

OLD BEAR-PAW

THE TRAPPER KING

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CHAPTER I. THE BROKEN CHIEF.

"I wonder what has become of that everlasting Yankee? He promised to meet me here at noon, yet I have stood here and seen the shadows of these old pines lengthen for the last hour. Surely something must have happened to detain him, for he never deceived me yet, and I do not like to believe he will commence now—"

"Yew are 'tarnal right; he won't!" interrupted the second speaker, who was no other than the "everlasting Yankee" himself.

Thus soliloquized the celebrated scout, Lew Kelly, and thus replied his tried friend and companion, Jehiel Filkins, as they stood upon a peak of the Black Hills, west a five-day's ride from Fort Randall—the nearest place where white men could be found, for they were already in the hunting-grounds of the Blackfeet.

The two scouts, well-mounted, and armed to the teeth, were spending a sort of vacation in that dreaded vicinity to satisfy themselves as to the truth of certain rumors, rife at Fort Randall and Yankton, concerning the gold, which it was asserted was laying around loose in the ravines and damp, dark gulches of the Black Hills; and of the existence, in the hills and valleys of the North-west, of bear, elk, antelope and beaver,

which an adventurous scout had asserted made that country a perfect paradise for the hunter and trapper.

They had gone far enough, and seen enough to convince them that there was good foundation for these rumors. Gold they had found in the black sand washed down from the hills, and in the quartz ledges underlying or jutting out from the very crag upon which they stood. As to game, they wondered they had not heard of it before, so abundant was it.

"What was you sayin', Lew?" asked Filkins. "Are you getting in a hurry to go home? Wal, I ain't, then. There ain't an Ingin within forty miles of here, and if there was I know you would not be afeared of them; but if you will wait just a week longer I will go *anywhere* with you, if it's to Halifax."

"You said those same words, ten days ago, Jehiel, yet here we are, a hundred miles further west than we were then."

"Sartin!" replied Jehiel. "But what's the hurry, Lew? You're too old a scout to get homesick so soon; I wouldn't."

"Mighty good reason why you wouldn't, and why you never tire out or get homesick. *Your* home is wherever you happen to find yourself, and you care for nothing but that old coat of yours. Besides, you forget that away over the hills there a dear little wife is waiting and watching for me, and no doubt alarmed at my protracted stay."

"Jes' so, Lew. A scout has no business gettin' married. It e'ena'most makes a coward outen him—"

"You lie, and you know it!" exclaimed the scout, angrily. "Have you forgotten our fight with the Blackfeet, two years ago? Where would your old yellow scalp have gone to then, if it had not been for me? And wasn't I married then, you old fool?"

"Cor-rect, Lew; I take it all back, and beg yer pardon. But, I never see'd such a kentry fur game as this, and besides, I hev' jes' set my heart on goin' over to that round peak there where it looks so foggy. You see it is right on the home stretch, and I can camp there while you pack up and foller to-morrer."

"All right, Jehiel; I will wait another day. But if you are bound to go you had better make a start; it is a good ten miles over there and a pretty rough trail."

"Cor-rect ag'in, Lew, and I'll jog along."

And the Yankee shouldered his rifle and started for the designated point. He was soon out of sight of the scout, who descended the western slope of the bluff and made his way to their camp, beside a limpid stream which flowed through the valley to the north.

He had nearly reached his camp when a sight met his eye which caused him to halt and take shelter behind a tree.

He saw, coming down the valley from the west, three persons on horseback, who seemed to be riding for dear life.

Two rode side by side, and fully a hundred yards in advance of the third, and all were lashing their horses to their best speed.

Of those pursued, one was evidently a female, and as she was bound, it was also evident that she was a prisoner.

The Indian in the rear, who was in such hot pursuit of the foremost, was lashing his horse in a perfect fury; and as they passed the tree where the scout was concealed, he said:

"It looks like a long chase, but I don't see any signs of anybody after them. If the squaw was only a white woman I would sail in and help her out of the fix—but then it is none of my business, and I guess I won't meddle. And I reckon they have too much on their hands now to take any notice of me."

Just as he reached his camp he looked after the Indians and saw the horse of the pursuer drop dead from exhaustion, and its rider was thrown violently upon the rocky path.

The Indian lay so very still that the scout thought he must be dead, and he started out to ascertain.

As he approached the fallen Indian, he discovered that he was still conscious, though unable to stand upon his feet.

The Indian was the first to break silence.

"Me know you—you are White Panther!"

"Yes, that is what some folks call me. But who are you, and what is the matter with you?"

"Me Gray Eagle, big chief of the Blackfeet. Heap matter! Leg broke, arm broke! Red Pine, the Sioux, has stolen Snowdrop, the daughter of Gray Eagle, and if I can not get her back, then my heart broke!"

"Then you are old Gray Eagle, are you? Are you alone?"

"Gray Eagle all alone. Kill him if you want."

"Well, I don't know as I want to; scalping broken-legged Indians is not my business, just now. But, I'll tell you what I will do! If you will agree not to make war upon the whites again, but let them hunt and trap in these hills when they please, I will go for Snowdrop, and I will not return until I bring her and Red Pine's scalp! What do you say?"

"Gray Eagle will promise!"

"But your promise is not worth shucks unless you swear to it."

"Gray Eagle will swear!"

"Swear by the Great Spirit?"

"Yes."

"Swear by your knife and your tomahawk, and your horse—even if he is dead he is good enough to swear by."

"Yes, I swear by all these that I will be a friend to the pale-faces as long as I live if Snowdrop is saved."

"Well, I don't know but that is about all you can do, and I will trust you; though if Jehiel was here he would say, 'Shoot him and let the Sioux keep the gal.' But I will carry you to my camp, and then I will go for Snowdrop; and I'll get her, too, if I have to follow Red Pine clear home!"

The scout raised the chief in his arms and carried him to the camp.

"There," he said, as he laid the chief upon a blanket, "you keep quiet until I come back."

He called his horse, a beautiful black stallion, and mounting, started on the trail of the Sioux.

CHAPTER II. SMITTEN.

The daughter of Gray Eagle was one of the very few handsome Indian women. Though not more than sixteen years of age, she deserved the proud distinction she had won of being the flower of the Blackfoot nation, and the only really beautiful girl in the tribe.

Dozens of chiefs had sought in vain to win her heart; even brave warriors from other tribes had offered fabulous gifts for her; but her father gave them all the same answer—that Snowdrop was the idol of his heart, and that he would not force her to marry a brave she did not like.

As for Snowdrop herself, she had never loved any one except her father, and consequently none of the braves received any encouragement.

But, Red Pine, a cruel chief of the Sioux, had seen her, and with him, to see her was to covet her; so he did not ask the consent of any one, but, watching his chance when the Blackfeet were nearly all gone on a hunt, and Gray Eagle was confined by sickness, he had stolen her away.

Gray Eagle had followed on the trail, and when within rifle-shot of the Sioux, had met with the accident already narrated.

Red Pine, seeing the fall of Gray Eagle, immediately slackened his speed so as to save his horse as much as possible; for the

chase had been a long one, and they were now fully thirty miles from the Blackfoot village. But he would not have ridden so slowly had he known who was upon his trail in the place of Gray Eagle.

"Would Snowdrop like to rest?" he asked.

The only reply he received was a flash of scorn from the wondrously black eyes of the captive.

"Ugh!" he grunted. "Snowdrop mad now, but by-and-by Red Pine *make* her talk!"

Snowdrop looked back to see what had become of her father, as she could no longer hear the sound of his horse's feet.

Red Pine also looked back and saw, what she evidently did not, that a well-armed and well-mounted white man was upon his trail. Furiously he lashed the horses ridden by himself and Snowdrop, and once more they flew down the rough valley.

Not long before he had received a severe chastisement at the hands of a party of white men, and he actually dreaded this single man who was now in pursuit of him more than he would have done the whole Blackfoot nation.

Lash as he would, his pursuer rapidly gained upon him. He stopped his horse, and placing himself behind Snowdrop, he drew her to him so that her form covered his breast, and drawing his knife, held it above her breast, resolved to kill her rather than give her up.

Snowdrop was prepared for the blow, but it never fell. With a howl of mingled rage and pain, the Sioux sprung from his horse,

his arm hanging limp and useless at his side, and darted into the bushes, where it was impossible for any one to follow him, just as the scout rode up.

Snowdrop, when she discovered that she had merely changed captors, was at first inclined to be angry, but when Kelly drew his knife and cut the thongs which bound her hands, at the same time saying that she was free, she replied:

"Snowdrop can not thank the pale-face, but he has saved her life, and now she is his."

"Gracious! I don't want you!" replied the scout. "Now you hold my horse until I find that red-skin and get his scalp, then I will take you to your father."

But he was unsuccessful. The Sioux had taken care to hide his trail, and the scout soon returned, and mounting his horse, led the way back to camp.

Neither spoke, but Snowdrop thought, "What a handsome man he is," and for the first time in her life she was in love. She had yet to learn that it takes two to make a bargain, though she resolved to win the love of the brave scout, or die.

When they reached the camp where Kelly had left the old chief, they found him sitting beside the fire, endeavoring to tie a cloth around his broken leg. An expression of pleasure lit up his swarthy face as he saw his daughter unharmed; then, as his eye rested upon the belt of the scout, Kelly said, as if anticipating his thoughts:

"No; the red devil got away that time. You see, I had to break his arm, or he would have struck the girl to the heart. But never mind, I will have his scalp yet; for I never go back on my word with any man, be he red or white. I brought back his horse for you, and I don't suppose you are far from your village, so you can go home when you please."

"White Panther is a great brave, but Red Pine has many warriors with him, and they may come and take Snowdrop from him. The village of Gray Eagle is only a day's ride from here; will the white brave build a smoke to call the warriors of Gray Eagle here?"

"Yes," replied Kelly, "and while I am about it, suppose you have Snowdrop get something to eat. There is plenty here," he said, pointing to several saddles of venison hanging in the trees near by. Then Kelly went to build the smokes.

The transparency of the atmosphere in that region is such that objects can be seen at a great distance; for example, a mountain presents a distinct and bold outline at fifty or sixty miles, and may occasionally be seen as far as a hundred miles.

The Indians, availing themselves of this fact, have been in the habit of practicing a system of telegraphing by means of smokes by day, and fires by night, and there are but few men who have crossed the mountains who have not seen these signals made and responded to from peak to peak, in rapid succession.

The Indians thus make known to their friends many items of information highly important to them. If enemies or strangers

make their appearance in the country, the fact is telegraphed at once, giving them time to secure their animals and to prepare for attack, defense or flight.

War or hunting parties, after having been absent a long time from their friends at home, and not knowing where to find them, make use of the same preconcerted signals to indicate their presence.

Very dense smokes may be raised by kindling a large fire with dry wood, and piling upon it the green boughs of pine, balsam, or hemlock. This throws off a heavy cloud of black smoke which can be seen very far.

Kelly proceeded to the top of the bluff where we first met him, and soon three long, white columns of smoke were rising heavenward. This done, he returned to his camp, and found dinner awaiting him.

Snowdrop presented him a nicely broiled steak upon a clean bark plate, and was well repaid for her trouble by the smile he gave her, and complimented her upon her skill in cookery.

After dinner Kelly set the broken limbs as well as was possible with the appliances at hand. When completed, he said:

"Will Gray Eagle remain with me until morning? Then I will start on the trail of the Sioux."

"Why does my white brother stop here?"

"I'm waiting for my partner, who went to visit a big hill over to the north-east. He was going to stay until morning, but that

smoke will bring him as soon as he sees it; anyhow, I won't go without him!"

"It is right for White Panther to be true to his brother, but the Sioux will be upon our trail before morning."

"Well, let them come. If they do, you can make a big addition to your stock of scalps."

Suddenly the sound of footsteps was heard, and in a moment Jehiel Filkins stood before them.

"Glad you are back, for we have got some work to do."

"I thought there was something up," he replied, "though I was on my way back when I see'd your smokes. Then, you just bet, I traveled! But say, I'm awful hungry! Who is that handsome creetur'?" he asked, as he set about getting his dinner.

"Oh! she is the daughter of that old cub who lays in there with a broken leg."

"It strikes me I have seen him somewhere, before, but I never see'd such a pretty gal as that, any place."

"Well," replied Kelly, "pitch in and make love to her if you want to, and marry her if you can. I'm sure you need some one to mend your clothes. But I have not told you yet that we have got to escort them to their village."

"Yes, we will," said Jehiel, "and lose our scalps for our kindness!"

"We won't do any such thing. I have been making a treaty of peace with Gray Eagle, and he has promised not to fight the pale-faces any more!"

"Wal, what's an Injun's promise good for?" asked Jehiel.

"You don't know them as well as I do, or you would not ask such a question!"

"No, I s'pose not—nor you don't know 'em as well as you will a year from now. But," he continued, "if we are going, let us be on the move. I will eat as we ride along."

Snowdrop was well pleased when she heard Jehiel speak thus, and smiled as she said:

"The Long Hunter is brave and good to be the brother of White Panther."

"Much obleeged," said Jehiel, "but he ain't my brother, though he is a bully boy, and fit to be the brother of a king."

Lifting the wounded chief to his saddle, they started up the valley, Kelly taking the lead, the chief next, and Snowdrop behind him, while Jehiel brought up the rear; preferring to be where he could admire the lovely form of the Indian girl.

"By Gunner!" he muttered, "but *ain't* she nice! I'll do something desperate, and marry her or bu'st!"

Truth to tell, Jehiel Filkins was desperately and irrevocably in love, but he was "counting his chickens" too soon.

In the midst of his reverie he was made aware of a sudden halt, and he looked up to see what was the matter.

CHAPTER III.

THE SIOUX STROKE.

When the scout had halted, of course the others stopped and Jehiel found himself close beside the object of his meditations before he had fairly recovered from his day-dream. But close ahead he saw a camp-fire, and the silly lover was at once transformed into the brave scout.

He rode to the front, and took his stand beside Kelly with his gun cocked and ready for service.

"White men, and a hard-looking lot they are too!" exclaimed Kelly.

Seated around the camp-fire were a dozen men, who, as soon as they discovered the party of our friends, sprung to their feet, and stood ready with their guns.

"Come on," said Kelly, "we may as well be bold about it, for we are too close to back out now."

The strangers stepped out in front of their camp, and waited for the scout to approach.

He had seen too many of that class of men before on the plains and in the mountains, not to know that he had come across a gang of road agents, through he was at a loss to imagine what they could be after, in that section.

He knew that these outlaws were frequently in league with the Indians, and he did not know but this party were in some way connected with the Sioux, from whom he was endeavoring to escape.

The leader of the party of whites was the only good-looking one in the crowd; the rest wearing a hang-dog, ruffianly look, as if they had been life-long murderers. The leader saluted Kelly with:

"Hello, stranger, which way are you going?"

"North," replied Kelly, "as you can see, if you use your eyes!"

"Yes, I see; but what are you going for?"

"It is not evident to my mind that it is any of your business where we are going," replied the scout. "I don't mind telling you, however, that we are bound for the village of the Blackfeet."

"What may I call your name? It strikes me I have seen you somewhere before to-day."

"You may call me Robinson Crusoe, if it will do you any good, though that isn't my name; and it is barely possible you have seen me somewhere, for I have been there several times."

"Where?"

"I told you *somewhere!*"

"Well, where are you from?" asked the stranger.

"Home!" replied Kelly.

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