

# CAPTIVITY OF THE OATMAN GIRLS

A STIRRING STORY OF 1850

## CHAPTER XVI

"The report of the strengthening of the Cochopas since their last expedition, gave me reason to fear the worst. Thus for a long time, and just after having reached a bright place (if such there was in such a situation) in my captivity, I was thrown into the gloomiest apprehensions for my life. I could not calculate upon life—I did not.

"For five months not a night did I close my eyes for a tranquil sleep or wake in the morning, but first and first were the thoughts of the slender thread upon which my life was hung. The faint possibility in which I had been that their plans of increasing their numbers with the Mexicans and whites might open the doors for my return, was now nearly blasted.

"I had been out one fine day in August several miles, following the roots for the chiefs family, and returning a little before sunset, as I came in sight of the village I saw an Indian at some distance beyond the town descending a hill to the river from the other side. He was so far away that it was impossible for me to tell whether he was a Yuma or a Mohave. These two tribes were on friendly terms, and frequent 'criers' or messengers passed between them. I thought at once of the absent man, and of my vital interest in the success or failure of the barbarous crusade. I said to myself that he was a Mohave, and I might have believed that I could find him as one of the army.

"With trembling and fear I watched his hasty steps, and suddenly started back. He was down into the river and was again upon the bank. I recognized him. 'He is wearing a red and blue sash heavily along as a sign of rank. He had become nearly exhausted from long travel—why can he be so long in alone?' Questions of this nature were asked aloud by myself. I was aware—such like a painful gasping and tormenting of the heart.

"I stopped; my approach to the village had not been observed. I resolved to wait and seek to escape one desperate effort to escape under the first shades of night. I threw myself flat upon the ground. I looked in every direction. The chains were strung across the river on every side like towers of adamantine, and if trails led through them I knew them not. I gazed raised myself up. I saw that the Indian turned into a hut upon the skirts of the town. In a few moments the 'crier' was seen bounding to the river and in the foot hills. Each on his way and others, and soon the noise was flying as on telegraphic wires. 'But what news? I could not claim. I started up and hastened to hasten to our hut and wait in silence the full returns.

"I could imagine that I saw the doom written in the countenances of every Mohave I met. But each one maintained a surly countenance or turned upon me a sullen smile. A crowd was gathering fast, but not one word was said for my ear. In total, awful silence I looked, I watched, I gazed, and dared not speak. It seemed that every one was reading and playing with my agitation. Soon the resemblance was contrived, and I was lighted, and 'Oh! rise up and speak; I listened, and my heart seemed to leap to my mouth as he proceeded to state, by substance, that—Mohaves have triumphed—five captives taken—among them a girl—none of our race. When they will be in tomorrow, the captives were brought in.

"Again one of the black clouds that darken the sky of our Mohave captivity broke, and the sunshine of gladness and gratitude ran freely down my face. I lifted my face in my hands and silently thanked God. I sought a place alone, where I might give full vent to my feelings of thanksgiving to my Heavenly Father.

"When it was ascertained that saw His goodness, in whose hands are the reins of the world, the storm, and thanked Him that this expedition, so freighted with six-

ty, had resulted so mercifully to me.

"The next day four more came in with the captives, and in a few days all were returned, without even a scar to tell of the danger they had passed. The next day after the coming of the last party, a meeting of the whole tribe was called, and one of the most enthusiastic rejoicing seasons I ever witnessed among them it was. It lasted indeed, for several days. They danced, sang, shouted, and played their corn-stalk flutes until very weariness, they were compelled to refrain. It was their custom never to eat salted meat for the next moon after the coming of a captive among them. Hence, our salt fish were for several days left to an undisturbed repose.

"Among the captives they had taken from the offending Cochopas and brought in with them, was a handsome, fair complexioned young woman, of about twenty-five years of age. She was as beautiful an Indian woman as I have ever seen; tall, graceful and lady-like in her appearance. She had a fairer, lighter skin than the Mohaves or the other Cochopa captives. But I saw upon her countenance and in her eyes traces of a painful grief. The rest of the captives appeared well and indifferent about themselves.

"This woman called herself 'Noweha.' Her language was as foreign to the Mohaves as the American, except to the few soldiers that had been among them. The other captives were girls from twelve to sixteen years old, and while they seemed to wear a 'don't care' appearance, this Noweha was perfectly bowed down with grief. I observed that she tasted but little food. She kept up a constant moaning and wailing except when checked by the threats of her boastful captors. I became very much interested in her, and sought to learn the circumstances under which she had been torn from her home. Of her grief I thought I knew something. She tried to converse with me.

"With much difficulty, I learned of her what had happened since the going of the Mohave warriors among her tribe, and this fully explained her extreme melancholy. Their town was attacked in the night by the Mohave warriors, and after a short engagement, the Cochopas were put to flight; the Mohaves hotly pursued them. Noweha had a child about two months old, but after running a short distance, her husband came up with her, grasped the child and ran on before. This was an act showing a humaneness that a Mohave warrior did not possess, for he would have compelled his wife to carry the child, he kicking her along before him. She was overtaken and captured.

"For one week, Noweha wandered about the village by day, a perfect image of desperation and despair. At times she seemed insane; she slept but little at night. The theiving, cruel Mohaves who had taken her and were making merry over her griefs, knew full well the cause of it all. They knew that without provocation they had robbed her of her child, and her child of its mother. They knew the attraction drawing her back to her tribe, and they watched her closely. But no interest or concern did they manifest save to mock and torment her.

"Early one morning, it was noised through the village that Noweha was missing. I had observed her the day before, when the chief's daughter gave her some corn, to take part of the same, after grinding the rest, to make a cake and hide it in her dress. When these captives were brought in, they were assigned different places through the valley at which to stop. Search was made to see if she had not sought the abiding place of some of her fellow captives. This caused some delay, which I was glad to see, though I dared not to express my true feelings.

"When it was ascertained that she had probably undertaken to return, every path and every space abounding the immediate trails, was searched, to find, if possible, some

trace to guide a band of pursuers. A large number were stationed in different parts of the valley, and the most vigilant watch was kept during the night, while others started in quest of her upon the way they supposed she had to go back. When I saw a day and night pass in these fruitless attempts, I began to hope for the safety of the fugitive—I had seen enough of her to know that she was resolved and of unconquerable determination. Some conjectured that she had been betrayed away; others that she had drowned herself, and others that she had taken to the river and swam away. They finally concluded that she had killed herself and gave up the search vowing that if she had fled they would yet find her and be avenged.

"Just before night, several days after this a Yuma Indian came suddenly into camp, driving this Cochopa captive. She was the most distressed looking being imaginable when she returned. Her hair disheveled, her few old clothes torn (they were woolen clothes,) her eyes swollen and every feature of her noble countenance distorted.

"'Criers' were kept constantly on the way between the Mohaves and Yumas, bearing news from tribe to tribe. These messengers were their news carriers and sentinels. Frequently two criers were employed (sometimes more) one from each tribe. These would have their meeting stations. At these stations these criers would meet with promptness, and by word of mouth, each would deposit his store of news with his fellow expressman, and then each would return to his own tribe with the news. When the news important, or was of a warning character, as in time of war, they would not wait for the fleet foot of the 'runner,' but had their signal fires well understood, which would telegraph the news hundreds of miles in a few hours. One of these Yuma criers, about four days after the disappearance of Noweha, was coming to his station on the road connecting these two tribes, when he spied a woman under a shelf of the rock on the opposite side of the river. He immediately plunged into the stream and went to her. He knew the tribe to which she belonged and that the Mohaves had been making war upon them. He immediately started back with her to the Mohave village. It was a law to which they punctually lived, to return all fleeing fugitives or captives of a friendly tribe.

"It seemed that she had concealed that portion of the corn meal she did not bake, with a view of undertaking to escape.

"When she went out that night she plunged immediately into the river to prevent them from tracking her. She swam several miles that night and then hid herself in a willow wood; thinking that they would be in close pursuit she resolved to remain until they should give up hunting for her. Here she remained nearly two days, and her pursuers were very near her several times. She then started and swam where the river was not too rapid and shallow, when she would out and bound over the rocks. In this way, traveling only in the night, she had gone near one hundred and thirty miles. She was, as she supposed, safely hid in a cave, waiting the return of night, when the Yuma found her.

"On her return another noisy meeting was called, and they spent the night in one of their victory dances. They would dance around her, shout in her ears, spit in her face, and show their throats of a murderous design, assuring her that they would soon have her where she would give them no more trouble by running away.

"The next morning a post was firmly placed in the ground, and about eight feet from the ground a crossbeam was attached. They then drove large rough wooden spikes through the palms of poor Noweha's hands, and by these they lifted her to the cross and drove the spikes into the soft wood of the beam, extending her hands as far as they could. They then with pieces of bark stuck with thorns, tied her hands firmly back to the upright post, drove spikes through her ankles and for a time left her in this condition.

They soon returned and placing me with their Cochopa captives near the sufferer, bid us keep our eyes upon her until she died.

This they did as they afterwards said, to exhibit to me what I might expect if they should catch me attempting to escape. They then commenced running round Noweha in regular circles, hallooing stamping and taunting like so many demons, in the most wild and frenzied manner. After a little while, several of them supplied themselves with bows and arrows, and at every circle would hurl one of these poisoned instruments of death into her quivering flesh. Occasionally she would cry aloud, and in the most pitiful manner. This awakened from that mocking, heartless crowd, the most deafening yells.

(To be Continued.)

## Popular North Beach.

### Excursion Steamer T. J. Potter goes into service June 27.

Those who are planning their vacation this year will be interested in knowing that the popular excursion steamer, the T. J. Potter, queen of river boats, goes into service June 27, and that she will leave Portland, during the season, every day from Tuesday until Saturday inclusive. To see the beauties of the picturesque and mighty Columbia from the decks of the Potter is a treat never to be forgotten. For speed and grace nothing in river or lake service in the entire West equals this side-wheeled beauty. Five hours from Portland and one from Astoria, through the famous fishing waters of the Columbia, past scores of salmon traps and nets and as many white-winged fish boats, lands the passengers at Iwaco where close connection is made for beach points with trains of the Iwaco Railway & Navigation Company, whose cars stand on the wharf awaiting the steamer. The beach is twenty-seven miles long, two hundred yards wide at low tide, and so hard that carriage wheels scarcely leave a mark. It is an ideal place for driving, riding, wheeling, or walking, and the surf bathing is unsurpassable. The excellent hotels and boarding houses provide good accommodations at prices ranging from one dollar to three dollars per day.

The round trip rate from Portland to Astoria is \$2.50; to Ocean Beach points \$4.00, good until October 15th. On Saturdays, during July and August, round trip tickets are sold to beach points at \$2.50, good for return leaving the beach the following Sunday evening.

The Oregon Railroad & Navigation Company has just issued a new summer book, (free for the asking) which tells all about the delightful resorts of the Valley of the Columbia River. This can be obtained from any agent of the Oregon Railroad & Navigation Company or by writing A. L. Craig, General Passenger Agent, Portland, Oregon.

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Special attention given to Passenger and Freight Traffic in and from The Dalles and Shaniko. Special rates given to parties and freight in bulk.  
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Chicago	Salt Lake, Denver, Ft. Worth, Omaha, Kansas City, St. Louis, Chicago via Union and East.	12:30 p.m.
Albion	Salt Lake, Denver, Ft. Worth, Omaha, Kansas City, St. Louis, Chicago via Union and East.	6:15 a.m.
St. Paul	Walla Walla, Lewiston, East Mall Spokane, Wallace, Pullman, Minot, Bismarck, Spokane, Chicago, and East.	3:30 a.m.

**70 HOURS TO CHICAGO 70**  
NO CHANGE OF CARS.  
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Breadford's Rheumatic Oil is the most powerful and reliable remedy ever discovered. It is a pure vegetable oil, and is entirely free from any poisonous or dangerous ingredients. It is sold in 1/2 oz. bottles, and is available at all drug stores.

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Call at the old stand and get your work done in a satisfactory manner.

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DEALERS  
FINE LIQUORS AND CIGARS.  
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We have a number of choice lots in the new town of Palmain for sale.

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In this way some lady will receive a handsome present which will cost her nothing, nor will it cost those who subscribe for our paper anything, as we are charging you only our regular subscription price. We are simply dividing profits with our patrons. Do not delay, but fill out the coupon and mail it to us, and it will receive proper credit. Remember, the one coupon is good for three votes, which can be sent to us each week free, while the other is good for two hundred votes, a cash subscription to accompany it.

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