A CRY BROKE FROM THE MAN'S LIPS, AND HE TURNED TO FIRE UPON THE SCOUT. BUT FOR HE COULD PULL TRIGGER, BUFFALO BILL'S REVOLVER FLASHED AND THE BULLET SPED WHERE IT WAS AIMED, NOT AT THE LIFE OF THE HORSEMAN, BUT AT HIS LEFT HAND UPHOLDING THE WEAPON.
BUFFALO BILL AND SILENT SAM;

OR,

The Woman of the Iron Hand.

By the author of "BUFFALO BILL."

CHAPTER I.

MIDNIGHT AT FORT BENHAM.

Everything was as silent as the grave save for the occasional challenge of a sentry as the sergeant of the guard went around the various sentinel posts of the fort.

A detachment of black cavalry was stationed at the fort, and up to a few months ago many of the negro sentinels had been assassinated by mysterious murderers.

What the object of the killing could be no one could imagine. Buffalo Bill, chief of scouts and king of the border, was stationed at the fort and had made a vigorous attempt to trail down the slayers of the black cavalry.

He had been partially successful, for he had cleaned out a band of outlaws who, he thought, were responsible for a few of the murders at least.

The leader, a man named Harold Carr, whom Buffalo Bill had never seen, had not been present when he attacked the outlaw band, and so had escaped killing or capture.

Buffalo Bill was seated within the stockade of the Post this evening thinking of his recent expedition.

There was one great mystery connected with it which puzzle as he might the scout had not been able to solve.

A woman clad in black had beset their path.

She had appeared to be in league with the outlaws, for on more than one occasion the sentinel in their camp had been found bound and the horses stampeded.

And yet, strange to say, she had finally left them a note after eluding them in a long chase, telling them where they could find the stronghold of the outlaws.

Man Killer, an Indian chief who had formed one of the party led by Buffalo Bill, had christened this strange female the "Woman with the Iron Hand," and Buffalo Bill considered that the title suited the woman exactly.

Buffalo Bill was considering in his own mind the advisability of setting out on the trail again with the same party he had taken before. He was determined in his mind to run down this Woman of the Iron Hand and at all hazards to penetrate the mystery surrounding her.

Two of the four men who were with him on this former expedition—Wild Bill Hickok and Dr. Frank Powell, the surgeon scout, were still in the fort. The other two members of the party, Chief Man Killer and Silent Sam, an old trapper who rarely spoke save when he was asked a question, were living in a small cabin some distance outside of the fort.

As Buffalo Bill, in his cozy quarters, was pondering the mystery in his mind and glancing over a map he had made of that section of Arizona, a shot, sharp, clear and distinct, rang out without the stockade wall.

Buffalo Bill was out of his quarters peering into the
darkness in a moment. He was joined by Colonel Alfred Thorp, the commandant at the fort.

The colonel was evidently laboring under considerable excitement.

"Another murder, Cody," he cried. "Another of our negro soldiers shot in the darkness."

Buffalo Bill dashed out on the plain in a moment and scouted around the whole vicinity of the fort.

It was too dark to follow a trail, but he instantly summoned Chief Man Killer, Silent Sam, Dr. Frank Powell and Wild Bill, and early next morning the party had started on the trail once more.

From the place where the colored trooper had been killed the track of a single horse went due west into the very wildest and most unexplored part of Arizona.

For two days the party followed this trail with the persistency and pertinacity of bloodhounds.

They often lost it and they were considerably puzzled by its erratic wanderings.

Finally they came upon the body of a dead horse, the horse which had made the trail.

Silent Sam and the Indian chief were in favor of returning. They had evidently followed the trail of a wild horse which had been scouring the plain and had finally broken its leg and perished in the wilderness.

Buffalo Bill admitted that they had followed a false trail, but persisted in penetrating still farther into the wilderness.

He had a premonition that outlaws of some kind had taken refuge in these fastnesses, and besides, he wished to explore them thoroughly, as he felt that it was his duty as a scout to know all the country in the vicinity.

So he insisted that they push farther on into the wilds, and as his wishes were backed up by those of Wild Bill and the surgeon scout, Silent Sam and Man Killer had nothing more to say.

The sun was almost upon the distant horizon, when Silent Sam, who was riding ahead of the others, called back:

"River yonder!"

He might have spared his breath in this instance, for the well-trained bordermen had long known from the appearances about them that water was near.

There was a camp, or the remains of one.

The fire was yet in a blaze, and the party had not been gone over a couple of hours, at the best.

It was too late to push on farther, for Silent Sam, who knew a little of the vicinity, said the ford, half a mile away, was a dangerous one, the stream running swift and among rocks, so a camp must be made, especially as the trail could not be followed by night.

If the pursuers pushed on through the night, it would have the pursuers well behind at the start in the morning.

Still, it could not be helped, and Surgeon Powell called a halt for the night.

There was a place to the horses near, grass grew in abundance, and wood was at hand, while the camping place was easily guarded.

If the pursuers had pushed on across the river, as appeared to be the case, there was no dread of a surprise for them that night.

Still, Buffalo Bill rode on along their trail up to the ford, and saw that it led into the stream and came out on the other shore.

He saw that Silent Sam was right in saying the ford was a dangerous one, for without a guide he did not care to risk his horse.

He was anxious, however, to see the trail of the fugitives on the other shore.

To do this he must go across, and there was yet light enough for him to see all that he wished to.

Throwing off his clothes, he plunged in, and, a bold swimmer, he picked out the way to bring a horse across, though he had no intention of then doing so.

"I wish to give Silent Sam a surprise," he muttered.

Reaching the other shore, he saw the trail coming out. Carefully he examined, and, counting the hoofmarks, saw that all were there, including the mule.

He returned then, picking his way, and noting just how to ride a horse across and not have him lose his footing, for the stream was a trifle over girth deep in the right crossing, and a horse, by a false step to right or left, might go far beyond his depth, and be swept upon the rapids below.

Resuming his clothes, Buffalo Bill mounted and returned to the camp, just as supper was announced by Silent Sam, who had proven himself a most excellent cook, and seemed anxious to do the work.

"Well, Bill, did you make any discovery?" asked Surgeon Powell, as Buffalo Bill, having staked out his horse in a good feeding spot, came up and joined the others about the fire.

"They crossed the ford, Doc, and as Silent Sam said, it looks like a very dangerous one, and sure death for one crossing it without a guide, I should say."

"Yes, soldiers and Indians, too, have been drowned there, and many horses, too," said Silent Sam.

"Yes, I have heard of it, and the fort scouts and soldiery dread it—the Indians call it Death Waters," said Surgeon Powell.

After a good supper, pipes were lighted, and then the surgeon scout suggested that the night watch be set and the rest turn in.

"You go on watch, Man Killer, and move between the horses and the camp, and Silent Sam, you take up a good position to keep your eye on him, should he get into trouble."

"Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill have said they will relieve you at midnight, so take my watch, Silent Sam, and call them promptly."

"Yes."

The Indian and Silent Sam then moved to their respective positions, and after a round of the camp and the horses, Surgeon Powell went back to where Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill had spread their blankets, and said, as he also turned in:

"Well, we have a double night watch, pard, and I guess will not be disturbed to-night, as the fugitives do not seem to think we are following them, and have put the river between us."

"We will be able to tell better when to-morrow comes," sleepily said Buffalo Bill, and in a minute he was asleep, and the others quickly followed his example.
CHAPTER II.

MIDNIGHT VISITORS.

Buffalo Bill was too experienced a plainsman to slumber quietly when something was going wrong about the camp.

He had the same instinct as a faithful watchdog, to sniff danger in the air.

With confidence in the ability of the Indian to watch the camp, and of Silent Sam to watch the Indian, Buffalo Bill was yet uneasy.

He at first sank into a sound and restful sleep.

But after several hours he awoke suddenly.

Just why he could not tell.

He tried to banish the thought of danger, but could not.

Had it been Surgeon Powell or Wild Bill on watch, he would at once spring up and go to satisfy himself that all was well.

But he did not wish the Indian or Silent Sam to feel the slightest suspicion that they would neglect their duty as sentinels.

His prowling about would certainly cause them to dread that he had a fear of their not doing their duty.

Again he sank to sleep.

But his dreams were troubled.

At last he sat up, took out his watch, and by the light of the flickering camp-fire looked at the time.

It was one o'clock.

He feared that he was mistaken in the dim light.

He looked again. One o'clock said the hands of the watch.

Why had he and Wild Bill not been called by Silent Sam at twelve?

Or had Wild Bill been called, and thought he could stand guard alone, and so had let him sleep?

No, there lay the form of Wild Bill not twenty feet away.

There also was Surgeon Powell near.

Both were apparently fast asleep.

Buffalo Bill now arose quietly, buckled on his belt of arms, drew on his boots, and softly crept to the fire.

He was right. It was now ten minutes after one o'clock.

Quickly the scout strode to where he had seen Silent Sam take his position, about halfway between the camp and the horses.

There was a group of rocks, and as he approached them Buffalo Bill called out:

“Silent Sam!”

A low moan greeted him in answer.

Springing forward, Buffalo Bill discovered Silent Sam lying on the ground, and, running his hands over him, he found him to be bound hand and foot, and a gag was in his mouth.

At once the voice of the scout rang out in alarm:

“How, pard! I have been tricked!”

It took but a second to awaken Surgeon Powell and Wild Bill.

Then they heard:

“Silent Sam has been gagged and bound—here by these rocks and big tree.”

“T' go to find the redskin!”

Surgeon Powell and Wild Bill quickly drew on their boots, buckled on their arms, and ran to the place designated by Buffalo Bill.

There they found Silent Sam, still bound, as described. As they set to work to free him, they again heard Buffalo Bill’s voice, a hundred yards away.

“The Indian is here, just as Silent Sam, and the horses are gone!”

This was certainly a surprise.

It was carrying the war into their own camp with a vengeance.

Leaving Wild Bill to free Silent Sam of his gag and bonds, Surgeon Powell ran to where Buffalo Bill was.

The horses were surely gone.

But the Indian was lying on the ground near a clump of cedars, and Buffalo Bill was quickly unwinding the lasso curled about him from head to foot, the noose being about his neck, for he had evidently been lassoed from behind.

The gag had been taken from his mouth by the scout, but the Indian could not yet speak.

Both Silent Sam and himself had evidently been prisoners for some time.

CHAPTER III.

UNSEEN.

There was no doubt but that the horses were gone.

But where?

The stake ropes were gone with them.

The Man Killer was aided to his feet by Buffalo Bill and Surgeon Powell, and helped to the fire, where Wild Bill had already taken Silent Sam, and given him a canteen of water to soothe his parched and inflamed mouth.

Throwing some wood on the fire, it flared up brightly as Surgeon Powell and Buffalo Bill came up with the Indian.

The faces of the three pardrs were white and stern.

They could not but feel that they were being beaten at their own game of clever strategy toward a foe.

The Indian was given a canteen of water and drank freely.

Then Surgeon Powell said:

“How was it, Silent Sam? For, as our midnight visitors did not deprive you wholly of breath, use what they left you by talking freely.”

“I don’t know.”

“You don’t know who surprised you on your post of duty and gagged and tied you?”

“No.”

“Tell us what you do know.”

“There!”

The man put his hand to the back of his head, and when he withdrew it there was a red stain upon it.

“Oh! you have been dealt a blow from behind. Let me see it!”

The surgeon scout looked at the trapper’s head, washed the blood away with water from the canteen, and exposed a gash in the scalp a couple of inches in length and cut to the bone.

“This was made by some sharp instrument, for it has left a clean cut. It was dealt from behind, and you were stunned, so knew nothing?”
Silent Sam nodded, and Surgeon Powell quickly took a few stitches in the wound and dressed it.

Then the trapper said:

"I was leaning against the tree, having just come from where Man Killer was, near the horses.

"I felt the blow, and that is all I know."

"It is a clever fellow, indeed, who can creep up behind you without your hearing him, and he took big chances."

"Yes, he was in the trees," suggested Buffalo Bill.

"That might be. Now, Man Killer, what can you tell us?" and Surgeon Powell turned to the Indian.

The redskin stood up, took the lariat that had been around his neck and body, and crept, without the slightest sound, up to within a dozen feet of Silent Sam, who stood at the fire, with his back to him, apparently not knowing what Man Killer's intention was.

He had not spoken, was acting in pantomime, and the surgeon scout and his two comrades watched him attentively.

Suddenly the coil was thrown, the noose caught about Silent Sam's neck, and he was dragged backward and downward to the ground, while with a bound the Indian placed his foot upon the rope, which he drew taut, and thrust a revolver into the trapper's face.

Had Silent Sam wished to resist he was caught so thoroughly off his guard that he could not do so, and Surgeon Powell, seeing that the pantomime was far too real, sprang forward and cried:

"Hold, chief! You will hurt the trapper!"

The Indian desisted at once, while Silent Sam got upon his feet quickly, his hand upon his revolver.

But his anger cooled in an instant, and he grunted:

"Don't play with me, redskin."

The Indian had not yet spoken, but innocently asked:

"Paleface pards see?"

"Oh, yes, you illustrated it a trifle too well, at least for Silent Sam," Buffalo Bill said, suppressing a laugh at the act of the Indian.

"Well, I understand how it was done, and I conclude that if Silent Sam was where he could see you, Man Killer, the two attacks were made at the same instant on both of you."

"Yes, Frank, and it would go to prove that there was more than one in this attack."

"Sure, Pard Bill," answered Wild Bill.

"Well, the question is now as to whether our horses have been run off beyond our reach, or have been taken a certain distance and left, only to retard our pursuit," Buffalo Bill remarked.

"We will know in the morning, and we can do nothing until then, so turn in, all of you, and get what sleep you can while I stand guard."

"No, Doc, I'll take the watch," said Buffalo Bill.

"You and Wild Bill can take it to-morrow night—if we get our horses back," replied Surgeon Powell, and the others at once turned in, and were soon fast asleep.

Surgeon Powell moved about the camp, around it, and kept a bright watch.

But the day began to dawn without anything happening to disturb the sleepers until called by their leader.

The attacks seemed to be made only on the trapper and the Indian, and for the purpose only of running off the horses.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE BACK TRACK.

Breakfast was over with, and Silent Sam was told to keep the camp, the Indian to go with Surgeon Powell and Wild Bill on the trail of the horses, while Buffalo Bill was to scout about the neighborhood of the ford and see what he could discover.

It was just light enough to pick up the trail when the party started, and Buffalo Bill went on toward the ford.

The trail of the horses was easily followed by the trackers, and led back toward the fort.

There was discovered to be the track of one more horse than those belonging to the party, and it joined them not far from the camp.

"Squaw with iron hand came again last night," said the Indian.

Wild Bill also asserted that it was the track of the Woman of the Iron Hand, and were all familiar with it, that it came from the direction of the ford. They had seen the track of the horse ridden by the mysterious Woman of the Iron Hand and were all familiar with it.

"Then she was alone, unless the others came on foot."

"Yes, doctor, it looks so."

"And a woman came into our camp, with two guards on duty, Wild Bill, and bound and gagged them both."

"That's what she did."

"It seems incredible."

"It does."

"I cannot understand it."

"Know all if the white squaw get grip on throat," said the Indian.

"It shall be my desire to keep her grip off of my throat, Man Killer."

"Me kill her some time."

"Oh, no, not a woman."

"She have scalp, same as white brave."

"That is not the way to reason, chief. You must not harm that woman under any circumstances."

"Chief hear."

"And you must heed."

The Indian nodded, and the three continued on the trail of the horses at a brisk walk.

Presently the surgeon scout halted.

"What is it, Pard Doc?"

"See that track?"

"Yes, it is going back."

"Yes."

"She had left the horses and turned back."

The Indian had made the same discovery, that the track of the horse ridden by the woman, if that animal had made them, had doubled and come back over the trail.

It was seen to branch off from the main trail just where it had been discovered, and it evidently led to the ford, not returning by the camp.

The other tracks led on as before, and the signs showed that the horses had been in a canter, and evidently were led, as they were close together.

After a tramp of half a dozen miles, the trail turned suddenly to the left, and in a little vale the horses were found.

They were staked out upon a little meadowland, very
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sparsely overgrown with grass, and which the kidnapped animals evidently knew of.

"It is strange that the one who stole our horses should show the humanity to care for them by placing them here where they could get food, and not stake them out upon the open plain, which was devoid of grass," said Surgeon Powell.

"It's a queer affair all around, Doc, for the horses were not really stolen, only led away to retard our pursuit for half a day."

"It's mighty mysterious all around, but there is your gray."

They had now come to the horses, the animals regarding them curiously, and welcoming their approach with a neigh.

"If you only had the power to speak, what a story you could tell us, good horses," said Surgeon Powell.

"Pony, see, hear, make war-cry, but no talk," said the Indian.

"I only wish they could. It would have been a boss way of making a horse, if the Lord had only thought about it, which I guess He didn't, seeing as they don't talk," said Wild Bill.

Surgeon Powell laughed at the scout's queer conceit, and replied:

"Well, we will have to wait our chance to learn what they know, Bill. But come, we'll get back to camp, have a rest and dinner, and then push on across the river and see what to-night has in store for us."

"Yes, and see what Buffalo Bill has found out, for whenever he goes on a lone trail he strikes it rich nine times out of ten."

"I believe you're right," answered the surgeon, and, leaping upon the back of the bareback gray, he led the way back to camp.

Upon their arrival there, Silent Sam said Buffalo Bill had not returned.

CHAPTER V.

BUFFALO BILL'S FIND.

When Buffalo Bill went off alone on his trail of discovery, he came upon the tracks of a single horse, leading down from the ford to the camp.

"That is the track of the black horse ridden by that strange woman," he muttered.

He examined it closely, and came to the conclusion to follow it.

It led him to a point several hundred yards from the camp.

There the animal had been left standing, evidently unhitched, for there was nothing near to tie to, and no sign of a stake in the ground.

"Now to see where this trail leads from here."

The scout was not long in discovering that the trail led to those of the other horses coming from the camp.

Satisfied on this point, and knowing that the others would see where the trail went, Buffalo Bill turned back to the ford the way he had started.

Before searching there he came upon the tracks of the black horse going back.

The animal's rider had accomplished the work started upon and was returning.

The approach to the ford was dotted with large boulders scattered about, and there were large pines and small clusters of cedars.

He could see the tracks of deer, elk, bear, and other animals leading to the water, where they had gone to drink, but to one side were the hoofmarks of the black horse, where he had come out of the stream, and again entered it, in the night.

"That is a plucky woman, indeed, to attempt this ford at night; but she did it, that is certain, unless it was a man mounted upon her horse, and which I am half inclined to believe, for I can hardly think a woman could do what she has done."

He was tempted to cross the ford, as he had done the evening before, yet could see really nothing to be gained by it.

"I'll just sit down in this cedar bunch and think it over," mused the scout; and he suited his action to his words.

The scout's thoughts turned now upon his tried pard. Wild Bill had told him how he had been put upon a special duty, to try and find out who the mysterious girl outlaw of the stage trails was, and where were her haunts, who her allies.

While lost in thought, and hidden among the cedars, Buffalo Bill unconsciously turned his eyes upon the river, and beheld a horseman coming down the bank.

He did not know him, and, from appearances, supposed him to be one of the comrades of the woman.

"If we can't get pudding, we must take pie," he muttered, as he brought his rifle around for use, for the man must come within a couple of hundred feet of where he was in hiding.

Buffalo Bill was ready for his man, whoever he might be.

He saw that he was well mounted and equipped.

The outfit on the horse showed that the rider was prepared for a long trail, but the good beast did not seem to mind the weight, though his maser was a man fully six feet in height and well built.

He wore no beard, but a heavy mustache shaded his mouth, and his dark face was handsome, though very darkly bronzed by exposure, while his hair was of golden hue and hung heavily upon his broad shoulders.

A rifle was swinging from his back, a lariat hung at his saddle horn, and he had a belt of arms.

This much Buffalo Bill took in as the man came along the river trail.

He then took notice that the bank shielded back from the river just there, and the horseman could not yet have seen the stream.

But as he neared the ford he came to a halt, dismounted, and, with a caution gained by long experience with the danger, doubtless, dismounted and crept up to the top of the steep bank and peered over.

He had seen the trail ahead, leading to the river, and felt that it must lead to a ford.

As he peered over and across the stream, Buffalo Bill saw by the start he gave that he had made some discovery.

The scout's attention had been wholly upon the horseman up to this point, but now he quickly turned his head and glanced across the river.
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The discovery that he made was a surprise to him, indeed.
“I have found more than I want at one time,” he muttered.

What he saw across the stream was a woman, a woman clad in black on a black horse, evidently the Woman of the Iron Hand.

She had come down to the edge of the water, and was mounted upon her splendid black horse.

The animal moved a few steps, and paused to drink.

The woman’s eyes were riveted across the ford, and she had raised a black veil she wore.

But her face was concealed by her hands holding a field glass up to her eyes, and with which she was reconnoitering the other side of the river.

Her hands, the scout noted, were concealed in a pair of black gauntlet gloves.

And the scout made another note of what he saw.

The woman, of course, did not see him, concealed in the cedar bushes, nor did she see the strange horseman.

The latter had discovered her, and his actions did not go to prove the scout’s suspicion that he was one of her two comrades.

The man’s face Buffalo Bill could not see; but he did observe that his actions were quick and excited.

He had slipped back down the steep bank, leaped into his saddle, unslung his rifle, and was slowly advancing toward the ford, as though he hoped to get there just as the woman crossed.

That he was excited from some cause the scout could see.

But Buffalo Bill was perfectly calm.

What was to take place he felt he was to be a witness of.

He felt that if the two met, as the man rode out from behind the bank, and the woman came across the stream, that he, from his point of vantage, would be within a hundred feet of them both.

Under the circumstances, Buffalo Bill did not mind being an eavesdropper, and he was going to make the very best of his chance situation.

As the man neared the break in the bank, Buffalo Bill saw that the woman had started to come across.

She had swung her feet upon the neck of her horse, to keep them dry, and, holding on to her saddle horn, thus rode and supported herself.

The man had peeped around the bank, quickly drew back, and, rifle in hand, waited.

Whatever he attempted, the scout was ready to act also.

But the black horse had evidently scented danger.

Perhaps he had caught a glance of the horse of the stranger, as he was quickly drawn back by his master, so as not to ride into view.

At any rate, the black gave a loud snort, as though of fear.

The woman quickly halted him.

“What is it, Black Boy?” and the question she asked her horse reached the scout’s ears.

The horseman heard it, also, without a doubt; for he settled himself in his saddle, and grasped his rifle more firmly.

The scout did the same as to his rifle.

The woman was about halfway across the stream, and

the swift current made it hard for her horse to stand still.

“We won’t risk it, Black Boy,” said the woman, and she was about to turn back, when the strange horseman spurred into view, his rifle at a level, and his voice rang as he shouted:

“Halt, Kate Kennon, or I will kill you as I would a wolf!”

CHAPTER VI.

QUICKLY DONE.

The words of the horseman, shouted with savage earnestness toward a woman, be she what she might, fairly startled Buffalo Bill.

He at once arose from his sitting posture and stood ready to spring into view.

Upon the woman the effect, whatever she might feel, was not shown by any great alarm.

She was startled, of course.

She halted her horse as she was about to turn, and sat in her saddle, gazing at the man, having lowered her black veil.

That she knew the man was certain.

But she, after a second or two of hesitation, called back, in a voice that had not a tremor in it, but was musical and firm:

“That you would keep your word, Harold Carr, I do not doubt. But I would rather be killed by your bullet than be again in your power, so I take the chances and try to escape!”

“Hold, I say! I am merciless!” shouted the man.

The woman laughed defiantly as she wheeled her horse, then uttered a cry of surprise, for she had seen Buffalo Bill spring into view.

She also heard the words the scout uttered:

“Hands up, you coward!”

A cry broke from the man’s lips, and he turned to fire upon the scout.

But ere he could pull trigger the revolver, for Buffalo Bill had thrown aside his rifle and drawn a revolver, fired, and the bullet sped where it was aimed, not at the life of the horseman, but at his left hand, upholding his weapon.

With the report the rifle dropped from the grasp of the man, going off as it did so, the bullet narrowly missing Buffalo Bill.

But the man was game, and showed it, for while his wounded left hand had dropped to his side, with his right he had grasped a revolver from a saddle holster, and so quickly that he nearly had it leveled at Buffalo Bill before he could fire again.

This time, recognizing that he had a very dangerous foe to deal with, the scout would take no chances, so aimed at the man’s head and fired.

He was again not a minute too soon, for the clutch of the fingers of the horseman upon his revolver trigger fired that weapon, and once again, by a strange coincidence, the bullet barely missed Buffalo Bill’s head.

The aim of the scout, however, had been true, for it struck the horseman in the forehead, a red mark appearing there as the arms swayed, the grasp on the revolver relinquished, and he reeled in and out of his saddle.
But for the quick bound of Buffalo Bill to his side, the man would have pitched head first upon the ragged rocks. But Buffalo Bill caught the falling form in his strong arms, and placed it gently upon the ground, the horse standing as still as a statue the while.

“IT was quick thinking, but I tried to fire a glancing shot, to stun him, not kill him.

“Guess he’s dead, however,” muttered Buffalo Bill.

Then he turned to glance at the woman.
She had meanwhile rapidly ridden out of the stream, and turned on the bank.

Though he saw she had a defender in Buffalo Bill, she yet cared to take no chances.
She saw the quick, sharp duel between the two men, and the fall of the horseman from the saddle.

But she stood ready to fly, as she now had regained her proper position in her saddle, and grasped her reins, ready to bound away.

This Buffalo Bill did not wish her to do, for he had at last come face to face with the strange woman who had so cleverly not only eluded them so far, but really gotten the best of them.

Raising his hat politely, he called out:

“You have nothing to fear now, miss, so can come across, as we were intending to do.”

“Thank you, but that is just what I do not now intend to do.”

“HE is dead, I think, so you have nothing to fear.”

“From him, no, and he brought his fate upon himself, and I am indebted to you for my life, an obligation I shall never forget, and reciprocate when I can, for I know you, Buffalo Bill, and from my inmost heart I thank you—good-by!”

She started her horse off at a bound, with a wave of her hand at the scout, and called back:

“You are a humane man, as I know, so will not allow that man’s body to become food for coyotes, bad as he was.”

“Who was he?” called back the scout.

But she returned no answer, and bounded up the slope, quickly disappearing in the timber.

For an instant Buffalo Bill was tempted to leap upon the horse near him and follow.

But he thought better of it, and muttered:

“No, I’ll ride my time, for it’s a long trail, indeed, that has no end to it.”

CHAPTER VII.
A MOUNTED ARSENAL.

Buffalo Bill had no sooner made up his mind to bide his time, and wait for the end of the trail to be found, to fathom the mysterious gathering about him, when he turned just in time to see that his life hung by a thread.

There was the man he had not meant to kill, but whom he supposed that he had, but no longer in a limp heap, as he had left him.

The bullet had glanced on the skull, stunning him, but not breaking the bone.

The shock had but temporarily deprived the man of consciousness, and, coming to his senses, he had discovered Buffalo Bill standing within a dozen feet of him, his back toward him, as he stood gazing across the river at the disappearing woman.

“Wounded in the hand as he was, and his head in a whirl from the blow of the glancing bullet, the horseman yet realized his chance for action.

He drew a revolver from his belt, and was bringing it around to fire, having arisen to a sitting position, when the scout, turning, suddenly discovered him.

It was too late to draw a weapon, and he still did not wish to kill the man, so with a bound he reached the shelter of the bank, just as a shot came, the well-aimed bullet cutting through the rim of his sombrero.

Turning, he peered over the bank, and now, with revolver in hand, called out:

“Drop that weapon and hands up, if you value your life!”

Wounded as he was, too dizzy to attempt to arise, and with the scout sheltered now, the man obeyed, calling out:

“I surrender. Don’t kill me!”

“Had I wished your life on my hands, I would have shot you, instead of wounds your hand, and I meant my aim at your head not to be fatal, yet feared that it had been, but am glad to see the contrary,”

and Buffalo Bill had walked up to the man while he was speaking.

His prisoner sat upon the ground, his hands above his head, the blood trickling from his wounded hand, and his face stained by a tiny red stream, that flowed from the bullet mark in his forehead.

To the scout he had the appearance of being more crushed by defeat than hurt by his wounds.

Evidently he was one who had looked upon himself as invulnerable, and the blow to his wounded pride made it hard to bear.

The scout quickly disarmed him, felt for weapons not visible, and from inner pockets took a pair of derringers and a very long, slender-bladed knife.

In one of his bootlegs he found a small revolver, and, besides, he had his rifle and a revolver in a saddle holster, together with his lariat, a very dangerous weapon in skilful hands.

“You are a mounted arsenal.”

“Any more?” said Buffalo Bill.

“No.”

“Quite sure?”

“You have searched me.”

“I know, and I’ll go over you again, for one claw overlooked might be dangerous.”

The man said nothing, and Buffalo Bill saw a look of anger creep over his face, which at once prompted him to make a more thorough search.

He was not long in finding another derringer, in a pistol pocket in his vest.

“I guess that’s all this time,” said the scout.

Then he added:

“Now my camp is not very far away, so I’ll let you ride your horse there, and then fix up your wounds, for I have a surgeon nard, who, if not there, will soon return.”

Buffalo Bill soon had the weapons of his prisoner safe, then he led up the horse and put his rider upon him, for he saw that he was still feeling the bullet blow upon his head.

“You are a phenomenally strong man,” said the pris-
CHAPTER VIII.
A DOUBLE RECOGNITION.

The words and manner of his prisoner, when he said that but for the strange Woman in Black he would have killed him, made an impression upon Buffalo Bill.

It interested him to know when, why, and about the situation, that had proven so nearly fatal to him, according to the man’s story.

“Was this his?”
“An year ago.”
“And where?”
“That I will not say.”
“But you had me covered, I take it, from what you said.”

“Wholly in my power.”
“And did not kill me, as that woman interfered?”
“Yes, and I was glad that she did, for my shot would have been heard by those whose presence I did not suspect near, and who would have quickly avenged you.”

“In the midst of life we are in death,” said the scout, with a smile, and added:

“Now tell me who you are?”
“I will not.”
“Your name is Harold Carr.”
“Ah; how do you know that?” asked the prisoner, quickly.

“It matters not.”
“I know now.”
“How?”
“That woman told you.”
“Well.”
“That name tells you nothing.”
“And you refuse to tell me more about yourself?”
“I do.”

“We who is the woman, then?”
“You do not know?”
“I confess that I do not.”
“Then I will never tell you.”
“It don’t matter. I know it.”
“Who is it?”
“Kate Kennon.”

The man was silent.
Then he said, as Buffalo Bill, who had meanwhile tied the wet handkerchief about his hand, and another about his head:

“That name tells you no more than did mine.”
“I heard you call her Kate Kennon, and I know her to be one of a band of outlaws.”
“You know that woman to be one of an outlaw band?”
“I suspect her to be.”
“You are on the wrong trail, Buffalo Bill.”

“Well, we will not discuss it now, for I wish to get you to camp,” and Buffalo Bill, who had aided the man to dismount, while he temporarily dressed his wounds, now put him again in the saddle, and, leading the horse, started for camp.

He had gone but a short distance when he saw Surgeon Powell and Silent Sam coming toward him, they having started out to see what had become of him when he was reported not to have returned to camp.

The eyes of the prisoner were upon the surgeon scout as they approached each other, and Buffalo Bill, looking up, said:

“There is Surgeon Powell, and he will soon dress your wounds for you when we reach camp.”

But the man did not speak, and the scout was struck with the pallor and almost frightened look that came upon his face.

Then, too, he heard him mutter, as though wholly unconscious of his presence so near:

“Frank Powell! Great God! that means death for me.”

Buffalo Bill looked at the man in surprise.

Did Frank Powell know him?

He would soon find out, for the surgeon scout and Silent Sam were now close at hand.

Another look at his prisoner, and Buffalo Bill saw that he was striving hard to be calm.

“Ho, Cody, I am glad to find you, for we feared you had gotten into trouble,” called out Surgeon Powell.

“I did, but I got out of it all right.”

“So I see, and got somebody else into trouble, I see.”

“Yes, some old acquaintance of yours, I believe.”

Surgeon Powell had now halted, as the scout and his prisoner came up.

He looked the man in the face now, and Buffalo Bill saw him do what he had seldom seen him do, start as though he had been hard hit.

His face paled, but he did not again show what he felt, and quietly remarked:

“Yes, I have met this man before—he owes me his life.”

Buffalo Bill waited for further explanation, but the surgeon scout made none, only said:

“Well, we will get back to camp, and I will be glad to be the guard of your prisoner, Bill, for he must not escape, and he is one to fear.”

The man did not speak, but merely looked at the surgeon with an evil glitter in his eyes.
As for Silent Sam, he had glanced at the prisoner, and said nothing, really showing no apparent interest in him.

On, then, to camp the party went, and it was a surprise when Wild Bill saw a prisoner brought in.

"How did you catch him, pard?"

"I was in ambush for game, Bill, and he rode into the trap; but I found him a hard customer, I can tell you, and it was nip and tuck who would win."

"You took the jackpot, though."

"Yes, and I have seen the mysterious Woman in Black."

"Tell us about it."

"I will, when Surgeon Powell dresses the prisoner's wounds, as I see he is preparing to do now, and then we'll have dinner, for it will be well to cross the river before dark and camp on the other shore."

The Man Killer had been as undemonstrative as had Silent Sam, a mere look at the prisoner appearing to satisfy him.

The surgeon examined and dressed the wounded hand and head, remarking:

"This bone of your second finger is shattered, but there is no fracture of your skull, so your wounds are not very serious."

"I should have been surprised, indeed, Harold Carr, if you died by other hand than mine."

CHAPTER IX.

SEALED LIPS.

The words of Surgeon Powell to the prisoner did not escape either Buffalo Bill or Wild Bill. They told of some wrong done the doctor, and waited his time to tell them of his former acquaintance with the man.

"Do you intend to kill me, Frank Powell?"

The prisoner asked the question somewhat uneasily.

"I am no murderer—not such as you are. I will faithfully care for you, do all I can to heal your wounds. You are the prisoner of Buffalo Bill; not mine; but I tell you now that when you and I again part it will be when one of us goes to his grave."

"I make no idle threats. I will do you no harm, take no advantage of you at any time; but large as this world is, it is not large enough for both you and I to breathe God's free air—one of us must die, and you know it, and by the other's hand, and the chances shall be as fair for you as for me."

"I shall say no more," and, gathering up his surgical outfit, Frank Powell walked away to his pack saddle and put them away.

When he returned his face was serene once more, and he made no allusion to what had evidently moved him most deeply.

Dinner was ready, and the prisoner was invited to eat with the rest of them. Frank Powell cutting up his food for him, as his wounded hand was in a sling.

Buffalo Bill told of his capture of the man and his meeting with the Woman in Black.

"Do you mean, pard, that he would have killed the woman if you had not prevented?" asked Wild Bill, with anger.

"Oh, yes."

"Then you should not have spared him."

"I take no life I can avoid taking, pard, as you know, and more, I felt that this man would be more valuable to us alive than dead; and I guess he will be, for Dr. Frank thinks so."

"He will be to me, Bill; but more I cannot say, even to you," was Frank Powell's answer.

Neither Buffalo Bill or Wild Bill replied, but they both felt that there was some dark page of the past to be read between those two men.

"Who is the woman?" Wild Bill asked of the prisoner.

"I have nothing to say," was the answer, in a decided tone.

"And will not tell of yourself, either?"

"No."

"Well, all I can say is that a man is a bad lot when he won't tell who and what he is," Wild Bill bluntly said.

"Let Surgeon Powell tell who I am, yes, and the woman, too!" said the prisoner, with a look of malign triumph.

"I have nothing to say," was the surgeon scout's determined reply, followed by the order to get ready to move.

The prisoner was placed upon his horse, his feet tied to the stirrups. The bridle was not put on the animal, but he was given to Silent Sam to lead.

Then, with Buffalo Bill, Surgeon Powell rode to the front, Silent Sam followed with the prisoner, Man Killer came next, leading the pack animals, and Wild Bill brought up the rear.

To the surprise of Buffalo Bill, Surgeon Powell did not refer to the prisoner or the woman. He certainly had expected, when they were alone together, that Surgeon Powell would explain to him what he had not to others.

But he was mistaken.

Frank Powell made no reference to his former meeting with Harold Carr, or to the dark secret evidently shared between them.

"This is an ugly looking stream to cross, Bill," said the surgeon scout, as they came in sight of the ford.

"Yes, but I can pilot all across, and Silent Sam and Man Killer also know how. But a false step may be fatal to the horse and rider."

"It looks so."

"The ford is a reef, right through those bowlders, I found last night, when I went across on foot. But I picked out the way—no, Silent Sam, I will guide you across," said the scout.

"Do you know?"

"Yes."

"It's bad."

"I know it."

"Death Waters kill many," said Man Killer, who had come up and joined them.

"I can make it," replied Buffalo Bill, for some reason best known to himself, anxious to let the Indian and Silent Sam see that he was not wholly dependent upon them in following the trail they were on.

With this he led the way into the stream, Surgeon Powell following close behind, and then came Silent Sam and his prisoner, Man Killer and the pack horses, and Wild Bill last.
Both Silent Sam and the Indian seemed to feel surprised at the unerring manner in which Buffalo Bill led the way across the fatal ford; but he kept his own counsel, saying nothing to them about his having gone into the water before and thoroughly picked out the correct crossing.

CHAPTER X.
BUFFALO BILL AROUSED.

The crossing was made without a mishap, and Buffalo Bill then asked Silent Sam and Man Killer if they knew of any good camping place near.

Bolt spoke of a bend in the river a couple of miles above, where grass was good, wood plentiful, and a good camp could be made.

A deer was shot by Man Killer with an arrow, and with this for supper, for it was now late in the day, they turned off of the plainly marked trail of the fugitives, and went up the river toward the designated camping place.

The ride was a short one, and the bank there sloped to the water, but the river ran turbulent, and the bank of the other side was high and steep, so there was no crossing.

The point of land was well grown with grass and timber, and a guard at the land end would keep the horses well corralled, so that no one could get to them without passing the man on duty and the camp.

"We'll see if our clever foes can run off our horses tonight," said Wild Bill.

"If they do, I'll give in that they can beat us," Buffalo Bill responded, while Surgeon Powell added:

"It will be impossible.

"Remember, mine is the first watch, and I'll let the Indian keep me company."

Silent Sam had gone to fishing as soon as the halt was made, and was not long in catching a fine string of fish.

Man Killer had gathered wood for the fire, and Buffalo Bill had looked after the horses, so that by sunset supper was ready.

With venison steaks, fish, bacon, hoecake, and coffee, the trailers had a good meal, the prisoner eating with apparent relish.

The latter, however, seemed disappointed when Buffalo Bill spread his blankets right between Wild Bill and himself, and said:

"You will have to slip these irons on your ankles to-night, pard, for it is safer."

The man winced, but the irons were put on, and, having finished their pipes, all turned in, save Surgeon Powell and Man Killer.

The horses were staked out directly upon the sloping point, where the grass grew in abundance and several hundred feet from the camp.

But to get them off that night, their kidnappers would have to lead them by the camp, then past Surgeon Powell and Man Killer on watch, the point there being not a hundred yards wide.

With apparent confidence, as Surgeon Powell was on watch, Buffalo Bill and the others turned in, and were soon fast asleep.

Frank Powell took his position on one side, near the water, the Man Killer going to the other.

But the doctor, to his surprise, felt sleepy and sat down by a tree, his back against it.

He had lost a great deal of sleep of late, and could not but feel the effects, while, as it was early, he concluded to nap a little.

The Indian was not far off, and if he heard any sound, he would warn him.

The hours passed by, and Buffalo Bill awoke.

It was time that he and Wild Bill were to go on watch, he was sure.

Why had Surgeon Powell not called them, or did he, in the goodness of his heart, intend to stand the whole night through?

This must not be so, he thought, and he arose and looked about him.

The prisoner was asleep; so was Wild Bill, and Silent Sam lay a few pieces off, also wrapped in slumber.

The scout slipped out of his blankets, drew on his boots, buckled on his belt of arms, and crept off in the darkness until he got beyond the arc of the firelight, for it had been left burning.

Buffalo Bill went directly toward the point where the horses had been staked out.

To his utter amazement, they were gone.

Instantly the dread seized upon him that Surgeon Powell had come to harm.

He knew his fearless nature, desperate deeds when aroused, and his great strength and quickness, and for any one to master him, he knew that it would only be by a deathblow.

How the horses had gone he did not pause a moment then to consider.

His duty now was to arouse his comrades and discover what the fate of the surgeon and the Indian had been.

In a run he went back toward camp, shouting as he did so:

"Ho, Wild Bill! Ho, Silent Sam! We have been visited again by our mysterious foe. The horses have been run off, and now I am going to see what has happened to Surgeon Powell and the Indian! Come!"

He dashed by the two men his loud call had aroused, straight for the spot where he knew the surgeon scout had gone on guard.

CHAPTER XI.
A STRANGE SLEEP.

Buffalo Bill had bounded through the camp like a deer, and Wild Bill and Silent Sam were on their feet in an instant.

"Bring a lantern!" the scout had shouted, and, leaving the circle of firelight, he hesitated an instant to accustom his eyes to the darkness, and then went forward.

He went straight to the spot where Surgeon Powell had told him he was going to stand on guard, and in the darkness he dimly saw the form of his pard lying upon the ground.

He called to him as he approached, but there was no reply, though the form moved.

Dropping down on his knees by the form, he cried:

"Bound and gagged, as I live!"

With rapid hands he freed the surgeon of the gag, then of his bonds, calling out:
"Bring a canteen of water, also, Bill!"
Silent Sam was sent back for the canteen, while Wild Bill came up with the lantern.
"I found him bound and gagged. How are you, old pard?" said the scout, as the lantern flashed upon him.
It was with a great effort that Surgeon Powell spoke, his throat and mouth were so dry and inflamed.
But Buffalo Bill heard:
"I am not hurt."
The canteen was brought by Silent Sam; the water soon relieved the surgeon scout, and he said:
"I cannot understand it at all; but I could not keep my eyes open, and went to sleep on my post. It seemed as though I had been drugged. When I awoke to consciousness it was an hour ago, and I found myself lying here as you discovered me, Bill. I heard you say the horses were gone."
"They are. Our foes have been again too clever for us, Frank; but thank Heaven you are all right. I only hope the Indian is equally as lucky, for his not appearing shows that he cannot do so."
With this Buffalo Bill seized the lantern and ran toward the other post of the guard.
The other quickly followed.
They found the Indian lying on his face, his hands bound behind him, his feet secured to a tree, and a gag in his mouth.
He was quickly freed, and he told about the same story as Surgeon Powell, for he said:
"Me heap fast asleep—eyes not stay open—go to sleep. Don't know more."
The party walked back to camp in a thoughtful mood.
"The horses are gone, no guard is needed now, so all turn in until dawn," said Surgeon Powell.
They did so, in the absence of any knowledge of how the binding of the guards had occurred, no one caring to talk, especially as the prisoner, Harold Carr, had laughed at their plight when they came back to camp.
Whether all slept or not, they lay quiet in their blankets, until Silent Sam arose, threw wood on the fire, and began to get breakfast.
The others were soon up and preparing for the day's work.
Breakfast was eaten in silence, for it was certain that all felt the strain, save the prisoner, and he ate heartily, seemed quite cheerful, and chatted while Surgeon Powell dressed his wounded hand and head.
"You don't know that you have to deal with those whom you cannot outwit. But I do, for I know all that woman and those with her are capable of. You had better turn back, for these are warnings, and if not heeded you can be killed as silently and cleverly as you are outwitted," said the prisoner.
"We came to see the end of this trail, and we will do it, if it leads us to the grave," said Surgeon Powell, and his words told that there was no backing out in him.
"I'm in it to stay, Frank," Buffalo Bill remarked.
"Me, too," asserted Wild Bill.
"You know what I came for, doctor," put in Silent Sam, in a very decided way.
"Man Killer looked ahead, not behind him," was the figurative manner in which the Indian showed his willingness to keep on.
And thus the prisoner's warning was answered by all.

It was now growing light, and Buffalo Bill and Surgeon Powell walked toward where the horses had been left.
They quickly saw that the animals had been led into the stream, and thus escaped.
But had they been led there to their death?
This neither the surgeon scout nor Buffalo Bill could believe.
Going down the bank for several hundred yards, Buffalo Bill halted and pointed across the stream.
"See that break in the bank, Frank?"
"Yes."
"They were swum across and landed there, for if they went farther down they could not land on either shore on account of the steep banks, as you see, until they reached the ford, and that would be far too long a swim in this wild stream."
"You are right."
"I'll send the Indian across to find their trail," and the two retraced their way.

CHAPTER XII.

PICKING UP THE TRAIL.

"Bill."
"Yes, Frank."
"I believe that both the Indian and myself were drugged last night."
Buffalo Bill and the surgeon scout had halted before they joined the others in camp.
"Do you mean it?"
"I do."
"You both went to sleep in a very strange way."
"We were drugged. I know the effects of drugs but too well, and both the Indian and I were given a narcotic. I have the feeling that follows the sleep caused by a drug, and that is why I drank so much coffee for breakfast, as an antidote."
"I thought you were going it strong."
"Yes, and I feel better."
"But who could have drugged you? Surely you do not suspect the old trapper, Silent Sam?"
"Oh, no."
"He was the only one."
"No."
"Who else?"
"Your prisoner."
"Ah!"

Going on to where the others were, the two pardeds found all still in the dark as to what had become of the horses, and also as to the strange sleep that had overcome Surgeon Powell and the Indian in the night.
When told what was wanted the Indian sprang into the stream, after casting aside his outer clothing, and swam boldly for the other shore, the swift current drifting him rapidly down as he went away.
He reached the other shore a hundred feet above the break in the bank.
As he landed he called back:
"Ponies come this way."
Buffalo Bill had meanwhile been gathering some logs, aided by Wild Bill, and these were soon tied together, making a secure raft, on which to carry the clothing and weapons of himself and the redskin.
The raft was taken as far above as the bank allowed, then shoved off, and, swimming behind it, the scout began to push it across. He had calculated well, for he just did reach the bank and land.

There Man Killer awaited him, and the two were soon away on the trail of the horses, the number increased now by the animal ridden by the prisoner.

Buffalo Bill and the Indian worked rapidly along on the trail of the horses.

By the time they got started on the trail it was a couple of hours to noon, and Buffalo Bill was anxious to find the horses, return to camp for dinner, and have the afternoon to still push after the woman and her companions.

The trail led down the stream, the nature of the ground causing a wide circuit to be made at times from the bank. They came upon a single trail that the others merged into.

It came from the ford.

"It is the trail of the prisoner, Man Killer," said Cody.

"Great White Chief know," replied the Indian.

The place where the scout had met the prisoner was reached, and they were at the ford.

The trail of the horses crossed the one to the ford, and a mile away reached the camp of the night before.

There were their horses.

They were staked out, as Buffalo Bill had hoped to find them, and suspected that he would, after the past experiences they had had of that kind.

No one was near, and the horses stared at them in a curious way as though they would like to know what it all meant, these midnight kidnappings and being carried each night on the back trail.

Mounting their own horses, Buffalo Bill and Man Killer led the others back to the ford.

This was crossed in safety, and then they found on the other shore a track of an animal they knew must have been the large black ridden by the strange woman.

This track led on in the trail left the day before, while Buffalo Bill and Man Killer turned off and went toward their camp up the river.

They reached it soon after noon, and their arrival was greeted with a shout.

"Well, Bill, you found them?"

"Yes, Frank, in our last night’s camp. Some one took them there, staked them out, and then returned to the ford, where the big black awaited them, for I recognized his tracks. Anything new?"

"Nothing."

"Had a talk with the prisoner?"

"Not a word."

"Can no clew be found to help us?"

"Nothing."

"Well, we will have dinner and then push on hard along the trail of these clever foes of ours."

This was done, and the whole party were in the saddle and back on the trail they had left the evening before.

It was picked up right where they had left it, and in half an hour they came to where the camp had been for the night.

Here a halt was made and a close examination of the camp and its surroundings was made.

This search seemed to show that there were six persons in the party now, for there were the tracks of that many horses; this could be plainly seen in the brush.

Pushing on once more the pursuers kept up a rapid and steady gait, for Buffalo Bill was in the lead now, and he was anxious to get as near as possible to their foxes by nightfall.

Calling Silent Sam forward with him, he began to question the trapper thoroughly about the country ahead.

He learned that the stage trail was not over half a day’s travel ahead, and that it ran along a ridge for miles, with a valley upon either side for many miles, and a mountain range beyond.

It was the hunting ground of the Indians in the fall of the year, and game of all kinds was abundant, while it was well watered, heavily timbered, and the grazing good.

"Will we find a good camping place for to-night, Sam?" asked Buffalo Bill, thinking of what was before him.

"Yes, a dozen miles ahead in a valley."

"What is carrying these people we follow into that country?"

"Don’t know, unless to rob the coach."

"Ah! When is it due?"

"Goes through to-morrow."

"We’ll try and crowd them too hard to let them rob it."

After a brisk ride of twenty miles, after striking the trail of the fugitives, the pursuers were led into a valley and camped in the forks of a stream for the night, the sun setting as they reached there.

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CHAPTER XIII.

PREPARED FOR THE WORST.

Buffalo Bill was not exactly pleased with the camp for the night.

The banks of the stream on either side were low, the water was shallow, and the grass so thick as not to give back the sound of a hoof-fall.

Under other circumstances the camp would be ideal one, but, with the fringe of trees about it, an approach upon all sides to it, he saw that it would be a very easy matter for a foe to approach from any direction.

"It will take a company of soldiers to guard this camp," he whispered to Wild Bill.

"You are right. But if they catch us napping, pard, they are welcome," was the answer.

Wood was gathered, the horses were staked out as near the camping place as possible, and Silent Sam busied himself with supper.

While there was yet light enough, the surgeon scout dressed the hand and head of the prisoner, the latter talking the while, but the doctor making no reply.

When supper was ready, there were three pairs of eyes upon the prisoner, though not appearing to observe him.

They were watching for some sign that he was making use of a drug, as they believed he had done the night before.

But the watchfulness of Surgeon Powell and the two Bills failed to detect a single suspicious act on his part.

It was dark when supper was over with, and Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill were to go on guard at once, saying they would enjoy their pipes there.
But there was one thing to be done first. That was to thoroughly search the prisoner for drugs. Approaching him suddenly, Surgeon Powell and the two scouts, the former said, sternly:

"Harold Carr, I am very sure that both the Indian and myself were drugged last night, for there is no other way of accounting for our going to sleep as we did. "I know of your skill in medicine, and I believe you, in some way, drugged us, for you are famous for your sleight-of-hand tricks. "We will search you, and resistance will only get you into more trouble."

The prisoner showed no emotion. He merely smiled in his peculiarly sardonic way, and replied:

"I did not drug you, for I have no drugs about me, though in my case on my saddle there are some medicines."

They did search the man most thoroughly, but found it as he had said. They could find nothing about him. Upon his saddle, in a leather pocket, they did find a case. It was well wrapped up in oil silk, to keep it dry, and contained a set of small surgical instruments, some plasters, lint, ointments and medicines, and a bottle of morphia. "I will keep this case," said Surgeon Powell, and then he added:

"But there will be no drugs given to-night, that is certain."

"Or horse stealing, either," added Wild Bill.

The two scouts now walked to their posts of duty, carrying their rifles with them, and Surgeon Powell went along, to see just where they took up position. On one side of the horses, in the fringe of trees on the stream, Buffalo Bill took up his post. Upon the other side of the animals, also in the timber on the banks of the stream, Wild Bill took position. Each was within two hundred feet of the horses, and twice that distance from each other.

They were also about a hundred yards from the camp, the fire of which they could plainly see. "Well, how do you think," Frank Powell had said to each, as he left them on guard, and started back for camp, while the two pards lighted their pipes and sat down to enjoy their after-supper smoke, for they had no dread of their foes appearing until the campers were supposed to be wrapped in slumber.

The surgeon scout returned to camp, wondering what the result would be.

If Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill were outwitted on guard, then he would give the palm to those they followed as being more clever than any one he had ever met on the frontier before, even among the cleverest of plainsmen.

Thus far Silent Sam, Man Killer and himself had been no match for their foes, in their mysterious midnight visits, and yet he could not bring himself to believe that the two greatest of border scouts, the kings of the plains, would be surprised and treated as others had been.

In camp he found the prisoner talking to Silent Sam and the Indian, and as he approached the former looked up and said:

"You expect to outwit that woman to-night, don't you, Surgeon Powell?"

"I have a hope that we may."

"Well, you won't, for that woman cannot be trapped, and what she sets out to do she does, as I well know."

Surgeon Powell made no reply, but, spreading his blankets, smoked his pipe and then turned in, placing the prisoner next to him, and with Silent Sam on the other side, to be sure he could not move without awakening one of them.

Half an hour after the camp was lost in deep repose.

CHAPTER XIV.

SURPRISED ON POST.

Surgeon Powell awoke with a start.

All was dark about him, save for a dim glare that came from the fire, for it had burned almost down to coals.

Indistinctly he saw the prisoner, with the form of Silent Sam lying beyond, and the Indian was also wrapped in his blankets.

The fire told him that midnight had passed. All was quiet in and about the camp, and, remembering that his two pards, Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill, were on guard, he felt that all was safe.

So he again dropped back upon his blanket bed.

But not to sleep. Sleep would not come to his eyelids. At length, as there crept over him a dread that all was not well, he determined to rise, call the Indian, and, leaving the prisoner and Silent Sam asleep, go to see if his two friends were all right.

He crept noiselessly from his blankets, awoke the Indian, told him to keep his eye upon the prisoner, whom he felt would always bear watching, and then moved away in the darkness.

He walked straight to the sentry post of Buffalo Bill. He saw no one, but as he drew near he heard a moan. It came from the side of a tree, a dozen paces away.

With a great dread in his breast, he ran forward, beheld a dark object lying upon the ground, knelt by the side of it, and found that it was Buffalo Bill.

The sentry lay upon his back, bound hand and foot. A gag was also fastened in his mouth.

It took more than a minute to set Buffalo Bill free, for the one who had bound him understood how necessary it was to make him secure.

But he was soon freed, yet he seemed to be half dazed. "You are not hurt, Bill?"

"No. What has happened?" he asked with an effort, after Surgeon Powell had handed him his canteen to rinse out his mouth and swallow a good drink of water.

"Heaven only knows, if you do not, pard."

"I don't feel just clear in my head."

"Were you struck by any one?"

"Don't know."

"Where is Wild Bill?"

"On his post, I guess."

"Let us go and see."

Buffalo Bill walked with a stagger.

He seemed dizzy, and Surgeon Powell grasped him by the arm.
They had gone but a few paces when Surgeon Powell asked:

"Where are the horses?"
"I don't know. They were here."
"They are gone."
"So it seems; but let us see about Wild Bill."
"I hope he has not been worse treated than you were."
"I hope not."
"I was bound and gagged."
"You certainly were."
"If Wild Bill is, we are no better guards than Silent Sam and the Indian."
"I do not understand it, Bill."
"Whoever did it is one too many for us—more clever than we are," and Buffalo Bill seemed to be getting over his semi-stupor.

Over in the edge of the timber, where Wild Bill had been on post, they found him.
He was lying on his back, and he was gagged and bound, just as Buffalo Bill had been.

He was in the same state of semi-stupor that Buffalo Bill had been in.

It took but a short while to unbind him, remove the gag, and force water between his lips.

"Ho! what's the matter, pards?" he cried, half springing to his feet, but falling back.

"Somebody has downed you, pard, as I also was," said Buffalo Bill.

"Have I been shot?"
"No, thank the Lord."
"What's the matter with my head?"
"Mine was the same way, and you'll soon come around."

"Tell me what has happened?"
"Why, we are no good, pard, for we have been surprised on post, as the others were, gagged, bound, and the horses run off."
"Do you mean it?"
"Don't you feel like it?"
"I certainly do."

"Come to camp, pards, for it must be nearly dawn, and some strong coffee will revive you, for you have been drugged, that is certain."

"Who did it?"
"That's to be found out."

"I remember smoking my pipe. I do not recall anything else."

"Ditto with me, Wild Bill. I was smoking my pipe, and I remember nothing more."

"Then your tobacco was drugged—it did the work, put you to sleep unconsciously, and our foes were on hand to do the rest," remarked Surgeon Powell.

"Yes, but they did not have our tobacco."

"No, but somebody else did."

"And that somebody is in our camp," said Buffalo Bill.

CHAPTER XV.
UNDER A DEADLY THREAT.

By the time camp was reached the two scouts were regaining their normal feeling, though they still felt a little strange about the head.

They went straight to the fire and sat down, while Surgeon Powell told the Indian to throw some wood on, for his watch told him that the night was nearly passed.

The fire flamed up, and Silent Sam at once arose to get breakfast, while the prisoner continued to lie still, and appeared to be asleep.

Surgeon Powell looked at the two scouts narrowly by the firelight.

He felt their pulse, and said:

"Get the coffee ready first, Sam, and give my two pards here a cupful."

This was done, and as the scouts had moved about meanwhile, and taken a plunge in the river, they were all right after they had a cup of coffee, and so said.

The prisoner arose for breakfast, and, this over with, while waiting for it to become light enough to take the trail of the horses, Surgeon Powell walked apart with the two scouts.

"Pards, you were both drugged last night, and through your tobacco. I was also drugged, and we have all of us found out what it was to be surprised on post," said Surgeon Powell.

"You bet we have, Doc, and I have sworn off from any more sleep at night," said Buffalo Bill.

"No, we will have to get at bedrock in this matter, and I believe I know who the man is who has drugged us."

"Who?"

The scouts asked the question together.

"That prisoner."

"But why?"

"He had his reasons."

"He surely is not in league with the woman."

"No. But he planned to escape, and was not able to make the attempt either night, owing to his being ironed."

"That may be. But we searched him for drugs."

"Yes, but it is an easy matter for him to in some way conceal a small drug."

"How did he get it into our tobacco?"

"He has been smoking from our supply, and he could have drugged the whole bag of it."

"I'll give up smoking," said Buffalo Bill.

"No, we'll just try a pipeful. I will, and if I begin to feel it, then we will know it is drugged," said Dr. Powell.

"And if it is, we'll all give up smoking for this trip," Wild Bill remarked.

So they went back to camp, and Surgeon Powell filled his pipe from the large bag they had along, and began to smoke.

No effects followed. Then Buffalo Bill recalled that the prisoner had borrowed his pouch upon their arriving in camp.

Wild Bill remembered also that he had also borrowed his.

This accounted for their going to sleep on post.

Surgeon Powell took some tobacco from Buffalo Bill's pouch, and he had not smoked long before his eyes began to droop.

"This is drugged," he said, shaking off the lethargy creeping over him.

"No use to try mine," said Wild Bill.

"It's the same."

Then Surgeon Powell turned to the prisoner.
THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES.

"Harold Carr, you drugged me when I went on duty in the last camp; you put the drug in my coffee. You drugged the tobacco of Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill, and rendered them unconscious on duty.

"Now, I have only this to say, that if one of us five again goes to sleep on duty, you shall be hanged before we leave camp. You know what to expect, so beware. You sought to escape, but failed, and that you may not, with your great cleverness, drug us all, you are to eat alone, be kept away from our packs, and I shall see that when we are in camp you are made fast to a tree."

Surgeon Powell spoke with a determination that showed he was in deadly earnest.

Then he added:

"Buffalo Bill, you be the especial guard of the prisoner until we return to camp, while you, Wild Bill, and the Indian look us up some game, for Silent Sam goes with me on the trail of the horses, as it is now getting light enough to see how to follow them."

Buffalo Bill took his place as guard over the prisoner. Wild Bill and Man Killer went off in search of game, while Surgeon Powell and Silent Sam picked up the trail of the horses and went after them.

It was just noon when the surgeon scout and Silent Sam returned with the horses.

They had found them some miles back on their trail.

CHAPTER XVI.

A SLEEPLESS NIGHT.

Wild Bill and Man Killer had been as successful as had the surgeon scout and Silent Sam.

A fine deer had been killed, and the choice parts taken, while a couple of wild turkeys, a duck, and several rabbits had been shot.

Buffalo Bill, in camp, had spent the morning fishing, giving his prisoner a chance to have the same sport, for he kept him very near him, and so a fine mess of fish were ready for dinner when the others returned.

"All enjoyed the substantial feast, but the prisoner was given his meal apart from the others, though he was not stinted.

His wounds were again carefully dressed by Surgeon Powell, and then the start was made, Buffalo Bill remarking:

"This double work the horses are getting does them no good, for they are going night and day."

"No, and we will have to put an end to it," returned Surgeon Powell.

"Let us all stand guard to-night."

"I don't think our foes can outgeneral us then," said Buffalo Bill.

"A good idea."

"I saw the trail of the black horse when out with the Indian this morning," Wild Bill asserted.

"Did it lead to our camp?"

"No, Doc, but as near as it dared approach, and then that Woman in Black, or whoever does this clever work, walks to where we are, and seems to catch us, in spite of all. In fact, it looks to me as though the prisoner was in league with our foes."

"I cannot believe it," said Surgeon Powell, thoughtfully.

"Nor I, for if that man had his way he would not only steal our horses every night, to put us back on the trail, but would put us off of it forever, is my belief. Why, save a blow and a choking the Indian and Silent Sam have had, we have not been made to suffer."

"That is so," said Wild Bill.

"We'll see what the night has in store for us, pard, with all of us on duty and the prisoner put beyond the power to drug us," remarked Surgeon Powell.

The trail of the black horse, in his night tramp to their camp, was soon picked up by Buffalo Bill, and this was followed until it joined the tracks of the other horses, those of the fugitives.

Pushing rapidly on, now that the trail was distinct before them, they began the ascent of the slopes, and later the climb of the range.

The summit was reached late in the afternoon, and a halt was called, for Silent Sam had reported to the surgeon scout that the trail of the fugitives would be very hard to follow upon the top of the ridge, as the nature of the ground was so hard no tracks would be left.

He further said that there was no camping place on the range, as no water was to be found, but that by crossing the ridge and descending halfway to the valley, a stream would be reached where there was excellent grass and plenty of wood.

Such being the case, and as the trail of the fugitives could not be seen on the ridge, it was decided, as night was coming on in an hour or so, to go to the camping place spoken of.

The next day they could look up the trail of the fugitives, and further, could meet the stage-coach as it went along the ridge on its way to Fort Benham, for Surgeon Powell wished to send a note by the driver to Colonel Thorp.

Their way was at once taken then to the camping place.

A ride of a mile brought them to it, and, just as Silent Sam had said, there was excellent water, grass and wood.

It was a small mountain stream, and the camp was made in a bend of it, where there was a level space of ground.

Anxious to spend the remaining time of daylight in looking up the trail of the fugitives, Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill had remained on the ridge.

But an hour's search failed to show them where the fugitives had gone, whether they had continued up or down the stage trail, or crossed over the ridge at some point at a distance from where they had searched.

The camp-fire smoke guided them down the slope to where their comrades were, and soon after nightfall they had discussed their supper and were enjoying their pipes, though the two scouts did not enjoy the solace of their tobacco as they might have done but for its having been drugged the night before.

With the horses feeding in the bend of the stream, the prisoner bound to a tree, though lying down on his blankets in camp, and the Indian to sit near and guard him, the other four went on their posts of duty, to watch through the night and await the result of their sleepless night.
CHAPTER XVII.

THE MIDNIGHT VISITOR.

Everything was as still as death in the camp. The horses had grazed until tired, and then lain down to rest.

The prisoner apparently slept soundly, in spite of his conscience and a dread of a bitter end.

Man Killer sat against a tree near, and did not move. He seemed like a statue in bronze.

But he was not asleep, for when the fire flared up the twinkle of his eyes could be seen.

The four men on guard remained quietly on their posts.

All were waiting.

Waiting for the coming of the mysterious Woman in Black, who had so cleverly outwitted them each night they had camped on her trail.

There were five on watch now.

Would she, or her two comrades, do it again?

Buffalo Bill was a trifle anxious at first, for he feared another case of drugging.

He concluded, after being on post for an hour, to make the rounds of the guards and camp.

He did so.

He had nearly finished when he saw the iron gray, which Surgeon Powell rode, rise suddenly to his feet, for he had been lying down.

The horse at the same time gave a low whinny.

The scout at once dropped down upon the ground, and thus remained.

He was sure that some one was there.

Just beyond the open space where the horses had been staked out was a fringe of timber.

Whoever was coming was hidden in the timber.

The iron gray was not over sixty feet from where the scout was crouching, but began to move toward the timber.

He went the length of his stake rope and halted.

As he did so a form came out into the open space.

In the darkness the keen eyes of Buffalo Bill saw the slender, black figure that he knew could only be the woman.

She first walked up to the gray, then passed on toward the stake rope, and bent over it.

Then Buffalo Bill began to move.

"I hate to make war on a woman, but I must. I can catch her, I think, and not hurt her. Then, too, I am not sure that it is a woman."

So mused Buffalo Bill as he unhooked the lasso which hung at his belt, and began to whirl it around his head, firmly, but silently, to throw the dangerous coil.

The dark form had reached the stake rope and bent over.

Another moment and the scout arose quickly to a standing position, the coil was whirled quicker and quicker and then was launched in its flight.

It fell straight where aimed, but did not encircle the form.

There came a half-uttered exclamation of surprise, and away bounded the form like a deer, straight for the timber shelter.

Buffalo Bill realized that the stooping position of the one he had attempted to lasso had thwarted him.

Instantly he began to drag in the slack, for the other end was tied about his waist, and he could coil it in quicker than unfasten it.

He started in pursuit as he did so.

The iron gray gave a snort of alarm and attempted to follow the dark form.

It was evident that the iron gray knew well the night visitor to the camp.

But the visitor had not been able to free the iron gray before the lasso fell.

The stakes had all been driven deep into the ground.

So the stake line tightened with a loud twang, as the horse came to a halt that road it taut, and the animal was thrown to the ground.

Buffalo Bill was now in full flight after the dark form nearly at the timber.

He saw the horse fall, and he gave a loud cry:

"Alert all! I have found the game!"

As the horse fell Buffalo Bill made a bound, hoping to clear the long stake line.

But the animal had sprung to his feet with remarkable celerity, and the rope tightened right across the scout’s path.

"It was at the very instant, too, that the scout was upon it, and the result was a trip up, and a hard one.

Buffalo Bill fell heavily, for he had his rifle in one hand, the lasso in the other, and could not catch himself.

It was a fall that nearly knocked him breathless.

But he struggled to his feet, grasped his rifle and lasso, and started in pursuit.

But now he saw nothing to pursue.

The dark form had disappeared.

The scout halted at the edge of the timber to listen.

He heard but the faintest sound of flying feet.

This sound came to him only for an instant.

Then all was silent.

He had lost his game, and knew it.

The iron gray was snorting wildly.

"Ho, Bill, what is it?" called out Surgeon Powell from his post.

In response Buffalo Bill cried:

"All right; remain where you are, Frank."

Then he called out:

"Ho, Wild Bill!"

"Ay, ay."

"Stay on your post."

Again he shouted:

"Silent Sam!"

"I’m here,” came the answer from the trapper’s post.

"Remain on your post."

"Yes."

Then came the call:

"Ho, Man Killer!"

"Want me, white chief?" answered the Indian from the distant camp.

"No, stay where you are, but all keep your eyes open, for a visitor came to camp, and I failed to lasso her."

Walking up to the iron gray, Buffalo Bill spoke soothingly to him, and soon quieted him.

Then he went to his post and waited.

About two hours after Surgeon Powell came to him on his midnight rounds.

"What was it, Bill?" he asked.

Buffalo Bill told him just what had occurred.
“Well, you thwarted her, if it was the woman, which I can hardly believe.”

“And failed to catch her.”

“Yes, but I do not think the horses will be run off to-night, and that is a great deal.”

“Somewhere.”

But he, Surgeon Powell, and Wild Bill remained guard over the horses until called to breakfast, just at dawn.

The night had passed without the horses being kidnaped, but it had kept the whole camp awake all night to guard them, and, had it not been for Buffalo Bill, the midnight visitor, the Woman in Black, would surely have gotten the animals.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PRISONER PLOTTING.

At breakfast the alarm of the night was talked over, and, though the prisoner ate apart from the others, where he could get no chance to “doctor” the food or drink in any way, he laughed at the party for having been outwitted by the woman, though the five had been on guard, and she had come directly into their camp.

Surgeon Powell and Buffalo Bill did not reply to his mocking words, but Wild Bill said:

“This trail has not come to an end yet, pard, and when it does I’ll gamble big money on it that we know all about that woman, and when we go back you won’t be with us.”

“No, I’ll have escaped, as I never saw the irons yet that could hold me when I got ready to go.”

“I wasn’t thinking of your escape.”

“What then?”

“I was thinking of our leaving you behind—in your grave.”

The man was silenced at once, and having finished their breakfast, all began to prepare for the trail.

“I’ll tell you what we’ll do, pard,” said Surgeon Powell, after he had dressed the cut in Silent Sam’s head and the wounds of the prisoner.

“Yes, Doc.”

“We’ll keep this camp, leaving the prisoner here, and Silent Sam here to guard it.

“We’ll leave the horses, too, for we can do better on foot in finding the trail we are after, and then can follow it.”

“I think you are right, Frank.”

“Yes, Bill, for there will be four of us to look for it, and we will have the day before us.

“Then, too, we must meet the stage-coach, for it will pass along this morning.”

This was decided upon, and so the three pard, with Man Killer accompanying them, started off on foot, to look up the trail of the fugitives, after it had reached the ridge.

Silent Sam was left in the camp to guard it and the prisoner, and the latter Surgeon Powell left with his feet only manacled, as his wounded hand he did not wish to retard in its recovery, for it was doing well.

The chain about his ankles, however, was wound once around a small sapling, so that the prisoner could not move from his position, and Silent Sam was given the key to the irons, to let him give the man a rest at dinner time.

Taking a lunch with them, in case they should be gone all day, the party then left together, while Silent Sam took up his position where he could watch all the approaches to the camp.

Hardly had the party been lost to sight when the prisoner seemed to brighten up.

He looked at the form of Silent Sam, standing a hundred yards away, and then began to tug at his irons.

The manacles were too small to slip over his feet, he soon discovered.

Then he began to measure the length of the chain that held them together.

It was some three feet in length, but a turn around a small sapling had shortened it by a foot.

The prisoner’s blankets were spread by the tree, so that he could lie down upon them, and his saddle had been placed there as a rest for his back or head.

It was a Mexican saddle, and the stirrups were massive and heavy affairs.

Suddenly an idea flashed upon him, and with one hand he began to unstrap a stirrup from the saddle.

He was able to do so after a while, and pulled the leather guard off of the stirrup leather, and then put it back again.

This gave him a very dangerous weapon. Indeed, for he could swing the heavy stirrup with great force in a blow.

This work done, he put the saddle back, so as to hide what he had done, and then waited. He could do nothing else than hide his time.

Thus an hour passed, and Silent Sam walked up to the camp, to see how he was getting along.

“Say, pard, I want to talk with you.”

“Well?”

“You know me?”

“I guess.”

“I know you.”

“Maybe.”

“Surgeon Powell intends to kill me when he gets good and ready.”

“Yes.”

“It’s money in your pocket to let me go.”

“How much?”

“Call it a couple of thousand.”

“Where is it?”

“I’ve got it, for, strange to say, I was not robbed, but allowed to keep my money.”

“It is not enough.”

“I’ve only got three thousand.”

“You won’t need any if you die.”

“That’s so.”

“I’ll give you the three thousand if you let me escape.”

Silent Sam did not reply for several minutes, and then said suddenly and with a firmness of manner that was startling:

“No, for I know you and all that it would mean for you to escape.

“You appeal to the wrong one, Harold Carr, when you ask me to aid you, for I know all you would do.”
CHAPTER XIX.

THE ESCAPE.

The face of the prisoner turned pale at the sudden words of the trapper.
He did not speak for a moment, and then said:
"Silent Sam, some day I will even up matters with you, for I tell you now that I do not intend to be shot down in cold blood, or hanged like a dog. The end is not yet—for me."

The trapper made no reply, and soon after the prisoner said:
"Say, I didn’t eat much breakfast this morning, so give me a cold snack."

Silent Sam walked to the fire, where the remains of the breakfast yet were, and picked up from the frying pan a piece of venison steak.

This he carried to the prisoner, who arose as he approached.

Taking the edibles, he said:
"Now bring me a cup of water, please."

Silent Sam walked away to obey.

He soon returned, bringing a canteen of fresh water.

"They are coming back," said the prisoner, as the water was almost within his reach, and he looked off toward the horses as he spoke.

Silent Sam turned to look in the direction indicated, when, with a quick and hard swing the heavy stirrup was brought down with great force upon his head.

Silent Sam dropped senseless.

A malignant smile of triumph came over the face of the prisoner, and he at once bent over the motionless form and thrust his hand in his pockets.

The key of the iron was almost the first thing he found, and it did not take him long to free himself.

Then he grasped the trapper’s knife, and seemed about to drive it in his heart.

But, thinking better of it, he said:
"No, if he is not dead, I will not kill him—that redskin would avenge him. I’ll tie him."

With a lasso he did this, and well, while Silent Sam lay motionless, the blood trickling from the gash the heavy stirrup had cut in his head.

Then the man worked rapidly.

The stirrup was put back on the saddle, then a bag of provisions was taken from the supplies of the scouts.

Next his own trappings were gathered together and put upon a pack saddle.

With but one hand to work with, for the wounded one was of little use, Harold Carr could not get along as fast as he wished.

But he had all ready soon, and, taking a piece of paper from his pocket, and a pencil, he wrote:

"SURGEON POWELL: I have made my escape; even though I was the prisoner of such renowned men as yourself, Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill.

I have taken your horses, all of them, so you will have to take the back trail to the fort, and you know that some day the settlement between you and me will come, with the chances in my favor.

To follow the trail of that Woman in Black is fatal, so give it up.

“I will not say good-by, for we shall meet again, so au revoir.

Yours until death, "HAROLD CARR.”

Then followed a postscript:

"I used my stirrup on Silent Sam, knocking him out with one blow.

"I believe he is dead."

The piece of paper was put on the breast of Silent Sam, and then the daring man walked rapidly to where the horses were.

Pulling up the stakes, he tied the animals two by two, except the one he intended to ride and use as a pack horse.

All were led up to the camp, and Silent Sam lay as he had fallen, motionless as death.

Quickly saddling his own horse and the pack animal, Harold Carr mounted and rode out of camp.

He had escaped, seemingly, when all attempts to do so would have been impossible.

Unable to bribe the old trapper, he had taken advantage of a kind act toward him to deal him a blow that surely looked to have been fatal, for Silent Sam yet lay motionless, just as he had fallen.

It was some time after the departure of the escaped prisoner from the camp before Silent Sam showed any signs of life.

Then his breast began to heave.

He moved his leg, then a hand, his head turned from side to side, and he uttered a groan.

Another moment and his eyes opened.

Gazing about him, he seemed for a while to be dazed.

Then intelligence came back into his eyes, and with a sudden motion he attempted to rise.

He could not do so, and realized that he was bound hand and foot.

He uttered a moan, as though of mental, rather than physical, pain, and his eyes closed again.

But as he did so he heard a shout, and his name was called in a loud tone.

CHAPTER XX.

HELD UP.

When Surgeon Powell left the camp with his two long-tried comrades and the Indian, they made their way up to the top of the range to the point where the trail of the fugitives, and their own in following, came out upon the summit.

"There are four of us, so we can divide here," said the surgeon scout.

"Yes, two of us can take this side of the range, one going each way, and two the other."

"We can thus cover a long distance, if need be, and if we find a trail, where those we are after have left the range, we can come back and notify each other by shots," said Buffalo Bill.

"Yes, that will be the way, Bill. But we must not go over half a dozen miles from this point," the surgeon said.

"And the coach?"

"Yes, Bill, we will take the way to the right here, to meet it first, while Wild Bill and Man Killer go to the
left. If we make any discovery, Wild Bill, we will send word to you by the driver of the coach."
So it was arranged, and the four parted.
Buffalo Bill and Surgeon Powell went up the ridge, one on each side, Wild Bill and Man Killer down it.
The summit of the range was very nearly level, and it was from a couple of hundred yards to half a mile in width.
The surgeon and Buffalo Bill walked briskly to their posts, as the others did, and the start was made.
All were to follow the windings, clear to the edge, to discover just where the fugitives had gone over, if possible, and they then continued on their trail, having, as they doubtless supposed, thrown their pursuers off the scent.
One mile, two, had the surgeon and Cody gone, keeping very nearly the same pace, when there came to their ears the sound of approaching wheels.
They knew that it was the coach.
The hard soil of the ridge made the wheels rumble loudly, and the two men moved away from the edge of the range toward the center.
Even there the coach trail was but faintly marked, owing to the rocky track it followed.
"Ho, Bill, you heard it, too," called out Dr. Powell, as the two came within hailing distance.
"Yes, Frank. It will soon come in sight, for the driver is sending his team along at a good pace," answered the scout.
A moment after, around a bend a few hundred yards away, came the coach.
The six horses were at a good pace, and the driver was urging them.
He was alone on the box, and, glancing ahead, saw the two men barring his way, and at once drew rein with great suddenness.
"It is Fred Fletcher, and he thinks he is to be held up," said Surgeon Powell, as he recognized the driver.
Then he took off his black army sombrero, and, waving it, shouted:
"Ho, Fred, we are friends! Come on!"
The driver then waved his slouch hat, gave a shout, and brought his team along at a slapping pace.
As he neared the spot where the two friends were standing, he drew down to a slow pace, until he finally halted.
"Well, Dr. Powell, I am just awful glad ter see yer," he said, in an earnest voice, dropping his reins on the backs of his wheel horses and leaping to the ground.
"Why, Fred, you look as though you had seen a ghost," said the surgeon scout.
"No, but seen two ghosts made, Surgeon Powell."
"What do you mean?"
"Two kilt."
"Ah! Passengers?"
"Sagers."
"Then you have been held up?"
"I has."
"And two of your passengers were killed?"
"Sure."
"This is bad. Where was this?"
"Back on the trail half a dozen miles, sir."
"Soldiers, you say?"
"Black cavalry, sir."

"Ahl, you had two black soldiers as passengers?"
"Yes, sir. The road agents held up the coach, and I told 'em they'd git nixie, for I traveled light. But they said as how they'd take a look inside ther hearse, and there they found the two black soldiers."
"And a fight followed?"
"No, sir. They jist told them two poor fellers ter git out, and they had a good look at 'em, and the result was they tarned ter me and said:
"'Fred Fletcher, yer lied ter us, for yer does carry a rich find, as we wants these two men, fer reasons they knows well, when we tell 'em we recognizes 'em as havin' been in ther Perdido raid.'"
"Then ther two sengers looked scared awful, and ther two road agents tarned to ther chief and asks what was ter be done.
"Ther reply come quick and sharp.
"'They must die!'
"'Now, Surgeon Powell, who does yer think their leader was?'
"'A woman,' said Buffalo Bill, speaking for the first time.

CHAPTER XXI.
A WOMAN'S DEADLY HAND.

At the words of Buffalo Bill, Fred Fletcher, the stage-driver, looked him squarely in the face.
He had observed him before, and been impressed with his very striking appearance.
Now he said:
"'You knows her then, pard; but I doesn't know you.'
"'It is my friend, Buffalo Bill, Fred, the great chief of scouts of whom you have heard so much.'
"'Lordy! Does you mean it, doctor?'
"'Certainly do, Fred—William F. Cody, Buffalo Bill, and the king of plainsmen,' said Dr. Powell, with a smile.
The driver appeared to be taken aback, for he beheld before him the man he had so longed to meet, of whom he had heard so much.
But Buffalo Bill stepped forward, and, offering his hand, said, in his frank way:
"'I have heard of you, Pard Fletcher, as one of the crack drivers of the Rockies, and I am glad to meet you.'
"They shook hands warmly, and then the driver said:
"'So you knows it was a woman who held me up?'
"'Yes, I guessed it, for she has been raiding the stage trails in the North, and is a bold and clever one.'
"'Well, she's down here now playin' ther same game.'
"'Yes, my pard, Wild Bill, and I came down this way to find her.'
"'What is Wild Bill, pard?'
"'Not very far away."
"'You will pass him on this ridge.'
"'I have heard of him often, and if you and him is along with Surgeon Powell on a trail, yer'll catch what you is after, if it's ther Devil himself.'
"'We hope to do so, Fred, though from all accounts it appears to be a she-devil we are after. Tell us more about your being held up.'
"'Yer see, gents,' began Fletcher, "when I seen ther road agent tarn to ther woman, I kinder thought that would be mercy shown."
"But, Lord I love yer, she took me aback, clean off my feet, when she says:
"'Them nigs must die.'
"Ther two black sogers seemed all broke up, and says I to her:
"'Does yer mean it?'
"'I does,' says she.
"'And you a woman,' says I.
"'Yes, a woman who has suffered, and by those men and their comrades.
"'A woman as knows how ter avenge a wrong,' says she.

"Wall, gents, I begged for them two black sogers, and they went me a little better in ther beggin'.

"But it were all for no good, for that woman sat there on her black horse, dressed as black as a undertaker, and with a veil over her face, and she tells me that them two men must die.
"Poor fellers, I felt that sorry for them I jest concluded I'd fight ther layout, seen' only ther two men and ther woman, and expecting ther sogers ter help me.

"But when I called to them ter chip in with me, they would not draw a weapon, and one of 'em said, sad like, and in a way I'll never forget:
"'No, boss, we has ter die, fer ther is a doom writ down agin' us black cavalry out here, jest because a troop made thet Perdido said.

"'We thanks yer, boss, and says good-by, for we has got ter go, and that is plenty more of these fellers in hidin', as we is sartin.

"'We is sogers, boss, and, though we was scared, and don't want ter be kilt, we has got ter die, and we is ready.

"Gents, I was that sorry and mad I jest concluded ter see if ther were more of 'em about, and I began ter feel fer my gun, when that woman covered me that quick I never see ther like.

"'Hands up!' says she, 'or ther will be three dead corpses insted of two,' and she called out:

"'Men, shoot that driver if he moves a finger.'

"She 'peared ter be talkin' to somebody out of sight, and I caved; I didn't move a finger.

"Ther next I know'd, gents, was hearin' two quick shots, and if yer will believe me, it was ther woman who fired 'em, and them two poor black sogers dropped dead in ther tracks, and ther bullets hed hit 'em square in ther forehead atween ther eyes.'

It was with intense interest that the surgeon and Buffalo Bill listened to the driver's story of a woman's cruel deed.

They could hardly believe it of one who had given Surgeon Powell a horse in place of his own, had treated them mercifully, never once harming them seriously, and had only kidnapped their horses.

But in this case she had been merciless to two negro soldiers, and her very act certainly connected her with the mysterious killing of the black cavalry at Fort Benham, the perpetrators of which Surgeon Powell had taken the trail to hunt down.

CHAPTER XXII.

TO PUSH THE PURSUIT HARD.

"Well, Bill, what do you think of the Woman of the Iron Hand now?" asked Surgeon Powell, when he had heard all that had been witnessed by Fred Fletcher.

"I almost regret not allowing that fellow Carr to have fired on her that day at the river, for it would have saved the lives of those two poor soldiers."

"Yes; but I have an abiding faith that we will yet run her and her road agents down."

"I feel the same way, Frank," and, turning to the driver, he asked:

"Pard Fletcher, how long ago was this?"
"Little over an hour."

"And how far back?"

"About half a dozen miles, sir."

"What was done with the bodies?"

"They is in ther coach."

They stepped to the coach, opened the door, and there were the bodies of the two negro soldiers.

The bullets had entered the very center of their foreheads.

"That shows nerve, Frank, and a very steady hand with the revolver, woman's though it was."

"Yes, Bill. The Man Killer properly named her when he called her the Woman of the Iron Hand."

"Did she rob you, Pard Fletcher?" asked Buffalo Bill.

"Well, she didn't, 'cause why? I hadn't nothin' of value along. Her two companions searched ther dead blacks, and got a little money, their watches, and some trinkets they was takin' to their pards at ther fort."

"Poor fellows! and then?"

"They just rode away and left me."

"And you came right along?"

"I put ther bodies in ther coach, and then made ther critters step lively."

"And which way did the woman go?"

"Right on down ther ridge."

"Did you see any one else?"

"Not a soul."

"Then if there were others they kept hidden?"

"They did. But I'm of ther idea they was all."

"Frank, we'll go back with Pard Fletcher here, to where we turn off to our camp."

"Yes."

"You can write your letter there to the colonel, while I push on to camp and get all ready for a quick move after these fellows."

"That is just it, Bill."

"And then Pard Fred can push on fast, and if he finds Wild Bill and the Indian a long way off, he will, I know, pick them up and drive them back a few miles, so we can lose no time, for the road agents will then find us on their trail much sooner than they expect, and we will have the better part of the day to rush them."

"The very thing, Bill, and we'll be off at once," replied Surgeon Powell, adding:

"I begin to feel merciless toward that woman now, since I've seen her latest work."

"As I do."

"But I do not just understand one thing, Bill."

"Well?"
"She came down from the north country, just before you and Wild Bill."
"Yes."
"Her act to-day in killing those men shows that she is the one who hunts the black troopers."
"Sure."
"And yet when she was in the north country the murders of the black soldiers at Fort Benham were going on."
"That is so."
"How do you account for it?"
"She had her aliases here."
"That is just it."
"But, Fred, remember, you are not to speak to any one, save Colonel Thorp, about having seen us on the trail."
"I won't, doctor."
"Give him the letter I will write, when we halt where Buffalo Bill turns off to go to our camp, and bring an answer back, leaving it for me where I will show you, for we will not be very far from this locality, in my opinion, as these road agents must have a retreat near here."
"I guesses they has, sir, for each time I has been held up it has been on this ridge, or in the valley near it."

The two pardes then got upon the coach with Fred Fletcher, and Buffalo Bill took the reins, with the remark:
"I'll send 'em along for you, Pard Fred."
"Yer can handle six of 'em, then?"
"I guess so," and Buffalo Bill was not long in showing Fred Fletcher that he could handle the reins with a skill that was wonderful, for he had driven stage in the Rocky Mountains when he was not out of his teens.
The team soon realized that a master held them in hand, and they traveled at a very lively gait.

Reaching the halting place, Buffalo Bill drew them up quickly, causing Fred Fletcher to say, with enthusiasm:
"Well, you can do it--no one better have I ever seen."

Springing from the box, and leaving Surgeon Powell to write his letter to Colonel Thorp, Buffalo Bill bade the driver good-by, and started down the trail to the camp.

After a rapid walk he came in sight of the camp, to suddenly stop and cry:
"Where are the horses?"

Walking rapidly on, he saw the animals nowhere in sight, nor did he see the prisoner, as he neared the camp, so he called loudly the name of Silent Sam.

CHAPTER XXIII.
THE SCOUT'S DISCOVERY.

Buffalo Bill felt a dread that all was not right in the camp the moment he saw that the horses were gone.

He hastened on to the camp proper, and then beheld the prostrate and bound form of Silent Sam.

What did it mean? Could it be that in the broad glare of day strange and daring woman had entered the camp and gotten the best of a man who had the reputation that Silent Sam had as a thorough plainsman.

At all events, he was there, and bound.

The horses, too, were gone.

The cut on the trapper's head, made by the heavy stirrup when the prisoner had dealt the blow, met the eye of the scout.

Instantly he set to work to free the bound man.

His lips alone could tell the story.

Buffalo Bill saw that the man had been dealt a severe blow.

His face was white, the stirrup had cut to the bone, he had lost considerable blood, and the blow had been one of such stunning force that it had rendered him unconscious for a considerable length of time.

In a very short while Buffalo Bill had Silent Sam free, and then he gave him a drink from his canteen, bathed the wound, and fluffed the hands and lower limbs, rendered stiff from their being long and tightly bound.

It was not very long before Silent Sam rallied, for he began to show color in his face, his eyes lost their glassy look, and at last, with an effort, he said, huskily:

"He got away with me, didn't he?"
"Who?"
"The prisoner."
"Then it was not the woman?"
"No."
"The prisoner escaped?"
"Yes."
"Did he take the horses?"
"They are gone."
"All of them?"
"Yes."
"He kept his word, then?"
"What was it?"
"To leave us afoot."
"The woman was not here, then?"
"No."
"He mastered you alone?"
"Yes."
"That is strange, in irons, as he was."
"It was trickery and treachery."
"Tell me about it."
"He tried to bribe me."
"Yes."
"Then he played the game of being hungry and thirsty."
"I see."
"He had stripped his stirrup off of the saddle, and stood up as I approached, and dealt me a blow he meant should kill, I guess."
"It was a severe one."
"I tried to dodge it, but too late, and I went down under it."
"I should think so."
"It seemed to crack my skull, hard as it is—to crush the bone."
"It did not, though, for I have examined it well."
"It was a severe blow, however, but Dr. Powell will soon fix it up all right for you."
"Where are the others?"
"On the ridge."
"They will wait there for me, so I will go after them, as we cannot follow the road agents now, as we had hoped to do."
"Why not?"
"The horses are gone."

Silent Sam muttered an oath, and Buffalo Bill, arising quickly, said:
"I will go at once to the ridge, for I may be able to catch the coach."
With this he started off at a run.

Arriving at the ridge, where he had asked Surgeon Powell to await him, he found that he was there, as also were Wild Bill and the Indian.

All seemed surprised at beholding him, and listened with amazement to the story he had to tell.

"Now, Man Killer, can you catch that coach, for if you do I'll give you the finest outfit on the border?" asked Buffalo Bill.

"Will try," and the Indian sprang to his feet.

"It has a long start, Bill, for Wild Bill and Man Killer were on their way back when they met Fletcher, and they have been here a couple of hours," said Surgeon Powell.

"If you catch it, go on to the fort, and bring us back horses, for we can only wait here.

"If you cannot catch it, wait where you are and I will meet you with provisions, so you can continue on to the fort on foot, and Surgeon Powell will write a letter for you to carry to Colonel Thorp," said Buffalo Bill.

Man Killer put down his rifle, drew his belt tighter, and bounded away along the trail.

"Now, Prank, you write another letter to the colonel at the fort, while Wild Bill puts up a bag of food for the Indian and hastens back here with it, where I will wait, for I can then start off after Man Killer."

The words of Buffalo Bill were quickly acted upon, for Surgeon Powell and Wild Bill started rapidly down the slope to the camp.

In just half an hour Buffalo Bill saw Wild Bill coming back.

He had the Indian's blankets and a bag of provisions, also a letter Surgeon Powell had written to Colonel Fred Thorp, as his own regiment loved to call their popular commander.

Buffalo Bill took up the rifle of the Indian, to carry it on after him, and with the other things brought by Wild Bill, started off at a long, swinging walk.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE INDIAN RUNNER.

Before leaving Wild Bill, Buffalo Bill had advised him that he had better start at once on the trail of the horses, so that he could see just how rapidly they had traveled and if there was any sign that the escaped prisoner, not dreading pursuit, intended to halt.

He also said he would like to know if the prisoner would retake to the ridge again, as though he intended to go on the trail of the road agents.

If so, he certainly must know where their retreat was, whether he was one of them or not.

Just what he was to the road agent band Buffalo Bill could not fathom, as he knew from his own experience that the man would have killed the Woman in Black had he not prevented.

"Some former member of the band, and a discarded lover, I take it," was his comment to Wild Bill, and he added:

"If we can follow that horse trail, while waiting for the Indian's return with recruits for us, we may be able to track the road agents to their lair.

"They, knowing we are dismounted, will naturally suppose we have all returned to the fort, and by giving that impression by changing our camp, we will be able to learn something, perhaps.

"That Indian is a fleet and tireless runner, and may overtake the coach."

"Silent Sam told me when I was in camp that it was down grade for forty miles, and Fred Fletcher would put his team to it all the way, for the relay station was that distance off, as they are very few and far between in these mountains," said Wild Bill.

"Well, the Indian can get a horse at the stage station, if he does not overtake the coach before getting there.

"I had known that it was down grade for such a distance, I would not have started the Indian to catch the coach, but let him push on for the fort direct."

"I do not believe he can catch it with the start that Fletcher has."

With this Buffalo Bill had gone on the Indian's track, while Wild Bill returned to camp, to pick up the trail of the stolen horses.

Buffalo Bill was as good a walker as he was a rider.

Often, from earliest boyhood, he had made many a long tramp on foot, and he had copied the swinging trot of the Indian, a pace that carries them very far in a day, and was not very fatiguing.

Dropping into this swinging gait, he left the miles rapidly behind him, and when his watch told him that he had been two hours on the run, he knew that he had covered a dozen miles.

Another two hours passed, and the sun was drawing close to the horizon.

Still another hour he went on, and then Buffalo Bill said:

"That Indian goes well, for I know I have made thirty miles."

He had just come to a bend in the ridge, where he had a view of the trail several miles ahead.

Far in the distance he saw the Indian runner trotting along.

It was white man against Indian, and, as usual, the paleface was the victor.

Spurring rapidly, Buffalo Bill began to overhaul the redskin, and drew near enough for him to hear a shot, he felt assured.

Taking his rifle, he fired, without stopping in his run. The Indian heard the shot, turned, seemed to be satisfied, and halted.

In ten minutes Buffalo Bill came up, and both showed the effects of their rapid run.

"No catch him," said Man Killer.

"No, he drove too fast for you, and had too long a start."

"White chief run like deer."

"I can get along a little bit. But, here are your provisions, blankets and rifle, and you can get a horse at the stage station, a dozen miles ahead, and should reach the fort, changing animals at the three stations Surgeon Powell says are on the coach trail, by to-morrow night."

"Man Killer get there?"

"I do not doubt it. But, yonder is a stream, so we will camp there, have supper, and then you can push on ahead, while I go back to our comrades."

"Great chief know."

The two then went to the bank of the little stream, a
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CHAPTER XXV.
A CHANGE OF CAMPS.

It was yet a couple of hours before dawn when Buffalo Bill heard the challenge, when nearing his camp:

"Halt! hands up!"

"Ho, Frank, you are on the alert, I see."

"Yes, Bill. What luck?"

"I caught the redskin, after a thirty-mile chase."

"No other man could have done it."

"Thanks. But he had not caught the stage, though I do not blame him, as the trail was excellent for wheels, and all down grade, while Fletcher doubtless pushed ahead hard, being some hours behind time."

"Yes; he’s a hard driver, anyway."

"We camped and had supper, then Man Killer pushed on, and, getting a fresh mount at the three stations, he’ll pass the coach by dawn, and get to the fort by night."

"Yes, but it will be a four days’ delay for us here, at least."

"No doubt. But where is Wild Bill?"

"He set off on the trail of the horses as soon as he got to camp, and has not yet returned."

"He camped on the trail, and will turn-up to-morrow."

"Yes."

"How is Silent Sam?"

"Better, but that was a hard blow he got, and a narrow escape from death."

"I thought so myself. But there is no need of standing guard, so turn in, for I am as tired as I can well be."

"I do not wonder, after standing guard all last night, tramping hard all the morning, then having a thirty-mile run, and a climb back of the same distance. You are a pine knot, Bill."

"We are two of a kind, Frank, for toughness."

"Physical, I hope you mean, not moral. Bill," and the surgeon soon laughed, while suddenly before the two appeared the tall form of Wild Bill.

"Well, parson, I am back again," and Wild Bill dropped wearily down by the side of his companions.

"Any discovery, Bill?" asked Surgeon Powell.

"I took the trail, and that fellow lighted out lively with those horses, I can tell you. Why, I’ve been sixty miles since I left here."

"So has Buffalo Bill."

"Did you catch the redskin, parson?"

"Yes."

"Did he catch the coach?"

"No."

"You did your part."

"He will do his now. But what did you discover, Bill?" asked Cody.

"The trail led down into the valley, up it along the stream, and he kept up a telling pace for twenty miles, as the trail showed. Guess he thought we were runners, and might overtake him."

"Wish you could have done so."

"Couldn’t."

"He slackened speed after about twenty miles, wore around, and up to the range again, climbing it by the stage trail. I got to the stage trail, and saw where he had crossed it, going toward the valley on the other side of the range.

"It was sunset then, and having found that he had thus doubled on his tracks, and really come back nearer to us, I determined to camp for supper and return. This I did, and here I am; but I have a piece of advice to offer."

"Well?"

"About a mile from here, down in the valley, is a canyon, and there is a good spring in it, and plenty of wood. I could hardly pick up the trail until I had passed it, and I went in there, wondering if the prisoner had gone that way."

"It is a blind canyon. I found, and the soil leaves no trail at its entrance, but a short distance up the canyon it is a perfect garden, so I say take up traps and go there to-night."

"On foot we cannot be tracked there, and I believe we can climb up to the ridge and stage trail out of the canyon, so be as near it as from here."

"You see, the Indian won’t be back with horses for some days, so we need only watch for him about the time to expect him."

"A good idea. What do you say, Buffalo Bill?"

"By all means go, and at once," was the answer.

Silent Sam was aroused, and the camp outfit gathered and put on a pole between Cody and Wild Bill, while Surgeon Powell carried a large bundle and Silent Sam the weapons.

So they started, and in half an hour had entered the canyon.

Wild Bill led the way through the darkness to the spring, which was sheltered by a thick growth of small pines, and here the tired party spread their blankets to get a few hours of rest.

It was late when they awoke, the camp was put in good shape, breakfast gotten, Silent Sam’s wound dressed, and all made comfortable for a stay of several days.

Later, Surgeon Powell, leaving Wild Bill in camp with Silent Sam, asked Buffalo Bill to accompany him, and the two started up the canyon, to try and reach the ridge.

This they did, finding an easy way, and as it was only a couple of hours’ walk to where Wild Bill had said the escaped prisoner had crossed the stage trail into the other valley, they decided to go there and see just where he had gone after leaving the range.

CHAPTER XXVI.
THE FUGITIVE’S TRAIL.

"Frank, I’ll tell you what is best to be done."

It was Buffalo Bill who spoke, and he addressed Surgeon Powell.

It was a little after noon, and the two were seated in the valley into which Wild Bill had trailed the escaped prisoner.

They had struck his trail at the ridge, where it turned off, followed it down into the valley, and there found that he had gone into camp, doubtless for the night, as he had reached that spot by dark.
Here they halted and had a cold dinner, and Buffalo Bill uttered the words that open this chapter.

"Well, Bill, what is it?"

"My plan is for you to return to camp from here, I taking what food we both need, and you remain all night, then start out to-morrow with several days' supplies.

"I will spend the rest of the day on this trail, and when you get here to-morrow will be on hand to meet you.

"If I have made any discovery, well and good, but if not, we can continue the hunt the balance of the day, and the next, when one of us can go to meet the Indian with the horses."

"I believe your plan is a good one, Bill, and I'll go back to camp. You need a rest, so you turn in early to-night, and I'll be here by nine o'clock to-morrow, and learn what you have discovered, if anything."

"All right, so it will be," answered Buffalo Bill, and, having taken a limited supply of food, he started upon the trail of the escaped prisoner once more, while Surgeon Powell, at a brisk step, went off on his return to the camp in the canyon.

Buffalo Bill had little difficulty in following the trail, for no effort had been made by Harold Carr to conceal it, apparently.

He evidently thought that he had left the scouts helpless, utterly unable to do anything else save go back to the fort.

The idea did not occur to him that they might send one of their party to the fort for horses and the others remain there.

He looked for a week to elapse at least before he need have any fear of them.

For several miles Buffalo Bill followed the trail down the valley, and then came to where it had crossed a large stream.

It was fordable, and, with his clothes and weapons held above his head, Buffalo Bill lost no time in getting over to the other side.

There began a barren plain, and a short distance from the stream the trail was lost sight of.

But the scout did not despair.

He noted the way the trail was going when he lost sight of it, and then he stopped to study the nature of the range toward which it went.

The range was over a score of miles away, and the scout's field glass picked out a break in it, where there was a canyon.

"That fellow knows this country well, I am sure, and yonder canyon is the place he headed for.

"I cannot get back to meet Frank Powell in the morning if I go there, but I can leave a note here for him, for he will come on my trail the moment he sees that I did not return to the camp where we had dinner."

A note was written, in a cypher which Buffalo Bill knew that Surgeon Powell and a few others alone understood, and fastened on a stick, it was stuck up just where the trail of the fugitive faded out of sight in the hard, barren soil of the plain.

Taking a large stick, then, with sharpened end, Buffalo Bill started, dragging it after him.

It left but a slight trace, one barely noticeable, but the scout knew that Surgeon Powell would see it and follow it.

Every now and then, as he advanced, he would turn a small stone over, that was along the way, and thus more thoroughly marked his trail.

It was nearly dark when he reached the verge of the range, and he could see that quite a considerable stream flowed there.

As he neared it, the plain became less barren, and to his delight he saw that he had very closely followed the trail of the stolen horses, for the tracks came into sight again, and led directly toward the canyon entrance, and which penetrated the range.

Arriving at the bank of the stream, he found it fordable, and at once began to prepare to cross it, as he had the other.

This he did, and thus he took the now broadly marked trail up the canyon.

For over a mile he followed it, to find that it branched into two canyons, each narrowing as they penetrated the range.

But he took the one the trail entered, and held on until it was dark, for he had his canteen full of water, and intended camping when too dark to travel farther.

At last he began to look about for a camping place, for he could hardly see the trail, but halted suddenly, as he came in sight of the glimmer of a camp-fire ahead.

"Ah! at last!" he muttered, as he kept on his way, for the firelight was a beacon now to guide him.

CHAPTER XXVII.
THE REDSKIN MESSANGER.

Colonel Alfred Thorp sat in his pleasant quarters, enjoying an after-supper cigar, though his face wore a troubled expression.

Half an hour before, and just after nightfall, he had been startled by the report that two negro soldiers had been found dead on post, each with an arrow in his breast.

Since the departure of Surgeon Powell to hunt a cul to this unknown and mysterious murderer of the colored troops, there had been no fatality among them.

For some days the guards had been troubled by night and doubled by day.

Then they had begun once more to have but one man on duty, commencing the very night of the two murders.

The guard on the night round at eight o'clock found two posts occupied by colored sentinels with only a dead man there.

Colonel Thorp had been at supper when the report was made to him, and he at once gave the order to have the guards trebled again by night.

It was done, and then he sat down to enjoy his cigar, and to wonder that no word had come to him of Surgeon Powell, Silent Sam and the Man Killer.

The surgeon scout certainly had not yet tracked down the mysterious spy of the negro soldiers, as the two deaths that night went to prove.

Had he met Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill as he had anticipated, thought Colonel Thorp.

The stage-coach would soon arrive, he hoped, for it was due that night at dark, and perhaps Fred Fletcher would bring in some news of the surgeon scout.
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"White Beaver don’t want more scout then,” was the reply.

The coach, which had its terminus station at Fort Benham, had a run of two hundred miles, which Fred Fletcher alone made, preferring to draw double pay for the work, and go clear through, as he was allowed forty hours to make it in, and there was but one round trip a week.

He was seldom late, and now, as the time passed, and the coach did not arrive, Colonel Thorp began to grow anxious.

He was just about to call the orderly and ask if its lamps were visible across the plain when he heard voices outside.

Then the orderly came in, accompanied by an Indian.

It was Man Killer, and the colonel gave him a hearty welcome.

Whatever the Indian had passed through, in his rapid ride, he was perfectly composed, and said:

"Man Killer come back.

"Has talking papers for great white chief."

"The White Beaver, Great Medicine Man of the Palefaces, send talking papers."

He had taken out of a hidden pocket the two letters, the one given the driver, Fred Fletcher, and later the one given him by Buffalo Bill and also written by Surgeon Powell.

Colonel Thorp read them both through without comment, for they told him that Surgeon Powell was pushing ahead on the trail of the Woman in Black and her road agent comrades, and all that had happened, to the holding up of the coach.

The letters also made known the fact that Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill were with the surgeon scout, the mysterious kidnapping of the horses of the party, and all that followed, as well as the capture of Harold Carr and his escape with all their animals.

The surgeon scout also asked Colonel Thorp to kindly send out by the Indian a horse for each of them, and two pack animals, along with a few extra supplies.

Colonel Thorp congratulated the Indian upon his quick ride, and was glad to hear from him that the coach would be along in a couple of hours, and why it was behind time.

"You will need rest to-night, so you can start back in the morning,” said Colonel Thorp.

But Man Killer asserted that he was not tired, needed no rest, and wished to get back with all haste to White Beaver and his companions.

He asked the colonel to let the horses be gotten at once, and also the supplies, and he would be ready to go within the hour.

This Colonel Thorp was only too anxious to have him do, if he was willing, for he did not like the idea of the party being dismounted in that wild country longer than was necessary.

But he offered to send a scout along with the Man Killer to help him with the horses.

This the Indian refused, and in a way that showed that he considered it a reflection upon his ability to go through alone with the horses.

The colonel saw how the Man Killer felt, and fastened to assure him that he had only intended to relieve him in his hard task.

“Talking paper ask for more scouts?” questioned the Indian.

“No.”

So the colonel sent the Indian off to get supper, ordered the horses and supplies, and in one hour he was ready for the start.

A letter was written to Surgeon Powell by Colonel Thorp, who gave it to the Indian, grasped his hand and saw him ride away, leading the half dozen fine horses selected for the party, and himself mounted upon a splendid animal.

An hour after his departure the coach lamps were seen dancing across the prairie, and when Fred Fletcher came in he reported having met the Indian and his horses going leisurely back on the trail, and then he gave Colonel Thorp a description of his hold up by the Woman in Black and her comrades.

A couple of hours after the arrival of the coach there was a shot heard, a cry of alarm from one of the posts, followed by a call for the guard.

Then the news spread through the fort like wildfire that another negro soldier had been killed on his post, though with him had also been two white sentinels.

He had been shot through the heart, and the flash of the murderer’s rifle had come from only a short distance away.

It was the third victim that night at Fort Benham.

CHAPTER XXVIII

TRACKING BUFFALO BILL.

Surgeon Powell returned from where he had left Buffalo Bill to the summit of the range, and made his way back down into the canyon.

He found Silent Sam not so well, his wound was inflamed, and he had some fever.

He did what he could for him, and made preparations for an early start the next morning to follow the trail of Buffalo Bill.

With Wild Bill he talked over matters fully, and stated that he expected one of them would be back within twenty-four hours, and he hoped to have made some discovery of importance.

If neither Buffalo Bill or himself did return within that time, he suggested that Wild Bill keep watch for the coming of the Man Killer with the horses, and instead of taking them down to the camp in the canyon, that they bring the outfit up to the range and push on after their trail, adding:

“I will leave good signs for you to follow, Wild Bill."

“I'll get there, doctor; but do you think Silent Sam is going to be ill from that wound?”

“I hope not, though it is possible that he might. We will get him into a camp nearer operations as soon as Man Killer returns,” was the answer.

Turning in for the night, Surgeon Powell slept well and long, and upon rising early was glad to find that Silent Sam was no worse, if not better.

He again dressed the wound, and gave Wild Bill instructions how to do it, and left medicines for him to give the archer.

Then he started off with a good supply of food and ammunition for Buffalo Bill and himself.

He reached the summit of the range by sunrise, took a
short rest, and went along the stage trail to where that of the road agents had turned off.

It was just at the hour he had appointed when he walked into the little thicket where he had left Buffalo Bill.

To his surprise there was not only no sign of the chief of scouts, but no fire or other indication that he had been there all night.

What did it mean, he wondered.

At first he feared harm had befallen Buffalo Bill.

Then he remembered that he had always argued that Buffalo Bill was not doomed to die with his boots on, after all he had passed safely through.

It then flashed across his mind that the scout had struck some trail he would not give up to return and meet him, and the best thing he could do would be to follow him.

It was not a light load he had to carry, as may be imagined, but he shouldered it and set out on the trail of the road agents, and which Buffalo Bill had gone upon.

He walked at a steady pace, and at last came to the stream.

Here he halted, but only to gather some driftwood, tie it together with a lariat, cut a sapling for a pole, and start anew.

He reached the other shore some distance below the ford, but with dry feet.

He dragged his raft ashore, fasten the lasso, and left the driftwood for use again, if needed.

He soon came to the end of the trail, as far as seeing the tracks of the road agents’ horses was concerned.

But there was the note left in the stick by Buffalo Bill.

“I did the right thing to follow promptly,” he said when he had read the short note.

He pushed on once more, his keen eyes detecting the slight trace of the pointed stick dragged by Buffalo Bill, and the stones here and there turned over by the scout to mark his way.

He reached the other stream at the base of the range beyond the large valley he had crossed, and here he set to work to build another raft.

This done, he crossed the stream safe and dry, as in the other case, and then pushed on once more.

At length he came to a spot where he halted.

But for the fact that he was closely watching his every step he would have failed to observe a small mark that was a faintly traced arrow.

It pointed off the trail.

He went in the direction it pointed, and found himself in a thicket, right where the canyon narrowed and branched in two directions.

Here, too, he found a stick stuck in the ground, and a small piece of paper folded around it.

The note was written in cipher, but well understood by Surgeon Powell. It read as follows:

“Have made an important discovery.

“Went from here last night to reconnoiter, camped here until this morning and now start again.

“Remain in hiding here until I return, and lie low, for camp of road agents is in canyon to the right.”

There was no address or signature, but Surgeon Powell knew that it was for him, and that Buffalo Bill had written it.

CHAPTER XXIX.

TRACKING THE SURGEON SCOUT.

Wild Bill felt the loneliness of his position in the little camp, with Silent Sam in distress on his hands, more than he would have had he been alone.

He took good care of the wounded trapper, however, gave him his medicine, killed some birds for him to eat, and at night tenderly dressed his wound.

He was glad to see that Silent Sam grew no worse.

His fever did not increase, and his wound appeared to be less inflamed.

But the old trapper had certainly had a severe blow, for he was more silent even than was his wont, spent most of the time lying down and appeared to be at times but semi-conscious.

As Wild Bill felt it was growing time for the departing of the Indian, who might make better time than was anticipated, and with his coming the camp would be changed, he determined the afternoon of the third day in camp to go up on the ridge, carrying the saddles along with him.

He made a trip well loaded down, hid the saddles, waited for some time and then returned to camp.

Wild Bill got supper, and leaving Silent Sam sleeping, took another load up the ridge, though it was now night.

Taking up his position to command the trail, where they had gone down to their other camp, he smoked his pipe and waited with the resignation of an Indian.

The hours went by, midnight came, passed, and still he kept watch.

The Indian must be along soon, he felt certain.

At last he heard a sound that at once brought him to his feet.

There was the sound of hoof-falls.

Soon, as they grew louder and louder, there came dimly into view a horse and rider.

Other horses followed, but with no riders.

“Ho, Chief!”

The horses halted, and the Indian asked, for it was the Man Killer:

“Is it the White Beaver?”

“No, Wild Bill.”

Explanations followed, the horses were staked out on the slope, and the scout and the Indian walked along the ridge to the place which led down into the canyon camp.

Silent Sam was still sleeping, and seemed not to be disturbed, while the two carried more of the outfit up to the ridge.

At last breakfast was ready, and Wild Bill aroused Silent Sam, though with some effort, and once more tenderly cared for him.

The trapper seemed very quiet, ate little breakfast, but was able to walk up the steep trail, while the scout and the Indian carried the last of the traps.

Securing all these, in the early dawn the two went after the horses, and they were found as they had been left, and much rested, for the Man Killer had pushed them along well in his coming.

They were soon saddled, the packs put on, Silent Sam and the others mounted, and the start was made to follow in the trail of Buffalo Bill and Surgeon Powell.

The latter had, as he had promised, left “signs,” and Wild Bill found no difficulty in following;
The Buffalo Bill Stories.

He found at the camp where Surgeon Powell had expected to join Buffalo Bill a note which told him that he had not joined him there, and so they pushed on once more.

Reaching the stream, the driftwood was discovered, and quickly made into a raft, for the Indian swam across and brought it back.

On this Silent Sam and the pack saddles crossed over, and the trail was again resumed.

The second stream was reached before sunset, and the raft, left by the surgeon scout, was brought into use.

Once more the saddle horses were led over by Wild Bill, Silent Sam, who was growing weak, and who seemed to be in a bad way, being sent over on the raft.

Again ready to mount, Silent Sam was found to be really too much fatigued to ride alone, so, as it was now nearly night, a good camping place was sought and found.

The trigger was first called for, and Wild Bill found that he was suffering greatly.

His wounded head was more inflamed, his fever higher, and he seemed barely more than conscious.

The blankets were spread for him, and refusing supper he dropped off to sleep.

Wild Bill remarked:

"I guess the trigger is done for, Man Killer."

"Feel heap bad. Maybe die bimeby."

"I am pretty sure that he will die bimeby, pard," responded Wild Bill, dryly, and he added:

"Well, we have horses and extra supplies, while we are much nearer our pards here than in the camp we left.

"We will see what the morrow has in store for us, and meet what comes as best we can," and the frontier philosopher turned in for rest, the Indian taking the first watch.

Chapter XXX.

Buffalo Bill on the Right Trail.

"At last," Buffalo Bill had said, when he looked at the light glimmering ahead of him up the canyon.

He concluded to go ahead, and make a thorough reconnaissance of this canyon, and also of the camp which he now was sure he had come upon.

"It is a quiet place, the plain is trackless leading to it, and the road agents have chosen wisely in having their retreat here.

"But I happened to have followed, and I believe the end is not far off."

So mused Buffalo Bill, as he moved ahead.

As he advanced, he saw that the light was much farther off than he had supposed it to be.

Another thing was that if he stepped either to the right or left, he lost sight of the light.

His eyes were blinded by it to a slight degree, and he turned his back and began to look over the way he had come.

He felt that something was wrong.

With the light no longer in his eyes, he began to see clearly about him, although it was now night, and the high walls of the canyon shut him in with greater gloom.

As he looked he uttered an exclamation.

On his right was a precipice, not three feet from where he stood.

It looked far down into blackness and death.

A step or two in that direction and he would have gone to his doom.

He now looked on the other side.

There, too, was a precipice.

It looked down also to death.

The canyon there was not over a hundred yards wide, and in its center was a ridge of rock, with the two yawning chasms, one on either side.

With all his nerve, Buffalo Bill felt the shock of his narrow escape.

He turned again.

There was the light.

"That is the beacon to guide the band by night to the camp.

"Others attempting to follow would be dashed to death.

"It looks to me that these chasms are very deep, and it would be a bad place to travel by day, if one's head was not level.

"I had a narrow escape, but as I have come this far, I will venture on."

With this he moved forward, feeling every step, and keeping the beacon ahead constantly in sight.

Half a mile did he thus go over, with death on either side, when he came to a barrier.

It was a tree that had fallen across the ridge.

But along the tree to the right was plenty of space for him to pass.

He did so, and at the other end found bars put across.

Getting over them, he saw that he was in safety now, for the canyon spread out, was dotted with trees, a stream wound through it, and tumbled over the edge of a cliff into the precipice on one side of the ridge.

The light ahead was several hundred yards away, so he still advanced.

His roll of blankets, provision bag, and extra weight he left at the tree, and took his bearings well from the high cliffs upon either side.

Then he moved forward toward the light.

As he did so he saw objects moving about.

They were horses, over a score in number.

He knew now why the bars were put up.

Catching one of the horses without trouble, he used him as a foil.

He walked by the side of the animal until he got near to the camp.

There were a couple of rude cabins there, sheltered by a grove of pines, but the light he had seen he now discovered was a large lantern on a rock.

The cabins, he was sure, could not be seen from the ridge trail to the retreat.

Going nearer, he gained the pines, and he saw a party of four persons seated at a table at supper.

There was a camp-fire near, and a man was busy cooking.

Three of those at the table were men, while the fourth was the Woman in Black.

A lantern swung from a limb of a tree over the table, and lighted up the faces of those seated there.

For an hour did Buffalo Bill watch them, and then, as he was preparing to go, he heard the sound of hoofs.

A horse was coming at a gallop across the level valley, as he had come.

A moment more, and a man rode up, dismounted, gave his horse to one of those at the table, who came forward
to meet him, and advancing to where the others were, sat down.
The man at the fire at once began to serve his supper, and as the light of the lantern fell upon him Buffalo Bill recognized Harold Carr, the escaped prisoner.

Buffalo Bill was too far off to hear what was said, but he had found the Woman in Black, the escaped prisoner, Harold Carr, and their retreat.

There were, as far as he had discovered, six persons in the band, one being a woman.

"I'll go back and get help.

"I only need the rest of our party to rope in this layout," said Buffalo Bill.

But to get back was a difficulty which the scout overcame after a moment of thought.

He caught a horse to make him his guide.

CHAPTER XXXI.
The Mysterious Campers.

It was a clever thing in Buffalo Bill to make one of the outlaw's horses his guide.

Then he took up his traps left there, and, putting up the bars again, got behind the horse and drove him, as it were, along the perilous trail.

When he had safely passed over the ridge, with the guidance of the horse, Buffalo Bill determined to take the animal back again, not caring to make a mistake of having him missed in the morning by the outlaws.

Looking about him, he found, after a long search, two long sticks, and, in going back used them for guides on each side, keeping them over the edges of the precipice.

He also watched his way most carefully as the horse went along.

At the bars he let the horse into the valley, then, with his sticks, began to retrace his way.

It was slow work, but he made it in safety, and came to where he had left his traps.

Taking these up, he went back through the canyon, reached the little river, and went down it for a camping place.

He found a good one, ate a cold supper, and turned in.

As he lay down his eyes beheld the glimmer of a light.

At once he arose and began to reconnoiter.

It was the light of a camp-fire, he was sure.

He went on down the stream for some distance, and at last came upon a scene that surprised him.

Camping right on the river bank was a small party.

They had evidently just gone into camp, the building of the fire having attracted his attention. Seeing that he could get nearer by getting under the river bank, he did so, and soon gained a position within twenty feet of the campers.

What he saw fairly startled him.

What he overheard startled him the more.

About the camp-fire were five persons, and staked out not far distant was a group of horses.

There were two white men, a young man and one with iron gray hair; both fine specimens of manhood.

There was a large negro man and a negress.

The fifth of the group was the Woman in Black.

Her veil was raised now and her hat cast aside, and Buffalo Bill saw a bresnced, but really beautiful face, slender, graceful, and wry form.

The negro was cooking supper, the negress setting a table that had been taken from one of the pack saddles, and was in sections.

There were campstools, several hammocks swung in the trees, and altogether the scene was a comfortable one, while two large dogs, too busily watching the cooking of supper to know the scout was so near, were lying near the Woman in Black.

Buffalo Bill was glad to see that the wind blew from the dogs toward him.

What he heard was as follows:

"We made a mistake, Kate, in not uniting our force with Buffalo Bill and his party, when we found out who they were, for then there would have been no trouble in corolling Carr and his cutthroat gang."

"Yes, father; but we can surprise them in their retreat, and that is half the battle, and they do not greatly outnumber us," said the Woman in Black.

"Yes, we are near their retreat, for I am sure you have made no mistake, Kate, and we must attack them to-morrow night; but, as you say, father, we did make a mistake in not joining forces with Buffalo Bill and that officer we saw with him," said the young man.

"It is not too late to do a good deed."

Buffalo Bill uttered the words as he swung himself over the bank, and strode into the full glare of the firelight.

There were startled cries, two savage yelps from the dogs, and they bounded toward the scout.

But a stern command from the Woman in Black cowed them, and she cried:

"Father! Brother! it is Buffalo Bill!"

"At your service, lady," and the scout politely raised his sombrero.

"I am so glad to meet you again, sir, for we were just wishing for you.

"The last time we met you saved my life, and I ran away from you.

"But how did you find us?"

"I have been, as I supposed, upon your trail for a week, miss, but it seems I am mistaken, for there appears to be two of you," and Buffalo Bill laughed.

"I do not wonder that you have been deceived, Mr. Cody, for others have been; but let me present you to my father, Andrew Kennon, some years ago a captain in the army, but now a miner, and this is my brother, Wilber Kennon, also a miner."

The father and brother of the woman warmly shook hands with Buffalo Bill, after which he continued:

"And you must know our whole party, Mr. Cody, and explanations will follow later."

"This is my maid, Quickstep, and Toby is her husband, and devoted friends they are to us, as you will know.

"There are our four-footed friends, Sentinel and Guard, and they are worth their weight in silver."

Buffalo Bill shook hands with both Quickstep and Toby, patted Sentinel and Guard upon the head, and took the seat placed for him by Wilber Kennon, accepting the invitation to have supper with pleasure, for he had eaten but sparingly of his scant provisions that day.
CHAPTER XXXII.
HER DOUBLE.

As Kate Kenyon had said to Buffalo Bill, explanations did follow.

It was after supper that Buffalo Bill heard the strange story, and it unfolded mystery, wrong and crime to his ears.

He heard how Andrew Kenyon had been a captain in the United States Army, but resigned because he had been financially ruined by a friend whom he had trusted with all of his business interests.

Stationed upon the frontier, from Texas to Colorado, both of Captain Kenyon's children, his son Wilber and daughter Kate, had been born in a border fort, and reared among wild life until the youth was eighteen, the girl sixteen; when they were sent to New York to be educated.

Two years had been spent there when the crash came, Captain Kenyon finding his fortune swept from him by his trusted friend, Harold Carr, having lost all in speculation.

Resigning from the army, Captain Kenyon had gone to the mines, to try and win a fortune, and there his two children had joined him.

After a year of hard luck, they had struck it rich in an obscure camp, and all had gone there, their faithful black servants accompanying them.

But another misfortune had dogged them.

Harold Carr, Jr., the son of Captain Kenyon's false friend, had fallen in love with Kate Kenyon when she was East at school, but was repulsed.

He had threatened her that she should marry him alone, and soon after she had gone to join her father in the West he, and his father and brother had to fly for their safety, having all been engaged in a fraudulent transaction.

Reaching the West, they went from bad to worse, and turned road agents.

They allied themselves to Indians and evil characters, and one day a raid was made upon Captain Kenyon's frontier home, in his absence, and Kate was kidnapped and carried to the outlaw retreat, to make her pay largely of his new-found gold for her release, or force her into a marriage with her hated lover.

But, through the aid of one of the outlaws, whom the Kenyons had once befriended, she escaped and returned to her home, while in the pursuit that followed Andrew Carr, Sr., had been killed by Captain Kenyon, who thus avenged in part the wrong done him by his false friend.

To get revenge on the Kenyons, Harold Carr, Jr., had dressed his younger brother up, as Kate was wont to dress, in a black riding habit, and the two, with their allies, going upon lawless trails, it became the belief that the miner's daughter, and son were acting as road agents.

As these rumors gained a wider circulation, Captain Kenyon at length made up his mind to go on the hunt for his foes.

He began to trail them, and one day, while in camp, beheld from a cliff two horsemen coming, and mistaking them for Harold Carr and one of his men, he and his son lay in ambush for them.

The discovery that they were not those they sought, but Buffalo Bill and a companion, caused them to take flight, and Kate had come to their rescue, she having meanwhile captured the Indian, Man Killer, in the canyon, as has been seen, for she could ride splendidly, throw a lasso with wondrous skill, was a dead shot, and as strong as a man.

Not caring to be followed by Buffalo Bill and those with him, and thus thrown off the trail of Harold Carr, they had determined to cover up their tracks all in their power.

When mounted upon her black horse, and returning to see if the scouts were still following, she had, in crossing the river, been met by Harold Carr himself, and but for Buffalo Bill would have been captured.

She had believed that Buffalo Bill had killed Harold Carr, but they determined to still track down the band, and the youth who was playing the part of her double, and so she had been the guide to the outlaws' retreat, where she had once been their prisoner.

To let the outlaws not suspect their intention, they had made a wide circuit, and were then in camp to await until the next night, and move on their retreat.

And that very day, from a distant range, they had seen Harold Carr come out of the canyon, ride across the plain, and toward night saw him returning, but to capture him they found would be impossible.

"He had gone back, double, after reaching his camp with our horses which he had stolen, to see if we were still on his trail, or had gone back."

"As he did not find us in the camp, he must think we had returned to the fort," said Buffalo Bill.

"You spoke of an Indian whom you called Man Killer, and a wounded man by the name of Silent Sam?" said Captain Kenyon.

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know those two men, Mr. Cody?"

"Only as frequenters of the fort and the allies of Surgeon Powell, sir."

"Well, let me tell you what I know of them, having just discovered all that they are before I left my camp, and I intend notifying the commandant at the fort."

The Indian is part Pawnee, part Sioux, and has white blood in his veins, while he has lived with half a dozen tribes and the whites as well.

"He is desperate, fearless and merciless."

"The white man, Silent Sam, is his devoted pard, though they do not appear to be such, always pretending to be alone."

"Silent Sam came West long years ago, a good man, and made his home, having his family with him."

"The Indian, Man Killer, his squaw and child made their home with them."

"One night a band of Indians, who had massacred a party of troops, taken their uniforms, weapons and equipments, blacked their faces with war-paint and attacked Silent Sam's home; and the Man Killer's cabin, the two men being absent."

"The wife and squaw and the children were killed, scalped, and the houses robbed and burned."

"The squaw lived long enough to greet Silent Sam and Man Killer on their return, and told them that negro cavalry had done the appalling deed."

"From that day Silent Sam and the Indian became avengers, and have killed the negro soldiers whenever
they could do so, and I have learned that they even pretended to be friends to all at the fort to carry out their murderous plans.

"I feel sorry for them, but they will take no man's word against that of the dying squaw, that black cavalry raided their home, and more, it was Silent Sam who aided my daughter to escape from Harold Carr, for he is not bad at heart, only a monomaniac on the subject of killing the black cavalry."

CHAPTER XXXIII.
THE TRAIL'S END.

Buffalo Bill was never more surprised in his life than when he heard the strange story of wrong and treachery in which Silent Sam and Man Killer were connected.

He could not doubt in, and he at once made known all that Surgeon Powell had told him about the Indian and the trapper.

He also told how they had been bound, gagged and surprised on post, and Captain Kennon said:

"All their own work against themselves, for they are adepts at trickery.

"That you and the others were drugged was their work, though Harold Carr doubtless furnished the drug put in your coffee and pipes.

"They took your horses back on the trails, gave you warnings, and did all they could to force you to return, because they did not wish to kill you.

"As for the fact of Surgeon Powell knowing Harold Carr, I think I can explain that by saying that once they were friends, and Carr visited Powell at the fort for months, then robbed him and fled.

"Then Carr was wont to lie in wait for Surgeon Powell to kill him, and very nearly was successful: but Surgeon Powell, I have been told, was so hurt by the act of his false friend that he never spoke of it to any one.

"Now I think we understand each other, and my advice is to first get your grip on Silent Sam and the Indian, and then we will have no trouble in capturing Harold Carr, and his brother Burt, who is impersonating my daughter, and his companions in crime.

"It is the right plan to pursue, sir, and we may as well wait here, for, knowing Surgeon Powell and Wild Bill as I do, I am sure that they will follow me very quickly, as soon as the Indian returns with horses, for that he will be sure to do, even if he and Silent Sam took some other plan to thwart us in pursuing this trail."

Soon after, as it was now growing late, they all retired to rest, Kate Kennon and Quickstep retiring to the Indian tepee, while Captain Kennon, Wilber and the negro, Toby, turned in in their hammocks, Buffalo Bill taking his blankets.

The two dogs were put on guard, and good ones they were.

It was the next night, when Surgeon Powell was overtaken by Wild Bill, the Indian, Silent Sam, and went into camp together, that Buffalo Bill appeared before them as an apparition, for he had been on the watch for their coming, having just met the surgeon, and arranged to join him later, when the others had come up.

CHAPTER XXXIV.
CONCLUSION.

It was a surprise to Man Killer when he suddenly found himself in the power of the three scouts, and was made a prisoner; but he accepted his fate in silence, while Silent Sam, now rapidly passing from life to death, rallied for a few moments, and confirmed the whole story told by Captain Kennon of his own and the Indian's revenge upon the black troops.

And, more, he said that he felt sure that Man Killer had not gone to the fort without killing others.

This the Indian proudly admitted was the truth, as he had left his horse, gone ahead, and killed two men, then ridden on to the fort, and when leaving with the horses had gone back on foot and shot another black sentinel.

That night Silent Sam died and was buried, while Captain Kennon and his party, unifying camps, Kate and Quickstep, with the two dogs, being left to guard the bound Indian, while the scouts and their newly-found allies took up their trail for the outlaw retreat.

Buffalo Bill, guided by his two sticks, led the way along the narrow ridge, the others following, and on foot they crept up to the two cabins and surrounded them. When dawn arrived, and Harold Carr and his men appeared, a demand was made by Surgeon Powell for their surrender, and at once a sharp fight was precipitated.

Harold Carr dropped dead under the fire of Surgeon Powell, his brother, Burt, still wearing his feminine disguise, was killed by Wilber Kennon, and Buffalo Bill and the others wiped out the rest of the band, not one surviving.

A few slight wounds were received by the attacking party, but that was all, and what they had accomplished was much.

The booty was packed upon the horses found in the canyon, the cabins were set on fire, and the whole party returned to their camp, where it was found that the Man Killer had ended his own life by taking some of the drug he had secreted about him.

By the side of Silent Sam he was buried, and the next day the whole party took the trail for Fort Benham, where the story was told, and Colonel Thorp was glad to welcome Captain Kennon, Kate and Wilber as guests.

Furthermore, he urged that Kate should remain at the fort, while the father and brother returned to their mine, and right there in Fort Benham Kate Kennon met her fate, as she became the wife of Colonel Thorp's aide, Lieutenant Tylor.

Back to their posts of duty went Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill, to win new laurels as scouts.

THE END.

Next week's issue, No. 112, will contain "Buffalo Bill's Raid on the Midnigheters; or, Following a Specter Guide."

This is one of the wildest adventures the great scout ever entered.

The Midnigheters were a weird band. What their peculiar aim in life was will be disclosed in next week's issue.
Buffalo Bill and the Red Chief's Trail.

(By William Little, Halifax, N. S.)

Just after reading one of Buffalo Bill's books I dropped to sleep and was in dreamland. I dreamed I was out with Buffalo Bill, who was after a war party of Indians who, in their ravages, had killed seven settlers. We went on the prairie, and Bill found some tracks. We followed them till they came to a large grove of trees. Here Bill told our party to remain till he be reconnoitered. He came back in half an hour and told us he had found the Indians' camp. There were forty braves there in full war paint, curled up around small watch-fires.

We all mounted and rode into the midst of the Indians. The Indians jumped up with a loud yell and grabbed their weapons. Bill commanded them to be still. He asked for their chief, and they said he was in the camp. Bill followed one of them into the camp, but the chief was not there. He demanded that the Indians should tell him where their chief was. The Indians gave a yell and rushed toward us. Bill called out just as the Indians fired for us to fall. We fell and fell, and felt myself hit in the head. I woke up and found myself out of bed on the floor, and I was glad it was all a dream.

A Ghost Dream.

(By George Dismukes, Downey, Cal.)

One night I dreamed I was going along a road. I was surrounded by ghosts and bound with ropes. I was carried off and dropped into a bottomless pit and was followed by the ghosts. I fell and fell, and fell till I alighted on a net, but it did not hurt me. I was taken before the king of ghosts.

"What has this fellow done?" said the king.
"He has insulted your majesty," they said.

"Give him his punishment," said the king.
I was tied to a post and some ghosts drew off a distance and threw mud balls at me. Next I was put on a springboard and hung in the air and fell into a lake. I was pulled out and made walk a rope which burned my feet. Next I had to fight the champion fighter of Ghostland. The first round I had him warmed up, and we could dodge between his legs and under his arms. When I got him one in the solar plexus he gave a kick and tripped me up. Then I woke up...I had been slugging my brother, and he had kicked me out of bed.

A Dream of a Mutiny.

(By Ralph Proctor, New Florence, Pa.)

One night I dreamed that I was a cabin boy on a large steamship whose route lay between San Francisco and Honolulu. One trip there was a large amount of gold aboard the vessel, and at last rumors of a mutiny began to circulate among the worst members of the crew. But I never thought seriously about it until one night about eleven o'clock, I was hustled out of my bunk, and told to dress as quickly as possible.

Not suspecting what was going on, I obeyed, and was soon up on deck. There a scene of confusion met my eyes. About one-third of the crew, including the captain, were bound, and guarded by armed men, and I realized that the mutiny had occurred. Then I noticed that the remainder of the crew were lowering two boats into the water. As soon as this was done, the bound members of the crew and myself were put in, and we were rowed to an island which lay about a quarter of a mile from the ship. There we were put ashore, with enough provisions and water for a week, and were left to shift for ourselves.

The next morning we explored the island, and found
that it was nothing but a barren waste, about a mile square. Our only chance for life lay in being picked up by a passing vessel, so we kept a constant watch on the surrounding ocean.

Just before dawn of the third day our vigil was rewarded by the sight of a sail far out at sea, but coming directly toward the island. As it drew nearer it slightly altered its course, so as to pass us on the north side, but by means of vigorous signaling, we at last drew their attention. A boat was lowered, and we were soon on board, where we quickly told our story to the wondering crew. No incident of importance occurred on the homeward voyage, and just as we entered the Golden Gate I awoke.

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The Redskin's Match.

(By Esten Sawyer, Anniston, Ala.)

I had just finished reading Buffalo Bill. I leaned back in the chair and was soon fast asleep. I thought that I was in a dense wood, sitting at the foot of a large tree, when suddenly a rope tightened around my neck. Judge of my horror on finding my captors Indians. They led me on and on through the woods till at last they reached camp, and amid the yells of the copper-colored brutes, I was bound hand and foot to await my torture at sunrise.

They placed one guard over me while the rest retired. I struggled with the cords that held me, but in vain, much to the delight of my guard. While I stood there watching my guard laugh at me I was surprised to feel one of my hands free, and then the other, and my feet. I did not stir. I saw a man wriggle behind the guard, who saw me looking and turned his head. The man sprang forward and choked him, gagged and bound him to the tree I had so lately been bound to myself.

Then I left. I looked at my liberator, startled, and said:

"Such a resemblance!"

"To whom?" he asked.

I looked again. I asked him his name, to which he replied:

"Buffalo Bill."

I felt some one shaking me and opened my eyes to see them all laughing at me. I had been talking in my sleep.

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Buried Alive.

(By Clyde Collison, Columbus, Ohio.)

One night I dreamed I was passing over some marshy ground, when it suddenly gave way beneath me. It was so sudden that I had no time to save myself. Down, down, I went till I thought I would never reach the bottom. At last I landed on the bottom with a dull thud. I tried to get up, but the dirt came down on me till I was almost buried. I tried to cry out, but the dirt was smothering me. I thought of all my friends, who probably would never see me again.

Slowly but surely the dirt was smothering me, and I was being buried alive. Once more I tried to escape that horrible, smothering sensation, but of no use. I tried again and again, when at last, overcome, I gave a horrible gasp and sank back, buried alive. When I awoke I found large beads of perspiration on my forehead. I never want to have such a horrible dream again.

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A Desperate Fight.

(By Henry Davis, St. Louis, Mo.)

One day after playing all day I went to bed and dreamed that my brother and I were in an open field with a lot of timber around us, when all of a sudden an Indian war-whoop was heard and a band of twenty-five Indians surrounded and took us prisoners. They took us to their camp, tied us to a stake and began a war dance. All of a sudden four rifles cracked and four Indians tumbled over, and then the four fellows charged the Indians.

One of the fellows cut me loose and I grabbed two revolvers and shot the two nearest Indians, and they made a charge for me. I clubbed a rifle and mowed them down with it; when a brave grabbed me from behind, and just as I felt the scalping knife on my head I awoke to find I had broken the lamp chimney, and the broken glass had fallen over my head.

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A Bear Dream.

(By Rosy Miller, Solomon, Kan.)

One night I was very tired and went to bed early. I dreamed a friend and I were out hunting. We were walking along the banks of a river, when I heard a noise behind me, and I turned in time to see a bear coming toward me. Before I could get out of the way the bear had grabbed me around the waist and we began rolling down the bank into the water. I tried to get my hunting knife out of my belt, but the bear had my arms pinned to my side. We sank and rose again, but the bear held on to me. When we were about to sink again I heard a rifle shot and the bear dropped dead, and then I awoke.

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Stealing a Ride.

(By Edward McGinnis, New York City.)

One night after returning late from work, I began to read and fell asleep. I began to dream about myself stealing rides on freight trains. I and my companion were riding, when all of a sudden a brakeman jumped before us and began shouting at us.

It seemed as if a bullet had struck me in the side and I had fallen off the train, but instead of a bullet, it was a knob of the bed that had struck me and I had fallen out of bed.

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My Adventure With a Kite.

(By F. B. Darling, Norton, Kan.)

I had been out late and was tired out. I came home, went to bed and was soon in dreamland. I thought I had invented a kite and it started up and I caught the rope to hold it back. It took me up, up, up into the clouds, and then the rope broke and let me down head first. I thought that I saw a telephone pole and was going to strike my head on it, and then I woke up to find I had bumped my head against the iron bedstead. Then I was mad.
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