

Ingraham Prentiss

# Buffalo Bill's Spy Trailer: or, The Stranger in Camp



Prentiss Ingraham

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# **Prentiss Ingraham Buffalo Bill's Spy Trailer; Or, The Stranger in Camp**

**IN APPRECIATION OF WILLIAM F. CODY**

**(BUFFALO BILL)**

It is now some generations since Josh Billings, Ned Buntline, and Colonel Prentiss Ingraham, intimate friends of Colonel William F. Cody, used to forgather in the office of Francis S. Smith, then proprietor of the *New York Weekly*. It was a dingy little office on Rose Street, New York, but the breath of the great outdoors stirred there when these old-timers got together. As a result of these conversations, Colonel Ingraham and Ned Buntline began to write of the adventures of Buffalo Bill for Street & Smith.

Colonel Cody was born in Scott County, Iowa, February 26, 1846. Before he had reached his teens, his father, Isaac Cody, with his mother and two sisters, migrated to Kansas, which at that time was little more than a wilderness.

When the elder Cody was killed shortly afterward in the Kansas "Border War," young Bill assumed the difficult role of family breadwinner. During 1860, and until the outbreak of the Civil War, Cody lived the arduous life of a pony-express rider. Cody volunteered his services as government scout and guide and served throughout the Civil War with Generals McNeil and A. J. Smith. He was a distinguished member of the Seventh Kansas Cavalry.

During the Civil War, while riding through the streets of St. Louis, Cody rescued a frightened schoolgirl from a band of annoyers. In true romantic style, Cody and Louisa Federici, the girl, were married March 6, 1866.

In 1867 Cody was employed to furnish a specified amount of buffalo meat to the construction men at work on the Kansas Pacific Railroad. It was in this period that he received the sobriquet "Buffalo Bill."

In 1868 and for four years thereafter Colonel Cody served as scout and guide in campaigns against the Sioux and Cheyenne Indians. It was General Sheridan who conferred on Cody the honor of chief of scouts of the command.

After completing a period of service in the Nebraska legislature, Cody joined the Fifth Cavalry in 1876, and was again appointed chief of scouts.

Colonel Cody's fame had reached the East long before, and a great many New Yorkers went out to see him and join in his buffalo hunts, including such men as August Belmont, James Gordon Bennett, Anson Stager, and J. G. Heckscher. In entertaining these visitors at Fort McPherson, Cody was accustomed to arrange wild-West exhibitions. In return his friends invited him to visit New York. It was upon seeing his first play in the metropolis that Cody conceived the idea of going into the show business.

Assisted by Ned Buntline, novelist, and Colonel Ingraham, he started his "Wild West" show, which later developed and expanded into "A Congress of the Rough-riders of the World," first presented at Omaha, Nebraska. In time it became a familiar yearly entertainment in the great cities of this country and Europe. Many famous personages attended the performances, and became his warm friends, including Mr. Gladstone, the Marquis of Lorne, King Edward, Queen Victoria, and the Prince of Wales, now King of England.

At the outbreak of the Sioux, in 1890 and 1891, Colonel Cody served at the head of the Nebraska National Guard. In 1895 Cody took up the development of Wyoming Valley by introducing irrigation. Not long afterward he became judge advocate general of the Wyoming National Guard.

Colonel Cody (Buffalo Bill) died in Denver, Colorado, on January 10, 1917. His legacy to a grateful world was a large share in the development of the West, and a multitude of achievements in horsemanship, marksmanship, and endurance that will live for ages. His life will continue to be a leading example of the manliness, courage, and devotion to duty that belonged to a picturesque phase of American life now passed, like the great patriot whose career it typified, into the Great Beyond.

## CHAPTER I. THE HERMIT OF THE GRAND CAÑON

A horseman drew rein one morning, upon the brink of the Grand Cañon of the Colorado, a mighty abyss, too vast for the eye to take in its grand immensity; a mighty mountain rent asunder and forming a chasm which is a valley of grandeur and beauty, through which flows the Colorado Grande. Ranges of mountains tower to cloudland on all sides with cliffs of scarlet, blue, violet, yes, all hues of the rainbow; crystal streams flowing merrily along; verdant meadows, vales and hills, with massive forests everywhere – such was the sight that met the admiring gaze of the horseman as he sat there in his saddle, his horse looking down into the cañon.

It was a spot avoided by Indians as the abiding-place of evil spirits; a scene shunned by white men, a mighty retreat where a fugitive, it would seem, would be forever safe, no matter what the crime that had driven him to seek a refuge there.

Adown from where the horseman had halted, was the bare trace of a trail, winding around the edge of an overhanging rock by a shelf that was not a yard in width and which only a man could tread whose head was cool and heart fearless.

Wrapt in admiration of the scene, the mist-clouds floating lazily upward from the cañon, the silver ribbon far away that revealed the winding river, and the songs of birds coming from a hundred leafy retreats on the hillsides, the horseman gave a deep sigh, as though memories most sad were awakened in his breast by the scene, and then dismounting began to unwrap a lariat from his saddle-horn.

He was dressed as a miner, wore a slouch-hat, was of commanding presence, and his darkly bronzed face, heavily bearded, was full of determination, intelligence, and expression.

Two led horses, carrying heavy packs, were behind the animal he rode, and attaching the lariats to their bits he took one end and led the way down the most perilous and picturesque trail along the shelf running around the jutting point of rocks.

When he drew near the narrowest point, he took off the saddle and packs, and one at a time led the horses downward and around the hazardous rocks.

A false step, a movement of fright in one of the animals, would send him downward to the depths more than a mile below.

But the trembling animals seemed to have perfect confidence in their master, and after a long while he got them by the point of greatest peril.

Going back and forward he carried the packs and saddles, and replacing them upon the animals began once more the descent of the only trail leading down into the Grand Cañon, from that side.

The way was rugged, most dangerous in places, and several times his horses barely escaped a fall over the precipice, the coolness and strong arm of the man alone saving them from death, and his stores from destruction.

It was nearly sunset when he at last reached the bottom of the stupendous rift, and only the tops of the cliffs were tinged with the golden light, the valley being in densest shadow.

Going on along the cañon at a brisk pace, as though anxious to reach some camping-place before nightfall, after a ride of several miles he came in sight of a wooded cañon, entering the one he was then in, and with heights towering toward heaven so far that all below seemed as black as night.

But a stream wound out of the cañon, to mingle its clear waters with the grand Colorado River a mile away, and massive trees grew near at hand, sheltering a cabin that stood upon the sloping hill at the base of a cliff that arose thousands of feet above it.

When within a few hundred yards of the lone cabin, suddenly there was a crashing, grinding sound, a terrific roar, a rumbling, and the earth seemed shaken violently as the whole face of the

mighty cliff came crushing down into the valley, sending up showers of splintered rocks and clouds of dust that were blinding and appalling!

Back from the scene of danger fled the frightened horses, the rider showing no desire to check their flight until a spot of safety was reached.

Then, half a mile from the fallen cliff, he paused, his face white, his whole form quivering, while his horses stood trembling with terror.

"My God! the cliff has fallen upon my home, and my unfortunate comrade lies buried beneath a mountain of rocks. We mined too far beneath the cliff, thus causing a cave-in.

"A few minutes more and I would also have shared poor Langley's fate; but a strange destiny it is that protects me from death – a strange one indeed! He is gone, and I alone am now the Hermit of the Grand Cañon, a Cræsus in wealth of gold, yet a fugitive from my fellow men. What a fate is mine, and how will it all end, I wonder?"

Thus musing the hermit-miner sat upon his own horse listening to the echoes rumbling through the Grand Cañon, growing fainter and fainter, like a retreating army fighting off its pursuing foes.

An hour passed before the unnerved man felt able to seek a camp for the night, so great had been the shock of the falling cliff, and the fate he had felt had overtaken his comrade.

At last he rode on up the cañon once more, determined to seek a spot he knew well where he could camp, a couple of miles above his destroyed home.

He passed the pile of rocks, heaped far up the cliff from which they had fallen, looking upon them as the sepulcher of his companion.

"Poor Lucas Langley! He, too, had his sorrows, and his secrets, which drove him, like me, to seek a retreat far from mankind, and become a hunted man. Alas! what has the future in store for me?"

With a sigh he rode on up the valley, his way now guided by the moonlight alone, and at last turned into another cañon, for the Grand Cañon has hundreds of others branching off from it, some of them penetrating for miles back into the mountains.

He had gone up this cañon for a few hundred yards, and was just about to halt, and go into camp upon the banks of a small stream, when his eyes caught sight of a light ahead.

"Ah! what does that mean?" he ejaculated in surprise.

Hardly had he spoken when from up the cañon came the deep voice of a dog barking, his scent telling him of a human presence near.

"Ah! Savage is not dead then, and, after all, Lucas Langley may have escaped."

The horseman rode quickly on toward the light. The barking of the dog continued, but it was not a note of warning but of welcome, and as the horseman drew rein by a camp-fire a huge brute sprang up and greeted him with every manifestation of delight, while a man came forward from the shadows of the trees and cried:

"Thank Heaven you are back again, Pard Seldon, for I had begun to fear for your safety."

"And I was sure that I would never meet you again in life, Lucas, for I believed you at the bottom of that mountain of rocks that fell from the cliff and crushed out our little home," and the hands of the two men met in a warm grasp.

"It would have been so but for a warning I had, when working in the mine. I saw that the cliff was splitting and settling, and running out I discovered that it must fall, and before very long.

"I at once got the two mules out of the cañon above, packed all our traps upon them, and hastened away to a spot of safety. Then I returned and got all else I could find, gathered up our gold, and came here and made our camp.

"To-night the cliff fell, but not expecting you to arrive by night, I was to be on the watch for you in the morning; but thank Heaven you are safe and home again."

"And I am happy to find you safe, Lucas. I was within an eighth of a mile of the cliff when it fell, and I shall never forget the sight, the sound, the appalling dread for a few moments, as I fled to a spot of safety, my horses bearing me along like the wind in their mad terror."

"It was appalling, and I have not dared leave my camp since, far as I am from it, for it resounded through the cañons like a mighty battle with heavy guns. But come, comrade, and we will have supper and talk over all that has happened."

The horses were staked out up the cañon, where grass and water were plentiful, and then the two men sat down to supper, though neither seemed to have much of an appetite after what had occurred.

But Savage, the huge, vicious-looking dog, felt no bad results from his fright of a few hours before, and ate heartily.

When their pipes were lighted the man who had lately arrived said:

"Well, Lucas, I brought back provisions and other things to last us a year, and I care not to go again from this cañon until I carry a fortune in gold with me."

"Yes, here we are safe, and I feel that something has happened to cause you to say what you do, pard."

"And I will tell you what it is," impressively returned the one who had spoken of himself as the Hermit of the Grand Cañon.

"Yes," he added slowly. "I will tell you a secret, comrade."

## CHAPTER II.

### THE MINER'S SECRET

"Pard, after what has happened, the falling of the cliff, and our narrow escape from death, I feel little like sleep, tired as I am, so, as I said, I will tell you a secret," continued Andrew Seldon, speaking in a way that showed his thoughts were roaming in the past.

"You will have a good listener, pard," was the answer.

"Yes, I feel that I will, and you having told me that you were a fugitive from the law, that your life had its curse upon it, I will tell you of mine, at least enough of it to prove to you that I also dare not show my face among my fellow men.

"You know me as Andrew Seldon, and I have with me proof that I could show to convince one that such is my name; but, in reality, Andrew Seldon is dead, and I am simply playing his part in life, for I am not unlike him in appearance, and, as I said, I have the proofs that enable me to impersonate him.

"My real name is Wallace Weston, whom circumstances beyond my control made a murderer and fugitive, and here I am. I entered the army as a private cavalry soldier, and worked my way up to sergeant, with the hope of getting a commission some day.

"But one day another regiment came to the frontier post where I was stationed, and a member of it was the man to whom I owed all my sorrow and misfortune in life. Well, the recognition was mutual, a quarrel followed, and he – his name was Manton Mayhew – fell by my hand, and he, too, was a sergeant.

"I said nothing in my defense, for I would not reopen the story of the past for curious eyes to gaze upon, and accepted my fate, my sentence being to be shot to death. On one occasion, in an Indian fight, I had saved the life of the scout Buffalo Bill – "

"Ah, yes, I know of him," said the listener earnestly.

"He, in return, rode through the Indian country, to the quarters of the district commander, to try and get a reprieve, hoping to glean new evidence to clear me. He was refused, and returned just as I was led down on the banks of the river for execution.

"I heard the result and determined in a second to escape, or be killed in the attempt. Buffalo Bill's horse stood near, and with a bound I was upon his back, rushed him into the stream, swam across and escaped.

"I was fired upon by the scout, under an order to do so, but his bullets were not aimed to kill me. Night was near at hand, and pursuit was begun, but I had a good start, reached the desert and entered it.

"The next day, for the scout's horse was worn down, my pursuers would have overtaken me had I not suddenly come upon a stray horse in a clump of timber, an oasis in the desert.

"I mounted him and pushed straight on into the desert, and the next day came upon a solitary rock, by which lay the dead body of a man upon which the coyotes had just begun to feed. He had starved to death in the desert, and the horse I had found was his.

"At once an idea seized me to let my pursuer believe that *I* was that dead man; so I dressed him in my uniform, killed the horse near him, left the scout's saddle and bridle there, and started off on foot over the desert, attired as the man whom I had found there.

"With him I had found letters, papers, and a map and diary, and these gave me his name, and more, for I found that the map would lead me to a gold-mine, the one in this cañon in which we have worked so well to our great profit.

"I wandered back, off the desert, and you know the rest: how I came to the camp where you lay wounded and threatened with death by your comrade, Black-heart Bill, who knew that you had a mine which he was determined to have.

"In Black-heart Bill I recognized a brother of Sergeant Manton Mayhew, another man whom I sought revenge upon. Hugh Mayhew had also wronged me as his brothers had, for there were three of them, strange to say – triplets – Manton, Hugh, and Richard Mayhew, and to them I owed it that I became a fugitive from home.

"You remember my duel with Hugh Mayhew, and that he fell by my hand? Well, there is one more yet, and some day we may meet, and then it must be his life or mine.

"Taking the name of Andrew Seldon, and leaving all to believe that I, Wallace Weston, died in the desert, I came here, with you as my companion. We are growing rich, and though the Cliff Mine has fallen in, there are others that will pan out even better.

"But, pard, when I went to the post this time for provisions, I came upon Buffalo Bill escorting a deserter to Fort Faraway, and a band of desperadoes from the mines of Last Chance had ambushed him to rescue the prisoner.

"I went to the rescue of the scout, saved him and his prisoner, and went on my way to the post; but yet I half-believe, in spite of believing me dead, and my changed appearance with my long hair and beard, that Buffalo Bill half-recognized me.

"I must take no more chances, so shall remain close in this cañon until ready to leave it and go far away with my fortune, to enjoy it elsewhere.

"Again, pard: I had written to the home of Andrew Seldon, whom I am now impersonating, and I find that he too, was a fugitive from the law, and that there is no reason for me to share this fortune with any one there, as I had intended to do: so now let us be lost to the world, hermits here in this weird land of mystery, the Grand Cañon, where no one dares come, until we are ready to seek new associations and homes elsewhere, and enjoy our riches."

"Pard, I thank you for your confidence, your secret. I felt that you had been a sufferer in the past, while I am sure you were not the one to do the first wrong. In all things I will be guided by you," said Lucas Langley warmly, and it being late the two men retired to their blankets to sleep.

## CHAPTER III. THE GRAVE AT THE DESERTED CAMP

Two men had met in the remote wilds of the Grand Cañon country, as the district bordering upon the Colorado River was called, having appointed a mysterious, deserted camp as a rendezvous.

One of these men needs no description from my pen, hardly more than a passing pen introduction to say that he bore the name of Buffalo Bill.

He had come alone from Fort Faraway, to the deserted camp over a hundred miles from the nearest habitation, to meet a new-found friend, one known in Last Chance Claim as Doctor Dick, and a man of mystery.

The latter was, in person, almost as striking in appearance as was handsome, dashing Bill Cody, for he was tall, sinewy in build, graceful, and dressed in a way to attract attention, with his cavalry-boots, gold spurs, corduroy pants, velvet jacket, silk shirt, and broad black sombrero encircled by a chain of gold links.

Doctor Dick was not afraid, either, to make a lavish display of jewels. His weapons were gold-mounted, as was also his saddle and bridle, and from the fact that he was an ardent and successful gambler, and was supposed to be very rich, he was called in Last Chance The Gold King.

Doctor Dick had made his début into Last Chance mining-camp, by bringing in the coach, one day, with the dead body of the driver on the box by his side, and two murdered passengers on the inside.

He had run off, single-handed, the road-agents who had held up the coach, and therefore became a hero at once, adding to his fame very quickly by showing that he could "shoot to kill" when attacked.

Signifying his intention of practising medicine and surgery in Last Chance, and gambling in his leisure moments, Doctor Dick had established himself in a pleasant cabin near the hotel, to at once become popular, and began to make money.

When Buffalo Bill went to Last Chance on a special secret-service mission, to investigate the holding up of the coach, and had recognized there a deserter, whom he had orders to take "dead or alive," Doctor Dick had helped him out of what appeared to be a very ugly scrape, and thus the two men had become friends.

Becoming confidential, Doctor Dick had told the scout a few chapters of his life, and he alone doubted that his foe from boyhood, Sergeant Wallace Weston – who had been reported as dying in the desert while seeking to escape – was dead, and the two, the scout and the gambler-doctor, had arranged to meet at the deserted camp and discover if the real truth could not be ascertained.

So it was at the deserted camp they had met, and Doctor Dick had stood with uncovered head before a quaking aspen-tree, at the foot of which was a grave.

Upon the tree had been cut a name and date, and this told that there lay the form of Hugh Mayhew, killed in a duel by one whom he had wronged.

It further told that Hugh Mayhew was known in the mines as a desperado, whose cruel deeds had gained for him the sobriquet of Black-heart Bill.

Convinced that the body in the grave was that of Hugh Mayhew, after he had unearthed the remains, and recognized in that decaying form his once brother – one of the triplets – Doctor Dick had seemed deeply moved when he told that he was the last of the trio and lived to avenge them: that he was sure Wallace Weston, their old foe, was their slayer, for he knew from the scout that he had killed his brother Manton at the fort, and hence he would not be convinced that the grave in the desert of Arizona held the body of Weston until he had certain proof of it.

"That man who came to your rescue, who called himself the Hermit of the Grand Cañon, who sought to shun you after his service to you, is either Wallace Weston, or knows something of him, and it is his trail we must pick up on his return to his retreat, and follow to the end, before I am satisfied," Doctor Dick had said to Buffalo Bill.

And so it was that the two had met at the deserted camp to pick up the trail of the hermit and follow it to the end, bring what it might to Doctor Dick.

The trail was taken up and followed to the brink of the grandest view in all nature's marvels, the Grand Cañon of the Colorado.

To a less experienced scout than Buffalo Bill, there would have appeared to be no trail down into the depths of that mighty chasm, and it would have been thought that the one whom they trailed had retraced his steps from there.

But the scout was not one to be thrown off the trail by any obstacle that perseverance, pluck, and hard work could overcome, and so he set about finding a way down into the cañon, though there was no trace of a traveled path left on the solid rocks upon which he stood.

Doctor Dick's determined assertion that he did not believe his old enemy, Wallace Weston, to be dead, really impressed the scout in spite of the fact that he had guided Lieutenant Tompkins and his troopers in the pursuit of the fugitive soldier, had found the body torn by wolves, dressed in uniform, and with his own saddle and bridle, taken when he had dashed away upon his horse, lying by his side.

Still, in the face of all these seeming proofs, the fugitive sergeant might yet be alive and he would do all he could to solve the mystery as to whether he was or not.

The scout had been anxious to go alone with the gambler-doctor in the search, for he did have the hope that, if really found, Wallace Weston might be reconciled with Doctor Dick, while, if taken by troopers, he would be returned to the fort and executed, as he was under death-sentence.

Buffalo Bill never forgot a service rendered him, and he did not wish to see the sergeant put to death, when he was already believed to be dead, and the secret might be kept.

After a long search Buffalo Bill found the perilous path down which the one he followed had gone with his packhorses.

He revealed the fact to Doctor Dick, and the two, after a long consultation, decided to take the risk and make the descent into the grand valley.

For men with less nerve than these two possessed it would have been impossible; and, as it was, there were times when the winding trail and dangers put their pluck to the test.

At last the valley was reached, and, greatly relieved, the two went into camp before prosecuting their search further.

The hermit had admitted to Buffalo Bill that he had a comrade dwelling with him in his retreat, wherever the retreat was.

Would it be that they held a secret there they did not wish known, and so would resist the intrusion of others? It might be, and that a death-struggle would follow the discovery of their retreat.

Still, Buffalo Bill was not one to dread whatever might turn up, and he had seen Doctor Dick tried and proven true as steel and brave as a lion.

And so the search continued, the scout unerringly clinging to the trail until, just as the two felt that the retreat of those mysterious dwellers in the Grand Cañon was almost before them, they came upon a sight that caused them to draw rein and sit upon their horses appalled at the scene presented to their view.

What they saw was the fallen cliff, and there, just peering out from among the piles of rocks, was the shattered end of a stout cabin. They had found the secret retreat, but they stood there feeling that those who had dwelt in that ruined cabin were beyond all human eye, buried beneath a monument of rocks an army could not remove in weeks.

"And this is the end?" said Buffalo Bill, the first to speak, breaking a silence that was appalling.

"Yes, his end, for he undoubtedly lies buried there beneath that mass of rocks. If it is my foe, Wallace Weston, who has met such a fate, so let it be."

The two did not tarry long in the cañon, for a dread of the weird spot seemed to have come over them both.

Doctor Dick roamed about, picking up bits of rock and examining it closely, while he muttered: "It was a gold-mine that held them here, but that falling cliff has hidden the secret forever."

And Buffalo Bill went about searching for trails, yet made no comment, whether he found any or not, to indicate that the lone dwellers in the cañon had not both perished in their cabin, and lay buried beneath the hills of rock that had fallen from the heights above the valley.

But, as the two men rode away up the dangerous mountain-trail, there were eyes peering upon them they little dreamed of, and Wallace Weston muttered:

"They believe me dead now: so let it be."

## CHAPTER IV. A VOW OF VENGEANCE

The night after leaving the Grand Cañon, Buffalo Bill and Doctor Dick camped again at the rendezvous of the deserted camp, which was marked by the grave of Black-heart Bill.

The two friends talked until a late hour into the night, though they intended making an early start in the morning for their respective homes, the scout going to the fort, the doctor to Last Chance.

"Well, Cody, you were satisfied before that Sergeant Wallace Weston was dead, that he died in the desert, but you yielded to my belief that he lived and was none other than the Hermit of the Grand Cañon who came to your rescue some time ago; but now you are assured that, the hermit-miner being buried beneath the walls of his cabin, there is no doubt left that, if he really was Wallace Weston, he is surely not among the living?"

"Yes, doctor, I can hardly bring myself to believe that Weston's body was not the one we buried in the desert, yet I grant that, it was just possible that it might not have been his."

"So you give up the search wholly?"

"Yes, I return to my duties at Fort Faraway."

"And I to my doctoring and gambling at Last Chance; but I thank you for coming with me on this trip, as my mind is made up."

The doctor said no more then, but wrapped his blankets about him and lay down to rest.

The next morning when the two were about to part Buffalo Bill said:

"I wish you would keep your eye upon the suspicious characters in the mines, for I fear, with the temptations in their way to get hold of treasure in the coaches, there may be more mischief done."

"I will keep a bright lookout, Cody, and at once send a courier to report at the fort any lawless deeds that may be done, for I know that your support will be prompt."

Then the two parted, Buffalo Bill taking the trail for Fort Faraway and Doctor Dick going on to Last Chance mining-camp.

But hardly had the scout disappeared from sight when the doctor halted, looked back and then slowly returned to the camp.

Dismounting by the grave, he stood gazing at the inscription cut into the tree for some minutes, and then turned his eyes upon the mound at his feet.

"Wicked, yes, hated and feared, yet my brother, and I loved him and my other brother, Manton, with a love that was greater than woman's love, and I revere their memory now.

"Whatever they were, whatever the crimes that led to their losing their lives, I must avenge them, and I will, for Wallace Weston's hand it was that did the deed.

"Yes, he killed Manton, and I am just as sure that he killed Hugh, who lies here at my feet. Buffalo Bill believes Wallace Weston dead; *but I do not!*

"No, I can never believe that he could die except by my hand, and some day we two will meet face to face, and then he will die, and I will be avenged for Manton's and Hugh's deaths; so here I vow to take the life of Wallace Weston, and thus avenge my brothers."

He raised his right hand as he spoke, pressed his left over his heart and so registered his vow of revenge.

Then, mounting his horse, he rode away upon the trail he had before followed.

He seemed in no hurry, rode slowly, made long noonday camps and camped early at night, so that it was the afternoon of the third day before he came in view of the scattered settlement of Last Chance Claim.

Situated in a mountain cañon, which widened into a large valley after some miles, with towering cliffs, rugged passes and wild, picturesque scenery upon all sides, Last Chance Claim, or mining-

camp, was scattered along for miles, the village portion, where the hotel, stores, and gambling-saloons were, being at the upper end.

As he came out of a mountain pass into the valley proper, Doctor Dick beheld crowds of miners hastening toward the hotel, and all were carrying their rifles and had an excited air.

"Well, pards, what has happened?" he asked as he put spurs to his horse and overtook a party of miners on the way to the hotel.

The response he received caused him to spur forward and dash rapidly on to the head of the valley.

## CHAPTER V. MASKED AND MERCILESS

Dave Dockery had taken the place of driver on the Last Chance trail, after Bud Benton had been killed on the box by unknown parties.

Dave Dockery was as shrewd as he was brave, and bore many scars of wounds received in the discharge of his duty, his nerve and endurance, it was said, saving his life where other men would surely have been killed.

The coach out from Last Chance had gone on its dangerous run with a very large sum in gold-dust, but Dave had gotten safely through with it, and was congratulated by all who knew the chances he had taken of losing treasure and life.

He had heard with regret, after reaching his eastern destination, that he was to be put to an equal strain going back, for a large sum of money in bank-bills was to be sent back to Last Chance in payment for several mines purchased there by outsiders.

Dave was told that the box contained at least thirty thousand dollars, and so he hid it away as best he could in the coach.

He also was carrying out as freight a dozen rifles of the last and most improved repeating pattern, and double as many revolvers, intended for the vigilantes of Last Chance, and who were personally unknown to any of the miners, though it was suspected that either Landlord Larry, the hotel-keeper, judge, storekeeper, and proprietor of the largest gambling-saloon in the place, or Doctor Dick, the gambler gold king, was the secret leader.

Whoever the vigilante captain and his men might be, it was certain that they had a good influence over the most lawless spirits in the mines, the fact of their being unknown greatly aiding their good effect.

Dave Dockery had hoped that he would have a stage-load of passengers upon the run to Last Chance, for he liked to have a crowd along, and then he felt that they were a safeguard as well, as in numbers there is strength.

But, when the starting-time came, only two passengers appeared, one of them a miner going out to Last Chance to hunt for a fortune, and the other a young man who told Dave Dockery that he was only traveling from a love of adventure, and enjoyed the wild life he thus far had met with.

He gave Dave a bunch of good cigars, showed him a silver flask of fine brandy, and was promptly invited to ride upon the box with him, an invitation that was as promptly accepted.

Out of the little settlement rolled the coach, followed by a cheer from the crowd gathered to see it depart, for the going and coming of the coaches in border places are events of great moment to the dwellers there.

The young man in search of adventure was upon the box with Dave, and the miner passenger was inside, where it was safer for him to ride, as he was in a hopeless state of intoxication.

The horses dashed away in fine style, enthused by the cheer of the crowd, and Dave looked happy and proud, while his companion on the box appeared to enjoy the scene immensely.

The young stranger was well dressed, for he had donned what was suitable for frontier roughing it, and wore in his belt a single revolver, as a means of defense rather than for show or bravado.

He had a fine face, fearless and frank, and looked like a man of refinement and education.

Dave Dockery was a good reader of human nature and took to his passenger at once, being really greatly pleased with his companionship.

Three-fourths of the trail had been gone over without adventure, the three stops at the relay-stations, for changes of horses and meals for passengers, having been made on time, and Last Chance was only a dozen miles away, when, as they neared a dreary-looking spot in a gorge, Dave said:

"There is where poor Bud Benton passed in his chips, pard, and I tell you I don't like the spot a bit."

Hardly had he uttered the words when a sharp report rang out and Dave Dockery fell back upon the coach and lay motionless, while out of the shadows spurred a horseman dressed in black and wearing a red mask.

With his revolver leveled at the stranger he said sharply:

"Your turn next, sir, for I am out for blood and gold."

Riding on the box with Dave Dockery, the young stranger had heard much of the wild ways of the border, and had been told that it would be madness to resist a "hold-up" of a coach, unless the chances were well on the side of those attacked.

When, therefore, the sharp report of a revolver had been followed by the toppling over of poor Dave, and a masked horseman rode out of the shadows of the cliff, his revolver covering him, the young man did not just know what to do.

He had with him a few hundred in money, his watch, chain, and a few articles of value, with some papers of importance.

That the masked horseman was alone he could not believe, and yet he had, against all traditions of the border, begun by firing upon Dave Dockery, and not ordering him to halt first.

That he had fired to kill the bullet-wound in the breast, and the motionless form of the driver as he lay back upon the top of the coach, were in evidence.

Now he stood the chance himself of life and death, and he awaited the ordeal with white, but calm face.

The horses had stopped in their tracks, and though no other persons were visible the stranger looked for others to appear. The thought flashed across him that he must lose all he had with him, but his life he could not believe was in danger, yet why the masked road-agent had killed Dockery without mercy he could not understand.

"Do you mean to take my life, man?"

"That depends whether it is worth more to kill you than to let you live," was the businesslike reply.

But hardly had he spoken when from out of the coach window came a flash and report. The miner within, awakening to a sense of his danger, had taken a hand in the affair.

The bullet barely missed the head of the masked horseman, who at once returned the fire, aiming first, however, at the young man on the box.

With a groan the latter fell heavily to the ground, his revolver half-drawn from its holster, and the murderer, leaping from his saddle, took refuge among the horses while he called out:

"I have killed your two comrades, and you share the same fate unless you surrender."

"I cry quits, pard," came in frightened tones from the coach, and the man was evidently now sobered and greatly alarmed.

"Then come out!"

The miner quickly threw open the stage door, put his foot upon the step and then peered cautiously toward his foe.

Instantly there came a shot, and, without a moan, he pitched forward head foremost and fell in a heap between the wheels.

"Any more?" called out the road-agent sternly.

No answer came, and, revolvers in hand, he stepped to one side and opened fire at the coach. He fired with both hands, and did not cease until he had emptied his weapons and riddled the coach.

Then he unslung his rifle from his saddle-horn and cautiously approached, ready to fire at the first sign of danger to himself.

But he had done his work well, and he had nothing to fear, so advancing to the coach, found that it was empty.

Quickly he set about searching the vehicle for all of value that it might carry. He found a roll of bills belonging to the miner, and a few things of value in his valise.

The young man panned out for him nearly a thousand in money, and some jewelry, and Dave Dockery was pretty well supplied with funds.

But the masked marauder searched rapidly on, and evidently looked for a richer haul yet.

The box was found with the money in it, and a bullet fired from his revolver shattered the lock.

"Ah! here is a haul worth all risks to get," he muttered, and the contents of the chest were put in a sack and tied upon his saddle.

His work thus far had taken but a few minutes, and, apparently satisfied with what booty he had secured, he shot one of the wheel-horses, to prevent the team going on with the coach, and, mounting the splendid animal he rode, and which was covered, head and all, with a black calico covering, he dashed away down the pass at a gallop.

## CHAPTER VI. THE DUMB MESSENGER

Hardly had the masked road-agent ridden away, when a deep groan came from the lips of Dave Dockery. His eyes opened, and after a supreme effort, which cost him the greatest agony, as moans would force themselves through his shut teeth, he was able to slip down from the box to the ground.

He knelt by the side of the man who had been his companion a few minutes before, full of life and vigor, and found him motionless. Then he crept on hands and knees to the side of the miner.

"Dead!" came from between his clenched teeth.

After several efforts he arose by aid of a wheel to his feet, and, taking a piece of paper and pencil from his pocket, wrote a few lines upon it with the greatest difficulty.

Making his way, supported by the coach, step by step to the wheel-horse that stood chained to his dead comrade, he unhitched him from the pole, fastened the slip of paper to the bridle, and gave him a blow.

"Go! old horse, for I cannot ride you; I am too weak to hold myself on your back. Go for help to Last Chance, and maybe if you hurry you may save my life."

The horse seemed to understand what was said to him, and started off at a swift trot down the trail.

He was just disappearing from sight when Dockery, unable to longer stand up, tottered and fell by the side of the trail, writhing in his agony.

And while he lay thus the faithful horse increased his speed to a gallop and went along thus for miles, his trace-chains rattling an accompaniment to his hoof-falls as he followed the trail to Last Chance.

Halting at a stream here and there for a drink of cool water, and at a grassy bank for a few mouthfuls of food, the horse held on his way, and a couple of hours after his departure from the coach galloped into the mining-camp.

Those who saw him with the harness on felt sure that some harm had befallen the coach, and they hastened after the animal, who, avoiding capture, dashed up to the hotel door and halted.

Lawrence Larrimore, nicknamed Landlord Larry, had seen him coming, and grasped his bridle-rein as he halted.

He had caught sight of the white slip of paper tied upon the bridle, and quickly securing it, read what was written thereon in the weak and wavering hand of the wounded driver, but which was recognized as the writing of Dave Dockery.

It was as follows, for Landlord Larry read it aloud, as the miners quickly gathered about him:

"Coach held up at Bud Benton's grave, and I fatally wounded.

"One passenger on box killed; miner in coach also.

"Coach robbed of large sum.

"Road-agent was alone, wore black domino and red mask, horse also masked, but feel sure I know him.

"I have just strength to write this, and beg quick aid, sending it by one of my wheelers.

"Come quickly if you hope to find me alive.

*"Dave."*

A roar went up from the crowd of miners at the reading of this note from Dave Dockery, who even then might be dying, and Landlord Larry cried:

"Spread the alarm, and let us go quickly to the spot, and try and save poor Dave, yes, and capture that masked road-agent, for he has got money in plenty.

"Oh! if Doctor Dick was only here to look after poor Dave, he might save him. Let me see! the coach was due at Bud Benton's grave about two o'clock and it is now after three. Come, men, mount and follow me!"

Dave Dockery was liked by all, and Landlord Larry was a very popular man; so, quickly, the miners obeyed the call to follow the one to the rescue of the other.

Just as the party of mounted men were about to ride away from the hotel, under the leadership of Landlord Larry, a shout was heard down the valley, and then came the cry from a score of men:

"There comes Doctor Dick!"

With an exclamation of pleasure Landlord Larry put spurs to his horse and dashed forward to meet the doctor, who warmly grasped his hand as the two met and called out:

"What is it, Landlord Larry?"

"Read this paper from Dave Dockery, who even now may be dead. We are going to his aid."

"And I will go with you."

"But your horse is worn out, Doc, and you look tired after your long trail."

"Don't mind me, for I will mount a fresh horse and follow," and Doctor Dick rode rapidly toward his own cabin.

The eyes of the miners followed the doctor as though all depended upon him.

They had come to almost revere this handsome, stern, mysterious man who had come to dwell among them, yet seemed so well fitted to adorn a far different life.

His life was as a sealed book to them, yet his skill as physician and surgeon was great, his generosity unbounded, and his nerve and daring far above those whom he had been forced to meet in deadly encounter.

He had made his home in a snugly built cabin under the shelter of a cliff within easy walk of the hotel, where he took his meals.

He had fitted his frontier home with an extravagance and comfort that was surprising, and had in a cabin near several as fine horses as could be found among the mining-camps, with a Chinese servant to look after them and his wants.

The doctor hastily dismounted, called to the Chinaman to throw his saddle upon another horse and look after the pack-animal, entered the cabin for a few moments, and before Landlord Larry and his party were a couple of miles away was in rapid pursuit.

He did not spare his horse, and overtaking the crowd of half a hundred miner-horsemen, he was greeted with a cheer, which he acknowledged by gracefully raising his sombrero.

Riding to the front of the column he took his place by the side of Landlord Larry, and set a faster pace than that at which they had been going.

"You say that Dave Dockery was able to write a note, landlord?"

"Yes, I handed it to you to-day."

"I thrust it into my pocket unread," and Doctor Dick now glanced over the note as he rode along. "I fear he is too far gone, Larry, for if he had been able he would have come into the camp. I will ride still faster, for every moment counts with a badly wounded man, and you see I am mounted on my racer."

"Push on, do, Doc, and I'll follow with the men as fast as I can," cried the landlord.

With a word to Racer, the horse was off like an arrow, and fairly flew up and down hill along the rugged trail to reach the scene of the tragedy and lend aid to the wounded driver.

At last the coach came in sight, and the coming miners were yet all of two miles behind. The four coach-horses, still attached to the pole, stood where they had been left by their driver, while the wheel-horse shot by the road-agent lay where he had fallen.

Near the coach, to one side, and not twenty paces from where Bud Benton had been killed, lay the form of Dave Dockery.

Throwing himself from his saddle Doctor Dick bent over him and said quickly:

"He still lives! Dave! Dave! speak to me!"

The eyes slowly opened, and there was a convulsive movement of the form, a struggle which, becoming violent, caused the doctor to grasp him firmly, and thus hold him.

The dying man seemed in an agony of despair at being unable to speak, and after a slight resistance ceased his efforts and sank back exhausted.

"Here, Dave, take this, for it will revive you," and Doctor Dick poured some medicine between the white lips.

As he did so a groan from another quarter startled him, and, glancing in the direction from whence it came, he saw the form of the young passenger, who had been riding on the box, quiver slightly.

In an instant he sprang to the side of the other sufferer, and bent over him, placing his hand upon his pulse.

"The bullet struck him in the forehead, glancing along the skull and coming out, I see, at the back of the head. It remains to see whether the bone is fractured – ah! here they come," and up dashed Landlord Larry and those who had kept up with him.

"How goes it, doctor?" asked Larry.

"Dave is beyond hope, I fear, while this gentleman is alive, though I do not know yet how seriously wounded. That man in rough clothes there is dead, as you can see at a glance; but come, we will get the wounded men into the stage at once, and I will drive on to the camps."

"And the road-agents?"

"By all means send a party to hunt them down," was the stern rejoinder.

## CHAPTER VII. DEATH AND MADNESS

All knew that Doctor Dick was a skilful driver, and that he would take the coach into Last Chance sooner than any one else could, so they hastened to get the team ready.

The harness on the horse, which had been the dumb messenger to make known the tragedy, had been brought back, and two of the miners' horses were quickly put in as wheelers, while the wounded driver and passenger were tenderly lifted into the coach.

In got a couple of miners to support them in their arms, while the body of the man killed by the road-agents was put upon the top of the coach.

Landlord Larry had himself led the party in search of the trail of the road-agents, while, mounting the box, and leaving his horse to follow on behind, Doctor Dick sent the team along at a slapping pace for Last Chance Claim.

As they went along they met other miners coming out to the scene, but these were turned back, as there was no need of their going, and Landlord Larry had with him all that was needed.

It was just nightfall when the coach rolled by the door of the hotel, while, to the surprise of all, Doctor Dick did not draw rein there. Instead he went on to his own cabin and came to a halt, while he said to the miners who accompanied him:

"If the lives of these two men are to be saved, it will only be by skill and devoted nursing, and I want them near me. Bring over two cots from the hotel, and we will soon make them as comfortable as possible."

The two cots were soon brought, the wounded men tenderly lifted out, and the coach driven to the stables by a miner, while Doctor Dick set to work to see just what he could do for his patients.

All knew that Driver Dave Dockery was a great favorite of the gambler-doctor and the remark was made:

"He'll save Dave if it can be done, and he's the man to do it."

Left alone with his patients, save his Chinese assistant, Doctor Dick threw off his coat and set to work in earnest to see what he could do for them, and how seriously they were wounded.

He first went to Dave Dockery. The driver lay as quiet as though asleep. Placing his hand upon his heart, and then his ear close to his breast, Doctor Dick said calmly.

"It is the sleep of death."

With only a moment of thought, he straightened out the limbs, closed the eyes, folded the once strong, bronzed hands over the broad breast, and, throwing a blanket over the form, said to his Chinese servant, speaking in the Chinese tongue, and speaking it well:

"Loo Foo, my friend is dead."

The Chinaman replied in his idea of English:

"Allee lightee, dockee, him wellee happy now allee samee 'Melican man angel."

Loo Foo had been converted, it was said, when he carried on the business of washee-washee in a mining-camp, for, as he had expressed it:

"More lovee 'Melican man Joss, gettee more washee."

Going from the body of Dave Dockery, Doctor Dick bent over the form of the wounded stranger. He found him lying in a state of coma, breathing heavily and apparently very badly wounded.

Examining the wound Doctor Dick saw that the bullet had glanced on the forehead, run along under the scalp to the back of the skull and there cut its way out.

Dressing the wound carefully, and using restoratives, the doctor soon had the satisfaction of discovering that his patient was rallying; and within an hour's time his eyes opened, and he looked about him in a bewildered way.

Passing his hand slowly over his face, he seemed trying to get his scattered thoughts, for he muttered something to himself and then suddenly burst into a violent fit of laughter.

"Great God! he will live, but as a madman," cried Doctor Dick, moved by the sight of the strong man's brain having been crazed by the wound he had received.

Having made him as comfortable as possible he left Loo Foo on watch and went over to the saloon to report the result, and found it more crowded than usual.

Many had assembled there who did not generally frequent the place, preferring the quiet of their own cabins in the evening after a hard day's work.

These were attracted by the happenings of the day, and the tragedy was being discussed in all its details, with the possibilities of the recovery of the driver and the young passenger, and the capture of the bold outlaws.

The fact that Dave Dockery had hinted in his note to Landlord Larry that he could possibly tell who the masked road-agent was, was a cause of considerable excitement to all, for it would doubtless fall on one in Last Chance to be the accused.

A hush fell upon the crowd as Doctor Dick entered, and the few who were gambling, for there were only a few that night, left their cards on the table to hear what would be said.

"Pards," said the doctor, in his courtly way, "I am just from my cabin, where I have left one of the wounded men dead, the other a madman."

A breathless silence followed these words, and then a voice broke it with:

"Doc, who is the dead man?"

"Dave Dockery."

A low murmur of regret and sorrow passed over the crowd, and the doctor added:

"He died soon after reaching the cabin."

"And t'other, Doc?"

"The bullet struck him in the head, slightly fracturing the bone, I fear, indenting it and causing a loss of reason, which I fear may never return to him."

"Poor fellow! better be dead, like poor Dave," said one, and this view was the thought of all.

"Pards, prepare for Dave's funeral to-morrow, and out of respect for him, let us close the saloon to-night, for I know Landlord Larry would wish it so."

A general murmur of assent followed, and the doctor continued:

"I wish two men as couriers at once, one to carry a note to Landlord Larry, for he can go to the scene of the hold-up, and start on the trail from there as soon as it is light enough to see."

"I'll go, Doc," said a cheery voice, and a young man came forward.

"Thank you, Wall, go with me to my cabin and I'll give you the note. Now, I wish a man to go as courier to Fort Faraway, and remember it is a dangerous and long ride."

"I hain't afeered of the danger, or the ride, Doc, so I'm yer man," said a burly fellow coming forward, and his words were greeted with a cheer.

Doctor Dick glanced at him and then said very calmly:

"Thank you, Brassy, but I do not care to accept your services."

"And just why?"

"In the first place, I desire to send a letter to Buffalo Bill, and you have expressed openly your hatred for him, and to some day even up on him for not allowing you to have your way in certain matters."

"I doesn't allow my hates to interfere with duty."

"I do not care to accept your services, Brassy."

"Now, I asks a reason why?"

"I have given you one."

"I wants another."

"Is this a demand?"

"It be."

"You shall have it."

"Then don't beat round the bush, but have the narve to come out with it like a man."

All looked at Brassy with amazement. He had been drinking and was reckless.

The doctor smiled, but answered complacently:

"I always answer a demand, Brassy, so will tell you frankly, that I would not trust you with any message whatever."

The words fell pat from the lips of the doctor, and there was no misunderstanding them, and Brassy did not, for with a yell he shouted:

"Yer shall eat them insultin' words, Doctor Dick!" and quick as action could be, he had drawn his revolver and fired.

The crowd had fallen back from about each man at Brassy's cry, and yet one man caught the bullet intended for the doctor in his shoulder.

It was not a second after the shot of Brassy's before the doctor's weapon rang out.

He had not expected Brassy to open fire so quickly, so was not prepared for defense; but he was just so little behind him in time, that before the man could pull trigger a second time, he fired, and his bullet went straight where aimed, between the eyes of the one he intended to kill, when he dropped his hand upon his revolver.

Brassy's pistol fired a second shot as he fell, but it was from the death clutch upon the trigger, and the bullet went over the heads of the crowd, while instantly was heard the doctor's quiet tones:

"Come, men, who volunteers as courier to Faraway?"

A young man stepped promptly forward and answered:

"I was a soldier at Faraway, sir, and know the trail. I will go."

"You are the very man, Harding; come with Wall to my cabin. Good night, gentlemen, and remember, I pay the expenses of Brassy's funeral, so do not be mean in his burial outfit."

With this Doctor Dick raised his sombrero and left the saloon, his admirers being still more impressed with his nerve and bearing after what had occurred.

The body of Brassy was removed to his cabin by those who were his friends, and all agreed that he had brought his sudden fate upon himself, as the first reason given, of his hatred to Buffalo Bill, was excuse enough for refusing him as a courier.

The saloon was closed, and the other gambling and drinking-places followed the example set and also closed their doors for the night, so that quiet soon rested in the mining-camp of Last Chance.

In the meanwhile Doctor Dick, accompanied by Wall and Harding, had gone to his quarters, where Loo Foo was found making a cup of tea, alone with the dead and wounded, and seemingly unmindful of the fact.

Entering the cabin the doctor drew the blanket back from the form of Dave Dockery and revealed to the two couriers the honest, brave face of the driver.

"Poor Dave! He is on his last trail now," he said softly, and seating himself at his table he hastily wrote two letters. One read:

"Dear Larry: Dave died soon after reaching my cabin. If you do not find trace of the outlaws by sunset, it would be well to return sooner, if you can get no clue whatever.

"I send Harding to Fort Faraway, with a note to Buffalo Bill, as I promised to do, if there was another hold-up on the Overland Trail.

"I had to kill Brassy to-night, but Ball will explain the circumstances.

"Get back to poor Dave's funeral at sunset to-morrow, if possible.

"I closed saloon to-night out of respect to Dave.

"The young passenger will be a madman if he recovers.

*Yours,*

*Doctor Dick."*

The note to Buffalo Bill told of the hold-up on the stage-trail, the death of one passenger, wounding of another, and killing of Dave Dockery, and closed with:

"Landlord Larry is on the trail of the outlaws, and all will be done to hunt them down that it is possible to do.

"I will drive the coach back on the run, and until another driver can be found.

"If you cannot come now, state what you think best to be done and it will be attended to.

*Yours,*

*Doctor Dick."*

The couriers left as soon as the letters were finished, and having seen them depart Doctor Dick went over to the hotel to get his supper, which Loo Foo had ordered for him, after which he returned, looked at his patient, gave him a dose of medicine, and, throwing himself upon his bed, was soon fast asleep, wholly oblivious it seemed of the dead man and the sufferer within a few feet of him.

## CHAPTER VIII. A STRANGE BURIAL

The courier on the trail of Landlord Larry found him and his half-hundred miners trailing the mountains and valleys over in search of some trace of the coming of the road-agents to the scene of the tragedy, and their going therefrom.

But the search of the evening before, and up to the arrival of Wall at noon, when they had gone into camp, had been wholly in vain.

Not a hoof-track could be found of the road-agents' horses, nor a place where they had lain in wait until the stage came along.

Landlord Larry was not one to waste energy upon impossibilities, and after reading Doctor Dick's letter he decided to return with his men to Last Chance.

They set out soon after the midday rest and arrived in Last Chance just as all was in readiness for the burial of Dave Dockery and Brassy, for a double funeral was to be had.

The landlord dismissed his men and went at once to the quarters of Doctor Dick, who greeted him warmly and asked:

"Any success?"

"Not a bit."

"Too bad."

"We could not find the photograph of a trail and to search longer was a waste of time, so as the men wished to go to Dave's funeral, I just came in."

"It was about all you could do under the circumstances, Larry."

"I see that they have got the corpse you furnished rigged out for burial too."

"Brassy?"

"Yes."

"Why not, for he has a number of friends?"

"Don't fear no trouble, do yer?"

"No, I think not, for Brassy prescribed for himself and I administered the medicine."

"Served him right for playing with edged tools."

"I will not say that, poor fellow, for life was dear to him; but he should have been more careful."

"We will go together to the burial."

"By all means, and I'll give my friends a hint to be ready if Brassy's pards go to showing an ugly mood, while you will go prepared, Doc?"

"I always am," was the laconic response.

"Now, how's yer sick man?"

"He will recover bodily, but never mentally I fear."

"I'm sorry," and Landlord Larry went to prepare for the burial.

In half an hour all was ready to start, and Doctor Dick and Landlord Larry were given the places of honor at the procession, or rather just following what was called "the band," and which consisted of a dozen men who *sang*, the leader alone playing on a cornet.

Following the doctor and Landlord Larry, came the eight men bearing the body of Dave Dockery on a litter on their shoulders.

The body was encased in a board coffin, and behind followed eight men carrying the body of Brassy.

Following were the miners, marching eight abreast, and in solid column, nearly a thousand men being in line, and among them were led the horses which Dave Dockery was wont to drive, his belt of arms, hat, and whip being carried on top of his coffin.

Up the cañon to the cemetery beneath the cliffs filed the column at funeral pace, keeping time to the splendid voices, that changed from air to air as they marched along, and which echoed and reechoed among the hills.

The burying-ground was reached, the bodies placed by the side of the graves dug for them, and Landlord Larry consigned them to their last resting-place by repeating the words of the burial service over them, no partiality being shown.

But when the coffin, with the weapons, hat, and whip of Dave Dockery was lowered into the grave, hundreds of bold, brawny men stepped forward and threw in upon it benches of wild flowers they had gathered, and when filled up, the little mound was covered from view by these sweet offerings of manly regard for the dead driver, while in strange contrast was the barren grave of Brassy, for his immediate friends had not thought of gathering flowers, there being no sentiment in his death.

Doctor Dick looked calmly on, and perhaps it was his stern, fearless mien that stayed the trouble that several of Brassy's pards seemed to have decided upon there in the sacred resting-place of the dead, perhaps the belief that they would be quickly sent to join their comrade, for they created no disturbance, only with a significant glance at the gold-king gambler turned and walked away with the bearing of men who would bide their time to avenge.

## CHAPTER IX. THE COURIER

The man who had volunteered to take the long and dangerous ride to Fort Faraway, to carry a letter to Buffalo Bill, had ridden along steadily after leaving Last Chance, until a couple of hours before day. Then he halted, staked his horse out, and, wrapping himself in his blanket, went to sleep.

For several hours he slept serenely, then awaking he cooked his breakfast and was soon again in the saddle.

He seemed to understand frontier craft perfectly, and to appreciate just what his horse could stand, so did not press him too hard.

Camping at nightfall, he was again on the trail at daybreak, and held steadily on during the day.

Another night-camp and he rode into Fort Faraway the next morning before the hour of noon.

He was directed at once to the quarters of Buffalo Bill, and though, having been a soldier there, he recognized many old friends, he saw that, dressed as he then was, and with his beard grown, the recognition was not mutual.

But the moment he entered the presence of Buffalo Bill he was recognized and warmly greeted, for the scout had always liked the young soldier, who had been given his discharge on account of a severe wound received in an Indian fight, which it was thought would render him lame for life.

"Well, Harding, I am glad to see you, and you deserve credit for the plucky ride you have made. How is the old wound getting on now?"

"All right, Bill, for I am not at all lame, I am glad to say."

"And you are getting rich, I suppose?"

"Well, no, but I have laid up some money in mining, only I cannot stand upon my wounded leg long at a time, and so I am going to ask you to take me on as a scout under your command, if you can do so."

"Harding, you are just the man I want, and you are in that very place where I need you, so you can return to your mine, and pretend to work as before, for there is where I wish you to serve me, since I received this letter from Doctor Dick."

"Thank you, Pard Cody, for your kindness, and will be glad to do as you wish; but may I ask a favor?"

"Certainly."

"It is that no one knows that I am in your service, not even Landlord Larry or Doctor Dick, for I can work better, I am sure."

"It might be a good idea to have it so, and it shall be as you wish, for you can do better work as a spy, and I have full confidence in you, Harding. But we will talk over just what it is best to do when I have reported to Major Randall the holding up of the coach and killing of Dave Dockery and the others."

Buffalo Bill then left the courier and went to headquarters, where he held a long conversation with the commandant of the post.

Returning to his own quarters he said to Harding, who was awaiting him:

"Well, pard, the major has heard the whole story, and he has left it to me to go in my own way about running down these road-agents, for, though only one was seen, there were evidently more at the hold-up."

"I do not doubt that, for one man would be a bold one to alone make an open attempt to hold up a coach with Dave Dockery on the box, and knowing that he had passengers with him."

"Well, Harding, you are to return to Last Chance, and give letters I will write to Landlord Larry, and I wish you to go to work in my service, and secret service it must be, for what you do must be

underhand, no one knowing that you are doing else than carrying on your mining as before. I will give you a paper which will protect you, for Major Randall will endorse it officially, and you can use it in case of trouble, or necessity; not otherwise."

"I thank you, friend Bill, and I'll be discreet, I promise you; but now there is another thing I wish to tell you, and to ask what you think of it."

"Well, what is it, Harding?"

"Do you believe that Sergeant Wallace Weston is dead?" was the query, in a low, earnest tone. Buffalo Bill started at the unexpected question asked him, and gazing intently at Harding, asked: "Why do you ask such a question, Harding?"

"I will tell you when you answer my question, Mr. Cody."

"Whether I believe Sergeant Wallace Weston dead?"

"Yes, sir."

"I do."

"You have good reason for believing it, then?"

"I have."

"Please tell me what it is."

"As you have some motive above curiosity in asking, I will do so, Harding," and Buffalo Bill told the whole story of Sergeant Weston's escape from execution, and the finding of a body in his uniform upon the desert, and burying it. But he added:

"I confess, Harding, after a talk with Doctor Dick upon the subject, I was led to doubt to a certain degree the death of the sergeant, and even followed a trail which I supposed was his."

"With what result, sir?"

"That we found the trail led to a mine which had caved in and crushed the cabin home of those who dwelt there!"

"When was this, sir?"

"Only a short time ago."

"Do you mind giving me the date?"

Buffalo Bill took a note-book from his pocket and gave the exact date.

"Now, Harding, you have some knowledge upon this subject; a secret to tell."

"Yes, sir."

"Out with it."

"You will keep it in confidence, between us two?"

"Certainly."

"You know that the sergeant was my friend, that he had saved my life twice in battle, and I loved him as I did a brother?"

"I remember."

"No man knew him better than I did in the fort, for we were boon comrades for over a year, and I knew his features perfectly, as well as other marks of identification."

"Yes."

"The sergeant had one mark that he was sensitive about, and kept hidden from all, though I saw it several times."

"What was it?"

"He had a peculiar way of dressing his hair, with a curl hanging over his forehead."

"I remember it."

"Beneath that curl, sir, was a birthmark."

"Ah!"

"It was a red cross an inch in length, and perfect in shape."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, and I saw that same mark on a man's forehead a few days before the date you say that Sergeant Weston, if it was he, was buried in the caved-in mine."

"Ah! and where did you see it?"

"I had gone to Wingate by coach, sir, to collect some money due me from several soldiers there, and in the sutler's store I saw a man whose face I was sure I had seen before.

"He wore his hair and beard long, and seemed to stoop badly, or was round-shouldered, but the form otherwise was the same, so were the eyes and shape of the head, and he had a round gold filling the size of a pin's head in one of the front teeth.

"Reading a letter that seemed to impress him, he took off his hat and pushed his hair back, and I saw the red cross on his forehead. I went up to see him as though to attract his attention, but he looked at me as though he had never seen me before, yet his face flushed and paled as he looked.

"Now, Mr. Cody, that man was Sergeant Weston, and I'll swear to it, but I would not tell any other man than you, for if he escaped death no one is more glad of it than I, unless – "

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