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[CONTINUED.]

Even though every one told him he could accomplish nothing whatever before daylight, Sterrett had a little party of stalwart frontiersmen fully equipped by midnight and ready to start the instant the gale should show signs of moderating.

And then, before the first faint glimmer of dawn, as though spent with its own violence, the gale began to die. The clouds scudding southeastward drew aside, uncurtaining the placid heavens, where the stars were faintly gleaming and then twinkling out of sight.

"Did the ladies get back all right? We can't find the ambulance anywhere along the Wolf."

CHAPTER XII



"Aim well, men, but fire freely."

Before quitting the ambulance and its precious freight Ellis had made such examination of the neighborhood as was possible in the thick darkness, and discovered that they were close to the edge of a narrow, winding ravine with abruptly sloping banks, and it was in here that those sagacious mules had sought shelter from the force of the blast.

Then in the whirling cloud of snow Ellis had remounted, shouted again a few encouraging words to the ladies within, assuring them he and his sturdy troop horse would have no difficulty in reaching camp and bringing aid, urging them meantime to keep snugly bundled in their robes, and with Mrs. Berrien's brave voice and cheery "God speed you, sergeant" ringing in his ears, he rode gallantly away, forded the shallow stream at the mouth of the conlee and then, facing the gale, spurred forth upon his perilous mission.

But, despite all the driver's efforts on the way, the gale had forced them far to the right of the main road and those which paralleled it, the only ones at all familiar to the Twelfth, and when Brewster and his little squad reached the ford, along toward two o'clock in the morning, they sought in vain in every ravine and break—shouted, fired their carbines and sounded their trumpet, all to no purpose.

come to their tents. At four o'clock he and his party had searched and scouted for half a dozen miles up and down the valley. Some of his best and stanchest men were giving out, and these, with Sergeant Brooks, he ordered to push along with the gale and seek news and shelter at the station.

Three others he posted near the main crossing of the Wolf, under the lee of a little bluff, where they and their horses speedily stamped a hole in the snowdrifts around the hospital ambulance and huddled for warmth—fires they could not light, even had there been a vestige of fuel—and then, with three undaunted campaigners at his back, he had once again turned down stream, following its wanderings in the darkness and feeling for ravines he could not see along the southern bank. Time and again they dismounted and ran beside their horses to restore circulation to the numb and stiffened feet and fingers.

Never for an instant did Brewster relax his efforts. Giving each of his men a pull at the flask, he selected little Murphy as about the most compact and certainly the lightest of the trio, and bade him make his way to camp and tell the colonel that up to surprise no vestige of the lost ones had been found, and suggest that additional parties be sent out at once.

"Tell somebody to bring my field glass," he added, as Murphy was about to ride away. "If I had dreamed we would have found nothing of the ambulance until this time, I never should have left it. Good luck to you now, corporal. Ride as lively as you can."

Murphy turned promptly away, spurred his unwilling horse through the ice into the black and racing waters of the Wolf and was presently following a little break in the north side which led by a more gradual ascent to the prairie beyond.

"Now, men, one of you ride back toward the party at the ford, poke into every ravine to your left—they're all full of snow; it may be the ambulance is so deep in the drift they could hear no sound. If you find anything, the faintest trace, ride up on the prairie and circle your horse to the left. Morse, you come with me."

"Beg pardon, lieutenant, I think Murphy sees something now," said Morse, indicating the farther shore with a nod of his fur covered head. Whirling eagerly about, Brewster was surprised to see his little Irishman, a hundred yards or so away, crouching low on his horse's back, still in the ravine and up to his girth in snow, and peering cautiously eastward, his eyes just level with the bank. Then he was plainly seen to signal. In an instant Brewster and his men were plunging into the rapid stream, crushing the ice that skirted the shores and bounding out upon the frozen ground beyond. Again Murphy held forth a hand—a warning gesture, not a beckoning one. "Keep down, keep down," he signaled, and wondering, the little party of troopers cautiously followed into the ravine.

"What do you see?" queried Brewster, eager and agitated.

"Upon my soul, sir, I wish I knew; but it's more like Indians than anything I can think of."

"Indians? where away?" And with a wild fear at heart Brewster gazed over the bank in the direction indicated.

"Indians, and coming this way, sir, or I'm a tenderfoot," muttered Morse, a man who had served in the Twelfth for many a year.

"What on earth can they be doing so far south of the agency? You don't think any of the hostiles have got down this way?"

"They're all hostiles, sir, when there's only three or four ag'in them. It don't matter whether these are from the agency or the Bad Lands now, if they can catch a white man a-napping, and something has brought them out here."

"My God, man! you don't suppose they've heard of the ambulance?"

"They hear things quicker than we do, lieutenant. Day or night, calm or storm, those fellows can all around beat us in getting news."

"And they are coming from the northeast, lieutenant," chimed in Murphy. "That means if they are from the villages near the agency they've circled around our people."

Breathless the little party watched the coming dots. The stream bore to the northeast after a deep bend about half a mile away, and on the farther bank, moving nearly parallel with the valley, about a dozen dark objects could be seen moving at rapid lope, the springing, tireless gait of the Indian pony. Ponies they were unquestionably, and each with his rider. Every moment brought them nearer and nearer, until, as they spread out in extended order across the level surface, it was possible to count their number, eleven: possible to note that every now and then some one of the number in front or on the flanks would rein in suddenly and circle around and stop, as though examining tracks upon the prairie.

from under his front; it bent across their path all the way and mules won't face it, and if it isn't the ambulance they're after, what can it be?"

"My God, if we only knew where it was!" groaned Brewster. "Come what may, men, we've got to stand 'twixt it and those scoundrels. Here, Murphy, lively now, slip back down into the valley and ride for all you're worth to the ford and bring those fellows back with you, every man of them. Tell them to keep under the bank and ride like hell. Off with you, now." And this time there was no recall; Murphy was out of sight in a flash.

Nearer and nearer rode the savage horsemen, now about a mile away. Already Morse and his silent comrade had swung their carbines out of their leathern buckets, thrust a cartridge in the chamber and loosened others in the woven thimbles. Brewster never for an instant quit his gaze, but his hand had stolen back and loosed the flap of the holster at his hip. The movements of the Indians had puzzled him; they were riding not as though moving on some point already determined, but rather as if searching, feeling their way. Every now and then, too, some of their number cantered to the edge of the bank and seemed to scrutinize the valley.

"Snowdrifts are too deep and plentiful in there, around that bend, sir. That's why they're up on the prairie."

Brewster's heart seemed almost to stand still. All on a sudden the leaders swerved; the blanketed riders could be seen bending low and over as they swung their nimble steeds in circle to the right. And then, then, an instant more, and tossing the powdery snow all in a feecy white cloud, there came tearing up out of the depths of some unseen cove a lively herd of Indian ponies rejoicing in their unwonted freedom and determined not to be herded back to slavery without a struggle.

It was hard to repress the shout of joy that sprang to the soldiers' lips. Then it wasn't the ambulance after all; nothing but this frolicsome band of rascals that, after breaking away from the Indian boys the evening before, had doubtless been driven before the gale, demanding the sending forth of quite a party of the young men in search, even before the storm had fully abated. For a moment the troopers forgot their mission as they watched the chase. Fresh and unhampered by weight of any kind the scurrying band came sweeping along the edge of the distant bluff, following an active, mischievous leader and leaving their jaded pursuers far behind. The Indian knows too much to chase a running horse; he leaves him to his own devices, well knowing he will more quickly stop when unpursued and can then more readily be headed off and turned back to the ways he should go. On came the nimble herd full tilt toward the elbow in the shallow valley, where a broad white streak told of deep drifted snow, and there the leader veered to the left and south and would doubtless have stretched away at racing speed on that course but for one young warrior on a dun colored pony, who with the speed of the wind came darting out across the level surface beyond, gamely, skillfully heading him. Around went the leader once more in a wide circle westward, around the southernmost edge of the snowy drift, and then, with thundering hoofs, the whole troop went bounding away to the west without a living soul to interpose between them and the bald, rolling heights at the far horizon, miles and miles away.

"Go it, pony! I'm glad to see a red-skin done for once!" was Morse's jubilant shout. And then, suddenly and sharp, "Good God! What's that, Lieutenant! Look!"

Not six hundred yards away, now, the little band of ponies, following their spirited leader, had suddenly halted at the very edge of some dip or sink in the prairie that lay to the southeast of the snowy rift in which the troopers were crouching, still hidden, they and their horses, from the sharp eyes of the chasing Indians. Then as suddenly, tossing high their scraggy manes, as though with one accord, the nubile brutes whirled to the south, their leader indulging in a fine flourish of heels as he sped away. And now Morse lay against the bank pointing eagerly to a couple of black objects startlingly outlined on the glistening white of the snow, two objects that came plunging up from the invisible depths of the hollow, struggling breast deep in the drifts, and at last reached the edge of the prairie, and followed instantly by another couple, with their long ears erect, with outstretched neck and eager brayings, clattered away in pursuit of the herd. Brewster knew them at a glance—Sterrett's ambulance mules. Indeed, the broken pole was still dangling between the two in rear and bounding with them over the frozen turf.

And that swerve, that sudden halt and turn to the south end, had cost the band their liberty. Darting along abreast of them, but nearly half a mile away to the south, the warrior on the dun colored pony had shot far out beyond them, and now, sweeping around in a wide circle to his right, rode between them and the broad wastes to the west. Two other Indians were circling in their front, barring the way to the low hills to the south. Others still, straggling far out eastward, reined up so as not to interfere with the "rounding" of the herd, and in a moment or two more these three experts had turned their runaway property in wide sweep back into the shining track of the sun, and in a very few minutes the matter was settled; the ponies were sulky trotting along the bank beyond the bend, headed for home and hard work again, with the ambulance mules braying at their heels. Here the younger Indians, the boys, took charge, and from the distant slopes, from south and east and from the prairie to the west, the others came cantering toward that sharp angle half a mile away and gathered in eager consultation about one who seemed to be their leader.

All this, and much more, Brewster and his men were watching with bounding pulses, in breathless excitement, Brewster with freetings of tingling nose and despair. Now he knew that the ambulance must be somewhere near at hand, possibly up that long ravine on the south side that slanted in from the prairie not a hundred yards away below them. Surely the banks looked as though there were a good ford at that point. Might not that be the very one of which Ellis spoke? Now, if it were not possible to drop back out of the drifts in which they were hiding and recross the stream, they might yet creep unobserved into the mouth of that gully and feel their way about until, somewhere in the snow, they came upon, as he now felt sure they must, the stormbound wagon with its precious contents. From their crouching place it was impossible to see across the ridge that separated them from the ravine referred to; but to the southeast the prairie lay before them, and the keenest eye could detect no sign of hollow between that which lay so near them and that from which those vagabond mules had emerged far up upon the plain. Somehow Brewster felt certain that now at last he was actually within pistol shot of the ambulance, within speaking distance, almost, of the girl he so fondly loved, whose very life at this instant depended not only on his courage, but also on his judgment. One false move would ruin all.

So long as the Indians kept up their powwow at the bend, so long was Winfred safe. The longer they delayed the nearer would it bring Murphy and the men from the main crossing three miles away up stream. Then, six to six, he could laugh at the Sioux. But any one who knew Indians at all knew that the discovery of the mules would only set them to work to find the snow camp from which the animals had broken away. Eye, even as these things flashed through his mind, Brewster could see that they were signaling "halt" to the herd guard, and that two of the youngsters were lashing their ponies out in front of the band and gradually bringing it to a standstill. Almost at the same moment, too, those in consultation separated, three riding swiftly after the herd, while the other three, slowly and cautiously, began to advance toward the hollow whence the mules had emerged. Evidently they expected to find the white man's wagon there.

"Now is your time, men," muttered Brewster. "Quick! Off with your side lines and double them about your horses' fore feet so that they can't even hobble out of the drift. Keep them here. Take your lariats and huddle my horse, one of you. Throw him if need be. I'll watch those beggars down stream. Ah, I thought so," he muttered, "they've grabbed the mules and are examining the harness; that will tell them easily enough they were cut loose after breaking the pole. Quick, men! throw snow by the bushel all over your horses. Roll in it yourselves. Get all the white on you can; then run down the gully as soon as you have your horses hidden and watch for my signal. The moment I say go, bend double and scamper to the ice yonder, then make for the bluffs. I'll follow instantly."

Meekly the two troop horses, after having been led to a deeper point down the coulee, bent their heads and submitted to the lashing together of their fore feet, but Brewster's "Black Jack" was of different mold. He would not yield.

"Over with him, Morse. No time to lose now. Lash him tight or he'll break away," called Brewster. And poor Jack's plunging availed him nothing. A moment more, with a dismal groan he was on his side in the soft, cold bed, the lariats being lashed and knotted so that even furious struggles could not free him, and then, to add to the indignity, his erstwhile friends and comrades were heaping new insult and a storm of snow upon him. Jack couldn't understand it.

"Ready, men! They're just peeping over in the hollow now. The moment they're fairly in it, I give the word."

Twenty—thirty seconds of breathless silence. Then a quick gesture; a quick, low toned, but imperative "Go!"

Go they did, skimming over the pool above the rapids, leaping the narrow chasm where the black waters, dancing and frothing, had defied the ice king; ducking under the opposite bank; carbines in hand, revolvers at the hip, cartridges gleaming in every belt; and after them, leaping, yet bending low, went Brewster. Another moment and they reached the mouth of the ravine, burst through the powdery drift, and then, Brewster leading, eyes everywhere, almost on all fours, they scurried along half way up the opposite slope, keeping well under the crest and just at the edge of the deep drifts to their right. Fifty—sixty yards they made their rapid way, and then around a little bend and among great heaps and mounds of glistening, shimmering white there rose an odd-shaped heap, only a trifle higher than its fellows, and from the midst of it there projected a dingy, white-brown canvas, slanting to the north, and with a cry of delight half stifled in his lips Carroll Brewster leaped into the snow, floundered to his armpits in the powdery drift, and in a moment more had forced his way through the fragile white wall before him, had seized the handle of the door and Winfred Berrien, starting from her mother's clasping arms, blinded for an instant by the glare of radiant sunshine, barely able as yet to rally from the stupor like slumber into which she had fallen, heard her name called in the joyous tones she knew so well and saw her lover, a stalwart, glowing, rejoicing young snow god, all sparkling with the white crystals, all glistening in the glorious beams, gazing upon her with a love light in his brave blue eyes that brought instant glow to her own wan and pallid cheek. And then, before she could even speak, before her mother could emerge from the enfolding robes, a shout was heard, then the sudden ring of a rifle shot, followed instantly by another, the spat of a whiplash on the canvas top. Something tore its way through the roof and front with spiteful "zip."

"Down! down upon the floor! both of you, quick!" shouted Brewster, as he

summed the door, and the next instant they heard the order in his ringing tones, half stifled in the snow. "Fire, men! Keep 'em off! Fire!" They heard the quick bang! bang! of carbines close at hand, the prompt response of rifles distant as were the first, the whistle of lead through the icy air, the shrill yells of battling Indians, the furious gallop of bounding hoofs. Everywhere to their front the rapid fire increased. More yells, partly of triumph, partly summoning additional warriors to the spot, then the muffled beat of coming hoofs, and in the midst of it all Brewster's stern voice, calm and steady: "Aim well, men, but fire lively. Don't let them again get so close as to have a shot at the wagon. Watch that above all." Two—three minutes the sound of battle raged about them, increasing at the front. A soldier's voice was heard to say: "There's more of them coming, sir. You can see them down there to the east." And Mrs. Berrien's heart grew faint with fear. Winfred had buried her face upon her breast and closed her ears to the horrid sounds. And then, all on a sudden, the yells of the charging Indians seemed to grow fainter, then sounds of dismay arose among them, then the cries were drowned in the clatter of iron-hoofed hoofs and the chorus of soldier cheers. Murphy and his little squad came whirling up the bank, and Mrs. Berrien's heart poured forth in praise and thanksgiving at the joyous Milesian hail:

"To hell wid 'em, fellers! Sure all B threep's comin'—not two miles behind!" [TO BE CONTINUED.]

To give delicacy of flesh to chickens make their principal food for a week or ten days before killing barley meal moistened with milk. Alternate with Indian meal; scald with either water or milk. During the process keep the chickens confined in a darkened room, in advice given in The Poultry Yard.

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NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION. Land Office at Oregon City, Oregon. Nov. 15, 1892. Notice is hereby given that the following named settler has filed notice of his intention to make final proof in support of his claim, and that said proof will be made before the Register and Receiver of the United States Land Office at Oregon City, Oregon, on December 29, 1892, viz: Joseph Hammer. Homestead entry No. 6087, for the S. 1/2 of S. E. 1/4 and S. 1/2 of S. E. 1/4, T. 28. N. R. 3. E. He names the following witnesses to prove his continuous residence upon and cultivation of said land, viz: C. R. Hasty, J. W. Hasty, D. W. Parker, Charles Mankie, all of Clatsop county, Oregon. J. T. APPERSON, Register.

NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION. Land Office at Oregon City, Oregon. Nov. 15, 1892. Notice is hereby given that the following named settler has filed notice of his intention to make final proof in support of his claim, and that said proof will be made before the Register and Receiver of the United States Land Office at Oregon City, Oregon, on December 29, 1892, viz: Joseph Paschel. Homestead entry No. 6270, for the S. 1/2 of S. E. 1/4, T. 28. N. R. 3. E. He names the following witnesses to prove his continuous residence upon and cultivation of said land, viz: Joseph Limhart, M. W. Griffith, Thomas McKate, Henry Koehl, all of Clatsop county, Oregon. J. T. APPERSON, Register.

NOTICE TO BRIDGE BUILDERS. Notice is hereby given that sealed bids will be received in the office of the county clerk of Clatsop county up to 1 o'clock p. m., December 8, 1892, for the construction of a bridge across Sandy river on the Herriek road in said county. Plans, specifications and diagrams to be furnished by bidder. A deposit of five per cent of bid required. The county reserves the right to reject any and all bids. W. H. HORTON, Clerk.

NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION. Land Office at Oregon City, Oregon. Oct. 20, 1892. Notice is hereby given that the following named settler has filed notice of his intention to make final proof in support of his claim, and that said proof will be made before the Register and Receiver of the U. S. Land Office at Oregon City, Oregon, on December 14, 1892, viz: Homestead entry No. 5011, for the S. 1/2 N. E. 1/4, N. E. 1/4, N. W. 1/4, Sec. 32, S. E. 1/4, S. W. 1/4, Sec. 29, T. 3. S. R. 1. E. He names the following witnesses to prove his continuous residence upon and cultivation of said land, viz: Carter sec. 2001, H. S. Jerry Boyd, John T. Brinkley, Frank Stone, S. D. Hedge, all of Clatsop county, Oregon. J. T. APPERSON, Register.

NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION. Land Office at Oregon City, Oregon. Oct. 15, 1892. Notice is hereby given that the following named settler has filed notice of his intention to make final proof in support of his claim, and that said proof will be made before the Register and Receiver of the U. S. Land Office at Oregon City, Oregon, on December 5, 1892, viz: Emil O. Nitschman. Homestead entry No. 6241, for the S. E. 1/4 of sec. 22, T. 3. S. R. 1. E. He names the following witnesses to prove his continuous residence upon and cultivation of said land, viz: Hans Johnson, Henry Meinke, Henry Johnson, Christian Schell, all of Clatsop county, Oregon. J. T. APPERSON, Register.

NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION. Land Office at Oregon City, Oregon. Oct. 15, 1892. Notice is hereby given that the following named settler has filed notice of his intention to make final proof in support of his claim, and that said proof will be made before the Register and Receiver of the U. S. Land Office at Oregon City, Oregon, on Nov. 28, 1892, viz: Henry Dubois. Homestead entry No. 6061 for the N. W. 1/4 of S. E. 1/4, Sec. 23, T. 3. S. R. 1. E. He names the following witnesses to prove his continuous residence upon and cultivation of said land under sec. 2301, R. S. Carl Howell, A. D. Crane, Samuel J. Boney and D. C. Howell, all of Springfield, P. O., Oregon. J. T. APPERSON, Register.

NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION. Land Office at Oregon City, Oregon. Oct. 15, 1892. Notice is hereby given that the following named settler has filed notice of his intention to make final proof in support of his claim, and that said proof will be made before the Register and Receiver of the U. S. Land Office at Oregon City, Oregon, on December 5, 1892, viz: William J. Evans. Homestead entry No. 6066, for the E. 1/2 of S. E. 1/4, S. E. 1/4, S. E. 1/4, Sec. 2, T. 3. S. R. 1. E. He names the following witnesses to prove his continuous residence upon and cultivation of said land, viz: Henry Robinson, Thomas Flynn, John T. Evans, John W. May, all of Mink post office, Clatsop county, Oregon. J. T. APPERSON, Register.

NOTICE OF FINAL SETTLEMENT. In the matter of the estate of Wm. Good, dec'd. Notice is hereby given that all parties interested in said estate that I have filed my final account in said estate with the county court of Clatsop county, Oregon, and that the judge of said court has set for Friday, the 15th day of December, 1892, at the hour of 10 o'clock a. m. of said day, as the time for hearing objections to said account if any there be. Dated at Oregon City, Oregon, Nov. 2, 1892. C. A. HOLMSTROM, Administrator.

APPOINTMENT OF ADMINISTRATOR. Notice is hereby given that the undersigned has been appointed by order of the county court of Clatsop county, Oregon, administrator of the estate of Sophia Ann Sorenson, deceased. All persons having claims against said estate are notified to present them properly verified at my office at Sandy, Oregon, within six months from the date of this notice. S. W. HARRIS, Administrator of the estate of Sophia Ann Sorenson, deceased. Dated October 3, 1892. 10-28-11-25.

F. COMPANY, FIRST REGIMENT, U. S. G. Army, Third and Main. Regular drill eight, Monday. Regular business meetings, first Monday of each month. OFFICERS: J. W. GARDNER, Captain. F. S. KELLEY, First Lieutenant. L. L. PICKENS, Second Lieutenant.

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