

BUFFALO BILL BORDER STORIES ~ No 154 ~

# BUFFALO BILL'S WAIFF OF THE WEST

BY

Col. Prentiss Ingraham



Buffalo Bill's Waif of the West;

OR,

IN A SPIRIT OF CHARITY

BY

Colonel Prentiss Ingraham

Author of the celebrated "Buffalo Bill" stories published in the  
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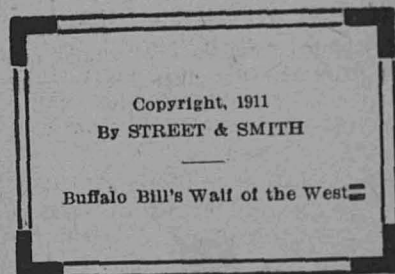


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## IN APPRECIATION OF WILLIAM F. CODY (BUFFALO BILL).

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. Hecksher. 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 WAIF OF THE WEST.

### CHAPTER I.

#### PAYALLUP PETE.

Following the uproar in the Flashlight, a seedy, rotund, greasy-looking individual jumped into the street, and backed away from the door, with a flourish of his revolver.

He was followed instantly by a crowd that sought to lay violent hands on him.

"Payallup Pete," said Buffalo Bill, "seems to have touched off an explosion. It must have been unintentional."

The great scout was standing not far from the Flashlight, in the street, with his friends—Pawnee Bill, old Nomad, Baron Von Schnitzenhauser, and Little Cayuse. They had not been in Rocket Range an hour.

"Stand off, gents!" the greasy specimen was shouting.

The warning went unheeded. The men who had come out of the Flashlight pitched at him, and he was soon down, rolling in the dust, his revolver knocked out of his hand.

When it became apparent that the mob from the Flashlight was about to "beat up" the fellow, Buffalo Bill's sense of fair play, which so often made him take the side of the under dog, pushed him forward.

"Payallup doesn't deserve much sympathy at any time," he muttered, "still——"

When Buffalo Bill moved, in a time of need, he did it quickly.

"Let's have a square deal here," he cried. "Don't



kick a man when he's down—that's cowards' work! What's he been doing?"

Denver Dave, keeper of the Flashlight, whose foot had been lifted, turned with a jerk.

"Whose—— Oh, that's you, Buffalo Bill!"

"What's the man been doing?"

"Nothin'!" was bellowed by the man who had fallen. "Absolutely nothin'."

"Nothin', except tryin' to shove the queer!" said Denver Dave. "He sops up good liquor at my bar, then he flips down a bogus dollar to pay fer it. When I——"

"Tain't so," said the man on the ground; "or, if it's so, I ain't knowin' to it!"

He had squirmed to a sitting position, but his hands were held by the men who had jumped on him; as if this were not enough, another man lay across, and clasped his feet. He could squirm and vociferate, but he couldn't do much of anything else.

"That you, Cody?" he asked. "I thought my ears caught the voice of a gentleman, in this uproar. You know me—Payallup Pete; and you know I wouldn't do a thing o' that kind, if I was to be hung fer it."

"Well, he's got the goods on him," declared Denver Dave. "He pulled back that dollar, when I told him 'twas bogus; an' he's got others like it. Then he swung his gun, and backed fer the door, and we rushed fer him."

"How's that, Payallup?" Buffalo Bill asked.

"I admit I've got a pocketful of iron money; but if it's bogus I don't know it. I backed fer the door, and was ready to defend myself, when Denver Dave said he'd cave my head in; an' then they jumped me."

"Would you mind letting Payallup Pete tell his story?" asked the scout. "You see, it's possible that a man may have bogus coin in his possession, and not

be himself a shover of the queer. He might have received it innocently."

"Then why did he try to run; and why did he jerk back the dollar, to take with him? Looks to me like he wanted to git away, and keep me from holdin' the proof ag'inst him."

"If you're willing, we'll——"

"You goin' to guarantee this feller's character, Buffalo Bill? You say you know him! So do we—and that's the trouble; we don't know no good of him. When Payallup Pete ain't a bum, he's crooked."

"Let him get up, and hear what he has to say."

The men holding Payallup Pete released him, and he got up. As he brushed the dust from his shabby clothing, he glanced round, and saw that a crowd was gathering.

"Where's my gun?" he demanded.

One of the men had it.

"I'll jest hold it, as a certificate of yer good intentions. When you clear yerself, ye git it back."

"If we're goin' to talk," said Payallup, "let's go inside, where things ain't so toomulchus. I kin explain how I got hold of that money. Is it sech a singular thing fer a man to have money, in this hamlet?"

"'Tis, when it's counterfeit," said Denver Dave. "But you step inside, and speak fast, and we'll hear what you've got to say, before the sheriff comes. One of the men has gone fer him."

He led the way into the Flashlight.

Payallup Pete followed, with the men who had seized him bringing up the rear, as a guard, close at his heels.

Following, Buffalo Bill and his friends entered.

"Now we'll look at that coin, which you hustled so quick out o' my sight, when I spotted it," said Denver Dave; "and you be mighty sure you put out the same one, with the others you had with it."

The greasy individual slammed a coin on the counter of the Flashlight, blinked at it with watery eyes, and followed it with a handful of others.

The proprietor, who had gone behind his counter, picked up the first coin and looked at it closely; then he inspected those that were beside it.

"Bogus," he said, "every one of 'em. You take a look, Buffalo Bill!"

With Pawnee Bill, the scout made his way to the bar.

"Counterfeit," he declared, when he had examined the coins and rung them on the counter. "I believe you said you could explain how you came by them, Payallup?"

"Yep. Easy 'nough."

"How?"

"I found 'em."

The listeners indulged in growls of skeptical doubt.

"Where did you find them, and how?" the scout asked.

"Out in the trail, beyond the town, in a buckskin bag. I throwed the bag away, and shoved the coin into my pocket. If they're counterfeit, which I still don't like to believe, I didn't know it."

"That's a likely tale," sneered the proprietor. "You got any more o' them kind with ye, or any other hard money?"

"Gents," said Payallup, letting his watery eyes sweep over the unsympathetic faces, "the mere fact of me havin' money o' any kind made me foolish; otherwise, I wouldn't hopped in here. There was jest twelve silver dollars in that bag, and the weight of 'em bulgin' my pockets made me feel rich; so, harborin' a thirst like a fish, I elected to stray in here, and it was my finish. When the proprietor yells 'Bogus!' and comes

fer me, I mentally sees the doors of the jail, an' tries to git out. Wouldn't you done the same?"

The sheriff came in, with more men crowding in at his heels; so that the Flashlight was filled to overflowing.

A giant in size, portly, with a face like that of a big overgrown boy, the sheriff was yet a man who commanded respect, and this, in spite of, or perhaps because of, his name, and his heavy rolling laugh. He was known as Happy Chance, and he had the gurgling, contagious laugh of a fat man.

"Hello, Cody!" he cried, as his eyes fell on the tall scout. "I'm hearin' that you've been usurpin' my functions. Well, where's the criminal?"

"Right here," said the proprietor, pointing to Payallup Pete; "and here's his bogus iron money. Mebbe you can guess the thoughts I was thinkin' when I seen it?"

Happy Chance—when he ran for office the ballots held the name of Simeon Chance—studied the coins on the counter, and took a look at Payallup. Then he glanced over the crowd.

"I reckon we got to clear this room," he said. "'Tain't right for this here suspected person to be subjected to unkind scrutiny; so you fellers walk out, an' take yer thoughts with ye. No man ain't guilty until the courts says so, and sometimes they make a mistake."

He laughed even as he said it. But the crowd cleared out of the room. Nomad looked doubtful, and started to go out with the rest; but the sheriff called him back.

"In a sense, Cody's bunch is officers," Chance explained, "same as me, and they can stay; but all others, except them that witnessed the transaction in here what kicked up this muss, can go out. Them that seen it I'll want fer witnesses."



He closed and locked the door on the heels of the last man to leave. Then turned about, boyish and smiling, as he dropped the door key into his capacious pocket.

"Denver, I reckon you're first man at the bat?" he invited.

The proprietor hastened with his explanation.

"You next," said the sheriff, to the prisoner. "But as umpire, I've got to decide right now that Denver's try was good."

Payallup Pete duplicated his previous report.

"Where in the trail was it you found the bag?" demanded Chance. "We'll go out there and dig it up."

Payallup Pete took fright, at that.

"'Twas way up on the mountain," he explained.

"How many miles?"

"I dunno; mebbly twenty."

"You couldn't find the exact spot—that's what you're meanin'?"

"I reckon I couldn't."

"I thought not."

He turned to Buffalo Bill.

"From what I learned on the way, I allow that you had the rights of it, when you cut into the game; they was hammerin' this man. While I'm servin' as sheriff, nobody ain't got no call but me to beat up a prisoner, and I never do it unless he plays ugly and I haf to. Denver, in that, was wrong; he should have held the feller, and sent me word. But we'll let that pass right now, and hear what Buffalo Bill has to say."

The scout looked doubtful. He did not know much about the proprietor of the Flashlight, but his calling was against him.

He decided, at the moment, to say nothing, in the presence of Denver Dave.

"All I saw," he reported to Chance, "was the trouble

on the street. I was standing there with my friends when the prisoner jumped out of the door of this place. He was flourishing a revolver and shouting. Then the proprietor and a number of men jumped on him, and began rough usage. I thought it time to interfere, and I did so."

"You've had a look at this money?"

"Yes."

"And it's counterfeit. The prisoner tells a fishy story as to how he connected with this metal. I don't see but I've got to hold him, and give the court a whack at the case. That's my duty, as I see it."

Payallup Pete put up a vigorous protest.

But, in the end, he was taken from the room, and removed to the jail.



## CHAPTER II.

### OLD MONTE.

"This sheriff seems all right," said the scout, when he had gone to his hotel with his friends, "but I don't know about Denver Dave. We can't afford to make any mistakes right at the outset."

"Et would be a big one," commented old Nomad, "ef ye should let inter this deal one o' the ombrays that's shovin' queer in this very town. After that, they'd know ever' move ye made, 'fore ye made et. Still, considerin' that he made sech a holler hisself when he seen that iron money, seems ter be er sign in his favor."

"Necarnis, that's just what I was going to say," remarked Pawnee. "Old Diamond is so bright and quick that he broke into the trail ahead of me. There has been a whole lot of counterfeit money circulating recently in Rocket Range. Which is why we are here, along with some other things not necessary now to mention. Some of it must have been passed on Denver Dave, of course; and, apparently, that was why he was so sore when Payallup shoved that across the counter at him, in payment for the liquor."

"On the face of it, that sounds good."

"Yet it isn't convincing?"

"Denver Dave probably knows no more about who is shoving the queer here than at the present time we do. Let us grant that, for fairness. But, at the same time, if Payallup strung a straight yarn, Denver might have thought he had a good chance to put up a virtuous shout, and get away with it safely. Payallup is a loafer and bum, without friends, and this is the first time I ever knew him to have money."

"With his wad o' money," the same man  
was kinderish."

"So the proprietor might have thought  
make a play which would cause people to  
he, at least, was amount of queer money."

"Which suggests that you think none o'  
fellows with him, at all, was as much  
as the proprietor?"

"I don't suggest anything—I don't know  
explaining why I wouldn't say anything  
in the presence of Denver Dave. 'Cause  
is being shoved here. We're to find out  
ing it."

"Oot ve can," corrected the horse."

"In an hour," said the scout, "he'll  
here, and I'm to have a talk with him."

by that time whether or not I can trust  
the outset, I think I can. After I've  
here, I'm going over to the jail with  
another talk with Payallup."

"Payallup had about finished that  
the trail?"

"Yes."

"Then he probably stole the stuff  
tion?"

"He found it, stole it, or it was shown  
That last doesn't seem probable, from  
of the man. Handlers of the queer  
their confidence such a man as Payallup  
the way I see it now."

He had brought away with him  
coins, with the consent of the  
took out of his pocket."

"Let some feller sketch  
marked Nomad, "and he'll

"Vich idt vosnd't money," the baron objected; "idt vos kinderfeidt."

"So the proprietor might have thought he could make a play which would cause people to feel sure that he, at least, was innocent of queer-shoving."

"Which suggests that you think most of the other fellows with him, if not all, were of the same mind as the proprietor?"

"I don't suggest anything—I don't know; I'm only explaining why I wouldn't say anything to the sheriff in the presence of Denver Dave. Counterfeit money is being shoved here. We're to find out who is doing it."

"Oof ve can," corrected the baron.

"In an hour," said the scout, "the sheriff is to be here, and I'm to have a talk with him. I hope to know by that time whether or not I can trust him. But, at the outset, I think I can. After I've seen the sheriff here, I'm going over to the jail with him and have another talk with Payallup."

"Payallup lied about finding that bag of coins in the trail?"

"Yes."

"Then he probably stole the stuff. Is that your notion?"

"He found it, stole it, or is a shover of bogus coin. That last doesn't seem probable, from what I know of the man. Handlers of the queer wouldn't take into their confidence such a man as Payallup Pete. That's the way I see it now."

He had brought away with him one of the bogus coins, with the consent of the sheriff, which he now took out of his pocket.

"Let some feller ketch ye with thet, Buffler," remarked Nomad, "and he'll be sayin' you're in et, too!"



Without comment, Buffalo Bill got up and took from his hand bag a magnifying glass.

"There is a tiny 'm' on this coin, which can hardly be seen without a glass," Buffalo Bill explained. "The light flashed on it just right, in that place, and I saw it; and now I want to show it to you. Look for it under the right claw of the eagle. It seems a part of one of its toes."

With the aid of the glass they found it.

"Waugh!" Nomad roared. "You're meanin' thet stands fer ole Monte!"

"I thought that would interest you. Yes, Monte Vidio. What his name is, I don't know; perhaps he has forgotten it himself. Fifteen years or so ago he came to the United States from Montevideo. Split that, and it gives the name he now goes by—Monte Vidio. He's about as skillful a counterfeiter as ever struck these shores. He went to making counterfeit money in San Francisco. Later he was in Chicago. Then he was in New York. Officers got after him, and he shifted again to the West, and, for a time, he lost himself down in Utah. Then he began his work again in Salt Lake City. But he got into trouble there, and killed a man; and went up for thirty years. A year or so ago he broke out. Since then he hasn't been heard of. Now here he is again. This is a new coin; it shows no wear."

"Up erg'inst ole Monte!" chuckled Nomad. "Wow!"

"It seems to please you, old Diamond," remarked Pawnee.

"Waal, when I fight I likes ter know I'm up ergin' som'buddy thet is plum' wuth fightin'. Thet's what I mean. But who'd er thought er buckin' up ag'inst thet critter hyar? Not me."

"There's a queer streak in that old rascal," said the

scout. "He is actually proud of his work. He makes a counterfeit that is hard to tell from the genuine, and takes pride in his ability. So he puts his initial on the coins—that letter 'm.' He has always done it, and that's how he has been tracked, from Frisco to New York, and back to Salt Lake."

Having put the magnifying glass away, the scout stowed the bogus dollar in his pocket.

"I'm going out a while," he said. "Down the street I have a friend whom I know is reliable, and I'm going to have a talk with him."

When Buffalo Bill returned, he had an odd bit of information to impart.

"I've found out what kind of men have been shoving the queer—some of them, anyhow," he said.

"Denver Dave's bunch?" guessed Pawnee.

"You wouldn't hit it in a hundred years; so I'll have to tell you."

"All right—go ahead."

"Indians!"

## CHAPTER III.

### PAYALLUP PETE REAPPEARS.

"Pass the ante, amigo," said Pawnee Bill. "When you tell me that the shovers of the queer in this town have been ki-yis, I'm feazed."

"There may have been—probably were—others, besides the redskins. You don't know Tim Tanner. But he's a reliable citizen of this bailiwick, who keeps a little notion store, and at one time and another he sees about all the people. Incidentally, he is a born detective; or a man born to poke his nose into the affairs of other people, if you like it better that way."

"I suppose he gets lots of fun out of it."

"That must be all he gets; unless he is able to help a friend occasionally, as he did me to-night."

"Line it out," Pawnee invited. "Indian shovers of the queer! It sounds like it might be interesting."

"I went down to his little store, and I told Tanner what I wanted. He made a great pretense of secrecy—that's his way. He closed and locked the front door, drew the curtains tight, then he took me into a back room and showed me a bale of wire."

"Sounds as if the bell clapper was loose in his steeple," Pawnee commented.

"See that wire?" he said. "Bit by bit, I've sold a bale as big as that to Indians—Blackfeet—who come down here from the mountains, where they live. At first they brought in counterfeit dollars, to pay for the wire; and the conterefts were so good that at first I took 'em, and passed them on to other men. When I found out, I called a halt. It was my notion then that the Indians were getting this counterfeit of white



men here in the town. But what puzzled me was that they always bought wire—as much as they could carry, and lugged it away with them. Since I've been prying round, and I find that they've been passing counterfeit money everywhere. Less than a month ago one of 'em went right into the bank, and got a twenty-dollar gold piece for twenty bogus silver dollars; so you see how good that hardware is. Then he brought the gold piece to me, and bought wire."

"Must be they're buildin' a mustang corral up thar," suggested Nomad, who had heard this with astonishment.

"I suggested that to Tanner," said the scout. "He thought that, too, until he had tried to sell the reds some wire better suited for that purpose. They wouldn't take it. Now he doesn't know what they're doing with it. But the thing had so excited him that my coming was like a godsend, as it gave him a chance to pour out his information."

"Wire!" exclaimed Pawnee. "Blackfeet—regular clout-and-blanket ki-yis, buying reams of wire! About what size was that wire, necarnis?"

"Nearly an eighth of an inch thick."

"Just clean, straight wire?"

"Yes."

"Wire like that would be strong enough to hold an elephant. I guess they didn't want it for a horse corral."

"Unt der kinterfeidt?" said the baron. "Vare dit dhey gidt dot pogus money?"

"Tanner suggested that they made it. He said that no white man would furnish it to them. Of course, I didn't tell him that I saw in that money the fine Italian hand of Monte Vidio."

"Tanner hasn't reported this to the sheriff?" asked Pawnee.

"No. He and Chance aren't on the best of terms. He thought he could work the thing out himself. But he was willing to tell me; because he had reached the point where he couldn't hold in any longer, and he thought I might be able to offer some valuable suggestions."

"What's your idea about Monte? That he is up on that mountain, living with the Blackfeet, and running a bogus-coin machine there? It doesn't sound reasonable."

"I know it doesn't. But I begin to think that our trail lies up that mountain."

"And it was up on that mountain trail, so he reported, that Payallup Pete found the stuff he tried to pass at the Flashlight."

"Yes. The two things seem to connect."

"So thet mebbysso," remarked the borderman, "Payallup is not ther liar ye thought. 'Twould be er quar thing, ef thet critter could tell ther truth, an' stick to et!"

"On my way back here," said the scout, "I made up my mind to have another talk with Payallup. It seems to me I may use this information to induce him to open up. So, if you're ready, Pawnee, we'll hunt up the sheriff, and have him take us over to the jail for an interview."

But it wasn't necessary.

A rap sounded on the door, and when the scout opened it and looked into the hall, he saw Payallup Pete standing there.

Payallup came in, glancing anxiously about, holding his greasy hat in his hands.

"Call the roll," he said; "I reckon all aire here."

"You escaped jail?" the scout exclaimed.

"No," said Payallup, as he helped himself to a chair,

"I was exposed to the measles last week, and to-night I broke out."

He winked solemnly. On his oily, round face was an elated grin.

"Why don't ye ask me somethin'," he said; "I'm bustin' with information."

"I intend to," the scout informed him. "Pawnee and I were just on the point of getting the sheriff to take us over to the jail, so that we could have another talk with you."

"That would 'a' been plum' funny—me looking for you here, and you lookin' for me there, and ther sheriff up a stump."

"But I'm going to ask you first how you got out of the jail. I hope you didn't do anything harsh—hammer a guard on the head with a chunk of lead pipe, for instance? A charge of murder would be——"

"Don't you worry about that!" exclaimed Payallup. "That jail is so full of holes you could use it for a fish net. I pried out a bar er two, twisted a bed sheet into a rope, and in that way reached the jail yard. After that, it was like fallin'. There was only a high board fence, which was easy to negotiate. I done that with a ladder, which had seemin'ly been left standin' against the wall for that purpose. Looked so much like I had been helped, with that ladder, I plum' expected to find a pal waitin' fer me when I got outside. Then I come huntin' for you."

"We're ready for that information."

"And back to jail I go, when you git it; so you think! I'd like to tie you up with a promise before I begin."

"That we won't insist that you ought to return to the jail?"

"That you won't help the sheriff. If he tags me I'm



IT; but I don't think he will, as I've got a good start. You're to keep out of it."

Pawnee Bill laughed.

"You want us to compound a felony, Payallup."

"Pound anything you want, except me. But I'm figgerin' that you're goin' to look on me so kind that you won't want to part with me, and will take me along with you, after you've heard my tale."

"We'll listen to it," said Buffalo Bill; "and we want to ask you some questions."

"No promise of immunity there! Oh, all right! Let it go. I think I can shift fer myself," Payallup boasted. "Now listen to my tale o' woe. I lied about where I got them bogus dollars, and how I got 'em."

"We knew that," said the scout.

"I had to make up an explanation so quick, I left holes in it," Payallup explained. "Say, it's right, is it, that them dollars aire bogus?"

"They're certainly bogus."

"It makes the whole thing queerer than ever. For I got that iron money of an Injun. Now, what?"

Nomad had roared an exclamation.

"Hit you on the crazy bone, did I?" said Payallup.

"Beg your parding! Yes, sir; I got that stuff from an Injun, up on the mountain. I wasn't lyin' when I said I got it in the trail on the mountain. This here red that I collected it of came ridin' down the trail. I didn't know he had money; but I saw he had a ca'tridge belt, and I wanted the ca'tridges. So I shied him off his cayuse with a dornick. Then I found that bag of silver dollars."

Nomad woofed again.

"You didn't kill the Indian?" asked Pawnee.

"Sure not! Think I'm a bungler? But I'm figgerin' that I was five miles down the mountain trail before he climbed on his cayuse again."

"You didn't see him any more?"

"I was travelin' too fast. I hadn't owned that much money in a year, and the sight of it made me wild. I didn't stop until I reached this metropolis. Then I only stopped long enough to make out the location o' the Flashlight. After that—well, you know the rest of it; we met, and I went to board with the county."

"Did you take that revolver you had at the Flashlight from the Indian?" inquired Pawnee.

"I did, and the ca'tridges. All I had in the wide world, when I met the coppery gent, was the clo'es I'm now settin' in; and you'll observe they have seen wear. That's why I used a dornick on him; my arm wasn't long enough to reach him, and I had no other weepoon."

"That's interesting," Buffalo Bill admitted.

"And true," Payallup declared.

"Do you mind telling us," said the scout, "what you went up there for? You're not a man who would like climbing."

"I'd sooner fall down a mountain than try to climb up it," Payallup admitted. "But I went up there. And if you're the kind of man I think, I'm goin' up ag'in, with you."


"You ain'dt no fatter as me," said the baron sarcastically.

The baron could climb like a goat.

"I'm lazier; that's the why of it. But I want to go back on the mountain."

"Unt meppysso be kilt by der Inchuns, huh? Oof dot Plackfoot seen you when you hidt him, you look oudt der nexdt dime."

"You're forgittin' that Cody is goin' to be with me—and you fellers. When danger threatens, you're to form a ring to purtect me, and I'll git in the middle." He laughed. "But, jokin' aside, I want to go up there ag'in."



"Why?" demanded Buffalo Bill.

"For a month," said Payallup, "I've been prospectin' up there. I kept at it till I wore my clo'es out, and et all my grub, but I found good color. I want to go back and see what that color means."

"You expect to get us interested in your supposed gold discoveries?"

"No; listen: *I'm* goin' up because of that. You're goin' up fer other reasons. Hearken to my tale of woe. There's queer doings on that mountain."

"Go on."

"What if I tell ye that there's a laidge up there, on the side o' the mountain, where, every Wednesday and Saturday, jest at noon, a skeleton comes out and dances?"

"Waugh!" cried Nomad, starting in alarm from his chair.

"Old man, I thought that'd hit ye!" cried Payallup.

"What do you say to it, Cody?"

"That some one up there makes that skeleton dance."

"Explanation Number One. Put it down, till we find a better. Though we might inquire, if it's so, who'd want to do a fool thing o' that kind?"

"You've no opinion on the subject?" the scout asked.

"I've had a hundred, each one more foolish than the others. Now, git this next one: Every onct in so often, in the moonlight, a girl rides down the mountain trail on an elk."

"That's dead easy. No explanation is needed. She rides down the trail on a tamed elk."

"But what's she doin' up there?" demanded Payallup. "And why didn't I ever see her at other times?"

"What was she like?" asked Pawnee. "How old was she? How was she dressed? But perhaps you didn't see her very well."

"I thought that'd int'rest ye, Pawnee—somethin'



about a lady! I was close to her several times. She's young, and she's han'some. Her dress was that of a white lady, and she was white."

"What war ther color o' thet elk?" queried Nomad solemnly.

"Elk color, o' course. What'd ye think?"

"Speret elks has var'us colors."

"When it comes to spirits and whiskizos, old Diamond is an authority," laughed Pawnee. "What else about that young lady?"

"That's all about her."

"Et's ernough," said Nomad. "I don't want'er go."

"When you was seeing all that," said Pawnee, "you wasn't, at the same time, sopping up the last of the foolish water you took up there with you? Play fair, Payallup; I think you must have been. And if the brand of stuff you were drinking had held out long enough, I reckon you'd have seen that skeleton riding the elk."

"I didn't have a thing to drink but water while I was up there," Payallup Pete protested. "That's why I was so mortal thirsty when I hit this two-by-twice hamlet. And the water—some of it; let me tell you about that!"

"Don't tell any more ghost stories here, unless they're strictly so," said Pawnee, with a side glance at Little Cayuse, who was listening staring-eyed and gripping his chair as if he feared it would slip away from him.

"Truth is my motto," declared the greasy ragamuffin. "How's this, about some water I found up there? It was on top of a hill—a little spring, as ye may call it—on a flat hilltop, in the midst of them mountains. Water was kinda scarce, and I thought I'd quench my thirst at that spring. When I goes to it one day

that water, what had been natcherel-lookin', had turned red."

"Why didn't you say it had turned to blood?"

"Well, it looked like it. But hold on—I ain't through yit. Havin' turned red, the water begun to sink right before my eyes, and soon it was all gone out o' that basin. Nothin' was left but a hole, through which it had sunk. How's that?"

He looked round triumphantly, with a beat-it-if-you-can air.

"The slant of the sun at the time, or the color of red clouds reflected in it, made the water look red," suggested Buffalo Bill.

"That don't tally with my observation. But say, it's so. What made the water drain away?"

"From here we can't tell that, of course. One would need to look at the spring. But that's a volcanic country, and I think it likely there are geysers and mud springs up there. You witnessed some natural phenomenon, of course. If the red color wasn't due to the sun, or to red clouds, perhaps some internal motion, down in the mountain, threw red mud up into the water, and colored it; and then it sank away, because of that internal commotion."

"That might be—so fur," admitted Payallup Pete thoughtfully; "I hadn't thought of it in that way. And that might account fer some o' the tarnal noises I heard—like explosions, and groanin's, and things o' that sort. But—listen to my tale o' woe."

He looked round, with another beat-this-if-you-can air.

"As I said, water was scarce up there," he went on. "Only other water was more'n a mile away; and I'm down on walkin' when I don't haf to do it. So, in spite o' them queer circumstances, when the water come

into that spring again, and looked clear an' sweet, I took a drink."

He swung round in his chair, his red face a deeper red. What he was about to tell evidently had deeply impressed his imagination.

"Now listen to my tale o' woe!" he urged dramatically. "After drinkin' that water I went crazy as a loon, and didn't know nothin' fer about a week; when I found myself on the other side o' the mountain, layin' in some bushes. Looked like I had run wild and drapped there, or somethin' had carried me there. Gents, believe it or not—and mebbey you won't—but that's a fact."

His air was so genuine that they didn't even scoff.

"You still hung round that mountain, after that?" asked Pawnee Bill.

"I did. And I tuck to watching that spring, though I didn't put my ruby lips to no more o' that water. Talk about foolish water—that was it! Then I made another discovery."

"The elk was swimming in the spring, with the young lady on its back," said Pawnee, laughing now, as if he sought to relax the tension, which suddenly had become painful, for Nomad was goggling and getting pale round the gills, and Little Cayuse seemed threatening to throw a Piute fit. Even the phlegm of the baron had been stirred.

"Shucks!" shouted Payallup, disgusted. "That spring wasn't big enough fer an elk to swim in."

"What was your discovery?" Buffalo Bill inquired.

Payallup turned to him.

"I told you about that skeleton dancin' every Wednesday and Saturday, out on that laidge, jest at noon. Well, by watchin' that spring, I found that the time it sunk away was at noon on a Wednesday and a Saturday."



"Waugh!" Nomad gurgled.

"Ye don't believe it?" Payallup Pete exclaimed.

"I ain't no call ter dispute ye, Payallup," said the borderman mildly. "At times I has seen quar things myself."

But the baron was beginning to think that Payallup was baldly lying.

"Dot skeleton," he said sarcastically, "he dake a trink oof dot crazy water, unt idt make him tance; dot iss easy. Oof nodd——"

"What?" asked Payallup.

"Insteadt oof exbressing my obinion, I wouldt radher sendt idt py freight; dhen idt wouldt nodd hurt your veelings so soon."

"You think I'm lyin'."

"Ach, no; I wouldt nodd so soon forgedt dot ve haf invited you in here as our guesdt."

Payallup's coarse face reddened again. Then he forced a laugh.

"It's a good thing that Happy Chance corralled my revolver," he muttered.

"You wouldt use idt on me?" exclaimed the baron.

"No; I'd give it to ye fer a hammer, with which to nail down these lies."

The baron began to get out his big pipe. The thing had lost interest for him.

"Go ahead, Payallup," Pawnee invited. "We want to hear the whole thing, you know."

"Well, that's all," admitted Payallup, "and I reckon it's enough. Maybe I'll think of some more bumby; but right now I'm through."

The scout came at him with a pointed question:

"You told the exact truth, Payallup, as to *why* you want to go back there—that is, if you do want to go back?"

Payallup Pete turned his eyes away.

"I told ye the truth," he said.

"But not all of it?"

"If I think of any other reasons that made me want to go up there, I'll tell 'em later," he temporized.

"But not now?"

"I've told everything I've got to tell now."

He turned in his chair and furtively studied the face of the scout.

"Think ye'd like to go up there, Cody?" he demanded.

"Why should we take an interest in all that?"

"On account of them bogus dollars I pulled away from that red. You're goin' to look into that, I know."

"You're willing to go along, and show us all those wonders?"

"I am," replied Payallup.

"And your reward?"

"Well, I've already told ye," said the greasy fellow petulantly. "I want to take another look at the gold color I uncovered up there. And besides——"

"Yes?"

"I allowed that if you found out I *had* told the truth, and nothin' but the truth, you'd try to square this matter with the sheriff; so's I wouldn't have to be in danger of that jail no more."

## CHAPTER IV.

### BUFFALO BILL, ATTORNEY.

A heavy tread was heard in the hall, the door was pushed open, and the sheriff came into the room.

Payallup Pete jumped for the nearest window, but was caught by the leg by Little Cayuse and pulled back.

Happy Chance was the most surprised man there, for he had thought Payallup Pete was resting securely behind the walls of the jail.

"Wow!" he cried. "What's this mean? Payallup, do I see you?"

Payallup Pete struggled to his feet.

"You wouldn't be seein' me," he said, "if this coppersy son o' perdition hadn't grabbed me when he did. But I reckon it's all right. If he hadn't, I'd jumped into the alley below, and broke my laig or neck. Still, I ain't pleased to see ye."

"It astonishes me to see you, Payallup. How'd you do it? How did you get here?"

"I took a fall out o' your jail—by the winder; then I clim' the fence. When you fix that old jail up, make it tighter, if you expect it to hold anybody."

He crept back to his chair, and sat down.

"I was hopin'," he said, "to send Cody over to see ye, as my special messenger, and have him fix things up there, so't I wouldn't need to go back. But mebbly he can arrange it right here, if he's willin'. I've been tellin' him some things that ought to int'rest you, too."

Happy Chance glanced at the closed window, through which Payallup had been about to throw himself. Then he smiled, and sat down.

"What's up?" he said to the scout. "Payallup is

good at hintin', but he don't tell much. I've got to lug him back to the jail, sure; but if he's been openin' up, why——"

He glanced about.

"I think," said the scout, "that we'll let Payallup tell you what he has been telling us. After that we'll go into a committee of the whole to consider it. Does that suit you, Payallup?"

"Anything has got to suit me, I reckon," the scared rascal declared, looking uneasily at the sheriff.

But he retold his story, for the benefit of the sheriff.

"How does Payallup's work of imagination strike you?" asked Pawnee Bill, with a laugh, when Payallup had finished.

"Sounds fishy—part of it," said Happy Chance; "and he'll admit it himself. There aire Blackfeet up on that mountain, and I ain't no call to doubt that Payallup would rob one of 'em, if he got the chance. So that part sounds as if it might be so. But the other is—fishy."

"Now I come in," said the scout.

"Yes," laughed the sheriff, "this is your innin', Cody. You was to contribute somethin', after Payallup got through."

"I suppose you know," said Buffalo Bill, "that Blackfeet have been passing bogus coin in this town?"

"I'd heard it," the sheriff admitted, "but it didn't seem reasonable. They come down here and buy a few things now and then, and scare the women and children. I've ordered 'em to keep out. But I never found any money on 'em."

"Did you ever find anything else on them?" asked the scout.

"Nothin' much. Yes, I did, too. One time I found one o' them bucks loaded up with a lot of wire. He'd stole it somewhere."



"They come here, shove some of the queer, sell the stuff they buy, for good money, often, and then they take that money and buy wire."

"Buy wire!"

"I think that is straight. I got it from a man who has sold a lot of wire to them. And you say you found one of them loaded up with wire."

"Say, that has a funny sound," declared the sheriff; "most as funny as some of the things Payallup told. What do a lot of ki-yis want with wire?"

"If the right kind they might want to make pony corrals with it; but the stuff they bought wasn't that kind. What they do with it I don't know."

"Was your man reliable—the one who gave you that?" asked the sheriff.

"If I named him, you'd know he is reliable."

Happy Chance began to count on his thick fingers:

"Becket, Simpson, Tanner, Kellogg; them's the only men in town who carry wire. So it was one of them, if it was a reg'lar dealer."

"I'll mention no names now."

"Well, if it was one of them he could be believed."

Payallup Pete had been twisting uneasily.

"Say," he said, "lemme contribute this to the jack pot. I didn't think of it a while ago. I found a piece of wire on that mountain."

"What was the size of it?" the scout asked.

"Three or four yards long."

"I mean, how thick?"

"I jedge it was about an eighth of an inch thick."

"That tallies with what I heard," said the scout.

"The wire these Blackfeet buy and take up there is that size."

"That don't tell us, though," said Chance, "what they're doin' with it."

"No."

"And we've no way to find out."

"Unless we go up there."

"You couldn't git any information from them reds," declared the sheriff.

"Here is another thing," said the scout: "Those bogus dollars were made by Monte Vidio!"

"Old Monte? How'd you make that out."

The scout took the counterfeit from his pocket, and the magnifying glass from his hand bag. He showed the sheriff the tiny "m" on the bogus coin.

"Wow! Looks like you're right. Lemme see! Old Monte was sent up, in Salt Lake, for killin' a man there, so——"

"And he escaped about a year ago," said the scout.

"I didn't know that," Chance admitted. "What's your idee? You think he's hidin' with the Blackfeet?"

"It looks it."

"Well, he can hide. No sort of game calls me hard enough to take me among them Blackfeet. They aire humble enough, down in the town; but you go up there and start trouble, and you'll wish you hadn't."

"Yet that's what I think of doing—going up there and looking for Monte Vidio."

"You think he is mixed up in all that foolishness Payallup told about?"

"I don't know. But we're here to get a line on this counterfeiting, and here a trail seems to open. If we find there is nothing in it, we can come back and start over."

"You'll find things up there jest as I said," piped Payallup Pete.

"It's monkeyin' with the buzz saw," muttered Chance, "if you go among them Blackfeet. When you goin' to start?"

He seemed skeptical.

"To-morrow. This is Monday, and, if we make an early start, we can get up there Wednesday. At noon on Wednesday, according to Payallup, the skeleton is due to dance on the ledge, and the water to drop out of that spring. We'd be in time for the show."

"And you'd take me with ye?" shouted Payallup.

"We've got to ask Chance about that."

"It's a Chance ag'inst me, then," Payallup grumbled.

The sheriff looked steadily at his prisoner.

"Cody, I'd like to accommodate ye," he said; "but, ye see, that passes my authority. Payallup has been flung into jail, but he ain't been tried. To-morrow he would have been given a preliminary examination, and permitted to have a lawyer. If found not guilty, then he could go; otherwise, he'd be chucked back in the calabaza, where he'd have to stay, and take his turn with the other grist at the next circuit court. That's the way it is. My business is to land prisoners—when I can; but the justice of the peace here is the man who says the rest of it, until it goes on to the higher court."

"This justice of the peace is near?" asked the scout.

"Yes; right round the corner, in his office."

"I wish you'd ask him to step up here."

Happy Chance stared.

"Sort o' irregular, that is," he said; "if you're meanin' to have Payallup's examination held here."

"That's what I'd like to do, so that it can be kept quiet."

"Happy Chance departed in search of the local justice.

He returned with a clean-shaven, humorous-looking young fellow.

"This is Mr. Sanders," Chance said, "justice of the

peace. I've explained the situation to him, but you can hand him the details."

The details were "handed" to Mr. Sanders in short order.

"When a man is arrested, charged with committing a crime," said Sanders, "the law says that he shall be given a prompt trial. Usually, that is a preliminary trial, held in my office; but the law don't say where it shall be held, or when. So I reckon we can go ahead and try Payallup Pete right here."

He seated himself in a chair behind a table, and hammered with his knuckles on the table.

"This here honorable court is now in session. Prisoner, you are entitled to have an attorney. You got any?"

"Buffalo Bill's my lawyer," said Payallup. "If he can't git me out o' this hole, then nobody can."

"All right. Cody, you'll have to be sworn in, before you can conduct a lawsuit before this court. We've got to have this thing done up regular."

Buffalo Bill took the required oath.

"Prisoner, what's your name?" the justice demanded, putting pencil to a pad of paper.

"Payallup Pete."

"I mean your regular name; that's your handle."

"So long sense I used it, I sometimes fergit it," said Payallup; "but, lemme see. Now I got it. It's Peter Simpson."

"Mr. Sheriff, what's the charge against the prisoner?"

"Pushin' the queer," said Happy Chance.

"Passing counterfeit money," remarked the justice, putting marks on his pad of paper. "Prisoner, do you plead guilty, or not guilty?"

"Not guilty," declared Payallup. "I didn't know



the stuff was counterfeit; and I didn't pass it—I only tried to."

"Tryin' to is the same as passin' it, in the law. Take the stand, Mr. Sheriff—that chair there—and tell what you know about this case."

Happy Chance couldn't tell anything, except that he had been called in, and had arrested the prisoner.

"I reckon we'll haf to send out for witnesses," said Sanders. "We got to have the testimony of the keeper of the Flashlight, or some other man what witnessed this attempt."

"I'm the prisoner's attorney, I believe," Buffalo Bill interrupted.

"Sure you are, Cody; I ain't tryin' to ignore you," Sanders declared.

"Then let me make a statement. The point is, that I have concluded that I'd like to take Payallup Pete with my party, in a trip we intend to make to the Blackfoot country, over on the mountains. We'll be gone two or three days, maybe longer. Blackfeet have come down into the town, and have passed counterfeit money. So it has occurred to me to look for evidence among them. Payallup has lately been up there, has made certain discoveries, and can act as our guide.

"So you see what we want to do is to use him for a few days, and then return him to the keeping of the sheriff."

Payallup Pete, who didn't want to be returned to the sheriff, began to "make a kick."

"If the prisoner at the bar is willin' to admit," said Sanders, "that he tried to pass bogus coin on the keeper of the Flashlight, it's going to simplify matters a whole lot."

"I'm willin' to admit that I did, but I didn't think it was bogus," said Payallup.

"What a man thinks don't count in law; it's what he

does. You tendered to the keeper of the Flashlight the bogus coin that Colonel Cody has shown to this honorable court?"

"Yes; but I didn't——"

"The honorable court finds, then, that you're guilty."

"But, looky here——" Payallup roared.

"The prisoner will keep still! I ain't the man who is to say whether you're to be sent to the penitentiary for this or not, you understand. My business is to hold you for trial at the next term of the circuit court. Therefore, the prisoner is remanded to jail, unless he can furnish a bondsman; and his bond is fixed at a thousand dollars."

He looked at Buffalo Bill.

"Now is the time for the prisoner's honorable attorney to cut into the pie," the justice proceeded. "Do you furnish the proper bond for that amount? If you do, the prisoner is to be released on bail; otherwise, the law don't allow me to do anything but send him back to jail."

Buffalo Bill promptly signed the bond for Payallup Pete's temporary release.

"Circuit court convenes in this town on the first Monday of next month," said Sanders, addressing Payallup. "You must be here to stand trial at that time. If you don't, or if Cody don't surrender you at that time to the court, he stands to lose a thousand dollars."

"Before that time," said the scout, "if Payallup stands by me, to help me all he can, I think we'll be able to land not only the Indians who have shoved the queer here, but the man that made it, and is making it; and Payallup will go free."

"Hallelujah!" yelled Payallup.

"Shut up!" said Sanders. "If the prisoner butts in that way again, I'll fine him ten dollars. The dignity

of this court is going to be maintained. After I adjourn, then you may holler."

"Adjourn in a hurry," whispered Payallup; "I'm bustin' to yell."

Happy Chance, the sheriff, looked gravely across the table at Sanders, but with a wink.

"Your honor," he said, "is Peter Simpson now at liberty?"

"He's at liberty, but he can't yell until after this honorable court stands adjourned," replied the justice.

"Then," said the sheriff solemnly, "I place him under arrest for breakin' jail!"

"What?" Payallup screeched.

Sanders hammered with his knuckles on the table.

"The honorable court admonishes the prisoner, but takes note of the fact that his feelings exploded, and does not impose a fine this time. But if it happens again——"

"Cody," Payallup appealed, "they're goin' to lug me off to jail, anyhow!"

"Jail breakin' is a serious offense," said Sanders, "and it can't be condoned."

"I was leanin' ag'inst the winder, when it broke and I fell out," said Payallup. "When I clim' the ladder, I thought I was climbin' back to my cell. I didn't know no better until I found myself outside. The jail breakin' was done by the jail itself; the window was rotten."

"It can't be condoned," Sanders went on; "so I have to hold the prisoner for trial at the circuit court. But the bond already given can stand for this offense, too."

"Then I don't haf to go back to jail?" said Payallup.

"You have to report at the next term of the circuit court for trial."

"Is this court adjourned?" inquired the sheriff.

"Has the honorable attorney for the prisoner anything to say?" demanded Sanders.

"Nothing," said the scout.

Sanders hammered the table again with his knuckles.

"This honorable court now stands adjourned," he announced.

Then Payallup Pete yelled.



## CHAPTER V.

### A CAPTURE AND A REVELATION.

Before daylight, the next morning, Buffalo Bill's party, with Payallup Pete, hit the trail leading into the mountains.

This early start was made so that any criticism of the manner in which Payallup had been released from custody could not be made until he was well beyond the town.

Payallup had a confident and swagger air, ill befitting his shabby clothing, as he rode at the side of the noted scout, on one of the best horses the local livery stable had been able to furnish.

"This here hike fer the high hills," he said, "is some diff'rent from when I made it the other time. Then I was toilin' on foot—an' I don't like to toil. Now I've got saddle leather between my laigs, and gun men to do the fightin' if the reds shows up ugly. Old Fortune is shore rollin' the ball my way."

At noon they rested, and ate their dinner in a glade. Payallup, between mouthfuls, regaled them with stories of his experiences on the top of the mountain, which was now in plain sight.

"Them Blackfeet," he said, "keeps well on t'other side o' the mountain. I reckon that's because they're afraid of the skeleton."

"I suppose it hasn't occurred to you," remarked Pawnee Bill, "that the skeleton dances for that express purpose?"

"What purpose?"

"To keep the Blackfeet off the top of the mountain."

"Wow!" exclaimed Payallup, stopping a cracker that was halfway to his capacious mouth. "Hadn't thought o' that. But what would a skeleton keer if they did come, and how would a skeleton know——"

"The man manipulating the skeleton would care, and know."

"So ye think a man is bouncin' that rack o' bones round up there?"

"Sure thing."

"What's his purpose?"

"Likely he has found the gold you are looking for and doesn't want any one to come nigh him."

Payallup Pete gave a start, and stared.

"But that spring of crazy water?" he asked, a moment later.

"He's manipulating that, too."

"And the girl what goes ridin' on the elk in the moonlight?"

"Probably she's his daughter, or sister, or his wife."

"And his name is Monte Vidio! Well," he said, after thinking this over, "if he has cinched that lode ahead o' me, there's goin' to be trouble. Say, this makes me anxious to git up there, to see what's happened sense I come away."

At sunset they camped again. Two or three hours of further climbing would have brought them to the mountain top, but they thought it best to refrain from climbing in the dark.

The horses were picketed, and the men were eating a cold supper, when hoofs were heard descending the trail.

"'Tain't moonlight yit, but hyar comes yer elk!" cried the borderman, starting up and grabbing a gun. "It shuffles along like an elk, anyhow, not like a hoss!"

But when the animal came in sight it was seen to

be a horse, of a scrawny variety, with its hoofs muffled with rags. On its back was an Indian.

"Wow!" whispered Payallup. "Looks jest like ther red I tuck that iron money frum. I reckon he's got a bag of it, and is going down to the town to trade it fer wire. I never yit could understand about that wire."

They were in hiding, by the side of the trail, as the man came on.

The approaching horse scented the party in ambush, and shied.

But it was too late.

Pawnee Bill's riata popped out of the bushes like a leaping snake, and the noose dropped over the head of the horseman.

The next minute, while the rider struggled with the noose, the whole party sprang into the trail, and the rider found himself covered.

"Climb down!" Buffalo Bill commanded.

With an appealing glance, seeing he could not escape, the man slid to the ground. Little Cayuse ran forward, then, and caught the plunging horse by the bridle.

"You seemed to understand that order," said Buffalo Bill, when the rider had dismounted; "so I think you can talk English. You're a Blackfoot, from the looks of your feathers and paint. What have you got under your blanket?"

"Me poor Injun," came the answer.

Buffalo Bill started, and glanced keenly at the man.

"Come out of it!" he now said roughly. "That gave you away. You're a white man!"

"Whoop!" yelped Nomad. "What's ther game?"

"This seems to be pretty good proof," the scout answered, "that the Blackfeet who have been shoving the queer in the town are white men, not Indians."

The rascal made another effort to throw off the

noose of the lariat, with the intention of making a break for his liberty.

But Pawnee Bill drew it tighter, and brought the man down in the trail, floundering, with a jerk on the rope.

The borderman and the baron leaped on him, and deprived him of his weapons—a pair of revolvers and a knife.

In doing this, as they pulled his blanket away, they discovered a buckskin bag stuffed with silver dollars, of the kind that had been declared bogus, and made by Monte Vidio.

Little Cayuse was announcing, also, that bound to the saddle were two other buckskin bags, of the same variety.

Bound with the lariat that had thrown him, the man was rolled over, searched further; then he was ordered to sit up, and talk.

He glared and refused, with attempted gutturals.

"Baron, bring over that water bottle," commanded Buffalo Bill. "We can quickly settle this racial question. From the looks, that paint is not so thick but that it will come off readily."

The baron waddled over with the bottle.

The rascal struggled, when the water was applied; but they held him, and scrubbed him vigorously.

It took only a minute to bring the paint away, and he was revealed as a white man—an evil-looking fellow, with wicked dark eyes, and high cheek bones, like those of an Indian.

A roar broke from Payallup Pete.

"Now, what's bit ye?" Nomad demanded.

"Him!"

"Ye know him?"

"Why, may I be nibbled with mus'rats, if that ain't Snake River!"



"You're mistaken," said the prisoner.

"Ye ain't him? Great terrapins! What's yer name, then?"

"Bill Morgan," the prisoner grunted. "You never seen me before this minute."

"Oh, I didn't!" Payallup yelled. "You don't reckon that time, when I was doin' a pasear down through Utah, and you was with a penitentiary chain gang, working on the road, poundin' stone. I says to you, says I, trying to be friendly—havin' been in a chain gang onc't myself, I felt sorry fer ye—I says, 'Work-in' on the highway?' And you says, 'No; I'm jest sandin' my way.' A joke like that, frum a man in yore condition, made me plum' reckon it. Oh, I know ye!"

"I never was on no chain gang, in Utah, ner anywheres else; and I never saw ye before."

"Oh, all right; let it pass."

Buffalo Bill took a hand in the questioning game:

"You have here three buckskin bags filled with bogus silver dollars. We think you were going down to the town with them. Where did you get them? And why were you dressed and painted like an Indian?"

"Them's questions I don't haf to answer," said the prisoner sullenly.

"Oh, ye don't!" yelled Nomad. "You give Buffler any sharp sass, and I'll plug ye."

He lifted his revolver.

"Cayuse," said the scout, "slip up the trail, where you can see it well, and keep a watch. We don't want any of this fellow's friends to happen in on us without our knowledge."

The young Piute slid away.

"You might as well tell," said the scout, "because we know. You were going to the town to buy provisions and wire with this stuff, for Monté Vidio."

The prisoner had good control of his nerves, for he did not move an eyelash, as he answered:

"You know a lot—you do!"

"We're going back to the town in a day or two, when we'll turn you over to the sheriff there, after which you'll have to talk. Better do it now," the scout advised. "If your answers suit us—if we see you're telling the truth—we'll try to make it easy for you."

"You're Buffalo Bill?"

"Yes."

"I never seen you before. And it's a surprise that I see you now, here. Say that you'll let me go, and I tell all I know."

"Then you do know something! We thought so."

"Will you let me go, if I tell what I know?"

"If you tell *all* you know, and the truth."

The rascal seemed to turn this over in his mind.

"Well, I got that silver of a Blackfoot. I met him in the trail up there, and tuck it from him."

"Wow!" Payallup bellowed.

"You don't believe that?" the man flashed at him.

"It sounds good, fer it's like what I done myself."

"Then I stripped him of his blanket and head feathers, took his box of paint, and turned myself into a red."

"Why did you do that?" demanded Buffalo Bill.

"Well, this is Blackfoot country, and I thought, as I meant to make the rest of the trip by night, if I run into any of 'em, I could slide through, with them thinkin' I was their kind."

"That don't wash," said the scout.

"No?"

"That's a lie out of whole cloth."

"Well, if you ain't goin' to believe me, what's the use?" the man asked.

"I can see that you made that up, after taking time

to think over your situation. So we're going to hold you, and when we get down to the town we'll land you in the jail."

Pawnee Bill tried his hand.

"When you broke away from that chain gang, down in Utah, and hit it out for this place, Monte Vidio was with you, wasn't he? We know he escaped, down there, and came up this way."

"I don't know him," said the man.

"What were you doing on this mountain?"

"Prospectin'."

Payallup leaned forward.

"What was you prospectin' for?" he queried eagerly.

"Silver, gold—anything I could find."

"Nothin' else? Speak up honest, now."

"That's all."

"Now, you wasn't lookin'——"

His excitement had carried him too far, and he checked himself suddenly.

"What did *you* think he was looking for, maybe?" demanded Pawnee Bill. "I guess you've been holdin' back something, Payallup. Better out with it, befor we go any farther."

Payallup laughed noisily, to cover his confusion.

"I was goin' to ask him if he wasn't lookin' fer a diamond mine, jest as a joke."

"Waugh!" cried Nomad angrily. "You answer Pawnee respectful, when he fires a question at ye, er I'll cave yer head in."

Payallup laughed again.

"Don't you fellers be so ferocious."

Little Cayuse slid into the circle.

"White girl make um pasear down trail," he reported.

## CHAPTER VI.

### WAIF WESTERN.

"Now we're goin' ter see ther elk act," Nomad whispered, as he writhed into the bushes.

The others did not follow him.

When the girl came in sight of them she stopped in confusion, and seemed on the point of beating a quick retreat.

She was on foot, as the Piute's language had indicated. And she was a good-looking white girl. Her clothing was ordinary, yet becoming.

"We'll not harm you," Buffalo Bill called out to her.

"I—I was looking for my pony," she stammered.

"Fer yer elk, ye mean," Nomad whispered, sliding into view.

"You haven't seen anything of a pony?" she asked.

"Is et a scraggly thing, with a cast of one eye, and a crop off its right year?" Nomad queried.

"I'd know it, if I should see it," she temporized.

"Waal, then, take a look at this un. This hyar critter, what we has captered, come ridin' et down ther trail, and as we know he's a thief, maybe he corralled yer pony."

She came on down, looking inquisitively at the group, and the prisoner.

"No," that's not my pony," she declared, when the captured pony was pointed out. "What are you holdin' this man for, and who is he?"

"We hoped," said Buffalo Bill, "that you'd be able to tell us who he is?"

She looked at the prisoner again.



"He was dressed like a Blackfoot—feathers, paint, and blanket; and at first we thought he was a Blackfoot," explained the scout. "You don't know him?"

He studied her face.

"I don't know him," the girl replied.

"You live up here yourself?"

"Yes."

"An' ride an elk?" added Nomad.

She looked at the borderman quickly, but did not answer.

Buffalo Bill and Pawnee were standing up, and had removed their big hats.

"It seems a singular thing—and that's what moves us to ask these questions," Buffalo Bill urged, "that you should be living on this mountain, when it is known to be infested with Blackfeet. You'll pardon us. I'll introduce myself and my friends. This is Gordon W. Lillie, and my name is Cody, but I'm better known as Buffalo Bill."

"Buffalo Bill!" she exclaimed sharply, staring at him.

The famous scout nodded.

"If you're Buffalo Bill, then you know me—or you would know me if I hadn't changed so, and the time hadn't been so long since you last saw me," said the girl.

The scout smiled.

"I shall be happy to renew that acquaintance," he replied.

She was flushed and smiling; yet she seemed timid and nervous, and glanced about.

"All I can tell you," she said, "is what has been told to me. Seventeen or eighteen years ago I was found on this mountain, by a prospector, and taken down to Carbon Springs. You know where that is. The prospector reported that he had found me well

down on the lower slopes, and that I was wandering round there, crying; he didn't see any one else, and he didn't know how I got there, and I couldn't tell him anything, except that I was lost. I don't remember that prospector. Then you came to me, and, as I didn't have any place to go, and there were only men in Carbon Springs, you took me farther on, and left me with a woman at a place called Cedar Crest. And you gave me a name—because I couldn't tell what my name was—I was really only a little more than a baby, then. And I still call myself by that name—Waif Western."

"Waif Western!" the great scout echoed. "Yes, I remember the circumstances, though they had really all but passed out of my mind."

He stepped forward, and offered his hand.

"We ought to be the best of friends," he said. "Permit me to introduce my friends again. This is Major Gordon W. Lillie. This is Nick Nomad. Here is the baron—never to be forgotten; when we speak his whole name and title, which we can't afford to do often, it is William Von Schnitzenhauser, Baron of Himmelblitzen. And this is Little Cayuse, the finest young Piute Indian that ever followed a trail."

"And the man there?" the girl asked, indicating the prisoner.

"Say, you've left me out," shouted Payallup Pete. "Ain't I counted in as one o' yer friends, Cody?"

"This man," said the scout, "is Payallup Pete, or Peter Simpson."

"And the prisoner?" she said, seeming much interested in him.

"He gives his name as Bill Morgan. But Payallup Pete declares that he is a rascal known round the country as Snake River."

"And what has he been doing, that you've got him tied?"

"It's safe to tie a man like him on general principles," the scout declared.

"But you didn't tie him for any such reason as that!" she declared.

"Let me tell you, lady," cried the prisoner, "that these here men aire makin' a mistake, and treatin' a feller harsh, when they ain't no call to. I admit I robbed a Blackfoot, up on the mountain, and was pikin' out with his pony and belongin's. But that ain't no crime, seein' that he was jest an Injun. Then they hauled me in—with a rope round my neck, and piled me down here. I had put on the red's blanket, and his paint and feathers, thinkin' I'd be safer that way, in the Blackfoot country, in the night. I allowed that in the darkness I could pass along safe enough, even if any Blackfeet saw me. That's the heft of my wrong-doin'. If you have got influence with these here men, you ask 'em to lemme go."

"I haven't the least influence with them—since I have just met them, and never saw one of them before, with the exception of Buffalo Bill, and, of course, I couldn't be expected to remember even him. But it makes me sorry to see any man tied that way."

"Waugh!"

"Did you speak to me?" she asked of Nomad, who had coughed out his dissent.

"No'm," said the borderman, shrugging his shoulders and dropping his gaze to the ground, "I war jest havin' internal reckonings o' thet patty de foi grass thet I et fer supper."

The girl glanced at Buffalo Bill; then at the others.

"You'll let me go on now and look for my pony?" she asked.

"Of course we can't detain you," the scout answered. "But what you told me was so interesting, I've been hoping for more. After I placed you with that woman

at Cedar Crest—what happened? I think I can be pardoned for asking that question."

"She died soon afterward."

"And then?"

"I lived with her sister, and after that with another woman, who the same as adopted me. But she is dead, now."

"And you're living alone here on this mountain, now? Am I to get that idea?"

She was flushed and confused again.

"I think I'll not answer that right now," she said. "Perhaps I can later. I owe a debt to you, and I mean to do right, you know; but I don't think I ought to answer it until—well, until I have had time to talk with somebody about it."

"Just as you choose," said the scout graciously. "I can send one of my men with you, to assist in finding your pony, or I can go."

She moved through their midst.

"No; I think I'd rather go alone," she murmured.

"As you please; but it's late, you know, and it will be dark soon."

She hurried on, as if anxious to get beyond their reach.

"Waugh!" the borderman gulped again, when she had disappeared. "What do ye make o' thet?"

"She doesn't seem to be much afraid of the darkness and the loneliness of this trail," said Pawnee Bill.

"I don't mean thet. She wouldn't answer, ye noticed. Ef Monte Vidio is up on this mountain, she's livin' with him, you bet."

"Idt yoost loogks idt," agreed the baron. "Oof dhis veller vouldt dalk, I am petting he could dell some t'ings apoudt idt."

"Right ye aire," Nomad agreed. "Ye noticed thet

she war mighty int'rested in him—wanted ter know all about him, and was tearful erbout them cords that's holdin' him down. Wharfore?"

But Buffalo Bill, recalling the child he had so long ago befriended, did not want to jump at unpleasant conclusions.

"She had a good appearance," he urged.

"I wisht you'd send Little Cayuse out ter foller her," said Nomad.

"No; that wouldn't be right."

"Why not? We're suspectin' her o' bein' crooked. And a crooked woman is——"

"I'm not suspecting her of anything of the kind," protested the scout.

"Ye ain't? Waugh! I am. A gal thet'll live up on this mountain wi' er man like ol' Monte—waal, et'd pay ter watch her. I'm bettin' dollars ter plugged nickels thet ef Cayuse held to her trail, he'd finally run her into some cabin up hyar, inhabited by Monte. Thet is, ef Monte is up hyar."

"We'll not annoy her in that way," the scout decided.

"Cayuse c'd do et 'thout her ever knowin' et."

"But *we* would know it. You overlook that."

The scout turned to Pawnee.

"That's coming back to me more clearly all the time—the things she told me. Waif Western! I remember giving her that name, because she was a waif, and Western."

"You never," said Pawnee, "got any points on how she came to be where she was found?"

"No; and I had forgotten that it was this mountain. I left Cedar Crest the next day, or soon, and never returned. The whole thing dropped out of my mind after a while. But it's all coming back to me now."



"You don't know who the prospector was who found her?"

"No; I've forgot his name."

"It's queer enough," declared Pawnee, "that she should be living up here. She must have a sort of homing-pigeon instinct, to want to return to the place where she was so strangely found."

"I'm studyin' erbout thet elk," grunted Nomad. "Ole Monte warn't never any animile trainer, so fur as I reckon; he war allus too busy grindin' out bogus dollars ter keer fer animiles."

"Was this the girl that you saw in the moonlight on the back of an elk?" Pawnee Bill inquired of Payallup Pete.

"I never seen her face good, before now; but all the ev'dence goes to say, don't it, that she is?"

"So you don't know?"

"I don't allow," said Payallup, "that there aire two handsome young women on this mountain—not unless ye count in Injun squaws."

"By the way," remarked Pawnee, "we didn't ask her much, if anything, about the Blackfeet! She ought to be able to tell us all about them."

"Ye ain't goin' ter see her erg'in," said Nomad, "unless ye capter her, like ye did ol' Snake River; you hear me!"

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE ESCAPE OF THE PRISONER.\*

The prisoner, who, according to the statement of Payallup Pete, bore the unique appellation of Snake River, refused to become communicative, even after he had been treated to a good supper, and the bonds on his arms and legs had been loosened up a bit, so that they could not cut him. He maintained that in his story he had told the truth, and nothing but the truth.

"You've been gittin' proofs," said Payallup to the scout, in the after conversation, "that what I told ye down in the town was strictly so. But I never knowed that the Injuns who was passin' the queer was jest white men rigged up to look like reds. I know now that if I'd took time and pains to wash the paint off the one I keeled over that time with a rock, he'd have turned out to be white, too. Wish I'd thought of it."

"Dose white men, also-o," remarked the baron, as he pulled peacefully at his pipe, while the night came down over the camp by the trail, "who vos knowin' to be passin' der kveer in der town vos broproply mempers oof dhis pand oof Monde Widio, huh? Vot you t'ink?"

"Looks like," responded Nomad, "we has got ter look fer er band o' white scoundrels up on this mountain, led by him. Some of 'em has been goin' down painted like Injuns, and some in thar natcheral color, but all has been pushin' ther queer."

"You recollect, old Diamond," said Pawnee Bill, "that when Monte escaped, over in Utah, other men got away, at the same time. I never heard that he was out with a chain gang, but it might have been that way; the particulars didn't come to me. However

you settle it, old Monte is a slick piece of goods, and if we're up against him here, we've got work ahead of us."

"An' danger!" added Nomad.

"Gents," said Payallup, "I never guessed that I was playin' in sech peril, when I was rompin' round on this mountain; if I had——"

"You would er stayed in jail, and tuck yer chances, eh?" chuckled the borderman.

"Well, you're nigh hittin' it," Payallup admitted.

Before turning-in time, Buffalo Bill once more questioned the prisoner, hoping to get something out of him; but Snake River was an oyster that refused to be opened.

"Think what ye like," he growled. "If you land me in jail, it won't be the first time I've breathed strained air through the bars of a cell."

"Then you admit that you've had a criminal record?" said the scout.

"No more'n the feller over there you call Payallup, what claims he knows me, and lies about it. He seems to have broke jail some recent; yit I see he's resortin' with you, which argues that you're countin' him plum' innocent. A lot o' times a man that's slung into prison ain't half as guilty as them that put him there."

Knowing they were in perilous territory, with probably white scoundrels to contend with, as well as rascally redskins, a guard was kept throughout the night.

Nomad's turn at guard standing came well along toward morning; and he took his station, with his back against a tree, close by the trail, where he could plainly see the prisoner, who was lying down, wrapped in a blanket. Apparently, Snake River was sleeping as peacefully as a child.

With his rifle between his knees, as he squatted down by a tree, old Nomad put his blackened brier between his teeth, and let his thoughts go out on the breath of fragrant tobacco smoke.

"Gin'rally," he reflected, "I'm a whole lot skeered up when I comes company front with things that aire seemin' mysterious; but not so much in this hyar case, 'cause thar aire holes in ther ladder what I kin see through. Thet gal, now! Nothin' ter be disturbed erbout thar. A likely young woman ridin' down ther trail on an elk, in ther moonlight, don't sound skeery, aifter ye've seen ther young woman. Waugh! Shore not."

He smoked, and reflected:

"An' thet skellerton bizness—ef Payallup didn't lie a whole lot erbout et; which mebbys he did, fer Payallup belongs in ther front rank when et comes ter handlin' cur'us falsehoods! Buffler says, an' so does Pawnee, that ther skellerton is proberbly one made out'n wood; an' is dangled over ther top of ther clift by a wire 'tached to it, which et is done ter skeer ther Blackfeet, so's they won't come climbin' to ther top o' ther mountain. Waal, ef et's so, thar's no need fer anybody ter break his neck runnin' frum it. Still, thar's a whole lot yit thet will need explainin'."

Nomad did not know when he fell asleep. That is a general experience. A man feels sleepy, fights it off; then is asleep.

Nomad's awakening came with sudden and painful force; and was instantly succeeded by an unconsciousness deeper than sleep, for it was not even invaded by dreams.

He was hit on the head—the side of the head, by a blow aimed at the top of his skull. As he started up, half blindly, another blow fell, and laid him out.

When he came back to consciousness this time, the

gray dawn was in the sky; and Buffalo Bill was working over him, while Pawnee was throwing water in drowning showers into his face.

"Whoosh!"

Nomad started up, as his eyes flew open.

"What ye doin'?" he yelled. "Think I'm a fish?"

Pawnee Bill gave him a final douse, which made the borderman roar with anger.

"Jokin' among friends is all right," he said, "when 'tain't carried too fur; but thet's too fur!"

"That brought you 'round all right," said Pawnee, in a tone of satisfaction, as he put down the water bottle he had used.

Then Nomad discovered that he had a racking headache.

"What d'ye mean?" he said. "War I needin' ter be brought 'round?"

"The worst kind, old Diamond," Pawnee answered. "What has become of the prisoner you were guarding?"

Nomad remembered suddenly his painful experience.

The prisoner was gone, and the blanket that had been round him. On the spot where he had lain was a tangle of knotted rope, through which the knife had passed. Even to the borderman's dazed mind, the situation was as clear as daylight.

"Waugh!" he bellowed.

He sat down again, trembling, his stomach threatening to turn a somersault, and a sudden blindness passing before his eyes.

"Waugh! Baron, back up yer mule hyar, and coax et ter kick me!"

"Dot Toofer moodel," said the baron, "iss too mooch oof a shentleman to keek a man vhen he iss town."

Nomad looked about again in the gray dawn, put



up his hand, and passed it over his painfully swollen head, then he stared shamefacedly at his friends.

"Tell me erbout et," he directed.

"You know nearly as much as we do," said Buffalo Bill. "I heard a sound of some kind; but it must have reached me in my sleep, for I didn't rouse up. I thought one of the horses was kicking, or thrashing about; and that Little Cayuse was walking over to it. For all I know that may have been an hour ago. When I woke up finally daylight had come. Then I saw you lying here, and a few moments later I discovered that the prisoner was gone."

"Yer looked erbout ther camp?"

"Cayuse is making a search now."

Nomad propped his back against the tree.

"Oh, snakes! When er man gits so's he ain't fit fer gyard duty, et is time fer him ter hive up in er town an' git ready ter die. Fallin' ersleep on gyard like thet is a shore sign o' ingrowin' age an' failin' stren'th. When we gits through wi' this hyar Monte tackle, Buffler, you'll haf ter discharge me."

"You're still worth any half dozen ordinary men," said the scout. "How are you feeling now?"

"Fine as silk, o' course—cain't ye see et? I c'd whup my weight in wildcats—nit! Honest, Buffler, I'm findin' et hard work ter hold my head up—feels like ther top o' et has been caved in by an Injun war club. Waugh!"

Little Cayuse returned from his brief tour of inspection round the camp.

"No find um tracks," he reported.

"The rascal got out by the beaten trail," said Pawnee.

It was an old game trail, hammered hard by the feet of elk and other animals, as well as by the passage of Blackfoot mustangs.

"What does yer think?" Nomad queried. "I don't like ter su'gest unpleasant things."

"We haven't had much time to talk it over," said the scout, "so we haven't arrived at conclusions."

"I hates ter su'gest thet gal!"

"It doesn't seem likely, old Diamond," objected Pawnee, "that she could have given you a clip on the head like that."

"Mebbyso not. But would she haf to?"

"I thought you suggested it."

"You seen what a int'rest she showed in Snake River?"

"No one could help noticing that."

"Waal, don't thet p'int ter anything—er does et? She war plum' sorry fer Snake River, an' said so. S'ponin' now Snake River be'longed ter old Monte's band, an' s'posin' she berlonged ter et, which et is easy ter believe, so fur as Snake River is concerned. And say thet she hiked wi' ther news ter old Monte thet Snake River had been captered down hyar, an' war likely ter spill out damagin' information, through bein' given ther third degree by Buffler. Et would seem likely, then, wouldn't et, thet old Monte would perceed ter take a hand in ther game? Thet's what I mean. Mebbyso ol' Monte give me this swell-head feeling', er one o' his men."

They made the borderman as comfortable as possible, in the camp; and pushed the search, up and down the trail, and all about, for tracks of the man who attacked him, and for trails of Snake River.

The rescue had been so craftily accomplished that they discovered nothing.

"There is one thing which goes against Nomad's theory, that the girl carried information to the white men we are supposing are on this mountain," said Buffalo Bill, when the searching had ended in failure.

"Name et," Nomad urged. "Ther more I thinks of et, ther more et seems so."

"It is this: if we are right in supposing there are a number of men up here of that stamp—when the girl carried that information to them, instead of trying a quiet rescue, they would have rushed us as we lay asleep."

"You mean that as a point in favor of the girl?" said Pawnee.

"Yes."

"If it proves anything, it proves too much; for it bears out the idea that the girl did it herself. And I know you don't want to believe that."

"I'd like to eliminate her altogether," the scout admitted.

"Ve ar're going to know a heab more as ve do now, when ve gedt petter acquainted mit dot young voman," declared the baron.

"Moonlight and myst'ry go together," remarked Payallup. "You gotter recklect that I seen her in the moonlight."

"Oof you can't dalk some sensidiveness," snorted the baron, "keeb sdill. Dot iss a pug-house itea. Moonlighdt unt mysdery go togedder! So do black-pirdts fly in der night, somedimes. Budt idt ton'dt mean notting."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### INVESTIGATING.

Leaving the borderman in the camp with Little Cayuse, Buffalo Bill and Pawnee took Payallup Pete and the baron, and climbed to the top of the mountain.

They wanted to get up there before noon, that they might witness the sinking of the spring, which Payallup had declared took place at high noon, every Wednesday and Saturday.

Nomad was recovering rapidly, for he had a constitution like iron; still, he was hardly equal, yet, for the mountain climb, and, as the animals were left behind, he could help the Piute guard them.

By ten o'clock the top of the mountain was gained.

It was not like a mountain top, in the ordinary sense; but seemed the beginning of a chain of ragged peaks and crags, broken by ridges and cavernous hollows, in which regiments of men might lie hid without much danger of discovery.

Payallup Pete led the way confidently for a mile or two.

"It's right ahead of us now," he reported, at last. "After we climb that rise, you can see it."

They advanced to the rise, and ascended.

Below them lay a craterlike hollow, in the center of which glistened a tiny mirror of water.

"There it is," Payallup whispered. "Jest at noon, on Wednesday, which is to-day, that water turns red; then it gives a snort and a gurgle, and slides down out o' sight. What do ye think o' that?"

The scout looked about.

Hanging over the craterlike hole, at the south, was a cliff of red sandstone, curving up like a finger.

"My first guess is," he said, "that, at certain seasons of the year, when the sun is far enough south, the top of that sandstone cliff obscures it at noon, and a red shadow is thrown down on the water."

Payallup Pete stared at the red cliff.

"Mebbyso," he admitted; "I didn't think o' that. But what makes the water run out jest twic't a week, at the time it does?"

"We'll have to figure out the answer to that later,"

"An' when I took a drink from it, that time, why did it make me crazy?"

"We can investigate that, by having you take another drink from it, and then watch you when the crazy fit gets to work," answered Pawnee Bill, as if he meant it.

"Wow! No, ye don't! Hereafter, whenever I want crazy water, I'm goin' to a reg'lar saloon and pay out my coin fer it. You don't ketch me soppin' up any more o' that stuff."

"Idt seems kviet enough roundt here," remarked the baron, looking about.

"What is that break right off there, behind the bushes?" asked Buffalo Bill.

"The mountain drops away there," answered Payallup.

"You didn't mention that."

"No," said Payallup, but with a noticeable hesitation.

"Anything singular about that drop?"

"Well, you can go over and look at it."

When they went round to the other side of the crater, they found that the mountain dropped sheer away, in a wall of granite. A great, dark, abysmal hole was at the bottom, with the same sheer granite wall rimming it on every side.

The bottom could not be seen, for trees were down



there, dwarfed by the distance to the size of bushes, in places, in other places rising; so that it was evident the bottom of this singular hole was as uneven of contour as the ragged mountain itself.

"Why didn't you speak of this?" asked the scout. "It's certainly singular enough to have stuck in your memory."

"I didn't think of it," Payallup answered; but there was in his tone that same note of hesitation and evasion already noted.

"Himmel!" exclaimed the baron. "Oof a man shouldt fall by dot blace in he couldt schmoke a pipe oof topacco pefore he got to der pottom."

They returned to the little spring in the middle of the crater, when the hour lacked a few minutes of noon.

"Look there," said the scout.

The tip of the sandstone peak, from their viewpoint, was reflected in the edge of the pool.

"That much of your spring has turned red, Payallup," said the famous scout.

Payallup Pete stared at the red reflection.

"Correct," he said; then dropped into silence.

Buffalo Bill looked at his watch.

"Five minutes more, if my time is right," he announced.

They waited half an hour, and the pool did not change in the least.

"Maybe your watch is off a bit," urged Payallup.

They waited an hour. There could be no doubt that the pool, or spring, had failed to bear out Payallup Pete's assertions.

"This is shore Wednesday?" said Payallup.

"No doubt of it," said the scout.

"Well, I don't know what to make o' this. The old

spring is taking a day off. But it shore done it every Wednesday and Saturday that I watched it."

"How long a time did you watch it?"

"Three months, certain."

"You didn't give us that idea before. I thought you were up here less than a month."

"Three months, certain," Payallup insisted.

"Now, where are the Blackfeet?" asked the scout.

"No use staying here longer."

"Walk off in that direction a mile," said Payallup, pointing, "and you'll find another cliff. At the bottom of it is level ground—sort of like a big valley. They're in that. But I'm shore afraid to take ye there now. For if it should happen that they've moved out, you'd set me down as a liar from way-back."

"We can tell if they've been there, if they've moved."

"What I'm wonderin', now," said Payallup, "is if that skeleton failed to come to time to-day, too."

"Whereabouts is the ledge where it promenaded?" asked Pawnee.

"Right off there, where we're goin'—overlookin' the Blackfoot village. I'll show it to you. But, of course, it's too late to see the thing now. Gotter wait till next Saturday noon for that."

A walk of more than a mile brought them to another rock rim, with a steep descent to low-lying ground.

Payallup Pete's spirits came back, when he looked down, and saw the conical tops of Blackfoot lodges, in the distance."

"I was 'most afraid to take a peek," he admitted. "But they're there. Ye can see 'em."

"Ten or twelve lodges, I judge," said the scout.

"Nigher fifty, and mebbys nigher a hundred.

There's a lot of 'em which you can't see for the trees an' bushes. I sneaked down there onc't an' took a look."

"Where is the trail by which the Blackfeet get on the mountain?"

"Over there—in a sort of gorge. I'll show it to you, if the gorge ain't closed up. Nothin' wouldn't surprise me, sense that spring failed to remember this is Wednesday."

The gorge was there, and the Blackfoot trail.

"Likely Miss Waif Western is down in that village," remarked Pawnee. "If necarnis is right, old Monte and his crew are also down there. I suppose we've got to investigate that village."

"But not to-day," said the scout. "We'll now take a look at that ledge."

Payallup Pete pointed out the ledge.

After that they tramped over the extended reaches of the mountain. It was hard work, with heavy climbing here and there.

But they found no one. With the exception of the Blackfoot trail, which crooked, snakelike, over the mountain, they saw no indications of human presence.

By nightfall, when they turned to descend to their camp on the other side, they were dead tired.

Nomad and the Piute had no experiences to report, when the camp was gained.

That night they were undisturbed.

The next day, for security, the camp was shifted. The day following, it was shifted again. Each day was spent in exploring the ridges and cavernous hollows of the mountain.

The third day brought Saturday round.

"Now we'll see the skeleton dance on that ledge," said Pawnee.

The old borderman was able for duty again, but he had no desire to see the skeleton dance. Neither had the Piute. So they were left behind.

But the skeleton did not dance at high noon on the ledge.

That night Payallup Pete disappeared.

## CHAPTER IX.

### PAWNEE BILL'S BLACKFOOT FOES.

Payallup Pete could not be followed, and Sunday was spent in the camp.

"From appearances," said Pawnee, "necarnis is going to be a thousand dollars out of pocket. But what Payallup Pete's little game is, I still fail to see."

"He wanted Buffler ter go bail fer him," said Nomad, speaking without taking time to think first. "And fer thet reason he sung his lyin' song."

"That won't explain it. He was already out of jail, and he didn't have to come to us. He could have walked right out of the town. He wanted to get us up here. Now why?"

"Dot iss der kvestion," said the baron, puffing comfortably at his pipe. "Budt I ton'dt can answer idt."

"Still," said Nomad, "we has got ter admit thet Payallup didn't lie erbout Injuns ridin' down ther mountain trail wi' bogus dollars tied up in buckskin bags. We connected wi' one, though he warn't Injun. We has got them dollars right hyar ter prove et."

Traveling round the whole circuit of speculation and argument, they were like a pony circling at the end of its picket rope; when they reached the end, they were where they had started.

Convinced, however, that the white man who had been caught with the bogus coins was not alone on the mountain, and sure that Waif Western was either on the mountain or in the Blackfoot village, when Monday dawned they tackled the work again, as resolutely determined as in the beginning.



Leaving the horses and the baron's mule concealed in a tree-clad hollow, they set out early.

Buffalo Bill took the borderman and Little Cayuse with him.

Pawnee Bill and the baron went in another direction.

That afternoon, when their search on the mountain had failed to reveal anything, Pawnee and the baron tackled the pony trail which led down to the Blackfoot village.

"This is ticklish territory we're going into now, Schnitz," remarked Pawnee. "So you be ready to drop into the bushes, if we hear anything."

"Yaw."

"And look out that you don't fall and break your neck."

"I vill dood idt. Yoost der same," said the baron, as he picked his way down the steep trail. "I could gidt along fasder oof I shouldt lay me down unt roll. Himmel! You hear dot? Someding iss coming now."

He slid off to one side, and Pawnee Bill followed him.

Disengaging the long lariat he carried at his belt, Pawnee Bill shook it free of kinks and spread out the noose.

The baron peered through the bushes.

"I am seeing idt. He iss a Inchun!"

"Another white man painted like a red, carrying counterfeit money?"

"I ton'dt know," Schnitz drew back. "You dake a loogk."

Pawnee Bill looked through at the horseman ascending the trail.

"Same kind of shaggy little pony, same kind of paint and feathers."

"Yoost like dot Snake Rifer."

"Sure thing. What do you say if we rake him in,

Schnitz? If he's a white man disguised, we can't afford to let him get by us."

"Sure nodt. Unt oof he is a Inchun——"

"We can turn him loose. Get down now; for here he comes."

They dropped down.

When the pony, and its rider came opposite them in the trail, Pawnee Bill let his lariat fly.

He was so dexterous in the use of the rope that he had no trouble in landing the noose over the rider's head; and the next moment, as the pony jumped, the rider dropped into the trail.

As he did so, he uttered a yell that might have been heard a mile, it was so ear-piercing. Then, slashing out a knife, he began to cut at the rope.

Before he could sever it, Pawnee Bill and the baron were on him; satisfied, however, by that yell, that they had a Blackfoot to deal with.

Pawnee Bill threw a loop of the rope round the redskin's legs, and pulled it tight. This, with the noose already round his neck, brought him into subjection.

"We're not going to hurt you," said Pawnee. "So stop your fuss! All we want to do is to ask you some questions about the Blackfoot village down there, and who is in it. We've an idea that you Blackfeet are harboring a lot of white scoundrels, and we'd like to know if it is so."

When he saw he could not get out of the folds of the rope, the redskin subsided; but the way he glared at Pawnee and the baron was not pleasant.

"He iss loogk like an Inchun," said the baron, "budt meppysso he iss a bainted vhte man."

"Oh, we've got a red this time," declared Pawnee Bill.

Nevertheless, the baron poured a little water from his water bottle into his hand, and applied it to the

Blackfoot's cheek, bringing a howl from the lips of the redskin, as he did so.

"You ton'dt haf coom in conduct mit mooch vater, huh?" said the baron. "Vale, a face vashing won'dt hurt you."

The paint came away; but the man was an Indian.

"Now, vot?"

"We're not going to hurt you," said Pawnee Bill. "Just answer a few questions, and we'll let you go. Baron, see if you can get hold of his pony."

The cayuse, having jumped along the trail a few yards, had stopped. While the baron tried to catch it, Pawnee began catechizing his prisoner.

"Are there any white men in your village?"

"Me no sabe," said the Blackfoot.

"I think you do. Any white men down there?" He pointed.

The Blackfoot shook his head.

"Where were you going?"

It evoked the same kind of answer—merely a shake of the head.

"You won't tell?"

The cayuse, chased by the baron, turned about, and dashed back over the trail, sheering past Pawnee Bill.

"Too bad," said Pawnee. "If this lariat hadn't been round the ki-yi, I could have got that beast."

"Unt now he vill go pack unt acquaint der Inchuns," the baron grumbled. "Dot iss padt. Maybe yidt I can gatch him."

He hustled past, down the trail in pursuit of the cayuse.

Two minutes later Pawnee Bill heard him yell.

"Now what's happened? Deserted Jericho! I wonder if he's fallen and broken a leg?"

He sprang down the trail, drawing his revolver as he ran, leaving the bound Blackfoot.

He did not see the baron. But, as he plunged along, he was thrown headlong, by a rope that jumped up out of the trail and caught him by the ankles.

Before he could writhe round, or even throw up his revolver, half a dozen Indians were on top of him. They fairly weighted him down with their numbers. As he struggled vainly to hurl them off, a length of the rope that had tripped him was thrown around his neck, and drawn choking tight.

Less than a minute later, Pawnee Bill was tied up so tightly that, as he later expressed it, he could hardly wink.

Then the baron was dragged out of the near-by bushes, wheezing and almost black in the face; for he, too, had been captured, and was kept silent by a rope that shut off his breath.

This rope was thrown off, and that round Pawnee's neck was loosened. But, as both were tied hand and foot, they were still helpless.

"Ach!" the baron gasped, as soon as he could speak. "Himmelblitzen! I t'ink I am deadt!"

Some of the Blackfeet, darting up the trail, came back soon with the Blackfoot captured by Pawnee Bill.

He was in a violent rage, and vented his spite by landing sundry kicks against the ribs of Pawnee Bill and the baron.

"That's all right," said Pawnee. "We deserve it, and all we're going to get. For a pair of fools, dear baron, we can take all the blue ribbons in this show."

"Idt is plack-unt-plue rippons on my site, I haf already receifed," the German groaned. "Ach, du lieber!"

The Blackfeet became the questioners, demanding to know why the white men were there, and why they



had maltreated the Blackfoot who had been riding up the trail.

"Baron, the chickens have come home to roost," said Pawnee. "We were a bit too harsh with that fellow!"

"Ve ar-re brosbectors," said the baron to the Blackfeet. "You know vot idt iss?"

"And," added Pawnee, "we thought we—er—might find in your village some white men we'd like to see. We asked your friend if any white men were in the village. It was not our intention to hurt him. But I s'pose we did—when we pulled him off his horse. And now we're sorry for it. But we are friends of the Blackfeet."

The Indians did not believe this, judging by their actions. They loosed the ropes on the ankles of their prisoners; then drove them ahead in the trail, lashing them with a rope-end now and then, to hasten their steps.

Half an hour or so took them into the village, where there was a great hubbub over the prisoners, thus brought in.

The Blackfeet of the village became angry, when they were told of the treatment the Blackfoot rider had received; and would have rushed on the white men, to administer blows and kicks, if a chief had not interfered.

Cast into a filthy lodge, in their bonds, they were left there the remainder of the day, without food or drink, and without attention or notice, except when some Indian, usually a curious squaw, pulled the lodge flap aside, and peered in at them.

They were still neglected when night came.

Long before that time, the cords had swollen their arms and ankles, and the kicking and rough treat-

ment they had received had made them sore from head to foot.

So far, the Blackfeet had showed no disposition to do more than hold them, and make their confinement as unpleasant as possible, by neglect.

Naturally, the prisoners speculated much as to the outcome. They blamed themselves. But they were anxious about the other members of their party. Feeling sure that their failure to return to the rendezvous would stir Buffalo Bill to make a search for them, they feared the result.

Because of this anxiety, as well as the pangs of hunger and thirst, and the pains of their position, it was after midnight before either of them fell asleep.

Pawnee Bill's uneasy slumber was broken, some time later; and he saw a blanketed squaw bending over him. As she had a knife in her hand, he was about to start up with a cry, when she motioned him to keep quiet.

He could not see her plainly, for the lodge was not well lighted. But he was about to speak to her, when the baron started up with an uneasy flounce and snort.

"Sh!" Pawnee Bill warned.

"Vot iss?" the baron demanded.

"I don't know. A friend, I hope."

"Himmel!"

Trying to rise, forgetful that he was tied up like a bale of hay, the baron fell back.

The knife in the hand of the squaw was slipping through the cords that held Pawnee's wrists together. When they parted, she attacked the cords on his legs.

"Just keep quiet, baron," Pawnee urged.

"I am so kviet as——"

The squaw glided to him, and began to slash his bonds asunder.

"Yiminy! Dot iss fine."



But the baron could hardly move his arms, even when the ropes dropped off. And when they fell from his ankles, and he tried to rise, he tumbled down, so stiff were his legs.

"A friendt in needt iss a friendt indeedt. I ton'dt know you, budt you ar-re under my opligations. I——"

The woman dropped the knife, dived to the rear of the lodge, and, lifting the lodge skin, disappeared.

Pawnee Bill had seen the knife fall. Feeling round in the gloom, he picked it up. It was a cheap trade knife, with a bone handle, the double-edged blade roughly sharpened by whetting on a stone. Of its kind, nothing could have been better as a weapon.

"Still alive, baron?" he whispered, working his arms up and down to limber up the stiffened muscles. "That was a good turn, eh? And unexpected. It makes me wonder what it means. I wonder, too, whether we can get out of this."

"I am so stiff as a mummy!" the baron grumbled.

"Same over here. But let me get this village behind me, and I'll do a running stunt, just the same. You saw the way that squaw went out. We'll follow suit."

Softly Pawnee crawled to the rear of the lodge. There he lifted the lodge skin, and looked out. The village was quiet. There was a moon, low down in the sky, and it threw the shadow of the lodge before him. The sides of the few lodges on which he looked caught the moonlight, and were plainly visible.

"No one moving out this way," he whispered, as he let the lodge skin fall. "So, baron, if you've got the kinks out of your muscles, we'll make a try for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. My everlasting thanks to that squaw. She must have fallen in love with me," he added humorously, "or she wouldn't have taken the risk."

Lifting the lodge skin again, he crawled out, wriggled to one side, and let the baron follow.

"I couldn't run, oof volfs vos chasin' me!"

"Let a Blackfoot yell rise, and you'd run like a locomotive. So would I. But I wonder what became of the squaw. I'd like to thank her. I was too muddled and tongue-tied at the time to think of it. Shall we try it now?"

"Yoost mofe on. I am pehint you."

They crept away from the lodge, in its shadow.

Reaching the limit of the dark area, they stood up, ready to step quickly across the moonlit space to the shadow of the next lodge, when a dog rushed out, with furious barking, and flew viciously at Pawnee's legs.

Instantly, stiffened limbs and sore muscles were forgotten, and Pawnee Bill, with the German lumbering at his heels, flew for the bushes, visible in the moonlight beyond the cleared area occupied by the Blackfoot lodges.

The yelping cur chased them, with an annoying outcry, sufficient to direct the attention of the Blackfoot to the escaping prisoners. Apparently all the occupants of the lodges were aroused. Half-dressed redskins filed out into the moonlight, with questioning cries and angry yells.

Gaining the low-growing bushes, Pawnee swished wildly through them, in a swinging turn that took him toward the trail. And after him labored the baron.

When they gained the trail, instead of continuing in it, they crossed it, and burrowed for safety.

But still the dog came at them.

Pawnee could not reach it with the knife. It stood off and barked, and made little lunges, but would not come near.

Picking up a stone, he balanced it carefully, measured the distance, let drive with it, and struck the dog in the back.

It was not a knock-out blow, but it sent the cur into the trail, with a yelp; and they heard it yelping still as it fled for the village.

"Now we've got to move," said Pawnee. "Follow me as fast as you can, without making a noise."

They got farther from the trail, and dropped down, where they waited for developments.

A band of angry Blackfeet surged past. Soon the trail was filled with Indians, who struggled up the steep ascent, convinced that the white men had fled that way.

Under cover of the noise made by the Indians, Pawnee Bill and the baron managed to get still farther away from the village. Finally, they felt safe in rising to a walk. The way was rough, as they struggled on, moving farther and farther from the trail and the village; but the moonlight helped them, and saved them from many a fall.

Yet it took them the rest of the night to gain the top of the mountain.

They had shaken off the Blackfoot pursuit. And in the gray dawn they shaped their course carefully for the rendezvous.

Buffalo Bill and those with him had been much alarmed. Already made anxious by the long absence of their friends, and aroused by the distant sound of Indian yelling, they had come out on the brow of the mountain.

There they met Pawnee and the baron; and retreated with them to the camp, where Pawnee told the story of the capture of himself and the baron.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE WAIF OF THE WEST.

The stirring up of the Blackfeet filled Buffalo Bill with anxiety.

He had hoped to get along peaceably with these unpleasant neighbors while on the mountain. He had even planned to lay before their chief the fact that certain white men were playing Blackfoot, for criminal purposes, and giving them a bad reputation in the town.

The fact that a squaw had intervened to aid the prisoners also came up for discussion. It was surprising, but not without precedent.

"We'll lie quiet here to-day," said the scout, "and see what develops. The Blackfeet will return to their homes and settle down again, and we may have no trouble with them."

"I don't blame the Blackfeet, necarnis—and I adore that Blackfoot squaw," said Pawnee. "But there's sure going to be trouble, if I ever meet up with that Blackfoot dog."

"Vot vorries me der vorst," grumbled the baron, as he tried to stay his consuming appetite, keen as a wolf's, after his long fast, "iss dot I losdt mein bipe!"

"What about my revolvers, and my gold-mounted knives, and my——"

"Ach! Vot iss dose, to a bipe?" grumbled the baron.

Comforted somewhat by a black brier loaned by Nomad, the baron finally forgot his loss and went to sleep.

About the middle of the forenoon, he was aroused, by the touch of Pawnee's hand on his arm.



"Somebody's coming down the trail, baron," Pawnee whispered.

"Inchuns?" said the German, wide awake in an instant.

"We don't know."

To their ears came an odd, shuffling sound.

A minute later, mounted on an elk and garlanded, there came into view an interesting figure—the Waif of the West, on whom the scout, years before, had bestowed the name of Waif Western.

The elk was garlanded, as well as the girl. And in the trail walked a hermitlike man, with rifle on shoulder.

The elk stopped, at a quick word from the girl, when she saw the men of Buffalo Bill's party. The man dropped the rifle into the hollow of his arm.

"Friends!" sang out the scout.

The girl flushed, then smiled. The man looked nervous and questioning, and fingered his rifle.

"We didn't expect to find you here," the girl said. "You were on the other trail, when I saw you before."

"We shifted our camp, for safety," the scout answered. "We're glad to meet you again."

"Well," the girl said hesitatingly, "I don't know whether we can be glad that we have met you or not. But I hope so. We ought to be friends. All white people ought to be friends, round here."

Her hesitation vanishing, after an inquiring glance at the man, she slipped lightly from the back of the elk. Then she and the man came forward, after she had dropped her garlands.

"This is Mr. Tempest," she said. "We're living up here now, for a while. I call him father. The last woman I lived with, I told you, died. Mr. Tempest was her husband. He has been my father ever since."

Buffalo Bill and his friends looked curiously at

Tempest, as they shook hands with him. He was between fifty and sixty years of age, but looked older. His hair and beard were white. But he was still muscular, and quick in his movements.

"Tom Tempest," he said. "Call me Tom Tempest. It's the name I've carried since I was a boy. We've been talkin' about you a good deal, since Waif saw you."

"One of your men isn't here," said the girl, looking about.

"Payallup Pete?" answered the scout. "He has left us. The prisoner we had then is gone, too; he departed that night, after we saw you."

He looked at the girl keenly.

"An' my head's feelin' sore yit," added the borderman. "I got er good clip on et, ther night Snake River went."

He, too, looked at the girl.

"He struck you?" she asked.

"I don't think et. Yit et might er been so, fer I had let myself fall ersleep, like er fool. An' I was ther gyard. Then I war hit on ther head. And when I come round, Snake River had j'ined ther ranks o' ther missin'."

The girl flushed again, observing the look the borderman shot at her.

"I hope you can't think I did that!" she cried.

"Waal, no; I cain't think et. Snake River had friends, and one of 'em crawled inter ther camp."

"Yoost like der skvaw vot grawled into der Plack-foot lotch lasdt night unt released me unt Bawnee," the baron observed.

The girl glanced at Tempest, then smiled.

"That's a compliment," she said to the baron.

"How iss dot?" he asked.

"I'm the squaw that set you free last night."

"Vot?" the baron yelled.

"I didn't expect to be asked about that—so soon," she said. "But I might as well tell it now. Father and I talked it over this morning, and concluded to tell you, if we met you."

"You certainly have our thanks," said Pawnee, as much amazed as the baron. "I think it would trouble us to say how much we thank you! It bewilders me, to think that you did it. You are living down there with the Blackfeet? But you took a risk—a big risk!"

"We're not living with the Blackfeet," she declared. "But we are on friendly terms with them, and are living near them, in a gorge on the side of the mountain. I'll have to tell you how it was."

The baron was fairly swallowing Nomad's black brier, and had forgotten to smoke.

"I saw you," she said, "when you were captured. I told father about it. At first we thought of finding your party, and telling them. But we didn't know where to look. So we decided that I should visit one of the Blackfoot girls I have made friends with. I went down there about dark, and stayed with her, in her father's lodge. I was afraid I couldn't do anything. But when it was nearly morning, I slipped out, with her blanket round me, and got into your lodge. And I got back without waking any of them, before the dog began to bark, and they began to chase you."

"And remained unsuspected?" said Buffalo Bill, admiring the courage of the girl.

"Yes, I think so. I got up, when my friend did, and we ran together out of the lodge. I'm sure I wasn't suspected. This morning, I went back home. And there some of the Blackfeet came, to ask father if he had seen anything of the white men who had got out of the village in the night."

Tom Tempest sat down, and the girl sat beside him. The garlanded elk wandered about, cropping the leaves of the bushes.

"Since we've met," said Tempest, "and no Blackfeet are near, I s'pose we might as well come to an understandin' now, as later. You're up here chasin' some thievin' white men. Waif has told me. I don't want you to think I belong to that crowd."

"When she got back, after she'd met you, she told me all about meetin' you, Colonel Cody, and how she felt about it. Besides that, I've heard of you, and I know you're strictly honest."

"We try to treat every one right," said the scout modestly.

"And do what good you can, as you go along. That's what I've heard of you. What you done for Waif proves it. But there are some p'int of her history that I reckon you don't know. I mean—accountin' for the way she happened to be up here."

"It's a long story, but I'll make it short. She was in a wagon, with her father, comin' along the trail that hangs over the Bottomless Pit. I mean the big hole over there, that maybe you've seen. The old trail is about gone now—grassed over. But it still can be seen there, windin' along the edge of the pit. Her father had a pair of mules drawin' the wagon; and the wagon was loaded with gold, in nuggets and dust."

"He was a prospector and miner. His name was Thompson—so we think; of that we ain't sure. A good many other things ain't clear, and never will be. But he struck gold somewhere to the west of this; and he probably was there a good while, with his wife and child. We're not dead sure about the wife, but there must have been one. She may have been with him, when he set out with his wagon and mule team, to cross the mountain, by that old trail; but we think not."



We found a man named Snyder, who is now dead, who claimed that he had seen a man named Thompson, with a mule team and a wagon like that, t'other side of this mountain; and that he had a little child with him, but no woman. Judgin' from that, we think that Thompson's wife was dead—maybe had died where he had been workin'. This Snyder understood the man to say that his name was Thompson. We got this from Snyder two or three years ago, shortly before he died; and his recollections, I admit, was hazy on a good many points.

"The rest of the story we reached by deduction. If Waif's father started over that trail with mules and wagon, there ain't but one belief possible, seein' that he never was seen again, so fur as any one knows. And Waif was found by that prospector, wanderin' round on the lower side of the mountain. That belief is that the mules and wagon, and Thompson—if that was his name—went into the Bottomless Pit.

"We've reached the conclusion it was that way. Must have been. I've gone over that old trail, and it bears me out. Some places it's right on the edge of the precipice. The way I figure it is, that when the man saw his wagon was goin' over, he pitched the child out; and, no doubt, he tried to git out himself, but couldn't, in time.

"Waif don't remember anything about it. She was stumblin' round, and scared near to death, when the prospector found her. That's the story he told, so I've heard. She couldn't talk. Maybe she was slow developing that way, for he said he thought she was about two years old. Anyhow, she couldn't tell anything.

"Which brings me round," said Tempest, "to right now, and why we are up here. We've been here two months. If Waif's father, and a wagon load of gold,

went into the Bottomless Pit, we thought we'd like to know about it. But," he added, "the trouble is, nobody can git into it.

"We tried to find a place; and then we went down and made friends with the Blackfeet. We didn't tell 'em what we was here for. I give 'em the idea that I was huntin' and jest prospectin' round. But we asked 'em about the pit. They said it had no bottom, and they was afraid to go near it. So we didn't git any information there.

"Then you came. That stirred Waif and me up a good deal. We wondered if *you* couldn't maybe find a way down. But we was afraid to speak to you about it; not knowin' you, I felt that way. A lot of men, ye see," he added apologetically, "if they knowed about the possibility of that gold being down there, would study how to get it, and beat Waif out of it. So we——"

He stopped.

"So you didn't know whether to tell me or not?"

"That's the right of it, colonel. But this morning, after Waif got back from the Blackfoot village, and told me what she had done, we concluded that if we met you, we'd tell you."

"And I'm glad that now you know about it," the girl said.

"She wanted to, from the first," Tempest added. "She argued that you wouldn't do wrong by her, the girl you had helped and had named. But I didn't know you—I hadn't met you. And there was the chance, too, that some naan was callin' himself Buffalo Bill who hadn't the right to that name."

"We'll have to look at that trail, and try to find a way to get down. You call it the Bottomless Pit?"

"The Blackfeet call it that, or a name which means



that. I don't know if it's got any name, given by white men."

They asked many questions.

In fact, the talk covered so much time, that Little Cayuse was sent to a peak overlooking the trail, to watch for possible enemies coming on them unawares.

"You haven't seen either the man called Snake River, or that other man who was with us—Payallup Pete?" Buffalo Bill asked Waif Western.

"We haven't."

"The white men who are supposed to be up here, are, we think, a band of criminals, to which Snake River belongs. And it's possible that Payallup has joined them. When we captured Snake River, he was painted and dressed like a Blackfoot. He was taking down the trail three bags of silver dollars that we know are counterfeit."

Buffalo Bill went into details, and told of the circumstances that had led him and his friends to that place.

"It seems to me," he added, "as you have been here two months or more, you ought to have seen some of those men up here. And I have another thought."

"I reckon what's in your mind is in mine," said Tempest, "and has been there a good while. That is—we was likely to be follered by men who would want to get at that gold ahead of us."

"You never heard of Monte Vidio?"

"Never."

"He's a skillful counterfeiter and all-round criminal, who escaped from the Utah penitentiary with a number of other prisoners. As the shovers of the queer came down from the Blackfoot country with their bogus money, we concluded that Monte Vidio was up here, at the head of the gang. Since hearing

your story, several things are clearing up in a most astonishing way.

"Right now, without looking further, I feel sure that Monte is really up here; and that he has heard about Waif, and about the gold that is supposed to be at the bottom of that hole. Somewhere near here he and his men are in hiding. Monte is at his old game of making bogus coin; or else he knew where to go to resurrect some he had buried.

"That is the only kind of money he now has, in my opinion, and he has been forced to use it in the town, to get things he needs, and supplies. One of the things the supposed Indians bought down there in quantities was wire."

"Wire!" said Tempest. "That looks suggestive."

"It can be understood now. Monte and his men intend to get into the Bottomless Pit by means of that wire—some sort of a wire rope, by which they can go down and up."

Tempest started to his feet.

"Perhaps they're already down there," he said.

"They may be; and that may be why we don't happen to run into them."

"Yes, I feel sure of it," said Tempest, showing alarm. "We've got to hunt for that wire, and find out what they're doing. Maybe we're already too late."

"I was going to ask you another thing—about some stories that Payallup Pete told us. He reported that on a ledge, which overlooks the village of the Blackfeet, he had seen a skeleton dancing. Did you ever see that?"

"A skeleton dancing! No. But there are places that the Blackfeet are afraid to go, and that might be one."

"You've seen the little pool on top of the mountain near the edge of the Bottomless Pit?"

"Yes."

"Did you ever notice anything peculiar about it?"

"No; never noticed it much."

"Payallup Pete declared that each Wednesday and Saturday, at noon, the spring sank and disappeared in a hole at the bottom; and at the same time the skeleton danced on the ledge."

"Where is the ledge?" asked the girl.

Buffalo Bill described its location.

"We'll have to investigate that, and the pool," said Tempest. "It's worth looking into."

"We watched the pool last Wednesday, and the ledge on Saturday. But there was nothing wrong. Saturday night, after the second failure, Payallup Pete disappeared."

"Looks like he lied about it, then," said Tempest. "But I'm goin' to investigate that."

"We're willing to help you get into that Bottomless Pit," the scout promised. "But our first work here is to locate the fake Indians who were passing bogus money. I think, though, that when we do that, we shall have a line on some method by which the Bottomless Pit can be entered."

When they had discussed this, and Tempest had described to them the gorge in which he and Waif Western were then living, he got up to go, the girl rising with him.

"These flowers," he said, laughing, when he saw that they looked at the garlands, "and them on the elk, are jest part of a bit of fun that me and Waif was up to. The tame elk we brought up with us, as a pack animal, in addition to Waif's pony; but she likes to ride it round, for the fun of it."

"Ye see," he added, "Waif ain't got any birthday—

that she knows about; so we picked one out for her. It's to-day. Accordin' to that birthday, she's twenty years old. And we was jest celebratin' it, with the flowers."

He caught the elk without trouble. Then, Waif having mounted to its back, with Tempest's assistance, they picked their way on down the trail, in the direction of their home.



## CHAPTER XI.

### PAYALLUP AND SNAKE RIVER.

When Wednesday came round again, Buffalo Bill sent Nomad and the baron off, with Little Cayuse, to watch the spring on top of the mountain. He and Pawnee at the same time set out for the vicinity of the ledge on which Payallup Pete had said the skeleton danced.

The sun lacked an hour of noon when Buffalo Bill and Pawnee reached the bushy slopes below the ledge. "Looks a bit like wild-goose chasing, necarnis," Pawnee admitted, "since Payallup made that fly-by-night disappearance."

Their hope that the dancing skeleton would be seen on the ledge was not strong, as they secreted themselves.

They had a better view of the ledge now than when it had been pointed out to them by Payallup Pete. They discovered that, near its center, there was a dark gorge, which broke the ledge at that point and cut into the face of the cliff.

"I'm offering diamonds to dornicks," whispered Pawnee, "that the skeleton is pushed up out of that gorge by the man who manipulates it. That is, if there is a skeleton!"

They had not been ten minutes in their place of concealment when they saw a bush move near one end of the ledge.

"The ghost gets ready to walk!" Pawnee whispered. For a whole minute after that not another thing happened.

"I see now," said the scout, "that the ledge can be

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gained from that end, though it must be steep climbing. We'll have to get up there."

Pawnee Bill whispered again:

"The bush shakes, necarnis. Now it walks! I see something moving. And—ah! Deserted Jericho!"

A man had come into view. And the man was Payallup Pete.

"What do you think of that?" was Pawnee's excited question.

"It begins to seem," the scout conjectured, "that Payallup Pete makes the skeleton dance—if there is a skeleton. We've sure got to climb to that ledge now, to rake in that rascal."

Payallup Pete was slipping along the ledge in the direction of the black gorge. When he gained the gorge he disappeared.

Pawnee Bill glanced at the sun, and consulted his watch.

"High noon in another fifteen minutes, or around that time. I wonder where Payallup has been keeping his precious self all this while? I begin to think that fellow is slipperier than an eel."

There was another period of monotonous waiting, during which they looked at the sun every minute or two, and consulted their watches.

"Noon it is, by my time!" Pawnee Bill closed his watch with a snap. "Now, we'll see——"

Bushes moved again, toward the other end of the ledge; and into view there came Tom Tempest and Waif Western.

"On-she-ma-da!" Pawnee gasped. "Are they mixed up in this, too?"

"I hope not," said the scout, as he watched the man and the girl moving stealthily along the ledge. "I don't want to lose faith in everybody I meet up here."

His eyes turned back to the gorge, and beyond it; and he uttered an exclamation:

"There it is!"

Out in the sunlight on the ledge, a skeleton was dancing, if a number of erratic jerks can be called dancing. It bobbed up and down, with jerks of the arms and legs and noddings of the head. Nevertheless, it looked gruesome. For it had the black opening of the gorge as a background, so that, viewed from the slope of the hill below, it seemed almost to be dancing on air.

"We were too late to see it appear," whispered Pawnee. "But there it is. I think a cord must run over that arm of rock to support it, and other cords make it move."

Glancing to the right, they saw that Tempest and the girl had disappeared.

"Probably they dived behind the bushes," guessed Pawnee. "I wish we were up there. I'd give a hundred dollars to catch Payallup Pete at that little game. The next time I meet him, you can bet that he will talk."

So desirous were they of getting closer to the skeleton and the mystery behind it, that they shifted their position with much celerity, and, climbing to the end of the ledge where they had first seen Payallup, they began to move hurriedly toward the gorge.

The cliff supporting the shelfy ledge bent outward like a bow, so that at first they could not see far. But in a short time they came again in sight of the dancing skeleton.

As they were moving quietly toward it, the skeleton collapsed suddenly into a heap of bones on the ledge; and they heard, down in the gorge, an outcry and sounds of a struggle.

The sounds had all but ceased when they reached

the gorge, and dropped into it by a natural stairway of rough stones. This brought them into sight of the men who had been fighting.

One of them was Payallup Pete. The other was the man he had called Snake River. Payallup had Snake River down on his back and was choking him. Snake River was already but half conscious.

Payallup Pete turned with a gasp, and snatched up a revolver, when he heard the thudding steps of the intruders. A queer look swept over his face.

"Ah, it's you!" he said. "Then, I won't shoot you."

"What's the row?" Pawnee Bill demanded.

"Take a look, and don't ask questions."

Watching Snake River, who was wheezing back to consciousness, Payallup snatched a knife from his enemy's belt, and, leaping up, dashed at a rope-end dangling from the cliff, and hacked it off.

Returning with this rope, he began to tie Snake River.

"Can't take no chances with a man like him," he panted, as he worked. "And, as I think I hear some one comin', if you want to take sides with me, instead of Snake River, you'd better git out your guns."

The sounds came from the gorge entrance. Tempest and Waif Western came into view—after having descended into the gorge, apparently from the other side of it, and climbed to this spot.

Payallup flung a glance at them, finished his tying, and stood up, revolver in hand.

"You haven't answered Lillie's question," reminded the scout. "And now, that you have the time, is a good chance for you to do it."

"It answers itself, don't it?" said Payallup; "I've captured Snake River."



"You were making that skeleton dance?" said Pawnee Bill.

"Wow! Sure not. That was Snake River."

Snake River opened his eyes. He had regained consciousness, and had been listening.

"That's a lie!" he wheezed.

Payallup Pete looked confused.

"Believe him, if you want to," he said. "But I've told the truth, and have done it from the first." He glanced into the dark gorge. "Trouble is likely to come from that way, Cody. Better look out fer it, and I'll do my explainin' afterwards."

Tempest and the girl had drawn near, but said nothing.

"We'll watch the gorge," said the scout, "and hear what you've got to say, now. Then perhaps we'll know what to do."

"It's this way, gents," said Payallup, still standing guard over Snake River. "I determined to look into this bizness up here, and this is the result. What it means I don't know yit. It's more than a guess that the skeleton was made to dance to skeer the Blackfeet away from this spot. Cody first suggested that idea, and I reckon he was right. Every Wednesday and Saturday, at noon, as I told ye, the skeleton danced out there, except when I went with you.

"Them failures made you suspicious of me." So I knowed that the next thing would be me lookin' through the bars o' that jail again. And as I wouldn't do that to save even Cody's thousand dollars, I skipped out. Sense then I've been tryin' to git at the nub of this myst'ry. I've been layin' out below the ledge, watchin' it.

"A while ago I slipped along the ledge and got in here. I hadn't more'n done it when Snake River come up out of the gorge, luggin' that skeleton. He shinned

up that rock, pushed the skeleton over, so't would slide down to the ledge, then began jerkin' ropes. I seen that one o' the ropes was a wire. While he was busy, I landed on him. And that's the whole of it."

"It's all a lie," said Snake River, as he had said half a dozen times while Payallup Pete was talking.

"Your story sounds good to me, Payallup," Buffalo Bill admitted. "But to make sure, while we hold Snake River, we're going to watch you."

"This is the man you captured, who was painted like an Indian," was the remark of the girl, as she looked at Snake River.

"The same ombray," said Pawnee. "I hope we can hold him better than we did that time."

"Hold him all you want to," said Payallup. "But recklect that he's my prisoner."



## CHAPTER XII.

### OLD MONTE AND HIS MEN.

Armed with a revolver, Waif Western was left to guard the prisoner, while Buffalo Bill and Pawnee, taking Payallup Pete and Tom Tempest, set out to explore the black gorge, and see what was at the end of it.

Since Snake River was presumably not on the mountain alone, and had taken such pains to scare off the Blackfeet, it was argued that there was something in the gorge which he wished to conceal.

Sure that they were at last on the track of old Monte, the scout and Pawnee, who were in front, took extra care against a surprise.

There was good footing at the bottom of the gorge, and tracks showing that it had been used. Following this path, they plunged deeper and deeper into darkness, discovering that the walls of the gorge began to close together at the top.

As a result, they were soon in what was virtually a big tunnel that cut into the heart of the mountain, but with an ascending grade.

They feared to light a torch, or even a match, and feared to talk after they had gone on a distance.

In the end, after much hard climbing up steep slopes, they beheld a light. This brought them to an immediate halt.

"Somebody's at home," whispered Pawnee. "There's a light in the window!"

"An' your winder light will be put out some quick," breathed Payallup, "if Monte is nosin' round in there, and hears ye."

They dropped down now, and made a crawl which brought them to a bend in the tunnel, and gave them a look into the cavernous place that was lighted with a candle.

Half a dozen or more men were in there, busy at work; and a wire cable that ran over a big wooden drum was visible, the free end of the cable disappearing in the darkness.

One of the men, tall and alert, seemed to be directing operations; and when, in moving about, he came nearer, so that they had a better view of him, Buffalo Bill saw the whitening hair at the temples, the dark face, the hawklike nose, and the sharp eyes of Monte Vidio.

Payallup Pete was squirming with excitement, in a nervous but jubilant mood, for it seemed that his vindication was at hand.

"Can we jump 'em?" he whispered. "They're more'n us, but if we have the advantage of a surprise, we might——"

He stopped, for the keen eyes of Monte seemed turned in his direction.

"All of Pard Bill's guesses," thought Pawnee, "seem to have been hitting the target, even though they were like arrows shot into the dark. He figured that we would find Monte on this mountain, and here he is. And that drum of wire appears to indicate that they have been trying to get into the Bottomless Pit."

Buffalo Bill was apparently in no hurry to make a movement. The men in the cave were heavily armed, and he knew that a crew gathered and ordered by Monte could be depended on to fight like fiends. Still, he had no notion of departing as empty-handed as he had come.

Lying flat in the tunnel, the scout and his companion watched the dimly lighted space before them.

Their eyes had become accustomed to the gloom through which they had made their slow way, and they could now see very well. There was furniture in the cavern, of the rudest kind; consisting of stools and a table, with shelves and boxes, probably made from material brought up bit by bit from the town.

There were packages on the shelves, probably holding food; and tools could be seen lying about, and in use.

The men were working at the wooden drum. It was like a huge spool of wire. Behind it was a box-like trough, or something of the kind, half as big as a small log cabin. This rested against the roof. Sloping back was a depression in the floor, below the box, like a crack. They discovered that this crack was, in reality, a ditch dug in the earth of the floor.

The floor was of earth and sand, ridged and uneven. Where the ditch had been dug were parallel ridges.

Looking still farther, when the candle was shifted, throwing its light beyond the drum and the box, they caught a glint of water.

Payallup Pete's patience had been stretched to the utmost, before anything occurred to break the tension.

Having tinkered and hammered at the drum until apparently its condition satisfied them, the men stood back, and it seemed that Monte was about to give an order.

But he was prevented from doing so at once by some men who came in from a hole, or tunnel.

"The horses all right?" Monte asked them.

"They'll be all right soon's the water runs," said one of the men. "We have been down lookin' at 'em. Failure to send any water down Saturday made it give out down there. The grass is still holdin' out, though."

"The other men are where they ought to be, I reckon?" Monte inquired.

"Jim's gone to see; he'll be here in a minute."

"Jim" appeared, running, coming suddenly into view from the farther darkness.

"You heard that about Saturday?" Payallup whispered, his lips at Buffalo Bill's ear. "Any meanin' in that?"

The pressure of Buffalo Bill's fingers on Payallup's arm stilled him.

"All ready!" said the man who had shot out of the darkness.

"Let her go!" commanded Monte, standing farther back.

One of the men climbed like a monkey to the top of the box, disappeared there, and came in sight again, with a rope in his hand.

The end of this rope was carried well out into the cave. Then three or four men began to pull on it.

"Now'd be a good time to jump in on' em," Payallup whispered again, with his lips at the scout's ear.

"They've got more men, but they sure ain't lookin' for trouble right now. What say?"

Again the grip of the scout's fingers on his arm subdued Payallup's desire to talk.

The heavy pull on the rope was not without effect. Something came away over the big box, and a flood of water began to roar into it. Under the weight of the water the box began to sink, and the big drum started, whirring noisily.

The drum was so geared that its speed was high, almost at the start; and before the box, filled with water, sank half to the floor, it was whirling like an electric fan, running off the wire, which slipped away like a shining snake into the darkness.

For ten minutes or more the water poured into the

box, holding it down. As it subsided, the box lifted, tipped, and the water began to pour out into the ditch. Already, from the overflow, the ditch was filled, so that now the water fell noisily in a widening pool, this pool decreasing as the box got rid of its contents.

The big drum kept up its whirring, but the movement was noticeably slower; then it stopped, and the cable ceased to run out.

The men had moved closer to the box, one of them carrying the candle. Its light falling on the roof, the scout and his companions saw a hole there, from which water still showered, though this was lessening.

Payallup was tugging at the scout's sleeve, wishing again to say something.

Buffalo Bill was of course convinced that the big drum ran its wire from the cave out over the rim of the Bottomless Pit; that, at its end, the wire held a basket or cage of some kind, operating like an elevator, and that the power was gained by the weight of water in the big box.

Also, it had become clear to him that the mystery of the disappearing spring stood revealed. The men in the cave had bored through the thin crust of rock forming the roof of the cave, and this hole, in the bottom of the spring, plugged in some manner, let the water run into the box when the plug was pulled out.

But he was not prepared for what followed.

There came a yell at the top of the cave, and a falling body shot through the hole that had emptied the water.

It came down feet first and struck in the box, which still held some water. The water flew in a shower, and the yell rose again—the yell of Nick Nomad.

The men round old Monte fell back with cries of



surprise. But Monte, though no one could have been more astonished, did not stampede. He stepped forward, caught the candle from the man who held it, flashed its light on the man who had tumbled into the box, and drew a revolver.

"What does this mean?" he demanded quietly.

Nomad, who had risen to his feet, and was bewildered by what had happened, turned like a wild cat.

"Wow!" he cried. "I am thet mixed up I dunno what——"

Another body came through the hole.

This time it was the baron. He had heard the borderman yell, after his unexpected fall, and then heard his wild woof, indicating that he was in danger.

The baron never regarded consequences to himself, when he felt called on to go to the aid of a friend. So, though he knew nothing of what had happened to Nomad, nor what was below him, he pushed himself into the hole and came down.

"Vot iss?" he yelled, as he struck with a resounding splash in the box by the side of the borderman.

The followers of Monte were quite as much amazed to see the baron drop through as if Nomad had not preceded him. Their amazement was not lessened when still another body shot down. This time it was Little Cayuse.

"One at a time," said Monte, getting his voice. "Cody's bunch, and I s'pose Cody will be following them next."

Cody did follow next, with the men he had with him. But not from the direction old Monte expected.

Shouting encouragement to Nomad and his companions, with a volley fired into the cavern to throw the followers of Monte into confusion, Buffalo Bill's little force charged into the cave.

Nomad's roar was heard, and he was seen to spring

from the box in a snakelike jump for Monte. Then the candle fell and went out, and darkness and confusion reigned.

For a minute or more there was pandemonium—yells, curses, revolver shots, a hurly-burly of rushing and fighting men, then groans, and the sound of running feet.

Buffalo Bill had his eyes on Monte Vidio, as the light went out. He saw Nomad fling out of the big box at the man, and saw the candle fall. But he succeeded in reaching Monte, nevertheless.

Nomad had collided with another of the bandits and was fighting this man furiously, under the impression that he had Monte to deal with.

The scout and the bandit leader went down together. Then followed a struggle, in which the scout at last turned his enemy, and got him down. Monte could not use his revolver, for he had dropped it. And he had not been able to draw his knife.

"Can any one find that candle and light it?" said the scout, as he held the struggling man down.

"Where is Pawnee?"

"Here, necarnis," Pawnee Bill panted.

"Busy, eh? Little Cayuse, there's a candle here on the floor. Scratch round for it."

A form flung through the darkness and began to paw about on the floor.

Little Cayuse finally found the candle, and lighted it.

By that time Pawnee Bill had subdued and had bound the man he had been fighting with.

Nomad had another, and was holding him.

The baron seemed to be chasing others, for they heard him stumbling and grumbling.

Seeing that Buffalo Bill could not tie his prisoner, for it required all his strength to hold Monte down—

the ruffian, knowing what to expect, was struggling desperately, and to the last of his strength and skill, to get away—Pawnee Bill came to the scout's assistance.

The only men now in the cave were the scout and his friends, and the few bandits they had captured. All the others of Monte's party had escaped.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### THE ESCAPE OF SNAKE RIVER.

"Waal, ef this ain't goin' some, I dunno!" Nick Nomad shouted.

Nomad, looking round, was taking in the situation.

"Begin at the beginning, old Diamond," Pawnee Bill said. "Breathe easier, and tell us about it."

"Waugh! I cain't. How'd you fellers git in hyar, anyhow?"

"We didn't fall through that hole in the roof!"

The borderman flung a glance at the hole. Water was running from it in a steady stream.

"No, I know ye didn't; thet exploit war left fer me an' the baron an' Cayuse."

"Where did you think you were going, when you crawled through that hole?"

"Crawled? Waugh-h! I fell through! Did ye think I done thet a-purpose?"

"I sure was giving you that credit. You fell through?"

"Buffler sent us up thar, ye recklect, ter watch thet spring and ter see ef ther worter would run out o' et accordin' to Payallup's schedule. That was while you piked off ter see ef ther skellerton would do ets high-land fling."

"We watched an' watched, ontill we war tired and 'twar long past noon. Then ther ole spring give a gurgle an' er flop, and ther worter begun ter sink. When et had about all run out, we could see the hole through which et war dreanin'; and, thinks I, I'll jest investergate et."

"Waal, I did. I slid down ter et—an' then—great

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snakes!—I fell through! Waugh! I didn't know whar I war goin'—inter ther bowels o' ther airth, likely, I thort; when I hit in that box. Great centerpedes! Et nigh busted my laigs, thet fall. And then I seen them men, wi' ole Monte, him glarin' at me, an' holdin' a candle, an' invitin' me ter come on down. Then ther baron; he come in."

"Yoost so," said the German, nodding vigorously. "Dhen I coom in. Nomad he iss disabbeared, unt iss making sooch a holler dot I t'ink he iss in trouble; unt——"

"Waal, I was, wa'n't I? Jew-whillikins!"

"Unt I am coming nexdt, down py der hole in. Unt Cayuse he iss follering. Unt py dot dime der fighting iss on der brogram. Ach, du lieber!"

"All's well that ends well," said Buffalo Bill, with a laugh. "But I don't wonder you were bewildered."

"Bewildered!" Nomad roared. "I don't know yit but mebbys so this hyar is er funny dream, an' I'm goin' ter wake up in camp."

Nomad's wandering optics fell on Tom Tempest.

"You're hyar, too? Whar's yer gal?"

"I think I ought to hurry back to her," said Tempest, speaking to the scout. "I've been uneasy about her for some time. She's out in the gorge," he said to Nomad, "watchin' Snake River."

"Snake River? Wow!"

"That's right," chirped Payallup Pete. "I captured him. He was makin' the skeleton dance when I nabbed him. We left him behind, with the girl to guard him."

"Waugh! Sufferin' centerpedes! More wonders. Ther skellerton come ter time, then! But you war numbered wi' ther missin', Payallup?"

Tom Tempest was turning toward the tunnel.

"I'll go with you, Tempest," the scout volunteered.



"Pawnee, you and the others look after the prisoners here; be careful that a rescue isn't attempted! We don't know how many this gang numbers."

He departed with Tempest, hurrying through the tunnel and out into the light of the gorge.

Before they reached the spot where the girl had been left with the prisoner, they heard sounds which sent them on at a run.

Snake River had freed himself, and had attacked Waif Western. As the scout and Tempest came within sight of them, the girl fired at Snake River. Apparently he had been threatening her with a club, but now, because he heard the shouts of Tempest and the scout, Snake River threw down the club and ran to the end of the gorge, where it opened on the shelf of granite.

Tempest, in his rage, punctured the air round the scampering rascal with revolver shots, but apparently did not hit him, for Snake River seemed unhurt when he vanished.

Waif Western was in a state of wild excitement.

"I don't know how he got loose," she said, "but suddenly he was free. He rushed at me with that club. He wanted my revolver, he said. I refused to give it to him, and then he tried to take it. When I ran he followed me with the club, and said he'd brain me if I didn't give him the revolver. And then—in my desperation, I shot at him."

Pale-faced, out of breath, and highly nervous, she sank down on a rock at the mouth of the gorge, while Buffalo Bill and Tempest hastened on in pursuit of the rascal.

When they came back they were forced to report that he got away.

The girl was more collected by this time, and watched the scout with interest as he examined the cords that had been on Snake River.

"He slipped them off," he said. "You can see that—they're intact! He worked at them quietly until he got them loose enough."

"I know he thrashed round a good deal," she declared. "But I didn't think that was what he was doing. He claimed the cords hurt him, and asked me to loosen them. Of course I wouldn't do it. Then he groaned and threw himself about."

"And under cover of that he worked them loose. But it's all right; we've got Monte!"

"The counterfeiter! I thought I heard shooting."

"They were in a cave back there. We'll take you into it, and you can hear all about Monte's capture as we go along. No use staying here," added the scout. "And we may be wanted in the cave."

They set off at once. But when they gained the cave they found things as they were before, except that Little Cayuse and Nomad were exploring certain dark passages, looking for some of Monte's men.

Pawnee Bill, leaving the baron to guard the captives, had followed the shining wire cable, and found that it went through a natural hole in the rock, to the edge of the precipice overhanging the Bottomless Pit.

To Tom Tempest this was a discovery of such interest that he had to go at once and take a look at the spot where the cable came out on the rim of the cliff.

Pawnee Bill went with him.

"The wire drops over the precipice here, you see," said Pawnee, "and it must run down into the pit."

Tom Tempest crept to the edge and looked down. "I can't see the wire much below here," he announced. "But I think you're right about it."

"Pard Cody has made some mighty shrewd guesses, or deductions, right from the start," Pawnee declared. "Of course you know what Monte and his crew were trying to do?"



"Get the gold that went off the precipice when that wagon went down," said Tempest. "It must be down there yet. But how they knew about it gets me."

"News gets out. No doubt you and Waif Western talked about this matter before you came up here. You probably advised about it with your neighbors. So it spread. These scoundrels got hold of it, and decided to get at the gold before you did. That's sure the way of it. And if Cody's counterfeit-money trail hadn't led up here, I reckon they'd have done it."

"A thousand thanks to Cody; and to you and the others!"

"Oh, you haven't got that stuff out of the Bottomless Pit yet!" said Pawnee.

"Well, I'm going to get it—with your help and your pards'. I feel sure of that now."

"We'll give the help, all right."

They turned back and reentered the hole through which the cable ran, thus getting back into the cavern.

Little Cayuse was at the top of the big box, where water was pouring down on him.

"Taking a shower bath, Cayuse?" asked Pawnee Bill.

"He's investergatin' up thar," said Nomad.

Little Cayuse had the big plug which had been pulled by the bandits out of the hole, and was trying to set it back, to stop the flow of the water; but he was not succeeding.

Buffalo Bill, with the baron, were examining the big drum, and the machinery connected with it. Though it was not an elaborate affair, much skill and mechanical ingenuity had been expended on it.

"You're a wonder, Monte," said the scout to the counterfeiter, "or you couldn't have rigged up this. We think that, later, we'll see if we can't use it to get down into the Bottomless Pit. I wonder if you

haven't got men down there now? Or does your wire cable reach the bottom yet?" Old Monte glared.

"You might as well 'fess up, old man," the scout said. "I've got you dead to rights, you see. You escaped from the Utah pen, with a lot more, and came up here for safety. Incidentally, learning about the treasure down in that pit, you thought you'd get it. I wonder where your molds, or stamps, are, for the bogus coin you've been making, and the coin?"

They found some of the coin later. But they became convinced it was coin that Monte had brought there. Apparently, he had been able to draw on a hoard he had previously concealed, and thus had not been under the necessity of producing any counterfeit money there.

"You'll get nothing out of me!" he snarled, whenever Buffalo Bill questioned him.

"Have it that way, Monte," said the scout serenely. "We've got you by the heels, and we don't need your information."

"You haven't got the rest of the boys!" snapped Monte.

"Sad, but true, Monte. We haven't got them. And we fear they may get away. We can't help it."

"They'll get you, all right, before you get off this mountain," the rascal boasted.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### A THREATENED ATTACK.

The talk in the cavern was interrupted by a jerking quiver that shook the thin wire cable.

"Somepoty iss on dot vire," said the baron.

"Thet's right," Nomad agreed. "It jerks like a fish bitin'. I reckon we gotter look inter thet."

Pawnee was in the big box with Little Cayuse, trying to fit the plug in the hole and stop the water from coming through. Buffalo Bill was still talking with old Monte.

The scout started up, when he heard the exclamations of the borderman and the baron. And he went with them into the narrow hole, following the cable.

When they came suddenly out on the edge of the precipice, they discovered two men there, stooping over the cable. These men sprang up and ran.

But they had accomplished their work. With a pair of nippers they had severed the cable, and let it drop into the Bottomless Pit.

The scout and his companions did not pursue them, because of the danger of running into a trap.

"No gittin' down inter thet place now," said Nomad, peering over.

It was clear that the rascals, knowing they could not now use the cable themselves, had determined that no one else should use it.

As the scout and his friends explored the rim of the precipice, they heard a shot from the cave.

This caused them to return.

Before they reached the cave the firing had risen to a fusillade.

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When they got inside they found that some of old Monte's followers had begun to shoot into the cave, from certain dark openings; then had sought to rush it and rescue their leader.

In this they had been balked. They had not accomplished the surprise they had planned, and had given over their attempt and disappeared.

"I got sight of one of them," Tom Tempest reported. "And one of them was Snake River. So you see he has rejoined the gang, and probably is now leading them."

This attack furnished proof of the danger of remaining in the cave. The outlaws no doubt were familiar with all its windings. They could draw back into safe hiding, and watch the time to strike. Sooner or later, if their courage was good, they might overwhelm the scout's little party.

The retreat from the cave was made by way of the tunnel and gorge. The three prisoners were taken along, being forced to walk ahead of the party, with hobbles on their ankles, and their hands tied together at their backs.

When the mouth of the gorge was reached, Nomad and Little Cayuse climbed up to the ledge to see if the way was clear. In doing so, they came out close to the heap of bones that represented the skeleton.

"I has seen ther time, Cayuse," said Nomad, forcing his courage, "when you an' me would er shook wi' fits ter come comp'ny front on a thing like thet; but now——"

The trapper dropped down.

"Waugh!" he whispered, glancing at the skeleton. "Thet thing didn't move, did et? I heard somethin'."

"Skeleton heap dead," said Little Cayuse, rolling his black eyes at it, nevertheless.

"Yis you heard somethin'?"



"Me think hear somethin' now."

Little Cayuse crawled ahead until he could poke his coppery nose out and view the length of the ledge.

"What's doin'?" Nomad asked, with a shivery gasp.

"Cayuse no see anything."

Nomad advanced, thrust up his head, and looked.

He was now higher than the Piute, and saw what the latter did not.

"Oh, ye don't see anything?" he snarled. "Waal, ye ain't lookin' good, then. Peek over thar. See them bushes and little trees? Look behind 'em."

Little Cayuse lifted his plumed head.

Z-z-zip! An arrow flirted out of one of the trees, struck the rock by the plumed head, and slid into the gorge.

Nomad pulled the Piute back.

"Blackfeet!" he said. "Waugh! They're aifter our ha'r, fer thet fool trick what ther baron and Pawnee done 'em. We has got ter git back prompt with news of this."

When they retreated with the report that Blackfeet were outside, watching the mouth of the gorge and the ledge, Waif Western rose to the occasion.

"They are friendly to me," she said. "So I'll go out and see what I can do."

"An' mebbysso git killed!" Nomad objected.

"If I show myself, so that they can see who I am, they'll not shoot me," she declared.

"How do ye know et?"

"They have been very friendly to me. One of the girls in their village is my good friend. I'll take the risk."

This she did. When they saw her in the mouth of the gorge, the Blackfeet withheld their arrows.

Stepping out on the ledge, she called down to them.

Her white friends heard her talking with the Indians.

In a little while she came back.

"They say they'll not harm me, nor my father. But they want the men who escaped from them."

"Hear that, baron?" said Pawnee.

"No. I ton'dt hear idt, nodd so dot I am going oudt."

"There is a thing you *can* do," said the girl. "You can return to the cave and get out another way. Your horses are on the other side of the mountain, and you can find one of the passages out, which those other men used. If you can't, it looks to me that you may have to fight the Blackfeet."

There was an objection to this.

It would leave Waif Western and Tom Tempest on the mountain. The Blackfeet might not harm them, but Snake River and his friends were to be considered. In addition, it involved the temporary abandonment of all effort to get into the Bottomless Pit.

Still, when the matter had been fully canvassed, it seemed the thing to do.

Buffalo Bill's party had three prisoners to look out for—the chief of them being Monte Vidio, the rascal the scout was anxious to put behind the bars of a prison. The longer the scout's party remained with Monte on the mountain, the greater was the danger of a rescue by some of his friends.

Payallup Pete was not anxious to go down to the town. He admitted that he, too, had been on the mountain, not for prospecting, but because he hoped he could find his way into the Bottomless Pit and connect with the treasure he had heard was there.

But he was promptly informed that he was "out of it and that the treasure belonged to Waif Western, and would be given to her, if it was ever recovered."

So the scout and his party went back into the cave, without hunting for the outlaws' horses; found their way out of it, and made their way to the town, taking Monte and the other two prisoners.

As for the poisonous substance in the water of the spring, which Payallup said had made him crazy, they did not have time to investigate it.

## CHAPTER XV.

## MISSING.

"Whenever," said Nomad, "I comes company front wi' er thing like this my worry tooth begins jumpin'."

Buffalo Bill's entire party, squatted in a mountain gorge, seemed to have an attack of "worry tooth," as Nomad called it.

They had gone there expecting to meet Tom Tempest, and his adopted daughter, Waif Western. Close at hand was the lean-to of poles and brush which the two had occupied. In the valley below the conical tops of Blackfoot lodges could be seen.

"Fer two days now," Nomad commented, "we has been lookin' round, and hain't found er trace of 'em. Ef ther gal war jest visitin' some Blackfoot friend down thar, she wouldn't er stayed so long. Two days ago they war ter meet us hyar, an' they ain't done et. So——"

Ceasing his grumbling, he fumbled out his black brier and began to thumb tobacco into it.

"As they're not on the mountain, nor in that cave," said Pawnee Bill, "they must be in the Blackfoot village. Something has delayed them there, and all we can do is to wait here until they appear."

"Thar aire others round hyar, 'sides Blackfeet, thet we has got ter figger on; an' a heap wuss than Blackfeet," went on Nomad. "Thar is Snake River."

He struck a match noisily, and swept the flame over the tobacco in his pipe.

"Likewise thar is ther scoundrelly crew thet we have er right ter suppose is round hyar somewhar with Snake River. Waugh! Ef them pizen tin horns hez



teched a ha'r o' thet gal's head, thar will be a pay day fer 'em, you kin bet!"

"If I, along with the baron," said Pawnee Bill, "hadn't turned a foolish trick that has made the Blackfeet our enemies, we could go down there now and look into this thing."

"Oxcoose me from doing idt," said the baron. "I haf some hairs on my head yedt vot I want to keeb."

"Just the same," remarked Buffalo Bill, who had been looking in silence at the village, "that is what I intend to do. We can't afford to spend any more time here, and if the girl is down there I want to know it. If they're not there, we'll camp on the trail of Snake River."

"You'll find et fust," growled the borderman. "I has carried this mountain, an' cain't find nothin'. Waugh!"

"Of course, so long as the Blackfeet don't know we're here——"

Pawnee Bill stopped abruptly.

In a bend of the gorge trail a bent form had come in sight—that of an Indian woman.

"Sufferin' snakes!" gulped Nomad.

"Treed!" said Pawnee. "Just when I'm saying the Blackfeet don't know we're here, one comes along, and shows by the way she's looking at us that she knows all about us, and is up here to give us a call. But I'll forgive her those black looks, if she brings news of the girl and Tempest."

Poking at the ground with a gnarled stick which she used as a cane, the Blackfoot squaw came on slowly, an unpleasant hag, with time-bitten features and tangled hair.

"The white men are still here," she mumbled, as she stood before them, leaning on her stick.

She spoke her own language, but the scouts under-

stood it reasonably well, and so did the old borderman.

"We cannot go away until we know if down in the Blackfoot village are a white man and young woman who used to live in this house," explained the scout.

"They are not there," said the hag.

"They have not been there?"

"Not for three days. Three days ago the girl was there, but soon went away."

"Where are they now?"

"Ask the wind."

"Where are the white men who used to live in the cave under the mountain?"

"Ask the wind."

"We have been asking the wind, and everything else, and get no answers. The white men who hid in the cave were enemies of the man and the girl who lived in this house. So we fear they may have harmed them. The white girl had for a friend a Blackfoot girl. Perhaps for that reason you will help us to find the white man and the white girl."

"I am the Basilisk," croaked the Blackfoot hag. "I do not come to give information, but a warning. Let me tell you your fate. It is death—death!"

"The Blackfeet sent you to give us that warning?"

"To-night the Blackfeet will attack and destroy the white men, if they remain on this mountain."

She pointed over the mountain with her stick in the direction of the town of Rocket Range.

"Let the white men hasten back to their homes. This is the land of the Blackfeet. That is the word I bear. It is death for them if they remain."

She turned abruptly, and, stabbing the ground with her stick, she began to hobble down the trail.

"Now I'm believin' in witches," said Nomad, pulling

again at his pipe, which had almost gone out, his eyes following the Blackfoot woman.

"It's better treatment than you could expect from the Blackfeet, anyhow, to have 'em tip us a hint like that," muttered Pawnee. "Usually, the gentle admonition comes in the shape of a bullet or tomahawk."

"But it's a hint we can't act on," said the scout. "We can't go back until we have located Tom Tempest and that girl, or learned what has become of them. They may be in the village, even though she denied it; and if they are we can be sure, now, they're held against their will."

"Thet name she handed out, Buffler?" questioned Nomad.

"The name of an iguana, or lizard, with a crest on its back. It's supposed to be so poisonous that even its breath will kill a man. You've seen the thing. The Mexicans call it *basilisco*."

"Oh, thet critter! Waal, et looks pizen."

"We sure can't show the white feather," said Pawnee. "Besides finding Tempest and that girl, we've got to take a look into the Bottomless Pit—if we can. But the first thing to do, I suppose, is to change our location, so that if the Blackfeet try to tackle us tonight they'll be like the Irishman who swatted at a mosquito, and it wasn't there."

There still were two hours of daylight. This time they used in getting out of the gorge, selecting a hiding place, and in covering their trail.

They couldn't be sure that no Blackfoot saw them. For, perched on some high cliff, a keen-eyed warrior might have beheld every movement. Still, they did the best they could, and when they camped down in the spot chosen and set Little Cayuse as a guard, they felt reasonably secure. In addition, they had selected the site for the readiness with which it could be defended.

With the coming of darkness, Buffalo Bill and Pawnee began now to make preparations for visiting the Blackfeet lodges, undeterred by the warning of the hag.

"According to my plan," explained the scout, "we'll all slip down there, with Blackfoot blankets round us and feathers in our hair; and while Pawnee and I go inside, the rest of you will hang round, and come to our aid if we need you."

"If that dog isn't dead, that tackled the baron and me," said Pawnee, "we're going to meet trouble. I shall enjoy sticking a knife in that brute, if I get the chance."

The moon was shining when they left their nest of rocks, and the time verged on midnight as they picked their way into the valley that held the Blackfoot lodges.



## CHAPTER XVI.

### STIRRING EVENTS.

Well out from the village, but close by the trail, the party stopped, after a cautious and quiet advance.

Pawnee's fingers bit into Buffalo Bill's arm, in a warning pressure.

"You heard something, necarnis?" he whispered.

"Yes—off at the right. Probably a prowling Blackfoot."

For a minute after that the scout and his friends hardly breathed.

A number of men, they discovered, were stealing stealthily toward them, so they got their weapons ready, while they lay quiet.

But the men stopped, when close at hand.

"Blackfeet sure," thought Pawnee, as he gripped his revolver and tried to look through the darkness, for here bushes shut out the moonlight. "Well, if they jump us, I think they'll find us ready."

To his amazement the men began to talk in low tones in English. They were white men:

"You don't know which lodge that old squaw sleeps in, I reckon?" said one.

"No, I don't; but it's one o' the lodges at this end," was the reply.

"There'll be fun to pay, if she makes a holler when you grip her; and I reckon she will. You make a break with her fer this trail, and me an' t'others will swarm in and shoot up the village in a way to par'lyze it. I hope you git hold of the right woman."

"As we can't afford to do anything else, I'm goin' to take the risk of flashin' a match when I find her,

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so's to be dead sure. Still, some of the rest o' them Blackfeet ought to know that secret way into the Bottomless Pit. It don't seem reasonable to me that the old woman is the only one what is knowin' to it."

"Anyhow, that's the way the report goes, among the Blackfeet. I heard 'em talkin' t'other night plain enough, and I understand their lingo. The old woman is the only one that knows the way. She goes in sometimes, they said; but it seems that it's a risk, and they wonder how she does it, and gits back alive. It's one of the things what makes 'em believe she is a witch."

"If we can git with her into the cave, you bet she'll tell us how she does it," was threatened. "She'll talk, or I'll shoot her head off!"

This bloodthirsty remark fell from the lips of the man called Snake River, for the rascals were Snake River and some of the men who had escaped with him.

"Shall we rush 'em?" Pawnee Bill asked, with his lips at the ear of the scout.

No answer came, and he knew that Buffalo Bill did not assent.

"We want to do this before Cody's crowd gits back," said Snake River. "I'd like to turn the trick, and git away with the stuff, before ever they hit this mountain again."

"Maybe they won't come back."

"Don't you believe it. They've made old Monte talk long before this, and so they know all about it. Their fingers will be itchin' to handle that gold."

"If it turns out that there ain't no gold down there—well, after all we've been through to git at it, that would be a scald!"

"Monte don't make mistakes, and he said it was there. It was a fool trick, to cut that wire when Cody's

crowd raided the cave. If it hadn't been for that we could have gone down that way."

"When a're you goin' to make this present tackle, Snake River?" asked a third voice.

"Jest as soon as I'm rested a bit, and the village is dead quiet," Snake River answered. "We don't want to move prematoor."

Buffalo Bill was wondering whether or not he ought to try to capture Snake River and the men with him. There would be a fight and an outcry, and the Blackfeet would hear it!

He had not settled this question when footsteps were heard in the trail, in the direction of the village.

A band of Blackfeet swept by, moving rapidly toward the mountain.

Snake River's voice sounded again.

"That's all right—glad they're gone—that many less in the village to fight, if we have a set to there. How many bucks was in that bunch?"

"Ten, or a dozen, anyway; but I couldn't count 'em. You don't reckon they're headin' for the cave?"

"I hope not; but they'll find nobody in it."

The voices dropped again. Pawnee Bill pinched the scout's arm, and whispered again:

"We might crawl 'em successfully now, as they don't know we're here."

But while Buffalo Bill still hesitated, thinking of the noise a fight would make, Snake River and his men began to slip away; so that instead of a fight, it would have been a chase now, if the attempt had been made.

"Dot vos a funny pitzness," breathed the baron. "Dit you hear all oof dot conversation?"

"It was sure interesting, Schnitz," commented Pawnee, "and my shell-like ear caught every word of it."

"My shellac ear mightd haf missed a few vords," the

baron admitted; "but I ton'dt t'ink idt. Iss idt der lizardt voman dhey ar-re going to gapture?"

"Looks it, Schnitz."

"Unt she iss know der secrett oof getting py der Pottomless Pit in? Oof so-o, I shouldt like to haf a dalk mit her apowet dot myselluf."

"They're crawlin' along clost by ther trail," announced Nomad, who, with his ear against the ground, had been silently listening. "I ain't got no love fer an Injun witch; but I'd shore feel sorry fer her, ef she fell inter ther hands of Snake River. He'd shoot her jest as he said, ef she didn't talk up prompt and plenty, an' she ain't ther kind thet would do et. I reckon, Buffler, a loud call has come ter us ter interfere—ef we can."

"We'll get into the trail and proceed there," replied the scout.

They went on slowly and carefully along the trail, ready to drop aside if more Blackfeet were heard coming.

Buffalo Bill expected that now and then they would be able to hear the movements of Snake River and his men, but they did not. When the village loomed ahead, they had not sighted them.

"In one of the lodges near this end was where Snake River expected to find the Basilisk," said Buffalo Bill.

Taking advantage of the shadows of the nearest lodges, they wormed their way into the village. A number of the warriors that were left in the village were in the council lodge, near its center; but some walked about between the lodges. A few women and children were to be seen gathered in knots. These seemed to be looking toward the mountain, and the scouts fancied it indicated that they anticipated a fight off there, and were listening.

Still undiscovered, the scouts began to move among



the lodges in one of which, as they had been led to believe, the Basilisk might be found.

But, seeing three or four painted figures stealing toward them, they dropped down, hoping to escape detection, yet ready to fight if forced to do so.

When the approaching men drew nearer another group of painted figures jumped out, and, in the fight that ensued, what they heard convinced them that the men seen first were Snake River's men, disguised as Indians.

"Waugh!" Nomad rumbled, as this discovery came to him. "Et would ease my mind a bit ef we could jump into thet mix-up and take a hand erg'inst Snake River."

Fate seemed determined to give the borderman his wish. The Blackfeet who had attacked Snake River's band drove the latter in a rush past the lodge and through the shadow where Nomad and his companions were concealed.

The result was that Buffalo Bill and his friends were right in the thick of the mix-up in less time than it takes to tell of it.

The outlaw known as Snake River leaped from one of the lodges, bearing in his arms the struggling form of the witch woman who had called herself the Basilisk.

Her screams attracted the attention of the Blackfeet, so that they turned toward Snake River, who was running with prodigious leaps to get out of the village, at the same time calling to his men.

Some of his men turned back to help him, striking with clubbed rifles at the Blackfeet who tried to oppose them.

In the confusion that resulted, Buffalo Bill tried to get himself and his friends out of the way. The scout pulled Pawnee Bill's blanket, and turned to the nearest

lodge. It was hoped that Nomad and the others would see this and instantly follow; and then, by getting out through the rear of the lodge, they might evade the Blackfeet, and so get out of the village, or take advantage in some manner of what was occurring.

But the old borderman had flung himself like a wild-cat at the painted white man who came closest to him, and they had gone down together, clawing and rolling over on the ground. To the superficial glance in the moonlight they seemed to be two Indians fighting and gouging at each other.

For the moment nearly all the warriors had streamed on, pursuing Snake River, directed by the screeches of the squaw; so that, so far as the Indians were concerned, Nomad and the bandit were having their little set-to unmolested.

But this fight of Nomad and the ruffian drew Buffalo Bill and Pawnee back from the lodge, just as they were entering it. It also turned the baron and Little Cayuse in that direction, to aid Nomad.

Possibly discovering that the borderman was about to receive help, the bandit, who had been fighting him furiously, struggled out of the borderman's grip, and, leaping up, bolted off, running out of the village.

He veered enough, apparently, to escape the Blackfeet who were returning. Not all of them had gone in pursuit of Snake River and the hag. There were other white men to fight, and they were coming back to finish the job. At the same time still other Blackfeet warriors were pouring from the near-by lodges, and a larger number came running from the council house.

Nomad was breathless, as he was jerked to his feet by Buffalo Bill. With the rumbled borderman in their

midst, Buffalo Bill's party formed a ring round him, and began to back toward the border of the village.

They had thrown aside the Indian blankets that hampered them, but they still had on the disguising paint and Indian feathers. So that it is not surprising if the Blackfeet thought they were members of the party of scalawag white men who had invaded the lodge of the Basilisk and carried her off.

The Blackfeet attacked impetuously, first firing a rattling volley from antiquated muskets and rifles that did nothing more than fill the air with an obscuring smoke, which helped the scout's party much more than it did the Indians. After they had discharged their guns the Indians rushed in, trying to come at the white men at close quarters and settle the matter with hatchets and knives.

Old Nomad pulled his faculties together. He had dropped his rifle in the scramble. But he caught one now out of the hands of a Blackfoot who tried to brain him, and, setting himself as a sort of rear guard to the retreating party, he swung the rifle, emitting howls that would have done credit to a wild cat.

"Hustle on, the rest of you!" commanded Buffalo Bill, as he went to the borderman's side.

Instead of obeying, Pawnee Bill, with the baron and Little Cayuse, remained with the scout, so that the five men presented a solid front to the leaping and yelling redskins who tried to get at them.

In his left hand Buffalo Bill grasped a revolver. When any of the Blackfeet grew overbold he thrust it out and fired so that the bullet swept over the heads of the Indians. Pawnee Bill began to imitate him in this. Then the baron and Little Cayuse did the same. It sounded like a miniature skirmish, and in its effect it was scary enough to keep the Blackfeet from ad-

vancing rapidly, yet they continued to follow, pushing as close up to the swinging guns and circling knives as they dared, while their yelling was of the sort to wake the dead. The whole Blackfoot village had been aroused. Men, women, and children poured from the lodges.

The abduction of the Basilisk, together with the disclosure of the fact that the white men had painted and feathered themselves, rendered the rage of the Blackfeet indescribable.

It was a fortunate thing for Buffalo Bill and his friends that the guns of the Blackfeet were all of the old-fashioned, muzzle-loading sorts. Having discharged them, the Blackfeet could not use them again, save as clubs, without taking time to go through the slow movements of loading, by first pouring powder into the muzzle, ramming home bullets, then fitting percussion caps to the nipples. It took time to reload an old muzzle gun, and time was not to be spared at this juncture.

So with their rifles harmless, except for their clubbing properties, the Blackfeet swarmed on Buffalo Bill's party, and forced it back into the trail running toward the mountain.

What had become of Snake River and his men was not apparent, except that it was clear they had taken advantage of their opportunity, and had fled hot-footed, leaving the scout's party as a buffer between themselves and the Indians they had outraged.

The fact that instead of fighting Snake River's outlaws, old Nomad, by a singular turn of the wheel of fate, was literally fighting in such a manner that they were aided, was gall and wormwood to the trapper, yet he was not given much time at the moment to think about it.

When the trail was gained the retreating white men



fell back more rapidly. Yet it is likely that they would have been overborne and slain in the end if a fortunate incident had not changed the course of events.

They stumbled across the fallen form of the old hag as they retreated. For some reason Snake River had dropped her in the trail, probably because he thought he could not escape if he tried to carry her farther. She started up, yelling, as the white men almost literally trod on her; then, still yelling, she leaped into the midst of the screeching warriors.

It brought them to a temporary halt. Buffalo Bill's party, still falling back, heard her shouting shrilly, no doubt giving some bit of information. Then half or more of the warriors swung abruptly away from the trail and went plunging off through the bushes.

Seemingly she had told them the direction taken by the man who had dragged her violently from her lodge, and the warriors were hurrying on in pursuit of him.

The brief respite given by this enabled the scout and his friends to put their backs to their foes, and ran in a wild retreat, straight up the trail.

Those of the Blackfeet warriors who had not hastened off after Snake River came pouring along the trail in pursuit of the scout's party, so that for half a mile or more it was a foot race.

The steeper slopes were gained by the scout and his friends in time to enable them to put the roughest of the trail behind them before the Blackfeet pressed them again. Then it was a wild scramble and hurry up the trail, toward the higher reaches of the mountain.

At first the scout meant to turn off and seek the shelter of the camp they had made early in the evening; but no good chance for this coming, the retreat was continued to the foot of a ledge, which gave access to

a black gorge that led into the cave which has been mentioned.

They climbed to this ledge, with the Blackfeet yelling in pursuit. There was now a spattering rifle fire from the braves who had taken time to reload their guns, but this did no harm, as the Blackfeet, even in daylight, were notoriously bad marksmen.

The ledge, lying along the face of a high, bold bluff, dropped suddenly into the mouth of the gorge, and into this gorge the scout and his companions hastily made their way.

The gorge was black as ink, as they began to traverse it; for in it the moonlight did not fall. As they fled along it in the darkness they heard the Blackfeet warriors dropping into the gorge behind them.

For half a mile the gorge continued in this fashion, then it pinched together at the top, and became in a short while afterward a tunnel running into the heart of the mountain, but at a steadily ascending grade.

When the Blackfeet knew that the white men were in this gorge, apparently bottled up, their yells began to take on a triumphant character.

The tunnel ended abruptly in a large cave that was directly under the top of the mountain. This cave was as black as the tunnel through which the white men had fled.

Here old Monte had housed his bandits and conducted his exceedingly ingenious attempt to get into the Bottomless Pit, and here he had been captured by Buffalo Bill's party.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE ATTACK OF THE BASILISK.

"Waugh!" snorted the borderman, as he dropped down, and, drawing his revolver again, he fired it from the cave into the inky darkness of the tunnel. "I am thiet done up thiet ef I had ter go another foot farder I couldn't."

"Der same over here," panted the baron. "I haf run undil my legs von't mofe no more."

The roar of the revolver in the confined space, with the yells and shrieks of the Blackfeet in the tunnel, produced a sound that was ear-splitting; so that for a minute or so no one in the cave could be heard.

Apparently the Blackfeet had thrown themselves to the floor of the tunnel to escape bullets. Their yelling died out, too. But that they had not returned, and were not thinking of doing so, was plain enough.

The scout's party was, so to speak, in the big end of a long-necked bottle, while the Blackfeet occupied the neck of the bottle. It can be seen, therefore, that, though the white men were "bottled up," their position made it easy to hold the Blackfeet at bay. The Blackfeet had to keep low down, to escape bullets, if the white men fired into the tunnel, while the white men in the cave could use the larger space very well to screen themselves.

"Ve ar-re here," said the baron, "budt ve ain't yedt oudt oof here. Unt how ve are to gedt oudt I ton't know."

"I reckon, necarnis," said Pawnee Bill, "that we may be in for a bit of siege. There was some food in here, that Monte had stored. If it is still here we are all right—for a time."

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But at the moment Pawnee Bill did not try to look for it, as the danger that, in their desperation, the Blackfeet might try to get into the cave by a wild and reckless charge appeared imminent.

For a time the Indians made no such effort. The scouts thought this was because they had sent back for reinforcements. Whatever the reason, it gave the hemmed-in party time in which to size up their situation.

In many ways they were not pleased with it, though it made for their present safety. They were not in the least enlightened about the singular disappearance of Tempest and Waif Western, and it was a search for this knowledge that had taken them into the village. And the Blackfeet knew, or would know, that it was Buffalo Bill's party that had been chased, and was now corked up. So the little hope the scout had held that he might be able eventually to square things with the Blackfeet and gain their passive friendship had gone glimmering.

Then the scout and his friends did not know how long they would be forced to remain there, nor the outcome. With a score of angry warriors holding the entrance to the cavern the situation was formidable. Yet they were grateful for the relief given from the driving and fighting retreat. And much experience made them hopeful that in the end all things would come out right.

"I am believin' thet I have got a knife in my hind laig," Nomad drawled, as he drew up his trousers and made such examination in the darkness as he could.

"He iss a horse," cried the baron. "How many legs haf you got, dot you sbeak oof a behint leg?"

"Et's ther laig thet war behind when ther knife struck et. Wow! Yes, thar's a cut in et."



"Anything serious?" inquired Buffalo Bill.

"I am saying no, because I'm so glad ter git erway without havin' my head hacked off thet I ain't goin' ter notice leetle things. Any o' the rest o' ye cyarved up?"

Buffalo Bill and Pawnee had knife scratches, but they had not mentioned them.

"Waal, et's a plum' wonder," grunted the borderman. "I don't ricklect ever comin' through er fight like thet wi'out somebody havin' marks ter show fer et."

"It was the capture of the Basilisk that made them so furious," Buffalo Bill commented.

"Which we didn't do, though we're gittin' credit fer it," Nomad grumbled. "Wonder whar thet pesky Snake River an' his crew is right now?"

"Ask the wind," as the old hag said," answered Pawnee.

"Thet makes me mad yit—us bein' throwed in between them scalawags and the Injuns, and made ter fight their battle er git killed. Waugh! I has a pleasant tork with Snake River erbout thet, next time I comes comp'ny front with him."

"I'd pay out good money," declared Pawnee, "if we could connect with the supplies and the water bottles we left in our camp. I'm hoping the Blackfeet don't locate it."

"Thar's plenty worter in this cave, ye know; and more in ther little spring on top o' et, which can be had by pulling out ther big wooden plug that holds et from streamin' in hyar. Still, I reckleets thet Payallup Pete, what war with us before, told a cock-and-bull story erbout thet worter havin' set him mad when he drunk et. But Payallup c'd lie easy as a Blackfoot can yell. With thet worter, ef et's good, and old

Monte's stock uv grub, I cal'late we c'd stand a healthy sort o' siege in hyar."

"Dare iss an Inchun yelling again," commented the baron, as a Blackfoot piped up in the black tunnel.

"I c'd change his tune," Nomad grunted, "ef et warn't er shame ter waste amminition when ye don't haf to. Wonder what is hurtin' him?"

There were sounds of excitement in the tunnel, and a shuffling of moccasins, which made the scout and his friends think the Blackfeet were preparing to charge the cavern.

So they set their revolvers in readiness to defend it, but the scraping of moccasins died down. Then followed an interval of almost breathless silence, broken finally by a scraping sound which seemed to indicate that something heavy had been dragged into the tunnel.

Then a light flamed, like a flaring match. For an instant, brief as thought, the black tunnel leaped into brilliance. Blackfeet were seen on the floor of the tunnel, and clinging like flies to the walls. But the thing focussing attention was an object that resembled a slender black log. At the end of this the Basilisk was standing. Her dark face was working with fury, while her knotted fingers seemed to writhe. In one of her skinny hands was the inflammable thing that gave the illumination.

Inky blackness dropped down like a curtain as soon as this was seen. This was followed by a hissing sound; then followed a dull explosion, and a ball of fire shot out of the end of the loglike object and came skipping and bounding into the cavern, where it burst in red fire.

The scout's party tumbled backward in a panic, getting away from the flying fragments of flame.

Succeeding the flame, which did no damage, aside

from the fright it gave, there came an acrid, smoke-like, choking odor.

"Waugh!" Nomad roared, as he coughed the foul stuff out of his lungs. "What in time is et?"

The shooting of the ball of fire into the cave the white men expected would be followed by a rush of the Blackfeet, and they tried to be ready for it. It seemed to them that was what the fire was for—to light up the cavern and give the Blackfeet their opportunity.

But, apparently, the Indians feared the effects of the smoke, for they did nothing but yell with astonishing force.

The match flared again, and went out instantly. The yelling ceased. Dead silence again came. In the brief illumination once more the Blackfoot hag had been visible.

"Look out fer thet thing—et's comin' erg'in!" Nomad whooped.

A hissing broke the silence, followed by a dull explosive puff, and once more a ball of fire shot through the tunnel and exploded in the cavern.

The effect was like the first. Flames flew in every direction, and the air was filled with that choking smoke.

"Wow!" the borderman roared angrily. "Ef thet squaw does et erg'in, shall I tech her with er bullet, Buffler? We cain't stand this hyar."

Buffalo Bill was loath to order Nomad to fire on a woman, even though she was the Basilisk, who now was seeking their lives. They began to see that she had not given herself that name in vain.

"If you shoot," said the scout, "aim at the warriors, when the light flashes. But we can stand a good deal of this smoke, and, by keeping well back in the cave, we will be beyond the reach of the fire."

"It's a good thing there isn't anything inflammable in this place, necarnis," exclaimed Pawnee.

Hardly had he spoken, however, when some half dozen braves, having crept up to the mouth of the cavern, hurled into the cave arm loads of some light material. The soft dropping of this in the darkness had an uncanny sound.

The braves, who had hurled the stuff, retreated, crawling away on their bellies like lizards.

Buffalo Bill ventured to leave the protection of the wall and seek for some of the stuff that had been thrown into the cavern.

"Wood fiber," he said, in a low voice, "and it seems to be soaked in turpentine, for it has that smell." He passed it to Pawnee Bill. "What do you make of it, Lillie?"

"This stuff will burn like kerosene," said Pawnee Bill, in a startled voice.

The light in the tunnel flashed again, and as quickly went out; but it gave a view of the wild-eyed hag standing by the log gun she was manipulating. A screeching howl rose from the lips of the Blackfeet. This was followed by the now familiar hiss and dull boom, and again a ball of fire was shot into the cavern.

Though Buffalo Bill had tried hastily to move the soaked wood fiber away from the opening, he had moved very little of it when the fire ball came bouncing in.

Striking in the midst of the fiber, the mass flamed like kerosene-soaked shavings, filling the cavern with a bright light, while the smoke from the pitch ball itself rose in a choking stench.

In the midst of the deafening Indian yells that now filled the tunnel it was hard for the scout to make himself heard.

"We've got to get back!" he yelled. "Back!"



He sprang past the flaming mass near the mouth of the cave and dived into a dark hole, though he did not know whither it went or what was in it.

His friends followed him in a mad scramble.

As this rush was made to get away from the furious fire and out of the killing smoke, the scout and those near him saw two men leap up before them and run ahead into the darkness.

One of the men was Snake River!

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE LOWER CAVE.

Snake River and his comrade disappeared in the darkness ahead, but it was plain that other men were in there with them, and were now running, for the thump of their feet was heard indistinctly, with snatches of excited sentences and exclamations.

It was an unpleasant discovery that Snake River's party had gained the cavern. It placed enemies before them, as well as in the rear. Still, having taken the plunge, with the fire flaming behind and the choking smoke rolling, there was nothing to do but go on and trust to luck for the outcome.

One thing indicated that the dark opening was a tunnel which led to some point offering at least temporary safety—the fact that Snake River's party had fled along it. They were supposedly familiar with the cave, as Monte's men had been using it as a home for a number of weeks previous.

The scout slowed his headlong flight, and drew his revolver.

"You saw those rascals," he cried; "so look out for them!"

"I didn't have a good look at their unhandsome countenances," Pawnee Bill admitted; "but I know who they are, all right. It will be a fight to the finish, if they attack us in here."

"Oof idt vos nodt for der running," panted the baron, who was fat, but who loved the hurly-burly of swift action and wild excitement, "I would be suited petter. Vare dit dhey gone?"

"I don't know where," said the scout, "but let us go straight ahead."

Having slowed their flight, they could now hear what was passing behind them. There was a noise in the cavern, indicating that the Blackfeet had invaded it in overwhelming numbers, taking advantage of the scare they had been able to inflict by the fire and the pitch ball.

"Waugh!" the borderman coughed. "You hears thet, Buffler? I dunno but we'd better stop an' put up er fight right hyar. No knowin' what's ahead."

The scout did not like to follow the unknown tunnel, or gallery of the cave, any better than the borderman; but he knew, from what he heard in the cave, that the log cannon, or whatever it was that shot the fire balls, was being dragged in, and would be used against them if they tarried. Moreover, it was impossible to fight a way to the outside through the Blackfeet.

"We'll have to go on," he said, "no matter what lies before us. The smoke is coming in here."

"Them Blackfeet cain't stand ther smoke any better than we kin," urged Nomad.

It seemed true enough, and for a minute or more the scout's party stood uncertain whether to remain, try the tunnel again, or charge into the cavern, with the risk of being killed before they could get out of it.

Then the Blackfeet did a thing which made the scout and his friends call themselves stupid for not having thought of doing it themselves. They pulled the plug in the roof of the cave, letting the water of the spring over it pour down into the cavern, so that the air began to clear.

Old Monte and his men had bored a hole through the rock which formed the thin roof of the cave, thereby cutting into the spring which lay in a cuplike hollow of crater shape on the flat top of the mountain. By this means they had been able at intervals

to empty the contents of the spring into a big box, and by its descending weight get power with which to operate the machinery they had set up to run a long wire down into the Bottomless Pit, elevator fashion.

As soon as the water ran out, leaving only a trickling shower descending, the smoke in the cave began to rise through the hole, as in a chimney. It was an unexpected display of Blackfoot sagacity, and if directed by the witch woman it did credit to her ingenuity and leadership.

The fire in the cave was almost smothered out by the downpour of water, but some leaping flames remaining revealed the crowd of Blackfeet and the Basilisk herself.

It would have been an easy matter for the scout and his friends to have directed a revolver fire into the midst of the Indians; but that was too much like murder, and the scout's desire not to slay any of the Blackfeet, unless forced to do so, was so strong that it was not done.

"If they crowd us in here we'll fight," he said, "and we'll shoot to kill; but I hope they won't crowd us."

"What d'yer call this?" roared Nomad, who was always belligerent. "Aire ye goin' ter let 'em step on our toes? We c'd fight our way through thet crowd, an' I knows-et."

"Some of us might get through," the scout admitted.

"Now dhey are going into der shooting pitzness again," announced the baron.

The Blackfeet were scattering, getting into the recesses of the cave or out into the first tunnel; but the hag stood defiantly by her log gun, as if she dared the white men to shoot her.

Then it came—the expected. The log gun belched its ball of fire once more. The pitch ball came bound-



ing into the tunnel occupied by the scout's party, emitting its nauseating smoke.

Buffalo Bill and his friends retreated before it, following the direction taken by Snake River.

"Er waugh!" Nomad roared. "Buffler, I'm gittin' plum' disgusted wi' ye."

"Before we go to killing Blackfeet," said the scout, amused rather than otherwise by the borderman's display of boiling temper, "we'll see where this hole leads to."

"An' run inter Snake River's lead. I'm er Piegan ef I'd do it. Le's turn round an' wade inter ther ki-yis."

But they continued their flight, under Buffalo Bill's leadership.

The tunnel soon descended sharply. It made two or three abrupt bends, which protected them from the fire of the log gun, and shut out all view of the fire in the cave.

Buffalo Bill lighted a pocket torch. It seemed less dangerous than the risk of tumbling into holes.

They kept a sharp watch for Snake River and his men as they went on, but they saw nothing of them. Yet it was certain that Snake River had gone this way.

Pawnee Bill confessed to a growing sense of uneasiness.

"This is what you might call crawling into a hole and pulling the hole in after you," he remarked. "I suppose so long as our ammunition holds out we can keep back the Blackfeet, if it comes to that. Yet I'm bothered to know how we are going to get out. Looks to me, necarnis, that the farther we go the slimmer our chances are. Still," he added, "don't think I'm hoisting the white feather, for I'm not."

"I don't believe," said the scout, "that Snake River

would have taken this passage unless he knew that it would lead to safety—somewhere out on the mountain."

The sloping tunnel became steeper, until their descent was a slipping scramble. At the end of ten minutes of this they reached a level, and the light of the pocket torch fell on the walls of another cave, through which foamed a stream of swift and deep water.

The scout hesitated at the entrance of the cave, expecting to be fired on. But when he heard nothing he went in, and they explored it.

The cavern was larger than the one from which they had been crowded by the Blackfeet. Its walls were dry, and the floor was of sand, with here and there stretches of limestone. The walls were limestone, curiously marked by deposits of lime, showing where water once had flowed or trickled.

The length of the cave was greater than its width. At the upper end, the little river came into view, shooting out of a hole in the limestone wall. At the opposite end it disappeared into the wall. Rivers of that kind are not uncommon in limestone caves.

The thing which puzzled the scout and his friends was that, while there was no apparent means of egress, except by the path they had descended, no one was in the cave until they entered it.

"Thar's a way o' gittin' out," said Nomad, "though we don't see et. Cain't be otherwise."

Little Cayuse ran from end to end, then waded and swam the swift current and made a search on the other side.

"All over there," he announced. "Nothin' do on this side."

The tracks of men had been seen in a bit of sand at the point where the tunnel dropped to the level, at the entrance; but the makers of them had then stepped

to the limestone, on which no footprints could be observed.

"Idt iss a kveer pitzness," said the baron, moving about and staring owlshly at the walls, the floor, and the water. "Oof you can dell me der secret I vill know idt."

"Look for a hidden doqr, necarnis," Pawnee Bill suggested.

They went round the walls, hammering with the butts of their revolvers. They were engaged in this when Little Cayuse made a discovery. He had found a miniature raft at the upper end of the cave, where it had been covered over with sand. His whoop brought the party to him.

"Little boat," he cried, as he scraped the sand away, thus revealing the light poles of which the raft was constructed.

They dug the sand away and lifted out the raft. It was small, made of cottonwood poles, and bound together with withes. It had apparently been under the sand a long while, and the wood showed rotten spots, while in places the withes were ready to part.

"Old Monte's men didn't put it there," said the scout.

"What was it ever used for?" asked Pawnee Bill.

Before they could speculate further on this, they heard the Blackfeet in the tunnel.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### OUT OF THE LOWER CAVE.

It was evident that the Blackfeet believed they now had the white men where escape was impossible. Their yells had a triumphant ring.

"I don't like the looks of this," Buffalo Bill admitted, as he studied the situation. "So far as I can see, the only way to get out is the way we got in, and the Blackfeet are blocking it. As soon as they begin to shoot pitch balls in here, we shall be smothered. Yet there must be a way out. Snake River's men passed through."

"Thet is," amended the borderman, "unless Snake River an' his crew is hidin' in hyar. I admits thet I don't see whar they c'd hide, unless——"

"Unless what?" asked Pawnee.

"Unless," said Nomad, "they're hidin' under ther sand, like thet raft. You recklect we has more'n once come on Injuns hidin' in thet way."

"Necarnis," Pawnee called, "you keep the Blackfeet interested there, if they take a notion to enter without an invitation, while Nomad and I look round a bit more."

Pawnee and the borderman walked over the sand stretches along the bottom of the cave. In these they prodded with their knives wherever there was a slight hummock, even though it seemed foolish to think that men could be so concealed.

Then they went again over the walls, sounding with the butts of their revolvers.

Before they were through with this second examination, it was apparent that the Basilisk had arrived be-



fore the cave. They heard her shrill cries, and heard the sliding movement made as the log gun was drawn down the incline.

The Blackfeet were not visible. But the flash of the light was seen as the witch woman got ready to fire the log gun; then the fiery ball came rolling and plunging into the cavern.

It exploded at the edge of the water, throwing out again its stifling fumes.

Following this, balls of turpentine-soaked fiber, tied to stones, were hurled into the cave.

It was so apparent that the trick used in the other cave was to be tried here that the scout and his companions began to throw the stones and fiber into the stream.

They were hardly equal to this, as the stones were soon coming like a shower.

In the midst of their efforts, the log gun spoke again, hurling its fiery projectile; and this, striking in the midst of the fiber that had not been hurled into the water, set it flaming.

"Into the stream with it," said the scout, kicking and pushing the burning mass.

But other fiber attached to stones came shooting in, and this, too, ignited, so that soon there was so much fire in the cave, as well as smoke, that the men jumped into the water themselves to keep their clothing from taking fire.

Nomad was roaring like an enraged bear. His face was scorched and one of his hands painfully burned.

"Is this hyar any fair way o' fightin', even fer Injuns?" he bellowed. "Give 'em lead, Buffler!"

By this time Buffalo Bill would have been quite willing to give the Blackfeet a taste of lead, if it could have been done without too much risk; but in order to shoot into the tunnel they would have to go close to its

mouth, and then shoot up the incline, which would subject them to a rain of fire.

"The best thing we can do now," he said, "is to keep down in the water. The smoke is rising, so that seems a good course. And we must rake the fiery stuff in and extinguish as much of it as we can."

This they now tried to do.

They found the condition of the air close to the water tolerable, and they were able to pull in and quench many of the flaming bits of soaked fiber. But how long they could keep this up was a question. They were hoping that the rain of fire soon would cease, for it seemed reasonable to suppose that the supply of material, brought down by the Blackfeet, would soon be exhausted, at the rate they were using it.

They hardly noticed that their struggle against the swift current was pushing them gradually toward the point where the arrowy little stream disappeared from the cave.

This would not have mattered, probably, if the baron had not fallen, swept from his feet. He was round-bodied and none too steady on his pipstem legs.

Little Cayuse leaped to the aid of the baron, and they went under together. As it seemed they were drowning, or in danger of it, Nomad and Pawnee Bill stopped fighting the fiery stuff and went to assist them.

As they did this they ran into a hole, and were soon themselves fighting the swift stream. Pawnee Bill, a capital swimmer, got the baron by the hair, and tried to draw him ashore.

Cayuse was clinging to the German like a leech, stricken with sudden terror. There was a strange and powerful pull there, at the bottom of the stream; it gripped Pawnee Bill's feet as if hands had clutched him.

Nomad was trying to assist, but, finding the current too much for him, he bellowed for assistance.

The whole thing had taken but a minute of time. Yet when Buffalo Bill turned, to go to the aid of his friends, he was horrified to see them swept downward against the hole, and then into it, out of sight.

The scout stood by the bank of the stream, up to his knees in water, reeling and horrified. He could hardly believe his eyes.

"Gone!" he cried hoarsely.

His head spun round, and he felt almost like falling.

He could not go to the help of any one, for no one was there to be helped. It was like a nightmare, that his friends had been sucked into that black hole and drowned before his eyes. He forgot the fire behind him, the log gun, and the yelling Blackfeet in the steep tunnel.

A feeling of utter helplessness was a new sensation. Always there had been a fighting chance. Now there seemed to be none.

The sounds of falling stones and the soft thud of the masses of fiber tied to them, then the low boom of the gun, and the rolling into the cave of the ball of fire, drew his attention.

Perhaps the fact that from this cave no sounds had been heard for some time by the Blackfeet emboldened them to think the white men had been overwhelmed by the fire.

At any rate, as the staring and bloodshot eyes of the scout turned to the tunnel, viewed now through the rolling smoke and the jumping flames, he saw the Basilisk appear there.

The scout's hand dropped to his soaked revolver, as if he thought of shooting her. He did not fire at her, however, but at the foremost of the Blackfeet who followed her.

They came leaping in, hideous in paint and feathers, swinging knives and hatchets.

The scout and his friends had got rid of some of their paint, by immersion in the stream; but the scout's head still wore its crown of feathers. His Indian blanket he had discarded long before.

Firing again at the screaming Blackfeet who menaced him—they were apparently oblivious of the stifling smoke—the scout stepped farther into the stream. There he made a stand, firing again and again, tumbling warriors on the sand, while knives and hatchets whistled and whizzed by him and fell into the water.

The scout at the moment had no fear of death. His sense of apprehension was paralyzed by contemplation of the fate of his friends. He fought because it was the thing to do—because he had never taught himself to think of surrender.

But the rush of the Blackfeet pushed him farther back into the stream. And as he struggled to keep his footing against the sweeping current, his feet moved into the hole that had been the undoing of his friends.

Thrown from his balance, he fell, dropped downward, and felt his feet clutched in the pull of the stream below.

He fought against it, while the weapons of the yelling Blackfeet plowed the water round his head; then he was drawn downward, and slammed against the hole through which the stream vanished.

The next instant, in spite of his fierce struggle against the stream, he was thrust by it into the hole, sunk below its surface, and was whirled away.

In the few seconds of thought given to him Buffalo Bill felt that the end had come.



## CHAPTER XX.

### IN THE BOTTOMLESS PIT.

Buffalo Bill's next clear sensation was that of falling, with a roar of water in his ears and a feeling of suffocation gripping his lungs.

It seemed to him, then, that he was driven into deeper water. Then a breath of air struck him, and, while he was gasping for breath and instinctively trying to swim, he was grasped by something, or some one, and drawn along.

He heard a familiar roar—the roar of old Nick Nomad, and he fell on a strip of sand. Then he knew that his friends were about him, and that he was being pulled by his clothing over the sand.

"Waugh! Waugh-h!"

It was good to hear Nomad's hoarse bellow.

Buffalo Bill, trying to rise, found that he was being supported by Pawnee Bill on one side and by the baron on the other. Back of him the little river was tumbling down in a wild waterfall, round him were rocks and trees, and his friends.

"You made idt also-o unt likewise!" shouted the baron. "Whoob-a-la!"

"We war lookin' fer ye, an' expectin' ye, Buffler," cried the borderman.

Little Cayuse was dancing on the sand like an Indian automaton.

"Thet seemed tough luck," Nomad added, "when we war sucked inter thet hole. Thinks I ter myself, 'I am shore a gone coon!' An' then I come rippin' down through thet flood o' worter inter this place, and t'others war with me: but you warn't."

### In the Bottomless Pit.

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Buffalo Bill stood up dizzily, supported still by Pawnee and the baron.

"It seems good to be still alive," he said.

"Thet's et!" Nomad cackled. "Ever' single one o' us thought thet he war rubbed off ther slate. And then disckivered thet he warn't hurt so't et could be reely mentioned; but war down hyar. You don't notice whar ye're at, do ye?"

The scout looked round.

"Out of the cave, anyway," he muttered.

"In ther Bottomless Pit," cried Nomad. "How's thet fer luck?"

"Ve ar-re here," said the baron; "but ve ton'dt know yidt oof dare iss any vay oof gitting oudt oof here. Himmel! Oof idt can't be dit!"

But Buffalo Bill was so grateful for the present that he had no desire to begin gloomy forecasts of the future.

A rock before him seemed to offer an easy position for his back, and he sat down, his friends grouping about him. Each was as wet as water could make him.

"Something of a bath, necarnis," said Pawnee. "But we got away from those frenzied Blackfeet, eh? I think it's a safe guess that the reason we didn't see Snake River and his friends in that cave was that they came in here by the water route ahead of us. We've been talking about that, and we can't see it any other way."

"So we're in the Bottomless Pit?"

Buffalo Bill was still breathing heavily and felt tired.

"Tell me your experiences," he said.

"You saw," said Pawnee, "how that suck hole in the river caught us. It threw us against the tunnel, and then pulled us into it. For myself, I thought I was headed sure on the long journey. But just when I couldn't have stood any more I was in the waterfall,

and able to breathe a little; then I dropped into the pool. I was still too mentally mixed to know what I was doing, but I struck out, and landed on the sand. Then I helped to fish the baron out. Nomad helped Little Cayuse in the same way. When we had time to get our wits together we saw what had happened to us. Then we became anxious about you, for we knew that you would think we had been drowned, and that it wasn't likely you'd try the water route unless you thought you wanted to commit suicide. I reckon the reds backed you into that hole?"

"That was the way of it," Buffalo Bill confessed.

He looked at Pawnee Bill.

"Shake hands, Lillie!" he laughed. "We can congratulate ourselves on having achieved the most remarkable thing on record."

"And live to tell of it," added Pawnee, as he grasped and wrung the hand of his tried and true friend.

They now were shaking hands all round and uttering sundry ejaculations, indicating that their heads were addled by great joy.

When they had worked off some of their exuberance, they began to talk more seriously of their situation. They made an examination of their revolvers and cartridges, pouring the water out of the weapons and drying the cartridges as well as they could.

"Of course," said Pawnee Bill, "we don't know that Snake River and his bunch are in here, but if they aren't I'll think it is strange. So we want to be ready for them."

"It must have been as astonishing to the Blackfeet as to ourselves—the thing that happened to us," Buffalo Bill remarked.

"I don't know about that, necarnis. You remember that little raft that was buried in the sand. If a man came through that hole and down this waterfall cling-

ing to a raft like that, he wouldn't have a hard time, especially since he would know what to expect and be prepared for it. It's my notion that the raft was made for such use by the Blackfeet, or by that witch woman.

"From what Snake River said, we got the idea that she knew how to get into the Bottomless Pit. It occurs to me that she may have had the raft hid in the sand for her use. But, if so, she hadn't come in by that route lately, for the raft was old and rotten."

"She would have to make a raft for use each time," said the scout, reflecting on this and looking about. "She certainly couldn't return by the waterfall. It puts a hopeful aspect on our situation. If she got in here, she got out. If she could do that we can."

"As I look at it," said Pawnee Bill, "our escape from the cave by way of the river may not have been unexpected by the Basilisk, whatever the other Blackfeet may have thought about it, or think about it now."

No sounds reached them from the Blackfeet in the cave.

They watched the waterfall, half expecting to see Blackfeet forms appear in the whirling water.

"Idt vouldt nodt be surbrising," said the baron. "Oof der vitch voman iss knowing to all dot, she iss schmaridt enough to gidt herselluf unt der Plackfeedt in here. Unt off Snake Rifer iss here, too, ve ar-re soon to haf a merry go roundt."

"Et will shore be er game o' tag," Nomad added.

"A sort of blind-man's buff," said Pawnee, "if this Bottomless Pit is the kind of place it looked to be when we viewed it from the top of the mountain."

"No can git to eat," said the Piute mournfully.

He was stroking a soaked mustang hoof, which he had drawn from a deerskin bag that he had fondly believed waterproof. The hoof was his "big medicine," warranted to ward off all harm, cure all sicknesses,



heal all diseases, guard against wicked spirits, foil enemies, and render him generally invulnerable.

The fact that it had been soaked by the water and was now mussy made him uneasy; but he began to clean it, and tried to dry it by blowing his breath through the hair.

"No deer git in here," he said, "no anything git here; mucho bad place. Muy malo!"

"I reckon ther Piute is right thar," Nomad agreed, glancing at the dark cliffs which surrounded the Bottomless Pit. "I don't see no chaine o' game bein' in this place."

Their food had been left, with their other supplies, except the things they carried, at their camp.

"Trouble is refusing to visit me," said Pawnee Bill. "After what we have come through, with not a hair of our heads hurt, I refuse to harbor any sort of worry."

Nomad drew up a leg of his trousers, and fingered a cut on his leg, which the water made smart.

"Ain't no hairs on my head hurt, but my laig is," he declared, and proceeded to tie round it a strip torn from the lining of his wet coat. "Still, Pawnee, ye cain't be no more thankful than I am. But what ther Piute intercatates is er fact, jest ther same. Ef thar is er way ter git out er hyar we're bound ter make er hunt fer et, fust thing."

"Someding to eadt iss imbordant," the baron agreed; "but I am nodd forgeddting dot dresure vot iss saidt to be down here. Vare vos idt der vagon falled from der cliff?"

"The trail is over there," answered the scout, pointing to the left. "Somewhere on that side we'll find what remains of the wagon, if it really fell from the trail."

"An ideer which has been sloshin' round in my mind, but which I has hesertated ter speak of," remarked

Nomad, "is erbout Tempest an' thet gal. Ther quar way in which they disappeared war a puzzler. Could et be, d'ye reckon, thet they fell in hyar an mebbysso war killed?"

"Though it is possible, I can't regard it as probable," Buffalo Bill replied.

"Ye say thet, bercause ye want ter think et. They had been trying ter find er way in hyar. Them cliffs aire steep an' they're treach'rous. They might have toppled off, same's as et is said ther wagon did. I don't like ter think et, though."

"Could dhey haf coom py dot vay?" asked the baron, referring to the waterfall.

"They wouldn't know about it," objected Pawnee, "and, even if they did, I can't think they would have risked it."

Forgetting that his clothing was soaked, the baron began to fumble for his pipe and tobacco.

"Ach du lieber!" he cried. "Now, how am I going to gidt along when I can't make me some schmoke?"

His "waterproof" tobacco pouch had not kept his tobacco dry; and if there had been a little soap with the water in his pipe he might have blown bubbles.

With much grumbling, he removed the damp tobacco and spread it carefully to dry, with the pipe unjointed and resting beside it.

"Der odder topacco," he said, "iss py der camp in; so vot am I going to do when dhis iss gone? I can lif mitout eadting, but——"

He shook his head sadly.

"Cody," he said, the thought of a tobaccoless existence stimulating his thinking faculties, "you rememper dot when ve are py der cafe, in der fairst dime, some off der oudtlaws cut der caple vot vos running down into der Pottomless Pit. Meppysso ve can findt idt down here."

"Thet might be er happenchance worth torkin' erbout," declared Nomad, brightening.

"Suppose we found that wire, and it was long enough to reach to the top of the walls, what could we do with it?" asked Pawnee Bill.

"Dot iss for you to vork oudt," declared the baron. "You ar-re der rope king."

Pawnee Bill smiled and stared at the dark, inaccessible cliffs.

"In the exhibition arena my time would be worth about a thousand dollars a minute if I could throw a loop of wire to the top of that wall," he said. "I think, baron, the man hasn't been born that could do it."

"Waal, we might think up suthin' ter do wi' thet wire, ef we could find it," the borderman urged. "I wonder how much rested you fellers aire?"

"I am nodt rested, unt my topacco iss nodt dry," said the baron.

Nomad got up restlessly.

"My clothin' will dry out while I'm walkin' round jest as fast as et will settin'. Ef thar is ary possible way o' gittin' out o' this hyar place, I'd like ter know et, fer et would shore easy my mind er bit."

"Another thought has come to me, and it may be worth looking into," said Pawnee. "We came in here by way of the little river. Now it seems certain this water runs out somewhere. If it didn't, this Bottomless Pit would be a lake. Perhaps the hole it goes out by may be big enough for us to go through. Or we could try——"

"Not fer me!" the borderman cut in. "Never erg'in."

"You don't know what I was going to say."

"You war goin' ter say thet ef et pops inter another hole we could go through thet hole same as we did this un. But you don't ketch me tryin' et."

"You'd rather stay in here and die?" said Pawnee.

"I'd jest as soon."

"Well, I suggest that as soon as it's light enough, we look over the Pit, and see what we can find. We can look for the remains of that treasure wagon while we're tryin' to find a way out."



## CHAPTER XXI.

### EXPLORING THE PIT.

The next morning they were still resting and discussing their situation, when a trilling whistle sounded. It brought them to their feet.

"What was that?" Buffalo Bill queried.

It was not easy to answer.

"Was it on top of the cliffs, or down in this pit?" demanded Pawnee.

"Et had a wortery note, but thet ain't no reason ter say thet et come through ther worter," avowed Nomad, staring at the falls.

Stretching back from the waterfall were rocky, bush-lined hollows dipping away into the farther recesses of the Bottomless Pit. Not having explored these, they did not know what was beyond them, though what they had seen of this hollow from the top of the mountain had given them a fair idea of its size and shape. So they knew it was a big, rocky valley, inclosed by precipitous walls.

"I has heerd an elk whistle," said Nomad, "but never like thet. Still, thar's no tellin' what quar kinds o' animiles is ter be found in hyar. I'm guessin' et war ther whistle of some animile."

They let it go at that.

But the sounding of this whistle stirred them into beginning an examination of the singular valley they were in.

"I don't reckon," said Nomad, before they set out, "thet some one ought ter stay hyar, an' be ready to pump lead into ther Blackfeet, ef so be any of 'em comes shootin' down thet worterfall? I don't allow thet any will come."

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The scout was of the opinion that it would be wiser for them to stay together.

Following one of the bushy hollows, they came out soon into more open ground, and saw the valley stretching on before them, with the high sheer walls all round.

After this view, they went back to the waterfall, and searched along the walls to the right and left of it, hunting for the wire that had been cut by Monte Vidio's men and dropped into the hollow.

They found it after a while, down in the bushes, in a snarl, to the right of the waterfall. But what use they could make of it they did not know. However, they concealed it by tucking it under the bushes.

When they got back to the waterfall there was no indication of enemies in the neighborhood, either white or red. They had got rid of the Blackfeet for the time, at least.

Their clothing was drying, and they believed their ammunition had not been injured. There was a bit of rust showing on their weapons, but this they wiped away, and so made ready for whatever was before them, as they set forth again.

They had judged, while viewing the Bottomless Pit from the mountain, that it was five miles wide at the bottom, and about as long; but they began to think it was much larger as they tramped along.

Suddenly a deer started up in the bushes with a crash, and dashed off, lost to sight almost immediately. Nomad woofed his joy, for the food problem seemed to be settled, if the hollow contained game animals.

"Thet strikes me as er quar thing, though," he remarked, with growing cheerfulness. "By what sort of a happenchance did deer ever git down inter this place?"

"Idt vouldt be an easiness to fall down," said the baron.

"But not ter go on breathin' after et war done," Nomad objected.

Still, it seemed that even that might be possible, and if there was no way to get into the place but by the cave, it was a clear inference that deer had fallen from the cliffs and survived.

Next a mountain grouse rose with a flutter, and disappeared into the bushes farther on.

"While ther ammynition holds out ter burn, I reckon we ain't goin' ter starve," cackled the borderman, leaping from moroseness to good humor. "I don't know why I didn't have sense ernough ter know thet birds would be in hyar likely. Grouse an' deer meat ain't goin' ter taste bad. But I wonder, Buffler, how erbout yer matches? Mine aire wet, I know."

Buffalo Bill and Pawnee were provided with match cases that had hitherto proven waterproof. They examined them with some anxiety. The matches flamed when scratched, and this question was settled.

"Hoob-a-la!" cried the jubilant baron. "Soon ve vill be findting a resdaurant unt a peer garten."

"With ér good crick flowin' by me, and ven'son ter eat," said the borderman, "I has lived two months, when trappin' wi' nothin' else ter set my mouth to; an' et warn't sech bad livin'."

The ground was so rough that it took most of the forenoon for them to cover the distance to the farther end of the valley. There they found that the swift little river left it through a sheer cañon.

"That's not so bad," said the scout. "I guess we can get out of this place, when we are ready to."

The stream filled the cañon to the walls, which were so steep that nothing but a fly could ascend them.

The cañon was dark, owing to the height of the walls, which shut out the sunlight.

"Though we haven't a boat," said Pawnee, as they discussed the cañon, "we could build a raft. But you'll see there are a lot of rocks in there, on which it might go to pieces, and that the cañon is not only narrow, but crooked as the hind leg of a dog."

"You vill blease oxcoose me from trying dot cañon," said the baron. "I ton'dt know vare idt goes."

None of them was ready to try it, except as a desperate measure, so, when they had surveyed it as well as they could, they went on, crossing the swift stream with the aid of ropes, and by wading to their shoulders. When they were done they were as wet as they had been at first.

Following the southern wall, they came, late in the afternoon, to the vicinity of the waterfall. They had seen no person other than the members of their party, and were coming to the conclusion that they were the only human beings in the deep valley.

Then they heard again the trilling, watery whistle. It seemed so near that it brought them up standing.

"Wow!" Nomad breathed, glaring round. "What is et?"

"It came out of that rocky passage," said Pawnee Bill; "or it seemed that way to me."

"But what made et?"

"Now you've got me, old Diamond. Hustle in there, Cayuse, and see what you can find."

The Piute hung back, staring with fear-filled eyes at the passage between the rocks.

"Me no like," he objected.

"You're afraid. I'll go in then."

Pawnee Bill entered the rocky, bush-clad passage,



swinging his revolver. There were high rocks on each side, and the passage, broken and rock-choked, took him close up to the waterfall. But he saw nothing.

"Nothing in there," he reported, "so far as I could see. But I sure thought that whistle was in there."

"We heerd et erg'in while ye war gone," Nomad reported.

"There are other passages, like the one you went into," said Buffalo Bill. "I've been poking into one of them, and found nothing."

Pawnee Bill, puzzled, took off his hat and scratched his head.

"Was it an animal?"

"I don't know what it was," the scout admitted. "But it didn't sound like the whistle of any animal I ever heard."

After exploring some of the passages they went on to the waterfall. The fall and its surroundings were unchanged. When this was seen, Little Cayuse dropped down and got busy with his mustang hoof.

"Jest give my shoulders a few wipes wi' thet," Nomad invited. "Et's jest Piute foolishness, o' course, an' I don't believe in et, but still——"

Pleased, instead of being offended by the expressed doubt, Little Cayuse curried Nomad's shoulders with the "big medicine" hoof.

"You like um, too?" he asked Pawnee.

"Go ahead, son, if it makes you feel better. I'm like old Diamond; I don't believe in it, but it can't hurt me."

Very gravely, Little Cayuse went the circle, passing the mustang hoof over the bodies of his friends, firm in the belief, in spite of repeated previous failures, that he was guaranteeing their safety and success.

After that he dug damp tobacco out of one of his pockets, a stubby pipe out of another, and tried to smoke.

"The big eend of a day in hyar," said Nomad. "Nothin' ter eat, an' nothin' doin'. Still, I shore feels better than when I war fightin' Blackfeet in ther cave." It was the general opinion.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### WHISKIZOOS.

The old borderman and the young Piute were having a bad attack of whiskizooos as night settled round the camp by the waterfall.

"The romantic gloaming always has a bad effect on you fellows," said Pawnee Bill.

Nomad was trying to keep his nerves well in hand, and was not making a success of it; but the Piute did not endeavor to conceal the fact that he was frightened.

"Bad spirits," he said, and worked the medicine hoop more energetically than ever.

"Whoosh!" Nomad whispered, in a hollow way, rising to his feet and staring out into the valley. "Thar et is erg'in."

Throughout the day at intervals they had heard peculiar whistling, which they could not believe was made by an animal. It had a watery trill, and seemed at times to come out of the air over their heads, at other times to emanate from one of the rocky passages that abounded near the waterfall.

But, as night began to settle down, whisperings took the place of the whistling. At first it was supposed that the whisperings were caused by the sighing of the wind in the ravines and over the rocks. But when the whisperings seemed to speak words, though what the words were could not be determined, the case began to take on a mysterious aspect that was nerve-trying to Nomad and Little Cayuse.

The whispering had come again, drawing the borderman to his feet. He stood staring into one of the ravines from which it had seemed to proceed.

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"Thar et is erg'in," he said. "I reckons, Buffler, you heerd et then as well as me."

Buffalo Bill had heard it; so had Pawnee Bill and the baron.

"Muy malo!" gasped the Piute, swinging his mustang hoof as if he would knock down any spirit foolish enough to leap out at him. "Me hear um, too."

"What do you cal'late thet war, Buffler?" Nomad demanded. "Wind can whistle an' et can whisper, but et shore cain't tork. I heerd er voice then, an' et said, 'Danger; go 'way frum hyar.' Whoosh!"

"There is sure somebody in here, necarnis," Pawnee Bill agreed. "I'm standing with old Diamond in saying there is."

"As the words which Nomad says he distinguished were English, the whisperer is a white man. You know what that suggests."

"Snake River, instead of whiskizooos. Old Diamond, I reckon we've got Snake River's villains to deal with, and I know you are not afraid of them."

Staring at the ravine, Nomad dropped again to his seat on the ground. While he fought shy of "ha'nts" and "sperets," and all the hair-raising brood hatched by darkness and an ignorant, lively imagination, it was well known that he feared not the face of clay.

"Ef et's only men," he breathed, "they cain't skeer me up none whatever. As fer Snake River, ef I sh'd come ercrost him makin' a noise like thet wi' his mouth, I'd break him in two. But—what's ther matter now, Cayuse?"

"Woo-ee! Me hear um ag'in!"

The Piute waved the mustang hoof frantically.

"Wow! So does I. Thar she goes. Listen, Buffler."

Plainly it came to them, rising and falling, a strange



penetrating whistle, coming from they knew not where.

"Go away! Go away!" was what it said.

The borderman staggered to his feet.

"What now?" demanded the scout.

"Waal, I'm goin'."

"Where?"

"I dunno, but I'm goin'. Cayuse, you intend ter stay hyar, while thet thing is warnin' ye?"

"Sit down!" Buffalo Bill commanded.

Trained to obedience, the borderman dropped back, but he soon began to expostulate.

"Now, see here," said the scout, "this is foolishness, and you're old enough to know it. If you and the Piute are willing to stay here with the baron, Lillie and I will investigate this thing. Some one is trying to stampede us—that's all; and you are willing to let it be done. Well, I'm not. What do you say, Lillie?"

"After you, necarnis." He rose. "Lead on, Macduff!"

"Don't leave this spot," the scout ordered. "Lillie and I will be back in a little while."

Instead of voicing an objection, which they expected him to do, Nomad stammered a scared exclamation and pointed a shaking finger.

"See thet? Looky thar! Is thet——"

"It's a signal light," said Pawnee Bill, in a relieved tone, as he glanced in the indicated direction and saw a light like a bluish star on the top of a hill in the valley.

"Wow! See ther color of et! Now et's gone. No, thar et is erg'in."

"A signal light," the scout agreed.

The blue light went out. But immediately it was seen on another peak, some distance from the first.

"Thar! What do yer say ter thet? If a man made thet light, how'd he git to thet other rock p'int?"

"Your brains are addled," said Buffalo Bill. "There are two men, and two lights."

"But ther color of et? Thet ain't no reg'lar lantern, ner signal fire."

"At a guess, I should say that the men doing the whispering are now flashing the lights—and for the same reason; they want to scare us out of this hole."

"Waugh! I'm willin' ter go quick."

"Where will you go?" asked the scout sarcastically.

"I don't think thet is done by any real man," said Nomad.

"By a spirit, then, of course. Is that your foolish notion?"

"You recklect," said the borderman solemnly, "thet story o' ther driver o' ther treasure wagon, who pitched down inter this place and war killed. We looked fer traces o' thet wagon ter-day and didn't find et; but we didn't look ernough. He war killed, I don't doubt; and——"

"And his ghost is whispering and flashing lights. I wish you could be sensible once, Nomad."

He turned to the baron.

"You're not afraid to stay here, Schnitz, and guard these two helpless men—Nomad and Cayuse?"

"Nit. I am nodt afraidt oof nottings. Der only spirits I belief in iss in a pottle. Budt at der same dime, dot iss a kveer pitzness."

Accompanied by Pawnee Bill, the scout set out.

"Of course," said Pawnee, as they went on, "there may be men in here we know nothing about. When Tempest and that girl came to the mountain over there with the intention of trying to get into this valley and settle the question of the fate of the treasure wagon, they thought no one knew of it. But you can gamble

that they talked more or less with various people before they set out, and gossip of that kind will spread like wildfire. So it's a safe guess that a lot of men, besides Monte and Snake River and that crowd, know that the gold of the treasure wagon is supposed to be here."

"A story of that kind," added the scout, "spread round, as it would be, might send scores of men prowling round the Bottomless Pit. You're right, Lillie. Some of those men may be in here."

"How they got in, we can't tell now. And they may know we are here, or they may not. The signal lights, if that's what they were, they may be using to send messages to some one on top of the walls; but we can't say as to that."

"Would that account for the whistling and whispering?" Buffalo Bill asked, showing that, though he had rebuked Nomad's superstitions, he had not been able himself to account for these things in any satisfactory way.

"That's my idea, necarnis. We got the words and sounds very indistinctly. How would it do to guess that the men we are supposing in here were trying to speak to the other men on top of the walls, and what we heard of it reached us as whisperings and indistinct words?"

"You'd account for the whistling in the same way?"

"The whistling might be to attract the attention of the men on the walls. Probably I'm spinning this out pretty thin," Pawnee Bill admitted, and laughed lightly. "The truth is, necarnis, I'm floundering round, grasping at anything that looks like a straw."

He stopped suddenly, his hand falling on Buffalo Bill's arm.

The whispering was heard again, but followed this time by hasty footsteps.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### A CAPTURE.

Buffalo Bill and his pard dropped down in the darkness, after creeping to one side so that they would be directly in the path of the coming man.

Pawnee Bill had loosed the reata he carried at his belt, as this shift of position was made, and threw the loop out now, and clutched it, with several folds of the rope, ready for a swinging cast.

"Once I get this round his windpipe," Pawnee muttered, "he will do no more mysterious whispering until we get ready to let him!"

Soft-footed, but in a hurry, the man came on.

They could see him now, indistinctly, against the dark background of large rocks. Judged by his clothing and wide-flapping hat, he was a white man.

He did not see the forms crouching in the gloom, and was not aware of his danger until the rope whipped through the air and the noose dropped over his head.

Then he uttered a low exclamation, and threw up his right hand to remove the noose. By a jerk on the rope, Pawnee Bill prevented this. And a second and harder jerk pulled the man forward and caused him to fall.

The pards were up and on him before he could rise.

"We've got him," said Pawnee. "Grip his Adam's apple, while I slap on the harness."

With a deft twist, he threw a length of the rope around the threshing legs of the captive, coiled another round his right arm as it came up; and, with Buffalo Bill sitting on the man's chest, there was now little chance that he could harm any one, or get away.



The revolver of the scout, pressed against the man's head, served to quiet him effectively.

Drawing out his waterproof match box, Pawnee Bill scratched a match. He expected that its light would show the face of the man called Snake River. But it did not.

"Hello!" he said, "who have we got here?"

The flare of the light had given the prisoner also an opportunity to size up the situation.

"Thunder!" he growled. "It's Buffalo Bill."

"I'm not worthy to be counted," said Pawnee. "I think, however, that I've seen you somewhere."

"I know that I have seen him before," Buffalo Bill asserted. "This is the scamp we saw down in Rocket Range—the fellow they called Junk."

"Sure—Junk Tabor—called Junk, because a certain fight he mixed in left him fit only for the scrap heap. What you doing here, Junk?"

The match had gone out.

"What you doin' here?" Junk countered.

"We were laying for the man who did the whispering, and helped flash the lights, and you ran into the net."

Junk had been lying on his back, but now he started up.

"Do you think I done that?"

"If not, who did?"

"Great snakes! I don't know. That was what I was hustlin' fer, when I run into your rope. I heard that whisperin', and it sort o' het up my imagination. How many men aire down in this rock heap, anyhow?"

"You don't know?"

"How should I? I didn't know you was here. Say, how'd you fellers git in here, anyhow?"

"We were thinking of asking how you got in here," said the scout.

"Better put that information on the table, quick," urged Pawnee. "Pard Cody has sometimes got a mighty short temper."

"You was down in that Blackfoot village? We allowed it was you. And I reckon you tracked after us into the tunnel and the cave. We heard the Blackfeet yellin', and we flew for home. But——"

He stopped abruptly.

"Well, why don't you go on?" Buffalo Bill demanded.

"I ain't goin' to do all the talkin'."

"From what you say, we know you were in Snake River's crowd. You went into the Blackfoot village to capture the witch woman, so that you could force her to tell you how to get into this place, which the Blackfeet call the Bottomless Pit."

"Wow! Where'd you tumble to all that?"

"We heard your bunch talking by the trail. Then we followed, when you went on to the village. You stirred up a hornet's nest when you captured the squaw, but you had to abandon her when you were pursued."

"That's right."

"Now, tell us how you got in here."

The muzzle of the persuasive revolver was pressed against Junk's head.

"We got it out of the squaw," the fellow replied.

"Snake River made her tell him the secret?"

"You're good at guessin'. Anyhow, that's right."

"The secret way in? What did she tell you?"

"'Twas so different from what we expected, that we didn't believe her. She said that the way to git in here was to go first into the lower cave and swim down the river through the hole where the river goes through the wall. We thought she was joshin'. But that is all we could git out of her. On account of a

great lack o' time, we had to hustle out of there without askin' all the questions we wanted to.

"We beat it to the cave, and then down to the lower cave. That was after we seen you come into the upper cave, with the Blackfeet after you. You follered us. And when we seen that by stayin' there we was goin' to have to fight your crowd and the Blackfeet, too, that river began to look interestin'. Snake River he went first, and then the rest of us after him. As I'm supposin' that you came through that same way, I don't need to tell you how 'twas. But it seemed takin' dangerous chances, even after what the old witch said, and you fellers and the Blackfeet crowdin' us. Snake River figgered that if we stayed in the cave it was suicide, and it couldn't be worse if we risked the hole in the wall."

He subsided. He had made a long speech, in a voice still hoarse from the rough handling he had received.

"How many men are in your bunch?" Pawnee Bill asked.

"Five—four, now that you've got me."

"Snake River is the leader?"

"You've got it right."

"How did you expect to get out?"

"We hadn't got so far along as that."

"Who were you signaling to?" said the scout, taking a turn.

"Didn't I tell ye we didn't do that? There's somebody else in here, besides your crowd and Snake River's. That's all I know."

"You were alone when we found you. How did that happen?"

"I was tryin' to do a bit of scoutin'."

"And Snake River—where is he—and the rest of your bunch?"

"Back there—the way I come, half a mile or so."

They were intending to ask other questions, with the hope of planning the capture of Snake River's whole band, when a whoop sounded at the camp—Nomad's well-known bellow, and running feet came in their direction.

"Old Diamond has been stampeded by something," Pawnee Bill growled. "A whiskizoo must be snapping at his heels, the way he is splitting the wind."

Apparently both Nomad and Little Cayuse were coming, having abandoned the camp and the baron.

Nomad came up at a dead run a minute later, and would have plunged on by if Buffalo Bill had not hailed him. That brought him up with a jerk. At his heels was Little Cayuse.

"What in time——"

"Oh, thet you, Pawnee? Waal, may I be kicked ter death by muskeeters ef ther thing didn't roam right inter ther camp!"

"What thing?"

Nomad looked back over the dark way he had come.

"What thing?" he snorted. "Now, ain't thet er question? How do I know what et war? Ask Cayuse?"

"What was it came into the camp, Cayuse?" Buffalo Bill demanded.

"Me no know," answered the panting and frightened Piute; "me no can sabe it."

"So you cut out, and left the baron there alone!"

"Et looked like er woman, near's I c'd make out," admitted the borderman. "When I fust seen et, et war down on ther ground clawin' round. I heerd et scratchin'. Then et riz up an' begun ter come toward me. After that——"

"You ran."

"Did I? I thort I war flyin'."

Shifting from one foot to the other, and glancing



nervously round, Nomad saw the form of the prisoner moving at his feet, and jumped into the air with another yell.

"Wow!" he squalled. "What is et? What ye got hyar?"

"Are you trying to raise the dead, Nomad?" demanded Buffalo Bill.

"Not ef I knows et. What is thet thing on ther ground thar?"

"A prisoner."

"Waugh! White, red, er——"

"One of Snake River's men."

"Great gallinippers! War he flashin' them lights an' doin' thet whisperin' an' whistlin'?"

"He wasn't. He seems to know no more about that than we do. But we've got to hurry back to the camp."

"Schnitz doesn't seem to be stampeding, though," observed Pawnee Bill.

But when they moved on the camp, with Junk Tabor in their midst, they heard the baron shuffling about at a great rate, somewhere near the waterfall.

Then the baron's yell sounded:

"Hellup! Kwick!"

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### UP AGAINST THE SNAKES.

They found the baron struggling on the ground with a man who was larger and stronger than himself. In addition, they heard a pattering of feet off on the right.

Junk Tabor was dropped with as little ceremony as if he had been a bag of potatoes, as the pards rushed to the baron's assistance.

The man who had been getting rather the best of the German leaped up when he heard the cries of the baron's friends, and made off in the darkness, leaving the baron gasping on the ground.

"Hurt, Schnitz?" asked Pawnee Bill, bending down.

The baron gave a flounce and concluded to live a little longer.

"Himmel! Idt iss Bawnee! Unt I am t'inking idt iss anodder willain. You heardt me?"

Buffalo Bill had plunged on past, pursuing the man who had fled, with Little Cayuse and the borderman following.

The man had disappeared, and the scout turned back, for he did not forget that sounds in that direction had indicated that other men were there. He now met Nomad and Cayuse, whose attention was attracted to sounds beyond the camp; then arose a cry from Pawnee Bill.

"Gr-reat snakes, what's happenin' next?" Nomad bellowed.

They discovered quickly enough. Junk Tabor had escaped, apparently because he had been aided. Pawnee had cried out, and sped after him.

A shot rang out in the direction taken by Junk.

This brought Pawnee Bill to a sudden halt and sent him back to the camp.

All the pards were together again, on the site of the camp. They had captured and had lost Junk Tabor. The manner of his escape, and certain sounds accompanying it, indicated that enemies were all about.

"I reckon, necarnis," said Pawnee, "that we are in the midst of Snake River's choice collection of snakes. Better get down, before another bullet comes hunting for us."

Dropping to the ground, they spread out, round the camp, to minimize the danger.

"If your whiskizoo scare has fluttered away, old Diamond, you might tell us about that woman," Pawnee invited.

"You seen idt, too, Schnitz," said Nomad.

"Dot vos vot I vos hunting for, vhen I got me indo trouple," declared the German. "I seen vot you called a vhisbizoozic sbirit oof a voman, unt as soon as you unt Cayuse haf skibbed oudt I am hundingt for idt. Unt I foundt idt—me; you seen idt lader."

"What? Thet man you war fightin' with?"

"Yoost der same. Dot sbirit voman vos a man mit a planket roundt him. I t'ink he vos drying to gidt by der camb in. Anyhow, vhen I make der search, he iss on der groundt—in der dark, righdt in der camb. Unt der nexdt t'ing he iss fighdting me, unt I am fighdting him. *Ach du lieber!*"

Nomad breathed heavily.

"What proof has yer got o' thet, Schnitz?"

"Righdt ofer dare iss der planket. He dropped idt off vhen ve pegin der fighdting."

"Waugh-h!"

"Another whiskizoo side-swiped out of existence," remarked Pawnee. "Some day, old Diamond, you'll

discover that all your whiskizooos breathe air, and eat victuals when they can."

"I ain't so shore ther baron is right," Nomad protested. "Ther things thet has been happenin' ter-day cain't be explained erway so easy. Did Junk Tabor admit thet his crowd war doin' ther light-flashin' an' whisperin' act?"

"He said that they knew nothing about it," said Pawnee.

When the talk dropped—it was carried on in low tones—they listened. Now and then they were rewarded by hearing stealthy feet moving in the ravines.

"Snake River's bunch can't make much of a surround, if there are only five in it," muttered Pawnee. "I wonder what they're up to?"

The answer came after a while. A revolver flashed on top of a rock fifty yards off. This was followed instantly by other revolvers at different points. Well aimed in the darkness, the bullets came into the camp, spurting sand and slatting against the rocks. One struck within a foot of Buffalo Bill's head.

"You noticed where that lead came from," said the scout. "The rascals can't easily shift their positions, so they'll shoot from the same places, when they try it again."

"I've marked down the fellow off on the right," said Pawnee.

"Five shots, warn't et?" said Nomad. "I'll take ther critter thet is in the ravine dead ahead."

"I'll watch that hill on the left," said the scout.

The others selected points they were to fire at when the shots came. These rang out a minute or so later.

The scout's friends let drive, aiming at the revolver flashes of their foes. Whether they hit any one they



could not tell, for no sound came; but the shooting on the other side was stopped for a time. When fire opened again the outlaws had changed their locations. But, as they were farther away, they did no harm, nearly all the lead going high and plumping into the waterfall behind the camp.

"If we're here in the morning they'll be perched where they can pick us off," said the scout; "so we'll also change our base."

But they began to think, when they had watched and waited an hour or more, that the rascals were gathering for a rush upon the camp.

Stealthy footsteps were heard. And as they came from a point near the wall, close by the falls, it seemed that the outlaws had worked over that way, and would make their attack from there.

The revolvers of the scout's party were turned in the new direction, and they lay quietly waiting for the next movement of their foes.

After an interval, in which nothing was heard, Nomad had another attack of whiskizos.

"Baron," he whispered, pulling at the German's sleeve, while his words sounded more distinctly than if he had spoken them aloud, "thet blanket ye saw round thet snake is movin' off thar! Now, what d'ye make o' thet?"

"Anodder willain under anodder planket," said the baron.

"You see et?"

"Vale, I see somet'ing mofing, budt meppyso idt is der shatters. Der moon iss coming oudt, unt idt makes shatters."

"Et is gone now," said Nomad, with a sigh of relief; "but thet war no shadder."

The watery whistle broke on the air, and the borderman stiffened as if he had been touched by a strong battery.

"Whoosh!" he said. "Did ye ketch thet?"

"I am teef unt dumb, unt plind, unt haf spavins, oof I couldn't," the baron grunted.

"Et is ther quar whistle we heerd ter-day."

"Yaw."

"What is yer opinion of et?"

"Somepoty iss plowing a vhistle; dot iss an easiness. Vhy ton'dt you ask me somet'ing tifficuldt?"

"Wow! Thar et goes erg'in! Buffler, aire ye hear-in' thet thing?"

"Keep quiet, and we'll see what it means," the scout replied impatiently.

"Wow!" The borderman flounced again. "Now et is whisperin'! Didn't ye ketch thet whisper?"

"If you'll keep still, old Diamond," Pawnee Bill begged, "we can understand what is being said."

Nomad stilled his jumping nerves and laid his ear to the ground.

The others, listening with heads up, now heard a voice ask:

"Are you there?"

"Idt iss asking oof ve are here," breathed the baron.

"Now, vot do you t'ink oof dot, when ve haf been shoodting from dhis blace?"

Again it came:

"Are you there?"

"Sure thing," said Pawnee. "And the latch string is out—for friends."

There was a movement in the shadows, causing Nomad to gulp and writhe; then the figure he had seen dimly came more plainly in view.

"Two of 'em!" he whispered.

"I don't suppose that suggests anything to you—you're so scared?" said Buffalo Bill.

"Gracious to gootness!" exclaimed the baron, rolling to his knees. "I am gitting some lighdt. Vhy, dot iss——"

"Sure it is," cried Pawnee Bill, rising. "Don't shoot, Nomad. Those are Tom Tempest and Waif Western."

Then he called softly, in a tone of welcome.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### EXPLANATIONS.

Tempest and his adopted daughter received an enthusiastic, but quiet, welcome.

"We was rather afraid to attempt it," Tempest explained, "for, ye see, a bullet from a friend, sent by mistake, would do as much damage as any other kind. It was your fight with them outlaws that let us know you was here."

"We searched for you on the mountain," said Buffalo Bill, "but we didn't expect to find you here."

"No more, I reckon, than we expected to find you here," declared Tempest. "Since we've been prowling round this mountain we've met up with a good many surprises, but this is ahead of any."

"It certainly is," the girl assented. "I wonder if you got in here the way we did, or if there is another way?"

"We came from the lower cave in here through that tunnel river."

"Just the way we came. You had a boat? We did."

"A boat! No."

"When we took thet sunken river route," said Nomad, "we war in too big er hurry ter think of a boat."

"The fact is," admitted Pawnee, "our entrance into this foodless Eden was about as unpremeditated as anything that could ever happen. You must have come in more deliberately. We got caught in that stream, and thrown into the tunnel, and came through. If that is the only way to get in, I reckon we'll stay here."

"Are we safe here—to talk?" asked the girl.

"I think we'd better get back a little to be out of the



line of bullets, if Snake River's crazy crew opens up again," said Buffalo Bill.

"So those were Snake River and his friends?" remarked the girl. "We thought they were. I wonder how they got in here?"

"By the same wild-river route," said Pawnee. "We captured one of the scamps, and he admitted that. They forced that Blackfoot witch to tell them how the Bottomless Pit could be entered, and then they tried it and came through."

"Isn't that queer?" said the girl. "I got our knowledge of that route from the Blackfeet. I went down there to see the girl who is my friend. I had talked with her about getting into this place before that. She said the Blackfeet were afraid to try to get in here, but that the old woman knew the way in, and some of the warriors. And she promised she would try to find out for me."

"When I went down there she had found out, and told me. So father and I thought we'd take a look at the lower cave, anyway. There was a little boat in it, ready for use, it seemed; but the water looked so scary we were afraid to try it. And when we had seen that hole in the wall that the river goes through we didn't know but, perhaps, the witch woman had guessed what we were trying to do, and was willing to send us in there, to be drowned. As it wasn't easy wading, we thought that we'd cross to the other side in the boat, and that's what we tried to do. Then we got caught in the current."

She drew her breath in with a gasp, as the sharp recollection of the terror she felt, when the boat was caught and thrown against the tunnel, came back to her.

"It's a wonder we wasn't drowned," Tempest said. "The boat filled, but it didn't sink; and we hung to it."

I admit I was scared bad, and I thought I was drowning. Then we shot through the hole, and dropped into the pool right off there. You know how it was."

Waif Western laughed nervously.

"I used to think I'd do anything and take any risk to get down here; but I've changed my mind, since that," she murmured.

"That's right," agreed Tempest.

"When we got over our scare," said the girl, "and felt able to do anything, we tried to explore this place. We found a hole over there that looked good for a camp, and we carried the boat there and hid it; for we thought we might have to use it, if we ever got out."

"At the other end of this pit, you know," Tempest added, "the river runs out between high cliffs. Looks like a boat would be swamped there, but we didn't know but we might have to try it in the end. So, after we had seen that, we took the boat over to the place we had picked out for a camp. We was going, then, to look for the place where it's said the wagon fell off the cliff. But we was stopped in that, by discovering that some men were in here. Before that, though, as I forgot to say, I had shot a deer with my revolver, and we had carried the carcass to our camp; so we have something to eat over there. We cooked some of it; but, after we saw the men, we put the fire out, and have been kind of hiding ever since, and trying to scare 'em into leaving."

"Hallelujah!" cried Nomad.

"What has hit you, Schnitz?" Pawnee asked.

"Thet meat! Say, I'm hungrier than a starved wolf. Any ole thing ter eat would suit me right now."

"Well, we've got plenty of that," declared Tempest; "and you're sure welcome to it."

"Say, Buffler," urged Nomad, "we couldn't adjourn over thar right away, c'd we?"

"Idt vouldt suidt me," said the baron. "Der embtiness oof Schnitzenhauser iss somet'ing vot you ton'dt read apoudt."

But Buffalo Bill was not ready to move yet, because he half expected a renewal of the attack, and he preferred to stay where he knew the lay of the land.

Tempest and the girl began to explain how they had tried to scare the bandits who had gained access to the pit. They had been responsible for the whistle, whispering, and a display of lights. The whistle was one that Waif Western had used in calling a tame elk they had brought to the mountain as a pack animal.

Nomad twisted nervously as he listened.

"Thet's ernough ter make some men I c'd mention feel plum' foolish," he admitted.

"It was by accident," explained the girl, "that we discovered that two of these ravines are regular whispering galleries. Father was at one end of that one off there, and he fell. What he said as he tumbled down came to me as a queer and indistinct whisper. After that we tried it in other ravines. The effect was odd."

"Waugh! I'm believin' ye!" And Nomad glanced at the recumbent form of the Piute. "I reckon you're findin' this story more interestin', Cayuse, than even ther whangdoodle of a Piute tom-tom! I am."

"The men we wanted to scare were near this waterfall," went on the girl, "when we tried it the first time. They ran, and they haven't been close to it since, I think. But they didn't try to get out of the valley."

"That is," Tempest amended, "so fur as we know, they didn't. Likely it was because they couldn't. When night came we tried the lights."

"War they jest ordinary lights?" asked Nomad skeptically. "We seen 'em shinin', lookin' kinda like blue stars hangin' in ther air."

"They weren't ordinary lights," said Tempest. "We

came here, you know, prepared to explore caves and underground passages, and for the purpose I brought some little torches chemically prepared in such a way that they would burn in foul air. That was the claim of the men that sold 'em, anyhow."

He took one out of his pocket. It was in a metal case, with a waterproof metal cap.

"Here it is. I ain't had no need to use it yet for foul air. Happened I had 'em with me when we came in here. So we tried 'em. I allowed the queer blue of the light would help to throw a scare into them men. I'm hopin' it did. Waif, she showed one light on a cliff on the right, and I showed one off on the left."

"Dhis mysderiousness vot haf gif Nomad unt Cayuse der spavins iss so easy, vhen you know idt," said the baron. "Vhen you ton'dt, idt iss a kveer pitzness."

"Our idea," said Tempest, "was to guard our camp in that way, and I think we succeeded. Anyhow, those rascals haven't been near it. We made most of the noises, and showed the lights, over there. And they kept away."

"I wonder what they're doing with themselves now?" mused Pawnee Bill. "It's been some time since they sent us their regards."

Apparently, Snake River's ruffians had abandoned their attempts to attack the men camped near the waterfall.

But not until morning was Buffalo Bill willing to move.

Then Tempest and the girl piloted the party to a glenlike hole they had chosen because of the means it offered for seclusion.



## CHAPTER XXVI.

### THE WRECKED WAGON.

"Ef the ven'son in this hyar Bottomless Pit hez all got ther quality o' this," said Nomad, as he sank his teeth into the juicy steak, "then this is whar I want'er live."

"Hunger is the best sauce, old Diamond," was Pawnee Bill's comment. "You were never hungrier in your life, eh? I don't think I ever was. I could eat sole leather, and enjoy it. But this is sure fine."

They had built a fire and taken time to cook the steak, even at the risk of bringing bullets. But they kept their weapons ready, and watched the surrounding hilltops.

Close by the roar of the waterfall sounded.

"Peaceful as ther Gyarden of Eden, too—this is," commented Nomad, as he looked round. "Still, ther snake is hyar, same as in ther Gyarden."

"Vhich his name idt iss now Snake River," said the baron, "unt iss a imbortant tifference. Der fairst snake he tidn't haf no rewolvers."

When none of Snake River's men were seen, plans were made for exploring the Bottomless Pit.

"We'll keep together," said the scout. "It will be safer."

"You ain't expectin' thet Witch of Endor ter come through ther falls wi' her Blackfeet?" said Nomad. "Mebbyso et would be er good idee ef some of us stayed hyar."

However, the scout's notion of keeping the party together seemed so good that it was finally adopted.

The broken, rocky, and bushy character of the land promised to give concealment to their movements.

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"Them snakes," said Nomad, "ain't goin' ter be in no great hurry ter tackle us in daylight; thet's my opinion. But ef they do—waugh! they'll git what's comin' to 'em. They desarnes a hair cut, shampoo, and var'us other trimmin's. I dunno but Fate pitched us in hyar jest ter do thet barber work fer 'em."

Nomad had received a great accession of courage since the discovery that his whiskizoo fright had not a decent leg to stand on, and the same could be said of Little Cayuse.

"If our notions are right about it," declared Tempest, "that wagon must have tumbled from that high cliff on the south. An old trail, now grown over, leads along there."

They went on round to that side of the valley.

Waif Western hung back when this was done, and the reason was not hard to understand. According to the story, it was her own father who had tumbled from the precipice trail into the Bottomless Pit with his wagon, which held a load of gold in the shape of dust and nuggets.

"Waif has said many a time," commented Tempest, speaking to the scout, "that she didn't know how she would feel if she should come onto the remains."

Little Cayuse was scouting ahead, lithe and alert, his eagle plume fluttering jauntily in his black hair.

Close under the wall, on the south side, he was seen to stop. Then he held up his hand.

"We'll go ahead," said the scout to Tempest.

When they gained the side of the Piute, the Indian pointed to a jumbled heap of rotting wood and rusted iron near the wall, overgrown with bushes and vines.

"There it is!" said Tempest, with a catching of his breath. "Looks as if that story was all true, Cody."

They climbed over rocks, to the place where the remnants of the wagon lay. They saw no human

skeleton, and no shining grains of gold. But the bones of a pair of horses lay whitening under the bushes.

Little Cayuse curried himself industriously with his mustang hoof, to ward off evil, then hopped down into the midst of the wreckage.

"Heap big fall," he said. "Kill um caballos quick. Mebbysso not kill um driver. No can tell."

He kicked away leaves and dead sticks, clearing a space round the remains of the wagon.

Buffalo Bill and Tempest made a hurried examination.

"Of course, in twenty years the skeleton of a man might have wasted away," said Tempest. "Still, you'd expect to see somethin'. Some of the harness of the horses is still here; all the buckles and the chains. And the gold wouldn't decay."

They burrowed and plowed through the wreck, pulling the broken and rotted wagon asunder.

When they had concluded, Buffalo Bill stepped out and beckoned to the party that had lagged behind purposely.

"We've found the wagon," he reported, as they came up. "Or a wagon. But I'm glad to report that we couldn't discover any human remains."

"You don't know, then," said Waif, "whether it is really the wagon we have been looking for?"

"There is no way to tell. Even if we knew the kind of wagon it was, what is left of this wouldn't help us much. A pair of horses and a wagon fell from the cliff trail, there's no doubt about that. It begins to look to me that the driver escaped, by which I mean he didn't fall down here with the wagon."

Waif Western looked at the scout intently, as if to make sure he was concealing nothing from her.

"You're not saying that just to make me feel better? I can stand the truth, you know."

"That's the whole truth," declared Buffalo Bill. "There's no reason why you can't look over the wreck yourself and verify it."

"You found no gold?" asked Pawnee Bill.

"None."

"Then et bergins ter look ter me thet this cain't be ther right wagon, or them stories o' gold dust was all 'maginary," said Nomad.

The baron climbed over the rocks and through the tangle, while this talk was being held, and joined Little Cayuse.

"You ton'dt findt no geldt, heh?" he demanded.

"All same not here," said the Piute, who had been exploring round. "Dead man no here, gold no here. All same make um lie, somebody."

Waif Western picked her way to the wreck of the wagon, assisted by Tempest, and looked the ground over thoroughly. Her face was pale as she made this exploration, but, when she had finished, the color came back and she breathed a sigh of relief.

"But if father escaped, when the wagon fell," she said, "he must have lost his life on the mountain, or in trying to get back to one of the towns."

She was not thinking of the gold, or else had forgotten it temporarily.

"This would be er good time," suggested Nomad, "fer them Snakes ter crawl up an' go ter whackin' at us. Nobody is doin' any gyard work."

Little Cayuse, his curiosity satisfied, scurried to the top of the nearest hill.

"Nothin' do!" he called down, when he had looked about.



Pawnee Bill, with Nomad and the scout, remained at the point where the wagon and horses had fallen. And after Tempest and the girl had left, they made a further and minute search, thinking that the gold dust had possibly been beaten into the ground by rains and the passage of time.

This kind of searching required some hard work. They turned up a good deal of soil with their knives. But it brought no discoveries.

Little Cayuse, who had begun to walk a beat along the top of the hill, was seen by Nomad to stop suddenly, then to drop to his knees.

"Ther boy has snagged erg'inst suthin'," said the borderman to the scout.

They saw the Piute stand up and signal.

"Askin' yer ter come up thar, Buffler. Waal, I reckon I'd like ter go along."

The baron accompanied Buffalo Bill and Pawnee up the hill.

"What yer found?" Nomad asked, when they had reached the summit.

Little Cayuse pointed to some marks scratched on the rock near him. The marks were overgrown with lichen, and, but for the keenness of his eyes, he would have passed them by unnoted.

"Mebbyso talk letter," he said. "Me no can tell."

Buffalo Bill dropped down and scraped the lichens away with his knife.

This was revealed—the letters being scratched in the stone:

"My wagon and team fell from the cliff into this place, and my horses were killed. I fell on one of the horses, and that saved me, though I got a broken leg. It's nearly well now, and I am going to try to get out. I have with me the gold dust and nuggets I had in the

wagon, and shall try to hang to them. When the wagon went over, I threw my little girl out of it. I hope she will be found by some one on the mountain. What I have suffered in mind I can't write here.

"JOHN GRAYSON."

Slowly the scout read this over. Some of the letters, and also a few of the words, he had to supply, as time had obliterated them.

"So his name was Grayson!"

"I reckon this must have been written by Waif's father," said Pawnee. "All the proof is that way. Shall we call her up here and tell her?"

They called to Tempest and the girl, both of whom now came to the top of the hill, where the rock writing was shown to them.

"It makes me want to hope he is living," she said, as she stared with tear-dimmed eyes at the old letters. "But I refuse to. If he had escaped, we should have heard of him."

"The gold," said Nomad, standing up and looking about as if he expected to behold it near, "is probberly somewhar in this big Bottomless Pit, jest as has been figgered. But whar et is no man kin say, and ther chances o' findin' et ain't good."

"Perhaps we can find something more about father," said the girl. "Oh, I hope so!"

When they descended the hill and continued the search, they kept up their watch for Snake River and his outlaw followers.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### A JUGGLE WITH FATE.

"That canoe," remarked Buffalo Bill, when they were again in the camp selected by Tempest and Waif Western, "suggests to me how the Basilisk possibly got into this place, and out of it."

"We know, or think we know, how she got in," was Pawnee Bill's comment. "She must have come through from the cave, just as we did."

"She got out, I think," the scout said, "by that cañon through which the river runs, and she used this boat. I've been thinking the matter over, and it seems to me that must have been the way of it."

"She has," he went on, "a reputation as a witch among the Blackfeet. It was claimed that she had been in this place before. But no one else had ever been able to get into it or out of it, and that made the feat a wonderful witchlike thing."

"I judge she kept this little boat in that lower cave for the purpose. How she discovered that the Bottomless Pit could be entered through that hole, I can't imagine. But I'm believing that she came through there in the boat."

"And got out of this place by going through the cañon over there in the same way?" said Pawnee.

"That's my idea."

"She shore had her courage with her, ef she did," said Nomad.

"She is a woman of courage and of brains," asserted Buffalo Bill. "We have had some proof of that."

"The only suggestion I get out of your idea," said Pawnee Bill, "is that one or two of us might try that

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cañon. If they got through, they could carry the boat into the cave and send it through for two more to use, and so get us all out by and by. But we have the Blackfeet to consider, even if the boat could live in the cañon."

"The boat brought two people into this place—Tempest and Waif. It could, perhaps, take two through the cañon," the scout declared. "But that wasn't my idea."

"I'm guessing at it, necarnis. But it doesn't suit me, if my guess is right."

"My idea," said the scout, "is for me to take the boat and try to get out by way of the cañon. If I can do it, I can go to Rocket Range and get the help of Happy Chance, the sheriff. He ought to be able to get together a bunch of fighting men that would make those Blackfeet look like thirty cents."

"Whoop-a-la! Say, Buffler," cried Nomad, "thet boat will kerry *two*. An' I'm goin' ter try thet raffle with ye."

"If one is drowned, that will be enough, don't you think?" said the scout.

"It's goin' ter be *too* many, ef thet one is ter be you!"

"It's a risk. The river in that cañon is about as wild a bit of water as I ever saw, and the channel is choked with rocks. How far it is through, or where the river goes, none of us knows."

"Yit you're argyin' thet ther witch woman made ther trip dead easy."

"That is my guess. If I'm right, I'll go through without trouble. If I have made a mistake, I won't go through."

"Waugh! Drop et, then."

"Don't you think we've got to do something?" the scout asked, with a faint smile. "This idea has come



to me, and I'm the one to try it. At any rate, I claim the right."

They sat thinking it over, with a word or sentence now and then flung in. Then they went to the end of the valley where the river left it, and looked at the steep-walled cañon through which the river ran. It certainly was a wild bit of water, and to attempt to ride it in the cockle-shell boat seemed the height of madness.

"I take et back," said Nomad; "ther witch woman never went through thet hole—not on yer life!"

"Still, I'm going to try it," said the scout.

When they had made another trip to the waterfall, and carried the boat across to the cañon, moving slowly, and watching closely all the time for sight of their foes, the day was finished.

That night they camped close by the cañon.

Throughout the day they had not seen Snake River's men. But that the rascals were not still in the Bottomless Pit could not be believed.

"Unless they're eatin' their boot leather, I dunno what et is they're livin' on," said Nomad.

"Perhaps they killed something," suggested Pawnee; "or they may have snared game of some kind. I haven't seen any smoke from fires, though."

That something still lived in the Bottomless Pit, aside from themselves, was proven in the night, when an attempt was made, by man or animal, to get at the store of venison.

The baron was standing guard at the time; but the light was not good. He saw something, called out a warning to the others, and the object disappeared as the camp roused from slumber.

"Whiskizos aire after you now," said Nomad, whose fears of ghosts and the like had been allayed.

"Sarves ye right, fer pokin' fun at me an' Cayuse. What did et look like?"

"Yoost somet'ing dark, vot vos mofing."

Buffalo Bill took a brand from the nearly dead camp fire, blew it into flame, and inspected, by its light, the spot where the object had been seen.

The ground was hard, and they found no tracks.

"My jedgment," said Nomad, "is thet Snake River's crowd is up erg'inst starvation, and one of 'em war tryin' ter collect our grub. When we fust come inter this place we seen er deer an' er grouse, but we ain't seen nothin' o' ther kind sense, which makes et seem thet game ain't over an' above plenty, an' they ain't been able ter git any."

There was no further disturbance during the night.

In the morning, however, they were alarmed by the discovery that Indians had climbed to the high walls not far away, and were looking down into the camp.

"Waal, let 'em look," grunted the borderman. "Lookin's free!"

"I don't suppose you notice what it suggests?" said Pawnee.

"Et su'gests Injun cur'osity. They got up thar ter see what they could, and located us hyar."

"Pard Bill," said Pawnee, turning to the scout, "you can see what you will be up against, if you try that cañon in the canoe. Those fellows have a lot of stones piled there."

"Himmel, iss idt so?" gasped the baron, staring at the high walls of the cañon, to which the redskins had climbed.

"You're right," Buffalo Bill admitted to Pawnee. "This proves that I was correct in my guess, eh?"

"In what way?"

"I said I thought the Basilisk came into the Pit from the cave, using the canoe; and that she went out in

the canoe through the cañon. She has kept that a close secret from the Blackfeet, for her own benefit. But now she has revealed it. She has no doubt told them that we will probably try the cañon—for she knows the boat is here, if I'm guessing right, and at her order they have got up there, with rocks, to stop it."

"A stone or two thrown down would sink the boat, all right."

"Yes, if they should hit it."

"And would kill the man in the boat," said the girl.

"I reckon, Cody, you'll have to think up some other plan," declared Tom Tempest. "It'd be suicide if you tried it now, and we can't afford to lose you."

The scout was not changed in his determination.

"Some one must get out of this place, and go for help; I'm the man to try it," he said. And from this he could not be shaken.

Fearing that delay would increase the danger, he made his preparations.

He took only his revolvers and knife, his water bottle, a few matches, in his metallic match case, and a bit of venison.

The boat was shoved into the water.

"I don't like ther looks o' this, Buffler!" groaned Nomad.

The scout wrung the borderman's hand, then shook hands with all the members of his party.

"You must believe that I will get through all right," he urged. "That is going to help me do it. Good-by now. To-morrow late, or the next day, you'll hear from me."

He threw the paddle in, pushed the boat into the stream, and leaped in.

"Good-by, Buffler!" said Nomad, a choke in his voice. "We know thet you're goin' ter make 'et."

"Good-by," the scout called to those who stood in silence on the shore.

Caught by the current, the boat began to drive toward the dark opening of the cañon, Buffalo Bill guiding it with the paddle.

On the high walls the Blackfeet began to leap about and yell.

Lifting his revolver with an angry jerk, Nomad fired. But the distance was great and the lead fell short.

The Blackfeet, yelling their hatred and defiance, were soon rolling stones to the cañon rims, and poising them there, intending to smash the boat as it passed through.

Buffalo Bill turned as the arrowy current drove the boat into the cañon, waved his hat, then swung round and bent to the paddle.

"It's do or die now!" he said, as he pulled with all his might.

The choked river had something of the fierce character of the whirlpool below the Niagara. It sucked and boiled, threw spray, roared and threshed, with swirling cross-currents in which it seemed the boat could not live.

Giving all his strength to the control of the boat, the scout paid no heed to the Blackfeet until a stone dropped down with a splash in front of the boat. Another dropped astern. After that they came hurtling all round him, plunging into the water.

"No use to dodge," he thought; "if I'm hit I'm hit, and can't help it."

The boat was filling, from the splashing of the choppy waves and the water thrown up by the falling rocks; and the scout was already wet to the skin.

The thing he feared came all too soon. A stone struck in the boat, with a thundering crash, which



threw the craft over on its side, tore a hole near the stern, and filled it with water.

The scout was thrown out and lost his paddle; but he caught the gunwale, and hung on.

Fortunately the light wood floated, so that though the boat filled, it showed no sign of sinking under his weight.

He could not hear the yells of the Blackfeet now, but the stones continued to rain down.

In this juggle with Death, he knew that if one of the stones struck him, Death would win. But he believed in the Cody luck. It was not the first time in which he had taken dangerous chances, and as he had won out in the past he refused to believe he would not do so now.

After the smashing of the boat he was literally helpless, so far as ability to guide it went. All he could do was to hang to it, and let the wild current drive it where it would.

As often as not, the boat was wholly under water, and quite as often he went under with it. But always it floated again, and went on, with a speed that was dizzying.

The dark wet walls slipped by as if they were never to end; the river roared, the walls echoed, and down came the plunging stones.

But the scout made the pleasing discovery that the Blackfeet could no longer see the boat, and were guessing at its speed; for that reason the stones were now falling behind it.

"I guess we're through with the worst of it," he said, speaking to the boat.

He did not see why he could not hang on for an hour, or even much longer. If he did not encounter waterfalls larger than the one that led from the cave into the pit, his chances looked good.

Soon after this the stones ceased to fall near him.

But the stream was as swift and as wild as ever. More than once something akin to terror and doubt troubled the heroic scout, when his lungs choked with water, which was pouring over him so continuously that he seemed under the surface half the time.

But hope buoyed him again when light began to enter the dark cañon. It came from ahead, and indicated the cañon's end. Then he beheld a rift, with sunshine playing in it.

"Almost out!" he thought, and felt stronger. "Almost out!"

The strange little river flowed out with arrowy swift-ness into a mountain-ringed valley. Then the current slowed, as the river widened; and, after some effort, Buffalo Bill succeeded in driving the broken boat against the bank.

When he crawled out at last, and sank on the sand, his strength was more nearly spent than he had thought.

It was a relief just to lie on the sand, get his breath back, and be thankful that he still lived.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### IN ROCKET RANGE.

Happy Chance, sheriff of Rocket Range, was sitting in his office, a fat cigar in his mouth, and peace in his heart. A shabby man was talking to him, and now and then the sheriff took time to notice what the man said and bubble out a laugh.

"That's all right, Payallup," he commented, nursing his cigar. "But Cody wasn't anxious to have you go onto that mountain. And as he is your bondsman, standin' to lose a thousand dollars if you ain't here on court day ready to answer to that charge of passin' counterfeit, I reckon you ought to respect his wishes."

Payallup Pete subsided and looked through the window at the dim mountain top.

"You know what he's gone up there fer, Chance?" he asked.

"I heard things, but I don't know if they're true."

"That girl's father—you know about that girl—went over the cliff trail there with a wagon load of gold. That's what Cody is after."

"If it's so," said Chance, "I reckon there stands an heiress for any wealth that's to be found. Looks it to me. Cody is up there to help that girl. I understand that. You think, if it's found, there may be a divvy, and you'd like to be in on it. Well, you wouldn't—see? The girl would get it all, unless she was of a mind to shell out to Cody and his crowd something for helping her."

"Then there are the Blackfeet who may come into the play," continued Chance. "Them reds can cut up ugly when they take a notion. Cody wanted me to go

with him, because some of Monte's men are supposed still to be up there. But I wasn't anxious to look for 'em there. And as for you buttin' in, it would be foolish, and ungrateful. Hadn't been for Cody goin' on your bond, you'd be boardin' at my little hotel right over there this minute, and you know it."

"That's right, too," admitted Payallup Pete, glancing at the jail indicated.

"So——"

But Happy Chance cut it short, hearing heavy footsteps approaching the door.

When the floor flew open, Buffalo Bill appeared in it, his clothing soiled and muddy, his face pale.

The apparition brought Happy Chance to his feet, in spite of his two hundred or more pounds of avoirdupois.

"Cody!" he exclaimed. "We was just talkin' about you."

He put out his hand.

"Shake!" he said. "Glad to see you. I'm saying the same for Payallup, who seems to be bashful. What's the news?"

The scout had come in, and closed the door.

"I want fifty men or more," he said, "to go with me at once to the mountain off there."

"You've just come from there? Look as if you had been soaked and dried out, then soaked and dried out again."

"I have, too many times to remember. I've had some tough experiences."

"I can believe it. Why the fifty men?"

"To fight the Blackfeet."

"Wow! I allowed that you'd get into trouble with them ki-yis. Have they wiped out your crowd?"

"No. But they chased us into the cave on top of the mountain. You know where that cave is, Payallup?"



"Shore I do. It's where old Monte was holed up. It's where the drum was that slid the wire into the Bottomless Pit. I been thinkin' I'd like to see it ag'in."

"Here's your chance. You can make one of that fifty men I want. The Blackfeet chased us into the cave. When they followed us we found a cave farther down, and there we got into the Bottomless Pit, by diving through a river that tunnels from the lower cave out into it."

Payallup hitched closer, his face shining.

"Did you find the gold?"

"We didn't. There is no gold there, so far as we could tell. But we found the broken wagon and the skeletons of the horses."

"No gold?" said Payallup, the interest going out of his fat, bloated face. "I reckon somebody got in there before you did, then, and got away with it. I'm guessing a critter named Snake River."

"Snake River and some men with him are also in the Bottomless Pit. They got in there ahead of us, but they didn't get the gold. They can't get out, and my friends can't get out. That's why I am here. They have got to be reached as soon as possible and rescued."

Then the scout proceeded with his story, telling of his perilous feat in getting out of the Bottomless Pit, and what his plans were.

"If the Blackfeet haven't destroyed it, the machinery made by old Monte for lowering a wire into the Bottomless Pit is still intact in the upper cave," he explained. "So we will want to take a lot of wire, and some sort of big basket or wire cage, which we can lower at the end of the wire. It's the only way we can get into the pit safely, or get my friends out."

"What about Snake River and his pals?" said Happy Chance.

"I thought you might find it interesting, as sheriff of the county, to collect them and take them for boarders at your little old hotel over there."

Happy Chance gurgled his fat man's laugh.

"Say, that wouldn't be bad. But I reckon they'd put up a fight before surrendering."

"Can you get the men I want?" asked the scout.

"Well, I reckon. I wouldn't go up there to look for gold, nor to fight redskins just for the fun of it. But when life is at stake and prisoners are to be gathered in, the sheriff of this county is right onto his job."

He lifted himself heavily from his chair.

"You need rest, Cody, and something to eat, and a bit of sleep, too. Go to your hotel for a couple of hours, and by that time I'll have the men for you."

He stopped as he moved toward the door.

"Payallup, do you know any men that would want to join in an expedition of this kind—gun men?"

"Me for one," said Payallup Pete.

"Rustle yerself then—git ready. And collect others, if you can."

Hurriedly he passed out of the office.

"Is that right," said Payallup, "that you couldn't find no gold at all, Cody?"

"There wasn't a thing, Payallup," said the scout, rising to follow the sheriff.

"The driver of the wagon wasn't killed, though he was hurt. We found a letter scratched on a rock which told that. The letter told us also that he had the gold and would try to get out. But we couldn't locate it."

The greasy fellow's interest came back.

"Maybe he died somewhere in there, then," he said, "and the gold can be found. He must 'a' died in there, if there ain't no way to git out. Say, Cody, I reckon



"I'll be one of that fifty men you're hollerin' for. Count me in."

Buffalo Bill went to his hotel, had something to eat, and caught a few winks of much-needed sleep.

Then he went to the stables where his horse and those of his friends were kept.

Bear Paw whinnied with pleasure and rubbed his silky nose against the scout's shoulder. And the other horses appeared as pleased—Chick-Chick and Hide-rack, as well as the Piute's pinto pony, and the baron's big-boned mule.

The story brought in by the scout, retailed by the sheriff, had spread rapidly through the town; and the scout found a crowd gathering before his hotel when he went back.

He was asked many questions, which he answered without making any statement about the treasure wagon.

These men were not of the fighting breed, anxious for a brush with the Blackfeet.

But at the end of two hours or more, Happy Chance showed up with a strong posse. He had thirty men instead of fifty; but they appeared to be good timber. The scout was pleased with them, as he looked them over and saw their weapons.

"We're going to hope," he declared, "that there will be no fighting. But we're going into that cave, and not all the Blackfeet on that mountain can stop us."

Happy Chance had bought a lot of wire, of the kind the scout said he wanted, and had it loaded on the back of a pack horse, with a big, strong basket. In addition, he had a quantity of tools—pickaxes, crowbars, spades, and the like, with dynamite, caps, and fuse.

"We'll get into that place you call the Bottomless Pit, Cody," he announced, "if we have to dynamite them walls down."

The men cheered.

Ten minutes later, Buffalo Bill, mounted on his beloved horse, Bear Paw, was leading the way over the mountain trail.

In a string of led horses were the animals belonging to the other members of Cody's party at the pit, with extra ones for Tom Tempest and Waif Western.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### LEFT BEHIND.

The anxiety of Pawnee Bill and those remaining with him in the Bottomless Pit was great, though in their talk they tried to minimize it. They tried to be hopeful.

"Buffler is thet clever," said Nomad, "thet whar other men would shore fail, he's bound ter succeed. Et didn't look as though ther boat could miss bein' hit by some o' them stones, they drapped so thick. Still, I'm goin' ter believe thet et did, and thet he's now on his way ter Rocket Range."

The yelling of the Blackfeet had stopped. The Indians had disappeared from the tops of the high walls.

Preparations were now made for a return to the camping place by the waterfall.

"It's there that Pard Bill will appear, when he returns," said Pawnee.

"Unt der Inchuns, too," said the baron, "oof dhey include to come t'rough from der cafe. Idt iss vot I am oxpecting."

"They might try ter use thet ole raft," suggested the borderman.

"Or make a new one—which is more likely," declared Pawnee Bill.

"Dot iss rightd," the baron agreed. And added: "Dot vitch voman, she iss oop to sniff."

When they had journeyed back to the waterfall they found everything as it had been left. And there were no new tracks on the sand by the river.

"The Blackfeet haven't come through yet," said Pawnee.

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"Idt requires a nerfe to do idt," said the baron. "Budt ve petter vatch oudt, yoost der same."

Though no one had visited their camp in their absence, they had not been in it long before becoming aware that Snake River and his men were near.

The keen eyes of Little Cayuse saw a movement on top of the nearest hill.

As he called attention to it, the head of a man was seen, and then a ragged coat was waved.

"Er flag o' truce," said Nomad. "Or mebbys o an in-vertation ter a gabfest. Thet is Snake River, ain't et?"

"What is it?" Pawnee shouted to the man.

"Don't shoot, and I'll tell ye," came back the answer.

"Talk away," said Pawnee.

"You won't shoot?"

"You heard me. No!"

Snake River came out into the open, on top of the hill, his coat in his hands.

"Have you got your men with you?" Pawnee demanded.

"They're back here."

"Tell 'em, for me, that they're close enough."

"We seen that bizness," said Snake River, shouting down the words. "And we couldn't be expected not to hear the yellin'."

"What did you see?"

"Cody, when he tackled the cañon in that little canoe. I don't reckon he made it."

"Is that all you came to tell us? We can have our own opinion about that."

"You think he got through?"

"What if he did, or didn't—to you? If you want to make the tackle, you can build a raft of poles and try it."

"We think we won't, and we see that you don't in-



tend to. But what I've come to say is—why can't we be more friendly?"

"You want something, eh?"

"Well, we've seen your fires, and seen you cookin' something; meat, we think. If you could spare us a little, we'd consider it kind."

"Starvation is chasin' 'em, jest as I said," cried the borderman.

"There is game in here. Why don't you get some of it?"

"We ain't seen any yit, that we could git clost to. There's a deer or two, but we ain't got weapons that will git 'em. So if you've got a little grub you'd kindly divvy on, we'd think better of you."

Pawnee Bill laughed.

"And when it had put a bit of strength into you, you'd be ready to fight us."

"No. We wouldn't do it. We think we're in here for keeps, and that you aire. So we figgered that we might as well try to git along some—what more friendly like, if your crowd was willin'. No use shootin' our lead at each other, when we're goin' to need it to kill birds with. That's the way we now look at it."

"Then you don't think you'll make a raft and try the cañon?"

"When we're ready to suicide, we will."

"We're willing to draw the line at fighting," said Pawnee. "But we don't think we care for your company. As for grub, we can furnish you a little, though we haven't too much for ourselves. If you think you can keep your guns down, I'll send some up by Little Cayuse. How's that?"

"We'll be glad to git it."

Pawnee conferred with his friends, and a package

of the venison was made up, tied with willow bark, and dispatched with the Piute.

Little Cayuse climbed the hill.

At the suggestion of Pawnee Bill, Snake River had drawn back. The Piute left the venison at the summit, descending without molestation.

Snake River came and got it, and disappeared.

"That's the last we can give them," said Pawnee. "We'll have to rustle game ourselves soon."

Just at dark, Snake River appeared again on the hill, and called down to the camp.

"More grub wanted?" said Pawnee. "We haven't got it to spare."

"Junk Tabor has told us that you got in here from the lower cave same as we did. So we're figgerin' that sooner or later them Blackfeet aire goin' to come through in the same way. Fer that reason, we're suggestin' that you let us jine ye down there, so's we can combine forces ag'inst the Blackfeet when they come."

"Don't do it," said Tempest. "You can't trust those fellows. I think I know what they're up to."

"What's your idea?" asked Pawnee Bill.

"They've struck the notion," said Tempest, "that we may have found the gold. They know about that gold, seein' that old Monte and them was up here for the express purpose of getting in here to find it. Like as not, if you do what they want now, they'll cut our throats in the night and search the camp, hoping to get the gold."

"Thet's right," Nomad agreed. "Ye cain't trust Snake River."

The others were of the same mind.

"We think we'll have to decline," Pawnee called back to Snake River. "If the Blackfeet slide down here through this waterfall, we'll try to take care of 'em."



"You're afraid to trust us?" said Snake River angrily.

"You haven't given us any good reason to trust you, I think."

Snake River departed in a bad temper.

That night a guard was kept on duty in the camp, and there was little sleep. For the chances seemed good that the Blackfeet might try to get in during the night, or that the camp might be charged by Snake River and his ruffians. Besides, thoughts of Buffalo Bill and of possible rescue were enough to induce wakefulness.

But the night passed quietly.

Tom Tempest's suspicions that Snake River had the gold in mind were confirmed by Little Cayuse, who saw some of Snake River's followers over by the south wall, that morning.

They had found the remains of the wagon.

"They'll see that writing on the stone, too, no doubt," said Pawnee. "And that will cause them to spend the day in searching. It's something I wish we could do. But we'll tackle that after Pard Bill comes."

"If they should find anything," said Waif Western, "they couldn't get out with it. At least, I hope they couldn't."

"I guess they couldn't," admitted Pawnee. "And when Pard Cody rounds them up, if they have found anything, we will take it from them."

That forenoon a revolver shot was heard.

"Connectin' with er deer likely," guessed Nomad.

"By ter-morrer we will be ready ter beg grub o' them."

"You're forgetting about Cody," reminded Pawnee.

"He is down in Rocket Range now, and is hustling together a gang of men, with the help of Chance. He'll be along on time, you can be sure."

"Pawnee, I'm goin' ter believe so," declared the bor-

derman, though his face somewhat belied his words. "Cody ferever! Halleluyah!"

He waved his battered cap and sent forth a feeble yell.

"Oof idt vos nodt for t'inking dot meppys so some-ting is gone wrong," said the baron, "ve couldt be yoost as habby town here. Der sunshine iss oof a nice prighdtness, der vaterfall iss make a goodt moosic, der flowers ar-re schmelling at my feedt, unt der vindt iss waving der drees. Budt dare iss always somet'ing. Yoost now I am afraidt my topacco vill gif oudt."

Though he had dried it, the tobacco was still damp, as he extracted the pouch from his pocket, and brought out his long-stemmed pipe.

But he put thoughts of trouble behind him when the pipe was going, lighted with a coal from the camp fire. He set his broad back against a rock, and even sang:

"Ledt der vide vorld vag as idt vill,  
I'll be gay unt habby sdill!  
Gay unt habby,  
Gay unt habby;  
I'll be gay unt habby sdill.

"Nomadt," he said, "vhy haf you sooch a cloudt oof gloominess? Vhy ton'dt you sing? Singing makes der indigesdion goot, drifes sorrow indo der voods, unt lifdts on high der lamp oof hobefulness. Yaw! I vill make some moosic."

Even the borderman saw the point, and assumed an air of cheerfulness.

## CHAPTER XXX.

### WHEN HELP CAME.

It was not until the morning of the second day after Buffalo Bill's departure, that a stone came down from the top of the mountain, so aimed that it fell clear of the camp.

Little Cayuse ran out and got it, giving a yell when he saw that a "talk-paper" was tied to it. At a run, he brought it into the camp.

"A letter frum Buffler!" yelled Nomad, swinging his old cap. "Dollars ter doughnuts et's a letter frum Buffler!"

So it was.

Nervously and hurriedly, Pawnee Bill cut the string, and spread out the crumpled sheet of paper.

"'We got here,'" he read, "'late in the night, and have waited until morning before trying to get word to you, as that seemed better. We found no Blackfeet in the cave or on the mountain. I have about thirty men with me, in charge of Happy Chance. As soon as we reached the upper cave, we began work on Monte's machinery, and have about got it in order. We have plenty of wire, and a large, stout basket, to be used as an elevator. We shall soon send the basket down. If you are in the camp and everything is ready for this, fire a revolver to let us know. All well. I got through the cañon without trouble. W. F. CODY.'"

The phlegmatic baron began dancing with delight before the reading of the letter was half ended.

"Whoop!" Nomad himself now yelled. "Halleluyah!"

He drew his revolver.

### When Help Came.

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"Shall I let 'er go, Pawnee?"

"All right! let 'er go!"

The revolver cracked; then it cracked again, and yet again.

"I reckon they can hear thet," he cried. "But what d'yer say if we all whoop et up tergether? Ef we stand out thar and all yell ter onc't, we can make noise enough ter be heerd over the roar o' this waterfall."

They ran out from the camp, stood together, and yelled in unison.

"Wow! Whoop et up. Now, erg'in."

They yelled again.

The baron did an awkward two-step when it was over.

"Choy iss coming in punches. Hoop-a-la!"

"Wonder what Snake River's crowd will think has struck us?" said the borderman. "They shore didn't miss hearin' thet. Even Waif war splittin' her purty throat, wi' ther rest of us."

"How long will we have to wait, do you think, before that basket comes down?" the girl asked.

Her cheeks were a rosk pink, her form trembling with excitement.

"Waal, not long. Buffler is er hustler, when he gits started."

"Shan't we get back where we can see it as soon as it appears over the edge of the cliff?"

They got farther back, and stared up at the cliff.

"Cayuse," said Nomad, "while we're doin' this hyar neck-breakin' act, watch out fer Snake River, ef ye can. I admits I cain't. Old joy is fillin' me too too-mulchus fer me ter spare time fer et."

They waited a long ten minutes before the big basket came in sight. It did not look big when they first saw it. Slowly it came sliding over the edge of the cliff, and for some time they were not aware that it held any



one. When they saw that two men were in it, their cries of delight ascended.

The basket came down at the end of a wire, and dropped on the rocks close by the wall, but clearing the waterfall.

It held Buffalo Bill and the sheriff.

Both were fairly smothered by the warmth of the greeting they received.

"Say, old man," said Chance to Nomad, when it seemed that the borderman would wring his arm off, "I'm going to have to use this hand, maybe, a little later. So spare it."

"How have you got along?" was one of Buffalo Bill's first questions.

"Finest ever," said Nomad. "Nothin' couldn't been finer. Buffler, we knowed you'd make et, an' we jest rested easy. We had some confabulation wi' Snake River, him wantin' ter jine us, ter git grub, and so's he could find out ef we had connected wi' thet gold. But Pawnee, he sent him hustlin'. But we did feed him, when ther scamp didn't deserve et. Buffler, shake hands erg'in. Otherwise, I'm li'ble ter conclude I must be dreamin'."

Buffalo Bill had plans for getting them out of the Bottomless Pit. They were simple. The wire and the basket were to be used.

"But we thought we'd better come down first, and see how you were," said Chance, "and how the land laid. We can send up for more men, if we think it's advisable. What do ye say, Cody?"

They talked it over.

Meanwhile they did a good deal of eating. For an abundant supply of food had been brought down in the basket.

"You see," said Chance, "having come this far, with Snake River and his bunch right here, I'd like to rake

them fellers in. Cody agrees with me that it'd be a good thing to do. So, what do ye say? We'll need more men likely, if we make that tackle."

"We can perhaps send Waif up, with a message," the scout suggested, glancing at the girl to see how this would be received.

She looked doubtfully at the slender wire.

"I suppose I might as well try it now as later, as it seems I must," she said.

"Thar's grit fer ye," said the borderman.

"Dot vire will carry her all righdt," said the baron. "So she needt nodd been afraidt. Budt oof I hadn't seen der sheriff unt Cody riding py dot dasket in, I wouldn't belief der vire vould subbort me. Vhy, I veigh two hoonert."

"And I weigh about two-fifty," said Chance, with a laugh. "So you're all right, baron. That wire don't look big, but its been tested for a thousand pounds, and held that much up all right. We didn't take any chances."

A letter was written and given to Waif Western.

When she had taken her place in the basket, a jerk of the rope signaled to the men in the cave.

Then the basket ascended, sliding up with a swiftness that must have been somewhat disconcerting to her. Soon it gained the top of the cliff and disappeared.

"You know how that thing was worked?" said the scout. "It was worked by means of water gained from tapping that spring on top of the mountain, right over the cave. But that was too slow. So we rigged the drum differently, and the men up there can work it. It takes about twenty men, though, to give it power enough."

Five men came down in the basket.

This was the number the scout had sent for.

"Now to root out the snakes," said Chance.



The wall of the Bottomless Pit was followed, on the south, which took them to the point where the old wagon lay, and the message scratched on the rock could be seen.

They tarried a while at these points, making another search of the wagon site, and talking over the probable fate of the wagon driver.

It was agreed that the man had undoubtedly been Waif Western's father, and that he had either lost his life in the Bottomless Pit, or in getting out of it.

If the latter, and he had tried to take his treasure through the cañon on a raft, the chances were good that the dust and nuggets had been sunk in the cañon. Therefore, they never could be recovered.

At the farther end of the Bottomless Pit they found Snake River's men in camp.

But Snake River was not with them.

Happy Chance, as sheriff, took a white handkerchief, mounted to an eminence, waved the handkerchief, and called to them to surrender.

They at first did not answer this demand.

"Where is Snake River?" he asked. "I'll do my talking with him."

"He went to hear what that shootin' and yellin' was about," they replied. "But we reckon we know now, since seein' you."

"You fellers might as well throw down your guns and waltz up here," Chance said. "Ye see, it will have to come to it. I've got five men with me here, besides Cody's party; and twenty-five more up in that cave. What do ye say?"

They replied that they would wait until Snake River came back.

Then they added a question:

"What's become of the Blackfeet?"

"Gone back home," said Chance. "We judge that.

We ain't seen 'em. They've left the cave and the mountain. You interested in hearin' from 'em?"

While the sheriff was talking with the party in the camp, old Nomad discovered that Snake River was returning.

"He's joggin' erlong clost by ther river," he reported. "I seen his head weavin' through ther bushes thar. If you'll git Chance off that hill, we mebbysso can rake in Snake River."

Happy Chance was invited to come down, and continue his talk with the outlaws later.

"What's up?" he asked, when he saw that all the members of the party were dropping into concealment, and that Pawnee Bill and the borderman were slipping away, Pawnee shaking out the coils of his rope.

"Snake River," announced the scout.

"Comin' right up to us, eh?"

They kept quiet after that.

Soon Nomad's yell was heard.

The scout and the baron ran out, followed by Chance. They found that Pawnee Bill had brought the outlaw leader down, and had him snared in the lariat.

They carried Snake River back and set him in the midst of their party.

"I got ye, Snake River, as I don't need to say it," remarked Chance, smiling. "Right over yon aire a lot of your men; all of 'em, I guess. I've invited 'em to surrender, and they felt sassy about it. Now you're goin' with me to the top of that hill, and you're goin' to advise 'em to climb off the high perch, fer their jig is done."

"What do I git for doin' this?" said Snake River.

"You? You git jail."

"Then I don't."

Though Snake River had been a scared and badly rattled man when he fell into the hands of Pawnee Bill

and the borderman, he was regaining his mental equilibrium.

"Why don't you?" said Chance. "I reckon you're goin' soon to change your mind on that."

"What's the use of me pullin' the boys in for you?" demanded Snake River. "I git jail if I do, and if I don't. I'm makin' trouble for them, an' gainin' nothin' for myself. That's how I look at it."

"You're going to change that look," threatened Chance. "Otherwise, you'll look into a revolver, which I'll use on you. First place, Snake River, you've been in this hole long enough to know that you can't git out of it, and that your men can't. So what aire they goin' to do, saying even that we leave 'em down here? Sooner or later they're goin' to cave in of hunger. You can see that."

Snake River saw it plainly enough.

"If you put it to 'em that way, as I was goin' to do when you showed up and stopped my talk with 'em, they're goin' to see it that way, too."

"You'll let me go and say that to 'em?"

"You're goin' to say it to 'em from the top of that hill—savvy?"

Taking the bound ruffian with him, Happy Chance set off for the hill.

When he showed himself there, Junk Tabor came out to answer his halloo.

"That you, Junk?" said the sheriff. "Glad to see ye. I've got Snake River here, all primed with an eloquent speech for you to hear. Give 'em the eloquence now, Snake River."

Threatened with the sheriff's revolver, Snake River stood up. His hands were tied, but there were no cords on his ankles.

"I'm fixed, boys," he announced. "Comin' back, they raked me in. I got to take my medicine, I reckon.

As fer you fellers, you can do as ye like. The sheriff is in here with a posse."

"Is that the eloquent address I put into your mouth, Snake River?" Chance demanded. "Your memory is runnin' pore. Tell 'em to surrender."

"We can make a fight of it," said Junk, not having heard the sheriff.

"You'll be wiped off the map," said Snake River. "There's more than ten men in here, and a lot on the mountain. You might try that cañon, if you had yer raft ready, and could git to it ahead of the sheriff, and——"

Chance pulled at the rascal's sleeve.

"Your eloquence runs poorer every minute, Snake River. I see I've got to deliver that speech for you."

He delivered it, in a manner to leave no question of his meaning.

"If we surrenders we git lugged to jail?" said Junk Tabor.

Other men had come up and were with Tabor.

"How's that, Chance?" one of them sang out.

"Junk's got the right of it. You git jail, if you go with me. But if you don't go, you git worse. Say that you could stand me off, which you can't, you'd starve in here sooner or later. If you tried that cañon you'd drown. But even if you got through, I'd git ye outside of it. So you see I hold the winning cards. Better think seriously, boys."

They thought so seriously of it that, after a parley among themselves, they came out together and surrendered to Happy Chance.

"Cody," said Chance, "here's where I am paid. If you have rescued the girl, you're paid. So there's satisfaction and happiness all round."

"But the gold," said Payallup Pete, who was one of Chance's men, now with him.



"Cody's going to push a search for that as soon as he gits ready, which will be quick; likewise a hunt for the man that is supposed owned it. If the girl and Tempest wants to take part in that with Cody and his crowd, that's all right. But you're goin' with me back to the town."

The escape from the Bottomless Pit was made without trouble.

Happy Chance took his prisoners into Rocket Range and landed them in his "hotel."

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### PAYALLUP AND THE SHERIFF.

"Of course, in approachin' an honorable man like you, with a propersition like this, I know I'm li'ble to meet a throw-down; still, nevertheless, and notwithstanding——"

The flush on the greasy face of Payallup Pete was marked, as his shifty eyes sought those of Happy Chance. In his thick fingers he was twisting a sheet of dirty paper.

"As sheriff of this county," said Chance, "I have to keep myself above suspicion, and the hint that I could do otherwise hits me plum' in the face as a personal affront. But—what you got there, anyhow, and whatever aire you drivin' at?"

With a sickly grin, Payallup Pete, ragamuffin and rascal, passed over the paper.

Spreading it out, Happy Chance looked at it intently.

"What I see is an arrow pointin' downward, and above it the letters, 'J. G.' If there's a meanin', I don't git it."

The sheriff was in his office, which was located in a little house close by the jail yard. The one door of the office was closed, but a window stood open.

Payallup Pete shuffled softly across the floor and closed the window with a secretive air.

"Beg pardon fer takin' the liberty," he said. "But there's too many men with big jackass ears passin' along this street to suit me."

The sheriff laughed, and glanced at the paper he had laid on his plump knee.



"If this is somethin' I oughtn't know, Payallup, you better keep it to yourself," he warned. "As sheriff of this county——"

"That's all right," said the ragamuffin, waving a greasy paw, when he had retreated to his chair. "As sheriff of the county, you can do your duty, an' mebbys make a little on the side. I reckon you ain't got no idea where I collected them initials and that arrow?"

"You started in to tell this story," Happy Chance reminded. "I ain't askin' no questions, and I ain't makin' no promises."

"I found that, or the original, on top of the mountain. I figger that J. G. stands fer John Grayson, the father of the girl they call Waif Western, and that the arrow p'inted to the location of a cache."

Happy Chance looked at the paper again, with increased interest.

"How's this?" he asked. "We was all up there together—my posse and Buffalo Bill's bunch of thief hunters and Indian fighters, and you're the only one that got wise?"

Payallup Pete rubbed his pudgy hands together softly and his crafty eyes narrowed.

"We was all of us up on the mountain, and down in that hole they call the Bottomless Pit. Nigh twenty years ago Waif Western's father tumbled from the precipice trail into that pit with a wagon load of gold dust and nuggets. The wagon, what was left of it, and the skeletons of the horses, was found, and words were found scratched on a rock, showin' that Grayson wasn't killed."

"I'm wise to all that," muttered Chance.

"I figgered that, as nothin' could be found in the Pit, Grayson got out of it, and, as it'd be human nature fer him to cling to his wealth while life lasted, I fig-

gered that he got that out, too. After we all got out of the Pit, there was a good deal of time spent at the top of the mountain. Cody's horses had to be brought up, and a lot of details looked to before we could come down. You fellers set round the campfire, smokin' and swappin' yarns. I searched about. Yit I admit that I was playin' in pure luck when I uncovered that. It was on a rock right at the top o' the mountain, but a bush had growed up in front of the rock, and covered the letters and the arrow. Jest by chance I pushed the bush aside; then I seen it. I didn't say nothin' to nobody, but jest put 'em down on that paper. If I'd had time and a spade, I'd have opened the cache. But I didn't dare even to try it. You fellers wasn't a hundred yards off."

"Your idea is," said Chance, "that Grayson cached his wealth there. If he did, why didn't he ever make his appearance anywhere afterward?"

"What is under that arrow only a spade can show. If the gold ain't cached there, we'll find some instructions about it. But the reason Grayson didn't show up anywhere is that the Blackfeet raked him in."

"Killed him."

"That's what I think."

"You're makin' this story mighty interesting, anyhow," Chance admitted. "Still, the high divin' that your imagination can do is——"

"You want to hear now what I'm proposin'?" Payallup Pete asked, hitching his chair closer.

Happy Chance laughed in his unctious way, but his face was flushed and his eyes had brightened.

"You're a thief, by your own statements, Payallup, and I'm the sheriff of this county; so what you tell me is to be in the nature of a confession. That's got to be understood."

"Suits me. You give me the third degree, and I tell everything. How's that?"

"Go ahead."

"In the beginnin'," said Payallup, "I'm goin' to admit that I wouldn't thought o' makin' this break to you, but fer what I heard this mornin', while I was hangin' round the Flashlight, about third drink time. They was talkin' it over there. Seems that you've played the ponies, or somethin' lately, and has gone broke the worst kind."

Chance's eyes snapped.

"They said that, did they?"

"That's what they said. So it come to me that unless you was different from most other men I know you'd see a chance when it was put up to you, like I'm going to do this."

"Keep to your confession, Payallup," Chance warned, his laugh gone and his flushed face angry looking. "I'm not hitchin' up with you, understand."

"Not yet," said Payallup. "But I'm hopin' that you will. Now, may I say what I want to, without gittin' kicked out?"

"I've told you to go ahead with your confession!"

"Buffalo Bill and his bunch aire up on that mountain, huntin' for that gold. Sooner or later they're goin' to find jest what I did, on that rock. If we foller right up, ordinary, we'll be annexed to their party, and be helpin' to pull their chestnuts out of the fire; that is, we will take chances with the Blackfeet, and git nothin', even if the gold is found."

"They're going to turn it over to that girl," said Chance.

"So they say. But they'll be hopin' big that she will reward 'em handsomely. I don't allow that Cody takes risks fer nothin', no more than other people. An' if they're alone when they locate it, who's to say that they

don't keep out a half or more? Nobody knows how much that gold amounts to!"

"Tom Tempest is with 'em."

"No, he ain't. But if he was, they could hoodwink him easy enough."

"Mebbyso."

"I know it."

"Well, go on!"

"So the thing to do is to make it impossible fer Cody's crowd to find the gold. They'll not uncover it at once, unless it's by accident, but they're sure to, sooner or later, though. I put that bush back jest as natural as I could, so, if we move quick, I reckon we can do it."

"Do what?"

"You know about that spring on top of the mountain, of course—all about it. But do you remember that I told about drinkin' out of that spring, and it set me crazy?"

"I reckon that; but you told a good many queer things."

"And all of 'em proved to be true. That water made me as crazy as a water bug. For a day or more I didn't know nothin', and had some of the funniest dreams that ever drove a man wild. When I come out of it I was that fuddled I was still ekal to anything. Now the nub of my idea is right there. Git Cody's crowd to drink of that water, and they're out of the game complete."

"I think you're still fuddled—to come to me with a thing like that!" growled Chance.

"No, I ain't."

Chance looked at the soiled paper again.

"I couldn't do a thing like that," he insisted. "But I could go up on that mountain with you and look round. Some of Monte Vidio's men aire still loose



round there somewhere, and it's my duty as sheriff to go hunt for 'em. But don't think for a minute, Payallup, that I'd jine in anything underhanded, like what you suggest."

"If we located the gold," the ragamuffin urged, "the young lady would shore see to it that we had a proper reward, anyhow. How does that strike ye?"

"That'd be legitimate. But if you think I'm——"

"Of course, we wouldn't think of keepin' *all* of it," said Payallup smoothly. "Is there ary man here that says so? I don't. And it's your plum' duty to make a hunt for them counterfeiters that belonged to old Monte's gang."

"That's more like sense," said Chance, twisting his big form uncomfortably in his swivel chair. "Did you have any plan for gitting Cody's men to drink of that crazy water?"

"I thought maybe you could suggest how that was to be done?"

"A thing I'd like to know, Payallup, is why you came to me; why didn't you try to put this thing through yourself?"

"I feel shy about them Blackfeet."

"They're bad citizens, git 'em riled," said Chance.

"And they're now riled. That's what I mean. I was afraid to tackle that mountain ag'in alone."

Chance got out of his chair, walked to the window, and looked out. For five minutes he stood there staring into the street. When he came back his manner had changed.

"I can see," he said, as he dropped into his chair, "that in a treasure hunt of this kind, one man has as good a right to make the tackle as the next one. The gold belongs to the girl. If she's the right kind, she'll be willin' to pay a handsome reward. Of course, what you've got on this paper may mean nothin' at all. If

it don't, all right. I can be doin' my duty as sheriff, by tryin' to locate the rest of them counterfeiters."

He looked steadily at the shabby figure crouched in the other chair.

"Your idea was to juggle their canteens, or water bottles, in some way?"

"Jest so," said Payallup Pete, nodding vigorously. "It might be done, with care. Suppose it happened that their canteens held some of that crazy water, and they didn't know it?"

"You're dead sure about that spring water?"

"I wouldnt' put this up in this manner, I reckon, if I wasn't. There is something queer about that water. I figger that the spring holds a mineral that is pizen, though it don't kill."

"You reckoned you could crawl into their camp in the night and change their canteen water? I don't think you could."

"That was another thing made me want help," Payallup admitted; "I was afraid I couldn't. We'd need somebody slick of movement. My thoughts was lingerin' round Pedro."

"Ah!"

"That young Mexican would do anything you wanted him to, even if it was to slit a man's throat. You know that. And he wouldn't talk about it afterward. Jest tell him what you wanted done, and he'd do it, or die tryin'."

"Pedro is a fine boy!" said Chance.

"I saw him at the street corner, rollin' a shuck cigarette, as I came along. Shall I tell him that you want to see him, if he's out there still?"

"Yes, send him in," acceded the sheriff. "But, understand this, Payallup. I'm goin' on that mountain to look for them counterfeiters—nothin' else. If, when we're up there, you point out to me that rock



with the arrow and letters, we'll see what's under it. Personal, I won't turn a hand against Cody. That's to be understood before we set out."

"Sure," said Payallup; "seein' that you're the sheriff, nobody would expect you to. But if me and Pedro——"

"Whatever you and Pedro does is different, if I don't know it. Jest now all I want to see him for is to order him to get some animals ready."

Payallup Pete opened the door stealthily, looked out, then stepped into the street.

A minute later a slim Mexican youth came in. His appearance was almost feminine when he removed his big hat. His liquid black eyes sought the face of his master.

"Pedro," said Chance, "we're going out on the mountain, to look for some of those counterfeiterers that aire still playin' hide-out. We'll want three horses, blankets, and food and water. Also, take half a dozen canteens, and a pick and spade. I'll look out for the arms and ammunition. Payallup Pete is goin' with us as guide."

"*Si, señor,*" said Pedro, still at attention.

"That's all, I believe. Of course, you're not likely to forget your cigarette tobacco. We'll want matches, too; and pans, cups, and a coffee pot. We may be gone a week. You know what we'll need."

"*Si.*"

"I don't suppose you're afraid to go up there?"

"No afraid," said Pedro.

"I was thinking of the Blackfeet."

"No 'fraid Blackfeet. Me know some them Blackfeet." He showed his white teeth in a confident smile.

"I thought I remembered that you did. If we get into trouble with them, you may be able to help us out. Another thing, Pedro."

"*Si, señor.*"

"You might drop word among the stable boys as to what we're up to. They'll be curious about what the horses are for. Have everything ready in an hour. We'll make the start from the stable."

"*Si.*"

When the slim Mexican had departed, Chance lighted a cigar, lifted his heels to the ledge of the window, and indulged in some troubled musing.

"I'll play on the side of the law," he reflected; "of course, I've got to do that. And I wouldn't even look at that arrow rock if I hadn't got into this financial hobble. Still, I've as good a right to make a hunt for that gold as any one has—Cody, or any other man. And if it should be there, I don't intend to *steal it*. As for that other matter—I'll keep out of it. I doubt if it could be worked. Anyway, I'll personally keep out of it."

But the flush was still in his face as he went out to collect the things he had chosen to get himself.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### A BLACKFOOT BEAUTY.

Little Cayuse, Buffalo Bill's trusty Piute tracker, looking toward the Blackfoot village, saw a girl come out into the trail.

He had been left in the mountain camp as guard while Buffalo Bill and the others of the party were making a final exploration of the mountain. If danger came, it was expected from the village, so he had concentrated his attention on the trail.

He was sure the girl was a Blackfoot, for no other Indians were in the vicinity. And he wondered what her purpose was, when he saw that she came straight on.

When she drew near he made the discovery that she was astonishingly good looking. Her features were of a fascinating type, her eyes large and black, her smile pleasing. Indian paint, applied deftly, gave her cheeks a warm and becoming tint of red. Across her brow ran wavy lines of blue, done artfully. And on her cheeks were other blue lines, running back from the red.

Her clothing was of warm colors—red, rich brown, and yellow. Red strands of cotton yarn held back her shining hair. Her tunic was of leather-colored cloth, fancifully embroidered in blue and red; her moccasins were buckskins, beautifully ornamented with beads.

Being an Indian, with an eye capable of appreciating beautiful Indian apparel and the face of a beautiful Indian girl, Little Cayuse did her the homage of staring at her, which he did with such boldness that she came to an abrupt halt when she had approached within half a dozen yards.

### A Blackfoot Beauty.

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The Piute had a considerable smattering of nearly every Indian dialect, and if he could have annexed the Blackfoot vocabulary on the instant he would have been delighted. Not being a master of Blackfoot, he pointed to the blanket roll beside him, and tried in English to offer her the hospitality of the camp.

Thereupon he made the gratifying discovery that the beautiful Blackfoot could speak English.

"Me see you here all 'lone," she said. "You be Injun, too, same as me! You sabe?"

"Me sabe good," declared the Piute. "You live by Blackfoot village, huh?"

"Ai. Down there me live. Where white man gone?"

Little Cayuse shook his head.

"Me no sabe—gone all round; me stay by camp. White man 'fraid of Blackfeet some; but not Pa-e-has-ka. Pa-e-has-ka no 'fraid anything. Come back bumpy. Where you go?"

"Me think me like git—what you call—'quainted," she admitted bashfully. "You sabe what that is? Me know you, you know me; that way."

"Ai. Me sabe. Ver' nice. Me think me like this git 'quainted. Me, my name Little Cayuse."

"Me, my name Red Pine."

"Me like that name, Red Pine."

She sat down on the blanket roll, when he motioned to it again.

"Why you stay with white man? You be Injun."

"Me stay by Pa-e-has-ka. Him great hunter, mucho fine trailer, heap big man; me like um Pa-e-has-ka."

"Him white man."

"You listen. Pa-e-has-ka make Great White Father at Wash'ton give me thirteen dol' a month. You sabe what that mean? Thirteen dol'. Heap mucho money."



She laughed and tossed back her black hair.

"Me no see so mucho money."

"You listen. Pa-e-has-ka say to Great White Father: 'Little Cayuse very good man—good trailer, good hunter. So you have him, too, blanket, rifle, pistol, ca'tridge, and all thing what he is eat.' Is not um good? Pa-e-has-ka ver' strong man."

"He is more as the Great White Father?"

"The White Father he no can fight; he stay in house all time. So he say, 'Pa-e-has-ka, you brave, you strong, you go do this fight for me. You want help, heh? Take um Little Cayuse. He also is brave. You go fight bad white man, some time bad Injun. No fight good Injun. So I pay Little Cayuse all this mucho money.' Ver' nice."

"Yes, that ver' nice. Where you live?"

"Me? Not live anywhere. Piutes live 'way off by Salt Lake."

"You no can have squaw, then!"

Little Cayuse looked confused, but instantly rallied.

"Ai."

She laughed.

"You no see squaw what you like, heh?"

"Now me see squaw what I like!" he declared.

Both laughed. This was very funny.

She fumbled in her dress.

"You know how you look you'self?" said Cayuse.

Laughing, she brought out a little mirror, of the kind Indians use when applying face paint, and also for signaling by sunlight flashes. Nearly every Indian carries one. She held it before his face.

"You see nice Piute brave, huh?" she asked, in a teasing tone. "Ver' fine Piute brave."

"Me see Little Cayuse."

"That what I say—ver' fine Piute brave."

Lowering the mirror, she drew out a bit of red pig-

ment shaped like a crayon. With it she traced on the mirror a caricature of a face.

"That me," she said, holding it up. "How you like?"

"Me no like," he declared, grimacing; "me like you better."

She lengthened the nose of the caricature, and held it up again for his inspection.

"You eyes, they very good, huh?" she asked.

"Mucho good," said the young Piute.

"Me see if you find what is in face. Somet'ing I have put in for you find. You look close."

The Piute bent close to the mirror, staring and knitting his brows, trying to see in the face the thing she spoke of.

"Me no see it," he said.

"When me make it go so, you see it," she explained.

She advanced the mirror, then drew it away; after that she began to turn it slowly before his eyes.

"You watch close now you see it."

The Piute watched closely.

Within a minute he was staring at the mirror with eyes that saw nothing.

She pulled away the mirror and snapped her fingers. He stared at the spot where the mirror had been.

"Make um sleep ver' easy," she said, gurgling a laugh. "Piute a fool."

In the camp were the usual stores, together with blankets, ammunition, and also a half dozen canteens.

Lifting the canteens, one by one, the girl found that each was filled. It proved to her that preparations had been made for going on when the members of the party returned.

"You stay there," she said to Little Cayuse; and, to make sure he would obey, she came back and made passes over his face, and blew her breath into it. "You stay there!"



The top of the mountain was not far off—less than a quarter of a mile. With fleet feet she covered the distance. When she was there she emptied the canteens she had brought with her, and refilled them from the spring on the top of the mountain.

A look round, after doing this, assured her no one was near. Then she returned hurriedly with the refilled canteens to the camp.

Placing them as they had been in the camp, she turned once more to Little Cayuse, who was lost to everything now.

"You foller me," she ordered, in a low tone.

He stood up with a jerky movement, like a man in a trance.

"Ver' good!" she commended. "Now foller me."

Carefully she stepped out of the camp without disturbing anything, and set her moccasined feet in the Blackfoot trail.

As carefully, Little Cayuse followed and imitated her. His eyes were open, and his movements were those of one walking in sleep.

Together they disappeared down the trail in the direction of the Blackfoot village.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### A DESERTED CAMP.

"Dot Biute," said the baron, "iss valk away from der camp in, huh? Dot iss no vay to do. In der Yerman army, off a sendry do dot he iss git shot."

They were in sight of the camp, and it was deserted. Everything in it lay exposed to thieving Indians and prowling animals.

"He ain't fur off, you kin bet," declared Nick Nomad, the old borderman, who had a kindly feeling for the Piute. "Ef he ain't, suthin' has happened ter him. Little Cayuse kin shore be trusted ter stick close to his job."

"That's right—he must be near," Buffalo Bill agreed, though he saw the deserted camp with some anxiety.

But when they entered the camp and called the name of Little Cayuse there was no response.

"It isn't like the Piute to stroll off, necarnis," declared Pawnee Bill. "If he did it there was a good reason. Perhaps he saw Blackfeet, and wanted to know what they were up to."

Mounting to an eminence behind the camp, Pawnee Bill looked about, and down the trail toward the Blackfoot village. The conical tops of lodges could be seen, far off, embowered in greenery.

Lifting his voice, he called the name of the Piute.

During Pawnee's absence, Buffalo Bill and the borderman looked the camp over, discovering nothing missing or wrong, and now they began to look for tracks beyond it.

Close by the trail an imprint that seemed to have been made by the Piute's moccasin was discovered.

The toe pointed to the trail. But they saw no other tracks, the Blackfoot girl having been wary in entering and leaving, and when going to the top of the hill for water.

"Ye couldn't rouse him?" Nomad questioned, when Pawnee came back. "Waal, this hez got me millin'. Ef ther lad warn't so deependable, 'twould seem different. From this hyar moccasin track, looks ter me thet he hit ther trail. Ef so, he must er seen suthin' thet attracted him, and got inter trouble."

Entering the Blackfoot trail, they pushed their investigation further, without success. The trail was hard beaten by pony hoofs and by many moccasins.

That Little Cayuse had been drawn out of the camp by seeing something which he thought required investigation, and then had fallen into difficulties, so that he could not return, was the opinion. And, of course, the cause very naturally accredited it to Blackfeet.

"We'll leave word for him here," said the scout, "and go on and make a search; that's the best we can do."

The "word" he left was peculiar in its form. He cut and peeled a small cottonwood bough, and set it in the ground in the center of the camp, inclining its top in the direction of the trail; then, at the spot where the moccasin print showed, another was set, inclined in the same direction. Along the upper part of each of the peeled poles the scout drew with his lead pencil a wavy line, and at the end of the line the outlines of three tepees.

Looking on with interest, the borderman and the others commented. The writing would be as plain as words to Little Cayuse, if he came back to the camp. It would inform him that they had set out along the trail leading toward the Blackfoot village. And, of course, he then could be expected to follow.

Their horses had been sent down to the town of Rocket Range, so they were their own pack animals. After they had adjusted their packs they set out over the trail, keeping close watch against a Blackfoot ambush, while looking for moccasin tracks that might show the Piute had departed from the trail.

They did not care to enter the Blackfoot village, a movement that would be filled with danger, even under the most favorable circumstances. So when they were two or three miles out from it they camped secretly, just out of the trail, having concluded to make a stop there until morning.

"If he doesn't show up by that time," said the scout, "I'll try to find out if he is in the hands of the Blackfeet."

"I reckon they has shore got him," urged the borderman; "cain't be no other way erbout et ez I kin see."

They ate a cold supper, and, all except Pawnee Bill, drank from the canteens they carried. Pawnee had a severe headache and no appetite.

When darkness came, with the baron taking the first watch of the night, they bunked down to get all the rest and sleep they could as a preparation for possible strenuous work ahead.

Some time in the night Buffalo Bill awoke, hearing bells. When he sat up and looked down the trail, in addition to hearing the bells, he saw will-o'-the-wisps dancing along the trail like drunken fireflies.

The other occupants of the camp were sound asleep. He saw that as he looked round. Even the baron's head had dropped on his shoulder and his body had slumped against the stone where he sat.

Buffalo Bill decided that the musical bells and the dancing lights required investigation, but he saw no reason why he should wake his friends.

So he rose softly, adjusted the belt that held his re-



volvers, cartridge web, and his knife, and slipped out of the camp and into the trail.

The bells kept ringing, and on before him danced the singular lights. He had never seen or heard anything like them, but he attributed the strange incidents to the Blackfeet.

It occurred to him, as he hastened over the trail, that the Basilisk was responsible for the mysterious disappearance of Little Cayuse.

The scout did not know that the bells he heard ringing and the lights that he saw flashing had no existence outside of his own mind. And, while he thought he was moving with much lightness and astonishing speed, he was really lurching, with clumsy stumbles that threatened now and again to throw him down.

Fact and fancy became even more mixed as he pushed on down the trail. Once he thought he saw Cayuse struggling in the arms of a Blackfoot. But when he hurried to the Piute's assistance, he found that a bush had fooled him.

Not for a moment did he think of turning back, for the bells rang louder now, and the flashing of the will-o'-the-wisp fires were nearer and beckoning. In addition, a high sense of exhilaration possessed him. Caution had fallen away. Always brave, he was now in a mood so reckless, yet so self-confident, that he would not have hesitated to enter the Blackfoot lodges and demand the return of Little Cayuse, in the belief that the Piute would be returned and the Blackfeet overawed.

The bells and the flashing lights did not seem to draw him toward the Blackfoot lodges, but into another trail, which took him past the village.

He had never so enjoyed work of the kind. Fatigue did not come. Yet he thought he was hurrying with a speed that ordinarily would have left him breathless.

He had no notion of time. It seemed to him that he had been traveling less than an hour, when, before him in the dim trail, there appeared the most beautiful Blackfoot girl he had ever seen.

"Ah!" he cried, stopping short. "Have you seen Little Cayuse?"

She put her fingers to her painted lips, and beckoned.

"I must keep still, eh? That means he is near. You are a beautiful creature, and as good as you are beautiful. If you know where my Piute boy is, take me to him."

She beckoned and flitted on before.

Exhilarated, hopeful, buoyant beyond words to express, the scout hurried after her. He felt like shouting. The Piute, he was sure, was close at hand. And this beautiful girl! To have one like her for a guide was a pleasure in itself!

The bells were still ringing and the lights were flashing. They had not been explained, but he was growing so accustomed to them that they hardly distracted his attention.

The path became a bower, lined with green trees and flowers. The woodland was filled with singing birds.

Beyond was a hill—such a hill as he had never imagined existed. The stones which composed it glistened like silver and flashed like jewels in the moonlight. Before a tree that grew tall and spreading, and seemed shimmering as if it wore a silver veil, the girl stopped. With her fingers to her painted lips, she beckoned, struck her hand against the tree, drew back one of the shimmering branches, and vanished.

The scout followed her without questioning. Behind that tree was Little Cayuse, he felt sure.

When he had passed behind the tree, the entrance of a cavern opened before him; it had been concealed by the tree. This opening, he saw now, was lighted and



filled with perfumed smoke. The light showed the Indian girl dancing on before.

"Cayuse is in the cave!" Buffalo Bill muttered. "Ah, now I am seeing strange wonders! I will still follow the girl."

The perfumed smoke made him cough, but, at the same time, he liked the odor. Approaching the fire, the girl threw a dark powder on it, and the flame became violet.

Behind the fire hung a curtain. No cloth-of-gold ever gleamed like that curtain. Behind it the girl disappeared, and the scout followed her.

The vast interior of a gorgeous cave was before him. At one side was a shelf, holding a row of skulls. But he hardly saw them; for his attention was attracted by a throne in the center of the cave.

On that throne, beckoning to him, was the Basilisk.

"Welcome," she said, in the Blackfoot tongue. "I knew you would come."

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### NOMAD RUNS AMUCK.

"Woof!"

Though it was like the low, sniffing grunt of a bear, it came from the lips of the borderman.

He had lifted himself on his elbow, with a sudden feeling that something was decidedly wrong, and he had seen Buffalo Bill disappearing out of the camp.

Still, there was in this such a sense of dreaminess, that Nick Nomad felt like lying down again and surrendering to it. Yet he was rising to his feet with the catlike stealth taught him by years of perilous wandering, and was staring in the direction of the trail, where Buffalo Bill had vanished.

The borderman cast an anxious glance around. The baron was asleep at his post, which, in this case, happened to be a big rock. A little farther on lay Pawnee Bill, wrapped in a blanket.

"Baron's ersleep, and Pawnee Bill he war plum' sick at supper time; so I reckon——"

He put the thought into action, and began to tiptoe out of the camp.

"No use distarbin' things when ye don't haf to. But I gotter see what Buffler is meanin'."

He stopped abruptly, close by the Blackfoot trail.

Buffalo Bill was not in sight, but his lumbering footsteps could be heard, also his words, which made the borderman think he had met some one.

"Buffler seems ter have moseyed out fer er gabfest! Now I calls thet quar. Wonder who he's swappin' langwidge with?"

Nomad stood rocking on his heels, listening intently. Then he went on slowly.

"Great snakes! He seems ter be torkin' ter a dumb man. Anyhow, ain't nobuddy answerin' thet I can hear. Wonder ef I hadn't better call ter him."

Stepping into the trail, Nomad began to discover that his knees were wobbly. Striving to move swiftly, he came near falling.

Other queer things were happening. There were two moons in the sky, and the stars were thick as sand, so that they made a golden blaze. Then the trail doubled. With two trails stretching straight before him, though slightly diverging as they went on, he did not know which to take.

He listened again, deciding to take the trail chosen by the scout. But he was confused by the fact that two Buffalo Bills were talking in singular monotones, and he could not tell which of the trails the scout was following.

"When in doubt allus take the right—and you'll be in the right. Waugh!"

Though he took the right, he could not get away from the left; it started before his feet, and shot to the left continually as he went on.

"Wow! What's ther matter wi' me, anyhow?" the borderman grumbled. "I ain't been drinkin' no valley tan. Yit I plum' feels like I had hogged down er distillery. Great snakes! Ther headache I am collectin', an' ther things I am seein', is what you don't read about!"

He thought he was moving at a rapid pace, and he could not understand why he did not quickly overtake Buffalo Bill. And he was annoyed to find that the sounds which had been leading him had died away.

In the borderman's bewildered mind was a singular mixture of reality and hallucination. He was in the Blackfoot trail; he had seen Buffalo Bill departing

from the camp, and had heard him speaking; all the rest, with the exception of the headache, was as unreal as the two moons he saw in the sky and the erratic double trail.

When he could no longer hear the scout, Nomad slowed what he had considered his headlong speed, and tried to reach conclusions—a work of exceeding difficulty.

But he arrived somewhere.

"Yes, thet's et! Buffler has diskivered thet Little Cayuse was captered by ther Blackfeet. Et's been my opinion right erlong. Now he knows et is so. And he has turned off hyar ter ther Blackfoot village ter do er rescuo act. Waal, ef so, he's goin' ter need help ther wust kind."

He had reached the point where the narrower trail went on toward a group of hills and the larger turned toward the Blackfoot lodges.

He took the larger trail.

"Great gallinippers!" he grumbled, feeling about and discovering that he had no weapon. "Now, ain't thet er fool trick fer er man like what I am? Come erway, an' clean fergot my belt, an' rifle, an' ever'thing. Whoop! Fust town I strike I'm goin' ter hire er kickin' machine ter git busy wi' me."

Nevertheless, he stalked straight along toward the lodges. He had no fear of the consequences. Weapons would come handy, if he had them; still, his fists were always with him.

"Buffler and Cayuse both in ther Blackfoot village. I'll be thar soon. Seems ter me I kin hear Buffler berginnin' er roocus."

Stopping to listen, he heard nothing.

"Funny about them two moons!" he mused. "Still, I has seen ther like afore. One time over in ther town o' Red Dog, whar ther whisky is thet pizen



thar ain't no name fer et, I seen three moons, an' one of 'em had a green tail, after I had connected up wi' er few drinks. But I ain't had my lips ter er glass fer so long thet I've plum' even fergot what ther smell o' nose paint is like. Whoosh!"

He stopped at last, with the lodges before him.

"All ther ki-yis aire ersleep. When ther hour gits so late thet et is early, even er redskin will go ter sleep; an' I reckon et is erbout thet time now. But Buffler went in hyar, and I'm follerin' suit."

He went ahead.

No guard stood before the lodges.

"Shall I go in?" he debated. "Shore. I kin whup my weight in wild cats. Wow! Ain't no measly band o' Blackfeet goin' ter throw ther kibosh on me. And ef Buffler's in thar, and Little Cayuse——"

He reeled on, belligerent, utterly lacking in judgment and sanity.

Approaching the first lodge he pulled at the flap.

"Hi there! Wake up! Thar aire two moons in ther sky an' et's rainin' stars. Whar's Buffler?"

He hammered the lodge pole.

The result ought to have satisfied him. A whoop sounded in the lodge, followed by a jump and a scurry, and a Blackfoot face popped out close by his.

"Waugh! You heerd me ring, did ye? Waal, I'm inkwirin' fer Buffler. An' I'm askin' fer Little Cayuse. What ye done wi' 'em? Speak out without bein' bashful."

The Indian was staggered by this verbal attack, and by the white man standing there in the moonlight. He gulped as if cold water had been dashed on him, so great was his amazement.

But hearing Blackfoot cries rising in the village, he beat down his astonishment and flung at the white man's throat.

Nomad had been expecting that, apparently. With a backward step, to give him room, he swung at the Blackfoot's face with his maullike fist, and knocked the Blackfoot down.

"You don't answer, when I ask ye polite?" he belowed. "Jump at me, does ye, when I'm jest makin' civil inkwires? Waal——"

The Blackfoot rolled aside, sprang up, and dived back into the lodge.

"You'd better git out o' my sight!" Nomad bawled at him. "I'm gittin' my mad up, when ye don't answer my questions. I reckon you don't know who has honored ye wi' this hyar moonlight call? Wow! I'm ther big wart hawk frum head waters; I'm ther biter frum Bitter Creek! Come at me erg'in, an' I'll par'lyze ye."

The Blackfoot came again, this time with a snicker-snee that looked as if it had been made from a scythe blade—one blow with it, placed right, would have sliced a man's head off.

With a yell the Blackfoot swung the formidable weapon.

Nomad's war howl broke on the air.

"Waugh-h! You're thet pizen I reckon I has got to——"

He caught the handle of the heavy blade with his left hand, as again his powerful arm drove his right fist into the Blackfoot's face; and then the redskin went down as before.

"Waugh! This hyar is whar I gits my innin's and goes huntin' round fer Buffler," he cried, as he caught up the terrible scythe-knife. "When I gits to rompin' frivolous with this hyar, everything is goin' to take ter the woods. Whoop!"

A half dozen Blackfeet, with the slumber dust still dimming their eyes, were rushing upon him. But he



drove them back with a wild sweep of the tearful weapon.

"Whar's Buffler?" he yelled.

Their answers were frightful howls.

"Whar's little Cayuse? Don't all speak at onc't."

He moved off from the lodge, swinging the blade in a circle round him.

"Whoever connects with this hyar is goin' ter git er ha'r cut," he warned. "Recklect I ain't responsible ef ye runs into et. This is my night. Whoop! Whar's Buffler?"

He drove them back and ploughed toward the next lodge.

"Ef ye've got him hyar, onderstand thet I'll find him, ef I has ter rip these tepees inter ribbons. I'll cyarve 'em! An' I'll cyarve ther man what interferes wi' me in this gentle pastime. Whar's Buffler?"

The Blackfoot village was boiling with sudden excitement. There was evidence, too, that the madman had thrown a scare into the occupants. Women and children ran, screaming, as he approached, while even warriors got out of his way.

But more and more they thickened round him, coming with weapons of all kinds; and the wonder is that, in this first spasm of excitement and bewilderment, some of them did not shoot him dead.

Perhaps his very recklessness saved him.

"Whar's Buffler?" he squalled. "Whar's Little Cayuse? Answer me! I'm Nick Nomad of Nowhar—ther gay gazaboo of ther bounding perairies, and I don't take no sass frum nobuddy. Come nigh me, an' I'll cyarve ye. Whar's Buffler?"

A commanding voice was heard.

Swinging his blade to keep a clear space round him, the borderman turned and beheld the tall Indian who had spoken.

Then the meaning of the words reached him. The Blackfeet had been ordered to take him alive.

"Waugh! Thet war you, war et? Ther Blackfoot langwidge is thet pecooliar I cain't speak et well, like what I kin English, but I kin onderstand et. Waal, ef ye don't want me ter make fiddle strings out er some o' these boundin' braves, you'd better call 'em off, fer I'm shore goin' ter do et."

The braves nearest plunged at him, but he drove them back.

"Looky hyar," he squawled at the chief. "Jest tell me what you has done wi' Little Cayuse an' Buffler, an' we'll soon be shakin' hands in peace and happiness, an' then we'll go erway. Thet's easy. Jest answer my question."

The Blackfeet kept jumping at him. When he swung round those behind him would spring to catch him by the ankles, so that he was soon shuffling as if he stood on hot coals.

"I don't want ter hurt nobuddy," he protested. "Still, I could do et. Whenever I sees two moons at ther same time my fightin' blood is het up easy. So I'm warnin' ye. Two moons is roostin' in my sky, same as a pair of fightin' cocks on er fence. Et's my sign er war, an' tumult, an' uprisin's, an—— Waugh! Leggo my laig!"

He dashed his foot into the face of the redskin who had clutched him by the ankle.

"Do thet erg'in, an' I'll put my foot down yer throat. Waugh! Some one tell me whar is Buffler."

When he got no satisfaction, but only a series of dashing attacks that kept him whirling, he began to call for "Buffler" himself; his loud voice rang through the village, even above the roar of the Blackfeet.

"He ain't hyar, or you has got him gagged. Stand

back! This is gittin' plum' wearisome. I'm goin' out now. Stand back."

But he seemed to have weakened, with his loss of hope of finding Buffalo Bill and the Piute. The Blackfeet were crowding him, trying to capture him alive; they snapped at his heels like so many curs. And dogs aided them, yapping mongrels, whose assaults made him angrier than even the assaults of the redskins.

Then he stumbled.

Before he could turn himself, after his fall, and bring up the scythe-knife, a dozen Blackfeet were on top of him.

Though he flung himself about like a wounded buffalo beset with wolves, he could not dislodge them.

Clinging with leechlike tenacity, they held him, until ropes were brought from the lodges, and these finished his attempt to shake them off and get away.

Still he roared, and kicked with venomous effort, even when he could do no more. The Blackfeet were gloating over his capture.

He was dazed. There were still two moons in his sky, and the stars were falling in a shower of fiery star dust. He saw twice as many Indians as were in front of him, and twice as many lodges.

In brief, he was still in the grip of the singular hallucination which had made him leave the camp and set off along the Blackfoot trail.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### THE BARON'S MISADVENTURES.

When Baron von Schnitzenhauser left the camp, he was raving crazy, and went noisily. At supper he had eaten heartily and applied himself frequently to the canteens.

The first effect of the crazy water, taken copiously, from the spring on the hill, had been to make him drowsy. So he had fallen asleep at his post. Now, with the sleep past, he was little better than a madman.

With a yell that was very uncharacteristic he leaped into the Blackfoot trail and rushed along it as if he sought a foe. He had with him his weapons belted to his waist. He drew the revolver, and punctured the startled air with revolver shots, until he had emptied the weapon.

Instead of turning toward the village, he plunged blindly into the dimmer trail. But he had been heard in the village, and soon the trail behind him was black with Indians who sought to get a nearer view, and learn what sort of mad creature they had here to deal with.

From raging wrath against all things animate and inanimate, the baron passed swiftly to a condition of hilarity. Then he wanted to shout joyously and sing, and he did both.

It was singular, or would have been if the Blackfeet had understood him, to hear him warbling the *Lauterbach* to the unresponsive trees and hills.

"Yaw," he chattered, "I am some singest yedt! Dit you heardt me when I made dot yodel? Idt iss go dhis vay:

"Oo-lee, oolee; o-lee, oo-lee; yah, eel-ee, ay-oh."



He stopped, and stared at the queer creature that had appeared before him in the moonlit trail.

It was the Basilisk, he knew. He had seen her before.

"Yaw!" he cried, balancing himself gravely, and with some difficulty. "I hobe I am seeing you. How you vos, hay? Oh, you ton'dt speak, heh? You yooost make motions. Vale, I ain'dt going mit you."

When he looked round, as she pointed in that direction, the Indians he had thought were chasing him, and for whose threatening he had not cared a rap, were gone.

"Vale, dit you nodice dot?" he asked, swinging round to the woman again. "Dhey vos dare, unt now dhey ain'dt. Dot iss vot you call a kveer pitzness, heh?"

She leaned on a stick, and was looking at him steadily. She had been a hideous old hag, gnarled and uncomely to the last degree; but she did not seem so now. She had not changed so that he did not recognize her, but he noted the fact of the change.

"You ar-re getting young again," he said, meaning it, though it seemed he was trying to be gallant to an old woman. "Budt meppysso you are your secondt childthood in, or idt iss der moonlighdt. Idt iss so pright to-night dot my eyes ar-re aching mit idt. Vare ar-re you going, unt vare am I?"

She beckoned with her stick, as if she meant that he should follow her.

But he shook his head.

"Nix. My memory iss too goot. You recollegct dot dime vhen in der cave on dop oof der hill you triedt to kill us? Unt dot odder dime in der village vhen you dit der sameness? I ain'dt ready to die yedt—I am feeling too goot; so, I ton'dt foller you. Budt vare iss idt I am?"

She beckoned again, imperiously.

"Nodt on your lifes! I am going dhis odder vay."

He turned sharply about and plunged into the bushes, away from the village.

Her wailing cry rose, shrilling through the night, making the baron jump as if a bullet had been shot at him.

"Yiminy!" he gasped. "Dit you heardt dot? Oof I hadt a voice like dot I vouldt gedt idt pulled."

He hurried on. For again his mental mood was changing, or the effect of the crazy water was passing. He began to have a sense of danger, and a fear of the Blackfeet.

"Vot am I doing here, anyhow?" he muttered, as he plunged on, and heard the shuffle of moccasins in the trail as the Blackfeet came running in answer to the call of the Basilisk. "Vare iss der camp? Lasdt dime I am in der camp, unt now I am here, budt I ton'dt know vare idt iss. Unt me? Yaw, I must be Schnitzenhauser, unt he iss drunk. Oddervise——"

He changed his course, with an increasing sense of peril, hearing the Blackfeet beginning a pursuit.

"Ledt me seen," he mused. "Der camp iss by der site oof der mountain. Oof I can findt der mountain——"

He stood up and looked round. He could not see far, even in the moonlight.

"Ofer dare iss der Plackfoot village. So der moundain he iss off dare. Yaw. Idt musdt be so dot idt iss. Budt to gedt me to idt iss going to dake vork. Vot in der name oof time am I doing here, d'ough?"

The Blackfeet, coming nearer, he once more shifted his course.

Then he remembered the revolver in his belt, and drawing it out he refilled the chambers with cartridges.

"Idt iss a fight vot soon I am oop against," he mut-



tered. "Meppysso. Vale, all right. Budt I am dot mixed I ton'dt know hardtly oof I am Schnitzenhauser or some odder feller. Yaw, I pedt you I am."

A Blackfoot whoop rang out, and the baron began to run, tearing headlong through bushes and over rocks, shaping his wild course in what he believed was the direction of the mountain, while vainly wondering how he came to be out there, with Blackfeet at his heels.

"Idt iss dot vitch voman! She iss t'row a shell on me, I pedt you. She iss got der sinkular power to do idt. Sure, I haf a graziness in my mindt. Odder-vise——"

The Blackfeet were drawing nearer in spite of his wild spurt at running, so he shifted another point, thinking to reach the trail, hoping that if he could get into it he could beat the Indians in a foot race for the mountain.

Then something clutched him by the ankle and flung him into a hole.

With great difficulty he repressed a yell.

But in time he discovered that what he had thought a clutching hand was a vine that had looped round his ankle.

He was so shaken by his fall that he did not at once try to rise, though the patter of Blackfeet moccasins came nearer and nearer.

Then, as the hole was rather deep and dark, festooned round with vines and bushes, and his strength was spent, he concluded that it would be better to crouch there and trust to luck, than to risk flight again.

So he burrowed like a rabbit.

The foremost of the Blackfeet shot past, and went on toward the trail. Others instantly followed, some swishing the bushes that concealed the German. Within two minutes all had passed, and he was behind them.

"Der Schnitzenhauser luck idt iss vaying on high-

ness!" he gulped, shivering still over his narrow escape. "To beat Schnitz you mus'dt get oop in der morning before you ar-re awake."

He discovered that his head was thumping like a drum, with a constricting pain over his eyes enough to make him frantic.

"Idt iss because I haf run so fasdt. Budt vot am I doing oudt here, eenyhow? Dot iss der kvestion. Oh, yaw, I regcollect. I am standting guardt. Unt I hear me somet'ing. So I go to look for idt. Unt here I am, varefer idt iss. Unt I am shaking like a leafs. Budt der kveerness vot I feel by my inside, unt in my headt —vot iss make idt? I am nodt trunk, because I haf nodt hadt no whisky; budt I feel trunk. I can see twice so many oof eeverything as dare iss, unt my headt idt iss hum like a humming pirdt. Ach! I pelieve me I am boisoned!"

He cuddled down, fearing the Blackfeet would return, and tried to adjust his mental balance, but in the latter failed.

He even became dizzier, and more nauseated as the time went by.

But he seemed to have escaped the Blackfeet.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### PAWNEE BILL PUZZLED.

Though Pawnee Bill had slept so soundly that he had not heard the departure of Buffalo Bill and Nick Nomad, he was aroused by the noise made when the baron took his wild plunge out of the camp and into the Blackfoot trail.

Starting up, he looked round, and was amazed by the discovery that he was alone.

"Hello!" he said, rising to a sitting position, and feeling for his revolver. "They've left the camp. I heard them going, and that waked me. But I wonder what it means?"

With his blanket folded round him, he sat listening to the tumult in the trail, the sounds receding.

Then, when nothing happened, he arose and looked about.

"Some sneaking Blackfoot tried to get into the camp likely, and they have chased him. And the reason they didn't rouse me is that they thought, as I had a headache last evening and ate no supper, that I needed rest."

So confident was Pawnee Bill that he was right in this that he set himself to await patiently the return of his friends and their explanations.

He sat on a rock at the edge of the camp, overlooking the trail, and spent his time in listening quietly, until the wild Blackfoot hub-bub broke forth, the sound indicating that some one was being attacked or pursued.

"They've bumped into the Blackfeet," he said, rising; "I reckon its up to me to go down there and lend help."

He went back and got a rifle, and was about to set

### Pawnee Bill Puzzled.

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out, when he heard light footsteps, and Little Cayuse came into view, at the side of the trail.

"Ah! It's you!" said Pawnee. "What's happened?"

Instead of answering, the Piute came slowly into the camp, staring about; then sat down.

"What's the matter?" demanded Pawnee Bill. "You hurt?"

"Mucho bad hurt!" groaned the Piute.

"Where? Let me see."

"Hurt here," said the Piute, tapping his head.

Pawnee Bill dropped down, and ran his fingers over the flannel headband and through the thick hair.

"I don't feel anything. Where's the wound?"

"Inside head," said Little Cayuse.

"A headache?"

"Mucho hurt here, too!"

Little Cayuse pressed his hand to his heart.

It took a minute for Pawnee Bill to discover that the Piute was referring to mental, instead of physical distress.

"Your feelings are hurt? Is that it? What's the trouble? Speak up quick, for there seems to be a fight going on down there somewhere, and I gamble that I'm needed."

"Ver' fine Blackfoot girl," said the Piute; "she make me fool."

Pawnee Bill stared.

"I guess I don't understand this, and I haven't time to try to understand it. I'm off down the trail. Do you go or stay?"

"Me stay."

"All right. Keep watch on the camp."

Pawnee Bill hurried along the trail in the direction of the sounds he had heard. They shifted from the trail and swung westward; then came toward him.



"At a guess," he muttered, "I'd say that necarnis and the others are making a home run, with the Blackfeet right behind them, trying to beat them out. Well, they're coming this way, and right here I stop for the present."

The sounds changed in character. Apparently, the pursuers had been baffled. They seemed to be beating about, at a loss which way to go. Then the Blackfoot yelping died out.

"Cody has thrown them off the scent. He will come on now, as soon as he feels that it is safe."

He waited an hour in the trail, and no one appeared.

It gave him time to do a lot of rather wild guessing as to the motives taking Buffalo Bill and the others out of the camp and down toward the village, as well as surmises about the actions and meaning of the Piute.

When he had spent the better part of two hours in the trail without developing anything, Pawnee returned slowly to the camp.

Little Cayuse lay near the middle of the camp, sound asleep.

When touched by the toe of Pawnee's boot, he did not wake.

"He's beat out. Well, let him sleep. But I wonder what has happened."

Even when morning came, and the sun rose, the Piute lay sleeping like one dead.

As neither Buffalo Bill, the baron, nor Nomad, whom Pawnee Bill assumed were together, appeared at the camp, uneasiness caused him to wake the Piute. It took some shouting, and a good deal of shaking to accomplish it.

Little Cayuse roused up at length, sleepy-eyed and gaping.

Pawnee Bill threw water in his face, and offered him the canteen.

"Take a good drink of water, and it will help you."

But even the smell of the canteen water made the Piute sick, and he pushed it away.

"Maybe you can tell me what has happened," said Pawnee. "Where were you in the night?"

"Me no know."

"You mean you got lost and wandered round? Well, why did you leave the camp? Did you see Cody?"

"No."

"You didn't see anybody?"

"Ver' fine Blackfoot girl."

"You said that once before. What do you mean by it?"

Little Cayuse gave himself a shake, to arouse his dulled mental faculties; but it was hard work.

"Mucho han'some Blackfoot girl."

"Well, what about her?"

"Me not know."

"Now, that's likely, isn't it? Tell me what you mean."

"Me no sabe."

"You don't understand what happened to you. Is that what you mean?"

"Ai. Me no sabe."

"Well, where have you been?"

"Me no sabe."

"Say, son, don't provoke me. You were gone from the camp when we came back to it, and you didn't appear later. In the night Cody and the others disappeared. I think they got into trouble with the Blackfeet, but from what I heard I thought they escaped, though I don't know. Then you came back, and you don't tell me anything."

"Ver' fine Blackfoot girl."

"She came to the camp?"

"Ai.



"What did she do?"

Little Cayuse gave himself another shake.

"Me no know."

"Oh, come! Did she coax you to leave the camp with her?"

"She say we be ver' fine friend."

"Then what?"

"She drew my picture on little lookin'-glass."

"This Blackfoot friend of yours was an artist, eh?"

"Mucho funny picture. Heap long nose."

"She was making sport of you."

"She say find little spot in picture. Me no can find. Then me go sleep."

"Deserted Jericho! Say, let me get the nub of that. A Blackfoot girl came here to the camp while we were gone, drew a picture on a little looking-glass, and asked you to find something in the picture."

"Ai."

"You tried to; then you went to sleep."

"Ai."

Pawnee Bill looked thoughtfully at the Piute. Little Cayuse's face and eyes had a heavy, stupid look, much like that of a man recovering from a drunken debauch. It was plain that it was an effort for him to remember or to think clearly.

"It begins to look as though this Blackfoot put some sort of kibosh on you, son. It sounds a good bit like the witchcraft some Indians are capable of working. I wonder why you let her come into the camp and monkey with you in that fashion?"

"She ver' fine."

"A good looker, eh? And you fell for that. You aren't the first one, son. I'd gamble dollars to dornicks that the Blackfoot Basilisk was at the bottom of it. I suppose you didn't see anything of the old Blackfoot woman?"

"No see."

"When you left the camp and followed this exceedingly handsome Blackfoot girl, where did you go?"

"No know."

"You saw nobody?"

"Saw Basilisk."

"Ah! Perhaps we're getting at something now. You saw the Basilisk. What did she do?"

"Little Cayuse mucho scared, and run fast."

"You ran away?"

"Ai."

"Was this in the Blackfoot village?"

"Me no know."

"You haven't the least idea where it was?"

"No sabe where."

"Then, after that, what did you do?"

"Hunt for camp and Pa-e-has-ka."

"You didn't find Pa-e-has-ka, but you found the camp; and here you are. Well, this is as odd a yarn as I've heard spun in many a day."

He still looked into the heavy face of Little Cayuse. Incidentally, through habit, he voiced his thoughts:

"It doesn't seem possible that this Blackfoot girl could have had anything to do with the disappearance of the others. Still, you can't tell. Anyway, it's up to me to find out what's happened to them. To do this, I've first got to find out where they are. Little Cayuse will be worth about as much as a wooden man in trailing, so I'll have to rely on myself. I guess I'll have something to eat, and then see what I can do."

He got out crackers and meat and opened a can of fruit.

"We'll just have a cold snack, Cayuse," he said. "This camp is too close to the trail to risk a fire to cook something, eh? How's your appetite?"

"No good," groaned the Piute; "no can eat."

"Mine wasn't, last evening; but I feel sort of wolfish this morning. My headache is gone, too."

"Little Cayuse got um head bad. Wuh!"

"Sorry for you, son. I know how it is. Try the water, anyway."

Little Cayuse lifted the offered canteen, then put it down.

"No can do."

"Anything the matter with the water?"

Pawnee Bill sniffed it.

Holding it off, he stared at the canteen, a sudden doubt of the quality of the water striking him.

"You filled these canteens, Little Cayuse?"

"Ai."

"Where?"

"Spring down there."

"You didn't fill 'em from that spring on top of the mountain?"

"No."

"Probably that was a lie—the story Payallup Pete told about that spring on the mountain. You recollect it, Cayuse? He said he drank of that spring, and it made him crazy as a water bug. But if you didn't—"

He put down the canteen, and regarded the Piute attentively again.

"From the things you've been telling me I reckon you might have filled these canteens at that spring without ever knowing it. Perhaps you thought, while we were gone, you'd try that spring water; and then it got in its work on you. Then maybe you filled up the canteens."

"No."

"If you did drink it, and Payallup Pete didn't lie to beat the band, the poison in that water may have made you bughouse. You seem to have been, and seem to be so yet to a certain extent."

"No. Me not bughouse."

"Never was a crazy man but didn't think he was the only sane one in the community. So your opinions stand disqualified. Are you sure you saw any Indian girl at all?"

"Me ver' sure."

"But, if you went batty, you could see anything, even if it wasn't there; and the things you really saw wouldn't be as they actually looked, in your eyes. Deserted Jericho! Cayuse, you couldn't have let the Basilisk come into the camp and imagined she was a handsome young woman?"

"No!" the Piute exploded, moved to indignation.

"But, as I said, you're disqualified. If you thought the Basilisk was a handsome young woman, you thought it, and couldn't help it. And if Buffalo Bill—— But that's nonsense."

Pawnee Bill ate his food, but he refrained from touching the water in the canteens.

"I'll take no chances," he said.

And to make sure the water was good that he meant to carry, he emptied all the canteens, then filled his own at the lower spring, which they had tested and found all right.

"I hate to leave this camp unguarded," he remarked, when he came back. "Blackfeet may find it, and carry off everything. They're a set of rouges and thieves. So, I think, Cayuse, I'll ask you to help me cache this stuff, so they can't find it easy."

It was work which took time, because of the care used.

The sun was two hours in the sky before Pawnee Bill had finished the task to his satisfaction, and was ready to set forth to investigate the mystery that surrounded the disappearance of his friends.



## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### THE TREASURE HUNTERS.

"Here's the place. Look behind that bush and you'll see it."

It was Payallup Pete who spoke.

Happy Chance stepped to the bush, bent it back, and looked at the rock behind it. With him was his slim Mexican servant, Pedro.

On the rock was the outline of an arrow, and above it the initials, "J. G." They were not deeply scratched, but the shade of the bush had kept off lichens, and the letters could be seen clearly.

"Right off there," said Payallup, pointing, "was the camp, where I wandered from when I found this."

His finger was directed to the mountain top.

"Over beyond it, as you know, is the Bottomless Pit, into which, it's said, John Grayson tumbled with his wagon and horses, and the treasure he had in the wagon."

"Bring up that pick and shovel, Pedro," commanded Chance. "We'll soon see if there's anything cached here."

Pedro brought up the articles, and Chance began to use them, with Payallup Pete taking a hand in the digging when nothing was found quickly.

The soil, long packed, was hard; but when they had gone down about three feet, and began to think they would find nothing, they struck a flat stone.

Pulling this out, they found a tobacco box of small size, so rusted that it was ready to fall to pieces.

Chance caught it up hurriedly, and, when its rusty hinges refused to move, he crushed in the top. Care-

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fully, he pulled out a folded sheet of paper, mildewed with age.

"No gold," he said, disappointed; "but we'll see what this is."

There was writing on the paper, but it was in lead pencil, and the paper was so old and decayed, and the writing now so faint that at first he could make nothing of it. The sheet had to be handled with care to keep from tearing it.

But, by dint of close scrutiny and some guessing, he extracted the following:

"While driving over the mountain, my team and wagon fell with me into the hole that is just beyond this mountain. My little girl, who was with me, I threw out of the wagon when I saw it was going over. I'm hoping she escaped; anyway, she did not fall with me into the hole. I had in the wagon a lot of gold dust and nuggets, that I had worked five years to get together. I fell on one of the horses, and got a broken leg; and the horses were killed. After staying in that hole until I got well, I got out on a raft through the river that goes through the cañon. Then I climbed to this place, intending to get down to the town. I couldn't bring the gold all the way with me; it was heavy and I felt weak, so I cached it at the foot of a pine that stands about three miles south of the Black-foot village. I marked the pine as I have marked this rock. It stands on a low bluff, back from the Black-foot trail. Behind the pine is a big, three-cornered stone. When I got here I was nearly played out, and so I rested. I had nothing to eat, but there was water in a spring on the mountain. I drank some of it, and it made me sick—ever since I have been getting sicker, and I have a feeling that I am going crazy. So, while my mind is still good enough for it, I'm writing this,



and shall bury it here, and I've marked the rock. If anything happens to me and this is found, I want the person finding it to make a search first for my daughter. I failed to find her, but I'm hoping she lived, and is in good hands. Then he is to go to the cache and get the gold. It is for her, if she lives. Whoever does this can take of the gold whatever amount his kind heart may prompt him to think is right for the trouble he has been put to. And he has now, in advance, the blessing of a man who fears that he is dying or losing his mind.

(Signed) JOHN GRAYSON."

Payallup Pete and the slim Mexican listened breathlessly, while Happy Chance pieced this together.

"This puts us on the right track," said Payallup. "Right over t'other side the mountain is the Blackfoot village, and the Blackfoot trail is plain enough. I reckon we ought to locate that cache easy, if the Blackfeet don't swarm on us."

Chance sat in a crouched attitude, staring at the mildewed paper.

"Looks like," he said, "that's a purty strong appeal to us to do right by the girl."

"We can figger about that," said Payallup, "after we locate the cache, if we do."

"That's right, too," said Chance.

He stood up, still looking at the paper. His manner was uneasy and furtive. Folding the paper, he was about to put it in his pocket.

"This is going to fall to pieces," he said, stopping the movement of his hand; "so I reckon 'twould be wise if we made a copy of it."

"Got a copy in my head, I have," declared Payallup. "What more do we want? We can recklect that **easy enough**."

"Memories aire treacherous," said Chance.

He drew out a notebook and pencil, tore off a sheet, and began to copy the statement of John Grayson.

Having done this, he thrust the copy in his inner pocket, and put the mildewed original in his pocket-book.

"By all rights, of course," he urged, "this gold, if we find it, belongs to the girl."

"Mebbyso," said Payallup doubtfully. "But how aire we goin' to be shore that Waif Western is the girl what's named in that writin'?"

"All the details tally," said Chance.

"Do they? I dunno about that. Waif Western was found, so it's said, at the further base o' the mountain, by some prospector. He took her into a town. There Buffalo Bill seen her, and gave her that name, because no one knowed what her right name was. She was then jest a baby, a couple years old. That's the story. Balking on it, she has been up here with her adopted father, Tom Tempest, huntin' for that gold, and some record of her supposed father; and Buffalo Bill's bunch aire pushin' a further search right now. But does it prove anything, so far as she is concerned?"

"On the face of it, it does," said Chance.

Payallup laughed nervously.

"What you ought to do, Chance, is to stick to your work down in the town. You ain't fit fer a sport," he sneered.

"No, I reckon I ain't," said Chance.

"If we find that gold, aire you goin' to turn it over to Waif Western? I'd like to know."

"We'll see about that," said Chance. "Mebbe she isn't the daughter of this man."

"You're gittin' sens'ble again. Recklect that you're needin' money, same as me."

Chance began to fill in the hole that had been dug.

"Anyways, whatever we do," he said, "we ain't got

no reason to let anybody see that we have been gopher-in' at this point. So we'll hide it—the work we've done."

They hid it carefully, packing into the hole all the soil they could, and strewing the rest of it wide. When they had finished there was no evidence of their work—that could be seen, unless the bush was pulled aside.

Having finished, Happy Chance broke the old tobacco box to pieces and threw the pieces away.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

## THE BARON'S DISCOVERY.

Apparently the baron had not gone in the direction he thought he did, or his further wanderings had taken him far away. Yet in his still bewildered mind, he was convinced that he was approaching the camp, when he heard a sound that resembled chopping.

He stopped and lifted himself like a cautious rabbit. "Little Cayuse musdt be cutting vood for der fire," he thought. "Yaw, dot iss idt; unt now I am close by."

Many experiences having taught him caution, however, he did not rise and make a rush to get into the supposed camp, but made, instead, a quiet approach.

When he was near the spot whence came the sound, he halted again to listen carefully. Voices reached him, in a low grumble.

"Hoob-a-la! Dot iss—— No, dot iss *nodt* Puffalo Pill. Vot iss der meanness?"

Then he heard the name of Payallup Pete spoken by Happy Chance.

"Bayallup Bete! Yiminidy! Vos iss dot dinhorn doing oudt here by ower camp in? He iss no goot, anyvare. I guess I petter dake me some looks."

He took a look, through the screen of a bush. He saw Payallup Pete swinging a pick, and Happy Chance standing by him directing the work. The third member of the group was a slim young Mexican.

But the baron discovered that this was not the site of Buffalo Bill's camp. He did not know where he was, and his head spun dizzily because of this new uncertainty.



"I am sdill trunk," he muttered. "Dot musdt be idt. I vos nefer pefore trunk vhen I tidn't trink notting, budt I am now. I haf heardt dot der air oof dhis moundain iss like vine, unt I pelieve idt. I haf sval-lered too mooch oof der moundain airs, unt idt iss go to my headt unt my sdomach, so dot my headt sbin roundt, unt I feel like some fools. I am disgustedt mit myselluf."

He was listening, while muttering.

"Drive the pick in here," commanded Chance; "you're gopherin' too far to the right."

"I'm right in front of the roots o' the old tree," said Payallup, but he shifted the direction of his strokes.

The German saw an old pine, that had its top blown off in some storm, and its trunk wrenched and rotting. Behind it was a large triangular rock.

"Der meanness oof vot I am seeing ain'dt so clear like sunlighdt—dot iss, oof I am seeing anyt'ing."

When he had loosened the top soil, Payallup Pete took up a spade and began to throw out the dirt.

After he had worked ten minutes Happy Chance relieved him.

They worked half an hour or more, after they had been sighted by the baron, and went down to a considerable depth. Now and then the Mexican took a hand with the pick or spade.

As they sank the hole, it was apparent that their excitement grew. Then it was as clear that they had met disappointment. Payallup Pete filled the air with profanity, when at last he came climbing out of the hole.

"Ain't nothin' in there, and never has been in there," he growled.

"I'm admittin' it looks it," Chance admitted. "But, first, I'm going to sink another hole alongside this one."

That old tree is rotten and the marks on it aire jest about gone. Maybe it has been thrown out of plumb by the storm that tore the top off. Looks to me like it once was leanin' more to the south'ard."

They began to sink a hole in this new place, and worked away industriously, while the Mexican went out into the trail and watched there. In doing this he placed himself so close to the baron that the latter deemed it wise to retreat, which he did with exceeding care.

When he had gained a point that offered greater security, the baron sank down and tried again to hear what was being said. But he was now too far off. However, he could plainly catch the sounds made by the pick and shovel.

For more than an hour the work went on.

The baron, listening and speculating, was amazed that Chance and Payallup Pete were in the region. At the same time, he realized that his head was not right, so that, occasionally, he held arguments with himself, tending to prove that he was hearing nothing, and had seen nothing.

He seemed to have argued all the sounds away finally. At any rate he heard nothing.

When a considerable time had elapsed after this, he ventured to investigate, and found that the three men had left the hole by the tree, and there was no longer any hole there.

The baron rubbed his eyes and stared in perplexity. "Der tree is dare, unt der sdone iss dare, but der hole is gone!"

Then his mind grasped the suggestion that probably the hole had been filled in.

He approached cautiously, to see about this; and at first was ready to declare that the whole thing had been part of a nightmare. The hole had been covered over



with exceeding care; dead leaves and sticks had been strewn on the new-turned earth, and all traces of digging had been removed.

But, when the baron got down on his fat knees and carefully scraped the leaves and sticks away he saw the evidence of the digging.

"Whoob!" he whispered. "I am nit treaming. Here idt iss, unt I seen der t'ings vot I seen. Budt I vonder vot iss der meanness?"

He stood up and looked round like a staring owl.

"Nopody iss in sighdt oof me. So I vill do idt. Der hole iss a cache. In der fairst hole vos notting. Budt in der second der vos meppyso something. I vill seen."

He began to dig with his fingers. Then he drew his sheath knife and tackled the job with that. If the earth had not been so newly turned and soft he would have found the work hard and difficult, but he went down easily, throwing the dirt out with his hands, flinging it over his shoulders, so that he looked like a huge gopher, burrowing.

While he was thus engaged, with his head in the hole, a sudden footfall behind him arrested his attention, and then a heavy hand fell on his back.

The baron came out of the hole in precipitate haste, startled, but ready to fight. In his hand was his knife, with which he had been cutting into the soil. With this in his hand he whirled.

Before him he saw Pawnee Bill and Little Cayuse.

"Ouch!" he said, ducking, and feeling guilty, though he did not know why. "Ton'dt hidt me."

"So it's you?"

"Who dit you t'ink?"

"We thought so, at first; then we didn't know. What's this mean, anyway?"

The baron sat up, like a fat woodchuck.

"I ton'dt know vot idt means."

"You know why you were digging?"

"Oh, him! I am digging to seen vot der odder fellers vos digging to findt oudt."

"What other fellows?"

"Habby Chance, unt Bayallup Bete, unt der Mexican."

"I guess you're crazy."

"Yaw! I haf been."

"They're not round here, baron."

"Oof nodd, my graziness iss incurable."

Pawnee Bill regarded him attentively.

"Why did you leave the camp in the night—you and Cody? You were on guard."

"Ask me somet'ing easy; I ton'dt know."

"You don't know why you left the camp?"

"I ton'dt. I heardt somet'ing calling me, unt I t'ought I heardt old Nompadt. I am t'inking he iss in trouple. So I chomp indo der drail, and soon I ton'dt know vare I am. Der t'ings I seen unt heardt make my headt sbin roundt so fasdt idt iss sdill sbinning. Dhen der Plackfeet got afdher me. I am running so fasdt dot I fall down. I t'ink I am near der camp. Vhen I am feeling safe, in der morning, I try to gidt to der camp; budt I come here. Unt here iss Habby Chance unt Payallup, mit a Mexican, digging. So I t'ink I vill see vot idt iss."

Pawnee Bill stepped off a distance of a dozen yards, inspected the surroundings, and viewed the trail.

"Cayuse came in this morning, crazy," he said, on returning, "with a yarn about an Indian girl that had hypnotized him, and induced him to leave the camp. Well, we'll talk about that later. You didn't dig this hole, Schnitz?"

"I am digging idt vhen you come. Habby Chance digged idt fairst."

"It seems singular, if true, that he is out here, with

that rascal, Payallup Pete. But if they are, and sunk this hole, they must have concealed something in it. Like you, I have a curiosity to know what it was."

Getting into the burrow in which the baron had been gophering, Pawnee Bill attacked it, with Little Cayuse standing in the trail as a guard, and soon got to the bottom of the recently excavated soil.

Not until he had opened each of the new holes to the bottom did he stop.

"Nothing here," he said.

"Dhey vos sbeaking oof dot tree unt der rock," said the baron.

Pawnee Bill made a close examination of the tree. Time and the growth of the tree had nearly obliterated the old marks of the knife, but Pawnee found the outline of an arrow, and the initials, "J. G.," in a place that had once been smoothed.

"There was a cache here, Schnitz; that's plain enough."

"An arrow, unt Chay Chee. Vot iss der meaningness oof dot?"

"Now, you've got me, Schnitz. 'J. G.' is, no doubt, the initials of the man who made the cache, and from the looks of the bark he made it a long while ago."

"Himmel!"

"What's bit you?"

"Say, Bawnee, I t'ink I am seeing some lightnings."

"Pass it on to me."

"Dot gelt vot iss pelong to der fader oof Vaif Vestern! You ar-re remembering dot?"

A flush passed over Pawnee Bill's face.

"I guess your recent head indisposition is gone, dear baron; anyway, your coco is showing up better than mine. I think you've hit it. Waif's father's name was John Grayson, and it looks to a man up a tree as though those are his initials. If so——"

"Oof so, idt iss look to anodder man oop a sdump, dot he iss bury his gelt here, eh?"

"You're hitting it."

"Dhen I seen vot I tidt seen—Habby Chance unt Bayallup, unt der Mexican digging by dhis hole in. I vos nodd treaming."

"It sure looks as though Chance and Payallup got a line on this cache, and opened it."

"Budt dit dhey findt der gelt? Dot iss der exciting kvestion I am asking oof mineselluf."

"If they did, they took it away with them, for there is nothing here now."

The baron stared into the yellow holes as if he fancied the gold might be in them, and overlooked.

"Idt iss nodd here. Darefore idt iss a clearness idt iss somevare else. Off dey got idt, der vay to findt oudt is to foller. Iss idt not?"

Pawnee Bill stepped off and began to search closely for tracks.

"Ah!" he cried. "Here are some. Take a look at them, Schnitz."

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## CHAPTER XXXIX.

### A DANGEROUS SITUATION.

The tracks led to the near-by trail, where they vanished.

But, as the course before entering the trail indicated the direction taken, Pawnee Bill and Schnitzenhauser fell in and advanced along it, with much caution.

"We can get to the end of this puzzle very soon, Schnitz, if we overtake them. But our chief business is to look for our pards. How are you feeling now?"

"Hoongry."

Pawnee Bill unslung his food bag, with an amused laugh.

"I guess you're coming round all right, Schnitz. But I wish I knew what really was the matter with you, if anything."

"Oof anyt'ing? You t'ink I am running a pluff?"

"I know you wouldn't try to run a bluff on me, but you have puzzled me. Would you mind telling me just how you were affected?"

"I vos infected efery way. Alreadty I haf toldt you."

But he tried to tell it again, while he put away the meat and crackers Pawnee handed out to him.

"I have collected a few fool ideas about it, which are probably all wrong," Pawnee admitted. "Some time, when we know the truth, I'll line 'em out to you. Your symptoms showed a large-sized case of jag."

"But I haf nodd efen seen der schmall oof whisky," the baron protested.

"I guess that's right."

"I admit I vos trunk, unt I am nodd feeling yoost

### A Dangerous Situation.

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right yedt. Budt how couldt I gedt me some trunk-  
enness mitout trinking?"

"I pass that up, Schnitz. You didn't touch that spring of foolish water on top of the mountain? You know the yarn Payallup Pete strung about the effect that had on him once."

"He iss sooch a liar dot you can't peliefe me. Pe-sites, I dit nodd trink idt."

"Cayuse was missing from the camp, you know; and it has struck me that, while he was gone, the water might have been changed in the canteens. You can ask Cayuse about it. But he doesn't know anything. He seems also to have been drunk, or crazy."

"Dot iss idt. I am grazy. I know now dot I am a madtman vhen der camp I am leafing. Yaw, I am ashamed oof me, budt idt iss der troot."

They went on, when the baron had satisfied his hunger.

Little Cayuse was worth nothing at trailing, but he followed the others in an apparently depressed frame of mind. He had not recovered from the spell that had been cast upon him.

"It's pretty sure that Chance and those with him went this way," declared Pawnee; "so if we watch closely the sides of the trail, we ought to discover where they left it."

"You vatch dot site, unt I vill vatch dhis," said the baron. "I am seeing notting yedt. But—" He drew himself up abruptly. "Himmel! Some vun iss caming."

They had barely time to slide to one side, when a beautiful Indian girl appeared in the trail.

"Little Cayuse's Blackfoot beauty, I'd bet a million!" Pawnee muttered. "And it looks as though she saw us. But we'll keep down and—"



Little Cayuse stood up, his eyes shining, his whole body trembling.

The Blackfoot girl stopped when she saw him.

"Hi, there!" Pawnee whispered, as Cayuse stepped out into the trail.

But the Piute paid no heed—in fact, he seemed not to hear the command.

The girl fixed her black eyes on the spot where Pawnee and the baron were crouching. Then she began to back down the trail, with Little Cayuse moving toward her.

Not knowing but that behind her were a number of Blackfeet, Pawnee Bill did not leap up to enforce his order until it was too late. The girl had turned in flight, and Little Cayuse was still following her, now at a run.

"Deserted Jericho!" Pawnee growled, as he got in motion in the trail. "Now, what do you think of that?"

"Maype idt iss a drap," warned the baron.

"That's so. It has a queer look, anyhow."

Pawnee Bill stopped, and, with his revolver ready, he bent forward in the trail, listening.

The pattering of moccasins sounded plainly.

"Baron, this gets my goat!" he cried

"Is dare some Plackfeedts aheadt?"

"There may be. But what do you think of Cayuse?"

"He iss got der graziness vorse as I hadt idt."

"I believe you."

Cautiously they moved along the trail, expecting to butt into a band of Blackfeet at any moment. The girl and the Piute, moving more rapidly, were drawing away, so that the sounds of their running feet came less distinctly.

But no Blackfeet were encountered.

When it began to seem that no trap or ambush of any sort had been intended, they increased their pace.

"They went straight ahead along the trail, I think," said Pawnee, slowing up; "but I can't be sure of it. What's your idea, baron?"

Whatever ideas the baron had were too confused for clear expression.

When they had gone on a quarter of a mile or so, a narrow trail was found leading toward the Blackfoot lodges, whose tops, from that point, could be distinctly seen.

Pawnee Bill made a careful examination of the ground.

"Dhey eidher vent aheadt, or oddervise," said the baron, as if this declaration was the height of wisdom.

Pawnee Bill laughed. Confused and anxious as he was, his light-heartedness would now and then express itself.

"You're sure a wise guy, baron," he declared.

"Yaw, you bedt me!"

"From some remarks you make I think your head is still doing the pin-wheel act."

"Idt iss. When I run fasdt, idt shakes oop der whisky vot I didn't trink, unt I am feeling der ineffectiveness oof idt. My headt iss go roundt like a vagon wheel. Budt from der looks, der Biute's headt idt iss go roundt like two vagon wheels. Dot vor sure vos a funny pitzness."

"That doesn't half say it. Of course, that was the Blackfoot girl he told me about, and she sure has got him bewitched the worst way. Did you notice how his mouth dropped open when he saw her there in the trail? Then he jumped up and began to walk toward her as if he couldn't help it."

"I haf seen idt. Dot Plackfoot iss a vitch. Unt she iss so hantsome as peautiful. I ton'dt plame Cayuse for losing oof his headt. Oof she vould look at me dot vay I vouldt lose mine."

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"Here's hoping she won't look at you!"

Pawnee was trying to discover if the tracks of the girl's moccasins took the little side trail that ran toward the village.

"A girl like that must have a small foot," he said; "so look close for little moccasin tracks."

"I ton'dt know oof she hadt a foodt. I tidn't see notting but dot peautiful face. Idt vos bainted like der fire screen oof a t'eater."

Pawnee Bill laughed again.

"To be hitting a hard trail with a pair of bughouse assistants! Baron, I need sympathy."

"Yaw, I susbeet idt. You ton'dt seen no steps oof a foot?"

"The ground is too hard. What shall we do?"

"I vouldt like to seen dot bainted face again. Oof she vos a Blackfoot she must haf py der willage gone."

"We don't know where this trail leads. We'll try the one going toward the village. Keep your eyes and ears open."

"Dhey are vide."

They advanced along this trail as cautiously as the other.

"How anxious I've been about Cody and Nomad I couldn't put into words," said Pawnee, "but you understand it. It's the blindest guesswork to try to figure out what has happened to them. But doesn't the chance seem good that they fell into the hands of the Blackfeet?"

"Dot iss righdt. Unt now idt iss Liddle Cayuse."

"And if they did," Pawnee continued, "I dislike to think of the treatment they have probably received."

"Dose Plackfeedt ar-re badt medicine."

"Led by that old woman they call the Basilisk, they'd do anything. You remember how they tried to burn us in that cave under the mountain?"

"I can nefer forgedt idt."

"So, if Pard Bill and Nomad are prisoners of the Blackfeet——"

"Tond't sbeak oof idt!"

The way seeming clear, they hurried faster.

Suddenly a mongrel dog jumped into the trail, crouched when it saw them, then dashed back into the bushes and began to bark.

With an exclamation of angry impatience, Pawnee Bill stopped.

"We had trouble with a cur like that once before, and probably it is the same one," he said. "If I could get my hands on it, I'd gladly slit its throat."

"Yoost a dog barking ton'dt mean notting to an Inchun. Of idt iss heardt der willage in der Plackfeedt vill t'ink ve ar-re some skunks. Der only tifficuldy iss dot maype he von'dt kvit idt."

Pawnee Bill drew one of the gold-handled knives he always carried. Made by Price, the veteran knifemaker of the West, it was a wonderful weapon in the hands of Pawnee Bill.

He stood in the trail, balancing the knife in his hand, waiting for the dog to show itself, and intending to throw the knife into it. It would be a quiet and easy way of stilling its noise.

Retreating further into the bushes, the animal again came back close to the trail.

Then it barked more explosively and threshed about at a wild rate.

"Shall we go on past it?" Pawnee asked.

"Unt haf idt snabbing at our heels? Idt iss a kvestion. Sooner as late dot noise iss going to be heardt, unt ve vill haf a fighdt on ower handts."

With the knife poised, Pawnee bent forward, listening.

"Did I hear something?"



"You can't hear a dog."

"Something else. Listen."

The dog was making a terrific noise, so that it seemed impossible to hear anything else.

"In the bushes, behind the dog," said Pawnee Bill suddenly. "Blackfeet are there, and are trying to sneak on us. Get back, baron."

They turned about just in time and retreated. For the next instant a flight of whistling spears swept through the air where they had been standing.

"Put on steam, baron."

Then Pawnee Bill, leading the way, stopped with a jerk that threw the baron heavily against him.

In the trail ahead had appeared the Blackfoot witch called the Basilisk. In her skinny hand she held a lance. She lifted it, and a shrill cry came from her lips.

It summoned to her side two Blackfoot warriors, who were armed with lances.

With Blackfeet behind, and those armed figures in the trail ahead, the situation looked critical. To get out of the trail was difficult, as the bushes lining it were a thorny hedge.

"Follow!" Pawnee Bill yelled, and ran straight on.

His knife was still in his hand.

At the biggest warrior he hurled the blade, and the warrior went down, rapped on the head by the heavy handle.

The hag and the other warrior flashed their lances. Pawnee gave a diving leap, and the hissing weapons sped over his bent head. The next instant his rush had knocked down the warrior and the Basilisk, and, with the knife caught up, and in his hand again, he was flying on for the other trail.

Behind him pounded the baron, having enough to do, without fighting, to keep up. The screeches of the hag were puncturing the air. The larger crowd of

Blackfeet filled the air with yells. Then a revolver cracked.

"Keep low, baron!" Pawnee yelled.

It was his experience that Indians always, and nearly every one else, shot high when excited or in a hurry.

With heads down they charged over the trail, with the Blackfeet baying like foxhounds behind them.

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## CHAPTER XL.

### BAFFLED SEARCHERS.

In the dense scrub beyond the main trail, near the base of the mountain, Pawnee Bill and the baron dropped into a sheltered hollow, and felt temporarily secure.

The Blackfeet had not relinquished the chase, but, for the time, they had been distanced and beaten. The pursued men, breathing heavily, were flushed and heated, but were still game, and could have run farther.

"So long as they make a noise we can tell where they are, and know when to move on," said Pawnee; "and we can here take time to get our breath back."

"Yaw! Himmel! Dot vos close cutting."

"I'm wondering if that was an accident—our encounter with those ki-yis, or if they were laying for us? I'd really like to know."

"Vot iss der tifference?"

"If they were laying for us, it would go to prove that Cayuse was taken on to the village, and that the Blackfeet then came out for the purpose of capturing us when we followed."

"Unt dot girl?"

"You can't keep your mind off her, eh? Is it the beauty of the girl, her wonderful facial decoration, or the mystery of Cayuse's actions, that gets your angora?"

"I oxbeet idt iss all oof dhem dot puts mine goat in der stable. Likevise, unt also-o, Habby Chance unt Bayallup. I am dot mixet I wouldn't know myselluf oof I shouldt meet me."

"I'm regretting I didn't get my knife into that dog.

### Baffled Searchers.

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He'll make trouble again, if we try to get into the village."

"Vhen iss dhis dry to be made?" the baron asked.

"As soon as we can, if we throw the Blackfeet this time. We've just got to find out what has happened to Cody and Nomad. It's getting on my nerves now."

"Ton'dt ledt idt."

"Baron, I envy you. You're too fat to worry."

"Vot iss der usefulness?"

"That's right. The man that worries doesn't accomplish half as much as the man who doesn't. Are those ki-yis coming nearer?"

The baron sat up to listen.

"I tond't t'ink idt."

"That's good. Well, we'll rest a while."

They rested and waited an hour or more. The Blackfeet's yelping died out.

"Is your head clearer, baron?" said Pawnee Bill, at last.

"Idt mightd be better. Budt dot is nodt der kvestion. Oof you ar-re ready for vork, I am."

"We'll get up by the trail, then. Later, we'll see if we can edge over toward the village. To-night, if it can be done, I'm going in."

They did not return to the trail at the point they had left it. Caution sent them a mile farther on. But it seemed they had struck the Blackfeet again, nevertheless.

Pawnee Bill saw a head move in the bushes; then the baron saw it. The owner of the head was passing along in the trail or close by it.

"Anodder trap, meppyso," said the baron.

Having dropped to the ground they listened attentively.

"He's gone on, I guess," remarked Pawnee quietly, "and he may have been alone."

They made another advance.

This brought them to the trail at the point where the head had been seen, and their approach was as cautious and silent as they could make it.

Then they heard a grumble of voices, from a point not far off.

"White men," said Pawnee. "I wonder if we aren't butting into Payallup and Happy Chance?"

"Idt wouldt be a habby chance," the baron chortled.

"Wow!" Pawnee grunted. "Don't startle me that way again, baron, right now. I can't stand it. I might have to laugh."

The voices heard rose more distinctly as they crawled on. Then they beheld a rock, and it seemed clear that the men talking were behind the rock, in concealment.

"They're too noisy, for men in hiding, as they seem to be," thought Pawnee.

He had stopped again, to get the drift of what was being said, and to discover, if possible, who the men were.

They were Happy Chance and Payallup Pete, without any doubt. An even more interesting disclosure was that they were talking about the cache they had opened.

"That rock wasn't jest exactly three-cornered," Payallup Pete was saying. "The writin' called fer a sharp, three-cornered rock."

"But you saw the arrow and initials on the tree," growled Chance, who seemed tired or angry—angry, perhaps, because his quest had been a failure so far.

"Well, let's see what the writin' said, anyhow."

Chance grumbled again; but a rustle of paper sounded, and he began to read. It was his copy of the letter taken from the tobacco box cache on the mountain.

"Nothing about a sharp, three-cornered rock in

that!" he said. "I reckon there ain't a doubt we hit the right place."

Pawnee Bill was anxious to see that paper; what he had heard had been wonderfully illuminating. Up to that time he had not doubted Happy Chance, but doubts had come now.

He pinched the baron on the arm.

"Shall we call on our friends?" he whispered, with his lips at the baron's ear.

"Yoost as you say."

"You heard that?"

The baron nodded.

"Yaw! Dare iss a nigger in der voodpile, unt I couldt like to seen him."

"Come on, then."

Pawnee Bill rose, stepped to one side, then advanced quickly round the rock, coming face to face with the speakers. The baron shambled at his heels.

The surprise was complete. The three men began to rise hurriedly, and, with a swift motion, Chance doubled up the copy of the letter and thrust it into his pocket. His voice was startled.

"Ah! It's you! Pawnee; this is enough to make a man's hair turn white."

He held out his fat hand, and tried to force a gurgling laugh.

Payallup Pete's face had taken a pasty pallor, even less attractive than its usual whisky red. As for the Mexican, after springing up, he stood with his hat in his hand, twisting it nervously, while he looked from Chance to the visitors. Pawnee Bill gave him a close, searching, but swift, glance, and turned to Chance and Payallup.

"We heard you," he said, eying Chance, as he ac-



cepted the offered hand. "So we thought we'd join you."

He had not failed to note that the paper had been tucked quickly out of sight. Of itself, that was enough to arouse suspicion.

"You didn't hear much," said Chance, not able to conceal his fear that a good deal had been heard. "We was talking about the situation of things round here right now. They ain't what we'd like to have 'em."

"No?" queried Pawnee.

"I reckon you heard them Blackfeet?" said Chance. "If you was near, you couldn't help it."

"They weren't after you?" asked Pawnee.

"No. But it sounded like they was after some one. Could they have been making it hot for Cody? I see he ain't with you. And I don't see Nomad."

"We don't know where they are right now," said Pawnee Bill, made secretive by what he had heard, and by Chance's act.

"You knew we were out here, of course; but the surprising thing to me, Chance, is to see you here—and Payallup Pete."

"Them counterfeaters, you know," Chance explained. "There's two or three of 'em ain't never been run in yet, and I think they're round this mountain. So I'm out here to look for 'em."

By this time Pawnee Bill knew that Chance was double dealing. It made him even more cautious.

"There's big danger of you running into those Blackfeet, and I shouldn't think it would pay you to take the risk on the slim chance of finding any of old Monte's men still hanging round out here. You haven't got a lot of men along with you, back somewhere?"

"Just Payallup and Pedro," Chance admitted.

"Pedro's your servant, I think?"

"He is—and he's a fine boy."

Pawnee Bill studied the face of the slim Mexican lad again.

"Pedro," he said, "you're too good-looking to be risking your neck out here. Do you know it? Or perhaps for some reason you're not afraid of the Blackfeet? Have you ever been down in that Blackfoot village?"

"No been in village," said Pedro.

"Keep away from it, then," Pawnee laughed. "I'm not trying to throw a scare into him, Chance. But it's good advice for any one."

"That's right," said Chance.

"How long do you expect to stay out here?"

"Depends," Chance replied. "If we don't have better luck, I'm going to hit the home trail to-morrow—that is, if we don't run afoul of the Indians. It's been hard work to keep away from 'em."

Pawnee Bill talked amiably, professing to speak freely of the plans of himself and pards, but never for a moment letting anything drop that would indicate that he did not know where Buffalo Bill, Cayuse, and Nomad were.

But, as Happy Chance was equally wary, this amiable play amounted to nothing.

"Well, I wish you luck," said Chance finally. "But I'm judgin' that the gold Cody is lookin' for ain't going to be located readily. We've got to search along this hillside, and I reckon we'd better do it before it gets later, while the Blackfeet aire quiet. Which way aire you goin'?"

It was a plain intimation that the company of Pawnee and the baron was not desired.

"We're going to work over toward the village," Pawnee confessed.



"Think you'll find any signs of the gold over that way?" asked Chance, interested.

"No; but we hope to connect with Cody over there."

"How long aire you expectin' to be out?"

"Until we find that gold—or what has become of it."

"That's a big contract," muttered Chance. "I reckon you're due to stay out all summer."

"We've got a pointer or two," Pawnee admitted.

"That so? You don't mind saying what?"

"Cody is at the head of this expedition, you know," was Pawnee's answer.

"So you can't talk yourself? I might take back any message of hope, though, that you'd like to send to that girl, Waif Western. She is down in the town."

"Jest tell her that you met us, and we reported that the chances are good."

"All right," said the sheriff. "She'll be glad to hear it."

He extended his hand. Pawnee Bill looked him in the eye as he took it.

"We're going to find that gold, Chance," he said, "or learn what became of it. Recollect that Buffalo Bill is a man who never gets left."

"I guess that's right," Chance admitted uneasily. "Well, luck be with you."

Payallup Pete felt that he had to shake hands, and did it; then the Mexican put out his slim fingers.

"Kinda girlish-looking hands, Pedro, for tackling Blackfeet, if you should have to do it," said Pawnee, with a grin; "so I'm hoping you won't have to."

He stood watching them as they moved off into the trail.

"Baron," he said, "if trickery ever showed its cloven hoof, it's right here and now, and I admit I didn't think it of Chance. This shows you that you can't always

sometimes tell. Now, I'm going to give you a commission."

"Vot iss?"

"I want you to see if you can follow that sneaky trio and discover just what they're up to. They have found a letter which was written by Grayson, telling where the gold was cached; I heard that much, and so did you. I guess the place was back there where you found those holes, when I came on you. The gold wasn't found there, and they're muddled. But they're going to make a further hunt, and maybe they'll locate it yet. If they do they'll never report it, unless that report is forced from them. They're here to get that gold, and keep it."

"I pelieve me."

"So, you see, the work is cut out for you. Keep close to them, if you can, and be sure they don't know it."

"Unt you?"

"I've got to find out what has become of our friends."

"Dot dakes you into der Plackfoot willage."

"It will, I reckon."

"To-nighdt?"

"Yes."

"Vare shall ve meet again?"

"At that camp at the base of the mountain, where these mysterious disappearances began."

The baron looked sober.

"All righdt," he said. "Budt oof ve ton'dt—"

"Don't say it. We'll meet there, and everything is going to turn out right."

"Yaw, I pelieve me. Idt iss dime for der Schnitzenhauser luckiness to gidt to vork. Eferyt'ing iss going to run now like a vagon schliding downhill. I can feel idt by my bones in."

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"Good for you, baron. Cut out now, before they get too big a start. And caution, baron—caution."

The German started off, threaded his way carefully through the shrubbery, and disappeared.

"Now, for my part of the work," thought Pawnee. "And I guess it's the biggest end of the job."

## CHAPTER XLI.

SANDY MACKLIN.

Pawnee Bill did not try to enter the Blackfoot village until long after nightfall.

In the interval he had visited the hidden camp at the foot of the mountain, which had not been located by the Blackfeet in his absence, and secured a blanket of Blackfoot make, which was among the stores.

With this Blackfoot blanket round his shoulders, Pawnee set out for the village as soon as the darkness was deep enough to make the approach practicable.

It must be admitted that Pawnee Bill's ideas were hazy with doubt. So many notions conflicted with others that he could reach no satisfactory conclusion.

He had jumped to a half-formed opinion that Little Cayuse's Blackfoot beauty was Pedro, Happy Chance's slim Mexican. Pedro's features and general appearance were remarkably feminine. Dress him in the clothing of a Blackfoot girl, and paint his face a bit, and he would have filled Cayuse's description.

Pawnee's knowledge of the crazy water spring on the mountain rested wholly on the story told by Payallup Pete. Payallup had been so positive in his declarations as to what the water had done to him that none of Buffalo Bill's men had ventured to sample it.

Taking that story as a basis, it was easy to arrive at the opinion that Happy Chance's Mexican had lured Cayuse out of the camp for the purpose of being able to fill the canteens with that "crazy water."

"Yet the whole thing seems sublimely foolish," reflected Pawnee. "Payallup probably told a whopper about that water. I've known of springs that had

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arsenic in them, and other hurtful minerals, but never one that would turn a man temporarily crazy. Still, something set the baron off his hooks; there's no denying it. And that girl bewitched the Piute. He says she did it by inducing him to look into a mirror. That smacks of hypnotism. But now comes the kink in the rope, and I can't straighten it: Why would Chance and Payallup want to do that? To put Buffalo Bill's crowd out of the running? It sure looks it?"

He thought this over carefully while he picked his slow way to the village through the darkness, with the Blackfoot blanket round him.

"It sure looks as if there must be something in that 'crazy-water' theory. All the members of the party but myself drank from those canteens. I felt sick, and didn't touch it. It was lucky for me that I didn't, if that's so, about the water having something in it that goes to the head. Say that the canteens were juggled, and Pard Bill and Nomad got up in the night and wandered out of the camp. It's a hit-and-miss guess, then, as to where they are now. Still, the chances seem good that they could not have wandered round long in a half-loony condition without being raked in by the Blackfeet. That's why I've got to get into the village—to find out about that. If they're there, and still alive, they're in danger, for it's less than a week ago we had that fight with the Blackfeet, and some of the braves were killed. They'll want to get even, and Pard Bill and Nomad, Little Cayuse, too, if they've got him, will sure suffer."

He was not taking into account his own peril in trying to enter the village. That came as a part of the day's work, and all thoughts of his personal danger he put aside.

The village was well surrounded by a scrubby growth of bushes and trees, and lay not far from the

trail—in fact, the trail, or a part of it, entered the village, bending in from the west.

Pawnee Bill kept away from this trail, and came up to the lodges from the opposite direction.

There were camp fires in the lanes between the lodges, where suppers had been cooked, and warriors still were smoking by them, while here and there others moved about.

"Nothing to indicate whether they have prisoners or not," mused Pawnee, as he lay listening.

He went forward on his hands and knees until he was close up to the nearest lodge.

A squaw and child were in it, and he heard them talking.

The talk was in Blackfoot, and concerned trivial matters, what he heard of it; and he gained no information.

Half an hour or more Pawnee Bill lay in the darkness back of this lodge. He was waiting for the fires to die down and the warriors to enter their lodges.

He had hoped some sort of council would be gathered, so that from it he could get the drift of matters of keenest interest in the village. But the big lodge that he took to be the council lodge was dark and deserted.

Some of the smoking groups round the fire tarried and talked, as if they were discussing matters of moment, but that did not help Pawnee.

When the time was late, verging close on midnight, Pawnee Bill began to creep from lodge to lodge.

It was the Blackfoot custom to keep prisoners in a guarded lodge, and Pawnee Bill was hunting for a lodge that had a redskin crouched before it in the attitude of a sentry.

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looking, he usually was able to see the front of the next lodge, and so he could tell if any one was there.

At imminent risk he had covered the greater part of the village, so slowly that it had taken a long time. The moon was about due to rise, and he wanted to be out and away before it did.

Then he heard a grumbling voice—that of a white man. The man, apparently turning himself wearily, muttered and swore at his fate.

The man was not Buffalo Bill, nor a member of his party. But Pawnee slid closer to the lodge, and, with his ear against the ground, at the edge of the lodge skin, he listened.

When he heard no more he crawfished, and made sure that no guard was squatting before the lodge.

But out in front, a dozen yards away, a Blackfoot was huddled in his blanket by the dead embers of a fire, indulging in a smoke. Possibly, Pawnee Bill thought, this was the guard, who did not think close attention necessary.

Pawnee Bill did the crawfish act again, and once more got in the rear of the lodge.

"If I'm making a mistake here I'll know it soon enough, and so will the Blackfoot," he thought. "Still, here goes!"

With the razorlike point of his Price knife he slit the lodge skin, a single stroke opening it a yard. Then Pawnee pulled the cut edges apart and slipped in.

Standing in the interior blackness, he listened.

Near him a man was breathing in a manner to show that he was awake.

"Hist!" warned Pawnee Bill.

"Who is it?" came in answer.

"You're a white man?"

"Yep."

"And a prisoner?"

"You're guessin' it."

"All alone?"

"That's right. The guard's out front somewheres."

Pawnee Bill sank down softly.

"Say, who is this?" came the inquiry.

"I'll ask your name first," said Pawnee.

"Last name I owned up to was Sandy Macklin."

"I guess I know you, Macklin, or about you. You belonged to old Monte's crowd. I don't suppose you are aware that the sheriff is out in this vicinity, looking for you."

"I wish he'd look here, then. But I reckon you're one of his men."

"I'm one of Buffalo Bill's men."

Sandy Macklin breathed heavily, but said nothing.

"You're tied?"

"Like a bale of hay. If you'll run a knife through these ropes it will be the biggest favor you ever done any man. I'm nigh dead with the hurt of it."

"Just a minute. Who else is in the village here with you?"

"No one. There were three of us, but——"

"Buffalo Bill isn't here?"

"No."

"Sure of that, are you?"

"I think I'd know it. No, he ain't here."

"And no other white man?"

"No."

"No Indian is held here a prisoner? Buffalo Bill's Piute tracker is missing."

"If it's so, I don't know of it. I s'pose you crawled in here looking for 'em?"

"Yes, that's it."

Pawnee Bill's blade hunted for the ropes on the man's wrists, then went after those that held his ankles together.

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"Be quiet," he warned, "now that you're free."

"Free! Gee, I wish I was! The way my legs feel I don't reckon I can walk, and I've got to git out of this village before I can feel free. What's that guard doin', if you know?"

"Taking a smoke out by the camp fire. But he'll be here in half a dozen jumps, if he hears you."

The man moved his arms and legs, and twisted about, trying to restore circulation.

"I'm all knotted with cramps," he groaned.

"How long have you been here?" Pawnee, whispered.

"Two days. I was goin' to tell you. Me and two other fellers fell into the hands of that old witch woman, and was brought here. The other two were taken away yisterday to be killed by her, and my time was to-morrer. We thought we c'd hit a trail on the other side of the village, and wouldn't have to try to git out of the country by the trail leadin' to Rocket Range. But it took us furdur into the Blackfoot country, and that's why the Blackfeet caught us."

"You don't know sure that your friends were killed?"

"I was told it by the Indians. When they broke the news, they told me to git ready, for my turn would come to-morrer. But it won't happen now, in that way. They'll maybe kill me as we try to git out, but I don't surrender now. You've planned to git out the way you got in, I s'pose; so I'll hear it?"

"I sneaked in, and perhaps we can sneak out. But I've got to make sure that Cody isn't here before I try it."

"Take it from me that he ain't here. I'm the only one. If you can spare me that knife, or a pistol, it might come handy, and as soon as you aire ready to crawl I'll be after you."

Pawnee Bill slid to the entrance and peered out at the guard.

"He has stopped smoking, and is looking this way," he reported, when he had slid back; "but I can't think he has heard us. Still, better be even more careful. Do your twisting, to get rid of cramps, after we're out of this."

"How about that knife?" the man asked.

Pawnee Bill gave him a revolver instead.

"That's better," the man admitted. "Six chambers here, by the feel, with ball cartridges in 'em. I'll sure git a Blackfoot or two, if they jump us. I'm ready to move."

Together they edged over to the back of the lodge, where was the slit in the lodge skin. Here Pawnee looked out, seeing nothing but the dark line of bushes beyond, and the scattered lighter-colored lodges closer at hand.

"Was you fellers huntin' fer us, as well as the sheriff?" Sandy Macklin asked, as he, too, looked out. "I reckon you was. But, take it from me, if I git out of this, that jail in Rocket Range don't git me."

"We weren't thinking of troublin' you," said Pawnee.

"Don't think of it now, then," Macklin growled ungraciously. "You go first, through here."

"In a second. You knew Payallup Pete, now out here with the sheriff?"

"And no good of him."

"You mean from your standpoint. He wasn't in with Monte's men?"

"I'm willin' to answer all your questions, when we're out of here. But Payallup wasn't of our crowd. He was too lazy, and not to be trusted. He'd rob a blind beggar, when the beggar was asleep. That's the size of Payallup."



"Old Monte never considered Happy Chance as his friend in any way?"

"What you drivin' at? No, he didn't. But we didn't trouble about Chance. He was lazy, too, and satisfied to stay down in the town, where the grazin' was good."

"The grazing?"

"You don't savvy? Well, Chance stood always ready to shake down a feller, when he could. Slip Chance a twenty, say, or even a single saw buck, and he wouldn't pull you, unless you had cut up bad and he had to. He was a fine feller. But, as for standin' in with any of our kind, he didn't—except in that way. You see, I'm tryin' to answer your questions, so that you'll move on, and we can git out of here."

"Here we go," said Pawnee.

He pulled wide the slit in the lodge skin, and let Sandy Macklin crawl through; then he followed.

"Which way?" whispered Macklin, crouching in the shadow.

"I'm going to make a further search for my pards, otherwise I can't rest easy after I'm out of here. You slide on toward that scrub off there, while I work toward those lodges. I'll join you soon. If you don't want to wait for me outside the village, don't. I can't expect you to."

Macklin shuffled toward the nearest lodge lying between him and the line of scrub. Pawnee Bill moved toward the lodges he had indicated.

Macklin's haste to get out of the village was his undoing. Perhaps some blame ought to be given, also, to the cramped state of his limbs, which made his movements clumsy.

However it was, Pawnee Bill had not gained the first of the lodges when he heard the yapping of a dog and an oath from Macklin.

Macklin must have been noisy, for the dog had ap-

peared from one of the lodges that Pawnee Bill, in entering the village, had passed safely.

Following the dog out of the lodge came an Indian. Then Macklin's revolver went into commission, and a shot, ripping through the night, laid the dog out on the grass.

Having silenced the dog, Sandy Macklin started for the scrub, distant fifty yards off. The yell of the Blackfoot rose, seconded by the yell of Macklin's guard. At the same moment Blackfeet began to pour from the lodges—some behind Macklin, as he ran, others from the lodges that were in front of him.

Pawnee Bill wanted to go to Macklin's help, but he saw how foolish and suicidal the attempt would be.

Blocked off from the scrub, by Blackfeet who ran to that point, seeing he was making for it, Macklin turned back.

Then his revolver flashed again, and the foremost of the Blackfeet went down.

Pawnee Bill, unable to aid Macklin, beheld a wild mix-up, like a whirling mob, in which lances flashed; then he heard the revolver again.

The light was increasing in the east—soon the moon would appear there, over the edge of the mountain. Pawnee Bill cast glances round, wondering if he ought not take advantage of the hurly-burly to make good his exit.

But he had not finished his search for Buffalo Bill. Macklin had declared that Cody was not in the village, but perhaps he did not know.

So the thing Pawnee Bill did, to secure his own safety, was to crawl round to the front of the nearest lodge and enter it. The inmates had dashed out to the fight, so he knew it was empty.

Feeling about in the darkness, he found a fur robe lying against the rear wall. Under this he slipped and

lay down there. He could lift the lodge skin on that side, and slide through, if discovered, and then make a run for it.

The wild hubbub had changed in character. The throat-splitting yells were triumphant.

"The finish of Macklin!" muttered Pawnee, and he could not help a feeling of deep regret.

Macklin was an unworthy criminal and law breaker, yet he was a white man, and Pawnee's own act, in setting him free, had sent him to his fate.

"Too bad! And I was talking with him only a minute ago! I'd have gone under, too, I reckon, if I'd been with him. It's strange how Fate plays her cards."

Pawnee Bill was keenly alive to the peril of his situation. If found he would be killed instantly; he knew that. And if the noise should draw the baron into the village, under the impression that Pawnee was in trouble and needed help, it would mean his death.

He saw that he would have to think now of getting out safely, and give no further time to a search. He would be forced to accept Macklin's word that Buffalo Bill and his friends were not there.

Macklin had said two of his pards, caught with him, had been taken away by the Basilisk and killed. This indicated that there was some other place, outside the village, in which the fierce witch woman and her followers satisfied their murder lust.

Pawnee wondered if Cody had not been taken to that place, if he was in the hands of the Blackfeet. It might indicate that he had met death there.

A band of yelping Blackfeet streamed past on their way to the council lodge. The moon, having swung clear of the mountain, its light revealed to Pawnee, as they passed the lodge entrance and he peered out of the robe, a lance lifted high, and on its blade some-



thing dark. Pawnee drew back his head and shuddered, anathematizing the Blackfoot fiends.

Apparently the Blackfeet had not discovered that Macklin had been helped in making his escape from the prison lodge. At any rate, there was no scurrying round in a hunt for another man.

Screeching their delight over the outcome, the Blackfeet swarmed on the medicine lodge, and Pawnee Bill thought his chance of getting away had come now.

"I can thank Macklin for one thing," he muttered, as he cast aside the fur robe. "He killed that dog, I think. I haven't heard the measly cur bark since that first shot."

Fearing to try the front of the lodge, he slit the rear wall, as he had done before, and crawled out, sliding along close to the ground. He had got halfway to the edge of the scrub when he was sighted, as he leaped from one lodge to the cover of another, and a wild chase began at once.

But, unlike Macklin, Pawnee Bill had his foes behind him. They had to come from the council lodge and its vicinity.

So he sent back a defiant answering yell and put on speed.

Still, that danger was not over was soon clear, when muskets and rifles opened on him, with a spattering revolver fire.

But the deceptive moonlight, which would have made the best shooting poor, and the Blackfoot tendency to fire too high, stood him in good stead, and he gained the scrub, with the Blackfeet still a good distance behind.

Swinging round the village in a half circle, he struck the Blackfoot trail, and flew for the mountain.

But Blackfeet were soon in the trail behind him, and tried to crowd him.

He got in some thick cover near the base of the mountain, and threw off the pursuers. There he burrowed.

"I've accomplished a little," he said, "but not much."

Still, he had accomplished a good deal. By that chance meeting with the unfortunate outlaw he had been made reasonably sure that Buffalo Bill and his friends were not prisoners in the village, and he had garnered a few facts concerning Happy Chance and Payallup Pete. In addition, he had discovered that there was another place, outside the village, visited, or occupied, by the Basilisk, where it seemed likely that Cody had been taken.

That opened up a field of work which he did not know how to begin on.

"I wonder how the baron got on?" he thought. "Perhaps, if the Schnitzenhauser luck has chanced to hit one of its winning streaks, he will appear at the rendezvous loaded up with valuable information."

Moved by this thought, as soon as he felt he could do so with a reasonable degree of safety, he began to work along in the direction of the hidden camp that lay on the side of the mountain overlooking the Black-foot trail.

## CHAPTER XLII.

### THE BARON AS A SHADOWER.

One might have thought, in view of his general rotundity, and his pipestem legs, that the baron was ill-fitted for the sort of work laid out for him by Pawnee Bill; but the one making that guess would have been mistaken.

Right now, however, he was clumsy. He had told Pawnee that he was all right, and he tried to feel all right, but he was not, and he knew it. Neyertheless, he went on, endeavoring to overcome present handicaps by extra care and hard work.

He succeeded so well that, though, for a time, he lost all knowledge of the location of Happy Chance and those with him, he found them again. They were in the trail that led off from the village, and were proceeding slowly, with due regard to the fact that the aroused Blackfeet had to be avoided.

Still, they had not escaped the notice of the Blackfeet.

One appeared in the trail directly ahead and brought them to an abrupt and huddled halt.

The baron heard their exclamations as they came to this full stop. The next moment he had removed his little fore-and-aft cap and was peering over the top of the low hill, behind which he had been stalking them.

He was so close that he could see and hear them plainly, and the object that had stopped them. It was the Blackfoot hag called the Basilisk.

"Der vitch yoman!" whispered the baron.

She came slowly toward the hesitating trio, her brilliant black eyes fixed on them. She hobbled and walked with a stick, which she prodded in the ground.



"Oof dot vitch voman vos coming by me dot vay," muttered the baron, "you vouldt seen me running; but anchels standt sdill while fools vouldt skip oudt."

Approaching the group, the hag lifted the stick; then she spoke. The baron was surprised to hear her use English, when he thought she knew nothing but Black-foot.

"You come look for the gold?" she asked. "Me I will show it. Me, I am Basilisk; I know all thing! You think me enemy. No!"

Happy Chance had small fear of a lone, old woman. He believed there were no other Blackfeet near. Payallup Pete harbored the same opinion. And, so far as the baron could see, none was near.

"What gold is that?" queried Payallup, his cupidity asserting itself.

"You come hunt for that gold," the old woman said, in a tone of conviction. "All white man same—hunt for that gold. You like me show you where?"

"See here," said Chance, "what do you know about any gold?"

"You all same like all white men—come look for the gold! I know."

"That's all right," said Chance. "We ain't makin' any denials. But what gold is this, and where is it?"

"Wagon gold." She pointed the gnarled stick off in the direction of the Bottomless Pit. "Wagon gold in pit. Many year ago. Wagon fall down. Me go find it—find gold; me hide the gold—me, the Basilisk. You know me, Basilisk?"

"We've heard of you, all right," Chance confessed.

"You're right," said Payallup, "in sayin' we're out here lookin' for that gold—and some others aire the same. You show it to us and we'll make it right with ye—do anything you want. Understand, old woman?"

"Me make talk with him!" she declared, pointing the stick at Chance. "Me no make talk you."

But Chance was cautious.

"Let's see," he said; "as this strikes me as kinda out of the usual run—anybody with gold offerin' to hand it over to somebody else—I'd like to understand it better. Not saying I doubt you, understand. But we've got to look out. You're a Blackfoot, and the Blackfeet have been showin' a considerable interest lately in hair collectin'. You understand?"

"You not want gold?"

"Sure we do, but we want to keep in continued communication with our scalps at the same time."

"Listen."

"I couldn't git my ears wider!" piped Payallup.

"Gold bad for Injun. Buy um whisky. Make Injun sick, make um die. Me no want Injun have the gold."

"Whoop!" panted Payallup. "It's good news. Jest hand it over to us."

"You're too voluminous," Chance growled. "Just keep your tongue in your teeth."

"No want Injun have um gold; want white man have," declared the hag. "Me show you where."

"This is our chance, don't ye see," Payallup urged.

"Mebbyso it is," Chance admitted.

He addressed the hag.

"You'll show it to us right now? How're we going to know you have it, or know anything about it? You see, we've got to be careful."

"Basilisk know all thing."

"I don't know about that," said Chance.

"Basilisk know all thing. Me see you when you dig on top mountain. Me see you when you dig by tree and rock. Me see you all time, same as now."

"Whee!" squealed Payallup Pete. "What do you say to that, Chance? She seen us!"

"Keep still!" the sheriff ordered.

"That ought to be convincing," Chance said to the woman, "and it is sure some surprising. Some of your Blackfoot spies saw us, of course. And it kinda makes me feel skittish about follerin' you."

"Oh, go ahead!" Payallup begged.

"We'll foller you, but at the same time we're going to look out," went on Chance. "If there's any treachery, you're likely to git hurt, you understand. We're willin' and glad to help you remove temptation from the Blackfeet; they need it done, and we're the lads to do it. So I reckon you can proceed to show us."

"Now you're actin' sensible," Payallup chirruped. "I thought you was going to play the fool. We don't need to be afraid of this one woman."

"Not of her; but she may have a lot of warriors hid out here somewheres."

The hag turned about in the trail, and, stabbing the stick into the ground, began to move off. Chance and Payallup, with the young Mexican, followed warily, Chance with hand on his revolver.

"Oof she does it," whispered the baron, "dot iss going to be a skinch for Chance unt Bayallup. Dhey vill git der gelt, unt skib outd; unt me—vot can I do to hellup idt? Notting."

He waited until they were well ahead in the trail; then he slid down from his perch and began his stalking again.

Feeling that he had to be doubly cautious, the baron made slow work of it, and they soon were so far in advance that he could not even hear them, due primarily to the fact that they held to the trail while he kept out of it.

When the baron heard them again, Chance's voice



broke out in a roar, following the yell of a Blackfoot; then a revolver cracked.

The baron abandoned his carefulness and hoisted his rotund body hurriedly to the top of the nearest small hill.

When he had done that and looked out, with his fore-and-aft cap barely showing over the bushes, he saw that Happy Chance and his companions had been led by the Basilisk into a Blackfoot ambush.

There had been a fight, and a Blackfoot lay in the trail, probably brought down by Chance's revolver; but the fight had been short. Chance and Payallup, as well as the Mexican, had been clubbed over the head with lance poles and brought to subjection.

Payallup lay in the bushes, knocked out; the lithe Mexican was prostrate in the trail, with blood flowing from his mouth or nose; while Chance, raging furiously, was held by two stalwart Blackfeet, who clutched his arms.

In the trail stood the old hag, leaning on her stick, shrill and triumphant laughter breaking from her lips.

"She iss cackle like a rooster," grunted the baron. "Vale, vot do you t'ink apowet dot? Budt idt iss yoost vot I am oxbecting."

Payallup Pete was stirred into animation by being kicked heavily by one of the warriors. There were a dozen of them all told, and they showed scant ceremony in their treatment of the prisoners. When the slim Mexican groaned and refused to stand up, or was not able to do so, he was lifted bodily, and held up by two of the braves.

"Oof dhey seen me, I am Idt also-o," the baron breathed, cautiously lowering his head. "Yiminidy! I am vishing Bawnee vos here by now. For I ton'dt know vot to do mit myselluf. Shall I foller on, or shall I make der pack tracks unt dell him apowet idt?"

While the baron hesitated, the Blackfeet got in motion with their prisoners, conducting them up the narrow trail.

"Not going to der willage, huh?" the baron sputtered.

He slid down from the hill, and began to follow the Blackfeet.

But night now was close at hand, and caution seemed a virtue so becoming that, with the gathering darkness, and the difficulty of proceeding with the care necessary, the baron soon lost all knowledge of the party he was trying to trail.

With the idea that they had stuck to the trail, he entered it finally, and kept on, until it seemed to end, and he grew bewildered.

"I am no goot eeny more," he grumbled. "My headt iss blayed oudt. Sure, I t'ink me I hadt petter kvit dhis trailing roundt pitzness unt seddle down unt puy me a prewery."

He stopped, then went back and tried to find the trail.

"Bawnee say dot I haf peen trunk, unt sure I feel like it. Budt oof I haf to be trunk I should like to haf der fun oof trinking somet'ing. Dhis iss make me madt like a raddlesnake."

He could find the trail some distance back. Then it came to an end, like the famous path of Western story which changed to a squirrel's track and ran up a tree into a hole. It was clear that here the Blackfeet had always scattered, for the purpose of obliterating their trail, that it might not be followed.

The baron admitted that he was up a stump.

"Der rentezvouses for me," he said at last. "Dare iss no usefulness in vasting my waluable dime here. Me for der hite-oudt—to meedt Bawnee. I am hobbing he iss hadt petter luck."

But on this point the baron's doubts were deeply

stirred, by hearing the ki-yi-ing in the Blackfoot village, when Pawnee Bill and the outlaw tried to get out of it, and the outlaw was attacked by the Indians and killed.

The baron swung in toward the village, ready to take dangerous risks to help Pawnee Bill; but, when the yelping and confusion died out, he concluded to go on, as he had intended, to the rendezvous.



## CHAPTER XLIII.

### THE BASILISK'S CAVE.

"That you, Schnitz?"

"Yoost der sameness—der righdt site oop mit care. Vot vos dot hullapaloo der Inchun willage in?"

"Come on in, and we'll talk about it."

"You tidn't findt oudt somet'ing apowet Cody?"

"Not a thing."

The baron's hopes of a favorable report being thus cast down, he came into the camp, which Pawnee had reached ahead of him, his exclamations showing his disappointment.

"What luck?" Pawnee inquired.

"Der Schnitzenhauser luckiness iss on der bum," the baron growled. "Aber I tidt seen unt heardt somet'ings."

"I had some lively and interesting adventures; but I'll hear your report first. You kept at the heels of those fellows?"

"Undil dhey meet oop mit der vitch voman, unt sdill afdervardts, when I losdt oudt."

"The witch woman?"

"She coom oop by der drail in, unt meedt 'em," said the baron, feeling around in the darkness for a seat at Pawnee's side, and sitting down. "I am seeing idt blain as your nose on my face. Unt she say to 'em dot she iss knowing vare dot gelt is."

"Grayson's gold?"

"I t'ink idt. She iss say she know vare idt is. Dot gelt is badt for der Plackfeet, she say—dhey puy whisky mit idt, unt she ton'dt vant 'em to have idt, so she vill show to Chance vare iss idt."

"And they fell for that?"

"Dhey dit. Dhey follered her, unt run into a am-pushes."

"Served 'em right! What else could they expect? But what happened then?"

"Der Plackfeedt took 'em away, along dot liddle drail vvhich ton'dt leadt to der willage, aber I ton'dt am knowing vare idt leadts. Vhen I am drying to findt oudt, idt iss losdt to me. Der darkness iss here, unt I can do notting. Himmel! For more as dwo hours I try. So I say I vill hurry me pack unt make a rebort to Bawnee. So idt iss."

"If they followed that trail, we ought to be able to find where it leads."

"Meppyso, budt I doubt idt. You see, Bawnee, der drail iss go oop der spoudt."

"The trail played out?"

"Sure t'ing. Idt blayed oudt. Here idt iss, unt then idt iss noddt here."

"We can pick it up all right in the morning."

"Meppyso. I hobe so. You dit vot, while I am a goneness?"

Pawnee Bill gave him a hasty running account of the things that had happened in the village.

"So dot oudtlaw iss gidt his meticine," the baron commented. "Vale, he iss deserfing oof notting, budt I am sorry for dot. Haf you got some matches? I am dying for a schmoke."

They smoked and talked, ate heartily, and sampled the water in the canteens they had carried. This water they knew to be good.

Then they set out through the darkness for the point at which the baron had lost the Blackfeet trail.

On reaching it, Pawnee Bill found that they literally could do nothing in the darkness. As the baron said, the trail "went up the spout"—disappeared.

So they camped out in the darkness near by, and tried to catch a few winks of sleep, which they sorely needed.

With the first streakings of dawn they were at the task again.

The Blackfeet had scattered where the main trail ended, but they had not been able to conceal all marks of their progress after that from eyes as keen as those of Pawnee Bill.

He and the baron kept together, restricted their conversation to whispers, and picked their way along, seeing here and there where a Blackfoot moccasin had been planted, with now and then the imprint of the shoe of a white man.

"They tried to turn a neat trick, when they took Chance and his bunch along here," Pawnee remarked. "They laid down blankets, I think, for them to walk on. But now and then Chance or Payallup stepped too far, and went off the blankets. That's the way I make it out."

The baron's eyes were not so highly trained.

"Vot a great t'ing idt iss to haf an edication," he said. "As for me, I ton'dt seen notting."

Working along in this way for two hours or more brought them to a hill, where the Blackfeet had come together again, and the plain trail went on as before.

As it pointed straight at the hill, Pawnee and the baron increased their cautiousness.

"Anodder ampushes, meppyso," said the baron.

"Perhaps so, but perhaps the end of the trail!"

They sank down as a strange wailing song reached them.

"Vot iss?"

"An Indian chant."

"Himmel! I nefer heardt vun like dot."

"They're up here, baron."



"Der Plackfeedt?"

"Yes."

"Mepppyso Cody, too, heh? Oof dare iss a fight coming, I am standing righdt pehint you. Go aheadt."

It was a crawl after that, so careful was their advance over the trail.

The rising and falling of the wild song became more clear. Then they beheld a flat face of rock, screened with high bushes, and, as the wailing came from that point, they knew they had reached the mouth of a cave.

"The Indians are in the cave," said Pawnee. "It's a risk to try to go in, but I'm going to take it. You're game, Schnitz?"

"Dry me! I am as mooch game as oof I am a quail on doast, mit a bottle at der site. Yoost mofo aheadt."

They moved quietly, but with increased speed.

When they reached the bushes they saw that the Indian trail passed round them. An opening showed between the bushes and the wall. Into this they crowded, and stood in the opening of the cave.

The walls were illuminated from a fire, or torch, burning in the cave, and the wild chant rose shrilly. They had never heard anything quite like it. The voice—one person alone was singing—quavered and shrieked, now high, now low, with an intensity of passion, or feeling, quite indescribable.

"Idt iss a vildt cat making moosic," the baron whispered.

"The Basilisk!"

"Dot vitch voman! Yiminidy! I peliefe you. Budt vot iss der meanness?"

"Maybe we'll know in a minute. Come on."

On they went, between the lighted walls, hands on their weapons, ready to fight or to fly, as events dictated.

Pawnee stopped suddenly as the walls made a bend, and before him he saw the light falling on a shelf that supported a row of skulls.

"Himmel!" he heard the baron breathe. "Idt iss a grafeyardt."

"The Indians are off at the right," whispered Pawnee. "If others come in behind us, we're bottled up. But we'll take a look, anyhow."

When they had gone a little farther they halted again, seeing an Indian girl walking slowly to and fro, swinging a torch. The light on the walls came from that torch, and the smoke from it now reaching them, they discovered that something fragrant was being burned in it.

Turning toward the row of skulls, the girl swung the torch over them, then turned and walked back.

At her right, still invisible, was the singer.

Pawnee got down on his hands and knees and crawled a yard or two farther. The girl, walking away, had her back to him. Then he beheld the Basilisk, singing that wild song and whirling like a dervish in the very center of the cave.

Behind her was a region of shadow, but it contained human forms, and when the light shifted, as the torches moved on, Pawnee Bill saw there the pards he had so long sought—Buffalo Bill, old Nomad, and Little Cayuse!

But this was not all, for, seated with them was Chance and his two companions. All were tied, had their backs to the wall, and could look out at the whirling Indian witch and the girl who walked to and fro with the censerlike torch.

"Himmel!" Pawnee heard the baron muttering behind him. "I t'ink I am trunk again unt seeing t'ings."

The girl lowered her streaming torch, and flashed its

light on a hideous little image that glittered against the wall.

The Basilisk whirled up to the image, stopped before it, and began to pray in a screaming voice. She hammered her head against the wall below the image, striking so violently that when she turned they saw blood on her face.

But she seemed not to know she had injured herself, for she whirled on, and, stopping before the row of skulls, she began to apostrophize them. She seemed to address each one, and Pawnee's linguistic ability acquainted him with the fact that she was reciting the manner of the killing of the owners of the skulls, glorying in it as the work of her own hands.

"Heavens!" was his mental ejaculation, when he found that she had slain each of the men the skulls represented, and that they had been white men.

Two of the men she had slain only the day before. They were represented by skulls at the farther end of the shelf, and there she tarried longest.

Pawnee Bill was looking for the Blackfeet he was sure were in the cave with the witch woman and the prisoners, but he failed to find them. Still, as Blackfeet had brought Chance and his companions to this place, he believed they were there in the shadows.

When she finished her address to the skulls, the witch woman again began her wild singing and her devilish whirling, spinning back toward the center of the cave.

"Der human bin vheel!" whispered the baron. "Dot iss making me more dizzy as I haf peen yedt. Am I treaming, or am I nit?"

Pawnee Bill drew back the hammer of his revolver, shifted it to his left hand, and took one of his famous knives in his right.

"Baron," he whispered, "we're going in there, even if devils stand before us. You are not dreaming. Pard



Bill is in there, and Nomad and Cayuse. That she-fiend is working herself up to the proper pitch of frenzy, when she means to kill them."

"Idt iss so. Himmelblitzen!"

"Come on. If the Blackfeet drop me, see if you can't get to Cody and cut the cords off him."

"I vill dood idt!"

The next moment the baron and Pawnee Bill were running into the cave.

## CHAPTER XLIV.

### THE GOLDEN IMAGE.

The Basilisk had danced up to the image and banged her head against the wall there, and was whirling back to the center of the cavern. Her eyes were the glaring orbs of a maniac. Her song like the scream of a rabid wild cat. Close beside her the Blackfoot girl, picturesquely dressed and painted, waved the streaming torch.

Pawnee Bill let a yell go as he swung into the cave, to let Buffalo Bill know that help was at hand.

The Blackfoot girl screamed in sudden fright.

The whirling woman stopped her wild gyrations, stared blindly at the men dashing toward her, plucked wildly at a weapon she carried at her waist, screamed again, as if sending a final cry to the Blackfoot gods, and dropped to the floor in a misshapen heap.

The torch fell from the hands of the girl, and she jumped to the aid of the Basilisk.

Pawnee Bill sprang past this pair on the floor of the cave and hurried to the men by the wall. The torch lay sputtering on the floor, but its light was dimmed and the cavern was gloomy.

"Right here we are, necarnis!" he shouted. "Just speak, will you?"

"Here, Pawnee!" responded Buffalo Bill.

Pawnee Bill threw himself at the point where the voice sounded. The next moment he was sliding the blade of the keen knife over the rough cords of twisted rawhide holding the scout's hands together.

Nomad's hoarse bellow broke through the cave.

"Waugh! Am I livin' ter see et? This you, Pawnee?"

"Aye—and the baron! Get busy, Schnitz."

"Vare iss eferypody?" sputtered the German.

"Right hyar, baron. Wow! I'm dead, I reckon—been tied up hyar so long."

The baron found his way in the darkness to the side of Nomad; then he began to cut the cords that held him.

Pawnee Bill, expecting to be attacked by Blackfeet, worked with a vim. The baron was scarcely slower, harboring the same fear, so that in less than a minute the scout and the borderman were free.

"You here, Cayuse?" cried Pawnee. "Ah, yes; here you are!"

The Piute was freed.

"Dhese odder fellers?" questioned the baron, working breathlessly and finishing with the borderman.

"Free 'em!" said Pawnee. "We'll need all hands, when the fight comes. How many Blackfeet are we up against, Pard Bill?"

"Only the Basilisk now," said Buffalo Bill. "The girl is leaving."

Abandoning the woman on the floor and the torch that still flamed there, the Blackfoot beauty was running in the passage leading to the outside. Even as Pawnee Bill looked, she was gone.

"No Blackfeet? I think I don't understand this."

"Dhis iss gifing you a Chance to be habby," the baron was saying, as he cut the cords that held the sheriff. "Bayallup, you nexdt; undt you ton'dt teserve idt."

While Pawnee was trying to get his twisted ideas straightened out, the baron released all three of the men.

"There are no Blackfeet in here," said the scout, "but I guess they're enough outside to make it warm."



for us, so we'd better try to get out as soon as we can."

But when Buffalo Bill tried to rise and walk he could not, he had been bound so long that his limbs were stiff. The same was true of Nomad and Little Cayuse.

Chance and his followers were in somewhat better shape, but not much. All were practically helpless.

Pawnee Bill hurried out into the cave and took up the torch. It was a basket-shaped affair of metal, at the top of a wooden pole. The basket was filled with mineral wool, soaked with some kind of resin.

Lowering the torch, Pawnee looked at the Blackfoot woman, lying in that shapeless heap at his feet. She was quite dead.

"Apoplexy!" he said. "That was it, sure. Overexcitement, and then our coming, was too much, and finished her.

"We'll hear your story, necarnis, when we're in a safer place. Yours, too, Chance," he added. "We've got to get out of this before that girl brings a lot of Blackfeet."

Yet it was five minutes before Buffalo Bill and his released pards could walk. Then they had to be assisted. Chance and Payallup Pete needed help, too. But the Mexican had not suffered so severely, and could lend assistance to Chance.

Under the conditions, it was a slow march out of the cave. They were ready to fight, for Pawnee and the baron had supplied the others with weapons, so that the party was fairly well armed.

But still the Blackfeet delayed their coming.

As the little company entered the passage leading to the outside, Buffalo Bill drew back.

"I'm forgetting something!" he said.

"What is it, necarnis?" asked Pawnee. "We'll let it go if it isn't of great value."

"But it is. Did you see that gold image against the wall back there? Bring it out. Probably you'll need the baron's help to do it."

Pawnee Bill ran back to get the image. It was so heavy that he had to summon the baron to assist him.

"Ach, it musdt be gelt!" the baron grunted, as he and Pawnee Bill raised it.

"It is gold," the scout declared. "Hang to it. I think I can walk now, by bearing against this wall."

They got out of the cave, without seeing anything of the Blackfeet. Yet it was so certain they would come soon that the party at once left the trail and sought hiding.

The idol was heavy, and the scout and the other released prisoners were still not able to walk far; so when a suitable burrow was discovered they got down in it, and, with weapons beside them ready for instant use, they lay quietly, listening for the Indians.

When it seemed that a little time would be given them they began to talk.

"Nomad and I threshed the thing out as well as we could, while we sat there expecting that our last hours had come," Buffalo Bill explained. "But, perhaps, Pawnee, you have reached the same conclusions, and have a better understanding."

"We jumped to a few conclusions," said Pawnee Bill. "From what Cayuse said, we believed he had been hypnotized by that Blackfoot girl. And I've got to beg the pardon of your Mexican, Chance, for I admit that I was nearly sure for a while that he was playing Blackfoot beauty!"

"Pedro! Not Pedro?"

"Well, I thought it. I'll not go into the details of the why. My idea got its deathblow only when the

baron saw you captured by the Basilisk and her Black-foot."

"The baron! Why—what——"

"Oh, it's all right, Chance; we'll not talk about it. But I hope you don't think we can't see through a hole in a ladder."

"Vhen idt iss so pig as to admit a elefant," the baron added.

"You fellows came out here to see if you couldn't connect with Grayson's gold, but you pretended that you were looking for counterfeiters. I'll tell you what became of those counterfeiters by and by."

"Two of them were killed by the Basilisk only yesterday," said the scout.

"The third—there were three of them," said Pawnee, "got his finish in the Blackfoot village last night. But that wasn't what I was going to say. Still, I'm not going to make any accusations against the sheriff of this county."

Happy Chance was too confused to say a word. But, as soon as he recovered so that he could talk, he declared that his first idea was to look for the counterfeiters, with a search for the gold on the side.

"If we had found it," he urged, "we expected to deal square with that girl, Waif Western."

"~~Shore~~ we did!" said Payallup Pete. "We was never dreamin' of doin' anything but that."

"There is the gold," said the scout, referring to the image. "I got that knowledge from the prayers and song of the Basilisk. She had found Grayson wandering on the mountain, killed him, and took his gold. How she melted the dust and nuggets and formed them into that image I don't know; but she did, and she kept it here in the cave. One of those skulls in there was Grayson's."



"Waugh! The pizen o' thet woman!" exclaimed Nomad.

"I'll tell you what happened to me, and perhaps that will help us understand the thing," Buffalo Bill said. "But about all I know of the first of it is, that I got up and left the camp in the night, thinking I heard bells and saw flashing lights. Then I met the girl, and followed her to this place, where I was tied and held ever since.

"I was crazy, I know. Then Nomad was brought to the cave, as crazy as I had been. And finally came Cayuse, also crazy. After that Chance and his friends were brought in as prisoners. But why I went crazy I don't know."

"Me also," said the baron; "but idt vos nodd a grazi-ness mit me; I vos trunk, mitout hafing der choy oof trinking anyting. Dot iss vot iss make me madd. Bawnee say idt iss der effecdt oof der vater from der grazy sbring on der moundain."

"You know about that 'crazy water,' Payallup," said Pawnee. "You said the water set you crazy once, you remember."

Payallup's red face was enough to betray his sudden confusion.

"That's right," he admitted; "I drunk from that water, and it made me crazy as a loon."

"This is interesting," said the scout. "But we didn't go to that spring and drink."

"We have figured it out this way, and feel sure it's right," urged Pawnee Bill. "The Blackfoot beauty bewitched Cayuse and got him to leave camp, where he had been posted as guard; then she emptied our canteens and filled them from the spring. I was sick, and took none of the water. The rest of you drank that night from the canteens, and the poison in the water, whatever it was, knocked you out."

They sat silent, thinking this over, while they listened for the Indians they expected to appear in the trail, which, though not to be seen, was not far off.

"I first made my mistake," said Pawnee, "when I thought that Pedro here had played Blackfoot beauty and filled the canteens."

Happy Chance covered his confusion by looking indignant in Pedro's behalf.

"What made you think that?" he asked. "That's the most absurd idea I ever heard tell of. Would I countenance a thing like that, even if it could have been done; and I don't think it could have been? Pawnee——"

He stopped.

"What?" demanded Pawnee.

"Well, I won't say any more."

"And I won't. I won't insinuate anything I can't back up. It wouldn't be right and becoming in me, and you're the sheriff of the county."

Chance forced a laugh.

"Forget it!" he said, with a wave of his fat hand. "There's nothin' in it. Me an' Payallup come out here looking for them counterfeiterers, and then thought we'd hunt round at the same time for the gold."

"Shore!" said Payallup. "That's right."

"And here is the gold," said the scout, laying his hand on the gold image. "If we get out of this now, it is going straight to Waif Grayson, with the story of how we came by it, and the story of the fate of her father."

"You've sure about that last?" Pawnee asked.

"I only know what I heard the old woman praying and singing. She thought she gained her power from spirits, and she believed that her hypnotic ability, or

whatever it was she had, was due to her sacrifices of white men here in this cave. She considered me her greatest enemy, and my friends next. As she thought the killing of Pa-e-has-ka would give her increased power, she had resolved to do it, and was working herself up to the proper pitch when you came into the cave. The shock of her failure, perhaps, killed her. She wanted to capture every one of my men, thinking if she would do so, and sacrifice them, she would be the greatest Indian witch ever known among the Blackfeet. I think she really believed that. If you hadn't come, I feel sure that both Nomad and I would have been dead within an hour."

"And that handsome girl helped her!" said Pawnee.

"That handsome girl is the Basilisk's daughter, or granddaughter, and was in training to take her place as the medicine witch of the Blackfeet, when the older woman passed on."

"Waugh!" Nomad grunted. "Ef handsome is as handsome does, thet young woman shore ain't the beauty thet she looked ter be in ther eyes of Little Cayuse. But I reckon, Buffler, we'd best go on. I feels as though I c'd make a stagger at walkin' now."

They went on.

Before they reached the rendezvous on the mountain they were pursued by the Blackfeet.

But they escaped over the mountain, and, without further trouble, they reached the town of Rocket Range, where the gold image was delivered by Buffalo Bill to the girl he had called Waif Western.

No definite charges were brought against Happy Chance. Buffalo Bill and his friends could not prove that he had even thought of changing the water in the canteens. And as he began to show at once the zeal that he had customarily displayed, and seemed in all



respects a conscientious officer, they tried to follow his wishes and "forget it."

The truth is, Happy Chance had yielded to temptation at a time when he was hard pressed for money, but fate had kept him from really committing a crime.

Many another man has gone through a similar experience, and lived to regret his lapse from the straight path of honesty.

So ends our tale.

THE END.

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