

HUNTED AND HAUNTED.

The Tragic Mystery in the Life of Old Jim Bridger.

The mystery of Jim Bridger's early life was explained to a writer during a recent visit to Oregon, by Col. Jesse Applegate, of the Umpqua valley, whose story of the "Pilgrims of '43" was published in the Call of August 6th. Col. Applegate, who is now in Monterey county on a visit, obtained the following details of an almost forgotten tragedy from some of Jim Bridger's companions nearly 40 years ago. The story, says the Call, has never before been published and is peculiarly interesting, as it explains why this celebrated scout and guide sought a home and protection among the Indians in his early days, and why he was always avoided and shunned by the old French trappers and traders on the Upper Mississippi and its tributaries.

A TRAGEDY OF FIFTY YEARS AGO.

The story, as related by old Jesse Applegate, is as follows: When Jim Bridger was a young man he became identified with the American Fur company, which, more than half a century ago, kept a winter headquarters near the mouth of the Kansas river. This trading post was in charge of the Choctaws, of St. Louis, Missouri. Here the Otoes, Kickapoes, Osages and Kaw tribes came to trade, and here, also, the flat-boaters and fur traders, voyageurs and others in the employment of the American Fur company passed their winters and prepared for their spring trip up the Missouri river after furs and peltries. In the spring of 1833 Jim Bridger, with a party of eight or ten hunters, trappers and fur traders, started for the Yellowstone country to spend two or three seasons hunting or trapping. The journey was a long and tiresome one, and as they had made a late start the season was far advanced when they reached the present site of old Fort Randall. They had abandoned the boat and were making their way on foot to Fort Benton, when the following tragedy occurred:

The party were marching in single file through a densely wooded region, each carrying his kit containing food, ammunition and traps strapped upon his back, his rifle upon his shoulder. The leader of the party, a young hunter named Tom Glass, was ten or fifteen feet in advance of the rest of the party, when a large she bear and two cubs were met on the trail. Before Glass could retreat the monster had seized him in a deathly hug and bore him to the earth. Before the bear was killed, it had torn open the unfortunate man's abdomen, exposing the intestines, and wrenched his left arm clear off the socket at the shoulder. His companions did all in their power to relieve Glass and ease his intolerable pain, but all agreed that he could not live long. His abdomen was bound with buckskin bands, and his left arm, which adhered to the shoulder merely by pieces of lacerated flesh, was washed, bound and tied to his side, and he was laid out to die.

LEFT ALONE TO DIE.

As the party was in a great hurry, owing to the lateness of the season, it was decided to leave one of the party to attend on Glass and bury him when he died, while the rest continued their journey. Lots were cast to see who should remain with the dying man, and Bridger was selected. It appears that the Indians were fierce and hostile along the Missouri river, and Bridger did not relish his task very keenly. He sat beside the wounded man one day and one night, during which Glass became delirious and raved wildly.

On the second morning Bridger determined to anticipate the death which he supposed was certain to claim his companion, and overtake his associates. So, while Glass was unconscious or asleep Bridger gathered up what few effects he deemed most valuable, belonging

to Glass, including his rifle, ammunition, etc., and quietly stole away, leaving the wounded man to die alone. He succeeded in overtaking his comrades and reported to them that Glass had died and he had buried him and brought away his arms and traps. Nothing more was heard of the affair until the following season, when a terrible denunciation was made, and Bridger fled to the mountain tribes to save his life. It appears that Glass awoke from his delirium on the second day after Bridger had left him. He found himself weak, alone without arms, food or help, and suffering intensely for water. He realized only vaguely his terrible situation. He remembered the bear and the departure of his companions after leaving Bridger to attend to him. He could see a cold, bubbling spring of water less than 20 feet away, and he was trying for water.

UNDESCRIPTIBLE TORTURES AND AN EXTRAORDINARY JOURNEY.

He managed, after a long and tedious effort, during which he suffered the most intense agony, to reach the water with his right arm. There he lay for several days, bathing his wounds with water and keeping down the fever. As he had no food, his fever soon left him, and in a few days he was able to crawl about on one side and one elbow. By a rare provision of Providence a buffalo calf had died on the plains not far from the grave in which Glass lay. He managed to crawl to the carcass, and by the aid of his hunting knife, which Bridger failed to find, the wounded man satisfied his hunger. He laid by the side of the dead carcass several days, during which he cut and dried several pieces of meat, and then crawled back to the water. More than a month after this time the emissaries at Fort Randall were astonished to see a strange looking object crawling slowly toward the stockade gate. It did not look like a human being, nor did it resemble any known animal, but it kept slowly crawling along, making neither noise or sign. It was picked up and carried into the fort, where, after being washed and cleaned, proved to be the animated skeleton of Tom Glass, the abandoned hunter. He had made his way, crawling along like a snake, upon one side, a distance of more than 100 miles. He had lived upon roots, reptiles and berries and even grass during the latter half of his terrible journey. What he suffered was known only to himself. His wounded arm was withered and dried; the wounds upon his body were partially healed, the fresh buckskin having almost grown to the lacerated skin.

A MISSION OF VENGEANCE.

With kind attention and care Glass was able during the following spring to walk about, and then he started forth on his mission of vengeance. He made his way to Fort Benton, on the upper Missouri, where he was regarded by his former comrades as an apparition and created consternation in the camp. Luckily for Bridger, he was absent trapping up in the Big Horn country. However, he was duly tried by proxy and sentenced by his old companions—the French and half breeds—to die at the hands of the first person who might meet him. He was declared an outlaw, a renegade, and doomed to death.

By some means Bridger learned, to his great horror, that the man he thought dead and devoured by the wolves was alive, and that he had been tried by his comrades and doomed to die. He learned also that Glass had sworn to follow him until he killed him. To escape this fate and to avoid meeting white men who might know of his crime, Jim Bridger fled to the Rocky mountains and made his home among the Shoshone tribe, where he remained for more than four years, when Glass discovered his retreat. Bridger again fled and went to Blackfeet, where Glass again followed him. Bridger started south and joined the Ogo-

lalla Sioux who, finding Glass lurking about their village, shot him as a spy. With the death of Tom Glass in 1838 Bridger felt himself safe from pursuit.

He never afterward attempted to fraternize with or associate with the old crowd of hunters on the upper Missouri. He crossed the mountains, joined his old friends, the Shoshones or Snake Indians, built Fort Bridger, where he lived with his squaw for many years, a quiet and silent man. He was kind, but not generous, to the white emigrants who met with him on the trail. He would not allow them to run into danger nor permit the Indians to attack the whites without warning them, if he could reach them. He was a bashful, but rather selfish man, not neglecting himself at any time. As a general rule the old man disliked to carouse with strangers, but as he grew old he became almost garrulous among his acquaintances, while at other times he would decline to say yes or no to a civil question.

This is explained by one of the scout's oldest acquaintances the singular mystery of Jim Bridger's early life and the cause of his lifetime exile among the Indian tribes of the northwest.

The United States steamer *Cerwin*, Lieutenant-Commander Healey, arrived in Esquimalt recently, from a cruise in the Arctic, on her way to San Francisco. Hearing, while in Alaska, that the Indians had taken possession of the American Fur Trading company's stations and held all the employes prisoners, Commander Healey, with a little delay as possible, went to their relief, and as the Indians were very hostile, shelled their village and released all the men held as prisoners. The prisoners, in which they have been punished will, in all probability, teach them a lesson which they will not forget very soon.

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