

ROYAL RANGER RALPH:

The Waif of the Western Prairies.

BY WELDON J. COBB.

CHAPTER XVII.—Continued.

Darrel and his companion disappeared through the aperture in the wall. The two guards, recognizing the scout as an enemy, began firing at him.

The latter sprang behind the bowlder that had blocked the entrance to the cave, and which Darrel Gray had forced aside in entering the place. It afforded a strong intrenchment for him, and he had his enemies at a decided disadvantage.

A sharp fusillade ensued, during which one of the men, evidently wounded, retreated down the corridor with a savage howl of pain. His companion followed his example and beat a hasty retreat. Ranger Ralph could hear them calling for help to their companions in the main outer cave.

"They have sounded the alarm and will soon return with increased force," decided the old scout.

He watched at his post for some time, abandoning it only when a wild commotion arose in the corridor.

Armed men bearing torches came rushing in pursuit of the fugitives.

Among them the scout observed Despard and Danton. He glided through the aperture leading to the outside, and found himself in the same moonlit valley into which Darrel Gray had fallen a few hours previously.

Darrel and Inez were nowhere in sight, and the scout supposed that they had succeeded in making their escape. He therefore set about finding some way himself to leave the valley.

The apparently impenetrable walls of the place made the task seem almost a hopeless one, however. His investigations were forced to be desultory and brief, for in a few minutes the outlaws arrived on the scene.

The scout had just time to safely ensconce himself in a small thicket, when Despard and his men came into view. Immediately the little inclosed valley was the scene of the wildest excitement. The men, with torches borne aloft, scoured every portion of the place.

A shout of triumph thrilled the scout, and a minute later he saw several of the bandits emerge from a smaller cave, where they had found Darrel and Inez. In the glare of the lights Ranger Ralph could discern the pale, distressed face of Darrel and the despairing one of Inez. With exultant cries the bandits bore their prisoners to the spot where Despard was.

"Remove the girl to the cabin and guard her until morning," ordered the bandit leader. "As to him," he indicated Darrel fiercely, "has crossed our path once too often. He shall die."

"No, not!" pleaded Inez, frantically; but she was borne away with her appealing words unheeded. Ranger Ralph could scarcely contain himself as he grasped his revolver grimly. Despard, Danton and several of the men were standing near him, but he realized that it would be folly to attempt to fight against such uneven odds.

"There was another of them," he heard a voice say suddenly. "Halt!" ejaculated Despard. "Who?" His informant was one of the guards. "A man dressed like a half-breed."

Despard started violently. "He was friendly to the girl and the prisoner?" he asked.

"Yes." "Then he was no half-breed at all. Danton, we have been deceived." "By Tallula?" "Exactly."

"You think he is no messenger from the Modocs?" "That's it."

"Who is he, then?" "A spy—a spy to the girl."

"Ranger Ralph, probably." "Perhaps. Boys, search the valley thoroughly. He cannot have escaped," called Despard to the men.

The bandits at once began a systematic scour of the valley. From his covert the scout could see Despard and Danton and several of the men return to the cave.

The outlaw chief repaired at once to the log house on the cliff where the disguised scout had been led by Vance.

Inez, weeping, was seated in the room. Despard, a fierce glitter in his eyes, approached her at once.

"Girl," he said, "I have a few words to say to you."

Inez did not reply, but continued to sob bitterly.

"You are entirely in my power," resumed Despard, "and neither you nor your friends can help my plans. You must become my wife."

Despard's words aroused all the resentful womanliness in Inez's nature. She started wildly to her feet, her eyes flashing, her face pale and defiant.

"Never!" she cried.

Her firm reply did not appear to disturb her captor.

"There is no escape," he continued calmly.

"I will die first!"

"No; you will obey me. You will not only become my wife but you will also do as I tell you, regarding the fortune your father has left you."

"Take that fortune, then. Release my friends and myself, and it is yours."

"No, my fair Inez," jeered Despard. "Your charms have fascinated me, and I shall wed you. As to the fortune, that is in the hands of a man named Walford. You will visit him to-morrow morning. You will tell him that I am your legally wedded husband, and induce him to turn over your fortune to me. Then you will accompany me to some distant country and become my wife."

Inez listened silently until Despard had concluded.

"And if I refuse?" she demanded.

Despard came a step nearer to her. There was a fierce glitter in his evil eye. "Shall I tell you?" he hissed.

"Yes."

"The man you love, Darrel Gray, shall die!"

With a cry of dread dismay Inez Tracey recoiled.

At that moment there was an interruption. One of the outlaws came rushing, excited and breathless, into the room.

"Captain!" he cried, "we have found the half-breed!"

"He is captured?"

"No. He is armed and in a position where we cannot dislodge him."

Despard started from the place.

"I give you an hour to decide your lover's fate," he cried, warningly, to Inez.

At the outlaw had reported was true. Ranger Ralph had been discovered. Driven to a place behind some rocks, however, he held the bandits at bay.

They were forced to retreat before his rapid fire. But he knew that when reinforcements came he must necessarily be dislodged and captured.

With some dismay he saw Despard and others arrive on the scene. His situation was a critical one. Hopelessly he glanced

up at the perpendicular walls before him.

Then he resolved to battle desperately when his foes made another attack. Just then he seemed to hear a voice on the cliff above him. At the same moment a lasso dropped nearly before his face.

"The lasso—seize it, quick!" spoke a low, strong voice.

The mystified scout obeyed. Some strong hand lifted him foot by foot from the ground.

A series of savage yells escaped the bandits as they witnessed his ascent. A score of bullets flattened against the cliff.

Steadily the lasso was drawn in. The scout reached the top of the cliff unharmed by the shots of the discomfited bandits.

A small but sinewy hand drew him over the edge of the cliff and led him out of view of the outlaws in the valley below.

With profound curiosity Ranger Ralph surveyed his rescuer. A cry of amazement escaped his lips as he recognized her. It was White Fawn, the Modoc princess.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE OLD HERMIT.

For some moments Ranger Ralph stood silently regarding the beautiful Indian maiden who had rescued him from a position of peril in so timely a manner.

"White Fawn!" he ejaculated in bewildered tones.

"Yes, it is the child of Shadow Snake. Who is the half-breed?"

She peered curiously into the scout's face as she spoke.

"I am no half-breed."

The Fawn thought so; at least she knew that he was an enemy of the outlaws.

"She knows you now. You are the great scout."

"Ranger Ralph, yes. But how came you here?"

"The Fawn will tell her friend and rescuer all; but they must not remain here."

"There is danger?"

"Yes; the renegades will soon be on our trail. Come."

She led the scout from the spot to a secluded portion of the valley. Ranger Ralph noticed that near by there was a horse bled and saddled.

In rapid tones the Modoc princess related how she had rescued Darrel Gray and had led him hither.

She explained that when she left him to reconnoiter the stronghold of the outlaws, she must have wandered into the valley and later had been captured.

The scout listened intently to her graphic recital, and noticed the fierce, revengeful light in her dark eyes when she spoke the name of her relentless foe, Dyke Despard.

"You have seen him—you penetrated to his haunts to-night?" he asked.

"Yes."

"And you know his plans?"

"I know that with the morning he intends visiting the old hermit they call Walford."

Ranger Ralph started.

"You are sure of this?" he asked.

"Yes; White Fawn is not mistaken."

"Then the outlaws have located the recluse?"

"One of their men has, and he will lead the crowd there with the morning."

This information disturbed the scout not a little. The reader already knows that this man Walford was the friend to whom Inez Tracey's father had entrusted the charge of the fortune intended for his daughter's dowry.

The old scout knew Walford, but he had not seen him for years.

He did not know his place of residence, however, except that it was located somewhere in the vicinity.

Now that Despard had discovered it, the scout readily saw that unless Walford was warned the former would succeed in his plans to secure the fortune.

"Do you know where Walford lives?" he asked anxiously of the Indian girl.

"No. White Fawn only knows that it is about ten miles from the canyon."

The old scout reflected deeply. Inevitable disaster seemed imminent to all his plans for rescuing Inez Tracey.

The Modoc princess watched his face impressively. Finally she asked:

"What will my friend do?"

"I do not know. Gray and the girl are captives, and the cave is well guarded. We can do nothing to rescue them."

"White Fawn will!"

There was a determined look in the dark face.

"How?"

"By going back to my father. Shame, disgrace at my misery, caused me to fear to return to my tribe. For the sake of the friends who saved her life, the Fawn will go to the Modocs. They shall know all, and a terrible vengeance shall be brought against the Crow and his renegades."

"You will go at once?"

"Yes. I stole a horse from the outlaws. I can reach my tribe in a few hours."

"You must make haste. Once Despard has seen the man named Walford, he will fly the country."

"Fear not. The Modoc warriors shall be on his trail with the earliest morning light."

"They will rescue my friends—they will not include them in their vengeance."

"Fear not. The Fawn will plead with her father's braves for the safety of her friends."

White Fawn sprang to the saddle of the horse near by as she spoke. Ranger Ralph saw her disappear rapidly down the canyon. He knew that he must remain inactive, so far as the outlaws were concerned, until the morning.

He realized that it would be folly to again attempt to penetrate to their stronghold. The thought of Walford, however, caused him to determine to endeavor to find the recluse, if possible.

He made a wide detour of the cave and started down the canyon in the direction where he supposed the mountain home of the recluse to be.

It proved to be a profligate journey. All the long night through he wandered up and down the valley. Not a trace of human habitation could he find.

The morning light did not materially change the situation of affairs. He finally determined to keep a close watch for Despard, theorizing that the outlaw leader would set out on his journey that morning for Walford's place of abode.

He ensconced himself in a thicket at the side of the canyon, and watched and waited patiently. It was nearly noon when his vigilance was rewarded. Coming down the canyon, he saw finally a dozen or more persons.

As they neared him, he made out Despard, Danton and Vance on horseback. On another steed was Inez Tracey, surrounded by several of the bandits on foot.

They had evidently left Darrel Gray a prisoner at the cave with the remainder of the band.

They passed so near to the scout that he could almost hear their conversation.

A look of utter despair pervaded the countenance of Inez Tracey. Apparently the heartless Despard had induced Inez to agree to his schemes. To save her lover's life she had consented to sacrifice her fortune.

The scout waited for some time after the cavalcade had passed by. Then, cautiously and stealthily, he took up the trail.

The bandits proceeded straight down the canyon, and Ranger Ralph followed them at a distance until they finally came to a halt. They seemed to have

some difficulty and delay in locating the hermit's home, their evident point of visitation.

Suddenly the entire party disappeared from view in a break in the canyon. When the scout reached the spot he found a large opening in the rock. Into this cave-like aperture the bandits had evidently disappeared.

Ranger Ralph threaded a dark, low passage, groped his way blindly around and then, paused. Far above his head he could see a light glimmering dimly. A series of steps cut in the solid rock seemed to lead to the point where the light was.

The horses of the party had been left just outside the place.

The scout began to ascend the steps and at last arrived at the top. Beyond him was a large apartment filled with evidences of a long career as hunter and trapper, consisting of trophies of the chase, skins of various animals which were hung up about the place.

The apartment was a gloomy one, and was lighted by a lamp hung by a chain from the roof of the cave.

Standing beneath it was a man, white-haired and aged in appearance. His clear, steady eyes were fixed upon the scout, who was slightly in advance of the party that accompanied him.

At a glance the scout recognized the strange old hermit, Walford, whom he had not seen for many years. The latter was speaking as the scout reached the shadowed extreme of the cave.

"Who are you? What does this intrusion mean?" he demanded, sternly.

"We came from Miner's Gulch," was Despard's ready reply.

"Do you see me?"

"How did you find this place?"

"From description, Mr. Walford. You were the friend of a man named Tracey."

The hermit started.

"Yes," he said; "what of it?"

"I came in behalf of that man's daughter."

"Halt! Then you know—"

"All concerning the fortune he left. I have come to claim that fortune."

"You!"

"What claim—"

"As the affianced husband of Inez Tracey."

Walford glanced suspiciously at the intruder.

"Allowing that there is a fortune," he said, "I must have some further proof that you are to receive it."

"It shall be forthcoming when you want it," replied Despard, promptly.

"Inez."

At his word his despairing captive stepped forward.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Child Life in Siam.

It is always interesting to learn how boys and girls in distant lands amuse themselves.

On this account taken from "Siam and Laos"—the most noticeable thing is that no mention is made of schools.

When the Siamese young folks get up in the morning, they do not go to the washstand to wash their faces, for the simple reason that Siamese houses can boast no such articles of furniture.

So our little Siamese friend just runs down to the foot of the ladder—for the house is built on posts—to a large jar of water with a coconut-shell dipper.

There she washes her face by throwing the water over her hands and rubbing them over her face. She needs no towel, for the water is left to dry. She does not brush her teeth, for they are stained black by chewing the betel nut. Her hair does not require combing, either, for it is all shaved except a little tuft on the top of the head, and that is tied in a little knot, and not often combed.

After breakfast is over, the children go off and find some pleasant place to play. The girls play at keeping house, and make dishes of clay dried in the sun. Little images of clay washed with lime are their only dolls.

The boys in Siam are very fond of pitching coins, and spend much of their time in this game. They play leap-frog, and very often jump the rope. Now, that so many foreigners come to the country, they have learned to play marbles.

In the month of March, though, usually dry and hot winds are blowing. At this time, the Siamese, young and old, are much engaged in playing games with kites, which are fitted with whistles, and the air resounds with noise produced by the boys and shouts of the multitudes of people engaged in the sport.

As the streets in Siam are almost all rivers and canals, the Siamese boys and girls early learn to row and paddle their little boats almost as soon as they learn to swim, which they do when they are only four or five years old.

A Clergyman's Advice.

The Rev. Dr. Thain David, of Livingston, England, in a sermon on young men, made the following remarks on life insurance: "If some of you will act upon the advice I am going to give you you will thank me for it some day. While you are to be perfectly happy while you are to be suddenly called away, and you are to make provision, even in this world, against such a contingency. It is meanly selfish for a man, dying in the prime of life, and professing a Christian faith, to be perfectly happy while he knows that as he steps into heaven his wife and children will step into the workhouse. I say it is abominable. If you have the faintest prospect of laying any dependent upon you, you have no business to spend on gratification all your weekly or your yearly salary. It is no yours to spend. The first few shillings or the first few pounds belong to them, and should go to pay the premium on a policy that at least will keep them from beggary. Excuse me from mentioning this. I am really provoked to see men, through sheer thoughtlessness, laying up for their families trouble that might easily have been spared had they only assured their lives in some sound and respectable office. Now, next year is not the time to do it, if you can do it to-morrow, or your yearly salary. It is no yours the sooner you take the step the lighter the burden will be."

Swearing vs. Praying.

Old Abner Kirby is one of the best known men in Milwaukee. He owns the Kirby House there, and is generally a good citizen and a prominent man. Mr. Kirby is at the head of a very fine family, who, one and all, with the exception of himself, are regular attendants at the church of Rev. Dr. Ashley. Profanity seems to be one of Mr. Kirby's strong points; he is noted all over the Cream City for his profane swearing, and one day when he met the clergyman, that individual asked if he could not be induced to attend church with his family, saying, "I will do you good."

"I will do you good," said Mr. Kirby, "I am not religiously inclined." "No, I suppose not," said the preacher, "but it doesn't cut any figure; come to church anyway; perhaps if you do you won't swear so much."

"Well, now, Doctor," said the old gentleman, "I don't know that it hurts me to swear; you see I swear a good deal, and you pray a good deal, but we don't either of us mean anything by it."—Arkansas Traveler.

THE WAY THINGS RUN

IN THE GREATEST OF GREAT STATES, INDIANA.

Things Which Have Lately Happened Within Its Borders—Some Pleasant and Some Sad Reading.

The Northern Prison.

The annual report of the Northern Prison, submitted to Governor Chase, sets forth the condition of the institution. Warden French has only been in charge eight months, the first four months of his term being under the Murdock regime. The Warden's report states that there are in the prison 800 convicts. During the year 323 were discharged and 416 received. The receipts of the year from contracts and miscellaneous sources, independent of the officers' boarding house and stewards' sales to prisoners, were \$116,690.90, and from the library fund, \$1,140, making the gross receipts \$117,830.90. The net expense of maintaining the prison, independent of the officers' boarding house and stewards' sales to prisoners, was \$284,584.58. Messrs. Levi Mock, John Brodie and James Reithan—say in their report that they believe every prisoner should be given an opportunity to attend school. The Board states that in its next recommendation to the Legislature it will ask that better provision be made for the education of prisoners. The directors also ask that the State Board of Charities give the prison more attention.

FORT WAYNE Methodists are in the midst of a revival.

Mrs. JOHN BEGGS, of Clark County, died suddenly of apoplexy.

CHARLES STOCKWELL, of Rushville, died from an overdose of morphine.

HENRY SCOTT, farmer near Wabash, whisked his wife, and the "White Caps" paid him a call.

Mrs. A. R. Beyerle, wife of the Junior editor of the Goshen Daily Times, died after an illness of a week.

A cow belonging to a farmer near Napoleon was bitten by a mad dog and went stark mad. It had to be shot.

HENRY BOLLINGER's store at Blue Lick was entered and robbed of goods to the amount of \$100 and \$38 in money.

JACOB HURBORN, the oldest man in Scott County, died at the age of 96 years. His wife's death occurred three days before.

ARTHUR KINSON, of Brazil, ruptured a blood vessel in his stomach while putting on a shirt and came near bleeding to death.

LOUIS WAGNER, a workman with the electric company at New Albany, was killed by a broken electric wire and instantly killed.

FIVE boys near Mitchell were scared nearly to death by seeing a ghost "sure 'nough." Two of the lads are seriously ill as a result.

OLD Larry Hart, of Peru, has reached his 105th birthday, and has the honor of being the oldest man in Indiana. He's never been married.

Mrs. KENNEDY, of Whiteland, thought she was being carried past her station by a train, and she stepped from the moving train and was fatally injured.

NEAR Branchville, Perry County, the 7-year-old daughter of Amos May fell from a wagon, the wheels of which passed over one of her legs, severing it below the knee.

Gov. CHASE made Mitchell Mailet a Christmas present of his liberty. Mailet was serving a term in the Prison South for murder in the second degree committed at Vincennes in 1877.

A WATCH-PEDESTAL in Southern Indiana is swindling boarding-house keepers by alleging the theft of jewelry from his room and refusing to pay for board and lodging until the missing articles are returned.

THE remains of J. C. Kolly, of Altoona, Pa., were found strewn along the line of the Fort Wayne railroad at a point near Wheeler Station. Kolly was beating his way from Chicago, East. The remains will be taken home by friends who were with him when he died.

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