases slain—their friends and relatives. The strength of such a force need never be judged by its numbers.

Men fighting for vengeance or justice, and armed with right, are a hundred times stronger than those who, steeped in villainy, have nothing but villainy behind them.

It was not a company with gay uniforms, burnished arms and bright guidons, riding over those grassy plains. No—with plain, dust-covered clothes, arms ready for service but not for show, stern faces and forms that scorned to show fatigue—those men rode on, determined to die or to sweep from the face of the earth the wretches they were after, and to rescue the helpless ones whom they were dragging off to a fate worse than death.



Erect in his saddle, his eyes as bright, clear and strong as those in the head of his wild prairie steed, Powder Face, Buffalo Bill led the way, while here and there, with many a wild jest on his lip, and fun enough in his composition for all hands, rode Wild Bill, sometimes in front and then in the rear, with his Black Nell fully as playful as himself, though for days neither he nor she had had more than four hours' rest out of twenty-four.

The horses of most of the men were those clean-limbed, wiry mustangs, which will tire a rider far sooner than they tire themselves, but, with few exceptions, the most had been going for the eight days which had elapsed since the party left the stockade on the South Platte, with only about four hours in a day and night for feed and rest, and they began to show it.

Of all the cavalcade there were two horses which seemed, like their riders, to be literally proof against fatigue. Black Nell and Powder Face were the two.

It was late in the afternoon and the trail was freshening, though at least two days, and perhaps three of them, had elapsed since Coye had gone along. But trees, the sure sign of water, were in sight not far ahead, and Bill frequently lifted his glass and scanned the country ahead, for he did not know when his enemy would halt to give his party rest.

He knew well that Coye must be confident of pur-

suit, for he had done too much damage not to merit it and the most deadly punishment.

All that the bordermen feared was that he would not halt until he got fairly into the mountain range, where defense would not only be more easy, but he would be among the Indians, who, as allies, would fearfully strengthen him against attack.

The distant mountains, snow-crowned, in which the Platte and Republican find their source, were in sight, and well-known peaks whose base was washed by the swift Colorado were within reach of the eye.

"I'd give all the gold I ever had or ever expect to have for a fresh mount of horses," said Buffalo Bill, as his mate rode up by his side. "You and I are the only two well-mounted men, if we had a race for life before us. Our men are game yet, but I can see their horses beginning to flag. We'll have to rest all night when we get to water. If we don't, we'll not be able to charge out of a walk when we overtake that black-muzzled wretch, Alf Coye."

"What is that glass of yours good for, Bill?" asked his mate, with a quiet smile on his face.

"Good for a great deal, Bill. I can see the trunks of trees ahead through it, while with the naked eye we can just detect that timber is there," replied Bill. "My father used to own it, and I wish I had known its value sooner."

"Thunder! I can see more with my naked eyes than you can through it."

"Well, think so, if that will do you any good."

"I can prove it. You are wishing for fresh horses, and yet can't see 'em though they are close under your nose, for all you are peeking around with your old tell-lie-scope."

"Where's your horses?" exclaimed the leader, looking around eagerly.

"Over there to the southward—don't you see 'em in that hollow plain, this side of the rise?"

"I see buffalo," said Bill. "There's no sign of horseflesh among them black humps."

"Well, shoot your eyes at 'em through the glass," said Wild Bill, laughing. "Maybe you'll change your tune. I've been looking at 'em this ten minutes."

Buffalo Bill carelessly raised his glass, more to satisfy his friend than in a belief there was anything more than game to look at.

But once there he held it, while a flush came over his face, and an exclamation of surprise broke from his lips.

"They *are* horses," he said, "and we are not yet in the range for wild horses. I don't understand it."

"I do," said Wild Bill. "The Cheyennes or Ogalala Sioux have been down to the Texas range or somewhere over the border for a drove, and there they are. Those are not wild horses; they're too quiet and too much together."

"You're right, Bill, and we must have 'em, or at least a fresh horse for every man, and we've got to be tricky to do it. The Indians have seen us, for

they are keeping back in that hollow, so they can't be very strong."

"You are right there, mate. But it isn't likely they've run their stock very hard this far from the settlement, and if we tried to go on and take what we wanted, they'd git and go where we couldn't overtake 'em."

"Yes, our way is to creep along slow, so as not to get far from them before dark, and then get back and surprise 'em. By keen work we can get their stock, or what we want of it, and with fresh horses, so we can lead our others, we'll double our speed."

"That's so. Slacken down your pace, and I'll caution the rest."

This was done, and when night came on the horses of the party were much rested, for they had crept on at a snail's gait for the past two hours.

As the moon did not rise till late, Bill had an excellent chance for getting back unobserved with his party, and they were materially assisted as well as encouraged in their movements by the light of camp fires.

For the Indians, supposing the passing party had not observed them, but had gone on where they could get water and good feed, had camped quietly for the night in the bowlders among the low hills.

By a cautious approach, dismounting his men and only leaving a small guard with his tired horses, Bill was enabled, after a couple of hours or more of maneuvering, to completely surround the horses and the Indians taking care of them.

There were only about a dozen of these, it being a mere thieving expedition, and not a war party.

Slowly and still as the panther creeps before it springs, they kept on, until at last, without even a yell, they bounded upon the astonished red men, slaying all, without the loss of a man themselves, or giving scarce any alarm. The surprise was complete. It did not even have the effect of stampeding the horses, and now without difficulty a fresh horse was secured for every man of the party.

The brands on most of them told that they had been stolen, and old saddle galls marked with white hair enabled them to pick those which had already been broken for riding.

With their fresh horses and a led horse for each man, when the day dawned again, the party dashed forward at full speed.

It was such a sight as city men never see, scarcely realize—the close column of stern, sun-browned men speeding over the plains and ridges, halting for nothing, but sweeping forward, with the hot breath of vengeance steaming from their lips.



## CHAPTER XXI.

A WILD, a grand, a beautiful scene. Mountains, great ragged peaks, covered with stunted foliage, like battered and war-torn giants breathing angry defiance to Heaven, lift their heads up among the clouds—heads whitened with snows which never disappear beneath the genial touch of summer's hand.

Winding down through deep gulches, bounding in reddish foam over huge bowlders, whirling and circling in shadowed eddies, rushes a mighty river—the Colorado the great red river of the West.

And close beside it, approached from the east by one of those long, winding canyons, or natural roadways, which seem to have been made only as approaches to the little Edens few and far between to which they reach, was a plain of perhaps a mile in length by half that breadth, as level as a floor, covered with short blue-grass interspersed with miriads of brilliant flowers.

A fringe of trees, mostly willow and cottonwood, grew along the river bank, and up the mountain sides the nut-pine and cedar predominated.

Scattered over this lovely plain was a large herd of horses with a few cattle, while close along the river stretched the lodges of a large Indian village.

Around these were many squaws and children, and a few warriors. The numerous disproportion

of the latter could be accounted for in but one way. A great war party was absent on some foray. On a guard for stock and hunters to keep the village meat, had been left behind.

The village was completely shut in by the mountains, which seemed to be almost if not utterly impassable, though mountain-men who know how to creep along the dark ravine or scale the rugged steep know not what impossibility is in the way of travel.

The one narrow passageway in and out could be defended by a few against the approach of thousands.

And for this reason had Raven Feather, the great war chief of the Ogallala Sioux, chosen it for the chief village of his tribe. For thither their ever-enemies, the brave and warlike Pawnees, would never dare to come. The Apaches of the South, or the Snakes and Shoshones of the North, nor the Utes and Piutes of the West, would never risk their warriors in an attack on such a defensive spot as this.

His own lodge, conspicuous for its size, was in the front center of the line, with a tall pole in the front of it to designate the circle where the great councils should be held when the braves met to celebrate a victory or decide upon taking the war-path.

In front of this lodge was seated Ma-no-tee, the Turtle Dove, his favorite wife, to whom all the rest were subservient, and around her at a distance were five other squaws, each of whom called the Raven Feather husband.

But to Ma-no-tee alone did the passing war speak or show respect, and she, full as haugh

the proudest of them, received their respect as if it was her due, and not a mere compliment.

Shadows began to lengthen in the valley, for the sun was swiftly moving toward its western cradle, when two Indian warriors were seen coming at full speed up the canyon toward the village.

Ma-no-tee, keen-eyed and vigilant, was the first to see and recognize that they came from the sentinel-post at the further end of the long canyon.

With a wild cry she summoned every warrior in hearing to her side.

Rushing to the chief lodge with their arms in hand they waited to know the cause of alarm.

"If the enemies of our tribe are near there are not many of the warriors of Ogallala to meet them; but they must not be weak because they are few. Ma-no-tee is a woman, but a man's heart beats in her breast. She has a rifle and a hatchet, a knife and war club, and she knows how to use them. We will die, if we must, but we will not turn our backs."

The warriors gave a wild yell of approval and turned to hear what the messengers had to say who were coming so fast across the plain.

Halting their horses, white with foam, at the very feet of Ma-no-tee, one of the Indians spoke:

"There is a friend to Raven Feather? Is he known to the Little Elk?"

"He is—he is a friend of Eagle-Eye, the great brave of the Black Hills," replied the warrior, Little

"His name is Captain Alf."

Then bid him welcome, and let him pass the jaw

of the canyon, where the braves of Raven Feather keep their watch. Tell the pale-faced chief that Raven Feather is out on the war-path, but he trusts Ma-no-tee, because she has a warrior's heart in her bosom, and knows no fear. She will build fires to cook meat for his people; let them come. If they are the friends of Raven Feather they may come and go as they will. If they are his enemies there is room for them in the deep waters of the great river. Ma-no-tee, the Turtle Dove, has spoken. Bear her words to the chief of the pale-faces, and tell him to come."

The warrior messengers mounted their horses again, and swept back through the canyon as fast as they had come.

The warriors who had gathered at the call of Ma-no-tee, now by her orders built great camp-fires and slew several fat cattle, which in some of his forays had been taken from emigrant trains passing the plains, kept for a time when they had not leisure or inclination to hunt the buffalo.

The sun was fast sinking behind the hills, but the great blazing fires sent out the red light far and near, making the grand old hills and rocks look wierd and picturesque in their bold outlines and dense shadows.

## XXII.

MA-NO . . . . . r tall form to the best  
advantage . . . . . of Raven Feather might  
see in his . . . . . his own dignity, donned  
a dress made almost entirely of feathers of the pink  
flamingo. Upon her head she wore a coronet of  
gold, rich with rough rubies and opals, brilliant even  
though uncut.

Over it a single black feather drooped, to show to  
whom she owed allegiance. She was, for an Indian  
woman, very handsome. Her features were classi-  
cal, her form fine, her eyes large and expressive.

In age she was about thirty, but having never  
been exposed to that drudgery which breaks down  
Indian women while they are yet young, she did  
not seem near so old.

Her warriors and attendants were also ordered to  
put on their best apparel, and make the welcome as  
imposing as possible when the main strength of the  
village was absent.

The sun was down, and the shadows of night were  
black in the ravines, and the gray robe of passing  
twilight rested on the peaks, when Alf Coye, hand-  
some in his half Indian garb, rode into the valley at  
the head of his weary column.

It was a long cavalcade, for beside his men, one  
hundred in number, he had nearly as many poor,

unhappy women, mostly young and beautiful, who had been dragged from desolate homes by the wretches whom he commanded.

It was a sad sight to see those pale, drooping captives mourning over their own dreaded fate, weary with long, forced marches, hopeless of rescue, terrified as they look at the mountain gorges through which they were led, uncertain of the doom before them. Oh! it was sad, very sad!

Handsomely mounted, splendidly armed, Captain Alf Coye made a splendid appearance as he dashed forward at the head of his command to make his obeisance to the favorite wife of the great Raven Feather. For he had heard often of her power over that chief and with the tribe, and knew that it was policy to impress her at first sight in his favor.

He addressed her in her own language, which he spoke fluently, but for fear my readers may not be able to read *Sioux*, I will be their medium to *anglicise* the conversation.

"The chief of the pale-faces from the river that is muddy, thanks Ma-no-tee, the beautiful wife of the great Raven Feather for her welcome. He is glad that she has lighted fires, for he has heard of the great Queen of the Ogallalas, and wished to look upon her face and form!"

"The brave chief of pale-faces speaks pleasant words, and the ear of Ma-no-tee drinks them, even as the notes of a singing bird or the sound of happy waters. Let the great chief choose a camping ground for his people. For himself and his wives,

Ma-no-tee has had a new lodge set up near her own."

And she pointed to a large circular tent made of the gaudily-painted tanned hides of buffalo, with pennons of tufted hair, bright-colored, waving from the lodge poles.

"Ma-no-tee has a big heart. The pale-face chief hopes to hold a little corner in it, for he loves to see a woman who is not a slave, but is brave and free and proud and beautiful. Will the wife of Raven Feather wear a gift from the hand of her husband's friend, which will tell her what all others may see, that she is very, *very*, beautiful?"

Alf Coye, as he said this, took from his own neck a golden chain to which was suspended a small, circular mirror, framed in gold, and threw the massive chain over the neck of the Indian woman.

Her bright eyes flashed as she raised the mirror and looked in it. And she threw on him a glance which told him that from thence on she would be his friend, if not indeed more affectionate than mere friendship would evince.

The party of Coye had now all come up, and waited his orders in regard to camping.

These were speedily given. They were to pitch their tents, or the few tents they had, directly in front of his own lodge and but a hundred yards away. The camp-fires already built were to serve for their cooking, and meat in abundance already hung around them on poles set by the warriors of Ma-no-tee.

"Where are the wives of the great captain, whom I shall call Silver-Voice from this time forward?" asked Ma-no-tee, addressing Coye.

"Silver-Voice, as you kindly call him, has never taken a wife," replied Coye.

The eyes of Ma-no-tee gleamed pleasantly as she heard those words. But a cloud came over their brightness as she added :

"But he has some fair prisoners, and among them there is one whom he means to make his bride. He has had no time to woo her since she has been in his power, and it is not likely he will stand on much ceremony now. Here is his choice."

And she pointed to poor Lottie, who, clinging to her mother, stood where both had dismounted from their horses.

Kitty Muldoon, looking as if she would like to do some scratching and biting, stood just behind her.

"There is your home for the present. Take your child in there and remain until I make a change, if you would not suffer more than you have already," said Coye, addressing Lottie's mother, and pointing to the new lodge.

Without a reply the latter moved toward the lodge. Kitty Muldoon also followed.

"Stop, girl! You belong to my lieutenant, Hubert Stanley, and he must find quarters for you," cried Coye roughly, to Kitty.

"May the divil take wings and fly away wid you and your liftenant, you big bla'guard. It's not



meself that will be parted from me mistress, an' now you hear it."

And Kitty bravely strode on after those whom she loved so faithfully.

"Halt! when I bid you, or it will be the worse for you!" said Coye angrily, and he clutched her by the shoulder and jerked her fairly around facing him.

"Is that ye gave, ye big coward? I tould ye once before not to lay the weight of yer dirty fist on me. Take that, you mane spalpeen!"

And Kitty with a strength that seemed wonderful, struck him two fearful blows directly between the eyes. The first staggered him, the second sent him reeling and senseless to the ground.

The eyes of Ma-no-tee flashed with anger, as well as surprise.

"The white squaw shall lose her life, for she struck the face of Silver-Voice."

And she called to a warrior near by to step forward and carry out her will.

But as the Indian but too willingly sprung toward the poor girl, Hubert Stanley interfered, and hurling the warrior back, cried out:

"The girl is *mine*, and no one shall harm her. Captain Coye had no business to lay hands on her, and if he wants a mutiny in camp, just let him try to interfere with the rights of others."

Stanley was angry, for he had really become attached to the girl, though he had been but little in her company since they had been on the march.

and had learned to look upon her as his own, or to be so whenever the party came to a resting place.

"Sure, sir, if ye value the life ye'd save the worth of a bawbee, let me go wid the mistress!" pleaded poor Kitty, looking at Stanley with streaming eyes.

"Go with her for the present. I have no fitting place fixed up to take you to at any rate, just now," said the lieutenant.

And as the three females passed out of sight into the lodge, the lieutenant turned and lifted his captain to his feet.

The eyes of the latter, fearfully swelling, were already "in mourning," for no pugilist hitting straight from the shoulder could have done the work better than Kitty in her fierce indignation had done it.

"Silver-Voice has been struck in the camp of Ma-no-tee. The squaw who struck him should have died. But the friend of Silver-Voice put back the warrior when Ma-no-tee told him to take vengeance for the blow."

Alf Coye heard the words of Ma-no-tee, but he could not see her, for his vision was closed.

"It was not necessary that she should die. Death is for men," said he. "There is a harder fate than death for her to meet. He whom you call Silver-Voice never forgives, nor does he ever forget. Let not Ma-no-tee feel bad because I have met this insult in her camp, for it did not come from her people. Hubert, take me into the lodge, get some raw meat and put over my eyes, and I will soon

have my sight back again. That girl of yours needs taming, and if you don't tame her I will."

"I'd advise you to keep your hands off from her in the trial," said Hubert quietly, as he led Coye into the lodge and showed him a pile of buffalo robes on which to recline; "for she handles herself about as well as the best man I ever saw. Two blows laid you on the grass, and if I had been within ten feet instead of three rods off, they were given so quick I could never have stopped her."

"Well, she shall pay for it yet. Now go and see to the camp. There is no need of posting sentinels here. The outpost at the mouth of the great canyon through which we came is enough. Let the men eat and drink and rest. I shall not move out of here for a month. I am going to rest and to enjoy a honeymoon, and you can do the same."

"Suppose our trail is followed? We have done enough work in the settlements to rouse the whole section along the borders."

"Let them follow. We are here in the very heart of the Rocky Mountains. The passes through which we came are known to few of the best scouts on the plains, and with twenty men we can hold these passes against a thousand. Our Indian allies are on the alert, and no foe can approach without our being made aware of it long before they are near. Let nothing trouble your mind, Hubert. Here we are safe, and here I mean to revel as I have never done before. It is a grand old place, this nest among the eternal hills and deep gorges. What

music in the rush of mad waters as they sweep through the wild glens and over the great cliffs. With that and the gentler tones of fair women, whom we will soon tame down to quiet obedience, we can enjoy ourselves as the free lords of forests and plains and of hills and valleys should. Where is your flask, Hubert? I am hot and thirsty."

"Water, cool from the rushing river, is far better for you now, captain, than a draught from my flask."

"Fury, man; do you think I need water now? No—give me something stronger than that to feel instead of cooling the fire that runs through every vein as I think of the future. Water will do when I can't get anything else."

The lieutenant handed him his flask and left the lodge.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

THE red sun sank behind the cold, white peaks of the mountains which overhang the Colorado, and with it almost sank the hopes of Buffalo Bill—the hope, I mean, of rescuing his dear mother and his sister Lottie.

Little did he dream that Lillie was again in the hands of his enemies, much less than even then one twin was almost as near to him as the other.

Though, by the exceeding freshness of the trail, he knew he was very close to the party of Alf Coye, he saw that they must have gained the mountain range, for the set of sun found him within three or four leagues of their base.

There, with rocks, sheltering ravines, a thousand ramparts everywhere, the wretches could make easy defense. Only stratagem could dislodge them; only cunning could release their unhappy captives.

Most likely, too, they were among Indian allies, for well did the young borderman know that in these hills were their secure retreats, their villages and camps, to which they retreated when they left the hunt or the war-path.

"Men," said he, as he ordered a halt, "we must rest a bit somewhere before we go in where blood has got to run like water, and it may as well be here. We've water in our canteens for ourselves, and the

dewy grass will help our animals. And, while you rest, I will ride on and see how things look ahead. One thing is sure, they can't go beyond the Colorado, and our journey westward is nigh to an end."

"Mate, it's me that is goin' in there on a scout!" said Wild Bill. "You needn't fix for a jaw now, for I *will* go. And we shouldn't both leave the party at once, for we two are the only ones of 'em all who know the country hereabouts. I know every inch of the ground ahead of us. Raven Feather, the big Ogallala chief, has his haunt in there. I know pretty nigh where it is, and I'll be cool. You can't, if you see them that is dearer than life to you, in their trouble. Come now, I must go."

"Can't we both go?" said Buffalo Bill. "I know there's peril, and we've swam the same stream too long to be parted when danger's about."

"No. As I said before, it isn't right for us both to be away from the party," said Bill. "Me and Black Nell can do the work. So, good-night, mate. I'll be back long afore it's time for you to stir."

The gallant fellow did not wait for any more argument, but calling his horse to his side with a shrill whistle, sprang on her back and darted away.

He had been gone but a little while when Buffalo Bill, who had wandered thoughtfully away from the place of bivouac a short distance, heard faintly, but distinctly, the sound of a bugle. His heart bounded wildly in his breast, for he recognized the well-known notes of the "Tattoo," or the turning-in call of the United States cavalry. And he knew that

no small party would use bugle-calls and the forms of regular marches and camps.

"There's help nigh!" he cried, in wild, exuberant joy, as he bounded back to his party. "We'll wipe out the enemy and their red friends now. I heard a call that none but the United States troops use, and there's a camp not far away. I must go and see who is in it, and if they'll help us. If they will, we'll root the devils out of yon mountain range, if there are a thousand of 'em. Stay here in quiet, and if Wild Bill comes back before I do, tell him where I've gone, and to hold on till I get back. Here, Powder Face! *Here*, you insect-lightnin', you're wanted."

The *Insect*, at the call of his name, trotted up to his master, who, without waiting for saddle or bridle, sprang on his back, and dashed away at full speed to the north, for from that direction the bugle sounds had come.

The men, with both leaders gone, huddled together and talked anxiously about the situation. They knew that a crisis was at hand, and that a struggle for life and the rescue of loved ones must take place before many hours went by.

Their tired animals fed from the rich dewy grass which grew around and rested, for long, forced marches, even with frequent changes on the extra animals, had told on their powers.

The men ate sparingly of their cooked meat, for even that was getting short. They had not had time to hunt.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

UNERRING in all natural instincts, as keen in hearing as in sight, Buffalo Bill knew to a mile almost in the gentle breeze of that evening how far away the bugler was who blew the notes that reached his ear; also, the precise direction. In this he rode swiftly for nearly half an hour, and then, checking his horse, he listened. He thought that he might catch some sound from the camp; and he did so. The clear notes of "Benny Haven, O!" a song as dear to our army officers as the Marsellaise to a Frenchman reached his ears, and he knew that some West Pointer was giving the air, while a ringing chorus following told that a lively set of officers were making the welkin ring.

Bill rode on more cautiously now, for he did not know where their sentinels and pickets might be posted, and he knew from experience that soldiers throw lead as if it cost nothing when they fancy Indians are about.

Rising over a small ridge he came in sight of the encampment, and from the number of tents and baggage wagons, knew that there was a full battalion, if not more, in the party.

And now Bill thought he would show them what could be done by a white man, and what Indians, if around, would be very apt to do.



Dismounting, he led Powder Face into a little hollow.

"Stay there, little lightnin', stay there, my insect, till I come back," said he, and Powder Face nodded his head knowingly, proof, of course, that he would obey orders.

Bill now turned toward the camp-fires of the detachment again, and stooping low in the tall grass, holding his long rifle at a trail, he moved swiftly, silently on.

Soon he came in sight of a picket guard of two men, with horses picketed close by them. By a short detour he passed them, and then another guard, and in a few minutes was inside of all the sentinels.

Approaching a fire in front of a large marquee, but crouching low in the grass and keeping in the shade of some wagons, he came so near that he recognized several of the officers, and knew them to belong to the gallant Fifth cavalry. The principal singer was Captain Brown (now a major), and with him Bill had enjoyed many a lively ride and hunt over the plains.

The captain was a noble, fine-looking soldier, and by the respect paid him, was evidently in command of the battalion.

Bill crept on till he could hear every word said by ten or a dozen young officers seated around him.

"Cap, suppose the noise we've made should bring down some of the Sioux or Cheyennes on us, for we're in their range?" old Sim Geary says.

"Well, if they came down on us, we'd come down

on them with a dose of blue pills from our carbines, and that would be all. A good Indian fight here would give us an appetite for the enemy we shall meet when we get over the Missouri border. I'm sick of garrison life outside of all creation, where a stray squaw is a luxury to look at, and a white angel only a thing to dream of."

"Do you ever dream of angels, cap?" asked Dr. Nettles, a young surgeon, who had been engaged in looking over and wiping dry a set of instruments.

"Yes, often," said the captain. "There was a golden-hair divinity at the Academy who so wove herself into my life that I find myself dreaming of her very often. I promised her when I came out West to take and save a scalp for her, and if I don't take the scalp of a red man, I mean to save my own for her."

"Cap'n, do them Southerners do any scalpin'?"

It was old Sim Geary, the guide and scout, who asked the question, as he half raised his buckskin-clad form from before the fire.

The captain had no time to answer, for at that instant, right in their ears, so close that it seemed to be among them, rang a wild, frightful war-whoop. Not one alone, but a dozen terrible yells, which brought every man and officer in the camp to his feet but one.

That one was old Geary, the guide and scout, who never moved, but lay with a grim smile relaxing the generally stern features of his sun-browned face.

"To arms! Indians! To arms, every man!" shouted the young captain, drawing the saber that lay at his feet. "Geary, what the devil are you laughing at?"

"Nothin' much, cap, only such an Injun as gave that yell never made me narvous. It is good imitation, though, and it would make anybody but an old mountaineer hop as you did just now."

"An imitation? I might have known it, for an Indian's blow would have come as soon as his yell," said Brown.

"That is a fact, cap'n, but if your boys in blue don't keep a better look-out, reds *will* come in on you and wipe you out while you're dreaming of that golden-haired angel at West Point!" cried Buffalo Bill, stepping boldly forth into the circle of light.

"Buffalo Bill, by the chances of war!" cried the captain. "I'm glad to see you."

"Not half so glad as I am to see you, cap, with all these boys about you, if so be you'll help me in a little matter of work that I've got close at hand."

"*Work*—what is it, Bill?"

"The whole story is too long to tell, cap, but the short of it is this. We are within two or three hours' ride of a hundred Missouri bushwhackers, who have got many helpless women prisoners, among them my own dear mother and one of my sisters. Alone, I should have tried to rescue them, if I went under while trying. But if you'll help me, I know I can succeed. Yes, sir, united—for I have fifty as good men, regular rangers, as ever drew trigger—we can

rid the earth of every rascal of the lot. Will you help me, sir?"

"Of course I will, Bill. You know I never turn from friendship's call, or allow an enemy to cast a shadow on my path without resenting it."

"That's so, cap. And now, since I've seen you, I'll ride back to my men, about five or six miles south of here, and let them know where you are. By that time maybe Wild Bill will be back from his scout, and we'll know what to do."

"Is Wild Bill with you? Then you and him are worth fifty men," cried the captain.

"We are but two, but we know how to throw lead," was Bill's quiet reply, as he gave a sharp, low whistle.

In an instant Powder Face came galloping into camp, and at a second call halted in front of his master.

"Cap," said Bill, as he shouldered his long rifle and leaped on the animal's back, "in all the kingdom of horses, above or below or all around, you can't find a match for this *insect*. He is lightnin' after buffalo, two gales of wind biled down into one on a race, and he don't like niggers, red nor black. He knows more'n most men, and does better than them, for he keeps it all to himself. But—there's Wild Bill's yell—caution your pickets not to fire; he's coming with news, or he wouldn't yell that way."

Orders were instantly sent out, and only in time for the next moment Wild Bill dashed into camp with Black Nell snowy with foam-flakes.

## CHAPTER XXV.

BLACK NELL, with her wild rider, dashed up so close to the grouped officers that most of them sprang back, thinking she would go right over them; but, at a word, without even the touch of a bridle-rein, she stopped, rearing so that, with her fore feet in the air, she was settled back on her haunches. Her rider slipped to the ground, and looking about him saw many faces that he recognized among the officers, and one that he seemed better pleased with than all the others, except the brother of his heart—Buffalo Bill.

That one was Geary, the scout and guide.

"Sim," he cried, before uttering a word to any one else, "have you ever been in the village of old Raven Feather?"

"Yes, twice—both times as a prisoner, when they had only saved my life and hair for a roastin' scrape. I never want to go there again. I got away, they never knew how, but they thought the devil helped me, I suppose, for they've got a name for me. They call me 'the Man with Wings.' We're not twenty miles from the village now."

"Not *twenty*? No—fifteen will measure the distance if you don't stretch it. But that is neither here nor there. We've got to get to that village, and that as sudden as springin' a trap. And if Cap'n

Brown backs out helpin' his old friends in this scrape, I'll turn Injun and take soft hair every chance I get as long as I live."

"What have you seen, Bill—what have you *seen*?" asked Buffalo Bill; and his pale face, tremulous lip, with the earnest, almost imploring look of his full blue eye, told how anxiously he waited for the answer.

"I've not seen your mother, nor Lottie, and Kitty Muldoon," said Bill. "But they are in there, for Alf Coxe has gone through the big canyon to the village. But I *did* see poor Lillie, riding behind old Raven Feather himself, and Jake M'Kandlas and Dave Tutt are in the party. So is poor Frank Stark, painted with black streaks—and you know what *that* means."\*

"Yes, they will burn him if we don't hinder it. And that I'd do, if I had to go alone to put a bullet through his heart from my rifle and die myself. Captain Brown, will you let my mother and sisters suffer worse than death at the hands of those fiends incarnate?"

And Buffalo Bill's face was white as snow when he spoke, not with fear, for that has never entered his system.

"No, Bill," cried the brave officer, "no. I will risk everything for their rescue. You scouts must plan now, and plan quick, too, for we have no time to lose. If they do not know we are near we may

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\* A prisoner destined to die at the stake.

surprise them. A surprise is equal to a defeat, were they treble our number—for Indians never stand in such a case, if they can get away."

"They mustn't get away; they must be wiped out. I owe 'em a big bill, and it has got to be canceled, as you folks with larnin' say," cried Sim Geary, now on his feet in earnest.

"How are we to do it?" asked Wild Bill. "The mouth of the canyon, with a big guard already there, is so narrow that not more than three can ride in abreast. The cliffs either side are a thousand feet high."

"Yes, nearer two thousand," said Sim, "and that will be all the better for us."

"As how?" asked Wild Bill.

"Because, when we've got them packed in that canyon, as we will have 'em by-and-by, ten or fifteen men up there, rolling down rocks as the Mormon saints used to with Johnson's army, when you and I scouted to Echo canyon, will do more damage than all these men can with their carbines!"

"But how will you get 'em there?" asked Buffalo Bill.

"As easy as eatin' rattlesnake when you've nothin' better to chaw on. Captain Brown must make an open attack in front, keeping his men back far enough not to lose while he makes a heap of noise about it. A picked party of men must get to the top of the hill overhangin' the canyon before daylight, and not be seen when daylight comes till it is time to roll rocks. Out on the plains they'll not



come to attack the troops, for you'll corral your horse-stock with the wagons, and have the last ready for a breastwork, and they'll be careful not to come too nigh. While all this is goin' on, and it don't need any of *us* in front, we three old border-men, with the party that Buffalo Bill bosses, will get behind 'em, come down on their rear after we've got their captives safe; and, if we don't finish 'em then, I'm willin' to eat dirt!"

"But how are we to get to their rear?" asked Buffalo Bill.

"No one but the 'Man with Wings' knows, and he will lead the way," said Sim, quietly. "And now, Captain Brown, if you'll understand the thing and move your command to the front of the canyon—you'll know it by two great red cliffs jutting right up two thousand feet in the air from the plains—we scouts will do the rest."

"When shall I show myself in front and open fire?" asked Brown.

"Just as soon as you have light to see to do it. We don't want to give the devils in there any time to do any deviltry after day comes on; and if you attract their attention, we will soon give 'em all they want to do. Pick your men for the hights, and let Sergeant Hill lead 'em, for I've seen him in the hills before. He is an old hand; he was with Sumner's Rifles at Ash Hollow when we wiped out three hundred Cheyennes in thirty minutes! Life on that day wasn't worth a drink o' whiskey to a Red!"

"We will move at once," said Captain Brown.



"And without sound of bugle. Remember, gentlemen, and be quick in mounting your commands."

"Make as much noise after daylight in front as you like," said Geary, starting for his own horse. "Come, Bill, you and your men have got to ride fast to reach the point where we will leave our horses. I know that no plan but mine can save the captives, for they'd kill them at any rate, whether we conquered or not, if we didn't get them in our hands before they've time to do it."

The two border leaders required no urging to make haste, but the moment he was mounted, sped away with him at the top speed of their horses.

And in less than half an hour, with all the Kansas men in close column, the spare horses now left behind, they swept away to another gorge in the hills north of the Great Canyon, which led to the village of Raven Feather.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

A PAINTER of the Salvator Rosa school, fond of black shadows contrasting with glaring lights, could have found a "study" inside the lodge which had been erected by Ma-no-tee, for the use of Alf Coye, or "Silver Voice," as she called him.

When the night's dense darkness came on, a huge lamp, stuck on a post in the center of the lodge, filled with fish-oil, which sent out a sickening odor, was lighted. It flickered and flashed, but revealed the three hapless women crouched in one corner, pale, wretched beyond the power of words to paint, and Alf Coye stretched out in the other with a great bandage over the eyes which brave Kitty Muldoon had so effectually closed.

In low whispers, Mrs. Cody and her daughter and Kitty talked, but low as they spoke, some of their words reached the keen ears of the fiend in human shape in the other corner.

They were talking of self-destruction, for hope had left their poor hearts, and death is not, to a brave woman, the worst fate in life or the hardest to endure.

A harsh laugh grated on their ears. It came from the lips of Alf Coye.

"If you're so anxious to die, death shall come soon enough," he cried; "but not in your own

way. My red friends like tragic amusements, but they want to share in them and to afford the music. I will see that you wait for death until the proper time comes."

"You'll see, will you, ye dirty bla'guard," cried Kitty. "Faith, it'll be eyes you'll have to borry to do it with, if I get at you again. I'll have 'em out instead of shuttin' 'em up, if you don't kape your ugly mouth shut. It's my belafe that you were niver born at all, at all, but was dug out from among Satan's castaways below."

"I'll pay you for this, you she-devil," cried Coye, grinding his teeth together in his anger. "You shall dance on hot coals to the music of a hundred warriors."

"Sure an' that'll not be like the chance that's waitin' for you, you ugly haythen. It's ould Satan will give you the *cead mil failthe* down below, wid all for a ball-room and yer own groans for music. An' maybe he's comin' for ye now—it sounds like it."

Several wild, shrill yells heard from outside caused the last remark of Kitty.

And while they were yet ringing through the night air, Ma-no-tee, queenly in her wild finery and lofty stature, came into the lodge.

"Let the heart of Silver Voice be glad," she said. "His friend, the great Raven Feather, is close at hand. He comes with many scalps and with prisoners. When the sun looks down to-morrow it will see a good sight. The braves of our tribe are all

here. Their squaws will be glad. The great fires will be lighted, and the dance of victory and the scalp-dance will be danced. And if any of our braves have been sent to the happy hunting grounds by the hands of the pale-faces, we will send pale-faces there on the wings of fire to wait on them and serve them as their slaves. Are the words of Ma-no-tee pleasant to the ears of Silver Voice?"

"Her words are as the music of a sweet singing bird in his ears," said Coye. "When Raven Feather comes, ask him to enter the lodge of his guest, who is sorry he cannot see him with his eyes to-night. But he will talk with him."

"It is well. Ma-no-tee will meet Raven Feather and carry to him the words of Silver Voice."

The Indian woman cast one scornful, haughty glance on the poor prisoners, and, turning, strode away.

In her heart there was not one womanly instinct of tenderness and sympathy—in truth, much as the writer has been among the "noble aboriginals," he has not been able to find anything of that nature except in *books* regarding them. He hopes the Quaker commission may bring about a millennium among the Red men, but his faith on that point is very weak indeed.

But a few moments passed, and the shouting and yelling grew louder all the time, when Raven Feather entered the lodge.

He did not come alone. Clutched by the arm he led poor Lillie as if he feared that escaping from his

grasp she might rush to destruction in the water of the river so near at hand—the waters that spoke so loudly in their angry rush through the confining channel of the rock-bound gorge.

One wild, glad cry, and tearing herself from his grasp she was in the arms of her mother.

“Mother, daughter, sister.”

These were the holy words sobbed out in what may be called the glad agony of their suffering hearts, for with death and misery before and around them, they were at least *together* once more to meet it.

Even that cold, murderous Indian, who could smile while he wrenched the quivering heart from the breast of a yet living enemy—even that cowardly, murderous white man who could burn peaceful homes and drag into captivity worse than death innocent and helpless women—even they were for a moment silent—dumb. Heaven alone knows from what impulse, for Heaven gives impulses which mortal nature cannot fathom.

Weeping and sobbing, murmuring low words meant for comfort where comfort could not come, the four women now clung together, while Raven Feather, who did not at first understand it, now began to comprehend that he had brought a daughter to a mother and a sister to a sister in captivity,—that he had three of the nearest relatives of the dreaded Buffalo Bill in his power.

“My friend, Captain Alf, heap sick! Pale-face squaw hurt his eyes. Is it so? For Ma-no-tee,

who calls him Silver Voice, has spoken to Raven Feather."

"It is. I am blind. But by to-morrow it will have passed away. A still night with my medicine, and I shall be well," replied Coye to the chief.

"Then Raven Feather will leave him to his rest. To-morrow will be a big day in the village of Raven Feather. When the sun looks up over the hill-tops, he will call his braves together, and our pale-faced friends shall see the scalp-dance, and hear the songs of victory. We have a prisoner whom Eagle-Eye wishes to torture. The pale-faces shall see the red fire drink his blood while he weeps like a woman! It will be a great day in the village of Raven Feather, and the heart of my brother will be glad."

"Yes; for I too have a work of vengeance to carry out," said Coye, bitterly. "Let me rest, that I may regain my sight and be strong once more. And let these women talk together this night, for it is their last night of peace and quiet on earth."

"Raven Feather has heard, and the wish of his brother shall be done. Good-night."

## CHAPTER XXVII.

THE sun rises alike for the rich and the poor, and with its great glaring eye; views the wicked as well as the good, the hideous as well as the beautiful things of earth.

And rising over the white cliffs which to the east overhung the village of Raven Feather, it looked down on a wild, strange scene.

From the gray of dawn "life" had been moving about the valley, and in the camp of the white as well as the red men.

Hasty was the meal that was taken, for there was something more gratifying to savage minds in preparation; something to come off which aroused their wild passions to a frenzy of anticipation.

The Indians gloated in imagination over the pleasure of dancing around the stake of torture and seeing victims writhe in the death-agony unmercifully prolonged. The white men, full of hate and malice, were worse a thousand times than the red fiends, for they had known good through civilization, and were evil from their own wicked inclinations and not through ignorance.

When the sun rose the preparations for torturing the chief victim were almost completed. In front of the lodge of Alf Coye a large post had been set,

and near it dry fuel lay in a huge heap ready to ignite when all was arranged.

The warriors of Raven Feather in their war-paint, gaudiest robes, wildest guise, gathered near. The white men, filthy and repulsive to a greater degree than the red men, lounged around, for they were not under that discipline which insures neatness of attire and cleanliness of person as in the army.

The beating of the great war drum of the camp by the prophet of the tribe was the signal for assembly, and when it sounded there was a hurrying from all quarters toward the great circle.

Foremost came Raven Feather, carrying a lance, ornamented with the many scalps taken by himself in battle. Then, assisted by a stout warrior on either side, Jake M'Kandlas, grim, gaunt and grizzly, and Dave Tutt, pale and thin, but fierce and hateful in every glance.

The frequent application of raw meat to the eyes Alf Coye during the night had so lessened the inflammation that he could see out of them, though hideous dark rings encircled them yet. He, too, strode forth, ready to enjoy the horrible work in contemplation.

At a shrill yell from the lips of Raven Feather, another of our characters was brought to view.

It was Frank Stark, with his hands securely bound, but his feet free, so that he walked erect between the two warriors selected to guard him.

His face was flushed, and a look of angry defiance marked it. He felt that he was to die—he had no



earthly hope of deliverance now, no chance for escape, but he did not mean that they should triumph over any weakness in him. He would endure torture without a groan, die without a single weak, useless plea for mercy.

His eye flashed as he was led past the white leaders, but he did not speak. He walked without guidance directly to the stake which by its paint and preparations around it he well knew was meant for him.

Quickly he was bound to it, and then a few loose fagots were cast about his feet. They did not mean to hurry his death.

The great drum again sounded, first in slow beats and then faster, as led by Raven Feather the red warriors began to make the circuit of the circle.

Faster and faster beat the drum—yell after yell now pealed out from the lips of the red fiends, who boasting of their deeds, rushed wildly around the captive, brandishing their spears and knives and flashing the weapons before his eyes as if at each pass they meant to bury them in his body.

"See the pale-face tremble," cried Raven Feather. "He has the shape of a man, but the heart of a quaw. We will roast his body and feed our dogs with his heart. See how he trembles."

"Raven Feather is a *liar*!" thundered Frank, determined, if possible, to excite him so that by an angry blow he would save him from torture. "The captive scorns and spits at him. It is Raven Feather who is a coward. He takes prisoners when they



sleep and have no strength to resist him. His captive defies him and his slaves, both red and white, and will not tremble."

"He shall. He shall cry like a baby that is whipped. Light the fires and warm the feet of the pale-face!" shouted the chief, his eyes glaring red with anger.

A warrior brought a blazing brand and threw it among the dry fagots at the feet of poor Frank.

Again the drum beat fast and loud, and the dance of doom went on. The fagots caught and the blaze began to curl up about the straight limbs of the victim.

"Ha! The fire laughs at the feet of the pale-face. Now see him tremble," shouted Raven Feather in wicked glee.

A defiant smile was on the face of Frank Stark, when a piercing scream broke on every ear, and the next instant, Lillie, her face white as snow, her hair all loose over her shoulders and flying out on the wind, rushed through the yelling circle, closely followed by her mother, Lottie, and Kitty Muldoon.

With her own hands, Lillie tore away the burning fagots from about the prisoner's form, while the Indians, silent for the instant, stood aghast at her frenzied look.

What Raven Feather or the rest would have done to her or those by her side for this interruption, may not be known, for suddenly, with no warning, a sound came rolling up the canyon which in a second changed everything.

Not like the roll of pealing thunder, but sharp, quick and crashing, leaping in loud echoes from cliff to cliff, and peak to peak of the everlasting hills, came the report of a cannon. It was the field-piece belonging to the cavalry train.

For a few seconds every warrior was dumb, still as a bronze statue, in surprise. Not even the hand with the uplifted hatchet fell—not a man moved.

Alf Coye was first to break the spell of silence. And before he spoke the rattle of small arms and the yells of fighting men far down the gorge were heard.

"To the mouth of the canyon," he shouted. "To the mouth of the canyon, every man, red and white. There are regulars in that attack, or there wouldn't be cannon. If they get through the gorge we're whipped. Follow, men—follow!"

And with his saber drawn he rushed to his horse picketed close by, mounted without waiting to saddle, and rode away.

In less than a minute every white man and every warrior, except alone Dave Tutt and Jake M'Kandlas, was speeding off toward the sound of battle.

And now, quick as thought, Lillie turned to unbind Frank Stark, that he might be free for flight or defence, for weak as they were, and fortunately unarmed, she knew not what the two white renegades might do to him.

But there was another fiend there to hinder her angel-hand in its work of mercy.

It was Ma-no-tee, who, rushing forward, hurled her away from his side, as she cried:

"The captive of Raven Feather shall stay there till the chief comes back to finish his work. Let the white-squaw go back with her mother and sister to her lodge, or it will be worse for her! Ma-no-tee has spoken. Her warriors are gone, but the rifle, the knife and the war-club are playthings in her hand. Let the white squaw obey, or Ma-no-tee will dip her hands in her heart's blood!"

"Not yet—she has got to live for *my* vengeance, good Ma-no-tee," cried Dave Tutt. "Call your squaws and drive these women back to their lodge, and my friend and I will guard the pale-face at the fire-post till Raven Feather comes back."

"The words of my white brother are good. Ma-no-tee will bend to them as the tall reed bends to the soft night-wind."

And the wife of Raven Feather called her women to her, while Lillie, Lottie, Kitty Muldoon and the poor widow gathered close to each other, not knowing what to do.

"Make no efforts for *me*—for your own safety go back to the lodge, kindest of friends," cried Frank Stark. "Our friends are fighting for our deliverance—go and pray to Heaven to help them."

"Pray to the—"

Dave Tutt had no chance to finish the derisive words he commenced, for, coming no one could tell whence, but as if they had dropped from the sky or sprung up from the earth, fifty riflemen, with Buffalo Bill, his mate, and Sim Geary at their head, rushed upon them.

Every squaw dropped in terror to the earth, Ma-no-tee alone excepted, for superstition added to their fear. They thought they were not mortal, for "the Man with Wings" was recognized by all.

While Buffalo Bill was embracing his loved ones, Wild Bill was cutting the thongs which bound Frank Stark to the post of torture, and Sim Geary, first knocking them down to make the work easier, was tying Jake M'Kandlas and Dave Tutt.

Meanwhile the firing outside grew sharper and heavier and the yells of the fierce combatants louder and more loud.

"We've no time to spend here!" cried Sim Geary. "There's a heap of warriors out there, beside Alf Coye's gang. Brown will have too much to do, if I don't close in on the enemy's rear. Not a rock will roll till we've opened fire. And we'll have time enough to attend to matters here when we've wiped them out that's in front."

"That is so—we must help our friends there. Mother, sisters, you are safe now. I will leave a half-dozen men, however. But I must go and help to exterminate the wretches. Boys, six of you release every prisoner here, and stay to keep the she-fiends of squaws quiet. The rest follow me!"

Buffalo Bill waited not to hear an objection, but, followed by his men, and Frank Stark also, who had armed himself from a lodge close at hand, bounded away toward the gorge.

Ma-no-tee eyed the women and the prisoners whom Alf Coye had taken, as the guard hurried to

release them, for a few moments in silence, and then, turning to her own lodge, disappeared, followed in a body by the squaws of her tribe.

Dave Tutt and M'Kandlas, bound hand and foot, lay helpless on the ground, and listened to the sounds of battle in the distance. Their faces, which had been flushed with the joy of success in their black wickedness, were now pale and troubled, and they trembled as they listened to the cannon, the rattle of heavy musketry and, soon after, the sharper fire of the riflemen.

Then came sounds which they could not understand. It was not like the report of cannonry, though all as loud. It was not thunder nor the sweep of the tempest; nor yet the rush of charging horsemen or the heavy tramp of advancing columns.

It was a rumbling, rushing, crashing sound, and a shaking of the ground, as if an earthquake was upheaving.

What could it be?

Louder and louder, drowning the yells of the warriors and the rattle of fire-arms.

"What can it be?" asked Jake M'Kandlas, turning his head with startled look toward Dave Tutt.

"It sounds as if the very mountains were falling. I feel the earth shake," said Dave.

"Yes, yes, that is it. There has been an attack in front to draw the Indians and Alf Coye there, and while now their rear is cut off by Buffalo Bill and his men, some of their men are above, heaving down rocks. That is it. Our chance to swing is

sure now, for Alf Coye can't get himself out of the scrape, let alone helping us."

"It looks dark. I wish they'd cut every woman's throat before they went," cried Dave. "If I had only killed Frank Stark, instead of waiting to see him roasted, it would have been some satisfaction."

"It is no time to think of what we haven't done!" said the other. "Can't we do something to get away from here? If I was untied I'd roll into the river, and run my risk of getting out below before I'd wait for such mercy as I'd get from Buffalo Bill now!"

"No use—but look! Ma-no-tee and her women are up to some dodge!"

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

MOVING with all possible celerity, it took Captain Brown until daylight to get to a position in front of the canyon, for his wagons, laden with stores and ammunition, and his heavy field-piece, could not be moved at a gallop, nor was it safe to leave them behind.

The Indian guard, whom Wild Bill had described as laying behind a natural rampart of rocks in the mouth of the Great Canyon, did not seem to be on the alert, for he moved slowly and cautiously on until quite near without seeing any of them.

But at last, a little after sunrise, when quite as near as he desired to go with his men, while uncertain as to the force before him, he had the satisfaction of knowing that he was observed by the enemy, for a band of fifteen or twenty warriors, mounted on fine horses, galloped out on the plain, and circling around for a few hundred yards, reconnoitered his party.

"It is time to make a noise now to attract the main body from the interior camp," said he to the officer in charge of the field-piece. "Send a shell in among those fellows, and then we will give them some pepper from the carbines to settle their opinion concerning us."

The piece was quickly unlimbered to the front,



ranged, and while its thunder went rattling in among the hills, the shell went with a shriek just over the heads of the startled redmen.

The next instant, a couple of platoons of cavalrymen sent in a volley from their carbines, which dropped two of the Indians from their horses and seemed to have touched more.

Quickly dragging their fallen men after them to save their scalps from falling into the hands of the foe, the Indians fell back into the gorge.

Now, placing his piece so as to throw an occasional shell in there, but ready with grape should a charge be made on his position, with the wagons placed *en corral*, so that the teams and loose stock were all inside, Captain Brown threw forward his skirmishers, and commenced the attack in earnest. Riding to and fro, Indian fashion, and firing whenever they saw a red to fire at, his men moved forward, while the Indians, shouting and yelling like fiends let loose from down below, kept up from their side a quick but not a dangerous fire.

In a short time, however, the latter were evidently increased in numbers, and the brave officer in command of the regulars took a fresh position, just at the crest of a low hill, which completely covered the mouth of the gorge, and planting his piece so as to throw shell fairly into the faces of those who might attempt a charge from there, he poured in his fire more rapidly than at first, while his carbine range was excellent.

That white men were also in his front was soon

apparent, for the sound of heavier guns and hoarser shouts fell on his ear.

In a little while the fire on his front lessened, though the yells in the gorge were louder than ever. The sharp crack of rifles could be heard as his own fire was suspended now and then.

"Buffalo Bill is at them!" he shouted. "Now is our time to close up and hold the mouth of the canyon. Limber up your piece to the front, and forward! Charge with me, men—charge!"

And away on his gallant bay the brave captain rode, followed by officers and men in good order, but at full speed.

Only a few scattering shots annoyed them as they swept into the narrow mouth of the gorge, for both Indians and white men, startled by the attack in the rear, which told that their village was in the hands of the enemy, had turned to meet that onset.

Now, with his large gun commanding the defile, the gallant captain felt that the enemy was doomed to annihilation, for he knew that the bordermen would never let one return alive, and he was sure none could pass him.

The Indians and their white allies, after charging back on Buffalo Bill and his party with immense loss, and an utter failure to drive back men as well protected by rocks as themselves, better armed and quite as desperate, now once more faced the regulars, evidently hoping to get out on the plains, where their numbers would give them an advantage. Followed by Buffalo Bill and his party, quickly as they

fell back, when they had to halt in the face of the grape and canister that met them, they were huddled all up in a disorderly heap.

And now came the most terrible work of all. Suddenly huge rocks came bounding down, with a noise louder than thunder, from the cliffs above, which no man could climb. Down, with clouds of dust, came ton after ton of rock, crushing and mangling men and horses in a dreadful mass.

Nothing now reigned but confusion, despair—death. They threw down weapons which were of no avail. They rode over each other, trampled and even hewed each other down with their knives and hatchets in their mad endeavors to get out of the way of the terrible avalanche which rained down the mountain steeps.

Backward and forward, to and fro, reeling and staggering worse than drunken men in their dread of this horrible death, mad in fears worse than madness, they tried to break through the regulars in front or the bordermen in the rear.

"I surrender! In the name of mercy stop this butchery!" shouted Alf Coye to Buffalo Bill.

The rebel bushwhacker was bare-headed—his right arm hung broken and useless by his side—his face was a mass of dirt and blood, he was almost alone, only a few wounded wretches around him were left alive.

"Mercy is a name not fit for your lips, you woman-killing fiend!" shouted Bill.

"There is the mercy he showed my gray-haired





**FACE TO FACE RAVEN FEATHER AND BUFFALO BILL MET.**  
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father in Kansas!" cried a boy not over eighteen, as he raised his rifle and sent a ball through the heart of the murderous man.

A dozen more shots and not one of Alf Coye's party were left in sight alive.

But now came a rush which even Buffalo Bill, brave and confident ever, thought might break his lines. Leaving their horses, dropping their guns, coming with knives and hatchets only, Raven Feather and near twenty of his braves dashed toward the bordermen. Not a yell broke from their set lips. That alone told how desperate they were. With eyes flashing red, every muscle swollen with fierce energy, like tigers they came. And as tigers leaping against bars they cannot break, they were met.

Face to face, knee to knee, and hand to hand, Raven Feather and Buffalo Bill met. Twice the borderman parried the deadly thrusts of the wily chief—twice again the steel of the savage drank his blood, but weak from twenty wounds, the Indian's eyes were not sure, and soon the knife of the brave borderman reached his body with a fearful thrust.

There was despair in the eye of Raven Feather, for nearly all his warriors had fallen around him, taking some pale-faces to death as they fell, but he made one more mighty effort. He struck down wildly, heavily, and broke away the guard of Buffalo Bill, but the latter, closing, grappled him

with his strong arms, and then both fell among the dying and the dead, the Indian undermost. But lithe, with the strength of the death agony, the savage turned his opponent, and while his eyes glared with fury, he clutched his throat with a strangling grasp.

In vain did the borderman strive to tear himself away—his knife was gone—his breath was going—his doom seemed certain.

But now Wild Bill, released victoriously from a similar struggle, sprang to his aid, and quick as thought his keen knife set his mate free from the Indian's deadly clutch, for again and again it pierced his quivering heart.

Sullenly, hate glaring even as his eyes glazed in death, Raven Feather sank down among his fallen braves—the last of them in the vain struggle for life and life's liberties.

A glad shout of victory rose from the lips of Wild Bill—it was echoed from cliff to cliff, while he worked around for a single living foe. Not one could be seen. The gory dead—friend and foe, white and red, lay thick about him—mute proofs of a conflict which could know no other ending.

It was over.

Forced to leave their horses behind, for only with difficulty could men climb over the debris of rocks and earth which had filled up a portion of the canyon, destroying and burying the murderous foe—came the regulars, led by their gallant young com-

mander. With them came the surgeon, ready to aid the wounded, and his services were needed in many a case.

Even Buffalo Bill, anxious as he was to hurry back to his loved ones, had to delay to have the blood staunched which poured from many a sad gash in his noble frame.

But the delay was brief. In a little while the force moved on, and debouching from the close canyon on the beautiful plain, hurried forward to the Indian village.

The two border heroes, our hero and his mate, led the van, while by their side Frank Stark, who had fought as bravely as the bravest, hurried on, eager once more to rest his eyes on the noble girl who dared the fierce wrath of the fiendish warriors to save him from torture.

On they all sped to the lodges, but, wondering, they looked in vain to see the dear ones hurrying out to meet and welcome them.

Not a human being was in sight. From lodge to lodge the bordermen and their Kansas followers rushed, but not one of the loved ones could be seen—not a voice answered to their calls.

Buffalo Bill was in agony. What had become of the guard he had left behind him—where were his mother, sisters, and the rest of the captives? What new foe had swooped down and gathered them up?

A cry from one of the men who had gone further than the rest in the search was heard down near

the river-side, and instantly all hands hurried to where this man was standing.

And then they saw a sight which froze the hot blood in every heart in a brief breath—a sight which struck them, for no power of theirs could save if *one* will was carried out!



## CHAPTER XXIX.

ON a great square rock, inaccessible except by a single narrow path, but where one could ascend at a time, and this path overhung with a rock which her women stood ready to hurl down if the ascent was attempted, stood all the prisoners, also the Indian women of the village, the widow of Raven Feather, and the two wounded white renegades.

The rock overhung the foaming torrent of the river where it was widest and roughest, and where no hope for life could exist if one were cast into the terrible yeast of foam. Foremost of all was this terrible tableau.

Holding poor Lillie, who was bound and helpless, as were all the captives, so before him that her form shielded his body, stood Dave Tutt, with a keen knife pointing to her heart, requiring but a motion to sink it there.

And Jake M'Kandlas stood in the same position, holding the poor widow as his shield and at his mercy.

Lottie was in the hands of the Indian queen, and each of the other captives were in a similar position, at the mercy of the squaws who held them.

"Pale-faces, raise but a hand against us and we strike!" cried Ma-no-tee. "We have sworn by the Great Spirit, and we will not lie. The waters of the

Red River of the west will save us from your hands, and when they are dead we will carry our captives with us! Raise not a hand, but hear the words which Eagle-Eye will speak."

The hand of Buffalo Bill clenched his long rifle so hard that the blood seemed ready to start from beneath the nails. Yet he read death in that fierce woman's eye—death to those who were part of himself, and he dared not raise a hand.

"Let him speak! Our ears are open!" was all that he *could* utter.

Dave Tutt, while a sardonic light gleamed from his dark eyes, raised his voice so that it could be heard by every man of the command.

"We know that you are victors, that our friends are dead, and we can expect no help from them. Yet we are not in your power. We can die. But it will be by our own choice. Ma-no-tee has spoken truly. Every captive shall die at our hands if a weapon is raised against us. And with them we will bury ourselves in the river that rushes madly on below. We have sworn it! But we have terms—terms which *you* can grant."

"Name them, fiend in human shape, name them!" cried Captain Brown, shuddering as he spoke, for it seemed as if the savage fiends would slay their victims even while the talk went on.

"Hear them!" continued Dave Tutt, "and we will give five minutes for their acceptance after they are offered. It is that you promise on your honor as men and soldiers, and swear on your oath as be-

lievers in a hereafter, that you will allow every one on this rock, red and white, their free, unrestrained liberty to leave this plain, with provisions and stock to carry them away; that you will not harm them in any way, or check their departure, nor follow them when they depart. On this condition, and this alone, we will surrender these captives unharmed into your hands. Speak quick, for if your answer is not yes, so help me high Heaven, I strike the first blow *here!*"

And the broad blade of his knife quivered over the heart of Lillie, who did not speak though her face, white as snow itself, and her great, mournful eyes looking hopelessly down, spoke more than words could say.

"Yes,—in Heaven's name, *yes!*" cried Captain Brown, in an agony of excitement.

"Let Buffalo Bill, Wild Bill, Frank Stark—let all say yes, and swear it?" cried Dave, his hand still upheld.

"Yes—yes, *yes*, YES!" gasped the men, one and all, for they were almost palsied with the position of the captives.

"*Swear* it, and we ask no more."

"We swear it!" came solemnly from every lip.

In an instant every prisoner stood free—their bonds were cut at a signal from Ma-no-tee, with the knives that threatened their existence.

And those who would have slain them, even the widowed squaws, now helped them in the perilous descent to rejoin their friends.

Soon all that party but one stood on the plain. The relatives, clasped in each other's arms, sobbing out their joy, forgot that they had suffered, forgot their past peril in the depth of this new happiness.

All but *one*, I said. It was Ma-no-tee.

Lofty in stature, regal in face and form, there she stood on the verge of the rock, the wind blowing back the long black hair from her shoulders and toying with the folds of her scarlet robe.

"Raven Feather is dead and Silver Voice has gone with him to the happy hunting grounds," she cried. "The braves who would have died to defend Ma-no-tee from the rifles of the pale-faces have all fallen. The hunters who slew the fat buffalo and killed the swift antelope as it ran, have perished. Ma-no-tee only sees the squaws of her people and the little children. She has no one left to hunt for her or to serve her. She will not stay alone. She hates the pale-faces, and will not accept life as a gift from their hands. She goes to join Raven Feather and Silver Voice. The River Spirits shall bury her in the caves of the deep waters!"

She ceased her wild harangue, drew her scarlet robe over her head, and, with a fearless step approached the brink, looked not, paused not, but sprang off, and went down into the mad current which swept in foam along.

A mournful cry rose from the squaws of the tribe, then all was still.

Shunned by the soldiers, and by the Kansas men, who, but for their plighted word, would have rended

them limb from limb, the two white renegades tottered feebly off with the Indian women to where their horses were grazing, and made preparations for leaving.

And now the troops took possession of the lodges, and began to kill and cook meat, for hunger spoke loud words among them all.

And while the widowed squaws, with their ponies laden down with their camp equipage, were mournfully moving away from their desolate homes, great fires were sending smoke and light aloft to the cloudless sky, at which hungry men were roasting the meat fattened under the care of their slain enemies.

Little did the soldiers care for their sorrows, as little, indeed, as they had cared for people murdered, homes destroyed, or captives brought to torture by the warriors whose deeds were now forever ended.

Such is life. As night follows day, and day succeeds night, so do our fortunes vary.

It is well! For doth not He order it who doeth all things well?

## CHAPTER XXX.

BUSY months have passed since that wild day of hot carnage, when the spirits of Raven Feather and his band of warriors sped on blood-tipped wings away to the happy hunting-grounds of their fathers gone before. Busy months, and over the flowery South, over the fertile West, through the cities of the North, and along the Atlantic's rock-bound coast, the tocsin of war, ringing fearful and loud, has brought out a nation's strength and a nation's chivalry.

In the streets of St. Louis, that great city of the West, whose future can only be measured by the strength and enterprise of her men of mind and means, all is life—busy, noisy, martial life. The rolling drum, the pealing bugle, the glitter of gay uniforms, the flash of burnished weapons, the dash of steel-shod steeds, falls upon the ear and meets the eye wherever you go.

In the streets of the great city you meet men of every class; hunters in buckskin and fur; Indians in the panoply of the plains; soldiers in the uniforms of their corps; countrymen in butternut and jeans, and citizens in broadcloth and patent leather.

And, alas! for the humanity that smiles on the all-destroying *traffic*, among these busy men you see the fell effects of that demon of rum, which, degrad-

ing humanity, makes man fiendish. Reeling and staggering on, cursing and blaspheming, groups of rum-maddened soldiers are seen here and there, licensed in excitement to liberties that, in times of peace, would soon lodge them in a prison cell.

A wild throng of such men—a mixed party, in which the colored trappings told that cavalry, artillery, and infantry men were all on a debauch together—swept along Fourth street, singing Bacchanalian songs at the top of their voices.

A young girl, not over sixteen, very, very beautiful, with great dreamy eyes, hair hanging in loose manes all over her white shoulders, drew back at the corner to let them pass. On her arm hung her satchel of books, for she was a schoolgirl.

The eye of a great bearded sergeant of artillery fell upon her shrinking form. Excited with strong drink, he forgot his manhood, and shouted:

"Halt, boys! Here's a girl that turns up her nose at a Union soldier."

The poor girl grew lily-white as she saw every rude eye turn upon her, and she would have fled, but the grasp of the drunken speaker was on her round arm already, and she could not tear herself from it.

"Say, is it not true, isn't your dad a Confederate?" cried the brute, his rum-laden breath throwing its sickening odor in her fair face.

"No, sir; my father's name is too well known as a Union man to have that epithet applied to him. He is—"

And the young girl gave the name of a wealthy Union banker in the city, and then added :

"Let me pass on, sir ; I am going to school."

"You don't pass here until you prove you love Union soldiers by kissing every man of the party," shouted the sergeant. "That's the tune, isn't it, boys?"

"Aye, aye—that's the ticket!" cried one and all of the drunken crowd.

"So, stand still—it's my turn first, my beauty, and so put out those rosebud lips of yours."

"Coward! I'll die before I submit to this insult," cried the brave girl.

The coarse wretch laughed, and bent his shaggy head down as he threw his rude arms about her slender waist.

Wildly arose her shrill scream upon the air, as she dashed her small hands into his eyes, for the moment delaying his purpose.

"Girl, mind what you're about, or this shall be the worse for you," shouted the sergeant, hoarsely, and he raised her form in his arms as if she had been but a doll.

But before he could again bend his hot, sensual face toward her pure lips, a horse and rider came rushing down the street with the speed of a winged bird.

It was Buffalo Bill on his wild Powder Face, and he dashed into and over that crowd as if they were only bags of down in his way.

With one blow of his clenched hand he dashed



the bulky miscreant to the earth, with his other arm he encircled the waist of the lovely girl, and, lifting her to his saddle-bow, gave the word "on" to his noble horse, and dashed through and over the crowd before a hand could be raised to check him.

On for a block, until he was out of range of any shot which might, in their mad excitement, be sent after him, and then he halted, and looked down into the lovely, confiding face which beamed up with a look of glad wonder into his own.

"If you'll tell me where to leave you, miss, so you'll be safe, I'll go back and give them drunken chaps satisfaction if they want it," said Bill, as he drew his horse to a stop.

"Oh, sir, you are so brave and so good! I was frightened almost to death, for they would have killed me. I would have died before they should kiss me," cried the lovely girl.

"Dying would come cheap for a willing kiss from such lips, but the brute that would force it is too mean to die—he ought to be wedged in a swamp and fed on raw porcupine skins, shells thrown in. But where do you live, miss? People will stare to see you here; and I'm rather bashful when I'm in such good company."

"You have stopped right before my father's house, and—oh, I am so glad! he is coming down the steps—for he can reward you better than I."

And the young girl pointed to a fine-looking, middle-aged gentleman descending the stone steps of a handsome mansion.

Bill reined his horse up to the sidewalk, and lifted the girl lightly down; then, as she hurriedly told her father of the insult, her peril, and her gallant rescue, he remounted to ride away.

But a word from the father and daughter stopped him.

"Young man, your name, if you please?" asked the banker.

The borderman gave it, also with his sobriquet of "Buffalo Bill."

"I have heard of you, young man, and all I have heard tends to your credit. But what is better still, I knew your brave, Union father, and I honored him in his life and mourned him in his death. For your rescue of my daughter, were you any other man, I would offer you a full purse, in addition to my gratitude. Not a word—I know you would refuse it, and therefore do *not* offer it. But Louisa shall thank you, and as I know you are already in the ranks of our country's defenders, I will use my influence to lift you to a position which you will honor. Make my house your home while you are in town."

"I dare not, sir!" said Bill, and his voice trembled as he spoke.

"Dare not? What is the reason?" asked the banker in astonishment.

"If I see *her* any more, I shall love her, and love above my station would be madness and folly," said Bill, bluntly, and with that honor which was part of his nature.

"*Love* her, man? Why, what if you do? If she

loves the man who has saved her from wrong, and protected her from insult, and is able to do it again, she has a father who will honor her for it, and never by word or deed of his stand between her and her heart's choice. I say again, make my house your home, and if love comes from that, so much the better. Take him right in, Lou, and introduce him to your mother, and I'll go to General Fremont and get him commissioned."

"Hold on about that, sir, if you please," said Bill.

"As you were a dear friend of my dear father, I will thankfully accept your hospitality, even at the risk of losing my heart. But I do not want a commission. I command a party of noble, brave, tried friends—scouts who are fearless and true—able to do good and efficient service. But the moment I put on shoulder-straps, I've got to have other shoulder-straps over me, who'll be ordering me about, and the first I know, they'll say something I don't like, and then I'll *buck*, as Powder Face would do if anybody else tried to ride him. No sir; let me remain independent, as I am, and I will do more service ten times over than I would with a U. S. commission inside my haversack.

"And now I'll go in and see your lady, and then, if Miss Louise will go, I will take her to see my own dear mother and my twin sisters, who've had hard times out among the redskins and bushwhackers, but are here safe at last, where I hope they will be contented until we've squelched through this trouble.

Then I'll build up the farm-house again, and set things to rights once more."

"And I'll help you, my brave boy. I must go now, but I'll meet you at dinner time."

## CHAPTER XXXI.

IN a neat cottage in the old or French part of the city, where even yet, amid grassy mounds and old forest trees, dwell the descendants of the first settlers, the old *voyageurs*, such as the Sublettes, Choteaus, Valleys, etc., etc., close by the bank of the great river, with the moonlight playing in the windows through trellised honeysuckles and climbing roses, was a cheerful, happy scene.

The good mother of Buffalo Bill sat there with her knitting in her hand. Close by the twin sisters were seated, while Kitty Muldoon, in one corner, was diligently engaged in paring potatoes for the morning meal, for early rising was a virtue never forgotten in that family.

The females were not alone in the neat little sitting-room.

Wild Bill, in an agony of uneasiness, sat there, for he had got boots on his feet and a citizen's suit of clothes on his body, and he was like a fish out of water in them. Frank Stark, handsome even in store clothes, and happy in the thought of being a reformed man and a Union soldier, was also there, looking a love which he dared not speak, for the pure young girl whom he had saved from wrong, and who had saved him from the cruel death by tortuer to which he had been doomed.

It was a noble group, worthy of better pen-painting than my stiff hand can give.

The door opened, for Buffalo Bill was not one to stand on the ceremony of knocking at his own home, and the son and brother came hurriedly in with a young and blooming girl on his arm.

"Louisa, here is my dear mother, there are my twin sisters, Lillie and Lottie, there is good Kitty Muldoon, and last but not least, here are Frank Stark and Wild Bill, rough diamonds of the hills, brave as the bravest and true as the truest. Mother, girls and all hands, here is Louisa La Valliere, the daughter of an old friend of our father, and if you'll love her half as much as I do, you'll try to make her as happy as a beaver among young cottonwoods!"

This was rather a long speech for Bill, but as he led Louisa forward to his mother and sisters while he was talking, hands clasped hands, and speaking eyes made them know each other before he was through.

Then came a narration of the adventure which had made him acquainted with the sweet girl and her parents, and an invitation through Louisa from her parents for the whole family to come and make La Valliere mansion their home while in St. Louis.

Though not instantly accepted, the offer was gratefully listened to, and then work was all laid aside, for Bill, proud of his sisters and their natural accomplishments, insisted on having some music. Both sisters sung sweetly, Lillie accompanied finely with the guitar, and with Louisa joining in their

songs, the little cottage was literally flooded with melody.

But a sudden interruption chased the thought of harmony away.

While Mrs. Cody was sitting wrapped in pleasant thought near the window, a hissing voice—a low muttered curse reached her ear, and turning she saw the wicked face of Jake M'Kandlas glaring through the window.

Wildly she shrieked his name, and the villain seeing he was recognized, fired his pistol with deadly aim at her and fled away. In an instant Wild Bill and Frank Stark sprang from their seats, one through the open window, the other out of the door in pursuit of the wretch. But Buffalo Bill, groaning out the words, "My poor mother!" leaped forward as she fell from her chair and caught her falling form.

The blood, gushing from a wound in her temple, seemed to tell the screaming girls, who rushed to her side, that it was a death wound.

Kitty Muldoon, whose outcries were piercing, had yet presence of mind to run for some water. A part of this, applied to the lips of the widow, revived her, and then Bill, to his joy, examining the wound, found that it was only a graze, plowing a furrow in the temple, severing a small artery, but doing no serious damage.

Oh, how thankful they all were when they found that the wound was so slight—how full of joy when, by simple appliances, the hemorrhage was stopped and the wound properly dressed.

And now, the excitement over, Buffalo Bill wished to go after the villain whom his mother had distinctly recognized. But he knew that if by that time either Frank Stark or Wild Bill had not overhauled him, he had got to some hiding-place where for the time at least he might be safe.

And soon the return of both Frank and Bill, unsuccessful, from their pursuit, convinced him of the fact. It was now for them all to be on a constant watch. For where M'Kandlas was, Dave Tutt could not be far distant, and they were men who would never be without confederates in crime, if bad men could be found to join their ranks.

The incident broke up all the pleasure of the evening, and Buffalo Bill soon escorted his new-found friend back to her father's house.



## CHAPTER XXXII.

IT had been known for some time to the commanding general at St. Louis that the Confederates were recruiting men for their armies from the secession sympathizers in the city. He knew that with so much money floating among them, prominent leaders must be likewise there—men to be trusted with money, and possessed of both talent and influence.

But when he heard from the lips of Buffalo Bill that Jake M'Kandlas, the great guerrilla leader, his right-hand man, Dave Tutt, and several other notoriously desperate men had been seen in town, he began to look on the matter with a serious eye, though until then he had scouted the thought that Confederate audacity would go so far as to recruit disunion soldiers under "his very nose," to use a common, but not a very refined phrase.

"It must be stopped—nipped in the bud, sir," said he to the chief of scouts, for that was now the position of our hero. "I give you every authority, call for men and means as you need them, but hunt these men down without mercy. They are spies and murderers, and if *you* spare them till they reach *my* hands, the nearest tree will be their gallows."

"Not much danger of my sparing them, sir," said Bill. "But I wish you would offer a reward for

their arrest, or any information that leads to it—not that I or one of my men wants the reward, but because money may induce some of their followers to turn traitor to them, and let us know where we can find them.”

“You are right,” said the General. “I will issue a proclamation to that effect immediately. By the way, sir, a valued friend of mine called on me this morning, who is much interested in you—Mr. La Valliere. If you will accept it, you shall have an eagle on your shoulder and a full regiment to command.”

“Thank you, General; Mr. La Valliere knows my mind on that subject. I am not fitted for that position, and have just sense enough to know it. In the place I now hold I can do my work, and do it well. In the other I’d be as helpless as a beaver without a tail, and—*what’s the matter, Bill, what’s up?*”

This last question broke excitedly from his lips as Wild Bill, closely followed by Frank Stark, rushed into the parlor where the General held his receptions.

“Jake M’Kandlas, Dave Tutt, and sixty men left here before the break of day to join Price down beyond Pilot Knob. They are all armed and mounted on good horses. I have it from a poor wretch who owed me a life, and wanted to pay a part of the debt, and I know he wouldn’t lie!”

Wild Bill spoke fast, and every word was distinct and to the point.

"Have every one of our boys in the saddle and here in fifteen minutes," cried our hero. "Bring Powder Face along with *you*, Bill."

Not a word or questioning look, but away hurried Wild Bill and Frank Stark to mount the scouts.

"General," said Buffalo Bill, "please send an order to the cavalry barracks, and have forty-three saddled and bridled cavalry horses sent here for my use. With fresh horses to change and relieve our own, I will overtake the men before ten o'clock to-night, though they have at least seven hours the start. And when they are overtaken, I think I can take care of them. They'll travel no further, or else *my* journey is over."

The General rang for an orderly, wrote out the order, and sent him in all haste to execute it. Then he turned to the chief of scouts and asked:

"Do you not want more men, sir? With forty-three, including yourself, you are to follow over sixty men."

"Yes, sir, to follow and to wipe them out, too. My men know me, and I know them, and two to one of this trash is poor odds for us to take. More men would be in my way. And now, General, if you please, a favor."

"Anything, sir, that I can grant will not be refused."

"It is only this—you know Mr. La Valliere well."

"Yes, sir, he is a bosom friend of mine."

"Then please tell him yourself, sir, where I have gone, and ask him to let little Lou run down and

tell my mother and sisters that I'll be back to-morrow."

"I will do it with pleasure, sir; but I beg you not to risk too much, or too rashly expose a life which I feel will be of great value to the country in this crisis. I am not one who believes good men are scarce—I believe they are plenty of them when they are roused up, but the nation needs them all now. We have too many bad men to oppose and defeat, to spare any good ones who can be saved."

"Don't fear for me, sir. It will never be my fate to die by such hands. Some red warrior, in time, may lift my hair, but no white renegade to his race and his country shall do it. I'll come back to report them used up, sir—but hark, I hear the clatter of horsemen. They are my boys, for you hear no bugles, no jingling sabres—their rifles, knives, and revolvers don't reach your ears with their noises till they're needed."

"True—for such service as you perform they are the best fitted of all men. I will see you off."

And the General with the stars on his shoulder walked out side by side with the scout in buckskin, and saw him leap upon his fiery horse without touching foot to stirrup, and run his keen eye along the line to see if every man was there. A quiet smile on his fine face and all was right. Then the led cavalry horses coming up a gallop, each man took the halter of a spare horse, and at the word away they went like leaves on the swift autumnal winds.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

MANY an eye followed the swift cavalcade that passed at a gallop through the crowded streets of St. Louis, and out on the road which led to the wild mountain region where in the far distance Iron Mountain and Pilot Knob rested their towering heads.

Well they *might* look. Three nobler-looking men, three finer horsemen never sat in a saddle than the trio who led that compact body of plain-clad, well-armed, stern-visaged, silent men.

In that swift-passing column, riding in ranks of four, no jests were passed, no loud, hilarious laughter rose on the air to make the observer think that soldiering with them was mere amusement—every look and action, every motion as well as that stern, thoughtful silence, told that “deeds not words” would mark their career. Three “sons of liberty” were they.

On, at a gallop, only pausing here and there after they had passed some way on the route to inquire if a body of horsemen, easily described from their numbers and the appearance of their grizzled leader, had passed. They soon found the trail, and after that no questions were asked, none necessary indeed, for those men had trailed the wily red men over sterile plains, through boundless prairies, among the rocks

and shelves of the great mountains, too long not to follow easily the tracks made on beaten roads.

On—swiftly on, changing horses every eight or ten miles, they kept, until, when night fell, they were coursing along the banks of the swift Gasconade river and enveloped in the wooded hills and thickly settled valleys of that region.

It was moonlight, and though dark, where the trees rose thickly on either hand and the road almost invisible in some of the dark ravines, they never checked their speed, for they knew they were rapidly closing on the enemy whose horses must be well nigh given out, for already had that party passed over ninety miles of ground—perhaps even more, with their relief of horses.

It was probably ten o'clock when they rode silently through a small settlement, where the few inhabitants seemed to have gone to rest, for in but one house was a light seen.

Our hero had adopted the old army precaution of throwing out an advance and rear-guard—Wild Bill, with two men, rode two hundred yards in advance—Frank Stark, with two men, as far in the rear, while he led the main body.

Shortly after passing this little settlement, a rocket was seen to ascend high in the air, and then another until five had been counted.

Buffalo Bill checked his men at once, and calling in his officers, Wild Bill and Frank Stark, held a hurried consultation.

"We're spotted, boys," said he. "The party ahead

has friends in the settlement back and they were writing news to 'em with their rockets."

"Yes—and it is received and *answered!*" said Wild Bill, as he pointed to a rocket rising in the sky directly ahead of the party and not more than two or three miles ahead. "They're warned of our coming now, and we'll have harder work than we would have had if we had come upon 'em unawares. But never mind, boys, we could whip five times their number. Remember one thing—we must do all on the dash. They're used up in horse-flesh and we are not. We must go through 'em like a winter sleet-storm, cutting and tearing 'em all to pieces as we go."

"I'll take the lead now, and we'll all close up except one man to scout three hundred yards ahead to see the first glimpse of them and then get back to us. Little Joe Bevins, there's just enough Injun in you to do that work well. Put out! You know what to do!"

It was but a boy to whom he spoke, in years not over eighteen, but his little frame was wiry as steel, his eyes sharp and active, his heart as fearless as that of a panther, and his nature just suited for the work he was in.

Checking their speed a very little, to breathe their horses, they rode on for twenty minutes more, passing in that time over four miles of ground, but nothing was seen or heard to indicate the near presence of the enemy.

But suddenly a half dozen rifle-shots were heard in front. Then for a minute or more all was still.

"I'm afraid they've got little Joe," said Bill, who had halted his party to receive news from the front.

A few seconds more, and more rifle-shots were heard; then followed the rapid reports of a revolver, and a second after little Joe came tearing back, firing as he rode upon a half dozen horsemen who were following him up.

The bordermen had halted in a dense shadow where trees on both sides obscured the moonlight, and the pursuers out in the light did not see them as little Joe dashed back into the ranks of his friends.

But they felt them, for a volley from the foremost rank took every man out of his saddle, and as they fell Buffalo Bill received the report of the young scout.

He had ridden right into the face of the enemy, who, mounted and drawn up in good order, waited in an open cornfield among the stubble for the onset of their pursuers.

"Drop the horses you are riding—leave them in the road and mount the fresh ones—form by eights, till we reach the open field, and then spread to a line and charge when I yell. Frank Stark takes the right, I take the center and Wild Bill the left. Let your pistols work first and your knives next. When we get into it, every man for himself and Heaven for us all. Remember your homes, wives, and your sisters, and don't let a shot be wasted, but sweep the villains from the footstool."

These were the brief orders, plainly given, of one



who speaks quick as he thinks and acts even yet more rapidly.

The formation by eights just filled the road, and with horses well in hand, yet ready for the burst, the party dashed on.

A minute only passed, the open field was before them, and in the clear moonlight, not sixty, but more than two hundred men waited for them, for several parties had joined Jake M'Kandlas on the route.

Not an instant did the bordermen hesitate, not a second did they wait to count numbers, not even for an order did they pause, but riding into line, right and left in a gallop, swept forward as their leader gave his wild yell—forward like an avalanche, firing as they went, upon the enemy.

A volley from the latter emptied only four or five saddles, and then face to face and hand to hand the parties met.

On through the mass dashed Buffalo Bill, a revolver in each hand, and shot after shot, in the very face of his opponents, dropped a man at every fire. In a minute he was through, and his trained horse wheeling at but a touch of the leg, brought him right back into the broken, confused mass. Every shot had been fired from his revolver, but now his great knife-blade flashed in the air and came sweeping down here and there, as he saw foes to strike, while Wild Bill, Frank Stark and all the rest were at the same kind of work.

It could not last long—scarce the time I take to

describe it elapsed before the foe, beaten and whipped from their stand, made for a dense thicket bordering the river.

All who could gain this left their horses, and plunging into the river, either perished in its rapids or, gaining the other shore, crept away into the mountain fastnesses where, at that time, they could not be followed.

The victory was complete. Dead men and horses lay all around—a few wounded lay groaning on the ground.

Bill now ordered the bivouac fires to be lighted. Full two-thirds of the enemy were past doing harm, and the rest were scattered. Their arms had been dropped and horses left, so he had no fear of any resumption of the attack.

His men were counted and looked to, as soon as the fires were blazing.

Only four had been killed, but full half the number had been wounded, some severely, others but slightly. There was no surgeon in the party, but half of those bordermen were worth more than five-tenths of the volunteer surgeons of the army, who, until the war had progressed some time, knew no more about wounds than a cow knows about the manufacture of cheese, though she is a material aid in the matter.

Of the enemy one hundred and fifty lay on the field when daylight enabled our heroes to examine the vicinity with care.

Buffalo Bill looked at every dead man anxiously.

There were faces—several, indeed—which he recognized, but he could not find the bodies of those whom he wished to see.

"Satan must help his own," he said, as he looked at the last of the party. "Jake M'Kandlas and Dave Tutt and Cantrell have got away. I expect, coward-like, they ran when we charged, for I did not get a glimpse of either in the fight. I would rather have had those three men than all the rest who are stretched out here."

"We'll have 'em yet, mate; don't fret. This has been a big night's work though, hasn't it?" said Wild Bill.

"It has, indeed," replied our hero. "Where's little Joe? I hope he isn't hurt, for he brought their scouts back so nicely for us to wipe out, that he deserves a big credit mark. Is he hurt?"

"No, cap," cried the young hero. "I got a scratch from one of their pistols and a hole in my jacket. But if you'll speak a good word for me to that rosy-cheeked gal that lives at your house, she'll mend the jacket and a bit of a hole in my heart that she made her ownself, when you sent me there with a message the other day."

"What? Kitty Muldoon, you mean?"

"Yes, sir; that's the gal."

"She is pretty and good, Joe; and if you'll fight this war through and come out all right, if she don't cook your meat and wash your clothes for the rest of your life, it shall not be my fault."

"Thank you, cap. Just put me where there's

work to do, and see if I don't do it up brown, after this."

"I will, boy; and I know you'll do well. And now ride back, a half dozen of you men, to the nearest farm-house and get spades and shovels, and all the men you can find. We'll be decent, if we have been rough. We'll bury the dead, and that is more than they would have done for us. They would have left the wolf and the buzzard to take care of our bodies."

Leaving these men to the work of humanity, we will now look elsewhere.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

JAKE M'KANDLAS, Dave Tutt, and Cantrell, the guerrilla, escaped, when so many of their vile confederates took water in the River of Death. They saw defeat in the terrible rush made by the bordermen—defeat in the instant confusion and panic in their own ranks, and rode out of the melee into the woods, and away by a side-path well known to Cantrell, before their presence was detected by any of the attacking party.

When the fight was finished, and the Kansas men lighted their bivouac fires, the three ruffians were safe and secure in a mountain cave some six or seven miles beyond and above them—an old place of refuge for these men when, in former days, they had followed the pleasant occupation of horse and negro stealing.

Until they had reached this almost inaccessible point, and had stabled their horses so far inside the extensive cave that no sound from them would attract the attention of pursuers, they scarcely paused to draw a long breath, or enter into conversation.

But now, refreshed (?) from their whisky flasks, and out of fear of bullets for the time, they opened their mouths and let out volleys of abuse against the men from whom their flight had alone saved them.

"Buffalo Bill, Frank Stark, and Wild Bill have done a big thing to-night," growled Jake M'Kandlas, adding an oath.

"They have, and the whole country will ring with their fame, while we poor wretches will only hear how we've been whipped by less than a quarter of our number. We may as well dry up and keep away from the borders after this," said Dave Tutt.

"Away from the borders, for *this*? No!" cried Cantrell. "I'll haunt the borders now worse than ever. We've lost men—but there are more where they came from. I'm neither beaten nor disheartened. I shall take the back track and raise more men. And then let Mr. Buffalo Bill look out. He'll find that though I'm in his debt now, I know how to pay up old scores."

"Well, I'm glad to see you so hopeful. I am as bitter as the best of you, but luck has run against me so long, I'm sick of the deal."

"Satan isn't sick of *you* yet, or you'd have been called home to-night, colonel," said Dave, with a laugh.

"You'd have your joke if he had you by the neck, I suppose," growled the colonel.

"Yes, but it would be a black joke. But the question now is—what are we to do next?"

"I've said my say," said Cantrell. "I'm going back to St. Louis for more men."

"And I'll go with you—not for men, but for a woman, for I've sworn to humble that girl Lillie, and I'll do it, if it costs me my life!"

"The bigger fool you. There isn't a woman on earth that I'd put in the balance against my life," said M'Kandlas, with a sneer. "You, boys, may risk the city if you like, but I shall not put myself in the way of the great Pathfinder. The open country for me hereafter. I can raise a few men, I reckon, and I'll bushwhack it for awhile. I can make my grub and transportation, if nothing more."

"Where'll you make headquarters, so a fellow can find you when he gets back!" asked Dave.

"At Rolla, or thereabout. Black Jake, the Cherokee half-breed, will know where I am, for he is my 'fence' in that region. He's Union in talk, but that's a blind. He's right side up for the South."

"When are you going to start for the city, Cantrell!" asked Dave.

"Just as soon to-morrow as we see them fellows take the back track. From here we can see the road forty miles with a glass, and I have a good one. We've got to go in careful, for when they don't find us with the dead, they'll know what to expect when our chance comes."

"Yes, about as little mercy, as far as I'm concerned, as a wild cat gives a rabbit. But I'm going to turn in," said Dave. "I'm as hungry as a cub wolf, and sleep is all that will help it, till we get to where there's something eatable to be had."

The ruffian drew his blanket around him, and dropped to the ground. The others followed his example.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

"OCH! isn't he a darlint, the bowld boy-sojer!" cried Kitty Muldoon, as Joe Bevins rode up the street at full speed, the day after the return of Buffalo Bill and his party to the city.

For Joe had just ridden down with a message from the chief of scouts for the young ladies, and had taken this opportunity to put a big ring on Kitty's fore-finger, and to tell her it should be her fault if it wasn't a wedding-ring when "the cruel war was over."

"Sure, and he rides aqual to the best hunter that iver broke his neck among the hills of Tipperary. He's not very big, that's true, but sure all that there is of him is worth the havin', and that's more than we can spake of everybody. An' what's wantin' wid you, ould man?"

Her last words were addressed to an old white-haired man, whose thick matted hair almost covered his face. His clothes were scanty and ragged, his form bent, and he leaned upon a staff with shaking hands as if afflicted with palsied weakness.

"Bread! I'm so hungry, and so weary!" said the old man in a low, husky voice.

"Wouldn't meat be better than bread, sure. Stay here and I'll get you a bite to ate, for it's not hunger should ever be denied."



And the good-hearted girl went into the house to procure the food.

In an instant the old man approached the door and quickly examined the lock. From among his rags he procured several keys and soon found one that fitted the lock of the door after he had returned the other key. Returning the regular key to its place in the lock, he pocketed its duplicate and took a hasty survey of all the surroundings.

When Kitty came back with a large plate of bread and meat, however, he was seated on the doorstep with his head bowed in his hands, as if from excess of weakness.

"Here, ould man, here's what'll drive the hunger out," said Kitty, as she put the plate down by his side. "And there's a dollar apiece from the young ladies I serve—two bits of angels all but the wings, d'ye see, and I'll put another dollar wid it, so you can have some mendin' and washin' done; for sure you nade it bad enough."

"I thank you—the people of the world are not often so good as you are," said the old man.

"Faith, that's their business and not mine, then. But I don't see what we're put here for, if it isn't to do a bit of good when the chance runs in our way. But ate away, and I'll get a mug of pure water from the pump for yes to wash it down wid."

"Water! Haven't you any whisky?" asked the old man.

"Whisky! The drunkard's own drink, that. No, faith, and it's a shame for an ould man like you to

be askin' afther it. Sure, it's bad enough, and too bad, too, to see a young man seekin' after the crater, let alone an old man like you, wid one foot in the grave and the other close behind it. If ye'll have water I'll get it, but if I'd an ocean of whisky to dip a bucket into if I'd the choice, I'd put a brand of fire there instead. There's a bit of a gossoon of a soldier lad that says he loves me, and I love him by the same token, but let me smell whisky on his breath, and he'll never come again where I'll smell it."

The old man made no reply, but ate a little of the food, then rose and leaving the rest, hobbled away.

"Mad because I would't get whisky for him," muttered Kitty, as she took up the half-emptied plate. "Well, bedad, when the next comes I'll ax him will he have champagne wid his mate before I bring it. But what he ate did him good, I reckon, for he walks away twice as fast as he came. Maybe he knows where there's whisky, and it's that he's afther in such a hurry. If it is, it's sorry I am he got any money from us, for it's a sin and shame to feed men wid that which makes bastes of 'em here and fiends hereafter. But there comes the young master and the bit of an angel too under his wing. Sure they say she's a rich man's daughter, but for all that she spakes as soft to me as if I was born a lady instead of in a cabin on a bog."

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

"How long are you goin' to stay here amongst this noise, mate?" asked Wild Bill of our hero, when they had been back three or four days after the chase and defeat of the M'Kandlas party.

They were both standing on the porch of the house held as "Headquarters" by the general in command.

"I don't know. The General wants me here to tell him about the country they've got to operate in very soon. Old Price is raising the old Harry among the few Union folks out towards the borders, and he has got to leave. The General is going to send a force that way, and when he is ready there will be work enough for us. For the scouts are to have the advance. I have bargained for that."

"Good on your head, mate. But what are we to do in the meantime, that's what I want to know. I'll *rust* laying around here. I go down to yo' mother's to see the girls, but I'm nothing on the ~~ca~~lking trail, and I look like a fool sitting there watching their pretty fingers come and go with the needle. Frank Stark has got tongue and can enjoy himself as he deserves to, but I'm a dumb fool and I know it."

"Bill, that is no discredit to you. A man can't have every gift all to his own self. You can take a

squirrel's head off at forty yards with your revolver, or at two hundred with your rifle. Frank Stark can't do it. You can outride any Comanche that ever swung over or under a horse. Not one man in a million can ride up to you, and no one can beat you. As to fear, if you feel it you don't know how to show it. And for love—there's your good old mother in Illinois, and Black Nell, your pet mare, and *me*, your mate—why, you love us all enough to die for any one of us."

"That's so, mate—that's so, and I love one of my enemies a little too much, too."

"Who is that?" asked Buffalo Bill, in surprise.

"His name is *whisky*, but I'm going to kick him out of my company. If I don't he'll spoil my shooting—if he don't do worse."

"That's a fact—and now I've thought of something. I saw my darling 'Lou' turn her head away when my lips came mighty close to hers, this morning, and I don't wonder. I'd been swallowing some barreled lightning, and she smelled it. I'll not give her reason to turn her dear head away again. It weakens the strongest, unnerves the coolest, and befools the wisest. I'm done with fire-water, mate."

"So am I, and there's my hand upon it. And now, Bill, I'm dying for a hunt. As you will not move out of here for a week at least, suppose I take a run up into the Gasconade hills and knock over a deer or two. Maybe I may trail out something, too, that will pay. Frank will go along for company, and we two will be able to take care of ourselves."

"I've no objections, mate, if so be you feel like exercising yourselves and them creepin' insects that can't go over a mile in two minutes without you use a spur. If you go, don't be gone over three or four days, and if you hear heavy guns anywhere, you'll know the army is on the move, and you'll know where to find me."

"All right, Bill; me and Frank will be off in two or three hours, for I told him I'd ask you about the trip."

Buffalo Bill was looking at the same old man who had begged for food and been answered by Kitty Muldoon on the day before. He stood just below them, near enough, indeed, to have heard what they said, if he had been listening.

"Oh, he's one of those curiosities that grows in cities, I reckon, for I never saw one on the plains or in the mountains. He's a beggar by his rags and wrinkles, and when he's as old as that and *has* to beg, we young 'uns ought to help him."

Wild Bill took a couple of dollars from his pocket and tossed them down at the feet of the old man.

The latter looked his thanks out of a pair of glittering black eyes, and bowing his head, picked up the money and moved away just as Buffalo Bill was drawing out his bag of buckskin.

"Hold on there, old boy—here's something to get better clothes. It will be cold by-and-by, and you need 'em bad enough now."

Bill followed his words with a twenty-dollar gold piece, which the old man caught ere it touched the

ground with an agility which made the two bordermen laugh heartily.

The old man muttered something—they supposed it was thanks, but had they *heard* his words they would not have let him go on unquestioned.

For he said:

“Laugh now—laugh now, but it will be somebody’s turn to cry before many hours go by. It’s a long road that hasn’t got a turn, and the one you travel has got a short turn, just ahead.”

They did not hear it, however, and when their laugh had died away, he was out of sight around the corner.

The two bordermen now walked to the stable where their horses were kept, and Wild Bill had his Black Nell saddled, also the horse of Frank Stark, for he intended to lead the latter around to the cottage, for he knew that Frank would be there.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

JUST below a succession of wild rapids, where the cascade, rushing through a gorge in the hills, came boiling and foaming into a broad eddy, there was one of those open groves which, if near a village, would have been "run down" with picnic parties and promenading lovers.

For beneath the great limbs of old trees the green sward was level and soft, the road passed just to the right, while the deep river, calming down from the rush above, purled and whirled along the low bank as quietly as if it hadn't been torn all to pieces among the jagged rocks in the hills beyond.

In this grove their horses, too well-trained to move away from their masters on such good grass, Wild Bill and Frank Stark camped on their second night out.

Their saddles and blankets were at the foot of a big tree. In front a fire blazed up cheerily, and before it hung a haunch of venison and a couple of wild turkeys, roasting nicely and browning from side to side, as one or the other of the men gave them a turn before the red heat of the hard wood-coals.

Hunters don't take the trouble to slice and cook sparingly when they're in a game country. The

cook as they kill, by "wholesale," and what they don't eat is left for the fox, the wolf, or the raven.

The two men were happy. They had bright water close at hand, plenty of meat, and bread too, though the last was a luxury rather than a necessity; fuel, and warm, bold hearts.

Their arms and horses were tried, trusty, and near. Their friends, though absent, were yet in their hearts, and that was a joy forever.

Oh! it is a blessed link, that of memory, even though it has shadows as well as its lights. There are none so soulless, none so utterly without heart, that they have not some cherished memory to dwell upon—something in the vista of the past ever dear, which will come up to the vision, making the good happier, the bad better.

The two men sat and talked about those they loved and cared for—the mother of one far distant, the sisters also of the other, and the dear friends yet nearer in St. Louis.

After awhile the well-browned venison and juicy turkey claimed their attention, and while from their tin cups they sipped the warm, pleasant coffee, rudely made, but all as fragrant as if it came from a silver urn, they sliced off pieces of meat or fowl, and ate with that keen appetite which perfect health, exercise, and pure air always carries.

They had fasted since morning and ridden fast; therefore a hearty meal was easy to take, and natural.

After supper the inevitable pipe made its appearance, and while circles of smoke came whirling from



their mouths and nostrils, for your borderman smokes as only he and the Indians do—as much through his nostrils as his mouth—they talked about those who were left behind.

All at once, however, a sound reached their ears which caused them to spring to their feet and seize their rifles, standing within reach.

It was the swift clatter of hoofs coming up the road.

And the next instant, on a powerful bay horse, a man dashed into the circle of light made by the fire, and before him, held in his arms, and apparently insensible, was a female.

One glance at the man and at the white face of the girl was enough.

"Lillie!" shouted Frank Stark.

"Dave Tutt!" cried Wild Bill, as the horseman dashed madly past them with his helpless prize.

Both rifles were raised and fired at the same instant; and just as the bay horse bounded into the darkness beyond the glimmer made by the fire-light, he fell with two balls through him.

The bordermen did not wait to mount their own horses, but both rushed on to overtake the dismounted rider.

The horse, struggling in his death-agony, was on the ground.

A scream from Lillie told where she was, for the villain was carrying her to the river. After her, with a wild shout, to assure her help was near, rushed the two bordermen.

Another shriek and a pistol shot froze their hearts.

Fearing the worst, they rushed on, and in a second more came to Lillie where Tutt had dropped her on the earth, firing at her as he wheeled away to plunge into the river, with deadly intent, of course.

"Lillie—oh, my poor Lillie—are you hurt?" cried Frank Stark, as discovering her by the light color of her dress, he raised her in his arms.

"No; he fired almost in my face, but missed me," she cried, as she recognized by his voice the person who had lifted her up.

"Thank Heaven for that! Bill, Lillie is safe!"

"Yes, and I expect Dave Tutt is, too, for he is across the river here where it is dark, and nobody but his master, Satan, could find him now. Is Miss Lillie hurt?"

"No, thank you," she answered, "but terribly frightened. That man tore me from our home in the dead of night, and changing horses I know not how often, for he had horses and friends all along the road, brought me here. We were pursued more than once, fired at two or three times, but he never stopped. Oh, it was horrible, horrible! Such a ride, such wild threats and curses! I could not have lived to see the light of another day, had not kind Heaven placed you where you could save me."

"Dave Tutt shall be hunted for this, as the hound follows the trail, till he dies!" said Wild Bill, in that low, solemn tone which means even more than it says. "As soon as the light comes I will find his

track, for I heard the stones rattle where he went up the other bank. He shall not rest, for he has no horse, and Black Nell can climb where he can go."

"It is my work—the hunting him down," said Frank Stark, eagerly. "You take Miss Lillie home, Bill, on my horse, and I can follow him afoot—and I will, till I lift his hair and leave his carcass for the wolves!"

"No, Frank. Lillie would rather go with you, and I want her to. I think as much of her as any man on earth ought to, but I'm not company for any sweet pearl of a woman like her—I'm too rough, you see. Take her, Frank, on your own horse—it's more than likely you'll meet Buffalo Bill and his men on the trail, though if that fiend changed horses so often, he has got well ahead."

"But, Bill, I don't like to have you go alone after that villain."

"You make me laugh, Frank. Dave Tutt is smart, I know that; but if he were ten times the man he is, when I get sight of him, and think that this is third time he has had Lillie in his hands, and that it isn't *his* fault that she is not now cold and dead in your arms, I'll use him up as easy as I would a bear cub. I will not hear a word against it—take Miss Lillie back, after we've given her a bite to eat and a cup of coffee, and let her rest awhile, and as soon as a gleam of day opens to let me go on his trail, I am there, to stay till I find him, and then he goes under."

"Well, Bill, I know it is no use to argue with you,

and as one of us must see Lillie back safe, it will have to be me—not that I don't like the job, but I feel as if I ought to be the one to give Dave Tutt his ticket of leave."

The men had now got back to the camp, for Lillie, strengthened by the glad presence of dear and true friends, was able to walk, though her wan face bore evidence of the fearful suffering she had known within the past few hours.





## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

BEFORE day dawned, Frank was on his way toward St. Louis, with Lillie seated on a blanket behind his saddle, for one horse had to carry both until he could get another.

And when day dawned, Wild Bill, swimming the river where it ran slow in an eddy, on his petted Black Nell, took the trail of Dave Tutt where he had climbed up the bank after swimming the river in the night.

The trail was easily found, for the ruffian had been too much hurried to be careful, and the instant that the eye of Bill rested on it, he said to Black Nell, even as if she was human :

"Old gal, there's the track of the ongainliest reptile that ever trod the airth! Keep your eye on it, for we don't leave it till it's maker is found, and then him and me has got to *settle*. You know what that means, don't you, beauty?"

The small, sharp ears on Nell's head had been pointed forward, as if she was listening to every word he spoke, and now she nodded her head as if she understood it all.

Then as he dropped the bridle reins, she turned up the bank, following the place where loosened rocks had made small furrows as they tumbled down—on through grass bent only slightly, yet enough to show

that something had recently gone through—on among trees and bushes, only now and then hesitating as she came to a hard, rocky place, where no trace could be seen. Here Wild Bill, bringing his judgment into play, would guide her until in some softer spot the trail would again become visible.

Where it was possible, Bill rode rapidly, but the chase had a good start, and the route was over lofty hills, through rough gorges and tangled ravines, and hours passed swiftly by without bringing the fugitive in sight.

Bill, however, did not hesitate or falter, and when night with its darkness came, he was satisfied that he must be very near, within three or four miles, perhaps, of Tutt. He also knew, by the course he had come, as well as by the lay of the land, that he was near a small village in that part of Missouri supposed to be most southern.

When it became too dark for him to see the trail, he loosened the saddle girths and removed the bridle from Nell's mouth, when he dropped into his blanket under a tree to sleep. He well knew that Nell would wake him,\* as she had often done before, if danger approached, and rest was needed.

When morning came, the mare refreshed on good grass during the night was ready for the bit and tightened saddle, and with a hasty lunch on dried vension, washed down by cold water, he mounted and struck the trail again.

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\* A historical fact, well known.



Within three miles he struck the spot where Dave Tutt had dropped his frame in the grass to rest, for the bed was plain to view. But the latter had undoubtedly started the instant he could see, and started much refreshed by rest, for where his steps could be tracked the stride seemed a great deal longer than before.

The country, though much broken yet, was easier to travel than that traversed the day before, and Bill got over it quite rapidly.

At noon he was close to a small village in which the one tavern was made conspicuous by a huge sign as well as by a crowd congregated about its doors.

Toward this, after resting his horse for at least a half hour to give her breath, Wild Bill galloped.

The village contained probably a hundred or more houses, mostly on one broad street, with the county court house nearly opposite the tavern.

Wild Bill rode directly up to the tavern, and leaping from his mare, left her untied at the door, and walked boldly into the bar-room, which was crowded with people. Of these he knew some, and some knew him, and he knew that most of them were Southerners.

But his quick eye caught sight of the only man he wanted *then*. Dave Tutt, flushed and heated, stood at the bar, raising a glass of whisky to his lips, as he saw Bill enter.

The color left his face, and with trembling hand he set the liquor down untasted.

"Drink it, Dave Tutt, drink it, for you'll need it now more than you ever did in your life!" said Bill, sternly, as he strode up within two feet of him, the crowd parting to right and left as he advanced. "Drink it, I say, and then go to the opposite side of the street with your revolver, and remember, it is *you or me!*"

David Tutt, reassured, when he found that work was not to commence instantly, swallowed the fiery liquid, and the color came back in his face.

"You've followed me sharp, Bill," said he, and I can't blame you. But I'd rather it would have been Frank Stark than you, for he is an infernal turn-coat, and——"

"Look here, Dave Tutt, you've got neither time or breath to spare in talkin'. Just cross the street and be ready to take care of yourself, or I'll rip your heart out where you stand!"

Bill's look as well as his low, determined tone told Tutt there was no chance of evading the combat or of delay which might be of advantage where friends on his side were so plenty.

So he at once put his hand on the butt of his revolver and slowly passed from the bar-room into the street, and on across it to the front of the courthouse.

"A fight! A fight! Stand clear!" shouted the landlord of the hotel.

"A fight! A fight!" screamed a hundred delighted men, and all drew off on one hand or the other to arrange a free line of fire between the two men.

"Are you ready, Dave?" asked Wild Bill, as the other reached the path fronting the court-house and faced about.

"One question and I am!" cried Dave.

"Speak it quick, then, for my arm aches keeping it down so long!" replied Bill.

"Did I kill Lillie last night?" asked Dave.

"No!" thundered Bill. "She is too much of an angel to die by such a fiend's hand as yours. You never even stretched her!"

"Then I'll kill *you* now and go for her on your black mare. I'm *ready*," yelled Dave, and he raised his pistol.

Both men fired at the same time, and for an instant it seem as if both had missed, for both stood erect, calm apparently, looking at each other.

Only a second, and with a death-yell on his whitening lips, Dave Tutt essayed to fire again, but his pistol exploded harmlessly as he fell forward on his face, dead.

Then Bill raised the hat from his head and looked at a hole in it where the ball had passed through, actually cutting away the hair on his head as it grazed the skull.

"There's one debt paid!" said Bill, as he glared fiercely on the crowd. "If any of you cared enough for him to stand in his place, I'll wait just one minute to see it done!"

Bill calmly waited the minute. Not a man stirred or spoke.

Then he whistled to Black Nell, sprang on her back as she trotted up, and rode off without hearing one word from those who stood around. They knew him too well to *talk* then.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

WHEN Wild Bill rode away from the village where Dave Tutt met but too honorable a death, there was not a man among all the people assembled, and nine-tenths were Southerners, to raise a hand to stay him, or speak a word to rouse his anger.

But as he rode away to the westward there were fifty who cried out:

"Why did we let him go? We should have hung him up on the spot."

"I reckon the talking would have had to lead the swinging!" said a rough-looking customer, who with revolvers and knife belted around him, looked as if *talking* would not be mere talk if it was tried on *him*.

"Are you a friend of his?" asked half a dozen of men, frowning on the stranger.

"Not if I know myself, and I reckon I do. But I know him, and the man that tackles Wild Bill single-handed has got his winter's work paid for in advance. I thought I'd see if you all would let him go before you'd speak or raise a hand—so I kept still and saw you do it. Now I'm going to fix him, or start them that will. I want a gal that's smart as lightning on-hitched, who can ride a race-horse and tell a smooth lie without blushing."

"Mister, I'm one that can do all that if 'twill *pay*," said a small but well-formed girl of eighteen or

twenty years—the landlord's daughter—a brunette, with a good deal of mischief in her dark eyes, and a firm, cruel look about her thin, close-drawn lips.

"It shall pay—his purse and gold watch, the one is full, I reckon, and the other worth two hundred dollars, for 'twas a gift from General Harney," said the man, in a quiet, business way.

"Well, I'd go for half that, but what am I to do?" asked the girl.

"Come in the back room and I'll tell you. You'll have to ride my led horse out there, he's a thoroughbred, and will take you over the ground as quick as you ever went, if he don't *histe* you out of the saddle."

"I'll risk that," said the girl, laughing, as she followed the man in to hear what he had to say.

This did not appear to take long, for she came out soon dressed for a ride, and as soon as he had put a side-saddle of hers on the horse, a magnificent chestnut gelding, clean-limbed, deep-chested, and with all the points of a thoroughbred visible, she sprang into her seat as the horse was led up to the tavern steps.

The animal was not used to a female rider, and bounded into the air with a wild spring which would have unseated many a *man*, not to speak of a woman.

"Let him have his head, and take the trail of you know whom. The story you tell will take him where he'll meet his match and get his gruel!" cried the stranger, as he saw the girl keep her seat in the saddle with a coolness which told him as well as the

horse that she was mistress of the situation and able to remain so.

She made no reply, but gave the horse the reins and sped away at a gallop.

"That gal is fit to command a regiment, and worth the whole caboodle of you men," said the stranger, with a sneer, as he turned and faced the loungers at the bar. "Landlord, give me a slug of your best brandy to drink her health in. If I come out of this war a major-general I'll take her off your hands, as sure as my name is—*what it is*."

The crowd, eager to know his name, looked their disappointment as he ended thus, and asked, speaking unusually respectfully:

"What mought that name be, stranger?"

"It might be Smith, or Brown, or Jones, or Jenkins, but it isn't," said the stranger, showing his white teeth in an icy smile. "Landlord, is this the best brandy you've got?"

"Yes, I paid eight dollars a gallon for it in Pilot Knob," said the landlord, not pleased with the way the stranger tasted it and then tossed the contents of his glass on the floor.

"It was good whisky, I expect, before they put burned sugar, oil of bitter almonds, and oil of vitriol in it and called it *brandy*," said the man, with a mocking laugh. "Never mind, there's your money for it, whether it is drank or not. And now, if any of you men are for the South enough to fight for her, starve when you can't get food, go wet when you can't keep dry, and die when your time comes,

why there's a muster roll for you to sign. My name is at the head of it, and if you don't know me now, you will when I take any of you under fire, for you'll see *me* in front."

The men went one after the other and looked at the name which headed the muster roll, and more than one hat went off as the whisper passed from lip to lip—"It is Ben McCullough, the great Texan ranger!"



## CHAPTER XL.

WILD BILL did not ride very fast after he left the village. He did not know but some of the bushwhackers would feel inclined to follow him, and if they did, knowing well that he could keep his own range with Black Nell under him, he felt no desire to get away until he had given them a chance.

He had gone four or five miles, perhaps, when he saw a woman coming on behind him at an easy gallop.

"That don't mean fight, but it may be a trick," he muttered, as he checked his speed a little to allow her to come up.

She was soon nearly alongside, and turning carelessly in his saddle, he glanced, first curiously, and then admiringly at her.

For not only was she dashing pretty, but she sat that horse in a way to captivate the fancy of any one like Bill—a good horseman himself, and a judge not only of animals, but how they should be ridden.

"That's a stunnin' animal you're on, miss," said he.

"It ought to be. Aunt Sally gave two hundred for him when he was a yearlin' colt," said the fair rider. "Uncle Jake M'Kandlas wants to buy him, but I don't mean to let Aunt Sally sell him, for he just suits *me*."

The girl spoke in a careless way, and did not ap-

*pear* to observe the sudden start which Wild Bill involuntarily gave as that last name left her lips.

"Who is Uncle Jake M'Kandlas? Is he Aunt Sally's husband?" asked Bill with well-assumed carelessness, recovering his self-possession in a minute or less.

"Oh, no—we call him *Uncle* Jake because he's old. He isn't well; he got hurt among the Indians not long ago, and he's stayin' at our house to get well," said the girl, speaking as easily and natural as if she had not learned a lesson. "Aunt Sally knowed him years ago, I've heard her say, when I was a little girl. Aren't you the man that shot a chap a while ago back there?"

And she pointed with her thumb over her shoulder toward the now distant village.

"Yes, he was my enemy. I gave him an equal chance, but he wasn't quite as sure as I. That drink of whisky kind of outsteadied him, I reckon."

"I heard 'em say you shot him to kill. But I must get on, or it'll be plum dark afore I get to Aunt Sally's."

And the girl urged her horse on faster and diverged more to the southwest, over the rolling prairie-land.

"Hold on a minute, please," said Bill, letting Black Nell "slide" a little faster. "How far do you live from here?"

"About ten or twelve mile, I reckon—it's just over that range of hills there."

"You wouldn't mind if I rode home with you,

would you?" continued Bill. "Jake M'Kandlas is an old friend of mine, and I'd like to see him, and sleepin' in a house is nicer than campin' out when a chap is all alone. I've got plenty of money to pay my way, and I reckon your Aunt Sally won't object to my giving you the price of a new dress."

"No, indeed, she wouldn't say nothin' agin that, not if you're a friend of Uncle Jake's; but you shoot careless, they say, and it makes me kind of fearsome of you."

"Oh, *you* needn't fear me. I never spoke a cross word or did a mean thing to a woman in all my life, and I'm not goin' to begin now. So, if you'll let me ride home alongside of you, you may let that chestnut beauty of yours *skim*, and I'll try to keep up."

"All right, stranger—I'll trust you."

The girl, whose artless manner had won away all feeling of distrust from Bill, rode along rapidly, and Bill, chattering as they galloped, tried to make himself agreeable.

## CHAPTER XLI.

FRANK STARK, securing a second horse for Lillie at the first settlement after leaving camp in the morning, made a rapid journey toward the city, but even as Wild Bill had anticipated, before night he met Buffalo Bill with a party on the trail of Dave Tutt.

The story of the rescue was soon related, and when Buffalo Bill was told that his mate had kept on after Dave, he took two of his men with him and pushed forward to overtake Wild Bill, sending the rest back in charge of Frank Stark with his sister.

He knew that Wild Bill would not now leave the chase until he had run his game down, and he determined to be "in at the death" himself, if he could.

But as we have seen this was impossible, for Wild Bill had been fast, and Dave Tutt had been dead long before Buffalo Bill had reached the spot where Lillie was rescued.

It was so dark after they crossed the river and found the trail of Wild Bill and the man he had followed, that they had to lay over until morning.

But when dawn came they started without any delay, and pushed on at a rapid rate for the next two hours.

But now, while crossing a valley of some extent, between two hill ranges, where all was level, and

there was neither bush, tree or rock to serve as concealment, they saw that which would have chilled the hearts of any man less fearless and less careless of odds than these bordermen.

Yelling wildly, full a hundred Sioux Indians came dashing over the hill in front of them, charging fairly down upon them.

Flight seemed to be the only policy. But to retreat is not in the tactics of Buffalo Bill.

His plan was formed in an instant, and acted on as quickly. Powder Face, trained to a hundred tricks, was made to lay down by a single word. The other horses were *thrown*, and tied so they could not rise, and then all were sheltered as far as possible with their saddles and blankets.

The animals were so arranged as to form a triangular breast-work, and inside of this, each man facing an angle, with his breech-loading rifle and revolvers ready for use, they waited the onset.

Yelling, as if *yells* could kill, the Indians came into range, and the moment Buffalo Bill knew his fire would tell, he and his companions began to blaze away. He knew that only an effective fire in the start, checking the enemy and throwing them into confusion, would save him and his two men, and not a shot was wasted.

Indian after Indian tumbled headlong from his horse, and soon circling away further and further, the red warriors rode out of range. In less than five minutes they had lost full twenty warriors, one of them a chief.

Wild yells for vengeance rose from their lips, and after a pow-wow of half an hours' duration, they again prepared to attack.

This time, dividing off into different squads, they charged all at once from various points, laying down on their horses, and shielding their bodies from fire with all conceivable cunning.

"Shoot the horses if you can't get a bead on the men," said Bill. "Fire sure and fast, and when a warrior is dismounted, put him out of the way of mounting again."

His men, cool as himself, poured in a steady fire with their long range guns, and though the Indians, firing as they charged, repeatedly came within a hundred yards before losing many, they wheeled away. Not a single shot of theirs did any serious injury, though some of their balls struck the saddles, and two of the horses were slightly wounded.

The Indians lost more in the second than on the first attack.

Another pow-wow was held among them and a change in the mode of attack made.

Buffalo Bill was the first to discover a small smoke rise where the Indians had huddled together.

"They are going to try to fire the prairie," said he. "But it is foolishness. The grass is too green to burn. They must try some other game. If I only had twenty men here I'd charge and whip the crowd. As it is, I'll try it before I stay cooped up here till after dark, when they'll be sure to creep in upon us and use us up. Ah! there they come again."

Now I'll show 'em another trick. Don't fire this time as soon as they get in range, but lay as low as you can. They'll think we're out of ammunition."

Again the Indians swept in a wide circle, whooping and yelling, and keeping under cover of their horses as usual.

They seemed astonished when no shot was fired from the novel barricade.

And then, when Bill hoisted a white handkerchief on the barrel of his gun, their exultant yells came wildly down on the wind. Not that for an instant would they respect a flag of true or accept a surrender, but they thought the poor men, without ammunition, were at their mercy.

They held a hurried pow-wow, and then, in dense column, rode, yelling and tearing, directly toward their supposed victims.

Bill and his companions, with their rifles pointed and two revolvers to each, loaded in their belts, waited until the Indians, who did not now think it necessary to fire, were within a hundred yards, and then, like flashing lightning, poured in their deadly fire.

Through that confused, headlong mass the rifle balls tore, killing and maiming them in line, and, as they could not check themselves before they were in revolver range, those swift, deadly weapons rained in a leaden hail with terrible effect.

Confused, huddled up, terror-stricken, the red men turned in every way to flee from that shower of death.

"Now, up and follow me!" cried Bill, and, without waiting to saddle, he sprang on Powder Face, and, with a fearful yell, charged right in among the enemy, brandishing his heavy rifle as a club, and striking down the warriors as if they were but playthings in his hand.

Oh, it was a grand as well as a fearful sight, to see him, bare-headed and bespattered with blood and brains, dash here and there, Powder Face kicking, plunging and snorting as he dashed his red hoofs into the dead and dying, while the Indians, utterly terror-mad, sought only to escape.

Bill was well supported by his two brave companions, and as long as there was an Indian left within reach of blow or bullet, they fought on.

It was a gallant fight.

Kit Carson, or Ben McCullough in his glory among the Comanches, could not have asked to see a better.

To the Indians it was a bitter, a terrible lesson. A few only fled far away, to tell that demons, instead of men, had been met, and their party had been swept away as the strong winds of November strip the sere leaves from the forest tree. They had fled to tell another story of the prowess of the "Long-haired Chief," whom none of them could kill; who was shielded by the hand of the Great Spirit.

When the fight was all over, and the mere scratches got in the last *melee* by Bill and his men had been looked to, the saddles were again put upon the horses, a little food eaten, and a drink of pure



water from their canteens, and then the route was resumed.

Night was approaching when Bill, observing the smoke rise from a distant house on the prairie, remarked that they would go to it to camp, for possibly there they might hear from Wild Bill.

## CHAPTER XLII.

WHEN the sun was just dipping to the crest of the farthest western hills, the fair brunette showed Wild Bill a smoke rising from a house half hidden in a little grove of locust trees.

"There's where Aunt Sally lives," said she; "now for a race to see who'll get there first."

And even as the words left her lips she touched her horse with the slack of the reins and he started at his wildest speed.

He had thus two or three rods the lead of Black Nell, but she began to slowly close the gap, and when they reached the door the two horses were side by side.

As Wild Bill leaped from his horse he turned to help the girl down, but laughing, with a fiendish light in her eyes, she cried out:

"Your *friend*, Jake M'Kandlas, comes yonder—I'll go to tell him Wild Bill is here!"

And she pointed to a group of men, eleven in all, who were slowly riding that way, and instantly rode at full speed toward them.

A woman came to the door—an old woman whom Bill had met years before, but who knew him instantly.

"Oh, merciful Heaven, Mr. Hitchcock,\* what will

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\* His real name.

become of you?" she cried. "Jake M'Kandlas and his gang will murder you under *my* roof! Oh, what brought you here?"

"Your precious niece there," said Bill, as he turned Nell loose and shouted: "Go for help, old gal—find Buffalo Bill and bring him here to bury me."

"My niece? I have no niece—I do not know that girl," said the woman, looking in wonder to see the black mare speed away as if she flew.

"Then I'm sold and the money paid in," cried Bill. "She has told Jake M'Kandlas, and there he and his tigers come. Old woman, if you ever do any prayin', get into your cellar, if you have one, out of the way, and pray your tallest, for there's going to be just the toughest fight here that ever was fought. Go quick, I want a clear range and no squalling to bother me."

There was a cellar and a trap-door leading to it, and through this the weeping woman fled for safety, perhaps to pray, as Bill asked her to do.

The next moment, throwing aside his hunting shirt and putting knife-hilt and revolver-butt where his hand would reach them easiest, Bill stood firm, fronting the door with his rifle cocked and ready.

A rush of horsemen, the sound of heavy feet leaping from the saddle to the ground, and then the burly form of Jake M'Kandlas loomed up before the door.

"Surrender, Yank!" shouted the renegade.

He never spoke again.

An ounce ball from Bill's rifle tore away the

very tongue that spoke, and took half the head with it, for he was on the threshold and the muzzle of the gun was in his face.

As he fell back dead the gang rushed in on Bill, and firing as he backed to a corner—one, two, three, four, five, six successive shots sent a man down in less time than I can write. Four more were left, and now knives in hand they were on him. One clutched him by the throat with a strangling grasp, while the others hewed and mangled him as he struggled to free himself.

One fearful blow with his clenched fist sent one combatant stunned out of the way, then he clutched the arm which was extended to his throat, and broke it as if it had been rotten wood instead of flesh and bone—and now his own knife was out. Oh—fearful for an instant—sickening was the work. Like tigers mad for blood, with flashing, clashing knives, silent only that their breathing could be heard for rods, they sprang and leaped at each other, parrying and thrusting, until the last man of the crowd lay dead before the hero.\*

He, a mass of blood from head to foot, staggered out of the door, where the brunette yet sat on her horse to await the issue.

She saw him, and with a wild scream gave her horse the rein and fled away in the thickening twilight.

Bill staggered to the well, and bending his head

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\* A historical fact.

down to a trough full of water by it, drank a few drops and then dropped senseless to the earth.

The widow who had been frightened from the cellar by the blood which dripped down in streams upon her through the cracks in the floor, now came up, found the state he was in, and carrying him in her arms into the house laid him on her bed and dressed his wounds as well as she was able—stanching them with ice-cold water and lint hastily scraped from the bed linen.

She had the joy to see his eyes open after a long death-like swoon, and to hear his husky whisper as he asked:

“Have I wiped 'em all out?”

“Yes, all but the girl, and she fled away. Oh, I do believe there's good in prayer!” said the old woman. “I prayed and I cried, and I cried and prayed all the time I heard the terrible work go on—and I stayed there where the blood ran down on me, until I thought I should die myself. The good God must have heard me, for though you are hacked and slashed all over, there isn't a wound that has reached your vitals. You'll live—Heaven be praised, you'll live!”

“Yes—it is to *Him* I owe it all!” said Bill, solemnly. “Nothing else could have saved me, for every man of 'em was a fighter! I reckon my old mother in Illinois must have been prayin' too, for 'twould take a heap of it to carry me through such a scrape. Are you sure all of them cusses are dead?”

"Yes—there is not a breath in any of 'em. I'll drag 'em out of the house—it's an awful job, but I can't bear to see 'em lie here after I light up. Their dead eyes would stare so awful like, for there isn't one that shut 'em afore he went out."

"I wish I could help you," said Bill, in his low whisper. "But I'm weak as a babe now. There *will* be help though afore long. I sent Black Nell after it, and she'll never rest till she brings it."

## CHAPTER XLIII.

ALL the long night the widow watched poor Bill. He was so weak that the fluttering breath, the low pulse, scarce told that he lived; but she prepared a mild stimulant—not alcoholic, but a home preparation of roots and herbs—and by noon of the next day he was, through its effects, able to take a little broth.

While she was holding up his head to feed him, a shrill neigh was heard, and Bill at once recognized from whence it came.

"Black Nell is back, and she has friends with her!" he said. "You'll not have to bother with me much longer, my good, kind friend."

Almost as soon as the words left his mouth, Buffalo Bill rushed into the room.

He, almost always cool and calm, was white as snow now in the face, and trembled like a dry leaf in the winter wind.

"Bill, is life left in you?" he gasped.

"Yes; lots of life, but not much blood," whispered Wild Bill.

"And you killed 'em all—old Jake and ten more—for I saw and counted 'em as I ran by."

"Yes, mate—I wiped 'em *all* out, but 'twas just the hardest job I ever tackled," said Bill, his bright eyes telling how sure he was of the work.

"Mate, I loved you before better than I loved my own life—I don't know how I can love you more. But if I ever have a chance to *die* for you, I'll laugh while I'm going. I should like to have given old Jake his dose, but it came just as good from your hand. He knew you and me were one. This has been the biggest single-handed fight I ever knew; for every man of them was a fighting man, a desperado. Me and two of the boys have had a big tussle with the reds while we was hunting you up; but our fight isn't anything compared with yours. But can you stand moving?"

"I'll have to. A gal that led me into this scrape got away, and I expect more of Dave Tutt's friends will be after my hair when she gets back to tell 'em I haven't gone under."

"Dave Tutt! Have you seen him?"

"Yes, and for the last time. He was fool enough to exchange lead with me at thirty paces. There is a hole in my hat and one through his heart. So *he* is settled with."

"Thunder, Bill—you don't leave nothin' for me to do."

"Yes, I do, mate. You've got to get me back where they can put the blood into my veins once more, and make me strong, so that I can follow the scout as before. Did you see Miss Lillie?"

"Yes—Frank is with her. I sent all the men back but two, so I could move fast and quiet to join you. Do you think, if I sling a bed into the wagon out here, that you can stand the ride back?"



"I *must* stand it, mate, whether I can get through or not. It won't do for us to stay here. Just the hardest man on the trail in the Southern army knows of this last scrimmage by this time. I saw him in the little town where I killed Dave Tutt. He and Van Dorn hunt in the same claim, and they are both men whom you know to be hard to get away from."

"Who is this other man, Bill?"

"Ben McCullough, the old ranger. I saw by his eye that he wouldn't interfere between me and Dave, for he is one that never would prevent fair play in a personal matter; but as soon as that was over I made tracks out of that, for I knew he'd overhaul me, and if he found I wasn't on his side in what is going on in the States, I must go under. But, by the way the landlord's daughter acted in showing me where Jake M'Kandlas and his gang were, I feel satisfied that he sent her. And she is back with him by this time, and has most likely told him that his friends were too few to put me under, and took the down track themselves. That being the case, it is more than likely he'll come or send to look after my welfare with anything but a friendly interest."

"You're right, Bill—you're right. I'll rig up the wagon outside and have the horses harnessed to it, and we'll fix you as comfortable as we can, and start right away."

"That's the talk, mate. The more start we have, if we're to be followed, the better. But look here

—don't take a thing from this old woman without paying for it. There's not far from three hundred dollars in my pouch, and there's the watch old Harney gave me. If it hadn't been for her I should have gone under, sure. When I got through I was too near gone to stop the bleeding myself, but she did it, and I live."

"All right, my mate—I'll do the clean thing by her; and if she'll come along and nurse you as we go, I'll make it worth her while out of my own pocket. Indeed, I reckon it'll be best for her anyway, for they that will come after you will not be likely to treat her well for having befriended you."

The widow had overheard the colloquy, for she stood near.

"I will go gladly, asking no recompense, and not willing to accept any," she said. "Take my wagon and mules, pile in the feather beds and clothing, and he'll lay soft and easy on 'em. As for me, I'm a lone widow. My two boys have been carried off to serve with them that you do not like; and I'm sure if I stay here I'll see rougher times than I have seen. Get ready as quickly as you please; take what you need, and I'll go with you."

"You're just as true and good-hearted as women-folks can be when they try," said Bill. "Go with us and we'll stick by you to the last, and see that every comfort we can command comes to your share. We're rough, but we never forget our own mothers, and while we remember them we can't be unkind to you."

It took but a little time for the party to get ready, and when the widow's wagon was all arranged, it was far ahead of the usual ambulance used in the army for comfort.

Wild Bill was lifted into it, the widow seated near his head, with a canteen of water, and then they drove on, taking a course which Bill believed would soonest bring him to where Union forces were stationed.

It was a painful ride for the wounded man, but he was too much of a hero to show by any complaint what he suffered.

## CHAPTER XLIV.

BACK with all the speed of which her thoroughbred horse was capable, sped the traitorous beauty, who had led Wild Bill into his fearful peril with the M'Kandlas gang—back over the plains toward the village where her father lived.

“What will the great Ranger say,” she asked herself, “when I tell him his friends have been slain, single-handed by the man whom he sent me to betray into their hands.”

For before he had dismissed her, he had told Ruby Blazes, the landlord's daughter, his name and rank, and that as well as her natural proclivities had made her so willing to serve him and the cause in which he was engaged. He had told her also where his camp was situated, so that, if not still in the village on her return, she might know where to send the noble animal which he had loaned her.

But when she reached her father's house, he was there, and not alone. In the large sitting-room, generally used as a family room, she found him and Van Dorn, who, with all his faults, was the bravest of the brave, with a few more kindred spirits, engaged in a friendly game of euchre, while her father, delighted at the occupation, was very frequently called upon to replenish their toddy

glasses, for they were at leisure now and could afford their grog with sugar fixings.

The room was blue with smoke, and long before she reached the house, Ruby had heard the laughter of those within.

But when the door opened and McCullough saw her flushed but weary-looking face, he dashed down the cards he held in his hand and rising, cried:

"Ah, here comes my Prairie Queen. How is it, my little fairy? Have you seen a little bit of tragedy since you left?"

"If the hardest and wildest fight that was ever fought single-handed is a tragedy, I have seen it!" she said, and a shudder ran through her fine form.

"What—that man was not fool enough to fight such a party as Jake M'Kandlas had around him?"

"He was fool enough to fight them, and man enough to whip them. There is not much of him left that hasn't got a hole or a gash—but of them not one man lives!"

"Girl, you surely do not speak this in earnest?"

"I do—it is the truth—neither more or less, and Jake M'Kandlas with ten more lay dead, for I saw them myself. I might have killed him, when it was over, for he had just life enough left to stagger out for water, but I hadn't the heart to do it. He is all man, if he isn't on our side."

"Yes, too much of a man to be on the other side. He must be made a prisoner. As a guide, what he knows of the country is invaluable. I do not blame you for anything that has miscarried, but that man

has done us too much damage now, and can do too much yet to be permitted to escape. He must be made a prisoner, or else he must die."

"Who is it?" asked Van Dorn.

"The man Hitchcock, generally known as Wild Bill. You know him well."

"I reckon I do. No better shot ever fired a rifle or pistol. And is it he that has wiped out old M'Kandlas and his gang?"

"Yes, so Miss Ruby says, and she saw it. But you've had a hard ride, my brave girl, and need rest. You found the horse true, did you not?"

"Yes, general; a better never skimmed the prairie."

"Then keep him hereafter for my sake, my little beauty. One who rides so well as you deserves a good horse to ride on, and you'll not find many to beat him, especially with your weight on."

"Oh, you do not mean that I shall keep that noble horse as my own?" cried the pleased as well as astonished girl.

"I do. You deserve some recompense for your trouble. I may want you to go on another errand for me some time."

"I'd die for you!" cried Ruby, her dark eyes flashing as she spoke. "Oh, if I were only a man, I'd ride where you ride, and fight where you fight, as brave as the best of them all. I wish I was a man."

"Some may; I'm rather glad you're not, and if I live to come out of this war, my beauty, I'll tell you why. If I *don't*, there's no use in your knowing."

Ruby blushed with pleasure, for the bold speaker was one of those dashing, handsome men whose kind attentions are seldom displeasing to the fair sex.

"What is to be done about that man, Wild Bill?" she asked. "He is pretty badly hurt, but if he is left alone, he'll get over it, and get back where he can do work against our side."

"Yes," said McCullough, thoughtfully. "That will not do. He must be taken care of. I'll send a party, or go after him myself to-night, or early in the morning."

"There needn't be much hurry," said the girl. "It'll be a good while before he is fit to travel, if I'm any judge. He was terribly used up. They fought awful, I tell you."

"I should think so, with such odds. That man is a human wild cat. There is no use in talking. For *one* man, he hasn't got his match on earth. Couldn't you win him over to our side, Ruby? You've a mighty taking way with you."

"It wouldn't take with *him*," said Ruby, with a sigh. "All that did take was the way I rode. He liked my horse a heap more than he did me."

"Pshaw! I though he had more taste. But never mind, my beauty. You shall see him dance on nothing yet."

"I'm not anxious for that. When a brave man goes under I'd rather he'd die like one than to be choked like a dog. He was polite to me, and I don't owe him any grudge. The chaps he wiped out

you know were mean as sneaks, even if they were on our side!"

"You're right, Ruby—but be off to rest, for you need it. I'll see you before I start in the morning. I've got something I want you to take care of for me, for one don't know how soon he'll be beyond care in this skrimmage. I've led a pretty swift sort of a life, and have looked old Death in the face about as often as any other man, but I never felt before as I do now, that I've got pretty near the end of my grazing-ground. I've never made a will yet, but I think I shall before I get out of this settlement."

McCullough said this in a low, serious tone, and a gentle pressure of the hand told Ruby that he meant all he said, perhaps even more.



## CHAPTER XLV.

DREARY in its loneliness stood the cabin home of the widow after its owner departed with her wounded guest and his friends, but the unburied corpses of Jake M'Kandlas and his gang made the picture terrible.

It must have seemed so to a party of men who reached it just as the sun was going down on the eve of the day when it was deserted. For the leader of these—they were but half a dozen, dressed as hunters and trappers usually went, and armed like them—drew back as he glanced at the bodies, and, with a shudder, said :

"Mates, we've come to a poor place for food or rest either, by the looks of matters here. Nothing living in sight, and dead men strewed around as if life cost nothing."

"Don't you know who that is, cap?" asked the man next to him, pointing down at the ghastly face of M'Kandlas.

"Bears and wild cats! It is the old colonel—the very man we've come to meet!"

"Yes, cap, and do you know who has been here?"

"Buffalo Bill, of course. I've heard of his oath, and you are one of the gang that he has sworn to kill? Isn't it so, Rackensack?"

"Yes, cap, it is; and I'd rather meet any other

ten men all at once than him alone. Not that I'm afeard of any man as a man, or afraid to die when my time comes, but there's luck goes with him. Colonel Jake has shot at him twenty times, and he never missed any other man. We've all tried to put him under, public and private, with lead, steel, and pison, but he lives, and he lives and swears he will live till we're all gone. There's but two or three left of the original lot—for truth, I don't *know* positive of any but me and Ginger-blue, the Texas Boy. But let's go inside—maybe we'll see something living in there."

The man who was called "cap" pushed open the unlatched door, and only saw the marks and stains of the terrible fight which had occurred in there. Bill and his companions had laid all the bodies outside while they were there.

"There are but few of our boys left now," said the captain. "All of Alf Coye's men are gone; but Dave Tutt must be left, for his body isn't among these, and he generally hunted in mighty close company to the old colonel."

"Yes, most likely he was off when this fight came on. Dave would go a hundred miles any day to see a lump of honey in the shape of a pretty girl, and most likely that took him off. Hark! what is that?"

"It's a voice singing—some girl. Like as not Dave coming back with a prize."

"She has a horse under her, and is alone," said one of the party, who glanced out of the door.

"Young, too—why, cap, haven't you seen her before?"

"Yes; it looks like that gal the colonel took from the Mormon train at Ash Hollow one time," said the captain, looking ont.

"It is her," said Rackensack, "and she is as crazy as a loon with a ball through both eyes! She is coming right here, too!"

The men all had entered the cabin, but they now hurried to the door to see the female, whose shrill, plaintive voice rose louder and louder as she approached, chanting a wild improvisation like this:

"Over the prairie, lonely and cheerless,  
Wanders poor Mary, eyes dry and fearless—  
Why should she weep?  
See the birds flying home to their nests,  
Daylight is dying away in the west,  
And Mary must sleep."

She did not seem to heed the presence of any one, but let her horse take its own course until it halted where the others were standing near the cabin door.

Then she raised her pale, haggard face, and, with a look as cold and meaningless as if it had been marble instead of plastic flesh, saw the men before her.

"Why are you here?" she cried. "Mary does not belong to you. Her people are lost, and she is looking for them."

"Does Mormon Mary know that man?" asked the captain, pointing to the dead body of M'Kandlas.

"Yes; it is the colonel. Don't wake him up, or

he'll beat you terribly. He is worse than a tiger when he is mad," she said.

"He'll not wake again in this world," said the captain. "But come in the house, poor girl—come in. There's no one of us will hurt you."

"Mary is hungry. The red Indians are afraid of her because she is a spirit, and she cannot get food from any one," said the girl, plaintively.

"We will find something for you. The man who wronged you most is past wronging you or any one else. Old Jake is dead."

"Dead—there are no dead!" said the girl, in a low, sad tone. "They only sleep when they do not move any more. I shall sleep by and by, and the winds will sing wild songs over me. The flowers will nod their heads and go to sleep, too. But we will all awake when God's daylight comes."

"Crazy or not, the girl speaks bright ideas," said the captain. "Stir about, men, and find something for supper—if you can't do better, kill a mule, for we've got to eat!"

"There's meat and potatoes in the cellar!" cried a man who had just made the discovery.

"Good! We'll have supper and a night's rest. When morning comes it will be time enough for us to decide what to do."

Soon a bright fire roared in the great chimney; a huge pot full of potatoes was hung over the fire-place, and a great pan of bacon was set on to fry.

One of the men attended to all this, for the poor, crazed girl had seated herself on a stool in one cor-

ner, and there sat rocking to and fro, singing low wild strains to herself, and not seeming to heed the presence of any other.

The widow had not taken away her housekeeping utensils, so these visitors found articles for setting the table in her cupboard, and in a little while the volunteer cook announced that supper was ready.

"Come, Mary; come, poor girl, and get something to eat," said the captain to the female, whose tangled hair and scanty, ragged garments made her look so pitiful.

And she, without a word, took the seat to which he led her, and ate ravenously of the food which he placed before with a bounteous hand.

All the men sat down and ate as if long abstinence had given them good appetites, conversing but little during the meal.

"Mary, have you ever seen me before?" asked the captain, when the woman at last drew back as if her hunger was fully appeased.

"Yes, you ride on the clouds when it storms. I have seen you at night when the owls sing, and I have listened to you when you told the red men to go back to the hills. You are the spirit of the hunting grounds, and the red men fear you."

"Poor girl! her brain is indeed gone wild," said the man. "Hallo! look outside, one of you, quick! I hear horses at a gallop. Be ready with your tools, boys, for we don't know what is coming."

One of the men sprang to the door, but had those who approached done so with hostile intent, he

would have been too late for resistance, for at the same moment that he opened the door, a dozen armed men stood before him, ready to enter.

At their head was the dashing-looking stranger who had lent Ruby Blazes his horse when he sent her to act as guide to Wild Bill, and who, on her return, had made her a present of the animal.

"Who are you here?" cried the man, as, with a cocked revolver in his hand followed first by the little brunette, who had guided him there, and next by several of his own men, he entered the warm cabin.

"None of us are enemies to Major Ben McCullough," cried the captain. "I've too good a memory of hot times on the Brazos, when the Mexicans were throwing escopette balls like hail among a few of us, to travel with them that do not like a Texan Ranger now."

"Why, it is old Cap Lewis, or I'm short of memory," cried the Ranger, extending his hand.

"It is me, or what is left of me, Major," cried the man; "and I'm glad to see you here. I got word the other day up in the hills from Jake M'Kandlas to meet him down here with what boys I had. I got here just as night came on, and found Jake and his gang, but they're done work for this world. Some one has wiped 'em out with rough and bloody hands."

"Yes; I know who did it, and I came here after him."

"*Him?* You don't mean one man did all the killing that lays outside of this cabin?"

"Yes, it was all the work of one man—Wild Bill; and here is a girl who saw it, Miss Ruby Blazes, who has just guided me and my party here."

"Where is he? Wasn't he hurt?"

"Yes," said Ruby; "he was all shot and all cut up—bleeding from head to foot when I saw him last. He couldn't have got away from here without help. Where is the widow? That isn't her."

"No; that poor girl is a victim of old Jake, who lays dead outside. She came in since we did, and there was no live man or woman here when we came."

"Then the widow has carried him toward a settlement for help, most likely," said McCullough. "When day comes so we can find a trail, we'll see to it. There seems to be plenty to eat here, so my party will have supper, and we'll smoke a pipe and talk over old times. Ruby may do something to comfort that poor girl."

"I don't like women folks," said Ruby, with a careless glance at poor Mary—"not without they're like me, saucy, able to take care of themselves at any rate. But I'd like to know what has become of Wild Bill."

"We'll find out soon enough in the morning, my little humming-bird," said McCullough, with a smile. "Our horses will be fresh and rested then. You must rig up a place for yourself and yon poor girl to sleep to-night—we men can tumble down on our blankets anywhere."

"Supper, major, supper," cried the temporary cook, for the second table was now ready.

## CHAPTER XLVI.

ALL the first day and well on in the night, Buffalo Bill hurried on with his small party, after leaving the widow's cabin, for he realized how impossible it would be to defend Wild Bill from capture, if not death, if such a man as McCullough should institute pursuit, and with anything like an escort overtake him.

Brave himself, he knew how to estimate bravery in others—untiring in pursuit, determined in undertakings, he knew what his own peril was when one like him might have taken his trail.

Therefore, he did not camp until the exhaustion of the wagon train made it a matter of actual necessity, and then he chose a position in a ravine which was not only defensible, but well calculated for concealment if any scouts should pass near.

Wild Bill, though suffering intensely from the jar of transportation, in his mangled condition, had borne up bravely, not a groan escaping his lips, but his spirits never flagged.

When asked by the widow if he suffered, his only answer was a smile, and a look of well-assumed indifference, with a quiet "not much"—but one who *knows* what suffering is could have told from the transient flush which would occupy the ashy paleness of the face once in a while, the wild feverish



glance of the eyes moving to and fro and the set lip, that he was in physical agony hard for any but such as *he* to endure without complaint.

Buffalo Bill had a small fire built and supper cooked, and then made his men lay down to rest, but with his usual disregard for self he kept guard, seeing that the horses did not stray from the feed near camp and that no danger of surprise should occur.

He knew the importance of this watchfulness, for he was yet some distance from a part of the country where he could expect help, and he could not move with a wagon, either with the speed or concealment of trail which would make escape practicable if pursuit was earnest.

The gray dawn, therefore, through his watchfulness and care, found the little party again ready to move forward, and another day of rapid travel followed. But the end of it found the wagon mules so nearly used up that he knew others must be had, or the progress of the party reduced to at least half of its former rate of speed.

Therefore, when camped on the second night, after selecting the feeding ground for the stock, and leaving orders for a strict watch to be kept until his return, he mounted Powder Face and rode off in search of other stock. He was somewhat acquainted with the country, and knew enough of it to be aware that if he and his real character were known there would be but one way for him to get fresh stock, and that would be by force.



**BUFFALO BILL ON GUARD. (Page 260.)**

He rode out from the blind old river road which he had followed during the day, to another more traveled, and along which an occasional farm-house might be seen, for on this route, if anywhere, he felt stock might be secured.

He had money with him, and if he could but purchase a team of smart mules, he could go on with a speed which would soon place him among friends where safety would be no longer a matter of doubt.

He was about four or five miles from his camp, riding westward along the road, when the baying of dogs told him that he was approaching habitations, and soon in the dim, uncertain starlight, shadowed by passing clouds, he saw a clump of buildings, such as are generally huddled up with the well-to-do farmers—the dwelling, corn-cribs and stables all near each other.

There was no light visible as he rode up, but the furious baying of half-a-dozen fierce dogs soon aroused some one within the dwelling house, and a door flew open, revealing a man half-dressed, with a light in his hand, who shouted roughly :

“What’s goin’ on out thar? Has Satan got into the dogs, or is there some one out thar?”

“Satan may be in your dogs, for they make noise enough, stranger,” said Bill. “But there is a chap out here who calls himself half white, who is rather tired of a long day’s ride, and wouldn’t suffer by a little rest and a bite to eat, which he is willing to pay for.”

"Who ar ye and whar ar ye from?" asked the stranger, raising his light so that its rays fell on Bill, who now rode close up to the door.

A sudden thought struck Bill—by a single name he might know whether he was with friends or foes to the "cause" which he loved, and thereafter act accordingly.

"Have you ever heard of Jake M'Kandlas?" he asked.

"What, the old dare-devil colonel? I reckon I have and seen him, too—but you're not he? He is a brick, though, and I like him."

"I'm glad of that," said Bill, now knowing how to act. "He isn't a great ways off. My name is Tutt!"

"Tutt—*Dave* Tutt? Why one of my gals met you over in Liberty—my Sal—my name is Nat Perkins. My darter Sal will be crazy to see you. She is over at Bill Done's, a mile from here, to-night; but she'll be back in the morning. I've heard her talk about you a hundred times. Why don't you 'light and come in? We'll have some red-eye and the old woman will have bacon on the fire in a minute—'light and come in."

"I would," said Bill, "but I left the colonel in a bad fix and must go back to him. Our wagon is bagged and we want a couple of span of mules or horses to drag it out. If you could spare them, why I'd have him here in an hour or two and all will be as right as an open sight and a hair-trigger with game before you."

"Why didn't you say so on the first?"

"Because I didn't know whether you was friendly to *our* side or not. These are times when one doesn't know who is *who*, till he tries."

"That's so, and I don't blame you. How far away is the colonel?"

"About four miles back, up the road."

"All right—here, Jim, Ben—tumble out, you curs, and harness the six-mule team. Be in a hurry while me and the stranger takes a swash of red-eye. I'll start the niggers and we'll soon overhaul them," cried Mr. Perkins.

"You needn't take the trouble to go. In fact, as we'll not make much of a stay after day, for we're hurrying on to join Price, after you and me take a drink, if you'll just ride over and tell your gal I'll be here soon, you'll do me a favor. Because I've got a present for her that I promised her at Liberty, but I didn't think I'd see her so soon. She is a powerful smart gal, is Sallie!"

"You'd better believe that, Dave, and says you're just about as smart as they make 'em now a-days!"

"Well, she is a good judge. So I'm rather flattered!"

Bill had now dismounted, and entering the house was soon engaged in a social glass, in which Mrs. Perkins and two of her grown daughters joined, for they were all up in the house now, anxious to see the man whom "Sal" had made famous in her talk about him.

In a very few minutes the mules were harnessed,

and Bill, going in a direction just opposite to that which he must take to reach his own camp, started.

The old man Perkins at the same time mounted his horse and rode away to bring his daughter home, so that she might meet her lover.

For such in reality Dave Tutt had been, though of this Bill knew nothing when the thought struck him to assume the character.

Starting at a sharp trot he rode on with the mule teams about half a mile, then riding alongside of the negro who had them in charge, he spoke to him by the same name which his master had used when he told him to go along with Cap'n Tutt.

"Ben!" said he, "how far is it across to the old river road?"

"'Bout a mile, mas'r capn'—'bout a mile I reckon! Your wagon isn't ober thar, is it?"

"Yes—I left it there and got out here some way. But no matter, we can get there, can't we?"

"Yes, mas'r cap'n—dere's an old field here on de left, but it's kind o' overflowed now, de water is high from dem late rains!"

"No danger of missing in it?"

"No, mas'r cap'n—all hard ground. Only jess de water in de way!"

"It is just where I want it," thought Bill, as he knew the water would hide his trail.

And at once, by his direction, the negro guided his team from the main road across the flooded field into a piece of wood which he well knew extended to the other road.

Not until he was on this road did he again speak to the negro, but now when he urged him down instead of up the river, the man exhibited a surprise which made an explanation and an understanding necessary.

"Ben," said he, "do you know there is a war going on?"

"Yes, mas'r cap'n—I've hearn 'em tell 'bout dat. But I doesn't know nuffin about it. I spec you do!"

"Yes, a good deal, and you'll know more about it before long. For you're in the service now!"

"*Me*, mas'r cap'n? De Lor' I doesn't know what you mean!"

"I mean this. I have appropriated you and these mules for the benefit of Uncle Sam, and you'll be wise if you mind me and ask no questions, but hurry on them mules. They'll never see Nat Perkins's stables again."

"De Lor', mas'r cap'n, you isn't a hoss thief?"

"No, Ben, I am not, and if your master had been a Union man I should have bought his mules. But as he was not, I knew I couldn't get them for love or money in any way but as I have. So they're mine till he can get them back from me, and I shall *hire* you to drive them and take care of them, if you will go with me willingly. If you don't I shall have to tie you up in the swamp somewhere, even if you should starve, till I get out of the country."

"I doesn't want you to do that, mas'r cap'n; but sposin' old master gets hold of this nigger if I goes off with you!"

"He'll not have the chance, Ben. In another day or two you will be free among free men, and never again be in his power."

"Did you say dat for true, mas'r cap'n?"

"Yes, Ben. I need you and these mules—will you go on willingly?"

"I s'pose I'd better, mas'r cap'n; but by the big gum tree, I doesn't see what it all means! But I is only a nigger, and me isn't expected to know much. So I'll jess do what you tell me, mas'r cap'n."

"Do it, Ben, and I'll see you through it all. The route we've taken will keep them from finding out our course, and I'll be many a mile away from this section before I camp again."

Bill was in high glee when he reached his camp with six fresh, strong mules to take the place of the four worn-out ones in front of his wagon.



## CHAPTER XLVII.

DAY dawned over the crowded cabin in which we left McCullough and his party a couple of chapters back, and with the coming of the light all hands were astir.

One of the first to greet the rosy smile of the eastern day-god was Ruby Blazes, coming from the little bedroom, as bright and fresh as a flower bathed in dew.

She met the Texan ranger with a cheerful look, bidding him good morning, as she extended her little hand to meet his.

"Where is the poor crazy girl? Was she quiet last night?" he asked.

"I reckon so. She was too proud, or too ugly to share the bed with me, and tumbled down in a corner on a pile of blankets. I did not notice whether she was awake or not when I came out—in fact, it was rather dark in there, and I had no candle. She is big enough to look out for herself; and as to being crazy—that's all bosh! Women don't get crazy so easy, though some of 'em can put it on, when they think it will *pay*."

"What is the reason you women never have any sympathy for each other?" asked McCullough.

"Because it is a dead waste. The sympathy of one true man is worth that of fifty—to *me* at least!

But excuse me, major—I must look to my horse. He is too good an animal to be neglected!"

"Never mind—one of my men shall groom him."

"But where is he? I picketed him here last night and put the saddle and bridle close by the picket-pin under this tree. All are gone! The horse might have strayed off, but the saddle and bridle could not."

"No. This must be looked to. Boys, where is the horse Miss Ruby rode—the bay that I gave her?"

No one could answer.

A search was vainly made, every other animal belonging to the party, even the pony which Mormon Mary had ridden, was there. The horse belonging to Ruby, with all its trappings, was gone—and it was the best horse of the whole lot.

"Count noses here inside the house and out!" cried the ranger. "Horses don't go off alone, with the harness on, very often!"

Lewis counted his men.

They were all right. So were those in McCullough's party.

Ruby rushed into the bedroom, and found the corner vacant where she had last seen Mormon Mary. There was no sign of her around the house.

"There's where my horse has gone!" cried the girl, with flashing eyes. "She *was* crazy, wasn't she? Yet she knew enough to get away from this camp without waking me or any of you up. That is craziness for you! How am I ever to get my horse, I'd like to know. It will not be well for her if I get my hands in her hair."

"Never mind, Ruby—we will take her trail and get the horse back. We'll have some coffee, and then take the trail, if it can be found. We've got Wild Bill to follow and capture."

"Yes, sir; and more than him," cried the old ranger, who had been out examining the trails leading to and from the place. There's a wagon mark leading east from here, and quite a lot of shod-horse tracks, Wild Bill has been carried off in a wagon, and he has an escort of some kind with him."

"There was nobody with him here!" said Ruby.

"Not when you left, Miss Ruby," said McCullough. "But he has friends, who most likely have come across him and are trying to get him back to the Federal lines. But we'll block that game. We can go two miles on horseback to their one with a wagon and we'll overhaul them long before they can reach a point where we cannot go."

"But my horse? It is no way likely this crazy woman has followed the trail of Wild Bill."

"She could not have done so in the dark—did you see a *single* trail—a shod horse? You ought to know the track of my bay," McCullough asked.

"Yes, sir, it is fresher than the rest," replied the ranger.

"Then we are all right. Hurry, all hands, and get breakfast, and we'll then follow the trail."

"What am I to ride?" asked Ruby, pouting. "That crazy girl has left her pony, but he isn't worth shucks."

"You had better remain here—if you wish, I will

leave a guard with you," said McCullough. "We shall ride fast, and as they have a long start, it will be hard work to come up with them. You could not endure the fatigue."

"Major, you don't know me—but you will before I'm through. I can stand as much fatigue as the best man you have here, and where you go I'm going. It is a sorry bit of horseflesh, that pony of hers, but I'll ride it until I get a better one."

"I'll do better than that. One of my men has got to go back with a message to General Van Dorn—he shall ride the pony, for there is not much haste required, and you shall have his horse."

"Oh, thank you, major. I'm happy now, for I never, never wish to leave your side."

"Ah, Ruby, with a long and bloody war before me, it will be very foolish for you to try to follow *my* fortunes."

"Foolish! Will any woman with a woman's heart in her believe it is folly to follow the ideal of heroism, in a cause to which her very soul is wedded? I may be young in years, but I am old in thought, and when I resolve, I am firm as the mountains are. Get me the horse, while I make coffee, for I will be so useful to you that you cannot do without me."

The ranger smiled, and turned away with a low sigh to give orders about the horse.

"Had I nothing else to do, I'd surely fall in love," he murmured, as he saw the girl hasten away to assist in getting breakfast.

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

WHEN Buffalo Bill got to his camp, and the negro, Ben, found out in real earnest who he was, and that it was a matter of life and death with them all to reach the Federal lines speedily, he proved himself an auxiliary worth having.

The fresh mules hitched to the wagon were put forward at a rapid trot, for the new driver was well acquainted with the road, and at several points he not only gained by making cuts across the country, but he crossed water often, so as to make the trail more difficult to follow.

Another day of travel was nearly ended, and Bill was already looking out ahead for a good camping-place, when the clatter of hoofs in their rear attracted his attention.

A momentary alarm passed from his breast as he saw that it was a woman who followed—a wan-faced but wild-eyed creature, whose hair floated out in disheveled tresses over her bare, sun-browned shoulders. She was mounted on a magnificent horse, which showed signs of having been ridden very hard.

Bill reined in his horse as she came up, deeming it best to question her, though there was nothing in her appearance to denote danger to him or his party.

"Where from, my friend, where from?" he asked kindly, as with a sad, wistful gaze she looked at him.

"Mary has ridden far, over the hills and over the plains. She is hungry!" said the woman, in a pitiful tone.

"We shall camp soon, and will have plenty to eat there; but here is a chunk of bread and meat to last till then."

And Bill instantly took some food from his well-filled haversack and handed it to her.

She ate a little, and then, in the same wild tone, said:

"Mary saw them lying asleep all around her—the bad and the bloody. She could not stay there, so she rose and took the best horse and came away. They will follow, and they will kill us all!"

"Who—who do you mean?"

"Colonel M'Kandlas, Captain Lewis, and all."

"Why, M'Kandlas is dead!"

"No, he sleeps; I saw him. He was asleep, and men slept all around him. Then others came, and they fed Mary, and wanted her to sleep. She could not, and she took a horse and came away."

"Others came!" Bill muttered; for though he felt sure that she was insane, he began to gather something from what she said.

His eye accidentally fell on the silver front-piece of the bridle on her horse. He saw a name engraved on it—the name of one whom he knew but too well. It was that of BEN MCCULLOUGH.

In an instant the thought came to him as to who had fed the girl, and from whom she had taken the horse.

A few questions adroitly put drew from her a nearly coherent story—enough, at any rate, to satisfy him that she had seen McCullough with a party at the deserted cabin of the widow—had taken one of his horses, and would, without a doubt, be followed.

To go on without stopping would be his best policy, if it could be done, but his horses and mules were too nearly used up to think of it.

He could do no more than to select as he had done the night before a defensible position for his camp, and take a night to rest stock and men.

Yes—a second thought came to him—he could get the woman, Mary, as she called herself, to go into the wagon with the widow, and on her horse, which yet had plenty of vitality, send one of his men on to a point where Union troops might possibly be met.

He would do that. She was so weary with her long, long ride, that Mary made no dissent when he proposed to her to ride in the wagon.

The moment this change was made, he started his lightest man forward with a message for the first Union man or officer he could meet, and then, as night was close at hand, looked out for a good camping-place.

He found one even better than he hoped for. It was under a lofty ledge which overhung the stream, with a little level ravine running back close by, where there was plenty of grass for the stock.

A cave, not large or very deep, ran back a little

way in the great cliff, and a fire built here could only be seen after entering it.

In truth, it was as good as a fort.

As the wagon could not be brought in there, Bill carried his wounded mate in, and had his bed made near a cheerful fire within.

The widow had succeeded in making Mormon Mary quite contented with her situation, and after night set in, and supper had been cooked and eaten, Bill felt very well satisfied with his position, for even if McCullough did follow up the trail, he thought he must have start enough to keep ahead of him some ways yet.

Wearied out at last, he knew that he must get some sleep or he could not much longer keep about, so posting his single sentinel out on the road by which they came, and bidding Ben look out for the stock, he laid down near the fire.

Wild Bill, worn out with continual suffering, also slept, an uneasy, dreamy slumber, while the widow and Mormon Mary alone kept awake.

The latter, with strange, incoherent, and rambling complaints, told so much of her sad story that the widow, listening with many a shudder, learned what fearful wrongs she had endured ere her brain became crazed. And it seemed to her as if retribution was but partial in the mere death of such a wretch as M'Kandlas.

Suddenly the girl paused, listened, and then starting to her feet, cried wildly:



"They come! they come! I hear the tramp of horses!"

Buffalo Bill, aroused by her cry, started up, rifle in hand, just as the sharp crack from his sentinel's gun told that he was on the alert, and that enemies were approaching.

The next second the man himself rushed in, announcing a body of horsemen and two women as being close at hand.

He had hailed and halted them, and satisfied by one expression from the leader's lips of what they were, had fired at the other and dashed in, as he had been directed to do, to alarm the camp.

"Put out the fire, mate—put out the fire, and you've all the advantage," said Wild Bill, in a husky whisper. "Then put my revolver where I can reach it. I'm good for six if they'll stand between me and the star-light out there."

## CHAPTER XLIX.

INSTANTLY, on the suggestion of Wild Bill, at the moment that the negro, Ben, came rushing into the cave to aid the defense, water was dashed on the fire, and all inside were left in darkness.

Our hero had an instant now for thought, and in which to direct his only two able-bodied assistants how to act, for it was a matter of the sternest necessity to keep ready with reserved loads, and not to give their enemy an opportunity to rush in among them empty-handed.

He knew well that if Ben McCullough was himself in command, and had not been injured by the hasty shot of his sentinel, he had one to deal with who in strategy as well as courage was more to be dreaded than any man in the country.

The very fact that after the alarm was given the outside party did not at once rush on to the attack, satisfied Bill that he had old hands to deal with.

They would reconnoiter carefully before they risked life in the work before them.

Bill placed the bed of Wild Bill behind a point of rock where it would be out of the range of fire, and made the widow take Mormon Mary with her into the same place.

He also arranged himself, the negro, and his other man in different parts of the cave, when, while using

their own weapons effectively; they would be out of range to some extent from an outside fire, and so far apart as to make their force appear larger than it really was.

All this was the work of not more than two or three minutes at the utmost, and it was done before any demonstration was seen or heard from outside.

But the quiet did not last long. The intense darkness made even the dim starlight outside capable of revealing the first movement.

A creeping form was seen to approach the wagon, raise, look in, then pass on, return, and listening, as if by sound to endeavor to discover the whereabouts of the party.

Unsatisfied—for Bill and all with him were silent—this person crept away.

A minute more and he returned, walking boldly, and with him came two women.

Wild Bill whispered to his mate:

"That's the gal who lured me into the hands of Jake M'Kandlas—the smallest of the two!"

"Then I expect the other is Sal Perkins after Dave Tutt," said Buffalo Bill, with a low laugh.

Neither had spoken above their breath, it seemed to them; but the sound evidently reached those outside, for they turned, and seemed to discover the entrance to the cave.

A whispered consultation was held, and the man hurried away.

A minute elapsed, and then Bill saw such odds coming forward that even his brave heart began to

tremble—not for the fear of death, but the thought that he would not again see his dear twin sisters, his noble mother, his darling “Lou!”

One by one, silently and yet boldly, they came forward, until he counted in all twenty-three men beside the two women.

All were armed with rifles and pistols, and some bore sabres.

Even yet no word had been spoken aloud on either side. But when his men were formed so as to cut off egress from the cave, then McCullough himself spoke in a tone loud and clear as a bugle note.

“Men—you who are hid away in yonder! listen to a man who never makes long speeches, but generally lets powder and lead talk for him. I know who you are, and that we are full five out here to one in there! If you will surrender, I will treat you well as prisoners of war. If you do not I will butcher you as we would so many grizzlies. We know your condition. Wild Bill is too near dead to fight.”

“You lie, you cuss! I could put a ball through your heart as easy as I did through that of Dave Tutt, if I chose!” cried Wild Bill, forgetting all prudence.

“He killed Dave Tutt—*my* Dave!” screamed the largest of the two women. “Into ‘em, men—into ‘em, and wipe ‘em out this minute!”

The maddened woman was on the point of rushing forward herself, but McCullough held her back.

The very fact that words instead of lead came from the concealed party gave him hope of a surrender.

He told the woman to keep still, and though his men held their weapons ready to fire, told them to wait for orders.

"I could dash in there and maybe lose a man or two, but it would be the last of you," he cried. "I do not wish to see useless bloodshed. I had rather hold prisoners than fill graves. So listen to reason, or it will be the worse for you."

"Ben McCullough, you know me and I know you. Together we had a time once in the Smoky Hills which you ought to remember, and you know what my grit is," cried Bill.

"Buffalo Bill, by thunder," cried the ranger.

"Yes, it *is* me, and for old times' sake I don't want to hurt you. If I had, you know what my needle-gun, now cocked in my hand, could and would do. There are more of us here than you expect, and we're fixed to stay. So, instead of bothering about us, go while you can, without getting hurt. All I'm trying to do is to get my mate back where his wounds can be attended to. Let us go in peace, and this will be the end of it."

"I can't do it, Bill. You must surrender as prisoners of war. You two men are worth too much to the other side to be allowed to slide when you're in my power. Just say you'll give up, and I'll draw my men back, and you can come out."

"I don't want to be impolite, Ben; but I'll see

you and all with you in Jericho first. And, now, do *you* move, or I'll throw lead, for I'm tired of talking. There, ready! Pick each a man, and ten of them are dead!"

"Fire! There's no use in fooling—fire!" shouted McCullough.

The words scarcely left his lips, when he felt the graze of a ball along his temple, which, while it staggered him, killed a man just behind him; and then, as his own men fired, shot after shot came from different parts of the cavern, and several men falling, made him believe that the force in there was, indeed, larger than he expected.

"Back to cover, men! back to cover till we get light on the subject, for they can see us now, and we can't see them!" he shouted.

And, leaving a half-dozen men on the ground, he got the rest out of sight.

"Pretty well for a starter! Try again!" shouted Bill, in derision.

"We will! Your doom is sealed, if I have to stay here a year!" cried Ben, angrily.

"We've plenty of grub and powder. You can camp, and take it easy, if you like," said Bill.

Ben made no reply. He was revolving a new plan in his mind. What it was a few moments sufficed to reveal.

Glimpses of men flitting to cover behind the trees on the river bank could be seen, and then all was quiet for several minutes.

"I don't like this. He is Indian enough for any-

thing, and is most dangerous when stillest," said Buffalo Bill to his mate.

"Keep under cover! He is going to try and light up in here so they'll have bullet range of us, I reckon," said Wild Bill.

"Yes, there it comes!" cried Bill, as a fire-ball made of clothing and soaked in whisky came bounding into the cavern thrown by a strong and skillful hand.

Bill and the white borderman had got out of sight before the ball, all ablaze, rolled in. But Ben, the negro, was too slow, and half a dozen rifle shots rung out, and the balls came singing in about him. One only struck him, and that hit him fairly between the eyes on the thickest part of his skull. The bullet was flattened, and so was he for a moment; but he crept away under cover in a few seconds more, for the blazing ball made him a complete target to the concealed enemy.

"Ki!" he exclaimed, as he crept in among some large, loose rocks. "If dat ar had hit this chile anywhar but on de head I spec' he'd have been hurt."

The fire-ball blazed a little while, and a cap which Buffalo Bill held up on a ramrod got several holes in it, but no other damage was done.

The first plan of the great ranger had not met with the success he hoped for.

His continued quiet after the ball had burned out and all was dark again, told Bill that some other dodge was in contemplation. He knew that *now*

McCullough would permit no let up; that even a surrender would not for an instant be listened to.

"Be still and be ready!" he said, in a low tone. "Have knives and revolvers ready if they make a rush."

Creeping forms were again seen moving here and there, and though Bill fired four or five times, he was not sure of any shot.

Suddenly again a fire-ball rolled in, and then, springing up from the ground at the very mouth of the cavern where they had crept, McCullough and his men were seen rushing forward with fearful shouts.

Bullets for a second only could be used, and but two men were down, when Bill, the negro, and the borderman were forced to rise and face the music with their knives.

McCullough, singling out Buffalo Bill, closed with his huge bowie-knife-uplifted, and as it came down, Bill met and parried the deadly blow, then with a counter-thrust nearly reached the heart at which he aimed, but the ranger, with a bound on one side, avoided the skillful lunge.

Then, with his keen eyes fixed tiger-like on his enemy, he made another bound, and again the knives flashed fire as they clashed together.

"Down with him! Here's for Dave Tuft!" shouted the Amazonian Sal Perkins, as with a large club she dashed in and struck down the uplifted arm of our hero.

Dark—dark seemed his chances now, though an



instant of generous thought seemed to hold back the ranger's hand.

That delay of scarce a second was life to Bill, yes, and salvation to his party.

For the clatter of hoofs and sabres, the sight of blue uniforms, and a wild charging cry was heard outside, and the ranger, almost entrapped, had only time to shout :

"Fall back, men, or we're lost !" when the Federal soldiers were seen rushing in.

Kicking the fire-ball far out of his range, McCullough managed to break through the incoming crowd, literally hewing his way out with his knife, and with him escaped a few of his men.

Light was now made, and then investigation showed that while Buffalo Bill and his men had been only slightly hurt, two-thirds of McCullough's men had paid for their assault with their lives.

The leader, with the rest and the two women, had got entirely away.

A pursuit was made—but a man who knew the country so well was not to be overtaken.

Buffalo Bill, whose forethought in sending on a messenger for help had undoubtedly saved him from destruction, was now safe with his partner and party, and with proud satisfaction took his course under a strong escort back toward the lines where he knew he would soon meet his loved ones.

## CHAPTER L.

IN ten days, by slow and easy stages, carefully nursed by the widow and by Mormon Mary, who, if not sane, had become quite calm under their treatment, Wild Bill reached St. Louis. A regular surgeon had attended to his wounds when the party halted each night, and when he and his noble mate were once more under the home-roof in the great city, he was a happy man.

Lillie had arrived safely under the care of Frank Stark, and the good mother of our hero was once more happy with her children all around her.

Kitty Muldoon was wild in the exuberance of her joy, and when she heard that Dave Tutt and colonel M'Kandlas had been slain, she fairly danced for joy.

"The big bla'guards," she cried. "Is it dead for sure they are? I wonder what has become of their souls? Sure its purgatory is too dacent a place for 'em, and ould Nick is too much of a gentleman for such company, bad as he is. Sure, I'm thinking they'll wander and wander around outside all through eternity, wantin' the bit to ate and the drop to drink, and never a hope of getting aither! Sure an' isn't starvin' in the midst o' plenty the worst of troubles?"

"How is my little friend, Joe Bevins, Kitty?"

asked Bill, with a sly wink, expecting to see the tell-tale blush rise on her rosy face.

"How is he, sir? why he is purty as a saint's picture and as brave as a game chicken wid new spurs on!" cried Kitty, as proudly as if the words had been spoken that would give her a right to comb her loved one's hair with a three-legged stool, if she chose.

"And now, if ye plaze, Mister Bill, will ye be after teilin' me wan thing, and that isn't two?"

"What is it, Kitty?"

"Did you think I'd be after denying an interest in me bould little sojer boy, that has a heart like a lion and a mouth like a cherry, and is the most illegant dancer just that ever flung a leg!"

"No, Kitty, no—it is not the nature of your countrywomen to be ashamed of the one they give their heart to. I know that. And as to the dancing, I hope to see that day not far distant when I may dance at your wedding!"

"Sure that'll not be till the cruel war is over," said Kitty, with a laugh. "And thin, maybe there'll be more of yez sailing in the same ship wid poor little Kitty, and good luck be wid us all?"

Frank Stark came in a few moments after this conversation was over, and with a bright smile on his manly face, told Bill he had just had a fine offer.

"What is it?" asked Bill.

"A commission in the general's body guard!" said Frank.

"You took it, of course?"

"Of course I *didn't* take it!"

"Why not—you'll have big pay and a pair of shoulder straps!"

"Bill, what have I done that you talk this way to me?"

"Why, Frank, I talk nothing, mean nothing, but kindness. We scouts get less pay and meet a thousand more perils than those who hold higher rank. You are a brave, true man, loyal to the heart's core, and I owe you a great deal for the kind, brave acts you have done for me and my family. I wish to see you do well!"

"Then keep me where you can see it. I shall serve as a scout, and under your eye or nowhere. I wouldn't take the stars of a general and serve away from you!"

"Brother, never try to urge such friends to leave you," said Lottie, gently. "We feel that you are safe when brave and devoted men cling to you, for where your daring leads you they will follow to shield."

"Or to avenge," said Wild Bill, gloomily. "For my part I want to be out and doing, though I know I shall go under before long. I feel it, and have since I had a dream the other night."

"Dreams are the sleeping shadow only of the thought that was in your mind when slumber stole over your senses. No man should be so weak as to be influenced by his dreams," said Lillie with grave earnestness.

"I can't help it; but when a man dreams that he

dies by the hand of a woman, and knows that he never thought of a woman except with kindness, it *is* something to worry about!"

"Did you dream that a woman killed ye for sure, Mr. Bill?" asked Kitty.

"Yes, I did."

"Then, sure, sir, it 'll be a man that does it, for drames always go by *contraries*."

Wild Bill shook his head and then said:

"If you'll all listen, I'll tell the dream exactly as it was. Then, maybe you'll not wonder at the hold it has upon me."

Every one drew near the easy-chair which Bill as an invalid yet used, and he went on to relate

#### HIS DREAM.

"I thought that Buffalo Bill and me, with about forty or fifty of our sort—all scouts—were in camp in one of the sweetest spots in all Missouri, down on the Saint Francis, with our horses picketed, supper on the fire, and me just ready to eat it, when in rode one of the boys in blue as fast as he could come, and told us General Carr was in an all-fired pickle down toward the Ozark range and wanted all the help he could get.

"I thought we didn't wait to eat supper, or ask questions, but were up and off in less time than it would take a Dutchman to bolt a bologna.

"We went on at a gallop, for we could hear cannon from the start, and after awhile we got into the hill country, and then we heard the crack of the rifles.

"We went no slower for this, but soon came where there was a chance to take a hand in. Sure enough, our folks were getting whipped awful. The batteries over on some hills across were mowing our men down by hundreds.

"Buffalo Bill, says he to me:

"'Mate, we can't stand this. Their guns must be taken or capsized!'

"I said *yes*, and we went for 'em! Oh, it was glorious! the way we went in, over and through rank after rank, till we got to the guns! We had a fight there, you'd better believe, for it was revolver to revolver, and knife to sabre; but we got the guns.

"I'd just taken off my hat to give one hurrah, when a hand clutched my throat, a knife came hissing down hot into my heart, and, as I felt the blood spout, I looked up and saw the face of a woman. *She* had done it.

"'There's your pay for killing Dave Tutt!' she cried. 'Go where he is, and tell him Sal Perkins sent you there!'

"I choked; I tried to say something to Bill about Lillie and Lottie, but I couldn't, for the blood was all in my throat.

"The woman laughed at me like a devil, and it made me so mad that I struggled to rise, and strike her, for I was down, I thought, and I hit my head such an awful thump against the wall that it woke me up. It was a dream—I *know* that; but it is a warning, and I feel that I shall die soon, and by a woman's hand."

"Oh, nonsense, Bill! Don't talk that way; it is foolish! Lillie, cheer him up with a song, or we'll all get the blues, for they're as catching as the measles."

Lillie laughed, seized her guitar, and in a clear, ringing voice, sung:

A BATTLE SONG.

The tempest is breaking  
In wrath o'er the land,  
The firm earth is shaking,  
Like a storm-beaten strand;  
Proud armies are moving  
Like clouds on the blast,  
And patriots proving  
Their manhood at last.  
Then up in array,  
And on to the fray—  
Yes, up and away,  
Where the war lightnings play!

Bill forgot his dream in a moment, and his dark eyes flashed proudly as she closed the verse, and he said:

"That is the music to get well on. I'll be in the saddle in a week—see if I'm not."

The good girl would have sung another verse for him, but at that instant, the noble banker, Mr. La Valliere, entered with his bright-eyed "Lou," her hair floating in soft waves down her fair neck and shoulders, and the music was for a time interrupted.

For where little "Lou" came, there was music without singing, one may be sure.

## CHAPTER LI.

MOUNTING on the best horse, for there were plenty to pick among now, Ben McCullough and the remnant of his party, on breaking through the disordered ranks of the charging soldiers, sped away at the swiftest rate, never drawing a rein until they reached the house of Nat Perkins.

Day had dawned before they got there, and the old man was at the door, surrounded by his family, when the party dashed up.

"Hallo! Here you are!" he shouted. "That's the way to ride—lickity-rip! lickity-rip! Wiped 'em all out, hey? Sal, did you take the hair of the he that killed yer lover?"

"Hold yer gab, you old carbuncle!" cried the girl, bitterly. "Mother, you and the gal get us something to eat quicker than evey you did before in your lives. Dad, roll out a keg of whisky—these folks need it more now than ever they did before."

"What's the matter? You uns haven't been whipped back?" gasped the old man.

"We just have, and the sooner you raise fresh horses for us in the neighborhood, the better it will be for you," said McCullough. "For if the soldiers follows us up and find us here, your houses and barns will be apt to go up in smoke and blaze."



"Wild-cats alive! General Ben McCullough whipped!"

And the old Missouri-man looked ghastly in his astonishment.

"Come, dad, there's no use in making faces. This crowd has got to be fed and to have fresh horses. Two-thirds of the party that went from here will never eat again. So the world is saved that much provender—but never mind that. Hurry up—hurry up, or I'll burn the whole caboodle out myself."

"Wild-cats alive—the gal has gone mad!" exclaimed the old man.

"You'll think so, old catamount, if you stand there much longer, for I'll pitch into *you*, sure as I live."

"Well, well, I'll go get the red-eye. But I say, did any of you see my nigger, Ben, and my six-mule team?"

"Yes; I sent a ball into Ben's head, for I don't like a nigger namesake," said McCullough, with a laugh. "As to your mules, you'll most likely see a U. S. brand on them if you ever see them again. I suppose they're contraband, according to the new code of Ben Butler."

"Well, if Ben can't be mine, I'd rather he would be dead than theirs," said the old man as he went down into his cellar.

There were lively times for the next two hours about that ranche. Food was cooked, eaten, and put in haversacks, and messengers sent to the neighbors for fresh horses. These came in rapidly, for the entire neighborhood sided with McCullough and his

cause, so he had no trouble in obtaining a fresh remount.

At the end of two hours the ranger was ready. And now came the strangest episode of all.

Sallie Perkins, dressed completely in a suit belonging to her absent brother, Gus, made her appearance on as good a horse as could be found in the whole cavalcade. In the belt which fastened the fringed hunting-coat to her waist, a pair of revolvers and a large bowie-knife rested, while in her hand she carried a useful as well as a dangerous weapon in guerilla hands, a fine double-barreled shot-gun, at once light, yet serviceable.

Her hair, long, curling, and red as a fire-blaze seen in the darkness of night, hung down over her graceful shoulders. That alone, with her fair, smooth face, revealed her sex. Her features were rather masculine, her eye bold and fierce, her voice strong and full.

"Where are you going, Sal?" asked her father, as he saw his daughter thus accoutred and mounted.

"I'm going to have revenge for the death of Dave Tutt!" she cried. "I liked him as well as I ever liked any man that traveled. If he had lived, we would have been harnessed some time. I'm about as good as a widow now that he has gone, and I don't care to live any longer than to meet Wild Bill in a fair, square fight. It will be him or me then, and I don't think it will be *me*! So good-by, dad—keep your hair on as long as you can, and if you have to lose it, be gritty while it is going."

"Wild-cats alive, but this beats me!" muttered the old man. "Gus'll swear when he finds his new trouserloons and Sunday coat gone."

"Let me hear him swear, and I'll knock his two eyes into one—that is, if he swears about me."

"Go it!" cried Ruby Blazes. "I like your spunk. You've got something to fight for, and so have I."

"I'd like to know what. You haven't had a sweetheart wiped out!" cried Sallie.

"Never mind if I haven't. There is one that I do love going in, and I'll fight by his side all through, and if he falls avenge him!"

Her dark eyes were fixed on McCullough as she said this, and a quick, bright glance from him made her face flush till it was fairly radiant.

"We must have luck when the women feel this way," he murmured. Then glancing his eye along the slender line of his followers to see if they were all right in arms and equipment, he gave his order in a sharp, quick tone:

"By *twos*, right turn, and follow me!"

There was no bugle call, but his men knew their duty, and though he dashed away at a gallop, every man in his place followed at the same pace.

"He's gone, and my best horses with him," sighed Nat Perkins, as the column vanished from sight. "And Sal rode on the best one I had. Wild-cats alive, if I lost that horse for good, it would well near break my heart. I hope I'll not lose him, but that gal is fearful reckless."

He now turned away with a sigh, not for the

daughter whom he might nevermore see, but the stock that was gone, and could be but poorly replaced by the used-up animals left behind.

"If them Yanks do come, they musn't know Ben McCullough has been here and got fed, or we'll not have a hair left," he said, warningly, to the family and servants who stood grouped around. "We must be Union up to the handle in our talk, or they'll go through us lickity-rip, like water through a sieve. This war is going to be ruination to honest folks like me."

And the old man sighed again.

## CHAPTER LII.

ALREADY the armies of the West were in motion. Lyon, Cuftis, Sigel, and, though last named, not least in military skill or bravery, General Carr, were out in Kansas and Missouri, moving to retard at one point or intercept in another the forces rallying under Price, Van Dorn, McCullough and Pike. The general in command of the Western Department, making his headquarters at St. Louis, had for a long time directed matters entirely from there, issuing proclamation after proclamation, but now he began to get ready to take the field in person.

Much against their will, he had kept back the scouts which had mustered under the leadership of Buffalo Bill, assigning as a principal reason that he could make them more useful to the country under his own immediate eye when *he* took the field.

It was to them a happy moment when, late one afternoon, Buffalo Bill received notice that he must prepare to start at dawn next morning for the front.

In his company quarters the news was received with cheer after cheer, and every man began to fix for the start.

If ordered, they would have been ready to move in twenty minutes instead of near as many hours, such was their discipline and the temperate habits which kept them always ready. And it was the

discipline of choice inculcated more by example than rule in and by their leader.

There was not much hilarity in the cottage home when the news reached there that the scouts would depart with the rising of another sun. But warm as were the hearts of the widow and her family with love for those who must leave, there was not one of them all who would lift a restraining voice. Patriotism had grown with their growth, and was a part of their very lives.

Silently, though sadly, each had something to do to help fit out those who were to leave, and it was understood that the last evening should be spent by all in whom the family had an interest at home.

Thus at the supper-table there were gathered the mother, her son and twin daughters. "Lou" La Valliere was there also with her good father, and Kitty Muldoon, with no eyes for anybody but brave little Joe, was nestled away as near to him as she could get.

Wild Bill once more in the glory of a full buckskin suit—Frank Stark, genteel and quiet, as modest as he was brave—it was a circle to admire and be proud of.

After supper, when Kitty with volunteer help had cleared the table away, the parties paired off, and a general quiet conversation opened.

Lou and our hero had their talk in one corner, Frank Stark and Lillie in another, while good, sweet little Lottie tried to make Wild Bill laugh at the dream which had taken such serious root in his mind.

Kitty was more than usually silent, though Joe was trying to be just as funny as he could, to hide the real sadness which filled his heart.

For I care not how brave and loyal, how true and patriotic he may have been, there was never yet the loving man who could rush from his home to the battle-field without leaving the best and warmest thoughts of his heart behind him with the dear one who last whispered out, or perchance sobbed the word—farewell!

Many a thought is framed on such occasions, many a word is uttered, which will come to the dying man amid the din of battle, softening his last agony—which will hallow the tears which may yet water the sod above his honorable grave.

But truce to this moralizing—my readers will grow sleepy over it.

Mr. La Valliere and the widow had planned out the whole campaign as they would carry it through if in power, and the rest talked themselves almost into silence when the iron tongue of time spoke out the hour of midnight in syllables of twelve.

This was a signal that could not be disregarded, for men who must mount early and ride all the day and for many days to come, needed rest.

"We may as well all say good-by to-night!" said Bill. "For before the light of day is spread out for the eyes of those who stay, we who are to travel will be on our route. For my part, I'm not much on the good-by—it is a shocking sort of word, and I don't like it. All I can say is—we are going

where we are needed, and when there is no more need of us at the front, we'll, if the good Father above permits it, be back here to make home look cheerful again. So don't spill any water out of your eyes, but give us cheery looks to make our hearts strong, and hope and pray that we'll all be men, do our duty while we are away, and come-back safe to say so."

"Bravo! A member of Congress could not have made a better speech," cried Mr. La Valliere.

"I don't know, sir, why you should link me with a member of Congress," said Bill, laughing. "I have never done anything very bad to deserve it. As to speeches—I'm rough, I know, but Lou will give me lessons by and by, and then I'll improve."

The banker now rose to leave, and Bill whispered a word or two to the darling of his heart, which checked the tears that rose in her beautiful eyes—for hope, brave hope is powerful to check the flood of grief when it is brought home to the heart.

The parting words were soon spoken, and with the solemn matronly blessing of that good mother floating like a wave of comfort after them, the young men filed away to take their accustomed rest before being called to the saddle.

It was a touching scene—one worthy of an artist's pencil rather than the too tame pen-paintings with which I lay it before the reader's eyes.



## CHAPTER LIII.

IT may interest the female portion of the readers hereof (though they are not expected to have a *great* deal of curiosity in such matters), if I say that before parting, betrothal vows had been exchanged between at least three couples in whom we are interested in this story. I will not insult the reader by naming them, for she surely knows long before this who is heart-mated in the party; and I don't believe in the linking of hands where the heart does not throb assent.

There is a great deal too much misery in this world produced by mismating to have any sign of approval from me, at least.

The sun just began to gild the spires and domes of St. Louis when Bill and his scouts turned at the Five Mile House to give a parting look to the town.

There was little said; but doubtless many a one of the party, realizing what was before him, thought he was very likely taking his last glance at the busy town.

"Forward at a trot, boys; we've no train to bother us, and, now we're off, the sooner we are where there is work to do, the better for us. There is nothing like work to drive the blues away."

"Except whisky," said Wild Bill, with a forced laugh.

"There's where you're a mile outside the mark," said Buffalo Bill, seriously. "I'm not much on a temperance lecture—I wish I was; but you know, and you all know, that there is more fight, more headache—aye, more heart-ache in one rum-bottle than there is in all the water that ever sparkled in God's bright sunlight. And I, for the sake of my dear brothers and sisters, and for the sweet, trusting heart that throbs alone for me, intend to let the rum go where it belongs, and that is not down my throat, at any rate."

"Good for you, Bill! You've got something to live for, and can afford to steer clear of pison," said his mate. "It is all true that drink carries misery with it to us who take it and to those who love us; but as I'm bound to go down before many days slip by, I think I'll take my bitters till I go."

Nothing more was said for a time, for the pace was too rapid for pleasant conversation.

At noon there was a halt to water and loosen girths and breathe the horses, while the men took a bite from the three days' rations in their haversacks.

But half an hour covered the delay, and they again dashed on at a rapid rate.

They frequently passed slow, ponderous wagon trains, carrying provisions and ammunition to the front; and occasionally overtook and went by some volunteer infantry regiments on the way to join the brigades ahead.

Officers and men get proud of their new uniforms and burnished arms, for it takes time and service to

make one careless of show and alive only to the use and efficiency of arms and equipage.

"Fifty good miles to-day, and the horses ready for as much more to-morrow," said Bill, as he lighted his pipe at the camp-fire when they bivouacked. "That would just suit old Harney, wouldn't it, mate."

"Not much, without he was after reds; then anything would suit him that had go in it. He cares neither for man nor horse when his blood is hot, and that is always the case when he smells Indians. He'll never forget his Carloosahatchie scare while he lives. It is the only scare he ever had, I've heard him say a hundred times, and the only time he ever forgot how to swear and took to praying."

"Look to your horses, boys, the first thing. Give them a rub down, and then, when supper is over, you'll have nothing to do and plenty of time to do it in," said Bill.

The men needed no second order, but at once took care of the good animals which were so useful and necessary to them—a care which always brings its own reward in the condition and readiness for service in which it leaves the animal on which it is bestowed.

## CHAPTER LIV.

No one is less fond of alluding to the events in which they were by necessity engaged than those who did the fighting and not the talking during the late civil war, and none are more anxious than those, on either side, who actively participated, to now see the hatchet buried and past animosities forgotten, past errors blotted out.

Yet in a story founded entirely on fact, with *real* characters for its actors, it is impossible to avoid some allusion, descriptively, to the past.

So, within two weeks after he left St. Louis, the hero of this story, with his company of scouts, held the advance of the great army which was destined to play such a conspicuous part in the long contested and fearful battle of Pea Ridge.

For days before this battle came on, Bill and his men were engaged in continual skirmishes, but owing to the nature of the country, and the skill of the bordermen in taking cover, he met with no important losses.

Ever by his side Wild Bill and Frank Stark particularly distinguished themselves, while Little Joe, who had begun to cultivate a mustache, did honor to the devotion of sweet Kitty Muldoon so far away.

Bill had enough to do as leader of scouts. He had McCullough and his Texans to watch—Pike

was out with the Indian allies in their war-paint and feathers—and Van Dorn, as stubborn, if not near so morally *good* as Stonewall Jackson, was moving with lightning speed at every chance and opening.

To keep the Federal generals posted in every movement was a hard task, but that Bill did it, and did it well, history proves.

For three days preceding the final struggle—the fifth, sixth, and seventh of March, almost without eating, certainly without sleep—the noble scouts kept the front.

On the last decisive day, when General Carr was so nearly borne down by the combined weight thrown on his command alone by Van Dorn and McCullough, when hoped-for reinforcements seemed delayed beyond the hour of hope, while a hill crested with batteries so commanded his position that to remain was destruction, while to retreat was nearly as bad, then the Kansas scouts reaped a harvest of glory which will remain theirs as long as history lives.

Buffalo Bill, riding up from a distant point where he and his men had been hotly engaged since daylight, saw what havoc the batteries were making—saw, too, that the headquarter flags of the opposite army were on the hill by the batteries.

"Boys," he cried, "I'm going to stop this butchery. Those guns must be taken or silenced, or we're a whipped crowd."

"They will be taken—that is the very spot I saw in my dream!" cried Wild Bill, while a gleam of

exultation flashed from his dark eyes. "We'll take the guns—but I shall go under. *My time has come!*"

"To charge, but not to die!" cried his mate. "Men, dismount, tighten every girth, look to your weapons, and be ready for the best piece of work you ever did. We must and *will* take the batteries over there and save General Carr and his command!"

The "boys" dismounted in silence. Noise was not in their line. Their girths tightened, revolvers fresh capped, rifles slung, and then they were ready.

Buffalo Bill waited for no superior orders. His eagle eye had seen what was needed, and now, rising in his stirrups, he shook his long rifle in the air and shouted:

"CHARGE!"

Merciful Heaven what a sight! Not fifty men of them all—yet like one swift cloud in a mottled sky, driving fiend-like before a gale, on—on they dashed!

No bugle note—no wild yell—but on—on to kill and to be killed!"

Over the plain, through the sulphurous smoke, up on the ascent, amid bursting hail and rain of iron and of lead—on they swept!

The Federal fire slackened in their rear, though it increased to the right and left, for the charge was looked on by many an eye, and now they were facing the iron hail of the batteries.

Talk not to me of the Light Brigade, famed at Balaklava—talk not to me of Lodi or Austerlitz. On a hundred fields in this, our dear native land, have

charges been made and battles fought which were as far beyond them as light is superior to darkness.

On—into and over the lines—through and through, a sheet of fire blazing from their revolvers, and then the clubbed rifle crashing down sabre guard and parrying arm—crashing in skulls and felling stalwart forms, on with their trained horses they swept—those heroic scouts!

Ben McCullough saw them coming—he saw the eye of Wild Bill single him out and the hand raised that never missed.

A smile, a defiant look, and he pressed his hand to his heart. He had got his summons and he knew it. Bitter and defiant to the last, he reeled from his saddle, and as he went down and the Kansas men swept like a destroying whirlwind over his body and the corpses of a hundred more, a yell for vengeance rose on every hand.

Wedged in by foes, it seemed as if these heroes, now fighting hand-to-hand, almost all with their knives alone, must now perish.

But hark to a shout which makes the air tremble!

Curtis is up, and with a wild cry, the Federals rush to the charge.

Wild Bill, for the first time in all the day, raises his voice in a glad, defiant, ringing shout.

Alas! it is his last. His cry has brought an eye upon him—yes, more than one—for Ruby Blazes, who had been in mute despair over the body of the hero of her heart, raised her wild voice as Sallie Perkins, still in male attire, dashed in on the bold scout.

Wild Bill did not see the uplifted hand until the knife came down swiftly to the very hilt in his breast, and he heard her shriek:

"Take that for Dave Tutt! Go, tell him that I did it!"

"My dream is up!" was all he said. "Good-by mate! Tell Lillie——"

He never closed the sentence. Death had him in his grasp, and he sank down helpless to the earth.

The next instant, as Curtis swept forward with fresh men, a bullet sent the brave Van Dorn to his last account, and then for an instant a fearful desperate charge was made by the Confederate forces to hold the guns, while they carried off the bodies of their leaders.

Till now, Buffalo Bill was unscathed; but those two women, fighting like demons, seemed to single him out, and in the few terrible seconds that followed, he went down, with nearly every man of his command. Not all slain, but most of them were terribly wounded.

It was like many another scene that never has been, or will be, faithfully described, where the courage and desperation that immortalized the Spartans at Thermopylæ was more than equaled.

When Generals Curtis and Carr stood by the captured batteries and battle-flags on the hill, they found Black Nell laying dead beside her brave master, while Powder Face, with his ears set back, stood defiantly over the body of his wounded rider, ready



to bite or kick the first who approached him with unfriendly motive.

Frank Stark and Little Joe both lay near by, wounded, but not fatally.

The shouts of victory now rang far and wide. The hard-fought battle was over, and friend and foe were alike sought out to receive surgical care.

Wild, fearful as had been the fray, terrible as the passions excited during its frenzied continuance, humanity had not perished in the hearts of the survivors, and now tenderly, carefully many a mangled form was lifted by the very hand that had helped to shatter it.

And this is war—war among brothers!

Oh, God of Mercy spare our land from a sad renewal of calamities so dire!

## CHAPTER LV.

AFTER the battle the army moved forward, but the main portion of the wounded were sent back. Not with the hospital train, but in selected ambulances, with a special escort, and with orders that their own wishes as to destination should be consulted.

Our wounded heroes of the Kansas scouts were retired to the rear.

The news of their glorious conduct, as well as of their condition, reached their friends in St. Louis, over the wires, before the sun had set on the field of carnage.

Was it then to be wondered at, when they reached the pleasant town of De Soto, on a south fork of the Osage, that a kindly face beamed into the end of the ambulance containing three of the most noted of our heroes—Buffalo Bill, Frank Stark, and little Joe Bevins.

It was that of Mr. La Valliere the banker.

"How are you, my brave boys—how are you?" he cried, as he saw their faces brighten on recognition of his own.

"Fifty per cent better than dead men, sir!" cried our hero.

"What do you know of per cent, my boy?" cried

"The doctor is coming. He'll be here in a minute."

"Thank you very much. I'll be here in a minute."

"The doctor is coming. He'll be here in a minute."

"Thank you very much. I'll be here in a minute."

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"The doctor is coming. He'll be here in a minute."

when Mr. La Valliere quietly walked out of the room.

"I'm going to ring for mine," said little Joe, "just to see if he is white or black."

Tingle, tingle, went his bell.

"Och, you blissid little darlint—is it your own Kitty Muldoon you're wantin'?" cried a familiar voice, and the buxom little body rushed to the bedside and half smothered him with kisses, not caring "a bawbee" for the witnesses to this outpouring of her heart's love.

It was surprising how quickly every bell in that room rung for a nurse then.

And never were bells answered more promptly.

Little Lou, beautiful as a rose and pure as the dew which gems it in the still breath of morning, was quickly at the bedside of her young love's first dream.

Lillie, all blushes and tremulous with joy, was bending tearfully over Frank Stark, while Lottie, more bashful than all the rest, sweet May flower as she was, came in as a kind of supernumerary, ready to help where help was most needed.

Another came in, led by the good banker, and Buffalo Bill turned even from his idolized Lou to give vent to the love and reverence that he felt for his mother.

Her white hand was so soft and cooling to his brow—her words of low praise and thankfulness that while he had done his duty, he had been spared—all, all was like magic medicine to his bruised and gashed body.

Mr. La Valliere looked at this scene a few moments and then made a very singular, but, under the circumstances, a not very inappropriate speech.

He coughed a little to clear his voice and then proceeded thusly :

"My friends, the recollections of a busy lifetime, as H. G. would say, throng in upon me just now and suggest various eventful experiences of my own.

"First, a penny saved counts as much in bank as a penny earned. Second, persons interested in the ownership of property are always more careful of it than those who are merely hired to take care of it. These and a few other considerations have caused me to call in the services of my friend here, Chaplain Danner, for the purpose of making this nurse business a 'joint-stock' affair, technically speaking.

"Lou, my darling, take that pallid looking hero of yours by the hand, while this gentleman speaks the words which I hope will make you both happy."

Tears of joy as well as wonder filled the eyes of the brave scout, when that trusting little hand was placed in his own. His voice grew strong as he responded to the questions, and when he uttered the vow to "love, protect, and cherish," it came up from the inner depths of as true a heart as ever beat for woman! Heaven bless him and her:

"Your turn next, my pretty Lillie," said the banker, as he approached the thrice perilled and thrice rescued heroine, and the brave man who for her sake had turned from evil ways and was striving for the good.

Soon that ceremony was over—none were there who could or would object.

For base indeed is the heart which will turn from him who has left the darkness, of his own free will, and come out into the light.

Foul and most ungenerous is the nature which will not rejoice to grasp the hand of him who has been redeemed from error, and who in the strength of redeemed manhood has honorably proven himself worthy of a good cause and pure, ennobling associations.

There was more to be done. Little Kitty stood open-mouthed, blushing and turning white by turns as the marriages went on, and now she trembled like a leaf when Mr. La Valliere approached her.

"There will be no objections here I hope!" said the banker, with a smile as he approached the bedside of Joe Bevins. "What do you say, Kitty; do you love Joe well enough to take him for better or for worse?"

"Faith, sir, I don't believe I'll find a better, and if I waited, I might find a worse, and if he's willin' I'm not the big fool to say no. But sure there's one thing—he mustn't take me away from missis, for I've promised in me heart never to lave her that has been so good to the poor lone girl I was when she found me."

"I'll never take you from them you love, Kitty, for I hope always to be near Bill myself, and he'll never lose sight of his mother, I know."

"Then let his riverence go ahead as soon as he

places," said Kitty, as she put her chubby little hand into that of Joe.

This last ceremony was soon over, and our story is in such a happy stopping place, that I believe it must be closed.

It is enough to say that Buffalo Bill, Joe Bevins, and Frank Stark yet live—that ever since they were linked to live-candy framed *en statuette*, they've led lives of wild adventure on the far western plains, which may yet be worked up into another exciting border tale by your very much obliged friend—THE AUTHOR.

THE END.









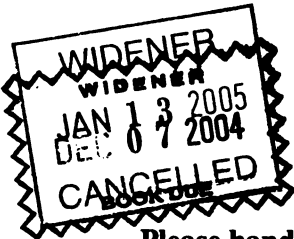
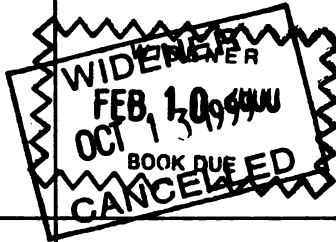




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