

ROYAL RANGER RALPH;

ON:

The Waif of the Western Prairies.

BY WELDON J. COBB.

CHAPTER X.

THE MODOC CAMP.

The spot by the river to which the two scouts had come was, indeed, as they supposed—the general camping place of the Modoc and Sioux savages.

Within an hour after their arrival the banks of the stream were lined with camp-fires and wigwams, and the war-paint of the Indians and the general bustle and activity told that some movement of importance was meditated by the blood-thirsty hordes.

It was destined that Ranger Ralph should soon learn all the plans of the Indians and their renegade white allies, and that he should be plunged into an active contest within a very short time.

When he had suddenly sprung from the tree where Darrel had been compelled to leave him, he lost sight of his companion amid the excitement of the hour.

He saw the Indians scour the vicinity, secure the horses, and lead them away; and then all became still in his immediate neighborhood.

"There's a perfect nest of them around here," he muttered, grimly. "It's going to be no easy task to escape. I wonder what has become of young Grey? He isn't any too familiar with this kind of work. The Indians seem to be starting out on some kind of an expedition, and while I'm in the corral of their camps I intend finding out what it is."

Ranger Ralph was an expert scout, and was thoroughly familiar with frontier tactics of craft and warfare. He descended from the tree and began to reconnoiter his position.

He made out that the main camp of the Indians was directly across and down the stream a little distance. Making sure that he was unobserved, the scout forded and swam the river, landed on the opposite bank and then gradually and stealthily began approaching the camp of the Modocs.

He at last gained a point of vantage most favorable to his plans, a small knoll of bushes and stunted trees enabling him to completely survey the camp and its inmates.

"Shadow Snake's band," he muttered, cœrcively, as his eyes swept the scene; "and in war-paint, too. It means trouble for us. Settlers! Ha! It is as I thought! Despard has come to his old friends. Then the girl Inez must be here also."

The scout's face darkened and he frowned ominously as he recognized, as Darrel had done, the form of Dyke Despard, in the throng about the campfire.

As he discerned the number of his enemies and realized the hazards of approaching them any nearer, he reflected deeply.

He was plunged deep in his meditations, when the sound of a familiar voice near at hand startled him and enchaines his attention.

"Despard," he murmured excitedly; "and Danton is with him."

It was indeed the outlaw leader and his chief associate.

They paused in a careless stroll from the camp and sat down on a log near the very spot where the scout was seated.

The latter thrilled with the keenest satisfaction at this opportunity of overhauling the plans of his enemies.

"You wanted to see me alone?" were Danton's first words.

"Yes."

"What about?"

"Our own affairs; we've got among friends, but I ain't satisfied."

"Why not?"

"I'm uneasy. The old chief Shadow Snake is reckless and revengeful; and if he should suspect us—"

"About the girl?" asked Towner.

"White Fawn—yes."

"How can he?"

"Should he meet any of the Nes Perces reservation Indians he would learn of our treachery."

"How?"

"They would tell him that the girl never reached them."

"That's true."

"So, whatever we do, we must act quickly."

"But we agreed to accompany Shadow Snake on the raid on the emigrant train."

"No; I gave him the information of its whereabouts—that is all."

"But he expects us to go with him."

"We will have to disappoint him. Here we are safe from pursuit from the vigilantes. That is why I came here."

"What do you propose to do?"

"To remove the girl down the valley to-night."

"Alooo!"

"No. You and one of the others will take her away from here about midnight. I will remain with Vance and guide the Modocs across the country to the train, and return to you."

"At the cost of our band?"

"Are at Damon's B&B. I will send them forward to meet you. Go to the old rendezvous and wait for me. You see, the Snake agrees to divide liberally for my share in the present venture. Once I get that, I will leave the camp, for we will soon find out about White Fawn."

"And then?" queried Danton.

"We will carry out our plan to find the hermit who has Inez Tracey's fortune, secure it, and, leaving the boys to their own plans, go East and enjoy our wealth."

The old scout looked grim as he overheard the plans of the conspirators.

He knew now how to act, if he could even save the girl and follow on the trail of Despard's men.

The two men left the spot and returned to the camp, and Ranger Ralph began to determine how he would make a detour and reach a point down the valley where he might intercept Despard's men, who would leave for the bandit rendezvous that night.

He began to cautiously work his way back to the river, believing escape by that avenue more easy than by the land.

He crept from thicket to thicket, and from covert to covert, gradually nearing the stream, and meeting with none of his enemies.

At last he came to a point where he paused in dismay. Since he had last been to the camp, it had been built by a little colony of savages, directly in the course to the river.

He cut off all safe escape in that direction, and nothing but a bold dash across an open space, or a slow and perilous retreat by the way he had come would avail him.

He resolved on the former course, even hoping that by a sudden run across the place he might gain the river unperceived.

With a spring he broke from the thicket and started across the open space.

A series of loud, alarmed yells from the fire told that he was discovered.

Within ten feet of a thicket where the horses of the Modocs were grazing, Ranger Ralph's foot caught in a trailing sprig.

He fell heavily. The next moment a score of dusky warriors were upon him. Ranger Ralph was a prisoner in the hands of his most merciless enemies.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ESCAPE.

Ranger Ralph made a desperate resistance against his savage captors, but struggled vainly in their iron grasp as they bore him towards their camp-fire with yells of triumph.

The demonstration soon drew a large throng to the spot, and the scout, securely bound, was tied against a tree, the cynosure of many murderous eyes and the object of the jeers and insults of his victorious foes.

A grim look came over the old ranger's face as he saw the Modoc chieftain, Shadow Snake, approach the spot.

With him were his renegade allies, Dyke Despard and Jim Danton.

The Indian leader started, and then stood in mute wonderment at the man he had endeavored to kill at Ten Spot two nights previous.

"Ranger Ralph!" ejaculated Danton, with a savage scowl. "He bears a charmed life."

The eyes of the Modoc chief kindled with satisfied hate as he recognized an enemy who had more than once crossed his trail to his serious disadvantage.

"The Ranger is a spy," he hissed. "What brings him here?"

The scout was silent.

"Yes; he has been trying to incite the pale faces to attack the tribes," said Danton. "He is a dangerous enemy."

"Let him die before we leave here at another sun," ordered the Snake briefly to the Indians about him.

The old scout did not speak. Into his mind came the thought of what he had overheard Despard and Danton say about the daughter of the old chief.

He resolved to bring this intelligence to the knowledge of Shadow Snake, but the opportunity was not yet presented.

He formed a plan to see the chief alone, when Despard and Danton would not be near to deny his statements or silence him.

For over an hour he remained secured to the tree watching the savages, who paid no further attention to him for the present.

In some way he had secured a keg of liquor, and were intently engaged in disposing of it as rapidly as possible.

The old scout knew from experience that as soon as the Indians were fighting drunk they would pay attention to him.

He recalled his many battles with the tribe, and knew that they were full of animosity and hatred toward him.

To his surprise, however, when they had finished the liquor the majority of them staggered from the camp, entirely ignoring his presence.

Only a few sleeping inebriates now guarded the prisoners.

The scout endeavored to free himself, but was unable to break the bonds that secured him.

In a few minutes the Indians returned with a second keg of whisky, from the direction of the main camp.

They were all, or nearly all, of them, very much intoxicated, and straggling along with them were several other savages from a different camp. One of these attracted the ranger's attention by his helpless and reeling condition.

As the savages placed the keg on the ground and began to drink from it, this Indian stretched himself out on the green sword as if to sleep.

His hand almost touched the form of the captive scout, and the latter looked somewhat startled as he observed that, though he was in a position of great peril, and that affairs were fast assuming a shape most favorable to the plans of Dyke Despard.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

what he believed would be the course pursued by the Modocs.

Twice he nearly ran into a party of horsemen, and the discovery made him very anxious.

"It cannot be possible that the Indians have started on the war trail already," he mused, conversely.

Sudden and fair later, the sound of shooting some distance ahead alarmed him. He hastened toward the spot.

As he emerged from the woods he sighted his vision that thrilled him to the keenest excitement.

Ranger Ralph was too late with his warning.

The emigrant train had already been attacked by the allied Modocs and Sioux, and the wagons were now the scene of an animated contest.

The red demons were pillaging and burning and killing, while the shrieks of the unfortunate emigrants echoed on every side.

"Too late to warn and save them!" ejaculated Ranger Ralph, grimly; "but not too late to help them against their murdered foes."

He directed the horse into the thicket of the conflict as he spoke, rifle in hand, determined to sell his life dearly in protecting the lives and property of the imperiled emigrants.

It was a brief and sanguinary battle.

The Modocs and Sioux and their renegade allies were in disorder and retreat to the embankment which was surrounded by a broken back, and butchered mercilessly.

The brave old scout saw the horse he rode shot down and himself wounded; he dragged his form to a covered wagon, and crept into it for safety and concealment.

Then, as the blood oozed from a terrible wound in the breast, Ranger Ralph sank into a blank lethargy of insensibility.

When he awoke it was broad daylight.

The wagon was moving, and he peered cautiously forth from a pile of hay in the bottom of the vehicle.

He was weak and in pain, and almost helpless; but he made out his situation at a glance.

Behind the wagon on horseback were a dozen men, doubtless another portion of Despard's band.

One of the vehicle was Jim Danton, and the general culprit not but that they were proceeding to the outlaw rendezvous at Lone Canyon.

So far, evidently, his presence in the wagon had not been discovered; he knew that he was in a position of great peril, and that affairs were fast assuming a shape most favorable to the plans of Dyke Despard.

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From Cradley Heath.

Recently a deputation of women went from Cradley Heath, in England—a place where women are employed at heavy work in forging chains—to London, to protest against the passage by Parliament of an act which proposed to prohibit the use, by women of a heavy forging implement known as the "oliver."

They objected to the passage of the bill on the ground that it would deprive them of employment.

At London they were questioned at length upon the manner of their employment by the Home Secretary—an officer whose position in the British Government is much the same as the Secretary of the Interior of this country.

Between Mr. Matthews, the Secretary, and the chain-woman the following dialogue took place:

Mr. Matthews—And what is the precise nature of the employment in which you are engaged?

Chain-woman (breaking in)—I don't want my work taken away from me!

Mr. Matthews (blandy)—Pardon me, that is not quite the point on which I desire information. If you will please explain to me the nature of the operation in which—

Chain-woman (firm though flushed, and determined to get out what she had come all the way to London to say)—It never done me no harm, sir!

Mr. Matthews—But, my good woman, if you will suspend your observations long enough to communicate some idea—

Chain-woman—I likes the 'eavy work, sir; an I says, Let each one do what they can!

The interview proceeded in this unsatisfactory way until a questioner was found who could talk to the chain-woman in their own language.

Evolution of the Knife.

This case full of instruments which we have newly placed on exhibition is designed to show the development of the tool which we call the knife, beginning from the earliest times," said Prof. Mason at the National Museum.

"First, you observe, is the fragment of flint, which the savage split by banging it on top with a stone hammer into a number of flakes. The smaller ones were used for arrow points and the bigger ones for knives; their edges being split off so sharp that you might almost shave with some of them. Next you see the flint inserted into a handle of split wood or bone, and, as further improvements, the fastenings of this primitive knife in the handle by the roots of trees and by cord of one sort or another bound around to secure it. The most beautiful knife in the collection is this exquisitely molded blade of greenish jade, belonging to the stone age, and had with a walrus tusk. You can hardly find a more admirably formed weapon among the products of modern cutlery wares. Most curious of the modern tools here is this sailor's knife, square at the end instead of pointed, to prevent stabbing in a row, or the dangerous falling of the weapon from aloft. Its blade drops out of the end of the handle when a spring is touched, so that Jack can hold a rope with one hand and open the knife for service without the need of ten fingers."

—Washington Star.

Prayers for Kids.

I have heard my father say that in the days of his early manhood, which dates back to more than a century, in a season of protracted drought it was a custom for the deacons of the church situated in the old town of East Windsor to call together the members on a week day and put up petitions for rain. And he has assured me that these meetings were always followed by rain. He failed to tell me just how soon. Among those always in attendance was a man of the name of Potwine, our wonderfully gifted in prayer. My father called him what he was, a "potwine," and I have often heard him say, "A potwine is a potwine."

"The attack on the emigrant train?"

"Yes. From what I have heard, they intend moving at once. They train should be warned. You can do that."

"How did you come here—this disguise were you not afraid?"

"I risked it, and luck has favored me."

"You cannot long continue it," remarked the scout.

"Why not?"