

BUFFALO BILL BORDER STORIES No.76

BUFFALO BILL'S CHIVALRY

BY Col. Prentiss Ingraham



STREET & SMITH CORPORATION, PUBLISHERS, NEW YORK

BUFFALO BILL'S CHIVALRY BY PRENTISS INGRAHAM

WESTERN STORIES ABOUT BUFFALO BILL

Price, Fifteen Cents

Red-blooded Adventure Stories for Men

There is no more romantic character in American history than William F. Cody, or as he was internationally known, Buffalo Bill. He, with Colonel Prentiss Ingraham, Wild Bill Hickok, General Custer, and a few other adventurous spirits, laid the foundation of our great West.

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In order that there may be no confusion, we desire to say that the books listed below will be issued during the respective months in New York City and vicinity. They may not reach the readers at a distance promptly, on account of delays in transportation.

To Be Published in July, 1923.

- 165—Buffalo Bill's Yellow Guardian..By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
- 166—Buffalo Bill's Double "B" Brand, By Col. Prentiss Ingraham

To Be Published in August, 1923.

- 167—Buffalo Bill's Dangerous Duty, By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
- 168—Buffalo Bill and the Talking Statue,
By Col. Prentiss Ingraham

BUFFALO BILL BORDER STORIES.

To Be Published in September, 1923.

- 169—Buffalo Bill Between Two Fires,
By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
170—Buffalo Bill and the Giant Apache,
By Col. Prentiss Ingraham

To Be Published in October, 1923.

- 171—Buffalo Bill's Best Bet.....By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
172—Buffalo Bill's Blockhouse Siege,
By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
173—Buffalo Bill's Fight for Right,
By Col. Prentiss Ingraham

To Be Published in November, 1923.

- 174—Buffalo Bill's Sad Tidings.....By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
175—Buffalo Bill and "Lucky" Benson,
By Col. Prentiss Ingraham

To Be Published in December, 1923.

- 176—Buffalo Bill Among the Sioux,
By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
177—Buffalo Bill's Mystery Box.....By Col. Prentiss Ingraham

THE WEST

Never, in the history of publishing, have there been so many stories of the West published in book and serial form. These books are even reprinted in England to be read there just as eagerly as they are sought after here.

Some of the best Western stories ever written are listed in Buffalo Bill Border Stories a list of which will be found on the pages immediately preceding this.

Buffalo Bill's Chivalry

OR,

The Brothers of the Bowstring

BY

Colonel Prentiss Ingraham

Author of the celebrated "Buffalo Bill" stories published in the
BORDER STORIES. For other titles see catalogue.



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Buffalo Bill's Chivalry

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languages, including the Scandinavian.

IN APPRECIATION OF WILLIAM F. CODY (BUFFALO BILL).

It is now some generations since Josh Billings, Ned Buntline, and Colonel Prentiss Ingraham, intimate friends of Colonel William F. Cody, used to forgather in the office of Francis S. Smith, then proprietor of the *New York Weekly*. It was a dingy little office on Rose Street, New York, but the breath of the great outdoors stirred there when these old-timers got together. As a result of these conversations, Colonel Ingraham and Ned Buntline began to write of the adventures of Buffalo Bill for Street & Smith.

Colonel Cody was born in Scott County, Iowa, February 26, 1846. Before he had reached his teens, his father, Isaac Cody, with his mother and two sisters, migrated to Kansas, which at that time was little more than a wilderness.

When the elder Cody was killed shortly afterward in the Kansas "Border War," young Bill assumed the difficult rôle of family breadwinner. During 1860, and until the outbreak of the Civil War, Cody lived the arduous life of a pony-express rider. Cody volunteered his services as government scout and guide and served throughout the Civil War with Generals McNeil and A. J. Smith. He was a distinguished member of the Seventh Kansas Cavalry.

During the Civil War, while riding through the streets of St. Louis, Cody rescued a frightened schoolgirl from a band of annoyers. In true romantic style, Cody and Louisa Federici, the girl, were married March 6, 1866.

In 1867 Cody was employed to furnish a specified amount of buffalo meat to the construction men at work on the Kansas Pacific Railroad. It was in this period that he received the sobriquet "Buffalo Bill."

In 1868 and for four years thereafter Colonel Cody

served as scout and guide in campaigns against the Sioux and Cheyenne Indians. It was General Sheridan who conferred on Cody the honor of chief of scouts of the command.

After completing a period of service in the Nebraska legislature, Cody joined the Fifth Cavalry in 1876, and was again appointed chief of scouts.

Colonel Cody's fame had reached the East long before, and a great many New Yorkers went out to see him and join in his buffalo hunts, including such men as August Belmont, James Gordon Bennett, Anson Stager, and J. G. Heckscher. In entertaining these visitors at Fort McPherson, Cody was accustomed to arrange wild-West exhibitions. In return his friends invited him to visit New York. It was upon seeing his first play in the metropolis that Cody conceived the idea of going into the show business.

Assisted by Ned Buntline, novelist, and Colonel Ingraham, he started his "Wild West" show, which later developed and expanded into "A Congress of the Roughriders of the World," first presented at Omaha, Nebraska. In time it became a familiar yearly entertainment in the great cities of this country and Europe. Many famous personages attended the performances, and became his warm friends, including Mr. Gladstone, the Marquis of Lorne, King Edward, Queen Victoria, and the Prince of Wales, now King of England.

At the outbreak of the Sioux, in 1890 and 1891, Colonel Cody served at the head of the Nebraska National Guard. In 1895 Cody took up the development of Wyoming Valley by introducing irrigation. Not long afterward he became judge advocate general of the Wyoming National Guard.

Colonel Cody (Buffalo Bill) died in Denver, Colorado, on January 10, 1917. His legacy to a grateful world was a large share in the development of the West, and a multitude of achievements in horsemanship, marksmanship, and endurance that will live for ages. His life will continue to be a leading example of the manliness, courage, and devotion to duty that belonged to a picturesque phase of American life now passed, like the great patriot whose career it typified, into the Great Beyond.

BUFFALO BILL'S CHIVALRY.

CHAPTER I.

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE CHIEF.

Finucane, chief of the San Francisco police, got up with a smile and stepped to the door of his private room.

"Buffalo Bill, by all that's good! Well, well! this is a pleasure, and no mistake."

"Why," laughed the scout, taking the chief's outstretched hand, "you act as though you were not expecting me."

"You got my letter all right?"

"Sure; that reached me at Fort Apache. If it hadn't been for the letter I shouldn't be here."

"In the first place," went on the chief, "you're on the hike so much of the time I wasn't at all certain my letter would reach you; and then, in the next place, I didn't know but you would have your hands so full you wouldn't be able to come on here. Sit down; and, while you're sitting down, just burn one of these with me."

Pulling out a drawer in his desk, the chief offered his caller a box of cigars.

"I suppose," remarked the king of scouts, when comfortably seated and with his cigar going, "that this hurry-up call of yours, chief, has some red-hot business at the back of it?"

"That's the way it stacks up."

"Government business?"

"Nothing less, Buffalo Bill, but it's a line of government business in which this municipality is vastly concerned. We're up against a lot of crafty, slant-eyed law-breakers, who are operating between 'Frisco and the Mexican line."

"Ah! Something in the Chink line, eh?"

"It's a Chinese graft entirely. We've got to cooperate with United States officials and do something to break up this extensive dealing in slaves."

"Slaves! That word has a gruesome sound in a free country like this."

"You're right about that. The whole business is contrary to the spirit of our institutions, and that is one reason why it's got to be broken up. Since that case of Yee Wong, the entire matter has come to a point where something has got to be done."

"What about Yee Wong?"

The scout's interest was only languid. He liked Indians far and away better than he did Chinamen—and that, of course, wasn't saying much for the yellow boys.

"What!" exclaimed Finucane. "Haven't you heard about the daughter of the big man over in the Flowery Kingdom?"

"Not a thing."

"The newspapers were full of it——"

"For a long while I have been in the wilds of Utah, and haven't been able to see a newspaper."

"That's so. Your work must keep you out of touch with the world a good share of the time, I reckon."

"That is the way of it, chief. Then, too, when I start in on a deal I can't think of much of anything else until the deal is wound up."

"Exactly! Your ability to concentrate your energies

is what gives you your success. As to Yee Wong, she's a pretty Chinese girl from Shanghai, daughter of a mandarin, or something, who has the run of the Forbidden City in Peking. However the game was worked, none of us Americans have been able to quite figure out, but Yee Wong was spirited away from Shanghai, landed in some Mexican port on the Gulf of California, and smuggled into the United States. We have been watching this port, and other Pacific ports up and down the coast, like weasels for some time past. No Chinaman has been allowed to land until his photograph and his passport have been examined with a microscope. As for Chinese women who tried to get into the country, they have all been sent to one of the missions and then put aboard the first steamer bound for the Orient. But none of those who arrived and were sent back was Yee Wong."

"What makes you so sure she was brought into this country?"

"One of the yellow boys went to the Chinese consul and turned informer. Tau Kee is one of the big slave-dealers, and has made a mint of money. He was back of the Yee Wong affair, according to the informer. Yee Wong, with a dozen other young Chinese women, was brought up the Gulf of California and up the Colorado River to Yuma. Whether Tau Kee has been able to bring Yee Wong to 'Frisco or not we do not know. 'Frisco's Chinatown, as you are perhaps aware, is a mysterious place. The biggest part of it is underground. When a yellow fugitive, or a slave, reaches Chinatown, it is next to impossible for the police to do anything."

"If you could lay hands on the slave-dealer, Tau Kee——"

"Which is precisely what we can't do. Tau Kee may be lying low in some of those dismal underground holes,

for all we know, or he may have his headquarters somewhere in the desert, or the mountains, hundreds of miles away from San Francisco. It is equally impossible for us to locate Yee Wong."

"Can't this informer give you any further help?"

"Not now," and the chief smiled grimly. "The next day after his first talk with the consul he was found in Yut Low Alley, with a knife in his heart. The Sam-sings had got him."

"The Sam-sings?" echoed the scout.

"Yes. They are the hired criminals and assassins who guard the slave-trade."

The king of scouts was thoughtful for a few moments.

"It looks as though you had a hard job on your hands, chief," said he.

"It is a hard job, and no mistake. That is why I have called on you, Buffalo Bill."

"If you were dealing with Indians instead of Chinamen, perhaps I could be of some help; but I don't know much about these yellow boys. I've met a few of the coolie class in the camps, mining over ground the whites have worked, and a few bazaar-men and laundrymen in the Chink quarters of various Southwestern towns, but that's as far as my knowledge of the Celestial goes."

"You can be a big help, all right," averred Finucane. "The principal work that confronts us is to find Yee Wong and send her back to her father. That will be an opening wedge, and, with that point successfully covered, I believe I can jump into the slave-trade and smash it single-handed."

"What do you want me to do?" asked the scout.

"Go to Yuma. That place must be Tau Kee's principal port of entry. Probably the old hatchet-boy himself is there. If you can't find Yee Wong, get Tau Kee by the

heels and bring him on here. With the slave-dealer in my hands, I believe I can force him to tell me the whereabouts of Yee Wong."

The king of scouts sank back in his chair and gazed at the ash gathering on the tip of his cigar. Should he, or should he not, mix up in this yellow conspiracy? Finucane watched him anxiously.

"You may have Indians to deal with, Buffalo Bill," spoke up the chief, "as well as Chinamen. From what the informer told the consul, Tau Kee has a force of Apaches and Mexicans helping him."

"This slave-trade must be profitable?" said the scout, lifting his eyes to the chief with sudden interest at the mention of Apaches.

"Immensely so," was the response. "I don't imagine, however, that Apaches or Mexicans charge overmuch for their services. Will you lend us a hand?"

"It's the government end of it that appeals to me," returned the scout. "Although the Chinese themselves have spirited Yee Wong away from her native country, yet we ought to be able to show these Orientals that the law, on this side of the water, is not entirely a dead letter. I'll go to Yuma, and do what I can."

"Good!" said the chief, drawing a deep breath of satisfaction. "I feel, now, as though Yee Wong was as good as found."

"Don't bank on anything, Finucane," cautioned the scout. "You have sprung a new deal on me, and 'for ways that are dark and tricks that are vain' the Chinaman outclasses the Indian. However, I and my pard will do our best."

"Your pard?" echoed the chief.

"My trapper pard, Nick Nomad," explained the scout.

"He came to Frisco with me, and is at our hotel in Geary Street."

"What hotel is it?"

"The Afton House."

"I will send some documents to the Afton House for you in the morning, Buffalo Bill. Among others, a transcript of the story told the consul by the informer and a photograph of Tau Kee. I must give you a word of warning, however. You have just spoken of the craftiness and guile of the Chinese: they are all that you believe them to be, and more. Their spies are everywhere. There is hardly a Chinese servant in all San Francisco who does not report to some one of the various tongs whatever he hears and thinks they ought to know. The Sam-sings have a serpentine cunning in keeping track of the intentions and doings of the police. I have no doubt but that the Sam-sings know you and your pard are in the city, and that you have been called here by me to help recover Yee Wong. Keep your eyes skinned both ways for trouble, Buffalo Bill, both while you are in the city and while you are about your work in Yuma."

"I always do that," smiled the scout.

"I should hate mightily to have you or your pard found with a dagger in the breast or the blue mark of a bow-string about the throat."

"No Chinaman will ever steal such a march on us, Finucane," returned the scout confidently.

"I can't think so; but, if you should run into any trouble before leaving the city, call me up on the phone and I'll do what I can to help you. As soon as it is discovered that you are looking for Yee Wong—and it *will* be discovered, you may rest assured of that—the Sam-sings will get word to the Brothers of the Bow-string."

"And who," queried the scout, standing at the threshold

with one hand on the door-knob, "are the Brothers of the Bow-string?"

"That is the name the Chinese have given to Tau Kee's followers. Their favorite weapon is a catgut string, or a silken cord."

"Stranglers, eh?"

"That's our name for them."

"Well, they'll have a time of it getting a bow-string around my throat. I'll look for those papers in the morning, chief, and will leave for Yuma some time during the day. You may expect a report from me any time within a couple of weeks. *Adios!*"

CHAPTER II.

NOMAD RISES TO A BAIT.

Old Nomad, the scout's trapper pard, was tilted back in a chair in front of the Afton House. It was nine o'clock, and Nomad was waiting for the scout to get back from his interview with the chief.

For a week, now, nothing of moment had come the way of the pards. As usual, at such times, the old trapper had begun to grow restive and discontented.

"A town like this hyar," he ruminated, "is too hefty fer Buffler an' me. A handful o' 'dobies, stuck on ther side o' a hill, is a big enough town fer anybody. What's ther use of er place so long an' wide ye kain't take er *pasear* around the block without gittin' lost? Waugh! An' thar ain't no excitement in these diggin's, as I kin find. When ther baron declined ter come ter 'Frisco with us, but went ter Yuma, I reckons his head was level. Ef I had et ter do over ag'in I'd hev stayed with him an'——"

Nomad suddenly cut short his reflections. A Chinaman had fluttered swiftly along the street and come to a halt in front of the hotel door, directly under the rays of an electric light.

The Chinaman was above the coolie class, that was certain. He had on a round, highbinder hat of black, dark-blue blouse and trousers, and gold-embroidered sandals. After hesitating a moment before the door, he turned to Nomad. A precautionary look had assured the Chinaman that there were no other white man in front of the hotel.

Nomad Rises to a Bait.

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"Exalted one," said the Celestial to the old trapper, "will your high nobleness give my despicable affairs your attention for a little?"

That was the best "pidgin" talk Nomad had ever heard from a pigtailed heathen. His curiosity was aroused in a flash, and a faint grin of amusement worked its way over his weather-beaten features.

"Ye're shore a bright one at slingin' ther Melican lingo," said he. "Whar did ye l'arn?"

"You are pleased to compliment my insignificant talents," said the Chinaman, wringing his hands. "I have learned the language of the white devils in the mission schools, and am now a clerk for the most honorable Yuen Chang, Chinese consul at this port. The consul has rewarded my degraded abilities with the office of interpreter."

"Sartinly ye're ther queerest Chink I ever met up with. But what's ther use o' underratin' yerself all ther time? Seems ter me like ye must be some persimmons among ther yaller boys, ef ye're able ter tork like thet an' hold down a job fer ther consul."

"I am the meanest of his servants," purred the other, "but I try to be faithful."

"Waal, what's ther ante?"

"My profound ignorance keeps me from understanding the sublime language of your nobleness."

"Thet's er long-winded way o' sayin' *no sabe*, eh?" laughed Nomad, greatly tickled. "Which I means ter ask what d'ye want? I might put aside my orful majesty long enough ter answer a question, I reckon."

"Tell me, then, where is the big high man called Cody? I must find him at once."

The trapper dropped his chair down on the walk at

that, and began to take a deeper interest in the Chinaman.

"He ain't hyar. Why? What d'ye want him fer?"

"It is the consul, Yuen Chang, who wants him, and he wants him in a hurry." The interpreter tottered despairingly on his sandals. "Where is the big high man?" he asked.

"Gone fer a confab with ther chief o' perlice," replied the trapper.

The messenger threw the big sleeve of his blouse over his face in an agony of disappointment.

"Tough luck!" muttered the trapper.

"There is another, Illustrious," proceeded the Chinaman, dropping his arm, "who might help me. Can you refresh my contemptible intellect with a little knowledge concerning Nicholas Nomad, friend of the big high man?"

All these mouth-filling adjectives, coming from a black-hatted Chinaman, filled the trapper with growing mirth. This particular hatchet-boy was as good as a circus.

"Waal, neighbor," chuckled Nomad, "ye've run out one trail, anyways. I'm ther ombray thet travels with ther big high streak er lightnin' called Buffler Bill."

The interpreter gasped, and all but went down on his knees.

"For this," he breathed, "I will burn a dozen punk-sticks at the altar of Gow Dong."

"I ain't er keerin' how many punk-sticks ye burn," said Nomad, "purvidin' ye cut loose an' tell me what ye want."

"Will the Most Noble listen to his trifling servant?" continued the messenger.

"Wagh! Ain't I listenin'? Tear off yer langwidge, but don't strain yerself too much on them big words."

"The most honorable Yuen Chang wishes speech immediately with the big high man, Cody. The big high man is just now unfortunately absent; would, therefore, the illustrious Nomad accompany his despised guide to the home of the consul and take a message from him?"

"Why didn't ye bring ther message?"

"Such a miserable person is not to be trusted with the consul's important affairs."

"Kain't ye wait till Buffler comes back from perlice headquarters?"

"The matter is of such importance it cannot wait."

"Waal, seein' as how ye're ther cutest trick of er rat-eater I ever seen, I reckons I'll go ye oncet. Wait hyar a minit."

Nomad got up and started for the hotel door. The Chinaman stepped hastily toward him.

"The highly esteemed of the gods will not be long?" he asked.

"Et'll take me jest erbout er brace er shakes."

Thereupon the old trapper slid through the door. All the way up-stairs to the room occupied jointly by himself and the scout the trapper was chuckling to himself.

"Funniest yaller-mug I ever seen!" he guffawed, as he opened the door of the room and let himself in. "Whatever d'ye reckon ther consul wants ter tell Buffler? Mebbey et has somethin' ter do with what ther chief er perlice is tellin' him. Anyways, I'm goin' ter find out. Things was gittin' monotonous fer me till thet highfalutin Chink showed up."

Nomad's revolver-belt was hanging on a bed-post. Pulling one of the weapons out of its holster, he slipped it into his hip pocket.

"Now I'm loaded fer b'ar," he thought, leaving the

room and starting down-stairs again. "I ain't lookin' fer trouble, exactly, but ye kin gamble I ain't er dodgin' any."

As he repassed through the hotel entrance, he found the messenger silently awaiting him.

"Lead on, my festive friend," said the trapper.

The messenger started off through the gloom of the street, his sandals sliding noiselessly and swiftly over the pavements. Nomad, unfamiliar with the city, did not notice that they traveled by dimly lit byways, all but deserted.

The houses became shanties and pushed closer together. The two and three-story shanties had balconies, and back of the balconies, in the dim rays of paper lanterns, the old trapper more than once caught a glimpse of a barred window.

In this part of the town there was more life, a continuous chatter going up on every hand. Nowhere could Nomad see anything but Chinamen. They sat on benches, or in doorways, or stood in knots on the sidewalk. Coolies passed with heavy baskets swinging from carrying-poles. Paper banners fluttered at the shop-fronts. Over all was the indescribable odor to be found wherever Orientals thickly congregate—disagreeable to an American nose, although now and then made more bearable by the fumes of burning incense.

Steadily onward went the trapper's guide, picking his way unerringly along squalid streets and still more squalid alleys. Chinamen cleared the way before them, squinting their eyes at the white man as he passed.

"Looks like Chinktown in Phoenix," said Nomad to himself. "Et's takin' us er blame' long while ter find ther consul. I say, thar, Charley!" he called aloud.

The interpreter halted and turned.

"Speak, exalted highness," said the Chinaman.

"How much farther ye goin'?" 'Pears like we was gittin' right inter ther heart o' Chinkdom."

"We have reached the Place of the Twenty Thousand Delights," said the Chinaman, "and here we find the consul."

He turned, mounted a short flight of steps, and entered a lighted doorway. Nomad followed, and presently found himself in a long, low room. The room was filled with Celestials, smoking, drinking tea, and playing *pi-gow*. Where the "twenty thousand delights" came in, Nomad was unable to understand. Several times, during that flight into the Chinese quarter, the grateful pressure of the revolver at his hip had reassured the trapper.

Maybe they were going to see the consul and maybe they weren't. Anyhow, old Nomad was having an adventure, and that was something he had been pining for. As long as the cute heathen in the black hat, with the high-strung way of expressing himself, was within arm's reach, Nomad wasn't doing much worrying. He had brought the trapper there and he would take him away again, even if he had to be prodded with the point of a forty-four.

The Chinaman cut across the low room and opened a door at the foot of a rickety stairway. Up the narrow, dimly lighted flight the trapper followed, his hand half pushed under the edge of his coat.

His guide halted at the head of the stairs, and, with his yellow palm, pressed sharply against the head of a rusty nail. A panel slid open in the wall, revealing a narrow corridor, dimly lighted, like the stairs.

"Enter, Illustrious," said the Chinaman, bowing and waving his hand.

"Not ef I'm onter my job I don't!" snorted Nomad.

"I've follered ye, an' up ter now I hev'n't made no kick, but right hyar's whar I lays down. I didn't expect ter find ther consul livin' in no palace, but I'll bet my pile agin' er Chink wash-ticket he don't hev his quarters in no hole in ther wall like thet."

"You will find him in there," insisted the Chinaman.

"What ye' givin' us?" growled Nomad, flashing his revolver.

"Spawn of a jackal!" yelped the Chinaman, suddenly changing his manner. "What will you do with your white devil gun? Enter!"

"What'll I do with ther gun, ye rat-eater?" answered the old trapper hotly. "Watch my smoke, will ye, an'——"

He got that far, when there came a sudden rush from behind. In a twinkling he was hurled from his feet and pitched headlong through the secret door and into the corridor.

CHAPTER III.

HUNTING FOR NOMAD.

It was ten o'clock that night before Buffalo Bill got back to the Afton House, after his interview with the chief. Nomad had said he would be up and waiting for him, but the trapper was not to be seen in front of the hotel or in the office.

"Probably he got tired waiting," thought the scout, "and turned in. Frisco is a big town, but it's a lonesome place for Nick. He'll be tickled out of his boots when I tell him we're to leave for Yuma to-morrow."

Passing up the stairs, the scout made his way to his room. One of the gas-jets was lighted and turned low. The old trapper was in neither of the two beds with which the room was furnished. From one of the beds hung his revolver-belt. The scout saw that one of the revolvers was missing.

"There's something here that I can't understand," thought Buffalo Bill. "Nick isn't in the hotel; he has gone away somewhere and taken one of his revolvers. Why did he go? That's the question."

Leaving the room, the scout went down to the office to make some inquiries of the night clerk. Yes, the clerk had seen Nomad go up-stairs to his room and then come down and go out again. He had left no word, and, consequently, the clerk had no idea where, or why, he had gone. While the scout was talking with the clerk, the telephone-bell rang.

"Somebody for you, Mr. Cody," called the clerk, turning away from the telephone.

Puzzled and perplexed, the scout had started across the office toward the outside door. At the call from the clerk, a thought darted through his mind that his pard was calling him up to report his whereabouts. In this, however, the scout was disappointed. The call had come from police headquarters.

"That you, Cody?"

"Yes."

"Well, this is Finucane. Where's your pard?"

"That's what I'm just trying to find out. When I got back here he had vanished—and taken one of his guns with him."

"It's as I feared, then. The Sam-sings have spotted both of you. It hasn't taken them long to begin their work."

"What do you mean? Have you heard anything about Nomad?"

"One of our Chink spies blew in here, a few minutes ago, with a story I didn't more than half believe; but, now that you tell me Nomad has mysteriously vanished, I'm inclined to take some stock in the yarn."

"Is he in danger?"

"The worst kind. I can't tell you very much over the phone, but I'm sending one of my best men hot-foot to help you out. Whatever is done will have to be done in a hurry. The man's name is Gordon. Wait there till he comes."

Finucane rang off abruptly. Buffalo Bill, even more perplexed than he had been before, left the telephone and began pacing the office.

It hardly seemed possible to him that the Sam-sings could have so quickly engineered a plot against his old pard. And yet, if Finucane's statement was to be believed, that is exactly what had happened.

While the scout was still pacing the office, a slender, sharp-eyed man came briskly in from the street. He carried a bundle under one arm. After taking a quick survey of the office, he walked straight to the scout.

"Buffalo Bill?" he queried, in a low voice.

"My name," answered the scout, giving his interlocutor a sharp look.

"I'm Gordon—from police headquarters. Are you armed?"

"I will be in a minute."

"Then hurry; we haven't much time to lose."

The scout went up to his room and buckled on his revolvers under his coat. When he came down, Gordon was waiting for him, and they left the hotel together.

"What's the matter with Nomad?" queried the scout.

"The Sam-sings baited a hook for him," answered Gordon, "and he rose to the bait."

"A spy reported that to you?"

"To the chief—yes. So far as Chinatown is concerned, the department wouldn't be able to do a thing if it wasn't for the Chink spies. This spy was in a hang-out known as the Place of the Twenty Thousand Delights. An old hatchet-boy went through the place with a white man in tow. The spy saw half a dozen Chinks get up from the tables, step out of their sandals, and creep after the two in their bare feet. The spy is a game 'un, so he kicked off his own sandals and went along with the rest of the Chinks."

"One of the foreign devils who is hunting Yee Wong," the spy overheard one of the Sam-sings say to the others. Then, from the foot of the stairs, the spy saw the Sam-sings creep up as noiselessly as shadows and throw the white man through a secret door in the wall. The spy waited for no more. He had to duck before the Sam-

sings came down; and he didn't draw a long breath until he had reached the big stone yamen and told his little story to the chief.

"It couldn't have happened once in a thousand times that we'd have a spy right on the scene of such a knock-down. It's your luck, I reckon, Buffalo Bill, to have the thing turn out that way. We don't know for sure the white man was your pard, but it looks pretty probable.

"It wasn't thought best to bring a special detail. The less the Chinks know what you're about, the more success you're liable to have. It's you and I for it, Buffalo Bill, and we'll have to work like weasels."

"We can't hope to avoid being seen," said the scout.

"We've got to keep you from being recognized, at all events," answered Gordon. "If the Sam-sings found out you were in Chinatown, we'd be put to it to get you out alive."

"They're the boys for quick action, all right," returned the scout, "but I reckon they'd find I had quite a little to say in a show-down. It beats me how my old pard ever allowed himself to get lured away from the hotel."

"The yellow-mug that turned the trick is one of the smoothest articles that ever sat in at a round of fan-tan. He was educated in the missions, and he can throw the Melican talk like a college professor. Sin Dig is his name, and he's plumb full of sin, at that."

"How long ago was it that your spy saw Sin Dig leading Nomad through that room?"

"Not much more than an hour. A good many things may happen in an hour, though, in that part of town."

"Nomad wasn't born to cash in on any such deal as this," said the scout, with confidence. "The Chinamen

will find they have trapped a hornet, and some of the Sam-sings are going to be sorry."

"All I hope is," said Gordon, "that we can find Nomad, and find him in time."

In following down Geary Street the scout and the officer had come to an open square. Here, in the shadow of a column upholding a golden ship, Gordon halted and began unwrapping his bundle.

"There's an old slouch-hat, a blouse, and a pair of breeches for you, Buffalo Bill," said he, speaking quickly and in a low tone, "and another outfit for myself. Put them on over your clothes. It might be well to take out one of your revolvers and carry it in the sleeve of your blouse."

The scout was more than pleased with Gordon's businesslike method of going about the work. He had laid his plans, it was evident, some time before he had reached the Afton House.

Buffalo Bill wadded up his hat and thrust it into the breast of his coat. His long hair he concealed neatly under the crown of the old slouch head-piece given him by the officer, and then got into the silk blouse and trousers. When he was ready, he had his right hand shoved into the left sleeve of his blouse, and his left hand shoved into the right sleeve. The fingers of his right hand, under the concealing silk, closed upon the butt of one of his forty-fives.

The officer had got into his own rig almost as quickly as had the scout.

"Of course," whispered Gordon, "we couldn't pass muster in any kind of light, but we're going to skulk along through the dark alleys."

"What's your plan, Gordon?" the scout inquired.

"We're going to the Place of Twenty Thousand De-

lights. By climbing a shed in the rear we can get into the second story through a window, and so to the hall with the secret door. Thanks to the information given by the spy, I know how to get through the door if we're ever fortunate enough to reach it. Follow me single file, Buffalo Bill, regular Oriental fashion. Take your cue from me and do just as I do."

They turned into a short thoroughfare known as Grant Avenue, followed it to the corner of Dupont Street, turned back along Bush Street for half a block, and then entered an alley.

A screeching babble of fiddles and tom-toms reached their ears from a neighboring Chinese theater. Gordon slouched along through the thick gloom, and Buffalo Bill followed tight at his heels.

They had not proceeded twenty steps along the alley before a figure upstarted, seemingly out of the very ground, directly in front of Gordon. There came a guttural challenge in Chinese. For answer, Gordon's fist shot out and the Chinaman tumbled backward with a yell.

"Quick, Buffalo Bill!" called Gordon, throwing himself on the prostrate form of the Chinaman. "We must get this fellow trussed up and gagged before any more of the Sam-sings attempt to interfere with us."

The scout sprang forward and went down on his knees.

"Is this fellow one of the Sam-sings?" queried the scout, holding a hand over the prisoner's mouth while Gordon fished two pieces of stout cord from an inner pocket.

"He was on outpost duty, and gave me the challenge of one of Tau Kee's Brothers of the Bow-string," returned the officer. "We're getting 'warm,' all right.

The yellow rascal wouldn't be here if there wasn't something to watch."

Having bound the Chinaman wrist and ankle, Gordon tore off a piece of his blouse, twisted it into a rope, and tied it between his jaws. The luckless Sam-sing was thereupon dragged to one side of the alley and covered with one of a number of empty boxes which were piled there.

"He gave a loud yell," muttered Gordon, "but the pounding and squawking from that Chink playhouse was enough to drown it. Come on, Cody, and look sharp. A knife in the back is a common enough thing around here."

The detective flitted on down the alley, halting at last in the rear of a shed built at the back of a larger building. No lights shone from this side of the structure. Smothered voices, jabbering like magpies, came from somewhere within; and from in front drifted the sounds of a night's activity in Chinatown.

"Here's where we begin, Buffalo Bill," whispered the officer. "Give me a leg up."

The scout helped Gordon up until he reached the edge of the roof, and from there he climbed to a good foothold without difficulty. Bending down in his turn, Gordon gave the scout a lift to his side.

The roof of the shed was almost flat, and shivered perilously under the weight of the two men. On hands and knees they crept slowly and carefully to the up-right.

There were three second-story windows within reach of the roof, but all were crossed with bars.

"Tough luck, Buffalo Bill," murmured the officer, opening his blouse and pulling a hatchet out of his belt.

"We'll have to make some noise now if we're to get inside."

"This is the Place of Twenty Thousand Delights, is it?" queried the scout, as the officer worked.

"A Chinaman has a powerful imagination," returned Gordon.

"I should think so! Poor old Nick isn't enjoying many of the 'delights,' and I'll bet on it."

"It's about an even chance whether we find him alive or strangled."

The scout still continued sanguine regarding his old pard's prospects. He refused to take any stock in the ominous significance of the officer's words.

"We're going to find him," said Buffalo Bill confidently.

"I like your spirit, anyhow," said Gordon.

Then, having got the edge of his hatchet under one of the bars, he lay back on the handle with all his weight.

The bar came away with a rush. Had it not been for the scout's quickness in catching Gordon he would have turned a back somersault off the roof.

For half a minute the uproar had been tremendous. The rickety roof shook and wobbled, and it looked for a moment as though it would surely fall and carry the two venturesome men down with it.

However, the shaking gradually ceased. Lying flat and listening, the scout and the officer waited for three or four minutes. At the end of that time, no evidence appearing that they had been overheard, they got up and went to work at the window again.

With one bar gone, they succeeded in bending the other upward, thus making a space large enough for them to crawl through.

The window on the other side of the bars was open.

Gordon wriggled himself through first. Buffalo Bill, being wider in the shoulders, had some difficulty in following, but at last he managed to make it.

"Hist!" murmured Gordon.

As he and the scout stood silently by the window, the deep, stertorous breathing of a near-by sleeper struck on their ears.

How was it possible, the scout asked himself, for any man to stay asleep during the noise he and Gordon had made on the shed roof?

A match was carefully struck and the mystery was at once revealed.

The room in which the two white men found themselves was small, square, and destitute of furniture. On a straw mat, near one wall, a shriveled-faced Chinaman was stretched out. In his limp hand was a long, opium-smoker's pipe. On the floor near his head was a small lamp and a brass jar.

Gordon gave a grim laugh.

"No fear of *him*," said he; he's dead to the world. Now for the wall and that secret door."

Picking up the spirit-lamp, Gordon tried to light it. The alcohol had been burned out, however, and the lamp was useless.

"We may not need it, anyhow," went on Gordon, putting the lamp back where he had found it. "There's probably a light in the hall, but we'll be in unknown regions after we pass the secret door, and a thing like that would have come handy."

The scout had already groped his way to the door of the room. Softly opening it, he peered out.

A long, cheerless corridor stretched before him. It was feebly lighted by an oil-lamp hanging midway of its length.

The jabbering which he and Gordon had heard on the roof was louder now, and apparently came from a room at the front of the building and near the foot of the stairs.

"The passage is clear," whispered the scout.

"Then," returned the officer, "now's our time, and we'll have to work with a rush."

Out into the hall they went, Gordon taking the lead and giving close scrutiny to the right-hand wall as he approached the head of the stairs.

"The spy said that the trap works with a spring, and that a nail in the wall controls the mechanism," whispered the officer. "Watch at the head of the stairs, Buffalo Bill, while I hunt for the nail."

In that vile-smelling den, surrounded by many and unknown perils, the slow seconds were like minutes, and the minutes like hours.

Suddenly a wildly excited voice broke high over the chattering below. The chattering ceased, but the voice kept on with frantic intensity.

"It's the Chink we caught in the alley!" muttered Gordon. "He has either got loose himself, or some one has found him and set him free. I know the lingo, and he's telling them down there about it. If we can't get through this door, we're going to have the fight of our lives to get away."

The shrill voice below came to a halt. A chorus of fierce voices and a rush of feet followed.

"Maybe," said Buffalo Bill, "the Chink will take the mob to the alley——"

But, even as the scout spoke, the folly of his words became manifest. The Chinamen below were not rushing through the front or rear door of the house, but were crowding into the hallway at the foot of the stairs.

"They're coming!" the scout whispered, whirling about and making toward the officer.

"Here's the nail that operates the door," breathed Gordon huskily; "shall we go on, or make a run back to the alley——"

"We'll go on!" declared the scout. "If my old pard is in this hole, I'll either get him out or stay here with him. Open the door—quick!"

The Sam-sings were already clambering up the stairs as Gordon pushed against the nail. Push as hard as he would, the mechanism refused to work.

"It's secured—on the other side!" gasped Gordon.

"Break it down! Use your hatchet! I'll gain what time you need!"

Whirling back to the head of the stairs, Buffalo Bill grabbed the first Chinaman who reached the top, knocking a knife out of his hand and hurling him back on those behind.

The uproar of the mix-up that followed was terrific. The falling Chinaman, overtopping those below, sent all to the foot of the flight in a shrieking tangle of arms, heads, and legs.

High above the clamor arose the sound of fierce blows rained on the panel in the wall.

Springing to the officer's side, the scout threw himself with all his force against the door. It gave way with a crash, precipitating him into the corridor that lay beyond.

Here there was blank darkness, but the scout was again in the midst of foes, for he could feel them pushing to get past him in the narrow space.

Right and left went his arms with the force of twin battering-rams, jolting strange oaths out of the astounded yellow men.

"Where are you, Buffalo Bill?" panted Gordon, from somewhere behind.

"Here!" yelled the scout. "Here are more of the Sam-sings, and we'll have to walk over them."

Suddenly a light appeared farther down the passage. Pigtailed heads choked the way, the light gleaming on knives that were hastily drawn and flourished.

But the scout's blood was up. Those Sam-sings with their knives barred his way to Nomad, and he flung himself against them irresistibly.

Crack, crack, crack came the spiteful notes of his forty-five, echoing thunderously in the cramped quarters. So narrow was the way that Gordon could be of no help, except to keep off those who might continue mounting by the stairs. To the scout alone fell the task of clearing the path in front.

There was no keeping back this foreign devil with the gun.

"*Feng-shin! feng-shin!*" chattered the Sam-sings wildly.

Four of their number were lying in the hall; and there were others, able to keep their feet indeed, but bearing upon them marks of the scout's fists.

At the first cry of "*feng-shin!*"—"earth devil"—a panic set in. Like so many rats the Chinamen scampered along the corridor, thinking only of escape from this white marvel, who seemed to have a dozen arms and the power of a hundred men.

CHAPTER IV.

NOMAD'S NUMEROUS "DELIGHTS."

The old trapper was a surprised man when the rush behind him was heard and he felt himself lifted bodily and thrown headlong through the secret door. The rear attack of the Sam-sings had been so noiselessly executed that he had learned nothing of their approach until too late to lift a hand for his own protection.

When he fell, the Sam-sings piled upon him, striking him with their fists. Something like a knuckle-duster must have caught him between the eyes, for just as he was making a heroic attempt to struggle up under the weight of his foes, his senses reeled away into night and he was left helpless, at the mercy of his captors.

While accompanying the cute, black-hatted highbinder through Chinatown, the blowing street-lights had shown the trapper a weird collection of dragons. The monsters, for the most part, were made of papier-mâché, their scales gilded and their gaping mouths and protruding tongues painted a fiery red. They hung overhead in the streets, or writhed above the doors of bazaars and restaurants.

In the darkness that followed the blow with the knuckle-duster Nomad dreamed, and his dreams were full of dragons. He was fighting them single-handed, and they came at him from all sides, by threes, by dozens, and in battalions. As fast as he killed off one detachment of the writhing, ill-omened monsters, another lot came at him, snorting fire and filling the air with a smell of brimstone.

That was a terrific combat, and none the less trying for being purely imaginary. When Nomad opened his eyes, he was panting like a spent dog.

He was in a small room, lighted by a smoky oil-lamp. The lamp stood on a little counter of polished ebony. Behind the counter sat a fat-faced Chinaman with a shifty eye. The Chinaman's hands were smooth, and the fingernails were fully two inches long. A cap with a tassel rested on his shaven head, and his cue, black and sinuous as a snake, crawled over the shoulder of his orange-colored blouse and rested its end on the table beside him. He had a pot of ink and a brush, and was busily making notes in the Chinese fashion, up and down and from right to left. The "writing" was being done in a brown-paper book; and, as he wrote, he turned the leaves from the back of the book toward the front.

Nomad, while his hazy faculties were clearing, studied the fat-faced Chinaman with an amazed eye.

Presently the trapper fell to thinking more particularly of himself. He recalled how the Chinaman in the black hat, spouting English like a college graduate, had called on him at the hotel; how he had accompanied him ostensibly on a trip to the house of the consul; and then, finally, how he had been grabbed and thrown neck and heels through a hole in the wall.

Beginning thus at the very commencement of his unusual experience, he followed it down through, link by link, to that room somewhere in the hidden regions of the Place of Twenty Thousand Delights.

"Et's chuck full er delight," thought Nomad grimly. "I knows, I reckon, bekase I've sampled 'em. Ther passin' joy o' bein' slammed down from behind an' hammered between ther eyes with er piece o' brass, ain't nothin' beside ther consoomin' pleasure o' layin' here,

hog-tied like er steer, wonderin' what brand o' delight ther fat yaller-boy is puttin' down fer me in his dope-book."

Nomad coughed and twisted himself up into a sitting posture. Some one started forward from the other side of the room.

It was the treacherous Chinaman in the black hat.

A look of rage crossed the old trapper's face, and he pulled savagely at the cords securing his hands.

"You onnery, low-down specimen of er rat-eater!" he cried, "ef I was loose fer a minit I'd make chop-sooey out er yer bloomin' carkiss. Ye're more kinds of er black-guard than I kin lay tongue to, an' ef I ever git out o' hyar I'll camp on yer trail till I put ye out o' bizness. Ye kin spread yore blankets an' go ter sleep on *thet*."

The fat Chinaman did not even look up at this outburst of wrath. He kept on making diagrams with his camel-hair brush. Nor did the Chinaman in the black hat so much as look toward the prisoner. He addressed the man in the tasseled cap. The latter, laying down his brush, leaned back in his chair and lighted a cigarette.

He spoke. Then the other Chinaman spoke. They had it back and forth for a minute, but all in Chinese. The most Nomad could make out of their talk was a whoop, two grunts, and a falling inflection. But they were talking about *him*, the trapper felt sure of that. Occasionally they would nod, or make a contemptuous gesture in his direction. Finally Sin Dig—for that, as we already know, was the name of the amiable one in the black hat—drew apart, allowing his fat companion to fix his shifty eyes on the prisoner.

"You one piecee bad white devil, huh?" remarked the fat person.

"Mebby I'm in one piece," answered Nomad, "but I feel more like I was in er dozen."

"You got one piecée name?"

"Nary, ye squinch-eyed thimble-rigger; thet's in two pieces."

"What you callee you'self, huh?"

"Easy mark is what I'm callin' myself at ther present writin'. From ther way I drapped inter this tinhorn game ye'd think I hadn't pipped my shell no later than yesterday. Waugh, but et glooms me up!"

"You Nickee Nomad?"

"Nickee!" mimicked the old trapper. "Say, I come purty nigh killin' er greaser oncet for callin' me Nicolo. Jest plain Nick, ef ye got ter hev it."

"You fliend big high man Cody?"

"I'm his blanket-mate an' pard."

"You helpee big high man looker find Yee Wong?"

"Yee Wong? Thet's a new one on me."

Here the man in the black hat butted in with more remarks in Chinese. The fat Chinaman nodded, tossed away his cigarette, closed his book, and locked it in a lacquered box which stood on the table beside the lamp. Tossing his cue languidly over his shoulder, he got up and waddled around the end of the ebony counter.

"You makee die," said he nonchalantly to Nomad, "makee go top-side. Savvy? Bymby come Brothers of the Bow-string, makee pull at breath with cord."

"Why, ye infernal, slant-eyed strangler!" cried Nomad, "ye're makin' yerself out ter be nothin' more'n a common killer, and ther wust kind of a low-down killer at thet. Mebby ye'n to what ye say, an' mebby ye won't. The big high man is loose in 'Frisco, an' he'll find out what's become o' me. Ef ye purceed accordin' ter yer

schedule thar'll be a gin'ral massacre o' Chinks hyarabouts."

The fat Chinaman listened patiently, went over to a side wall, kicked at the mopboard, and then passed through an opening that suddenly appeared before him. The opening closed, and Nomad was left alone with Sin Dig.

The betrayer went around behind the ebony counter, sat down in the fat man's chair, and lifted his gold-embroidered sandals to the top of the counter. Then he began smoking cigarettes of his own.

"The illustrious one," he sneered, "will soon be in a country where he cannot interfere with Tau Kee's business."

"I don't know er thing erbout Tau Kee, ner erbout Yee Wong," snarled Nomad, "but I do know thet ef I was loose fer a minute you'd emigrate ter a land whar ye couldn't fool white men."

Sin Dig gave a supercilious grin and relapsed into silence. Minute followed minute, the trapper working hard but fruitlessly to free his wrists of the cords that bound them; then, while he was still straining, five low-browed scoundrels glided into the room, one of them carrying a silken cord with a noose at the end.

No word was spoken. Sin Dig simply nodded toward Nomad, and the five stepped over to him.

The trapper realized that he was in a tight corner. Buffalo Bill could not know where he was, and might make no attempt to hunt for him before morning; and, even when he did make the attempt, hunting for a needle in a haystack would be easy compared with the task he would face.

Yet, although he knew his case was practically hope-

less, Nomad, bound though he was, wriggled and fought to such purpose that four of the Chinamen had to take him down and sit on him before the fifth could adjust the cord about his neck.

Having got the cord in position, the strangler arose with the free end of it in his hand. Standing erect, with one straw sandal on the trapper's chest, the assassin began taking up the slack with a steady and constantly growing pressure.

As his breath came gaspingly he turned his head toward the outer door. About it he saw more rascally Chinamen—all Brothers of the Bow-string, and watching the work in the room with malevolent grins and deep interest.

Then, just as Nomad felt he was close to the end, there came the sound of a crash. The Brothers of the Bow-string leaped to the right-about; at the same moment, the cord in the hands of the strangler relaxed and the trapper gulped down a full breath of air.

He tried to shout, but the muscles of his throat seemed paralyzed and no sound left his moving lips. The Chinamen at the door had rushed along the corridor. The man operating the cord dropped the silken strands, leaped to the table, and picked up the lamp.

Yells and shouts and the sounds of a fierce struggle floated into the stuffy room; and in the midst of the clamor the trapper thought he could hear the voice of Buffalo Bill.

Again he tried to shout, but some one else had rushed upon him and grabbed the end of the cord. The strangler stood just outside the door with the lighted lamp held above his head. The rays, filtering into the room, brought out the saturnine features of Sin Dig, bending down over the intended victim and pulling at the cord.

"The exalted one," breathed Sin Dig, "shall not profit by the coming of his noble friends. When they arrive, the Illustrious Nomad will be safe with his ancestors!"

With returning breath, Nomad had recovered some of his strength. Even though help was on the way, he knew that the treacherous Chinaman might have time, before it arrived, to finish the work begun by the strangler.

With a fierce effort, the trapper threw himself to one side, knocking Sin Dig's feet out from under him and throwing him heavily to the floor.

At that moment the strangler came running back with the lamp. Sin Dig called to him, but he paid no attention.

Placing the lamp on the counter, the strangler made a rush toward the side of the room, kicked sharply against the mopboard, and vanished into the gloomy regions beyond. From this it was plain that the fight was going against the Sam-sings, and that a getaway was necessary if the treacherous Chinamen were not to risk their lives.

But Sin Dig's fury increased with his frustrated attempt on Nomad. He seemed possessed of but one idea, and that was to finish the work of the strangler.

Once more he seized the cord. At that moment some of the panic-stricken Chinamen rushed past the door and along the corridor outside. Following them in hot pursuit came Buffalo Bill.

The scout would have passed the door had Nomad not found his tongue and given a warning shout. The call was enough.

Into the room plunged Buffalo Bill. He was but an instant sizing up the situation, and another instant in felling the wily Sin Dig with a straight-arm blow.

"Buffer!" panted the trapper. "Kin I believe my eyes,

followed with the lamp. Nomad lingered to hoist Sin Dig to his feet and grab him by the cue.

"Make so much as er stutter, ye whelp," he hissed in the Chinaman's ear, while he caressed his chest with the point of his revolver, "an' I'll blow a hole through ye. The boot's on t'other foot now, an' et's you who're dancin' ter my music."

Kicking the Chinaman through the secret door, Nomad followed him down the steps.

By then the opening in the wall closed of itself, one of the stair-treads, perhaps, releasing a spring that operated the closing mechanism. But it had not closed before the fleeing white men heard the Sam-sings crash into the room they had just quitted.

"Ye'll hev ter hustle, pards," called the trapper. "Thar'll be er raft er yaller-boys pilin' down on us in er minit."

"Who's this behind me?" demanded Buffalo Bill, noticing the black-hatted Chinaman for the first time.

"That's Sin Dig," answered Gordon, looking over the scout's shoulder. "He's the scoundrel that got Nomad into this bunch of trouble."

"Thet's whatever!" boomed Nomad. "Ef we kin kerry him away from hyar a pris'ner, thet's what we're goin' ter do."

"He'll serve time in San Quentin for this!" averred the officer.

"An' ef ther hatchet-boys git too fierce fer us," proceeded Nomad, "an' we kain't take him away a pris'ner, I'm goin' ter make a good Chinaman o' him afore I leave him behind."

As an officer of the law, Gordon discreetly ignored this observation.

All by that time were at the foot of the stairs. A passage stretched before them.

"Where does this passage lead, Sin Dig?" asked Gordon sharply.

"To the place where it goes, excellency," was the insolent answer.

Nomad caught the Chinaman's cue and took a hitch with it about his yellow neck.

"I'll strangle ye with yer own h'ar ef ye don't answer!" glowered the irate Nomad.

The trap-door sprang open at the top of the stairs.

"No time to waste on Sin Dig," said Gordon quickly. "Come on with the lamp, Buffalo Bill."

The officer started along the corridor at a run, while the Sam-sings slid down the stairs with frantic yells. One or two revolver-shots dampened their ardor and caused them to hang back.

"Ah! here's a door—and it's just a plain, ordinary door with nothing secret about it," cried Gordon. "Now, then, let's see what's on the other side."

He flung the door wide and a breath of cool air was wafted in.

"The street!" cried Gordon, as he sprang out on the sidewalk. "Luck's with us at the wind-up, friends."

And luck surely was with them, for they emerged from a building adjoining the Place of Twenty Thousand Delights. As if by magic every Chinaman on Dupont Street had scurried away. The thoroughfare in the immediate vicinity was entirely deserted save for a detail of blue-coats gathered on the walk.

"Hello, Gordon!" cried one of the policemen. "Where's the trouble?"

"In the Delight hang-out. Probably it won't do any good, but you'd better raid it."

Five officers rushed into the house and ransacked every room and passage they could find; but the inmates—excepting one stupefied opium-smoker in a room on the second floor—had vanished. There was not a Sam-sing anywhere to be found.

At a point near Geary Street Buffalo Bill and Nomad parted with Gordon.

"Gamest man I ever trailed with!" exclaimed the policeman warmly, reaching out to grasp the scout's hand. "I'll see you in the morning, Cody; and, meanwhile, I'll find out what there is in this box. Its contents may have a bearing on that work at Yuma."

"What was the matter with you, Nick?" queried the scout, as they walked.

"Huntin' excitement," answered the old man gruffly.

"Well, I reckon you found it," laughed the scout.

"Chuck full o' delights," said Nomad, "but I'm appreciatin' 'em more now than I did a while back."

CHAPTER V.

IMPORTANT NEWS.

Next morning, while the scout and the trapper were dressing, old Nomad unbosomed himself.

By allowing himself to be swayed by the treacherous San Dig, he had bit at the sort of a gold-brick game which city tin horns hand out to Hoosiers. Nomad admitted that he was a Hoosier, and that he had forfeited the right to travel in Buffalo Bill's class.

The old man was sour and angry. In the bright light of the morning after, he was able to see his weakness of the night before in glaring colors.

"I'm goin' back ter ther deserts an' ther mountings," he said glumly. "I'm ter home thar, Buffler. I hadn't never ort ter come ter 'Frisco at all. When ye come ter towns of more'n a hundred people I'm like er sheep with er long fleece. Waugh! I'm goin' ter say 'ba-a' an' make fer ther fust train."

"Chirk up!" laughed the scout, clapping his old pard on the shoulder. "I know just how you felt last night, Nick. You were hungry to be doing something, and the big city had got on your nerves. Why, even if you'd known Sin Dig was fixing a trap for you, it's dollars to doughnuts you'd have gone with him just the same."

"Mebbyso," was the gloomy answer; "no tellin' what kind of er fool caper I'll cut when I takes ther bit in my teeth. I'm thet restive, sometimes, thar ain't no restrainin' me."

"Well, pard, it won't be many hours before you and I take the back track together."

"Somethin' up between you an' ther chief o' perlice?" queried Nomad.

"Yes. I suppose you aren't particularly in love with the Brothers of the Bow-string after what happened last night?"

"Not ter hurt," gulped the old man, bristling.

"How would you like a deal that would give you a chance to break even?"

Nomad jumped to the edge of his chair.

"Try me!" he muttered.

"I'm going to."

Thereupon the scout went into details about the mandarin's daughter from far Shanghai, and about Tau Kee, and his "underground railway" for slaves into the United States by way of the Gulf of California and Yuma.

"Waugh!" said Nomad, with a satisfied grunt, "et sounds good. I'm beginnin' ter savvy, now, what ther fat Chink meant when he spoke o' Yee Wong an' Tau What's-his-name. I'm ready ter jump inter this business with both hands an' my spurs on, Buffler; only let et be soon."

"It will be soon enough, I reckon," replied the scout. "Now, chirk up and come down to breakfast."

The way Nomad slaughtered ham and eggs and buckwheat cakes during that morning meal proved that his gloom hadn't robbed him of his appetite. Just as they were leaving the dining-room they saw Gordon hurrying into the hotel.

"Hello!" exclaimed the scout; "you seem to be in a rush."

"I am," was the brisk answer, "the biggest kind. Where can I talk with you two for a few minutes? There's a train south at eleven-thirty, and you've got to

catch it. No matter how quick you get to where you're going, though, you may be too late."

Buffalo Bill caught the urgent haste in the officer's voice and manner, and wasted no time in leading him up the stairs and to his and Nomad's room.

"There," said the scout, closing and locking the door. "We'll pull our chairs together and not a Sam-sing in 'Frisco will know what we're talking about. What's to pay, Gordon?"

"It was the contents of that lacquered box that set the department by the ears," explained Gordon. "Say, Nomad's getting into the scrape was worth all it cost him and us. That's right! The contents of that box puts the department in the possession of a whole lot of information that couldn't have been got in any other way. Nomad, by following Sin Dig last night, you gave the chief a remarkable boost."

"I made er remarkable fool er myself at ther same time," growled the old man. "Wouldn't make sich an exhibition o' myself ag'in fer a million dollars."

"Well, with the help of what was in that box the Old Man will get a strangle hold on the slave-trade in 'Frisco. The other end of it, Buffalo Bill—the Yuma end, you understand, along with the rescue of Yee Wong—is left to you."

"Was there anything about Yee Wong in that box?" queried the scout.

"Well, I guess! Why, there was a whole book full of hen-tracks and double-jointed ideographs telling about Tau Kee's operations. The book itself is a record of the murders committed by the Brothers of the Bow-string. It, alone, is enough to put a noose around the throats of some fifteen or twenty Chinamen, providing we can catch them. But the point I am getting at is this:

"Chink letters, found in the box, tell that Yee Wong is in the hands of a red-headed Chinaman in Yuma. This red-headed Chink is Tau Kee's principal lieutenant, and watches operations on the Colorado River. Now, a red-headed Chinaman ought to be an easy person to locate. Don't you think so?"

"Never heard of a red-headed Chinaman!" declared the scout. "Didn't know there ever was such a freak."

"I never saw one," pursued Gordon, "but we have that Chink letter as proof. The thing to do is to get to Yuma as soon as you can, and camp on the trail of this red-headed heathen."

"The finding of that box, Gordon," reasoned the scout, "is a thing that will work both ways. The Sam-sings here in 'Frisco will know the police got hold of it, and they'll know, too, that you have had the contents translated. That will give them warning, and by now, no doubt, the warning is being passed along to the red-headed Chinaman. Before Nick and I can get there, the Chinaman will have taken Yee Wong and gone to safer quarters."

"That's what we fear; but it's a situation the chief trusts to your sagacity to meet."

"Look hyar, Buffler," put in Nomad, "our Dutch pard, ther baron, is hangin' out in Yuma this blessed minit, waitin' fer some 'oxcidement,' as he calls it, ter happen erlong. Why not shoot a telegraft message at him an'—"

"By George!" exclaimed the scout, "that's the very move!"

"You have a pard in Yuma now?" queried Gordon, catching the scout's excitement.

"Yes; and a game pard he is, too, barring a tendency

to bungle things now and then. But he'll do in this pinch."

"It will be a whole lot better working through your pard than through the Yuma authorities, as the chief had thought of doing."

"Far and away better. Is that all, Gordon? If it is, the quicker I can get to a telegraph-office the sooner our Dutch pard will be hunting the trail."

"One thing more, Buffalo Bill," went on Gordon, pulling a long envelope from his pocket. "This is sent to you by the chief. It contains a copy of the report made by the informer who went to the Chinese consul here, and also photographs of Tau Kee and Yee Wong. They will probably be of help to you. If you meet up with Tau Kee you'll be able to recognize him, and the red-headed Chink won't be able to palm off on you another Chinese girl for Yee Wong."

"The stuff will probably come handy," said the scout, pushing the envelope into his pocket. "I'll settle our bill, Nick, and shoot that telegram through to the baron. Meanwhile, get our traps together and meet me at the eleven-thirty train on the S. P."

"Gittin' our traps tergether ain't so much of-er job," grinned Nomad, slowly recovering his spirits. "When we travels we travels light, like ther cimiroon thet had fifty-three pieces in his grip—er pack er keerds an' a paper collar. I'll be ready fer Yuma by ther time you aire."

"You know enough about the Sam-sings by this time, Buffalo Bill," continued Gordon, as they went down the stairs, "to understand that, from now on, you and Nomad will be marked men."

"Nomad's marked with a frantic desire to meet the Brothers of the Bow-string and play even," laughed the

scout. "He's only too glad to think the Sam-sings may come at him."

"Well, the chief wanted me to remind you to be on the lookout continually. Don't put your trust in any Chinaman, no matter who you may think he is."

"I never did put much confidence in them," said the scout, "and I don't intend to begin now."

"If you're going to the telegraph-office," added Gordon, "I'll show you the nearest one."

The office was only two blocks away, and here the scout sent this message:

"WILLIAM VON SCHNITZENHAUSER, Grand Central Hotel, Yuma.

"Important business. Hunt for secretly, without delay, red-headed Chinaman supposed to be in Yuma. Camp on his trail, if you have any luck, and notify me at your hotel, Yuma. Nick and I coming first train.

"BUFFALO BILL."

"That will do the trick," said Buffalo Bill, as he turned away from the receiving-window after filing his message. "Tell the chief, Gordon, that if there's anything in this Yuma deal I and my pards will dig it up."

"No-use telling him that," smiled Gordon; "the chief knows. You may have some exciting times, but it's a cinch you will win out."

"We can't have any excitement that will lay over last night's."

"Well, I hope you won't have any worse, and that you'll come out of what you do have fully as well. Here's where our trails fork. Good-by, and good luck."

"Same to you."

The men, who had conceived a great liking for each other because of the perils faced together during the preceding night, shook hands heartily and separated.

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN THE NEWS REACHED YUMA.

It's at Yuma that two rivers come together. Where they join there's a bluff, and on top of the bluff stands a big building with grated windows, and bastions, and armed guards.

From the veranda of the Grand Central, Villum von Schnitzenhauser, otherwise known as "the baron," could look up and see the penitentiary. He loved "oxcide-ment," did the baron, but there hadn't been so much as a dog-fight in Yuma since he struck the town. There, at the edge of the desert, he was having as uneventful a time as was Nomad during the greater part of his stay in Frisco.

Hour after hour the baron used to sit on the hotel veranda, his feet cocked up on the railing, a long pipe between his teeth, looking up at the penitentiary and wishing some one would break out, so he could join in the excitement of a chase.

"I made some misdakes, py shinks," he would murmur ruefully. "I should haf gone along mit Puffalo Pill und Nomat to der pig city. Oof I hat done dot, I shouldn't be vasting away und rusting oudt mit meinseluf like vat I am."

Then the baron would heave a long sigh, puff at his pipe, and let his mind wander back among the many pleasant activities in which he had assisted the scout and the trapper.

One day—a hot day, too, as the days usually are in Yuma—there came a ripple of excitement. It was only

a ripple, but the baron grabbed at it like a drowning man at a straw.

A small edition of an Indian came along the street. He was a handsome boy, for an Indian, straight as a ramrod, buckskinned and moccasined, bareheaded, and with a superb eagle feather nodding over his scalp-lock.

There was nothing uncertain about his movements. He walked as though he was on springs, and every turn of his head, every bend of his lithe and flexible body, had a cause and went straight to the mark.

The baron watched him languidly.

"Dot leedle Inchun is der pest-looking feller vat efer I see," said the baron to himself. "I like der looks oof dot poy."

Reaching the steps leading to the veranda, the little Indian turned, ascended them, and walked straight to the baron.

"How?" said he, extending his hand.

"Pooty goot," said the baron, taking the outstretched hand, "considering dot dere isn't anyt'ing doing. How you vas yourseluf, hey?"

"Heap fine," was the grave response.

"How iss poppa und momma, und der odder leedle bappooses?"

"No sabe; no got um."

There was a wistful light in the boy's eyes for a moment.

"Vell, now," said the baron sympathetically, "dot's vorse as I t'ought. Here iss some money. Run away und ged a shdring oof peads fer yourseluf."

The boy pushed the hand away and drew himself up proudly.

"No take um paleface money," said he, with tre-

mendous pride. "Piute boy him work for what he get. Much 'blige. You think um Piute boy beggar? Huh!"

"Vat a keveer leedle Inchun id iss!" murmured the wondering baron; "so intependent mit himseluf, so full mit chinchel!"

"Look!" said the Indian boy.

His hand dipped into a beaded medicine-bag and brought out a handful of gold. The baron almost fell off his chair.

"Vy," he gasped, "you vas rich! Sooch a rich leedle feller vat id iss! Verè you ged so mooch as dot?"

"All same honest," answered the boy.

"I bed you! You don'd need to tell me dose."

"You heap baron?" pursued the boy.

"Vell, how you know dot?"

"You pard Pa-e-has-ka, Long Hair Chief?"

"Sure! Und you know Puffalo Pill, too! Vell, vell!"

"You all same pard Nomad, the Wolf-killer?"

"Nomat? Yah, so. I peen pards mit dem bot'."

"Wuh! Me pard, too."

"I vas so habby to know dot as I can't tell!" beamed the baron. "Vat iss your name?"

"Little Cayuse."

The baron, on the spur of the moment, reached out his arms and pulled the Indian boy to him in a delighted embrace.

"Oh, py shinks, I haf heardt oof you! Yah, so helup me, I haf heardt fine t'ings aboutt der Leedle Cayuse. Say, dis vas some bleasures I don't expect."

"Where Pa-e-has-ka?" asked Little Cayuse, untangling himself with dignity from the baron's embrace.

"Dey peen in 'Frisco," said the baron. "Ve vas all in Utah togedder, und vent from dere by Fort Apache; und id vas ad der fort dot Puffalo Pill got a ledder. Ven

he readt dot ledder, he und Nomat vent to 'Frisco und I come on here."

"Wuh," said Little Cayuse, "me know. Me hunt for Pa-e-has-ka since many sleeps. Mebbysso he come to Yuma?"

"Meppyso; anyvay, dot's vat I hope. Oof he don'd come py Yuma, den, py shiminy, I go verefer he iss."

"Wuh! Little Cayuse go, too."

"I t'ought," ruminated the baron, "dot Puffalo Pill say you hat choined der army, Leedle Cayuse?"

"No like um; like um Pa-e-has-ka heap better."

"Vell, I don't plame you for dot. Puffalo Pill——"

The baron was interrupted by a messenger-boy, who walked up on the porch at that moment and came toward him with a yellow envelope in his hand. The boy's eyes were resting admiringly on Little Cayuse. But the young Indian kept his eyes on the baron.

"William von Schnitzenhauser," asked the boy, "you him?"

"Dot's me," palpitated the baron. "It can't be dot any vone iss delegraphing me a tispatch?"

"Dis here's fer you if yer name's what I said," went on the messenger.

With shaking and eager fingers, the baron scribbled his name on the book; then, feverishly impatient, he tore open the envelope and pulled out the enclosure.

The messenger, still with his eyes on Little Cayuse, faded around the corner of the hotel.

As the baron read and reread the message, his chest began to swell and a look of intense satisfaction drifted across his face.

"Vell, ve chust peen dalking aboutt Puffalo Pill," said he, "und here iss some messaches from him. He has

delegraphed by me dot dere iss imbortant pitzness to be tone."

"Little Cayuse help?" asked the boy, his voice trembling with eagerness.

"I don'd know for vy you can't helup, Leedle Cayuse." The baron cast a cautious look around the veranda. There was no one within ear-shot. "Come gloser," he whispered, "vile I read him."

Then, with his lips close to the small Piute's ear, the baron read the message twice aloud.

"Pa-e-has-ka and Wolf-killer come to Yuma," breathed the boy. "Good. Me see um."

"Dot's goot, you bed you; aber vat's dot aboutt der ret-heated Shinamans?"

"You no sabe red-hair yellow man?" returned the boy.

"I never heardt oof sooch a t'ing as some ret-heated Shinamans. Dot means ve'll haf to look, my poy."

"Me sabe," said Little Cayuse.

"Vat's dot?" returned the baron. "You know vere dere iss a ret-heated Shinaman?"

"Wuh!"

"Vere id iss? Ve'll go righdt away und camp on his drail. Dot's vat Puffalo Pill say."

"You follow; we find um yellow man heap quick."

"Ach, vat luck id iss! I findt Leedle Cayuse, und I ged a delegraf tispach from Puffalo Pill, und now Leedle Cayuse knows vere der Shinaman iss. Vait a leedle, my poy, vile I go afder my guns."

The baron ambled quickly into the hotel, and in three minutes he ambled out again, his coat bulging at both hips.

"Lead on, Cayuse," said he, "aber don'd forged dot der orters is to go mit carefulness und nod let anypody know vat ve yas aboutt."

The German and the little Piute had no sooner got out of sight than a Chinaman, in a dirty white apron, crawled out from under the veranda.

Pulling off his apron, he rolled it up and threw it back into the hole from which he had crawled; then, like a streak, he darted along the sidewalk and disappeared between two adobe houses.

The Brothers of the Bow-string were well represented in Yuma by paid spies. What had happened was something the king of scouts could hardly have guarded against in a telegram.

The baron was expecting Little Cayuse to steer him straight toward the Chinese quarter of the town, but the course did not bear in this direction.

Stepping off spryly in front, with never a word or a look to right or left, Little Cayuse pointed southward and westward toward a series of steep bluffs along the Colorado.

The outskirts of the town were passed and soon left far behind. Cayuse had struck into a beaten foot-path that led between clumps of greasewood and low-growing mesquit-trees.

"Cayuse," called the baron, "tell me somet'ing."

The boy halted and whirled about. The baron was mopping his dripping face with a red cotton handkerchief.

"Vas you going ofer indo Mexico?" he asked.

"We go toward Injun camp," said Little Cayuse.

"Vat Inchun gamp?"

"Yumas."

"Ah, ha! You know der Yumas?"

"Me lodge in Yuma teepees. Yumas heap friends Pintes. Me Piute."

"Iss der ret-heated Shinaman among der Yumas?"

"Him got lodge plenty close."

"Vell, don'd forged ve got to shneak oop on der lodge. You vas only a poy, Cayuse, und meppy, ven ve come glose py dot lodge, id vas pedder dot I do der scouding."

"Ugh!" grunted Little Cayuse, as he turned and continued on along the foot-path.

Suddenly he paused, bent over quickly, and picked up something.

"Vat id iss?" queried the baron, coming near.

In his hands the boy was holding a small wooden box.

"Somebody lose um," said he.

Opening the box, he disclosed some neatly stowed red, white, and blue poker-chips.

"Some gampler, meppy," hazarded the baron. "Drow der pox away, Cayuse. Ve don'd got time to monkey mit dot."

"No throw um," answered Cayuse; "keep um. Sell um, mebbysso."

The box was too big for his medicine-bag, but he got around the difficulty by emptying the chips into the bag and throwing the empty box away.

"Yumas heap foolish," said he, as they continued on. "Make gamble, lose plenty dinero. Gambling no good. Little Cayuse know. Pa-e-has-ka tell um."

"Dot's righdt, you bed you. I don'd gample mein-seluf; I only schust vin."

"All same gamble, win or lose."

"No, py shinks! Ven you vin id ain'd gampling—id s a skinch."

The boy grunted disgustedly.

When he had come close to the Yuma encampment he turned from the foot-path and made a détour. The path ran directly to the camp, and he did not care to be seen and questioned by the Yumas.

Half a mile beyond the Indian encampment was a thick chaparral covering the ground to the edge of the steep bluffs. Cayuse entered the chaparral at a place where the bluff fell sheer downward to the waters of the Colorado.

Leaning out of the bushes, the boy directed the baron's attention along the edge of the bank to where a small boat was made fast. A rope ladder led from the brow of the bluff to the post to which the boat was secured.

"See um boat?" whispered Cayuse.

"Sure," answered the baron.

"Him red hair yellow man's boat. Red Hair's lodge near top of um rope ladder."

"Vell, vat oof dot? Ve don'd care noddin aboutt der poat, Cayuse. Id's der Shinaman ve vant to vatch."

"Wuh! Plenty 'Paches 'round Red Head's lodge."

"Vat's dot? 'Paches? Vat's der Shinaman got to do mit 'Paches?"

"No sabe. All same 'Paches dere. You stay here. Me go look, see."

"You shtay here, Cayuse, und I vill go meinseluf. You vas only a poy und you might get indo more drouples as you could take care oof."

"Me Injun; 'Paches Injun. 'Paches see um Cayuse, no hurt um. See um baron, kill um, scalp um. Wuh, mebyso."

There was a lot of forceful logic in what the boy said. He lived with the Yumas. The Apaches who were with the Chinaman probably knew that. Therefore, if the Piute boy was seen skulking about the chaparral the Apaches would probably think nothing of it. But the baron might find it hard to explain his presence.

"Vell," agreed the baron, "if dot's der vay of id, vy,

you go along und do der scouding. Aber have some care mit yourseluf, Cayuse. Puffalo Pill say dot ve vas to gamp on der drail und make id a segret."

"Me sabe."

Without further words Cayuse slid noiselessly into the bushes and vanished. The baron sat down on the brink of the bluff, where he could catch the faint breeze playing across the river, and, at the same time, keep an eye on the rope ladder and the boat.

He sat there quietly for several minutes, and was just beginning to think it was time Cayuse was returning with a report, when he saw something down the bank that commanded his immediate attention.

An Apache Indian lowered himself over the edge of the bank and onto the rope ladder. The Indian had a bow and arrow and a lance secured to his bare back.

Reaching the foot of the ladder, he pulled in the boat, dropped into it, picked up an oar, and steadied the boat broadside onto the foot of the bluff. Then, looking up, he waved one hand in a signal to some one at the top of the bank.

Another man got over and stood for a space on the top rungs of the ladder. This was a Chinaman, a Chinaman in black blouse and breeches and wearing an old army fatigue-cap. His cue was not coiled at the top of his head, but swung down almost to his knees.

And the cue was *red*. There was no doubt on that point. The baron was some distance away, but he could distinguish clearly the color of the cue.

A bundle was handed to the Chinaman. It was a long, narrow bundle, closely wrapped in a red blanket. From the contour of the blanket, the baron guessed that it swathed a **human form**.

What did that mean? Had the red-headed Chinaman killed somebody, and was he rowing out into the river to hide the evidence of his crime?

Carrying the bundle awkwardly over his shoulder, the Chinaman descended cautiously the swinging ladder, and, after some maneuvering, managed to get both himself and the bundle safely in the boat.

Another Apache followed the Chinaman. When all were embarked, the painter was cast off and the boat headed down-stream, two Apaches working at the oars.

"Vell," muttered the baron, "how vas I going to foller dot ret-headed Shinaman now? Dere vasn't anoder poat, und I hafn't a horse, und—py chimineddy! vat a luck id iss! Vere's Cayuse? Vy don'd he come pack und say someding? I'll findt him, und ve'll tecite vat's pest to do."

The baron was greatly upset. He had supposed that all it would be necessary to do would be to lie low in some convenient spot, watch the red-headed Chinaman, and then send Little Cayuse back to the hotel to tell the scout about it when he and Nomad arrived from San Francisco. Now this pretty little plan of the baron's had all been knocked in the head.

Starting straight into the chaparral, the baron headed in the direction where he supposed the Chinaman's hang-out to be. The bushes were thick, and here and there among them was a prickly plant known as the catsclaw. Time and time again the branches of a catsclaw struck against the baron's face, scratching him and causing him to explode a few remarks by way of easing his feelings.

Presently he sat down, in a small, cleared space, thinking to take a few minutes' rest before continuing on. He had not been seated more than half a minute when he

heard a thrashing among the bushes, drawing steadily in his direction.

Some one was coming. Thinking it was Little Cayuse, the baron started to yell, by way of giving the boy the direction. But, before he could yell, he suddenly be-thought himself of the Apaches. There might be more of the Apaches in that vicinity than those who had gone with the Chinaman in the boat. It would be just as well to wait and let the person who was coming show himself without any shout from the baron to guide him.

As fate would have it, chance was guiding the person who was approaching straight to the little cleared space where the baron had taken up his position. The baron rose to his feet and got a revolver in his hand, in order to be on the winning side in case of an argument.

A second later, when the newcomer showed himself, the baron's astonishment held him spellbound. It was not Little Cayuse, nor was it an Apache. On the contrary, it was another Chinaman, but a black-haired Chinaman, whom the baron at once recognized as a waiter at the Grand Central.

"Ah Fong, py shiminy!" cried the baron. "Vat you doing here, hey?"

"How do?" grinned the wily Ah Fong.

He was as much surprised to meet the baron as the baron was to meet him, in spite of the fact that he felt sure the baron was somewhere in the chaparral.

"Vat you doing here, I saidt!" exclaimed the baron sharply.

"My looker fo' led-head China boy," lied Ah Fong cheerfully. "No findee."

As a matter of fact, Ah Fong had found the "led-head China boy," and given him certain extracts from

the talk between the baron and Cayuse, which had inspired a sudden flight on the part of the guardian of the mandarin's daughter.

"I t'ink, py shiminy," averred the baron, "dot you vasn't telling der trut'."

"My no tellee lie," insisted the Chinaman. "Me see li'l Injun boy. He say my findee you, telle you go top-side bank, waitee one piecee while likee you was."

"I'll find oudt oof you vas lying or nod," said the baron. "I'll go pack py der rifer, und you vill come along."

"My got makee lun back to hotel," demurred the Chinaman.

"You can go pack to der hodel ven I peen droo mit you, und nod pefore." The baron lifted his gun and made a threatening gesture with it. "You see dis, hey?" he asked.

"My no blind," wailed the Chinaman, rolling up his eyes.

"Den make for der rifer pank, und don'd ged too far aheadt oof me. Ve'll vait dere. Oof der Inchun poy don'd come, den dere'll be some drouples for you from me."

The Chinaman, thus threatened, pushed tremblingly into the brush, and he and the baron were soon on the brink of the bluff. Snakelike, the skulking form of an Apache followed in the baron's rear. Not the crack of a twig nor the brushing of a limb marked the Apache's movements. The baron was as oblivious of his presence as though he had been a hundred miles away.

"I don'd know vat your game iss, Ah Fong," said the baron, facing the Chinaman and standing sidewise to the river, "aber I t'ink you vas oop to some foolishness. Telle me der trut', und eferyt'ing vill be all right. Oof you

don'd tell me der trut', den you vill be sorry, I tell you dot."

The startled eyes of the Chinaman roved past the baron and rested upon the figure of the Apache. The baron, noting the Chinaman's glance, turned around. He had just time for one astounded yell when he was caught and hurled over the edge of the bluff into the river.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BARON'S HARD LUCK.

If the baron had had his attention called to the Apache an instant sooner, it is highly probable that he would have been able to use his revolver and avoid the disastrous results of the surprise. The Apache could have used a knife, had he been so inclined, and the German's finish would thus have been brought about, then and there. No doubt the Indian thought that a fall from the bluff would prove equally effective, and so heaved the baron over and let it go at that.

To add to the baron's hard luck, he struck a projecting rock as he shot downward, cutting his forehead and stunning him and knocking the breath out of his body. When he hit the water he went down like a plummet.

The Chinaman, awed by the Apache's murderous work, stood rooted to the ground, staring at the place where the unfortunate baron had disappeared.

Catching Ah Fong by the arm, the Indian dragged him back among the bushes. The Chinaman, thinking a fate similar to the baron's was about to be meted out to him, sent up a yelp of terror; but his fears had no foundation.

"Ugh!" grunted the savage, pointing northward along the river.

Ah Fong followed the Apache's finger with his eyes, and saw a small sailboat gliding down-stream. There were four white men in the boat, and it was evident the Indian feared his murderous act had been seen, and that

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he had retreated into the bushes and dragged the Chinaman after him in order to avoid possible results that might prove disagreeable.

However, the men in the boat did not appear to have witnessed the recent act of the Indian's, and both Chinaman and Apache, from their covert, continued to watch the river for some sign of the baron.

After all but deciding he had gone down never to rise again, the watchers were surprised to see him bob up to the surface, feebly swimming. He was making directly across the river, and those on the bank believed that he was figuring on having the sailboat pick him up.

As a matter of fact, the baron was not doing any figuring whatever. He was not in a condition to do so.

The cool water had revived him a little, and he had instinctively gulped his lungs full of air on regaining the surface. A lucid interval came to him, and he had presence of mind enough to push his revolver-belt downward and let it slip over his feet to the bottom of the river. The moment this was accomplished, his faculties grew hazy again, and he had no idea which way he was swimming.

It was a blind struggle to keep afloat, impelled solely by the instinct of self-preservation.

The baron was an excellent swimmer. Had he not been, the weight of his clothing would have proved too much for his enfeebled powers.

Not a sound came from his lips. He was past knowing what he was about, yet still he struck out frantically, swimming, swimming directly into the course of the sailboat.

The four men on the boat were not long in sighting him. One of them picked up a coil of rope. Standing on

the little cabin forward, he yelled a warning to the struggling German and let the rope fly.

The baron was a scant twenty feet away at the moment, and the end of the rope fell within easy reaching distance. But he did not grab it. Nor did he pay the slightest heed to the warning call of the man. He merely continued his mechanical struggles to keep afloat.

The man on the boat swore roundly.

"He must be er dummy!" shouted a second one, from aft.

"Dummy er no," cried the man forward, "we got ter save him. He's purty nigh all in. Put yer helm over, Eph! Andy, ease off that sheet."

The sloop-rigged little craft swerved in a half-circle. Another of the men aft, armed with a boat-hook, reached out, twisted the iron point in the baron's clothes, and pulled him alongside. Another moment and he was lifted into the cockpit, where he immediately keeled over and lay like a log.

"Looks ter me like he was a goner, cap," remarked Andy, hauling in the sheet as the boat once more came up into the wind.

The captain knelt down and lifted the baron's head.

"Got er bad cut over the eye," he remarked. "It was a blow that must have doped him proper. How he ever managed ter keep on top o' water is what gits me. Gits me some kind of a rag fer a bandage, Nate."

The fourth man of the quartet dived into the cuddy and reappeared with a strip of white cloth. This was bound about the baron's head.

"Hurt anywhar's else, cap?" asked Eph, from the wheel.

"Not as I kin make out," the captain answered, knead-

ing the baron with his knuckles in a search for broken bones. "I know what'll fix him."

The captain crawled into the cuddy himself, and came back with a flask of spirits. Some of the contents was forced down the baron's throat; a rolled-up coat put under his head, and the four men went about their business while waiting for results.

However, the liquor did not have any appreciable effect on the baron. He remained unconscious for an hour, and the captain decided to take him into the cuddy and put him into a berth.

"He's clean fagged, boys, an' his reasonin' apparatus is off soundings," remarked the captain, "but he'll be all right arter a while. He must hev taken a tumble from the bluff."

When the baron revived, he found himself on a heaving bed, with a swinging lantern casting vague shadows over a diminutive room, that seemed as unstable as a trotting horse.

He felt of his head, found the bandage, and wondered how it had got there. Where was he, anyhow? Turning over on his bed, his eyes encountered a man sitting in a bunk opposite.

"Vat's der madder mit me?" he called.

"So, ho!" returned the man, lifting his head and staring at him. "Ye've come to, hev ye? Well, mate, so fur as I kin see, thar ain't much the matter with ye *now*. We picked ye up out o' the river, two er three hours ago, an' ye've been a bit slow corrallin' yer wits."

"Vere der tickens am I, anyvay?" pursued the baron, groping about to get the hang of the situation.

"Ye're on the sloop *Centipede*, bound fer the Gulf o' Californy arter pearls."

"Nod mooch I ain'd bound for der Gulf oof Californy."

The baron threw his legs over the side of the bunk and sat up. "How far you vas from der town oof Yuma?"

"'Bout twenty miles in er bee-line, I reckon," answered the man, who happened to be the captain.

"Ve're sailin' down der Colorato Rifer, hey?"

"Sure," laughed the captain. "Kinder hazy yet, ain't ye?"

"My headt don'd feel schust righdt, dot's a fact," admitted the baron, lifting one hand and pushing his fingers through his damp hair. "I haf hat a pooty hardt time, you bed my life on dot."

"It's easy fer me ter savvy that," agreed the captain. "How did you get into the water?"

"I vas pushed off der pank by an Inchun."

"By an Indian, eh?" returned the captain. "Them red whelps aire ekal ter anythin', blamed if they ain't."

"Who iss der captain oof der poat?" went on the baron, as the importance of the work he was doing for the scout gradually came home to him.

"I am," was the answer.

"Vell, Misder Gaptain, I got to ged pack py Yuma so kevvick as I can. Vill you turn der poat aroundt und dake me?"

"Couldn't think o' that, mate. Ye see, it 'u'd mean a big loss ter us."

"Id vill be a pig loss to a lod oof odder peoples ool I don'd ged pack to Yuma righdt away kevvick," pursued the baron. "How mooch you loose oof you take me pack, hey?"

"That's hard tellin'. It 'u'd take us all night ter work back, an' we'd hev ter do a lot o' work with the oars. The boys wouldn't like that much, I kin tell ye."

"Subbose I gif you one hunnert tollars for taking me pack py Yuma?"

"Well, nacherly that 'u'd make a diff'rence. The boys 'u'd work like nailers all night fer a share in a hundred pesos. The question is, mate, hev ye got it?"

"No," said the baron, "I don'd got him, but Puffalo Pill has, und he'll see dot you ged der money."

"Buffalo Bill!" exclaimed the man. "Jumpin' jee-whilligers! You a friend o' Buffalo Bill?"

"I'm one oof his bards," and the baron, demoralized though he was and with an aching head, straightened with pride.

"That's yore word fer it," went on the captain, but in a kindly tone. "I don't reckon I could git the boys ter put back on jest yore plain say-so about bein' a pard o' Buffalo Bill's. Everybody knows about the king o' scouts; he gives purty nigh ever'body as needs it a helpin' hand, an' ever'body ort ter give him one. But mebbey ye're jest talkin' when ye say ye're a pard o' his."

"Schust vait a minid!"

The baron pushed a hand into one of his soggy pockets. Had what he wanted been lost out of his clothes while he was in the river? There is never any run of hard luck, but what a little good luck comes with it; so it happened with the baron. He had lost pretty nearly everything else out of his clothes, but that telegram of the scout's had stuck by him.

It was a badly disfigured piece of yellow paper, yet by opening it out tenderly the writing could be deciphered. The captain held it under the ravs of the lamp, and spelled out the words.

"I reckon ye're the straight goods, all right," said he. "Jest hold yer luff, will ye, till I go out an' chin-chin with the boys."

The captain crawled out, and there was the sound of

much talking and some argument. Finally the talking and arguing ceased, and the captain came back again.

"We'll turn the trick fer ye," he announced, "fer a hundred dollars, takin' yore word fer it that Buffalo Bill won't kick on the price. They're puttin' the *Centipede* about already. Aire ye hungry?"

"Vorse as dot, gaptain. I'm peen so near shtarved dot I can't see shtraight."

"We'll hev somethin' ter eat in a little while. Andy's gittin' it."

"You're a goot feller, und dot's all aboutd id. Schust don'd say nodding aboutd vat vas in dot delegraf message, vill you?"

"About all I could read was Buffalo Bill's name," grinned the skipper of the *Centipede*.

A little later the baron ate heartily of the simple but nourishing fare the captain set before him; and, directly he had finished, he rolled over in the bunk and was soon in the land of dreams.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BARON IMPARTS HIS CLUE.

Buffalo Bill and Nick Nomad were at the Grand Central hotel for breakfast. Their first proceeding, on reaching the hotel, was to make inquiries concerning the baron.

A puzzled look overspread the clerk's face when he heard the name of Villum von Schnitzenhauser.

"There was a Dutchman by that name stopping here," said the clerk, "and he looked to be as square a piece of furniture as ever came out of the factory, but he lit out yesterday, right after dinner, without paying his board-bill."

"Lit out?" queried the scout. "Where did he go?"

"You've got me. He was here to dinner yesterday, but he wasn't here to supper and he didn't use his room last night."

"Did he leave any baggage in his room?"

"All the baggage he had consisted of a saddle and bridle. They're in the room."

"Good gear?"

"Fine as they make 'em."

"Then you can gamble, my friend, that the baron wouldn't jump his board-bill and leave such valuable property behind. I know him, and your impression about his being square is correct. He's a pard of mine."

When the scout wrote his name, the clerk stared; then he gave a foolish grin.

"Thunder!" he exclaimed. "To think that I didn't recognize you, Mr. Cody! Why, you was in Yuma, some

months ago, with a man named Okay. If the Dutchman is a pard of yours, he can have the best in the house, baggage or no-baggage; and, as for you, all you've got to do to own the hotel is to ask for it."

"We'd like to own a room with two beds for a while," laughed the scout. "Meanwhile, if the baron shows up while we're at breakfast, just tell him we've arrived and are anxious to see him."

"I'll do that. Front, show Mr. Cody and Pard Nomad the way to the dinin'-room."

"Wash-room first," said the scout; "we've been most of the night on the cars. Had a small accident on the road and were delayed in getting here."

"What d'ye think o' ther baron, Buffler?" queried Nomad, somewhat later, as he sent back for his third helping of liver and bacon.

"There's just one thing to think, pard," the scout answered. "The baron has evidently hit the Chinaman's trail, or he would not have stayed away all night."

"Et 'u'd be jest like Schnitz ter blunder onter thet red-headed Chink fust clip," said Nomad; "but I'll bet money he gits tangled up some'rs erlong ther trail. Schnitz is as game as they make 'em, Buffler, but he's lame in his head-work—like me. Ef he was ter——"

"Hist!" broke in the scout warningly. "I don't like the looks of the Chink waiter who has been serving us. He acts nervous. Wait till he goes away."

Certainly Ah Fong was nervous. When he had put down the dish Nomad had called for, he hovered about in close proximity to the pards. Buffalo Bill sent him over on the other side of the dining-room and told him to stay there until he was called for.

"We can't be too careful, Nick," said the scout.

"No more we kain't. Then Brothers o' the Bow-string aire likely ter meet us when we least expect et."

Finishing their meal, the pards left the dining-room and went out on the veranda.

"If the baron doesn't show up pretty soon," remarked the scout, taking a chair and firing up a cigar, "we'll have to go on a still-hunt ourselves, Nick. This is a rush order we've got."

"I'm ready any time you aire, Buffler," returned the old trapper. "We'll hunt through Chinktown fust, I reckon?"

"That would be the likeliest place, I take it, to find the man we want. We'll wait here for a while, and see if the baron shows up, or sends any word. He knew we'd be here this morning, because I was careful to inform him on that point in my telegram. It's a cinch, too, that he wouldn't stay away from the hotel all yesterday afternoon and last night if he hadn't struck a hot trail."

"Er got peppered by one o' them thar bow-string boys," added Nomad.

"I don't believe the Brothers of the Bow-string have had time, as yet, to connect the baron with our operations. Still, you never can tell. The Sam-sings may have sent advance information some hours ahead of us."

For a while the pards smoked and reflected in silence. Nomad was in excellent spirits. The farther he traveled away from San Francisco, the better he felt.

"This hyar is somethin' like livin'," said he, exhaling a cloud of smoke. "Plenty o' room ter breathe in, an' a feller kin take a *pasear* as fur as he likes an' not run the risk o' gittin' lost."

"Elegant prospect, too," remarked the scout, with an upward glance at the building on the bluff.

"Thet's whar ther hull kit an' caboodle o' ther Sam-

sings ort ter be," scowled Nomad. "Ef I was ter hev my choosin', howsumever, I'd——"

The old trapper never finished the remark. His eye had caught sight of some one down the street, and he half-rose from his chair.

"Look, Buffler!" he exclaimed; "who's them two om-brays comin' from ther direction o' ther river?"

"Why," returned the scout, looking in the direction indicated by Nomad, "one of them is certainly the baron!"

Most certainly it was. There was a man on each side of the baron, helping him along. He was a sorry-looking sight, being bareheaded and having a generally torn and bedraggled appearance. There was a bandage about his head, and one of his boots was missing. He leaned heavily on the arms of the two who were supporting him.

"Something has gone crosswise with the baron," murmured the scout, not a little perturbed.

"He run inter them bow-string boys, I'll bet," volunteered Nomad, "an' didn't hev Pard Buffler ter help him out. But he ain't so bad off, fer all thet. He's still able ter walk, with er leetle help. Anyways, he's made out er gutta-percha. I don't keer how much ye bend him, he's bound ter flop back like he ort ter be, ef ye give him time."

Before the baron reached the veranda, he caught sight of the scout and the trapper. Knowledge that they were there, and waiting, acted like a magic tonic. Breaking away from the two men who were helping him, he gave a whoop and started for the veranda steps at a limping run.

"Puffalo Pill!" he cried; "und Nomat! Vell, py shinks, id makes a new man oudt oof me schust to look ad you. How you vas, anyvay?"

The baron stretched out a hand to each and sank into a chair that the trapper pushed toward him.

"We're all right, baron," answered the scout, "but you seem to be a little bit under the weather."

"Vell, I come pooty near being a leedle bit under der vater, und I vould haf peen oof dese poys hatn't fished me oudt. Puffalo Pill, haf you got a hunnert tollars aboutd your clothes?"

"Why, yes, baron. What of it?"

"I bromised id to dese poys oof dey vould pring me pack py Yuma. Id's vort' id, I tell you dot."

"You have found out——"

"Vat you vant to know. Dot's vat ails me."

On the baron's bare word, the scout handed over a hundred in cash to one of the men who had assisted the baron into port. After the men, with many expressions of good-will for the baron, the scout, and the trapper, had left, the baron roused up to remark:

"Vat I haf to say, Puffalo Pill, vill haf to be saidt some place vere id von't be heardt py any vone but you. Id's more imbortant as I can tell."

They found a place in one corner of the office; and there, while the baron rested himself in a comfortable rocker, the story of his misadventures were gone into.

"Thet's er surprise-party, all right, about Leetle Cayuse," said Nomad. "Ther kid's ther clear quill, an' I'll gamble a blue stack he's chasin' arter thet red-headed Chink this minit. When he hits er trail, he's wuss ner a dog with er bone—ye kain't shake him loose."

The scout leaned back thoughtfully.

"Cayuse finding the baron, as he did, just before my telegram was received," he observed, "was surely a stroke of luck. The little Piute had been staying with the Yumas, and in his prowling around through the chaparral he caught sight of the fellow we're here to find."

"An' ther Red Head hes shore got Yee Wong with

him. Et must er been ther gal ther baron seen bein' taken down ther rope ladder ter the boat."

"No doubt of it."

"Ther question is, whar did ther Chink take ther gal? An' why did he make sich er sudden move?"

"He got news that matters had gone wrong in 'Frisco," said the scout. "That's the reason the red-headed Chinaman changed his location. As to where he went, we'll have to trust that part of it to Little Cayuse."

"Then what's fer us ter do, Buffler?"

"Get horses and ride into that chaparral. We may find something there, and we may not. Little Cayuse, not knowing what had happened to the baron, was probably looking for him last night. Perhaps the boy left some clue as to where he has gone at the Chinaman's old hang-out. We'll go and take a look, Nick, at all events."

"Meppy I could go along mit you," began the baron, "und do somet'ing to helup?"

"Ye'd cut er nice figger goin' out arter 'Paches an' Chinks, wouldn't ye?" jeered Nomad. "You, a feller thet had ter hev two men help him up ter the hotel from the river!"

"Id vas pooty fierce luck, ain't id?" groaned the baron.

"You have done your part, baron," said the scout warmly, "and done it well. Nick will help you up-stairs to your room and I'll arrange for a doctor to come and see you at once."

The baron had stiffened up a little while he had been sitting in the rocking-chair, and it took Nomad several minutes to get him up and started. Meanwhile, Buffalo Bill had arranged for a doctor, and had telephoned one of the town corrals for two saddle-horses.

The animals came presently, and the pards mounted and rode in the direction of the Yuma encampment.

"I don't want ter pick no flaws in yer head-work, Buffler," said Nomad, "seein' as how thet's my own short suit, as ye might say, but thar's one thing erbout this hyar purceedin' of ours thet gits past my guard."

"What's that?" the scout asked.

"Red Head got away with ther gal in er boat, didn't he?"

"According to the baron, yes."

"An' thar was on'y one boat."

"I didn't hear the baron say anything about two boats."

"Waal, ef Cayuse hadn't no boat, how could he foller the Chink an' the 'Paches? An' he didn't hev no hoss, nuther, ef I gits ther baron right."

"If the red-headed Chinaman went down-stream, or up-stream, in the boat, Nick, Cayuse could follow along the bank. If the Chinaman crossed the river, you may rest assured Cayuse found a way to get himself across."

"Ther Piute's a lettle fernomenon," averred Nomad, "an', as he knowed what ye wanted done, we kin gamble thet he'd do et, er try to. But he ain't twins, an' he kain't be in two places to oncet. In other words, Buffler, he kain't be trailin' Red Head, an' ridin' back ter Yuma ter tell us whar Red Head's gone."

"Cayuse will find out some way to give us all the information we need," said the scout confidently.

As the Piute boy had done when leading the baron to the chaparral, Buffalo Bill gave the Yuma camp a wide berth. This would forestall any meddlesome curiosity on the part of the Yumas.

Entering the brushy stretch at about the point where Cayuse and the baron had struck into it, the pards were able to look along the bluff and see the rope ladder which

had been used by the red-headed Chinaman and the Apaches in getting away from their chaparral hang-out.

While proceeding onward in single file, and forcing their way through the tangled bushes, the pards kept a sharp lookout for skulking red and yellow men. Their vigilance, however, gave them no glimpse of a foe.

In due course they came out into a clearing in the heart of the chaparral. It was a small clearing, and had an adobe hut in the center of it.

The hut was so low that its roof did not overtop the bushes at the clearing's edge.

"Good place fer a gang er criminals ter roost," commented the trapper, sizing up the advantages of the situation. "No one would ever dream thar was a 'dobe hyar until he got right inter ther clearin'. Thet's whar Tau Kee's hirelin's hev been keepin' Yee Wong, I reckon, while ther big Chiny high boy has been stirrin' things up about her."

They rode to the door of the hut, and the scout dismounted. While Nomad held his horse, Buffalo Bill entered the shack and took a survey of its interior.

A canvas curtain partitioned the hut into two rooms. Both rooms were roughly furnished with the few articles a Chinaman considers necessary for comfort. There were no chairs or tables, but straw matting covered the earthen floor. In one corner were a couple of bowls and two sets of chop-sticks; on a shelf were a jar of ink, a camel's-hair brush, and a number of sheets of rice-paper.

A little to one side of the door a square sheet of paper lay on the matting, with a white poker-chip in the middle of it. The combination struck the scout as rather too odd for mere accident, and he bent down and picked up the paper and the chip.

There was a rude drawing on the paper. In order to

give it a closer examination, the scout carried the paper out into the sunlight.

"What ye found, pard?" queried the trapper.

Buffalo Bill showed him the poker-chip and the paper.

"Chink's doin's," muttered the trapper.

"Perhaps," replied the scout; "but this drawing interests me. There are four human figures represented on this paper, Nick."

"Waugh! Et looks more like some feller had shut his eyes an' tried ter draw a plan of er house with er paint-brush."

"The drawing was done with Chinese writing-materials. There are a brush and a pot of ink on a shelf in the hut."

"How d'ye make human figgers out of them, Buffler?" And, as he put the question, Nomad bent over the scout's shoulder and fixed his eyes on the rude diagram.

"It's Indian drawing," went on the scout. "First, there are three figures, two quite large and the one in the middle somewhat smaller. They are holding each other by the hand. That rude circle around the head of one of the figures seems to represent the sun; and under the three is something that looks like a boat."

"Ye got er powerful imagination, pard," remarked the trapper.

"The figure with the sun enclosing its head is that of a Chinaman—for there's the cue, and it's a long one."

"Is et a risin' sun, er a settin' sun? Et might mean them three figgers was goin' east er west," suggested Nomad, getting interested.

"It is neither a rising nor a setting sun, Nick; just a plain, round sun, with half a dozen rays striking off from its rim. By George!" exclaimed the scout. "The sun is

red. That must mean the red-headed Chinaman is one of the figures."

"Keno! Et's es plain as print in er black night."

"The other large figure, in this group of three," pursued the scout, "is that of an Indian. The feather in the hair makes that clear. The smaller figure between the Indian and the Chinaman is that of a woman, a Chinese woman."

"What does thet big dot mean, right in front o' ther Injun?"

"That means, perhaps, another redskin. A party of three got away in a boat, taking a Chinese woman along."

"Who's thet behind?"

"A little Indian."

"What's them two things in front o' ther leetle Injun?"

"They're supposed to be moccasins. The meaning is, I take it, that the little Indian followed the party in the boat on foot. The paper was left here for the baron."

"Waugh! He'd hev played hob figgerin' out ther meanin' o' ther diagram. Leetle Cayuse must hev drawed thet picter, an' et's more of er credit ter his ingenooity than to his skill."

"It settles our doubts, at all events. We know, now, that he followed the fugitives. There is no guesswork about it."

"But what does ther poker-chip mean?"

"That's too deep for me. I can't see how the chip has any bearing at all on the picture-writing. The cabin has been abandoned, however, and there's nothing further to be gained by staying around here. We'll mount and ride back to the edge of the bluff. Possibly we can find something else of importance in the vicinity of the rope ladder."

The scout swung himself to the saddle, and he and the trapper spurred around the hut and headed westward across the clearing.

"Jest wait er minit, Buffler," said the trapper suddenly.

He had been surveying the ground for tracks. He saw no tracks, but he did see another poker-chip—a red one. The chip lay on the ground a few yards to the south of the hut.

While Nomad was picking up the red chip, Buffalo Bill rode on to the southern edge of the clearing and picked up a blue one.

"The whole business is beginning to clear up, Nick," the scout called. "Little Cayuse is leaving a poker-chip trail for us to follow."

"Hooray fer ther leetle Injun!" exulted the trapper. "Thar's more'n one way ter skin er woodchuck, an' et's a cinch Cayuse is wise ter all of 'em."

"After Cayuse left the baron," said the scout, "he must have scouted near enough to the hut to see what was going on. He saw the red-headed Chinaman take Yee Wong and make for the boat, with the Apaches following; he saw the outfit get into the boat, and waited long enough to make sure which way the boat was going. Then, while the baron was being thrown into the river, Cayuse was back here drawing his diagram. When he had finished, he did not take time to hunt for the baron, because he had already lost several minutes over his picture-writing. Without the loss of a moment, he started off after the boat-party, dropping poker-chips as he went."

"Sure thet was ther way o' et. Like es not, Cayuse found ther chips in ther hut."

"It makes little difference where he found them; the

fact remains that he had them, and that he is using them cleverly."

"Et's er wonder the 'Pache thet hove ther baron inter ther river didn't come back hyar, find ther pictur'-writin', an' tear et up—say nothin' o' makin' things interestin' fer Cayuse."

"That Apache probably made himself scarce soon after the red-headed Chinaman and the other Indians got away in the boat with Yee Wong."

"A good idee usin' ther boat. Water leaves no trail, an' I reckons Red Head was powerful anxious ter kiver his tracks. Et's us fer ther poker-chip trail; eh, Buffler?"

"Exactly. We'll run it out, Nick, and see if we can find Yee Wong at the end of it."

Without more ado, Buffalo Bill again plunged into the chaparral. Everything was depending on Little Cayuse, and the pards knew the boy would not fail them.

CHAPTER IX.

THE POKER-CHIP TRAIL.

From the clearing to the edge of the chaparral the chips were hard to follow. A good deal of time was lost, searching to find a telltale disk of red, white, or blue when the trail had been lost.

Cayuse must have appreciated the fact that whatever friend followed him would experience difficulty in keeping the right track through the dense thickets, for he had dropped the chips with a prodigal hand; but, in order to make the trail perfectly easy, he would have had to lay one of the disks at intervals of five or six feet, and he had to think of marking a long trail, and not be any more generous with the chips than actually necessary.

It was with a feeling of intense relief that the pards finally emerged from the chaparral down the river. Beyond them, as far to the southward as the eye could reach, stretched a series of sandy mounds, entirely bare of every sort of vegetation except cactus.

Here the chips could be readily detected; and, although they were lying at wide intervals, the pards rode at a gallop and easily followed.

The course paralleled the river, yet far enough away from it to indicate that Cayuse had screened himself from the eyes of those in the boat by trailing along under the higher mounds at the bank's edge.

"Sence we seen ther kid last, Buffler," remarked Nomad, "he ain't lost none er his cunnin'."

"If anything," said the scout, "his experience in the army must have still further sharpened his wits. He had

good friends in the army, and I'm wondering why he ever left it."

"Prob'ly et got too monotonous fer him. Tootin' ther bugle, like he done, must git ter wearin' on er kid's narves, arter a while. Reveille, assembly, stable-call, mess-call, taps; et's ther same thing over an' over. Cayuse is one o' ther kind thet likes ter be doin' things wuth while, an' ter be doin' 'em continual. In our hurry ter git away from Yuma, Buffler, we overlooked an' important p'int."

"What was that?"

"Why, ther hotel waiter thet ther baron run onter in ther chaparral. The Chink told ther baron a lame story. Like es not he was in cahoots with ther 'Pache thet tossed ther baron inter ther river."

"I thought of that fellow, all right, but with our taking the trail his capacity for doing any harm had materially diminished. We can look after him when we get back."

The sandy hills grew higher and rougher as the pards rode southward. Occasionally they happened upon a dribble of water flowing through a swale, a few scanty cottonwoods growing on the creek's banks.

At one of these swales the pards halted for a little to breathe their horses.

"I wonder how fur Cayuse had ter foller thet outfit?" ruminated the trapper. "He must er hed a tremenjous supply o' poker-chips."

"Not so many as you'd think, Nomad," returned the scout. "But he began to run short some distance back, for they're lying farther and farther apart. I hope he succeeded in running out the trail before he ran out of chips."

"Even ef he didn't, ye kin bet yer moccasins he found some way o' lettin' us know how he went."

Half an hour after leaving their temporary halting-place, the pards passed the last chip. The next object on which their eyes lighted, as having been used to fill out the trail, aroused the deepest astonishment.

The object was a *ten-dollar gold piece*!

Buffalo Bill swung over from his saddle and picked it up.

"Well!" he exclaimed. "This poker-chip trail is turning into a trail of gold. Wouldn't that knock you slab-sided, Nick?"

"Et does!" breathed the old trapper. "I'm shakin' so ye kin hyer my spurs rattle. Wharever did ther kid corral the gold?"

"However he got it, he came by it honestly. We know enough about him to be sure of that."

"Kerect! Thar ain't a dishonest ha'r in ther kid's skelp-lock. But he's mighty keerless with his money."

"What does Little Cayuse care about the money so long as it helps us along the trail? He knows this business is of the utmost importance, or I would never have sent that telegram to the baron. Well, here's one piece of gold, at least, that Cayuse is going to get back again."

The scout dropped the coin into his pocket and spurred on. Presently there came another flash of light from a rise ahead. It proved to be a second ten-dollar gold piece.

From that on, the coins lay at irregular intervals, but always on rising ground, where the sun would catch their gleaming surfaces and reflect a dazzling point of light. And always the coins would be picked up and carefully kept for Cayuse.

"What er reg'lar picnic some Chink er 'Pache would

hev had," said the trapper, "ef he had follered ther trail ahead o' us. A red man, er a yeller 'un, would have scooped in enough gold ter make him independent."

"Cayuse is helping us out regardless of expense," smiled Buffalo Bill. "But that's the kind of a lad he is."

After picking up the last gold piece, Buffalo Bill, who was riding in the lead, topped a "rise" of ground that gave him an unexpected glimpse of something ahead and to the right. Quickly he backed his horse down the slope and laid a restraining hand on Nomad's bridle.

"What's ter pay?" asked the trapper.

"We're at the end of the trail," replied the scout, slipping his feet out of the stirrups and sliding to the ground. "Take my horse and ride to the foot of the hill. I'll reconnoiter a little and rejoin you in a few minutes."

Before the trapper could ask any further questions, Buffalo Bill had started westward under the brow of the "rise."

A hundred yards brought him to the bluffs at the river; then, with exceeding care, he crawled up the slope, pulled off his hat, and stared at the bank below.

What he had seen from the top of the "rise" while in the saddle was the upper part of a square sail showing over a low bluff. The boat, of which the sail formed a part, was now plainly under the scout's eyes.

At that point there was a sort of inlet, where the river received a smaller stream. At its entrance, the inlet was narrow and brush-covered, but back of the entrance it opened out into a sort of bay.

The boat at which the scout was looking lay in the bay, beside a wharf rudely constructed of bamboo piles and pine planks. It was a queer-looking craft, with places notched along its bulwarks for sweeps. Buffalo Bill had no difficulty in identifying it as a junk.

The craft was fairly swarming with coolies, naked to the waist and with long knives thrust into their belts. Some were smoking and idling about on the wharf; others were asleep fore and aft on the junk, and still others were taking down the square lug-sail.

Buffalo Bill was no more than a minute in realizing that here was Tau Kee's port of entry for his illegal trading. The place was in Mexican territory. Bringing his contraband goods up the Gulf of California and up the Colorado River in light-draft junks, the wily Tau Kee had them unloaded in this screened inlet, after which they were started along his "underground railway" into the States.

The junk, it was plain, had but recently arrived in the inlet, but no contraband goods were being unloaded. Were the coolies waiting for night? Considering the sequestered situation of the inlet, such caution seemed hardly necessary.

It might be that the junk had called to pick up the troublesome Yee Wong, and convey her to some place where she would not prove so troublesome to the wily Tau Kee. If the Chinese girl was on the junk, how was Buffalo Bill and Nomad to get her away, guarded as she was by all those armed coolies?

This was a task that gave the scout food for reflection. He and Nomad were there to get Yee Wong, and there would be no time to return to Yuma after a larger force. If Yee Wong was to be rescued, it must be then, or never.

The scout, much perturbed, retraced his way swiftly to where Nomad was holding the horses and waiting.

"Ye look worried, pard," said the trapper.

"I am," was the response, "no two ways about that."

What can you and I do against thirty well-armed Brothers of the Bow-string?"

"Thirty?" echoed Nomad.

"All of that, to say nothing of the red-headed Chinaman and the Apaches."

"What did ye see, Buffler?"

"A Chinese junk laid up at a wharf in an arm of the river. It's a great place for smuggling. The junk sails up the gulf and the river and works her way into the inlet by means of sweeps. There the goods are unloaded, received by agents of Tau Kee, and toted over the line, most of them, I suppose, finally landing in the Chinese quarter of San Francisco. Tau Kee must be a mighty clever Chink! No wonder he has got rich in the business."

"Is the gal on the junk?"

"I didn't see her. The coolies are so thick on the junk you can't see much of anything else. But the girl must be there. The junk, I believe, came purposely to take her away."

"Take her whar?"

"Pass the ante, Nick. If the junk had brought goods, the coolies would be unloading them."

"We got ter git the gal away afore the junk pulls out?"

"If we get her at all. It's going to be a hard job for us two, and there's no time to get back to Yuma for help."

"Then hyar's my chance ter break even with ther Sam-sings!" growled Nomad. "Say ther word, pard, an' we'll charge ther hull bunch."

"And get sponged out for our pains! That would be a great play. It won't do, Nick. If we ever used head-work, we've got to use it now."

"The Chinks aire too crafty, Buffler. We kain't fool 'em at their own game. Ef we could——"

"Pa-e-has-ka!"

The low call came from eastward, along the foot of the ridge at whose base the pards stood talking. Both whirled about on the instant.

"Cayuse!" exclaimed Nomad, a broad grin breaking over his face. "I thort et was erbout time thet kid showed up."

It was really the little Piute. Lithe and straight he stood at the foot of the slope, his eagle feather nodding in the faint breeze; and while he stood he beckoned.

"He wants us to come," said Buffalo Bill. "He knows more in a minute about this game, Nick, than we do in a year. Perhaps he has some other plan, or can give us information that will point to an easier way for getting Yee Wong than fighting that big outfit of coolies. We'll go and see what he wants."

The next moment the pards were in the saddle, riding after Little Cayuse, who glided on ahead of them, silently and swiftly. The arroyo narrowed into a steep cut between banks covered thickly with manzanita, and in the brushiest part of the cut Cayuse halted and waited for the pards to overtake him.

His eyes were gleaming brightly, and, in spite of his attempt to hide his happiness at meeting the scout and the trapper, it showed plainly.

"How?" said he, taking Buffalo Bill's hand. "Pa-e-has-ka look heap fine. Wolf-killer," he added, turning and giving his hand to the trapper, "look heap fine, too. Cayuse heap glad find um pards once more. Where Dutch pard, huh?"

"Our Dutch pard met with hard luck, Cayuse," said

the scout. "He's back in the Yuma hotel, in the hands of a doctor."

"How you find um poker-chip trail?"

"The baron told us about that hut in the chaparral, and when Nomad and I got there we discovered your picture-writing."

"Great writin', Cayuse," interposed the trapper, with a grin, "on'y et 'u'd take er man with a big intelleck ter figger et out."

"Pa-e-has-ka figger um," said the boy, with an admiring look at the scout. "You read um picture-writing, follow um poker-chip trail. Red-head yellow man here," and the boy waved his hand. "Him got yellow woman 'long, and Apache warrior, too. Heap lot yellow men on big canoe in river."

"I've already found out about the big canoe, Cayuse," said the scout. "When did that come in?"

"Two, three hour ago. Yellow men use long paddles, bring canoe into bay. Ugh! Yellow men no good. Got bad hearts."

"They're smugglers, Cayuse. You *sabe* smugglers?"

"Me *sabe*."

"Have the yellow men unloaded any goods from the big canoe?"

"No see um."

"You followed the red-head yellow man down the river?"

"Sure."

"When did they get here?"

"During night."

"So you've been on the go all night and all day, up to now?"

"Pa-e-has-ka tell Dutch pard trail um Red Head. Dutch pard no trail um; me trail um."

"Had anything to eat?"

A look of contempt crossed Cayuse's face.

"Cayuse no squaw; him all same warrior. Pull up belt, eat when um get food. Heap easy follow boat; heap easy stay here, no let yellow men see. Umph!"

The scout and the trapper dismounted.

"We are trying to rescue the Chinese woman, Cayuse," went on the scout. "She was stolen away from her native country by a smuggler called Tau Kee. The woman's name is Yee Wong, and it is imperative that we rescue Yee Wong and send her to San Francisco. Sabe?"

"Heap sabe," nodded Cayuse.

"There are a lot of Chinamen on the junk, and only three of us to turn the trick. To go back to Yuma for help is out of the question. Yuma is too far away, and before we could get back here with a big enough force to cope with the coolies the junk will have sailed away to the gulf, taking Yee Wong."

"Yee Wong not on junk," said Cayuse.

"She isn't?" asked the scout quickly.

"She in cabin, now; mebbysso go on junk bymby. Red-head yellow man and Apaches watch cabin. We take um Yee Wong out of cabin, make run on horses, get away from coolies. Wuh!"

"Et's better bein' born lucky ner han'some, ain't et?" crooned the trapper. "Waugh! What's er few 'Paches an' one red-headed Chink? Ther job's as easy as fallin' orf er log."

"Take me to a place from which I can see the cabin, Cayuse," said the scout, thrilled by this sudden turn of events as presented by Cayuse.

"Come," said Cayuse, starting up the southern slope through the manzanita.

"Stay with the horses, Nick," said the scout to his pard; "I'm going with Cayuse to get the lay of the land."

"Don't fergit me when et comes ter the fightin'," begged the trapper. "Ye understand, Buffler, I owe ther Sam-sings a hull lot."

"We'll all have plenty of fighting, I reckon, before we get away with Yee Wong."

From the bushes at the top of the bank, Buffalo Bill and Cayuse were able to look down on a small stream that entered the Colorado and formed the inlet. The valley through which the stream flowed was narrow and crooked, and a bend hid the inlet from the cabin.

The cabin was constructed of cottonwood logs, and the roof was of tule thatch. It was small, and from its door ran a well-beaten path westward, along the edge of the stream and to the inlet.

Two Apaches were dozing in the sun in front of the cabin. While the scout and the boy were peering cautiously downward, a Chinaman in black clothes, with a long, red cue swinging behind him, came out of the cabin door, spoke sharply to one of the Indians, and then ambled off in the direction of the river. The scout and the boy gazed after him until he had vanished around the bend.

"You want um yellow woman," whispered Cayuse; "get her now. Mebbyso red-head yellow man go to make ready send yellow woman on big canoe."

It looked to the scout like a propitious moment. Although he would have liked to make a prisoner of the red-headed Chinaman, yet that was impossible, considering that they would have to make a dash in getting clear with Yee Wong.

"Now's the time, all right, Cayuse," returned the scout. "We'll have to rush the Apaches. They'll set up a

clamor, of course, and that will bring the coolies. We'll have to get away with Yee Wong before the coolies come."

"Fool um Apaches," suggested Cayuse.

"How?"

"Make ready go to cabin, Pa-e-has-ka. Leave Cayuse alone. Watch um."

The boy turned, crept off through the brush for a dozen yards, and then, rising suddenly, he boldly emerged onto the slope that descended to the bottom of the valley.

The eagle-eyed Apaches sighted him before he had taken a dozen steps in the open. In a flash they were on their feet; and, in another flash, they were bounding up the ascent in hot pursuit of Cayuse.

The boy, playing his part well, halted as though startled. Then, whirling about, he rushed into the manzanita again.

At the point where he vanished from the sight of Buffalo Bill, the two Apaches, in a few minutes, likewise vanished.

Thus, at grave risk to himself, the brave Indian boy had cleared the way for the scout. The scout felt sure that it was Cayuse's intention to lure the two Apaches into the cut, where he and Nomad would have no difficulty in taking care of them.

Pushing out of the bushes, the scout hurried down the slope toward the cabin. At the cabin door he halted to give a cautious look in the direction of the inlet. No one was visible in that direction. If the scout worked quickly, it might be possible to get away with Yee Wong before the red-headed Chinaman or any of the coolies got wind of what was going on.

The cabin door was open. As the scout's gaze passed through the opening, a queer scene met his eyes.

CHAPTER X.

THE RESCUE OF YEE WONG.

Almost directly in front of the scout, not far from the end wall of the cabin, was a copper vase in the form of a dragon. Half a dozen punk-sticks were smoking in the vase, filling the room with a pungent, pleasant vapor which drifted slowly out of the door.

At the foot of the vase was a Chinese girl. She could not have been more than sixteen years old, and, with her olive cheeks, almond eyes, and penciled eyebrows, she was wondrously pretty. Her head was bare, and her blue-black hair, combed in the Chinese style, was held at each side, above her ears, by two clusters of mock-jewels. Her blouse and trousers were of white silk, embroidered with gold; while her feet, bound in infancy after the barbarous Chinese custom, were small as a child's and encased in diminutive sandals of red velvet. Her hands, which lay despairingly in her lap, were held together by silver manacles, clasped to the wrists.

On the way to Yuma from San Francisco the scout had studied the photographs of Yee Wong and Tau Kee. There was not the least doubt about the girl, at whom he was looking, being the mandarin's daughter.

The drifting fog from the punk-sticks blew into the scout's face. He sneezed; for, although the odor of the incense was pleasant, a full breath of it was more than he could stand.

The sneeze drew the girl's attention. A sharp exclamation escaped her, and Buffalo Bill heard a sound as of some one moving quickly. With a quick step he crossed

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the threshold, only to be met by the spiteful bark of a revolver.

A bullet zipped past his ear and buried itself with a thud in the log wall. The girl struggled to her knees, clasping her hands and moaning with terror.

Facing about, Buffalo Bill saw an Apache Indian. Evidently he had been left in the hut as an inside guard. The Apache held a lance in one hand and a revolver in the other. Before the scout could reach him, he had pulled trigger again, but the hollow *click* that followed proved that the chambers of the weapon had been exhausted.

The scout had little time to bother with the redskin. The shot, echoing down the valley, would reach the ears of the red-headed Chinaman and the coolies. In short order they would come piling up the valley, and the scout must be well away with Yee Wong by that time.

With an ear-splitting yell, the Apache cast his useless revolver aside and leaped toward the girl with his lance.

A cry of fear broke from Yee Wong's lips as Buffalo Bill sprang at the murderous redskin and seized his lance.

There was small doubt in the scout's mind but that the Apache had orders to slay the girl before allowing her to be rescued. That was a favorite method pursued by the Chinese.

With a fierce jerk, the scout wrenched the lance out of the Apache's hand. Leaping back, the savage jerked a knife from his belt and flung himself forward.

In this he missed his calculations, for the scout received him on the point of the lance. Deep into his breast sank the poisoned lance-head, impelled as much by the impetus of the Indian as by the strength of the scout's

arms. Staggering back, the Apache flung up his hands and crumpled to the floor.

Without a word, the scout turned quickly to the girl and caught her up in his arms. Failing to understand that she was being rescued, the girl began to scream and struggle.

There was no time for explanations then, for the scout could hear a medley of yells down the valley, and he knew that the Chinamen were coming.

As he raced out of the cabin, carrying Yee Wong as easily as he would have carried a child, he saw a wave of coolies rolling up the valley. The coolies' long knives flashed in the sun. But they were armed with something besides knives, for the crack of revolvers suddenly punctuated the frantic yelping of the yellow men.

The bullets sang all around the scout and the girl, some singing through the air overhead and others kicking up little flurries of dust close to the scout's feet.

It was impossible for Buffalo Bill, burdened as he was, to make any sort of defense; all he could do was to run as fast as he could across the bed of the valley and up the slope toward the covert of manzanita.

But there were others to fight the battle for him. Cayuse and Nomad were on the brow of the "rise," and their weapons tuned up and began to cover the scout's flight.

The reports came like the explosion of a bunch of fire-crackers, and the coolies halted in their breakneck race for the cabin.

"Get to the horses!" panted the scout, reaching the edge of the thicket.

"You mount yer hoss, Buffler," called back Nomad. "an' trail down ther cut ter ther arroyo, leadin' mine. Cayuse an' me'll fight ther varmints off an' keep 'em from

climbin' ter ther top o' ther bank an' pickin' us off as we hike through the brush. We'll jine ye in the arroyo."

This was a good plan, but whether it was good or not there was no time for a debate.

As quickly as he could go, the scout stumbled through the manzanita. When he reached the horses he saw the two Apaches lying in the bottom of the cut. Beguiled by Cayuse into the vicinity of the old trapper, the two redskins had been met and vanquished.

Mounting with the girl in front of him, the scout took Nomad's horse by the bridle and spurred in the direction of the arroyo.

The girl was still struggling, and, as the scout had to hold her with one hand, she hampered him considerably.

"Yee Wong!" he exclaimed.

The girl turned to look into his face. There was an expression of wonder in her almond eyes. She said something, but it was in Chinese and the scout could not understand.

"I'm a friend," continued the scout. "Do you *sabe* friend?"

"Flien'," repeated the girl, and followed the word with more Chinese talk.

It is possible that Yee Wong, from that single word "friend," was beginning to get the drift of affairs. At any rate, little as she understood the scout, and little as he understood her, she gave over her struggles.

On down the cut the scout forced his way, while the rattle of firearms came from the valley and from the bank of the cut on the south.

As the scout moved forward with the horses, Nomad and Little Cayuse kept pace with him, holding off the Chinamen by virtue of their superior marksmanship and quicker shooting.

"Hustle along, Buffler!" the trapper suddenly yelled, from above. "Some o' ther bow-string boys aire makin' ready ter climb over the 'rise' inter the arroyo. Ye'll hev ter stir yerself ef we beat 'em out."

Buffalo Bill dug in with his spurs and the horses thrashed through the bushes. Buckskin "chaps" and stirrup *tapideros* were what he needed for that scramble through the manzanita; but those were the things he did not have, and he made no effort to defend himself against the tearing sweep of the bushes; but he kept Yee Wong safe by holding her up in front of him.

At last, with an exclamation of relief, he galloped out upon the clear sand of the arroyo, and Nomad and Little Cayuse came racing down the slope to join him.

"They're pluggin' right erlong arter us, Buffler," puffed the trapper, as he sprang to the back of his horse. "Seems like thar was more'n a million of 'em, an' they're crazy fer fair. They don't like et much, I reckon, hevin' ther mandarin's darter stolen right out from under their Chink noses. Up with ye, Cayuse!" he added to the boy.

With a flying leap, Little Cayuse gained the back of the horse at the saddle-cantle, and the pards spurred at speed up the north slope of the arroyo.

From the opposite "rise" the baffled Chinamen clustered and poured a withering fire; but their marksmanship was bad, and, besides, Buffalo Bill and his pards were almost out of range.

"Have they got any horses, Cayuse?" asked the scout, as he led the way over the top of the hill.

"No got cayuse," said the boy; "yellow men use um boat."

"A boat's er handy thing, but et won't do 'em no good chasin' us," jubilated the trapper. "Waugh, but that was

warm work! I paid 'em back fer the 'twenty thousand delights' them other Sam-sings give me in 'Frisco."

By that time the fugitives were far enough away so that they could slacken speed. There was not the least danger of their being overtaken by the outwitted Chinamen.

"Heap fine," said Little Cayuse. "Yellow men got bad hearts; Pa-e-has-ka teach um good lesson."

"It was a needed lesson, too," said the scout.

"The big high boy with ther red pigtail won't help Tau Kee no more," said the trapper. "Him an' me drew a bead on each other erbout ther same time, but I was a shade quicker in the pull. Ef I hadn't been, Buffler, I'd never hev made this hyar ride back ter Yuma with ye."

"How many were there of the rascals?"

"Forty ef thar was one!" declared Nomad. "While you was in ther cabin, Cayuse an' me had a purty leetle go with them two 'Paches, in ther cut. Cayuse brought 'em right down on me, but I'd got wind o' what he was up ter, an' it wasn't no surprise-party. Mebbly ther baron wouldn't hev liked ter be in this! He'll be gloomed up fer quite er spell over what he's missed."

"The baron had his excitement last night. He had enough then, I reckon, to last him for some time. Cayuse," the scout went on, speaking to the Indian boy, "you were pretty free with your gold pieces."

"Wuh!" muttered Cayuse.

"Must be well heeled with wampum, Cayuse, eh?" asked the trapper.

"Use um gold all up. Him all right."

"Waal, ye didn't lose it. Buffler an' me picked up every glitterin' piece an' ye kin hev 'em back as soon as we hit Yuma. Whar'd ye git the stuff?"

"Him army pay, extra-duty pay," said the boy.

"Saved et all, did ye?"

"Wuh!"

"Whyever did ye quit the army, kid? The sojers thort a heap o' ye."

"Ugh! Pony-sojers make war on Piutes; Piutes Little Cayuse's people; Little Cayuse no fight Piutes."

"Don't blame ye fer quittin', ef that's ther case. A Piute ain't like a 'Pache. The 'Paches fight their own people for the whites."

"Apache no good," said Little Cayuse.

CHAPTER XI.

BACK IN YUMA.

It was late when the victorious scout reached Yuma with his pards and Yee Wong. The horses were completely fagged, and all hands were hungry and nearly as tired as the double-burdened horses.

With scant thought for himself, Buffalo Bill's first move was to place Yee Wong in the motherly hands of Mrs. Preston, wife of the proprietor of the Grand Central Hotel. He told Mrs. Preston enough of the girl's story so that she would understand the importance of keeping her safe. Little Cayuse was left with Yee Wong and Mrs. Preston as a body-guard, with particular orders to keep an eye on Ah Fong, in case he should present himself.

The baron, aroused from his slumbers by the commotion in the hotel, got into his clothes and came limping to the office; there, while he was getting as much of an account of recent stirring events as he could from Cayuse, the scout and the trapper went away—the former to the telegraph-office to send another "rush" message, and the latter to return the horses to the corral.

The scout's telegram was brief, but to the point. It ran as follows:

"FINUCANE, Chief of Police, San Francisco.

"Yee Wong in our hands. Send some one after her.

"CODY."

Gordon and another officer came, reaching Yuma on the following afternoon. With them was a maiden lady

from one of the Frisco missions, a lady who could talk Chinese. She was to have immediate charge of Yee Wong, with the officers acting as escort.

"I can hardly believe, Buffalo Bill," said Gordon, "that you accomplished so much in so short a time. The chief thought there must be some mistake; but I told him there couldn't be, and that you were not the sort to send a message for the fun of the thing."

"I was little more than a passenger at the wind-up," laughed the scout. "The credit for nearly all our success on the Colorado belongs to my Piute pard and my Dutch pard—principally to the boy."

"He's an odd youngster for you to have for a pard," remarked Gordon.

"I wish I had a dozen pards as loyal, and as full of grit and initiative. Little Cayuse is a wonder, Gordon."

"I believe you. Have you sent any one down the Colorado to look after that junk?"

"No officers from here could go there in an official capacity, you know. The place is in Mexican territory."

"I understand that. But the Mexicans themselves——"

"I have been told that a force of Mexicans have gone to the inlet. But I don't think they will accomplish much. Everything is *manana* with them. They're too slow."

"This *manana* business won't wash when you're dealing with men like these bow-string fellows."

"Hardly," said the scout. "It may be," he went on, with a troubled look, "that the Mexican authorities will claim Yee Wong."

"They'll have to be quick about it, if they do. The girl will pass through the Golden Gate on her way to the Flowery Kingdom inside of three days."

"The quicker you get her started for home, the better."

The scout and the officer were having their talk on the veranda. Before they finished, Miss Thompson, the lady from the mission, came out of the hotel and approached them.

"How's your protégée, Miss Thompson?" asked Gordon.

"Well and happy," the lady smiled, "but she has had a terrible experience."

"I imagine as much."

"She is very grateful to Mr. Cody and his friends, and says that she will tell her honorable father about him when she gets back to Peking."

"How did she happen to fall into the hands of Tau Kee's rascally slave-hunters?"

"She was visiting her honorable aunt in Shanghai, and was carried off to a junk in one of the river sampans. From the junk she was transferred to a vessel sailing for Acapulco, Mexico; and, at that port, she was put aboard another junk and brought up the Gulf of California to Yuma. She was first landed at that place where Buffalo Bill found her, and taken in charge by the red-haired Chinaman. From there she was brought to the rendezvous near here, where she was kept for several weeks; then, a day or two ago, a Chinaman named Ah Fong came and said that the white devils were on Yee Wong's track. That made it necessary for the red-haired Chinaman to take Yee Wong back to the inlet again. A junk was expected to come and remove her to some safer place, and the junk had already arrived when Mr. Cody came and rescued her."

"A pretty how-do-you-do when such things can happen in a country like this!" exclaimed Gordon.

"The worst of it happened in Mexico and China," interposed the scout; "and, as for the mandarin, he has

only his own countrymen to blame. If he could get at some of those Brothers of the Bow-string, I imagine that a lot of heads would pay for the villainy."

"Did she say anything about Tau Kee?" went on Gordon, to Miss Thompson.

"She had quite a little to say about Tau Kee," answered the woman. "He had given orders, she said, that she was to be well treated, and she was."

"But where is this Tau Kee? Is he in 'Frisco?"

"She says no, that he lives in a dreary cañon among the mountains—a safe and secret place with the gruesome name of the Cañon of Death."

"Whop!" muttered Gordon, "the name certainly has a gruesome sound. We're leaving on the morning train, Miss Thompson," he added. "Be ready, please, for we've got to get back to 'Frisco as soon as we can."

"We shall be ready," answered the woman, as she moved away.

"I don't believe that Tau Kee, after this experience, will give us any further trouble," said Gordon, when Miss Thompson had left. "That inlet, into which he brought his junks and unloaded his contraband goods, will never be safe for him after this. If he continues his operations, he will have to pick out some other place—and suitable places for that sort of work are scarce."

"I sincerely hope you have heard the last of him. His red-headed helper has been sent across the divide, and that may put a damper on Tau Kee's future unlawful plans."

"You are out some money and time by this work, Cody," said Gordon, after a little thought; "I am to make up to you all of your actual outlay, but all you get for the rest of it is glory."

"It was satisfaction enough for me to help, as best I

could, in restoring Yee Wong to her father. If I can do anything more to help put down this smuggling business, I hope Finucane will not hesitate to call on me."

"You stand ace-high with Finucane, no doubt about that. The stuff found in that lacquered box came at just the right time to help him in his fight with the Chink lawbreakers. All Chinatown is scared about to death. There are more real good Chinamen in the Chink quarter now than was ever known before."

"That's a fine thing, anyhow. More power to the chief's arm! This is excellent work he's engaged in."

The next morning Miss Thompson and Yee Wong, convoyed by Gordon and his companion, boarded the train for 'Frisco. The last thing Yee Wong did was to take Buffalo Bill by the hand, smile at him gratefully, and say a lot of things in the Chinese language. The scout, of course, understood the smile better than he did the talk.

"She says," explained Miss Thompson, "that she wishes ten times a million delights to your illustrious worship, and hopes that you will live a hundred years and then meet your honorable ancestors in the Blissful Valleys."

"Tell her I wish her the same," laughed the scout, "but I don't expect to live to be a hundred, though I'm in no hurry to join my honorable ancestors."

The train arrived, the ladies got aboard, followed by the officers, and then the train pulled out again, on the way to San Francisco. And that, so far as Buffalo Bill was concerned, was the last of Yee Wong, beautiful daughter of the big high man of China.

The party of Mexicans who went to the inlet on the lower Colorado failed to find anything there but a de-

serted log cabin. The beaten path still ran from the cabin to the bank of the inlet, but there was not a thing in the inlet—even the bamboo wharf having been pulled up and taken away.

Ah Fong, before Buffalo Bill got around to have a heart-to-heart talk with him, made himself scarce; and he went so suddenly that he failed to collect nine dollars that was his due from the hotel-keeper. When a Chinaman will forget himself so far as to turn his back on nine dollars, it is a safe guess that his business in unknown quarters is very pressing.

The baron was recovering finely from his fall over the bluff until Nomad told him of the brisk skirmish at the inlet. Thereupon the baron had a backset. There had been a whole lot of excitement in which he had borne no part, and it seemed to strike in, like the measles.

Gradually, however, he got over the disappointment and became fairly cheerful once more.

Little Cayuse, who had so cleverly distinguished himself, received praise from everybody, but he had a head that could not be turned.

"Ye're all ter the good, Cayuse," said Nomad, clapping him affectionately on the shoulder. "The hull town has heerd about ye, and some good people want to make up a purse an' send ye to an Eastern school. How you like um, huh?"

"No like um," was the prompt response; "no go."

"What d'ye intend ter do with yerself?"

The boy was silent, his eyes wandering to that part of the veranda where sat Buffalo Bill, smoking and reading a paper. It was wonderful how the lad's eyes glowed as they fixed themselves on the scout.

"I see," chuckled Nomad. "Ye'd ruther go gallivanting

around ther kentry with Pard Buffler, an' take yer schoolin' later on?"

"Wuh!" said Little Cayuse.

The following day Buffalo Bill received a telegram, and as a result Little Cayuse got his wish and went "gallivanting" with the scout.

CHAPTER XII.

YELLOW SMUGGLERS.

"Yonder is Wolpi, Nick; Wolpi, the place of the Gap."

Buffalo Bill arose in his stirrups and pointed to a mesa, far-distant and lifting its jagged top against the sky-line. Nomad was riding on one side of him, and Little Cayuse on the other.

All were dusty, and the horses were tired and thirsty. The scout's remark caused the trapper to stir in his saddle, peer ahead, then settle back with a muttered "Waugh!" and begin filling his pipe.

Little Cayuse showed no interest whatever. Straight as a ramrod he sat his steed, eyes fixed ahead.

But that was the little Piute's way. Nothing ever went on about him that he did not both hear and see the whole of it.

Nomad scratched a match on his saddle-pommel, trailed it over his pipe-bowl, and fell to puffing.

"Wolpi, eh, Buffler?" said he. "Waal, what 'is thar erbout Wolpi thet you, an' me, an' Lettle-Young-Man-thet-Holds-His-Yaup, thar on yer t'other side, hev come ninety miles through sun an' sand ter find et?"

"Mainly, old pard," said the scout, "there's a snake-dance in Wolpi this afternoon."

"Waal, I wouldn't walk from ther nigh ter ther off side er my hoss ter see all ther snake-dances this side o' Tophet."

"All people are not of your way of thinking, Nick. There'll be a lot of visitors at Wolpi this afternoon.

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Most of them, however, come in by way of Winslow, Flagstaff, or Cañon Diablo. When we get to Wolpi we shall find cowboys, tourists, and, I hope, a few Chinamen."

At the word "Chinamen," old Nomad shifted about and gave his pard a look.

"Waugh!" he grunted, "now ye're openin' up yer trail, Buffler. Chinks, eh? Thet's ther thing ye got up yer sleeve. What erbout ther rat-eaters?"

"Remember that telegram I got at Yuma, telling me to proceed to Holbrook?"

"Ther telegram from Finucane? Shore I remembers et."

"Well, at Holbrook I received a letter from Finucane. He says that Tau Kee is operating in this part of Arizona. Sam Lot, a one-eyed Chinaman, is bossing the smuggling operations. Opium is coming in through Mexico without paying the lawful duty. It's Tau Kee's opium, and Sam Lot is merely distributing agent. Finucane wants us to capture Sam Lot."

"Did Finucane tell ye Sam Lot was goin' ter be at Wolpi fer ther snake-dance?"

"No."

"Then ye're goin' et kind er blind, ain't ye, Buffler, huntin' fer one pigtail in er couple o' thousand squar miles er sand an' cactus?"

"I may be going it blind, Nick, but I don't think so. I'm hoping to get a clue at the dance-rock in Wolpi."

Once more the old trapper turned to look sharply at the king of scouts.

"What's back er thet, Buffler?" he demanded. "Ye've based this hyar *pasear* to Wolpi on somethin' more'n a guess."

"Advices from the government, Nick, sent to me at

Fort Apache and forwarded to Holbrook. In a way, they jibe somewhat with the work Finucane requests of us."

"How so?"

"Opium is being introduced among the pueblos of Tusayan, degrading the industrious natives. Chinamen are believed to be back of the nefarious traffic. The government wants the evil stamped out before it spreads and ruins the Moqui people. You and I are requested to take hold and do the work. Finucane says he thinks the Chinamen are operating in the vicinity of Holbrook; but it may be that my government advices refer to the very same yellow scoundrels whom Finucane has in mind. Personally, I think the gang is one and the same. When we catch Sam Lot and his yellow smugglers, I firmly believe that we shall have the rascals wanted by the government."

"I reckons ye're right, as usual, Buffler; but whyever aire ye lookin' fer a clue at Wolpi?"

"The dance will bring representatives from all the other Moqui pueblos to Wolpi. This dance takes place only once in two years, and it would be an excellent opportunity for Sam Lot to interest the Mokis in his opium and lay the foundation for a still more lucrative trade in the contraband stuff.

"Tau Kee, the big high boy who is back of the operations, we know to be a clever Chinaman. I believe he will understand the advantages of having Sam Lot at the snake-dance, and, consequently, that Sam Lot will be there. If he is there, we'll come pretty near knowing who he is by the fact that he has only one eye. If he isn't there, we shall merely have our ride from Holbrook for nothing. The opportunity, however, of picking up a possible clue is too promising to be passed by."

"This hyar Tau Kee must be er half-brother ter ther

Seven Demons, Buffler. Sailin' inter his yaller helpers on the Lower Colorado, like we done, an' gittin' away ther stolen Chink gal, Yee Wong, must hev kinder discouraged Tau Kee in his slave-dealin' an' set him ter smugglin' opium."

"I think Tau Kee has always been smuggling opium, more or less, Nick," said the scout, "but perhaps he is doing more of it, now that his slave-dealing has received a severe backset. If we don't pick up any clue to the yellow smugglers at the dance-rock, we shall at least see the snake-dance. You may not care for it, old pard, but it will be interesting to me and to Cayuse. Eh, Cayuse?" and the scout turned a smiling face to the boy.

"Wuh!" said Cayuse. "We get a good many fun this grass."

"What do you think of my idea for locating the yellow smugglers?"

"Him good, you bet. Sure thing we find one-eyed Chinaman at dance-rock."

While talking together, the pards had been riding briskly onward. Already they were in the carefully tilled patches of corn and garden-truck which the Moquis of Wolpi cultivated at the foot of the mesa.

At no time had the Moquis a very plentiful supply of water, and the precious fluid had to be conducted among the various garden-plots with the greatest care.

"They're choice of their corn," said the scout, "and are fighting birds and rabbits all the time. Whenever one of their burros gets into the corn, they crop his ears to show he is a thief. They say there isn't a burro on the mesa that has a whole ear."

"Every time he eats an ear o' corn the Moquis cut off an ear, hey?" laughed Nomad. "Thar ain't many burros could eat more'n two ears without losin' his head. Chirk

up, Cayuse," added the trapper to the boy. "Thet's er joke, an' now's ther time ter laugh."

Little Cayuse merely grunted. According to his notion, they were on business bent and it was no time for jokes.

While zigzagging along the trail through the corn-fields, the scout and his pard kept their horses from nipping at the stalks.

"Mister Kid-With-ther-Long-Face," muttered Nomad, "wouldn't laugh ef ye paid him fer it. Et's agin' his Piute principles."

The pards, by this time, were close enough to the mesa so that they could see the buildings at its top, their outer walls perched dizzily on the edge of the precipice. Many of the Moquis were in favorable positions, looking down at them.

As the pards drew near the precipitous foot-path leading upward to the pueblo, a lot of nearly naked Moquis boys rushed at them.

"Kente! Piba! Matchi!" came a juvenile chorus.

The youngsters, in this fashion, asked for "candy," "tobacco," and "matches."

"Een quaqui êsi—Am I welcome?" smiled Buffalo Bill. "Buenos! Si!"

The scout, knowing before he left Holbrook what would be expected of him, had prepared himself. Pulling a bag from his war-sack, he held it up.

"No piba, no matchi!" he called; "but here's your candy."

He gave the bag to one of the eager urchins; then, when the candy had been fairly parceled out, the small Moquis came and took the horses.

"They'll water them and put them out to grass for us," said the scout, dismounting. "Go with them, Cay-

use," he went on to the Piute boy. "See where the animals are picketed and that the trappings are taken care of; then follow us to the pueblo."

Little Cayuse nodded and went off with the Moquis. The scout and the trapper at once started up the flight of rough stone steps that led to the top of the mesa. Reaching the top, they passed among the pueblos on their way to the open space and the dance-rock.

They saw many white men, cowboys and tourists, and here and there a white woman; but among the first of the visitors to capture their attention was a lean, undersized Chinaman with a green silk patch over his left eye.

"Waugh!" whispered Nomad, startled. "Tork erbout luck, Buffler! Why, thar's yer one-eyed Chink, fust crack out o' ther box!"

"Keep track of him, pard," returned the exultant Buffalo Bill. "I'll go on to the plaza."

Nomad side-tracked himself and strolled carelessly after the Chinaman. The scout, walking on, had not covered fifty paces among the rock-dwellings before he came to a breathless halt.

Directly in front of him was a second Chinaman with a green silk patch over his left eye!

This Celestial was clad in a blue blouse and breeches—clothing exactly like that worn by the yellow man whose trail Nomad had taken.

What did this mean? Finucane had said nothing about two one-eyed Chinamen; and yet here they were, big as life, both come to view the snake-dance, and at the same time, no doubt, help along Tau Kee's drug business.

Deeply mystified, the scout trailed after the second Chinaman, who was shuffling calmly along toward the plaza and the dance-rock.

Before the scout had gone far, to his amazement the Chinaman he was following was joined by a third, likewise in blue blouse and breeches, and wearing a green silk patch over his left eye.

Buffalo Bill was staggered. That was a great day for one-eyed Chinamen in Wolpi.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SNAKE-DANCE.

The *mesa* on which Wolpi is built resembles the deck of a ship, being long and comparatively narrow. Following the general contour of the *mesa*, the *plaza* is greater in its length than in its breadth. About the center of the *plaza*, isolated and alone, stands a mushroom-shaped rock. This is the dance-rock, and it is a favorite seat for spectators.

A ladder led to the top of the rock, and Buffalo Bill climbed the ladder and took a seat among some cowboys and male tourists.

On one side the *plaza* was edged by the *mesa's* precipitous wall; on the other side were two-storied, terraced dwellings. Along the edge of the *mesa*, and on the terraces, the visitors were gathered.

The two one-eyed Chinamen Buffalo Bill was keeping under surveillance were sitting cross-legged on a rooftop directly opposite the scout. Only a few yards of space separated the scout from the Chinamen.

The ceremonies of the dance had, more properly, begun at dawn, with what was called the "snake-race." Runners, carrying melon vines, corn, and other products, had started from far off on the plain, the winner passing over the roof of the snake *kiva* and depositing there the load he had brought with him.

It was now drawing near sunset, and the dance proper was about to begin. The snakes had been washed, chanted over, and placed in the *kiva*, and the actors in the ceremony were all costumed and ~~waiting~~

Over the snake *kiva* was a bower of cottonwood branches, called the *kisi*.

As the scout sat and waited for the performance to begin, he took no part in the conversation going on around him. His mind was busy with the three one-eyed Chinamen.

Undoubtedly only one of the Chinamen was really one-eyed. The fact that all three wore green silk patches must have been a move on the part of Sam Lot to keep himself from being "spotted."

The fact that he had made such a move seemed to indicate that he feared enemies were after him. Yet, if he had feared this too much, he would not have chanced coming to Wolpi at all.

The wily Tau Kee, whose headquarters was not in San Francisco but somewhere in the Arizona wilds, had spies everywhere, and usually he was able to divine any move on the part of the authorities in advance of its execution. If Tau Kee had known, beyond doubt, that Buffalo Bill was again on his trail—or, rather, on the trail of his yellow smugglers—as already stated, he would not have risked sending any of his men to Wolpi.

The Chinamen's use of the green silk patches, therefore, appeared to the scout to be no more than a precautionary proceeding. Yet, if the Chinamen recognized him, his mere presence in Wolpi might arouse their suspicions.

The two Celestials on the roof apparently paid the scout no attention. To all seeming, they were waiting curiously for the snake-dance to begin.

When the shadow of the *kisi* had lengthened far eastward, a painted priest crossed the *plaza* and vanished among the cottonwood boughs. This was the man whose business it was to hand the snakes out to the dancers.

The sun dropped still lower, and the wonderful colors of an Arizona evening began stealing out of the east. That was the right moment, and, amid an expectant hush from the spectators, the Antelope priests filed into the *plaza*.

Their seminude bodies were painted in white, embroidered kilts of white cotton were fastened about their loins, tortoise-shell rattles were tied to their knees, turquoise necklaces hung around their throats, and fox-skins drooped from their shoulders. At the head of the procession marched the Antelope chief, with his *tiponi*, or sacred badge of office, across his left arm.

Behind him trailed the bearer of the medicine-bowl. The other priests carried rattles.

Four times around the *plaza* marched the priests, sprinkling sacred meal and stamping on a plank in front of the *kisi*.

The scout saw but little of this performance. Off to the right he had caught a glimpse of Nomad, almost elbow to elbow with the first Chinaman—the one with the green silk patch whom the scout had told him to follow.

Nor was Nomad taking much interest in the Antelope priests. His gaze, roving across the open space, was resting on the other two Chinamen squatted on the terrace.

The old trapper's race was a study in astonishment and wonder.

There was a hole in the plank on which the Antelope priests stamped while passing. Supposedly, this hole led into the underworld, and the stamping was to inform the ancestors of the Moquis that a ceremony was going on.

After going four times around the *plaza*, the priests

lined up in front of the *kisi*, facing outward. Then came the grand entry of the Snake priests.

The Snake priests wore dark-red kilts and barbaric ornaments, and their bodies had been plentifully rubbed with red paint. As did the Antelopes, they circled the *plaza* four times; then they formed a line facing the other priests.

The rattles imitated the *buz-z-z* of the rattlesnake, and the Snake priests swayed from side to side, sweeping their eagle-feather snake-whips along the ground. A humming chant was begun, and grew louder and louder. The two lines of priests swayed back and forth toward and away from each other in serpentine fashion. Up and down between the lines strode the bearer of the medicine, sprinkling the liquid charm to all points of the compass.

Then, in a twinkling, the line of Snake priests broke into groups of three. The chanting rushed to a shriller pitch, and each group of three began to hop around in a circle in front of the *kisi*.

In each group of three there was a "carrier," a "hugger," and a "gatherer." The "hugger" had his arm over the shoulder of the "carrier" and the "gatherer" walked behind.

Suddenly the "carrier" of one group dropped to his knees in front of the *kisi*. A squirming rattlesnake was handed out to him. He placed the snake midway of its length in his mouth, and he and his two attendants went on hopping around in a circle. In this manner, each group was presently provided with a snake.

The "hugger" in each group waved a feather wand in front of the snake in the "carrier's" mouth to attract its attention, but this was only partially successful. Both

ends of the snake would wriggle and coil, while its red forked tongue shot out menacingly.

Again the Snake priests hopped four times around in a circle. At the finish of the last round, the "carrier" opened his mouth and allowed his snake to drop to the ground.

Here the "gatherer" got in his work, picking up the wriggling reptiles as they fell.

It was a weird and curious spectacle, and far from being a pleasant one to look at.

The king of scouts was keeping track of the doings in the *plaza*, and, at the same time, watching all three Chinamen as well as Nomad out of the tail of his eye.

But already the evening shadows had rendered clear-seeing impossible. Dusk fell over Indians and spectators alike.

While the scout's head was turned in the direction of Nomad and the first Chinaman, he felt something strike slimily against his throat.

At first the scout failed to understand what the object was, or how it had come to strike him. The next moment the warning buzz of a rattlesnake sounded in his ears.

"Howlin' blazes!" yelped a cowboy, next to the scout, springing to his feet. "Who threw that rattler? Look out, neighbor! It's going ter bite!"

All was confusion on top of the dance-rock. Most of those on the rock had leaped erect and were pushing away from Buffalo Bill. One tourist took a breakneck slide from the top of the rock to the *plaza*. Another made such haste getting down the ladder that he tipped it over, leaving a couple of other tourists clamoring for the ladder to be put up again.

Realizing his peril, Buffalo Bill snatched at the coil-

ing reptile and tore it from his throat. Before he could cast it from him, the snake had struck, fastening itself to the fleshy part of his hand.

The scout was no more than a second jerking the snake away. It fell into the *plaza*, and there the wildly alarmed trapper, who had witnessed the incident and hurried to the foot of the dance-rock, put his heel on the serpent's head and crushed it into the sand.

"Was ye bit, Buffer?" cried Nomad.

"Yes," said the scout calmly, tying a handkerchief tightly about the wrist of the bitten hand and drawing the knot snug with his teeth.

"Who threw it at ye?" demanded Nomad, his voice husky with rage and alarm.

Taking a revolver from his belt, the scout thrust it through the handkerchief and twisted it, making a sort of tourniquet.

"Go after those two Chinamen on the roof, Nick," said the scout, hurrying to the ladder which had again been set up against the dance-rock.

But the Chinamen had vanished; and, while Nomad was searching for them, the one he had been set to watch also slipped away.

The dance was not interrupted by this misfortune to the scout. A little group of white men and tourists gathered about him at the foot of the ladder leading down from the dance-rock.

"Don't fret about it, pard," said a grizzled cowboy. "If that was one o' the rattlers used by the reds in this snake *fiesta*, I'm bettin' my pile its fangs was pulled. Why, some o' these dancers git bit half a dozen times! They don't turn up their toes, do they? Nary!"

"I've heard," said a tourist, "that they go out in the desert and gather up the snakes, and that the reptile

are just as venomous when they're used as when they were caught."

Buffalo Bill was perfectly willing to be convinced of the harmlessness of the snake that had struck him, but he wanted to be sure of it. It was not a situation to be dealt with lightly.

Walking around the rock, he picked up the snake Nomad had killed. The cowboy struck a match and the head was carefully examined.

"Thunder!" exclaimed the cowboy, aghast. "The fangs are there, all right."

"And my hand is beginning to swell," said the scout quietly. "I reckon that's proof enough that the rattler's venom-sack hadn't been tampered with."

"Here's the remedy, pard," and the cowboy thrust forward a pocket-flask. "Swaller all the valley-tan in the bottle, and I'll get you some more."

The scout, however, wanted a clear head for the next few hours.

"I know something better than that," said he. "If you've got a cartridge about you, pull the bullet out of the shell so I can get at the powder."

The cowboy put away the flask, demurring loudly at the scout's folly in declining the "valley-tan," pulled a six-shooter, "broke" it, and drew out a cartridge. After twisting the leaden slug out of the cartridge, he handed the shell, with its powder, to Buffalo Bill.

The scout turned up his hand, sprinkled the powder on the bite; and, while those about him watched with set faces, prepared to touch a match to the little black heap that lay on the skin.

The match was scratched. Before it could be touched to the powder, however, one of the Antelope priests broke through the crowd of spectators, knocked the pow-

der aside, blew out the match, and caught the scout by the arm.

"Come," said he.

"Where are you going?" demanded the scout.

"You bite, Salako fix um."

"Who's Salako?"

"Her Wolpi snake-woman."

The scout was not anxious to have a medicine-woman stand over him and pound a tom-tom for the purpose of frightening away the evil snake-spirit. He wanted something else besides the tom-tom treatment. However, the Antelope priest seemed to know what he was doing.

Across the plaza he hurried the scout, climbed ahead of him up a ladder to one of the terraces, guided him across the roof-porch and in through a door.

An old woman stood with a candle just inside the door. She was wizened and toothless, and a dirty old blanket covered her shrunken form.

"How?" said she, her parchmentlike face cracking in a grin.

"Are you Salako?" demanded the scout.

"Me Salako?"

The scout held out his hand. Giving the candle to the priest, Salako pulled the revolver from under the handkerchief and handed it to the scout.

"No good," said she.

The scout returned the weapon to his belt, and Salako went on to remove the handkerchief. Then, leading the scout across the room, she made him sit down on a blanket while she brought a gourd filled with thick, dark liquor.

"Drink!" she commanded.

The scout lifted the gourd to his lips and swallowed

its nauseating contents. There was no liquor about it, and probably it consisted only of a brew of herbs.

"Will that do the trick?" he asked.

"Him cure paleface. *Ló-lomai!* (Excellent)."

"Where did that snake come from?" went on the scout, addressing the priest.

"Him Chinaman threw snake," replied the priest, piecing out his words with the hand-talk.

"One of the Chinamen on the roof?"

"Si."

"Where did the Chinaman get the snake?"

"Mebbyso stole from *kiwa*."

"How long have those Chinamen been at Wolpi?"

"Three One-eyes here since morning. Come last sleep."

"Where did they come from?"

The priest shook his head to signify that he did not know.

"Make lay down," said Salako.

As she spoke, she laid a stone *metat* on the blanket for the scout to put his head on.

"How long before I'll be over this, Salako?" he asked, stretching himself out with his head on the *metat*.

"Mebbyso two, three hour. That heap better than go die."

She clapped her hands. In answer to the summons a girl of sixteen or seventeen entered from an adjoining room. Two great whorls of hair stood out at the sides of the girl's head, after the fashion with unmarried Moqui women, and about her throat was a double string of turquoise beads. Broad bands of beaten silver encompassed her arms and wrists. She was pretty, and when Salako spoke to her in the Moqui tongue she sank down

on her knees near the scout's head and began fanning him with a corner of her blanket.

Buffalo Bill had trusted himself entirely to the priest and Salako. Reason had told him that many of the Indians must be bitter during the dance, and that they would necessarily have to have some antidote for the rattlesnake virus. He was receiving the Indian treatment, and he was satisfied.

A slight dizziness affected his head, but whether it was due to the poison, or to the antidote, he did not know.

The priest placed the candle on a shelf and glided silently back toward the dance-court. Salako brought two more candles, lighted them from the first, and set them in sockets about the room.

This room was a large one, and neat beyond anything the scout had ever seen in the shape of an Indian lodge. The walls were of stone, very thick, laid up in mud and plastered. The floor also had been plastered, the plaster drying to the hardness of granite. Other blankets were scattered about the floor, as well as a few sheepskins.

A low stone bench ran entirely around the room, broken only for door openings.

The roof was of large cottonwood beams, covered with brush, and the brush, in turn, covered with grass on which was a layer of adobe clay.

From the center of the ceiling hung a feather tied to a cotton string. No house, in all Moquidom, was without its string and feather. They represented the soul of the house, and the sign of its dedication.

In one corner of the room was a fireplace with a hood; sunk in the floor were corn-mills; not far from the corn-mills was a big *tinaja*, or water-jar, with a dipper made from a gourd.

All these things the scout noted dreamily, while the

Moqui maiden sat by and unceasingly fanned him with the corner of her blanket. In a little while he felt that his brain was clearing; and, with active, normal thought, his mind took up the subject of the Chinaman who had hurled the snake.

The Chinamen had seen and recognized the scout on the dance-rock. Somehow one of them had secured the snake. Watching his opportunity, the Chinaman had hurled the snake over the intervening space at the white man whom he believed to be a secret enemy.

It was the Chinaman's hope, no doubt, to settle the scout's earthly affairs then and there, and prevent him from causing Tau Kee and the yellow smugglers any further trouble. It was a daring move, but it was going to fail; and, because the move had been made, Buffalo Bill knew that the clue he had received at the dance-rock was a sure one.

While he was thinking, he glided off into a doze. He was awakened by sounds of laughter and talk. Opening his eyes, he saw that the room was filled with the Snake priests. The ceremony was over, and the Snake men were drinking their antidotes from Salako's bowl.

The scout was staring at the strange scene when old Nomad, tearing into the room, dodged around through the priests and came to where his pard was lying.

"Howdy, Buffler?" asked the trapper, his eyes glittering with anxiety.

"I'm feeling fine, Nick," said the scout, looking at his hand.

He still carried the marks of the snake's fangs, but the hand was not swollen in the least and was not at all stiff or sore.

"I seen one o' them thar priests an' he told me he was goin' ter fix ye on."

"Did you find the two one-eyed Chinamen, Nick?"

"Waugh! Ain't thet er combination fer yer life, Buffler? Three one-eyed rat-eaters! Sufferin' boa-constrictors! I was shore knocked slab-sided when I seen 'em."

The scout turned to the girl, who was still sitting on the blanket. Taking a silver dollar from his pocket, he handed it to her.

"Gracias!" he smiled.

The girl gave him an answering smile, took the coin and glided away.

"But did you find the Chinamen, Nick?" the scout went on.

"Nary; they sloped. I been huntin' ever'whar ye could think of fer 'em. Shore one o' them throwed the reptyle?"

"I'm sure of it. They saw me and suspected why I was here, and that is why they tried to get me out of the way."

"Thet yaller whelp must er been a snake-charmer, then, er else he'd er got bitten afore he throwed ther snake."

"Undoubtedly he knows how to handle venomous serpents without trouble to himself. Where's Cayuse?"

"Kain't find him, nuther; but, as I was trailin' along hyar, one o' them Moqui kids thet took our hosses ran up ter me an' handed me this."

Nomad stretched out for the scout's inspection a small silver-mounted spur.

"That belongs to Little Cayuse," said the scout.

"So I reckon, Buffler. But what does et mean? Ther Moqui kid didn't say a word, an' got away afore I could ask him anythin'. Mebbyso ther Piute lost et an' ther Moqui found et."

"No. If I read the matter right, Cayuse gave it to the boy to give to you or me."

"What fer?"

"Why, to signify that Little Cayuse had suddenly left Wolpi—so suddenly that he hadn't time to come and tell us why or where he was going."

"Whar d'ye reckon he's gone, in sich er flutter?"

"To follow the one-eyed man who threw the snake."

CHAPTER XIV.

TRAILING THE CHINAMAN.

Buffalo Bill, knowing Little Cayuse so well, had no difficulty in correctly translating the lad's action in leaving the spur.

Little Cayuse made a hit with the Moqui boys who showed him the way to the water-hole and the pastures. Cayuse had the best there was, in the Indian line. From his beaded moccasins up he was a miniature warrior. Yet it was the magnificent eagle feather that made the biggest hit with his Moqui acquaintances.

That eagle feather told every Indian who looked at it that Little Cayuse had slain an enemy in fair and honorable combat. The boy was not boastful, and never a word about that fight had ever passed his lips; but the little Moquis understood, and their Piute friend became a hero in their eyes.

After picketing out the horses, and putting the riding-gear in a place of safety, the Moquis, to make plain their own daring to the Piute, led him to the *mesa* by a dizzy path that would have tried the nerves of a mountain-goat.

Several months before, Little Cayuse had broken his arm by a fall from a cliff; but that arm was as strong as the other one now, and, during his climb up the dizzy *mesa* wall, he crowded hard on the heels of his Moqui leader.

This new route to the pueblo reached the scarp at the back wall of the terraced dwellings. The terraces, however, were all on the other, or *plaza*, side. In order to

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get where they were going, the young Indians had to claw up a blank wall of three stories. Had a stone given way under their fingers, they would have been precipitated to the foot of the *mesa*. Yet nothing went wrong, and the youngsters pulled themselves over the top roof of the pueblo and descended a ladder to the first terrace.

This terrace happened to be the one on which the two Chinamen were seated.

When Cayuse got a good look at the Chinamen, he caught his breath; then he caught his breath again when he gazed across the *plaza* and saw the third Chinaman, with Nomad a little way off.

Three one-eyed Chinamen! The boy was as surprised as the scout and the trapper had been a little while before.

Cayuse, dodging out of sight and keeping well away from the front of the terrace, was not long in discovering Buffalo Bill on the dance-rock. Instinctively he knew that Pa-e-has-ka was watching the two yellow men on the terrace; but he, Cayuse, would watch them, too.

The Moqui boys wanted to carry their Piute friend off to another place where they could get a better view of the dance, but Cayuse shook his head. Not caring to miss the spectacle themselves, all but one of the Moquis scurried away. The Moqui who remained had taken a tremendous fancy to Cayuse, and would not leave him, even for the snake-dance.

Like a weasel Cayuse watched the yellow men. Being behind the Chinamen he could not see when the wriggling snake was pulled from the Chinaman's blouse; but when the Chinaman arose, he caught the movement of the man's arm and saw the rattler shoot across the open space straight toward Pa-e-has-ka!

A swift pang shot to the little Piute's heart. He inferred quickly that the Chinamen had recognized Pa-

e-has-ka as an enemy, and that this was an attempt on his life.

Accompanying his agonized fears for the scout, a fierce indignation welled up in Cayuse's breast. If the Chinaman had succeeded in his fiendish plot, or if he had failed, he should not get away unwatched, or without being followed.

The Chinaman, as soon as he had hurled the snake, whirled on his sandals and vanished. His companion lingered for a moment, peering in the direction of the dance-rock, then himself turned and disappeared. Both had gone into one of the Moqui houses.

Cayuse waited a short time, doubtful as to what he had better do. There was some confusion on the top of the dance-rock, but everywhere else the spectators seemed entirely absorbed in the doings of the snake-dancers.

To follow the Chinaman into the *pueblo*, as Cayuse reasoned, meant to lose them. They could climb and descend ladder after ladder in the darkness, cheating pursuit like a couple of moles.

Undoubtedly it was their intention to reach the foot-path, descend to the foot of the *mesa*, and so escape unseen.

Little Cayuse was but a few moments in making up his mind as to the course he should follow.

Unbuckling a spur from his moccasined heel, he pressed it into the hand of his Moqui companion, and then indicated old Nomad, who was standing at the foot of the dance-rock.

"Give spur to him, *amigo*," he whispered in the little Moqui's ear. "*Sabe?*"

The Moqui nodded and started away. As the Moqui descended the ladder leading downward from the terrace, Little Cayuse climbed to the *pueblo* roof. Lowering

himself over the roof's edge, he began a perilous descent of the stone wall, going down the same course up which he had climbed with the Moquis.

It was darker now, and the peril was greater; but peril was the last thing Little Cayuse ever thought of when his duty pointed him along a certain course.

He was in a hurry to get to the foot of the *mesa*, for he wanted to reach the bottom of the foot-path before the two Chinamen came down. Nevertheless, even though he was in a hurry, he had to take his time getting down that treacherous precipice. Overmuch haste would have landed him in a lifeless heap at the bottom.

The descent was safely accomplished, although to the impatient boy it seemed as though he had been all of an hour in making it. The instant he had flat ground under him, he raced to the foot of the path and crouched behind a boulder.

Minute after minute passed, and no one came. His skin grew hot as fire one minute, then cold as ice the next. Had he missed the Chinamen? he asked himself with despairing heart; had they succeeded in getting down and away before he had reached the foot of the path?

But, no! Presently he heard a patter of padded shoes on the steps of the path. The patter grew louder and louder, and a low sound of voices struck on his ear.

He drew a revolver, crouched low, and waited, his eyes gleaming like two coals of fire. All the Indian in him was aroused. If that yellow man had killed Pa-e-has-ka, his best friend, then why should not Cayuse earn another eagle feather? Revenge, the blood revenge! That was the principle drilled into him by the Piute warriors. It rose, now, and gripped him with iron hand.

In a few moments he saw not two men, but three.

They were pattering downward like ungainly silhouettes against the lighter background of the rocks.

Three men, three yellow men! The one across the plaza must have joined the two who had fled from the terrace.

Which of the three had thrown the buzzing snake at Pa-e-has-ka? Cayuse had six loads in his revolver, and the Chinamen were close. Why not earn three more eagle feathers instead of one?

He lifted himself to his knees, crooked his left arm in front of his face, and laid the barrel of the revolver across it.

Then, as his finger was caressing the trigger, he had a sudden thought. What was it Pa-e-has-ka had said about skulking in ambush and shooting like a coward? And what would Pa-e-has-ka say if two innocent men were sacrificed in order that the guilty one might be slain?

Before what the scout had said, and what he might say, the fiery spirit of the little Piute drew back. Silently and swiftly he put away his revolver and glided like a wraith after the figures of the shambling, chattering Chinamen.

He had time to think, as he followed, and his thoughts made him glad that he had held his hand.

Pa-e-has-ka's work was to capture these men who were selling a sleep-drug to the Moquis. By following them, Little Cayuse might find where they kept their unlawful goods. If he could do this, the boy knew that Pa-e-has-ka—if he should live—would be glad.

If Pa-e-has-ka should live!

The boy drew in a hissing breath. If the great scout had sung his death-song because of what that Chinaman

had done, then—and let the Great Spirit witness!—Little Cayuse would win another eagle feather.

The boy was brave, and generous, and loyal. He had lived a long time with the pony-soldiers, and the wives of the officers had talked to him and taught him many good things known to the palefaces; but when he thought that Pa-e-has-ka, whom he cared for more than for any one else in the world, might have been slain, he forgot all the things he had learned from the white people and reasoned like a Piute.

On the trail of those three Chinamen he was as keen as a skulking panther; to discover that he was following, or to evade him, were alike impossible.

The Chinamen walked directly away from the mesa, through the corn-fields and garden-patches, heading directly westward toward Mishonginovi. They did not go to the pastures, so it was plain they had brought no horses. Shambling along on foot, they struck straight into the heart of the desert.

Little Cayuse followed.

The three yellow men were flapping, ungainly figures in the distance ahead. As the night deepened, and the stars brightened, the human figures had come into startling prominence.

Cayuse could see them plainly, and was instantly aware of every move they made.

At first they had feared pursuit, and had looked back often; but now that they were getting farther and farther away from Wolpi and could see no one on their track they were becoming less apprehensive and wary.

Cayuse's stealthiness did not diminish, however. He zigzagged from greasewood-bush to cactus clump, from cactus clump to *val-de-verde*, taking every advantage of the sparse growths of the desert to hide his advance.

The Chinamen continued to chatter earnestly among themselves. It was plain that they feared Buffalo Bill and his pards, and that they were talking over plans for their own safety.

The hours lengthened. Still the Chinamen kept on indefatigably, and the boy followed tirelessly, relentlessly.

From time to time, Little Cayuse heartened himself for the trailing, and against the alarm he felt for the scout, by whispering a song of his fathers.

"Ta-vi kwai-naut-si ya ga-wats
Si-chom-pa kung-wat-ru
Tu-yung-wi-ra-vats.

"At morn the eagle will cry,
On the further shore of the sea,
And a rainbow will be in the sky."

It was the warrior's song of hope. "At morn the rainbow will be in the sky." That meant that Pa-e-has-ka would live, and that Little Cayuse would bring joy to his heart by finding the camp of the Chinamen and the place where they stored their poison-drug.

Cayuse knew about the poison-drug. Not many sleeps ago he had been a guest in the lodges of the Yumas, on the lower Colorado. Near the Yumas, in a thick chaparral, was a camp of the yellow men.

While gliding through the chaparral one day he had come upon a Chinaman, sprawled flat on his back among the bushes. The Chinaman held in his hand a pipe with a little bowl, his face was hueless, his mouth was open, and he was breathing stertorously. Thinking the yellow man was dying, Cayuse had run to bring Siwash Charley, an old man of the Yumas who had great wisdom.

When Siwash Charley looked at the Chinaman, he laughed.

"Why do you laugh, my father," the boy had asked indignantly, "when the yellow man is dying?"

"My son," had answered Charley, "he is not dying. He has smoked the poison-drug, and is very happy."

"Happy! When he looks like that?"

"Even so. He is a fool and is in a fool's paradise. The poison-drug kills the brain by inches, and makes a warrior like a squaw. It is the weapon of the evil one."

"Why does the Chinaman use it?"

"*Quien sabe* (Who knows)?" asked Siwash Charley.

Little Cayuse would never forget that yellow man in the chaparral, nor the words of the old Yuma. The boy was eager to help Pa-e-has-ka keep the poison-drug away from the Moquis.

On and on he crawled after the yellow men. Suddenly one of them halted and turned. Cayuse was caught in the open, but his quick wit saved the day. Dropping on all fours, he imitated the awkward lope of the coyote.

Crack! A gun spit flame and a bullet zipped past the boy. He gave the coyote yelp, so nearly to the life that it would have deceived an Indian, and loped into the bushes.

He heard the Chinamen laugh as they started onward.

A little later the three yellow men disappeared over the edge of a dry-wash. Inasmuch as they did not mount the opposite bank of the wash, Cayuse felt certain their camp must be at the bottom of it.

For several minutes he waited patiently, then wriggled snakelike to the brink of the depression and looked over.

A little fire of mesquit brush glowed at the bottom of the wash. A pot was over the fire, and the three one-eyed men sat in the glow, drinking *samschu* and taking their rest after the walk from Wolpi.

The boy's eyes wandered about the camp. He saw one horse—a scraggy, undersized cayuse—but no more. However, he saw those other beasts of burden—coolies—in plenty.

He counted twenty of them, nineteen lying in heaps around the camp and one waiting on the three one-eyed men, replenishing their cups from the steeping pot.

One of the Single-eyes spoke to the serving coolie. The latter went to a sleeping comrade, kicked him into wakefulness, told him something, then passed to another, and another, until he had aroused and given orders to four.

The four coolies clapped away in their straw sandals, one north, one south, one east, one west. The one who went east passed within two yards of Cayuse, but he was rubbing the sleep out of his eyes and could not see.

The four coolies went on guard, each at a distance of a hundred feet from the camp. Silently as a lizard, Little Cayuse crept into a thicket of brush and continued to wait and watch.

The one-eyed men finished their *samschu*, the serving coolie took away the cups, and then the Single-eyes began to smoke cigarettes and to do more talking.

In the midst of their talk there came a cry from the east. The One-eyes leaped up, climbed the western slope of the wash, and went to join the guard who had been posted in that direction.

Cayuse peered out of his covert and saw an Indian on horseback. After talking with him, the One-eyes led him into the wash.

Some object was lying on the ground. A Chinaman went to it, bent down for a moment, then returned with a package in his hand. He exchanged the package for

something the Indian gave him; and the Indian turned, whipped out of the wash, and galloped away eastward.

The boy's heart sank. The Indian was a Moqui. He had come from Wolpi, or perhaps from Cichomovi, to buy some of the poison-drug! The yellow smugglers were succeeding in their work.

A few minutes after the mounted Moqui left, one of the Single-eyes blew a shrill whistle. The four guards came running in, the sleeping coolies were aroused, and confusion reigned in the camp.

Out of this confusion order presently emerged. A coolie, with a carrying-pole across his shoulders and two bundles hanging from cords at each end, topped the western bank of the wash and went off at a swinging walk.

Another coolie, likewise burdened, followed the first. Thus they followed one another until there were eighteen coolies in a file, swinging across the desert with their bundles and carrying-poles.

After them came a queer device, consisting of a single wagon-wheel with two parallel strips of wood crossing the hub. The strips of wood ended in four handles, two at the front and two at the rear. One coolie was at each pair of handles, pushing and pulling. As they moved, the wheel turned. On each side of the wheel were panniers containing equipment—or opium, it might be.

Little Cayuse had seen such a contrivance before. It was a rude vehicle for transporting loads, and was called a "go-devil." The go-devil, in its passage, left a thin line like the trail of a snake.

Behind the go-devil came two of the One-eyes. They traveled light, carrying only fans to beat the air in front of their faces when they grew warm.

The third of the Single-eyes bestrode the scraggy little beast, and Cayuse could hardly keep from laughing when he saw how awkwardly the Chinaman rode.

Up and down the line of panting coolies the mounted Chinaman galloped. He had a whip in his hand, and sometimes he struck his cayuse with it, and sometimes he struck a lagging coolie.

In this fashion the yellow men broke camp and trailed out across the starlit desert.

The boy followed. He believed he understood why this change was made. The Indian from the East might tell some of the white men at Wolpi where the Chinese camp was located, so it was well for the Chinamen to make a change.

After an hour the country roughened into low sandhills. A new camp was pitched in the bosom of the hills, with dunes hiding it on every side. A water-hole and a growth of mesquit made of the spot an excellent halting-place.

Cayuse himself went into camp in a sort of gap overlooking the arroyo preempted by the Chinamen. Undoubtedly these yellow men would stay here for some time. They had water, they had forage for the horse, and they were in the midst of the seven towns of Tusayan—Wolpi, Si-chom-ovi, Ha-no, Mi-shong-inovi, Shi-paul-ovi, Shungopavi, and Oraibi. If the Chinamen were to barter with the Moquis of the seven towns, what better place could they select?

Little Cayuse asked himself what he had better do. Should he return at once to Wolpi, find out about Pa-e-has-ka, and report the new camp of the Chinamen? Or should he linger there for a time and learn whether the Chinamen made another change?

He studied the stars. The small hours of the night had

come. He was tired, and perhaps it would be better if he slept and watched the Chinamen. When he learned that that was their permanent camp, then it would be time enough for him to return to Wolpi after Pa-e-has-ka and Nomad, the Wolf-killer.

Curling up in the bushes, he went to sleep.

The sun was high when he awoke, and his first move was to peer out of the covert. The Chinamen were there. Some of the coolies were eating rice with chopsticks, some were smoking cigarettes and playing *pi-gow*. He counted sixteen of the coolies. The remaining quartet, he reasoned, must be at the four points of the compass, guarding the camp.

The One-eyes were asleep under a shelter-tent of yellow silk—Cayuse could see their stockinged feet sticking out from under the tent.

Yes, without doubt that was to be a permanent camp. Now was the time for Cayuse to dodge away and recross the hot sands to Wolpi.

He had had nothing to eat since the afternoon before, at Keam's Cañon. And not a drop of water had passed his lips since leaving Wolpi. But what did that signify? He was a warrior. After pulling up his belt a notch, he reached for a pebble to put it under his tongue. Before his fingers touched the pebble, he straightened up, startled. Some one rushed past him. Peering out, he saw a coolie traveling like the wind toward the water-hole. The coolie's cue was flying out behind him and his garments were fluttering with the wind of his speed.

What did this betoken? Little Cayuse knelt and watched breathlessly.

Straight to the shelter-tent went the coolie. Stooping over, he caught the stockinged feet of the One-eyes and

pulled them vigorously. The owners slid out, excited words were interchanged, then one of the One-eyes assumed command and gave orders.

The panniers of the go-devil were raided for coils of cord. Carrying these, ten of the coolies separated from the main body. Climbing out of the swale that hid the camp they darted into the valleys among the sand-dunes. The One-eyes followed.

In leaving the camp, the Chinamen had passed close to Little Cayuse's shelter, and he hardly breathed until they were past. Then, when they had vanished, he wriggled clear of the bushes, placed a hill between himself and the camp, and crawled to the top of a ridge.

Looking eastward along the thin serpentine trail made by the go-devil, he saw a sight that almost made his heart stop beating.

Nomad, far off, was galloping alone along the go-devil trail, running it out. Aye, and running, at the same time, into an ambushade of yellow foes!

CHAPTER XV.

NOMAD CAPTURED.

Little Cayuse had wits abnormally sharp. From what he saw he was able to reason clearly and effectively.

The Moqui boy had given the spur to Wolf-killer or Pa-e-has-ka. Wolf-killer had gone on the hunt. No Indian was better at reading a trail than was Wolf-killer. He had followed the three Chinamen to the camp in the dry wash, and then the mark of the "go-devil" had led him into the sand-hills.

Little Cayuse was too far away to make Nomad hear. To call a warning to the trapper would mean capture for Little Cayuse, for he had a force of coolies behind him as well as in front. Still that would not have deterred the plucky little Piute if he had thought he could reach Nomad's ears with a warning cry.

With scant thought of his own danger, Cayuse stood up on the top of the ridge and waved his arms. Perhaps the trapper would see him, even if he could not hear.

But Nomad had his eyes on the thin mark of the loaded "go-devil." On each side of him, as he galloped, were thick tangles of greasewood and thorn. A likely place, thought the boy, for the yellow men's treachery.

With sudden thought, Cayuse drew his revolver, pointed it into the air, and pulled trigger. Hearing the report, the trapper might suspect trouble and halt.

The echo of the shot did reach the trapper's ears, but too late. He looked up. While his eyes were lifted, a rope which lay in the sand across the path his horse was

following suddenly lifted a foot high, and was held taut by coolies among the scrub.

Nomad's horse, tripped by the rope, stumbled and fell, pitching the trapper headlong. Before Wolf-killer could make a move, Chinamen swarmed out and fell upon him.

With a hoarse cry of rage and disappointment, Little Cayuse dropped down below the crest of the ridge, picked out a covert that gave him a view of the "go-devil" trail leading to the yellow men's camp, and waited and watched.

He had not long to wait before he saw the victorious Chinamen returning. Four of them carried the brave old trapper. He was bound hand and foot—a prisoner, but with eyes fierce and defiant.

Back of him came a One-eye, leading his horse. A second of the One-eyes carried his belt and revolvers, while the third waddled along exultingly, fanning himself. The balance of the coolies scurried ahead, to inform the rest of the camp—at least Cayuse thought the rest of them scurried ahead, for he could see one disappearing along the arroyo.

Wild thoughts rushed through the boy's head of plunging from his covert and falling upon the yellow men single-handed. He was eager to rescue his friend, Wolf-killer. Sober second thought, however, showed him the folly of such a proceeding. There were too many of the foes and they would make him a prisoner—thus a bad matter would be worse.

It would be better, Cayuse reflected, to hang around the yellow men's camp and watch for a favorable opportunity to do secretly what he could not do openly.

When the last Chinaman had vanished around a curve of the arroyo, Cayuse walked down into the go-devil trail. Then, to his astonishment, he saw four coolies

bringing up the rear of the procession that had just passed, one of them carrying the rope that had tripped Nomad's horse.

Little Cayuse was in plain sight, and, from the way the coolies quickened their pace to a run, he knew he had been seen.

In a flash he made up his mind as to what he should do. To fight was out of the question, for that would have brought the One-eyes and the coolies from around the turn.

Sitting down in the sand, he waited for the four coolies to come up with him. They came on the run. One would have laid hands on him, but he shook his head and gave the peace-sign.

The coolie drew back and stared. Little Cayuse made signs of smoking a pipe. The coolies appeared to understand the gestures, but their hostility only slightly abated. The one with the rope waved the boy sternly along the arroyo, and he stepped off briskly in the direction of the yellow men's camp, watching and listening for any sounds of treachery behind him.

The little Piute was filled with heavy disappointment. Was he to be captured, and thus prevented from doing anything for Nomad, or would his wit pull him through?

The turn of the arroyo brought him into the swale that held the water-hole. Nomad was lying in the sand by the silken shelter-tent, and around him squatted the One-eyes. Back of the One-eyes hovered the other coolies.

The scraggy cayuse had been prepared with a bridle for one of the One-eyes, but the Chinaman had not made use of the horse. The cayuse had not yet been led away, but was standing with drooping head near the shelter-tent. A few yards from the cayuse stood Nomad's sad-

dled and bridled horse, one of the coolies hanging to the bridle.

The approach of the boy brought the three One-eyes to their feet and spread fresh excitement among the coolies. Nomad turned his head and an expression of surprise crossed his face. Little Cayuse did not even look at him, but turned his head away.

If the trapper called to him, then his fight for freedom was sure to be a losing one, for the yellow men would know at once that he was a friend of Nomad's, and, consequently, an enemy of the smugglers.

But Nomad, although filled with amazement, did not speak a word. He gathered from the boy's manner that he had something at the back of his clever brain and was playing a part.

Cayuse kept nonchalantly on, and halted in front of one of the Single-eyes, between the group about Nomad and the scraggy cayuse.

"How?" said he. "You speak English?"

The One-eyes looked him over with glittering suspicion.

"My sabe English," answered one. "Who you?"

"All same Moqui. Come from Shungopavi for sleep-drug."

"You all same boy," said the Chinaman. "No sellee."

"Me sent by warriors from Shungopavi," persisted Little Cayuse, taking a gold piece from his beaded medicine-bag. "You give young warrior sleep-drug, take this."

The eyes of all the Chinamen gleamed as the gold piece glinted in the sun.

"How muchee you got?" asked the Chinaman greedily.

"Got um plenty. You give um sleep-drug?"

"How you makee travel from Shungopavi?"

"All same foot."

"Why you walkee? No got cayuse at Shungopavi?"

"No got um good cayuse."

"Boy all same makee lie. No speakee truth. You prisoner, sabe?"

The Chinaman stepped toward Cayuse and made a grab at his scalp-lock. He was a boy, was Cayuse, and the one-eyed Chinaman was not expecting trouble.

So it happened that he met with a surprise.

Quick as a lightning-flash Little Cayuse darted under the outstretched yellow hand, bringing his head in contact with the Chinaman's stomach.

The impact knocked the Chinaman's breath out of his body, doubled him up like a jack-knife, and laid him gasping on the sand beside Nomad.

"Brayvo!" whooped the delighted trapper, jubilant over the boy's success in spite of his own sorry situation. "Ther cayuse, kid; ther cayuse!"

No need to suggest the cayuse to the Piute. That horse was the end and aim of his present work.

The other One-eyes made a rush at him, and the coolies started out of the background. A run and a leap landed Cayuse on the back of the scraggy mount. One spur was still left on his moccasined heels and he used it.

The cayuse bolted down the swale as the sharp points of the rowel raked his hide. A revolver—one of Nomad's revolvers in the hands of a One-eye—cracked, and a hot pain leaped through Cayuse's side. But he was turning into the arroyo, and the trail in front of him was clear.

Turning as he galloped, he shook his small fist.

"Heap squaws!" he taunted, following the words with a war-whoop.

As he plunged behind a sand-hummock, he saw a One-

eye climbing aboard Nomad's horse and starting in pursuit.

Nomad's horse was far and away better than the mount bestrode by the boy. But what cared Cayuse for that? He felt himself a match for any one of the smugglers who might overhaul him. His wound—but what meant a wound to a warrior? He had been lucky to get away as well as he had.

From his medicine-bag, as he rode, Little Cayuse pulled a strip of soft, white doeskin. From a smaller pouch he took a little brownish powder. Sprinkling the powder on a section of the doeskin, he applied that part of the bandage to the wound, brought the end of the doeskin strip clear around his body, and pinned the bandage tightly in place with a long thorn, likewise taken from the beaded bag.

The boy had been taught to be prepared for any emergency. He was now reaping the benefits of his early training.

The hurt was not severe, for the bullet had merely plowed a furrow across his ribs; yet, from such an insignificant furrow strength could ooze drop by drop. Little Cayuse was fasting, and had no strength to spare.

The powder and the compress stopped the flow. Barely had he satisfied himself of this when the revolver barked venomously a second time. The bullet sang through the air a dozen feet from the boy.

He laughed tauntingly. The picture of the One-eye, galloping after him with cue and baggy silk blouse fluttering in the wind, filled the small Piute with grim humor.

The One-eye disdained to put his sandals in the stirrups, and the wooden foot-rests were thumping and

whacking against the horse's sides. This terrified the animal and urged him to greater speed.

The big horse was gaining on the little one, and Cayuse measured the lessening distance with a calculating eye.

The fight, he knew, was between him and the One-eye. No other horses had been left in the yellow men's camp, and it was hardly possible the Chinamen would follow on foot. Even if they did follow, they could not come up in time to take part in the combat.

Bing, ye-e-ep!

Again the revolver made itself heard from behind. The bullet cut harmlessly through the air, but it came much closer to the boy than had the first. The One-eye was getting the range, but he was too bungling a marksman to cause Cayuse much worry. If he made a hit it would be purely accidental, and Cayuse was not expecting accidents of that sort.

Bing, spat!

There was an accident, all right. The third bullet had ripped through a fold in the slack of Cayuse's buckskin trousers, passing close to his thigh, but not touching it.

Nevertheless, with a wild, despairing yell, the Piute boy threw up his hands, swayed and tumbled from the pony's back.

The pony stopped on the instant, sniffed at the prostrate figure on the sand, and then shied off to a clump of bushes and began browsing. The pony was too spiritless to run when there was fodder in sight.

A yell of chattering triumph went up from One-eye. He slowed to a halt, slid awkwardly down from the saddle some six feet from his small foe, and clumped rapidly forward in his sandals.

Then it was that the unexpected happened. Cayuse,

in falling from the horse, had not let go the revolver he was holding in his hand. The One-eye had not noticed this, but he could not help noticing the revolver now. It was lifted and pointed at him as he stooped over to examine his supposedly slain victim.

"Ugh!" growled Cayuse, rising to a sitting posture. "Yellow man stand still! Sabe? Stand still, or Piute shoot!"

The Chinaman staggered back, bewilderment in his yellow face. Nomad's revolver, brought from the camp, was snugged away in the band of his baggy trousers.

He made a movement of his yellow hand. Cayuse, keen-eyed as a hawk, was on his feet in a twinkling, the point of his own weapon within a foot of the Chinaman's breast.

"Want Piute to take um cue-scalp?" he demanded.

"No shootee!" begged the Chinaman, reading determination in the boy's eyes.

"Make lay down, face to ground!" ordered Cayuse.

"You lettee Chinaman go," begged the yellow man; "Chinaman givsee plenty sleep-drug. Hey?"

"No like um! Sleep-drug heap bad for Injun. You sell um to Moqui, make plenty trouble. Make lay down, or Piute make shoot."

"All same," fluttered the One-eye. "No shootee!"

Thereupon the Celestial prostrated himself, hands under him and working to get the revolver from under his blouse.

"Bring um hands behind!" cried Cayuse. "*Pronto!*"

"Yessee," gasped the Chinaman, his mouth muffled in the sand. "No shootee! No usee fire-gun!"

The One-eye's hands were awkwardly lifted and placed together at his back. Cayuse edged away to Nomad's horse, keeping the Chinaman covered with one hand, and,

with the other, lifting Nomad's picket-rope from the saddle-horn.

With his teeth he unrove the half-hitch that secured the coils; then, like a hawk swooping down on a defenseless chicken, he dropped onto the back of the prostrate One-eye and gave his hands a double lashing at the wrists.

Then, stepping back with the free end of the rope in his hands, Cayuse pulled the Chinaman to a sitting posture and took away the old trapper's weapon.

"You throw um snake at Pa-e-has-ka?" he demanded, his gleaming eyes on the prisoner's face.

"Pa-e-has-ka?" wailed the One-eye, blinking with terror. "No sabe Pa-e-has-ka."

"Sabe Buffalo Bill?"

"No sabe."

The weapon in Cayuse's hand nudged against the prisoner's yellow throat.

"Sabe Cody, Buffalo Bill?" the boy demanded again.

"Me sabe!" screeched the Chinaman. "No shootee."

"Buenos!" muttered Cayuse. "Buffalo Bill all same Pa-e-has-ka. You throw um snake at Pa-e-has-ka?"

"No throw snake!"

"Who throw um?"

"All same Sam Lot."

"Where Sam Lot?"

"All same Chinaman's camp."

Little Cayuse leaned forward and slipped the green silk patch from his prisoner's eye. The uncovered eye was a sound one.

Cayuse heaved a breath of disappointment. Sam Lot was the man with the single eye; so this Chinaman could not be Sam Lot. He had told the truth.

"Who you?" asked Cayuse.

"All same Wing Foo."

Cayuse turned and looked westward along the *arroyo*. There were no Chinamen in sight in that direction, but it would not do for him to remain in that spot very long. The smugglers might come.

Keeping hold of the end of the picket-rope, Cayuse ordered his prisoner to get up; then he piloted him to the cayuse, forced him to mount, and secured his feet under the pony's girth.

Leading the pony behind him, he walked to Nomad's horse and got into the saddle. Working from the saddle, he unbuckled one end of the pony's bridle-rein from the bits and buckled it again into the bit-ring of the trapper's horse. In this manner the two horses were bound together, and Chinaman and Piute would ride side by side.

The best gait, under the circumstances, was only a rapid walk. The cayuse was a slow traveler, especially if there was no one on his back to force him.

The trail to Wolpi was long, and Little Cayuse was hungry and thirsty. The gnawing at his stomach he could ease by pulling up his belt another notch, but it was impossible to defend himself against the thirst that burned in his parched throat.

Nevertheless, he was a warrior and not a squaw. He must get back to Wolpi as soon as he could and send some one to the relief of Wolf-killer. Many hot miles lay between the little Piute and "the place of the gap."

Then there was the hurt in his side. It was nothing—a mere scratch—but since he had pitched from the pony in fooling the One-eye the wound hurt like a knife in his side.

"Ugh!" muttered Little Cayuse, bracing back his shoulders. Again he sang to raise his courage and his en-

durance. It was of the Ant he sang, the Little Red Ant who had accomplished wonders:

"Ta-si-va ku-mai-a
Ma-na-pa win-ka
So-ku-nas so-ma
Wi-a wi-ga-va.

"The Little Red Ant
Descended the hill
With one arrow only,
With one arrow only,
With one arrow only——"

Cayuse caught himself in his lugubrious chant. The Little Red Ant was brave, and had, with his one arrow, come off victorious in a fight with many. He, Little Cayuse, would be as brave as the Little Red Ant.

While the boy chanted, the slant-eyed prisoner looked at him covertly and wonderingly. Cayuse roused himself to tap the weapon at his belt.

"Why Sam Lot throw um snake at Pa-e-has-ka?" he demanded.

"Pa-e-has-ka hunt for Chinamen," returned the prisoner.

"Yellow men sell um poison-drug to Moquis?"

"Sam Lot sell um."

"Sam Lot work for Tay Kee?"

"All same."

"Snake bit um Pa-e-has-ka, send Pa-e-has-ka to happy hunting-ground of the palefaces, then Wing Foo hang. Sabe hang?"

"No likee!" wailed Wing Foo. "Wing Foo no throw snake at Buffalo Bill. Sam Lot throw snake."

"Where Sam Lot get um snake?"

"From Moqui man."

The hot desert seemed suddenly to dance and whirl about Little Cayuse's eyes. Was he a squaw, after all? Wasn't he worthy to be the friend of Pa-e-has-ka? He struck his forehead with his clenched fist, savagely, intolerantly; then, drawing rein, he slid from the saddle and hunted in the sand for a pebble. As he reached to pick up the pebble, he fell full length on the ground.

Fiercely he struggled to rise. The chant returned to his lips. It was a medicine-chant, and warranted, among the Piutes, to bring strength and victory.

Fighting his way to his knees, he lifted his head with dim, unseeing eyes fixed on the east.

"At morn the eagle will cry
On the further shore of the sea,
And a rainbow will be in the sky——"

Little Cayuse crumpled into the sand with the last word and lay silent.

The crafty Chinaman leaned over the back of Nomad's horse to look at him.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MAN FROM FRISCO.

Buffalo Bill, it will be recalled, was left in the *hogan* of Salako, talking with his trapper pard. Nomad had just shown Little Cayuse's spur to the scout, and the scout had correctly interpreted the spur's meaning.

"I reckon, from thet move o' ther Chinks, thet the fat's in ther fire; eh, Buffler?" said Nomad.

"Meaning what, Nick?" returned the scout.

"Why, thet our hand's tipped. The yaller smugglers know we're arter 'em, er thet rattler wouldn't hev been throwed at ye."

"Tau Kee has probably told his hirelings to beware of Buffalo Bill and his pards. After what happened on the lower Colorado, Tau Kee has ample cause to fear us."

"Waal, thet's no dream!"

"So, when those Chinamen saw me on the dance-rock, the play with that rattlesnake promised success. But the smugglers forgot that the Moquis are past masters in the art of dealing with rattlesnake poison."

"Ye're plumb well, aire ye, Buffler?" asked Nomad, his anxiety returning. "Shore ther pizen is all out o' ye?"

"I don't know what became of the poison, Nick, but I feel all right."

"I was skeered stif when I l'arned ye'd been bit. Fer one, I'll never fergit what these hyar Moquis done fer ye. But say, what's ter be done erbout Cayuse?"

"Not a thing, at present. Cayuse knows what our work is in this section. He's following the Chinamen.

After he locates their hang-out, you can expect him back here to tell us. That will be our cue to move."

"How long aire we goin' ter wait fer Cayuse ter come?"

"He'll be back to-night, unless something goes cross-wise with his luck."

"No use follerin' him?"

"Did Cayuse take his horse?"

"Nary."

"Did the Chinamen take any horses?"

"They hadn't none."

"Then it's a walk for the little Piute; and if you can follow a foot-trail at night, old pard, you're a better plainsman than myself."

"Which I ain't, ner no one else. Ef we're goin' ter hang out hyar, et strikes me we'd better be huntin' up some chuck. We hev'n't had er bite sence leavin' Keam's Cañon."

One by one the Snake priests had swallowed their antidotes and departed. As Nomad finished speaking, the last of the priests left the *hogan*, and Salako appeared and advanced to the two white men.

The scout took a five-dollar gold piece from his pocket and handed it to the woman.

"*Gracias!*" said she, with a grin that exposed her toothless gums.

"She ain't purty," remarked Nomad, "but she's done a heap fer you, Buffler."

"You give um white men something to eat, Salako?" queried the scout.

"*Pronto, pronto,*" answered the old woman, clapping her hands.

Again the young woman appeared, and Salako spoke to her in the Moqui. The girl turned and glided away.

She reappeared presently, bearing cold corn cakes and roast chicken.

"Thar!" cried Nomad, his face brightening; "thet's what I calls doin' ther han'sum thing. Chicken! Why, pard, I hev'n't had any chicken sence we left Yuma."

They were on the point of falling to with their fingers, Moqui style, when a voice hailed them from the door.

"Cody! And Nomad! Well, well! If you hadn't been in such a tearing hurry I'd have overhauled you at Holbrook."

A slender man in well-worn corduroy stood in the room, staring at the pards in the candlelight.

"Gordon!" exclaimed the scout.

"Et ain't never Gordon!" gasped the trapper.

"Oh, but it is, though," laughed Gordon, coming forward and taking the hands extended to him. "Finucane sent me to Holbrook, but you fellows had got away from there a few hours ahead of me. They told me at one of the hotels you had gone to Wolpi, so I hit the trail and followed. What the blazes are you fellows doing here?"

"What are we doing in Wolpi?" laughed the scout, making room for Gordon to sit down on the blanket between him and Nomad. "Why," and he lowered his voice, "we're looking for yellow smugglers."

"But Finucane has a clue that Sam Lot is operating in the vicinity of Holbrook," demurred Gordon, dropping down on the blanket and looking hungrily at the corn cakes and the chicken.

"I have a better clue that he's in the neighborhood of Wolpi," returned the scout.

"Where did you get your clue?"

"At the Wolpi dance-rock."

"What is it?"

The scout smiled and dismissed the girl, who was standing by, ready to wait on them. Salako had already left the room, and the three white men could talk in perfect privacy.

"I'll tell you in a minute," went on the scout. "Who sent you to this place, Gordon?"

"To this wickiup?" said Gordon, looking about him with interest. "Why, it was a redskin dressed in white paint, principally, and having a fox-skin hanging down his back."

"One of the Antelope priests—probably the same one who brought me here."

"I got here too late for the snake-dance," mourned Gordon.

"Ther snake-dance, Gordon," dropped in Nomad, "was ther smallest part o' ther exhibition this arfternoon. Ye ort ter hev seen ther pufformance given by Pard Buf-fler."

"What was that?" queried Gordon. "You're a star actor when it comes to doing things, Cody, I know that. What's the latest?"

"I'm getting to it," smiled the scout. "You're hungry—I can tell by the way you look at that pile of chicken. Jump in; we'll divide the chuck between us, and talk while we eat."

Then, while the corn bread and the chicken steadily vanished, Buffalo Bill told Gordon everything that had happened since the time the pards had left Yuma.

At some points in the recital Gordon was astounded; at others, having a brave man's admiration for cleverness, he was thrilled; and through it all he followed the scout with the most intense and unflagging interest.

"Great move," said he, when the story was done, "jumping you with that rattler. Just about like one of

these pigtailed heathens. The Moquis pulled you out of a bad hole, Cody. Why didn't you fill yourself with whisk? That's the white man's antidote."

"I'm not partial to 'whisk,' Gordon," said the scout; "besides, I wanted to keep a clear head."

"I see; but, say! What gets me is the green patches those crafty Chinks wore over their left eyes. Wow! One of 'em was Sam Lot, but you couldn't tell which."

"Et was a puzzlin' play, all right," said Nomad. "Two of them Chinks must nev good left eyes. Ef we could git clost enough ter tear off ther patches, et wouldn't take us long ter tell which is Sam Lot."

"Your little Piute pard, then, as I understand it, is trailing the Chinamen?"

"Yes," said the scout; "and when we hear from Little Cayuse, which we ought to do before morning, we'll lope into the Chink camp, fay Sam Lot by the heels, confiscate his smuggled opium, and give Tau Kee another setback. You arrived in time to take a hand in the finish, Gordon."

"Better late than never," said Gordon, pulling out a handful of cigars and passing them around. "Finucane thought I'd better come," he went on, when the weeds were going. "I told him Cody and Nomad didn't need me, but he thought it wasn't right to let you fellows do all the work."

"I don't think there'll be much work to do, from this on," murmured the scout, looking speculatively into the smoke clouds that floated above his head; "still, you never can tell. These Chinamen are queer customers to handle."

"You think Cayuse will be back before morning?"

"If he isn't back by dawn we'll go hunting for him."

"Any idea much way he went?"

"Not the slightest."

An hour was passed in the smoke-talk; then, accepting Salako's invitation to pass the night in her *hogan*, the white men stretched themselves out side by side on the blanket and went to sleep with their heads on the stone *metats*.

Nomad was first to awake. The growing lightness in the room suggested dawn, and he started up. Gordon was snoring like a house afire, but Buffalo Bill was missing.

As Nomad got up and passed to the door leading out on the terrace, the stir he made aroused Gordon.

"What's to pay, Nick?" he asked, sitting up.

"Buffler slid out some'rs," replied the trapper. "I was on ther p'int er takin' a *pasear* around the pueblo ter see ef I could locate him."

"I'll go along," said Gordon, getting up.

As they passed through the door, the scout's head arose above the terrace. He was just climbing up from the *plaza*. There was a troubled look on his face which did not escape Nomad or the officer.

"Bad news, Buffler?" demanded the trapper quickly.

"No news is good news, they say," was the reply, "but, in this case, I'm inclined to think differently. Little Cayuse hasn't come back."

"Then we're ter hit ther trail?"

"*Pronto!* The horses are ready and waiting at the bottom of the *mesa*. We have rations at our saddlecantles and full canteens at the horns. I've seen to that. All we have to do, now, is to mount and ride."

"Bully!" exclaimed Gordon. "That hits me plumb center."

Buffalo Bill slid back down the ladder, and Nomad and Gordon made haste to follow him.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE OPIUM BUYER.

The towns of Tusayan lie almost in a direct east and west line. All are built on *mesas*, known respectively as East, Middle, and West *mesa*. Wolpi and Sichomovi are in the extreme east, and between them and Oraibi on the extreme west, lie the other Tusayan *pueblos*, separated at varying distances.

The problem of picking up a foot-trail was a difficult one for the scout and his friends. Beyond the corn-fields and truck patches the ground was stony and hard, much tracked by horses and men.

When the friends had mounted at the foot of the path, Buffalo Bill made a suggestion.

"We can gain more," said he, "by separating and riding east, south, and north. The Chinamen may have gone in any of these directions, although it seems almost certain that the east would not call them. There are not Moqui towns in that direction, and if they are working up an opium trade among the Moquis they would hardly head directly away from their prospective customers.

"You, Gordon, since you are not so familiar with the plains as Nomad and myself, had better ride to the east. I will go south, and Nomad will point for the west. At a distance of two or three miles from the *mesa* we will circle in a general westerly direction, keeping our eyes skinned for signs. By proceeding in this manner we shall all come together, and we can then hold a pow-wow and report whatever we have discovered—in case

we are so fortunate as to have discovered anything. It's the blindest kind of a trail we're looking for—don't forget that."

After a few more directions, covering points that were not clear to Gordon, the three friends separated.

The scout, riding well to the south of Wolpi, scanned every inch of ground. Little Cayuse was famous for leaving "trails," and usually found a way for dropping signs of his passage over unfamiliar ground. The scout was half-expecting to find something of the sort in the present instance, although he was not letting his hopes have too free a rein in this direction.

By describing a half-circle, with a radius of two or three miles from Wolpi, the ground over which the Chinamen and Little Cayuse had had to pass would be fully covered.

As the scout, riding northwest on the last lap of his circling, drew rein occasionally to look for Nomad, he was puzzled to understand why the old trapper was not in sight. If he had followed orders—and Nomad was a stickler in carrying out his pard's commands—then the scout should long ago have been close enough to the trapper to see him on the flat plain.

Yet Nomad was not in sight. Thinking he might have passed him, in some manner, the scout turned and rode back on his course. Presently he saw a horseman in the distance, but it proved to be Gordon.

"Seen anything of Nomad?" asked Buffalo Bill.

"Not a sign," answered the officer, "and not a thing, either, that I could call a footprint. This confounded sand all looks alike to me. What are you fretting about Nomad for?"

"Well, we're in the place where he ought to be, and——"

The scout broke off and dismounted. He picked something off the ground and showed it to Gordon.

"A red cotton handkerchief," said Gordon.

"Nomad's," observed the scout. "I'd have seen it sooner if it hadn't blown up against that *cholla* cactus. Nick passed here going west. There's his trail," and the scout, following up the handkerchief tip, showed Gordon a set of hoof-prints.

"It's easy to see 'em when you know where to look," said Gordon. "What did Nomad go west for when he had reached the place where you told him to begin circling?"

"Because he struck the trail of the Chinamen and Little Cayuse," replied the scout, remounting "and didn't want to lose time waiting for us. He left the handkerchief for our information."

"Trail!" gasped Gordon, with a look of ludicrous bewilderment; "do you mean to say, Cody, that you see any footprints among those horse-tracks?"

"I do; the marks of three pairs of wooden-soled sandals along with the hoof-marks of Nomad's horse. Look sharp as we ride along, Gordon, and you'll see them."

"Blamed if I do!" muttered the officer, after he had galloped for a mile, looking at the ground all the way. "You and Nomad must be a couple of wizards."

"What do you see ahead of us, Gordon?" laughed the scout, nodding toward the west.

A horseman was visible in the distance, riding toward them, but too far off for Gordon to identify him.

"Nomad," hazarded the officer, "coming back."

"Not Nomad, but an Indian," corrected the scout.

"My eyes are nearly as good as yours, Cody. How do you know it isn't Nomad?"

"By the way the horse moves, and——"

"Oh, well! I'm not on intimate terms with Nomad's horse."

"And by the way the man rides."

The scout was correct. The approaching figure turned out to be a Moqui astride a runt of a cayuse. The white men and the Indian drew rein, nose to nose. There was a small tin box tied to the Indian's belt.

"How!" said the Moqui, with an ingratiating smile.

"How!" answered the scout, Indian fashion. "Moqui?"

"Si."

"Where you belong?"

"Sichomovi. You Buffalo Bill?"

The scout nodded.

"Me see um friend, Buffalo Bill. Tell him how he find um camp yellow Long-tails."

"He's seen Nomad!" exclaimed Gordon, as though it was a chance discovery, and a big one.

"He's coming along Nomad's trail," said the scout, "and could hardly have helped seeing him."

"I reckon that's so, too," said Gordon, somewhat subdued. "I know as much about trailing as a Boston schoolm'am knows about the Diggers. Go on with your business, Cody, and I'll hold my yawp."

"Friend gone to camp of Yellow-tails?" the scout went on, addressing the Moqui.

"Si."

"Where is it?"

"Dry wash. Moqui tell friend Buffalo Bill him show um way to camp."

"Correct, *amigo*. Point your horse the other way and we'll be hiking."

The Moqui turned his horse, the scout and the officer accommodating their pace to their guide's.

"What you got in tin box?" asked the scout.

"Sleep-drug," answered the Moqui. "Heap big medicine. Make um Moqui great warrior."

"Ugh! Make um Moki all same squaw. Sleep-drug heap poison. Where you get um?"

"Long-tails' camp. Long-tails sell um."

"Long-tails got heap bad heart. Get Moqui into trouble. Long-tails no got right sell um sleep-drug. Big chief at Washington feel mighty bad Long-tails act so."

The opium buyer thought over this for a few minutes.

"Him make plenty fine sleep," said he; "make plenty fine pictures in Moqui sleep."

"Him kill Moqui bymby. Buffalo Bill know. Him poison. Him good little while; kill bymby. How much you pay for um?"

"Ten dol'. Him cost plenty high."

"Here twenty dol'. You sell um Buffalo Bill?"

"Him no good, why Buffalo Bill want um?"

"Look, see. You sell um?"

"Me sell um twenty dol', make ten dol'. Take twenty dol', go Long-tails' camp, buy two more box. Whoosh! Sure me sell um."

The scout parted with his twenty dollars and the Moqui parted with his box. So far as the Moqui's getting twenty dollars' worth of the drug at the Chinamen's camp—well, the scout would see that he didn't.

He hooked the thong that was wrapped around the box over his saddle-horn by a loop.

"You get um all for yourself?" he asked.

"Him for all Sichomovi *pueblo*."

The scout muttered an angry exclamation.

"Understand that, Gordon? See how general the use of the drug would become if it were allowed to spread! The Moquis are among the most industrious of the *pueblo*

Indians. But if Tau Kee, Sam Lot, and the rest of those yellow fiends were allowed to have their way, it would not be long before the Moquis would be degraded to the lowest level."

"It will be a big feather in your cap, Cody," averred Gordon, "if you can nip this opium business in the bud."

"I'm going to nip it," said the scout resolutely. "Before I am done with him, Mr. Sam Lot will see the inside of a federal prison."

"Dry wash plenty close," spoke up the Moqui. "No see um Long-tail guard."

"Mebbyso Long-tails draw in their guards," suggested the scout.

But the Moqui, with a puzzled air, shook his head and rode onward. A few moments later, when they stood on the slope looking down into the dry wash, they saw that the camp had been deserted.

"Long-tails gone!" gasped the Moqui. "Buffalo Bill sell um back sleep-drug?"

"Not much," answered the scout grimly. "A bargain's a bargain, *amigo*."

The Moqui rode sulkily down into the dry wash. The scout threw his reins to Gordon and dismounted. While the officer and the Moqui looked on, the scout kindled a brisk fire of mesquit brush and dumped the contents of the can into the center of it.

"There," said he, getting back into his saddle, "that's what ought to be done with all the stuff. We'll scout around, Gordon, and see if we can find the trail left by the Chinamen when they pulled out of here. Nomad must have found it, or he'd be waiting for us."

It was the scout himself who picked up the trail. The long, one-wheel track in the sand puzzled him.

"What do you make of it, Moqui?" the scout asked, as they followed along the track.

"No sabe," was the sullen response.

The Indian cherished hard feelings on account of his opium. So long as he believed he could buy twenty dollars' worth more at the camp of the Long-tails, he was fairly satisfied; but now that the Long-tails had moved, and there was considerable doubt of his being able to get any more of the stuff, he was greatly cast down. However, the people of the Sichomovi pueblo had clubbed together and sent him after opium, so he felt constrained to keep with the white men, on the chance that he might still be able to get what he was sent for.

"Looks like a rattlesnake trail to me," said Gordon, his eye on the swerving line in the sand.

"Whatever the secret is," returned the scout, "we'll discover it when we reach the camp of the Long-tails."

"What's that ahead?" demanded Gordon.

The scout lifted his eyes quickly from the ground and peered into the blistering distance.

"Ugh!" muttered the Moqui. "*Dos cabynos* (two horses); one no got rider. Him on ground. All same dead, mebbysso."

The scout lifted himself in his stirrups and held the brim of his hat to shade his eyes.

"Chinaman on a horse and a man on the ground!" announced the scout. "Come on, Gordon! Looks like a case where we might be needed."

"After you on the jump, Cody!" cried the officer, using his spurs in a wild dash after the scout.

Buffalo Bill was about three horse's lengths ahead of Gordon during the rush across the desert. Drawing nearer, the scout's pulses quickened when he discovered that the Chinaman wore a blue blouse and trousers, and

that he was bound and roped to the cayuse. A little later he saw that the cayuse was secured to the bit-ring of a horse that looked like Nomad's, and his consternation increased. Was it the old trapper who was lying on the ground? The next minute the scout's eyes answered the question: It was not Nomad lying sprawled in the sand, but Little Cayuse!

"It's my little Piute pard!" shouted Buffalo Bill over his shoulder to Gordon. "He has captured one of those Chinamen, and something has happened to him!"

"Look ahead, Cody!" yelled Gordon, jerking out his revolvers as he raced. "See the Chinks—coming out of that gap in the hills!"

Where the queer trail entered the sand-hills the scout, following Gordon's cry with a quick look, saw fully a dozen coolies. The Chinamen were on foot and hurrying toward the bound prisoner and Little Cayuse.

"Charge them, Gordon!" roared the scout, getting his guns in his hands. "Turn them back; don't follow them. We've got to look after Cayuse and this other Chink as soon as we can."

The two white men, riding like the wind, swerved their horses to right and left around Cayuse and the bound Chinaman and bore down on the coolies.

The coolies, thunderstruck by this unexpected appearance of two desperate white men, whirled about and fled back into the hills in a panic. Buffalo Bill and Gordon blazed away at them to further increase their fright. As soon as they had been thoroughly stampeded, the two horsemen turned back and drew rein beside Little Cayuse.

"The boy has been killed!" were the scout's first words as he looked down at the strip of doeskin and the trickle of red that flowed from beneath it.

"I don't believe it, Cody," said Gordon. "Looks to me more as though he had been fagged out. He must have captured the Chinaman and tied him to the horse after he received that wound. Certainly the Chinaman, bound as he is, couldn't have given the boy such an injury; and, as for those rascally coolies, it's a cinch that we've just backcapped their first attempt to get at him."

The scout was on the ground in a jiffy, feeling of the boy's wrist and of his breast over the heart.

"How is it?" asked Gordon.

"A whole lot better than I feared," replied Buffalo Bill. "Little Cayuse hasn't helped me for the last time, by a long shot."

Unpinning the doeskin bandage, he looked at the wound.

"A nick, that's all," he went on, "but it cost the boy a good deal of strength. Your canteen, Gordon."

The officer took his canteen from the saddle, unscrewed the top, and handed the canteen to the scout. Lifting the boy's head on one arm, Buffalo Bill pressed the canteen to his lips.

It had been the lack of water, as much as anything, that had helped to bring on the lad's sorry plight. A few swallows of the fluid acted like magic. Opening his eyes, Cayuse stared dazedly up into the face of the scout.

His first feeling, as soon as he realized what had happened and where he was, was one of intense joy at sight of Pa-e-has-ka, alive and apparently as well as ever. Cayuse's next feeling was one of deepest chagrin that Pa-e-has-ka should see him in a moment of such weakness.

"Ugh!" he grunted, staggering up.

"Don't be in a hurry to move around, my boy," said

the scout kindly. "You're pretty badly tuckered, and——"

"Cayuse all right!" was the resolute response.

"How?" grinned Gordon, reaching out his hand.

Cayuse reeled forward and hung to the stirrup-leather of Nomad's horse. He peered at Gordon, whom he knew well, for a moment. He must have been as surprised as Buffalo Bill and Nomad had been to see Gordon, but not a flicker crossed his face.

"How?" said he coolly, reaching out to get Gordon's hand.

"Pon my soul, boy," cried the officer, "you're shaking like a leaf."

Cayuse jerked away his hand with a grunt.

"Cayuse all right," he repeated, almost savagely.

Reaching up, he pulled the eagle feather out of his scalp-lock, blew the dust off it very carefully, and smoothed it with his fingers.

"Hang me, but he's a cool one!" laughed Gordon.

"He acts as though he was mad at us for saving his life."

"He's grateful enough, Gordon," said the scout, "but Little Cayuse is a warrior. He thinks we found him acting like a squaw. That's where the shoe pinches. As a matter of fact, he has proved himself a bigger warrior than I ever thought he was. He has been to the camp of the yellow men, and he has captured one of the Chinamen who threw that rattler at me. What warrior, twice his size, could have done as much, single-handed?"

The boy could not keep down his pride and gratitude at these words from the one whom he honored most. His eyes shone.

"Ugh!" he muttered. "Pa-e-has-ka Little Cayuse best friend."

"I am, make no mistake about that," said the scout. "How long since you had a drink of water, Cayuse?"

"Keam's Cañon."

"Keam's Cañon," went on the scout, "yesterday noon. How long since you've had anything to eat, Cayuse?"

"Keam's Cañon."

"Think of that, Gordon!" exclaimed the scout. "Without anything to eat or drink since yesterday noon, he trailed the Chinamen on foot last night, met up with them, I suppose, had an encounter, got wounded, cut out this yellow smuggler and two horses, and was on his way back to me at Wolpi when he gave out."

"He's a marvel!" declared Gordon, with hearty admiration.

The scout presented the flask again, and Little Cayuse took another drink; then, before asking the boy a single question, the scout supplied him with food from his war-bag and made him eat it. When Cayuse had finished eating, and not before, the scout went after information.

Cayuse was never known to waste any words. Probably he used up twenty telling of Nomad's capture by the Chinamen, of his—Cayuse's—escape from the yellow men's camp, and of his capture of the man with the green patch, who had proved to have two good eyes, and who had given pursuit on Nomad's horse.

The scout, as soon as Cayuse was done, walked around and took a good look at Wing Foo.

Wing Foo, during the time Little Cayuse was lying helpless on the ground, had tried desperately to break his bonds. Failing in this, he had tried with equal desperation to get the pony to move away toward the Chinamen's camp. But the pony had no ambition to

move, and it was out of Wing Foo's power to urge the brute with his heels or his hands.

Of all the galling situations the Chinaman had ever been in, that must have been the worst. With his captor lying senseless on the ground, unable to hinder in any way, it was yet impossible for Wing Foo to effect his escape.

"Where's Tau Kee?" asked the scout.

"No sabe," answered the sullen Wing Foo.

Gordon rode close and looked into the Chinaman's face. Wing Foo tried to turn his head, but he could not twist his neck sufficiently to get his face away from the officer's eyes. Gordon pulled up Wing Foo's right sleeve and looked at his bared forearm. There were two cicatrices on the forearm in the shape of a cross.

"Well!" he chuckled, "here's a find, and no mistake!"

"How's that?" asked the scout.

"I mean that Little Cayuse has pulled down a cool thousand reward money," proceeded Gordon. "This fellow is wanted in 'Frisco for knifing Sing Yak, one of the wealthiest merchants in Chinatown."

"Good enough!" said Buffalo Bill. "Just now, though, Wing Foo is mightily in the way. We've got to do something for Nick, and we can't bother with the Chinaman."

"Can't we tie him up and leave him somewhere?" suggested Gordon.

"And run the risk of his getting away? Hardly."

The scout drew back thoughtfully. Suddenly his eyes lighted on the Moqui, hovering in the background. He beckoned, and the Moqui rode forward.

"You like to make another twenty dol'?" asked the scout.

"Wuh!" was the Moqui's prompt reply.

Without further words, Buffalo Bill unbuckled the pony's rein from Nomad's horse and rebuckled it in its proper place. Wing Foo's feet were unbound and he was hauled from the pony. The Moqui's horse was larger and stronger, and the Chinaman was made to get up behind the Indian, and in that position his feet were again secured.

"You have weapons of your own, Cayuse?" asked the scout.

The boy nodded.

"Then give me Nomad's."

The boy handed the weapon over.

"Now," pursued the scout, "get up on that apology for a horse, Cayuse, and ride to Wolpi with the Indian and the Chinaman. When you get to Wolpi, take your Chinaman to Salako's *hogan* and keep him a prisoner until we come. Tell Salako you are Buffalo Bill's pard, that she is to help you take care of your prisoner, and, also, look after that dent in your side."

The boy's eyes pleaded to stay with the scout, but the scout's attitude was firm.

"Wuh!" said Little Cayuse.

Another gold piece passed glittering from the scout's hand to the Moqui's.

"You sabe, Moqui?" the scout asked.

"Me sabe," returned the delighted Moqui.

Never before, in a whole year, had he made so much money as he had in that one day.

The scout took his own canteen from the saddle and put the strap in Cayuse's hand.

"Adios, pard!" said he to the boy. "Wait for us in Wolpi."

The boy rattled his spur and the pony stumbled off behind the Moqui and the Chinaman.

"He's an odd genius!" muttered Gordon, gazing after the boy.

"He's the bank that gets my guilt, every time," returned the scout. "Just now old Nomad is the lame member of our combination." He jumped into the saddle. "Let's ride," said he shortly.

"Where to?" asked Gordon.

"To the Chinamen's camp," was the short answer.

"Why, there are twenty-three of the Chinamen, Cayuse said!"

"Twenty-two," said the scout. "Cayuse has diminished their number by one."

Gordon stared at Buffalo Bill, then he laughed recklessly.

"I don't care if they're a thousand, Cody!" he cried. "It's worth the price to ride with you and see how you do things."

The scout led Nomad's horse during the gallop for the camp of the Chinamen.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN RATTLESNAKE GULCH.

"You remember," said the scout, as they rode through the sand-hills, following the track of the go-devil, "how Cayuse, Nomad, and I rescued Yee Wong right out from under the noses of a lot of coolies? There were near fifty of the yellow scoundrels. Here, Gordon, we have only twenty-two."

"Oh, I'm with you," cried the plucky officer, "no matter how many. Lead the way, Cody, and make it a fight or a foot-race, whichever you please."

"The smugglers have no horses. We have, and that's a big advantage. The smugglers, too, are not well armed. We are, and that's another advantage. The only thing I'm afraid of is that they will do some harm to my old pard before we can rescue him. If they do——" The scout finished with an ominous scowl.

"I understand," said Gordon. "But I'm not anticipating that they'll injure Nomad. If they do anything, they'll use his life as a buffer between them and disaster."

"Meaning——"

"That they'll threaten to kill him if we don't hold off. I know these Chinks. Sam Lot will make a bargain, if he can."

The scout grew thoughtful.

"I'll let nothing stand in the way of my duty," said he finally.

"In other words, Nomad will have to take his chances?"

"And so will Sam Lot and the rest of the smugglers. We're here to get a strangle hold on Sam Lot and break up this villainous opium deal of Tau Kee's. The very existence of the Moqui people is at stake. Last night," the scout added, "it was Salako of Wolpi who saved my life."

A few moments later, with weapons in hand and ready, they plunged from the *arroyo* into the swale where was the water-hole.

Not a Chinaman met their eyes. Shelter-tent, carrier-poles, packs, go-devil, and panniers all had disappeared.

"Skipped!" exclaimed Gordon.

"Looks that way," said the scout, "but they can't skip far or fast on their sandals, with each coolie loaded with camp truck and opium."

At the water-hole they drew rein. While Gordon held Nomad's horse, the scout bushwhacked in the chaparral. He failed to find a living thing. Every last Chinaman was gone.

"We'll trail 'em," said the scout. "Throw me your canteen, Gordon, till I fill it. After that we'll water the horses."

"Wait before you fill that canteen," called Gordon, slipping out of the saddle.

He knelt beside the water-hole and tasted the water.

"What's the matter?" asked the scout.

"I didn't know but the spring might be poisoned. I've run onto such tricks before, in Chinatown, where water-coolers have been tampered with. The Chinks are adepts at the work. But, no, it isn't the case here. Probably the outfit was in too big a hurry to leave. Fill the canteen, Cody. I'll warrant the water fit."

The water gurgled into the canteen, and, when the

scout arose and screwed on the cap, Gordon rode the horses into the water and they drank long and deep.

An ironwood-tree grew close to the edge of the hole. As the scout moved away, swinging the canteen in his hand, his eyes fell on the trunk of the tree. A square of yellow paper was pinned to the tree with a dirk.

"Well," remarked the scout, jerking out the dagger and taking the paper in his hands, "they didn't use up all their time in getting away. They spent a little of it writing a notice for us."

"What does it say?" queried the officer, with interest.

"Whoever wrote it slings a fair hand and is well up in English," said the scout. "Could that be Sam Lot, Gordon? What do you know about Sam Lot, anyway?"

"I know he's a bad Chinaman with one eye, that he talks bad pidgin, and that he couldn't write c-a-t, cat, so you could read it if he was to be hung."

"Then it must have been the other man with the green patch. Listen here:

"Buffalo Bill: You escaped the rattlesnake, at the dance-rock, but there is a worse fate which you will not escape if you continue to follow me. Your pard, Nick Nomad, is in our hands. Our spies will watch you. If you leave the water-hole on our trail, you have seen Nomad for the last time. If you continue to follow, your friends will have seen *you* for the last time.' That screed," finished the scout, "is signed 'Sam Lot.'"

"A fat lot *he* had to do with it. Thunder! Anyhow, whoever wrote it, the thing looks like business. These Chinks talk about bumping a fellow off as glibly as they would ask you for a dish of curry and shark's fins. What are you going to do?"

"I have already told you that, Gordon," said the scout calmly. "We're after Nomad; when we get him, we'll

go after Sam Lot; when we get Sam Lot, we'll go after the Chinamen's opium. When we get *that*, we'll destroy it, and I reckon the opium question among the Moquis will be settled for all time."

"Say, you're the boy!" cried Gordon. "You think as much of Nomad as you would of a brother, and yet you go ahead with your duty in spite of the warning?"

"Do you know why?" queried the scout grimly.

"Because that's your caliber. Right and justice at any cost."

"And because, first and principally, that warning's a bluff. And I always make it a rule to call a bluff if I'm anywhere handy. Let's go look for the trail of the go-devil."

They rode to a heap of ashes that marked the location of the Chinamen's camp-fire. There were plenty of Chink "signs" everywhere, and out of the mass of evidence, read in the sand like the page of an open book, the scout traced his way to the thin trail of the go-devil.

"Come on, Gordon!" he called.

The trail led up the side of the swale, steering carefully clear of the bushes. At the top of the bank the scout halted and gazed about him.

Crest after crest of sand unrolled in every direction. No long line of toiling Chinamen, however, could be seen crossing the ridges; and yet, the scout well knew, the Chinamen could not, in the short time at their disposal, have got beyond the range of his eyes.

"They're dodging us in the rifts between the hills," volunteered Gordon.

"Right! You're improving, Gordon. If Nick and I had you with us on a month's hike, you'd know as much about the plains and the mountains as you do about

Chinatown—and there's mighty little you don't know about that Chink quarter in 'Frisco."

"That's where I put in most of my time when I'm at home, and——"

"Ah!" muttered the scout. He had seen a yellow face pop up and down behind a sand-dune.

"What's the rip?" asked Gordon.

"Chink, ho!" answered the scout. "I sighted one of the smugglers. Let's find out whether he's a spy or a part of the main body."

The scout, as he finished speaking, galloped down the slope in front of him, descended a small valley, cut through a gap, and turned around to the right. In spite of his quickness, however, the Chinaman had disappeared.

"He was a spy," announced the scout, as Gordon overtook him.

"Then we're being watched," returned Gordon, "just as that warning stated we would be?"

"Yes."

Gordon shook his head forebodingly.

"We've got a tough prospect ahead of us," he muttered.

The scout once more picked up the go-devil trail. For an hour he led the way along it, both he and Gordon watching continually for Chinamen, or for treachery of some sort—but watching in vain. Not another yellow head showed itself, and no hostile move was made against the pursuers.

By the end of the hour, the character of the country had changed. Sand-hills had given place to rocky eminences, equally sterile and forbidding.

The go-devil trail, in places, was hard to find, but those who were pulling and hauling the one-wheel

wagon seemed to pick out every available spot of sand in which to leave the trailing mark. Over rock bottom, of course, there was no trail; yet the sand spots were so thick that the scout and the officer managed to stick to the correct course.

"It looks as though the Chinks were taking that go-devil thing through every patch of sand they could find," said Gordon.

"That's the way it looks to me," agreed the scout.

"What's their object, Cody? Do they want to help us to follow them?"

The scout pulled up.

"They may," said he, looking around critically, "be luring us into some sort of an ambushade. If they had plenty of guns, this would be a very pretty spot for them to use in trying to wipe us out."

Buffalo Bill was right regarding the conveniences of the place for an ambushade. He and Gordon had entered, and half-traversed, a narrow, rocky gulch. The sides of the gulch were precipitous and unscalable, and the rims on each side were strewn with great boulders.

A properly armed enemy could lie behind the boulders and throw a fatal drop-fire into the bottom of the gulch without exposing themselves to a shot from below.

While the scout swept his eyes around, below and aloft, a voice from somewhere rang out sternly:

"Stand, white devils! You are face to face with your last chance for life. One step farther in pursuit of my followers, and you die!"

The terrible significance of the words, and the tone in which they were uttered, caused Gordon's cheek—strong-hearted man though he was—to blanch. He looked at the scout, and saw nothing in his face but dauntless resolution.

"That means us, Buffalo Bill," said Gordon, in an awed voice.

"But it doesn't mean, necessarily," answered the scout, "that we're going to let the Chinks get the better of us."

He searched the rocks everywhere in an attempt to locate the unseen speaker.

"Do you see where he is?" queried Gordon.

"No. The coward is skulking among the rocks somewhere, I reckon, so afraid of his yellow hide that he dare not confront us while he talks." The scout lifted his voice. "Hello, there!"

"Hello, doomed white man!" came the response.

The echoes clattered through the gulch and made it impossible to locate the particular spot from which the voice proceeded.

"Show yourself!" taunted the scout.

"Not until I come with my coolies to carry the bodies of yourself and your companion from the gulch. Will you turn back?"

"Where is my pard, the man you captured near the water-hole?"

"By now he has suffered the fate that will overtake you if you continue to proceed."

The scout's eyes gleamed like the eyes of an aroused panther.

"If that is so," he cried, "then your life pays the forfeit!"

A mocking laugh echoed through the gulch.

"Will you turn back?"

"Who are you?" demanded the scout.

"One whom you shall never see."

"Are you Sam Lot?"

"I am helping Sam Lot start his opium trade among the Moquis, but I am not Sam Lot."

"Are you white, red, or yellow?"

"I am yellow; a Chinese."

"You're black, too! As great a blackguard as there is unhung. I am a representative of the Government, and I call upon you, whoever you are, to surrender."

Again the mocking laugh echoed up and down the gulch.

"For the last time," came the voice, "will you return whence you came and leave us alone?"

"No!"

"Then the consequences of your folly be upon your own head."

As the last word ceased reverberating through the defile, the scout and the officer, whose eyes were directed upward, saw a wriggling line leap over the brink of the gulch, hang for a breath against a background of blue sky, then drop like a shot into the defile with many a horrifying twist and turn.

It struck on the withers of Gordon's horse, fell writhing to the ground, and, like lightning, coiled itself to strike.

"A snake!" yelled Gordon, pulling his horse back just in time to save the animal's leg.

"A rattler!" said Buffalo Bill. He was already on the ground with a stone in his hand. In another instant the stone had descended upon the snake with crushing force. "Dismount, Gordon," he called, "and back the horses under that overhanging shelf."

With the words, the scout seized the bits of Nomad's horse and his own, and backed the animals under a narrow strip of rock which overhung the base of the gulch wall on the right.

This was but scanty protection for the horses; still, by standing in front of them, their riders would be able to guard them.

While Gordon was backing his mount under the shelf, Buffalo Bill was heaping up a pile of stones for defensive purposes.

Two more snakes were hurled from the top of the gulch by unseen hands. One of these struck Gordon on the shoulder, and would have coiled about his throat had Buffalo Bill not knocked it away and despatched it with a stone. The other reptile, alighting on the spot where the scout had been standing, wriggled off toward the horses. With a leap, Buffalo Bill landed upon it and ground out its life with his heel.

"Talk about your heathens!" cried the irate Gordon. "Why, a Chink is the worst heathen that ever walked. Who but a Chink would ever think of waging war with rattlesnakes?"

"Look out!" shouted Buffalo Bill.

Half a dozen snakes came down all together. For a few moments there was the hardest kind of work for the beleaguered whites. Springing back and forth, using their feet and stones, dodging the coiled and striking reptiles, they managed to kill most of them, while one or two wriggled away to the opposite side of the gulch and vanished into crevices among the stones.

A brief period of inaction followed. The scout was looking thoughtfully up and down the gulch.

"Where did the yellow whelps get all those snakes?" panted Gordon.

"They must be the reptiles used at Wolpi yesterday," answered the scout. "When they are done with the rattlers, the Moquis send them back into the desert. These

Chinks must have bought the whole squirming outfit. Will you take your chances in a dash along the gulch?"

"Still following the track of the go-devil?"

"Yes. The trail must lead us out of here, and if we can get at those yellow scoundrels with our guns we'll soon stop this snake business. But they'll keep up with us and hurl the rattlers at us as we ride."

"I'd be a mighty poor pard, Buffalo Bill, if I didn't follow wherever you led!"

"Then, be quick. The led horse will hamper us, but Nomad may need the brute, later on."

"Nomad!" muttered Gordon, rushing for his horse. "Don't you think that Chinaman was telling the truth when he said Nomad was done for?"

"No—another bluff."

They were in the saddles and had started along the gulch before the voice from above hailed them again.

"Back! Turn back, or you die!"

"We'll give you powder and ball before you're many minutes older!" roared the scout.

Once more the snakes began dropping. As the scout had surmised, the yellow fiends above kept pace with the horses below, and the rattlers were thrown with marvelous skill.

Very few of them missed striking horses or riders, but they fell off, or were knocked off, before they could do any injury.

The scout set as swift a pace as he could, considering the difficult nature of the ground.

Presently he saw ahead of him a fork in the gulch. A sharp spur ran into the defile, parting it left and right into two channels. The point of the spur was high and steep, and as the scout approached it, the wary Chinamen played their trump-card.

A perfect rain of writhing reptiles was thrown from the point. For an instant, the air seemed literally full of snakes, twisting, writhing, buzzing.

There was no fighting such an overwhelming number. Jerking down the brim of his hat, the scout bent forward in his saddle, urged Gordon to his best speed, and dug in with his spurs.

The horses were frantic under the dropping serpents. At the touch of the rowels, they leaped madly into the right-hand fork of the defile, jumping boulders, pitching, plunging, and struggling to get away. Although his right arm was nearly pulled out of its socket, the scout kept firm hand upon Nomad's horse.

How he got unscathed out of that rain of death he never quite knew; but finally he pulled up in a place where the walls of the gorge broke away in easy slopes, and where there were no snakes and no Chinamen.

"All right, Gordon?" he called.

He faced about in his saddle, and a cry of consternation escaped his lips.

Gordon was not in sight!

To say that the scout was merely surprised would understate the depth of his feelings. He was astounded, and filled with the most profound alarm.

Had Gordon been overwhelmed in that last rain of reptiles?

The scout could not understand how this could be.

Even if the officer had been bitten, he would still have been able to follow, and should at that moment have been close upon the scout's heels.

Perhaps, ran the scout's thoughts, he had become bewildered during the final deluge of snakes, had lost sight of the scout, and had taken the left-hand fork instead of the right?

Dropping the reins of the led horse over his saddle-horn, and throwing his own reins over his horse's head, Buffalo Bill slid to the ground and climbed the left-hand slope.

Reaching the top, he was able, by crossing a narrow stretch of rocky soil, to reach a place where he could look down into the other fork of the gulch.

This fork, like the one on the right, had broken at the sides into easy slopes. Although Buffalo Bill could look up the defile for a long way, and down it as far as the main gorge, nothing could he see of his companion.

"Here's a go, and no mistake!" muttered the scout. "Have the smugglers caught Gordon, as well as Nomad? I don't see how they could lay hands upon Gordon, but something pretty serious must have gone wrong with him to cause such a sudden disappearance."

Returning to the horses, the scout mounted and spurred back on his trail. There was great peril in this, but he thought little of his own danger in the attempt to find out something about his missing comrade.

There were snakes in plenty where the smaller gulches came together and formed the larger defile. Here and there crawled the reptiles, hunting for holes in the rocks. He avoided them carefully, meanwhile looking in every direction for Gordon.

But the officer had vanished as effectively as though the earth had opened and swallowed him.

The Chinamen, evidently, had left the brink of the gulch wall, for not another snake was thrown and the scout was not so much as challenged.

He rode far back down the main gulch, then turned about meditatively and retraced his course up the right-hand fork to the spot where he had missed his companion.

"It's a mystery," he muttered, a baffled look overspreading his face, "but I've done all I can, for now, and will have to let the mystery work itself out. Where's that go-devil trail?"

By luck, he found the go-devil trail in that fork of the gulch, and continued following it, although more warily than he had done before, for he was now alone, and hampered with Nomad's horse.

The right-hand fork had become a valley, and a turn in the valley brought him upon an object that made him pause.

This object was the go-devil itself, its panniers emptied and the machine deserted.

"I'm beginning to understand this business," mused the scout, his eyes on the abandoned go-devil. "The trail of that thing was made very plain for Gordon and me, and the object was to lure us into that gulch and shower us with the rattlers. Having served its purpose, the cumbersome machine was unloaded and left."

Beyond the go-devil the Chinamen had blinded their trail effectively. Even the eagle eyes of the scout could detect no sign that pointed to the direction the yellow smugglers had taken.

Balked for the time, he urged his horses to the top of the valley's right-hand bank, and from this elevation took a sweeping survey of the surroundings.

To the north, sand-hills. To the south, scarp after scarp of rocky uplifts. To east and west, boulder-topped ridges rolling away like billows of the sea.

"I'll have to go it blind," said Buffalo Bill to himself, "and one way is as good as another. The sun is getting low, and I'll pick out a good place to camp. To-night I may discover something. It's about time, I think, this run of luck took a turn."

Riding to the foot of the next slope, he saw a straggling growth of mesquit bushes. Mesquit always tells of water, and the scout followed up the line of brush, which thickened into a scant chaparral as he advanced.

Finally he came to a trickling dribble of water, falling from a cleft of the rocks into a small pool. Here he assuaged his own thirst and that of the horses, then hitched the animals in the mesquit, where they could browse on the beans.

After skirmishing around the spot, to make sure he had it all to himself, he fished an evening's ration out of his war-bag, munched the food hastily, then lighted his pipe and leaned back against the rock.

He had a good deal to think about—Nomad's fate, Gordon's disappearance, as well as the steps which it would be best for him to take.

The sun went down while he smoked and reflected, the shadows deepened, and the stars came out in the sky and grew brighter and brighter.

Finally he knocked the ashes impatiently out of his pipe, tucked the latter away in his pocket, and got to his feet. He was at a loss. It was not possible for him, by mere speculation, to determine anything. He must chance his next step and trust to luck.

He started to get out the horses, with a view to mounting and riding down the shallow valley in which he had camped. On second thought, he postponed this business until he had climbed the slope back of the spring and taken a view of his surroundings.

That was where Buffalo Bill's luck turned. The moment he had topped the rise he realized this himself.

The rise gave him a glimpse of another shallow valley, rocky on the slopes but sandy and fringed with a dark

growth of bushes at the bottom. Down this valley the scout caught the flicker of a camp-fire.

"*Buenos!*" he muttered. "There's my tip, all right. The Chinamen were nearer than I had imagined. What fools they were to start a fire, knowing that foes are loose in the hills! But that's like a Chinaman. He's cunning in some things, but in others a schoolboy could give him lessons. I'll leave the horses here and reconnoiter in the direction of the fire."

Silently the scout slipped to the bottom of the next slope. Taking advantage of the bushes, he crawled softly along the valley, eyes and ears constantly on the alert for lurking enemies.

What puzzled him was that absolutely no sounds came from the direction of the fire, and sounds, of course, were inseparable from a camp in which were so many men as Sam Lot had under him.

Why the silence? The camp could not have been abandoned. No fire burns in a deserted camp.

The scout half-suspected another trap. Had the fire been built to lure him into ambush? Were the Chinamen hiding out in the *manzanita*, biding their time until he should crawl right into the midst of them?

This was a thought to give a less resolute man than the scout a good deal of apprehension. But Buffalo Bill, having started his work, was not the one to turn back for real or fancied dangers.

He would keep on until he reached the camp-fire. If danger was awaiting him, he would meet it with his six-shooters, and the darkness would favor him even as it favored the Chinamen.

Creeping slowly, carefully, making no noise as he passed through the thickening chaparral, Buffalo Bill drew closer and closer to the fire.

Still no evidence of foes; only silence—a silence, perhaps, that might be considered ominous.

Suddenly he heard the buzz of a rattler, and his heart jumped into his throat. Suppose he crept upon a coiled snake, there in the dark? It was a long way to Wolpi, and Salako!

But the buzzing of the rattler was distant, and apparently nearer the fire. The *manzanita* screened the fire from the scout, so that he could see merely a bright glow in the direction of the camp.

Finally he came close enough to break through the bushes. A precautionary glance showed him no one in the immediate vicinity of the fire, and he decided to put his fortune to the touch by a bold move. Rising to his feet, he stepped out into the open space.

Then it was that the extent of his luck came home to him with tremendous force.

As he emerged from the *manzanita*, a horrifying scene flashed before the eyes of Buffalo Bill.

A little way from the fire was the old trapper. He was sitting on the ground, knees hunched up to his chin, a stick thrust under his knees, his wrists bound beneath the stick and around the knees. A gag was in his mouth.

Nomad, bucked and gagged, was entirely helpless.

In front of him, coiled ready to strike, was a rattlesnake!

CHAPTER XIX.

NOMAD'S HARD LUCK.

The old trapper, having struck the trail of the Chinamen and Little Cayuse, could not resist the temptation of following it without waiting to be joined by Buffalo Bill and Gordon.

He dropped the red handkerchief, knowing it would be quickly seen by the scout against the light background of the sand. The handkerchief—we know already what havoc the wind played with it—was left by Nomad at the very point where the trail of the sandal-shod Chinamen was discovered.

Plunging along this trail, and trusting to his pards to follow, Nomad was not long in meeting the Moqui. The Moqui had camped and refreshed himself, after leaving the camp of the Long-tails, and hence had made slow time getting away from the vicinity of the dry wash.

Of the Moqui Nomad made inquiries regarding the Chinamen, Little Cayuse, and the position of the camp.

The Moqui, of course, could tell him nothing of Little Cayuse; but he told the old trapper where the Chinamen could be found, and gave an estimate of their numbers.

The fact that the Moqui was in the dark regarding Cayuse filled Nomad with dire apprehensions concerning the boy. He would push on and do what he could for Cayuse, in case he happened to be in trouble.

Telling the Moqui that Buffalo Bill and another white man were somewhere to the west of Wolpi, and asking him to meet them and tell them about the Chinamen's camp, the trapper hurried on.

He reached the dry wash after the Chinamen had left, but he was not long in picking up the trail of the go-devil, the thin track of which puzzled him as greatly as it puzzled the scout and the officer a little later.

Following the track at speed, and keeping it constantly under his eyes, Nomad rushed in among the sand-hills. A sudden shot, faint and distant, caught his ears. He looked up, caught one glimpse of a figure standing on an elevation to the west, then—down went Nomad's horse, pitching the trapper headlong from the saddle.

Before he could rise, Chinamen were piled upon him three deep. He fought, of course, for the trapper would always fight, no matter how great the odds against him. Equally, of course, his fight was a losing one, and he was bound wrist and ankle, his guns taken away, and himself borne to the camp in the swale and flung down by the shelter-tent.

The three one-eyed Chinamen gloated over him, kicked him with the toes of their sandals, giped at him, and in other ways aroused his fierce rage. But he held his peace. He was as angry with himself as he was at the Chinamen. It was a regular tenderfoot play, this old trick of tripping a horse with a stretched rope! A tenderfoot play, and Nomad had allowed it to be worked on him! A fine story for the ears of "Pard Buffler!"

The three One-eyes squatted in the sand to hold a chattering council. In the midst of the powwow came Little Cayuse, walking nonchalantly along in the lead of some coolie stragglers from the arroyo.

Nomad was astounded; but, as is already known, he caught the drift of the boy's maneuvering and failed to recognize him by word or look.

Little Cayuse's losing play about the opium caused the trapper to strain ineffectively at his bonds; then when

the boy ducked under the One-eye's grabbing hand and hit the Chinaman in the stomach with his head, the old trapper's exultation found vent.

Cayuse got astride the pony and swung away for the arroyo. One of the Chinamen fired at him. Nomad, twisting his neck to look, did not believe that the boy was hit, and he gloried in the taunt the boy flung back.

The One-eye with the revolver mounted Nomad's horse and gave chase.

"Ketch up with him, ef ye want ter," growled Nomad, with fierce delight, "but ef ye come clost enough ther kid'll nab ye. Oh, I know!"

Nomad knew that Buffalo Bill and Gordon were somewhere on the go-devil trail, and he felt in his bones that they would meet Little Cayuse, and that all three would come on to that camp in the swale and make matters decidedly interesting for Sam Lot and his smugglers.

There was a lot of chattering when, after a lapse of some time, the One-eye on Nomad's horse failed to appear. A force of coolies went to investigate; the rest of the coolies, under the direction of the two remaining One-eyes, fell to making preparations for a hurried getaway. The go-devil was packed, the bundles made ready.

Two shots came from the east, faint and distant, but distinct, for all that. The Chinamen became frantic with apprehension, all but the two One-eyes. They, at least, seemed to keep their heads. One of them was writing something on a paper, laid on a flat rock; the other was slopping up and down in his wooden-soled sandals, saying Chink words that sounded as though they might be oaths.

The coolies who had been sent to investigate came back, and they came running. The Chinaman on the

job took their report, gave orders, and the carrier-poles were got over the coolies' shoulders, the go-devil was started, Nomad was picked up by his four bearers—and away went the bobbing string of smugglers. The last thing Nomad saw in the swale was the One-eye, who had been doing the writing, affixing a paper to the stunted tree by the water-hole. When he had driven in the dagger, this man executed a waddling rush after the rest of the Chinamen.

Some of the packs had been doubled, so that four coolies could be left to carry Nomad, while another could trail along and watch the rear of the column.

"Ijuts!" muttered Nomad. "Why don't ther pizen critters, in makin' sich er hurried git-away, cut my feet loose an' make me walk? But nary, they ain't got sense enough fer thet. Waal, I'm satisfied. Puff, ye yaller slaves, puff!"

Nomad was having it easy, but not so easy as might be expected. He was roughly handled, as the Chinamen trailed through the sandy valleys, and once he was dropped.

Swish!

A One-eye with a quirt was on the bearers in a minute, slashing their bare back and saying things. Nomad wasn't dropped again!

On and on they went, gaining the rocky gulch, traversing it to the fork and then taking the right-hand defile.

The Chinamen were frantic with haste and dripping with perspiration, and at every step the One-eyes were urging them to greater endeavors.

Well up the right-hand defile, Nomad saw the go-devil abandoned. But the contrivance was not left until two sacks, wriggling with pent-up life, were taken from the

panniers, swung over the back of two of the coolies, and carried up the slope.

One of the One-eyes and half the coolies doubled back on the course along the brink of the gulch. Where they went, or why they took the two bags of snakes, Nomad could not guess.

Nomad himself was carried up and down two rocky slopes, and then along a valley and into a chaparral of *manzanita*.

There, in the midst of the charparral, was a cleared space, and the old trapper was roughly dropped. A stick was found and thrust under his knees. Four coolies held him while the cords were taken from his wrists, his hands brought around in front and secured under the stick and in front of his hunched-up knees.

Nomad was volubly indignant over this rough treatment, but his noise was quickly hushed by a gag.

It was a heathen way to treat a man, thought Nomad. But he was presently to witness something else that was fully as barbarous.

The One-eye in charge of that detachment gave an order. On the instant four coolies threw themselves upon one of their number, bore him down, tied him, and laid him back upward in the sand.

This coolie, the trapper remembered, was the one who had led the other coolies and tagged Little Cayuse into the camp in the swale.

Having stretched him out, with his bare back glistening in the sun, the one-eyed man seized his quirt. With one foot on the coolie's body, One-eye thrashed the slave until his arm was tired and the slave's back was raw and dripping red. Then One-eye withdrew, tired out, cast aside the quirt, lighted a cigarette, and sat down in the shade of the *manzanita*.

The coolie was released. For a moment he could not rise—or else he would not rise—Nomad could not tell which.

One-eye gave another order.

A basin was brought, together with a bag of salt and a canteen of water. A mixture of salt and water was made in the basin and a coolie sent to throw it on the raw back of the quirted slave.

This was enough. Smarting under the treatment, the coolie leaped up. Apparently he was cowed, but Nomad caught a flicker in his slant eyes that spelled murderous rebellion.

The one-eyed leader laughed tauntingly, and the coolie, the smoldering light deepening in his eyes, slunk away.

"Thet's what ther coolie gits, I reckon," thought Nomad, "fer taggin' Leetle Cayuse inter thet other camp. Although he wasn't ter blame fer what happened any more'n what I am. But thet's how these heathen rat-eaters do bizness. Waugh! What er pizen outfit they aire."

Time slipped away. The other One-eye, with his detachment, did not return. The One-eye who bossed things among the *manzanita* bushes evidently began to worry. He consumed cigarette after cigarette, traced a sloppy, wobbling course up and down through the clearing, and looked often and earnestly into the distance.

The old trapper, bucked and gagged as he was, found his position decidedly uncomfortable; but he soothed himself with the thought that he was not so wretched as the flogged coolie; and he had also the hope that, at any moment, Buffalo Bill, Gordon, and Little Cayuse might appear and change the complexion of things.

The sun went down, and One-eye gave more orders. The coolies gathered brush and built a fire; but they

worked sullenly, and One-eye had to use his quirt a good many times.

When the fire was going in good shape, One-eye sat down near the blaze and began once more on his cigarettes. Suddenly a creeping form pushed through the *manzanita* behind him.

Nomad saw the form, saw the gleam of a knife in the form's hand, and saw a silent, murderous, rush.

One-eye, at the last moment, heard the sound and turned—but he turned just in time to receive the point of the knife in his breast.

Not so much as a whimper came from the stricken man. He fell backward and lay silent.

The flogged coolie had wielded the knife, and he now stood over his slain enemy and kicked him savagely again and again. The other coolies ran forward, but not to take vengeance on the slayer. On the contrary, they grabbed the expiring Chinaman and pulled him into the bushes.

"Thar!" thought Nomad, "thet's another example o' ther way these hyar Chinks do things. I knowed, ther minit thet coolie got up from ther ground, thet he'd watch his chance ter play even. But I never thort he'd make sich er play as thet!"

CHAPTER XX.

WINDING UP THE SMUGGLERS.

The coolies soon reappeared from the bushes and rushed upon the packs. They worked rapidly, gathered what they needed, and, without paying the least attention to Nomad, trailed silently and swiftly out of the firelight and into the brush.

"Good-by ter thet bunch!" thought Nomad. "They knows et won't be healthy fer 'em ter lay around hyar till t'other One-eye shows up with the rest o' ther gang. Et's plumb sensible of 'em ter git out, but they mout hev cut me loose afore they went."

That was a good time for Buffalo Bill, Gordon, and Little Cayuse to appear. If they could only arrive in advance of the other One-eye and the remaining coolies, they could have everything their own way.

Then, while Nomad was turning all these things over in his mind, the fateful buzz of a rattler struck on his ears. He lifted his head and his eyes opened wide.

In front of him, coiled and with erect, swaying head, he saw the snake that had just rattled its warning.

He tried to yell, but the gag prevented anything more than a wild, inarticulate gurgle; then he tried to move, but he was too securely bound for that. The most he could do was to roll over on his side, shut his eyes, and wait for his doom to fall.

While he lay there, breathless and helpless to defend himself, he heard a crashing of the bushes.

"T'other One-eye is back on ther job!" was his thought.

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Next he heard a rush of feet, the crack of a revolver, and felt himself lifted to an erect position.

"Nick!" breathed a familiar voice.

An electric thrill shot through the old trapper.

"Buffler!" he cried, as the gag was jerked away. "Buffler, er I'm er Piegan!"

He saw the snake, writhing its last, with a bullet through its ugly head. Two passes of the scout's knife, and the trapper was free.

"Right in ther nick!" gasped Nomad, staggering up. "I come mighty nigh gittin' what you got, Buffler, thar at ther dance-rock."

"Where are the Chinamen?" asked the scout.

"I knows whar one of 'em is——"

"Which one?"

"One o' ther One-eyes. The rest thet was hyar ske-doodled. Wait, an' I'll show ye."

Nomad crossed the clearing, found the slain Chinaman, and dragged him out into the firelight.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed the scout. "How did that happen?"

Nomad told about the flogging, and about the coolie's revenge.

"The worm will turn," said the scout philosophically. "Even a coolie will show his teeth and bite, if you push him too far. I was afraid these scoundrels had done for you, old pard!"

"Mebby they mout, ef they'd hev had time. Anyways, but fer you thet rattler would hev done fer me. Beats all how thet snake happened ter be Johnny-on-the-spot at jest ther right minit. Ther last I seen o' any thing thet looked like snakes was down in ther gulch, when a couple o' bags of 'em was taken from ther go-devil and kerried off along ther rim o' ther gash."

"Haven't those Chinamen got back here yet?"

"Nary, Buffler, although I'm expectin' of 'em at any minit."

Nomad bent down and pulled up the dead Chinaman's blouse. Underneath it was his revolver-belt and one of his revolvers.

"Whoop-ya!" exulted the trapper. "When luck does turn, Buffler, et turns all in er heap."

Nomad buckled the belt about his waist and the scout handed him his other weapon.

"Whar'd ye git et?" asked the surprised trapper.

"From Cayuse."

"An' whar's thet leetle streak o' lightnin' now?"

"He was wounded, and I sent him back to Wolpi—with the prisoner he had taken."

"Pris'ner, Buffler? What pris'ner?"

"The Chink with the greet patch over his eye who chased him on your horse."

"Then he put ther kibosh on him! Lettle Cayuse done et! Waugh, but thet's fine! Ef I on'y had thet hoss er mine——"

"I've got the animal for you; it's with mine, in a chaparral near here. What happened to you, pard?"

"I hates ter tell, et was sich er tenderfoot play. I was ketched, thet's all; but hyar I am, an' hyar's you, an' I'm er wonderin' whar Gordon is."

"Pass the ante about Gordon. We had a rain of rattlers in the gulch and we got separated."

"A rain o' rattlers! Sufferin' chipmunks! How was thet?"

"I'll tell you later. Just now we have a fine opportunity to destroy this contraband opium, if those coolies didn't lug it away."

"Tote et off? Not them. All they took was chow an' water—I seen 'em at their plunderin'."

Buffalo Bill bent down and pulled the green silk patch from the Chinaman's eye. The eye was gone!

"This," said the scout, rising, "is Sam Lot, Tau Kee's right-hand man in this opium business—slain by one of his own followers!"

"Thet's his reward fer tossin' ther rattler at ye!"

"Possibly. At any rate, it's what he got for flogging the coolie. We know that. Heap brush on the fire, Nick; we want a hot one."

Nomad gathered fuel and got the fire to blazing; then, from the many packs swung at the ends of the carrier-poles, they took box after box of opium and emptied them into the blaze.

"Thar goes a hull lot o' Chink visions," remarked Nomad, gazing at the lurid flames, "glimpses o' ther Seven Heavens, picters o' the D.T's., an' I don't know what all! Ole Tau Kee 'u'd squirm, I reckons, ef he could see this!"

"It's the saving of the Moqui people," answered the scout gravely, "and no discount on that. Hustle, Nick! We want to get rid of all the stuff before we're interfered with."

And they did hustle. Just as the last can of dope stuff was dumped into the blaze, a Chinaman with a bit of green over one eye came tearing through the brush. Back of him tropped a lot of coolies.

Nomad gave a yell and leaped into the air.

"Thar he is, Buffler! Thar's ther Chink thet went back along ther gulch with them bags er rattlers! Don't let him git erway!"

In his haste to come to close quarters with the Chinaman, the old trapper leaped the blaze.

The Chinaman must have been astounded by what he saw. Nevertheless, he was a man of quick perception and of some courage.

He had a revolver of his own, and it leaped into his hand with adroit quickness. The weapon was lifted and leveled. Nomad, in his eager desire to get hands on the man, had not drawn his guns. Another moment and the Celestial would have taken big revenge for the havoc Buffalo Bill and his pards had played with the plans of Tau Kee.

But the scout was too quick—just a shade quicker than the yellow man. A bullet leaped across the narrow clearing, and the Chinaman reeled back into the brush.

At the fall of their leader, the coolie snake-throwers became like frightened sheep. White devils had taken their camp, and the game was lost! Their one desire was to get away, and such a scattering among the bushes was never heard before.

In the midst of the confusion, a horseman plunged through the *manzanita* and into the glare of the fire.

"What's going on here?" he shouted. "Cody! by all that's good. And Nomad, too!"

"Gordon!" exclaimed the scout. "Well, this is the best ever. Get down, man; you're right in at the wind-up."

Gordon got down from his horse like a man in a trance.

"Who's that running through the brush?" he asked.

"Coolies," said the scout.

"Makin' fer home an' mother like er lot o' skeered coyotes," added the trapper.

"Who's the Chinaman there on the ground?"

"One of the One-eyes," said the scout.

"Buffler jest pulled off his eye-bandage," added the trapper.

Gordon stepped to the Chinaman's side and looked into his face.

"Sam Lot, as I live!" muttered Gordon.

"We had made up our minds to that already," said the scout.

"He's only got one good eye, Gordon, an' thet proves ther case agin' him," added the trapper.

"Who's that other Chinaman, over there, his sandals just sticking out of the brush?" asked Gordon, wheeling and looking around.

"Another of the One-eyes," said the scout.

"Buffler shook a load out er his gun at him, tharby savin' my skelp," added the trapper.

"What're all these empty tin cans lying around?"

"Opium-cans," said the scout.

"Buffler an' me hev jest emptied ther last blame' can inter ther fire," added the trapper.

"Well, *well*, *WELL*!" Gordon lopped over against his horse. "Have you fellows left anything for me to do?"

"Not onless ye wants ter chase a lot o' panicky coolies," grinned Nomad.

"What I want you to do, Gordon," put in the scout, "is to tell me how you gave me the slip in the gulch."

"Well, Cody," smiled Gordon, "I couldn't see you for snakes. I was busy, for a while, getting away from the twisting rattlers; then, when I looked for you I couldn't see you. I pushed on up the left-hand fork——"

"I took the right-hand one," interjected the scout. "But, as soon as I missed you, I climbed to the top of the bank and looked into the other fork. Ycu weren't in sight."

"You bet I wasn't," went on Gordon. "I was mad clear through. The way the Chinks had fought us with snakes had got onto my nerves. I wanted to get close to the yellow boys with my guns. So I spurred up the left-hand bank of the fork and rode back along the rim of the gulch. I saw some of the Chinamen and gave chase, but they dodged away. However, I kept looking for Chinks, and by the time my ardor cooled I found I was lost and couldn't get back to the gulch.

"I've been meandering around looking for the gulch ever since, wondering what you'd think of me for taking the bit in my teeth like I did. When it began to get dark, I began to get worried. Then I heard sounds of shooting, saw a camp-fire, dug in with my spurs and arrived here."

"You did well, Gordon," approved the scout.

"Thunder! Why, I didn't do anything."

"Yes, you did. Why, by mixing things with those coolies you held them back from this camp. That gave the coolies a chance to get away with Sam Lot, it gave me a chance to rescue Nick, and it gave Nick and me a chance to dump all that opium into the fire without being hindered. You were the biggest kind of a help."

"I'm glad to know it," was the glum answer. "You've destroyed all the opium, have you?"

"Every ounce."

"Anything else of value in the Chinamen's packs?"

"No. Some of the coolies who came on here got away with the rest of the valuable plunder before I arrived."

"Let's have a look——"

"No time for any more looking," interrupted Buffalo Bill. "Nomad's horse and mine are secured beside a spring, a little way from here, and I'm afraid some of

those coolies will blunder upon them and use them to help in their get-away. We'll leave things here just as they are. Some of the Chinamen, perhaps, will stroll back and take care of Sam Lot and the other man. Just now, though, I'm anxious about the horses."

Buffalo Bill started into the *manzanita*, and Nomad followed. Gordon mounted and spurred after them.

The scout found that he had had his worry to no purpose. The two horses were peacefully browsing among the mesquit bushes when he and Nomad and Gordon reached the spring.

Here the friends fell back on their rations and rested for an hour or two, while explanations and counter-explanations were indulged in; then, in the cool of the night, they mounted and rode back to Wolpi.

What the scout had set out to do had been accomplished. At one blow the opium trade had been destroyed and the last of the One-eyes accounted for.

"The loss of Sam Lot will be another blow between the eyes for Tau Kee," said Gordon.

"I reckon he'll throw up his hands an' quit, arter this, eh?" said Nomad.

"He will, if he knows when he's well off," went on Gordon. "Clever as he is, he's no match for Buffalo Bill and his pards."

"Buffalo Bill and his pards," remarked the scout, "have never met Tau Kee face to face on his own grounds. He might give a different account of himself in a personal clash with us."

"That's something you will never experience, Cody," said Gordon. "Tau Kee is too wise ever to come company front with you and your pards."

The scout made no answer to this. He was beginning

to think that he'd never feel satisfied with himself until he had forced the wily Tau Kee to a personal trial of wits and physical prowess.

* * * * *

At Wolpi, Buffalo Bill, Nomad, and Gordon found Little Cayuse safely lodged in the *hogan* of Salako. His prisoner was with him, and was being looked after by all the Moqui boys of the *pueblo*.

Little Cayuse listened languidly to Nomad's account of what had happened.

"Pa-e-has-ka always make good," said Cayuse, when the trapper had finished. "Him all same like thunderbolt. Strike once, no need to strike again."

The priest from whom Sam Lot had secured the rattlesnake which he had flung at the scout on the dance-rock was found and interrogated.

It developed, from this interview, that the priest had not only sold the rattler to Sam Lot, but had instructed him in the way to handle the snake without being bitten. And, further, it was discovered that the priest had agreed, when the snake-dance was over, to give all the rattlers used in the ceremony to Sam Lot for a piece of gold.

A coolie, stationed in the pastures for the purpose, received the two bags of serpents and rode off to the dry wash with them, using the scraggy cayuse for the purpose. By the time the Piute boy had tagged his Chinaman to the dry wash, the two bags had been safely placed in the panniers of the go-devil.

Thus was cleared away a question whose solution the scout had already guessed.

After a day in Wolpi, the scout and his pards, with the Chinaman in keeping, started for Keam's Canon.

Taking their time, they were three days covering the ninety miles separating Wolpi from Holbrook.

From the latter town Gordon departed with the slayer of Sing Yak, the Chinatown merchant, guaranteeing to see him safely in 'Frisco.

By that time Little Cayuse was so far recovered from his wound that he did not even wear a bandage over it.

"Ye're a corker, kid, an' no mistake," said Nomad, sprawled out in a comfortable chair in the hotel office and nursing his pipe. "Et ain't one Piute in er thousand as could do what you done, all boggled up with er wound like ye was."

"Ugh!" deprecated Little Cayuse.

"I'm gladder'n blazes ye're goin' ter git a thousand fer ketchin' thèr Chink. What ye goin' ter do with et?"

"Put um out, make um grow."

"Ye'll be a reg'lar Piute millionaire one o' these hyar days. But le'me make er suggestion."

"What?"

"Take yer thousand, hike ter ther East, an' git er leetle schoolin'."

"You got um schoolin'?"

"Me? Waugh! I know my a, b, abs, an' thet's erbout all. Ye see, Cayuse, I was born book-shy."

"No born gun-shy, hey?"

"Nary. Ef I'd been born gun-shy I wouldn't be travelin' eround with Pard Buffler, like I am."

"Mebbyso I go school, I no travel around with Pa-e-has-ka, too."

"Shore not. Ye kain't go ter school and hike about with Pard Buffler an' me. What d'ye think?"

After a brief silence, Little Cayuse inquired:

"You like um Little Cayuse, Wolf-killer?"

"Ef ye was my own son, kid, I couldn't like ye no better."

"Why you try get me away from Pa-e-has-ka, then?"

"Jest so ye'll git some schoolin'."

Another silence; then Cayuse:

"You do um Piute favor, Wolf-killer?"

"Shore. What is et?"

"No make any more palaver 'bout school. Me no like um. Sabe?"

Little Cayuse got up, adjusted the eagle feather in his scalp-lock, and went away to look for Buffalo Bill.

"Thet's ther Piute of et," muttered Nomad.

CHAPTER XXI.

ROUNDING UP RATTLESNAKE TIM.

There were ten men in the party from Gray Buzzard's Gulch. Hassayamp Jim was the leader, and, as befitted his office, he rode at the head of the horsemen—rode at a reckless pace which only hardy frontiersmen would have dared to follow.

Behind Jim came Catamount Joe, and trailing after Joe were the other eight, weaving in and out of the mesquit and greasewood, and flying down the gulch like the wind.

For Jim's Kentucky-bred gray mare had been stolen. Such an act of lawlessness, at that place and time, was reckoned as being on a par with manslaughter, and punished accordingly.

The ten vigilantes were grimly determined. There was no doubt about the horse-thief being Rattlesnake Tim, because Catamount Joe had seen Tim slashing down the gulch on Kaintuck, and had made haste to carry the news to Jim.

"I've plumb suspicioned this yare Rattlesnake Tim of not bein' on the squar'," called Hassayamp, over his shoulder, as he plunged along, eyes front and searching the moonlit spaces ahead.

"Me, too," asserted Joe. "His face is shore bad medicine. I copped him fer a tinhorn ther minit he struck camp."

"What kin ye expect of a feller thet trains with ther pigtail heathens, anyways?" boomed Modoc Charley, from the rear. "Time an' ag'in Tim has left ther camp an' staved with ther Chinks thet's washin' over white-

man's gravel. I've hearn tell Tim eats with chop-sticks, palavers ther Chink lingo like a washee-washee, an' plays fan-tan like a yaller blackleg. Whoosh! When er white man gits so low-down as thet it's time he was made ter cash in."

"Chinks ain't the wust o' his low-down *compadres*," called the Missourian from the extreme rear, his words fighting up against the wind of the ride and reaching the ears of Hassayamp.

"What comminglin' kin he do thet's wuss nor hangin' out with er lot er pesky rat-eaters?" cried Hassayamp.

"Trainin' with the 'Paches," answered the Missourian. "I've seen him a-drinkin' tizwin with ole Hakamore an' his gang o' bucks, an' fraternizin' with ther hull measly layout like they was blood brothers."

A howl of scorn ran from end to end of the long line of vigilante horsemen.

"Yare's the result o' Tim's degradin' hisself by sich practises," said Hassayamp. "When a man gits so low-down, hoss-stealin' comes easy, I reckon."

"Thar's things about him, too," spoke up Joe, "thet would make Tim a whole man if it wasn't fer his fool way o' comminglin' with Chinks an' 'Paches. He kin ride, I'll say thet fer him. Why, thet feller could keep straddle of er piece er streak-lightnin'!"

"Right ye aire!" agreed the Missourian.

"An' shoot!" went on Catamount Joe; "why, I've seen Tim split a pistol-ball on the edge of a knife at thirty paces."

"He's a rare hand with er gun, all right," said Hassayamp, "but it ain't goin' to do him no good ter shake out any loads at us. All I'm hopin' is thet he don't ruin Kaintuck afore we overhauls him. Thet hoss is wuth ary ten fellers of Tim's caliber."

Talking ceased for a space, and the pursuit settled down to a grim battle with distance and time.

Times out of number, on the old frontier, a man's horse had been the saving of his owner's life. When red dangers thickened, and threatened to overwhelm a solitary cattleman, or a traveler between widely separated settlements, four speedy hoofs raced with death. So it happened that to steal a man's mount might be construed as a direct blow at a man's life.

It was Hassayamp who saw the shadowy speck gliding through the bushes in the far distance; and presently those behind him saw the speck and an exultant yell arose shivering in the night. Spurs rattled, quirts slashed, and the pursuers urged their horses to brisker pace.

The pursuers were drawing closer and closer. It was a tense moment, and when Catamount Joe lifted his voice it sounded odd and out of place.

"I've hearn thet Buffalo Bill and his pards aire on their way to Gray Buzzard's Gulch. Them flash-light warriors ort ter hev got thar in time fer *this*."

Hassayamp swore fiercely.

"D'ye think, Joe," he cried, "thet Buffalo Bill an' his pards would stand fer what we're a-goin' ter do with Tim? Nary! What we're a-thinkin' of don't agree with Buffalo Bill's idee o' law an' order. Lucky thing fer us he wasn't at the gulch, an' thet he couldn't take no hand in this."

"Thet's the only thing I got agin' the scout an' his pards," called out the Missourian. "Their idees o' what's right an' proper don't coincide with the ones held by we-uns."

"We're overhaulin' Tim on the jump," proceeded Hassayamp, studying the shadowy speck with an eye of calculation. "In twenty minutes we'll come up with him."

We'll try him in our saddles as we ride, so'st ter save time. Modoc, ye're counsel fêr ther pris'ner; Joe, ye're prosecutin' attorney fer ther vigilantes. I'm Jedge, and the rest o' ye's jury. The Jedge," Hassayamp added, "will now hear the complaint o' ther prosecutin' attorney."

"Waal," said Catamount Joe, his words jolting out of him as he galloped, "this yare case, Jedge, is er dead open-an'-shut. I seen Rattlesnake Tim comin' down ther gulch on yer hoss, Kaintuck."

"How long hev ye knowed Rattlesnake Tim?" asked Modoc.

"All ther time he's been in ther gulch, barrin' them periods when he was fraternizin' with ther Chinks an' ther 'Paches," answered Joe.

"How long ye been familiar with Kaintuck, said hoss berlongin' ter said Hassayamp Jim, of said Gray Buz-zard's Gulch?"

"Ever sence Hassayamp brought ther hoss ter camp."

"Ye're sartin ther man was said Tim, an' ther hoss was said Kaintuck?"

"I'm sure sartain."

"Jedge," proceeded Modoc, "Catamount Joe hes made out a cl'ar case agin' Tim, but I pleads Tim's extreme youth, him not bein' more'n twenty-five——"

"Bah!" interposed the "Judge." "Thet ain't no plea. When Tim gits older chances aire he'll do worse."

"I pleads," went on Modoc, "his good ridin' qualities. Riders like Tim aire few an' far between."

"Good ridin', Modoc, makes it easier fer Tim ter run off hosses."

"I pleads," went on Modoc, "Tim's straight shootin'. He's a master-hand with er shooter."

"Good shootin' makes it easier fer him ter knock over them as chases ther hosses he steals," said the Judge.

"I'm done," said Modoc. "Ther pris'ner's attorney rests his case."

"What you got ter say, Joe?" asked Hassayamp.

"I asks fer a limb an' six feet o' rope," came promptly from Joe. "If we don't discourage hoss-stealin' in ther gulch, whar we all goin' ter land?"

"Yer p'int is well taken, Catamount Joe," said Hassayamp. "Gentlemen o' the jury, what's yore verdict? We're comin' clòse on ter Tim. Ye won't hev much time ter consider, kase Tim's li'ble ter git down ter gun-play most any minit."

"Guilty," came from the jury, "an' ther punishment is left with ther Jedge."

"I fixes the punishment right off," cried Hassayamp. "Git yer rope ready, Catamount. The ole cottonwood is right on ther trail Buffalo Bill an' his pards'll hev ter take comin' inter ther gulch. Thet's whar we leave Tim, an' et'll be an objeck-lesson ter ther king o' scouts consarnin' ther way we-uns run things in these parts."

A moment later Hassayamp rose in his stirrups.

"Halt whar ye aire, Tim!" he roared.

What could the horse-thief do? Ten men were against him, and he knew he was guilty. If he fought, it would not save him from capture, and that was no time to have human lives on a man's conscience.

Rattlesnake Tim drew rein, faced Kaintuck about, and held up both hands.

"You win!" he called sententiously.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE FORM ON THE TREE.

"Et seems powerful strange ter me, Buffler, thet we kain't find no one as knows whar this hyar place, called ther Cañon o' Death, happens ter be. Mebbyso thar ain't no sich place."

"There must be such a place, Nick. We've heard about it from several Chinamen. The last Chink to speak about it was the man Cayuse captured and got one thousand dollars for."

"Thet yaller-mug didn't say er word erbout et while he was with us."

"No; but he made a statement to Gordon, who took him to Frisco. Gordon sent me a telegram at Holbrook, and it's that message that took us to Kymo, here in Yavapai County. The message says, Nick, that Tau Kee is located somewhere in the Cañon of Death; and that if we ride to Gray Buzzard's Gulch, and quietly capture a man there by the name of Rattlesnake Tim, he can be made to show us the way to the cañon, and to Tau Kee's hang-out."

"I'm hopin' ye've got et right, Buffler, kase I'm more'n anxious ter polish off this hyar Chink bizness we've been workin' on fer so long. Tau Kee is ther big high boy thet's back o' all ther Chink trouble-makin'. Oncet he's down an' out, I reckons we knocks ther yaller-mugs' combination inter a cocked hat."

"That's my opinion, exactly."

"An' what's ther Great American Splinter got ter do with et?"

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"His name is Sam Hill," laughed the scout. "Why do you call him the Great American Splinter?"

"Kase he's erbout as long as er sliver, an' erbout as thick. Then, too, when he torks he kinder splinters his words."

"Well," smiled the scout, "Sam Hill knows Rattlesnake Tim, and I've brought him along to identify the man. When we get to Gray Buzzard's Gulch, we'll have to capture this Tim before he gets wind of our coming. Sam Hill will help us turn the trick."

Buffalo Bill, Nick Nomad, Cayuse, and the man called Sam Hill were riding westward toward Gray Buzzard's Gulch. The scout and the trapper rode stirrup to stirrup in the lead. At a short distance in the rear rode Little Cayuse and Hill.

Although Buffalo Bill and his pards had successfully broken up Tau Kee's opium-business, the outlaw Chinaman was still engaged in the slave-trade. The government was anxious that the dangerous man should be captured and his nefarious business stopped, and the services of Buffalo Bill had been requested to follow out the task to its conclusion.

Sam Hill, the man the scout had brought along to identify Rattlesnake Tim, was six feet six in his stockings, and about six inches through at his widest. The difficulty of buying clothes long enough and narrow enough made him look at all times like a skeleton scarecrow. Nomad's reference to him as the "Great American Splinter" was not entirely undeserved.

Hill had an impediment in his speech. He never said all he wanted to say because he couldn't—his tongue wouldn't let him.

Little Cayuse, riding at Hill's side, looked like a pigmy.

"I don't keer how we tries ter hide our hand, Buffer," went on Nomad, "I'll gamble er blue stack thet Tau Kee is next ter every move we make. He's got spies everywhere, seems like. I'm guessin' thet by ther time we reaches this miners' place in Gray Buzzard's Gulch we'll find Rattlesnake Tim hes got warnin' an' hes mounted an' skinned out."

"That may be," answered the scout gravely. "Tau Kee has certainly shown his resourcefulness in getting next to our plans. Still, we've got to ride ahead and do our best, and at the same time hope for the best."

"B-B-B-B-Buffalo B-B-B——"

This bubbling sound came from the rear. The scout turned in his saddle and looked back. Sam Hill was trying to talk, and, as usual, he found the attempt too much for him.

"Use yer hands, Hill, like ye was deaf an' dumb!" called Nomad. "Ye might as well be dumb so fur as torkin' is consarned."

"Do you want something of me, Hill?" asked the scout. The long, thin man nodded.

"What is it?" asked the scout.

"Who is T-T-T——" Hill stopped to whistle and hit himself in the side. "Who is T-T-Tau Kee?"

"He got et out!" gasped Nomad. "Buffer, Sam Hill has asked one whole question all by hisself."

"Tau Kee, Hill," replied the scout, "is a very bad Chinaman. He used to deal in slaves—unfortunate people from his own country whom he imported and sent to 'Frisco by way of the Gulf of California and the Colorado River. When we broke up his business in slaves, he gave his attention to opium. Now that we've stopped that, there's no telling what else he'll do unless he can be cap-

tured and made to suffer for his unlawful actions. My pards and I are after him. That's our present business. Tau Kee is said to have his headquarters somewhere in these parts in a cañon known by the gruesome name of the Cañon of Death. Ever heard of such a place, Hill?"

"N-N-N——"

"Shake yer block fer No, podner," suggested Nomad, "an' tilt et some fer Yes. Thet'll save wear an' tear on yer speech fixin's, an'll be a heap more satisfactory ter every one."

Sam Hill "tilted his block" to signify that he understood what the trapper meant, and shook it to signify that he did not know anything about the Cañon of Death.

"Rattlesnake Tim can take us to Tau Kee, I'm told," went on the scout, "but he probably won't take us willingly. What we've got to do is to capture him, and we're taking you with us to identify the fellow."

"We got ter work quick, Hill," spoke up the trapper, "an' when we lays alongside o' our suspect, ef we waits fer ye ter tell us whether he's Rattlesnake Tim er not, he'd hev time ter saddle up an' git fifty miles erway. At thet time don't try ter tork. Jest tilt yer face fer a sign."

Sam Hill was good-natured, and he greeted the trapper's words with a grin.

"I'll d-d-d——" he began.

"Tilt!" yelled Nomad. "Ye're tryin' ter say ye'll do what I ask ye, but ye mout as well begin right now familiarizin' yerself with ther signs."

Hill tilted.

Little Cayuse, riding a beautiful pinto pony whose mane and tail were decorated, after the Indian fashion, with strips of red flannel, studied Sam Hill as though he were one of the seven wonders. Never before had

Cayuse seen a paleface built on Hill's specifications, and never before had he seen one who made such wild and ineffectual attempts to talk.

In due course, the scout and his party reached the place where the trail led them into the mouth of Gray Buzard's Gulch.

The gulch was wide and roomy, and was supposed to contain a stream. The stream, however, was like most Arizona water-courses, flowing underground and showing itself only here and there in pools, where bed-rock forced it to the surface.

Owing to the presence of the water, there was grass in the gulch, and mesquit, and an occasional cottonwood. The trail followed the center of the defile, skirting the edges of the pools.

"Ther gulch is rightly named, Buffler," remarked Nomad, when they were well in it. "Look thar!"

The trapper pointed upward with his hand.

The scout, following his pard's gesture, saw three or four vultures wheeling lazily through the air above the gulch rim.

"Some d-d-dead h-h-h—" began Sam Hill.

"Don't try ter tork when et distresses ye, Hill," said Nomad. "Ye're tryin' ter say thet thar is some dead hoss er cow layin' eround. What's ther use o' tryin' ter tell us thet? Buffler, an' Cayuse, an' me hes got *some* sense, an' when we sees a flock o' vultures, we're able ter figger out—"

The words died on the old trapper's lips. He pulled up his horse, straightened rigidly in his saddle, and stared ahead.

There was no need of words. What Nomad saw all the rest saw—a figure pendent from the limb of a cottonwood, a human figure, twisting slowly in mid-air.

"Waugh!" breathed Nomad. "Thar's been er lynchin', Buffler. Et ain't er pleasant thing ter see, thet figger."

Buffalo Bill spurred onward at a gallop. At the foot of the cottonwood he drew in his horse and gazed with a frown at the gruesome sight.

Men had taken the law into their own hands, making themselves judge, jury and executioners, and had slain a fellow being in defiance of the courts.

While the scout sat his horse, thoughtfully gazing, Nomad, Hill and Cayuse rode up beside him.

"It's R-R-R—"

"Pass it up," growled Nomad to Hill; "'course it's rough, an' 'course it ain't right. Mebbys o ther poor chap was innercent o' what he was hung fer? Who knows? Sich er sight ruffles my narves, et does so."

"The men of the gulch must have done this," said the scout.

"Wuh!" muttered Little Cayuse. "Some white men all same worse than Injun."

"It's R-R-R—"

"This hyar ain't no time ter splinter yer tork, Hill," put in Nomad. "We've got eyes, an' we kin see; besides, bein' human, we're goin' ter plant ther poor feller like he ort ter be. Hey, Buffler?"

"Yes," answered the scout. "I'll hold him while you cut the rope."

The scout rode under the swaying form and took it in his arms. Nomad passed the knife through the rope, and then Sam Hill dismounted, took the form from the scout's hands and laid it on the sand.

"It's R-R-Rattlesnake T-Tim," Hill finally managed to articulate.

That gave the scout, the trapper, and the little Piute a start.

"Are you sure of that, Hill?" demanded the scout.

"P-p-positive."

"Waal, how's this fer tough luck?" scowled Nomad.

Certainly it was a singular and most unfortunate coincidence that Rattlesnake Tim, the one man in the gulch who could guide the scout to the mysterious Cañon of Death, should be found there swinging in the forenoon sun.

"Mebbyso ther Chinks done this ter keep us from gittin' any infermation from him," hazarded Nomad.

"That is possible, Nick," returned the scout, "but I hardly think it probable. Look through the man's clothes and see if you can find anything of value."

A careful search was made, but not a single article of personal property was found.

"His pockets hev been looted clean, Buffler," announced the trapper. "This hyar looks some suspicious. Ef ther Chinks did ther work, then they took everythin' ther man had."

"You, and Cayuse, and Hill, Nick," said the scout, "can dig some kind of a hole with your picket-pins and see that Rattlesnake Tim is decently put away. I'll ride on to the camp and see what I can find out about this. Follow me as soon as you are done."

Setting spurs to his horse, Buffalo Bill galloped up the gulch. Several miles lay between the scene of the tragedy and the camp, and it was two hours before the scout turned a bend and saw a cluster of tents and adobe shanties before him on a flat.

Gray Buzzard was a placer camp. The "diggings" were fairly rich, at this point. Above the flat were the old workings, now being washed over a second time by Chinamen, who were well satisfied if they could make from fifty cents to a dollar a day.

Buffalo Bill turned his horse from the trail and rode down to the edge of a pool where some men were panning gold at a gravel-bank.

"Howdy," said he.

"Howdy, stranger," answered one of the men, putting aside his pan and getting up.

"Saw a man hanging from a tree down the gulch," went on the scout casually.

"Did ye?" grinned the miner, with an expressive look at the other men. "Waal, now! Must hev been hung, don't ye think?"

"I don't think, I know. He was."

"Did you ever know Rattlesnake Tim?"

"No."

"Waal, I reckon it's him. Reg'lar, no-count hoss-thief, thet's what he was. Useter hang out with the Chinks up the gulch, an' when a white man does thet he's purty low-down. Allers thort Rattlesnake Tim 'u'd come ter some sich of an end."

"May I inquire your name, friend?" asked the scout.

"Shore ye may. Catamount Joe is ther handle I tote. Another name belongs with it, but I reckon it don't cut much of a figger. Who might you be?"

"Buffalo Bill!"

"Whoop! Ther reg'lar ole Injun-tamer hisself! Put 'er thar!"

Catamount Joe came up the bank and gave the scout his hand. The rest of the miners tossed him a greeting.

"Been expectin' ye, Buffalo Bill," went on Joe.

The scout looked interested.

"Expecting me?" he repeated. "How's that? I didn't send word I was coming."

"Waal, it got around camp someways last night."

The scout wondered how the news had traveled ahead of him. The information had reached Gray Buzzard before he and his pards had left Kymo. Had some of Tau Kee's spies brought the word?

"Was there a horse stolen from here, last night?" he asked.

"Thar was thet. Hassayamp Jim's Kaintuck, one o' the finest pieces o' hoss-flesh in this part o' Arizony."

"Where can I find Hassayamp Jim?"

"He's up ter his cabin—the one with the painter skin nailed to the wall."

"Much obliged," said the scout, turning his horse and riding on again.

Over his shoulder he could see Catamount Joe and the other miners clustered together, talking excitedly and casting covert looks after him.

"Rattlesnake Tim was lynched," muttered the scout, "and these Gray Buzzard men did it. Hassayamp Jim must have been the leader."

The scout had no difficulty in locating Hassayamp's cabin. As he rode up to the door, a shaggy-haired, powerfully built man stepped through it. The man had a pipe in his mouth and removed it to emit a cloud of smoke and give the stranger greeting.

"Buenos!" said he.

"Buenos!" returned the scout civilly, dismounting and seating himself on a bench near the door. "You Hassayamp Jim?"

"Thet's my label, all right. What's your'n?"

"Cody—"

"'Nother words, Buffalo Bill, king o' scouts! Give us yer fist, Buffalo Bill. This camp is shore proud ter hev ye hyer."

"I'd like to talk with you a little, Hassayamp, about the man you lynched last night."

"Go on, Cody! Ye're jokin'. Ye don't mean ter say ye think I lynched a man? Why, I'm ther peacefulest ole cimiroon in the Territory."

"I won't say you did the lynching, Hassayamp, but Rattlesnake Tim was strung up by some one in this camp. Personally, I think that to lynch a man is about the poorest use you can put him to—"

"Them's my sentiments to a t, y, ty!"

"And that those who take part in a lynching," pursued the scout steadily, "are committing a crime. Two wrongs don't make a right."

"No more they don't," expanded Hassayamp Jim. "Dern glad ter find a man thet thinks exactly like me."

"Although I'm a government officer, Hassayamp, I'm not here to make any trouble about that lynching, much as I regret and condemn the occurrence."

"Ye kain't regret it ner condemn it any more than me, Buffalo Bill. It was my mare Rattlesnake took, but I couldn't begin ter say who it was chased Rattlesnake an' brought the critter back."

"That's immaterial, just now, Hassayamp. What I want to know is this: Had Rattlesnake Tim anything of importance about his clothes?"

"He had some pussonal property—a dirk, two guns, a belt, six dollars in cash, and some more leetle things. They was put inter my hands an' I'm holdin' of 'em for Rattlesnake's next of kin—if he has any—ter show up an' claim the outfit."

"Would you mind letting me look at the various articles?"

A gleam of surprise, not unmixed with suspicion, shot from Hassayamp's keen little orbs.

"Shore I wouldn't, Buffalo Bill, purvidin' ye ain't got no objection tellin' me why ye want ter see 'em."

"Well, somewhere in this section there is a defile called the Cañon of Death."

"Never heerd of it; an' I've lived hyer, man an' boy, fer thirty-odd years."

"In this Cañon of Death a scheming Chinaman named Tau Kee, slave-dealer and smuggler, is supposed to have his headquarters."

"Never heerd o' Tau Kee, nuther. All Chinks is bad medicine, when ye comes ter simmer 'em down, an' I ain't never had no likin' fer any of 'em."

"I have received information from 'Frisco to the effect that Rattlesnake Tim knew the way to this Cañon of Death, and knew whereabouts in it Tau Kee could be found. I and my pards were coming here to arrest Rattlesnake Tim and make him take us to Tau Kee. You can imagine how we felt when we found our man swinging from that cottonwood."

Hassayamp Jim's face was a study. Not for one moment would he, or any of the others, admit that they had had a hand in the night's lynching; but, from what Buffalo Bill now told him, Hassayamp felt as though it would have been better had Rattlesnake been brought to the camp and held.

"Thet was shore tough luck, Buffalo Bill!" declared Hassayamp, with genuine regret. "Mebby thet was ther reason Tim stole Kaintuck an' put out like he done? We knowed in the camp, last night, you was comin', an' Tim may hev guessed why. He wanted a swift hoss, an' so he rode off with Kaintuck."

"That may be true," said the scout, struck with Hassayamp's explanation. "I wonder how the news of my coming got here? I tried to keep it dark."

"A Chink from up-gulch brought the word. Leastways, that's what they told me at the Home Sweet Home red-eye emporium."

If this were true, then certainly Tau Kee had spies in the Chinamen's camp, and in Kymo. The scout was not greatly surprised, for he already knew something of Tau Kee's resourcefulness.

"You understand now, Hassayamp," pursued Buffalo Bill, "why I want to look at the stuff you have that belongs to Rattlesnake Tim."

"I'm plumb willin' ter show it, Cody, an' ter do all I kin ter help ye. Come inside."

Hassayamp turned and went into the cabin, the scout following.

From an old trunk in one corner of the room Hassayamp took a bundle, wrapped in canvas. Laying the bundle on a table, he unwrapped it and displayed the personal effects of the late Rattlesnake Tim.

There were the revolvers, dirk, belt, coins to the extent of six dollars, and a piece of folded rice-paper.

"What's that?" asked the scout, pointing to the rice-paper.

"Rattlesnake," said Hassayamp, picking up the paper and slowly unfolding it, "could talk Chink like a ratter an' read it like a mandarin. This paper is kivered with hen-tracks, which ther same, I reckons, is some sort of a Chink letter. See fer yerself."

Hassayamp, the unfolded paper in his hand, held the document up for the scout's inspection.

The scout was just reaching out to take the paper when there came the report of a revolver from somewhere close at hand. The paper fluttered in Hassayamp's hand, and a bullet, which came through the window, spatted into the mud wall of the cabin, near the door.

"What ther howlin' blazes was thet?" yelped Hassayamp, giving a startled jump.

One glance showed the scout a hole through the paper. Without a word, he plunged through the door, sprang into the saddle of his waiting horse, and dashed around the cabin.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AN UNWILLING INTERPRETER.

Of course the unexpected proceeding that had just taken place in Hassayamp's cabin was plain to the scout.

Some armed Chinaman, in the service of Tau Kee, had been lurking around the cabin, possibly in the hope of getting at the stuff taken from Rattlesnake Tim.

Looking through the window, the Chinaman had seen Hassayamp open the paper and hold it up for the scout's inspection. Hoping to make the contents of the note illegible, the Chinaman had sent a bullet through the paper.

This explanation darted through the scout's mind in a flash, quickly followed by a determination to get hold of the Chinaman, if he could.

A dozen rods back of the cabin was the sheer wall of the gulch, too steep for any man to climb. At the foot of the gulch wall was a fringe of brush.

No one was in sight, but it was quite possible the lurking miscreant might have taken to the bushes.

The scout rode into the thicket, and he had not thrashed the covert for a dozen yards before he flushed his Chinaman.

The fellow ran out of the bushes less than a hundred feet from the scout, dashed across the open and behind a tent.

By the time Buffalo Bill had galloped around the tent, the Chinaman had reached the trail and was making for up the gulch as fast as his legs could carry him.

The pursuit had now become a straightaway race, and the scout knew that he would get his man.

Hassayamp, standing in front of his door, saw the fleeing celestial and drew a gun on him quick as a wink.

"Hold!" yelled the scout. "I'll get him, Hassayamp!"

Hassayamp dropped his gun disappointedly.

"Git him, Buffalo Bill," he whooped, as the scout dashed by, "then bring ther heathen hyer an' we'll massacre him! I'll l'arn him ter interfere with me when I'm transactin' bizness with a friend."

As Buffalo Bill steadily decreased the distance between him and the racing yellow man, the latter, halting suddenly, turned deliberately. Crooking his left arm on a level with his eyes, he laid a revolver across it and took deliberate aim at the scout.

Crack!

A bullet, cleverly aimed, clove the air across the scout's saddle; but, as it happened, the scout was not in the saddle, and so did not connect with the piece of lead.

Precisely as the Chinaman pressed the trigger, Buffalo Bill had dropped to the side of his horse.

Before the astounded Chinaman could launch another bullet, the scout was upon him.

Dropping clear of his horse, the king of scouts caught the Chinaman about the throat and bore him roughly backward to the ground.

Then, before the celestial fairly knew what was going on, Buffalo Bill was again on his feet with the Chinaman's weapon in his hand.

"Heap smart China boy," said the scout dryly, focusing the revolver on the Chinaman's head. "Have got a wish to go top-side?"

"No have got," answered the Chinaman sullenly.

"Makee get up; go back to cabin chop-chop."

"Can do," said the Chinaman, climbing to his sandals.

He thereupon headed for Hassayamp's wannegan, pigeontoeing his way smartly while the muzzle of his own gun dug him in the back whenever he showed an inclination to lag.

Buffalo Bill, of course, was behind the gun, following the Chinaman and leading the horse.

"Waal, consarn me fer a tinhorn," whooped the admiring Hassayamp, who had witnessed the entire performance from his door, "if thet wasn't ther neatest trick I ever seen played. Buffalo Bill, I takes off my hat ter you, I shore does. If thet's ther way ye do things, I don't wonder everybody is crackin' ye up as ther quickest thing on ther frontier!"

"Bosh!" laughed the scout. "A quick eye and a spring in your legs is all that's required for a trick of that kind. I need this Chinaman."

"Whatever do ye need him fer?"

"Why, to translate those hen-tracks you were just showing me. Was the writing injured?"

"Nary; it wasn't. Ther bullet cut a hole through ther margin of ther paper an' never teched ther writin'. But will he tell ye what's the meanin' of them crisscross marks?"

"He will," affirmed the scout grimly.

"Will he tell ye right? How ye goin' ter know whether he gives ye a fair shake or a fake?"

"I've a way of telling that. Lead the way back into the house, Hassayamp."

The miner proceeded into his dwelling, the Chinaman followed the miner, and Buffalo Bill followed the Chinaman.

"Sit down," ordered the scout, and the prisoner dropped into a chair. "What's your name?"

"Chang Yuen," was the sulky answer.

"You spy for Tau Kee, eh?"

"No sabe Tau Kee."

"Yes, you do. Why you shootee bullet through paper?"

"Makee one-piecee fun."

"Hyer 'im!" shouted the irate Hassayamp. "He thinks it's fun, does he. Fer half a cent I'd strangle him with his own pigtail!"

"Hand him that piece of paper, Hassayamp," said the scout.

Hassayamp picked the paper off the table hesitatingly.

"Mebby ther whelp'll tear it up when he gits his claws ont'er it?"

"I reckon he won't; but, to make sure, cover him with one of your guns and, at the first move to tear the paper, put a bullet through him."

Chang Yuen squirmed. He had understood the scout's order to Hassayamp, just as the scout felt sure he would. There was no idea in the scout's mind of slaying the Chinaman for tearing the paper, but as long as the Chinaman thought this would be done the scout's purpose was accomplished.

"You sabe?" asked the scout, bending his glittering eyes on Chang Yuen.

"My no sabe," faltered Chang Yuen. "No can lead."

"Make a stagger at it, anyhow," admonished the scout. "You no read him, Hassayamp makee shoot."

Off to the side of the room Hassayamp was drawing a bead on Chang Yuen's blouse-covered breast. There was that in Hassayamp's face which proved he was eager for an excuse to use his shooting-iron. Chang Yuen saw this and fairly writhed with terror.

"Can do!" he bellowed; "no makee shoot!"

"Go on," said the scout. "What does the paper say?"

"Him say to Lattlesnake Tim," said Chang Yuen, holding the paper up close to his eyes, "Buff' Bill come plenty quick to gulch, you makee lun, gettee out of countly."

"Who wrote it?" asked the scout blandly.

"Him signed Yut Sing."

"That's all?"

"No say ally mo'."

"How d'ye know he ain't lyin', Buffalo Bill?" asked Hassayamp.

"I don't know, but I can find out."

"How?"

"Can you rustle another Chinaman for me, Hassayamp?"

"Kin I? Waal, I reckon. They're thicker'n flies eround a merlasses-bar'l, a ways up ther gulch."

"Chase one in here as quick as you can—one that can read—and I'll show you how we're going to test Chang Yuen's veracity."

Hassayamp slipped the revolver into his belt as the scout took the paper out of Chang Yuen's hand. The next moment Hassayamp was tearing up the gulch on the hunt for a Chinaman who could read.

He was back in fifteen minutes, leading a Chinaman by the cue.

"Hyar's yer man, Buffalo Bill," said Hassayamp. "I know he kin read, kase I've seen him writin' letters with a paint-brush. His name's Sing Sing, which is whar he ort ter been long ago. Sing Sing is shore his proper home."

"Can you read, Sing Sing?" queried the scout.

Sing Sing cast a frightened glance at Chang Yuen, then swerved his almond eyes to the resolute face of Buffalo Bill.

"My can do," said he.

"I want you to read something for me. Read it right, mind you. Chang Yuen has already read it to us, and if you don't read the same as he did, then we shall know that one or other of you is not telling the truth."

The scout turned to Hassayamp with a covert wink.

"If Sing Sing doesn't read that communication just as Chang Yuen gave it to us," said he, "then you will put a bullet into Chang and I'll take care of Sing."

Chang Yuen was almost frightened out of his wits. He twisted despairingly in his chair and his face turned to the color of old cheese.

The scout gave the paper to Sing Sing, who squared away and began in a faltering voice:

"Him addressed all same Lattlesnake Tim."

"So far so good," said the scout. "How is it signed?"

"Him signed Tau Kee——"

A screech burst from Chang Yuen, and he started up, shaking as with an ague.

"My no leadee light!" he wailed. "My can do, you givee nothel chance. No shootee! Me velly good China boy. Me leadee light nexy time."

"Whoosh!" guffawed Hassayamp Jim. "Thar's more ways than one o' skinnin' a cat. I takes off my hat ter ye ag'in, Buffalo Bill!"

To learn that the letter was from Tau Kee at once discredited Chang Yuen's work. Chang himself had been as quick to understand this as had Hassayamp or Buffalo Bill.

"Hassayamp," said the scout, turning to the jubilant miner, "take Sing Sing out of the house where he can't hear what Chang has to say. While Sing's away, Chang will translate the letter again. When he has finished you will bring Sing back and let him prove Chang's work."

By playing one Chinaman against the other, we will be able to get down to the facts."

"Goin' ter give Chang another chance ter save his skelp, aire ye?" asked Hassayamp, grabbing the end of Sing's pigtail.

"Yes—providing he shows a willing spirit from now on."

"This way, ye goggle-eyed rat-eater!" said Hassayamp to Sing Sing as he towed him clear of the cabin.

Buffalo Bill had taken the paper. He now returned it to Chang.

"What does it say?" he asked sternly.

"Him to Lattlesnake Tim flom Tau Kee," chattered Chang.

"It's clear enough now who it's from."

"Lettel makee say two Chinamen flom 'Flisco makee come to Tau Kee to-morrow night——"

"When was that written by Tau Kee?"

"Yessulday."

"I see. Two Chinamen from 'Frisco are going to call on Tau Kee to-morrow night—that's to-night. Go on."

"Lettel makee say him big high men flom Chinatown, makee talk 'bout opium-trade and slave-trade. One big high man got cut on face side like closs; both big high men stay with Chinamen in Glay Buzzel's Gulch till makee go to Tau Kee. Big high men makee stay Lost Mule Gulch till Lattlesnake Tim come. Then Lattlesnake Tim and big high Chinatown men all makee stay Lost Mule Gulch till Tau Kee makee send man blingee them Cañon of Death. Him lettet no say ally mo'. Tau Kee makee kill Chang Yuen now."

"Don't worry about that, Chang. Tau Kee is pretty close to the end of his trail. He's a bad Chinaman and

will have to pay for some of his evil work. Now, let's see if I've got this right:

"Two Chinamen from San Francisco are staying in the Chink camp above here, in the gulch. One of these Chinamen has a cut on the side of his face in the form of a cross. Both of them are going to Lost Mule Gulch to-night, where they expect to meet Rattlesnake Tim. Then, when these three are in Lost Mule Gulch, Tau Kee will send a Chinaman to meet them and guide them into the Cañon of Death. Is that right?"

"Yessee, him allee light. My can go now?"

"No, you can't go just yet. What were you doing outside this cabin while I was talking with Hassayamp?"

"Makee watch, makee lis'n."

"You're a spy for Tau Kee, then?"

"All same."

"Who brought word from Kymo that I and my pards were intending to come to Gray Buzzard's Gulch?"

"Nothel China boy, spy fol Tau Kee."

"That letter doesn't say anything about me."

"Him lettell come to Lattlesnake Tim befo' China boy blingee news you come. My tellee Lattlesnake Tim last night you come. Him makee steal hlorsee ffrom Hass'yamp, makee tly get away. No can do."

"That's the way to talk. I'm going to keep you for a while here in this camp, Chang, but no harm will come to you if you don't try to get away."

"Tau Kee sendee Chang Yuen top-side!"

"No, he won't. I'm here to capture Tau Kee and send him to 'Frisco."

"No can do."

"Watch my smoke." The scout lifted his voice. "Hello, Hassayamp!"

"Hyee!" came from without.

"All ready. Bring back your Chink."

Presently Hassayamp came snaking Sing Sing back through the door.

"Got ther rights-o' thet letter, Cody?" asked Hassayamp.

"Chang has given me a full translation, and it rings true. All we have to do now is to prove it by Sing."

Sing was given the letter. Although he was in great anxiety for fear of harm coming to himself or to Chang Yuen, yet he read the letter through substantially as Chang had given it.

"Check!" exclaimed the scout, when Sing had finished. "The two translations tally to a dot, Hassayamp."

"Ther fust translation made by Chang sounds about as much like the last as a shoot-fest sounds like er nigger camp-meetin'. Nothin' at all erbout ye in thet last translation, Buffalo Bill."

"Not a thing."

"Rattlesnake Tim jest simply heerd ye was comin' an' was so skeered he took my hoss an' lit out fer Lost Mule Gulch a day ahead o' time. But thar ain't no directions in thet letter tellin' ye how ter go ter git ter this place they call the Cañon o' Death."

"There are the best kind of directions, Hassayamp."

The miner opened his eyes and stared.

"Mebby I'm er ijut, but I swear I kain't see it," said he.

"These two big high boys from 'Frisco are up above us in the Chink camp. Suppose I and my pards watch the camp, then follow the Chinamen when they leave? Or, on the other hand, suppose we were to go direct to Lost Mule Gulch and wait there for the Chinamen to come? Then, after they arrive and are met by the man who is

going to take them to Tau Kee, suppose we follow the three men into the Cañon of Death?"

"Ye're too plum' deep fer me!" exclaimed Hassayamp. "But I reckons ye kin do it, Buffalo Bill. I'm beginnin' ter think thar ain't many things ye kain't do, when ye make up yer mind. But it's blame' risky."

"When a man does his duty in these parts, Hassayamp, he usually has to take some risk."

"Thet's right, too. From ther tone o' thet letter, Buffalo Bill, it looks ter me as though Rattlesnake Tim didn't hev much of er idee whar this hyer Cañon o' Death is, arter all. Ef he had, it wouldn't hev been necessary fer Tau Kee ter send some 'un ter guide him an' ther 'Frisco Chinks ter his hang-out."

"Undoubtedly you're right."

"Then, by missin' Rattlesnake Tim like ye done, an' findin' him swingin' from the cottonwood, wasn't sich a mighty loss ter ye, arter all, hey?"

The scout frowned.

"As I said before, Hassayamp, two wrongs never made a right. If a man steals a horse, that's wrong; if the man is lynched for stealing the horse, that's a bigger wrong. However, it is impossible to undo what has happened, and I am not here for that, anyway. Where is Lost Mule Gulch?"

"Ten mile away, in ther wildest part o' ther mountings."

"Hard to find?"

"Not fer a man thet knows the kentry. What ye goin' ter do with Sing and Chang?"

"I want you to keep them for me for a few days."

"Keno, Buffalo Bill. Anythin' I kin do ter help I'll be tickled ter pull off."

"This slay-dealer, Tau Kee, has his spies everywhere."

If possible, I should like to keep what has happened in your cabin from the Chinks up above. If the two men from 'Frisco got word about what I had discovered, they might not attempt to go to Lost Mule Gulch."

"Thet's er fact. I'll put ropes on ther two Chinks, an' gags, too, if ye say so. No one'll see 'em but me. An' I'll hold 'em till ye say ter let 'em go."

Hassayamp, feeling that he might not have done the right thing the night before, was anxious to help the scout all he could, in an endeavor to square the account.

While he was binding the Chinamen, a trampling of hoofs approached the door. The sounds halted, and a voice boomed out:—

"Hi, thar, Buffler! Yer hoss is out hyar, an' I reckons ye're inside. Aire ye?"

"On deck, Nick," the scout called back.

"Come ter ther door, Buffler. Got somethin' hyar ter show ye."

The scout was on his way to the door as Nomad spoke. When he reached it, and looked out, he saw a peculiar sight.

Nomad, Little Cayuse, and Sam Hill were grouped about two silken-clad, long-cued Chinamen, mounted on burros. From their rich apparel it was evident the Chinamen were men of some consequence. Each wore a silk cap with a tassel, and were of good size—like most celestials from the north of China.

Both Chinamen were uneasy, and kept casting apprehensive glances up the gulch. Clearly they were with the scout's pards 'against their will.

"Ketched 'em hidin' in ther bresh jest as we finished plantin' Rattlesnake Tim an' started fer hyar," explained Nomad. "They acted suspicious, an' I didn't know but they might hev er guilty knowledge o' ther lynchin'."

"Chinamen had nothing to do with the lynching, Nick," said the scout.

Chagrin overspread the trapper's face.

"Then I made er miscue by bringin' of 'em in," said he. "Better let 'em go, hadn't I?"

"Wait a minute."

The scout stepped closer to one of the Chinamen and looked at the side of his face. It bore a scar in the shape of a cross.

"No," exulted the scout, "you have made a find, old pard! I want these men. Bring them into the cabin. Cayuse, take care of the burros and the horses. Watch them, boy, until we need them."

If the two Chinamen had had nothing to do with the lynching, Nomad was wondering what business the scout could possibly have with them.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A DARING PLAN.

When Nomad and Sam Hill entered Hassayamp's cabin, personally conducting the two big high men from 'Frisco, Sing Sing and Chang Yuen had been bound and dragged out of sight behind a piece of swinging canvas that partitioned a clothes closet off the main living-room.

Hassayamp had heard the colloquy taking place between the pards at the door. Nevertheless he was as much surprised at the scout's action in retaining the Chinamen as were Nomad and Hill.

"My trapper pard, Nick Nomad, Hassayamp," said the scout, nodding toward the old man. "Also Sam Hill, of Kymo——"

"Ye don't need ter interduce me ter Hill," grinned Hassayamp. "H-h-how aire ye, S-S-Sam? •Nomad, glad ter shake yer fin."

Hassayamp wheeled about and took a good look at the two men Nomad had brought in.

"Wow!" he muttered. "They looks like reg'lar bazar-men, and good things. But why aire ye keepin' of 'em, Buffalo Bill?"

"Look at the face of that man on the right," said the scout.

Hassayamp stepped over and looked.

"Thunder!" he cried. "Thes aire the big high boys from 'Frisco!"

"Exactly. They were starting for Lost Mule Gulch a little ahead of time—like Rattlesnake Tim, for instance."

"An' Nomad brought 'em in! Too bloomin' bad, ain't it?"

"Why?"

"Waal, they're next ter ye, now, an' ye kain't pick up their trail in Lost Mule Gulch, an' foller."

"I can do something better than that."

"What?"

"I'll tell you later."

"A-A-All this is s-s-sur-sur——" began Hill.

"Shore et is," broke in Nomad, "et's blame' surprisin', Hill, an' no two ways erbout et. Somethin' must hev happened hyar while we was busy with Rattlesnake Tim. What was et, Buffler?"

"Your mind will be set at rest in a few minutes, Nick," the scout answered.

Turning to the two bazar-men, he motioned for them to sit down. One obeyed the gesture. The other declined, and remained standing in considerable dignity.

"Why you treat two peaceable Chinamen like this, uh?" asked the celestial who had remained on his feet. "This a free country, uh? You give back burros quick and let Chinamen go."

"Not so fast, my friend," said the scout. "You're from San Francisco, aren't you?"

"Chinaman mind his own business," was the calm reply, "and Melican man do same."

The Chinaman pulled a fan from the breast of his blouse and proceeded to cool himself with it.

"Thet's a hot 'un," muttered Hassayamp. "He's got his nerve."

"You were going to Lost Mule Gulch," pursued Buffalo Bill.

"Mebbyso; mebbysso Kymo. Chinamen go where thev please."

"When you reached Lost Mule Gulch you were to be met by a white man named Rattlesnake Tim."

The big high man's complacency was broken a little, at that.

"So?" said he, studying an open-mouthed dragon on his fan. "You're plenty smart foreign devil, but you make bad guess."

"Tau Kee was to send a man to meet you and your friend and Rattlesnake Tim," went on the scout, "and this man was to conduct you to the Cañon of Death and to Tau Kee, the slave-dealer."

The man on the bench drew in his breath and hunched his shoulders. A quiver ran through the other Chinaman's face, but he had better command of himself than his companion.

"Another bad guess," he observed dryly.

"You're going to talk with Tau Kee about opium. There's a big stone yamen in 'Frisco, with barred windows and iron doors. How you like to be behind the doors, uh?"

"Not like it very well. You make up fine story, but we don't go to white devils' yamen because you make bad guess. We all same peaceful Chinese bazar-men. Come to Gray Buzzard's Gulch to make bid furnish supplies to coolie gold-diggers. Now on our way to Kymo to reach 'Frisco. You keep us, we make you plenty trouble."

"Why did you hide in the bushes when my pards were coming along the gulch?" demanded the scout.

"We think your pards mebbysso hold-up men."

"Waugh!" snorted old Nomad. "Took us fer a lot er hold-up men! What d'ye think er thet, Sam Hill?"

"S-s-strangle th-th-the y-y-yel——"

Hill's gaunt body was aquiver with rage.

"They ort ter be strangled, thet's er fact, Hill," said Nomad, "but Buffler is workin' this deal, an' thar's a hull lot back o' et we don't know nothin' erbout."

"You make big mistake," proceeded the Chinaman. "I'm Wah Yip; my friend's name Wah Yong. We keep big wholesale house in 'Frisco. Know all big high white men. Ask Finucane, chief white devils' police. He tell you all about Wah Yip an' Wah Yong. Now you give back burros and let Chinamen go."

As he finished, he stepped toward the door, at the same time flinging a remark in Chinese at Wah Yong.

Wah Yong started to rise.

"Sit down!" ordered Buffalo Bill. "Nick, stop that other Chink! They'll leave here when I'm ready to have them, and not before."

Quick as a flash Wah Yip flung out his right arm. A knife slid into his right hand from somewhere up his wide, long sleeve.

The knife flashed in a half-circle, but, before it could strike Nomad, Sam Hill had grabbed the Chinaman's wrist.

Hill might stutter in his talk, but there was no stuttering in his actions. His move was like lightning; and it took him about half a second to shake the knife out of Wah Yip's hand.

"Waugh!" snarled Nomad fiercely. "Tried ter knife me, hey? Why, you scarred-face son o' Belial, I'd put ther kibosh on an ord'nary Chink fer thet!"

Nomad grabbed the Chinaman, took a twist of his cue about his yellow throat, and forced him down on the bench, at the same time choking him with the braided hair.

"That's all right, pard," said the scout. "Wah Yip has more spirit than I expected to find. We've caught

him at criminal work, and we've got to expect him to feel cut-up and desperate about it."

"Waal, he needn't fry ter make me feel cut-up, too," scowled Nomad.

"He's b-b-bad med-med-med——"

"Shore he is, Hill. Heap bad medicine. Say, fer a Great American Splinter ye jiggled yerself mighty quick. Wouldn't hev thort sich er gangle-legged specimen as you could hev done et."

"I'm qu-qu-quicker w-with my h-h-hands than I am w-w-with my t-t-tongue or—or——"

"No discount on thet, Hill. What's ter be done with ther Chinks, Buffler?"

"Peel off their silk clothes and their caps," answered the scout calmly.

Nomad stared.

"Goin' ter put 'em ter bed?"

"Not exactly. Hassayamp, got two pairs of extra trousers—old ones?"

"Waal, I reckon," answered the amazed Hassayamp. "Nothin' pertic'larly fine, howsumever. They're overalls I used in ther diggin's."

"They will do, all right."

Nomad let go Wah Yip's cue and untwined it from his neck. When he laid hands on Wah Yip's blouse, however, the Chinaman protested.

"You pay big for this," he threatened, "if you rob Chinamen."

"We aren't going to rob you at all, Wah Yip," answered the scout soothingly. "We're not that sort. We are merely going to borrow your clothes in order to carry out a plan for forwarding the interests of right and justice."

The scout turned to his gaping friends.

"Some people might think it a daring plan," he added, "and perhaps a reckless one, but it's one of my maxims to strike while the iron's hot and not to pass up any opportunities. What little success I have had in the West and Southwest is due almost solely to that."

"Snarlin' hyeners! What ther blazes aire ye thinkin' o' doin', anyways, Buffler?"

This from Nick, while he pulled off Wah Yip's embroidered jacket.

"Patience, pard," said the scout, "and you'll know all before long."

"I kin hev patience, all right, ef I knows I'm ter be in on the deal."

"You are," returned the scout grimly.

Blouses, trousers, and caps were soon on the table, and the two sulky Chinamen were made to get into two pairs of muddy blue overalls.

"Now," proceeded the scout, "tie them, friends, and put them with Sing Sing and Chang Yuen. I want you, Hassayamp, to keep them just as you do the other two Chinks. Don't make them any more uncomfortable than you have to."

"This hyer cabin is being turned inter a reg'lar Chink skookum-house," grinned Hassayamp, "but I'm willin'. If it's anythin' ter help Buffalo Bill, we'll turn ther hull camp inter a Chink lock-up."

Yip and Yong did not look so impressive in their overalls as they had in their fine Chinese attire. When stripped, it had been discovered that both of them wore money-belts, heavily weighted with gold.

"They were going to the Cañon of Death to buy smuggled opium of Tau Kee, or perhaps slave girls," said

the scout. "It was a neat arrangement, and it falls into our hands pretty pat. We'll nip proceedings in 'the bud, and, at the same time, if luck favors, we shall lay old Tau Kee by the heels."

"But how?" demanded Nick.

"You'll find out before you're many hours older, pard," returned the scout.

CHAPTER XXV.

BILL BUFF AND NO MAD.

Hassayamp prepared a late dinner of bacon, spuds, beans, coffee, and skillet bread. Little Cayuse was called in to take his share of the food.

The boy saw the four Chinamen, bound hand and foot, behind the canvas curtain, and he must have known that something unusual was going forward, but not a word or a move suggested curiosity.

After the meal, he took a little red paint from his medicine-bag and drew two lines down each side of his face.

This was Little Cayuse's war-paint. It told, in no uncertain manner, that he expected soon to go on the war-path with Buffalo Bill.

The scout watched the boy with grim humor.

"Go back and keep watch of the live stock, Cayuse," said the scout, when the painting was finished.

"Wuh!" said Little Cayuse, and strode out.

"Thet Injun kid ain't much of er hand ter palaver, is he, now?" remarked Hassayamp.

"Never," replied the scout.

"Leetle Cayuse," averred Nomad, "says less an' savvy's more than any white man, big er little, ye ever seen. Notice ther war-paint?"

"Shore."

"Thet means, podner, thet he's next ter a glimmerin' idee o' what Pard Buffler has in mind. I no cuntux ther situation, an' you don't, ner Sam Hill, hyar. But Cay-

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use—why, he's got his Injun notions, an' he's primed hisself fer b, i, z, biz."

"I take off my hat ter him," said Hassayamp.

"I want two pieces of rope about a yard long, Hassayamp," said the scout.

Hassayamp got the pieces of rope.

"Take them down to where Cayuse is herding the horses and burros, Nick," proceeded the scout, "and tell Cayuse to paint both ropes a dead black."

"Ye'll hev me mad as er locoed steer, Buffler," groaned the old trapper, "with all these hyar goin's on which I kain't savvy."

"No Mad," laughed the scout. "That's what we'll call you this evening. Bill Buff and No Mad." The scout laughed again. "How does that sound?" he asked.

"Sounds bug-house, Buffler," flung back the trapper, starting off with the ropes.

Sam Hill had filled his pipe, and was smoking. He had tried several times to stutter out a question or two, but had given up each time and relapsed into silence.

Hassayamp was clearing away the dinner dishes. His face was heavy with repressed curiosity, and his brain was harried with wild guesses.

"Can you talk and work, too, Hassayamp?" asked the scout.

"Try me," was the answer.

"How long will it take two men, on burros, to get to Lost Mule Gulch?"

"Two hours."

"There's a moon to-night, isn't there?"

"Full moon, an' from ther looks now 'thar'll be a clear sky."

"Could you tell a stranger how to go from Gray Buz-

zard's Gulch to Lost Mule Gulch, by moonlight, without making a mistake?"

"I kin. Ther landmarks kain't be mistook and ther trip 'u'd be plumb easy."

"Well, tell me."

"Fust off, ye go down ther gulch."

"Yes."

"But ye don't go clear down ter ther end. Ye goes only half-way, ter a gap in ther left-hand wall. Gap's easy ter find. It opens up in the wall like er lost tooth in ther mouth of er Modoc squaw. There you turns, climbs, crosses a level stretch due west fer a mile—an' thet brings ye ter ther rim o' Lost Mule Gulch. It's an easy slope on ther east side, Lost Mule Gulch is, but it's a steep wall more'n five hundred feet high on ther west."

"That all?"

"Thet's ther a ter z of it, Buffalo Bill."

In a little while, Nomad returned with the blackened ropes.

Picking up the tasseled caps of the Chinamen, the scout affixed a piece of rope to each of them.

"Now," said he, "we'll kill time until supper. Have it early, will you, Hassayamp?"

"Shore. Anythin' ter oblige."

"I and my pards have got to hit the trail directly after sun-down."

"What trail, Buffler?" asked Nomad.

"The trail to Lost Mule Gulch."

With that, the scout left the cabin and spent the afternoon at the diggings. He was back in time for supper, and found Nomad and Hill engaged in a game of seven-up, on the bench in front of Hassayamp's cabin.

"He don't stutter none with ther keerds, nuther, Buffler," observed Nomad. "What's next?"

"Call in Cayuse."

Supper over, an air of intense expectation pervaded Buffalo Bill's friends—Little Cayuse possibly excepted. He started off to continue looking after the live stock, but the scout called him back.

"Bring up the horses and burros, Cayuse," said Buffalo Bill.

"Wuh."

Cayuse vanished.

"Now," proceeded the scout, "get into a blouse and a pair of Chink trousers, Nomad. Keep on your other clothes, but slip your revolvers around on the belt so you can get at them handily through the front of the blouse. Put your cap in the breast of your buckskin coat, just as I'm doing."

The scout, as he spoke, removed his sombrero, folded it compactly, and stowed it away in the front of his coat. Likewise he slid his gun-holsters around as he had directed Nomad to do.

To get into the Chinese gear took only a little time, and when Nomad was ready, with the silk cap on his shaggy head and the blackened rope dangling behind, Sam Hill laughed uproariously and nearly fell off his chair.

"Funny, ain't it?" grunted Nomad, glaring. "Ef this hyar's a joke, Buffler——"

"It's a joke—but I expect to make it a joke on Tau Kee," interrupted the scout. "Here's where I tell you all about it—but, first, make a round of the cabin, Hassayamp, so that we'll be sure no Chink from above is eaves-dropping."

While Hassayamp was making the round, Buffalo Bill explained to Nomad and Hill and Little Cayuse—who had

come with the horses and burros—about the Chinese letter to Rattlesnake, translated by Chang and Sing.

"It has long been a puzzle," the scout went on—like-wise addressing Hassayamp, who had got back by then—"it has long been a puzzle to the 'Frisco authorities how this slave-dealer and opium-smuggler, Tau Kee, has been able to boss his many operations from a hang-out in these Arizona hills.

"Tau Kee never leaves his home roost, and yet, by the aid of efficient emissaries, he managed, for some time, to prosecute a very profitable business in contraband goods. He began by bringing in slaves by way of the Gulf of California and the Colorado river, transporting his human chattels thence overland to Chinatown in San Francisco. My pards and I, I am happy to say, gave that traffic a telling blow from which it has not recovered.

"Next, Tau Kee turned his attention particularly to the opium-business, trying to introduce the drug among the Indians of the Moqui pueblos. Fortune favored us, and my pards and I were able to stop that contraband traffic.

"But Tau Kee himself still remains entrenched among his coolies in that mysterious place called the Cañon of Death. Whether there is such a cañon or not has long been in dispute, but I think we have settled it pretty thoroughly that the place has a real existence. The problem before us, pards, is to capture Tau Kee and send him to 'Frisco to be punished for his criminal deeds.

"You remember that old recipe for cooking a hare. 'First catch your hare,' and so on. Well, before we can capture Tau Kee we've got to find him—and that's a job a good many men have tried to do, and failed. We're not going to fail. Luck has dropped into our hands a

sure method for locating Tau Kee. When we find him, we'll take care of the rest of our work and capture him.

"In order to find the slave-dealer, Nomad and I are to play the rôles of Wah Yip and Wah Yong. We wouldn't pass muster in broad day, but I think, on a moonlit night, the man who comes to Lost Mule Gulch for us won't be able to detect the trick. We shall get into the Cañon of Death, and we shall find the slave-dealer."

The old trapper, a grotesque figure in his borrowed clothes, was rubbing his hands and gloating over the prospect.

"Y-y-you'll b-be k-k—" bubbled Hill.

"Nary, we won't be killed," said Nomad. "Buffer an' me's a hull team an' somethin' ter spare."

"Wh-wh-what's f-for me an L-L-Little C-C-C-ay—"

"You and Little Cayuse," said the scout, addressing the Piute boy particularly, "are to follow us, at a good distance, with the horses. After Nick and I leave Lost Mule Gulch you're to continue to follow—if you can. Cayuse, I depend on you. Do what you think best, in the circumstances; only remember, when we want our horses we may want them in a hurry. Have them where we can get at them, if possible."

"Wuh!" said Little Cayuse, a smoldering light in his dark eyes.

"When I hired you in Kymo, Hill," continued the scout, "you were only to be of service here in Gray Buz-zard's Gulch. If you don't want to keep on with us—"

"I d-d-do!" stuttered Hill, with much vehemence. "S-s-say, I w-w-wouldn't be l-left out of th-th-this f-foi a f-f-farm."

"Very well. You all understand what's to be done, and there's no further need of words. No Mad and Bill Buff are off for the Cañon of Death."

"Whar ye're shore goin' ter stay!" declared Hassayamp grimly. "It's er fool bizness, an' is shore goin' ter cost ye yer skelps."

"We'll see about that," answered the scout, half-through the door. "Take good care of the Chinks, Hassayamp."

"It's me fer thet part o' it, all right."

Without more ado, Bill Buff and No Mad got astride the burros and started.

At the edge of the camp, the scout and the trapper passed a couple of miners.

"Look at the rat-eaters!" cried one jeeringly.

"Hookeshty mookeshty thri kem a hooshty," chattered Nomad, with a stifled laugh.

"That's right," called the other miner, "throw yer onnery lingo. What's shark's fins sellin' at?"

The burros passed on into the gloom of the gulch beyond the camp.

"Oh, I dunno, Buffler!" said Nomad, with a self-satisfied chuckle. "This rig, mebbys, is better'n what we think. We fooled them miners in good shape."

"They weren't close enough to see our boots or our whiskers," laughed the scout. "If they had been we should not have fooled them so easily. This isn't an easy deal we're working, Nick—don't get that in your head for a minute."

"Nary, Buffler. Ef et was easy, I wouldn't like et. Et's ther hard things with er spice er risk in 'em thet hits me."

"This work is all danger—after we get into the Cañon of Death. That's an ominous name for a cañon, and there must be some excuse for it."

"So'st we git at Tau Kee thet's all I'm a-carin'."

"There's no telling how many men Tau Kee has with him. We're walking, wide-eyed, into a trap that may be sprung behind us, but if we can fool the man who comes to show us the way to Tau Kee, the advantage will be on our side—for a while."

"We'll fool him," said Nick confidently.

"Not if you let loose any jargon like that you just handed to those miners."

"Which I won't, pard. I got sense enough ter hold my yawp when we comes company-front with er reg'lar Chink."

The moon was in the sky, round and bright. Its light trailed over the western wall of the gulch, and when the pards had been nearly an hour on the way they began looking for the gap.

They saw it at last—a jagged rent in the high gulch side, with an easy slope leading up and through it.

Through this rent the hardy little burros bore them, and finally they found themselves on a level plateau, covered with boulders and cactus-clumps.

The moonlight lay brilliantly on the plateau, and it was not long until the venturesome pards had crossed the cactus-covered stretch and reached the brink of a chasm which they knew must be Lost Mule Gulch.

The bottom of the chasm was steeped in ominous darkness. Before the pards an easy slope dipped downward into the gloom, but the opposite side rose stark and sheer like the bastions of some huge fortress.

"Is this hyar ther place, Buffler?" asked Nomad, in a low tone.

"It answers the specifications, Nick," replied Buffalo Bill. "The man we're expecting to find may be down there somewhere, or he may not have come as yet. If

he's there, the less talking we do the better. If he's not there, we'll come to a halt and wait for him to find us."

"Kereet. Set yer pattern an' I'll foiler et. You better do all ther torkin' when we meet up with ther Chink."

"It's mighty little talking I'll do until we get into the añon we're bound for."

The scout started his burro down into the darkness, and Nomad followed closely.

At first, as the scout went downward, he could see little as the deeper gloom began to encompass him; then, as his eyes grew more familiar with the darkness, its pitch-black character gradually gave way, and he was able dimly to distinguish surrounding objects.

Boulders covered the gulch bed, scattered like blots as far as he could see in every direction. At the bottom of the slope he drew rein.

Nomad rode alongside and was about to speak, when a shrill whistle rang out, its echoes bounding from side to side of the gulch and finally fading into silence.

Instinctively each white man reached for the front of his blouse, a thought of discovery uppermost in his mind.

Not a word was spoken, but the scout and the trapper were ready for anything. They merely sat on their burros and waited.

Once more the whistle-signal filled the defile with its echoes; then, close upon the heels of it a brilliant red light shot up from the top of a boulder, illuminating the gulch with ghastly brilliancy.

Still not even then did a Chinaman show himself.

The red fire died down slowly until only a few glistening coals were left.

What did this mean? Treachery? Or was it the usual proceeding when any opium or slave-buyer was

being conducted to the secret fastnesses of the Cañon of Death?

That red light had enabled the man setting it off to see something of the character of the approaching men.

Was he satisfied with the appearance of Buffalo Bill and Nomad? Or had he seen anything to make him think that they were impostors?

Presently all doubts were settled.

A figure could be seen moving toward the pards from the direction of the boulder on which the red fire had appeared.

The figure halted a few paces away and called out something in Chinese. From the rising inflection of the man's voice, his words were evidently a question.

"*Ting haouiv*," said the scout.

That was about the extent of his knowledge of Chinese. *Ting haouiv* meant "all right," and was an answer that could be used for any one of a dozen questions.

To all appearances the answer satisfied the Chinaman. From under his blouse the man took a lighted lantern—a small lantern which gave about as much light as a good-sized glow-worm. However, it served as a guide for the two pards.

A beckoning wave of the light was a signal to move forward, and the scout and the trapper proceeded.

The course they were led was down the gulch, the man in advance keeping several yards to the front. In and out among the boulders moved the light, the pards keeping their eyes fixed on it constantly.

Probably a quarter of a mile from the place where they had entered the gulch, the light made a sharp turn to the right and crossed to the steep eastern wall.

The light halted directly in front of the wall, before

a mass of bushes that seemed to climb directly up its face. As the scout spurred onward, and came closer and closer to the wall, the man with the lantern backed into the bushes, apparently penetrating the solid granite.

The glow of the light wavered and continued to recede, beckoning as it went.

The scout spurred the reluctant burro into the tangled mass of branches. A moment later the chaparral gave way completely and the scout found himself in a dank-smelling corridor, or tunnel, or grotto—he was at a loss to tell which.

His curiosity was mounting at every step, and at every step he was looking for surprises.

The Chinaman's lantern was too dim and too far in advance to be of much service in surveying the place through which the scout and the trapper were being conducted. All they could do was to file along in the wake of the Chinaman.

They had not proceeded many feet before the scout came to the conclusion that they were traveling through a sort of natural corridor—a corridor that led into the apparently solid wall of the gulch—where?

Abruptly something happened which changed the trend of events.

Another Chinaman showed himself at the side of the one with the light. This second man, after exchanging a word or two with the guide, moved gulchward along the passage.

What followed was immediately foreseen by the scout, but there was no way of avoiding it.

The second man, coming close to the two on the burros, was sufficiently sharp-eyed to note the American faces of the riders.

He gave a screech.

The scout clapped his two hands about the Chinaman's throat, and held him as in a vise.

The man with the lantern, unable to comprehend what was happening, came trotting back toward the two he was guiding.

"Get the other fellow, Nick!" called the scout sharply. "Quick, before he gets away from us."

The old trapper had slipped down from his burro at the yell of alarm. The scout's order found him ready, and he made a rush in the direction of the man with the lantern.

The voice of the scout had made it clear to the first Chinaman that those he had been leading were not the ones he had supposed them to be.

He turned to run, but Nomad had him in less than a dozen steps.

"What's ter be done with 'em, Buffler?" asked the trapper, holding his man down on the rocky floor and smothering his lips with one hand.

"Keep them from doing any more yelling; that's the main thing. Find some way to tie them, is the next thing. We've got to leave them here, but they've got to be made harmless before we go."

Nomad jerked off the Chinaman's blouse; then, kneeling on his chest, he threatened him with a bullet if he made a sound, and tore the cotton blouse in strips. These strips answered for bonds and a gag.

The scout had proceeded somewhat in the same way. Working quickly, the pards had the two Chinamen helpless almost before they were able to realize that they were prisoners.

"This is unfortunate," said the scout regretfully. "I

expected that our ruse would be discovered, but hoped it would not happen until we had reached the cañon. Come on, Nick. We'll leave the Chinks and the burros here, scout on ahead and see where this passage leads."

Picking up the lantern which had been dropped by their erstwhile guide, Buffalo Bill and Nomad made their way along the tunnel.

CHAPTER XXVI.

IN THE CANON.

The tunnel was long and tortuous. As the scout examined it under the light of the lantern, the walls gave evidences of erosion.

In ages past a seepage of water had eaten its way through the softer strata in that part of the gulch wall, digging it out and ultimately forming the hole which the scout and the trapper were exploring.

Whether the water that had wrought this prodigious piece of work had come from Lost Mule Gulch, or from some place toward which the pards were proceeding, was a secret locked in the breast of Nature. Nevertheless, the tunnel was there; it had been made use of by Tan Kee in his lawless operations, and it was now to serve Buffalo Bill in his attempt to make a prisoner out of the slave-dealer and end his nefarious career.

A sharp twist in the passage brought the pards face to face with the ragged, irregular opening which formed the tunnel's exit.

Up to that moment they had had no idea where they were going, and the abrupt change from the gloom of the tunnel to the bright moonlight thrilled them quite as much as the beautiful scene which magically unrolled before their eyes.

Before them stretched an oblong niche in the mountains, reaching far to the north and losing itself in the velvety darkness. Perhaps the niche was an eighth of a mile wide. Its sides were sheer cliffs, save at one part of the left-hand wall. Here there was a slope upward

to half the wall's height. At the top of the slope was a gigantic shelf, and above the shelf was a great overhang of the upper half of the cliff.

The walls of stone houses were visible on the shelf, and here and there lights flashed through openings in the walls.

Being directly over the niche, the moon trailed her light in every part of it, save where the overhanging cliff threw the stone houses into shadow.

Giant *sahuara* cacti were marshaled throughout the bed of the niche like so many grotesque sentinels.

Opposite the foot of the slope leading to the houses was a miniature lake, oval in form, and undoubtedly fed by underground springs—at least, Buffalo Bill could see neither inlet nor outlet. In the moonlight the lake sparkled like a silver plaque.

Not a moving figure was visible to the straining eyes of the pards, although there was small doubt about there being a plentitude of life among the stone houses.

"The Cañon of Death!" exclaimed the scout, with a sweeping gesture toward the scene before them.

"Et's ther purtiest bit o' scenery I've set eyes on fer quite er spell," returned Nomad. "Whyever should they call a place like this by sich er name?"

"Perhaps there's a reason which we know nothing about. Great place for a hang-out like Tau Kee's, Nick! Who'd ever imagine there was a hole through the wall of Lost Mule Gulch?"

"Mebbyso thet's how ther mule was lost thet give ther gulch et's name? Ther critter strayed inter this mole-hole back o' us, an' follered his nose till he came out inter this cañon. Oncet he got hyar, he lived in plenty an' peace ter the end o' his mule days."

"Hassayamp has lived in these parts for more than thirty years, and he never heard of the Cañon of Death."

"Waal, a feller mout live in Lost Mule Gulch fer a hundred y'ars an' he'd never heer of et er see et ontill some 'un p'inted ther way fer him, like was done fer us. Now we're hyar, Buffler, what we goin' ter do? 'Pears ter me like ole Tau Kee has lighted up in honor o' the callers he's expectin' from Chinktown, 'Frisco."

"Our business is to get hands on Tau Kee and snake him out of here."

"I reckon et'll be easy enough ter find him. I'll bet a ten-dollar bill agin' a last y'ar's bird's nest ther yaller slave-dealer is some'r's in thet bunch o' houses. Them looks like cliff-dwellin's ter me, pard."

"No doubt that is what they are. The people who inhabited this country centuries ago had to find places that would protect them from the Apaches. This would have made an excellent retreat for those old ancestors of the Aztecs. Half a dozen men could hold this tunnel against an army of hostile reds."

"Shall we make front on them stone houses, Buffler?" asked Nomad, impatient to be at work.

"I think you'd better stay here, pard, and let me go on with the scouting," answered Buffalo Bill. "One can work better than two at getting the lay of the land under that cliff."

"But ef they'd diskiver ye snoopin' around, two could do a hull lot more fightin' than one."

"I shall try not to let myself be discovered. We have two prisoners in this tunnel, Nick, and two burros. Both the prisoners and the burros must be watched. If a burro crowded out into the cañon and got to tracking around, it would be seen and would cause an alarm; and if one of the prisoners worked loose—well, there's no need for

me to tell you what would happen then. All our prospects for capturing Tau Kee would be knocked in the head."

"Ye're right as per usual, pard," said the old trapper promptly. "I'll stay hyar, but ef I hears anythin' thet sounds like ye had got inter trouble, et'll take more'n two Chinks an' a brace o' burros ter keep me from ther scene o' ther diffikilty."

"During this scout, Nick," said Buffalo Bill. "I'm going to try and dodge trouble. Take the lantern and go back, from time to time, and look at the prisoners. I'm off. The night is getting on, and if we do anything here we ought to wind it up before morning."

Handing the lantern to the trapper, the scout descended a short slope to the bed of the cañon. Here he paused to consider his course.

His safest way to reach the stone houses would have been by following the foot of the wall around to the ascent below the overhanging cliff. This would have taken considerable time, and the scout decided, inasmuch as the bottom of the cañon seemed entirely deserted, to make a direct advance upon the stone houses.

This called for a zigzag course across the upper end of the cañon, and he set out briskly. In a few moments he was among the *sahuaras*.

Something white against one of the *sahuaras* caught his eye, and he swerved from his course to see what the object was.

A chill shot through his nerves when he drew near. The object which had attracted his attention proved to be a human skeleton. It was hanging from the long thorns of the cactus midway between its top and the ground. Those bones, white and glimmering in the moonbeams, formed a gruesome spectacle.

Another of the cacti caught the scout's glance, and he found this likewise decorated with a human skeleton. Spurred by a morbid curiosity, he passed from *sahuara* to *sahuara*, only to find that from each hung a gleaming jumble of bones tied together with ligaments of deer-skin that was almost as tough as wire.

Where had those bones come from? What fiendish idea had the man in mind who had placed those grisly relics on the *sahuaras*?

The box-cañon was still beautiful in the moonlight, but for the scout the beauty had faded.

That secret niche in the mountains was literally a Cañon of Death. Every *sahuara* in the vast grove told its own fatal story.

At the base of one of the *sahuaras* the scout picked up a grinning skull. A flint arrow-head was embedded in the temple.

This arrow-head gave his thoughts a new turn.

The skeleton undoubtedly had been in the cañon for a long time. The arrow-head suggested an Indian massacre. Had Tau Kee, when he took possession of the cañon, found the bones scattered over the bed of it? And had he, out of some heathen conceit, decorated the *sahuaras* with them?

Such questions were bootless, and the scout did not waste any time trying to figure out answers to them. The night was passing, and he had yet to make his prowl among the stone houses.

He still seemed to be the only person abroad in the cañon. Flitting from cactus to cactus, he came at last to the foot of the slope leading to the shelf and the houses. The slope was easy and the climbing far from difficult.

As he mounted upward he saw that the houses were

ruinous, great gaps marking the places where portions of the walls had fallen inward or outward.

Three lights were visible, shining through deep embrasures. Hearing voices coming from the vicinity of one of the lights, the scout laid his course in that direction.

Redoubling his caution, now that he was hard upon the rendezvous of the slave-dealer, the scout noiselessly gained the top of the slope and stepped upon a narrow shelf of rock.

Some three feet from the edge of this shelf rose the ancient walls.

The coming of a Chinaman from the interior of the houses would have spelled disaster for the scout, and before he continued on toward the light from whose vicinity came the voices, he crouched down on the shelf and listened intently.

He heard no sounds which indicated the approach of a Chinaman; what he did hear, and with wonderful distinctness, were the voices that had already attracted his attention.

To his astonishment, they proved to be the voices of women. There were but two voices, and one was shrill and angry while the other was half-sobbing and pleading.

Wraithlike he glided to the window and peered in. What he saw caused him to draw back and clench his hands.

Buffalo Bill was no stranger to trying spectacles, but never had he looked upon any sight which enraged him like the one he saw through that opening in the old wall.

He hesitated only a moment; then, heedless of personal peril, he climbed to the opening and dropped into the room beyond.

Buffalo Bill, when he had looked through the unglazed opening which answered for a window, saw a square, ruinous chamber, the floor littered with debris except in the center and at one end, where the broken stone and rubbish had been pushed aside.

A candle was burning on a ledge of rock, its guttering flame serving to intensify the cruel little drama which it lighted.

A young woman leaned against the end wall of the room. Her arms were stretched above her head and secured in that position by thongs encompassing the wrists. The girl's face was to the stones, and her back was bare.

Near-by, with a rawhide whip in her hands, stood an ugly old hag. The hag's face was convulsed with anger, and she was snapping venomous words at the helpless girl. The girl's only reply consisted of choking sobs and tearful prayers for mercy.

Both women were Chinese. The one with the whip was clad in soiled and ragged clothes, and wore straw sandals; the other wore embroidered silk, and had gold-embroidered shoes on her diminutive feet. The covering removed from the upper half of the girl's body hung downward from a sash about her waist.

While the scout stared through the window opening, the old harridan had raised the whip and brought it down on the girl's back. A shiver ran through the frail form of the girl and a cry of pain burst from her lips. A livid welt stood out on the white skin of her back.

This is what the scout had seen; and it was this that impelled him to climb through the window and drop into the room.

Despite his encompassing dangers, Buffalo Bill's chivalry would not allow him to stand apart while such brutal treatment was being visited upon a woman. It mattered

not to the scout whether the woman were Chinese, Indian, or Caucasian; he would not tolerate such cruelty if he could prevent it.

The cries of the girl under the whip smothered the sounds of the scout's entrance. With one bound he covered the distance separating him from the old Chinese woman and, quick as thought, caught the skinny hand holding the whip and got his fingers over the woman's mouth before she could utter a screech of fear and astonishment.

The whip dropped, the woman stared wildly for an instant and then dropped limply to the floor.

Buffalo Bill was amazed at this, but presently concluded that his startling appearance had thrown the hag into a faint.

So far he had accomplished his purpose without causing an alarm to be sounded through the rooms and corridors of the cliff-houses; but the girl, likewise startled, seemed about to raise the cries which her tormentor had not been able to give.

"No makee noise," murmured the scout, stepping to the girl's side. "Me friend. You understand?"

The girl turned her head and gave him a look of dumb terror.

Buffalo Bill's ornate Chinese clothes, which gave the lie to his bearded American face, must certainly have astounded and confused the girl. The scout's kindly manner, on the other hand, was assuring. The girl became quiet, furtively awaiting developments.

Quickly as he could, the scout released her wrists. She would have fallen but for the quick support of his arm.

After a moment she disengaged herself from his grasp and stepped away, drawing her misplaced garment about her shoulders.

"Who you?" she asked curiously, a wince of pain running through her face as the silk garment touched the raw welts left by the whip.

The scout was glad to learn the girl could talk "pidgin."

"Me Melican," said he, with a friendly smile. "No like see China girl whipped."

The girl gazed at him for a few moments and then, as a swift thought ran through her brain, a terrified look crept into her eyes.

"No Melican men can come this place," she whispered. "Tau Kee makee see Melican man, usee bowstling. You savvy bowstling?"

The girl lifted her hands and pressed them about her throat.

This gesture was not needed to make the scout understand her words.

"Bowstring?" he returned gravely. "Yes, I savvy."

"Go!" breathed the girl, pointing to the window. "Makee lun, chop-chop."

The scout stretched out his hand.

"You slave girl? Come with Melican man. He sendee you 'Frisco, back to China."

An expression of joy overspread the girl's face and a light of hope danced in her almond eyes.

"Me slave girl. Tau Kee tly sellee to big high 'Frisco man. Him comee to-night. San Moy go!"

The girl put her hand in the scout's. At that moment the scout made a discovery: The hag had vanished from the room.

Either she had come out of her swoon with unusual celerity, or else she had been shamming with the hope of saving herself punishment and getting away.

"We'll have to hurry," muttered the scout, "or——"

But it was too late. The old Chinese woman had alarmed all the people in the cliff-houses, and they could be heard scuttling about in all directions.

Releasing the girl's hand, Buffalo Bill leaped to the wall and struck the candle to the floor.

"San Moy!" he whispered.

"Me here," came the girl's tremulous answer, through the darkness.

"Savvy any way out of this hole? Think quickly."

"My tly," answered the girl. "Takee hand—him so black in loom no can see."

Shadowy heads were coming and going past the window opening, and the swift *clap, clap* of sandals on the shelf beyond the wall gave evidence that Tau Kee's men had gathered to cut off retreat into the cañon.

There must be obscure rooms and corners in those old cliff-dwellings, the scout reasoned, where he could foil pursuit until such time as he could regain the shelf and fight his way down the slope and toward the mouth of the tunnel.

In spite of San Moy's excitement her hand was steady when the scout grasped it and she led him through the gloom toward a door.

There was one trouble with San Moy, however, which made her guidance slow and hazardous.

According to the Chinese custom with all high-born females, her feet had been bandaged in childhood and so kept from growing to normal size.

For a full-grown young woman to walk with a child's feet was difficult, especially through rooms and along passages littered with stones, and through pitch-darkness.

San Moy toddled—her forward movement could scarcely be called walking—and several times Buffalo Bill

was compelled to stop and pick her off the floor, or lift her over some large obstruction which got in their path.

All around them as they groped and stumbled through rooms and passages they could hear the scurrying of feet and an interchange of whistle-signals.

It seemed to the scout as though a snare of some kind was being spread, and that the Chinamen were merely waiting until he and the girl got into the right place before pulling the snare tight.

Suddenly the girl stopped. She saw that she was hampering the scout and so endangering his chances of escape.

"You leavee San Moy," she whispered; "you makee better lun no takee San Moy 'long."

"I'll get you away from this brutal outfit, San Moy, or else I'll go down fighting for the two of us!"

She reached up and laid her soft hand on his cheek with a caressing gesture.

"You plenty kin' friend," she murmured. "What you name?"

"Buffalo Bill."

"Buff' Bill!" She clapped her hands. "Ah-h-h! You samee Melican man savee Yee Wong."

The scout wondered how San Moy had happened to hear of Yee Wong, but had no time to waste in idle questioning.

"Come, San Moy," he whispered, "we can't stand here; every second counts, you know. I'll carry you——"

"No makee tly," she objected. "My plenty safe. You go 'lone, chop-chop. Savvy? Plaps you get away, you come back, savee San Moy 'nother time. Makee lun by wall—keepee hand on wall. Him blingee you all same to door flont of house. Goo'-by, Buff' Bill!"

Before he could catch her she had slipped away in the darkness, and he was left to fight his way out alone.

The scampering and the whistling kept up, now near, now at a distance; but it was constant, and proved that his enemies were on the alert.

Following San Moy's directions, Buffalo Bill kept his hand on the rough wall and made his best speed. He stumbled and barked his shins a score of times, but was up and running again with hardly the loss of a second.

If he could reach the shelf without the wall, he believed he would have a chance to fight his way to safety. That was his present object—to reach the door San Moy had told him about.

But luck was against the scout. A large stone caught his legs at the knees and the impetus at which he was traveling pitched him headlong.

When he struck, it was on a stone floor several feet below the level of the passage along which he had been running. The fall was terrific, and he landed on his head and shoulders, stunning him.

Dazedly, and scarcely comprehending, he saw a lurid glare of red, like the burst of flame that had lit up Lost Mule Gulch a little while before.

That was all the king of scouts remembered for some time. Night—the night of oblivion—closed down upon him impenetrably.

CHAPTER XXVII.

IN THE HANDS OF TAU KEE.

Buffalo Bill's faculties fought valiantly against the numbing effects of his fall. It was a winning fight, but a slow one, and when he opened his eyes it was to find himself a prisoner.

He was tied, hands at his back and his legs fairly covered with tightly drawn coils.

There was little surprise in finding himself a prisoner. The Chinamen would have been foolish indeed not to take advantage of the helplessness caused by his fall.

But what did surprise him a little was the discovery that his Chinese disguise had been stripped away.

Blouse and trousers lay on the stone floor near him, surmounted by the tasseled cap and the yard of blackened rope.

Half a dozen candles burned on ledges about the room. The scout lay in the center of the floor, at a point where the rubbish had been cleared away, and two men sat on each side of him.

He experienced another surprise when he discovered that these men were not Chinamen, but Apache Indians.

All this trouble the scout knew he had brought upon himself. Jumping through the window to rescue San Moy from the hag's whip lay at the bottom of his disaster. Nevertheless, given the same cause again, he would have acted exactly in the same way.

"Apache!" he called.

Both Indians turned their glittering eyes upon him, and one of them gave a surly grunt.

"Why have you made a prisoner of me?" the scout inquired, in Spanish.

Most Apaches understand Spanish, even if they do not speak it fluently.

"Ugh!" grunted one of the Indians. "Pa-e-has-ka got a bad heart for Long-tail yellow man. Pa-e-has-ka shall never leave the Cañon of Death. Long-tail has said."

"Long-tail has another guess coming," said the scout. "What are you Indians doing here?"

"Long-tail is our chief."

"He's a nice kind of a chief for a couple of Apaches! You reds had better get back to your reservation, and be good; Long-tail is nearing the end of his rope."

"Pa-e-has-ka talks big for a prisoner."

"Pa-e-has-ka talks sense; he knows."

"The trapped catamount can show his claws, but he cannot scratch; he can show his teeth, but he cannot bite."

Both Indians grunted delightedly over this figure of speech.

"There are others," said the scout calmly, "who will scratch for the trapped catamount, and who will bite for him, too."

"Pa-e-has-ka has friends near here to help him?" asked one of the Apaches uneasily.

"What Pa-e-has-ka knows, he knows," was the scout's oracular answer.

One of the Indians made a gesture with his head, and the other got up and left.

"Where has he gone?" asked the scout.

"To bring Long-tail," replied the Apache.

"Good! I have wanted to see this Long-tail for some time."

"You will see him, at the end of this sleep, for the last time."

"Is he going to die at the end of the sleep?"

"Pa-e-has-ka is going to die. Long-tail has said."

"Are the Apaches squaws that they put faith in a scoundrelly Chinaman? Are the Apaches children that they believe his foolish words? Pa-e-has-ka has the big medicine. Long-tail cannot kill him."

"Pa-e-has-ka big chief, but a big chief is only a man. Where was Pa-e-has-ka's medicine that it let him be captured? Where is Pa-e-has-ka's medicine that it keeps him bound? Wah!"

Further talk between the scout and the Indian was cut short by the coming of the Chinaman and the other Apache.

Another surprise thrilled through the scout when he set eyes on the slave-dealer. He was expecting to see a man equipped with physical prowess, half-ruffian, half-pirate, and wholly vicious. On the contrary, he beheld an individual who looked as though he might be a professor in some Chinese temple of learning.

Of course, the man was Tau Kee. The air of authority which he brought with him was proof of that.

Tau Kee was fat. Tau Kee was bald. And Tau Kee wore a pair of horn spectacles on his pudgy nose.

His face was childlike in its amiable expression. To look at his face, one would have thought that Tau Kee had not the courage to slap a fly.

He had a jolly eye, and when he came to the center of the room and stood looking down on the captured scout, he laughed so heartily that he dropped his spectacles.

"Fine joke, Tau Kee," said the scout, "only I don't feel like laughing with you."

"Fine joke?" repeated Tau Kee, between chuckles. "Why, it's the best ever."

That was American talk, and the scout gave Tau Kee a sharper look.

He was a Chinaman, all right. The slant of his eyes, the high bones in his fat cheeks, gave indisputable evidence on that point. Yet—he had no cue.

Carrying a silk cap in his hand, Buffalo Bill was able to see the whole of his bald head. But he had a long hair cue fastened to the edge of his cap—similar to the way in which the scout had made use of the blackened rope.

Tau Kee's jacket was of rich red silk; his trousers were also of silk, but yellow, and tied down at the ankles above his sandals.

"Where you ketchee so much good Melican talk?" asked the scout.

"Stow it! You don't have to throw any of your Melican pidgin at me. Get right down to brass tacks, Buffalo Bill, when you talk with this big high boy. Cut out the baby-talk. We can burn you at the stake or chop off your head. Which do you prefer—a stake, or a chop?"

Tau Kee clapped his hands over his stomach and writhed at the joke.

"You're as funny as a Joe Miller joke-book," said the scout. "Somebody will get you in an almanack one of these days."

"Don't think it, Buffalo Bill. I was born to go in a better book than an almanack. You queered my game with that mandarin's daughter, hornswoggling me out of a cool five thousand dollars, Mex. You butted into my game near Wolpi, destroyed two thousand dollars' worth of opium, capturing one of my best men and slay-

ing others. Oh, I feel mighty friendly toward you! You will understand how grateful I am about sunrise tomorrow morning. Think I'm stringing you? I am not now, but I will be at sunrise—bowstringing."

Tau Kee shook again with elephantine mirth.

"Joke about something else," said the scout. "Why are all those bones hanging to the *sahuaras* down in the cañon?"

"Ask my good friends, the Apaches, about that. They can tell you who furnished the bones, and how, and when. The Indians have called this the Cañon of Death, I believe, ever since the Melican gold-hunters were lured into it and massacred. Nice little place I've got here, eh?"

"Fine."

"You like it?"

"Sure. It's just the place to wind up a fat slave-trader."

"You speak of something that can't be done. There's too much gray matter in here," and Tau Kee thumped his dumpy knuckles against his bald head. "But tell me something, will you?"

"Certainly. Pack your bag for Frisco. They've got your room ready at San Quentin."

"There's plenty of room for me outside of San Quentin. This is what I want to know: Where are the two Wahs—Yip and Yong? I was expecting them here tonight with plenty of yellow metal. In their stead *you* blow in, wearing the clothes of a big high bazar-man. What's the answer?"

"Yip and Yong are waiting for their clothes at Gray Buzzard."

Tau Kee's eyes twinkled behind his spectacles.

"They're both waiting for their clothes, are they? You only wore one suit. Who's wearing the other?"

"You'll have to find that out for yourself."

Tau Kee slapped his hands. A coolie came running into the room. Tau Kee said something in Chinese, and the coolie went running out again.

"You brought some one with you," said Tau Kee to the scout. "What's more, my man whom I sent to Lost Mule Gulch hasn't come back; nor the other coolie who went to meet him in the tunnel. If there are two disguised Melican men loose in the cañon, we'll have to have the other one. It is late. I suppose you want to sleep?"

"I'm not sleepy."

"Afraid? Is the great Buffalo Bill afraid of Tau Kee? If so, that's the best joke of my career. I'll frame it in solid gold and hang it up where I can always see it."

"Don't order the frame," advised the scout dryly.

"I suppose you have wanted to see me for a long time?"

"Not half so much as I have wanted to get my hands on you."

"Getting your hands on me is an impossibility. I'm wise enough to see to that. You are to see me twice, Buffalo Bill, now and at sunrise. At sunrise we separate, and I'll make you a solemn promise."

"What's that?"

"You shall have the biggest *sahuara* in the cañon, all to yourself. Good night."

Tau Kee went out.

And the scout—went to sleep.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AT THE TUNNEL.

The old trapper, disappointed in not being able to accompany the scout, but recognizing the wisdom of the move that kept him at the tunnel, stood in the entrance and watched his pard zigzag among the *sahuaras*.

"Whyever is he foolin' around in thet grove o' cactus?" Nomad asked himself. "Et must be thet somethin' thar hes captered his fancy. Waal, while he's sociable with the *sahuaras*, I'll go back and get sociable with the Chinks."

The trapper turned back into the tunnel, retracing his way toward the spot where the Chinamen and the burros has been left.

His footsteps echoed hollowly in the vaulted passage, and as he walked along, swinging the lantern, he made good use of his eyes and ears.

It was the trapper's habit to keep his eyes and ears in full commission during his waking hours, and no matter whether he was busy or idle, he was constantly in touch with whatever was taking place around him.

Suddenly he came to a halt. His quick ear had detected a sound he did not like and could not account for.

It was not a sound made by a moving burro, but resembled more the sliding of a crawling form. He judged that it came from a point between his present position and the place where the burros and prisoners had been left.

Was there another Chinaman loose in the tunnel? If so, then it was a foregone conclusion that the fellow

had liberated the prisoners, and that Nomad was to have a three-cornered fight on his hands.

The prospect was not at all displeasing to the old trapper. As he moved onward again, he opened his blouse in front of his pistols and made ready for quick work if it should be needed.

Arriving opposite the place whence the sound had come, Nomad's quick eye detected something dark hugging the floor against one wall. The lantern dropped and the trapper flung himself on the object and gripped it with both hands.

It was a form, and a human form; but it was not the form of a Chinaman.

"Ugh!" it muttered.

"Jumpin' taranches!" muttered Nomad, drawing away. "Ef et ain't Leetle Cayuse I'm er Piegan!"

It was really the Piute, and he sat up with a calm "Wuh!" and leaned his back against the wall.

"What ye doin' hyar?"

"Come see what up."

"How d'ye find out erbout this place?"

"See um man with light bring Pa-e-has-ka and Wolf-killer in here."

"So ye follered?"

"Wuh."

"Whar's ther big high Sliver?"

"With um cayuse in gulch. Where Pa-e-has-ka?"

"Ef ye'll wait till I go back an' look at ther pris'ners, Cayuse, I'll show ye whar Buffler hes gone."

"Pris'ners all right; me just look um over."

"Keno! Then we'll erbout-face and push fer ther cañon."

Nomad led the boy to the end of the tunnel and showed him the Cañon of Death and the cliff-houses.

Buffalo Bill had vanished from among the *salmaras* and had probably gained the shelf and begun his daring search for information.

Nomad explained to Little Cayuse where the scout had gone and what he hoped to accomplish.

The boy made no comment. For Cayuse, whatever Pa-e-has-ka did was the right thing.

Stepping clear of the tunnel the boy's eyes darted everywhere about the cañon; they took in the situation of the cliff-houses, measured the walls, the height of the overhang above the houses, the width of the shelf beyond the edge of the overhang, and also gave the lad accurate knowledge of many other things which might, or might not, be useful.

That was little Cayuse's way. It had been born in him to be observing. When he stepped back to Nomad's side, he had the cañon mapped in his mind.

"I reckon," grinned the appreciative Nomad, "thet ye know all erbout this hyar place now, Cayuse, an' thet ye've got et figgered out ter a hair jest what's goin' ter happen ter Buffler."

"Mebbyso Pa-e-has-ka get into hands of Tau Kee. No can tell. Pa-e-has-ka all same fox, but when fox take um too many chances, fox get caught. Pa-e-has-ka no come *poco tiempo*, we know him caught."

"I knowed he was doin' er risky thing, but we had ter locate ther slave-dealer afore we could make any kind of er front on him. One man was better'n two at thet work."

"Wuh! S'pose we take um pris'ner and burros out in gulch, let Sam Hill watch um?"

"Good idee, Cayuse. Thet's ther thing we'll do."

This suggestion of the Piute's was put into immediate execution. The two Chinamen were thrown across the

backs of the burros, and the burros were then led out through the bushes at the tunnel entrance.

"Hill!" called Nomad, when they were clear of the bushes and standing in the gloom of the gulch.

"C-c-coming!" came the stuttering response.

The lengthy frontiersman showed himself presently, riding one horse and leading three.

"You tell him what he's ter do, Cayuse," said Nomad, "an' I'll slide back, as speedy as I kin, an' keep watch o' ther tunnel."

Without lingering further in the gulch, the old trapper returned through the tunnel with his lantern. As he drew near the angle that led to the farther opening, he set down the lantern. By this precaution he would prevent the light from being seen by any Chinamen who might be in the cañon.

It was well the trapper took this precaution. When he passed around the angle some one leaped upon him with the spring of a panther. He had just time to catch a glimpse of four forms hovering against the lighter background of the ragged opening.

These were the men ordered by Tau Kee to investigate the fate of the coolie sent to meet the Chinese merchants, and to look for another white man disguised in Chinaman's clothes.

Disguised as Nomad was, there was a little doubt in the Chinamen's minds as to his identity. Had Nomad brought the lantern around the angle, a bullet instead of a Chinaman would have leaped at him.

The trapper was almost knocked off his feet by the force of the Chinaman's spring. He staggered a moment, then, recovering himself, shook the celestial from his shoulders and bowled him over with a right-hander.

This move left no doubt in the minds of the remaining

Chinamen as to Nomad's being a Melican man. Flashes of fire lit up the tunnel, and the crack of revolvers awoke venomous echoes in the silent passage.

But an old fighter like Nomad was not to be caught in such a way as this. Directly he had knocked the Chinaman off his sandals, he dropped prone at the Chinaman's side. As a consequence, the bullets cut the air over his head.

On the heels of the hostile shots came the bark of the trapper's weapon. A yell of pain pierced the night as a Chinaman reeled backward through the opening and fell heels over head down the slope to the bottom of the cañon.

This was enough for Tau Kee's men. They were not ten-pins, and had no mind to set themselves up merely for the trapper to knock them over. They were maneuvering against a moonlit background, and that made them excellent targets. Whirling about, they raced away.

"Wh-wh-what's the m-m-m——"

When Sam Hill was excited he could not talk at all. That was the case with him now, as he came racing along the tunnel, bawling to Nomad at the top of his voice.

"Nothin's ther matter, Hill," answered Nomad. "Four er five Chinks tried ter rout me out o' this hole in ther wall an' I wouldn't stand fer et. Bring thet light from eround ther corner. One o' ther Chinks wasn't able ter git away, an' ef he kin savvy Melican I'd like ter ask him somethin'."

The trapper had reference to the man who had fallen under the impact of his flinty knuckles.

Hill brought the lantern, and he and the trapper stood

looking down on the Chinaman, who was just stirring around and getting his wits back.

"D-d-did you h-h-it the Ch-Ch-Ch——"

"Yes, Hill, I shore hit 'im. He's tryin' ter figger out, I reckons, whether he was kicked by er mule, er whether ther mounting up-ended an' drapped on him. Buffler says my right's a reg'lar pile-driver when et gits inter action. Waal, mebb'y. Anyways, ther Chink looks some dazed."

The Chinaman sat up and nursed his eye with both hands.

"Savvy Melican talk?" asked Nomad.

"Some savvy."

"Why was you an' the rest o' yer outfit foolin' around this hyar tunnel?"

"Tau Kee say come, find othel Melican man in big high mandarin's clothes."

Old Nomad let out a yelp of anger and consternation.

"Find *another* man in Chink clothes, hey? Thet's ther same as sayin' Tau Kee hes found one, already. Look hyar, you, an' mind ye don't tork with two tongues: Is Buffler Bill in ther hands o' thet pizen varmint, Tau Kee?"

"Yessee."

"Oh, ther tarnal luck! I didn't want him ter go, not noways, kase I had a feelin' in my bones thet et wasn't goin' ter pan out right. Now see what's happened, Hill. Buffler comes ter capter ther slave-dealer, an, ther slave-dealer capters Buffler. Whoop-ya! I feels like er cyclone hitched ter a mounting—frettin' ter do somethin', but chained like er hound dorg ter a post. See here, Chink! What's goin' ter be done ter Buffler Bill?"

"When sun makee come up, Tau Kee usee bowstling on Buff' Bill."

Nomad's first spasm of rage having subsided, he calmed down and grew thoughtful.

"Hill," said he grimly, "go back ter ther gulch an' git leetle Cayuse. Us three hev got ter do a hull lot afore sunup."

Sam Hill was less than five minutes getting to the gulch and back. While he was gone, Nomad disarmed his Chinaman. The fellow had an unusually long cue, and the trapper bound his hands with the end of it.

"C-c-can't find C-C-Cayuse," announced Hill, on his return.

"Can't find him?" repeated the trapper blankly. "Now what in Sam Hill does thet mean?"

"D-d-don't know. H-h-he was th-th-there when I l-l-left to c-c-come in here at the t-t-time the sh-sh-shoot-in' com-com——"

"Ef you had er nickel fer every time ye balked on a word ye'd be richer'n Vandefeller. Ye're a good man, Hill, but thet tongue o' your'n is sartinly er handicap. Cayuse was in ther gulch when ye heerd ther shootin' hyar an' come ter investigate; an' he wasn't in ther gulch when ye went back thar lookin' fer him. Thet's what ye mean ter say?"

"Y-y-yes."

"All right. Ef I was with ye a while I'd git so'st I could read yer mind an' ye wouldn't hev ter tork at all. Whyever did ther kid pull out? Et's hyar an' now we needs him, an' fer ther fust time sence I kin remembet he ain't eround ter answer roll-call."

"He t-t-took B-B-Buffalo B-Bill's h-h-h——"

"Took Buffler's hoss, hey? Thet makes ther conundrum a harder 'un than et was afore. Whyever did he take Buffler's hoss?"

"And h-h-he t-took ev-ev-every l-last p-picket-rope, t-too."

"Took Buffler's hoss an' all ther picket-ropes! Must be he's plannin' a lynchin'-party, with himself fer ther party. Waal, this hyar ain't no time ter figger out why he went. He's gone, an' et's you an' me fer et, Hill. Our job is ter snake Buffler out o' ther Cañon o' Death afore sunup. Et's er big order, kase Tau Kee an' his Chinks aire expectin' trouble, an' prob'ly aire ready fer et. Still, thet's ther job fer you an' me."

"I'm r-r-ready fer an-an-anythin'."

"Thet's how I likes ter hear ye stutter, Hill. We'll hev ter be ready fer anythin' an' mebbly face everythin' ef we save Buffler. Our Chink's torkative. Let's see ef we kin git anythin' more out of him."

Nomad, lantern in hand, went over to where the Chinaman was sitting on the floor of the passage.

"Whar-bouts aire they keepin' Buffler Bill?" he demanded.

"Stone loom, south end cliff-houses."

"Thet's cl'ar enough. Stone room, south end o' the cliff-houses. Is ther room back o' ther wall facin' ther cañon?"

"All samee."

"How could er stranger find et ter-night, purvidin' he had ther narve ter try?"

"Loom gottee window, plenty big light shine thloo window. Mo' light than shine thloo othel windows."

Nomad stole to the mouth of the tunnel and took a look across the cañon at the cliff-houses. There were several lights shining from the stone walls, as before, but now there was one much brighter than any of the rest. And this light was at the extreme south end of the stone wall.

"Tally fer ther Chink," said Nomad. "He's ther whitest yaller man I ever seen. Got er han'kerchief, Hill?"

"Y-y-y——"

"Twist et inter a rope an' put et on ther Chink's heels fer a lashing; then you an' me'll travel."

The handkerchief was twisted and tied around the prisoner's ankles.

"Come on, Hill," said Nick, starting through the exit from the tunnel. "We'll lay a straight course fer——"

Nomad was interrupted by a spurt of fire from behind a boulder. The report of a rifle crashed through the cañon, and so close did the bullet shave the trapper's head that it whisked off the tasseled cap he was wearing.

"Wow!" he cried, jumping back into the shelter of the tunnel. "Ain't thet plumb scandalous? Ther Chinks want er lock o' my ha'r ter remember me by, so they cut et off with er lead slug. Whoosh! Hyar's somethin' else ter bother us, Hill."

"Wh-wh-where did th-th-that shot c-c-c——"

"Whar did et come from? Why, from behind a big rock at ther foot o' ther slope leadin' from ther tunnel ter ther bottom o' ther cañon. No likee, an' thet's er fact. Ther Chinks aire watchin' this hole in ther wall like er lot o' slant-eyed weasels."

"H-how m-m-many of——"

"How many aire they out thar? *Quien sabe?* On'y one took er slam at me, but thet was plenty. They got rifles, an' we on'y got six-shooters. Consarn ther pizen luck, anyways! They kin shoot from behind their rocks an' we kain't so much as tech 'em."

Hill, cautiously approaching the entrance, started a large stone to rolling down the slope. At first the stone rolled slowly, traveling downward like a blurr of shadow.

Instantly the cañon was lit up with gun-flashes. The shots came from all sides of a half-circle, where the Chinamen lay entrenched behind boulders. *Spat! spat! spat!* went the bullets on the stone.

After the first round, the hidden marksmen detected the cheat, and allowed the stone to reach the bottom of the slope unmolested.

"Sufferin' wildcats!" muttered Nomad. "Thar's a reg'lar army o' Chinks down thar. No git out fer us, Hill, with things like they is."

The old trapper was gloomy.

"It's a h-h-hard sit-sit-sit——"

"A hard sitiuation? Waal, et's wuss'n thet, pard. We kain't git out o' hyar ter help Buffler, an' ther Chinks kain't git in hyar ter take us. Et's er deadlock. We're blockaded—hung up—an' not able ter do er thing. An' thar's pore ole Buffler over thar in them cliff-houses, an' mornin' comin' on. What kin we do?"

It was a conundrum. Tau Kee, the crafty, had sent the larger part of his force to keep the Melican men out of the cañon. Nomad and Hill were bottled up in the tunnel, utterly helpless to make a move in the direction of the cliff-houses.

Nomad slumped down on the stone floor, mumbling savagely to himself.

"We'll watch ou-ou-our ch-ch-chances an' m-m-make a r-rush," suggested Sam Hill.

"Et won't work," answered Nomad dejectedly. "Them Chinks aire out thar ter stay. They kain't rush our position an' they don't intend ter let us rush theirs."

"M-mebby T-T-Tau Kee's m-m-makin' a bl-bl——"

"Makin' er bluff? Et mout be, Hill, but I hates ter bet on et when Buffler's life is swingin' in ther balance. All we kin do is ter hang out hyar an' see whether et's er

bluff er not. Ef et ain't——" Nomad ground his teeth impotently and did not finish.

The hours dragged slowly. The lantern, using up all its oil, burned out. Nomad and Hill were left amid cheerless darkness in the tunnel.

From time to time an essay was made to see whether the Chinamen were relaxing their vigilance. Hill pushed out his hat on a piece of okatea-stick. He drew it back with two hoies in the crown. Nomad got out of his Chinaman's blouse and trousers, wadded them up in a roll, and tossed them through the entrance. They were met with a round of ball before the Chinamen discovered that the bundle was as harmless as the stone which they had peppered before.

With such devices, proving that Tau Kee's men were at all times on the job, the night passed. Dawn came, steadily lightened, and Nomad and Hill crowded behind a shoulder of rock from whose protection they could look out into the cañon and range their eyes toward the wall and the cliff-houses.

"We'll know, *muy pronto*," said the old trapper huskily, "whether Tau Kee's tryin' ter ring in er bluff, er not. Ef ne ain't——"

Nomad paused, staring with wide eyes. What he saw Sam Hill had seen, and that was this: Buffalo Bill, hands-bound at his back, coming out through a door onto the shelf that bordered the outside wall of the cliff-houses.

There was a noosed cord around the scout's throat, and a fat Chinaman in spectacles was holding the free end of the cord. The fat Chinaman was laughing like a fend.

On either side of the scout was an Apache Indian, hanging to his arms.

"Et ain't no bluff," gasped Nomad shiveringly. "Ther pizen Chink is goin' ter give my old pard ther bowstring! Tau Kee knows we're hyar, lookin'. He wants ter do ther job whar we kin see! Ef I had er rifle, ef I had er rifle!"

The trapper turned away his eyes for a moment, and then felt Hill's hand tugging excitedly at his sleeve.

"L-l-look! L-L-Little C-C-Cayuse——"

Nomad stared again at the overhanging cliff. On the very brink of the cliff stood a horse—Buffalo Bill's horse; on his knees at the edge was Little Cayuse, dropping a noosed rope down and down.

"How did he ever git up thar with er hoss!" whispered the old trapper huskily.

"He h-h-has sp-sp-spliced the p-p-p——"

"Yes, he has spliced ther picket-ropes an' he kin drap thet noose plumb over ther place on ther shelf whar Buffler is standin'. But what good will et do?"

Sam Hill could not figure out an answer. At just that moment the Chinamen on guard around the entrance to the tunnel caught sight of the horse and the boy. Two or three of the Chinamen sprang up and flung their arms wildly; one raced at speed toward the slope leading to the cliff-houses; two or three more began using their rifles on Little Cayuse.

"Now's our time ter make thet rush!" said Nomad. "Foller me, Hill!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

BUFFALO BILL'S STAR PLAY.

The scout was awakened from his dreams by one of his Apache guards. Opening his eyes he found that the candles in the stone room had been extinguished, and that the rising sun was looking into the cañon.

"Pa-e-has-ka's time has come," said one of the Apaches, in Spanish. "Where his big medicine now? Come with us."

The scout saw that the coils of rope had been unwound from his legs, and that his feet were free. Each armed with one of his forty-fives, the Apaches caught him on either side and raised him to his feet. Then, hanging to him firmly, they led him out of the room and along a ruinous, debris-littered corridor.

"Where are you taking me?" the scout asked.

"Long-tail said to bring you. He is waiting with the bowstring."

"And a string of jokes, too, I'll be bound," muttered the scout. "He's the folliest assassin I ever met up with."

A moment later the Apaches turned the prisoner into another room with a door leading out on the shelf. Tau Kee was there, with a silken cord in his hand.

In another moment the fat slave-dealer had flung the silken death-cord over Buffalo Bill's head.

"When I make a promise," grinned Tau Kee, "I always keep it. The great Buffalo Bill is near the end of his rope."

"Of *your* rope, you mean," answered the scout.

Tau Kee chuckled.

"Ah, ha!" he murmured, dancing fiends in his slant-eyes, "you're something of a joker yourself. Did you hear shooting in the night?"

"No."

"You must have slept like a log, then. A lot of my coolies have got your pards holed up in the tunnel. They can't get out, but they can stand in the mouth of the hole, look over this way and see what is going on. It will be a fine sight for Nomad, eh? He'll enjoy it. I can't deprive him of the performance. Come on."

Tau Kee, holding fast to the end of the silken cord, waddled toward the door. The Apaches followed with the condemned prisoner.

Standing on the shelf, Buffalo Bill swept his eyes across the Cañon of Death toward the mouth of the tunnel. He saw two men crouching within the entrance, and had little difficulty in making them out as Nomad and Sam Hill.

The diabolical plans of Tau Kee seemed on the point of being carried to a successful finish.

"A beautiful view, eh?" grinned Tau Kee, making a gesture toward the grisly skeletons below. "Pick out your *sahuara*, Buffalo Bill."

"I'll pick out nothing," came hoarsely from the scout as he struggled in the grip of the Apaches.

"Before I begin pulling the bowstring," said Tau Kee, "I must pay my respects to our audience."

Removing his cap he bowed in the direction of the tunnel.

"He's mad," thought Buffalo Bill, "mad as a locoed steer!"

At that moment a movement among the men guarding the tunnel was seen. Tau Kee's back was turned while he manipulated the end of the silken cord, pulling it so that the noose tightened around the scout's throat.

At that instant the scout felt the cool blade of a knife between his wrists, sawing through the cords.

"See lope!" screamed a woman's voice; "lope flom top-side!"

Buffalo Bill wrenched his hands apart—and then things began to happen.

Out of the tails of his eyes he saw a noose swinging over the edge of the rock above. He felt in his bones that it was some contrivance of his pards for effecting his rescue.

Back of where he had stood on the shelf was another door leading into the stone wall.

He knew, likewise, that San Moy had crept through this door, while the backs of those on the shelf were turned to it, and that she had freed his hands.

Right and left shot the scout's fists. The play of lightning in a thunder-storm could not have been swifter; and where the fists struck they landed like a thunder-bolt.

The Apaches, astounded by the progress of events which they could not comprehend, had stood as though paralyzed for a second, and that second had proved the scout's salvation.

His fists had reached them with crushing force, toppling them heels over head off the shelf and down the slope.

Whirling about, Buffalo Bill saw Tau Kee strike down San Moy with a blow. Like a flash, the scout hurled himself upon Tau Kee, overthrew him, caught his hand

head in both hands, and dashed it with stunning force on the rock shelf; then, while the Chinaman lay quiet with quiver after quiver running through his form, Buffalo Bill grabbed at the swinging noose, pulled it in out of the air, and slipped it over Tau Kee's head and under his arms.

"Haul away!" he shouted.

He could not see Little Cayuse, up above, leading the horse away from the brink with the end of the rope tied to the saddle-horn. Yet that was what the Piute boy was doing.

While the Chinaman was lifted from the shelf and hauled over the overhang of the cliff, the scout was gathering in his revolvers, which had been dropped as the Apaches tumbled down the slope.

Bullets began to sing and patter around the scout and against the stone wall. But he was thinking more of San Moy, just then, than of any one or anything else.

Forcing the revolvers into the band of his trousers, in lieu of a belt, he gathered the girl up in his arms and bore her through the doorway and behind the wall.

The blow given by Tau Kee had left a bruise on the girl's face, but she was not unconscious.

"I'll never forget this, San Moy!" said the scout, hurrying to a window opening, revolvers in hand.

"You savee San Moy from whip, San Moy savee you," she answered.

"You did well."

"Why you no ketchee lope, go top-side?"

"Think I'd leave you, after what you'd done for me? That's not my style. Besides, I'd rather capture Tau Kee than save myself. The scoundrel has been snaked out of the cañon, and my pards have got him for keeps.

Keep behind the wall, San Moy; don't go near the door. How many men are in the cliff-houses?"

"No one here now but old Gow Lin. Her allee same woman. Tau Kee sendee all but Indians to watch tunnel."

"Luck has turned my way with a vengeance," said the scout.

Through the window he had a good view of what was happening below.

Seven Chinamen, armed with rifles, were running toward the cliff-houses from the direction of the tunnel. Behind them, racing like mad, came Nomad and Hill.

The Apaches, still bewildered, were half-way down the slope. As the scout watched, he saw them start to mount upward.

One of his revolvers discouraged the movement. The Apaches turned and ran down the hill, one of them with a useless arm.

At the foot of the hill the Indians met the Chinamen from the tunnel.

Two of the Chinamen began climbing the slope, but Buffalo Bill drove them back with his revolvers.

The loss of Tau Kee had taken all the fight out of his men. The cliff-houses offered their best means of defense and they had striven to reach the shelf, but now that that position was held by the scout, the red and yellow scoundrels could only turn and race down the cañon, putting their main reliance in their legs.

"Come, San Moy," called the scout, backing away from the window; "here's where we make our get-away. The coast is clear between the cliff-houses and the tunnel, and we'll make the most of our opportunity."

With the girl's hand in his, he led her out on the shelf and down the slope.

"Buffler!" yelled Nomad. "I never expected ye ter git out o' thet alive!"

"That was a great plan of yours—lowering that rope," returned the scout.

"Et wasn't no plan o' mine, Buffler. Leetle Cayuse worked et all by hisself, an' Hill an' me didn't know er thing erbout et. We're goin' ter wind up ther Chinks. Come on, Hill!"

"Stay right where you are, Nick!" shouted the scout. "You're crazy! The Chinamen are stampeded, for now, but they won't be long finding out there are only three of us. They have rifles, and our cue is to get out of the Cañon of Death without wasting a minute. We have captured Tau Kee, and we have this little woman who risked her life to save mine. There is nothing else for us to gain here. This way."

The scout, still leading San Moy by the hand, was already on his way to the tunnel.

As a proof that he was correct in his reasoning, the Chinamen had halted their headlong flight, had posted themselves behind the great boles of the *sahuaras*, and were indulging in more rifle-work.

Nomad and Hill, acting as a sort of rear guard for the scout and the girl, kept up a desultory and defiant shooting with their revolvers.

Although the six-shooters had a much shorter range than the rifles, yet Nomad and Hill were able to cover the retreat of Buffalo Bill and the girl and keep the Chinamen at bay until all were in the tunnel.

The tunnel, of course, meant safety for the scout and his pards. From there back to Gray Buzzard the way was clear.

"A close call, old pard," said Buffalo Bill when the

fugitives had rounded up within the entrance to the tunnel.

"Close!" echoed Nomad. "Buffler, honest, I don't think I ever seen ye in a tighter corner than what thet was. Why, thet fat Chink had ther rope around yer neck, an' was beginnin' ter pull! I was plumb crazy, fer fair; an' thar was Hill an' me, blockaded so'st we couldn't move! Who's ther gal? She looks some like Yee Wong."

"She is San Moy," said the scout, and told how he had climbed through the window to save her from the lash, thereby getting himself into difficulties.

"Thet was shore like ye, pard," said Nomad. "Ye knowed blame well thet by dodgin' inter thet room an' helpin' ther gal ye was riskin' yer neck. But ye done et, an' I'm proud ter think ye did."

San Moy must have caught the drift of these remarks, for a grateful look crossed her face and she pressed closer to the scout and took his hand.

"She's a brave little girl," said the scout, laying his hand on San Moy's head, "and I'm going to see that she reaches 'Frisco safely and is sent back to her own country. How long have you been in this cañon, San Moy?"

"Me blought from Yuma, mebbys one moon since," answered the girl.

"From Yuma, eh?"

"Yessée, Yuma."

"That," said the scout, to Nomad, "must have been before you and I had our fracas with the coolies on the lower Colorado."

"Ther time we rescued Yee Wong," returned Nomad. "Shore San Moy must hev been smuggled in afore thet, Buffler. Thet Yee Wong bizness wound up ther slave-dealin' in them parts."

"Where did you come from, San Moy?" the scout went on.

"Tientsin. My fadder live Tientsin."

"Who brought you across the sea?"

"Melican man in trading-junk. Red-head Chinaman meet me Yuma."

"He won't meet any more girl slaves in Yuma," scowled Nomad. "Buffle an' his pards took keer o' him."

"Me findee Gow Lin in Yuma, too," went on the girl. "She blingee me to cañon with othel Chinamen."

"Who taught you to speak English?"

"Tau Kee. Him say big high Chinaman who buy me likee have wiffee speak English."

"How were you taken from Tientsin?"

"No can tell. Man come my fadder's house while my fadder 'way. Me makee tea; when me dlinkee tea no can remember ally mo' till findee me on trading-junk of Melican man."

"And you have been in this cañon a month?"

"All samee."

"Gow Lin had charge of you?"

San Moy nodded.

"Why was she giving you that whipping?"

"Tau Kee makee do."

"Why?"

"Big high bazar-man flom 'Flosco come makee buy San Moy. San Moy no likee be sold. Her makee trouble, so Tau Kee say whippee."

"You're a good little girl, San Moy, and you'll never have any more troubles. You will be sent back to your father in Tientsin—I promise you that."

"We've got a prisoner here, Buffle," said Nomad;

"mebbyso ye'd like ter ask him somethin' erbout them thar cliff-houses?"

"We ought to have two Chinese prisoners, Nick."

"Shore, but them fellers and the burros was sent back ter Lost Mule Gulch. Whar'd ye leave 'em, Hill?"

"S-s-safe enough, I r-r-reckon," answered Hill.

"This other Chink, Buffle," proceeded Nomad, "was one I captered. Drag him out hyar inter ther light, Hill, will ye?"

The prisoner was hauled nearer the entrance of the tunnel.

"Him one Tau Kee's men," remarked San Moy, gazing into the Chinaman's face.

"We'd figgered thet out already," grinned Nomad.

"How many men Tau Kee got?" the scout asked the Chinaman.

The prisoner spoke in Chinese to San Moy.

"Him say so many," said the girl, holding up both hands and then lowering them and holding up two fingers.

"Twelve, eh?" murmured the scout.

"I don't think thar's as many as thet, now," averred the trapper significantly.

"So many Chinamen," and the girl held up both hands, "and so many Indians," she finished, elevating two fingers again.

"Cut the prisoner loose," ordered the scout. "We don't want to bother with him."

Hill freed the Chinaman, pocketing the handkerchief which he took from the prisoner's ankles.

"G-g-git out!" said Hill, helping the Chinaman through the tunnel entrance with the toe of his boot. "Ch-Ch-Chinks are all h-b-bad med-med-med——"

"Ye're tellin' us somethin' we know, pard," said the trapper.

"You say," went on the scout, "that you didn't know Cayuse was going to let a rope down from the top of the cliff?"

"Hadn't no notion what he was up ter, Buffler. He slipped erway from Hill an' me, takin' yore hoss an' all ther picket-ropes. He had ther idee up his sleeve all ther time, I suppose, on'y he never let out er thing."

"How did he know anything about the lay of the cañon? He must have had some knowledge of the place or he couldn't have worked such a game successfully."

"He come in hyar and sized up ther cañon last night. I wondered why he was lookin' et over so keerful. But he never let out er peep as ter what he was intendin' ter do. I reckons he thort he was takin' a long shot, anyways, an' thet mebbly his scheme wouldn't work."

"It wouldn't have worked, either, if San Moy hadn't slipped through that door and cut the ropes from my wrists."

Nomad laughed.

"Et was er sight, I'm tellin' ye," said he, "ter see Leetle Cayuse walkin' yer hoss away from ther edge o' ther cliff, snakin' thet Chink up ther slopin' wall. I'll gamble er blue stack Cayuse was some surprised when he found he had a Chink at the end o' ther rope an' not Buffler."

Standing in the tunnel entrance, Buffalo Bill took a long look at the top of the cliff over the stone houses. He could see nothing of Little Cayuse.

"How he ever got up there is a mystery," said the scout.

"Ef there was er way, ye kin bet he'd find et."

"He may be waiting for us in Lost Mule Gulch," observed Buffalo Bill. "We'd better go there and make a start for Gray Buzzard. I'm hungry enough to eat Hassayamp out of his wickiup."

As for that, they were all hungry, for they had had much hard work and with nothing to eat since the evening before.

Buffalo Bill, holding San Moy by the hand, guided her through the tunnel and out past the bushes that masked the end of it in Lost Mule Gulch.

They found the horses, and they found Little Cayuse, keeping watch over Tau Kee and the other two Chinamen.

The boy did not seem to think he had done anything out of the ordinary.

Tau Kee was not feeling so jovial as he had been. He was roped with the spliced riatas, and Cayuse had consumed plenty of hemp in the tying.

"How, Pa-e-has-ka?" called the boy. "You all safe, huh?"

"All safe, Cayuse."

"Why you send um fat yellow man on rope, huh?"

"It was the quickest and safest way to make a prisoner out of him."

"Ugh! Me heap s'prised find Chinaman."

"But you took him in."

"Wuh! Me no let yellow man go; tie him plenty, put him on Pa-e-has-ka's cayuse, bring um down in gulch."

"Tie him to one of the burros, Nick, you and Hill," said the scout. "We want to get away from here before Tau Kee's men come through the tunnel and begin using their rifles."

"Him Tau Kee?" asked Little Cayuse, while Nomad

and Hill were securing the Chinaman to the back of one of the burros.

"Yes."

"You send up Tau Kee, stay in cañon yourself. Pa-e-has-ka big chief. You bet!"

"What gave you the idea to get on top of the cliff and lower the rope, Cayuse?" asked the scout.

"Me get um hot think. No savvy whether me win out, but make um try. Think him over when me size up cañon with Wolf-killer."

"It was a good plan. Snaking Tau Kee out of the cañon, like you did, took the heart out of his men. But for that, Nomad, Hill, and I would have had a hard fight on our hands—perhaps a losing fight. You're always doing the right thing at the right time, Cayuse."

The boy's eyes sparkled. Praise from the scout was dear to his heart, and he could not keep his face from expressing his feelings.

Whether Tau Kee's men were afraid to venture into the tunnel or whether they feared to risk their lives in an encounter with the scout and his pards by penetrating the tunnel and coming out into Lost Mule Gulch, is a question. Yet, be that as it might, they did not appear in the gulch to dispute the departure of Buffalo Bill with Tau Kee and San Moy.

The two remaining prisoners were released, just as the scout and his friends were ready to start, and sent back to the Cañon of Death with a threat and a warning for their companions.

Tau Kee rode one burro and San Moy the other. The rest of the party traveled on their own horses.

When they had reached the crest of the slope at the top of Lost Mule Gulch, Buffalo Bill paused for a mo-

ment to look back at the high wall of granite which walled off one end of the gruesome cañon.

"We're well out of the Cañon of Death," said he, "and I did not dream that we'd be able to make a get-away as easily as we have done."

"You're fools for luck," growled Tau Kee, "that's all."

CHAPTER XXX

CONCLUSION.

The miners did not go to work in Gray Buzzard's Gulch as usual on the morning following the departure of the scout and his pards for the Cañon of Death. Instead of repairing to the placers, they all flocked to the front of Hassayamp's cabin.

"Hyer's my idee," said Modoc Charley. "It'll be criminal fer us fellers ter hang out hyer while Buffalo Bill an' his pards aire bein' cut ter pieces in this place called ther Cañon o' Death."

"Whoof!" snorted Hassayamp. "Didn't I tell 'em not ter go? Didn't I say they wouldn't come back? Might as well hev torked ter a stone wall. Cody had ther bit in his teeth an' allowed he knowed what he was erbout. Whatever happens ter them, they brought it on themselves. I'm goin' ter stay right hyer an' boss this crop o' Chinks what was left with me."

"Chinks is pizen," said Catamount Joe. "Chinese free labor is what's roonin' ther Passyfic Slope. I'd like ter rise an' put er motion."

"Put it," said the Missourian. "Ain't we-uns listenin'?"

"Hyer it is, then. I moves thet ther hull kit an' ca-boodle o' us gits on our cabyos and rides up-gulch."

"What fer?" demanded Hassayamp, fixing his glittering eyes on Catamount.

"Why, what should we visit ther camp o' rat-eaters ler?" asked Joe, with some show of surprise. "Let's

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wipe 'em out, an' git even fer what this Tau Kee has done ter Buffalo Bill an' his pards."

There followed a moment's silence, but it was plain that all, with the exception of Hassayamp, regarded the plan with favor.

"If we're goin' ter hev a massacre," suggested Modoc Charley, "why not begin with ther four Chinks Hassayamp hes got in his cabin?"

This was Hassayamp's signal to get a move upon him. Reaching for his guns, he pulled them out of his belt and laid them across his knees.

"Them's your fool sentiments, aire they?" he growled. "Now, listen ter me! Ye ain't goin' ter string up ther Chinks in my wannegan, an' ye ain't goin' ter wipe out any Chinese free labor up ther gulch. What ye did ter Rattlesnake Tim seems ter hev put you men in killin'-mood. Chalk down what I'm tellin' ye: I've took part in my last lynchin', an' thar ain't goin' ter be any more high-handed plays in these parts so long as I've got my hardware handy and am able ter use it. Sabe that?"

A silence fell, during which wondering glances were exchanged by the other miners.

But Hassayamp's decided stand had put a damper on the lawlessness.

"What's come over ye, Hassayamp?" inquired Modoc Charley.

"I been torkin' with Buffalo Bill. What he says ter me is this hyer: Two wrongs never made er right. Ketch et? Ther more ye think it over, the more ye'll savvy ther sense o' et. I'm gamblin' this Tau Kee an' his yaller boys'll make an end ter Buffalo Bill an' his pards; but us fellers won't right matters any by goin' up-gulch an' bumpin' off them Chinks."

"Oh, waal," drawled Modoc Charley, getting up, "if thet's the way ye feel, Hassayamp, I'm goin' ter work."

"Me, too," said Joe.

"We'd better all scatter," said the Missourian. "I was lookin' for a heap of excitement, but——"

He stopped short, eyes down the gulch.

"Jumpin' sand-hills!" he yelled. "See what's a-comin'."

Every one turned to look. Four horses and two burros were traveling up the gulch, heading for Gray Buzzard camp.

The miners couldn't just make out who were riding the burros, but they had no difficulty in recognizing those on the horses.

"Buffalo Bill!" gasped Hassayamp.

"Comin' back," echoed Modoc.

"He got away with his life, but I'll bet he didn't accomplish nothin'. He couldn't—he ain't had time."

"Look at 'im!" said Catamount. "He's wavin' his hat. Feelin' mighty fine, seems like, fer a feller thet hasn't accomplished nothin'."

"Anyways," said Hassayamp, "him an' Nomad has been stripped o' their Chink clothes. Thet's somethin'. When er white man goes an' gits inter a silk cap, a blouse, a pair o' baggy breeches, with er rope painted black fer a squee-jee down behind, he is lowerin' himself *some*; but ef he runs out er blind trail on ther Chinks by so doin', I reckons he gits back his respectability. Question is, hes, or hes not, Buffler Bill run out thet Chink-trail?"

"Wait er minit," said Modoc, "an' he'll tell ye."

As the little cavalcade trooped up to Hassayamp's door, Buffalo Bill shouted a greeting to all the miners.

"Never expected ter see ye alive," said Hassayamp.

"None o' us did," seconded Catamount.

"Ye ain't showing many marks o' trouble, but I'll bet ye got out o' Lost Mule Gulch by ther skin o' yer teeth," went on Hassayamp. "Didn't ye, now? Say, Buffler, wasn't thet Tau Kee too much fer ye?"

"He came pretty near being too much for me," returned the scout. "There he is—you can ask him."

The scout nodded toward the fat Chinaman as he spoke. A wondering silence fell over the crowd of miners.

"White wins!" muttered Hassayamp.

"Stack up er white man ag'in er Chink, Hassayamp," put in Nomad, "an' ye'll find they wins every time."

"In this case, Nomad," said Hassayamp, "thar was only three whites an' a small red stacked up ag'in no one knows how many o' ther yaller boys. Waal, I'm gladder'n blazes it turned out like it did, anyhow. Put out yer live stock an' come in an feed. While ye're feedin' ye kin tell us what happened."

* * * * *

As long as there were any white men congregated in Gray Buzzard's Gulch the performance of Buffalo Bill and his pards, aided and abetted by Stuttering Sam of Kymo, formed a standard and illumniating topic of conversation.

The camp wanted to adopt Little Cayuse, before the scout and his pards broke away from the place, but that was something not to be considered.

If Little Cayuse ever left Buffalo Bill and Nick Nomad it would be to go East, somewhere, to school. Until that

time, if it ever came, the boy was to remain with the scout and the trapper.

The meeting between the Chinese bazar-men and Tau Kee was laughable, in a way. The bazar-men, seeing that Tau Kee had been captured, affected to ignore him and thus avoid incriminating themselves. But Tau Kee, catching the drift of their sentiments, told all about them, and then laughed insolently in the chagrined faces of the yellow merchants.

The big high men from Chinatown, 'Frisco, had made that journey to Arizona for the purpose of laying plans to bring in opium by way of the land-boundary between the two Californias, upper and lower. Incidentally, one of the bazar-men had brought much gold to pay down for San Moy.

The scout and the trapper, through force of circumstances quite unseen by themselves, had found it impossible to bring away the garments borrowed from the bazar-men. But the merchants, terrified at the thought that the scout might use Tau Kee's information against them, made no complaint about the failure to return their clothes.

The scout set them adrift with Sing Sing and Chang Yuen, and all four vanished up the gulch in the direction of the Chinese camp, the merchants astride their burros and still wearing the blue overalls supplied by Hassayamp.

The scout and his pards did not remain long in Gray Buzzard's Gulch, but soon took horse for Kymo, borrowing a couple of mounts from Hassayamp and Modoc to help their prisoner and San Moy that far on their journey to 'Frisco.

Finucane, chief of the San Francisco police, who was

intensely eager to get hands on Tau Kee, was telegraphed to. He sent two of his best officers to Kymo to take charge of Tau Kee. One of these officers happened to be Buffalo Bill's old friend, Gordon.

To Gordon, also, Buffalo Bill confided San Moy, placing a sum of money in his hands to be used for the girl's expenses in traveling back to the Flowery Kingdom, where she belonged.

San Moy seemed reluctant to part from the scout. He had befriended her, and she had saved his life. In this way a bond of friendship had been established between them.

At the parting, little San Moy cried. Then, drying her eyes, she asked all the josses in all China to shower blessings and good luck upon the head of the scout and his pards, and climbed aboard the waiting train.

Later, like Yee Wong, San Moy was returned to her native land. As for Tau Kee, he was sent to San Quentin for life.

Tau Kee's capture and conviction was a blow from which the contraband traffic in slaves and opium never recovered.

Finucane had set his heart on abating the crying evil, and, with the help of Buffalo Bill and his devoted companions, his purpose was practically accomplished.

At Kymo, the scout received a telegram. This message had been sent originally from Yuma to Fort Apache, forwarded from Fort Apache to Holbrook, and lastly forwarded from Holbrook to Kymo.

"Where you was, anyway?" ran the message. "Haf you peen gifting me der go-by on burpose oder accidentally? Answer so kevick as you can by Yuma, telling were ve can meet up togedder."

This message was signed "The Baron," and was from the scout's Dutch pard.

The scout answered the message at once, asking the baron to meet him in Phoenix, Arizona, which was to be the pard's next port of call.

THE END.

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