BUFFALO BILL UP A STUMP
OR
THE PAWNEE FAKIR OF THE BITTER ROOT

The furious charge of the cow compelled him to let go of the calf, and he sprang to one side just in time to escape collision with the mother.
BUFFALO BILL UP A STUMP;

OR,

The Pawnee Fakir of the Bitter Root.

By the author of "BUFFALO BILL."

CHAPTER I.

ON THE EDGE OF THE DESERT.

It had been rather a cool day for so early in the fall, but that made the traveling all the finer. The little cavalcade of two mounted men and a big roan horse drawing a "lumberree," on which was stowed their dunnage, was winding along the edge of the desert as though fearing to venture boldly upon the hot plain until evening fell.

"I want a drink more'n I ever wanted anything in this world, Bull," remarked the younger of the two trailers wearily. "Just the look of that sand and sage-brush yonder makes me gape."

He was a slight, fair-haired fellow, scarcely out of his teens, and burned rather than browned by the sun and weather, showing that his familiarity with this wild country was of small duration. His companion was of an entirely different breed of man, being burned by the sun a mahogany color; with great, toil-worn hands, and a wilderness of beard upon his face, out of which, when he removed his hat, a dome-shaped bald crown towered to a surprising height.

His physical build was peculiar. When he was sitting down the observer would surely believe him to be a giant in height. His torso was enormous, and great, long, muscular arms branched from it. His neck was thick and short.

But when he stood upright he was little taller than when he sat. His legs, though sturdy enough in all good conscience, were as singularly short as his body was enormously large! So short were they, indeed, that he waddled when he walked, and therefore much preferred to remain on horseback, where he rode "standing up." He was really a gigantic dwarf.

When he spoke it was in a deep, mellow, rumbling tone, which seemed all right emanating from him on horseback; but when he was on the ground it was several sizes too large for him.

"Keep up a bit longer, Mr. Garry. They's signs of juice over that thar ridge yonder."

"By thunder! are those trees, Bull?" exclaimed Garry Littleton excitedly.

"That's what they be, son."

"Ah-ha! where there are trees there must naturally be water," cried the tenderfoot.

He urged forward his own beast, and just as the sun dropped below a distant "divide" he looked down upon a little valley which lay open to the desert, and through
which ran a line of dense, leafy trees, indicating a water-
course. With a cheer Garry Littleton spurred his tired
steed down the rough slope of the hill. But Bull Thomp-
son came with the wagon more cautiously, unslinging his
rifle and scanning the neighborhood sharply.
The youth quickly tethered, or "tarietted," his mount,
and plunged through the line of trees with his pocket
drinking-cup. Instantly his voice rose in a yell of dis-
appointment.
There was the bed of the stream—all nice, clean, white
gravel; but it was as dry as a bone! There wasn't a
drop of water visible.
"What's the matter with ye?" demanded Bull, coming
quickly through the trees.
"Why! there ain't any water here. And it doesn't look
as though there ever had been."
"There was plenty in that thar bed last high-water,"
observed Bull grimly. "And a tearin' old stream it
was, too!"
"You're fooling me, Bull."
"No, I'm not, Mr. Garry."
"Well, then, where's the water now?"
"Why, sir," said the old hunter, with a queer smile,
"don't expect the water ter be the same height all the
do ye?"
"Water!" roared Garry. "Why, there isn't a sign of

"Waal, sir," drawled Bull, "I do kalkerlate that this is
my branch."
"Dry?"
But that makes it all the better."
"Suffering mackerel!" exclaimed Garry. "How can
you talk so when I'm eaten up with thirst?"
"That's all right, son. Ye can't must always
bout the locks of things. And this is one of 'em.
 further see a dry-branch than a measly little trickle of
water that's mebbe lukewarm under this sun we had
today."
"Why?"
"'Cause I knows there's always water in one o' these
beds. Ye don't see it, but it's here, and is never dry.
Look at these trees—and the grass. Don't you see how
green they be?"
He went on further to explain to the youth that a "dry-
branch" is a stream whose water runs through and under
the coarse gravel of the bed, rarely rising above ground
excepting during the spring and summer freshets, but
invariably found by digging a few inches or feet.
The water itself was soon the proof of Bull Thomp-
son's statement. Garry drank to his heart's content.
"You het, when we come to cross this desert to
morning, I'll carry all of this water I can," he
grinned. "My ain't it good!"
"Tain't really necessary," observed Bull.
"Suffering mackerel! I don't want to be parched with
that again the way I have this afternoon."
"Twon't be necessary."
"You don't mean to tell me that there are 'dry-branches'
yonder?"
"Nope."
"What then?"
The youth grinned slowly, as he bent over the fire of
fuel he was building in the bed of the stream.
Ice," he said.
"What!"
"All you want. Have plenty of ice-water out there,"
grinned Thompson.
"Aw, you must think I'm a durned fool, as well as a
tenderfoot."
"I do," admitted the old man, chuckling.
"Well," snapped Garry, "don't try such a yarn as that
on me—don't! Ice in a desert of sand and sage-brush?
Suffering mackerel!"
Thompson continued to chuckle while he got supper.
Despite the fact that Garry Littleton was the nephew of
the commandant of Fort Lane—the Kern," Bull called
Colonel Littleton—the old guide and trapper was im-
mensely fond of "stringing" the youth. For Garry was
verdant as to the West and its ways. They had started
out from the fort two days before, seeking the buffalo
that were now working slowly southward, and almost
every hour brought surprises to the young Easterner.
The "lumberer"—a narrow canvas-covered wagon—
served as a tent for Garry. Thompson slept "with the
horses," as he said—out in God's open. He scoured a
shelter, despite the fact that the night was sharp.
The next morning—indeed, before the morning had
even flushed the east—the youth was awakened by a stir
and whinnying among the horses, and, peeping out of the
wagon, he saw the squat form of Bull Thompson busy
over a fierce little fire built upon the coals of that which
had been set the evening before.
The fresh, keen air of early dawn brought to the East-
erner the grateful fragrance of steaming coffee and siz-
zling buffalo steak, and, impelled by such hunger as only
a frontiersman knows, he sprang into his outer clothing,
ducked his head in a bucket of ice-cold water, and shouted
to Thompson that he was "ready for breakfast."
Thompson, however, was not in his usual state of good
nature this morning. His observations were mostly
grunts given grudgingly in response to Garry's questions.
"What's got into you this morning, Bull? You got up
too early," declared the youth.
"Wunt ter git an early start," growled Thompson.
"'I should thank you did. It isn't sun-up yet. You're in
a hurry to get over to those ice-caves you were joshing
me about, eh?"
"We may be durned glad to git to them caves, son,
declared Thompson. "I dunno but I'd be fulfillin' the
Kern's orders if we turned square around and fit out for
the fort again."
"What's the matter with you?" cried Garry, in surprise.
"Cut out the hunting trip altogether? And after you've
been promising me a 'killing' with the bison?"
"We may see a 'killing' of another kind," grunted Bull
again.
"Confound it all, Bull! tell me what you're hinting at?"
Thompson stood up suddenly, pointing his right index
digit at a distant hilltop.
"See that!" he said.
Garry looked in amazement. All he saw was a faint
column of smoke rising intermittently from the summit
of the eminence.
"And that!" exclaimed Bull, pointing to another point
of the compass.
Garry saw another hill and more smoke.
"And then ag'in that's another!"
A third hill and again smoke.
"Suffering mackerel!" cried Garry. "What of it?
Other hunters are out, I suppose. If there are all the
buffaloes you tell for, aren't there enough for all hands?"
The Buffalo Bill Stories.

Thompson laughed harshly. "Hunters," he grunted, in a tone of disgust. "Hunters in the buffalo country don't climb hills and make smoke like that."

"What is it, then?" demanded the tenderfoot.

"Injuns."

CHAPTER II.

The Sand Mounds.

Despite the fact that Garry Littleton had arrived at Fort Lane at a time when the great tribes—the Sioux, Ute, Pawnee, Blackfeet, and Cheyenne—were supposed to be at peace with the whites—or, rather, cowed for the nonce by the blue-coated soldiers of Uncle Sam—the word "Injuns" was bound to make an impression upon the young man.

Especially when Bull Thompson spoke it so seriously. Garry had heard rumors of the dancing of the Pawnees in recent months. And he had been at Fort Lane when Wild Bill Hickok had ridden in from the Northwest with the tale of an abortive raid by a party of Horse Head's Pawnees, which had finally resulted in the destruction of more than half of the raiding-party by the white settlers.

Wild Bill and that famous scout, Buffalo Bill, had handled a band of twenty-three of the Pawnee bucks so roughly that only six of the number escaped with their lives. The tale was in everybody's mouth about the fort when the commandant's nephew and Bull Thompson started upon their buffalo hunt, and the general opinion was that the Pawnees had received a lesson which would keep them quiet for some months to come, at least!

"My goodness, Bull! you don't believe there is any danger from Indians—do you?" Garry asked.

"There's one thing I'm allus shore on, when it comes to Injuns," said Bull.

"What's that?"

"That ye can't tell for the life of ye what they're likely to do!"

"Suffering mackerel!" exclaimed Garry. "I don't want to give up this trip. Not because of a little smoke, anyway."

"Where there's smoke, there's some fire, I'm allus hear'n tell," declared Thompson.

"What do the smokes mean?"

"I ain't a good enough sign-reader for that air, son. You'd oughter ask Cody—or Wild Bill Hickok. They've made a study of Injuns, which same I haven't. I've been huntin' an' trappin' through these yere mounds for a-many years, but when the Injuns break loose I don't stand up for a prophet an' tell what I believe they're likely to do. For, I tell ye frankly, I don't know!"

"There's Nick Wharton—old Nick Wharton; why, he's next door to an Injun himself. I honestly b'lieve he thinks like an Injun, and he talks the various dialects more often than he does United States."

"He could tell ye what them smokes mean. But I can't. I only know that there are Injuns near, and whether they've spotted us or not, I dunno. Time'll tell."

"Suffering mackerel! you ain't cheerful a little bit, Bull," declared Garry. "If I wasn't so hungry, you'd spoil my breakfast with this croaking."

"Oh, all right!" exclaimed Thompson, in something of a huff. "We'll go on. Good thing we ain't sorry for it."

They tacked the roan into the lumberace, got upon their own horses, and struck almost instantly into the rolling plain, the barrenness of which had gained it the name of "desert." In parts it was not bad pasture, and there were miles of mesquite; but there were likewise patches of sand—sun-baked, crusty earth on which nothing green could grow. And there were stretches of loose sand, too, through which the horses plodded, filling the eyes and ears and nostrils of the sojourners with irritating particles.

Garry Littleton and his guide suffered from this immensely before noon. They had started in good season, so as to travel before the sun's heat was at its worst; but the air was so clear that it did seem they were not getting ahead in the least.

The range of wooded low hills beyond which Thompson was sure the buffalo would be found seemed just as far away at noon as it did when they left the shelter of the coulée in which they had spent the night. And Garry had drunk so much water that he saw they would be upon half-rations for the rest of the day.

"It's too bad those ice caves are only situated in your imagination," he grunted, his throat so parched that his voice was merely a croak.

"You'll be laughing the other side of your mouth before long, mebbe," growled Thompson. "Mebbe we'll be deamed glad to take to them caves."

"In your imagination?"

"In the ground, ye fool!" exclaimed the guide. "We ain't more'n a mile from the first one—what's that?"

Garry shaded his dazzled eyes, following the direction of Bull's pointing finger. All he saw was an undulating plain of sand, through which the trail was defined by wagon-ruts, here and there half-drifted over.

"You're beginnin' to see things, Bull."

"Ugh!" grunted the guide, dropping his hand to his saddle. "I thought I seen something moving over yonder—right where that little mound is."

"There are two mounds—no, three. Gee, Bull! they look like graves."

Thompson grinned. "We don't bury folks that air way out yere. The coyotes would have 'em in short order if we did."

"This trail winds around that way. I'm goin' to look into those mounds when we get there."

"Nothin' but wind-rows of sand—that's all," declared Thompson. "Still—it's funny. I never see anything jest like them b'fore, seems ter me."

He continued to mutter to himself, occasionally glancing across the dazzling plain at the heaps of sand which, as Garry had said, looked so much like barren mounds in a cemetery. The youth, however, thought of little but the heat, and wondered if the joys of buffalo hunting would be sufficient to make him forget the discomfort he was just then undergoing.

The trail over which they rode approached nearer to the curious mounds. When the sun shined so dazzingly on a waste plain like this it seems to "dance" in the distance. It looks as though the sand itself danced.

"Suffering mackerel!" exclaimed Garry Littleton suddenly. "I must be going crazy, Bull."

"What about?" grunted Thompson.

"Why, I thought I saw one of those mounds move."

The old hunter drew in his horse instantly. He could rise no higher in his saddle, for his short legs were straight already. But he peered off sharply from under the flat of his hand at the mounds.

"Hold on!" he exclaimed.
"What's the matter with you?" demanded the young fellow.

"I ain't never heard of its being done by any but them blood-thirsty Apaches they tell about down near the Mexican border—but—by Jehoshaphat!—if them mounds moved—"

"What's eatin' you, Thompson? What's the matter?" gasped Garry, riding close in and shaking the old man by the shoulder.

"Injuns!" exclaimed the hunter, and jerked his rifle-strap over his head.

"Where! where! Let me get a shot at them!" gasped Garry, quite too excited to be frightened, and balling himself all up in trying to get his own rifle unlimbered.

"There, ye young durnhead!" exclaimed Thompson.

His own rifle was at his shoulder, and almost instantly, as though he had no need of aiming, the muzzle of the weapon began to spit fire.

Like a transformation in a pantomime the dead desert scene changed instantly to the wildest kind of a "ruction!" Thompson had not turned his own rifle loose before a figure on horseback—to Garry Littleton it looked gigantic—suddenly rode over a low, treeless ridge just beyond the sand-mounds; and, bringing his horse to a standstill, the stranger likewise opened fire.

For an instant Garry believed that Thompson and the stranger were firing at each other, although the latter looked like a white man. But then the little hollow in which the mounds were suddenly became enlivened by several leaping, yelling, half-nude figures!

Indians!

The mounds of sand were dissipated in an instant. The first bullets which ploughed the sand in the hollow by the trail started those mounds to life, for each had been an ambushed redskin waiting for Garry and his guide to come along!

The youth began to shoot, too. He heard the whiz of bullets which he knew had been aimed in his direction by the savages, but he forgot all through the fight to be frightened. And then, it lasted but a few short minutes.

The last of it was when the two remaining Indians made a dash for the ridge, evidently attempting to reach their ponies which had been hidden out here in the desert since before daybreak. But the strange white man shot one of this couple and then rode down the other, his big horse trampling the redskin under his hoofs.

On the side of the ridge and in the hollow lay seven dead Indians.

"Whew!" exclaimed Bull Thompson, removing his hat and wiping his bald brow, while his still smoking gun lay balanced before him on the saddle. "I never did like to burn powder on a hot day."

Garry found himself trembling—actually his teeth chattered. But he knew he wasn't frightened. Anyway, it was all over now.

"Who—who do you suppose that man is?" he asked, trying to ask the question carelessly and so hide the real emotion, of which he was ashamed.

"Why," said Bull, scratching his fringe of hair before sitting on his hat again; "why, if I ain't mistook, that's not none other than Buffalo Bill himself."

"Who?"

"Buffalo Bill—Bill Cody. Yep! it's him. And he's coming this way."
gauge, and the ruts were made by great, broad, enormously heavy freight wagons—and Garry rode close to Buffalo Bill.

"What are these caves Bull speaks of?" he asked the scout.

"Ice caves."

"Suffering mackerel!" exclaimed the tenderfoot. "I thought he was fooling me."

"If you go in deep enough—yes."

"He's open to believe anything but the truth, like most pilgrims," scoffed Bull, with a chuckle. "If you told him that an Injun was to be trusted before he's dead, he'd believe you."

"They are—sometimes."

"I must ha' skipped them times," grunted Bull.

"You're like Wild Bill and Nick—they see no good at all in a redskin," laughed Cody.

"And I reckon Old Nick knows if anybody does."

"He thinks he does, anyway."

"I'm inclined to believe that a good healthy doubt regarding every Indian one meets is a safe proposition," said Garry Littleton ruefully. "Who'd have thought they would have burrowed in that scorching sand and lain there half the forenoon for the sake of getting a close shot at us?"

"An Injun'll do most anything for the sake of killin' his enemy without runnin' any risk himself," said Bull sentimentally.

Ten minutes later there appeared a cloud on the horizon behind them. Garry might have taken it for a rapidly growing thunder-head—if it had been the season for electric storms. But his companions left him no room for doubt.

"Got much breakable in this ramshackle vehicle of yours, Bull?" asked Buffalo Bill.

"Not much."

"Then it's us for the short cut to the nearest cave. Those Indians are coming up fast."

"Are you sure they are Indians?" queried Garry doubtfully.

"Well, I'm pretty sure it's no Sunday-school picnic," laughed Cody, and he turned off the direct trail.

The others followed him, and soon they were riding over the roughest kind of ground, with the lumbering bumping along to the beat of the drum. It was a tight race for the clump of low table-rocks which marked the peculiar caves which offered shelter to the trio of whites.

The opening of the first cave was so large that they drove right in—horses, wagon, and all. But soon there was a turn in the cavern wall, and behind this the three picketed the horses and prepared to receive the Pawnees with a hot welcome.

Garry was excited, for this was his first Indian fight; the other skirmish had been on and over before he scarcely realized what was happening.

His two companions were so cool and collected, however, that Garry, was ashamed to betray his feelings in his face. He followed their lead successfully in preparing for the expected encounter, emptying his rifle and pistols quickly, reloading, pulling the filled section of his cartridge-belt around to the front where he could get at the ammunition easier, and otherwise making the most businesslike preparations for the scrimmage.

He saw the Pawnees coming—a mob of snorting ponies and half-naked and paint-besmirched bodies of lean men upon their backs—faces made doubly horrible by stripes and splotches ofumber; spears, from which fluttered locks of hair—some of them the fair hair of white women and children—tossing above the dust-cloud drummed up by the ponies’ feet; war-hatchets, bows and arrows, and a few rifles ready for instant use.

The mob had seen their dear friends and they thirsted for the blood of the white men. If Garry had had any lingering sympathy for the “noble red man” he was instantly cured of it for all time.

"There’s a big chief with ’em, Buffalo," declared Bull Thompson. "I thought you said Horse Head and the upper chiefs weren’t knowing of these raids?"

The scout was likewise peering out at the charging crew, and he now exclaimed:

"I see him. He’s a northern Pawnee; I never set eyes on him before; but I reckon I know who he is. He’s the stirrer up of most of this trouble we’re having with the tribe. He’s a medicine-man and faker—kind of a prophet, and I hear has started the young men of old Horse Head’s own village to sun-dancing."

"I’m going to try to pick him off," Bull growled, leveling his rifle.

"Go ahead, but he’s foxy. He’ll pull out before the crowd get in range—see that! What did I tell you?"

The forefront of the charging gang reached the yawning entrance to the caves; but the Indian with the monumental feather head-dress pulled his pony out to one side and did not get into range. The three white men, however, paid their compliments to the massed Indians and ponies with considerable execution.

Evidently the Pawnees had not expected such a greeting. They pulled out of the cut and scattered over the plain directly before it. They were many and were sure that only three whites were in the cave; but to rush the cave-dwellers meant the certain loss of several of their number.

Then suddenly there was a wild whoop raised by the Indians far out on the plain. It was answered by those nearer to the cave. The ponies were wheeled, the wounded were picked up on the run, and in a moment the Pawnees were charging away into the north, larruping their ponies to top speed.

"It’s all over," grunted Bull Thompson, in some disgust, it seemed, wiping again his powder-smirched face.

"I reckon your friends the bluecoats have hove inter view, Buffalo?"

"Reckon you’re right, Bull."

They ventured forth about at first. Scouring over the plain in the Indians’ wake, but some distance out from the caves, was a solid column of Uncle Sam’s cavalry, and by the way they rode it was certain that there would be a general round-up of that particular party of Pawnees before night.

"You’ll jine ’em, I reckon?" asked Thompson casually, as they went back to the horses and wagon.


"Then you’ll travel with us, Mr. Cody, won’t you?" queried Garry Littleton anxiously.

"Better come along and have a bit of sport on the way, Buffalo," added Thompson. "And you can tell the Kern’s novelty were a darn sight more about the crooked-backs than I kin."

"Well," returned Buffalo Bill, laughing, "I’ll be glad
of your company till you get into the range, anyway," and they proceeded to get dinner where they were before pressing on across the remainder of the desert expanse.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CROOKED-BACKED OXEN.

Bull had used a phrase that Garry had not heard before. "What are 'crooked-backs'?” he asked, while they were discussing the meal.

"Crooked-backed oxen," Cody said, with a smile.

"That's what the greasers call 'em in their own language. It's what the first white men called the buffalo, too."

"Oh, buffalo!"

"And there used to be millions where there are now thousands."

"You've done considerable yourself toward wiping out the herds, Bufla," remarked Thompson.

"Yes. I have. And so have post hunters like yourself, Bull. It takes a lot of beef to feed Uncle Sam's army. They tell me they're beginning to raise cattle by the thousand down below the Panhandle because of the scarcity of buffalo. Somebody figures that, in twenty years, the critters will be as scarce as hen's teeth."

"But that will work a hardship on the Indians, won't it?” asked Garry. "Don't they still depend a good deal upon the buffalo for food?"

"They're very wasteful. They kill lots more than they can possibly eat," observed Cody.

"And besides," added Bull, "we're hopin' the Injuns themselves will be as scarce as hen's teeth, too, in twenty years—'tern 'em!"

"That's savage," said Garry.

"I've been everything but scalped by the blamed critters; I feel savage," granted Thompson.

It was out of this discussion that a long conversation grew between Garry Littleton and Cody that afternoon. While Bull cleared up after the meal and got the lumberee ready, Cody took the youth back into the cave and showed him the ice-lined chambers, where the current of air blew so shrewdly through the passages that water, dripping from the roof, was congealed into great icicles.

To and from this strange cold-storage cavern, and after they were mounted again and winding their way into the West, the scout gave the Eastern youth much information regarding the game of which he was in search, but all tersely put.

Cody, who had secured his sobriquet from his success as a buffalo hunter for various posts, as well as for entire divisions of the Western Army during the Indian wars, had spent no little effort and time in the study of the habits and history of the wonderful beasts which, even at the day of his meeting with Garry Littleton, were notoriously decreased in numbers.

"Like enough the first white men to see the bison, as the scientists tell us we ought to call the crooked-backs, were that Spanish land pirate, Cortez, and his conquistadores. The Aztecs had 'em down there in Mexico, for the beasts spread in droves of millions over more than a third of the territory of North America. Why, it's not so many years since they were found in small bands east of the Mississippi," declared Cody.

"Some Spanish sailors wrecked on the coast of Texas killed and ate buffalo some few years after Cortez saw the critters in Montezuma's menagerie. Then came Corranado, a Spaniard, who explored parts of what we're beginning to call Arizona and New Mexico now. This was in fifteen forty-two. They's been some few of 'em killed since then," observed Cody, with a grim smile.

"Corronado reported that the plains he crossed in the lower Panhandle were as full of crooked-backed oxen as the mountain Serena, in Spain, of sheep. "I don't know how many sheep Serena boasts, but I've seen buffalo so thick that—if they'd let you—you could have walked for miles upon miles on their backs."

"Kind of risky perfeedin'," observed Bull Thompson, grinning.

"Yep. They're not very tame," admitted the great hunter, with a smile.

"I once drove from old Fort Zara to Fort Larned, on the upper Arkansas," pursued the buffalo king, "a distance of thirty-four miles. At least twenty-five miles of the distance was through an immense herd of buffaloes, composed of countless smaller herds of from fifty to two hundred. They were all going north.

"My road ran along the river bottom, and the whole country seemed one great mass of buffaloes, all moving slowly northward. I could hardly see where one herd was separated from another. I calculate that there must have been half a million in that bunch of crooked-backs."

"And yet you say they have already become scarce?"

"They're some thinned out," declared Thompson, breaking in. "The Injuns slaughter 'em."

"Well, some of the tribes used to believe that the buffaloes issued from the earth in an unfailing stream. They believed they'd never stop coming," said Cody.

Before night they began to see buffalo-wallows and many big skulls along the edge of the desert. But nothing was seen of the crooked-backs themselves that night—not of any other game, and the party was short of meat for breakfast.

Both Cody and Bull Thompson assured Garry that they were now "on the range," and when they started out from the night's camp the youth kept a bright lookout for the animals in search of which they were. He expected to see some such herd as Cody had told of the day before, and when, about ten A. M., Thompson mounted his pony, halted the roan and the lumberee, and, pointing toward the southwest, said, "Buffal!" the tenderfoot looked in vain.

"What's the matter with you, Bull?" he demanded.

"You're fooling me."

"Don't you see that black speck?"

At last, after straining his eyes, Garry admitted that he saw something.

"Buffal," said Bull, again.

"Pshaw! Prairie-dog, jack-rabbit, or—or—" trying to recall some minute object frequent on the plain—"buffalo chips!"

Thompson regarded not his incredulity, and Garry saw that Buffalo Bill himself had seemed to accept the old hunter's statement as true.

"It can't be!" cried the youth.

"Old buffalo bull; been driv' out by younger ones; makin' for herd; herd ain't five mile erway—git-ap!" touching the roan up with his quiet.

Their course was nearly parallel to that of the "speck," and their speed evidently a trifle greater, for at about noon they had so nearly converged that Garry's doubts were dissipated. He could plainly see the bulky head,
covered with dense, sweeping hair, and the short, thick, sharp horns of a huge old bull.

After a time the hunters began to climb a gentle activity, over the brow of which the bull passed and disappeared in advance. Cody unslung his rifle, and, as he had before the Indian fight the day before, recharged his magazine and even oiled the lock a little.

"We'll find some of 'em over this hummock," he said, smiling, to Garry.

Reaching the summit shortly afterward, one of the prettiest scenes the Easterner had ever seen met his eyes. A circular basin about a mile in diameter lay before the party of hunters, the bottom carpeted with grass still vividly green, and very restful to the eyes after the long journey of the day before across the parched wilderness of the so-called desert. This green bottom contrasted sharply with the brown rim of shaly rock that enclosed it.

Along the southern border lay a narrow bow of crystal-clear water, which sparkled like starlight under the intense rays of the noon tide sun. Three or four buffaloes were drinking at the western end of the pool, and the old bull was making a bee-line for them.

"Thunder and Mars!" ejaculated Garry. "Is that all of them?"

Both Cody and Thompson laughed at the crestfallen look of their young companion. Garry had expected to see the hollow crowded with the creatures, instead of this small bunch of stragglers.

Garry was eager to spur down upon the group, however, and try his maiden shot at the beasts; but Cody counseled waiting.

"No use stirring that small bunch up. They're following the big herd. If you want to see a bunch of buffaloes that are worth seeing, don't shoot to-day."

The scout had another reason, too; but of that he said nothing to the commandant's nephew. He did not know how many of the Pawnees were astir, and they might attract the attention of some other war-party by promiscuous firing.

So they picked their way carefully into the valley and watered their horses at the stream; for it proved to have a slight current, being, in fact, the outwelling of a dry-branch.

CHAPTER V.

THE BUFFALO HUNT.

Garry Littleton stood his watch that night, for he would not hear of Cody and the guide doing all the work. If one or the other of the recumbent figures lying feet to the fire was sharply alert all through the time of the tenderfoot's sentinelship, the latter was not aware of it, so it did not matter.

Cody and Thompson were both alive to the danger of an Indian surprise. The Pawnee faker who was stirring up so much trouble among Horse Head's young bucks might influence the whole tribe to break out against the whites, in time. If Uncle Sam's boys in blue did not capture the scoundrel, after his attack upon Cody and his friends at the ice-caves, he might continue his harmful influence among the red men for months.

The Westerners had some trouble in keeping Garry in leash in the morning, for he was eager to get at the scrub herd of bison they had sighted the night before. The bunch had quitted the valley long before the party was ready to move, however; but after the camp was struck and the hunters astride their mounts, Garry's eyes were brightened by glimpses of the straying animals as they passed over certain gentle undulations far in advance.

They trailed along behind the stragglers, seeing that all the time the herd was increasing.

"That proves they're all bound for the main drove," Cody declared. "We'll have our pick of buffalo veal, or young cow, yet."

"That old fellow we saw first looked good enough for me," grumbled Garry.

"He'd be as tough as shoe-leather."

"Don't matter. I'd like his hide and horns. Lord! wouldn't I like to take his head back home with me!"

"Oh, if that's the case, we'll see that you are stocked up on such lumber," said Cody, laughing.

At last, well along toward mid-afternoon, the hunters mounted a rather higher ridge than usual, and from the summit a scene was laid bare to Littleton that made him gasp.

To the westward, seemingly as far as the eye could reach—to the north, too, and to the south—appeared one endless mass of black and tawny creatures—at that distance seemingly all of a size and all moving steadily southward.

The movement of the enormous herd, which was made up of countless small herds of a hundred or two, was slow—really majestic; and they grazed as they went. The bright, level sun here and there lighted up the tossing horns which gleamed like polished ebony. Not a sound rose from all this dense, tremendous sea of rhythmlic moving creatures.

Although similar spectacles had been often viewed by Cody and Bull Thompson, it could never fail to impress them. They, like Garry, reined in their horses and watched the sea of moving buffaloes with a feeling akin to awe.

Suddenly a long trail of sleek, glossy cows, each with a calf by her side, filed out of the surging chaos, directly athwart the hunters' course.

"Buffalo veal, y jings!" exclaimed Thompson. "Hold yer fire, Cody; I want one o' them calves."

"All right; get it over with," said the scout. "Remember, Littleton here wants his buffalo bull, and I want to pick him out a good one."

Thompson loosened his lariat and set spurs to his mustang. Cody and Garry rode on more leisurely, leaving the roan and the wagon on the ridge.

The thundering hoofs of the mustang frightened the file of cows and young; but Thompson was soon up with the last of them, and fairly flung himself from his horse as they swept by. In a moment he had a struggling tawny little bison in his brawny arms.

The mother did not observe her loss for a little space, galloping on with the rest. Then suddenly she missed her offspring, and, with a bellow, wheeled about to look for him. The calf began to blat, too, and to the great delight of Cody and Garry, the little creature made such strenuous efforts to rejoin its mother that Thompson could not tie him, as he had evidently first intended.

Thompson hated to give up his intention, but the cow was charging him in a furious manner. He was finally obliged to let the calf go, and sprang to one side just in the nick of time to escape collision with the mother.

She wheeled with astonishing swiftness and again
charged, while the calf went blatting away after the rest of the file.

"Hurry up with that veal, Bull!" yelled Cody after the discomfited old fellow.

It looked as though instead of the hunter getting veal, the hunted would get a tough old plainsman. The infuriated cow ripped at the sole from one of Thompson's boots as he slipped aside the second time. And instead of being satisfied then and keeping on after her calf she turned for a third charge.

Thompson was making every effort to reach his mustang; but the beast did not fancy meeting the buffalo cow, and it was making a wide circle around the scene of the combat. Thompson's rifle was tucked into a sort of holster behind the saddle, and Thompson flew after the horse and rifle, while the cow flew after him, both of them spitting profanity in their own way.

Cody near tumbled off his horse in his enjoyment of the scene; but Garry Littleton watched the battle with some fear that the old guide would be seriously injured. Finally, Thompson got the horse to stand still long enough for him to reach his rifle. The next moment the cow tumbled forward with her nose in the sod, and was soon dead, with the blood pouring from her muzzle.

"That's pretty old veal, Thompson!" shouted Cody, as he and the youth cantered over to the puffing and blowing hunter.

"Waal, I never did care much for bob-veal, anyway," declared the veteran, with a wry smile. "That chap was too young; this critter will eat fine," and he set about flaying the cow at once.

"Come on, Mr. Littleton," sang out Buffalo Bill. "We'll ride down there and cut out your big bull."

Garry, filled with excitement and eager desire, spurred his mustang after Cody's powerful charger. The scout's horse was as well trained for hunting as he was in other respects. In an hour, by sharp maneuvering, the scout had cut out a herd of some seventy-five of the buffaloes, among which were several fine bulls.

Not a shot was fired by the scout and his young friend, and the great bulk of the herd went steadily on about its business without paying the least attention to either Thompson's shot, or the maneuvers of Cody and his companion.

The latter were "riding herd," much as cowboys would handle a bunch of steers. The buffaloes were getting nervous, and finally one of the old bulls charged Cody. This set them all a-quiver, and they were ready for a stampede.

The bull which charged was not the best in the herd, so Cody merely avoided him; but finally he tolled out a magnificent specimen—a veritable monarch of the plains—and under his advice Garry placed two bullets where they would do the most good in the great body.

At the fall of the bull the mob went mad and charged with thunderous hoofs along the rolling plain. Instantly Cody began to use his magazine rifle. With his horse running at full speed alongside the stampeded herd, the scout brought to the ground in quick succession four cows and another bull, and ending by lariating a calf—as Bull Thompson seemed to want veal so badly.

This work was done so quickly, and so cleanly, that it made Garry gasp. It was easy to see why and how Cody had obtained his sobriquet. It was not until they had dragged the dead animals together in a heap, and the three were at work shouting the great bull, Garry had shot, that the latter thought of the waste of flesh represented by the huge carcasses.

"We can never have need of so much meat—not if we were to remain in the mountains all winter," declared the youth.

"I can guarantee there won't be much wasted," Buffalo Bill said, with a smile.

"How's that?"

Cody stood up and pointed to the northeast. Garry followed the direction of his index finger. There a rapidly growing cloud of dust masked the rapid approach of some body of horsemen.

"What's that—cavalry?" asked the youth.

"By thunder!" exclaimed Thompson. "Injuns again!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE POWWOW.

Garry began nervously to fumble his rifle. The dust-cloud was his with possibilities. He had seen Indians enough already to last him the entire trip.

"Steady!" said Cody. "There won't be any shooting in this."

"What?"

"No; keep your shirt on."

"But Bull says they're Indians."

"Just so."

"Buffalo thinks they're tame," said Thompson, in explanation.

"Not Pawnees?"

"Very much Pawnees. If I'm not mistaken it's old Horse Head himself," observed Cody.

"Glory be!" ejaculated Thompson. "I'd like to take a pop at that old sinner."

"But you won't. Horse Head is a friend of mine."

"You keep him from letting his young bucks run wild then," grunted the guide.

"That's what I'm out here for," returned Cody quietly.

"Don't be troubled, Mr. Littleton. Go up and bring down your wagon, Bull. We'll camp here."

"But only yesterday we were fighting some of these Pawnees!" cried Garry Littleton.

"That's so, and possibly some of the bucks in this bunch may have been in that crowd yesterday—if the cavalry didn't pick them all up. Just the same, this is a peaceful crowd. It is old Horse Head's hunting-party. I killed these critters for them," Buffalo Bill added coolly.

"Oh, thunder! let him have his way. He knows what he's about," said Thompson, and set out at once to get the roan and the lumberree, his squat figure waddling comically over the plain.

But Garry hadn't much thought for anything humorous. The cloud of dust was so near now that he began to see the ponies' heads, and here and there a spear lifted. The tail of the cloud strung out far behind. There seemed to be two parts to the approaching column.

"Buck up! buck up!" exclaimed Cody, smiling into the young scout's rather startled eyes. "This is all right. These first ones look a bit warlike; but they're only the advance guard. It is a big hunting-party—the whole tribe, perhaps, killing for the winter."

"What you say goes, I suppose, Mr. Cody. But I don't feel a bit happy," admitted the youth.

"That's all right!"
Thompson rattled down with the wagon, disembarked, and began to unharness the horse coolly. Whatever he may have secretly felt, he took his cue from Cody's manner, and the Indians might have been a hundred miles away for all his appearance of care.

Cody stepped out, unarmed save for the pistols at his belt, and advanced to meet the cavalcade, which gradually revealed itself out of the smoke raised by the ponies' drumming hoofs.

Garry saw the tossing heads of the ponies—and the tossing spears. To his mind the charge of these supposed "peaceful" Pawnees was as threatening and warlike as that of the crowd that had chased his two friends and himself into the caves the day before. It would not have surprised Garry in the least had the mob ridden down the scout and come on with yells to take his own and Thompson's lives.

In a minute, however, the cavalcade was drawn in with startling suddenness. Every animal was yanked back upon its hind feet by the jerk of the powerful hand that guided it by the thong slipped over the lower jaw. The dust drifted away; the ponies came down upon their fore feet; slowly out of the cloud there was revealed more than a score of Indians—the same in Garry's eyes as those he had fought with, saving for the lack of war paint!

An old man led them—an old man even for an Indian, and Garry had seen enough of the red men hanging about his uncle's post to know that an Indian must indeed be aged to show his years in either his face or figure.

In his youth this chief must have been a giant. But he was shrunken now, and his shoulders were bent. Yet he sat the horse he bestrode with an ease that Garry was sure he could never command if he lived to be a hundred!

There were gray hairs above the chief's temples; his face—what with scars and wrinkles—was like a railroad map; his bare arms, on which he wore gold bands both above and below the elbow, were lean and scrawny. His mouth was merely a toothless slit in his face.

"How, brother!" he grunted, in guttural English.

"How, chief! I am glad to meet Horse Head on a peaceful mission," Cody returned pointedly.

The words evidently hit home, for there was a stir among the bucks behind the old man, and a flicker of emotion even passed over Horse Head's grave face.

"Ugh: we meet in peace. It is true," he said.

"Alright; ask your people to alright. We have much meat, and would gladly share it with Horse Head and his people."

There were many expressions of satisfaction at this; the eyes of the braves had already looked longingly upon the heap of dead cattle.

Horse Head bowed his head with gravity.

"It is good what the great scout says," observed the Pawnee chief.

He turned to those about him and spoke in the Pawnee tongue. At once they became active, dismounting, picketing their horses, and setting to work upon the dead buffaloes with their skinning knives.

Garry had already approached near to Cody. He felt safer, somehow, at the scout's elbow. Thompson was cheerfully hobnobbing with the greasy, wild-looking redskins, but the scout would not intrude.

"Alright and rest, Horse Head," Buffalo Bill said again.

"Your teepee will be pitched here?"

"When the women come," responded the chief, beginning stiffly to dismount from the ragged little horse he bestrode. Garry saw that one of the chief's legs was unendurable at the knee. He dismounted as though it were a wooden leg.

Buffalo Bill brought forth an old collapsible pouch of cut tobacco, and the chief's eyes glistened. The white man's tobacco was more fragrant than the cheap mixture of tobacco and willow bark which the Indians smoked.

Some of the younger bucks had found plenty of brush and dried buffalo dung, and a fire was already blazing. In the lee of this the scout and Horse Head, with Garry, big-eyed with interest, sat them down. The chief filled a long stemmed pipe he drew from his pocket; the scout filled a well-burned meerschaum and tamped the charge down carefully. Both leaned forward, secured a burning twig, and gravely lighted their pipes. Then, when the bowls were glowing well, both removed them from their lips, wiped the stems, and exchanged the pipes for a few whiffs—a ceremonial act binding the peace agreement.

"The great scout is hunting the buffalo for the great white chief?" suggested Horse Head, after the pipes had been returned to their owners.

"No. This young man is the nephew of the white chief, Colonel Littleton, at Fort Lane. He has come to learn the ways of the game and of the hunters. I am come to meet you, Horse Head."

"Ugh!" grunted the old Indian, but gave no other sign that the reply had been unexpected.

"It has come to the ears of the white chiefs, and they have told the White Father at Washington, how some of the northern Pawnees have killed peaceful settlers."

"Ugh!" grunted Horse Head again.

"These Pawnees are nominally under the government of Horse Head. I am sent to ask the meaning of these outbreaks."

For some minutes the old man smoked in silence. Then he asked softly:

"There are great villages in the lands toward the place of the rising sun filled with the Yellow Eyes?"

"Yes."

"And there is a great white chief over each of these villages?"

"That is so, Horse Head," admitted the scout.

"Do none of these white chiefs find that some of their people will not obey the law?"

"True; they do."

"Are these law-breakers always punished?" inquired the wily old man, blowing the smoke in a wreath from his thin lips.

The meaning of his answer was obvious.

"There are always unruly ones," admitted Cody. "But as fast as the white chiefs learn who they are and capture them, they are punished."

"And the runaways from Horse Head's camp are punished," said the old man, with feeling. "Fifteen lie out upon the hills toward the Bitter Roots, with the coyotes' muzzles in their bellies; and seventeen, I am told, fell before the rifles of the great scout and his brother, Wild Bill."

The old man's voice shook. He still puffed calmly at his pipe, but his hand trembled and his eyes glowed. Twenty years before it is doubtful if he would have sat here and talked over these deaths of his tribesmen with one of those who had made so many bite the dust.

"And yesterday," continued the chief, "yesterday, seven more were killed. It is bad. It is very bad."

Cody knew well enough that the old Pawnee was boi-
ing within with indignation; but he showed no sign of
fear. He calmly smoked for a space; then he said:
"This is all true, Horse Head. The young men are
dead. They have been punished. But they brought
the punishment upon themselves. And the reason for their
outbreak is not removed. It must be."

"That was sufficient to startle even the imperturbable
Indian.
"Removed?" he grunted. "What means the great
scout?"

"These young men—young men, Horse Head—
have been led into evil by the voice of the medicine-chief
from the north. I have heard of him. He must be given
up to the white chiefs. In no other way, Horse Head, can
you save your people as a whole from a long and bloody
war."

CHAPTER VII.
THE PROMISE.

Garry Littleton, who listened to these muttered words
of the scout, and who had been watching the chief’s face
as well, actually expected an outbreak from Horse Head.
The old man was deeply stirred. A shout, and the weapon
of every Indian there—the children and squaws had now
come up, and made, together, a large party—would have
been turned upon the whites. But Cody seemed utterly unmoved. He made the
threat—for threat was intimated—with perfect care-
lessness.

The length of time which elapsed before the Indian
chief said a further word showed how keenly he felt this
matter, and how difficult it had been for him to restrain
his savage rage.

"The great scout speaks hot words to his friends,"
grunted the Pawnee. "Horse Head meets him in peace;
but his white brother talks of war."

"Horse Head," drawled Cody, "you are a shrewd man.
You are old, but you have led your people to war not so
many years ago. You claim still to govern them."

"Ugh!"

"You will not govern them long if this faker from the
Bitter Root keeps his influence. He’s working against
you. You would better agree to the thing which will
keep peace between the whites and your people till you go
on the journey to the happy hunting grounds, at least."

"Ugh!" exclaimed the old man.

"I’m talking to you, Horse Head. The Pawnees
may be strong and brave. But the bluecoats are like that
herd of buffaloes yonder. No man can count them.
Better to keep friends with them than to dig up the
hatchet."

"What is it that the great scout would ask?" queried
the old man cautiously, after a season of deep thought.
Whatever was done, or said, the chief wished it to seem
that Cody asked a favor, rather than made a demand.

"I want that Bitter Root faker. He must be given up."

"I cannot give over one of my people, not even to the
great scout."

"Better for you if you do, Horse Head. He is getting
an influence over your young men that will soon steal
away your own. Aside from its bringing about a war,
Horse Head will soon be as a squaw in his own village.
He will be left at home to tend the fires when the braves
go to war."

Cody was deliberately stirring the old man’s rage.
But there was a serious doubt in Garry’s mind whether
the scout would succeed in turning this rage against the
medicine-man, who was seeking to usurp Horse Head’s
influence with the tribe, or bring the vials of the old
chief’s wrath upon his own head?

"Horse Head speaks truly," the scout pursued. "His
young men have been killed. I do not forget the time
when I fought with the Pawnees against the warriors of
Colorow. Nor do I forget the battles in which we
worsted the Sioux. It grieved me deeply to shoot down
Horse Head’s young men. But they attacked the whites,
and they paid the penalty."

"It is true," agreed Horse Head calmly,

"Mothers have lost their sons, and the maidens may
weep in your lodges, Horse Head; but it is better to
chastise the few than to punish the many. Deliver this
man up to the white chiefs, Horse Head. It is the only
way."

For several moments the old man smoked thoughtfully
again. Then he spoke, coolly, dispassionately, having
completely controlled his rising vexation:

"The great scout speaks as a child; he is without rea-
son. Let him listen to me—to Horse Head—who has led
the war parties of the Pawnees for more years than his
white brother has lived."

"What he asks is a thing impossible. No Pawnee can
be traitor to his brother and live. It is the law of the
tribe," Horse Head said, with more dignity than actual
truth.

"Hunting Wolf makes great medicine. He is a seer
of visions, a dreamer of dreams. The Great Spirit has
touched him and has given him the power of magic."
Then the old man’s lids closed almost completely over his
eyes, and he blew a whiff of smoke. "So he says," he
added, with the slightest possible emphasis upon the "he."

Garry had believed that Indians never joked or ex-
pressed humor. But there was a humorous twist to the
old man’s thin lips.

"The young men have listened to the voice of Hunting
Wolf. They have sat at his feet. He sees the time when
the Pawnees will be rich and powerful again. The youths
believe. What can Horse Head do?"

He raised his hand to stop Cody’s attempted speech.

"Civil war is to be avoided. It is the shedding of blood
without reasonable prize. A brother is killed, not an
enemy. Horse Head will not lead one-half his people
against the other half.

"But if Hunting Wolf possesses the power he claims,
he is stronger than the Yellow Eyes. He will lead my
young men to victory. He will make medicine that will
make the Pawnees what they once were. The white
chiefs have no men with magic like Hunting Wolf?"
It was a question, and he asked it with some eagerness.
The wily old chief, Cody saw, was half-convinced of the
faker’s power as it was! But he did not wish to lose his
chiefdom.

"The Hunting Wolf has failed so far to lead the young
men to victory; isn’t that so?" cried Cody.

"Ugh!" with acquiescence.

"Then how does he retain his influence?"

"The whole tribe must be with him. And that is plain.
The Pawnees have never been victorious when they were
divided," said Horse Head.

"Well, old friend," the scout said, with gravity, "I can’t advise you further. The white chiefs are very,
angry. As yet they are particularly angry against this Hunting Wolf. But if he is not given up—"
"Show the Pawnees that his magic is not good. Or make a greater magic," Horse Head exclaimed.
"Let us sleep over it," the scout said gravely, rising to make room for the women to cook at the fire.
"Very well. We will speak together again at another sun," declared Horse Head, and the conference was over.
Garry eagerly touched the scout's arm as they moved away. "Let me speak to you, Mr. Cody," he whispered.
The scout looked at him curiously, but shortly found opportunity of taking him aside. "What's on your mind, youngster?" he asked.
"I was listening to your talk with the Indian."
"Of course. You could easily do that," Buffalo Bill said, laughing. "Old Horse Head speaks English like a college professor. Oh! he is a sharp fellow. I must say that this situation puts me up a stump."
"So I saw. You have not accomplished what you hoped to?"
"Correct you are, sir."
"This Hunting Wolf is very powerful with the tribe?"
"You bet he is!"
"But suppose, as this Horse Head suggested, some white man could show more magic than he?"
"Say! these Indian medicine-men are wonders—some of them. I've seen some of their capers. You certainly can't explain them."
"And the Indians couldn't explain some things that are rather common knowledge to us whites."
"Right, my boy!"
"I've got something at the fort, Mr. Cody, that I believe would scare any set of Indians blue," whispered Garry.
"What's that?" queried the scout, with interest.
The young Easterner whispered further into the scout's ear. Gradually a broad smile wreathed Buffalo Bill's features. Finally, he slapped his hand down upon his thigh with satisfaction.
"By thunder! I believe it would work, boy. It's a great scheme. And it would suit Horse Head. Take the trick out of this Hunting Wolf at once, and that is all that will be needed. He would never have a mite of influence in the tribe again," declared the scout.
"But do you think you could get the fellow to try conclusions with you?"
"Old Horse Head will fix it. I'll get him to demand a general powwow, at which this Hunting Wolf shall show himself a better magician than the whites. Then we'll have him—if all goes well."

The whites foregathered with themselves during the meal. Squaws brought them steaming steaks from the great fire. They impoverished their coffee supply with which to treat the bucks. Thompson had a flask hidden away in the lumberee, and suggested producing it; but Cody put a stop to that idea as soon as it was suggested.
"No red liquor to Indians. Not only is it against the law, but they can't stand it. It's poison to them, and makes the mildest buck that ever took a scalp a rip-roaring fiend straight from the pit!"
Garry enjoyed himself much as he might have had he been dining upon the verge of an active volcano. He could not keep his eyes off the wild faces, and wondered continually if he had not been plugging away at some of these fellows with his rifle from the mouth of the cave in the desert!

And at night the young fellow might as well have kept all three watches instead of one. He could not sleep longer than a minute at a time. And he was scalped and murdered a dozen times in these cat-naps, before morning.
It was a fact that, aside from the cow Thompson had shot and the calf, which the whites had reserved for their own use, there was little but bones left of the other creatures.
Garry had seen the hide and head of his big bull carefully placed in the lumberee; but the way the red men ate he feared that even the pelts would not be left.
In the morning Cody and Horse Head had a shorter conference. And when it was over the scout had the satisfaction of having obtained the promise of such a trial of magic between the faker of the Bitter Root Pawnees and himself, as had been suggested to him the evening before.

CHAPTER VIII.

INDIAN AND BUFFALO.

The outcome of his conference with Horse Head had left Cody with some idle time upon his hands. He had to report to Colonel Littleton, but it was not necessary for him to appear before the commander of Fort Lane in person.
Thompson agreed to take the scout's letter to the commander, as he was going back with the pelt of the big buffalo bull, and to bring back certain paraphernalia that Garry Littleton had brought with him from the East.
Garry was anxious, despite his feeling of insecurity, to watch the Indian-hunt, and Cody was nothing loath himself. Horse Head's party had reached the range only the afternoon before, and had made no killing. Now they started in methodically to slaughter the wild cattle.
The women and children remained in camp to cut up and "cure" the buffalo flesh as rapidly as the dead beasts were dragged to the camp. Old Horse Head himself no more than sat upon his pony and directed the first movements of the hunters. Then he went back and sat in the door of his teepee, smoking and dreaming. In spite of the flashes of vigor which revived the old man now and then, his day was past, and he coveted the comforts of peace and ease.
To see the spreading circle of tuft-headed riders charging down upon the vast herd of crooked-hacks was a typical picture from the old days—the days when the Yellow Eyes—as they called the whites—were unknown in the land, and the tribes had only other tribes to fight.

Then every bison season was likely to see the germ of a brisk conflict with some old-time enemy; for if one tribe ventured upon the territory, or hunting-grounds, of another, there was sure to be trouble. The border-lines were quite as plainly defined as are the divisions of counties and states to-day.

The method followed by the Indians in hunting, however, did not appeal to Garry as being a sane one, and he said as much to the scout.
"That's Injun nature," grunted Cody. "An Injun can't kill a snake without yelling about it. The sight of blood, or the possibility of killing—even a dumb brute—excites him. He's got to yell, and shriek, and make a big noise.
"Now, look at those greasy devils charging down upon that bunch of bison. Whites could go through, and
around, them without making a stampede. But before these Pawnees get through, they'll have the whole b'lin' of 'em stampeding for the south as fast as they can lay hoof to the ground."

Garry could easily believe this prophecy. The Indians, some armed with old muskets, or poor rifles, but most dependent wholly upon the feather-tufted spears and skinning knives, rode down upon the buffaloes. They forced their wild ponies into the mass and roughly cut out half a hundred or more of the brutes, frightening into a lumbering trot a couple of thousand more. That part of the great herd became hidden by a cloud of dust, out of which nothing could be seen but an occasional galloping hump, and the towing and gleaming horns.

One of this frenzied herd came the hunters, driving those selected for slaughter. The scene was wild enough—the Indians, with wild shrieks, spearing the fleeing bison, not infrequently getting flung from their ponies, entering into the battle with as much abandon as though charging a human enemy.

To look on alone made Garry Littleton's blood tingle, and when he saw a bunch of the bison escaping and charging past his station, with a look at Cody for permission, he unslung his rifle and began to shoot.

"Only see that you don't fire wild, boy!" admonished Cody earnestly.

Garry brought down one, two, three in prompt succession. Then the bunch—there were ten left in it, and several were heavy bulls—swerved from his station and aimed more directly for the great herd again. Excited by the sport, the youth drove his spurs into the flanks of his mount, and the latter leaped ahead to head off the charging cattle.

It was a foolhardy thing to do. Cody could not make himself heard, and the boy was rods away before the sound of his frenzied horse could reach the hunter.

Down the plain roared the tattered bunch of frightened and bleeding buffaloes. Sometimes half a dozen spear-thrusts were needed to end one of the beasts; the old hunters, however, usually brought the quarry to its knees with a single thrust.

Garry was right in the path of the maddened beasts. As easily he might have turned a locomotive driven at full speed as to turn these crooked-backed oxen from their course.

His horse, however, was not so great a fool as the boy. The mustang knew its business, and Garry might have sent in a bullet or two and then escaped had he been half as wise. All he saw coming out of the ruck of smoke and dust, however, was the foremost of a great bull, and he knew well enough that a bull, even at close range, would merely flatten itself upon the frontal bone of the huge brute.

He tried to shift his position in the saddle so as to get a better shot; and just then the mustang made a sideways jump, having caught the red and rolling eye of the charging bull.

Garry lost his grip on the reins. The mustang rose on its hind feet and wheeled like a spinning-top. And when its little fore feet struck the prairie again Garry was landing on his head and shoulders several yards away!

It had all happened so suddenly, and he was so dazed by the fall, that the youth did not seek to escape. Down upon him charged the big brute, and it seemed absolutely certain that not only this bull, but the other animals behind him, would charge over the prostrate boy!

Even did Garry escape the sharp horns, and the heavy, charging head, the hoofs of the bison would cut him to shreds. Few though there were in this wild bunch, he would be stamped to death as they ran over him. Escape seemed impossible.

It is quite doubtful if Garry understood all that was happening, or if his sensations were, indeed, typical of a man facing sudden and awful death. His brain seemed stunned, and the only lucid impression he seemed to have was a feeling of vexation against the mustang for throwing him so incontinently!

The Indians in the rear of the herd did not see the overthrow. Those flanking the bison's might have done something toward turning them had they known the white youth's peril.

Not a hand seemed stretched forth to his rescue. If ever a man was near death, and doomed to suffer it, Garry Littleton seemed so placed!

CHAPTER IX.

BUFFALO BILL TO THE RESCUE.

To cut across the path of the group of buffalo would have appalled even the recklessness of Wild Bill Hickok. Cody, cool and sagacious man that he was, never took chances merely for the excitement of the thing!

He saw the pony gallop out of the mêlée, riderless. He knew that Garry Littleton was already dead, or pretty certain to lose his life. It seemed impossible that he could be saved—that the bison could be turned in time.

His own horse was too small an object to turn the bunch of stampeded buffalo. It would take greater bulk than that to split up the bunch.

The scout's mind, however, worked with marvelous quickness and precision. The youth was down—and he was the nephew of Colonel Littleton—and the colonel happened to be the officer under whom Cody was working just at present. There was a certain call upon his loyalty in this matter; besides, he rather liked the Eastern youth.

The seconds occupied in this chain of reasoning were brief, however. As Garry was flung and the mustang came plunging out of the ruck, Buffalo Bill set spurs to his own mount. The latter leaped ahead with a wild snort, running beside the dust-cloud which enveloped the stampeded brutes.

The horse's stride was much longer than that of the buffaloes. Like an arrow from the bow the scout shot along beside the band, stretching along his mount's neck, talking to the straining brute as only a horse-lover does to the beast which he trusts for speed and sure-footedness.

It was no emergency for the use of a rifle; there was too great danger of a stray ball piercing the figure of the youth upon the ground. As for pistols, the .45-caliber bullets might have been pumped into the buffalo bull for half an hour without much more than puncturing his rough hide! Cody did not even glance at the hair rope which hung from his saddle. There was neither time nor room to rope the big bull; for the maddened beast was more likely to yank the scout's mount off his feet than to be thrown himself.

Therefore, there was just one weapon left the scout in this terrible emergency, and another man would have hesitated to use it. While his horse was stretching out

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THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES.
like a racer, gaining at every jump upon the great bull in advance of the rest of his fellows, Cody reached back for his Bowie.

He seized the knife in his left hand, gripping it with fingers of steel, and swung himself far to the left of his running steed. His right foot slipped from the stirrup, and he caught the toe of his polished riding-boot under the neck of the horse.

Amid the blinding dust thudded the hoofs of the charging buffalo bull. With almost human intelligence the horse judged his distance, and brought his rider within reach of the massive, tawny body.

Although so lumbering and awkward in appearance, the gait of the buffalo is as swift as any split-hoof animal of the West, saving the antelope. It is sure-footed, too, often climbing steep and rough mountainsides. On the comparatively level plains its speed and endurance powers are marvelous.

At race-horse speed the huge brute skimmed the prairie, its nose close to the ground, its rage-inflamed eyes gleaming like coals amid the tangle of hair which covered its forehead. Nothing could turn the bull; seemingly nothing less than a thunderbolt could stop it.

Yet suddenly the scout, far over-hung from his saddle, made a swift and decisive stroke upon an upward slant. A thousand men, hunters though they might be, would not have known where and how to strike. Buffalo Bill knew the anatomy of the bison better than any other frontiersman.

The keen, long, two-edged blade was driven to the hilt into the huge body behind the shoulder and low down. The force Cody put into the blow nearly carried him off his horse entirely, and he was forced to content himself with a single stroke, and leave the knife raking in the wound.

But a few yards—aye, a few feet only—separated the bull from the prostrate and dazed youth. However serious the wound Cody's knife had made, it seemed impossible that it could check the beast in so short a distance.

But the stroke had been as certain as death itself. The point of the knife was driven through and through the great thumping heart of the galloping bison. Had a thunderbolt itself fallen and stricken him, his death could have been no more sudden.

The heart burst and the great bull pitched forward on his nose with a shock that seemed to shake the earth about them. The momentum of his run threw the huge body in almost a complete somersault. For a moment there was danger that the bull would finally crush the youth, though already dead!

But it toppled sideways—the great bulk of flesh and bone—and actually the imperiled youth lay in the shelter of it! On charged the remainder of the maddened brutes. One plunged Pell-mell into the fallen monarch of the plain, and went down with a broken neck. The others separated and passed by on either side.

The whooping, yelling Indians followed, and then back rode Cody, blowing a little after his exertions, but with brightening eye, as he saw that his charge was safe.
bulls, and the cows and calves were gathered in a compact bunch behind the threatening bulk of the bulls. Even the yearling bulls pawed the earth and bellowed as though to bid defiance to the enemy.

"Ole Ephraim," as the frontiersman called the grizzly-bear, did not charge at once. He slowly circled around the group, looking for a weak place where he might break down the defense. But the monarchs of this herd were wise old fellows, and wherever the grizzly went, they presented their lowered heads and sharp horns to him.

The cows gazed upon the maneuvers passively, chewing their cuds, or sucking their young. Cody told Garry that, however, had the grizzly succeeded in breaking through the ranks and seizing a calf, the whole herd would break and run in panic. That was the buffalo nature.

In this case, however, the bear found no good opening. Yet he was too hungry—or too stubborn—to give up. Growling and roaring, his challenges being quite as ferocious as those of the bulls, he finally made a spring for a big bull that, more courageous than its mates, had advanced a ways toward him.

The buffalo seemed not at all afraid to meet the charge. It leaped forward, too. The impact made the walls of the little valley echo again. The bull bunted the bear in the right fore shoulder, and bruin was flung over on his back, his belly exposed to the sharp horns of his foe.

But as he fell his mighty paw caught the bull beside the head. It was an awful, fairly a bone-cracking, blow! The onlookers, although some rods away, heard the big brute's skull smash like the impact of a heavy heel upon a beach shell.

Over rolled the bull, too, his bellowings now changed to moanings. But two of the other bulls were charging upon the common enemy. Before bruin could get upon his feet the two were upon him. The sharp horn of one bull ripped a terrible gash in the grizzly's side. The roar which issued from the grizzly's throat was such a sound as Garry Littleton had never heard before.

The second bull bunted the bear at another angle, and, likewise, must have hurt the brute greatly; but Ole Ephraim was by no means ready to give up the fight. He had already got his death stroke, perhaps; but the end would come slowly. And he was not ready to be worried to death without putting in some blows.

His great paws swung like the paddle-wheels of a steamboat. The bull that had ripped him open caught first one, and then the other paw upon his shoulders. He went down, bellowing, with both fore legs useless, the shoulder-bones being snapped like pipe-stems.

The third bull escaped without a scratch that time, but, returning to the charge, the big bear suddenly heaved himself up on his haunches—he was evidently unable to use his hinder parts—and received the bull in both arms!

The shock sent the grizzly backwards; but he held onto his prize. Big as he was, the bull was tightly hugged to the bear's breast and his bones cracked and splintered under the vise-like pressure.

The two huge carcasses rolled together, over and over, into a little hollow. Garry believed both must be dead; but, after a minute of uncertainty, the spectators saw the bloody mass of the bear quiver, and throw off the dead and crushed carcass of the bull.

Other buffaloes had gathered around, stamping and
blowing, and threatening the enemy with their massive foreheads. The grizzly rose up stifly, still dragging his hind quarters, and actually advanced upon his enemies!

When he had dragged himself out of the hollow, three of the bulls charged at once. They downed Ole Ephraim, rolled him over, and stamped upon him. Their bellowings drowned his snarls of rage and agony. But when they drew off he managed to give one a stroke, where-with his saberlike claws flayed the bull for a space four inches or more broad the entire length of his side from the fore shoulder to the rump!

That bull started on the gallop, bellowing mightily, and the others—although victory was with them—followed suit, panic having entered into their bovine souls. The whole herd charged along the valley.

And out of the dust came Ole Ephraim, covered with blood, dragging the lower half of his body, but following in the trail of the departing buffalo, and roaring his defiance.

Garry could not stand it any longer, and he sighted his rifle and sent a bullet crashing into Ole Ephraim's brain.

CHAPTER XI.

INTO THE RANGE.

Cody and his young companion remained in their camp, or near it, for four days. Then Bull Thompson returned. But this time two pack-horses brought all the plunder.

"Going up into them blamed hills," declared Bull, "and that puts the lumber out o' the biz. Hosses is better. It's all right, younger; I got yer stuff stowed all right on Tom and Jerry."

He called the pack-horses that—"just because it sounded handy," Bull said. But he couldn't tell which was Tom and which was Jerry. However, as they were strong and able animals nobody in the party was likely to quarrel with their names.

The word brought from Colonel Littleton satisfied the scout, and the party took up its way slowly toward the Bitter Root Range. Bull reported that the Pawnees had finished their fall hunt of the buffalo, and that he had spied the tail of the crew, their ponies laden with flesh, making for the range through a more southerly pass than that at which the trio of whites aimed.

It was perfect fall weather, and game in the hills was plentiful. Garry Littleton had never seen such a game paradise before and would have recklessly slaughtered more than they had any need or use for, had not Cody stayed his exuberance.

Certain animals they needed for meat; the pelts of others were valuable—especially at this time of year. And Bull taught the Eastern youth to follow a trail, as well as a lot of woodlore that would be of value to him if he ever ventured into the wilds again, or should be unfortunately lost during his present trip.

After a week of this pottering about, one evening, as they sat about the camp-fire, which burned in the lea of a rock, close to the shadow of a thickly wooded side-hill, Garry was suddenly aware that only he and Bull were conversing. He looked around and noted that Buffalo Bill—as silently as one of the shadows lying so heavily about—had slipped away.

"Why! where's Cody?" he demanded of the guide.

Thompson had evidently heard nothing, or seen nothing, to arouse his attention. He was busily cleaning a badly burned pipe and looked up with a comical expression of surprise upon his bearded visage.

"Glory be! what's got into him?"

"Why, he was here just a minute ago!" declared Garry. "Is it some trick he's playing on us?"

"Buffa ain't likely to play tricks," said Bull seriously. "You'd better git back a bit, son. Don't sit so close into the firelight."

"What—is what is it?" demanded Garry, greatly disturbed.

"Hanged if I know. I got pretty sharp ears, but I don't claim to be the woodman Buffa or Old Nick Wharton be."

"Can it be an enemy?"

"Well, no tellin'. That'll do. Don't move too quick. If we're being watched ye might attract a bullet."

"Is it Indians?"

"Like enough—hush!"

The old man listened intently. Far, far away, it seemed, the sleepy call of some night bird sounded—twice.

"Come on!" whispered Bull. "That's him."

"Who?" cried Garry, amazed.

"Buffa."

"What! that bird?"

"Yep. It's an old call of his."

"But how can you tell it is a signal instead of a real bird?"

"Because it was sounded twice. The bird itself usually calls three times."

"Something must have happened," breathed Garry, following Bull into the wood.

"More like suthin' is goin' to happen," growled the old man. "Got your shootin' irons?"

"Yes."

"Steady, then!"

The call was repeated, and Garry noted that it came twice in swift succession. Instantly—and with startling swiftness so that the youth started and sweat all over his body—the mournful wail of a coyote split the silence of the night.

Garry leaped about, gripping his rifle tightly. He knew that there was really no danger from the cowardly coyotes while he was armed; yet their cries always set him to shuddering.

And, then, suddenly he realized, gloomy as the place was, that Bull Thompson was shaking with laughter.

"By Jove! that was you, Bull!" he cried. "Sh. It was. I was answerin' Buffa. Then's the signals we agreed upon. Keep quiet now—and be ready to shoot."

Suddenly Garry saw a moving shadow in the clearing where the fire-light danced. He gripped Bull's arm hard and pointed.

"All right!" whispered the guide. "I see. Dunno who it is."

"An Indian?"

"Likely. Yes, by the jumping Jehoshaphat! An Injun."

"You—you won't shoot without provocation, Bull?" queried Garry.

"I'm thinkin' the mere fact that an Injun is alive is provocation enough to shoot the critter," muttered the old fellow. "But we'll wait and see what Buffa says. Gosh! that boy's years air sharp!" he added, with admiration.
CHAPTER XII.
THE MYSTERY.

They had not long to wait. Suddenly—and quite as noiselessly as the appearance of the Indian himself—a second figure stepped into the clearing. It was Buffalo Bill, and he walked quietly across to the fire.

"How!" grunted the red man, between the long exhalation of his laboring lungs.

"How!" returned Cody. "You come from the great chief, Horse Head?"

"Ugh!"

"I am glad to receive the messenger of the great chief. Sit by our fire and take food."

"Ugh!" exclaimed the man suspiciously. "Two more white men here?"

Evidently he had marked the signs of the trio's occupancy of the camp.

"Oh, the others will be right along. Here they are," said Cody, for Bull Thompson had touched Garry's arm, and together the two marched into the clearing likewise.

"Ugh!" was the red man's observation, and sat down.

He was covered with sweat and grime, and his mocassins were badly worn. He had evidently come a long way—and rapidly.

Bull cooked some meat and boiled a pannikin of coffee for the runner. The Indian ate ravenously, and afterward filled and lit a pipe and smoked slowly for some minutes before he made known his errand.

Then he began to speak in his native tongue to Cody, for he was evidently less of a linguist than Horse Head, the chief. The story he told was long, and was expressed in very tedious and flowery phrases; but the scout listened quietly and made little comment.

After he was done, the Indian rolled up in a blanket Bull gave him and went to sleep almost instantly with his feet to the fire. The three whites drew together, but Cody was careful to keep them in the shadow, while he told them briefly what it was all about.

This man was a runner, or messenger, from Horse Head. Arrangements had been made, so the old chief sent word, for the trial of magic before the tribe. A place was set, and a time, and the old chief gave his word that, no matter how the matter might end, the three whites should have a safe conduct to Fort Lane after the trial was over.

"You reckon you can trust that old geezer?" demanded Bull.

"I wouldn't take young Mr. Littleton into the nest of serpents if I wasn't sure," the scout declared.

"Well, by Jephoshphat!" cried Bull, "you don't find me none behind. I ain't got much confidence in that old Pawnee: but where you two fellows go I reckon Bull Thompson kin toddle, too!"

"We've time enough to take it easy. There's a fortnight yet before the day set. This Hunting Wolf, it seems, claims that he must make a lot of fool preparations. He's a great bluffer, all right."

"What under the sun do you suppose he will do?" asked Garry, with interest. "I had no idea that these Indians set up for magicians."

"I reckon every tribe has its 'black art' business," said Cody, with a laugh. "Lots o' folks in the East who are swamped up about spiritualism. That's old to the Injuns. They believe in it—always have. Their medicine-men and prophets talk with the spirits—or claim to."

"Do they have table-rappings, and such things?" asked Garry.

"They would if they had tables. But I've been in a medicine tepee and heard a bird flapping his wings in there in the dark, and felt the wind of 'em; but there wasn't any bird—only a naked old fiend of an Injun, and me."

"Waugh!" grunted Thompson. "Do you believe that truck, Cody?"

"I believe what I've seen and heard—as far as it went. I heard voices of animals, and the spirit's bird talked."

"Of course, that was ventriloquism," said Garry.

"What's ven—what's that ism?" demanded Bull.

"The throwing of the voice so that it seems to proceed from some other place than the lips of the speaker."

"Huh!"

"There is more than that to Indian magic," said Cody seriously. "There are things no man can understand or explain—I reckon because they're meant to be hidden from the ordinary understanding. Whether the magicians or medicine-men hypnotize you, or not, I won't say. But I've seen things at a medicine powwow that I never liked to talk about afterward."

"But there's no danger. This business will go through all right. I believe this Hunting Wolf is a faker, pure and simple. And, if he isn't, I believe just the same we've got him beat."

"Look here!" exclaimed Thompson suddenly. "You never got out of this camp just now and made all that catouze over one Injun, Buffla, did ye?"

"What do you mean?" asked the scout, smiling grimly.

"Why, you was gone all of a sudden. Then you called us out. Did you hear this fellow coming—so far away, too?"

"I had no idea he was coming."

"Then what started you up?"

"Didn't you hear the horse whinny?"

"What hoss?"

"Mine."

"Didn't pay particular 'tention."

"I did," said Cody seriously, smoking. "The horse said 'Injun' just as plain as you could say it."
“Suffering mackerel!” exclaimed Garry suddenly, “do you mean to say your horse can tell the smell of an Indian from a white man?”

“Sure.”

“But not so far away as this feller must have been when you slipped out o’ camp, Buffa,” declared Thompson.

“How far away do you suppose the runner was?”

“If he wasn’t bluffing about his wind when he come into this camp, he must have been two miles ’r more away when we first seen you’d left us.”

“I guess you’re right,” admitted Cody slowly.

“And the wind was in his face.”

“Yes.”

“That hoss of yours takes the medal,” said Bull grimly. “Tell us another.”

Cody smiled again. “You’re right. I saw that soon. Just as soon as I saw the runner, in fact.”

“You saw what?”

“That it wasn’t this Indian the horse scented!”

“Suffering mackerel!” mumbled Garry. “More of them?”

“But not around here now, I am sure.”

“How do you know?”

“There was a prowler near before the messenger came in. Of that I am sure. While this messenger remains, however, the other will keep well away,”

“How do you know that?” demanded Bull, in a worried tone.

“I wish I knew who the scamp is as certainly as I know that we need fear nothing from him while this chap lies at our camp-fire,” returned Cody, and he spoke in a worried tone.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FRESHET.

After that Garry Littleton somehow lost all interest in sleep for that night. It is true he rolled up in his blanket; but instead of putting his feet to the merrily burning fire, and so keeping his entire body comfortably warm, he got into the shadow and lay there, shaking with both a physical and mental agony, until morning.

It was still dark when he saw the Indian runner rise up suddenly and shake himself free of his blanket. Garry gripped the pistol he had taken to bed with him, and watched.

It was Cody’s guard, and he said something to the redskin in the guttural dialect of the Pawnee. Oddly enough Garry had been reminded strongly, whenever he heard the native tongue spoken, of two Japanese students—two of the first who had come to America—who were in his class at school. To his ear there seemed to be much in common between Japanese and Pawnee; many of the words and inflections seemed entirely similar.

For some moments the Indian and Buffalo Bill talked. Then the former tightened his belt, shook hands gravely with the scout, settled his knife in his belt, and, scooping up two or three tiny pebbles which he placed under his tongue to assist the flow of saliva, he started off, on the back trail over which he had come, at a sharp trot.

“Awake, youngster?” asked the scout.

“Yes.”

“Better get up, then. We might as well make an early start,” and he stirred Bull up with the toe of his boot.

“But I thought you said we had plenty of time to get to the rendezvous Horse Head has appointed.”

“So we have. But I don’t fancy this place as a camp,” muttered Cody, casting a sharp glance around the glade. His evident nervousness did not appease Garry’s own uncertainty. And even the phlegmatic Bull Thompson expressed himself as mighty glad to get out of the place—which they did about sun-up.

They started directly up the trail in the wake of the Indian runner. A few rods up the incline they came to the crossing of a brook. Here Cody made an exhaustive examination of the moist ground—a particularly good place for retaining the impression of whatever passed over it on either four or two feet.

“Oh!” he said, at last, and with satisfaction. “Here we have it.”

“Have what?” asked Garry.

“The print of a second Indian’s foot.”

“Git out!” exclaimed Bull. “That’s the runner’s.”

“No. The runner had a ragged pair of moccasins on when he came last night.”

“But he changed for good ones and flung the old ones away. I saw them,” Bull declared.

“So he did. But this footstep, made by an Indian in a whole moccasin, points down-hill.”

“How do you know it is not a white man’s footprint?”

“He bears perfectly even on the entire foot—and toes in. Indians are flat-footed.”

“But mebbe the runner stepped back for suthin’,” suggested Bull, but in a tone which showed he did not believe it.

“And there is water standing in the footprint.”

“Dew!” exclaimed Bull.

“That’s it. The print was made last evening.”

“And who can it be?” cried Garry.

“I’m free to confess I hope we’ll never larn, lad,” declared Bull.

But Cody said nothing, and hurried them on until they were out of that valley and had put the ridge behind them.

They jogged along then with comfort, and Bull showed evidence of a free conscience and a good appetite again. But Garry was still unpleasantly worried—the more so that Cody quite ignored his hints that he would like to discuss the mystery of the second Indian. The scout was a hard man to draw out when he was minded to be reticent.

Later they struck the trail of an antelope herd, one of the hoof-prints promising that the leader was a buck of enormous size. They set after this quarry and forgot the Indians in the excitement of the chase.

Even the fact that it had grown disagreeably dark and chill, and that the clouds threatened a heavy downpour, did not hold them back. They entered a narrow defile which plainly—or so Cody said—was a pass to some farther verdant valley or basin; otherwise the deer would not have taken to it.

The defile became a cañon with walls that were sheer precipices, before long. It narrowed, too, until the horses had to pick their way in the bed of the rocky water-course. This was especially hard for the pack-
animals; therefore, the progress of the trio was slow in the extreme.

As the day darkened, and the walls of the cut heightened, Cody and Bull both began to look anxious and discussed the wisdom of going back.

"Though," said the scout, "it's likely to show us a clear path ahead sooner than we'd get one by returning."

By and by it began to rain, however, and Garry had never experienced such rain in the East.

"A cloudburst!" exclaimed Bull, as they cowered beneath their blankets. "We ought to find shelter from this, Cody."

"Oh, a little wetting won't hurt us," declared Garry cheerfully.

"It ain't the wetting I'm afraid of," grumbled Bull.

"I'm neither sugar nor salt; I won't melt."

"What is it, then?" asked the Easterner.

"These durned cliffs air too clos't together to suit me. There's going to be some little water sloppin' down this way purty soon."

"A freshet?" asked Garry.

"Wa'al, ye might call it that."

"You think the bulk of that water will shed this way, old man?" queried Cody, turning back to ask the question of the guide.

"I'm afraid so."

"Then we'd better get out."

"But it may be a shorter distance to safety up the cañon than back."

"Thunder! we don't know what's ahead," cried Cody, pulling his horse around. "I vote we go back."

"You're the doctor, Buffalo," said Bull.

"Do you mean to say there is danger from any flood that might sweep through here?" asked Garry, in doubt.

Bull's eyes swept the walls of the cañon and finally spied an up-rooted sapling caught in a crack of the rock, fully a score of feet above the bed of the stream in which they stood.

"See yonder?" he questioned. "How d'ye s'pose that tree got perched up there?"

"You don't mean to say the water ever tossed it so high?"

"I mean ter say that very likely the last cloudburst up in these here hills raised the water in this cut to that level. We wanter sneak!"

They turned the pack-horses about and started down the cañon again at a lumbering trot. Already Garry thought the puddles through which they splashed were a little deeper. The stream seemed to be steadily growing.

This was not so, however. Had he but known, the stream would show no perceptible increase in depth, if the freshet was coming, until a wall of water—an overwhelming wave—tore down the cañon, sweeping all before it!

The rain fell heavier, were that possible. There was not a dry stitch of clothing upon the youth, for the blanket was long since saturated, and he had flung it off. They kept the loads of their rifles dry by wrapping them in oiled silk, of which Garry had brought a goodly supply. The pistols in their saddle-holsters were useless, however, and Garry very much doubted whether those he carried in his belt scabbards were any better.

Despite the rain, however, Buffalo Bill looked spick and span. Where the dampness made his two companions look like bedraggled cats, there was little change in his appearance.

But his face showed the strongest anxiety. The roaring in the mountains behind them seemed to grow. Was it the wind, or was it the water tumbling down the upper gulleys and cuts which emptied into the cañon they now traversed?

Suddenly the rain seemed to cease. It had swept on and left them as abruptly as it had begun. Some peaks high up in the range glowed under the sun's rays. The clouds were breaking.

But the murmur from the hills increased. The wind was dying. Cody's query was answered. It was not the wind that made that noise!

"What the blazes!" gasped Bull Thompson, becoming aware of the sound, too.

"That's the cloudburst!" cried Cody. "Spur up!"

"Is the freshet coming?" shrieked Garry, who was ahead, driving one of the pack-horses on which was laden his precious paraphernalia with which Cody trusted to "make magic."

"Git on! never mind that hoss. Let it shift for itself!" yelled Thompson. "Here she comes!"

CHAPTER XIV.

BETWEEN TWO FOES.

But, frightened as he was, Garry had no intention of letting the pack-horse fall behind. He had secured a quiet and he beheld the flanks of the beast most unmercifully as they fled down the cañon. His own mount was a plucky one and needed no urging.

Behind him thundered Bull, Cody, and the other pack-horse. The noise of the rushing water far up the cañon soon drowned out the hoof-beats, however. As the rain had ceased and the tempest had quieted about them, the sound of the deluge from above grew, and grew, until the air vibrated with the sound.

"There's a break in the wall just beyond that turn yonder!" shrieked Cody in Bull's ear, as he drew beside the old guide. "I remember it."

Bull nodded. There was no time for talking. Every second counted in the race, and so did every ounce of breath, perhaps. The beaten horses staggered on now like drunken animals.

Suddenly Garry was seen to draw up his steed. He let the laboring pack-horse go, but he brought the mustang he bestrode back upon his haunches.

And, as he did so, there was a flash from the cañon-wall—a flash of a gun, followed by a second and a third. The sharp explosions of a Marlin repeater rattled the echoes of the cut, and were plainly heard by the Westerners despite the roaring of the freshet.

Cody and Bull unslung their rifles. Bang! bang! bang! bang! bang! That emptied the Marlin, they knew.

Garry's hat spun into the air, his coat was shot through, his bridle rein was cut, and his horse sprang sideways with a wild snort and plunged as one of the bullets cut a furrow along its neck.

Garry swung the animal around and came tearing up the cañon. He didn't even unsling his gun. The bullets had sung about him like wasps, and for the moment they seemed to him to be more threatening than the deluge from the rear.
“Head around there!” shouted Bull. “That gun’s empty.”

“What is it?” gasped Garry, pale-faced, indeed.

“Indians!” cried Cody, with assurance.

“What Injun owns a repeating rifle?” demanded Bull, in disgust.

“I don’t know,” yelled back the scout. “But I’m going to find out in short order.”

He spurred ahead. There were no more shots. He rounded the spur of rock, and there was a steep path up to a little plateau—the break in the wall of which he had spoken.

The empty cartridge-shells on the ground proclaimed this to be the station of the individual who had so nearly killed the youth. But there was nobody in sight.

Thompson hurried the frightened youth along. Whatever danger lurked ahead, the deluge behind seemed more real to the frontiersman.

He glanced back and then prodded Garry’s horse again. There—like a mighty comber tumbler shoreward upon a sea-beach—came a wall of water higher than their heads as they sat upon their horses!

“It’s a-comin’!” shrieked the old man, as the little cavalcade rounded the turn in Buffalo Bill’s wake.

They saw the scout on the shelf, and Garry’s and Bull’s horses followed. Even the pack-animals knew enough to climb. The water rushed around the turn before the rear horse had secured his footing on the plateau, and he was nigh swept away.

But Bull leaped down, seized the lariat which hung at his saddle-bow, noosed the faithful beast, and, single-handed, drew it up out of the flood to a place of stable footing.

Like a ravening monster, disappointed at having lost its prey, the flood roared on. The water filled the cahon completely, from wall to wall, and to a depth of more than ten feet!

Suddenly, while they were marooned in this way, the sharp crackle of a rifle again sounded—this time from above. One of the pack-horses fell with an almost human-like groan.

“That fiend!” shouted Cody.

He cast a glance upward and beheld the tortuous path by which the person who had attacked them had mounted the cliff. The bullets continued to drop about them, although the three men were fairly well hidden behind a projection which butted out upon the plateau.

“That feller shoots well for an Injun, Buffalo!” cried Bull.

The scout made no reply. The instant he counted seven shots he darted out of shelter and began to swarm up the side of the cliff in the way the coudrel, who so thirsted for their gore, must have gone. Nothing Bull or Garry could shout to him brought Cody back.

The path was a mere crack in the rocky wall. Soil had sifted there in places, and in the soil herbs and bushes had taken root from time to time. The roots of these helped him. He clung to them, reaching up, hand over hand, to seize the tough stalks, clinging with finger-tips to rough protuberances upon the face of the rock, holding at times almost “by the skin of his teeth” in places which afforded, to the eyes of his companions below, no hold at all!

Suddenly Bull saw a dark face peering out over the edge of a shelf high above. Instantly his rifle sprang to his shoulder and a bullet sang viciously upward. The face disappeared; but a shower of clipped feathers spun into the air, cut from the Indian’s topknot by the rifle ball.

“Git yer gun, sonny, and keep yer eye peed for the skunk!” roared Bull. “If you see hide or hair of him, plug away!”

But the Indian did not appear again. When Cody reached this shelf he found that it wound around the cliff and gave exit out upon an upper table-land. There he found marks of moccasin and pony feet in the wet earth. The mysterious savage, with the magazine rifle, had utterly disappeared.

Cody made his way slowly down into the cañon, by another path, and joined his comrades after the flood had subsided. He was very much crestfallen.

“I swear! I’m completely up a stump in this business,” he said gruffly, in answer to Garry’s inquiries.

“The cuss is a Pawnee—that I know. Beyond that single fact I can’t tell a thing about him.”

“He sure’s a sarpint,” said Bull.

“If I ever get my hands on him!” growled the scout, clutching his brown fingers in the empty air, and seeming to look forward to squeeze the throat of Mr. Indian with considerable satisfaction.

“What we going to do about this poor horse?” queried Garry, pointing to the dead pack-animal.

This brought Bull Thompson down to hard pan, at least. Bull saw that he was due to walk from this time on, and he was not built for walking.

“Did I understand that we started out from Fort Lane on pleasure, younger?” he demanded of the commandant’s nephew.

“That was the original understanding, I believe,” admitted Garry.

“Waal, by the jumping Jehoshaphat! I’d like ter have the fun begin purt’ soon,” exclaimed the guide gloomily, beginning to remove the goods from the dead animal and strapping them on the back of his own mount.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BUFFALO STAMPEDE.

They went down into the water-swept cañon as soon as the deluge was passed. There they plodded along through the slop, sometimes slipping waist deep into pools, and often having difficulty with the horses, until they came out into the open valley again.

It was then sunset. There was a grove, and some of the trees were evergreen. Yet so severe had been the rain that it was almost impossible for them to find sufficient dry wood to make a fire with which to cook supper. As for drying their clothing and their packs—that much-desired work had to be postponed until morning.

It was cold, and everything was musky and wet, and Garry obtained a very conclusive lesson regarding a life in the wilds. It was not all “beer and skittles.” He longed for the lumber with which they had first started out. That would have afforded him a warm and dry bed, at least.

In the morning he was hawking and expectorating with incipient bronchitis, and not until Bull managed to make a rip-roaring fire, which baked them all through and through, did the youth feel again as though life was really worth living!
They kept a sharp lookout, but not an Indian—not even any Indian “smoke,” or other sign—did they discover that day, or for several days. Then they arrived at a rather high, but broad and verdant valley—a flat, luxuriant table-land on which was plenty of wood and water and sufficient green herbage for thousands upon thousands of cattle, late as the season was.

Through it ran a deep cañon, with earthen banks more than a hundred feet high in most places, and at the bottom of which brawled a branch of the Bitter Root River. They followed the eastern bank of this stream for miles.

It was the second day of their journey up the valley that Bull Thompson sighted a great herd of creatures passing down the valley. He saw them at breakfast time, and his shout of surprise roused the attention of his mates instantly.

“For the land of liberty’s sake!” he gasped. “This spring water we’re feasting on has gone to my head—sure’s shootin’. What’s them things I see comin’—the critters of my fevered imagination, or be they buffals, heh?”

Garry, using his field-glasses, assured the old man that there really was a herd of the crooked-backed oxen—and a big herd, too—coming down the valley, and on this side of the river.

“They’re belated. You can see they’re hurrying south,” said Cody, later. “The buffalo really is a migratory animal, although they can easily endure the coldest climate with their coat and the fat hump they carry, to live on. But they go where the herbage is best.”

“Our buffa steaks air all gone; one o’ them will come in handy,” remarked Bull sententiously.

The herd came slowly down the valley, feeding as it moved. It bore over toward the farther wall, giving the hunters a wide berth, though the creatures seemed to have no particular fear of them. There were several thousands in the herd, and it was an easy matter for Bull to chase out a yearling during the forenoon and kill the creature near the verge of the enormously steep and high river bank.

They camped at this spot temporarily while the buffalo was skinned and cut up. It chanced that they had selected a sort of promontory, or out-thrust of the table-land into the river—the broad and deep stream made a sharp turn here and roared at the foot of the bank on either side of them. Before them, as they camped, was the great plain of the valley with the brown herds grazing upon it more than a mile away.

This point of exposed land was treeless. The bank here was as precipitous as at any part of the river bluff they had thus far seen. A horseman’s life would not be worth a picayune if he attempted to descend to the river.

Suddenly Garry noticed that, far upon the other side of the herd of buffalo, there seemed to be some commotion. It was like a great herd of cattle “milling,” and on the wind came the sound of bellowing and bawling to their ears. Something had stirred the temper of the brutes, but even Cody did not guess that anything was wrong with the herd until it was too late for the three whites to mount their horses and flee!

It seemed as though—with exceeding abruptness—the whole mass of the buffaloes were in motion. Their direction was changed, and instantly, instead of being peaceably grazing wild cattle, they became instead a charging, thundering mob of terrified beasts—utterly irresponsible and wildly determined to plunge forward upon a straight course, no matter what opposed them!

And their course was directly toward the high bluff of the river!

Cody sprang up at Garry Littleton’s cry and cast an anxious glance about. It was plain instantly that escape was impossible. The forefront of the herd was too broad for even on the fastest horse of their three to flee. As for their pack-animals, they would have had to be abandoned, and would have gone down and been stamped to death by the terrified mob of buffalo.

“A stampede!” yelled Bull Thompson. “What’ll we do, Buffalo?”

He had already sprung for his horse, which was lariated near-by.

“Stay where we are!” cried Cody, obliged to raise his voice to be heard above the deep rumble of the coming hoofs. “Get a move on! gather the stock in a bunch. They’ve got to break the rush of the critters somehow.”

“They’ll surely swerve aside, won’t they?” gasped Garry. “They won’t go spang up to the edge of this bluff?”

“To the edge of it?” muttered Bull. “Why, ye fool! they’ll go over it—hundreds of ‘em—thousands of ‘em! There’s no more stoppin’ a buffalo stampede till they git ready to stop, than there would be tryin’ to halt a Washoe zephyr!”

“Suffering mackerel! what shall we do, Mr. Cody?” demanded the frightened youth.

“Make your horse lie down! Make him lie down!” repeated the scout hurriedly. “Close to mine, here! Bull, make those pack-horses git down. Stake ‘em down, if necessary. We’ve got to make a bulwark of ‘em in some way.”

“I’d like ter know what started them crazy critters this way all of a sudden?” grumbled Bull.

Garry did not ask that question; it was enough to see the mass of galloping creatures hurling themselves so recklessly toward the high bank of the river. The sight was terrifying in the extreme.

Surely, he thought, something will turn them before they pour over the brink of the bluff and plunge down to the river!
But nearer and nearer came the stampeding herd, and gave no sign of turning. The noise of their approach was so great that now the three imperilled hunters could not converse even at the top of their voices. But from Cody’s gestures the youth knew what he was expected to do.

The prone horses made but a poor defense against the charging buffalo. He did not see how they were to be saved by such means. But when he saw Cody prepare his rifle for action, and even lay his loaded pistols on the ground within easy reach, Garry did the same.

Madly, with heads down, nostrils smoking, tails up in the air, and with a blind fear whipping them on, the great herd thundered down to the brink of the river bluff.

Garry saw Cody turn toward him, and the scout’s lips moved. He read on them this command:

"Hold your fire till I begin."

He nodded; but, as the buffalo herd came closer and closer, it was hard, indeed, for the frightened youth to obey. He looked from right to left along the forefront of the herd. It was more than a mile broad, and gave no promise of holding back at any point.

They were now within a hundred yards—then fifty—then twenty-five! The speed of the stampeded animals was terrific. In a few seconds Garry believed it would be all over with him and with his friends. The buffaloes came down upon them like a roaring sea!

Suddenly Cody raised his rifle and fired, Bull Thompson was not a second behind him, and Garry began to blaze away, too. They shot low, and into the very faces of the herd immediately before them. Buffalo after buffalo tumbled headlong, either dead or wounded. It made little difference which, for the crowd behind made it impossible for the brutes to rise again once they were upon the ground!

The three whites pumped lead so rapidly that a perfect sheet of flame seemed to meet the charging buffaloes. Their own huge bodies began to bank up before the imperilled trio and their horses. One great bull fell across a pack-horse, and the creature squealed terrifically.

The tawny bodies heaped up in a veritable breastwork, one atop the other. The charging herd behind positively could not get over the barrier. Desperately as they were charging, they had to split and go around this pile of their dead and wounded brothers.

Meanwhile, the buffaloes on either side had reached the brink of the bluff. No halt was called, but, as madly as ever, they plunged down the desperately steep bluff to the river. Hundreds upon hundreds rolled heels over head to the bottom. The bluff side was cut and scarred by their sharp hoofs. Avalanches of dirt and stone were carried down to the water’s edge.

And at the bottom were piled the dead creatures, while the later and more fortunate ones came down over their bodies, reached the stream, and swam across to the other side where there was a narrow beach on which they began grazing as though nothing at all had happened!

These matters did not closely attract Garry’s attention, however, until later. The peril which immediately threatened him and his friends was too real for him to think of anything else at the time.

At least twenty-five of the big brutes had been shot in that charge, and their heaped-up carcasses made a bulwark eight or ten feet high!

By no means did the entire herd go over the bluff into the river. As quickly as it began did the stampede stop. To Garry the whole thing was inexplicable. One moment the buffalo had been peacefully feeding, the next they were wildly galloping over the plain en-masse! And now they were comparatively quiet again.

But Cody and Bull Thompson looked at each other when it was all over, and simultaneously pronounced the same word:

"Injun!"

"You don’t mean to say the Indians started that stampede?" cried Garry.

"That’s what I mean ter say," declared Thompson. "And they come nigh ketchin’ us, too! I never come so near bein’ killed without r’ally bein’ put inter my coffin before, in my life!"

But Garry could not joke.

"Is it really so, Mr. Cody? Do you believe the Indians started that stampede?"

"They most certainly did. When the herd was just starting I saw their spears waving above the backs of the buffaloes. If we went across the valley I’d be able to show you their ponies’ hoof-prints."

"No; I don’t want to see ‘em. I just want to get out of this place,“ declared Garry. "Suffering mackerel! isn’t there any honesty about a redskin at all? When we’re invited to be their guests at this powwow, can’t they treat us decently?"

Cody shook his head slowly. "I don’t blame this on Horse Head," he observed.

"But they’re Pawnees," growled Bull.

"Yes, they are Pawnees," admitted Cody, but he said no more.

CHAPTER XVI

THE BIG VILLAGE.

The pack-horse was fortunately unhurt, and the party gathered their possessions and hurried up the valley as fast as possible until they were out of the region of the buffaloes.

There were enough dead buffaloes at the bottom of
the bluff to supply the entire Pawnee tribe for the winter; but when the stampede had quieted down, not a sign of an Indian was revealed to the white men's gaze.

They were unmolested for the next few days, too, and disturbed by these two attacks upon himself and friends, Cody hurried their arrival at the rendezvous which old Horse Head had appointed for the gathering of the Pawnee clans.

Since the cloudburst the weather had remained fine again. When they reached the neighborhood of the great plateau on which the temporary camps of the various divisions of the tribe were being set up, they saw plenty of Indians. But all seemed friendly enough.

Most of the parties had been out on the fall hunt. Their ponies and squaws were laden heavily with dried buffalo and deer flesh. Garry saw several grizzly robes, and wondered how the savages had managed to kill “Ole Ephraim” with their poor hunting-tools.

Cody made no mention of the two attacks upon his party. He reserved complaints until later. When they arrived at the great camp they were given quarters in a big skin teepee, conveniently near to running water, and their wants were supplied by the squaws as though they were beloved and honored guests, instead of really being hated enemies.

Garry could not help feeling more than a little squeamish about it all. Here they were, three white men among hundreds upon hundreds of cold-blooded savages, all of whom would be glad to scalp and kill the trio. He could not get it into his mind that Horse Head’s passport could hold these wild devils in check.

Putting his fears aside, Garry Littleton was not a little interested in the home life of the savages. Despite the fact that the women—the married women, at least—were almost as much beasts of burden as the ponies, they seemed to be otherwise treated kindly by their lords and masters.

There were no bickerings or quarrels, as far as he could see, between the husbands and wives; even the children did not seem to know how to quarrel. And there was much fun and laughing among the young people. The girls seemed especially light-hearted, and were always working or playing together. The young braves watched them closely, but seemed to be afraid of losing their dignity if they unbent and joined their sisters in their romps.

Cody fairly exuded information regarding the people and their peculiarities, and Garry learned a heap about the Pawnees. These lectures were frequently interrupted by the approach of old men, who had either fought against the scout, or fought with him, in years past. They always shook hands, accepted a pipe, and sat down for a powwow. Cody seemed always to find some little present with which to please these old fellows, and these keepsakes the Indians appeared to cherish greatly. The youth learned that the giving and accepting of presents was considered of much moment by the Indians.

In the middle of the encampment was a great circle, in the center of which the council fire burned of nights, and around which the young bucks danced, or the vain-glorious ones told of their great hunting deeds. Garry learned that the red man was great for “blowing his own horn,” and that oratory seemed to be cultivated mostly for the sake of bragging about the great things the orator had accomplished. Of course, he could understand almost nothing of these sages, or stories, but Cody translated some of the more flowery “yarns.”

“They’re a good deal like children,” said the scout. “And the United States have got to treat them as such. They remind me of a lot of boys, who begin to brag to each other about what their fathers get a week in wages, and how many fine things their mothers have for their parlor!”

Horse Head had not yet appeared at the rendezvous. Cody explained that the wily old chief was delaying his appearance until all his people should be assembled, so as to have more pomp and ceremony connected with his reception.

“It’s what the old chap lives for now—adulation,” declared the scout. “And I reckon, too, that he’s waiting for this faker. Hunting Wolf, to show up first. The one of ‘em which gets here last will seem—at the surface of things, at least—to have the greater influence.”

If this was really Horse Head’s reason for delay, Hunting Wolf was the sharper. A runner came from the north announcing the coming of the medicine-man; another appeared from the east saying that Horse Head was on the road. But, although the runner from the faker arrived first, Horse Head and his train entered the camp an hour ahead of the prophet, who was gradually sapping the old chief’s influence with his braves.

The whole camp uprose to greet the coming of Horse Head and his people; but when Hunting Wolf came Horse Head’s bucks and squaws were added to the throng which welcomed him. So it appeared that the usurper received a greater ovation than the head chief of the Pawnees himself.

CHAPTER XVII.

HUNTING WOLF.

The whites were more curious to see the medicine-man, who had been stirring up the young Pawnees to riot and blood-shed, than they cared to show. Although Horse Head himself stood up to greet the faker, Cody and his friends lay in the shadow of their teepee and seemed quite unconcerned when Hunting Wolf’s retinue passed into the council circle.

But all three had seen and marked the tall, lithe Indian
THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES.

with the handsome feather head-dress, who strode from the pony corral to the center of the village. And they recognized him, too.

"He's had that head-dress mended since I put a bullet through it," muttered Cody, in a low tone.

"It is the fellow who attacked us in the cañon when the freshest came," cried young Garry.

"You bet your boots it is," agreed Bull Thompson.

"Ah-ha! the devil! Why didn't we plug him then?"

"And he and some of his followers started those buffaloes after us, also," Cody said.

"He's a treacherous hound," Garry muttered. "Why do you trust our lives here with him?"

"Don't fret, sen/y," said the scout. "Old Horse Head holds the whip-hand yet."

"But if he should do some tricks that would make ours look cheap?" suggested Garry.

"Perk up! Perk up! Make up your mind right now, son, that if this biz of ours works as we expect, there won't be any Injun in this camp who'll try conclusions with us."

All this was spoken bravely enough; but it was plain that Hunting Wolf was a great man in the eyes of his people. He was followed respectfully by those who had openly espoused his cause. Others looked after him when he passed as though he really was—as he claimed—a being set apart to worst the whites and bring to the Pawnees strength and plenty again.

It was reported that for two weeks Hunting Wolf had been wandering alone in the mountain fastnesses, preparing for his ordeal with the white men.

"The deuce he has!" grunted Cody, when he heard this tale. "He was bounding us all that time, trying to get a chance to finish us so that he wouldn't have to match up against us at all!"

He said this in the privacy of their own teepee, however; he did not breathe a word to the assembled chiefs that the medicine-man had sought to kill him and his friends by strategy, and so escape measuring his magic with that of the whites.

The first night after all the people were assembled the drums called the encampment to the counsel circle. The whites were brought by an official guard sent by old Horse Head. For the first time the trio began to notice looks cast upon them that were threatening. Some of the young bucks shook their spears, or touched the handles of their knives as the white men marched past.

"The influence of this Hunting Wolf is beginning to be felt throughout the encampment," said Cody cooly. "We may have to kill him before we get through, boys."

"Thunder!" muttered Bull Thompson. "I wouldn't ask for a better job."

"And how long do you suppose you would remain alive after it?" asked Garry.

"Shucks! you never can tell what's going to happen. That's why I always carry an umbrella when I go out," grunted the old frontiersman.

In the circle, however, were gathered the more staid warriors. The trio squatted near Horse Head, and even Garry took a puff or two at the peace-pipes that went around the huge circle.

There followed an enormous amount of oratory after the pipe-smoking. Even old Horse Head took a hand. But when Hunting Wolf got up and made a fiery speech, even some of the more staid braves looked ugly at the "Yellow Eyes."

"It's up to you ter cast a few pearls b'fore the blame swine, Buffia," remarked Bull Thompson. "Why should they do all the spoutin'? If I could speak the lingo—even as well as I understand it—I'd give that lanky devil some hot shot."

"The time hasn't arrived to accuse him of treachery," muttered Cody. "We must worst him in magic first. At least, we must equal his feats before we try to turn his people against him."

The scout did rise, however, and speak quietly to the assembled Pawnees. He made no boasts, nor did he lay claim to the powers which Hunting Wolf proclaimed; but he spoke significantly of the power of the Great White Father at Washington, who was greater than all other earthly powers, and reminded the Pawnees that the arm of the government—the blue-coated arm—was long!

Perhaps the reminder was needed, for hatred had begun to glow in many eyes when they looked upon Cody and his friends. After the scout's speech matters went more calmly. The trial was set for the following day at noon. The Hunting Wolf was first to exhibit his skill and power. It was evident that the Indians did not expect the whites to make any exhibition at all. Their new medicine chief would completely overpower the whites, they were sure!

"Now, whatever happens to-morrow," Cody told his friends as they went back to their lodge, "make up your minds that shooting isn't going to help us—not a little bit. It's got to be cunning against cunning—strategy against strategy. We've got to down that faker with cold science—not with cold steel, or hot lead!"

But Bull Thompson did not seem very hopeful over this statement.

CHAPTER XVIII.

INDIAN MAGIC.

The camp was awake early on the morrow. The drums and rattles began their "music" before the whites had finished eating breakfast. The Indians began to stream out of the camp to an open piece of plain on which Hunting Wolf was to show his powers as a magician.
This was so as to perform the act away from the contamination of the camp and the women. The squaws were not allowed to see the "medicine"; nor were the Pawnees as a whole considered by this new prophet to be in a proper condition to partake of the wonders he claimed to be able to do.

In other words, the tribe had affiliated too much with the whites, and their encampments could not be graced with his mighty miracles until all the families of the tribe had become welded again into an offensive league against the Yellow Eyes.

This Hunting Wolf had said the night before. It was sufficient, as Cody observed, to gain the red scoundrel a swift bullet or a length of hemp if he ever fell into the hands of the soldiers.

By and by, Cody leading the way, the three strolled outside the encampment to the place where the bucks were gathered. A great circle had been marked off by the chiefs, and the onlookers stood, or sat, about this ring.

As far as Garry could see, there was absolutely no preparations made for the making of any medicine. There was no paraphernalia in readiness. There was nothing but the sun-baked prairie and Hunting Wolf, standing with folded arms, his face turned slightly up to the sky, in the middle of the open space.

He stood like a statue, not a muscle quivering on his tawny body as far as the youth could see, until it was nearly high noon. Then, suddenly he broke into a sing-song speech, and many of the old bucks on the ground, smoking their pipes, swayed their bodies to the rhythm of the recitative, and muttered words and phrases at certain intervals in the harangue like the responses at a Methodist class-meeting!

At last the faker ceased, and, with an elaborate series of grunts, the Indians settled themselves to "see the show." Two young bucks brought a freshly killed deer's head, with the blood still dripping from it, for the whites to examine. It was a real head; there could be no deception in that.

The bucks motioned to Garry to take the head to Hunting Wolf, who now stood as before in the middle of the ring, but stripped even of his breechclout.

"Go ahead, boy," Cody muttered, as the white youth hesitated.

"G'wan," murmured Bull, on his other side. "I got a cocked pistol in my coat pocket. They won't do nothin' to ye."

The youth seized the dripping head by the antlers and walked quickly out to the medicine-man. Hunting Wolf did not even look at the white youth; Garry placed the head at his feet. There was a red blanket lying on the ground near-by, and at a motion of the faker's thumb Garry picked up the blanket, examined it, and looked under it, too.

The faker waved him back to his place in the circle, and for the first time looked upon him. His glittering eyes met Garry's own with something like a physical shock to the youth! They were the glittering, mesmeric eyes, holding the gaze of the youth all the time he was pacing backwards to the circle and into the arms of his friends. He could not release his eyes from the holding glance of the Indian until then.

Not a sound was heard about the big circle. The Indians, as well as the whites, seemed held in some spell of Hunting Wolf's weaving.

Suddenly the faker stooped and picked up the deer's head Garry had left before him. The antlers were big and wide. The Indian held the head high in the air and placed the point of one antler in his mouth.

And there, right in the open, with the throng silently gazing upon the wonder, Hunting Wolf gradually swallowed the entire head, horns and all!

Of course, it was a preposterous—an unbelievable—thing; but the eyes of Garry Littleton never left the tall Indian, and that deer's head disappeared—somewhere. The Indian was unclothed; there was no place in which it could have been hidden. In five minutes the feat was performed and the head had totally disappeared.

Gravely the faker bowed to the four points of the compass, spreading out his arms and making slow and low obeisance. The throng about the circle seemed to "come to" with long-drawn sighs, as though they had been asleep.

"Suffering mackerel! did you see it?" gasped Garry, of his two friends.

"I reckon we saw what you did, son," returned Cody quietly; but Bull Thompson seemed beyond the point of expressing his thoughts.

Hunting Wolf squatted down where he had been standing—he had scarcely moved his feet in all this time—and the drums began to beat again. There was plainly more to follow. The whites did not feel like conversing; in truth, Garry felt as though he had really seen a supernatural exhibition.

For some time Hunting Wolf seemed to be resting, or recuperating his powers. Then he stood up again and the drums ceased, and the people fell silent. Hunting Wolf waited for the hush to become intense.

Again he "worshiped" the four winds, and when he straightened up and turned to face the whites Garry suddenly started and gasped. A second Indian stood beside Hunting Wolf!

One moment the faker was alone. The next there was materialized from the thin air another being—seemingly another self! The second figure had not crossed the open space of the circle. Garry was sure of that. He suddenly was—that was all!
And the wonder of it was he was of figure and presence similar to the faker himself. It was as though he had crossed his eyes and looked upon Hunting Wolf, so seeing two of the man!

The two figures—rather the one figure and the apparition—stood side by side for a moment. Then they shook hands, and Garry could not tell which was real and which was an illusion, they seemed so much alike.

One of them suddenly stooped, picked up the red blanket, spread it fully, and cast it over the other figure. For a moment the shrouded figure stood there, the height of a man, showing the contour and outline of a human being. Then, slowly, steadily, silently, the figure within the blanket began to shrink and the blanket itself settled down upon the ground again.

The mystery-man sank into the ground, or so it seemed!

Hunting Wolf stood there alone, his arms folded, his face unmoved. After a moment he again made his inclinations to the four cardinal points. Then he beckoned Garry forward.

The youth went. He felt a weakness in his knees and something like faintness at the pit of his stomach. This was magic—it was no bluff!

Hunting Wolf pointed to the blanket. The youth picked it up and shook it. There was no second Indian there. Hunting Wolf nodded, turned upon his heel, and walked quietly out of the ring and away to his own lodge.

Garry Littleton went back to his friends in a maze.

CHAPTER XIX.

YANKEE MAGIC.

When the three whites got back to their lodge Garry and Bull Thompson were in so pitiable a state of funk that Cody hastened to relieve their minds of some measure of the gloom which had settled upon them.

"What's the matter with you fellows?" he began. "Does a little thing like that faze you?"

"A little thing!" ejaculated Bull. "Did you happen to see what I seen?"

"I don't know. Have you a particular line of pink elephants with their tails tied up in blue bows? What did you see?"

"I haven't been drinking—not as I knows on," declared Bull sullenly.

"Well?"

"I seen that lanky Injun swaller a dear-head big enough to choke an elephant, all right!"

"Sure you did. So did I!" cried Garry. "I told you so before."

"Same here," added Cody coolly.

"You saw it!" cried the youth.

"Yep."
"You will not flee while you may?" demanded the old chief, his eyes glowing.

"We're not going to run. Strike up your drums when it grows dark, and light your counsel fire. We are going to free you of that medicine-man forever—but you don't deserve it, for there is treachery in your heart. Horse Head! I—can—read—you—like—the signs of the wild deer."

He had risen to face the old Pawnee sternly. Horse Head shrank back; he muttered something; then he departed. Evidently he was sorely troubled. But he held his people together until night.

The whites kept close in their lodge during the remainder of the afternoon. Occasionally there were wild yells and shrieks from groups of the young bucks who were being inflamed by the speeches of Hunting Wolf. Most of these sounds came from the outskirts of the encampment. Had the whites attempted to make a getaway they would have been killed before the camp was out of sight. But within the rings of teepees the old bucks and more sedate chief men kept public clamor in check.

Garry Littleton was scared, all right; but he knew that they were at that pass where to show the white feather was to court death! When evening fell, and the great fire was lighted, and the drums began to grumble, the Youth set forth with Cody and Bull Thompson for the counsel circle, without showing any more emotion than the scout and Bull themselves.

They arrived safely at the gathering point. Horse Head and the older braves seemed gathered near one end of the circle. Some of Hunting Wolf's followers had usurped the places of the older men in the inner ring. The whites stood together between the two parties of Pawnees, and in the light of the fire.

It was a peculiar situation. Both divisions of the Indians would be glad to see the whites killed; but one lot believed in keeping the promise Horse Head had made to them, while the others were already anxious to break the truce and commit a crime which would be sure to be considered by the white chiefs a challenge to battle from the entire tribe.

Garry and Bull had brought between them to the council circle a brass-bound box, some eighteen inches square, which Garry had cherished with exceeding care ever since Bull had brought it to him on his special trip to Fort Lane.

Rough as was the country through which they had traveled, and dangerous as had been some of their experiences, Garry had shielded this strong box from harm. Now it was set down upon the ground in the glow of the fire-light, so that all could see it.

Cody stepped forward after a time and began to harangue the fierce throng. While he spoke he could see young bucks taking aim with guns and poising spears as though to fling them at him from the outside of the circle. Not a friendly face did he gaze upon. Those that were not actually expressing hatred were emotionless altogether.

And what Cody said was not calculated to pacify the Pawnees.

"You have been treacherous to my people," he declared, in the course of his speech. "You have agreed to a truce, and we have supplied you with food in time of famine, and in return, and over the heads of your honorable men, you break out and wantonly kill inoffensive settlers. The lands on which those people have built their cabins are not yours. They belong to a tribe that have long since removed from here. You have spilled blood without cause.

"And then," cried Cody, warming to his own words, "you invite us to your encampment, promising us protection if we will come, and then threaten our lives. Have the Pawnees lost all honor? Have the people of the great Horse Head become so poor and weak that they dare not keep their word?"

"You are being led astray by those of evil tongue. You are as children to be won over by a little man who plays tricks with your eyes. The Pawnees were never like this when I fought side by side with them!"

"Now, this man who claims such power has shown us his silly play. Let him stand forth before me if he dares!"

Instantly Hunting Wolf strode into the ring, in head-dress and beaded robe, shaking a great spear in his hand. The moment was pregnant of peril for Buffalo Bill. Another word and the usurping chief might cast his spear, and the scout and his two friends he sacrificed. But Cody was shrewd. He knew well the value of pricking the bubble of human vanity.

"He is here!" he exclaimed. "I summon him to a trial of peaceful magic, and he comes in the garb of war. My brothers and I went to his place of magic unarmed. He fears our magic—so he comes with weapons. Has he brought his swift spoken gun, too?"

The shot was sudden: but it told. Indian as he was, Hunting Wolf's countenance changed. Evidently the possession of the seven-shot Marlin was a matter heretofore kept from the knowledge of his people.

"Come! stand forth in peace and try my magic," cried Cody, advancing a step upon the savage. "He is called 'Hunting Wolf,'" he observed in an aside to the red men; "I fear it may be 'Running Wolf' soon."

The faker had tossed his spear aside, and threw off his beaded garment. He approached Cody with folded arms, again a master of himself and his passions.

"This prophet of yours, Pawnees, says he has spent many days and nights in solitude, praying to the spirits, and making medicine to give him victory in this trial of
magic. Look at the little box I bring. It is a wonderbox. It knows more than any man. It knows more than any prophet. It knows what is in Hunting Wolf’s heart!”

There was a murmur about the circle. The faker looked with some perturbation upon the brass-bound box.

“I challenge Hunting Wolf to ask the box to say, here and now, just what Hunting Wolf was doing in the time he says was spent by him in prayer and fasting.” Cody roared out these words, pointing an accusing finger at the would-be chief.

“Waugh!” grunted several of the old men. It was an astounding demand.

But it was a demand that Hunting Wolf could not refuse. He swaggered forward. The throwing of the voice, or ventriloquism, was well known to him.

“I will ask the question the white man desires,” he said sneeringly. “But see that the lips of the white man and his friends do not move.”

Cody smiled. He suddenly held out to the Indian the three strong neckerchiefs which he and his friends usually wore.

“Hunting Wolf,” he said, “will tie up the mouths of the white men. Then will he know that neither of them speaks from the box, but a spirit stronger and greater than the spirits which Hunting Wolf claims are his familiars.”

Of course, all this was said in the Pawnee language. Garry was rather frightened when the Indian began to gag them; but he had been warned to do or say nothing and to trust in Cody. Indeed, there was absolutely nothing else to do.

Hunting Wolf made the three kerchiefs secure, and then stepped back. Cody gestured toward the box, and then to Hunting Wolf, as though telling him to ask his question.

The faker could not let the opportunity go by without an oracular harangue; but it was evident that he was disturbed, and finally brought out the question in about the form Cody had suggested.

He stepped back; the box remained quite silent. Hunting Wolf began to recover his calmness. Comments in undertone ran around the circle. Suddenly Cody stooped and seemed, with his knuckle, to rap upon the box. Instantly there was a muted whir from the interior of the box.

The three whites, as well as the Indians, waited expectantly. With startling abruptness there broke upon the silence these discordantly spoken words, in the Pawnee dialect:

“Hunting Wolf is two-faced; Hunting Wolf is forged of tongue; Hunting Wolf has not the truth in him, but is false!”

The astonishment and fear of the Pawnees brought half of them to their feet. Hunting Wolf grabbed up his spear as though to fling it at the box. But instantly Cody’s hand flashed a glistening pistol into sight and aimed it directly at the faker’s heart.

The box—jerkily, sometimes almost indistinguishably—spoke, after whirring again:

“Hunting Wolf is full of false tales. He pours these into the ears of the foolish. He does not commune with the spirits of the air and of the mountains as did those great prophets of old.

“While he says he prayed and fasted in the solitude, he was treacherously seeking the life of the three white men who have come here under the protection of the great Horse Head.

“He tried to shoot them with the fast-shooting gun bought of some runaway soldier. Again, he tried to crush the three white men under the hoofs of the buffalo in the great stampede.

“He is altogether bad. His heart is black. He would steal the hearts of the young men, and would control the Pawnees in the place of their rightful chief, Horse Head. I have spoken.”

There was another whir. The box spoke no more!

CHAPTER XX.

CONCLUSION.

There was no possibility of Hunting Wolf denying the truth of the speech of the Wonder Box. His face and manner betrayed him.

Cody tore off the bandage about his mouth and cried:

“Chiefs! men of the Pawnees! this Hunting Wolf is a traitor to you as well as to the whites. Cast him off—I warn you.”

It was old Horse Head himself who stilled the clamor. He rose, and the growing murmur from the throng was silenced. They obeyed him again, as had been their wont before the influence of the Hunting Wolf began to be felt.

“The white man has finished. Let him, and his friends, and his Wonder Box, depart on the morrow. Your chief men, and your wise men, will deal in counsel with he who would set the law of the tribe at naught and make your head men liars.”

“The shrewd old rascal!” exclaimed Cody, when he and his two companions were in their lodge again. “He would have played us a trick himself had he been sure that Hunting Wolf was all that he claimed to be.”

Bull Thompson swallowed hard. “Jehoshaphat!” he exclaimed. “I’ve jest got my heart down ag’in. It’s been in my mouth all the evening!”

“That funny machine of yours is certainly a wonder, Mr. Littleton,” said Cody. “I was reading something about it in an old New York paper at the fort. Ain’t two or three scientists working on it?”

“A chap named Edison is doing the most, I believe,” said Garry. “My father is greatly interested in the idea.
He had me bring it out to show uncle what it was like. It's scarcely practical yet, you know. It’s supposed to repeat the very tone, as well as the words, of the human voice.”

“By thunder!” exclaimed Cody. “It's practical enough to show these Injuns that Yankee magic rather walks over Injun magic. What did I tell you? Why, that little box, and what it said, may keep Horse Head’s people quiet for two or three years longer.”

“Too bad you didn’t put a hole through that faker,” growled Bull. “I guarantee you’ll hear of him stirring up trouble again. The Injuns won’t do anything to him.”

“But he’s lost his rating. That’s enough,” declared Cody. “However, he is a dangerous proposition, I admit. But now isn’t the time to demand him of old Horse Head.”

Indeed, they were very glad to get out of the matter alive themselves. What became of Hunting Wolf they did not learn until long after. But the next morning, with a guard of Horse Head’s own braves, the three whites took the back trail for Fort Lane.

Garry Littleton did not really feel his hair sticking on his head securely until the fort hove in view. He had had a remarkable experience, had killed big game, and had been present at an Indian function scarcely equalled in the annals of Indian warfare; but, as he said, it was much more interesting to talk about than it was to go through.

Bull Thompson started south soon after their return to the fort on another hunting-trip; but he could not get Garry to accompany him. As for Buffalo Bill, he disappeared, soon after his return to Fort Lane, and nobody but the Department knew just what had become of him.

But this was quite a common occurrence with him. He had nipped the Pawnee uprising in the bud; some other work of moment called his immediate attention, and he was out on the trail again.

THE END.

What scouting expedition Buffalo Bill was sent out on will be told next week in No. 284 of the BUFFALO BILL STORIES, in a thrilling and exciting narrative, entitled “Buffalo Bill’s Secret Foe; or, The Wizard of Windy Gulch.”

ABOUT THE EARLY NUMBERS OF THE TIP TOP WEEKLY

We receive hundreds of letters every week from readers asking if we can supply the early numbers of Tip Top containing Frank's adventures. In every case we are obliged to reply that numbers 1 to 800 are entirely out of print. We would like to call the attention of our readers to the fact that the Frank Merriwell Stories now being published in book form in the Medal Library are inclusive of these early numbers. The first book to appear was No. 190 entitled “Frank Merriwell's Schooldays.” We give herewith a complete list of all stories that have been published in book form up to the time of writing. We will be glad to send a fine colored catalogue of the Medal Library which is just filled with good things for boys, upon receipt of a one-cent stamp to cover postage.

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