McReynolds Robert

Thirty Years on the Frontier

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Содержание

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I
IN DAYS OF INNOCENCE

In the following pages I shall tell of much personal experience as well as important incidents which have come under my observation during thirty years on the frontier. As a cowboy, miner and pioneer, I have participated in many exciting events, none of which, however, caused me the prolonged grief that a certain bombshell affair did when I was a boy, resulting in a newspaper experience and habit of telling things, and eventually led to my coming West.

My grandfather's plantation in Kentucky and nearly opposite the town of Newburgh, on the Indiana side, was as much my home as was my mother's. She being a widow and having my brother and sister to care for, as well as myself, felt a relief from the responsibility of looking after me when I was at my grandfather's home.

The plantation faced the Ohio River, the wooded part of which had been a camping ground for rebel soldiers, until they were driven out by the shells of a Yankee gunboat. While hunting pecans in these woods one day, I stumbled on to an unexploded bombshell, and, boylike, I wanted to see the thing go off. However, I was afraid to touch it until I had counseled with the Woods boys, whose father was a renter of a small tract of ground below the plantation. That night the three of us met and decided to explode the shell the following Sunday morning, after the folks had gone to church. I feigned a headache when grandmother wanted to take me in the carriage with them to church, but when I was satisfied they were well down the road, I hurried to the strip of forest a mile away, where the Woods boys were waiting. They had come in a rickety old buggy drawn by a white mule. It was in autumn and as the leaves were dry on the ground, we were afraid to kindle a fire, and decided to take the shell near the tobacco barn, around which we could hide and watch it go off. Neither of the boys would handle it, so I lifted it into the buggy; then they were afraid to ride with it, and it was left to me to lead the mule to the tobacco barn. I hitched the animal to a sapling near the barn, while the other boys gathered up some kindling, and we made a pile of old fence posts, and when I had laid the shell upon the log heap, we lit the kindling with a match and all ran behind the barn, forgetting all about the mule. The wood was dry and was soon all aflame. Every little while one of us would peek around the corner to see if the thing was not about ready to explode. We were getting impatient, when the mule gave a great "hee haw" that called our attention to his peril. It was his last "hee haw," for in a second more the bomb exploded with a deafening noise, and fragments of the shell screamed like a panther in the air. We ran around to see the result of the explosion, and behold! it had spread that mule all over the side of the barn.

The things my grandfather said and did to me when he returned from church does not concern the public. But when he had finished, I was fully convinced that I was all to blame, and that I owed Mr. Woods $150 for his demolished mule.

Then followed long lectures from my mother and grandmother, and to add to my discomfiture was Mr. Woods' lamentations and his expressed regrets that it was not me, instead of his mule, that was blown up.

I was the owner of an old musket with which I spent most of my time hunting rabbits, using small slugs of lead for shot, which I chopped up with a hatchet. Two weeks before the bombshell episode, I had found a musket-ball, and I concluded to try a man's load in the gun on my next rabbit; I poured in a full charge of powder, but when I came to ram the ball home, it would go only half

way down the barrel. I was afraid to shoot then, lest the gun might burst, and as I could neither get the ball out or farther down, I laid the barrel between two logs, tied a string to the trigger, and got behind a stump and pulled it off.

A few minutes later while I was examining my gun, grandfather came running out of the potato patch to find who was shooting at him. However, he was so thankful that matters were not worse, that I got off with a slight reprimand.

But this Sunday capped the climax. A council of my kinfolks was held that night, and decided that neither man nor beast was safe on that plantation if I remained. Their final verdict was that I should be sent to my mother's home in Newburgh, and there to learn the printer's trade, attend Frederick Dickerman's night school, be made to pay for the mule, and my musket confiscated. I was paid $3 a week as printer's devil to start with, one dollar of which I might spend for my clothes, fifty cents for tuition in the night school, one dollar and twenty-five cents for the mule debt, and the other twenty-five cents I might spend.

Grandfather was very careful to see that I saved the mule money, and I used to think he took a special delight in collecting it from mother, to whom I paid it every week.

It took me nearly three years in that printing office to get out of debt. I was now eighteen years of age.

Life in the printing office was too monotonous; I wanted a more exciting scene of action. I used to watch the great river steamers come and go, and wondered if I could hold any kind of a position on one of them, except carrying freight, when by accident one day there came an opportunity. The steamer "Dick Johnson" was lying at the wharf loading hogsheads of tobacco, when the freight clerk was injured by a fall of the stage plank. The captain wanted someone to take his place, and my schoolmaster recommended me. Here was a chance to put in practice the bookkeeping I had studied under him. It was what I wanted – I could now get a glimpse of the outside world.

The position on the "Dick Johnson" was a stepping-stone, for in another year I was the mate of the steamer "Rapidan," plying between Florence, Alabama, and Evansville, Indiana, and had thirty negroes under my control.

It was historic country through which we passed. The trees on the islands near Pittsburgh Landing yet showed signs of shot and shell fired by federal gunboats. Ofttimes some passenger who had been a participant on one side or the other at Shiloh, would entertain his listeners for hours with stories of the fight, until some of us younger officers became imbued with the war spirit.

The autumn of 1875 had come when yellow fever broke out aboard our boat, and we lay in quarantine two miles below Savannah, Tennessee, for a month. I stayed with the boat until we were released, and then went to my home in Newburgh, ill with malarial fever.

Stories of rich gold finds in the Northwest had been circulated through the newspapers, and one day I resolved to try my luck. The things we believe we are doing for the last time, always cause a pang of sorrow, and as I packed my valise on Sunday afternoon to leave forever the home of childhood, my feelings can be better imagined than described. My grandparents came over from their Kentucky home to bid me good-bye. When I was ready to start, grandfather took from his pocket a roll of bills, and placing them in my hands, said: "Here, Mackey, is your mule money, and I have added interest enough to make the sum total $500. I paid Mr. Woods for his mule, but I wanted to teach you a lesson. Profit by it, and make good use of the money, and say, Mackey, whatever you do in life, never insult a blind man, never strike a cripple and never marry a fool."

It was the last time I ever saw the noble old guardian of my youth. The first two of his parting injunctions I have religiously obeyed.

II
OUT FOR A FORTUNE

My first view of the Nebraska plains was the next morning after leaving Omaha, and I thought I never saw anything half so grand. The February sun threw its beams aslant the mighty sea of plain over which so many white covered wagons had toiled on their way to the then wild regions of the West.

Small herds of buffalo and antelope were frequently seen from the car windows; the passengers fired at them and often wounded an antelope, which limped away in a vain attempt to join its mates. That night we witnessed the mighty spectacle of the plains on fire. The huge, billowy waves of flame leaped high against a darkened sky, and swept with hiss and roar along the banks of the shallow Platte. The emigrant train upon which I was aboard was crowded with people of all sorts. Many of them were homeseekers on their way to Oregon and California, while not a few adventurers like myself were bound for the Black Hills. A young man who went under the name of Soapy Wyatte, was working the train on a three-card monte game, and was very successful until he cheated a couple of ranchmen out of quite a sum of money. Then they organized the other losers, and were in the act of hanging him with the bell rope when he disgorged his ill-gotten gains and paid back the money. Men of his class were plentiful, but as a rule they were careful not to cheat the frontiersman, for when they did they usually got the worst of it.

Cheyenne at that time was a typical frontier town. Gambling houses, saloons and dance halls were open continuously, night and day. Unlucky indeed was the tenderfoot who fell into their snare. I soon secured transportation with a mule-train for Deadwood. There were thirty-three of us in the party. The wagons were heavily loaded with freight and the trail was in frightful condition; we ofttimes were compelled to walk.

I had bought a heavy pair of boots for the trip, but the sticky alkali mud made them so heavy that I soon cut off the tops. The next thing, I put my Winchester rifle and revolver in the wagon and then trudged along the best I could. The Sioux Indians were on the warpath and it was dangerous to get far away from the wagon train. Almost every freighter we met warned us against Red Canyon. The stage drivers reported “hold ups” and murders by organized bands of road agents. This kept us on the alert. At night there was a detail of eight, to divide up the night in standing guard. These men were selected from the most experienced plainsmen, of whom there were quite a number with us.

We were eight days out from Cheyenne, and several inches of snow had fallen during the night, but the sun rose clear on the biting cold of the morning. Suddenly we heard shots ahead. “Indians! Indians!” shouted one driver to another and then the wagons were quickly formed in a circle, the mules being unhitched and brought to the center of the circle.

Then for the first time I saw the hideous forms of a band of half-naked savages mounted on their ponies in the distance. They were galloping in a circle around us, yelling their war cry, “Hi-yi, Hip-yi, yi.” They fell from their horses before the deadly aim of our men; their bullets came like the angry hum of hornets about our heads. Their numbers increased from over the foothills, whence they first came. There was a look of desperation upon the faces of our men, such as pen can not describe. James Morgan, who was standing near me in the act of reloading his Winchester, suddenly fell nerveless to the ground. Our captain’s voice rang out now and then, “Be careful there, boys; take good aim before you fire.” Two Indians circled nearer than the others. They were lying on their horses’ necks and firing at us while they were at full gallop. I took aim at one and fired; others must have done so at the same time, for both of them fell from their horses. The fight lasted perhaps an hour, when the Indians withdrew to the hills. One of our men lay dead and two were wounded. I went to where the two Indians had fallen. There lay their forms, cold and stiff in death. The sunbeams were slanting over those snow covered hills. I felt an unaccountable terror as I looked upon them and

the crimson snow which their life blood had stained. The raw north wind seemed to pierce my very heart. Night was coming on, and with it all the horrors of uncertainty. I lingered about the spot for some time, with a dreadful fascination mingled with terror. Human life had perished there; human souls had gone into the uncertainty of an unknown beyond. With my brain reeling with excitement of the day and sickened in heart, I returned to our wagons, where some of us walked outside the circle throughout the long watches of that wintry night.

When the morning sun rose clear above the snow-covered hills, we wrapped the body of the dead teamster in his blankets, and again took up the toilsome drive. The Indians had retired from the fight, probably for the reason that they saw another outfit of wagons coming far down on the plain. The wagons overtook us about 9 o'clock, and after that we had no more trouble with Indians.

Deadwood, at that time, was like all the frontier mining towns. Saloons, gambling houses and dance halls comprised the business of the place. The gulch was dotted with miners' cabins and dug-outs. There were a few stores, restaurants, and a bank, but as yet the town had not started a "regular" graveyard. The news of our fight soon spread up and down the gulch and many were the willing hands that offered their services in the burial of James Morgan, our teamster. They dug his grave on the hillside, where afterwards more than five thousand men were buried. They either fell from the deadly pneumonia, or from the bullets of each other in quarrels. When Morgan's grave was ready to be filled, some one suggested that a chapter from the Bible should be read, but none of us knew where to ask for one, in all Deadwood. Presently a boy said, "I will find one," and he soon returned with a young lady, who proved to be his sister. He handed the book to our bronzed captain of the mule train; he shook his head. Then someone asked her to read it. When she began, those grim frontiersmen bared their heads, and I fancied I saw the tears gather on more than one bronzed cheek as she knelt upon the frozen clay and offered up a prayer for the dead teamster's soul.

The adventurous spirits from far and wide were flocking to this new Eldorado. Wild Bill, the famous scout, Captain Jack Crawford, Texas Jack, and other equally noted scouts and Indian fighters, were there. They sought gold and adventure alike, only for the pleasure it would bring.

III
BLACK HILLS DAYS

I knew Doc Kinnie was not a civil engineer, but he had a plan which looked good, and as I was almost broke, I consented to help him work it. There was a horseshoe bend in the creek which might be drained for placer mining by tunneling through in a narrow place. I talked up the project with some of the boys, and they agreed to dig the tunnel while Doc did the civil engineering. Day after day they dug and blasted rock, while Doc stood around looking wise and encouraging the work. In about a month they were practically through to the other side of the creek. Then they began to call for Doc's measurements and calculations. "Never mind, you are not through yet," he would say, "I will let you know when to stop digging."

"But we can hear the water rushing," they would say.

"You fellows can't tell anything about it. Sounds of rushing water are always carried a long distance by rocks."

"But we are not in the rocks now, we are in a clay bank."

"Clay does the same thing; keep on digging."

Two days later and there was a commotion at the lower end of the tunnel, when a full head of water came rushing out, bearing with it men, wheelbarrows and shovels. They were nearly drowned, and half frozen, when they scrambled out of the creek. Mad as hornets, they sought their civil engineer, but he was nowhere to be found. The work was done. The prospects were good. When their clothes were dried and they had eaten dinner, they laughed over the incident and pardoned Doc's miscalculation. With pan and rocker, we now began to work the dry horseshoe bend. Nuggets weighing an ounce, and from that on down to the size of a pin head, were found. The fellows were honest, and made an even divide all around at the cleanup each night. In two months we had taken out over $6,000, and then sold the claim to a placer mining company for $18,000 in cash – $3,000 apiece for the six of us. In two months we were all broke; the money had gone into wildcat speculation in mines. But who cared? Were the hills not full of gold, and all to be had for the digging?

I joined a party who went thirty miles to the northwest in search of new diggings, and the most that came of it was a laughable incident.

The great hills rose on every side, frowning darkly in the dense forest of pine. Our voices echoed from rock to rock, as we sat one noon-day about our camp-fire, talking of possible finds, when, bareheaded, with hair disheveled, blood flowing from a wound in his face, and a wildcat held to his chest in close embrace, Mark Witherspoon rushed into camp, yelling at the top of his voice. He was prospecting in a ravine a mile distant, when he saw something waving in the underbrush. Thinking it was mountain grouse, he advanced in hope of getting a shot, when a huge wildcat sprang at his throat.

As the forepaws of the animal struck his chest, he let fall his gun, and hugged the beast with all his strength to his chest with both arms. The head of the wildcat was drawn slightly backward by the tense pressure of his arms upon its back, while the claws were rendered practically powerless by the close embrace. So quick had been Witherspoon's action at the start, that he received only a slight wound on the face. In this predicament, he started on a run for the camp. He did not dare to let go and the wildcat wouldn't, so both held fast. The cat glared up fiercely at him with its yellow eyes, while its hot breath came into his face at every leap. Whenever the vicious beast made the slightest struggle, Witherspoon hugged the tighter, fearing at every step he might stumble and the deadly teeth be fixed in his throat.

In this manner he reached camp, and it was some seconds before he could make us understand that the cat was terribly alive, and that he was not holding it because he wanted to, or racing for the sake of the exercise. Finally one of the men despatched the animal with his revolver, and, to

Witherspoon's inexpressible relief, the dead beast dropped from his arms. Before the boys got through telling the story afterwards, they made it out that Witherspoon had run nine miles with the wildcat.

Soon after our return to Deadwood, a man in an almost fainting condition came into town and announced that his companion had either been killed or captured by the Indians. A party was organized and was led by Wild Bill. It was not long before we came upon a scene that told what the poor fellow's fate had been, much plainer than words are able to portray. We found his blackened trunk fastened to a tree with rawhide thongs, while all around were evidences of the great torture which had been inflicted ere the fagots had been lighted.

When brought face to face with this, I stowed two cartridges safely away in my vest pocket, resolved to suicide rather than to fall into the hands of such miscreants. Then came the news of the Custer massacre. For many days afterward we patrolled the mountain tops, and kept bivouac fires lighted by night, as signals.

IV
THE CUSTER MASSACRE

The arrival at Fort Lincoln, on the Missouri River, of a party of Indians in 1874, who offered gold dust for sale, was the beginning of the cause that led to the great Sioux war in 1876, in which General Custer and his devoted soldiers were massacred on the Little Big Horn River on the 25th day of June of that year.

The gold which the Indians brought to Fort Lincoln, they said came from the Black Hills, where the gulches abounded with the yellow dust. The consequent rush of white men into that region was, in fact, a violation of the treaty of 1867, when Congress sent out four civilians and three army officers as peace commissioners, who gave to the old Dakota tribes, as the Sioux were then called, the vast area of land bounded on the south by Nebraska, on the east by the Missouri River, on the west by the 104th Meridian, and on the north by the 46th Parallel. They had the absolute pledge of the United States that they should be protected in the peaceable possession of the country set aside for them. This territory was as large as the state of Michigan, and of its interior little or nothing was known except to a few hardy traders and trappers prior to 1874.

With the advent of the gold seekers in 1875 the Indians saw that the greedy encroachments of the white man were but faintly resisted by the United States government, and that sooner or later it meant the total occupation of their country, and their own annihilation, and so with the traditional wrongs of their forefathers ever in mind, they determined to make a stand for their rights.

The scene of General Terry's campaign against these Indians lay between the Big Horn and Powder Rivers, and extended from the Big Horn Mountains northerly to beyond the Yellowstone River. A region barren and desolate, volcanic, broken and ofttimes almost impassable, jagged and precipitous cliffs, narrow and deep arroyas filled with massive boulders, alkali water for miles, vegetation of cactus and sagebrush – all these represent feebly the country where Custer was to contend against the most powerful, warlike and best armed body of savages on the American continent.

An army in this trackless waste was at that time at the mercy of guides and scouts. The sun rose in the east and shone all day upon a vast expanse of sagebrush and grass and as it set in the west cast its dull rays into a thousand ravines that neither man nor beast could cross; to go north or south could only be decided by personal effort. An insignificant turn to the wrong side of a little knoll or buffalo wallow would ofttimes lead the scout into ravine after ravine, or over bluff after bluff, until at last he would stand on the edge of a yawning canon, hundreds of feet in depth and with perpendicular walls. Nothing was left for him to do but to retrace his steps and find an accessible route.

Custer had been ordered by General Terry to proceed with his command, numbering 28 officers and 747 soldiers, up the Rosebud River, and if the trail of the Indians was not found at a given point, to then follow the course of the Little Big Horn. These instructions were followed, and on the 24th of June he turned westerly toward the Little Big Horn, where a large Indian village was discovered some fifteen miles distant. The trail they were on led down the stream at a point south of the villages. Major Reno with three companies was ordered to follow the trail, cross the stream and charge down its north bank, while Captain F. W. Benteen was sent with three companies to make a detour south of Reno.

The point where the little armies separated, many of their men never to meet again, the river wound its silvery course for miles in the narrow valley as far as the eye could reach; its banks were fringed with the elm and cottonwood, whose foliage hid from view a thousand Indian tepees beyond the river. Sharp eyes had noted the advancing columns, and quick brains had already begun to plan their destruction.

That night the three divisions made a silent bivouac beneath the stars which must have looked down like pitying eyes.

In the grey light of the morning, and with noiseless call to boots and saddles, they were stealing on toward the foe.

Reno proceeded to the river and crossed it, charged down its west banks and met with little resistance at first. Soon, however, he was attacked by such numbers that he was obliged to dismount his men, shelter his horses in a strip of woods and fight on foot. Finally, finding he would soon be surrounded, he again mounted his men, charged the enemy and recrossing the river, took a naturally fortified position on the top of a bluff.

Benteen, returning from his detour, discovered his position and drove away the Indians and joined him. Soon the mule train was also within his lines, making seven companies under his command.

Reno engaged the Indians soon after noon on the 25th and did some hard fighting until the evening of the 26th, when the enemy withdrew. After congratulations with their reinforcements the question uppermost in every mind was: “Where is Custer?”

They had heard heavy firing on the afternoon of the 25th and saw the black cloud of smoke settle like a pall over the valley, but Reno had his wounded to care for, and to have gone to the relief of Custer would have left them to be butchered. Neither could he divide his command, for such a course would have been suicidal.

Meanwhile the supply steamer, Far West, with General Terry on board, steamed up the Yellowstone on June 23rd and overtook Gibbon’s troops near the mouth of the Big Horn on the morning of the 24th. At 5 o’clock on the morning of the 25th, Gibbon’s column was marching over a country so rugged as to tax the endurance of the men to the utmost, and the infantry halted for the night, meantime General Terry pushed ahead with the cavalry and a light mountain battery. On the morning of the 26th, some Crow Indians reported to General Terry that a great fight had been going on the day before, and later scouts reported that a dense, heavy smoke was resting over the southern horizon far ahead, and in a short time it became visible to all.

So broken was the country and progress became so difficult that it was not until the morning of the 27th that Terry’s relief column found the trail of Custer.

They had passed cautiously through a dense grove of trees and the head of the column entered upon a beautiful level meadow about a mile in width extending along the west side of the stream and skirted east and west by high bluffs. It was apparent at sight that this meadow had been the site of an immense Indian village and showed signs of hasty abandonment. Hundreds of lodge poles with finely dressed buffalo robes, dried meats, utensils and Indian trinkets were left behind. In a large tepee still standing were the stiffened forms of ten dead Indians. Every step of the march from here on showed signs of a desperate struggle. The dead bodies of Indian horses were seen; here and there were cavalry equipments, and soon the bodies of dead troopers, beside their frantic and still struggling, wounded horses gave evidence of a disastrous battle, and farther on was revealed a scene calculated to appall the stoutest heart. Here was a skirmish line marked by rows of slain with heaps of empty cartridge shells before them, and their officers lay dead just behind them. Still farther on men lay in winrows, their faces still drawn with the awful desperation of a struggle unto death; pulseless hands still clasped blood-stained sabres. Near the highest point of the hill lay the body of General Custer. There was a cordon of his brave defenders dead about him; his long hair was clotted with blood, while a great wound in his breast told how the brave soul had gone somewhere out into the wide waste and hush of eternity. Near him lay the body of his brother, Captain Custer, and some distance away another brother, Boston Custer, and his nephew, Armstrong Reed, a youth of 19. All were scalped except General Custer and Mark Kellogg, a correspondent of the New York Herald.

When the fight was at the hardest a Crow Indian with Custer wrapped himself in a dead Sioux Indian’s blanket and made his escape; as he left the field he saw the squaws and Indian children rifling

the dead of their trinkets and going about with their stone battle axes beating out the brains of the wounded; they danced about over the dead and dying, mutilating their bodies and singing the wild, weird strains of their battle songs.

When the welcome news of relief came to Reno's besieged command, strong men wept like children.

Among the first of his men to search among the fallen for a dead friend was one Charles Wilson, a blue-eyed, beardless trooper, a mere boy whose heart seemed to fairly break as he contemplated what must have been the awful death of his comrades. The man he was seeking was Jim Bristow, a tall, dark private whose last words to the young trooper were:

"Charley, my hour has come. We shall ride into this fight and you will come back alone. I want you to promise to take a little trouble for me when I am gone. You will find her face here in this locket upon my breast. I had thought to some day make her my wife, and that thought has gladdened my lonely life. Write to her, Charley, and tell her where is my resting place and that my spirit will wait for hers in that borderland twixt heaven and earth."

The boy answered, and his voice was low with pain. Just then the bugle sounded, and for an instant eye met eye and hand touched hand, and Jim Bristow rode away with Custer's column. This was the man young Wilson was searching for. The dead were so frightfully mutilated, their bodies bloated, blackened and swollen by the hot rays of the sun that they were buried as speedily as possible, on June 28th. Major Reno and the survivors of his regiment performed the last sad rites over their comrades and then a general retreat to the mouth of the Big Horn River was ordered.

V
THE SHADOW SCOUT

The bugle notes had died away, the cloud of battle smoke lifted from the valley and peaceful starlight shone over the rugged hills when a shadow crept out of a deep ravine and skulked into the valley of death and began dealing out retribution. Chief Dull Knife had much to say about it when he surrendered. He spoke in whispers when he referred to it, and he looked suddenly around, as if he feared it was softly stealing upon him to stab him in the back. Chief Gall's braves had something to say about it when they surrendered, and when white men asked them who or what the shadow was, they shook their heads and whispered:

"We kill 'em all, but yet there is one left. It is a white man; there is blood on his face and clothing; he carries a sabre and two revolvers, and the night wind blows his long black hair over his shoulders. It is a spirit sent by the Great Manitou to watch over the graves of the white soldiers."

White men saw the shadow, hunters, trappers and scouts who built their camp fires near that valley, through which the big mountain wolf skulked and prowled all night long, had felt the mysterious presence of the shadow or had seen it. They fled from their blankets at its soft step, and they had fired at it, and seen it glide off unharmed.

It was not a shadow of sentiment, but a being who sought vengeance for the butchery of the little band of heroes, for the brave comrades who grouped themselves about the noble Custer and fought to the death.

When the soldiers moved out of the valley, leaving so many graves behind them, the wolves rushed out from canon, ravine and den, to dig up the fresh earth and mutilate the dead. The shadow was there – a solitary, mysterious and vigilant sentinel to guard those sacred mounds. It screamed and gestured at the fierce beasts, it fired upon them with rifle and revolver and struck them with bright, keen sabre. The wolves ran here and there, from grave to grave, gnashing their teeth in anger, but the shadow closely pursued them. They formed in groups in the midnight darkness and waited for the shadow to tire out and fall asleep or go away, but it paced up and down over the graves, vigilant and unwearied, and daylight came to hurry the wild beasts to their lairs till another night.

Hunters and scouts had seen the sentinel-beat among the graves in the light of noon-day, when men could not be mistaken. The path ran from grave to grave, winding about to take in every one, and then it ran to the river and disappeared in a ledge of rocks. Scouts said it was a path beaten by human feet. The Indians said that a shadow or spirit alone could remain in that lonely spot, having only the company of wild beasts and the graves of the lonely dead.

Once when Red Cloud and a trusty few were scouting to learn the whereabouts of their white foes, they encamped in the valley for the night. The shadow stole among them as they slept, and when the fierce scream aroused the band from their slumbers, five of the red men had been murdered, each throat slashed across with a keen blade. The shadow stood and jeered at the living, who huddled together like frightened children. When they fled for their lives it pursued them with drawn saber, and one of them had a scar on his shoulder to prove he had been struck with a blade. Next day when a full band of Indians rode into the valley to solve the mystery and secure revenge, they saw no living thing. The bodies of the dead warriors were cut and hacked and gashed. Five of the poor cavalrymen whose brains had been beaten out had been revenged.

Before the crown of a single grave had sunk down, Crazy Horse started to cross the valley at midnight with his lodges. The shadow confronted his band and mocked them, and as the red men hurried along in the darkness, vividly recalling the mad charge of the cavalry, the strange shadow skulked along with the column and fired shot after shot into the band. They fired at it and rushed out to capture it, but it disappeared, as shadows do. Two squaws, a child or two, an old man and two

warriors fell by the bullets which the shadow fired. From that time the red men avoided the valley as white men avoid a pest. They would not cross it or skirt it, even at high noon when the sunshine beat down upon the graves.

Texas Jack, the famous scout in the employ of the army, and a companion, in the late autumn of 1876 crossed the lonely battleground and halted long enough to see that the graves had not been disturbed. They saw the path of the sentinel leading from grave to grave. They saw the skeletons of the red men slain by the shadow. They saw the shadow itself. They were leaving the valley when their ears were greeted by a wild laugh, and from a bed of rank grass and dry weeds a quarter of a mile away they saw the shadow beckon them to come forward. The shadow was a man – a tall, gaunt, heavy bearded and long-haired human being dressed in rags that once had been an army uniform. He held up in the air and shook at them a carbine and a sabre, and when they galloped away, he sent a leaden ball whistling over their heads.

This was the last time this trooper was seen alive, no doubt he was bereft of reason, and believed himself called upon to avenge his comrades and so lurked in the valley, living like the wild beasts around him and missing no chance to strike a blow.

Some years later, when peace was restored and Crow Dog with his son and two warriors were hunting buffalo on the Little Big Horn, they were themselves pursued by a hostile party of Crow Indians. They took refuge among the shelving rocks along the river. Far into the deep recesses, where the waves and winds for centuries had hollowed out a chamber, they found a skeleton. By its side lay a carbine, two revolvers and a long cavalry sabre; about the neck was a delicately wrought chain with a gold locket attached. This and some other trinkets they carried away. After a lapse of fourteen years from the time Custer and his soldiers fell, these same Sioux Indians were again on the war path in the Bad Lands of South Dakota. Custer's old regiment was there, too. Many of them had fought with Reno and Benteen on that fateful 25th of June, and by the chance of war it was a part of their command under Colonel Forsythe who fought the battle of Wounded Knee. Among them was Charles Wilson, the beardless boy, who rode away with Reno, whilst his friend Jim Bristow followed Custer. No longer a boy, but a bronzed and bearded soldier who had stood the chance of fate in many an Indian fight.

After the battle, when they were gathering up the dead Indians frozen stiff by a four days' blizzard which raged with wild fury over the plain, there was found about the neck of a young warrior a locket and chain. Wilson curiously examined the trophy and found upon opening it, the photograph of Jim Bristow on one side and upon the other the sweet face of the girl who had promised to be his wife. The young brave from whose neck the locket was taken was found to be the son of Crow Dog, who had married into Big Foot's band, and this blood-stained bauble, which had at last found its way into the hands of Bristow's friend as he had intended when they parted, and all the circumstances connected with it, revealed at last the identity of the shadow-scout who kept the midnight vigils over the graves of Custer's heroic dead; who when the chill blasts of the northern winter had come, had crept into his lair among the rocks and far from the cottage where the voice of love had pleaded so long for his return, with the smoke of battle still before his eyes, and with the shouts and shots of that dreadful day still ringing in his ears, had died alone.

Wilson stood by my side a week later as a heavy army wagon rolled into Pine Ridge agency bearing the body of Sitting Bull, the great war chief, who had directed and led the fight on Custer's men. When the wagon halted, Wilson drew the canvas cover from the dead chief's form and gazed long at the bronzed, cruel face, which even in death, was magnificent in the strong drawn lines of unrelenting hatred. There was a cold glint of light in Wilson's eye as he took one last satisfied look at this dead monster of the plains and turned away to keep his word given fourteen years before to his comrade – Jim Bristow – the last survivor of that awful massacre on the Little Big Horn.

VI
INDIAN FIGHT IN COLORADO

Old "Daddy" Stephenson sat in the shade of the ranch house, squinting his one eye toward the north, the other eye having been shot out a few years before. His squaw was boiling the leg of an antelope in a pot that swung under a tripod of sticks nearby, when "Doc" Kinnie and Charley Hayes rode up.

"Here's yer Injun," shouted "Doc," as he untied his lariat from a blanket and let the bloody head of an Indian roll on the ground near Stephenson's feet.

The old squaw came over, took a look, and, uttering a long, doleful sound like the cry of a wounded wolf, ran inside and grabbing her blanket, started for the hills, chanting a dismal wail peculiar to her people when in distress.

"You fellows have played billy hell; you've killed my brother-in-law," calmly remarked Stephenson as he refilled his pipe and again cast his one eye toward the north.

"And the best thing you can do is to hit the trail while you are wearing your scalps," he continued after a pause of several minutes.

At that moment the old man's half Indian boy and myself came up from the corral.

This incident furnished the cause for an ugly Indian fight which occurred on Rock creek, northeastern Colorado, on June 12, 1877.

"Doc" Kinnie, Charley Hayes and myself had come from Deadwood to Cheyenne as an escort for a stage coach carrying the Wells-Fargo express, when Stephenson offered us better pay to work on his cattle ranch.

Four days before the incident of the bloody head, Stephenson had missed seven head of cattle and had struck the trail of one Indian who had driven them off. He rode to the ranch house in high rage and offered Kinnie and Hayes one hundred dollars if they would recover the cattle and kill the Indian. In five minutes they were in their saddles riding to the point where Stephenson indicated the trail. I did not join them, as Stephenson insisted that two were enough. Kinnie and Hayes had no difficulty in following the trail of the stolen cattle and were close on them the next evening. Not caring for a night attack they went into camp, eating their bacon raw rather than make a fire. They were in their saddles at the first grey streak of dawn and within an hour came upon two Indians eating their morning meal in a canon, while the missing cattle were grazing five hundred yards beyond.

It was a complete surprise to the Indians, and in the melee that followed one of them was killed and the other made his escape. It then became a question of how best to prove to Stephenson that they had killed the Indian without the burden of taking him back.

Kinnie, who had been a medical student in Ohio before a certain escapade had caused him to emigrate to the west, suggested the amputation of the dead Indian's head as the handiest way, and also suggested that they keep quiet as to the Indian who got away, lest the old man should only want to pay one-half of the promised reward.

Hayes stood guard while Kinnie cut and twisted the Indian's neck until the head separated from the body. He then rolled it in the Indian's blanket and carried it on the pommel of his saddle until the afternoon, when he rolled the ghastly trophy out on the ground in front of Stephenson and his squaw wife.

"Seems to me if I had your kind of relations I would pay a better price and get them all killed off," said Hayes, as he returned from the corral.

This remark nettled Stephenson, who smoked his pipe awhile in silence. He then grew angry, ordered the three of us to hit the trail for Fort Morgan at once, saying that two thousand Cheyenne Indians would be down upon us as soon as his squaw could communicate with them. This we refused

to do, as neither Kinnie nor Hayes, nor their horses were in condition for flight, besides the old man had not settled and we rightly guessed that he would like to get out of paying the one hundred dollars, as well as preserve his good standing with the Indians.

Later in the evening he was caught hiding a quantity of Winchester cartridges. That settled him. We knew then he wanted to see us slain, while he would endeavor to lay blame upon us. In five minutes he was bound hand and foot and laid upon a corner in the ranch house upon some blankets. The Indian boy was also bound and thrown into another corner for safe keeping. The log ranch house was then loop-holed and our horses were brought inside, also a quantity of hay, wood and water.

We were prepared for a siege. Kinnie and Hayes lay down to sleep, while I kept the first watch of the night. All light was extinguished and I constantly went from loop-hole to loop-hole, peering into the darkness for the approaching foe, while the old man lay upon his blankets, swearing like the old sinner he was. I lay down for some sleep in the after part of the night, leaving the others to watch.

It was daylight when I was awakened by rifle shots. They came from a hill upon whose crest rode forty Cheyenne warriors, bedecked in feathers and war paint and stripped for battle.

We made no reply to their shots, but led them to believe by our silence that the ranch house was deserted.

After pow-wowing for an hour, six of them began advancing cautiously. We waited they were within a hundred feet of the house, when our rifles emptied three of the saddles, and two more were riderless before the sixth retreating Indian reached the main party, which by that time was in commotion and had begun a circling ride around the ranch house to prevent our escape.

For the remainder of the day they kept well out of reach of our rifles, but when night had gathered they stole away their dead and wounded under cover of darkness. The next morning there was no sign of them. We were not to be caught, however, by such a ruse, having played the same game ourselves the morning before. We felt sure they would be reinforced within two days with an overwhelming force that could easily storm the house and tear it down over our heads.

Our only hope was to get away, and we held a council of war in whispers. The old man and boy had been released at intervals to relieve the pain of the cords, but not a word was said to them of our plans. When darkness again came we saddled our horses, stored a quantity of provisions in our blankets, strapped them behind our saddles and filled our canteens with water.

The Indian boy was then liberated and given these instructions:

“Creep along the banks of the creek until you come to the lone cottonwood tree, one and one-half miles distant, then fire six shots from a revolver. This will draw the Indians to you, when you can explain that we have compelled you to do this. If you fail to fire the shots we will kill the old man and charge through the Indian lines anyway.”

This command was delivered to the boy in a manner calculated to impress him with the earnestness of the threat, although it was not our intention to harm Stephenson, and yet the muzzle of a Winchester close to his head caused him to earnestly implore the boy to faithfully do as he was told.

From then the minutes dragged like hours. We watched anxiously from our loop-holes for the flash from the young Indian’s revolver. Twenty minutes passed, then thirty, and no shot was fired. Was he playing us false, or had he been captured by the Cheyennes, who in turn might set a trap for us. Thirty-six minutes passed, then a spark flashed in the distance and we counted six shots. This was the critical moment and every ear was listening for the sounds of horses’ hoofs. A few moments later we heard them, as they came out of the ravines. We saw them, too, as they skirted along the dim sky line. We waited a few minutes to give them time to reach the cottonwood tree and then led our horses out and rode rapidly away to the northwest, knowing that the clatter of our horses’ hoofs would mingle with those of the Indian ponies and might readily be taken for those of their own horsemen.

Our rifles were in our saddle holsters and our heavy revolvers were in our hands, as we rode in silence. Kinnie was in the lead, while Hayes and I rode behind side by side. Not a word was spoken for more than five hours, until day was breaking, and by the red glow of the eastern sky we saw away

down the plains the camp fires and white tents of a troop of cavalry from Fort Morgan. Kinnie burst out into a long, hearty peal of laughter.

"What the deuce has struck you now?" asked Hayes.

"I forgot to give daddy any change back," he replied, as he held up a well-filled pocketbook.

VII
A COWBOY DUEL

Tom Rawlins rolled out of his blankets from under the chuck wagon with the remark, “I suppose a man shouldn’t be late at his own funeral,” and walking over to the camp-fire, lit his pipe by the glowing embers.

Day was breaking, and by a solemn compact entered into with “Kid” Anderson the night before, he would be dead at sunrise.

A month before they had exchanged shots in a dance house in Ogallala, after quarreling about a woman. The two cowboys met in North Platte the day before, for the first time since the affair, and each swore the other should die.

Many of us who were friends of the two men divided into factions and crowded about the principals. The declaration of war having been made on both sides, neither could withdraw without losing caste, as such was the custom in the 70’s among the wild fellows of the plains, who put a cheap estimate on human life. Rawlins had seen four years’ service in the Confederate army, and at the close of the war had followed General Joe Shelby into Mexico and fought under the banner of Maxmilian. When Bazaine withdrew the French troops he secured his discharge and returned to Texas wearing the honorable scars of battle. “Kid” Anderson was inured to the life on the plains from his youth and had been in many an ugly Indian fight.

Someone suggested a duel, and no Indian ever conceived a more fiendish plan. Two Colt revolvers with handles exactly alike, one loaded, the other unloaded, were placed under a blanket with handles protruding. A silver dollar was tossed into the air, heads to win, tails to lose. The winner was to have the choice of the revolvers. If he drew the loaded one, he had the right to shoot the loser, who was to stand ten paces away with the unloaded weapon in his hand. Rawlins won the choice of revolvers and drew the empty one.

Anderson then spent a month’s wages buying drinks for the boys, and kindly gave Rawlins until sunrise the next morning to live. Rawlins accepted his fate with stoicism and returned to camp, rolled in his blankets and slept soundly. Inured to danger for years, he knew sooner or later the end would come, and so gave himself but little concern about it.

It was the spring round up and there were fifteen outfits in camp within two miles of North Platte, and the round up would begin as soon as two more outfits arrived.

The news of the plan and chance of fate by which Rawlins was to lose his life had spread from one camp-fire to another during the night, and created an intense excitement.

Rawlins was standing by the fire, when I. P. Olive, one of the largest owners on the range, rode up.

“Look here, Rawlins, suppose you had won, would you shoot Anderson down like a dog this morning?”

“Certainly I would,” he replied, “and he would not be the first dog I have killed, either.”

“This thing cannot go on,” said Olive, decisively. “If you men have got to kill each other you must do it in a civilized fashion. Your plan is too cold-blooded; it has given the shivers to the entire camp.” He then rode over to the “Double Bar” camp, where Anderson lay sleeping.

“Get up from there, you wild ass of the plains,” he shouted. “Rawlins is waiting to be killed. Are you going to do it?”

Anderson was on his feet in an instant, facing Olive in the dim light of the camp-fire.

“It is none of your business what I intend to do!” and his yellow eyes gleamed dangerously as his hand stole to the handle of his sixshooter. Olive was a dangerous man himself and had a record

of killing four men in Texas. He saw danger in the manner he had approached Anderson, and using a more conciliatory tone, said:

"Give Rawlins a show for his life and we will all think the more of you for it."

Finding the sentiment of others who joined in with Olive strong against him, Anderson yielded to a change. This time the principals were to meet upon the plain a mile from camp, mounted and armed with revolvers. They were to fight within a circle of one hundred yards, outside of which they might retreat, reload and return to the combat.

It was a beautiful morning, all balm and bloom and verdure. The face of the sky was placid and benignant. The sun rose like a great golden disc on the purple and pearl of the distant sky line and clouds, airy and gossamer, floated away to the west.

The men stole away from camp in twos and threes, and were gathering on a knoll that overlooked the battle ground, while Rawlins and Anderson were selecting their horses from the remudas. Rawlins chose a Texas mustang, fleet of foot and supple as an Arab. Anderson chose a stocky built animal and appeared altogether indifferent as to any of his qualities. The two men were stationed at the edge of the circle formed of lariats with their backs toward each other.

Olive gave the word, "Ready!" The men grasped their bridle reins tightly and settled themselves in their stirrups.

"Wheel!" The trained horses turned as if upon pivots.

"Fire!" rang out Olive's clear voice of command.

Anderson rode forward a few paces and stopped. Rawlins dug his spurs into his animal's side, and came on with a rush, firing his revolver as he came. Four shots sped harmlessly over the plain.

The men were within a few feet of each other when Anderson fired his first shot. Rawlins reeled in his saddle a second, grasped the pommel, and bringing down his revolver sent a bullet through the brain of Anderson.

Both men fell from their horses, and there were two dead faces in the grass.

The horses dashed wildly away, with blood upon their trappings and sleek hides.

Two graves were dug, and the funeral was over before the sun had dried the dew upon the grass.

There was a girl in Nebraska without a lover, and a widowed mother in Texas without a son.

VIII
PLEASANT HALFACRE'S REVENGE

I was with a party of cowboys twenty-five miles west of Ogallala, Nebraska, in 1878, when a huge iron box was found in the sands of the Platte River by one of our party, which recalled a tradition of tragedy and revenge, unequaled in the annals of the west.

In one of those great bends of the Ohio River, opposite Three Mile Island and below the town of Newburgh, in Southern Indiana, there lived some forty years ago, a man who furnished cause for which his neighbors with one accord, joined in deporting him.

Pleasant Halfacre occupied a cabin in a small clearing, which opened on the south, facing the bayou which separated the island from the mainland on the Indiana side. On all other sides for a mile or more was a dense forest, where great hickory, pecan and beech trees furnished the winter provender for the grey squirrels, raccoons and opossums. In some places the woodland was low and swampy; there were great ponds where the water lilies grew and in winter the wild duck and brant paused long in their southern flight to feed. The bayou abounded in catfish and silvery perch.

In this little oasis in a desert of toilers, Halfacre had lived for nearly a quarter of a century. His wife, a big buxom woman, was the mother of eight tow-headed children who, when anyone chanced to come, acted like scared squirrels. They would scamper away into the woods and coyly peep at the stranger from behind big trees, while the dogs kept up an incessant barking.

In summer, the woman and children would cultivate the small clearing with hoes, while Plez would catch catfish and sometimes work in the harvest field a few days for some neighbor. This he did only when dire necessity compelled. The very sight of an agricultural implement, he declared, would make him sweat. The man loved nature and in his simplicity, would go into raptures over the coloring of the gorgeous sunset, or wade about the ponds for hours for water lilies, or the great blue, bell-shaped flowers which grew upon the wild flag and calimus stalks.

He would bedeck his ragged garments with these flowers and, with a string of catfish, would emerge, a gorgeous spectacle, from the forest on his way to the Evansville market.

In winter his children would gather pecans and hickory nuts, while he would take the dogs and hunt raccoons and opossums, the meat of which furnished the family food, while the pelts brought a small price at the market.

In all the forty years of his life, Halfacre had not been twenty miles away from his home. He could neither read nor write and the world to him ended at the blue rim of the northern horizon beyond the cypress hills. The man was totally devoid of any sense of responsibility, either to his Creator, his neighbors or himself. Once when the good preacher, who held services at the "Epworth meeting house" twice a month, reproved him for some misdemeanor by threatening him with the hereafter, he replied, "The devil can't inflict any more punishment on me than I can stand, if he does, he will kill me." With this logic to soothe his conscience, and his love of idleness thoroughly gratified, Halfacre was very well contented.

For a long time the neighbors, for many miles around, had been missing articles of small value, the loss of which caused much delay in their work as well as vexation and annoyance.

A farmer would be all ready to go to market and when he came to hitch up, he would find the coupling bolt to his wagon gone, or perhaps the singletree would be missing; or if ploughing in the field he would take the horses out to where he had left the plow the night before and find that the clevis or some bolts had been stolen. The good matrons would have their dinner horns or bells taken away at night. Nothing of any considerable value was stolen and no organized search was made until one day, Farmer Beasley was floating down the bayou in a dinkey boat when he came upon one of Plez Halfacre's children sitting on the bank eating mush and milk out of the blue flowered

shaving mug which old Tippecanoe Harrison had presented to his grandfather, while another one of the Halfacre children sat upon a log, making a paw-paw whistle with his ancestor's razor.

This was too much for Farmer Beasley. He turned the dinkey boat around, paddled back to Newburgh and swore out a search warrant for the Halfacre cabin.

In the loft they found a collection of articles which was a wonder to behold. There were grindstones, iron wedges for splitting rails, harrow teeth and a miscellaneous lot of plunder, enough to start a second hand store.

The word was passed and the next day the farmers began to assemble. They came by the score; some in wagons bringing the entire family and their dinners, and the day was spent identifying stolen articles.

Meantime, while all this was going on Pleasant Halfacre sat to one side, looking the very picture of dejection. A council was held and it was decided that if they sent Plez to jail, the county would have to support his family, and as taxes were already high, it was decided to deport him, his family and chattels.

Nearby, a house boat was found, which the owner offered to sell for twenty dollars. It was purchased and Halfacre, his family and effects were placed aboard and warned never to return, whereupon the boat was shoved out into the stream.

It was a sad blow and one the least expected. "To leave the cabin and go away where he should never again see the water lilies, out into the world where he just didn't know nobody." This was the burden of his lamentations as he sat upon the bow of the boat and wept.

Some of the women cried softly when they saw such evidence of his grief and love of home, humble and poverty stricken as it was, and they rode home in silence, wishing to forget the scene of the grief stricken man, who had said the birds would never sing so sweetly to him again.

When the word went around a day or two later, that Plez and his family were again living in the cabin, there was a general sigh of relief, and when the preacher spoke of forgiving "Those who trespass against us," there were some heartfelt Amens that went up from the holy corner of the "Epworth Church."

Winter had come and the Halfacres were discussed by the good dames who gathered at each others homes at quilting parties, and many were the articles of outgrown clothing that were sent to the destitute cabin.

There was a January thaw and the ice in the river was breaking up, when one morning in the grey dawn a barge came drifting down the stream amid the cakes of ice that were piling high upon the head of the island. A man was standing upon the deck, frantically calling for help, for it was certain the barge would be crushed in the great pack of ice when it struck the head of the island.

A crowd had followed along the shore, but none seemed to know what to do or to have the courage to venture to the man's rescue.

Suddenly Plez Halfacre was seen to launch a skiff from among a clump of willows and standing on the bow, fought his way through the ice floes with an oar, rescued the man from his perilous position and landed safely below the head of the island.

The barge was lost and Plez became the hero of the hour.

The rescued man proved to be a wealthy coal mine owner from the neighborhood of Cannelton, and in his gratitude some days later he presented Halfacre with a cheque for $5,000.

Again a pressure of the neighborhood was brought to bear, and Halfacre emigrated to the west. He started alone with his family from Omaha in a prairie schooner, intending to settle in the neighborhood of Denver. When twenty-five miles west of Ogallala he left his family in camp one afternoon and wandered some miles away over the plain in search of antelope.

When he returned some hours later he found his wife and children slain by the Indians and their mutilated bodies lying about the smoldering ruins of his wagon. The horses had been driven away.

Wild with grief and rage, he did the best he could in burying his dead, and then made his way back to Omaha. He met with much sympathy from the pioneers along the route, but for this he seemed to care but little. He went about in a gloomy, abstracted way that caused people to say he was losing his mind.

One day he appeared at a blacksmith shop in Omaha, and ordered a big wagon box made of plow steel, which he paid for in advance. When it was completed he loaded it upon a wagon and covered it with a white cover, until it looked like an ordinary prairie schooner. Into this he loaded a barrel for water and provisions enough to last for six months. He also stored in the iron box, a large quantity of ammunition, with two or three rifles and revolvers. The sides, bottom and top of the box were loopholed, protected with iron slides.

When all was ready he purchased horses and drove to the place near the Platte river, where his family had been slain. Here he picketed his horses and deliberately built a camp-fire. He did not have long to wait for results. The Indians saw the smoke, and seeing only one man, they swept down upon his camp. He waited until they were reasonably near and went inside his iron box. When they came to within a few yards, he opened fire from the loop-holes, killing a number of them before they retreated. The Indians could not make out the situation, and that night they crept through the grass and tried to kindle a fire beneath his wagon. Halfacre was alert, and shot them from the bottom loop holes. After two or three assaults, in which they lost many of their number, the Indians went away and ever afterwards avoided the place, as they believed it protected by evil spirits.

Halfacre lived in his wagon for more than a year, making incursions into the Indian camps at night, where his rifle dealt death.

To the Indians, he was an avenging spirit and they spoke of him in whispers. His remains were found some miles away, long afterwards by soldiers, who believed he had frozen to death in a blizzard. The rusted relic on the banks of the Platte River, slowly disappearing beneath the quicksands, was the only memento left of the tragedies there enacted.

IX
CAPTURING WILD HORSES

Lying upon the plain with his shoulder dislocated and his foot tangled up in a lariat, O. E. Kimsey held the head of his fallen horse close to the ground, in No Man's Land, for four hours, to prevent him from rising and dragging him to certain death.

We had gone to No Man's Land, now Beaver county, Oklahoma, in 1887, to capture wild mustangs, to be sold to the ranchmen of Kansas and Colorado. We had become separated in our search for them. Kimsey was far out on the plain when his horse stumbled into a coyote hole and as he fell beneath the horse his shoulder was dislocated. In a moment he realized that his foot was tangled in his lariat, which hung from the pommel of his saddle, with one end tightly fastened there. The horse attempted to rise, but to allow him to do so would mean being dragged to death.

Kimsey threw his uninjured arm over the horse's head and held him down. To call for help was useless in that barren and uninhabited plain, and he could do nothing else but hold the horse's head close to the ground. Night was coming on and he saw the hungry coyotes gathering. His strength was failing as the hours dragged by. He had almost lost all hope when he thought he heard the tramp of a horse's hoofs, and he shouted loud and long. He was right. I was in search of him and came to his rescue.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.