

# ROYAL RANGER RALPH.

## The Waif of the Western Prairies.

BY WELDON J. COBB.

### CHAPTER XVII.

#### IN THE CAVE.

Ranger Ralph, the old scout, was not idle while all the events described since his mishap at the river were transpiring. When the horses ran away and dashed the wagon over the cliff near Lone Canyon Tavern, the ranger at first gave himself up for lost.

The descent was a terrible one, and he clung to the sides of the wagon as it turned and fell and finally struck the water with a crash.

Then, dazed and bruised, he was half-conscious that the horses had become separated from the vehicle, and that the latter, badly shattered, was floating down the stream.

It had now become so dark, especially in the shelter of the cliffs that lined the river perpendicularly, that he could not estimate his situation except that he was being borne rapidly away from the scene of the accident by the stream's swift current.

"I'm rid of the outlaws, any way," he muttered grimly, "and probably near their stronghold. I wonder if young Grey has managed to find the girl, or if she is still a captive and on her way to this desolate place."

His predicament was not a pleasant one, for the wagon box was immersed in water and he was wet through from the dip in the stream.

Finally it began to sink so low that he was compelled to climb out, and the seat, and thence later to the top of the wagon cover itself.

From here he regarded the fast-flying landscape silently and clung to his frail raft as it was driven hither and thither by the rock-choked current.

There was a final crash, and Ranger Ralph was flung head foremost into the river.

The wagon was splintered to pieces as it came in contact with a huge rock in midstream, and floated away leaving the scout floundering in the water.

He managed to reach the shore, and stood with dripping garments ruefully surveying his situation.

Darkness and solitude surrounded him, and there seemed no means of leaving leaving the narrow, confined space except by the waterway up and down stream.

Suddenly a light appeared in the distance, and the scout stood peering at it for some time, vainly endeavoring to make out its location and cause.

"It must be a lantern or camp-fire of the outlaws," he decided, and he determined to endeavor to make his way toward it.

In the darkness and amidst unfamiliar scenes this was no easy task, and his progress was slow and laborious.

Clinging to trailing vines and shrubs, scaling rocks, fording and swimming, he managed finally to gain a pile of rocks directly beyond which was the light he had seen.

It proved to be as he had surmised, a camp-fire, built somewhat back in a cave-like aperture of the rocks.

It was accessible by a narrow, dangerous path from the cliff above, and was evidently one of the entrances to the mountain fastness of the bandits.

A dozen rough forms were visible in the glow of the firelight, and among them Ranger Ralph readily recognized several whom he had known to be members of Despard's outlaw band.

From his place of espionage the old scout could watch his enemies and determine at leisure the best course to pursue.

There was no fear of interruption, for while he might gain the entrance to the cave it was not likely that they would come his way. He was so near to the entrance of the cave that he would almost hear the laughter and conversation.

There was only this ledge of rock between him and the open space in front of the cave.

The scout crouched low as two men came toward where he was. At first he determined to retreat, as he feared they were coming over the ledge; but as they paused at the edge of the stream near by he discerned that one of them bore a lantern in his hand, and that they had come to obtain some water for the camp.

"What's the programme, anyway?" he heard one of the men ask; and the other replied:

"A general breaking up of the band, I hear the boys say."

"And a division of the profits?"

"Yes. It's whispered about that Despard is tired of the life, and that it has become too dangerous to suit him. He's afraid of trouble with Shadow Snake, and he's got some desertion near to the entrance of the cave that he would almost hear the laughter and conversation."

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ized appearance gave him just the look he desired, to enable him to penetrate to the enemy's camp with his identity unsuspected.

When he had fully completed his mental plan of action, the scout cautiously clambered over the ledge of rocks and made his way toward the camp fire.

Several of the bandits were near, and impeded his further progress, as he reached the entrance to the cave. A man whom he recognized as Vance raised a gun menacingly.

"What do you want? Who are you? Have you come here?" he demanded quickly.

In accordance with his assumed character, the scout folded his arms over his breast and adopted a sullen, defiant expression of face.

"The Black Crow," he muttered. "I must see him."

"Who are you?"

"Tallula, the half-breed."

"How do you come here?"

"The Modoc knows the hiding-place of the white men and the paths that lead to it, was the scout's steady reply, admirably couched in the Indian vernacular.

Vance stared.

"Ha!" he ejaculated, "you come from the Modocs?"

"I come from the emigrant train. I bear a message. Who is the Crow?"

"Why do you wish to see him?"

"He will know when he remembers his broken pledge to Shadow Snake."

It was evident from Vance's manner that he recalled the fact of Despard's double-dealing with the Modoc chieftain.

He glanced uneasily beyond the supposed messenger from the Modocs.

"Did Tallula come alone?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Drawn by the camp-fire there; I will speak with the Crow."

Ranger Ralph smiled complacently to himself at the success of his imposition so far, but assumed a studied attitude of sullen silence until Vance had returned.

"Come," said the latter; "the Crow wishes to talk with you."

"Ugh!"

The scout was led into the cave through several long passages, and finally into an apartment that was apparently a portion of a wooden house that was built over the river and into the cliff.

Despard and Danton sat at a table drinking, and the former glanced at the sullen figure of Vance's companion.

"Here is the half-breed from the Modocs," said Vance.

"From Shadow Snake?" asked Despard.

"Ugh!" replied the scout in a disguised tone of voice.

"What does he want?"

"He shares of the plunder taken from the emigrant train. The Crow has played him false, and he seeks restitution or revenge."

Despard evinced a cool unconcern of the scout's sullen threats. He listened calmly while the disguised ranger in guttural tones told of the dissatisfaction and anger of the Modoc chieftain. Then he said:

"Shadow Snake demands gold?"

"Ugh!"

"And if it is not sent to him?"

"We will see the laconic Vance. When must he have his answer?"

"In two days."

"Good. Before another day is past, Tallula shall know my decision. You can stay here until then."

Ranger Ralph retired with calm dignity, and congratulated himself upon the fact that he had not been recognized by the outlaw.

"Watch that half-breed closely," said Despard to Vance; and the latter followed the scout from the room.

"We have no time to waste," said Danton, when they were alone.

"That is true."

"The Modocs will march against us unless we return a share of the booty."

"Then we must act at once. I have located the haunt of the old hermit."

"Where?"

"Yes; and in the morning I shall go there. Once I secure the secret of Inez Tracey's fortune, I shall leave a small amount of plunder for them to divide, and you and I will come on to the north, leaving this part of the country forever."

Meanwhile Ranger Ralph had been led toward the river end of the cave by Vance.

He paused ere they reached the camp-fire.

"Tallula is weary," he said.

"All right; you can sleep anywhere here."

The pretended half-breed flung himself upon a bed of furs, and contented himself with proceeding to the spot where his companions were, and after telling them to see that Tallula did not leave the cave, paid no further attention to the scout.

The latter had fully decided to explore the bandits' haunt, in the hope of finding Inez.

After a while he left the rocks, and, unperturbed by the men around the camp-fire, began examining the various passages and apartments of the great underground cavern that they occupied.

There was one dim corridor down which he could see a light burning, and he stealthily made his way toward it.

He drew back in the shadow of a projecting shelf of stone as he saw, directly ahead of him, an embrasure in the corridor, a man seated on the floor of the cave.

His back was to the scout, and he seemed to be lazily nodding as if in sleep.

"A guard," muttered the scout, thrilling at the quick interest in his discovery. "There must be some one in the cave beyond, perhaps the girl herself."

Ranger Ralph peered cautiously beyond the spot where the corridor enlarged. He started as he discovered that a large apartment terminated the passage, and upon a rude log table was a second lantern, and its rays showed a couch covered with a panther-skin.

Upon this the scout made out a familiar form. It was that of the very maiden who was the theme of all his anxious thoughts.

He stood spell-bound, yet excited, gazing silently at the girl, whose head was bent in her hands, as if in grief and despair. Rapidly he began to form a plan for evading the guard in the corridor and reaching Inez.

crouching movement, began to step gradually toward the apartment.

Ranger Ralph's attention was divided between him and Inez. He saw that the outlaw was too thoroughly engrossed in watching the inmates of the apartment to pay any attention to him. Cautiously, therefore, the scout began to steal after him.

A few steps enabled him to gain a complete view of the interior of the cave. He came to a dead stop with sheer surprise as he saw the cause of the girl's emotion.

"Darrel Grey!" he muttered under his breath.

It was indeed the young scout.

As the reader will remember, after he left White Paw he had penetrated to the cave of the outlaws from which he had fallen.

When Despard had removed Inez to the cave, Darrel had reached a spot where a huge rock blocked up the entrance to the apartment. For over an hour he sought to push this barrier away and at last he had succeeded.

It was his entrance that had so startled the girl, and she sprang toward her with outstretched arms.

In the first impulse and rapture of love and joy Inez had glided to greet him. A modest flush surmounted her brow, and she paused, trembling and confused as he gazed at her so fervently.

"Oh, Darrel—Mr. Grey! You have come to rescue me."

"Yes. But we must not delay."

"There is a way of escape?"

"By the way I came, yes. Ha! What is that?"

Darrel drew the startled Inez closer to his side and recoiled quickly as he discovered the guard.

The latter had moved into full view. "Retreat toward the opening to the valley," directed Darrel to his fair companion.

"Hold!"

The guard leveled his revolver as he spoke. Evidently he recognized Darrel as an intruder and an enemy.

The latter was entirely unarmed, the savage having taken his firearms from him when they tied him to the stake at the Pueblo River encampment.

Inez had nearly reached the aperture in the wall, when the guard raised his revolver.

Ranger Ralph had taken in the scene at a glance, and resolved to act quickly, as he discerned the peril of his young friend Darrel Grey.

With a rapid spring he was fairly upon the guard. Too late, however, to prevent the shot the latter had directed at Darrel.

The bullet sped wide of its mark. The report of the pistol, however, awoke all the silent echoes of the cave.

With one blow the old scout felled the guard insensible to the floor of the cave. Then, springing over his prostrate form, he seized the revolver that had fallen from his grasp.

Darrel Grey recognized him with a joyful cry.

"Ranger Ralph!" he ejaculated.

Inez glanced with quick interest at the man she knew to be her father's old-time friend and her own.

The scout glanced back at the corridor with an alarmed face, as he heard a new commotion. Two men had come suddenly upon them. Ranger Ralph divided in a flash that they had been companions of the guard.

Doubtless they had been sleeping in the embrasure in the corridor, and he had not noticed them, and as they entered the apartment they comprehended the situation at a glance.

"Fly!" ordered the scout to Darrel and Inez.

"But the outlaws will be aroused—"

"I will hold these two at bay, and cover your escape."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

### Earnings of Railroads.

The advance sheets of the introduction to Poor's Manual for 1891 show that the number of miles of railroad completed in the United States at the end of the last calendar year was 166,817, and that the number of miles constructed during the year was 5,739. Since then enough track has been laid to make the total mileage to date 170,000 miles. The increase in share capital during the year was \$145,140,260, which was equal to a little more than \$25,300 for each mile of road constructed during the year. The increase in the funded debt of the roads during the year was \$277,536,254, which was equal to not much less than \$50,000 per mile of road constructed. It will, however, be understood, of course, that the increase in funded debt did not necessarily, or probably, fall all on the new road constructed.

The total amount of share capital at the end of the year was \$4,640,239,578 and the total amount of funded debt was \$5,105,902,025. This gives a total of \$9,746,141,603. This total is equal to more than \$58,400 for each mile of road in existence at the end of the year.

Mr. Poor states that, counting in all forms of indebtedness, the cost of the roads as measured by total was \$59,638, or close to \$60,000 per mile on the average, the total indebtedness having been \$10,122,635,900. One would expect the average indebtedness per mile to decrease, but according to Mr. Poor it increased last year \$1,364.

Regarding net earnings, Mr. Poor reports that in 1890 the average was 3.4 per cent, against 3.3 per cent in 1889, 3.2 in 1888, 3.1 in 1887, 3.7 in 1886, and 3.4 in 1885. These are the normal earnings, of course, or the nominal capital invested to be one-half the nominal amount, which is in accordance with Mr. Poor's estimate in former years, we find that capital invested in railroads pays on the average fairly satisfactory profits. The earnings pay interest on the funded debts, which in the aggregate exceed the entire capital invested, according to Mr. Poor's estimate, and give an average of about 34 per cent for dividends besides. While it is true that many roads do not earn dividends, or even fixed charges, yet on the whole the railroads of the country are paying concerns. Those which are not have been prematurely built, or built where railroads are not needed, or wrecked by intentionally or ignorantly bad management. It has been observed that there was a slight improvement last year over the year before in net earnings, which, however, were still below those of 1886 and 1887.

LIGHTNING played a serious trick upon Geo. Rood, a resident of Jewett, Conn. A thunderbolt struck him, causing severe but not dangerous burns. Since the accident his body seems full of electricity. When he places his hands together they adhere, and when his feet touch it is difficult to separate them.

SEVERAL pigs were missed by a farmer in Gladwin, Mich. After watching several nights for the rogue, the vigilance of the sentinel was at last rewarded. He saw a snake carrying off another young pig. The snake was dispatched and measured over nineteen feet in length.

# LITTLE BOYS AND GIRLS.

## THIS IS THEIR DEPARTMENT OF THE PAPER.

Quaint Sayings and Doings of Little Ones Gathered and Printed Here for Other Little Folks to Read.

### A Complaint.

I think it really isn't don't you?—To leave us nothing at all to do! In a world all made to order so a modern boy has no earthly show. Columbus sailed across the sea, and that night he was done by you or me. And now they call him great and wise, they praise his genius and enterprise. Although when he found our native land he took it for India's coral strand!

There's Newton, too, saw an apple fall down from the branch, and that was all—Yet they talk of his great imagination And say he discovered gravitation. And say he was a genius, too, and that he knew what things fell, and I studied the rule.

For no one bodied, in grammar-school! There's noble George, who wouldn't lie—Perhaps he couldn't. He didn't try. But if I should cut down a cherry-tree My father would only laugh at me!

Benjamin Franklin—what did he do? Flew a kite; on Sunday, too. Standing out in a heavy shower. Getting soaked for half an hour. Fishing for lightning with a string. To see if he couldn't bottle the thing. Suppose! should by my kite in the rain? People would say that I wasn't sane. Why should there be such a difference Between Ben Franklin, Esq. and me?

I can see steam move a kettle-lid! Quite as well as James Watt did. And I can explain about engines, too. Bigger and better than Watt ever knew. But somehow he took all the praise, And I'm neglected nowadays.

Then there's Napoleon, First of France—Suppose that we had had his chance. No doubt we'd have been emperors, too; But we'd have conquered at Waterloo. Such a stupid and grave mistake! I should have sent him the proper way To arrive in time to save the day!

Still, what makes me feel the worst Is Adam's renown for being first. I wouldn't have had such a glory, too. It was just a thing that happened so. And my sister says, "If it had been me, I wouldn't have touched that apple-tree."

She gives a scream and she scots away. To write such things as Shakespeare's plays But now, when everything has been done, I cannot think of a single one To bring a boy to wealth and fame. It's a regular downright burning shame!

P. S. When it's fine, I shall play base-ball. For you know it never would do at all To forget about "Jack" who becomes, they say, A very dull boy, without plenty of play. But what's the use of saying so many things. As soon as I've finished Monday's sums I'm going to build a great flying-machine. Will make T. Edison look pea-green!—St. Nicholas.

A Quaker Boy of Long Ago. Little Moses W. was a worthy member of "the people called Quakers," says Anna Carpenter in the Housekeepers' Weekly. Rarely is a name so fittingly bestowed as this.

The most gracious patience and sweetness characterized the child. Like the Moses of the bulrushes and the exodus, however, beneath the gentleness a quick spirit and a firm will were hidden, which on rare occasions would flash forth or stand firm.

The youngest of a household of boys, Moses was the recipient not only of a wealth of affection, but it cannot be denied, of an occasional embarrassment of riches in the shape of suggestion, advice, and dictation.

One bright day the little fellow sat on the porch, surrounded by pretty, clean blocks from the great barn at which the carpenters were hammering away, and bright smooth corn-stalks, gravely building a barn. Various criticisms by his elders upon his unique style of architecture had been answered in the loveliest way. At last his brother Benjamin settled down at his side.

"Now, Mosie, I wouldn't make such small stable doors; thy horses can't get in."

"Oh, yes, Benjine, they can; my horses are such wee little horses."

Then: "Why, Mosie, that over-shoot isn't right; that's not like father's barn."

But soon Benjine began to change a block here and a cornstalk there to take liberties with threatened radical changes to the precious structure and havoc to all the devices of the busy little brain.

The pleadings "It don't go at way," and "Pease don't Benjine," were met by "Now just wait a minute, Mosie, and see what a big, nice barn we will have directly."

At last the dark eyes began to flash; the small man rose, advanced one foot, and shaking a mite of a finger at his brother, exclaimed:

"I tell thee, Benjamin, I wish thee would just mind thee own biddie; it's much as thee can do, an' more an' thee possibly can do right."

### Bones' Ducks.

Bones was a shaggy, fat Skye terrier with a short tail. Just why these scruffy-looking Skye terriers always find luxurious homes and fond admirers I don't know, but they seem to do it. Bones was no exception. He was the household pet. Every member of the family cuddled and kissed him, and he returned their affection with equal ardor.

When any one came home after a short absence, Bones showed extravagant delight, and his demonstrations were usually rewarded with candy or cake.

He had a trick of catching up any small object which came handy, and bringing it to lay at the returned owner's feet, as if to display the generosity of his heart.

Sometimes he overshoot the mark, like the rest of us.

One day the lady of the house returned, and Bones, dashing out to find some token of affection to present to her, fell over three unfortunate little ducks walking primly behind his mamma. He caught one up in his mouth, and with joyful haste rushed back to the parlor.

Poor duck! Poor Bones! The duck struggled. Bones took a firmer grip. The duck struggled harder. Bones gave a hurried gulp, and to his own dismay as well as to the duck's the duck went down Bones' throat and never came up again.

The shout of laughter which greeted his exploit was too much for Bones. He ran out faster than he came in. His stomach and his conscience both would him for long after. It was

only necessary to say, "Duck, Bones!" to see him sink away with the funniest expression of doggish shame, caused by the remembrance of his unintentional dinner.—Harper's Young People.

Jewish Colonization. Recently various schemes have been advanced to ease the condition of the Jews—the persecuted race of all modern history. The latest is that of Dr. Paul Friedman, a native of Berlin, who proposes acquiring the Land of Midian, which lies on the northern side of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Akabah, and colonizing it with Jews. Although the territory is small, 160x70 miles, it is extremely fertile and capable of supporting 500,000 people. It is now inhabited by about 10,000 Bedouins, a race somewhat akin to the Jews.

Historically the Land of Midian is interesting, being mentioned in the Bible and by Jewish writers many times. It was to that land that Moses fled when he killed the Egyptian. The Midianite race, moreover, is said to have been descended from Midian, the fourth son of Abraham of Keturah. The story of the overthrow of the Midianite race is one of the most graphically told in Holy Writ. It began during the wanderings of the Israelites, whom Moses was training to warlike methods. The Midianites, probably through fear of the multitudes overrunning their pastures, became hostile to their distant kinsmen. It was then that the Midianite women sought to seduce the men of Israel from the paths of virtue and the worship of the true God to that of Baalpeor. Then the fatal command of Moses went forth: "Avenge the Lord on Midian," and 12,000 Israelite soldiers went out and slew 128,000 Midianites. How they saved the women and children and how Moses ordered the execution of all male children and all women who had borne a child is told at length.

After a lapse of two centuries the Midianites again grew powerful and sought revenge. The second Midianite war followed, which ended in the terrible battle of the Valley of Jezreel when Gideon and his little army of 300 men destroyed 120,000 men that drew sword, and 15,000 more. After this the Midianites lifted up their heads no more, and they faded out of Hebrew history, and serve only as references for the poets and prophets.

Self-Possessed. Two