BUFFALO BILL'S BOLD CHALLENGE
OR FIGHTING REDSKINS IN THE RAPIDS

With a yell of hate, Yellow Plume leaped to his feet, and bending his bow, let drive full at the scout. But with the quickness of thought Buffalo Bill dived ere the shaft could reach him.
BUFFALO BILL'S BOLD CHALLENGE;

OR,

Fighting the Redskins in the Rapids.

By the author of "BUFFALO BILL."

CHAPTER I.

WILD BILL'S CLOSE CALL.

One summer morning, in the sixties, when the Indians in the West and Southwest were still giving much trouble to Uncle Sam's settlers and soldiers, and when the great railway lines were being pushed forward across the continent to the Pacific coast, a scout rode across country in Kansas from Fort Larned to another military post, about sixty miles distant.

He was carrying the military mail and despatches from one fort to another, and his mission was an exceedingly dangerous one, for it was known that the Indians in Kansas and the neighboring territory were on the point of rising to attack the whites, even if they had not already risen.

Many reports had been received from scouts familiar with the Indians which showed that an alliance was being arranged between several of the tribes with the object of going on the war-path in numbers strong enough, as they imagined, to enable them to bid defiance to Uncle Sam's troopers, even though the latter were armed with the quick-firing "devil guns" so much feared by the Redskins.

The scout who was riding across country was, with one exception, the most remarkable man of his class at that time in the West.

He was none other than our old friend Wild Bill, and it need hardly be added that the exception alluded to was his great friend and comrade Colonel William F. Cody, better known as "Buffalo Bill," the king of the scouts.

As he rode along, mounted upon a magnificent mustang, Wild Bill was a splendid, fearless figure that it would have done the heart of any brave man good merely to look upon.

In person he was about six feet one inch in height, and as has been described by his friend, General George A. Custer, "straight as the straightest of the Indian warriors whose implacable foe he was." He had broad shoulders, well-formed chest and limbs, and a face strikingly handsome. His sharp, clear blue eyes were used to looking any man straight in the face, whether that man were friend or foe. His nose was a fine aquiline, and his mouth well shaped, with lips partly concealed by a handsome mustache.
THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES.

His hair and complexion were those of a perfect blond —fair as a Saxon viking. He wore the former in long, flowing ringlets, which fell carelessly over his powerfully formed shoulders. Riding his horse as if he were part of the animal, he looked a perfect type of physical manhood.

He had galloped for about twenty miles, when he stopped on a small hill overlooking a valley through which a river ran.

He cast a quick glance around the landscape to see if any foes were in sight, and his eyes immediately fell upon a band of about fifty Indians not more than a third of a mile away.

They saw him almost at the same moment, and immediately jumped on their horses, from which they had dismounted with the idea of watering them in the river, and gave chase.

Wild Bill waited until they came near enough to enable him to see what tribes they belonged to, and whether they were dressed in their war-paint. When he had satisfied his doubts on those scores, and found out that they were really on the war-path, he hastily turned his mustang to make a ride for life. But before he galloped off, he lifted his rifle and shot the foremost of the Indians through the head.

As he turned from his horse, his comrades gave a yell of rage. Wild Bill responded by turning in the saddle and waving his sombrero toward them defiantly.

They fired a scattering volley, but the bullets whizzed harmlessly around him. Riding over uneven ground, the Indians could not take accurate aim.

The scout was riding a splendid mustang, and the gallant animal fully understood what was expected of him. He knew that it was a ride for life, and that he must put forth his greatest speed to save his master from death and himself from an Indian owner—a fate terrible to any decent horse.

He crossed a wide ravine and tore along the valley toward Fort Larned.

Reaching a ridge beyond, Wild Bill looked back for a moment and saw that the Indians were tearing after him. They rode at great speed, and many of them were evidently well mounted.

"Their own ponies can't travel like that," said the scout to himself. "They must have done some raiding before this, and got hold of some of the settlers' animals. The rising we've been looking for has broken out, sure. Them folks at the fort must be put on their guard, whatever happens. I guess the whole country will be ablaze in a couple of days."

If he had been mounted on a fresh horse, Wild Bill would have had no doubt of the outcome of the race; but his mustang, splendid animal though he was, had already ridden far, and showed signs of flagging.

The Indians began to gain on their quarry for a time, and then the mustang made a spurt and shot ahead again. But the effort was too great for him, and he could not keep up his speed for long.

When he had run about three miles farther, half-a-dozen of the Indians had crept up to within two or three hundred yards, while several of the other braves were not far behind.

Now and then they fired at him, but their rifles were of inferior quality and their aim was bad, so that neither the scout nor his horse was touched.

The Indians seemed to be shortening the distance from their prey at every stride, but Wild Bill bent over in his saddle and whispered to his mustang: "Get up, old man!"

It was the first effort he had made to urge the animal to greater speed, and immediately he exerted himself to the very utmost, drawing slowly away from the Indians for the next three or four miles.

But there was a limit to the mustang's power of endurance, if not to his will.

The Indians were nearly as well mounted as Wild Bill, and their steeds were comparatively fresh. One of them in particular—a spotted animal—kept gaining all the time. The others were strung out behind in a long line for a distance of more than a mile, but they were all riding as hard as they knew how, for they wanted to be "in at the death."

The brave riding the spotted horse was armed with a rifle, and as he drew within a hundred yards, he occasionally sent a bullet whizzing unpleasantly close to Wild Bill.

The scout saw that this Indian must be stopped, or a stray shot from his gun might do fatal harm to his mustang or himself.

Suddenly reining up his horse and wheeling him around, Wild Bill raised his rifle to his shoulder and took a quick aim at the brave.

The Indian was not more than sixty yards off, and as Wild Bill's rifle cracked he reeled and fell from his saddle.

Without waiting to see whether his enemy was dead or only wounded, the scout wheeled his horse around and fairly flew in the direction of Fort Larned.

He would have liked to stop and take a few shots at the other Indians as they came dashing toward him, but he realized that his first duty was to carry a warning to the fort. He had no right to play with his life when such a duty as that was placed upon him.

It was true that fifty Indians could do nothing against the strong body of troops stationed at the fort, but if they succeeded in killing him, they would certainly not ride on for that place.

They would wait until reinforced by a much stronger party, and then perhaps carry the fort by surprise if the garrison had not received a timely warning.

Wild Bill realized these facts, and resolved that he must curb his natural propensity to fight, and run away instead—a thing he always hated to do, however great might be the number of the enemies opposed to him.

While he was engaged in shooting their leader, the other Indians had gained upon him, and they sent several shots whizzing after him as he resumed his flight. Now and then he turned in the saddle and returned their fire, shooting two of the foremost horses as they drew near him.

"Buffler Bill would shoot the blazed varmints through the head if he were here," muttered the scout, "but I'm not sure as how I could do that with a snap aim at a gallop. Anyhow, I can't run the risk, so I'll shoot the durned cayses instead."

The redskins kept up the pursuit until they were within about three miles of the fort. One of the outposts saw them chasing the scout over the prairie and promptly gave the alarm, for a vigilant watch was being maintained at that critical time.

As Wild Bill rode up, several of the soldiers mounted in hot haste and rode to his rescue. The Indians saw this, and promptly turned on their trail to ride back as quickly as they had come.
A lieutenant, with thirty or forty men behind him, galloped in pursuit, while Wild Bill rode into the fort to make his report to the commandant.

CHAPTER II.

AT FORT BARNED.

The officer in charge of the fort was a colonel named Mathers, who had had much experience in Indian fighting, and had taken part in several campaigns with Buffalo Bill and Hickok.

As Wild Bill entered his quarters, he rose from his chair and grasped him heartily by the hand.

"Thank Heaven, they didn't get you, Bill!" the officer exclaimed. "I saw them through my field-glasses chasing after you, and I immediately ordered out the men, but the outposts had done the work already.

"We shall need you badly before this business is over, for it looks as if it is going to be one of the most serious Indian wars we have had for years. You did not find it possible to get through to Fort Hays?" he concluded.

"I believe I could have got through," Hickok replied. "I guess I could have ridden round the Injuns, and maybe gone to Fort Hays all right. But it occurred to me that this fort might get surprised and rushed if ye didn't know the Injuns had broken out at last."

The commandant nodded his approval. If Wild Bill had been a soldier, he would have expected him to carry the message without exercising his own individual judgment. But a noted scout like Hickok was expected to think for himself, weigh the situation, and act for the best accordingly. That, indeed, was the very reason of his employment.

"Could you tell me who the Indians were—what tribes they belonged to?" the colonel asked.

"Yes, of course; I took care to find that out," Wild Bill replied, almost in an injured tone of voice. "I waited till they got near enough so as I could find out from their feathers and war-paint. They were mostly Sioux, but there was a few Cheyennes and Crows, and I shot an 'Pache. He was the only one in the bunch, so far as I could see."

"Then there has been an alliance made between the tribes, and we will have to meet the attack of a strong confederacy," muttered the commandant.

He rang a bell and an orderly entered the room, saluted him, and stood at attention.

"Ask Colonel Cody to oblige me by stepping in here for a moment," the colonel said.

The soldier left the room, and in a few moments returned, announcing the famous king of the scouts, Buffalo Bill.

He had been making a tour of inspection to see that the horses of the soldiers were in good shape, and that all necessary preparations had been made for a long ride and a hard campaign, if the need should arise.

The famous frontiersman was an even more striking and handsome figure than his friend Hickok. At this time he was in the zenith of his vigorous manhood.

It was only a short time before that he had earned his sobriquet of Buffalo Bill by shooting a record number of buffaloes to supply fresh meat for the workmen engaged in the construction of the Kansas Pacific Railway.

Every line of his face and every movement of his body showed force, courage, and determination such as are rarely seen even among the bravest men.

The border king greeted his friend Hickok warmly, and said:

"So they couldn't get you, old pard! I wish I'd been with you to help you put up a little bit of a fight."

The colonel briefly explained the position, and Cody was not surprised to hear that several tribes had joined in the rising.

"The Sioux are at the bottom of it," he said. "Unless we strike hard and swiftly, the rising may spread not only over Kansas, but over all the territory round about.

"I received a message from my friend and blood-brother, Red Cloud, the war-chief of the Navajos, only two days ago. He sent one of his braves to tell me that the Sioux had sent their messengers even down into New Mexico to try to persuade the Navajos to join with them in a grand uprising against the whites."

"Red Cloud is a good friend to us, and he promised me once that whenever his tribe had trouble with the government he would send to me, and get me to help him straighten it out without war."

"He tells me now that some of his young men want to dig up the hatchet. He is doing his best, with the help of the old men, to keep them back; but he wants me to come to him.

"I think I'd better go, for if the Navajos join the rest the matter will become very much more serious than it is now."

The colonel nodded his head, but remarked:

"You will be putting your head in the lion's mouth, Cody. You will probably arrive there just about the time the bucks are doing their war-dance and putting on their war-paint. The peacemaker generally has a hard time of it, and if you ask them to bury the hatchet they are very likely to bury it in your own skull."

"Of course, that is the risk one is always taking in this business," replied the border king, laughing lightly, "but I know the Navajos, and they like me pretty well. I had the good luck once to help them save their chief, Red Cloud, from some dangerous enemies."

The colonel rested his head on his hand, and was absorbed in thought for a few moments. Then he straightened up, and said, with decision:

"Go to the Navajos, and Heaven send that you reach them safely and persuade them not to dig up the hatchet! But first I must have a message sent through to Fort Hays. Maybe they are not on their guard at that post, and even if they are I must let the commandant there know my plans, so that we can work out a joint plan of campaign."

"I have five hundred brave men in this fort, but there is not one among them whom I can trust to take this message when thousands of hostile Indians are riding over the country."

"I know they would all do their best, but there would not be a chance in a thousand of any one of them getting through."

"I can only trust that message to you two men, for you will know how to dodge the enemy as no other would."

The two scouts immediately signified their desire to make the dangerous trip.

"I think you had better go together," said the colonel, "for the carrying of the message is vital for the success of our plans."

"I want the commandant at Fort Hays to march to meet me at Fork River, about midway between the two
forts. He must not only leave enough men to garrison his fort, but bring along all that can be spared to join my force.

"It is no use for us to skulk behind walls and let the Indians ravage the country as they like. We must strike at them swiftly, even if they do outnumber us by ten to one. That is the only way to nip the rising in the bud."

Cody applauded this brave resolution, for his knowledge of Indian character told him that the colonel was perfectly right.

"We will saddle our horses and ride at once," he said, rising to leave the room.

"No, don’t go until after dark," urged the officer.

"You will have a much better chance of getting through then, and it is better to delay a few hours than run the risk of not having the message delivered at all."

The border king agreed, and the colonel then took up a despatch which was lying on the table beside him, and asked:

"Do you know anything of a man named Hunky Kennelly? He is known among the Sioux, I am told, by the name of Bad Eye."

Wild Bill shook his head, but Cody replied:

"I heard of the man a few months ago, when I was doing some hunting in Wyoming. He is an Irishman, and a disgrace to his country. He killed a man in St. Louis, and had to flee from justice."

"I understand he married a Sioux girl in Red Dog, one of the border settlements in Wyoming, and then joined the Sioux tribe, being made a member of one of their clans."

"Yes, that is the man," said the commandant. "I am told in this despatch from Washington that a native spy reports he is the leader in this movement. He has stirred up the Sioux, and through them the other tribes."

"He is said to be a man of gigantic stature and terrible ferocity. They tell me, too, that he possesses extraordinary cunning and military skill, for he was once an officer in the army. He had to leave because he stole money belonging to his regiment."

"I should say that he is a man to be reckoned with," observed Buffalo Bill. "I have found that Indians fight better, as a general rule, when they are led by a white renegade."

"Durn my cats! but I hope I get a chance for a shot at him!" exclaimed Wild Bill.

The three men then left the quarters, and made the round of the fort so that all was in readiness to repel the attack which they knew might come at any moment.

Several settlers from the country round about had already come into the fort with their wives and families and such of their household goods as they could move, for the news of the Indian rising had already begun to spread.

The men among the newcomers were all tough frontiersmen, fine riders and good shots; and Buffalo Bill saw that they would form a valuable addition to the regular troops who garrisoned the fort.

After they had seen that all was in order, the colonel and the two scouts chatted with the fugitive settlers, and found that they were all eager for a fight with the Indians at the earliest possible moment.

They were all true-blue Americans, who hated to be on the defensive when a fight was in prospect.

They discussed the situation, and there was not a man who did not seem convinced that the Indians would get the worst of it before long.

Several of the settlers denounced the redskins in unmeasured terms, saying that hanging and shooting were too good for “scurvy varmints.”

"The damned skunks bay got every reason ter be grateful to us," said one old man, "but there ain’t an ounce of gratitude in their natures. We give ‘em lands and huntin'-grounds, and don’t trouble ‘em anyways; but whenever they see a chance they want to scalp us and lift our cattle."

"I don’t think all Indians are vermin," said Buffalo Bill. "I have met some pretty good ones. And I don’t think they are all ungrateful, either, for I’ve known some, at least, who were as grateful as any white man could be."

CHAPTER III.

WAITING FOR THE ATTACK.

The afternoon wore away, but no bands of hostile Indians appeared in sight. Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill headed scouting-parties, and rode some five miles from the fort, but they saw no signs which led them to suppose that an attack was imminent.

The party of soldiers who had chased Wild Bill’s pursuers returned to the fort during the course of the afternoon, and reported that they had followed the Indians about ten miles without coming up to them.

Then they saw another party of Indians, at least five hundred strong, riding across the prairie to join the fugitives, so the lieutenant in command wisely gave the order to turn the horses’ heads back toward the fort.

The Indians did not chase them.

More settlers came in during the afternoon, and they lighted fires in the courtyard of the fort, and prepared to cook their dinner, for there was no proper accommodation for them.

As their bear steaks and deer meat frizzled and sizzled on the fire, they told one another queer yarns of Western life, for they were all men who had seen the rough and humorous side of the frontier.

"We’ll come out of this yer business all right," observed one of the men. "I’ve come through worse gold-durned contraptions than this, by a long sight."

"Yes, it’s an old saying out in my country," said a hunter from Arizona, "that if you let things alone long enough they will even up of themselves."

"Take, for instance, the case of Jack Cade. There were two brothers of them—Jack and Bill—and one day a crowd got after Bill for horse-stealing, and caught and strung him up. He protested his innocence, but it was no go. We found out a month later, however, that we had actually hung the wrong man and let the real thief get out of the country."

"And did things even up later on?" he was asked.

"They did. We couldn’t restore Bill to life, and beg his pardon, and elect him alderman of the town, but when we caught his brother Jack, after he had robbed a settler of his outfit, we not only let him off the hanging, but made him sheriff and squared things in proper shape.

"Things don’t always even up even for the man who’s been planted, but if he leaves any relatives behind the public will see to it that his loss turns out to be their gain."

Just before it grew dark several of the scouts and
outposts who had been placed by Buffalo Bill rode into the fort, and reported that a very strong force of Indians was advancing over the prairie in three columns.

Some of the men estimated that the war party numbered more than four thousand men, but others placed it at not over half that number.

The colonel called Buffalo Bill and Hickok to him, and held a hasty council of war.

"It is as I expected," said the border king. "The Indians are fondest of attacking either at dusk or just at daybreak. They think sentries are likely to be less vigilant at those times, and I guess they are right, as a rule.

"But luckily we are ready for them. If I might make a suggestion, colonel, I think it would be a good plan to pretend that we are much less numerous than we actually are. They are not likely to know our strength.

"Let only fifty or a hundred men reply to their fire. Keep about four hundred in reserve, ready to pour a terrible volley into the redskins when they try to rush the fort, encouraged by what they suppose to be our weakness.

"A surprise like that always knocks the heart out of an Indian. As soon as they recoil, we might make a sudden sortie and charge them vigorously.

"By adopting this plan, I believe we shall have a good chance of inflicting a crushing defeat upon them, although they are so greatly outnumber us."

"It's a capital idea," said the colonel, "and we will carry it out. I won't let more than about seventy men reply to their first volleys, and I'll tell the officers in charge of our four field-guns not to fire until the redskins are swarming outside the walls."

He hurried away to give these orders, and by the time he had done so the redskin host appeared in sight.

It numbered between two and three thousand men, and approached swiftly, for all the braves were mounted.

They belonged to tribes which practically lived in the saddle—the Sioux, the Cheyennes, and the Crows.

His two companions were redskins, one being a Cheyenne and the other a Crow. Thus the three tribes which had entered into a confederacy were represented under the flag of truce.

"That's the renegade Irishman, sure enough!" said Buffalo Bill to the colonel, who nodded agreement.

Kennelly, the renegade, otherwise known as Red Eye, reined up his horse and shouted, in English:

"We want to come inside the fort to discuss terms of surrender with you."

"This fort will never surrender while I am in command," the colonel answered, "and we will hold no talk with renegades and murderers. Go back to your redskin allies at once, unless you want a bullet through your head!"

The renegade had expected this answer, but he had had a lingering hope that he might have been allowed inside the fort on the pretense of discussing terms of surrender, and then he would have been able to gain some valuable information as to the number of the garrison and the strength of the defenses.

His disappointment showed plainly in the vicious grin which fitted for a moment over his evil face. His left eye, which had a squint, glared horribly.

It was this defect that had gained for him his Sioux name, Bad Eye.

He shook the rein of his horse, and tried to urge the animal right underneath the wall of the fort; but before it had advanced three steps a bullet from Buffalo Bill's rifle cut a feather from the head-dress of the rider.

As Kennelly hastily reined his horse back, Buffalo Bill sang out:

"The next bullet will go through your head, Bad Eye, unless you clear out at once. The white flag was never meant to protect such scoundrels as you are."

Seeing that nothing further was to be gained, the three men turned their horses and rode back to the ranks of the Indians.

Before he departed, however, the representative of the Cheyennes drew his scalping-knife, and sent it hurtling through the air at the log wall of the fort, where it stuck, quivering. Then he raised his arm and uttered a defiant war cry.

One of the soldiers lifted his rifle to shoot the brave, but Buffalo Bill struck the weapon upward before the man could fire.

"He has a right to defy us," said the border king, "and he is a brave man. We won't shoot him under the white flag, even if he is a redskin."

No sooner had the three envoys retreated than the Indians began their attack.

True to their natural instincts, they were cautious at first, beginning by long-range firing.

Some of them dashed toward the walls of the fort on horseback, circling around and lying down in the saddle to avoid presenting an easy mark. They fired their rifles, and then retreated hastily.

But the greater portion of the Indian army dismounted and advanced to the attack on foot, taking advantage of every bit of cover they could find.

Following out Buffalo Bill's suggestion, the garrison only made a feeble reply to the heavy fusillade poured in upon them.

The volleys of the Indians did little harm, most of
their bullets burying themselves harmlessly in the thick walls of the log fort.

Two of the soldiers were killed by bullets which entered the loopholes through which they were firing, and three others were slightly wounded.

On the other hand, at least a dozen redskins bit the dust in the first few minutes' fighting, although only twenty or thirty men fired at them.

They approached nearer to the fort, and the colonel ordered another twenty-five men to join the firing-party.

By gradually increasing the resistance, he wanted to make it appear that he was putting forth his greatest possible effort to repel the onslaught.

Suddenly there was a loud war-whoop, which Buffalo Bill recognized as coming from the renegade, Kenney.

Next moment the entire force of the Indians leaped to their feet and charged toward the fort, uttering a chorus of frightful yells that would have made the blood of most men run cold.

When the leaders of the host were within about thirty yards of the walls, the colonel shouted:

"Now, boys, let them have it!"

Instantly there was a blaze of flame all around the fort.

Over five hundred rifles discharged their dreaded messengers of death at the same moment, and the four field-guns, posted one at each corner of the fort, hailed shell at the advancing Indians, tearing terrible gaps in their ranks.

It was impossible for any army to withstand such a sudden and fearful shock. The redskins halted with one accord, as if they had suddenly been struck with paralysis.

Next moment they turned and fled, in spite of the frantic efforts of their chiefs to rally them.

Another volley was poured into them as they ran, and they fell all around the fort by dozens.

The colonel hastily gave orders for a sortie and a charge, with the idea of cutting them up as they fled and keeping them on the run.

The horses were at hand, all saddled, for this purpose, and in less than two minutes three hundred men were speeding from the fort, headed by Buffalo Bill.

But by this time the Indians had reached their own horses and were galloping away in all directions. Many of them were shot before they could escape, and the rest were chased for two or three miles, until they began to bunch together in strong parties and return the fire of the white men.

Then Buffalo Bill, who had been placed in charge of the pursuing party by the colonel, ordered a retreat to the fort.

He did not wish to get too far away in the darkness and risk spoiling the great victory by a subsequent reverse.

The Indians still greatly outnumbered the band under his command, and if they turned on him they would be able to do serious damage. He, therefore, gave them a parting volley and rode back at the head of his men.

"I reckon we must have killed at least two hundred of them around the walls of the fort," said the colonel, clapping him warmly by the hand. "How many did you get in the pursuit?"

"Fifty or sixty, as nearly as I can figure it," replied the border king.

It was a great victory, and it had been bought at a comparatively trifling cost. Only about a dozen of the defenders had been killed, most of them during the pursuit, and not more than twenty were wounded.

"Do you suppose the redskins will have had enough?" asked the colonel.

"No, I don't," Buffalo Bill said. "Of course, this is a galling repulse for them, but all three of the tribes are brave and persevering in warfare, especially the Sioux. This defeat will merely enrage them and make them all the more anxious to have revenge on Uncle Sam's troopers."

Wild Bill rode at this moment to the two men as they stood talking. He was mounted on one of the swiftest horses in the fort, and he led another splendid animal, which he offered to Buffalo Bill.

"These are the best beasts I could pick out of the bunch, Buffalo," he said.

Buffalo Bill mounted without a word, and offered his hand to the colonel.

"Where are you going?" asked the astonished officer.

"Where else but to Fort Hays," said Buffalo Bill.

"We had arranged to ride there as soon as it was dark, and if you will hand us the despatch we will get off at once."

"But the country is full of the fleeing Indians," the colonel objected, "and there is not one chance in ten thousand of your getting through. It is sheer madness to attempt to ride under these new conditions."

The border king laughed lightly, and said:

"We are still waiting for that despatch, colonel."

The officer looked at him steadily for a moment, and saw that argument would be useless. Nothing would turn the gallant and famous scout from his heroic purpose. Nor was Wild Bill one whit less resolute.

Without another word, the colonel took the despatch from his pocket and handed it to Buffalo Bill. Then he shook the two scouts by the hand, and a minute later they were galloping away in the direction of Fort Hays.

CHAPTER V.

NICK WHARTON IN PERIL.

Buffalo Bill and his partner rode along swiftly and silently for about half-an-hour, and saw no traces of the redskins. Then, as they slackened their pace for a moment to breathe the horses, Wild Bill said:

"Gosh all hemlocks, Buffalo——"

Buffalo Bill turned in the saddle and interrupted him.

"That's Nick Wharton's expression," he said, "and I know what you are going to say. You wish that old Nick was with us now, joining in the fun. This certainly would be an adventure after his own heart."

"I guess he'll be buttin' into it before we get through," Wild Bill remarked. "He was away at Fort Leavenworth a couple of weeks ago, so I heard, and he must have known we were around this yer section. I wouldn't be surprised to run across him any moment."

There is an English proverb that says: "Talk of angels, and you will hear the flutter of their wings." There is also another, which runs: "Talk of the devil, and you will see his tail." The truth of these two adages was speedily made clear to Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill.
They relapsed into silence, each thinking of their old friend, and rode forward over the prairie. They had not gone more than half-a-mile before they saw, through the darkness, which was illuminated only by the pale light of the stars, a figure on horseback spurring toward them at a terrific pace.

Instinctively they grasped their rifles and made ready for anything that might happen.

In a few moments the figure drew up alongside, and they saw from its ungainliness and general tattered and dilapidated appearance that it was none other than that of their old friend, Nick Wharton, of whom they had just been speaking.

He was riding his old mare, who, as he often said, was "not much to look at, but a holy terror to go." She was certainly tearing along at a great pace, but as she reached the two scouts she stopped dead short and reared up on her haunches.

Old Nick brought her to the ground again by a single dexterous movement of the reins. He recognized his comrades in a flash, but he did not pause to exchange greetings. He merely gossiped out the one word:

"Injuns!"

As he said this, Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill saw, coming toward them through the darkness, half-a-dozen figures on horseback.

Silhouetted against the horizon of the prairie, they could see that the figures were those of Indians, for their feathers and scalp-locks were plainly visible against the light of the stars.

As the Indians came up they were met with a volley from the scouts, and three of them reeled in their saddles and fell to the ground.

Buffalo Bill and his companions were not accustomed to miss their aim.

The remaining Indians drew rein sharply, and gazed in blank astonishment at their fallen comrades.

They had been chasing only one man, and suddenly they were brought face to face with three magnificent marksmen.

As they sat on their horses, hesitating what course to pursue, the rifles spoke again, and their hesitation was solved for them.

Never again would they roam the prairie or lift the scalp of an enemy!

"Darn all catamounts, but them varmints chased me nigh on six miles," said old Nick, as soon as he had time to make explanations. "I heard, down in Fort Leavenworth, that the Injuns was goin' on the warpath, so I struck a bee-line for Fort Larned, whar I knew you two boys was at.

"I guess you've had a hot time. As I was comin' 'cross the prairie I butted into a hull army o' Injuns, who seemed ter hev met with a rough time. Somebody had thrown a scare into them, an' I reckoned yer trademark, Buffalo.

"Waal, I ducked under cover, and the most of them passed me by, but I got up too soon, an' 'bout twenty of 'em, comin' along last, caught sight o' me, an' give me a hot chase.

"My mare laid herself down to it noble, and I managed to shake off all of 'em 'cept them six what's layin' over there in that tracks now.

"But what sort of a game air you two boys puttin' up now? I guess that's somethin' doin', ain't that?"

Buffalo Bill gave him a brief account of what had happened, and told him that they had planned to reach Fort Hays and subsequently go down to the country of the Navajos, if necessary, to try to prevent that tribe from taking the war-path.

Old Nick was delighted at the prospect, and immediately insisted on accompanying them.

"Go-durn all fishhooks!" he exclaimed. "I've been butt-rin' round Fort Leavenworth for a couple o' weeks, and that ain't been nothin' doin'.

"I got into a bit of a dispute with a young lieutenant, an' I hight him off the colonel's verandah onto the ground. I thought sure he'd want to hev my blood fer that, but he merely observed that I was an uneducated person who didn't know the proper rules of etiquette.

"Then I got into a mix-up with a couple o' settlers. They was heeled, all right, but 'stead of drawing their guns they walked ten miles to the nearest sheriff to demand justice. When the sheriff come around, I told him to ferit it, and he forgot quick enough.

"But this yer sort o' business didn't seem to make me popular around the fort. The colonel was a bully good sort o' a fellow, but at last he hinted that the place was sorter nanner fer my talents. So when I heerd that 'mithin' might be 'join' round Fort Larned I pulled up and came to find you, boys.

"You certainly need Hickok and me to look after you, Nick," said Buffalo Bill, laughing heartily.

"I dunno how it is," Wharton responded, heaving a sigh. "I'm jest about the most peaceful critter on aith, an' yet I always seem to be runnin' inter trouble.

"The three scouts rode on for some time, chatting about their former adventures and the chances of the present campaign, until they had covered about half the distance between the two forts.

Then, as they crested a hill and looked down into a wide-stretching valley beyond, they saw half-a-dozen camp-fires gleaming through the darkness about two miles away.

They reined up their horses sharply, and held a council of war.

"Those reined up the Indians we fought," said Buffalo Bill. "They have stopped their flight and gone into camp until morning.

"What shall we do?" asked Wild Bill. "Shall we make a detour and pass by them, about a mile away, so as to be out of touch of their scouts and sentries; or shall we creep in on them, and see if we can learn anything of their plans? The chances are they are discussing them around the fire."

Cody hesitated.

He knew that the carrying of the message safely to Fort Hays was of the utmost importance, but, on the other hand, he felt that a chance of learning what the Indians proposed to do ought not to be missed.

"Tell me what we will do, boys," he said, after a few moments' thought. "Nick and I will creep into the camp and see what we can find out. You know the Cheyenne and Sioux lingo, don't you, Nick?"

Nick nodded.

"So do I, Hickok, you must take the despatch and wait on horseback, holding out two beasts at a safe distance. If they catch sight of us you mustn't attempt a rescue. You must ride at top speed for Fort Hays. We will shift for ourselves as best we can, but that message must be carried, at all costs."
"May I be scalped ef I leave you and Nick in the lurch!" exclaimed Wild Bill.

"You must do it, if needs be, old pard," urged the border king. "The lives of many men, the peace of the border, the whole plan of campaign depend upon that message reaching Fort Hays. I don't suppose the Indians will see us, but if they do you must ride the best you know, as soon as you hear the first war-whoop."

The manner of the king of the scouts was so impressive that Wild Bill at last agreed to do as he commanded.

They rode cautiously toward the camp-fires, and as they approached they saw that the encampment of the Indians was a very large one.

It had been established on the banks of a stream, and by a rough computation Buffalo Bill estimated that nearly two thousand braves were gathered there around the six fires.

Evidently the Indians had rallied after the first shock of the retreat had passed; and they again constituted a very formidable fighting force.

About a quarter of a mile from the camp the three scouts drew rein and dismounted, Buffalo Bill and Nick Wharton leaving their horses in charge of Hickok.

"Don't try to cut up the hull gang o' them Indians," Wild Bill said, as his two friends strode off into the darkness toward the camp-fires that twinkled ahead of them.

CHAPTER VI.
BUFFALO BILL FIGHTS THE RENEGADE.

As Buffalo Bill and Nick Wharton approached the first of the camp-fires, they saw that the Indians were dancing the Sioux ghost-dance around it, while at the next fire several of the Cheyennes were indulging in their own tribal war-dance.

Several sentinels had been placed around the camp, but, by careful scouting and judiciously taking advantage of cover, the two comrades managed to dodge them and get inside the corral.

When they had accomplished this feat, Buffalo Bill uttered a sigh of relief. They were now fairly safe, unless they were observed by some of the braves around the fire. In that event, the sentries were likely to cut off their retreat, unless it were made too rapidly to give them time to take up the alarm.

Nothing was going on around the first two fires except the dancing, which both Buffalo Bill and Wharton had seen many a time before.

Taking shelter behind a clump of bushes, they crawled forward until they were right in the center of the camp, and opposite the largest of the bivouac fires.

Here they saw that most of the leading chiefs of the three tribes were gathered, and they rightly concluded that a war council was being held.

Four braves were posted near the camp-fire, evidently for the purpose of keeping the other Indians from intruding while the chiefs and the old men discussed their plan of campaign.

Among the men seated around the fire the two scouts saw the renegade Kennelly.

He was smoking a big pipe, which looked incongruous in the midst of such wild and weird surroundings. His face was stained with blood from a wound in the forehead where a bullet had grazed him, and this intensified his ordinarily ferocious look.

Nick Wharton drew his revolver—the rifles had been left behind with Wild Bill—and in another moment would have sent a bullet through the head of the renegade, but Buffalo Bill seized his arm and signed to him to control himself.

They crept nearer and nearer to the camp-fire, until they were within about fifteen paces of it, lying hidden in a small clump of low brushwood.

They could get no nearer, for the light of the fire brightly illuminated the surroundings, and there was no other cover.

The Indians were talking angrily in the Sioux tongue, and the scouts, who were both familiar with it, were pleased to find that they were loudly abusing Kennelly for the failure of the attack on Fort Larned.

One after another denounced him as a bad leader, who had betrayed them into believing that they had hardly any opposition to meet, and had then taken them up against an almost impregnable position.

At last, after a young war-chief had denounced him as a lying traitor, Kennelly took the pipe from between his lips and broke silence for the first time.

"Listen, my brothers; and pay heed to my words, for I do not speak with a false tongue," he said. "I told you that it would not be easy to take the fort, and that you must be willing to lose many braves in the attempt.

"I told you that Long Hair, the slayer of many buffalo, was there, and you know well that he is worth a hundred men in himself. Yet you persisted in making the attempt, and you have no right to blame me for the failure.

"Did I hang back in the charge? Did I not lead your young men up to the walls of the fort? If they had followed me, we would have got inside and taken the scalps of all the men there.

"It was not my fault that they reeled back and would not follow me when the big firing began. How was I to know that your warriors are nothing but women and babes?"

At this gross insult half-a-dozen of the chiefs sprang to their feet and menaced the renegade with the tomahawks which they drew from their belts.

But the Irishman, in spite of his villainy, was a brave man. He merely gazed at them contemptuously, without deigning to draw his gun, and went on:

"You think that you have a quarrel with me. Very well. Name your champion, and I will meet him in single combat before you all.

"If he overcomes me, he may take my scalp; but if I slay him there must be no more disputing of my orders. My brothers, the Sioux, chose me for their war-chief in this fight, and I will be obeyed."

The young chief who had denounced Kennelly most hotly eagerly accepted this challenge, and begged his red comrades to let him act as their champion.

After a few minutes' consultation among themselves, they agreed. Kennelly watched them from the corner of his squint eye, but pretended to be utterly uninterested in the matter which spelled life or death to him.

The young chief threw off his buffalo-robe and stepped out into an open space near the fire, naked to the waist,
but gorgeously painted with the war-colors of his tribe. He was a Cheyenne.

As he stood in the firelight, straight as a young sapling, with his right hand resting upon the tomahawk in his belt, he looked a formidable foe.

Kennelly glanced at him for a few moments through half-closed eyelids, and then yawned sleepily and knocked the ashes out of the bowl of his pipe.

The Indians, on the one side, and the two scouts, hidden behind the bushes on the other, watched the scene with interest.

The young chief stamped his foot impatiently, and Kennelly slowly raised his huge, bulky form from the ground.

Once he was upon his feet, however, a wonderful change came over him.

Seated upon the ground, he had seemed as lazy and inert as a hog, but now his body was as tense and active as that of a panther.

Stealthily he crept toward the Indian, and they looked into one another’s eyes as intently as if they were both hypnotized.

An old Crow chieftain gave the signal for the duel to commence by dropping his tomahawk to the ground.

Instantly the young Cheyenne rushed forward, whirled his tomahawk around his head, and flung it straight at the skull of his enemy.

But he had reckoned without his adversary’s lightning-like quickness of eye.

Kennelly ducked just in time to escape the deadly missile, which tore off part of one of the feathers in his head-dress.

Straightening himself immediately, he flung his own tomahawk at the Cheyenne, burying it deep in his skull.

The man staggered, yelling his death-whoop; but before he could fall to the ground Kennelly leaped upon him, caught him in his arms as if he was a baby, and tossed him high into the air over his own head.

He fell to the ground, and when the other Indians rushed up to examine him they found that not only was his skull cleft, but that his neck had been broken by the terrible fall.

Bad Eye calmly drew his knife and took the dead man’s scalp, although he knew that that act would doubly enrage the already furious Cheyennes.

Then, holding the blood-stained knife above his head, and dangling the scalp in the other hand, he cried:

“I have overcome your champion, oh, chiefs! Who will be next to yield up his scalp to Bad Eye?”

There was no response to this challenge. The Indians were brave men, and the Cheyennes, at least, were much irritated at the death of their champion, but not one among them cared to try conclusions with such a redoubtable fighter as Kennelly had shown himself to be.

Suddenly Buffalo Bill rose from a clump of bushes in which he had lain concealed, and stalked, a majestic figure, into the circle of light cast by the glow of the fire.

To say that the Indians were surprised by this sudden apparition is but faintly to convey their absolute amazement. They looked as if a ghost had suddenly emerged into their midst.

The renegade Kennelly was not less astonished. He stared at the border king for a moment, and then sat

down heavily upon the ground, picked up his discarded pipe, and began to fill it with tobacco.

Buffalo Bill surveyed the scene for a moment with quiet amusement, and then said, in the Sioux tongue:

“Greeting to you, chiefs and elders of the Sioux, Cheyenne, and Crow tribes! I have heard the challenge thrown down by Bad Eye, and I come into your midst to accept it.

“You know me for your enemy, I am Long Hair, and I have slain many of your braves. But I come fearlessly among you for the ordeal by single combat, for I know your code of honor must give me a fair start on my horse after the fight is over, supposing that I come out of it victorious. Is it not so, oh, chiefs?”

Cody’s action might have seemed to the outsider to be nothing else but suicide. To a man acquainted with the Indian laws of chivalry, however, there was nothing so very extraordinary about it.

One of their most stringent rules was that an enemy who challenged one of their braves to the ordeal by single combat must be held sacred, like an envoy under the white man’s flag of truce; and after the fight was over he must be allowed a good chance of retreat.

The oldest chieftain by the camp-fire, after looking round the circle and catching the eyes of his comrades, acted as spokesman. He bent his head gravely, and said:

“It is as you say, Long Hair. You are a great warrior, and your fame has been sung by our young men round the camp-fires. You shall fight Bad Eye if you desire to do so, and at the end, if you live, you shall go forth unharmed and beseide your horse, and ride away from us. None of our braves shall seek your scalp until you are half-a-mile distant.”

Buffalo Bill saluted the chief gravely, after the Sioux fashion, and then turned to Kennelly, who sat smoking and gloowering at him, and asked:

“What weapons?”

“Tomahawks,” growled the renegade, as he rose to his feet and fronted the border king.

Nick Wharton had followed Buffalo Bill, after a moment’s pause, due to his absolute amazement at the bold course Cody had taken. His appearance did not alarm or surprise the Indians. Too many startling events had happened that evening for one more to have any effect on them.

“Durn my cats, Buffler!” said old Nick, after he had glanced defiantly round the circle of Indians. “You are the queerest duck I ever struck in my galumpin’ existence. What in thunder d’ye want to butt into this yer controversy for? Let me tackle thar Irish mountain o’ flesh! I guess I kin manage to settle his hash for him.”

The border king waved his friend aside, and whispered:

“Be on the watch, Nick, in case any of the Indians tries to get me in the back while I am fighting him.”

Wharton nodded, and promptly rested his hand upon his six-shooter in his belt, ready to whip it out and fire at a moment’s notice.

The Indians formed a ring, which was speedily added to by hundreds of other braves who flocked to the scene from the camp-fires near-by.

Buffalo Bill and the renegade stood in the center. Kennelly held his tomahawk, red with the blood of the slain Cheyenne, in his hand.

Buffalo Bill did not possess such a weapon, but a
Cheyenne brave stepped out of the circle of onlookers and handed one to him.

It was a weird and impressive scene.

The light cast a fitful glow on the faces of the duelists, and illumined their eyes as they circled around for a few moments, waiting the opportunity to send their sharp-edged weapons whistling to the mark.

Suddenly Kennelly stepped forward with a rapid motion and flung his tomahawk at the border king's head.

Buffalo Bill had held his eyes, just as the pugilist does those of his opponent, and instinctively he knew what was coming a second before Kennelly raised his hand.

He flung himself forward, and the tomahawk passed harmlessly a foot above his head.

"Wah!" cried the Indians, in admiration of the border king's clever movement.

Before the exclamation had died upon their lips, Buffalo Bill had darted forward and struck Kennelly a terrible blow on the crown, which left his head asunder almost to the chin.

Bad Eye would trouble the peace of the border no more. The renegade had met with his desert at last.

CHAPTER VII.

THE RIDE TO FORT HAYS.

The Indians gazed silently at the corpse of their white ally, and not one of them showed the slightest sign of grief or indignation at his death.

Buffalo Bill had only done what many of them would have liked to do if they had possessed the courage and skill.

The border king wrestled his dripping tomahawk from the skull of his fallen enemy, and, holding it tightly in his right hand, boldly faced the assembly of chiefs, with a questioning glance in his eyes that seemed to say:

"Now, what are you going to do about it?"

Nick Wharton stood by his side, with his hand on his six-shooter, ready to fight to the death.

The bold aspect of the two scouts profoundly impressed the redskins, and not a thought of revenge crossed their minds.

Even if the renegade had been more popular than he was, their code of honor would not have allowed them to attack the victor in an ordeal by single combat without giving him a fair chance for his life.

"Go in peace, Long Hair," said an old Crow chief, stepping forward and saluting him. "You are indeed a great warrior, and I would that you were one of my tribe. I hope that some day I may meet you in the front rank of battle, or, if that cannot be, in the happy hunting-grounds of the Great Manitou."

With a majestic wave of his hand, the chief took motion three of his followers toward him, and ordered them to escort Buffalo Bill and Nick Wharton past the sentries and see them safely to their horses.

Then the redskin, who was imbued with all the chivalry of his race, drew from his waist-belt a pipe, filled it with tobacco, and said to Buffalo Bill:

"As soon as you are gone, oh, Long Hair, I will light this pipe, and not until I have smoked it and the flame dies out need you fear that we will mount our horses and pursue. Is that all you ask?"

Buffalo Bill bent his head in token of assent, and muttered to Nick Wharton:

"Will you say that Indians are no better than varmints now, old pard? Could anything be fairer than that?"

"I guess he is a white man whose skin went red by mistake," growled old Nick.

As the two scouts strode away from the camp-fire, accompanied by their Indian escort, Buffalo Bill glanced back and saw the Crow chief lift a burning stick from the fire and light his pipe.

He immediately increased his pace, for he wanted to get as long a start as possible before the calumet of peace burned out.

In a few minutes they reached the spot where Wild Bill was holding the three horses. He was naturally surprised at the appearance of the Indians with his friends, but a warning cry from Cody prevented him from firing, although he had immediately whipped his rifle up to his shoulder.

Buffalo Bill explained the situation in a few hurried words, and then the three scouts lost no time in mounting their horses and putting as much distance between themselves and the camp of the redskins as they could before the truce-pipe was smoked out.

"I don't believe they will trouble to pursue us," said Buffalo Bill, as they sped along over the prairie at a tearing gallop. "That old chief is a pretty smart fellow, and he will know very well that there is no chance of catching us, after the start we have got. Our only danger, as I figure, is that we may stumble across another war party, or some of their scouts, before we reach Fort Hays."

They rode along for a couple of hours, occasionally glancing behind to see if they were followed; but they saw nothing to indicate danger.

Suddenly, as they emerged from a brush-covered ravine, Buffalo Bill held up his hand in warning.

His comrades reined up their horses and listened intently.

They had not remained silent more than a few seconds before they heard an almost noiseless pad of hoofs on the turf of the prairie.

The scouts knew that Indian ponies were always unhorsed, and they realized in a moment that another fight was ahead of them. Rifle in hand, they waited for the enemy.

The darkness was so intense that they could hardly see ten yards ahead of them. Suddenly out of the gloom, half-a-dozen mounted figures emerged.

The scouts saw at a glance that they were Indians, even if they had not known, as they did the next moment, by the startled war-whoop that broke from the lips of the redskins.

Buffalo Bill galloped toward them, revolver in hand, and before the redskins fully understood their peril he had shot down two of them and broken through the party.

Wild Bill and Nick Wharton followed close behind him, and in their passage they each sent an Indian to join his forefathers in the happy hunting-grounds.

The two remaining redskins hastily fired their rifles at random, and fled into the darkness at top speed.

Wild Bill was eager to pursue them, but the border king reminded him of the necessity of reaching Fort Hays; and the scouts resumed their adventurous journey.
Shortly before dawn they reached the fort and were sharply challenged by one of the sentries.

News of the Indian rising had been carried thither, and a vigilant watch was being maintained.

Buffalo Bill cried out that they were friends, and in a few moments they stood within the gates of the fort and in the presence of the commandant, who was hastily summoned from his bed, where he had lain down to take a couple of hours’ sleep after a night of anxious watching.

The news of the victory over the Indians at Fort Laramie caused great rejoicing, and the daring feat of the three scouts in riding through a territory infested with Indians made the commandant exhaust his vocabulary of compliments.

“Do you think the Indians will accept battle with the combined garrison of the two forts?” asked the commandant.

“I doubt it,” replied Buffalo Bill. “They have lost a good many men, and they will not care to fight in the open until they get reinforcements. Unless you move swiftly and make a junction with the troops from Fort Laramie, they will escape to the hills and scatter, until fresh war parties can be brought up from the villages of the three tribes. Meanwhile the most important thing that I and my two companions can do is to ride down to New Mexico and help Red Cloud to prevent the Navajos from joining the confederacy. If they do so, other tribes may join it, too, and the whole frontier would be ablaze. That must be prevented, at any cost.”

The commandant agreed, and, after a brief rest at the fort, Buffalo Bill and his two friends started on their long ride down to New Mexico, taking with them spare horses and provisions, as they did not wish to waste time by hunting on the way.

CHAPTER VIII.

RED CLOUD AND THE GRIZZLY.

Several days later the three men were compelled to part when they were approaching the border of the Navajo country.

Nick Wharton was not able to resist the temptation of following some panther tracks which he found near the spot where they camped one afternoon. He followed the trail into the thick wood, and the panther sprang upon his shoulders before he was aware of its presence. He killed it with his bowie-knife, after a terrible struggle; but he was so badly mauled that he had to be taken by his friends to the house of a rancher near-by.

Wild Bill agreed to stay and look after him here, while Buffalo Bill went on alone to visit his friend Red Cloud, the chief of the Navajos.

* * * * * * *

It was a late New Mexican afternoon. Red Cloud, already familiar to readers of these stories, was out alone on a ‘hunt, and had just pitched his camp.

He was a tall, finely built, athletic young fellow, thoroughly trained in all the craft and skill of the Indian. None of his fellow braves could throw a tomahawk with more unerring aim; none could shoot straighter, either with the rifle or with the bow.

Red Cloud lighted a fire of dry twigs, and set to work to fry some deer meat—the result of his successful hunting on the previous evening. He had crept down to the pool where the deer were wont to drink, and, keeping well to windward of them, had shot a couple before the rest of the herd took flight.

The stream beside which he had camped ran through wooded country, and from time to time Red Cloud’s piercing black eyes roved around the trees in his immediate vicinity, for he was too well trained to let an enemy, whether man or beast, creep upon him unaware.

Nevertheless, as he took his fried steak from the fire and became absorbed in eating it, with the keen appetite of a youthful hunter, he narrowly escaped being caught.

Suddenly his quick ear heard the sound of the snapping of a twig, and, turning round hastily, he saw an immense grizzly bear—by far the biggest he had ever met—approaching swiftly toward him through the trees.

The animal was running on all fours, with the peculiar, humped-up gait of the grizzly; but, despite its ungainliness, it was wonderfully quick. It had scented the meat and the man, and was evidently determined to have both of them.

Red Cloud had fought grizzlies before, and knew full well that they were about the most dangerous enemies a man could encounter. He seized his bow, and sent an arrow whizzing into the flesh of the bear, just below the shoulder.

The animal gave a howl of rage and pain, but came on as if nothing more had happened to him than the mere pricking of a pin.

The Indian hastily launched another arrow, without any better effect, and then threw down his bow and seized the rifle which lay on the ground near-by his camp-fire. By this time the grizzly was not more than twenty yards away. Red Cloud fired one shot, which wounded the beast, but only served to further enrage it without doing any mortal injury.

Then the man turned on his heel and fled to the nearest tree, hoping to dodge the beast around its trunk and find a chance of getting in a death-shot.

But the grizzly was already at his heels, and, as he sprang to the tree, he could feel the hot breath of the angry bear upon his back.

He gained the shelter only a yard or two ahead of his enemy, and the bear, carried on by the momentum of his speed, went about ten yards beyond the trunk, giving the Indian a second or two in which to catch his breath and bring his gun to his shoulder.

The animal turned with incredible swiftness and charged again. But Red Cloud had dodged to the other side of the trunk, and met him with a bullet squarely in the breast.

Before he could fire another shot with his repeater, the grizzly was upon him, rearing upon its haunches.

The beast presented a terrible sight, that might well have inspired terror even in the heart of a brave man like the young Indian hunter.

It was covered with blood from head to foot from its wounds. Its mouth was wide open, exposing its long, cruel teeth and a terrible snarl; and its forepaws, with their frightful claws extended, were raised to tear the man to fragments.

Before Red Cloud could press the trigger again the rifle was dashed from his hands by a terrific blow of one of the bear’s paws. Next moment he was clasped in the beast’s merciless paws. Next moment he was clasped in the beast’s arms and borne to the ground.
He abandoned all hope of life, but, with the game instinct of a well-trained Indian, he managed to draw his hunting-knife and deal the beast several deep wounds in its side.

Roaring with pain, the grizzly released him for a moment, just as a shot rang out from behind a near-by tree.

Hit through the head, the animal turned, with a vicious snarl, to meet its new enemy. It took a few rapid bounds in the direction from which the shot had come, and then rolled over on its side—stone-dead. It had struggled for life and revenge with desperate tenacity, but a bullet through the brain had settled it at last.

Buffalo Bill, with a smoking rifle in his hand, stepped out from behind a tree and walked toward the prostrate Indian, glancing at the body of the bear as he passed it, to make sure that it was really dead.

As he approached, the young Indian lifted himself slowly and painfully upon his elbow, and said:

"Brother, I thank you."

Then, as he tried to rise to his feet, he was overcome by the loss of blood from the many wounds inflicted upon him by the claws of the bear, and he sank back unconscious.

Buffalo Bill promptly attended to his injuries, bandaging the wounds and stopping the flow of blood as cleverly as any surgeon could have done.

This accomplished, he forced some brandy and water from his flask between the Indian's teeth, and gradually brought him back to consciousness.

"Let my brother rest quietly, so that his wounds will not reopen," said Buffalo Bill, as Red Cloud opened his eyes and gazed gratefully at him. The Indian, trained in a severe school of discipline, did as he was bidden.

Buffalo Bill would not allow him even to talk until his faintness had passed away.

The border king threw fresh twigs on the fire and made some strong broth, which Red Cloud drank eagerly.

The Indian, who had been watching him in grave silence, presently said:

"My brother has saved my life for the second time, and Red Cloud is grateful. But my brother is on a journey, and he must not delay himself upon my account. Let him place my rifle by my side and some meat near-by, and Red Cloud will wait until he is strong enough to return to the tents of his people."

"No, Red Cloud, you need not think I am going to leave you like this. You are not in a fit condition to travel. We will camp together until you can ride to your village.

"Indeed, it was you that I was coming to see. I have traveled all the way from Kansas to talk with you and your braves, and tell you the words of the Great White Father. Some of the tribes to the north have risen against him and dug up the tomahawk to smite the palefaces, but they have themselves been smitten, and they will be sorely punished."

In a few brief but rapid sentences Buffalo Bill told the young Navajo chief about what had happened at Fort Larned.

Red Cloud replied that he had personally every desire to live on good terms with the white men, and so had most of his tribe, but there were some troublemakers among the young braves who were always talking war. However, nothing was likely to be done in the matter until his return to the village, then he would call a war council and give Buffalo Bill an opportunity of explaining the matter to the whole tribe.

CHAPTER IX.

RED CLOUD'S STRANGE STORY.

Buffalo Bill and Red Cloud lived together, by the side of the stream, for several days. The border king constructed a hut of wattled branches, in which he put the Indian. There he tended him until his injuries were healed.

It was some time, however, before he was able to totter out into the sunlight again.

At night-time the king of the scouts kept guard over his friend until long after dawn, for he knew that in his weak state the Navajo would easily fall a prey to any prowling animal or marauding enemy.

The scout took his rest during the day, lying by the side of his patient, who could wake him at the least sign of danger.

He was sleeping thus one afternoon, when he was awakened by his shoulder being violently shaken. He opened his eyes and reached for his gun in a moment.

Red Cloud, who was evidently in a state of great excitement, although he repressed outward signs of it with Indian stoicism, pointed to an arrow that was still quivering in the wall of their little shelter above his head.

"The Cave Dwellers! The Cave Dwellers!" he cried, and he pointed toward a clump of trees about fifty yards from their hut.

Glancing thither, Buffalo Bill saw two squat, deformed, misshapen creatures who looked more like big apes than men. They were almost black in color, and their arms and legs were bowed like those of a gorilla. As he watched them they danced to and fro and gave vent to several hideous yells, making the most hideous grimaces at the same time.

Buffalo Bill had heard of these strange creatures before, but he had never imagined they could look so demoniac and inhuman. After a few seconds one of the savages leaped forward, fitted an arrow to the bow which he carried in his left hand, and was about to pull the string.

Before he could do so Buffalo Bill drew a quick bead on him and shot him dead.

The other Indian gave a wail of dismay, looked at his slain companion for a moment in a dazed way, and then promptly took to his heels and fled through the trees. The border king did not attempt to pursue him,
for he thought it possible that some other of his com-
rades might be lurking about, and it would therefore be
dangerous to leave his patient.

"It was a lucky shot, brother," said Red Cloud. "The
arrows of the Cave Dwellers are almost always poisoned,
and the slightest scratch with one of them is likely to
kill a man. If the first arrow they fired had struck me,
I should now be roaming the happy hunting-grounds of
the Great Manitou."

"Who are they, and why did they attack us?" asked
Buffalo Bill, after he had satisfied himself that the sav-
age he had shot was really dead.

"They are the Cave Dwellers," replied the Indian, "and
they attacked us because they have a mortal feud with
my tribe, and especially with myself. It is a long story,
brother, but it were well that you should know it."

"Let me get rid of the body first," remarked Buffalo
Bill. "If I leave it here, the coyotes and buzzards will
come around pretty soon and trouble us. See! They
are beginning to circle already."

He pointed overhead, where several vultures were
circling in whirls that approached constantly nearer to
the ground.

With his strong, broad-bladed bowie-knife, the scout
hollowed out a grave a few feet deep in the loose, sandy
earth, and placed the body of the dead savage in it.
Over the shoveled-in earth he rolled a number of heavy
stones, so that the coyotes would be unable to dig up the
body.

Having thus given his slain enemy decent sepulture,
the border king returned to the hut and prepared a meal
for himself and his patient. As they sat smoking their
pipes, after they had finished the repast, he asked Red
Cloud for the story of his feud with the Cave Dwellers.

Red Cloud thought a moment, and then began:

"They are the old people, these Cave Dwellers—the
oldest people in all this country. They are older than
the Moquis, or the Pueblos, or the Navajos, or the
Apaches. They were here from the beginning of time,
but when the other tribes came into the country they
were driven to take refuge in great caves far up on the
sides of the mountains, where hardly a goat can climb.

"There has always been enmity between them and the
other tribes, and though they often dwell for long months
up in their caves and do not trouble us, yet the hatchet is
never buried. These Cave Dwellers are more like beasts
than men, and they are fond of eating the flesh of their
enemies, when they can capture them and carry them up
the secret paths that lead to their caves.

"But it is not alone in the caves of the mountains
that they live. They have also subterranean caverns
running far into the bowels of the earth, and they also
dwell in tents on the plains at some seasons of the year,
when they come out of their caves to hunt and steal the
cattle and ponies of the other tribes."

"And how did you manage to incur their special en-
mony, Red Cloud?" asked Buffalo Bill.

"Three years ago, my tribe dwelt peacefully in our
country, under the strong and good rule of our great
chief, Spotted Snake. The neighboring tribes feared and
respected us, and we had beaten the Cave Dwellers into
submission. We had buried the hatchet with the white
man, and we were left alone in our hunting-grounds
without interference. It was a happy time for the tribe.

"But Spotted Snake died, and his son, Scared Coyote,
was a weakening. He ruled over the tribe like a woman,
scarcely ever leaving his wigwam, and never risking
his skin in the perils of the chase.

"Gradually the tribes which his father had kept so
well in check began to encroach upon our territories,
and the Cave Dwellers especially caused us great trouble,
stealing our ponies and raiding our crops. Scared Coyote
never resented this insult, for his heart was as weak as
water within him.

"Our main camp was pitched at that time by the side
of the Giant Spring.

"Does my brother know it? It is a spring that
bubbles up from the earth and makes a big pond, com-
ing from a subterranean river that flows many miles
under the ground of the open prairie."

"Yes, I have seen it," answered Buffalo Bill.

"Then my brother will be able to understand my story.
In those days I was just beginning to win my name as a
scout and brave among my tribe, and I was always
eager to do some great deed.

"My arm was big with muscle and sinew, and I could
shoot an arrow farther than most of the braves; but I
was yet counted as a boy by many of them.

"I learned one day that the Cave Dwellers had ridden
into our country and established a camp there in great
numbers. I crawled to the place by night and listened
secretly as they talked around their fire. I learned that
they were preparing a great surprise for us. Our
tents were to be surrounded by them, and the Navajos
would be destroyed forever, so that they could enter into
possession of our hunting-grounds and no longer be ob-
liged to live in their desolate caves.

"I hastened back to camp with this startling intel-
ligence, and asked to see Scared Coyote, who, as usual,
was in his wigwam with his squaws.

"Tell the dog of a boy," was his message in reply,
"that the chief will see him to-morrow, because he is too
busy now mixing his paints with which he adorns him-
self."

"I told the messenger that my mission was most im-
portant, and that the fate of the tribe depended on my
seeing him.

"I waited over an hour for the reply to the second
message, and then Scared Coyote—who was jealous of
the prowess I had gained in hunting—sent out another
messenger to say that he was a man who did not change his mind. He had said that he would not see me until to-morrow, and therefore he would not see me, whatever I might have to say. With the pride of an ignorant, foolish youth, he added that the word of a great chief was not lightly given and could not be lightly taken back.

"'Tell Scared Coyote,' I said, with my heart hot with anger within me, 'that his word is the word of an infant in swathing-clothes. Even a chicken just hatched by his mother hen would have the sense to flee from danger, but he will stay here and die. Then let him die!"

"I turned on my heel and walked to the tents of the other braves, on whom I knew I could depend, and whom I knew were disgusted, like myself, with their young chief.

"I told them what I had learned, and we held a war council.

"We decided that we would shift our tents secretly in the night and leave Scared Coyote alone while he was asleep. Everybody heartily detested him, and therefore the plan was agreed to by all. We threatened to throw the squaws into the Giant Spring if they told the chief of our plans. We resolved to wait our chance of raiding the Cave Dwellers at a convenient season, for they greatly outnumbered us, many of our tribe being away on a distant hunting expedition.

"We struck our tents silently at the dead of night. The stamping of the horses was muffled by tying their feet in the long prairie-grass. Any other Indian would have heard us, none the less; but Scared Coyote did not sleep with one eye open, like the rest of his people. He slept the heavy sleep of a puppy-dog in his burrow.

"As we rode away over the prairie, and looked back to see the chief's tent standing alone, we laughed at the thought of how surprised he would be when the sun arose and showed him that his tribe had left him.

"But there was a greater surprise even than this one in store for Scared Coyote. By a wonderful happening, the Cave Dwellers decided to make their attack on us the very same night that we rode away, although when I heard them talking around their fire they were going to postpone it till the following night, in the hope that some of their tribe would join them.

"They had moved down upon our camp in the night at the same time we were moving off in another direction; and when Scared Coyote awoke he found himself surrounded by the dreaded savages.

"One of the Cave Dwellers, whom we took prisoner afterward by a daring feat, of which I shall tell you, informed us that Scared Coyote swooned away like a woman when he saw them.

"How we laughed when we heard of the traitor's death—for was he not a traitor to skulk in his wigwam with the women instead of looking after the welfare of his tribe?"

Red Cloud looked at Buffalo Bill inquiringly.

"Yes, he was certainly a skulker and a traitor," the border king agreed. "I do not know that you did right to leave him, but I can understand how enraged you and your fellow braves must have been."

"The Cave Dwellers, in overwhelming numbers, moved after us, and we were obliged to move farther away," continued Red Cloud. "At last the braves who had been out hunting joined us, and then our enemies retreated and camped near the Giant Spring."

"But you have not told me what happened to Scared Coyote," remarked Buffalo Bill, interrupting the story.

"Oh, they threw him into the Giant Spring, with his paints tied around his neck, for he behaved in so womanly a manner that they got a greater contempt for him than we had, and they would not give him a warrior's death.

"Though we had abandoned the place which had for so long been our headquarters, we had no idea of giving up the struggle," Red Cloud continued. "We knew that the Cave Dwellers still greatly outnumbered us, but we nevertheless meant to attack them. At a grand council of war I was chosen chief, in place of Scared Coyote; for, although I was such a young man, I had distinguished myself by saving the tribe from certain annihilation.

"I thought long and hard what I should do, and presently I hit upon a good plan, although it was one fraught with great danger.

"Five hundred yards above the Giant Spring, on the north, there is a great hole covered over with brushwood and prairie-grass. A narrow furrow in the ground, also covered by grass and brush, leads to this hole, the furrow extending along the prairie for nearly a mile.

"I thought that we would creep along this furrow and hide in the hole, and then surprise the hostile tribe when they struck their camp and marched northward, as I would contrive they should do by sending some of my men to make a feint of attacking them from that direction.

"I expected that by this ambush I would have them at my mercy, for they would be surprised beyond measure to see us spring up from the ground to attack them practically within the limits of their camp.

"But on reconnoitering the place, after we had crept along the furrow, I met with a great surprise. The hole at the bottom was filled only by a thin crust of earth, which broke when I pushed the end of my bow into it. I found that the hole actually went down into the subterranean river which led to the Giant Spring.

"Instantly a new and better plan occurred to me. Why not drop into the water and be swept along to the spring, and thence emerge into the center of the enemy's camp,
and attack the Cave Dwellers as they slept in their tents? The sentries would not be able to see us, for they were posted on the outskirts of the camp, and we should emerge from the center.

“As we looked down through the hole we could see that the water was surging by with tremendous force, and several of the braves who were with me said that my plan was sheer folly. They thought that any man who dropped through that hole would meet instant death. None of them would agree to the plan, and we returned to our camp.

“The next night I crept back to the place, with one of my best men, and got him to lower me down into the hole by some buffalo-thongs tied tightly together and looped under my armpits.

“I was overjoyed to find that the river ran swiftly through a wide, high-vaulted passage. It was almost a cavern, and there was no danger of a man having his head knocked off or being battered to pieces as he was swept along, as the braves had predicted.

“We went back to the camp and told the braves what we had found, and they immediately agreed to follow my lead. I selected thirty of the best among them, and just before dawn we had assembled at the hole again.

“Our plan was to let ourselves drop well into the river, descending to some depth; for we did not know how low the rocks might be at the other end of the passage, where we would have to emerge. It would not do, therefore, to float down on the surface of the river; and this fact made our enterprise ten times more difficult and dangerous than it would otherwise have been.

“We agreed to wait for one another on the sides of the Giant Spring, hidden among the water-lilies and other plants that grew there; and then, when all had arrived through the tunnel, we would rise up with a yell and attack our sleeping enemies.

“This yell was to be the signal for the rest of our braves, lurking around the camp, to rush in and help us to utterly annihilate the Cave Dwellers. Finding enemies in their midst, and thinking themselves surrounded on all sides, I felt sure they would be too demoralized to be able to make any real resistance.

“As I was the chief it naturally fell to me to lead the way. I slipped down the buffalo-thong until I was within eight feet of the water. Then I let go, dropping my hands to my side, and went down into the river feet first.

“The water was as cold as the snow of the mountains, and it seemed to me that I would never cease going downward into icy depths. The moment after I struck the surface of the stream I felt as if I had been seized by some giant wrestler, in whose hands I was a mere baby.

“My arms were pulled from my side, from the surging, swiftly flowing waters, and it seemed to me as if somebody was pulling my limbs apart with terrible force. I held my breath until I thought I would be obliged to take in some of the water, and at the one moment my lungs felt as if they were being torn asunder. There was a loud roaring in my ears, and I thought my head would split open.

“Fortunately, just at the moment when my senses were leaving me, I came up to the surface, and my hands instinctively grasped some reeds. I took a long breath, and looked up, and there were the stars looking down at me from the sky. I had come safely through the tunnel and reached the side of the Giant Spring. As I looked to one side I saw a number of tents, from some of which smoke was ascending.

“I was in the midst of the enemy’s camp, and my position was one of great danger. I kept my head well down among the reeds, and waited impatiently for my comrades. It seemed as if they would never come. I waited for what seemed like an hour, but probably it was only a minute or two, at the most, and then, one after another, I saw heads bobbing up around me, first on one side and then on the other.

“One of the braves, as he came up, gave a loud gasp for breath, and then went down, never to appear again. I regretted his loss, but only one man lost out of thirty in such an enterprise was better than I had ever expected.

“We got together silently on the bank, and then, drawing our tomahawks, rushed upon the silent tents with a mighty war-cry. We were instantly answered by loud whoops from our friends on the outskirts of the camp, and in a few moments we had the Cave Dwellers at our mercy.

“We captured several of their chiefs and head men as they were sleeping in their tents, and many others we slew. It was the most complete victory that my tribe has ever achieved, and it reduced the Cave Dwellers to complete submission. A few of them managed to escape and get back to their inaccessible caves, but never again did they make a concerted raid upon our territory.

“Nevertheless, they cherish a bitter animosity against the Navajos, and especially against me. One of the chiefs whom we took prisoner managed to escape, after learning that I was the man who had dealt such a heavy blow to his people. Evidently he told them about it, for two or three times since then a few of the Cave Dwellers have tried their best to take my scalp.

“This attack that you saw, my brother, was not by any means the first one they have made upon me. I guard myself against them as well as I can, but I expect that some day I shall fall a victim to their poisoned arrows or be carried away a prisoner to one of their caves, and there be devoured by them in one of their hideous feasts.”
Red Cloud said these last words calmly, with all the stoical philosophy of an Indian, and then folded his buffalo-robe about him and sank into profound thought, gazing into the dying embers of the camp-fire.

The young warrior was not a man to worry over even the worst that might happen. The matter was in the hands of the Great Manitou, and when his time came he would die as bravely as he had lived.

CHAPTER X.

THE FIGHT IN THE RAPIDS.

In a few days Red Cloud was sufficiently recovered to travel, and Buffalo Bill was glad of the opportunity to carry out his mission at last.

The Indian and the scout mounted their horses, which were very fresh and mettlesome after their long rest in camp, and each man secretly admired the great skill and horsemanship which the other showed.

“You are a great rider, Red Cloud,” said Buffalo Bill, after he had watched his blood-brother for a few moments, sitting his horse like a bronze statue as it reared and bucked and cavorted in all directions.

A gratified smile shone on the Indian’s face, and he replied:

“Would my brother care to try to mount this horse? No other man but myself has ever ridden him. Once he kicked a brave to death who tried to ride him.”

“I don’t mind trying,” said the border king, who had never yet met the horse that he could not subdue.

He leaped from his own mustang as he spoke, but Red Cloud kept his place in the saddle.

“No, my brother,” he exclaimed, “I did but jest. I might as well take my tomahawk and bury it in your head as let you mount this beast. He would surely kill you, for he is very savage to all but myself.”

By this time Buffalo Bill’s blood was up, and he was determined to mount the Indian’s mettlesome animal.

“Here is a fair offer, Red Cloud,” he exclaimed. “If your wounds are quite well, will you try to mount my mustang and ride him? He is not fierce, but he will certainly shake you off gently to the ground if I give him the word to do so. And if you cannot keep your seat on him you must let me try to mount your beast.”

The Indian’s spirit was aroused by this challenge. He eagerly accepted it, feeling confident that he would be able to sit the mustang without any difficulty. Like his white companion, he was used to conquering any animal he met.

He dismounted and approached the mustang, which cocked up its ears suspiciously and looked inquiringly at his master.

Buffalo Bill said: “Steady, old girl!” The mare kept as quiet as a lamb while the Indian mounted her, and allowed him to ride her gently up and down.

“Ugh! Do you call her troublesome?” the redskin exclaimed. “I never rode a gentler horse.”

Buffalo Bill smiled and gave a low, peculiar whistle. Instantly the mare stopped her quiet gait and began to rear and buck violently.

The Indian clung to the saddle with great skill and resolution, but the animal suddenly stopped its plunging and rolled gently on the ground, shaking him off and depositing him gently in the long grass of the prairie.

He got up, with a shamefaced look, and waved his hand toward his own pony.

“You must mount her if you wish, my brother,” he said. “But I pray you be careful, for her rage is sometimes terrible. I would much prefer that you did not try.”

Buffalo Bill went fearlessly up to the animal, caught it by the bridle, and vaulted into the saddle. Instantly the pony started on a wild gallop, and before it had gone twenty yards stopped suddenly in the middle of its stride and reared up almost erect on its hind legs.

The border king leaned forward, patted its head soothingly, and whispered in its ear. The animal became quiet in a moment, brought its forefoot to the ground, and trotted along peacefully, with Buffalo Bill bending forward and soothing it all the time.

In less than two minutes he had got it under complete control, and brought it back at a gentle canter to Red Cloud, who had watched the scene with the most intense astonishment.

“Are you a medicine-man, oh, brother?” he exclaimed, in amazement. “You must have some spell that you cast over horses, for I never saw anything like this in all my days.”

“There is no spell needed,” said the border king lightly. “I have a way of letting animals know that I am their friend, and so I never have any trouble with them. This is particularly the case with dogs and horses. I never yet met one that I could not get along with.”

The two men then mounted their own steeds and rode toward Red Cloud’s village, which they entered at evening on the following day.

The chief was welcomed with loud cries of delight by the women and children, and with deep grunts of satisfaction by the less demonstrative braves, whom he had led to victory against their enemies on so many occasions.

He had gone away from the village on his hunting trip for only a day or two, and they had been much alarmed by his long absence, especially as one of the braves who had been out scouting had returned to report the discovery of Cave Dwellers’ footprints in the direction which Red Cloud had taken.

A great feast was held that night, and Red Cloud sung the praises of the border king as a great white
chief who had twice saved his life and had sworn blood-
brotherhood with him.

Naturally the redskins welcomed him warmly, and the
chiefs and old men smoked the pipe of peace with him,
and swore that he would always be to them as their
brother, because he had restored to them their beloved
chief.

Under such circumstances as these, Cody's mission was
naturally rendered easy for him. At a council of the
tribe he told of the crushing defeat which had been in-
fulled on the Crows, Cheyennes, and Sioux at Fort
Larned, and he appealed to the Navajos to keep the
peace and try to induce the other tribes in the South-
west to do the same.

There was hardly any dispute about the matter. Only
two or three of the younger and more hot-headed braves
spoke in favor of war, and they were speedily over-
ruled. Solemn pledges were given that the peace with
the palefaces would be kept, and when at last the time came
for Buffalo Bill to leave the village and rejoin his
friends, he did so with a feeling of deep satisfaction at
the complete success he had achieved in his diplomatic
task.

"Do not go back on horseback, my brother," said Red
Cloud to him, when the king of the scouts announced
that he must make his preparations for departure. "Go
by the river. It is much easier, and it will land you
within a few miles of the ranch where your friends are
waiting for you. One of my braves can take your horse
for you to that place, and he can bring back the canoe
which you will use."

Buffalo Bill agreed to this arrangement willingly, Al-
though he traveled so much on horseback, he was not
averse to other means of transportation, now and then.

Red Cloud lent him a fine birch-bark canoe, and the
greater part of the population of the village came down
to the river bank to see him off, parting from him with
expressions of the deepest regret.

"Take care you don't fall in with the Nez Perces, my
brother," was Red Cloud's final warning. "They are a
cruel and treacherous tribe, and Yellow Plume, their
chief, has no love for white men."

"I know that," Buffalo Bill replied. "I have met Ye-
low Plume twice, and once I had a very narrow escape
from falling into his clutches."

With a parting wave of his hand, the king of the
scouts plied the paddle vigorously and sent his frail bark
into the center of the stream. In a few moments, he
had passed round the bend of the river, and was out of
sight of the Navajos.

The journey to the ranch was not a long one, but it
was considerably increased by the windings of the
stream. The banks were clad thickly with timber and
brushwood, and the bushes in many places grew right
down into the water.

Buffalo Bill had been traveling for about five hours
when he saw a canoe suddenly shoot out into the middle
of the river from under the cover of some of these
bushes. In it were seated two Indians.

They yelled to him threateningly, and ordered him to
halt.

The border king saw at a glance that they belonged
to the Nez Perces tribe, and that their motives were
obviously hostile.

As he came near to them, he put down his paddle and
took up his rifle. At the same moment one of the Indians
fitted an arrow to his bow and drew it up to the head.

Before he could discharge the shaft, Buffalo Bill tumbled
him over into the water with a bullet through his
breast.

The other Nez Perce gave a yell of alarm and paddled
swiftly for the shelter of the bank. Before he could
reach it, however, he, too, fell a victim to the deadly
rifle of the king of the scouts. Cody had no wish that
the man should escape and bring a horde of his compan-
nions down upon him.

Putting down his rifle, Buffalo Bill paddled on. He
soon got into broken water, which suggested that he was
approaching some rapids.

The strength and roughness of the stream rapidly
increased, and just as the scout was thinking that it
would soon be advisable to paddle into the bank and make
a portage with the canoe, a new and serious danger con-
fronted him. Just behind him, over toward the left, he
heard a chorus of loud and angry yells.

Recognizing the war-cry of the Nez Perces, he looked
over his shoulder, and saw a large canoe shoot out from
the cover of some low-growing bushes. It was filled by
six stalwart Indians, and their powerful arms made the
craft shoot toward Buffalo Bill's canoe at terrific speed.

The border king paddled as hard as he could, but
escape in that way was out of the question.

The Indians did not seem to want to kill him. They
were intent upon making him a prisoner.

With every stroke of the paddle, it became more and
more apparent that some dangerous rapids were being
neared. But neither Buffalo Bill nor his pursuers, in
the excitement of the chase, took much heed of that fact.

Cody thought of stopping and fighting it out, but the
Indians were so close that he knew he could only kill
two or three of them before the rest settled with him.

Therefore, when they had almost drawn alongside, he
cast a swift glance around and decided that his only
chance was to take to the water and swim to the other
bank, where he might find cover and escape.

As he looked round he saw that the man in the bow of
the Indians' canoe was none other than Yellow Plume,
the chief of the Nez Perces; and he determined that he
would take any risk rather than fall into his hands as a
prisoner.
Suddenly, to the intense amazement of the redskins, Buffalo Bill flung down his paddle and slipped over the side of the canoe farthest from them.

With a yell of hate, Yellow Plume leaped to his feet and, bending his bow, let drive full at the scout. But with the quickness of thought Buffalo Bill dived ere the shaft could reach him, and, drawing his bowie, slashed fiercely at the bottom of the savages' frail craft as it swept past him.

Still keeping under water; he swam to the bank and pulled himself up under cover of a weeping willow that grew right down into the stream.

Peering through the branches, he saw that the Nez Percés had come to grief. Their canoe had speedily filled with water and sunk.

As he watched he saw Yellow Plume swirled violently by the swift current against a rock, which cracked his skull as if it were an egg-shell. Two of the other savages, unable to struggle against the rapids into which they had now entered, were speedily drowned; but the remaining three, taking advantage of an eddy in the current, managed to swim to the opposite bank.

Buffalo Bill continued his journey on foot, and at last reached his destination. He was warmly welcomed by the rancher, an old man who had known him for many years in several parts of the West and who had a great reputation as an Indian fighter. His name was Hank Jones. He was much pleased when he heard the news of Buffalo Bill's dealing with the Navajos, for he lived near the border of their country and was naturally delighted to know that they were likely to keep the hatchet buried.

"Have you had any trouble with the Cave Dwellers?" the king of the scouts asked, as they sat smoking after dinner.

The old man said that he had not had any for the last year or so, but that they were in the habit of stealing his cattle before the Navajos broke their power in the manner Red Cloud had described. The border had now been at peace for some time, and the settlers were consequently enjoying a period of unusual prosperity.

"Gol-durned dull, I should call it," said Nick Wharton, who had now fully recovered from his injuries. "What in thunder do you do to pass the time?"

His host explained that there was plenty of good hunting in the neighborhood, and he hoped to show them some before they left his ranch.

"Grizzlies and mountain-lions is pretty well in that way," growled old Nick, "but a man hunt for mine, that's the greatest sport of all."

Next morning, Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill went out for a ride together, and stopped for a glass of milk at the log cabin of a settler about ten miles off. As the man was handing it to them, his glance fell upon a couple of Indians who were coming toward them at full gallop.

"Injuns!" he said, and he ran inside to fetch his gun.

Buffalo Bill looked carefully at the men as they rode up, and saw that they were Navajos. They were not dressed in their war-paint, and when they came near enough he recognized their features as those of two of Red Cloud's best braves.

The old man reappeared, rifle in hand, and was about to level the weapon at the redskins, when the border king stopped him and exchanged greetings with the Indians.

"What is the matter, Eagle Eye?" he asked the leader of the two braves.

The Indian was much excited. Instead of wasting time beating about the bush and exchanging empty compliments, after the manner of his people, he went straight to the point at once.

"Red Cloud has been captured by the Cave Dwellers, and carried off to one of their inaccessible caves in the mountains," he said. "We fear that they are saving him to offer up as a sacrifice at their great feast of Toshak, five nights hence, and that then they will devour his flesh, and so disgrace our tribe and the bones of our ancestors forever."

Buffalo Bill recoiled in horror at this news, for he had grown to like the young Indian extremely, on account of his high courage and manly qualities.

"How did this happen?" he asked. "Where were your braves, that they allowed their chief to be captured?"

"Blame us not, O great white chief," said Eagle Eye, "although in truth I sometimes blame myself. Yet I could not help it."

"Red Cloud went by night to visit the graves of his father and uncle and pray to the Great Manitou to give him wisdom and strength to rule properly over the tribe. It was his custom to do this once every moon."

"Knowing that the Cave Dwellers had sought his life many times, I begged him to let me accompany him to the graves and watch over his safety while he prayed. But he would not permit it. He strictly commanded me not to follow him, saying that he must be alone with the spirit of his father."

"When day dawned he had not returned to the village, and I began to grow alarmed. After an hour had passed I went to the burying-place with six other braves. Red Cloud had disappeared, but two dead Cave Dwellers lay on the ground near his father's grave."

"There had been a fierce struggle, as the marks on the ground plainly showed; but the Cave Dwellers were more than twenty to one, and at last they had overpowered him and carried him away to one of their caves."

"Following swiftly on their trail, we found this message, which he had managed to write and drop on the path when they were not watching him closely."

Eagle Eye handed to the border king a fragment of
white cloth, evidently torn from the Navajo chief’s shirt, on which was written, in Indian hieroglyphics with the man’s own blood, the following brief but appealing message:

“Tell my brother, Long Hair.”

Buffalo Bill’s heart burned within him with rage against the Cave Dwellers as he read these words, and he registered a mental vow to do all that a man could do to save his blood-brother from their clutches.

“We could not catch the Cave Dwellers before they reached their mountains and ascended to their lofty retreats,” said Eagle Eye, continuing his story. “It was hopeless to try to follow them there, for they had many sentries posted on rocky ledges on the hillside. These sentries shook their spears at us and shouted their defiance.

“We would have ascended, but we could find no path by which to climb. Every time we followed one, we found it terminated in a sheer wall of rock or a precipice.

“At last I pretended to withdraw, with my men, but really lay concealed in the brushwood near the foot of the mountain until one of the Cave Dwellers came down, thinking we had gone. We captured him, and forced him to tell us what they were going to do with Red Cloud. He said they were keeping him for a sacrifice at their cannibal feast of Toshak.

“I sent two of my braves to bring the rest of the tribe to the spot, left the others on watch near the mountains, with the prisoner, and then followed you as hard as we could ride to give you Red Cloud’s message.

“I have heard much of your great deeds, O Long Hair, and I thought that if anybody could rescue Red Cloud it would be you, who are his blood-brother. But, indeed, it seems hopeless, for we are not birds that we can fly to the abode of the Cave Dwellers.”

“If they can climb up, we can,” said Buffalo Bill, with his usual brave confidence. “There must be a path, and we must find it.”

During this conversation they had been riding back to the ranch at a sharp canter, and they soon reached it. While food and drink were being served to the two Indians by the orders of the hospitable rancher, the border king told Nick Wharton and his host that he would have to postpone the hunting trip they had arranged, and go instead to the rescue of his blood-brother.

“Have as good a time as you can while I’m away, Nick,” he said, “but don’t shoot everything in sight. Leave a little hunting for me to do when I get back.”

“Shuck my hide, Buffalo!” exclaimed the old scout, in aggrieved tones, “but did you sagashuate that I was goin’ ter let yer go off by yer lonesome among those Injuns? I’m comin’ along, too, and if we don’t find some way ter flutter up that gol-durned mountain, call me a blamed tenderfoot.”

Ten minutes later Buffalo Bill, accompanied by Wild Bill and Nick Wharton, rode with the Indians to join the Navajo brave who had assembled at the foot of the Cave Dwellers’ mountain to rescue their chief.

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CHAPTER XI.

BUFFALO BILL’S DARING DESIGN.

When evening came the little party was still far from its destination. As twilight stole over the prairie Buffalo Bill called a halt for supper, and the Indians set to work to build a fire.

When they had done this one of them took his earthen pot, which he always carried at the bow of his saddle, and went to a stream near-by for water.

He was back in a few moments, and ran up to Buffalo Bill and said:

“Come! Bring gun, grizzly coming up!”

The border king was on his feet in an instant, and he followed the Indian to a little thicket of trees down by the side of the stream.

Peering through the fast-growing darkness, he made out a great gray form advancing toward him. When within about twenty yards, it scented danger and stopped with an angry growl.

Buffalo Bill leveled his rifle and fired, but the bear, although mortally wounded, charged forward. When it was within a few paces of the scout, it exposed its flank, in turning toward the Indian; and thus gave the border king an opportunity to finish it with a bullet through the heart.

“Good! That’s the first grizzly I ever killed with only a couple of bullets,” said Buffalo Bill to himself, as the other men ran up, alarmed by the sound of the shots.

The Indians lost no time in skinning the animal. A portion of the flesh was carried to the fire, cut up into strips, and at once cooked. As soon as the meal was finished, the rest of the meat was cut up and divided among the party, who then mounted and rode on, the two Indians again leading the way.

Next day they reached the mountain where the Cave Dwellers lived, and found that the Navajos, to the number of over two hundred, had pitched their camp in front of it. But they had been able to do nothing toward the rescue of their chief, for the face of the mountain was a perpendicular cliff, at the foot of which a stream flowed.

Buffalo Bill crossed the stream and rode forward to reconnoiter the position, accompanied by several of the Indians. They had not gone more than a hundred yards along the foot of the cliff when a great stone came bounding down from above, striking the ground a few yards in front of Buffalo Bill’s horse and breaking into fragments.

At the same moment a shrill yell was heard from the
Dog was lying in a twisted and huddled heap on the floor.

The aged medicine-man was towering over him, with his right arm outstretched, and his finger pointing down at the prostrate figure.

He looked as stern as an avenging angel. Fire seemed to flash from his eyes, and his frail form shook like an aspen leaf with the intensity of his passion.

Buffalo Bill bent down, and saw at a glance that Leaping Dog was dead.

There was a look of unfathomable terror in his eyes, and his body was twisted like the trunk of a blasted tree.

"He is dead," said the border king. "You don't want your tomahawk, Red Cloud. But how did he die, Silver Fox?"

"The dog was smitten by the wrath of the Great Manitou," replied the old medicine-man cautiously.

"So we see. But that wrath came through the medium of the Great Spirit's servant, Silver Fox, I suppose. How did you do it?"

"Seek not to know the mysteries of the medicine-lodge, Long Hair," said the old priest solemnly. "They are known only to a few of us, who are bound by the most solemn oaths. We may not reveal them to our children or brothers—still less to white men. Let it suffice that there is an Indian magic which in some matters is greater than the wisdom of the palefaces.

"I knew what was in the heart of this dead dog," he went on, spurning the body of Leaping Dog with his foot as he spoke. "I knew that he meant to murder Red Cloud as soon as he had formed the purpose in his mind. I waited for him to come and raise the knife, as I knew he would do, and then I invoked the wrath of the Great Manitou and slew him."

"You mean that you killed him by sheer terror, Silver Fox," said Buffalo Bill.

He had good night to his red friends and went back, with Wild Bill and Nick Wharton, to their own tepee.

They discussed the strange death of Leaping Dog, but could come to no satisfactory conclusion about it.

"It must have been done in some way by means of hypnotism," said Buffalo Bill. "Silver Fox must, in one momentary glance, have made the man think he saw something terrible enough to frighten him to death. And that Indian had pretty good nerves, too, I should say. Yet I never saw such a crazy look of fear and horror in any man's eyes—not even in the eyes of men who have died under the tortures of the redskins—and you know what they look like. I tell you I'm afraid to go to sleep to-night, for I know I shall dream of that look in the eyes of Leaping Dog."

However, in a few minutes, the border king was fast asleep. His nerves were much stronger than he had represented them to be.
The commandant nodded.

"And I will take it as soon as my horse is saddled," added the king of the scouts.

The officer thanked him and gave him a letter to the commandant at Fort Hays, making arrangements for them to meet at a rendezvous and attack the Indians.

It was a hard ride that Cody had that night, but an hour after dawn he drew rein at Fort Hays and delivered his message. This done, he flung himself down on a sofa for a few hours' sleep.

The border king awoke about six o'clock, and, going out of the commandant's house into the courtyard of the fort, found that two hundred troopers were already saddling their horses to ride to make the junction with the Fort Larned contingent.

A well-equipped expedition was being got ready. Pack-mules carrying provisions, water, ammunition, and tents were awaiting to accompany the soldiers. Their commander evidently expected a long and hard campaign.

As the men were having their breakfast, Wild Bill and Nick Wharton appeared on the scene; and the three scouts rode out with the column when it left the fort.

The march was kept up nearly all day, until late in the afternoon the rendezvous was reached.

Strong parties of Indians had been observed hovering around the flanks of the column during the morning; but they had not dared to attack, and the officer in command would not allow his men to break ranks in order to chase them.

Arrived at the rendezvous, he gave orders to pitch the camp and await the arrival of the Fort Larned forces. As yet, they were nowhere to be seen.

The mules were unloaded, and soon rows of white tents were erected on the green prairie.

Before any steps could be taken to fortify the encampment, the Indian bands which had been observed during the morning appeared again.

They hovered round the camp at some distance, keeping well out of rifle-shot, but presently they were strongly reinforced by other war parties, which had evidently been sent for.

Toward the close of the afternoon the camp was ringed round by nearly two thousand redskins, who outnumbered the white soldiers by almost ten to one.

It looked as if Uncle Sam's troopers would be doomed immediately an attack was made. However bravely they might fight, they must succumb at last to overwhelming numbers.

Buffalo Bill figured out the situation, and when the Indians were gathering their forces together for an advance, he decided it was high time to try the effect of a bluff.

He remembered that the Indians had used the white flag at Fort Larned, and he decided that he would try it himself.

At the worst, he hoped to be able to hold them by talk for some time, and thus increase the chance of the troops from Fort Larned arriving before the fight was over.

He drew out his handkerchief, tied it to the barrel of his rifle, and rode toward the Indians, waving his improvised flag of truce.

His action evidently surprised the Indians, but in a few moments three or four of them, who seemed to be chiefs, rode out to meet him.

The commander of the soldiers and two or three of his officers spurred their horses after the border king, and were by his side before he met the Indians.

"What in thunder are you up to, Cody?" the commander asked.

"I am going to try to work a bluff on them," the border king replied. "We would stand very little show if it came to a fight. I want to hold them off until the Fort Larned people show up, or else bluff them into not fighting at all."

"How on earth are you going to do that?"

Cody did not reply, for at that moment the Indian chiefs came up to him, and he turned to salute them with his usual dignified courtesy.

One of the redskins was the same old Crow chief who had spoken to him by the camp-fire the night before, and had smoked the pipe of truce to give him his fair start.

"Greeting to you, Long Hair!" the Crow exclaimed.

"Our tomahawks are thirsting for the blood of the white soldiers. Why do you call upon us to delay the fight? Do you wish to surrender? It is useless, for our braves are determined to take the scalps of all your men. The Crows, and the Cheyennes, and the Sioux do not take prisoners."

"Listen to my words," replied Buffalo Bill, speaking in his most impressive manner. "My tongue is not forked, and my words are the words of wisdom and mercy. I have no hatred in my heart against your tribes, and I wish to save you from absolute defeat and annihilation.

"If you attack the white soldiers, you will surely die. They are armed with rifles which cannot miss. You know how many of your braves lost their scalps in the fight at Fort Larned. Many more will bite the dust now unless you go back to your tents in peace and bury the hatchet."

"What can you gain by fighting against the white man? You know that you are always beaten. I cannot count on my fingers the number of times I have seen your braves scattered and shot down by the white soldiers, as the clouds are driven before the wind."

Buffalo Bill's harangue, delivered in a stern and impressive tone of voice, seemed to shake the warlike resolution of the Indian chiefs. They were all old warriors, and each one of them could remember previous occa-
cliff above, and, looking up, they saw a number of the Cave Dwellers on a ledge two hundred feet above them, with their bows bent threateningly.

"Back, all of you!" shouted Buffalo Bill. "Their arrows may be poisoned."

Seeing that the party retreated quickly, the savages did not shoot.

When they had got out of range, Buffalo Bill called a council of war, but found that nobody had any useful suggestions to offer. Then he mounted his horse and rode along the bank of the river farthest from the Cave Dwellers to get a good view of the cliff. He saw that there were three or four openings in the solid rock on the level of the ledge on which the Indians were posted.

He was astonished to notice that above these openings the cliff, which was in this place quite perpendicular, was covered with many strange sculptured figures, some of which still retained the color with which they had been painted in times long past.

Evidently the Cave Dwellers had not always been the degraded savages they were at present, or, more probably, a higher race had formerly occupied the caves and made these sculptures.

"Now, Eagle Eye," said the border king, as the Navajo brave came up to his side and watched the cliff with him, "we have to see how this place can be climbed."

The Navajo shook his head sorrowfully.

"I'm afraid it is impossible, Long Hair," he replied in his own tongue. "You see that there is a zigzag path cut in the face of the cliff up to that ledge. In some places, as you can see, the rock is cut away altogether and the path is broken. They must have ladders to cross these breaks, and no doubt they would draw them up at once if they were attacked. You see that the lower ones have already been pulled up.

"Likely enough, sentries are posted at each of those breaks whenever they are threatened with an attack. Besides, we must remember that our first aim is not to attack, but to rescue Red Cloud. If they thought there was any risk of our getting up, they would almost certainly kill him without waiting for the feast of Toshak."

"I understand all that, Eagle Eye," replied Buffalo Bill, "and I have no idea that we could make our way up by that zigzag path. The question is, could the cliff be climbed elsewhere? The other end of the ledge would be the best point to get up at, for any watch that they might be keeping would certainly be where the steps of this path come down to the ground."

Eagle Eye looked doubtful.

"Unless a man could fly, Long Hair, there would be no way of getting up there."

"I don't know about that," the border king responded, carefully scanning the cliff. "Wait till I have had a good look at it."

For a long while he gazed intently at the cliff, observing even the most trifling projections, the tiny ledges that ran here and there along its face.

"It would be a difficult job and a dangerous one," he muttered presently, "but I am not sure that it cannot be done. At any rate, I shall try. When I was a boy one of my favorite sports was cliff climbing, and there was nobody who could beat me at it, Eagle Eye.

"Do you see, just in the middle of that ledge, where the large square entrance to the principal cave is, that the cliff bulges outward? That is lucky, for if there are any sentries on the steps of the zigzag path, they will not be able to see round that point. If they could, I would not have much chance of getting up, for it will be a bright, moonlight night.

"When I get to the ledge, if I do get there, I will lower down a rope. You can fasten the lariats of your braves together to make that rope; they will hold the weight of a dozen men easily. The lightest and most active of the warriors must come up first, and when two or three of them have mounted the ledge we can haul the rest of them up easily.

"Now you can leave me and see that the rope is made ready and tell your braves what I propose. I shall be here for half-an-hour at the least. I must see exactly the way to climb and calculate the number of feet along each of those little ledges to the point where I can reach the big one above. I must have the whole thing well in my mind before I start to climb."

The Indian shook his head doubtfully and departed. He had little faith in the feasibility of the scheme, and he thought it was nothing short of madness to attempt it.

Such was the opinion of the rest of the tribe when he told them what the white man proposed.

Buffalo Bill, however, had a look of confidence on his face when he rejoined them.

"I'm more convinced than ever that it can be done," he said, after the evening meal of bear's meat had been eaten. He filled his pipe and began to smoke quietly.

Wild Bill and Nick Wharton reconnoitered with him and told him that his scheme was pure folly, and he would simply throw his life away. When they found that they could not turn him from his purpose, they both begged him to let them climb the cliff in his stead, but he would not hear of it.

"You are a brave man, Long Hair," said Eagle Eye, "but no man can do what you are talking of, and you will simply sacrifice yourself for nothing."

"I will wager my horse against yours that I will succeed," replied Buffalo Bill.

The Navajo gravely nodded and took the bet. Indians of all tribes are much given to wagering, and the horse which Buffalo Bill was riding was a far better one than his own. Eagle Eye regarded the matter in the light of a legacy, rather than a gamble.

In order to lull the Cave Dwellers into a feeling of se-
curiosity, the border king ordered the camp to be struck, and the whole party rode away as if they had given up the enterprise as hopeless.

When they got out of sight a halt was called, and Buffalo Bill gave instructions for the operations of the night.

"We will cross the river on the horses a mile above the caves," he said. "We must use the animals, or we shall not be able to keep our rifles and revolvers dry. We will tear up a couple of blankets and twist the cloth round the barrel of the guns so that if they knock against the rocks, as we climb up, they will not make a noise and put our enemies on their guard."

The border king then chose the lightest of the Indians to follow him up the rope of lariats after the ascent had been made. Another light-weight was to be the third, Wild Bill was to follow, and then those on the ledge were to pull up Nick Wharton, Eagle Eye, and the rest. The lariats were securely knotted together, and the knots tied over again with strips of hide to prevent their slipping.

The Indians obeyed all of Buffalo Bill's orders without a word, but it was evident from their manner that they had not the slightest hope that his daring attempt would prove successful. Even Nick Wharton, who usually had the utmost confidence in his friend and leader, shook his head dubiously and said to Wild Bill:

"He is an all-fired wonder, is Buffler, but I sagashuate he yev stepped up agin' a bigger contraption than he kin manage this time."

CHAPTER XII.

THE FIGHT ON THE PRECIPICE.

About an hour after sunset they started, riding slowly and scouting carefully to see that none of the Cave Dwellers was on the watch. It was two days after full-moon, and they had therefore as many hours to reach the foot of the cliff before it rose.

An hour was more than sufficient to travel the distance. They therefore rested for a time, after darkness set in, before they started. Then they swam the river on horseback, and made their way noiselessly along, keeping at some distance from the river bank, until they reached the place where the cliff rose perpendicularly.

They pressed on, keeping close to the base of the rocks, until they arrived at the place which Buffalo Bill had decided upon as the easiest at which to make the ascent. Then they lay down among the boulders at the foot of the wall of rock, and remained there until the moon rose, for it was impossible to attempt such a difficult and dangerous climb in the darkness.

While they waited they discussed the best way of getting the lariat rope up, for it was obvious that whether it was carried in a coil over the shoulder or wound around the body it would hamper the movements of the climber.

At last Buffalo Bill solved the problem by putting a ball of twine in his pocket and saying that he would throw it down from the ledge when he got up, so that the lariat could be tied to it and then pulled up.

"Good luck, pard!" said Wild Bill, as the border king prepared to start, and both he and Nick Wharton gripped their friend by the hand, while Eagle Eye laid his hand on his shoulder, saying: "Ugh, heap brave!"

The ascent was comparatively easy for a short distance. Then Buffalo Bill came to the first of the ledges he had noticed.

It was only about ten inches wide, but, keeping his face to the rocky wall, and using his hands to grip the most trifling irregularities in the smooth surface, or to get a hold in small crevices, he managed to make his way along until he arrived at a bulge in the wall which seemed to effectually bar further progress.

Buffalo Bill drew his bowie-knife, bent forward, and cut a hole in the rock just large enough to rest his feet in. Thus, gaining a step forward, he cut another foothold, and so went on until he had got round the projecting rock at a frightful risk, and gained a secure footing on the next ledge.

But this ledge narrowed rapidly as he passed around it. He was now at one of the points which had appeared to him to be the most difficult, for, as he looked up from the ground in the afternoon, the ledge seemed almost to cease, while the next one above it was also so narrow that he doubted whether he could obtain standing-room upon it.

The scout now made his way along on tiptoe, in imminent peril of falling down the face of the cliff with every step.

In some places the ledge was not more than three inches wide.

After he had gone about thirty feet it widened, and the next forty or fifty feet upward were comparatively easy, for the rock sloped to some extent inward, and there were many fissures in which he could get a tight grip with his strong fingers.

Then came several difficult places, but he was now thoroughly confident, and he attacked the rocky wall with the utmost daring. At last he reached his goal and drew himself up on to the broad ledge that led to the caves.

None of the Cave Dwellers were in sight, and he flung himself down on the ground and rested for a few minutes, for he was utterly exhausted by his difficult climb, which not one man in a hundred thousand could have accomplished safely.

As soon as he felt refreshed by his brief rest he took the ball of twine from his pocket and flung one end, weighted by a bullet, over the side of the cliff. He knew that he had allowed ample length, and he drew it in until
he felt a slight strain, followed by three jerks—the pre-arranged signal.

His friends below had hold of the string. Two more jerks told him that they had fastened the lariat rope to it, and in a couple of minutes he had the rope in his hands.

The scout found a big rock jutting out of the ground in the path, and he tied the rope firmly around it, and then shook the rope to show that he was ready for the first Indian to ascend.

Two pulls upon the lariat told him that the man had been tied on, and he began at once to haul. He found the weight much less than he expected. Not only was the Navajo a short and wiry man, but he used his hands and feet with such good effect that in about five minutes he stood beside Buffalo Bill.

"You can haul up the next man, while I go forward and reconnoiter the cave," said the border king.

The Indian nodded, and immediately signaled with the rope for the next man to be tied on.

Buffalo Bill meanwhile stepped forward cautiously along the ledge until he came to the wide entrance of the principal cave. As he approached it, a short figure rose up from behind a rock. It was one of the Cave Dwellers keeping vigilant watch.

Before the man could utter a yell, Buffalo Bill had gripped him tightly by the throat, so that he could only gurgle feebly. Yet he managed to draw his tomahawk, and raise it above his head to dash out the brains of the king of the scouts.

Taking his right hand from the man's throat, which he still held tightly gripped with the left, Buffalo Bill caught his wrist and wrenched away the weapon. He struck the Cave Dweller a heavy blow on the head with the flat of the blade, which knocked him senseless.

The border king then stepped swiftly into the cave. He could see several recumbent forms lying on the ground, and from the back of the cave there came a confused hum of voices. The light of the moon shone full into the entrance, and the place was almost as light as day.

The intruder had not taken more than a few paces when he stumbled against a body lying in the shadow. The man arose and bent forward into the moonlight, uttering a low cry of surprise.

Buffalo Bill raised the tomahawk, but before he could use it he saw that the man was none other than his blood-brother, Red Cloud, the Navajo chieftain.

Without a word Red Cloud extended his hands, and Buffalo Bill saw that they were bound together by a rawhide rope. He drew his bowie-knife and cut the bonds, and then handed the Indian the tomahawk which he had taken from the sentry at the mouth of the cave.

Red Cloud rose to his feet and eagerly gripped the weapon. "I expected you, my brother," he said simply.

The cry which the Indian had given when Buffalo Bill stumbled against him had aroused one of the Cave Dwellers sleeping near-by. He was, as it appeared afterward, the chief of the tribe, and he raised his body on his elbow and glanced around suspiciously.

His eyes fell upon Buffalo Bill and Red Cloud, and he instantly leaped to his feet, with a frightful yell of rage and warning.

In a moment the cavern was alive with the forms of the Cave Dwellers, wakened from their sleep, while those who had been talking at the back also ran forward. All this had happened in a much shorter space of time than the telling takes. The rest of the attacking party had not yet come up, and the blood-brothers were in the most deadly peril.

The chief of the Cave Dwellers rushed forward, and in a moment was locked in a death-grapple with the border king on the ledge at the mouth of the cave. As the rest of the band came forward, Red Cloud advanced a pace or two to meet them.

Buffalo Bill and the chief of the Cave Dwellers struggled on the edge of the precipice, locked in a deadly embrace; while the brave Navajo, tomahawk in hand, kept the other Indians at bay.

Although he was a man of small stature, the savage chief possessed the strength and ferocity of a giant ape. He strove to throw Buffalo Bill over the cliff, and in his rage he cared not whether he went over with him.

To and fro they swayed, and it seemed as if they must go down to death together, locked in one another's arms. But with a mighty effort Buffalo Bill overpowered the savage, raised him from the ground, and flung him sheer over the cliff, making a quick turn on his heel as he did so, in order to avoid being carried over himself by the impetus of the falling body.

He had got rid of his dangerous adversary none too soon, for the Cave Dwellers were attacking Red Cloud with great ferocity and would have Overpowered him in another moment, although he was making fine play with his tomahawk and had stretched two of the savages dead at his feet.

Buffalo Bill drew his six-shooter and speedily dropped three of the foremost of the Cave Dwellers. But the rest pressed on to the attack, and the blood-brothers had to battle for their lives more desperately than either of them had ever done before, accustomed though they were to wild adventures.

"The last shot, Red Cloud!" gasped Buffalo Bill, after a few moments of rapid firing, as he thrust his second six-shooter into his belt and drew his bowie-knife.

The Cave Dwellers, demoralized by the rapidity and accuracy of his aim, had retreated a few paces; but they were getting together again for another rush. The doom of the blood-brothers seemed to be sealed.

But just as the Indians rushed forward Wild Bill,
Eagle Eye, Nick Wharton, and a couple of Navajo braves charged to the rescue round the ledge and into the cave. They met the Cave Dwellers with a volley of shots and drove them back into the recesses of the cavern.

Realizing that their only chance of life was to cut their way out through their enemies, the savages soon rallied to the attack, and several minutes' hard fighting followed. But Buffalo Bill's party managed to hold the entrance until reinforcements came up, for Eagle Eye had left a couple of braves at the rope to draw up the rest.

It was a fight to the death. The Cave Dwellers refused quarter, and in the end only three or four of them managed to escape down the zigzag path.

Red Cloud and his warriors took many scalps that night, and there was much rejoicing in the Navajo village on their return, for they had not lost more than half-a-dozen braves in the fight and had utterly annihilated their troublesome neighbors.

Buffalo Bill had escaped from one of the fiercest fights in his experience without a scratch, and Wild Bill and Nick Wharton were also unwounded.

CHAPTER XIII.

LEAPING DOG'S TERRIBLE FATE.

On the night following the fight with the Cave Dwellers, a feast was held in the village of the Navajos to celebrate the great victory they had gained.

The Indian braves and their three paleface brethren gathered closely around the camp-fire after the feasting was over. The warriors told stories and legends of their tribe and indulged in wrestling and other sports, in all of which they showed great skill.

Buffalo Bill and his friends noticed that in the wrestling a tall and truculent-looking warrior named Leaping Dog overcame the other braves with ease. He threw one of them after another with scarcely an effort, until at last he could find none willing to meet him.

Then he turned to the white men, insolent with his triumph, and cried:

"Will you wrestle with me, palefaces? I will wager my tomahawk that there is none of you who can throw me."

"Remember that the white chiefs are guests in our lodges, Leaping Dog," said Red Cloud, in a reproving voice. "It is not seemly to challenge them thus."

"I mean them no harm," declared the truculent brave.

"All men say that Long Hair is a great warrior and a mighty champion among his own people. If that is so, he should not fear me."

"Fear you!" yelled Nick Wharton angrily. "It 'ud take a sight more than you, ye durned red devil, ter scare the bravest man that ever straddled a hoss on the plains."

In his indignation the old trapper spoke in English, which the Indian did not understand. But he knew from the tone that what was said was not particularly complimentary to himself, so he turned his piercing black eyes on Wharton with an angry glance.

"If Long Hair will not wrestle with me, perhaps the old chief who roars like a bull will do so," he said sarcastically.

"Sure, there's nothin' better I'd like than ter break yer neck, ye durned savage," retorted old Nick.

"Let him alone, old pard," Buffalo Bill said soothingly. "I'll take him on, if one of us must. I guess your muscles aren't quite as tough, or your limbs as supple, as they used to be when you were a young man."

"You be everlastingilly gol-durned, Billy Cody!" exclaimed Nick, now thoroughly incensed. "I kalk'late I kin tackle a blamed Injun still, even if Ihev come ter be an old man. You let him get at me—an' don't you or Bill Hickok butt in."

"All right! Go as far as you like, but try not to quite kill him," laughed Cody.

Nick Wharton advanced into the center of the ring of redskins, in which his adversary was already standing in an attitude of defiant challenge.

Old Nick was a husky fellow, despite his age, but he did not look the physical equal of the red man, who was a giant over six feet tall, with muscles that stood out like masses of whipcord all over his arms and legs.

"I guess I may be a gone coon," said the old trapper, as he removed his hunting-jacket and stared critically at his opponent. "I used ter be powerful strong on the wrestle oant, but I guess I'm weakening a bit now. In all my wrasslin' days, I reckon I never hit up agin a tougher proposition than that thar redskin."

Old Nick advanced boldly to the encounter, but his anticipation was soon justified.

The redskin rushed suddenly forward and had him in a resistless grip almost before he understood what was happening. He tried to struggle, but, with a mighty heave, the Indian sent him squarely to the ground and rose from his prostrate body with a sarcastic laugh.

"Will either of the other palefaces wrestle with Leaping Dog now?" he asked.

Cody and Hickok both jumped up, ready to accept the challenge and avenge their friend, but Wharton had already risen from the ground, and he stepped in between them.

"Wait a minute, old pard," he said. "This hyar is my funeral. I ain't had my bellyful yet, not by a long shot! I want the best two out of three."

When Leaping Dog understood this he said that he was perfectly willing. He would throw the white man again, as he had thrown him before.

"It is no use, my brother," said Red Cloud, taking Nick
Wharton aside for a moment. “In wrestling we are all as children in the hands of Leaping Dog. He is a champion against whom no man can stand. He has beaten the best wrestlers of all the tribes.”

Old Wharton said nothing, but a look of grim determination came into his face that meant volumes.

The other Indians seemed to be of the same opinion as their chief, for they shouted to the white man not to meet their champion again, saying that he might hurt him seriously.

“Gol-durn him, let him go as fur as he kin!” muttered Nick savagely, as he stepped forward and faced his late victor.

Leaping Dog did not seem to hold his opponent so cheaply this time. He saw, by the glitter in the old trapper’s eyes, that he was indeed a man to be feared.

He held his body as tense and rigid as that of a panther, and his coal-black eyes did not waver for a second in their baleful glance into those of the white man.

Suddenly he leaped like a wild beast straight at the throat of his opponent, seeking to grabble him round the neck—a favorite hold among the less sportsmanlike of Indian wrestlers.

But Nick had seen Indians wrestle too often to allow himself to be caught in that manner.

He showed an agility surprising in so old a man.

With a movement even quicker than that of the Indian, he side-stepped, and, before his foe could recover his balance, he had grasped him round the shoulders in a clever hold that left him little chance to break away.

After swaying to and fro for a few moments, he forced the redskin backward until his shoulders fairly touched the ground.

The Indians were dumb with intense surprise for a second or two, and then they hailed the victory with loud whoops of delight. Leaping Dog, being a surly fellow, was not popular in the tribe. As the wrestling champion he had always been overbearing in his manner, and they were therefore glad to see his pride meet with a fall.

“Quits!” cried Nick. “Now fur the rubber!”

Leaping Dog got to his feet, looking angry and crest-fallen. There was an expression of fierce vindictiveness in his eyes as he faced Wharton for the final bout.

Before they could clinch, Red Cloud rushed in between them, put his hand down to the brave’s belt, and pulled out a knife, which he tossed to the ground at Buffalo Bill’s feet.

There was nothing wrong in the fellow having the knife. All the braves were wearing one, as they commonly did; but Red Cloud had caught that evil look in Leaping Dog’s eyes, and he thought that the man might be tempted to use his weapon, if he wereworsted again.

Leaping Dog glared at his chief savagely, but said nothing.

A chorus of emphatic “Ughs!” of approval went up from the Indians around the circle. It was clear that they did not think their chief’s suspicions were altogether unjust.

As the two men met again the Indian was far more wary than on either of the other occasions. Nick Wharton, tired of his cautious feints, eventually had to rush in and grapple him.

He secured a good grip, but the redskin struggled stoutly, bringing all his tremendous strength to bear to overcome the old scout.

The men struggled backward and forward for more than two minutes, panting heavily. Now one, and now the other, would gain a slight advantage, only to lose it again in a moment.

Then Wharton thought of an old trick which he had often used in his youth. It was too old to be used with any good effect on an expert American wrestler, but it might be new to the redskin, whose style of wrestling was altogether different.

Putting forth all his strength, he started to push the Navajo backward, inch by inch, as if he meant to force him over to the ground, as he had done before.

Leaping Dog strained his muscles to resist this attempt, just as Wharton had expected he would do. The redskin was thus pushing forward with all his strength.

Suddenly the trapper stopped pushing and pulled him violently forward.

As the Navajo’s own strength was being exerted in the same direction, he could not save himself in time. He struggled for a second or two to keep his balance, but in vain.

Before the spectators could fully realize the cleverness of Wharton’s trick, Leaping Dog was lying face downward on the ground, as flat as the proverbial pancake.

He was badly shaken up, for the fall was a heavy one. For several moments he lay prostrate, and then Nick Wharton helped him to his feet and offered to shake hands with him.

The surly Indian brushed aside the proffered hand and shouted savagely:

“The will fight you with knife or with tomahawk!”

“That you shall not!” declared Red Cloud angrily, stepping in between them. “Begone to your teepee, Leaping Dog! You blacken the face of our tribe. Learn respect for our white brothers, who have fought so well for us.”

The other braves around the fire shouted angrily that Leaping Dog ought to be expelled from the tribe.

Seeing how strong was the feeling against him, Leaping Dog retired to his lodge, as commanded, but he did not lie down to sleep.

Had any one drawn aside the flap of buffalo hide that served for a door, the buck would have been seen busy at a task congenial to his savage nature.

He was whetting a long, broad-bladed knife by the
light of a lamp of crude oil, and singing a savage death song as he did so.

* * * * * *

After the wrestling was over, some other games were indulged in, and then the circle around the camp-fire broke up.

Cody and his two comrades were conducted by Red Cloud to his own tepee, which was the best in the village. He begged them to use it for the night, saying that he would sleep in the medicine-lodge with Silver Fox, the venerable medicine-man of the tribe.

As the chief turned to leave his white friends, after bidding them good-night, he did not notice that a figure was watching him from the shadow cast by an adjoining wigwam.

The figure was that of Leaping Dog. He had caught the last words uttered by the chief.

He had sharpened the knife until its edge was as keen as that of a razor, and now he thirsted to plunge it deep into the hearts of his enemies.

But he knew he must be cautious. He must stab them when they were asleep. If he were discovered in his crime, his life would not be worth a moment’s purchase.

Even when the bodies were found it would go hard with him, though there might be no actual evidence that he was the guilty party. His fellow braves would at once suspect him, and they were likely enough to kill him on suspicion—for he knew that most of them disliked him strongly.

Lurking in the shadows, he wondered whom he should attack first—the whites or his own chief. Red Cloud had disgraced him before his own people, and his savage heart burned with rage at the thought. But the old white man had beaten him at wrestling, and made him a laughing-stock before them all.

He must carry out his revenge quickly, and put a long distance between himself and the village before the dawn. He would have to travel fast and far, for the avengers of blood would follow on his trail as soon as the dead bodies were discovered.

With this idea in his mind Leaping Dog went to his tepee, and made preparations for a long journey. He saddled his pony, and placed some provisions and his weapons upon it. This done, he stole quietly to the medicine-lodge of Silver Fox.

He had made up his mind. He would slay his chief first, and then assassinate the white men. He had a violent hatred of all palefaces, and the blood of Nick Wharton alone would not satisfy his lust for revenge.

He listened outside the lodge and heard voices talking inside. The chief of the Navajos and his venerable host of the night had not yet gone to sleep. They were talking of the white men and praising them highly. Their words added fuel to the fire of hatred in Leaping Dog’s heart.

At last their voices ceased, and by the sound of their deep and regular breathing, the watcher concluded they were asleep.

* * * * * *

Meanwhile, the three scouts had made themselves comfortable in their wigwam, and were talking over the events of the evening.

Cody and Wild Bill congratulated their old friend heartily on his victory over the redskin wrestler.

"That’s all right," said Nick, "but that’s goin’ ter be more trouble over that. Thet redskin is out fer blood."

"If that’s the case, we had better not all go to sleep to-night," remarked Buffalo Bill. "He did look pretty wicked. This is his chance to get even with us, for he knows we shall probably leave the village to-morrow."

"Of course the tribe would punish him with death if he stuck a knife into any one of us, but when an Indian sees blood he isn’t going to stop out of fear of the consequences. We must take turns at keeping watch to-night."

"By the way, don’t you think he is as likely to stab Red Cloud as any one of us? Remember how the chief treated him in front of all the other braves. That must have been a bitter pill for him to swallow."

"Let us go to Silver Fox’s lodge and warn Red Cloud to be on his guard," said Wild Bill. "I know which lodge it is. It’s only about a hundred yards down the line of tepees."

His companions agreed, and they all stepped out into the cold, biting night air. Buffalo Bill took the precaution to pick up his revolver before he saluted forth.

As they came in sight of the medicine-lodge they saw a figure outside it.

Before they could get near enough to recognize the man, the latter lifted the buffalo robe that hung over the door of the lodge, and passed inside.

"Come on!" said Cody, in a hoarse whisper, to his friends. "If that is Leaping Dog he may do his work before we can stop him."

He ran toward the lodge at the top of his speed, but before he could reach it a frightful scream rang out—a cry far worse than any death yell he had ever heard. It froze his blood with horror, and for a moment he stood still—aghast.

Then he rushed forward, expecting to find the dead body of the young chief of the Navajos.

He tore aside the flap of the tent, but the sight which met his eyes was very different from that which he had expected.

Red Cloud was rising to his feet from his blanket, tomahawk in hand, but there was no foe for him to strike.

Buffalo Bill let the hand which grasped his revolver fall to his side, for he saw that the body of Leaping
sions when he had fought against the white man and been hopelessly beaten.

“What are these new rifles that cannot miss?” asked the Crow chief, after talking with his comrades aside. “Give us a proof of their wonderful power, and perhaps we may believe your words.”

“Here is one of them,” replied the border king, tapping his own weapon as he spoke.

“Show me what it can do,” demanded the Indian.

Buffalo Bill noticed that the Indian had a bow and a quiver full of arrows slung on his back. A daring thought came to him.

It seemed impossible to execute, but he determined to try it. It was the only way he could think of to save Uncle Sam’s troopers from an attack by their overwhelming enemy.

“Shoot an arrow into the air as far and as hard as you can,” he said, “and I will cut it in halves with a bullet as it falls backward and comes whizzing down to the ground. My rifle cannot miss, and you will find, if you attack our camp, that the rifles of the white soldiers cannot miss, either.”

The Crow looked at him in amazement for a moment, and then took his bow from his shoulder, fitted an arrow to the string, and shot it into the air with all the force of which he was capable.

Buffalo Bill stood about ten paces off, with his rifle to his shoulder. The arrow soared far into the air, and then, when the momentum was exhausted, came down swiftly, turning round and round with an erratic motion.

Bang!

Buffalo Bill’s rifle cracked when the feathered missile was about ten feet from the ground.

The Indian chieffain stooped and picked up the shattered shaft, with a cry of amazement.

“See,” he exclaimed, “the bullet has broken the arrow!”

The other Indians gathered round, surprised out of their ordinary gravity and reserve. They handled the broken arrow as children would handle a new top, and looked at Buffalo Bill as if he were a magician.

They had never seen such shooting before, and they regarded it as something beyond the scope of merely human skill. There must be some witchcraft in it.

Buffalo Bill struck while the iron was hot.

He knew the Indian character thoroughly, and he immediately began another harangue about the terrible results that would ensue to their tribes unless they immediately consented to bury the hatchet and return to their villages and live in peace.

While the Indians were hanging in the wind, anxious to do as he counseled, and yet unwilling to abandon their blood lust, they saw a column of dust approaching across the prairie.

They watched it silently for a few moments, and then saw that it was a column of cavalry coming up at full gallop.

The men from Fort Larned had arrived at last to reinforce their outnumbered comrades.

This sight decided the redskins. Turning toward Buffalo Bill, the Crow chief threw his tomahawk to the ground, and said:

“Let it be buried, my brother! We will return to our villages, and dwell in peace with the white man. Bad Eye, who stirred up all this trouble, is dead; and there is nothing to be gained by keeping on the war-path. There will be wailing in our villages for the braves whose scalps have already fallen. We will bury the hatchet before worse befalls.”

Thus ended the war of the confederacy of the three tribes, which might have led to widespread massacre and suffering had it not been for the border king’s ready wit and marvelous skill with the rifle.

There was a joyous party at the bivouac that night. The troopers, while somewhat disappointed at the thought that the fighting was over, were satisfied with the complete victory that had been won.

They had seen the backs of their late enemies, who, before retreating to their villages, delivered over two chiefs from each tribe as hostages.

These prisoners were to be returned after all the details of peace had been arranged by the officials of the government.

The lion’s share of the credit was given by all to Buffalo Bill for the suppression of the rebellion, and his fame stood even higher in Kansas and all along the frontier than it had ever done before.

As for Red Cloud and his brave Navajos, they remained the friends of the king of the scouts in particular and the palefaces in general. Some of their deeds in this capacity will be related in future stories in the Buffalo Bill Library.

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