

BUFFALO BILL

THE ADVENTURES OF
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Bill Buffalo
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The Adventures of Buffalo Bill

FOREWORD

With the death of William Frederick Cody, at Denver on January 10, 1917, there passed away the last of that intrepid band of pathfinders who gave their lives to the taming of the West, a gallant company of brave men steadfastly pushing back the frontier year by year and mile by mile, and ceasing from their labors only when the young and vigorous life of the Pacific States had been linked up for all time with the older civilization of the Atlantic seaboard.

The fame of Colonel Cody, or Buffalo Bill as he was popularly called, recalls that of Daniel Boone, Davy Crockett, and Kit Carson, but he cannot be said to rank with those earlier heroes in point of actual national service. He played no large part in the upbuilding of our Continental Empire. Yet he was made of the same stern stuff, and, on his more circumscribed stage, he was a gallant and picturesque figure, a true superman of the brave old days. When, in 1883, Cody gave up his roving life and organized the Wild West show it meant that the Wild West itself was gone for good and all. Together with Boone, Crockett, and Carson his life rounds out the century of continental occupation, counting

from the year Boone crossed the mountains into Kentucky to the final completion of the Union Pacific Railway. Boone was born in Pennsylvania and died in Missouri; Crockett was born west of the Alleghanies, in Tennessee, and died in Texas; Carson and Cody were born west of the Mississippi, and died in Colorado.

Perhaps the most picturesque period in Buffalo Bill's life was his service as a rider in the service of the famous Pony Express just before the Civil War. This was perhaps the most perilous job that a man could undertake, and young Cody was barely fifteen years old. Yet he had had previous experience in Indian fighting and at the age of eleven he had killed his first Indian. Shortly afterward the Civil War began and Cody enlisted in the Union Army, serving as a scout. When the fighting was over he returned to the Far West. The transcontinental railways were in process of construction, a romantic episode in American history fittingly depicted in the glowing pages of Zane Grey's *The U. P. Trail*. The builders of the Kansas Pacific Railroad wanted buffalo meat to feed their laborers and Cody undertook the contract. In eighteen months (1867-68) he killed 4,280 buffaloes, and thereby earned his title of Buffalo Bill.

In 1868 Cody rejoined the army as scout and guide, and quickly made a reputation as a man of infinite endurance and daring. He was attached to General Sheridan's headquarters at Hays City, Kansas; and soon after reporting for duty he learned that the commander wanted a dispatch sent to Fort Dodge, a distance of ninety-five miles. The Indians had recently killed two

or three dispatch riders on this route, and none of the scouts was anxious to take on the job. Even a promised bonus of several hundred dollars found no takers. Cody volunteered and made the dangerous trip in safety. But at Fort Dodge he found that the commanding officer there was very anxious to send dispatches to Fort Larned, and again the regular scouts shunned the task. On went Buffalo Bill to Fort Larned, sixty-five miles farther. About half-way he stopped to water his mule and the animal got away from him. For thirty-five miles Cody trailed the obstinate brute on foot, never quite able to get within clutch of his bridle rein. At daybreak Fort Larned came in sight and the danger from roving Indians was over. "Now, Mr. Mule, it is my turn," exclaimed the exhausted and thoroughly infuriated scout, raising his gun to his shoulder. Like the majority of Government mules he was not easy to kill. He died hard, but he died.

After a few hours' sleep it was necessary to begin the return journey, as answering dispatches had to be sent to General Sheridan. Again the ride was made in safety, and one of the greatest feats in all scout history had been accomplished. It should be explained that, previous to beginning the ride to Fort Dodge, Cody had been in the saddle for twenty hours, covering a distance of 140 miles. His grand total for a period of fifty-eight hours was 365 miles (including thirty-five miles on foot), an average of over six miles an hour.

A little later Cody was appointed chief scout and guide for the Fifth Cavalry in a campaign against the hostile Sioux and

Cheyennes, and he had many narrow escapes from the tight places into which his adventurous disposition was always leading him. He also served as chief scout for the Republican River Expedition of 1869.

While living near Fort McPherson, Nebraska, in 1870, Cody was appointed justice of the peace by General Emory to take care of certain civilian offenders against the common law. Buffalo Bill protested that he knew nothing about law, but General Emory was insistent and Cody went over to North Platte and was sworn in. That very night he was aroused by a man who had a complaint to make. One of his horses had been stolen by the boss of a passing herd, and he wanted a writ of replevin. "I don't know what a replevin is," answered 'Squire Cody, as he took down his old Lucretia rifle and patted it gently, "but I guess this will do as well." In company with the complainant Cody galloped after the cavalcade and soon overtook the offender against the ethical code. At first the boss was defiant, but when he realized who the 'Squire was he quickly weakened. "I didn't care a blank about you being justice of the peace and constable combined," he explained, "but when I found out you were Buffalo Bill it was time to lay down my hand." The 'Squire read the fellow a lecture on the iniquity of horse stealing, collected a fine of one hundred and fifty dollars, reclaimed the animal, and declared that court was adjourned.

In 1872 the Russian Grand Duke Alexis visited this country, and a Far West hunting expedition was arranged in his honor.

Buffalo Bill acted as guide and chief huntsman. The Grand Duke, under Cody's tutelage, succeeded in bagging several handsome heads, and, in token of his appreciation, he presented to Buffalo Bill his almost priceless fur overcoat and a wonderful set of sleeve links and scarfpin studded with diamonds and rubies. In this same year Cody was elected a member of the Nebraska Legislature. Later on he resigned and went to Chicago, where he made his first appearance on the stage as an actor in a play written around himself and entitled, "The Scout of the Plains."

In 1874 Cody acted as guide to a grand hunting party given by General Sheridan to a number of wealthy and distinguished Eastern men. Cody became a great favorite with everybody, and the next winter he went on to New York to visit his new friends. He wore his famous sombrero and his fringed hunting suit of buckskin everywhere, and they created a mild sensation on Broadway and Fifth Avenue. Then he went back to the West and tried the hum-drum life of a farmer and ranchman.

The famous Wild West show was staged for the first time at Omaha on May 17, 1883. It was a tremendous success from the start, and Colonel Cody was besieged with applications from all over the country. He went to England in 1887; royalty patronized this truly original and thrilling entertainment, and Buffalo Bill's fortune was made. In later years several successful European tours were undertaken.

In November, 1911, Colonel Cody announced his retirement. He was then sixty-seven years old and reputed to be worth

\$3,000,000. He went to his ranch at Cody, Wyoming, and tried to settle down. But the old spirit of adventure lured him back to the sawdust arena. This time he was not so fortunate. He lost money on every hand, and finally the celebrated show went under the auctioneer's hammer. Friends came to his rescue, however, and bid in his famous white horse, Ishan, which the Colonel always rode at the head of his roughriders.

The old scout had kept his courage, too, and he announced his intention of trying it again; he even joined a circus company as one of the regular troupe of performers. But his race was run, his day was done. Even his iron constitution had been weakened by the trials and privations of seventy-two years of strenuous life. He had lived up to the very last inch of his allotted span. He had played hard and he had fought hard and in the end he died hard, amazing even his experienced physicians by his extraordinary vitality. The doctors had told him that the end was near, but he only laughed and called for a pack of cards. "You can't kill the old scout," he said, smilingly. "Let's have a game of high-five." Yet even this undaunted spirit was forced to bow to mortal necessity, and a day or two later he relapsed into a state of unconsciousness from which he was never to emerge.

His death attracted the notice of two continents. The newspapers printed columns of obituaries; the State of Colorado ordered a public funeral in his honor; it was the passing of a heroic figure in American annals. All in all, he must rank as the greatest of scouts and the most gallant of Indian fighters. He

never knew fear. His life was in danger hundreds of times, and yet he always had the better of his adversary. He lived a free life among wild surroundings, but he was always to be found on the side of law and order. He was a dead shot, a splendid horseman, and an absolutely fearless fighter. The men who knew him best, including many well-known officers of the army, all united in praising the bravery, honesty, and modesty of this true product of the old wild West. His place can never be filled; he was a relic of the days that are gone, never to return.

THE ADVENTURES OF BUFFALO BILL

I

Crossing the Plains

In the early settlement of Kansas common-school advantages were denied us, and to provide a means for educating the few boys and girls in the neighborhood of my home, a subscription school was started in a small log cabin that was built on the bank of a creek that ran near our house. My mother took great interest in this school, and at her persuasion I returned home and became enrolled as a pupil, where I made satisfactory progress until, as the result of a quarrel with a schoolmate, I left the town and started across the plains with one of Russell, Majors & Waddell's freight trains.

The trip proved a most enjoyable one to me, although no incidents worthy of note occurred on the way. On my return from Fort Kearny I was paid off the same as the rest of the employés. The remainder of the summer and fall I spent in herding cattle and working for Russell, Majors & Waddell.

In May, 1857, I started for Salt Lake City with a herd of beef cattle, in charge of Frank and Bill McCarthy, for General Albert

Sidney Johnston's army, which was then being sent across the plains to fight the Mormons.

Nothing occurred to interrupt our journey until we reached Plum Creek, on the South Platte River, thirty-five miles west of old Fort Kearny. We had made a morning drive, and had camped for dinner. The wagon masters and a majority of the men had gone to sleep under the mess wagons. The cattle were being guarded by three men, and the cook was preparing dinner. No one had any idea that Indians were anywhere near us. The first warning we had that they were infesting that part of the country was the firing of shots and the whoops and yells from a party of them, who, catching us napping, gave us a most unwelcome surprise. All the men jumped to their feet and seized their guns. They saw with astonishment the cattle running in every direction, they having been stampeded by the Indians, who had shot and killed the three men who were on day herd duty, and the redmen were now charging down upon the rest of us.

The McCarthy boys, at the proper moment, gave orders to fire upon the advancing enemy. The volley checked them, although they returned the compliment, and shot one of our party through the leg. Frank McCarthy then sang out, "Boys, make a break for the slough yonder, and we can then have the bank for a breastwork."

We made a run for the slough, which was only a short distance off, and succeeded in safely reaching it, bringing with us the wounded man. The bank proved to be a very effective

breastwork, affording us good protection. We had been there but a short time when Frank McCarthy, seeing that the longer we were corralled the worse it would be for us, said,

“Well, boys, we’ll try to make our way back to Fort Kearny by wading in the river and keeping the bank for a breastwork.”

We all agreed that this was the best plan, and we accordingly proceeded down the river several miles in this way, managing to keep the Indians at a safe distance with our guns, until the slough made a junction with the main Platte River. From there down we found the river at times quite deep, and in order to carry the wounded man along with us, we constructed a raft of poles for his accommodation, and in this way he was transported.

Occasionally the water would be too deep for us to wade, and we were obliged to put our weapons on the raft and swim. The Indians followed us pretty closely, and were continually watching for an opportunity to get a good range and give us a raking fire. Covering ourselves by keeping well under the bank, we pushed ahead as rapidly as possible, and made pretty good progress, the night finding us still on the way and our enemies yet on our track.

I, being the youngest and smallest of the party, became somewhat tired, and, without noticing it, I had fallen behind the others for some little distance. It was about ten o’clock, and we were keeping very quiet and hugging close to the bank, when I happened to look up to the moonlit sky and saw the plumed head of an Indian peeping over the bank. Instead of hurrying ahead and alarming the men in a quiet way, I instantly aimed my gun

at his head and fired. The report rang out sharp and loud on the night air, and was immediately followed by an Indian whoop, and the next moment about six feet of dead Indian came tumbling into the river. I was not only overcome with astonishment, but was badly scared, as I could hardly realize what I had done. I expected to see the whole force of Indians come down upon us. While I was standing thus bewildered, the men, who had heard the shot and the war whoop, and had seen the Indian take a tumble, came rushing back.

“Who fired that shot?” cried Frank McCarthy.

“I did,” replied I, rather proudly, as my confidence returned, and I saw the men coming up.

“Yes, and little Billy has killed an Indian stone dead – too dead to skin,” said one of the men, who had approached nearer than the rest, and had almost stumbled upon the Indian. From that time forward I became a hero and an Indian-killer. This was, of course, the first Indian I had ever shot, and as I was not then more than eleven years of age, my exploit created quite a sensation.

The other Indians, upon learning what had happened to their advance, fired several shots without effect, but which hastened our retreat down the river. We reached Fort Kearny just as the reveille was being sounded, bringing the wounded man with us. After the peril through which we had passed, it was a relief to feel that once more I was safe after such a dangerous initiation.

Frank McCarthy immediately reported to the commanding officer and informed him of all that had happened. The

commandant at once ordered a company of cavalry and one of infantry to proceed to Plum Creek on a forced march, taking a howitzer with them – to endeavor to recapture the cattle from the Indians.

The firm of Russell, Majors & Waddell had a division agent at Kearny, and this agent mounted us on mules so that we could accompany the troops. On reaching the place where the Indians had surprised us, we found the bodies of the three men, whom they had killed and scalped and literally cut into pieces. We of course buried the remains. We caught but few of the cattle, most of them having been driven off and stampeded with the buffaloes, there being numerous immense herds of the latter in that section of the country at the time. The Indians' trail was discovered running south toward the Republican River, and the troops followed it to the head of Plum Creek, and there abandoned it, returning to Fort Kearny without having seen a single redskin.

The company's agent, seeing that there was no further use for us in that vicinity – as we had lost our cattle and mules – sent us back to Fort Leavenworth. The company, it is proper to state, did not have to stand the loss of the expedition, as the government held itself responsible for such depredations by the Indians.

On the day that I got into Leavenworth, some time in July, I was interviewed for the first time in my life by a newspaper reporter, and the next morning I found my name in print as “the youngest Indian-slayer on the plains.” I am candid enough

to admit that I felt very much elated over this notoriety. Again and again I read with eager interest the long and sensational account of our adventure. My exploit was related in a very graphic manner, and for a long time afterward I was considerable of a hero.

In the following summer, Russell, Majors & Waddell entered upon a contract with the government for General Albert Sidney Johnston's army that was sent against the Mormons. A large number of teams and teamsters were required for the purpose, and as the route was considered a dangerous one, men were not easily engaged for the service, though the pay was forty dollars a month in gold. An old wagon master named Lew Simpson, one of the best that ever commanded a bull train, was upon the point of starting with about ten wagons for the company, direct for Salt Lake, and as he had known me for some time as an ambitious youth, requested me to accompany him as an extra hand. My duties would be light, and, in fact, I would have nothing to do, unless some one of the drivers became sick, in which case I would be required to take his place. But even more seductive than this inducement was the promise that I should be provided with a mule of my own to ride, and be subject to the orders of no one save Simpson himself.

As a matter of interest to the general reader, it may be well to give a brief description of a freight train. The wagons used in those days by Russell, Majors & Waddell were known as the "J. Murphy wagons," made at St. Louis especially for the plains

business. They were very large and very strongly built, being capable of carrying seven thousand pounds of freight each. The wagon boxes were very commodious, being about as large as the rooms of an ordinary house, and were covered with two heavy canvas sheets to protect the merchandise from the rain. These wagons were generally sent out from Leavenworth, each loaded with six thousand pounds of freight, and each drawn by several yoke of oxen in charge of one driver. A train consisted of twenty-five wagons, all in charge of one man, who was known as the wagon master. The second man in command was the assistant wagon master. Then came the "extra hand," next the night herder, and lastly the cavayard driver, whose duty it was to drive the loose and lame cattle. There were thirty-one men all told in a train. The men did their own cooking, being divided into messes of seven. One man cooked, another brought wood and water, another stood guard, and so on, each having some duty to perform while getting meals. All were heavily armed with Colt's pistols and Mississippi yagers, and every one always had his weapons handy so as to be prepared for any emergency.

The wagon master, in the language of the plains, was called the "bull-wagon boss"; the teamsters were known as "bull-whackers"; and the whole train was denominated a "bull outfit." Everything at that time was called an "outfit." The men of the plains were always full of a droll humor and exciting stories of their own experiences, and many an hour I spent in listening to the recitals of thrilling adventures and hairbreadth escapes.

The trail to Salt Lake ran through Kansas northwestwardly, crossing the Big Blue River, then over the Big and Little Sandy, coming into Nebraska near the Big Sandy. The next stream of any importance was the Little Blue, along which the trail ran for sixty miles, then crossed a range of sand hills, and struck the Platte River ten miles below Fort Kearny; thence the course lay up the South Platte to the old Ash Hollow Crossing; thence eighteen miles across to the North Platte, near the mouth of the Blue Water, where General Harney had his great battle in 1855 with the Sioux and Cheyenne Indians. From this point the North Platte was followed, passing Courthouse Rock, Chimney Rock, and Scott's Bluffs, and then on to Fort Laramie, where the Laramie River was crossed. Still following the North Platte for some considerable distance, the trail crossed the river at old Richard's Bridge, and followed it up to the celebrated Red Buttes, crossing the Willow Creeks to the Sweet Water, thence past the Cold Springs, where, three feet under the sod, on the hottest day of summer, ice can be found; thence to the Hot Springs and the Rocky Ridge, and through the Rocky Mountains and Echo Canyon, and thence on to the great Salt Lake Valley.

Nothing occurred on the trip to delay or give us any trouble whatever, until the train struck the South Platte River. One day we camped on the same ground where the Indians had surprised the cattle herd in charge of the McCarthy brothers. It was with difficulty that we discovered any traces of anybody ever having camped there before, the only landmark being the

single grave, now covered with grass, in which we had buried the three men who had been killed. The country was alive with buffaloes, and having a day of rare sport, we captured ten or twelve head of cattle, they being a portion of the herd which had been stampeded by the Indians two months before. The next day we pulled out of the camp, and the train was strung out to a considerable length along the road which ran near the foot of the sand hills two miles from the river. Between the road and the river we saw a large herd of buffaloes grazing quietly, they having been down to the stream for a drink.

Just at this time we observed a party of returning Californians coming from the West. They too noticed the buffalo herd, and in another moment they were dashing down upon them, urging their steeds to the greatest speed. The buffalo herd stampeded at once, and broke down the hills. So hotly were they pursued by the hunters that about five hundred of them rushed through our train pell-mell, frightening both men and oxen. Some of the wagons were turned clear around, and many of the terrified oxen attempted to run to the hills, with the heavy wagons attached to them. Others turned around so short that they broke the wagon tongues off. Nearly all the teams got entangled in their gearing, and became wild and unruly, so that the perplexed drivers were unable to manage them.

The buffaloes, the cattle, and the drivers were soon running in every direction, and the excitement upset nearly everybody and everything. Many of the cattle broke their yokes and stampeded.

One big buffalo bull became entangled in one of the heavy wagon chains, and it is a fact that in his desperate efforts to free himself he not only actually snapped the strong chain in two, but broke the ox yoke to which it was attached, and the last seen of him he was running toward the hills with it hanging from his horns. A dozen other equally remarkable incidents happened during the short time that the frantic buffaloes were playing havoc with our train, and when they got through and left us our outfit was badly crippled and scattered. This caused us to go into camp and spend a day in replacing the broken tongues and repairing other damages, and gathering up our scattered ox teams.

The next day we rolled out of camp, and proceeded on our way toward the setting sun. Everything ran along smoothly with us from that point until we came within about eighteen miles of Green River, in the Rocky Mountains, where we camped at noon. At this place we had to drive our cattle about a mile and a half to a creek to water them. Simpson, his assistant George Wood, and myself, accompanied by the usual number of guards, drove the cattle over to the creek, and while on our way back to camp we suddenly observed a party of twenty horsemen rapidly approaching us. We were not yet in view of our wagons, as a rise of ground intervened, and therefore we could not signal the trainmen in case of any unexpected danger befalling us. We had no suspicion, however, that we were about to be trapped, as the strangers were white men. When they had come up to us, one of the party, who evidently was the leader, rode out in front, and

said,

“How are you, Mr. Simpson?”

“You’ve got the best of me, sir,” said Simpson, who did not know him.

“Well, I rather think I have,” coolly replied the stranger, whose words conveyed a double meaning, as we soon learned. We had all come to a halt by this time, and the strange horsemen had surrounded us. They were all armed with double-barreled shotguns, rifles, and revolvers. We also were armed with revolvers, but we had no idea of danger, and these men, much to our surprise, had “got the drop” on us, and had covered us with their weapons, so that we were completely at their mercy. The whole movement of corralling us was done so quietly and quickly that it was accomplished before we knew it.

“I’ll trouble you for your six-shooters, gentlemen,” now said the leader.

“I’ll give ’em to you in a way you don’t want,” replied Simpson.

The next moment three guns were leveled at Simpson. “If you make a move you are a dead man,” said the leader.

Simpson saw at a glance that he was taken at a great disadvantage, and thinking it advisable not to risk the lives of the party by any rash act on his part, he said, “I see now that you have the best of me; but who are you, anyhow?”

“I am Joe Smith,” was the reply.

“What! the leader of the Danites?” asked Simpson.

“You are correct,” said Smith, for he it was.

“Yes,” said Simpson, “I know you now; you are a spying scoundrel.”

Simpson had good reason for calling him this, for only a short time before this Joe Smith had visited our train in the disguise of a teamster, and had remained with us two days. He suddenly disappeared, no one knowing where he had gone or why he had come among us. But it was all explained to us, now that he had returned with his Mormon Danites. After they had disarmed us, Simpson asked,

“Well, Smith, what are you going to do with us?”

“Ride back with us and I’ll soon show you,” said Smith.

We had no idea of the surprise which awaited us. As we came upon the top of the ridge from which we could view our camp, we were astonished to see the remainder of the trainmen disarmed and stationed in a group, and surrounded by another squad of Danites, while other Mormons were searching our wagons for such articles as they wanted.

“How is this?” inquired Simpson. “How did you surprise my camp without a struggle? I can’t understand it?”

“Easily enough,” said Smith. “Your men were all asleep under the wagons, except the cooks, who saw us coming, and took us for returning Californians or emigrants, and paid no attention to us until we rode up and surrounded your train. With our arms covering the men, we woke them up, and told them all they had to do was to walk out and drop their pistols, which they saw was the best thing they could do under circumstances over which they

had no control, and you can just bet they did it.”

“And what do you propose to do with us now?” asked Simpson.

“I intend to burn your train,” said he. “You are loaded with supplies and ammunition for Sidney Johnston, and as I have no way to convey the stuff to my own people, I’ll see that it does not reach the United States troops.”

“Are you going to turn us adrift here?” asked Simpson, who was anxious to learn what was to become of himself and his men.

“No; I am hardly as bad as that. I’ll give you enough provisions to last you until you can reach Fort Bridger,” replied Smith. “And as soon as your cooks can get the stuff out of the wagons you can start.”

“On foot?” was the laconic inquiry of Simpson.

“Yes, sir,” was the equally short reply.

“Smith, that’s too rough on us men. Put yourself in our place, and see how you would like it,” said Simpson. “You can well afford to give us at least one wagon and six yokes of oxen to convey us and our clothing and provisions to Fort Bridger. You’re a brute if you don’t do this.”

“Well,” said Smith, after consulting a minute or two with some of his company, “I’ll do that much for you.”

The cattle and the wagon were brought up according to his orders, and the clothing and provisions were loaded on.

“Now you can go,” said Smith, after everything had been arranged.

“Joe Smith, I think you are a mean coward to set us afloat in a hostile country without giving us our arms,” said Simpson, who had once before asked for the weapons, and had had his request denied.

Smith, after further consultation with his comrades, said: “Simpson, you are too brave a man to be turned adrift here without any means of defense. You shall have your revolvers and guns.”

Our weapons were accordingly handed over to Simpson, and we at once started for Fort Bridger, knowing that it would be useless to attempt the recapture of the train.

When we had traveled about two miles we saw the smoke arising from our old camp. The Mormons, after taking what goods they wanted and could carry off, had set fire to the wagons, many of which were loaded with bacon, lard, hardtack, and other provisions, which made a very hot, fierce fire, and the smoke to roll up in dense clouds. Some of the wagons were loaded with ammunition, and it was not long before loud explosions followed in rapid succession. We waited and witnessed the burning of the train, and then pushed on to Fort Bridger. Arriving at this post, we learned that two other trains had been captured and destroyed in the same way by the Mormons. This made seventy-five wagonloads, or four hundred and fifty thousand pounds of supplies, mostly provisions, which never reached General Johnston’s command, to which they had been consigned.

After reaching the fort, it being far in November, we decided

to spend the winter there, with about four hundred other employés of Russell, Majors & Waddell, rather than attempt a return, which would have exposed us to many dangers and the severity of the rapidly approaching winter. During this period of hibernation, however, the larders of the commissary became so depleted that we were placed on one-quarter rations, and at length, as a final resort, the poor, dreadfully emaciated mules and oxen were killed to afford sustenance for our famishing party.

Fort Bridger being located in a prairie, all fuel there used had to be carried for a distance of nearly two miles, and after our mules and oxen were butchered, we had no other recourse than to carry the wood on our backs or haul it on sleds – a very tedious and laborious alternative.

Starvation was beginning to lurk about the post when spring approached, and but for the timely arrival of a westward-bound train loaded with provisions for Johnston's army, some of our party must certainly have fallen victims to deadly hunger.

The winter finally passed away, and early in the spring, as soon as we could travel, the civil employés of the government, with the teamsters and freighters, started for the Missouri River, the Johnston expedition having been abandoned.

On the way up we stopped at Fort Laramie, and there met a supply train bound westward. Of course we all had a square meal once more, consisting of hardtack, bacon, coffee, and beans. I can honestly say that I thought it was the best meal that I had ever eaten; at least I relished it more than any other, and I think the

rest of the party did the same.

On leaving Fort Laramie, Simpson was made brigadier wagon master, and was put in charge of two large trains, with about four hundred extra men who were bound for Fort Leavenworth. When we came to Ash Hollow, instead of taking the usual trail over to the South Platte, Simpson concluded to follow the North Platte down to its junction with the South Platte. The two trains were traveling about fifteen miles apart, when one morning, while Simpson was with the rear train, he told his assistant wagon master George Wood and myself to saddle up our mules, as he wanted us to go with him and overtake the head train.

We started off at about eleven o'clock, and had ridden about seven miles, when, while we were on a big plateau back of Cedar Bluffs, we suddenly discovered a band of Indians coming out of the head of the ravine half a mile distant, and charging down upon us at full speed. I thought that our end had come this time. Simpson, however, was equal to the occasion, for with wonderful promptness he jumped from his jaded mule, and in a trice shot his own animal and ours also, and ordered us to assist him to jerk their bodies into a triangle. This being quickly done, we got inside the barricade of mule-flesh, and were prepared to receive the Indians. We were each armed with a Mississippi yager and two revolvers, and as the Indians came swooping down on our improvised fort, we opened fire with such good effect that three fell dead at the first volley. This caused them to retreat out of range, as with two exceptions they were armed with bows and

arrows, and therefore to approach near enough to do execution would expose at least several of them to certain death. Seeing that they could not take our little fortification or drive us from it, they circled around several times, shooting their arrows at us. One of these struck George Wood in the left shoulder, inflicting only a slight wound, however, and several lodged in the bodies of the dead mules; otherwise they did us no harm. The Indians finally galloped off to a safe distance, where our bullets could not reach them, and seemed to be holding a council. This was a lucky move for us, for it gave us an opportunity to reload our guns and pistols and prepare for the next charge of the enemy. During the brief cessation of hostilities Simpson extracted the arrow from Wood's shoulder, and put an immense quid of tobacco on the wound. Wood was then ready for business again.

The Indians did not give us a very long rest, for with another desperate charge, as if to ride over us, they came dashing toward the mule barricade. We gave them a hot reception from our yagers and revolvers. They could not stand or understand the rapidly repeating fire of the revolver, and we checked them again. They circled around us once more, and gave us a few parting shots as they rode off, leaving behind them another dead Indian and a horse.

For two hours afterward they did not seem to be doing anything but holding a council. We made good use of this time by digging up the ground inside the barricade with our knives, and throwing the loose earth around and over the mules, and we

soon had a very respectable fortification. We were not troubled any more that day, but during the night the cunning rascals tried to burn us out by setting fire to the prairie. The buffalo grass was so short that the fire did not trouble us much, but the smoke concealed the Indians from our view, and they thought they could approach to us without being seen. We were aware of this, and kept a sharp lookout, being prepared all the time to receive them. They finally abandoned the idea of surprising us.

Next morning, bright and early, they gave us one more grand charge, and again we "stood them off." They then rode away half a mile or so, and formed a circle around us. Each man dismounted and sat down, as if to wait and starve us out. They had evidently seen the advance train pass on the morning of the previous day, and believed that we belonged to that outfit, and were trying to overtake it. They had no idea that another train was on its way after us.

Our hopes of escape from this unpleasant and perilous situation now depended upon the arrival of the rear train, and when we saw that the Indians were going to besiege us instead of renewing their attacks, we felt rather confident of receiving timely assistance. We had expected that the train would be along late in the afternoon of the previous day, and as the morning wore away we were somewhat anxious and uneasy at its nonarrival.

At last, about ten o'clock, we began to hear in the distance the loud and sharp reports of the big bull-whips, which were handled with great dexterity by the teamsters, and cracked like

rifle shots. These were welcome sounds to us, as were the notes of the bagpipes to the besieged garrison at Lucknow when the reinforcements were coming up, and the pipers were heard playing "The Campbells are Coming." In a few moments we saw the head wagon coming slowly over the ridge which had concealed the train from our view, and soon the whole outfit made its appearance. The Indians observed the approaching train, and assembling in a group, they held a short consultation. They then charged upon us once more, for the last time, and as they turned and dashed away over the prairie, we sent our farewell shots rattling after them. The teamsters, seeing the Indians and hearing the shots, came rushing forward to our assistance, but by that time the redskins had almost disappeared from view. The teamsters eagerly asked us a hundred questions concerning our fight, admired our fort, and praised our pluck. Simpson's remarkable presence of mind in planning the defense was the general topic of conversation among all the men.

When the teams came up we obtained some water and bandages with which to dress Wood's wound, which had become quite inflamed and painful, and we then put him into one of the wagons. Simpson and myself obtained a remount, bade good-by to our dead mules which had served us so well, and after collecting the ornaments and other plunder from the dead Indians, we left their bodies and bones to bleach on the prairie. The train moved on again, and we had no other adventures, except several exciting buffalo hunts on the South Platte near

Plum Creek.

II

Rounding Up Indians

In October, 1867, General Sheridan organized an expedition to operate against the Indians who infested the Republican River region. "Cody," said he, "I have decided to appoint you as guide and chief of scouts with the command. How does that suit you?"

"First rate, General, and thank you for the honor," I replied, as gracefully as I knew how.

The Dog Soldier Indians were a band of Cheyennes and unruly, turbulent members of other tribes, who would not enter into any treaty, or keep a treaty if they made one, and who had always refused to go upon a reservation. They were a warlike body of well-built, daring, and restless braves, and were determined to hold possession of the country in the vicinity of the Republican and Solomon rivers. They were called "Dog Soldiers" because they were principally Cheyennes – a name derived from the French *chien*, a dog.

On the 3d of October the Fifth Cavalry arrived at Fort Hays. General Sheridan, being anxious to punish the Indians who had lately fought General Forsyth, did not give the regiment much of a rest, and accordingly on the 5th of October it began its march for the Beaver Creek country. The first night we camped on the south fork of Big Creek, four miles west of Hays City. By this time I had become pretty well acquainted with Major Brown and

Captain Sweetman, who invited me to mess with them on this expedition, and a jolly mess we had. There were other scouts in the command besides myself, and I particularly remember Tom Renahan, Hank Fields, and a character called "Nosey," on account of his long nose.

The next day we marched thirty miles, and late in the afternoon we came into camp on the south fork of the Solomon. At this encampment Colonel Royal asked me to go out and kill some buffaloes for the boys.

"All right, Colonel; send along a wagon or two to bring in the meat," I said.

"I am not in the habit of sending out my wagons until I know that there is something to be hauled in; kill your buffaloes first, and then I'll send out the wagons," was the Colonel's reply. I said no more, but went out on a hunt, and after a short absence returned and asked the Colonel to send out his wagons over the hill for the half-dozen buffaloes I had killed.

The following afternoon he again requested me to go out and get some fresh buffalo meat. I didn't ask him for any wagons this time, but rode out some distance, and coming up with a small herd I managed to get seven of them headed straight for the encampment, and instead of shooting them just then, I ran them at full speed right into the camp, and then killed them all, one after another, in rapid succession. Colonel Royal witnessed the whole proceeding, which puzzled him somewhat, as he could see no reason why I had not killed them on the prairie. He came

up rather angrily, and demanded an explanation.

“I can’t allow any such business as this, Cody,” said he. “What do you mean by it?”

“I didn’t care about asking for any wagons this time, Colonel, so I thought I would make the buffaloes furnish their own transportation,” was my reply. The Colonel saw the point in a moment, and had no more to say on the subject.

No Indians had been seen in the vicinity during the day, and Colonel Royal, having carefully posted his pickets, supposed everything was serene for the night. But before morning we were aroused from our slumbers by hearing shots fired, and immediately afterward one of the mounted pickets came galloping into camp, saying that there were Indians close at hand. The companies all fell into line, and were soon prepared and anxious to give the redskins battle; but as the men were yet new in the Indian country a great many of them were considerably excited. No Indians, however, made their appearance, and upon going to the picket-post where the picket said he had seen them none could be found, nor could any traces of them be discovered. The sentinel, who was an Irishman, insisted that there had certainly been redskins there.

“But you must be mistaken,” said Colonel Royal.

“Upon me sowl, Colonel, I’m not. As shure ez me name’s Pat Maloney, one of them redskins hit me on the head with a club, so he did,” said Pat.

And so when morning came the mystery was further

investigated, and was easily solved. Elk tracks were found in the vicinity, and it was undoubtedly a herd of elks that had frightened Pat. As he had turned to run he had gone under a limb of a tree against which he hit his head, and supposed he had been struck by a club in the hands of an Indian. It was hard to convince Pat, however, of the truth.

A three days' uninteresting march brought us to Beaver Creek, where we were camped, and from which point scouting parties were sent out in different directions. None of these, however, discovering Indians, they all returned to camp about the same time, finding it in a state of great excitement, it having been attacked a few hours previously by a party of Indians, who had succeeded in killing two men and in making off with sixty horses belonging to Company H.

That evening the command started on the trail of these Indian horse thieves, Major Brown with two companies and three days' rations pushing ahead in advance of the main command. Being unsuccessful, however, in overtaking the Indians, and getting nearly out of provisions – it being our eighteenth day out – the entire command marched toward the nearest railway point, and camped on the Saline River, distant three miles from Buffalo Tank. While waiting for supplies we received a new commanding officer, Brevet Major General E. A. Carr, who was the senior major of the regiment, and who ranked Colonel Royal. He brought with him the celebrated Forsyth scouts, who were commanded by Lieutenant Pepoon, a regular army officer.

The next morning, at an early hour, the command started out on a hunt for Indians. General Carr, having a pretty good idea where he would be most likely to find them, directed me to guide them by the nearest route to Elephant Rock on Beaver Creek. Upon arriving at the south fork of the Beaver on the second day's march, we discovered a large fresh Indian trail, which we hurriedly followed for a distance of eight miles, when suddenly we saw on the bluffs ahead of us quite a large number of Indians.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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