

man's near crazy to talk to you. An' so the Injuns have had you all this time, when we all thought you dead an' gone. So you got away somehow, did you? an'—"

But Dess interrupted her with a merry peal of laughter. "It is no use for you to ask any more questions, auntie," she said, "I shall not answer a single one until you have given us something to eat. I am nearly famished, and I would be willing to wager a round dollar that Bruno is, too."

"Why, bless your dear little heart!" the good lady exclaimed, as she hurried away to prepare supper for her very welcome guest. "How lucky it is that you spoke of it; I'd never 'a' thought of it—never."

It was broad daylight, and the savages were preparing to devour their breakfast, when Watumni, missing Dess and Nitia, ordered one of the women to go and arouse them. The woman obeyed, but only to return in a short time with the startling announcement that their wigwam was deserted. A howl of rage was raised by the infuriated braves, and they started off in all directions in search of the two women, who they at first believed were concealed somewhere near, among the thick growth of chapparal. The rage of Watumni was fearful to behold, when one of his braves soon returned with the announcement that two of their best ponies were gone.

The savages were soon mounted on horses and sent off in pursuit of the fugitives. Little difficulty was found in tracing them as far as the creek, where, it was clearly evident, they had entered the bed of the stream; but whether their course had been with or against the current they did not know. A party was dispatched in each direction, Watumni going with those who traveled toward the source of the stream; and, in his rage and excitement, he soon had his pony in a foam of perspiration. The ground was still damp where the fugitives' horses had emerged from the water, and a horrid cry of exultation arose among the savages, who were now assured that they were on the right track.

Thinking that the women could not be far in advance, they taxed their ponies to their utmost speed. Presently they came to the spot where the fugitives had separated. They were somewhat puzzled to know how to account for this; but they pushed on, four or five following Nitia, while about the same number hurried in pursuit of the white girl. They were greatly disappointed, as twilight gathered about them, that they had not once come in sight of the fugitive. It was soon so dark that they could no longer see the tracks of the noble little steed which had borne the white captive so swiftly away; but they did not slacken their speed until near the hour of midnight, being

fully convinced that they were in pursuit of Naoma, as they called her, and well aware that she had taken as straight a course as possible toward the little valley of Oak Dale. As the hour approached midnight, they found their animals so much exhausted that they were utterly unable to keep up anything like a decent pace. Angered and dispirited, they dismounted, picketed their ponies and started off on foot, hoping to intercept the white maiden in her flight, feeling assured that she would not pursue her journey after nightfall. They were disappointed in their anticipations, however; for when it was light enough to see, they found that the horse tracks which they had followed the previous day lay before them, still showing signs of a moderately rapid flight.

Watumni was perfectly enraged, and, when once they had approached so near as to look down upon the little valley of Oak Dale, his desperation was fearful to behold. Seeing that the fugitive had outwitted them, the savages, crushed and humiliated at the escape of their prize, returned to the lodges, there to receive the news that Nitia had cunningly evaded her pursuers, and that, as far as they had been able to discern any traces of her flight, she had taken a most direct route for the reservation.

With this information, the whole truth dawned upon the intellect of the old chief. Nitia had become jealous because of his approaching marriage with the white woman, and, in consequence thereof, had aided her to escape. He cursed himself bitterly for having been such a fool as to leave the beautiful Naoma to the sole charge of Nitia. But alas! a still greater humiliation awaited him. Two weeks had not elapsed ere he and his braves were surprised one morning to find themselves completely surrounded by a detachment of troops from the reservation, with Nitia, who had piloted them thither, in their midst. Watumni saw that resistance was useless, but the sight of his wife so angered him that he raised his rifle to his shoulder, and he would have shot her dead on the spot, had not one of the troops approached at that instant and seized the weapon from his grasp.

The Indians were taken to the reservation, but, despite the efforts of the whites, they could not obtain sufficient evidence to implicate either Watumni or Hotiti with the Oak Dale massacre. Watumni insisted that some of the Oregon braves—all of whom had been killed in the war, he said—had acted contrary to the advice of their chief when they made the attack on Oak Dale; and as there was no evidence to disprove the assertion, it was finally taken for truth. There was not sufficient white testimony to criminate them, and they were not aware, at the time, of the existence of a little white captive, who had been in the midst of the fray. Nitia considered herself avenged,