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Vol. III.

The Dashing Dragon;

Or, The Story of Gen. Geo. A. Custer from West Point to the Big Horn.

BY CAPTAIN FREDK WHITTAKER,

AUTHOR OF "WOODS AND WATERS," "RIFLE AND REVOLVER," ETC., ETC.



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JUST AS CUSTER CAME UP, THEY HEAR A LONG, LOUD CRY FROM ONE OF THE INDIANS.
HE HAS FOUND THE TRAIL!

The Dashing Dragoon;

OR,

The Story of Gen. George A. Custer

FROM WEST POINT TO THE BIG HORN.

BY CAPTAIN FRED'K WHITTAKER,

AUTHOR OF 'WOODS AND WATERS,' 'RIFLE AND REVOLVER,' ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

CUSTER AS A BOY—AS A TEACHER—AS A CADET AT WEST POINT.

GEORGE ARMSTRONG CUSTER was born in a village in Harrison county, Ohio, almost at the edge of Pennsylvania. It is ten chances to one if you can find the place on an ordinary map. In the midst of Harrison county is the county seat, Cadiz; and a few miles off, at the meeting of some country roads, is a little village called New Rumley. There Custer was born, forty-two years ago, on the 5th December, 1839, in a little cottage. His father was the village blacksmith, who took to farming soon after his boy's birth, and at New Rumley young Custer was brought up, on the farm, like many another poor man's son, going to country district-school. They always called him Autie or Armstrong in those days. Somehow or other his middle name was preferred by all his friends, all through his life.

Of course we all want to know what sort of a boy Autie was. There were several remarkable things about him. He was a frank, honest, manly boy, always full of fun; could run faster, jump further, wrestle better than any other boy of his class. He was a boy all over, and got into plenty of mischief, as boys will. How many pairs of pantaloons he tore, climbing trees and vaulting fences, I dare not calculate. Out of school he was the best catcher at base-ball in that part of the county, and there was not a fellow of his size could throw him wrestling.

But he never got into a mean scrape, never lied, and, what is more remarkable still, never had a single fight in all his boy life.

Autie Custer grew up like other boys, strong and hearty. When he was twelve, his elder sister married, and became Mrs. Reed. She left New Rumley with her husband to go out to Monroe, Michigan, and asked her father to let Autie come with her for a year or two. Father Custer consented, and Autie went "out West," to Monroe, where he stayed at school until he was nearly sixteen.

Monroe is on the western shore of Lake Erie, just half-way between Detroit and Toledo. It is quite an old place, and there was once a great battle close to it, in the war of 1812, between the British forces under General Proctor, assisted by the Indian chief, Tecumseh, on one side, and a force of Kentucky Mounted Riflemen on the other, under General Winchester. The Americans were surprised at Monroe, which was then called "Frenchtown," and the end of it was that they were all massacred by the Indians.

Autie Custer used very often to go down to the little River Raisin, which runs through Monroe, to the spot where the battle was fought, while he looked at the place where the poor fellows had retreated over the river on the ice, on that terrible winter's day, only to find themselves slaughtered at last. It was there that he first conceived the idea of becoming a soldier, to defend the frontier farmers against just such terrible disasters as the massacre of the River Raisin.

It was now the year 1856, and Autie was sixteen. He had learned all that they could teach him at school. Had he cared for nothing but play he would never have been anything in after-life. As it was,

at sixteen he came back to New Rumley, as full of fun as ever, but having learned so much that he could make his living teaching school.

It was through this that he got into West Point and became the great soldier he was when he died, so the story is worth listening to. We all know that West Point is the great military school of America, where they train up officers, but that's about the sum of our knowledge. It was all Custer knew then, but he had made up his mind he would go to West Point if he could. He had heard that each member of Congress had the power to send one person there, and that there was some examination to be passed. He did not personally know any member of Congress, but he knew who the member from his district was. So he wrote to that member a short, manly letter, telling him he was very anxious to go to West Point, and asking Mr. Bingham whether there was a vacancy and what were the qualifications required.

Observe here, one thing. Custer did not trust to friends, politics, or influence, to get what he wanted. He went to the fountain-head, and asked for it. If any reader of these lines wants to go to West Point or Annapolis, let him do the same. Write straight to the member of Congress, for your district. If he does not answer, or says "no," decidedly, *give it up*. You cannot get into West Point. If you trust to friends, you may be kept waiting for months, only to be refused at last. If you write to head-quarters, you are soon out of your troubles, one way or the other. Custer found it so. There was a vacancy, but another young man from the next county had applied for it, and Bingham wrote to Custer, telling him that if this young man failed to pass the examination, he would give the next chance to Custer. The examination was in January, and it was then May. There were eight long, weary months to wait before he would know. Custer kept on teaching all the time, and every Saturday went to school himself at the Normal School. He made up his mind that when the examination came, he would be *ready for it*. The young man from Jefferson county thought himself all safe, as Mr. Bingham had promised him the appointment. The time came, and this confident young man was "plucked," that is, failed to pass the examination. Then, in went young Custer, and never missed a question. His eight months' work had paid him well. He found himself a cadet in the United States service, with a certain future before him, and a chance to do almost anything.

Suppose he had given up the fight to that young man, and neglected his studies, he would not have been ready for his opportunity. As it was, when it came, it found him able to take it. Had it not come, his year's study would have made him a better teacher, able to command a higher salary. So you see, Custer's "luck" consisted here in getting ready in time. The other young man's "bad luck" was—his laziness.

Now Custer really had to go to school in earnest for four long years at West Point. First, they drilled him to march with the other cadets, in line and column, carrying a musket, sometimes at a walk, sometimes running, always in exact line with the rest, heads up, toes out, till he was nearly tired out. This was in the June encampment, when the cadets sleep in tents. Then he was sent into barracks, and all the winter he had to study algebra, geometry, surveying, French, Spanish and military history, the only relief being drill, drill, drill. So passed a year, when he rose a class, and had still harder studies, while his drill was changed to loading big guns and learning to ride in the riding-school. Some people think that must have been fun, anyway, the riding-lessons, but these folks wouldn't think so at West Point. They ride for business there, not pleasure. The class is mounted on great troop horses, old fellows, with hard mouths, horses that are used to being ridden by a dozen different people every week, and which know all the most effectual tricks to get a rider off. For a little while the pupils

ride slowly round the school in file, horses all fully saddled, cadets sitting upright. Then the riding-master halts them and tells them to "cross stirrups." Every cadet must take his feet out of the stirrups, and throw them across the saddle, so as to ride entirely by balance, or by clinging with the knees to the hard, slippery saddle. Then away goes the long file at a hard trot, jog, jog, jog, all round the ring. Then the cadets begin to tumble off, and by the time the lesson is over, hardly one has escaped a tumble. That's the way they learn to ride at West Point, by tumbling off until they can stick on at any pace, on any horse, and then they are free of all horse creation. It ends by leaving these young West Point cadets splendid horsemen, and Custer soon became one of the best there.

But I did not intend to dwell long upon West Point, except to show how Custer was trained to become what he became in after life. He went in, June, 1857, a gay boy, full of spirits; he came out, June, 1861, a brave officer, a perfect horseman, a good shot, a good swordsman, understanding infantry, cavalry and artillery, able to command, having learned to obey. All these advantages he had gained by sticking to his work at school, watching his chance, and not being afraid to speak up for what he wanted.

His only piece of real good fortune in all this time was in finding a vacancy at West Point, and finding Mr. Bingham willing to give it to him. Those were things not due to himself, but everything else was the fruit of his own hard work.

At the close of Custer's career at West Point, however, one other thing occurred to him, not the result of his own exertions, but of something over which he had no control. This was the breaking out of the great civil war, which began just at the very time that Custer graduated, and which affected his future very seriously. Before 1861 the cadets had to stay five years in West Point, at the end of which time they were examined by a board of visitors and graduated. The successful ones were then put on probation in regiments as "brevet second lieutenants," where they generally served at least a year before they were promoted to second lieutenants. The army was very small, only sixteen thousand men, the officers few in number, only about twelve hundred in all, and the Academy used to graduate about sixty officers every year. So it was very hard to find places for all the graduates, and they had to wait for vacancies, living meanwhile as extra officers by brevet. When a man became second lieutenant at last, he had to wait another long, weary time before he became a first lieutenant, and at least ten years before he became a captain. No matter how many brave deeds he might do, it would not help him a bit any more than it does now. He could not be promoted, simply because there was no vacancy above him, and the only way to create a vacancy is to kill an officer or get him to resign.

This slowness of promotion in a small regular army is one of the reasons why army officers always wish for war. It kills off the colonels, and majors, and captains, and leaves vacancies to be filled by the second lieutenants. Before Custer's time there had only been one war since West Point was founded. This was the Mexican war in 1846-7, which had been the means of promoting ever so many young graduates to high stations in the army while it lasted; but since that all the officers had to do was to stay around frontier forts on the plains, with an occasional skirmish with the Indians, where no one was much hurt. This made promotion very slow, officers very few, and as a consequence led many of them into bad habits to while away the time. This is the case now, owing to the same causes. Put a man into a little post on the plains, with hardly any one to talk to, and the chances are that he will fall into bad habits, especially drinking and gambling with what few companions he has.

From this sort of bad and useless life Custer was

very fortunately saved by the great events which attended his graduation.

CHAPTER II.

THE GREAT WAR—CUSTER AT BULL RUN—ON THE CHICKAHOMINY.

ALL of our readers have heard of the great war that this country went through from 1861 to 1865. The older ones, no doubt, remember its passage, and many even took part in it. A good many more had fathers, brothers, uncles in that war, some North, some South. I do not here propose to say much about it, except to explain how Custer came there, and how he got his name of Cavalry Custer.

The immediate reason of the war was this: A good many of the Southern States of the Union—that is Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, South and North Carolina and Virginia—became dissatisfied with the United States government, and determined to separate and set up a government of their own, which they did, calling it the Confederate States. This was in 1861, and at first it was supposed that there was no way the United States could stop them. It so happened, however, that there were certain forts and other property on the coasts of these seceded States which did not belong to them, but to the United States; and it became a question who should hold these forts. At last the war began in South Carolina by the people of that State firing on Fort Sumter in the middle of the harbor of Charleston and taking it from the United States troops. Then the President called for more troops to take it back, and the great civil war began, all of a sudden. When this happened Custer was still a boy at West Point, and he saw his classmates, the cadets from the Southern States, one after another, leave the Academy to go home to their own States and take part in the war. All old friendships were broken up, and these lads, friends and schoolmates, all knew when they parted that when next they met it would be on the battlefield, as enemies, under different flags. For nearly two months after the taking of Fort Sumter both parties did nothing but gather together their soldiers and drill them. The Confederates had made their capital city at Richmond, Virginia, and the Union troops were gathered in front of Washington to protect their own capital and try to capture Richmond. It was thought that if they could do that, the Confederates would be so much disheartened that they would give up the fight, and that was really the way the war was ended at last. But before that time there were many terrible battles to be fought, thousands of men killed, and four long years to pass by.

When Custer came out of West Point he was ordered to join the regiment in which he had been made a second lieutenant. This regiment was the Fifth Regular Cavalry, and it was out in the field in front of Washington, at a little stream called Bull Run. He reached his company, after riding all night from Washington, and that very day saw his first battle. The Union soldiers, under General McDowell, attacked the Confederates under General Beauregard. At first the Union troops had everything their own way, but, just as the victory seemed decided, some fresh Southern troops came up and attacked the Union men by surprise. Then came a sudden change. The Union troops were seized with a panic and ran away, frightened to death, throwing away their muskets, flags, everything, and a great many kept on all the way to Washington. The only troops that staid and did their duty were the few regulars, among whom was Custer's regiment, and one or two regiments of old steady militia. There were not many men killed or wounded, but the Union troops lost nearly everything they had. Thus they found out in their first battle that it is not enough to have plenty of men and guns to gain a victory, but that the men must be old soldiers to stand up against misfortune if it comes.

After Bull Run, therefore, the Union men did not try to do any more fighting for some time. They

staid around Washington, behind a ring of forts, and began to train and drill their men, to make them real soldiers, and they chose a new general—General McClellan. In drilling soldiers and other hard work the new officers from West Point were very useful, and Lieutenant Custer worked as hard as any. The winter passed away, the spring came, and at last McClellan determined to move, for he found that he now had a real army of soldiers of more than a hundred thousand men, enough, as he thought, to take Richmond.

It was determined to move against the Confederates, but not by land, over the old Bull Run battlefield. McClellan preferred to move his men by sea, and set them down in the peninsula formed by the mouths of the Pamunkey and James rivers, on which Richmond lay. By so doing he thought he could get close to Richmond without a fight, as the Southerners had no ships to fight at sea.

It may as well be remarked here, to those who are not quite certain about the places hereafter mentioned, that they can never clearly understand a battle or campaign unless they follow it on the map; then everything becomes plain.

The Union army of McClellan was now called the Army of the Potomac. It was so called because it was first formed on the banks of the Potomac river, to defend Washington. This army took a whole month to move by sea, bit by bit, but at last it was all landed at Fort Monroe, at the very end of the Peninsula, and began to move toward Richmond. Before long McClellan found that the enemy had got round in front of him, and had dug a great ditch across the Peninsula, with a bank behind it, at the village of Yorktown, the very place where Washington captured Cornwallis and the English army eighty years before. Behind the ditch and bank were the Southern army, with cannons and guns, all ready to say, "You can't go any further."

So McClellan had to stop and dig a ditch of his own, sending for big guns in his turn, and making a regular siege of it. This siege first brought Custer into notice. Although the army was large and well-drilled, there was hardly any one in it who understood how to make good fortifications, so that the young West Point officers, who had been taught all this kind of work, were much in request, and Custer found himself taken from his company and appointed an engineer officer.

It was here that he had quite a little adventure one night. He was ordered to take a party of soldiers, with spades, out close to the Southern lines and dig a ditch for a rifle-pit, that was to be made so close to the enemy that one might have thrown a stone in on either side. It was a very dark night or the soldiers must have been seen. If they had been the enemy could have killed them all, for they were out in the open ground, while the enemy were lying down behind their great ditch and bank.

This sort of work was, of course, the reverse of pleasure to Custer and his men. But they knew it had to be done, or General McClellan would never get to Richmond; so out they went into the dark, without saying a word, and began to shovel away in dead silence. Luckily it was soft ground, or the enemy must have heard them. As it was, while they worked, they could hear the Southern soldiers talking to each other around their camp-fires, and could hardly believe but what they could be found out. Lieutenant Custer walked softly around among his men, giving all his orders in a whisper, and so they kept on all night, till, when the morning dawned, the Southerners were surprised to see the long line of bank that indicated the rifle-pit, and were greeted with such a fire that they could no longer work their guns in that neighborhood.

So the siege went on, every day McClellan bringing up more guns, and getting ready for a bombardment. To find out what the enemy were doing, the Union army used to send up balloons at the end of a long rope, and each balloon had an officer with a spy-glass. Here, again, Custer was made useful.

and he was the first officer who was sent up to watch the enemy. He used to do this every morning and evening, when the enemy had their camp-fires lighted, so that he could estimate their numbers by the line of fires.

At last, one morning, when he went up, long before sunrise, he noticed something strange. *There were no more fires*; and though he waited till daylight, none were seen. Then, he suddenly made up his mind that the Southerners had stolen away in the night, so he gave the signal and was pulled down by the men holding the rope, when he went and reported what he had seen.

Then it was found out that the Southern general, Johnston, seeing that McClellan was quite ready to batter down his works, and that he had detained aim long enough, had retreated toward Richmond. The next thing was to follow him, and the whole army set out on its march, in the midst of a terrible rain storm. People at home don't know what that means with an army, but the Union soldiers soon found out, and so did Custer, when they saw the long train of army wagons, stretching for miles and miles, cutting up the soft road into mud, where the horses stuck fast, and the wheels were buried, and the soldiers were up to their knees in red clay, and everything was miserable. There was no fun in that, and no fun when they came up with the enemy, some seven miles off, at Williamsburg, and had a furious battle, where nearly three thousand men were killed and wounded. Then, very slowly and cautiously, General McClellan moved his army up the Peninsula, following General Johnston, and only moving a few miles a day, but without much fighting. At last General Johnston drew back right into Richmond, behind a little stream called the Chickahominy, and waited for the Union troops to attack him.

Here was the place where Custer found his second great chance in life, and took it. The army was coming slowly along on the road toward Richmond, and between them and the enemy lay a valley, the bottom of which was filled with a dark, swampy forest, hiding the Chickahominy from view. On the other side were some low hills; and, beyond that, every one knew that they would be able to see the church steeples of Richmond, the city they had come from their homes on purpose to take. It was only four miles off, now, and they felt full of hope as they marched along.

It must not be supposed that the army could see anything of Richmond. For that matter, they could not see any enemy, they could not even see the whole of their own army. When we think what a number of them there were, we can imagine this. McClellan had an army of a hundred thousand men. We all know a city of a hundred thousand people is a very big city. There are not many such in the United States. An army stretches over much more ground than a city, and if McClellan's army had marched all on one road, with its wagons, it would have made a column fifty miles long. But, instead of that, it was broken into ever so many little columns, moving abreast of each other, and all these little columns found themselves stopped at the same time by the great dark swamp and black forest, where the stream of the Chickahominy, just like a river of ink, stole along between black banks of mud. There was no telling how deep that was, nor how many of the enemy might be hiding in the dark thicket on the other side, waiting to pick off the Union men, if they tried to cross. So the army halted, and went into camp, and McClellan told his chief engineer, Colonel Barnard, to go down and examine the river.

Barnard beckoned to a young officer near by, and, of course, we all know who the young officer was. It was Lieutenant Custer, whose opportunity had come. The old engineer galloped down to the river, followed by Custer, and they were soon outside the line of sentinels, called "pickets," that were placed there to watch the enemy.

These pickets were at the edge of the wood, and several of them warned Barnard and Custer to go no further, for they felt sure that the woods were full of enemies. The old engineer only smiled and went on into the wood. He had seen, from the top of the hill, with a spy-glass, that the enemy's main pickets were on the other side of the river. He and Custer tied their horses in the wood, and then went on foot through the swamp, now nearly dry, till at last they stood right at the edge of the deep, black stream that was rolling sluggishly along between its muddy banks, and on the other side of which was another deep, mysterious-looking forest.

Then Barnard turned to Custer, and pointed to the other bank.

"Jump in," said the old engineer to the young one.

Very few people would have liked that order, with a muddy bank and a stream like a river of ink to cross. Neither did Custer. He was a poor swimmer, and had all his clothes on. Moreover, if he went across, there was a chance that the enemy might shoot him from behind a tree, or wait and capture him on the other side. Most men would have hesitated, for a moment.

Without a word, Custer drew his revolver, held it up in the air, and jumped into the black, slimy waters, up to his breast, while he commenced his perilous journey, all alone.

CHAPTER III.

A PERILOUS FEAT—PROMOTION—AN ADVENTURE.

SLOWLY, but surely, Lieutenant Custer began to wade the river, holding high his revolver, and anxiously watching the other side of the stream. He expected every moment to see a flash in the dark wood and to feel the sting of an enemy's bullet, but for all that he went on, the water, black and full of slime, up to his armpits, while he felt his feet sinking in the soft black swamp muck that was at the bottom of the stream. It was a horrid place, a dark, dangerous-looking hole, bad enough at any time, but doubly disagreeable now, when the other bank was occupied by wary enemies.

On he went, slowly wading, till he had passed the middle of the stream, and the water began to sink toward his waist. All this time dead silence on the other bank. Behind him stood old Colonel Barnard, watching anxiously. The old engineer had found all he wanted, now Custer had passed the middle of the river. He saw that it was not up to a man's neck anywhere, and he wanted to call Custer back.

But he did not dare do this. He knew that the enemy must be in the wood, and the silence made it probable that they had not seen Custer. If he shouted to him, it might attract a patrol that way, and Custer and Barnard might both be shot. So he began to beckon and wave his hand, to call the young officer back.

But Custer was too busy watching the enemy's side of the river to notice Barnard. He went softly on, coming gradually out of the water, then seized the hanging branch of a tree and climbed up the bank, and still no sign of the enemy. He slowly crept forward into the wood, keeping his pistol ready for use.

He had only gone a few steps when he caught sight of the enemy's picket sentinel, standing with his back to him, leaning on his musket, about a hundred yards off. He realized, then, how he had escaped being seen. The enemy were not watching the line of the river carefully. He crept slowly forward, and soon found that the belt of wood was quite narrow, at that place, and that there was open ground beyond, and that in the middle of that ground there was quite a large party of the enemy, with a camp-fire, round which they were lounging, half asleep. The river made quite a curve round this place, and he saw an open spot higher up, where a party might be crossed, which would get right behind the enemy's party.

Then, having seen all he wanted, he quietly went

back to the bank, where he first saw Colonel Barnard making signals to him to come back. Custer nodded in reply, let himself quietly down into the water, and waded safely back, when he told the old engineer all he had seen.

Barnard was a queer, silent old officer, quite deaf. His hearing had once been injured by standing too close to a heavy gun when it was fired off. He listened to all that Custer told him, as they walked back to their horses, but said nothing. Then they mounted and rode back to McClellan's headquarters, over the hill.

Just as they came there, the general was mounting his own horse to visit the lines of his army, and find if they were well posted. He told Barnard to come with him, and as they went along, the old engineer told him all about Custer's passage of the river. Then the general wanted to see the young officer, and poor Custer, covered with black mud, and dripping wet, rode up to the general, feeling very red in the face, for the general and all his officers were dressed in brilliant uniforms.

McClellan very kindly questioned Custer about the river, and the young fellow answered promptly. He told the general all he had observed in such a clear, business-like way, that McClellan was at once struck with his knowledge.

Then he suddenly turned to Custer, and asked him how he would like to come on his staff as a captain.

You can fancy how Custer felt then. Of course he was very thankful; and within a week after, he was a captain on the staff of the general, with a large, handsome tent, two horses, servants, and everything pleasant, having been promoted before he had been a soldier a whole year.

How simple now seems the story of the way Custer found this piece of "luck," as some called it. He found it by doing a dangerous duty in the very best way possible. When Barnard told him to jump in, had he hesitated, he would never have been made a captain. He knew that if the enemy saw him, he would be shot, but he knew that it was his duty to go, live or die; so he went. He might have stopped in the middle of the river and come back, but he knew that it was his duty to get all the news he could, so he went on. He might have shot the picket who had his back turned, but he scorned to do a mean, cowardly murder. Soldiers—true soldiers—never kill people, except to gain a victory, and then only to protect their country.

The sum of all the talk about "luck" is, that Custer always did just what he had to do, whatever it was, in the best way that he knew how. Anybody can do that. It is a safe rule. It got Custer into West Point, because he was ready for examination, when the young man from Jefferson county was not. Now it made him a captain on McClellan's staff, because McClellan saw that he was a man who always did his duty.

The time on the general's staff, of course, passed very pleasantly for Custer, and he soon had the satisfaction of seeing the army cross the Chickahominy, and of getting a fair sight of Richmond, only four miles off. Then the siege of Richmond began.

But in the mean time the Southerners were not idle. They had been gathering all their men together to repel McClellan, and one morning they came out of their fortifications and attacked part of McClellan's army at a place called Fair Oaks Station, just outside of Richmond, killing a number of men, and putting the Union troops to flight. They did not follow up their victory, however, on account of a very severe wound received by their General Johnston, which checked their successes, because there was no one fit to take his place.

So they fell back into the city, and gathered more men from all quarters, till they had an army nearly as large, and at last even larger than McClellan had. This army was put under the command of General Robert E. Lee.

Of course people have all heard of General Lee, but you don't know perhaps of what family he came. He had married the great-grand-daughter of Mrs. Washington, the wife of General Washington. Mrs. Washington, you know, was a widow with two children, when she married Washington. Her eldest son was called Mr. Custis, and his grand-daughter had married General Lee, bringing with her all of Washington's old estate at Mount Vernon, which belonged to her father, whose name was George Washington Parke Custis, under the terms of Washington's will. So, very strangely, here was General Lee, his estates at Mount Vernon in the hands of the Union troops, fighting against those very troops.

And very well he fought, too, for Lee was a good general, and he had with him the terrible Stonewall Jackson, as he was called, whose very name used afterward to frighten the Union soldiers, for he had a way of always catching them in front and rear at the same time and fighting worse than any one they ever heard of. And so Lee and Jackson one morning came out of Richmond, marched all round McClellan's army till they got behind it, and suddenly attacked by surprise.

Then followed a terrible battle, that lasted, off and on, for seven long days, in which Lee drove the Union men back every day, and which ended at last at the battle of Malvern Hill, when the Southerners were finally beaten in their turn, and the Union troops had a long rest behind fortifications, by the James River, where the Union gunboats covered them with their heavy guns.

This was a dreadful blow for McClellan and his staff, among whom Custer was the most active. All through the "Seven Days' Fight" Custer was on horseback, riding from place to place, carrying orders, with little or nothing to eat and hardly any sleep, but always cheerful and ready for duty. Just as before, he did his duty *the best that he knew how*.

At last all was quiet, and McClellan lay at Harrison's Landing on the James river, thinking what he should do next to take Richmond. While he was awaiting, Custer had another adventure, by which he gained a good horse and a beautiful sword, which he afterward wore all through the war.

He was sent out into the Peninsula with a party of three hundred cavalry to scout, that is, to find if there was an enemy in that vicinity, and, if so, to beat them. They traveled on through the woods for some time without seeing anything, the men riding in a long column, four abreast. Ahead of the main body, a hundred yards, was a small company, the men scattered out into a long line, about fifty feet apart, so as to scour the woods in all directions. These men are called "flankers" or "skirmishers," and cavalry always advance that way, covered by these skirmishers, when they think the enemy is near them. If they did not have them the main body might run headlong into an ambush, and get very badly punished. With a line of scattered skirmishers the ambush would be stirred up, and could only kill one or two at most, giving the main body time to get ready. Of course the skirmish line is the place of most danger, but where you are sure to see the enemy first, and Custer always went out with the skirmishers, to see what was to be seen, for himself, instead of riding with the column. The general had told him to go with his party and find out all he could, and he was not going to let any one else do his business.

At last, as they were in the woods, they saw a cloud of blue smoke ahead, where the country road opened into a clearing, and distinguished horses and soldiers, with an old house and barn and a haystack. They had not been seen themselves yet.

So Custer halted the skirmishers, sent back word to the column to close up, and in a moment more away went the Union cavalry into the clearing at full speed, yelling at the top of their voices, firing pistols and waving their swords, while the enemy,

taken completely by surprise, scattered and fled in every direction.

Then away went Custer far ahead of every one, on his black horse Harry. He saw at a glance that the enemy were only a party of cavalry, out on the same errand as himself, and that all that could be done was to break them up and take as many prisoners as possible. He saw one Southern officer, mounted on a beautiful chestnut horse, and away he went after him. The Southern horse was better than his own, but there was a very high fence before them both, and he hoped that would stop his enemy. Away went the Southerner till he came to the fence, when he put spurs to his horse and went over without touching. Most men would have given up after that, but Custer was one of those fellows who never give up. He dug the spurs into Harry, went at the fence, and over he popped, too. The Southern officer had pulled up on the other side, thinking to see him fall; but when he saw Harry come over, he turned to flee once more. By this time, however, Custer was close to him. The Southern officer had waited too long. Up went Custer's pistol.

"Surrender!" he shouted, as they galloped through the wood.

The officer turned his head a moment, then struck in his spurs and went away, faster than ever. He was leaving Harry.

"Surrender, I say! Surrender, or I fire!" cried Custer.

No answer. *Bang!*

The fugitive officer gave a shout, and fell off his horse, clutching wildly at the reins, and the next moment Custer pulled up beside his dead body.

He had hardly time to reflect, when two more of the enemy came tearing back at him, chasing a little bugler boy, who had gone too far in the chase. At sight of the young captain they halted and turned, but too late.

"Come on, Johnny," he cried to his bugler; and away they went after the late pursuers, one of whom was soon wounded by a second shot from Custer, when both surrendered.

Then the officer and bugler rode slowly back to the village, where they heard the Union trumpets blowing the recall. As they came along, they met the chestnut charger of the slain officer straying loose, evidently puzzled at what was going on. As it saw the other horses it trotted up, whinnying, glad of company.

Custer caught the bridle. At the pommel of the saddle was a long, straight sword. All through the war, after that, he always wore that sword. It was his, fairly won, and now it hangs up in his house in Monroe, though the arm that wielded it is long faded into dust.

CHAPTER IV.

ON SHERIDAN'S STAFF—THE CHARGE AT ALDIE—MADAM A BRIGADIER-GENERAL—END OF THE WAR.

AFTER CUSTER had won his sword, it was some little time before he had an opportunity to use it. This famous sword was made at Toledo, in Spain, and bore a legend in Spanish on its blade. "Draw me not without cause, sheathe me not without honor." It was good counsel, and Custer kept it. He and his party returned to headquarters, and reported what they had done, and then everything was quiet for some weeks.

General Lee, however, had no idea of leaving them in peace for long. Thinking himself safe from McClellan's beaten army, he started off with his own men inland to take Washington, and the President, in great haste, sent for McClellan's force to come back by water. Before they had all got to Washington, Lee was back on the old Bull Run battle-field, where he fought another great battle, beating what Union forces there were in that place, under General Pope, and was only restrained from going into Washington by McClellan's arrival.

Then McClellan, who had been in disgrace on

account of his defeats in front of Richmond, was once more put in command, and followed Lee in a long march up into Maryland, where he finally beat him in two battles near Sharpsburg and Harper's Ferry, driving Lee back into Virginia.

But, after that, McClellan lay still so long without moving, that the President got impatient, and when the general at last began to move, President Lincoln suddenly sent an order dismissing him from the command of the army, and telling him to go home. This was a terrible blow to poor McClellan and to his staff, for they had to go home too. To Custer in particular, it seemed as if all his fair prospects were destroyed, and he was dreadfully cast down. But there was nothing to do but obey orders; so Custer and his general had to leave the army and go back to the North, leaving their comrades to fight the enemy without them.

That was a dreary winter for poor Custer, in 1862, and into 1863. The army had a bad time of it, for General Burnside, the next general, suffered a bloody defeat at Fredericksburg, where more than ten thousand men were killed or wounded. At last the winter wore away, and Custer returned to the front, being ordered to join his old cavalry regiment as a simple lieutenant. Some men would have been sulky at the loss of rank, and refused the offer, but Custer felt it was his duty to go, to help his country. So he went, and soon found his reward.

The Army of the Potomac was now under General Hooker, who suffered a defeat as bad as Burnside's, at a place called Chancellorsville, a few miles from Fredericksburg; but General Hooker, spite of his defeat, did one thing that helped his army to their next victory, and gave Custer his third great chance. Hooker gathered all the loose cavalry regiments into a single great body, and called it the "Cavalry Corps." This cavalry corps he soon after gave to General Pleasanton to command; and General Pleasanton, who had known Custer as the best officer on McClellan's staff, asked him to come on his own staff.

So Custer found his reward for sinking his angry feelings and doing his duty. He was a staff-officer once more. And a splendid staff-officer he made as Pleasanton soon found.

In the mean time, General Lee suddenly made up his mind to try another attack on Washington. So he left his camp at Fredericksburg, crossed the Rappahannock river, close to the mountains, and marched down the Shenandoah valley toward Maryland and Pennsylvania. This was in the spring of 1863.

Hooker no sooner found him gone, than he marched to head off Lee from Washington, and sent the cavalry corps to hover round the enemy's column and hinder his march. With the cavalry went Pleasanton and young Custer, and met the enemy close to the mountains, at a little village called Aldie. Here Custer went out with a brigade of cavalry under Colonel Kilpatrick, and they both met the Southern General Stuart, who engaged them fiercely. At one time the Southern cavalry came down the road in a grand charge to take Kilpatrick's guns, and the colonel was obliged to order a counter-charge with two regiments of horse.

All was ready, and the line began to move, when the enemy fired a great volley, and yelled so fiercely that the Union cavalry began to falter and turn back. Colonel Kilpatrick's horse was shot, and the men began to run away. Then all of a sudden, out dashed Custer, full speed. He wore very long hair then, and rode a splendid horse, and all the men stopped to look at him he was so handsome.

He waved his sword cheerily, and called out, "Come on, boys! Don't be afraid! We can beat those fellows!"

Then, without looking back he rode straight at the enemy, and the Union cavalry gave a great yell, and followed him, in such a tremendous charge, that they swept the Southern cavalry from the field,

took their guns, and won a glorious victory, all owing to Custer's example.

General Pleasanton was so pleased that he sent in Custer's name at once for promotion: and a week later, there came a great yellow letter to Pleasanton's headquarters, directed to BRIGADIER-GENERAL GEORGE A. CUSTER. It was actually true. Custer was made a general for that charge. If he had run away, the men would have run away, too. His courage gave them courage; and instead of a disgraceful defeat they had a brilliant victory.

This often happens in war, and is one of the reasons why true bravery is so much prized and wins so many rewards. It is a very different thing, you see, from a quarrelsome disposition and fighting. The quarrelsome and fighting men almost always try to have the best of a fight, and to hurt other people without getting hurt themselves. When they find themselves all alone, with stronger men than themselves coming at them, they generally run away, while the truly brave man only thinks: "It is my duty to do this, even if I do get killed." That was Custer's rule, and he acted upon it in this charge. The result was, that all the men who were getting frightened felt ashamed of themselves, when they saw this one boy officer riding all alone to get killed for their sakes. So they tried to do their duty too, and ended by winning the victory.

That battle made Custer a general, and Pleasanton ordered him at once to take command of a brigade of cavalry.

Some of my readers perhaps don't know what a brigade is, so I will tell you in a few words as possible how an army is divided nowadays.

The first and smallest body of troops is called a company, and is commanded by a captain, with two lieutenants and several sergeants and corporals under him. Twelve companies or troops of cavalry make a regiment, under a colonel. Two or more regiments make a brigade, under a brigadier-general. Custer's new brigade was made of four regiments, all coming from Michigan, where he had been at school. It was therefore known all through the army as the "Michigan Brigade." Sometimes there are not enough generals for the brigades. In that case, the oldest colonel takes command, and leaves his regiment to the next officer in rank, either a lieutenant-colonel or a major. If there are none of these, the oldest captain commands the regiment.

Two or more brigades make a division. Custer's brigade and two others were made into a division called the "Third Division," and put under General Kilpatrick, who had been Colonel Kilpatrick at Aldie. Three divisions made up the Cavalry Corps, under Pleasanton.

Now, for all the rest of the summer, Custer was kept pretty busy. He was not the sort of man to rest on his honors, and be satisfied with being called "General Custer." He knew that his rank was only a trust given to him by the nation, and that he was expected to win battles with his brigade. And win them he did, wherever he went.

At first the men and officers of his new brigade did not like him at all. He was so young and boyish-looking, that they thought it a shame to have him set over gray-headed men. But Custer was so kind and respectful in his manner to old officers, and so wonderfully brave in battle, that very soon they all learned to like him. Whenever there was a charge to be made, out rode the boy general in front of them all, waving his long sword, and calling out, "Come along, boys!"

And they never hesitated to follow this handsome boy.

Before three weeks were over, he was known all through the army as "the boy general with the golden locks," and every one wanted to see him. He wore his bright yellow hair in long curls over his shoulders, under a very broad black felt hat, and always dressed in a jacket and trousers of black velvet, covered with gold embroidery, while a blue

sailor's shirt with a broad collar was tied at the neck with a bright crimson necktie. This dress made him remarkable everywhere; and his men could see who was coming long before he was close by. A good many people laughed at him, but he never cared. He just went ahead and did his duty; and pretty soon people found out that whenever the danger was greatest, the boy general was at his best.

He never flinched, even when all hope seemed gone. He headed every charge that was made, and seemed to fight just as well when the enemy were all around as when he was driving them. Twice during that summer he and all his brigade were surrounded by heavy forces of the enemy, and had to fight their way out; but the boy general was always the first in the charge, and led his men safe through all their perils.

Then, when they were in camp, the boy general was always quiet and modest. He allowed no drinking and neither smoked nor drank himself. He was deeply religious, and had the chaplain read prayers every Sunday morning regularly. He remained, as before, a good son and brother, and always sent home part of his pay to take care of his father and mother. With all his dash and reputation, he never became vain and puffed up, but was as jolly and full of fun, when duty was over, round the camp-fire, as if he were still a boy at school.

So the year wore on, the cavalry winning battle after battle. General Lee was first defeated in Pennsylvania at the great battle of Gettysburg, and driven back into Virginia, and followed all the way to Culpepper near the Rapidan river, where both armies went into winter-quarters.

In the next spring the Army of the Potomac received a new general once more. Hooker had been replaced by General Meade, just before Gettysburg, and now General Grant came from the west and was put over Meade's head. General Pleasanton was sent out west, and another western general, named Sheridan, was sent to Virginia to command the cavalry corps of the Army of the Potomac. This was in 1864.

As it turned out, General Sheridan was just the man who was wanted, and Custer suited him exactly. General Pleasanton had been a good general, but Sheridan was a better one, and he soon found out that Custer could do his duty better than any general in the cavalry corps. That year General Grant drove Lee slowly but surely back on Richmond, and by the end of the summer had him besieged in Petersburg, to the south of Richmond, while Sheridan, with the cavalry, made long expeditions all over the country behind Lee's army, destroying the railroads.

Then Lee tried to get Grant away from Petersburg by sending an army down the Shenandoah Valley to threaten the city of Washington, but Grant would not let go. He only sent away Sheridan, with part of his cavalry and some infantry, to meet the Southern army of General Early. The end of it was, that Sheridan beat Early in three great battles, and drove him into Richmond; and finally Lee was forced to leave Richmond and fly to the open country, where Sheridan and Grant followed so fast, Custer's men at the very head of the column, that the Southern army surrendered April 9th, 1865, and ended the long four years' war.

And all this time, the man who had done most work was General Custer, now a major-general in command of the Old Third Division, the same who was once little Autie Custer, son of the New Rumley blacksmith and farmer. His single division took more prisoners, three times over, than it had men, and captured every gun that the enemy ever fired a shot from, never having lost a single gun or a single flag, but capturing more flags than all the rest of the cavalry corps.

But now peace was come, and all the army of volunteers was discharged and sent home. Along with them went General Custer, with his wife, after

a year's stay in Texas, and in 1866 was "mustered out" from being a general, and found himself once more plain Captain Custer of the Regular army.

CHAPTER V.

A CHANGE OF BASE—ON THE PLAINS—INDIAN TACTICS.

WE are now coming to the happiest time of Custer's life. At first it was pretty hard for him, of course, to come down from being a general to a simple captain, but that did not last long. In 1866 Congress determined to add some more regiments to the regular army, and as Custer was the best cavalry officer in the country, the President offered to give him the command of one of these regiments, called the Seventh Cavalry. He was not made a full colonel, though. There were so many old officers, who had been generals of the volunteers before Custer was made one, that it was difficult to find places for all of them, and as it was, all the lazy fellows who had done little to deserve success were furiously jealous of Custer. So one of the old gentlemen, called General A. J. Smith, was made colonel of the Seventh, while Custer, who was made lieutenant-colonel, the next officer in a regiment, had the full command of the men, for Smith was too old to be able to get out.

Custer found himself, therefore, in the end of 1866, once more ordered on active service, for which he was very glad. Like all honest men he hated to lead a lazy, useless life, and draw pay from the Government without doing anything for it. A great many worthless men, who have friends in Congress, get into the regular army every year, with no other object than to lead just such a lazy life, but all such men Custer heartily despised, as other brave, honest men do. In time of peace it is nothing to be proud of, to be an army officer, unless there is something useful to do, and some one to protect from harm. Custer knew that there was only one place left where the army was really useful, and that was out on the plains, to protect the frontier settlers from the robberies and murders of the Indian war parties. Very glad was he then, when he was sent out to Fort Riley, in Kansas, to take charge of the Seventh Cavalry.

At the time he went out, the engineers were building the Kansas Pacific Railroad, which now carries passengers from New York to San Francisco in one week. But when Custer came to Fort Riley, in the winter of 1866, very little progress had been made in the road. It had been started, in those days, from both ends of the line; and there remained, between the California terminus and that at Fort Riley, a gap of more than a thousand miles, over which the Indians roamed as they pleased. That was many years ago, remember, and a good many things have happened since then.

Fort Riley, where the eastern end of the Kansas road terminated, was the post to which Custer was assigned, and where the officers of his new regiment began to flock in. The reader must not imagine from the name "fort," great frowning stone walls and guns, such as we call a fort in the East. Fort Riley was nothing but a square inclosure surrounded with low barracks where the soldiers lodged. Near it was the railway station, and a number of low groggeries and boarding-houses, where the railway laborers lived. To get the money out of these poor fellows and the soldiers, the whole of the little town swarmed with gamblers, thieves and loose characters of all sorts, men and women. Inside the fort itself, the place being guarded by sentries, things were quiet, the bad characters not being allowed there, but in the town and round the station, Fort Riley was a little hell upon earth. It is a strange thing, and shows what a curse money may sometimes be, that this state of society followed the Pacific Railroad as it was built, steadily tracking it from station to station as it advanced, always having gamblers and thieves after the money paid to the laborers.

Here Custer and his wife were obliged to stay all

the winter, he drilling his men and seeing to the discipline of his new officers, till in the spring of 1867 a grand expedition was ordered against the Indians, and Custer, with his new Seventh Cavalry, was ordered to leave the fort and join General Hancock, the commander of all that country, at another fort called Harker, ninety miles west. Fort Harker was on the Smoky Hill Fork of the Kansas river, right in the center of the State of Kansas. If you have a late large map of that State, you can follow Custer's campaigns hereafter, as I tell the story.

You may ask what the Indians had been doing to make this expedition necessary. The fact was, the Indians knew well enough that, by the time the railroad was finished, their good days on the plains would be all over. Not being strong enough to prevent the white men from working, they contented themselves by killing every man, woman and child they could catch away from help, and annoying the stage-roads in particular.

Between the two ends of the Pacific Railroad, in those days, there ran a line of stage-coaches along the Smoky Hill Fork, out to Colorado. On this stage-road the railway was afterward built, but, till it was laid, the Indians could come down on the road to rob whenever they pleased, unless the coaches were strongly guarded with soldiers. Every now and then they would do so, and then gallop away, after killing a dozen passengers. You may ask why the soldiers at the forts did not follow them. So they did, but the Indians never attacked unless the soldiers were a long way off, and before they could be followed they were out of sight, when it was useless for the soldiers to pursue.

But all the while that the Indian war parties were doing this, the tribes were pretending to be at perfect peace with the white men. All the winter of 1866 Indians used to come into the forts and Indian agencies, to get blankets and beef from the Government. Perhaps some people may not understand what I mean by this, or how the Indians had any such right, so I will try to explain in a few words as I can.

We know all America once belonged to the Indians. Bit by bit, first one tribe, and then another, sold their lands to the white men, or had them taken away, beginning up in the State of Massachusetts, and so on out to California. Some white men, like William Penn, paid the Indians honestly for their land. Others, such as Daniel Boone and the Kentuckians, moved right in and took the land by force, driving away the Indians and killing them. Out on the plains of the Missouri the land was held by several great tribes, called the Sioux, Cheyennes, and Arapahoes. At one time there were also Pawnees, Arickarees and Blackfeet, but these tribes are almost extinct now. The Sioux roamed over Kansas, Nebraska, and Montana, in 1867, up to the British line, the Cheyennes had Kansas and Colorado, and the Arapahoes stretched down through Indian Territory to Texas, where they were met by the Comanches and Kiowas. The Sioux are the Northern Indians, the Cheyennes the Western, and the Comanches and Arapahoes are South-western. It was principally the Cheyennes that were in trouble in 1866. All the summer before Custer's arrival, they had been plundering the stage-roads, murdering passengers, attacking the stations, and stealing the horses.

Beyond the Mississippi, the Government, being anxious to keep peace with the Indian tribes, has at various times made treaties with them, by which it was agreed to pay them for their lands, so much a year, in blankets and food, if the Indians will only keep on certain lands reserved for them in the Indian Territory, and hence called "Reservations." The whole of the Indian Territory is marked off thus in reservations for the different tribes; and whenever they choose to come to them they find a store there, and an "Indian Agent," as he is called—a Government officer—to issue blankets and cattle. The Indians are told that if they stay on the re-

servations, the Great Father—as they call the President—will take care of them, but that, if they go off, he will send soldiers after them to punish them.

But the Indians were altogether too smart for the agents. They used to come in and get their beef and blankets, and buy rifles from the agents, one day; while the next they were off killing peaceable farmers and travelers. This sort of thing lasted all the summer, while there was plenty of grass for their ponies, and in the winter they used to come in, and remain quiet and peaceable, to all seeming, or else go off and hide in the mountain valleys till spring.

It was determined, in 1867, that the Government should try and break up this system, by making the Indians come in on their proper reservations. So General Hancock started out with infantry, cavalry, and artillery, in the month of April, from Fort Riley, Custer commanding the cavalry.

The winter was over, but the spring was very late, indeed. The column was headed south-west toward the Arkansas river, where the Cheyennes had their camp, when a tremendous snow-storm visited the soldiers, and compelled them to go into camp, and start fires to avoid being frozen to death.

As it was, the poor cavalry horses were huddled together at the picket-ropes, so stiff and cold they could hardly stand, and it was feared that Custer's regiment would lose all its horses. The only way they kept the poor creatures from lying down and dying, was to have a man walking up and down the line all night long, with a great whip, making the horses move about. This fearful cold only lasted one night, but Custer never forgot it. Two or three days after they came to fine weather and green grass; and Custer, for the first time in his life, saw an Indian tribe ready for war.

The expedition suddenly came on the Indian camp, and all the warriors had come out to protect their women and children, for they fancied the soldiers had come to kill them all.

Such, however, were not Hancock's orders. In those days the Government was just starting what is called the "Peace Policy," and the soldiers were ordered not to hurt the Indians if it could possibly be avoided. Hancock called a halt, and so did the Indians; and a council took place.

General Hancock rode out, and Custer went with him, along with a number of staff-officers, while on the other side out came Pawnee Killer, Little Bull and Big Bull (and who knows what other kind of Bulls and Bears), to have a talk with the white chief.

Custer was very much struck with the appearance of these Indian chiefs, and they seemed to have been equally taken with his looks. He wore his long curls still, but he had dropped all his old velvet and gold. Instead of this, he now wore a white deerskin hunting shirt, with its fringed cape and sleeves, while a broad white hat crowned his head, and his lower limbs were covered with blue trousers and high boots. He wore a sword, had two handsome revolvers in his holsters, and generally carried a light sporting rifle. The Indians were so much struck with his appearance, as he sat on his thoroughbred horse, the picture of health and courage, that they named him at once the "Big Yellow Chief."

On his part, Custer admired the looks of the Indians very much. Every chief was stripped to the waist. They wore silver bracelets on their arms, necklaces of grizzly bears' claws, and silver medals on their naked breasts. On their heads, each wore his "war-bonnet," a cap of wolfskin or tiger cat, the head of the animal grinning above the man's head, while a crest of eagle's feathers rose high above, and then fell down the back, as far as the horse's crup. The chiefs wore scarlet or buckskin leggings, fringed with horse hair, and some had the fringe made of human hair, from the scalps of white people. Every man bore a lance, bow and quiver, and a rifle, generally a repeater, and all had

revolvers in their belts, some one, some as many as four or five. They rode the spirited little Indian ponies, speckled and spotted with all sorts of colors, full of life and spirit. These horses had feathers stuck into the headstalls of their bridles or knotted into their manes, while every one had a scalp, with long black hair, hanging from his bit under his chin. Every one was saddled with the light Comanche saddle, which all the Indians now use, and most had scarlet saddle blankets.

Such wild, picturesque, dare-devil warriors you never saw, and it seemed for some time as if it were impossible to stave off a fight for long. However, the chiefs who came forward were peaceably disposed, and it was finally agreed that the soldiers should advance and encamp near the Indians, promising to do them no harm. It was General Hancock's object to get the chiefs to come to council, and then to induce them to bring in the squaws and children to their reservation.

The Indians promised everything very fairly and sweetly, and then the column moved on. They expected to find the Indian camp just over the next swell, but it turned out that the Cheyennes had fooled them, for it was ten miles off. As they advanced, all the Cheyenne braves rode away before them, along with a good many warriors on foot. The soldiers marched their best, the cavalry actually trotted all the way, and so did the battery, while the Indians did not seem to be making much haste. All the same, though, the soldiers found the Cheyennes leaving them fast behind, so that, long before they got to the village, not an Indian was in sight.

Then at last they saw the village, an assemblage of some three hundred white lodges, pitched in a beautiful green grassy hollow, surrounded with trees, with a little stream running by it and Custer was in sight of his first Indian camp.

CHAPTER VI.

INDIAN CUNNING—BOOT AND SADDLE—SEARCH FOR A TRAIL.

GENERAL HANCOCK, as the soldiers approached the camp, noticed that the Indians were very uneasy. They all fancied that the soldiers had come to get them into a trap and kill them. To calm their anxiety, and partly for fear of Indian treachery, the general ordered his camp pitched a mile from that of the Cheyennes, and surrounded it with sentries. Then, as it was late in the day, he ordered a feast, and entertained some of the chiefs, who *talked* better than ever, and all swore that they were going to be very good.

Evening came on, and then night, and it was duly arranged that the Indians should come to a grand council in the morning. Then everything was quiet, and the soldiers were all sound asleep, when one of the general's Indian scouts, who had been prowling round the Cheyenne camp, came hurrying back in the middle of the night, with the news that the Indians were *stealing away*, leaving the village standing.

Then there was a fine bustle, as may be supposed. General Hancock was furious, and ordered all the cavalry out, under Custer, to surround the village and capture all the Indians that were left, dead or alive. As quickly as they could be waked, but without sounding any bugles, the cavalrymen were routed out of their tents, saddled up in haste, and rode out to surround the village. There was a bright moonlight, and they could see the white lodges grouped under the trees, like rows of ghosts, but not a figure or fire was visible. By the time the village was quite surrounded, they found out, when too late, that the Indians had fled entirely, leaving not a soul behind.

Custer thus took his first lesson in Indian tricks, and he never forgot the results of that night's experience. He had found that it is never safe to let an Indian go, when once you have him in sight. In a match of cunning, the Indian is sure to win. Nothing was left but to report to General Hancock, and the

general at once ordered Custer to take all the cavalry and follow the Indians, hoping to catch them.

All the rest of the night was spent in getting the men ready for next day's trip. It was impossible to follow the trail of the Indians till daylight, and very difficult then. Left to themselves, the soldiers could never have done it, but, along with the expedition, were some twenty or thirty *scouts*, some white and some Indians. It was on these that they had to depend to catch the Cheyennes. All that night the cavalry soldiers were up and working. Each man had to get three days' pork and hard tack, and a week's coffee and sugar ready for the march.

Starting on a long scout after Indians is not so easy. First, you must put your coffee and sugar in little bags, and tie them up very tight, or the jolting of the horse will shake them all over the saddle-bags, on the pork and hard tack. Each article must be wedged in so tight it cannot be moved. Then the men draw fifteen pounds of oats apiece, supposed to be enough on the plains, along with the grass to keep a horse three days. This grain goes into a long, narrow canvas bag, and fills it up tight, till it looks like a huge sausage. Then the end of the bag is tied, and this sausage is strapped on the back of the saddle so that it cannot shake about.

One may say, well, all this can be done in half an hour. That is true, but it takes another half-hour for the sergeants of the different companies to go to the commissary and have their portions weighed out to be distributed afterward to the men, one by one. Then all the horses' feet have to be looked to. If a shoe is loose it must be taken off and reset, for it would never do for a horse to lose a shoe, out on a long march. That horse would soon go lame and have to be left behind.

At last, however, everything was ready, just as the first streaks of dawn were coming in the east. The wagon train of the Seventh Cavalry was all harnessed up and ready to move out. Then the bugles sounded "to horse," and each orderly sergeant ordered his company to lead out their horses. There they stood in a long line, each man at his horse's head, till they had counted fours, beginning on the right, each man calling successively, "one—two—three—four; one—two—three—four," to the end of the line. Then each sergeant turned to his captain, who sat on his horse a little behind him, and touched his cap. A moment later, all the captains called out, "Prepare to mount." At that word each No. 1 and No. 3 led out his horse to the front, the other numbers standing still. This was to give the men room to get on their horses. At the same time, and all together, each man put his foot in the stirrup, seized his horse's mane in one hand, the pommel of the saddle with the other. "Mount!" shouted all the captains. In another moment, just like a machine, every man of the Seventh Cavalry sprang up, threw his leg over, and took his seat. And that is the way a cavalry regiment starts out. A civilian might think a good deal of fuss is made about a little thing, but that is only the beginning of what soldiers call "discipline." Every man has his number and place, and never forgets it, and so, no matter what the crowd, everything is always in order.

A few minutes later, the whole regiment started out in columns of fours, followed by its train of forty great wagons. It may be said why did they take the wagons, when the men carried three days' food? It must be remembered that the great plains of the West stretch for thousands of miles every way, and that neither Custer nor any of his officers knew how far they would have to go before they caught the Cheyennes. The reason they carried provisions on the horses was that they might be able to leave their wagons for a three days' scout at any time, but with their wagons they could stay out a whole month.

I am telling my readers all these little things to give them an idea of what life on the plains really is, when there is a large body of men to be moved. Remember that on the plains there are only two

things to be found for food—grass for the horses—game for the men. It is not always so easy to find game as one may think, and when it is found, it is not so easy to catch it. Moreover, one buffalo will feed three hundred men; and the Seventh Cavalry, officers and all, numbered nearly four hundred. So they had to take the wagons with them, and of course they could only go as fast as the wagons went, that is to say at a walk or slow trot.

Perhaps you begin to see now one reason why the soldiers don't catch the Indians oftener than they do. It is because the Indians, accustomed from childhood to live on the plain, have no wagons. Their ponies live on grass, they live on buffalo and other game. Well, then, you may say they cannot keep together in large numbers any more than the soldiers, or they would starve, too. That is just what is the matter. Whenever they want to move fast and escape the soldiers, they are obliged to split up into little parties, and scatter in all directions, so that they can live on hunting, eating any animal that comes in their way. They only keep in large villages in places where game is very plentiful, in time of peace, sending out their hunting-parties far and wide.

But all this time we are keeping the Seventh Cavalry and Custer waiting, when we ought to be on the trail of the Cheyennes. It makes no difference, however. The soldiers couldn't find the trail any more than you could. The ground is as hard as a rock, and there are so many pony and horse-tracks that you or I couldn't make head or tail of them.

But, stay; there are those with Custer who can find the trail, and just see them go, now! There they come out of camp at full gallop, dressed in gray and brown, with old fur caps, big white hats, buckskin coats, red shirts, dirty and ragged-looking, with wild, matted hair, and big beards, mounted on ponies, big horses and mules; several dirty-looking Indians among them, with striped handkerchiefs round their heads, and their shirts hanging out behind. Do you know these fellows? They are the scouts. Some have been on a drunk all night. Almost all have been gambling, and there's not one of them you would like to meet in a dark place alone. But, rough as they look, there is more in those fellows than you think. Look there! There's one very different from the rest. He rides a beautiful sleek black mare, a racer, and has a silver-mounted saddle and bridle. That fellow's a dandy. See how clean his buckskin suit is, all trimmed with beads, and how carefully his hair is curled. Did you ever see a handsome face in your life, with its high, thin nose, and that long, silky mustache? And what a perfect cavalier. As he rides near Custer, you see that they are very much alike in figure, tall and slender, long-limbed and graceful. Their faces are not unlike, only Custer's curls and mustache are yellow, this fellow's are dark. That man is Wild Bill, the best pistol-shot and the bravest scout on the frontier, but as quiet and peaceable a man as you'd wish to find, as quiet as Custer. It wouldn't do to try and bully him, though, for Wild Bill has killed more men than any scout on the frontier, and the worst desperadoes are afraid of him. If he points a pistol at a man he never need shoot twice. He kills every time.

Will Wild Bill find the trail for Custer? No. There are some things no white scout can do like an Indian, and all the scouts fall back as soon as they get to the abandoned camp, and let the Indians go to the front. The column of soldiers is a few hundred yards off, halted, and waiting for the long file of wagons to lumber out, and the white scouts are clustered in a knot at the further end of the village.

See, the Indian scouts—two Delawares, a Shawnee, a Creek, and a Cherokee—have leaped off their horses, and stretch out into a circle round the further end of the village. The whole ground is covered with pony tracks, crossing and recrossing in inextricable confusion. The scouts run out just like

so many hounds trying to find a scent, at a long, swinging lops, peering at the tracks as they go, and hunting all over the ground.

For some time not a word is spoken. Wild Bill and the white scouts watch the Indians searching. Now the lumbering noise of advancing wagons stops and the soldiers are all at a halt. Here comes Custer, out to the front, to see if the scouts have found the trail. He rides a beautiful bright bay horse, thoroughbred, and looks like anything but a soldier in his jaunty buckskin dress. All round his horse see those dogs capering. There are Blucher and Maida, his famous Scotch deerhounds, given him by Mr. Barker, of Detroit. There are several foxhounds and a white Spitz dog, and Custer looks more like a huntsman than a general.

Hark! Just as Custer comes up, they hear a long, loud cry from one of the Indians. It comes from that dingy-looking fellow, with a dirty face, one or two broken feathers in his hair. Dirty as he looks, he is the smartest trailer of his nation, one of the tribe of Delawares who once lived in Maryland. He has found the trail!

Away goes Custer, dogs and all, and the scouts follow. When they come up, the Delaware points to the ground. A straight double furrow runs out from the confusion of tracks, and you can see other furrows near it streaking off in one direction from the camp. These furrows look as if a man had been dragging a stick behind him in the dust, on each side of him. There are, however, pony tracks between the furrows, so it seems that a horse must have carried the sticks.

So he did. Those furrows are the marks of what is called a "lodge-pole trail." They are made by the ends of the poles with which the Indians put up their lodges. When the squaws take the lodge down, they tie the poles together at one end, throw them over a pony's back and let the other end trail. Then, on the poles behind the pony, they place the bundle of skins that makes the lodge. Then, on the pony, put a squaw and all the children they have lying around loose, and Mr. Indian is ready to move house.

Whenever you see a fresh lodge-pole trail, you may know that the women and children are along, and there is a chance of catching the Indians, for they never run away from their families. In this instance the scouts had seen plenty of broad trails of horsemen, all moving in different directions, and purposely made very plain, but what they wanted to find was the main trail. They knew that the Indians, in trying to escape, would spread out just like a fan, on purpose to conceal their movements, but they knew that if there was a single lodge carried off, it probably belonged to the chief's family, and that the Indians would be sure to come back to their chief at last.

So, without waiting any more, Custer gave the signal; the column started, and away went the scouts on the little narrow lodge-pole trail, careless of the pony tracks elsewhere, just as the sun rose over the dry plains of Kansas.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PRONG-HORNS—A MISADVENTURE—THE FIRST BUFFALO.

The lodge pole trail soon became so plain that scouts could follow it at a trot, and whenever a piece of soft ground came along they could see the marks half a mile ahead. The scouts pronounced the trail about twelve hours old, and it was clear that the Indians were nowhere near. So the column swept on its way as fast as the wagons could be driven, the scouts ranging on so far ahead as to be almost out of sight at times, the column of cavalry only about half a mile in front of the wagons.

There they were on the broad green plains, the grass now sprung well up, and hiding the crevices and dog-holes* that make riding so dangerous. The country stretched away in waves like a great sea on all sides, and as the sun came out hot, the monotony

of the scene and the want of rest began to make the officers sleepy. Every now and then, in the distance, one might see a few antelopes standing on the swells, watching the soldiers with curiosity; and some distant moving specks, when examined through a telescope, turned out to be a herd of mustangs scouring away.

Custer very soon became tired of riding at the head of his column, when all the scouts were away. He knew that the Indians were out of reach at present, and he was always devotedly fond of hunting. He could not resist the temptation of going off after some antelopes. There was a little group right ahead of the column, some two miles off, and he made up his mind to have one if he could.

"Come, Blucher! Come, Maida!" he cried, and away he went over the plain with his two gallant grayhounds. The antelopes stood watching him in astonishment as he came, till he had topped and turned a swell, and lost sight of the column and his game at the same time. Then he pulled up, and rode more leisurely, skirting the foot of the next swell to leeward of the antelopes, in hopes of surprising them. Sure enough, when he rode over the next ridge, there were the pretty creatures not three hundred yards off still staring at the distant wagons which they could see through a dip in the swell.

The next moment the antelopes saw Custer, and then—you have seen race-horses run, but you never saw anything run like those prong-horns. Away went Custer at the top speed of his thoroughbred horse, and away went the two grayhounds, stretching out straight in their frantic eagerness. They might as well have chased a bird. The antelopes left them behind as if Custer had ridden on a cart-horse and the dogs had been fat lap-dogs. Before one could say "Jack Robinson," the prong-horns were out of gun-shot, and then they began to stop and look back, as if inviting the hunter to come on.

In those days Custer was very green at hunting antelopes, or he never would have tried to run them down. For a mile or two they are the swiftest animals on the continent, though they can't last if hunted by relays of horses. However, he had all this to learn yet, so he kept on, sometimes getting near the game, but always distanced whenever they got frightened, till at last he gave it up as a bad job and called back his dogs.

There was not much run left in the grayhounds. They were quite exhausted already, for they had been fed so high in camp that they were too fat to run well. So back went master, horse and dogs, all feeling pretty well disappointed. There was no luck for them that day.

The chase had carried Custer quite out of sight of the wagons, and he hardly knew where he was. So he began to peer all around the horizon for landmarks. Nothing all round but the green plains, dotted with patches of bushes, one hillock just like another.

See, what's that!

Custer started in his saddle, and shaded his eyes with his hand. Not a half-mile from him, was a great black beast, quietly feeding in a green bottom, and it needed no one to tell Custer, any more than it would you, had you seen it, what it was. He had never seen one in his life before except in a picture, but there stood a real live buffalo waiting for him.

Who cares for antelopes now? A moment later, Custer had turned his horse, and was going straight for the buffalo. The beast was feeding, with its head turned away, and the general was able to ride softly up to within a few hundred yards, when the buffalo suddenly tossed up its head, wheeled round to look, and then started off at a lumbering gallop.

"Hurra! now we're off," thought Custer; and

away went his splendid horse, full speed, the dogs running ahead. The buffalo looked heavy and awkward, but somehow it puzzled even Custer's splendid horse to catch up with it, tired as the horse was with the run after the antelopes. However, the dogs had recovered their breath by this time, and they had nothing to carry, so they skinned away over the plain, and were soon up with the buffalo.

Look at that! Brave Blucher! The gallant dog made a grand leap and caught the buffalo by the ear. No use, Blucher. He's too much for you. See, the great black beast stops a moment, shakes its huge head, and sends poor Blucher flying, taking a mouthful of hair with him, for he wouldn't let go. Custer is coming up now. If he had a common horse, it would have given up long ago, but a thoroughbred will run till it drops dead.

Away goes the buffalo again, Maida after it on the other side. Good Maida! See, she tries the same leap as old Blucher, but misses it. The buffalo gives a low, angry bellow and makes a dash of its great head at the brave dog. No use, old fellow, Maida is too quick. There comes Blucher again, plucky as ever, and heads off the buffalo, barking loudly. The great brute comes to a trot, and now Custer is up within twenty feet of the old fellow.

"Back, dogs, back!" he shouts, and out comes his big revolver. Now the buffalo starts off again and Custer after him. See, the hunter points his pistol at the beast, right in the midst of the black mass, behind the shoulder. Now to fetch the heart! The pistol quivers and settles to a good aim, and not ten feet separated man and game, both at full speed, when—*hu!*—round comes the old bull with a furious bellow at the horse, and the charger shies off so suddenly that Custer, who is leaning over to shoot, finds himself almost off. *Crack!* a flash, a report, and the next moment down goes the horse, shot dead, while Custer goes flying one way, the pistol the other, right in front of the buffalo, on the ground!

Another moment and the beast will be on him, when Maida and Blucher fall at the buffalo on the other side, and the great animal turns away with a snort of rage, and gallops off, leaving Custer alone.

Here's a nice ending for a buffalo-hunt, truly! The hunter rises from the ground, shaken and bruised, and looks ruefully at his dead horse. A thousand dollars gone, shot by accident, and not even a buffalo to show for it. Custer's finger had been on the trigger when the buffalo charged, and as he clutched at his reins to keep his balance, he had killed his own horse.

So ended Custer's first buffalo-hunt; and so, or nearly as badly, ends the first buffalo-hunt of every man who goes after buffaloes.

He sat down on the dead horse, pretty well cast down, and presently the two dogs came slowly trotting back, as if to ask what was the matter with their master. Here was a pretty situation to be in. Out on the plains without a horse, no rifle—for he had left that behind—nothing but two pistols and a sword, and he had no idea where he was. "Well," thought Custer, as he always did, "it's no use crying over spilt milk. I must find the column, or maybe the Indians will find me."

So he started off on foot, following, like a sensible man, the back trail of his horse. He knew where he had come from, and he judged that he might find the column or its trail, if he went on long enough. He was saved the trouble of a long tramp, however. No sooner had he topped the next swell than he saw the dust of his own men, the cavalry guidon fluttering high above it; and within half an hour he had another horse, and was riding along at the head of his column, as if nothing had happened. A party went off and took the equipments from the dead horse, while the column pursued its way.

That day the scouts went on very rapidly, the trail of the Cheyennes getting plainer and plainer. Fresh trails of parties of horsemen began to join it from each side, showing that the scouts were right

* These "dog-holes," as the plainsmen call them, are the burrows of the prairie-dog, or American marmot, an animal that lives in regular villages of holes, so close together as to be dangerous to ride over.

in their supposition. The scattered Indians were beginning to reunite, thinking themselves out of danger. Several small lodge-pole trails joined the first, till the main trail was as plain as a road, and as easy to follow.

Moreover, the earth had not fallen down and packed, as it would have if the dew had fallen on it. This showed that part of the trail must have been made since daylight; how long? was the question. The head trailer said just after sunrise, and his reason will give you some idea of what trailing is in its nature.

"See dirt all stuck up big lumps, general," he said in his broken English. "Maybe so, must be wet, much heap. Dirt little bit stick now—see."

He pointed to the lodge-pole marks. The dirt at the edge of the furrows was in good-sized lumps, and seemed to be stuck together. Then he scraped another furrow close beside it, and showed how the dry dust fell away in small particles on each side. It was plain that the dirt must have been wet when the lodge-poles scraped along, and, as there had been no rain, it must have been before the dew dried—that is, just after sunrise. It was now eight hours since sunrise, so that the column had probably gained four hours on the Cheyennes, who had started twelve hours ahead of the soldiers.

This was very encouraging. The wagons were pushed to a trot, and the regiment was divided into five or six little short columns, each moving abreast of the others, at some five hundred yards off. By this means the soldiers commanded a view of a large expanse of country, and the horses in the rear of the column were not tired by trotting to catch up.

The trail grew fresher whenever the ground was soft, but sometimes they came to long hard stretches of barren ground, only covered with the short buffalo grass, and as hard as a rock underneath. All the same the Delawares and Shawnees pushed on, pointing out the trail by a few bent blades of grass, quite confident they were right.

Presently, away from the column, as they turned the edge of a swell, what should they all see but a herd of forty or fifty buffaloes, right in front of their path. Custer was delighted. Every one realized that the Indians must still be out of reach, or the buffalo would not be grazing quietly. The general was determined to kill a buffalo and wipe out the disgrace of the morning.

A short consultation was held, and away went Custer, with four or five officers who could be spared, after those buffalo. About two miles ahead was a little river with very steep banks, which the scouts said would delay the wagons at least an hour, so there was time for a hunt. Moreover the river might stop the herd.

So away went Custer on a fresh horse, outstripping all his officers, and they were within a few hundred yards of the herd before the animals took the alarm. Then what a scampering! The horses seemed to go crazy with eagerness, leaping half out of their skins as it were, and coming up rapidly with the buffalo.

Now they're up, Custer first. No mistake this time. He's into the herd, which is scattering, and singles out a large fat cow. Now he's within range. Crack! No horse killed that time. You might hear the slap of the bullet into the buffalo's side. She shakes her head and turns viciously on Custer, but he has not forgotten the lesson of the old bull. As the horse shies, he slides with it, and the buffalo, finding herself unable to catch the horse, turns and trots off. Round spins Custer, and again comes the crack of his pistol.

That did the business. The cow staggers and drops on her knees, and a moment later down she goes, dead.

Custer has killed his first buffalo; and as he pulls up, he hears the cracking of pistols that tells of his friends being hard at work beside him.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TRAIL GROWS HOT—COLD—PETERS OUT—SWEET SATANTA.

THE officers with Custer were all old soldiers, good riders and good shots, but they found it a very different job to what they expected, killing a buffalo. Only one of them succeeded in bagging his game. He was a cool old fellow who never fired till he was sure of his mark, and he took three shots before he finished his buffalo. Another fired away twelve shots out of two revolvers, and was ready to swear he hit his bull every time, but the old fellow lumbered away, and, as no blood was found, the captain was obliged to own up he might have missed every time, owing to his excitement. Another hit his buffalo fairly first shot, for he saw the blood spurt, but it was up in the neck, and the great brute turned on him so ferociously that he chased horse and rider off the field. All the rest had a good laugh at that officer, you may be sure, and he didn't get over it for a long time. Next chance he had he stuck to his buffalo till he killed him. It takes courage to hunt a bull buffalo, as well as to fight a battle. It's not as easy as it looks.

By this time the herd had all dispersed, and the horsemen were at the banks of the stream, where they waited for the column to come up. As they did so up galloped the Delaware head trailer to Custer in great excitement.

"Look, general, look!" he cried, and pointed to the other side of the stream. It ran between high steep banks, in the midst of a charming little green valley, covered with very long grass and bushes. There, on the other side, tied to a tree, were two Indian ponies, saddled and bridled.

The scout gave a long cry and waved his hand in the air, and up came the other scouts in a hurry, headed by Wild Bill. They had not been hunting, but attending to their business of trailing. They all saw what was the matter, and down the steep bank went the whole crowd, and over the river, Custer in their midst.

The scent was growing very hot now. The ponies tied to the trees were evidently Indian property, and they were both covered with sweat, *not yet dry*. Whoever owned them could not be far from them. A little way off were the ashes of a number of fires, and in one of them the embers were still smoking. The Indians must have stopped for breakfast, not more than five hours before.

But who owned the ponies, and where were they? The Delaware soon solved that question.

He said that they must have belonged to two scouts who had been left behind to watch for pursuit, and that it was therefore plain that the Indians could not have been aware that they were followed, till the buffalo-hunters had nearly run into them. He said that the scouts were probably somewhere down the stream, looking for game for breakfast, and was confident that one of them was a great war-chief of the Cheyennes, called Roman Nose.

"How do you know that, chief?" asked Custer.

The Delaware pointed to one of the ponies. On the saddle hung a white buckskin frock, every seam fringed with locks of human hair, on scalps.

"That is the jacket of Roman Nose. I have seen him wear it many a time," he said in his own language to Wild Bill, who interpreted to Custer.

That was conclusive. The scent was struck. The question now was how to hurry up the wagons. Down they came, lumbering along to the banks of the stream, but it was a very different thing taking them across to going over with the cavalry alone. It was fully an hour before a place could be found where the wagons could cross, and all this time the scouts were hunting up and down the stream for Roman Nose and his friend. On the other side of the stream the trail looked just like a country road, so plain was it, and it was very tantalizing to have to wait for these lumbering wagons, but they did not dare to abandon them, for fear other bands of

Indians might be prowling round, watching for a chance to capture them.

At last the wagons were got over, and the pursuit was resumed at a sharp trot, the scouts scattered far ahead.

Still the trail kept single and broad. It was plain that the tribe still thought itself out of danger. The sun began to sink lower and lower, and at last, just as he was almost touching the horizon, a long line of dark timber in a green bottom showed that they had come to another stream.

All this time the officers and Custer had been watching the horizon in all directions, with great intentness. Every now and then they could see dark moving objects in the distance, which everybody was ready to swear must be Indians. They could almost see the feathers.

But the Delaware chief only shook his head and laughed.

"May be so no Injun, general—only buff'lo."

"Yes, but out there," said Custer, "I can see the horses."

"Mustang," said the Delaware, briefly.

If an officer rode out and halted, turning a telescope on the moving masses, it always turned out the Indian was right. It was nothing but a herd of buffalo or mustangs. So they went on till they reached the stream, and evening at the same time, when a halt was called.

The scouts then announced that they could not follow the trail any longer, that they must wait for daylight. The horses were all pretty well fagged out, for they had ridden all day long without halting. Moreover, the scouts told them that this stream was the last they would come to for twenty miles. It was clearly impossible, therefore, to push on. They must go into camp, rest and feed their horses, and make double haste in the morning. The wagon-teams especially needed rest and food. So they crossed the stream and went into camp, finding splendid grass and abundance of wood.

One thing they noticed here which showed that Broken Nose and his companion must have at least reached the tribe and given the alarm. *There were no fires.* The Indians had evidently pushed on in great haste.

Of course there were two sides to this business. If the Indians had the start, an advantage, it was also clear that they would have to push on all night, with tired horses, for at least twenty miles, without rest or water; and that the freshened strength of their pursuers might enable them probably to catch up next day, if they went into camp at night. It was clear that, so far, they had outstripped the Indians.

So they went into camp, setting a strong picket outside to watch, while the horses enjoyed themselves amazingly in the deep grass of the river bottom. Their course during the day had been due north from the place they had left, which was on the banks of the Arkansas river. They were now approaching the Smoky Hill Fork of the Kansas, a valley then traversed by a stage road, and through which the Kansas Pacific Railroad now runs. Since those days, only a few years ago now, there has been a great change there. In the solitary prairies, through which Custer then chased the roving Cheyennes, not an Indian is now to be seen, and the screaming locomotive dashes through the valleys, cutting the swells like a ship on the ocean, while great farms, where thousands of cattle roam over square miles of territory, occupy the old hunting grounds of Cheyenne and Arapahoe.

Next morning, while the stars were still shining, the clear notes of the bugle rung out the "veille." That means "Wake up!" A moment later out rolled the rollicking notes of the "stable call," to which the soldiers used to sing the old song:

"Come to the stable, all you that are able,
And rub down your horses, and give them some
corn;
For if you don't do it, the colonel shall know it.

And then you shall rue it, as sure as you're
born."

Every cavalry soldier knows that old song, so work tumbled the men of the Seventh, and went to work with a will.

By the time the sun rose every horse had been carefully brushed down as clean as a new pin, and felt ready for a march, while the men were at breakfast. The scouts were already out, scattered over the plain, searching for the trail, and brought back bad news.

The trails began to scatter again!

The Delaware chief decided to follow the center one guided by the marks of the lodge-poles, and the column started on. Very soon they discovered that the country had changed very much in character. Instead of rolling green grass and plenty of game there was a dry, flat plain, with scanty grass and quantities of low brambles. This plain was seamed with great cracks, sometimes ten or twenty feet deep, and opening out to six or eight feet wide. These cracks delayed the wagons very much, for they had to be taken round to the heads of the fissures before they could pass.

The ground grew so hard that they could hardly see the trail even of the lodge-poles, and the further they went the more the trail scattered. Presently they saw a few black specks in the distance, and coming up found them to be broken down ponies, abandoned as unable to keep up.

This was encouraging. They pressed on at a trot. Presently they came on a bundle of lodge-poles on the ground, where it had been thrown off, then another, then another.

At last the lodge-pole trail ceased.

Now who was to find where were the warriors and where the women and children? The pony tracks became fewer every moment. Here one turned off, there another—one to the right, one to the left. Which was to be followed?

To give you an idea of the perplexity, you must imagine that every half mile or so a party of Indians broke off on each side, and as soon as they were out of sight, hid behind a swell of the prairie, whence they were now safely watching the column from each side, some far in the rear. The soldiers kept on, the Indians breaking off, so that by the time the column reached the Smoky Hill River Road, the last pony track had disappeared.

So Custer had taken his next lesson in Indian warfare—that soldiers can never catch Indians, if the Indians don't want it, or unless they are taken by surprise. It was clear now that he need chase them no longer. Of all the hundreds of tracks behind, who was to tell which was warrior, which squaw, or how soon the Indians might unite if the soldiers separated! The only thing left to do was to march down the Smoky Hill stage road, and warn the people that the Indians were up and going to fight everybody, not in small parties, but the best they knew how.

That was the last Custer saw of the Cheyennes that year. As he went down the stage road he found they had been before him. Stations were found burned, horses had been carried off, men killed, scalped and burned in their own houses, where the wolves were seen feeding on their half-consumed bodies. Before the column reached Fort Hays, the new terminus of the Kansas Pacific Railroad, Custer had seen enough sickening sights to show that Indian warfare meant no quarter.

At Fort Hays he halted to wait orders; and there he was joined by General Hancock, with the rest of the expedition. The general was pretty sulky about the escape of the Cheyennes, but he thought he had made up for it by another move. The Cheyennes had gone off to the north, but on the south there were still the Kiowas and Arapahoes; and with these the general had held a grand council.

Here there came Lone Wolf and Satanta, the first and second chiefs of the Kiowa, and Little Raven and Yellow Bear, first and second of the Arapahoes.

besides minor chiefs. This council was held at Fort Dodge, in the south of Kansas, and no one ever knew such good boys as those Kiowas and Arapahoes. They wouldn't kill white men, like the Cheyennes, not a bit of it. They loved the white man and hated the Cheyennes. All they wanted was plenty of blankets and beef, and leave to say how much they hated the Cheyennes.

Satanta made such a pretty speech that General Hancock was delighted, so delighted that he insisted on giving the chief one of his own coats, with a major-general's shoulder-straps. Satanta took it, and cried for joy, and the council broke up, General Hancock going to Fort Hays. Just three weeks after, Satanta came down to Fort Dodge with all his men, killed a soldier, stole several horses, and rode up to the stockade dressed in the very coat Hancock had given him. So the poor old general was fooled once more by the scamps.

However, when he met Custer, the General did not know of his friend Satanta's doings. He only thought of the Cheyennes in the north. So he ordered Custer to take the whole of the Seventh Cavalry, three hundred and fifty men then, with twenty wagons, and start of to the north-west, through Kansas into Nebraska, to scout the Nebraska river.

While Custer was preparing for this expedition, he had one or two adventures near Fort Hays.

CHAPTER IX.

HUNTING ON A WAGER.

The Seventh Cavalry was lying at Fort Hays expecting the arrival of General Hancock every day, but with little to do meanwhile. To pass away the time the officers used to go out buffalo hunting whenever they were off duty, but had done very little except to tire their horses and shoot away ammunition so far. There were some twenty officers altogether, and one evening they were sitting round the camp-fire at head-quarters, talking over matters, when as usual the hunting came up. Then, as a matter of course, every man began to boast of what he could do, and several of them began to joke their commanding officer about his misfortune in shooting his own horse. Custer could always take a joke as well as any man, and this time he did not feel the sting of their jokes so much on account of having killed some buffalo since that time.

At last one officer, who thought himself a very fine shot and rider, offered to bet a champagne supper for the party that he could take half the officers and kill more buffalo than the other half could do, with Custer at the head of it.

Very much to his surprise, however, Custer took him up at once.

"I'll take that bet, major," said he, quietly; "and you can pick your men, too. We'll begin to-morrow morning."

The major could not back out then, and the bet was arranged at once. The officers were chosen by lot, into two parties of ten each, and it was settled that each should go out in turn, one next morning, the other the day after. The one that shot the fewest buffalo was to give the supper and pay for it. The senior major of the Seventh, who was too old and fat to hunt any more, was to be the referee and umpire. The parties were to bring in the tongues of the buffaloes killed, as proof of their slaughter, and leave them with the referee, who was to keep the matter secret till both parties had hunted. Then they tossed up which party should go first, and the lot fell to Custer.

Next morning, accordingly, at daybreak the little party was up, horses ready for the hunt, orderlies ready to follow their officers. Then they proceeded to count noses. Alas, out of the ten who should have been present only seven were found able to go. Of the rest, one was officer of the day, another officer of the guard, and a third had a scouting detail. These things could not be helped; they were part of the luck. The other side might lose men, too.

Without waiting to think over their troubles, the

little party of seven rode off. A bad beginning may make a good ending, when there's pluck in people. The ground where they hoped to meet the buffalo was fifteen miles from the camp, and it was necessary to take along an ambulance to pack the meat, if any was procured. Each officer had an orderly to ride behind him, and each carried a pair of pistols, while several had the old Spencer seven-shooting carbine, which they found an excellent hunting weapon.

One of the carbine men was Custer. He had found from experience that one carbine bullet was worth more than three or four pistol-shots, and had determined to try the experiment fairly.

At last they reached the destined point, where the long prairie-grass ceased, and the short buffalo-grass began. As they topped a swell there in the distance was a small herd, which every one at once pronounced to be buffaloes, less than a mile off.

Now there was hurry and preparation at once, as you may think. Before the party lay a little hollow which would shelter them from sight, and into it they plunged, ambulance and all, halting in the bottom. There the ambulance was stopped, while the hunters dismounted and looked carefully to their horses. The saddle-girths were loosened, saddle-cloths set straight, curb-chains looked to. Then an extra turn was given to every girth-strap, and the horses were girthed in tight and snug, fit to run for their lives. Every officer looked to his own mount; it would not do to trust to orderlies now, when a failure in any part of the harness might cost a life. Each man looked to his revolver and carbine, and all were ready. Custer gave the signal, and the little party rode out.

Now we shall see a real buffalo-hunt, no chance runs as heretofore. There are seven in the party, and two of them are young officers who have never yet shot a buffalo. They are full of wild excitement, trembling with eagerness, and it is plain that they will be the failures, if there are any. The other five are old stagers, including Custer—that is, they have been at it before.

They keep behind the swell, which slants away to leeward of the place where they saw the herd. At the end of the little valley Custer rides up the side of the slope, and halts so as to hide everything but his head. Then he takes out his field-glass to look at the herd.

"Just seven, gentlemen," he says, quietly. "Now if any one of us lets his animal get away, it may cost us the supper. We are seven, too. Do you think we can account for one apiece?"

"You can bet we will, general," said one of the youngsters, confidently.

Custer smiled.

"I've been there before, young gentleman. Look out you don't kill your horse, as I did, instead of the buffalo. Are you all ready?"

"All ready, general."

Then over the hill goes the little party, and finds itself only about a quarter of a mile from the herd, dead to leeward.

They take a slow trot and ride straight at the herd. See! a movement among the animals, which see the hunters. Next moment away go the buffaloes, right into the wind's eye, in a lumbering gallop, like so many cows.

Away go the hunters, also at full gallop, spreading into a long line, spurring their horses like mad.

"Each man take his beast. Begin on the left!" shouts Custer, as they begin to come up with the buffaloes. Beyond them is a long hill, and the animals are laboring dreadfully, while the horses gain on them every stride.

Not five minutes have passed, but the hunters are within fifty yards, when crack! crack! go the pistols, beginning with the youngsters. Nothing hurt, but the horses seem fairly to fly.

Now only thirty yards divide them, and the hill grows steeper. Twenty yards, ten, now only as many feet, and the herd scatters in terror and goes

away in all directions, hunters after them. Such a scene of confusion you never saw for a few minutes.

The pistols are flashing, and the loud bang! bang! of the carbines is heard every now and then.

See, there's an old bull down on his knees, the blood pouring from his mouth. Don't waste powder. He's gone, sure enough. There's another—a cow. She's stopped; another sure sign.

Look at the youngsters—they're both crazy. Not a round left in either pistol, and haven't finished a buffalo yet. There goes Custer on his big horse, the new one, a great, coarse beast that runs well for a spurt, but all covered with sweat already. He's after the king bull of the herd, and rides on the right side. Up goes the old Spencer carbine in a moment.

Bang! and the old bull stumbles and pitches on its head, the blood pouring out of its mouth. The big bullet has settled it. Now another hunter has stopped a bull, and five buffaloes are down out of the seven, while the other two have slipped off, and can be seen a little way off, going down a steep ravine, headforemost, where few horses would dare to follow.

So the hunters come slowly back, and the orderlies cut out the tongues of the slain animals. Five tongues are not such a bad beginning.

Presently up rumbled the ambulance, where the tongues and *hump* of the animals were placed, while the hunters allowed their horses to rest and recover their breath. Custer's big horse was pretty well tired out, and it was yet early in the day; but Custer's motto was "never say die," so, after a short rest, the party proceeded on its way.

From the crest of a neighboring hill a second herd was soon descried, and a second chase began.

This was a much longer chase than the first. The horses were tired, the herd fresh. Custer's big beast gave out and tumbled down a ravine, after the buffalo, suffering a severe sprain of the loins, which disabled it, so that the general had to change animals with his orderly, and ride back to his party empty-handed.

As he returned, he met two bulls close to him, and gave chase. This time, also, he used his Spencer carbine, and two shots finished his game. When the party was reunited, six more tongues had been added to the first five, and everybody was tired.

They halted for lunch, fed and watered their horses, and started on their return to camp at a slow pace, trusting to find more buffaloes as they went. Sure enough, as they topped the first swell, there was another herd to leeward, and as the animals smelt them, they all started right up the wind, passing close to the party.

Buffaloes always run up wind, no matter what is in the way, so that this herd was soon within striking distance, without any chase. One bull went down first fire, the rest scattered, but the king bull of the herd charged the whole party viciously.

Then there was some fun. There were seven hunters at one bull, but he seemed to mind the pistol-shots no more than flies. He kept charging all the time, chasing first one, and then the other, till at last a carbine-bullet brought him down, and the thirteenth tongue was added to their store.

Now the party started on its return home, for the horses could not have got up another run. It was resolved that the contest must stand on thirteen.

It was a long march home, and the day was hot, but every one was much elated with the party's success. Custer had killed two buffaloes himself, and only one of the party had failed to do the same. It remained to be seen what their rivals would do next day.

Arrived in camp, of course the curiosity was very great to know what luck the hunters had met with. The other side could not ask the referee, who had the tongues; that would have been unfair. The referee looked wise and said nothing, but the members of the party pretended to feel disappointed, and somehow the rumor spread in camp that Cus-

ter's party had only *nine* tongues. The orderlies kept their part of the secret, very well, and when the major's party rode out next morning, the members were all full of the notion that they had only ten tongues to get to win the supper.

The second party had nine hunters, and started full of hope. They had extra horses and were determined to beat nine tongues. The Custer party kept in camp, and the second party began to straggle back in the course of the day, two or three at a time, the last coming in with the ambulance long after dark.

Then there was a great excitement. The nine hunters were full of confidence, and began to banter their rivals as to what kind of champagne they would have.

Custer's party only smiled. The tongues would decide the question.

Every one flocked to the senior major's tent, and the leader of the party could contain himself no longer.

"General, we've beat you," he cried out, rubbing his hands. "You've only nine tongues, and we've got *eleven*. Enough and one to spa-e, old fellow. Order on your supper."

Custer smiled quietly, and his party kept quite still.

"What does the referee say?" asked Custer. The referee, a stout, jolly old officer, grinned.

"Orderly," he said, "bring in the baskets."

Two great baskets were brought in. The first was that of the major's party. Eleven fresh tongues were counted out.

"Well, isn't that a square beat?" asked the major.

"Not quite," said the referee, quietly. "There are *thirteen* in the other basket. Count them, if you please."

You ought to have seen those fellows' faces go down as the orderly counted out thirteen tongues. The major recovered first, like a man.

"I own up, general. It's a square beat," he said.

And that's how Custer's party won a supper. The defeated nine telegraphed to St. Louis along the railroad, and ordered on the supplies, which reached camp the day General Hancock arrived. That evening they had a jolly time, you may be sure. Next day the Seventh Cavalry received orders to march on a scout.

CHAPTER X.

AN INDIAN BEGGAR—THE CAMP SURPRISED—A BATTLE ON HORSEBACK.

WHEN General Hancock arrived at the camp in April, 1867, he ordered Custer to march from Fort Hays north to Fort McPherson, Nebraska, which was on the Union Pacific Railroad. This road, which runs parallel to the Kansas Pacific road, on which Custer had been operating, was finished much further out.

From Fort McPherson the cavalry was to move south-west, in a circuit, coming back to the railroad at Fort Sedgwick, and thence straight south to Fort Wallace on the Smoky Hill road, whence the column was to go back to Fort Hays again.

If you look on the common maps very likely you will not be able to find all these forts, but if you take an old or new Appleton's Railway Guide you can find them, some with the fort before the name, some without, as railway stations. There you will see that Custer was to describe a great circle to the north-west of Fort Hays, and it was pretty certain, so General Hancock thought, that he would strike the Cheyennes somewhere or other.

This was only a few years ago, and what a change! Hardly an Indian there now, only railways and farms. The Union Pacific road runs through Nebraska, the Kansas Pacific along the Smoky Hill valley, and the two have driven away buffalo and Indian alike.

In 1867, when Custer marched, it was very different. All the way to Fort McPherson not a living being was seen, except a few buffalo and mustangs, and one distant Indian war-party, that scoured away

out of sight. When the scouts came to examine the trail of this party they found the large feet of shod American horses, very different from the tracks of the little bare-footed ponies generally used by the Indians. It was plain that the Indians were riding stolen horses, taken from the stage company, fine, powerful animals, worth two hundred and fifty dollars apiece.

After a march of three hundred miles and more, Custer reached Fort McPherson on the railroad, and learned that General Sherman was out at Juliet, the terminus of the Union Pacific. General Sherman was the chief of all the army under Grant, in those days, as he is now, and therefore entitled to command General Hancock. As soon as he heard of Custer's arrival, Sherman telegraphed him to wait till he came to him, so the Seventh Cavalry waited nearly a week, resting their horses and getting ready for the next march.

While they were there, one day, a number of Indians were seen out on the plains near the station, and one of them bore a white flag. This man was coming to the fort.

As soon as Custer heard of it, he sent out a party to meet the Indians; and, very soon, in rode some ten or twelve picturesque warriors, headed by a fine, powerful Indian chief, whose war-bonnet was one of the handsomest ever seen on the plains, and whose leggings were fringed with the scalp-locks of several warriors.

Custer knew his face. It was the Sioux chief, Pawnee-Killer, a great friend of the Cheyennes. Custer had met him in the first Hancock council. Of course he was curious to know what Pawnee-Killer wanted. He soon learned.

The chief came in, he said, because he loved the white man, and hated war. He had been afraid that the soldiers were coming to kill all his children, so he had fled; but now he wanted to make friends. He was quite ready to bring in all his tribe and settle down. His village was only a little way off. Could the Big Yellow chief let him have a little coffee and sugar to show the squaws? then they would all come in. Of course he was hungry. The soldiers had frightened away the buffalo. Could the Big Yellow chief give his men a bullock? He was out of blankets; wanted some. Could not the Big Chief give him some ammunition, just to hunt buffalo?

So the chief went on, begging and promising, all the time watching Custer's camp, to find how many men there were. The end of it was, that he quite deceived Custer, as Satanta did Hancock, and procured all the food he wanted. Then he rode away, swearing eternal fidelity to the white man, and as soon as he was out of gun-shot had a good laugh at the way he had fooled Big Chief.

He was hardly out of sight before the whistle of a locomotive was heard, and General Sherman arrived at the station to see Custer. Of course Custer reported Pawnee-Killer's visit, and the first question Sherman asked was:

"Did you arrest him? Where is he?"

"Why no, general. My orders were not to hurt the Indians if they were peaceable; and this chief has promised to bring in his tribe to-morrow."

"You'll never see him," said the general, curtly. "The scamp came to beg. He got what he wanted, and now he's off. His lodges may possibly be near here, and if so, you may catch him. Saddle up, and follow his trail, at once. If you come on his band, you must do one of two things: bring it in, or destroy it."

Of course there was nothing for Custer to do but obey orders. General Sherman was a very different man from Hancock, a spare, nervous, excitable fellow, always hard at work and very keen. Hancock was much older, and being fond of good living, was more inclined to laziness and good-nature, therefore not half so fit to cope with these wily Indian chiefs.

In less than an hour after General Sherman's arrival the Seventh Cavalry, three hundred and fifty

strong, was winding over the plain in column of fours, preceded by a strong body of scouts, and followed by twenty wagons, heavily loaded with provisions and corn.

The scouts soon found the trail of Pawnee-Killer's band, which was quite broad and plain, and followed it all day to the south-west, toward the headwaters of the Republican river. The trail was that of a war party of some thirty men, and more than half rode large American horses, stolen from the stage companies. Not a trace was to be seen, however, of lodge-poles, and, unless these were found, every one knew it was hopeless to try and follow Pawnee-Killer, if the Indian wished to escape.

That day the column made its camp by the Republican river, and not an Indian had been seen. The wagons were corralled in a square, the men pitched their tents in regular streets, and the horses were turned out to graze in a hollow close to the camp, under a guard, while a strong chain of mounted pickets was thrown out all round the camp.

At this place the river was small, shallow and easily fordable, and low swells surrounded the hollow in which the camp was pitched. No Indian sign had been seen by the scouts, and it was the expectation of every one that Pawnee-Killer was fleeing to the mountains, far away.

What was the surprise of every one in the morning, to hear, just before sunrise, the furious rattle of carbine-shots, followed by the yells of attacking Indians and the tramp of hundreds of frightened horses. Out of the tents plunged the men in their shirts, catching up carbines and belts as they ran, and running to their horses.

Outside the camp, in the gray dawn of the morning, came a strong party of mounted Indians, as hard as they could tear, yelling at the top of their voices, firing in all directions, shaking red blankets and bells, and swooping down on the picket-line and herd of horses.

Had the animals of the regiment been all in one herd, loose, there is little doubt that the Indians would have stamped the whole body, so ungovernable do horses become when terrified in a large mass.

Very luckily, however, only a few baggage mules had been left in the herd, the rest of the animals having been brought in to the picket-rope late at night, within fifty feet of the men. This is the rule in a cavalry regiment. Each company has a heavy cable called a picket-rope, which is stretched on short posts along the front of the company streets, each soldier's tent being close to his horse, which is tied to the picket-rope by the halter. This fact saved Custer's horses. The presence of so many men whom the horses knew, and the opening of a smart fire of carbines on the Indians, calmed the horses, and drove off the Indians, so that almost before one could say there had been an attack, the stampeding party had hauled off, finding the surprise balked by the soldiers.

The fight was not over, however, by any means. As the light grew stronger all the tops of the swells were to be seen covered with mounted warriors, riding to and fro, and evidently planning an attack.

As you may imagine, they did not blow stable-call or breakfast-call that morning in the Seventh. It was all hurry and bustle. Saddle up and lead out was the word, and it is surprising how fast a man learns to get ready if there are Indians near him.

Inside of ten minutes the whole regiment was mounted, and the different squadrons were deploying out on the plain around the camp to repel the Indians. They were none too soon. As soon as it was fairly light the whole country seemed to swarm with warriors, and the scouts afterward declared that there must have been at least a thousand Indians, nearly three to one of the soldiers.

The Indians had evidently made up their minds to try what the Big Yellow Chief was made of, and made a grand charge on the camp. It was the first

Indian charge Custer had seen, and he never forgot it.

From all quarters of the compass, streaming on in irregular clouds, down came the warriors, crouched over the necks of their swift little war-ponies, going at a perfectly frantic gallop. The dust rose behind them in a great cloud, and through that cloud one might see the feathers tossing, scarlet streamers waving, arms flashing. On they came like birds flying over the ground.

Crack! crack! crack! see the flashes of their rifles, and hear the bullets, *plou! plou! plou! thump!*

Nearer they come, howling like a pack of wolves.

Hi!!! Yip! yip!! yip!!! yip!!!! HIAH!!!

How they come! It looks as if they would ride over everything. Now they're within range of the thin skirmish line of horsemen that stretches round the camp, and see! Out flames a long line of spitting flashes, and the rattle of carbines becomes incessant. The thin blue smoke curls up in puffs, and through the veil one may see the Indians turning.

Then away they go, all round the camp, in their favorite method of attack, abandoning the charge, and "circling."

Now the real fun begins. A long file of Indian warriors, every man at full speed, goes tearing round and round, the camp of the Seventh. Every warrior is cutting up all sorts of pranks to show his horsemanship. Some are hanging over behind their horses, sheltered from bullets, while they fire under the pony's neck or over the saddle. Here a fellow stands up like a circus-rider, yelling and shaking his gun, while another stands on his head.

All of them keep going as hard as they can tear, round and round, firing all the time. The soldiers cannot hit the warriors, try their best. Now and then a pony goes over, but his rider is up before the soldiers can get at him, and jumps up behind a friend.

The firing is incessant, but very few folks are hurt. This kind of fighting is full of excitement and rapid motion, but it does not mean real business. Presently Custer determined to break it up.

He drew in a whole squadron and so contracted his skirmish line that the Indians thought he was getting frightened. Much encouraged, they contracted their own circle, galloped closer and closer, and shot more rapidly than ever. All of a sudden, Custer formed his squadron and charged the ring, pistol in hand.

"Hey! what a charge! Now one may see the weak point of Indian fighting. The warriors cannot stand a charge. They break and scatter in a moment, as Custer bursts through the ring. Now, too, one may see the advantage of discipline. The Indians, man for man, are better riders, shots and fighters than the soldiers, but see how the soldiers drive them! No sooner through the circle than the squadron wheels to one side, and sweeps up the long file of warriors, throwing them into confused masses and driving them like sheep.

This new maneuver puzzles them. There is a loud yelling of some signal, and the next moment away goes the whole gang, full speed, defying pursuit.

The attack had been foiled.

Custer drew off his men to camp; the Indians clustered on the neighboring hills. After a little out came a white flag from the Indian ranks; Custer went out himself to meet it, and found in the bearer none other than his moral friend, Pawnee-Killer, as sweet and smiling as ever. What could he want?

CHAPTER XI.

INDIAN IMPUDENCE—TREACHERY—INGENUITY—CUSTER ARRESTED—SUSPENDED—RE-INSTATED.

WHAT did Pawnee-Killer want with Custer? It soon came out that he asked for another talk with the Big Chief, and came to propose a meeting in sight of the two forces by the river-bank, to which each person should be entitled to bring only six companions. Custer at once consented, but, suspecting treachery, ordered a whole squadron to be

ready, mounted, just outside of the camp, awaiting the signal of the bugle to charge, full speed.

Then, with five officers and a bugler, he went down to the bank to meet Pawnee-Killer. Every man of the party had his revolver stuck loosely in his belt, and had his hand on it all through the interview, a precaution soon found to be very necessary.

Pawnee-Killer came swaggering in, with seven chiefs, instead of six, and opened the conversation by shaking hands, with a sonorous "How!" Then all the chiefs went through the same operation, and the talk commenced through an interpreter.

Pawnee-Killer wanted to know how long the soldiers were going to stay, and whether he couldn't get some more coffee and sugar out of the Big Chief, that was all.

As soon as Custer could command his face, for he could not help laughing at the outrageous coolness of the Indian, he angrily retorted by asking how the chief dared to try and steal his horses that morning?

Pawnee-Killer took matters very coolly. He thought it was hardly worth disputing about. He wanted to know how long the soldiers would stay there, as they disturbed the buffalo. Any coffee and sugar to spare? Pawnee-Killer very great chief. Chiefs like sugar, love white brothers. Got any to spare?

Custer returned a decided negative. Wanted to know when Pawnee-Killer would come into the fort, as he had promised.

Pawnee-Killer couldn't say. Some time, by-and-by. Wasn't sure he could go at all, unless he got some coffee and sugar.

The other bank was lined with Indians, loafing around, and just then one of them came wading over the stream, and walked up to Custer, to shake hands and say "How." Several more were preparing to follow, and Custer realized that treachery was intended.

He turned to Pawnee-Killer, and pointed to the bugler.

"Just order your men back, chief," he said, in English, "or my man will blow his trumpet, and bring down all my soldiers."

As he spoke the bugler, an intelligent fellow, raised his bugle to sound, and Pawnee-Killer looked disturbed. It was clear the chief understood English. Without waiting for the interpreter, he ordered his men back, and began to withdraw sulkily.

"White chief, big fool!" was his parting greeting, as he waded into the river, and Custer mounted his horse and rode back. The young general had learned his second lesson in Indian warfare. After that he never indulged in talks with hostile chiefs, unless he felt sure that he had the whip-hand of them. Pawnee-Killer had given him his last instructions in treachery, and he never trusted an Indian again.

The whole of the Seventh Cavalry was therefore mounted, and started to attack Pawnee-Killer and his band. As soon as the chief saw Custer was in earnest he fled with all his men, though they were more than half as numerous again as the regiment; and before half an hour was over not an Indian was to be seen. The rapidity with which they vanished was surprising to Custer at the time, but in after years he found the secret to be very simple.

Every Indian, going to war, takes two ponies, at least, one to travel with, one to fight from. On these he carries nothing. The soldiers have only one horse apiece on which to follow, and each horse is loaded down with clothes and forage and provisions. Every few miles the Indians can change horses; so there is no wonder that he goes the fastest. Being in their own country, too, the Indians can scatter and hide, which the whites cannot do without getting into trouble.

Of this last maneuver they had a notable instance that very afternoon. Custer returned to camp after a fruitless chase, and very soon more Indians came

in sight on the opposite side to that on which they were spied in the morning. There were only about twenty, and Custer sent out a troop of fifty men to chase them off. The Indians moved slowly off, and the troop followed, and scattered, as the Indians scattered.

No sooner were the two parties of soldiers about a mile apart than at least a hundred Indians came out of the numerous narrow ravines, hid in the prairie, and galloped down on the smallest of the parties.

The officer in command at once dismounted three out of every four men, had the horses led in a little column in the middle, deployed his dismounted men in a circle of skirmishers, and so fought his way back to camp.

Had the Indians been white troops, they would have charge and ridden right over the little band; but, being Indians, they had their peculiar weakness, which is this: they cannot stand a close fight where they must lose men. They always try to kill their enemies without losing any of their own warriors, and that makes them cowardly in some things, while they are brave in others. So they kept circling round the little troop at full speed, shooting away and hardly ever hitting anything, while the soldiers, firing slowly, from the ground, managed to kill two Indians and wound two others, before they reached camp. The other party was not attacked.

Some days after, Custer's wagon-train, which he had sent to Fort Wallace under a guard of fifty men, to get provisions for a longer scout, was attacked by seven hundred Indians, who fought in just the same way, circling round and round. The officer in command saved his men in just the same way as the first-mentioned had done, by putting his horses in the middle, between two columns of wagons, and deploying his dismounted skirmishers all round the train. He also beat off the Indians: so that in this campaign Custer and the Seventh Cavalry found out a good deal about how to fight Indians, a lesson of which they often afterward availed themselves. They learned that they could not successfully fight mounted, for the Indians could outride the soldiers, and the Indian ponies never got scared, while their own big horses soon became unmanageable. So they always, after that, fought on foot, round their horses, whenever they got into a tight place among Indians, and always found the plan work well.

Soon after these events, Custer proceeded on his long scout, and marched out of the Indian country, nearer the settlements. Here he got into fresh troubles, from another source. His men began to desert, not one or two, but ten or a dozen at a time, and at last he found out that there was a plot for more than half the regiment to desert in a body.

One afternoon, after a march, when the horses were grazing, a party of fifteen soldiers started out in broad daylight, before their officers' faces, mounted and armed, and determined to desert. Only the guard in camp had saddled horses, and these at once pursued the deserters, one of whom was shot dead, another wounded, some more being taken prisoners. This sudden and severe treatment cowed the men, and there were no more desertions, but the result of the difficulty was much trouble for Custer, as we shall soon hear.

He pursued his march to Fort Wallace, discovering on the way the victims of a terrible Indian massacre. A young officer named Lieutenant Kidder, who was searching for Custer himself, with dispatches from General Sherman, had been caught by Pawnee-Killer's band, and killed, with every member of his party. Custer found their bodies, all stripped, and so hacked to pieces by the Indians that not one could be recognized. Such a horrible sight is never seen outside of an Indian battle-field, and Custer never forgot it. He little thought that the day would come when he and the flower of his officers and men would be found in the same condition.

He pursued his march to Fort Wallace, finding the Indians all gone out of the country; and then the

question remained what next to do. The original orders for the scout were to return from Fort Wallace to Fort Hays, whence Custer first started, but the horses of the regiment were too much exhausted to march together, and the provisions and forage at Fort Wallace were found to be so bad that the men were falling sick. So Custer decided to leave the main body of his regiment there, take the best men and horses, and march to Fort Hays himself, to see General Hancock, whence he could send back good provisions for his men.

He made a march of one hundred and fifty miles in two days and a half, reaching Fort Hays, but found neither provisions nor Hancock there. Hearing that General Hancock was at Fort Harker, sixty miles off, he determined to push on with one or two officers and men, leaving his escort behind, for the road was no longer dangerous. In twelve hours more he was at Fort Harker, and found, to his surprise, that the Kansas Pacific Road had been finished to that post, which was now a railway station. There was no Hancock there either, however, no one but Custer's own colonel, old General A. J. Smith, who commanded the department.

From him Custer learned that Hancock had given up the campaign and retired to Fort Leavenworth, too far off to be followed, while active movements had been stopped for the year. General Smith gave Custer permission to send back the wagon-train to the regiment under a junior officer, and to go by railroad himself to Fort Riley, ninety miles off, where Mrs. Custer and the general's sister were living, from whom he had now been separated ever since March, it being then July, 1867.

Custer went there, supposing all was right. How rejoiced those at home were to see him, no one can tell but those who have been in similar positions, as soldiers or sailors. Within a week, however, he was rudely awakened from his dream of happiness by an order of arrest, and was soon after tried by court-martial, on some charges prepared by a personal enemy of his, who had determined to injure him.

He was charged with leaving his men to go on a journey on *private business*, and with excessive cruelty and illegal conduct in stopping the attempted desertions of his men by shooting a deserter. That unlucky journey to Fort Riley was made the pretext for the whole trial, and Custer was finally condemned to be suspended from rank and pay for a whole year.

Of course this was a heavy blow for the poor fellow, after trying so hard to do his duty; but he had to submit and go back to Monroe, leaving the Seventh Cavalry to go out without him, and fight the Indians next year.

As it happened, however, this very unjust sentence, passed on Custer, was the means in the end of giving him the greatest triumph of his life. He went away, and the war languished all the summer of 1868. Nobody seemed to have any success. The Indians did more mischief than they had done for years. General Hancock was removed, and General Sheridan put in his place, but even then things did not come right. The troops had the worst, the Indians the best, all the summer.

Finally, as nothing else could be done, they had to send for Custer before his year was out, and he received a telegram from Sheridan, stating that Sherman and all the officers of the Seventh had united with him to ask the President to send Custer back to the plains, to show the officers how to fight Indians.

The same day the order arrived from Washington, and Custer started for the West, arriving at Fort Hays the last day of September, 1868, to meet General Sheridan.

He found everything in the department in a bustle, for Sheridan had determined on something never known on the plains before his time. This was a winter campaign against the Indians, and it was to lead this campaign that he wanted Custer.

It was now that Custer approached the grandest and most successful time of all his Indian career.

Sheridan's reasons for a winter campaign were founded on common sense. In the summer, the soldiers could not catch the Indians, who had plenty of ponies, fat with grass, and as much game as they could shoot. In the winter, it was different. The troops could carry along wagon-loads of oats and feed their horses, while the Indian ponies could only be kept alive down in the hollows of streams, where there were enough cottonwood trees for the animals to feed on the bark.

As it was, the poor creatures were miserably thin, and quite unable to march far, so that, if the tribe was found, it was probable the soldiers could catch them. For these reasons, Custer was to take out the Seventh Cavalry as soon as the winter set in, to hunt Indians.

CHAPTER XII.

A QUEER CHARACTER—A WINTER CAMPAIGN—BRILLIANT RESULTS.

It was some time before Custer considered himself quite ready for the Indians. He found his regiment full of green recruits, fresh from the towns of the East, men who hardly knew how to ride a horse to water, leave alone fight on him. They were miserable shots, and could, some of them, scarcely hit a barn door from the barn-yard fence. He found them encamped among the Indians, and so scared that they hardly dared leave camp. He very soon changed that, however, by sending out large scouting parties at night, to frighten the Indians. Finally, he left the camp where he found the regiment, moved in, close to Fort Dodge, on the Arkansas River, out of reach of Indian annoyances, and set to work to drill his men in earnest, to become good riders and good shots. Every day he had target practice, and out of all the companies he selected the very best shots, which he organized into a separate troop, called the "Sharpshooters." To these he promised to give certain special privileges, such as exemption from picket duty, and the privilege of always being at the head of the column. The consequence of this promise was, that all the soldiers were eager to be sharpshooters, and shot their very best, the whole regiment improving daily.

While he was drilling, of course the Indians were doing what they pleased all over the country, but Custer did not mind that. It was just as well they should imagine themselves secure. He could not catch them till the snow was on the ground, and the less suspicion they had of a winter campaign, the more likely he was to find them. At last, after a long march, with a strong column, through the Indian Territory, down to the borders of Texas, at the place where Camp Supply now stands, the first snow came, in a tremendous blinding storm, and the Seventh Cavalry, with a numerous wagon train, started on its journey to find the Indians, November 23d, 1868.

The winter had set in with a vengeance, for the storm lasted the whole of the first day and all night; and when it cleared up at last, there were eighteen inches of snow on the ground, with the thermometer down about zero. This was a real winter campaign and no mistake. Many men would have halted for the storm, for even the Indian guides lost their way, and could not tell where Wolf Creek was, the place where the regiment was to encamp the first night.

Custer would not be beaten, however. He had a map, he knew the direction of Wolf Creek, so he took his course by compass, and pushed on, reaching the creek safely, and excelling the guides. Of these guides he had plenty on this expedition. First, there were twenty Osages, friendly Indians, from a small tribe on a reservation in Indian Territory. Their chiefs were Little Beaver and Hard Rope. Then he had several white and half-breed scouts, about some of whom novels have been written. Especially there was California Joe, who was

afterward one of the most useful scouts Custer ever had.

California Joe was a tall, broad-shouldered fellow, with a tremendous brown beard, and a shock of curls that looked as if they had never seen a comb for years. His great peculiarity was a short brier-wood pipe, which he never stopped smoking, day or night, except when asleep, eating, or on an Indian trail. He would talk you blind for hours, and had the quaintest expressions in his speech you ever heard. He had great contempt for the powers of a regular officer to fight or catch Indians, but he soon conceived a great liking for Custer, finding him so different from the rest, and they worked together harmoniously all the time they were comrades together.

Then there was Romeo, a half-breed Indian, who acted as interpreter, a short, squat, jolly little fellow, who looked as if he thought of nothing but eating, but who could "lift a trail" better than most men. There were several others not so well known, but California Joe and Romeo were always Custer's favorites.

The column proceeded south in the direction of Texas, bearing west toward the head-waters of the Washita River, in which country the Indians were expected to be found wintering, anywhere within a hundred miles. The soldiers had not traveled three days, before they found how wise Custer had been to wait for the snow. By the banks of the Canadian River, they found a broad fresh trail, evidently that of the last war-party of the season, going home, and the greenest recruit could have followed it in such a snow.

Their troubles were over, as far as finding the Indians was concerned, for it was clear that the trail was made by men quite unsuspecting that they would be followed, and therefore careless of their marks. It was found, quite by surprise, while Custer was crossing his wagon train over the River Canadian, an operation which took several hours, and during which of course the regiment could not move. To utilize the time, Custer sent out two squadrons under Major Elliott, to scout down the river and see what they could see. This detachment found the Indian trail, about ten miles below Custer's ford, leading off to the south-west. Major Elliott was a very brave and sagacious officer, and he realized that there was no time to be lost, so he set off on the trail at once, sending back a scout named Jack Corbett, to tell Custer of his discovery.

Corbett found Custer at the crossing, arriving just as the last wagon was drawn slowly up the steep bank, with three teams in front of it. The mode of following the Indians was now very soon settled. The Seventh Cavalry had twelve companies in all, divided into six "squadrons." Major Elliott had two squadrons; Custer left one as a guard for the wagons, and with the other three squadrons, six companies, determined to strike off to the south-east in the direction in which Corbett pronounced the trail to be leading. The wagons were to follow his trail as fast as they could come with the guard. Of course there was a danger that Indians might pounce on them, but Custer decided to risk that. He was satisfied, from the snow, and from the total absence of tracks outside of the war-trail, that the Indians were hugging their lodges. When he and Elliott united they would have ten companies, or about seven hundred men, and he judged it best to move quickly.

In ten minutes from Corbett's arrival, therefore, away went the column, at a fast walk, over the frozen snow, to catch the Indians. The snow was not near so deep as it was further north, where they had come from, and it had thawed and frozen into a hard crust, so that progress was easy.

They took up their march about noon, and just as the sun set they came on Elliott's trail, where he was following the Indians. Now the scent was growing hot. That night was full moon, and the trail was so broad and heavy that they could follow

it after sunset. Of course they did so with prudence. All talking was stopped in the column, which swept on at a long, slashing walk, such as cavalry horses soon acquire, and which is always most rapid at night, when the animals think they are nearing camp.

At nine o'clock they came up to Major Elliott's party, which had halted, and the whole regiment was dismounted.

The men and horses were all pretty well tired, and needed food, but the question was how to cook coffee. The trail had led them down into the valley of a stream, which they afterward found to be the Washita, where there were high banks and heavy timber, so it was decided to risk making small fires, low down in the hollow, trusting to the cold weather to keep prowling Indians at home.

If not seen, it was well worth the risk to give the men the refreshment of hot coffee, which no one appreciates so much as a shivering soldier, after a long march.

Supper was cooked, the horses received a double share of oats, and after an hour's halt the pursuit was resumed. Now, however, it was necessary to take extra precautions. Little Beaver and Hard Rope pronounced the trail to have been made that very day, and that the Indians had probably passed just before sunset.

It was almost certain that the camp would be found in the valley of the same river which they had just reached, and probably not very far off. It was therefore necessary not to alarm the Indians till the regiment was prepared to dash on them, and the noise of the frozen snow under the horses' feet could be heard a quarter of a mile off.

The way the new march was arranged was this: in front of all went little Beaver and Hard Rope, on foot, gliding over the snow-crust in their soft moccasins like silent spirits, Custer riding a little behind them, at a slow pace. The other Indian scouts were thrown out in all directions, also on foot, to watch for lurking foes, while the white scouts rode in a little body, three or four hundred yards back. The regiment, in column of fours, was at least half a mile behind, only just in sight.

On went the column on its new march, for about an hour more, when Hard Rope stopped progress. *He smelt fire*, he said. A little further, after a cautious advance, and they discovered the dim embers of a deserted fire. The Indian scouts crept up to it, and found no one alive, but plenty of pony tracks. It was pronounced to be a fire made by some Indian boys, in charge of the pony herd belonging to the village. The herd had gone, but could not be far off—the village must be very near. You may fancy how cautiously the scouts stole on now, the regiment halting some way off. At the very next hill, Hard Rope waved back Custer, stole up to the top, peeped over, and instantly fell flat on his face, then crept slowly back to Custer, laid his hand on the general's bridle and whispered:

"Big heap Injun down there."

"How do you know?" whispered back Custer.

"*Me heard dog bark*," said Hard Rope, quietly.

Custer dismounted, crept to the crest of the hill, peeped over, and there, in the midst of the timber, were the white lodges of an Indian village, sleeping in the moonshine. There was no mistake.

He went back to his horse, and sent a scout to call up the officers of the Seventh, telling them to come quietly, leaving their sabers behind. He led them to the top of the hill, showing them, for the first time in their lives, an Indian village full of enemies, which the white man had caught at last. There was no question as to the catching—the only one was, would the Indians stay caught? Against their escape Custer soon provided.

Dividing his regiment into four divisions, he ordered three of these to make circuits, about a mile from the camp, so as to come in on all sides just about daylight.

One detachment, commanded by himself, with

the sharpshooters and the band, remained where they were, while the others started; and the rest of that cold moonlight night was passed in dead silence, waiting till the preparations were complete. It was a long, weary wait, but the success at last attained paid for all. The Indians were sound asleep, and suspected nothing till daylight, when all the detachments simultaneously burst on them, the band playing "Garryowen," the men cheering, carbines and pistols cracking, galloping horses tearing through the camp. The result was a complete and overwhelming defeat for the whole band, which proved to be the village of Black Kettle, a Cheyenne chief. Over a hundred warriors were killed, and some seventy women and children were taken prisoners, while nine hundred ponies and all the stuff of the village was captured. About fifty warriors got away by a bold dash in the first confusion, but the rest were completely defeated.

No sooner was the battle over than fresh troubles began.

It turned out that there were four other bands, encamped within a few miles of Black Kettle's village, and the warriors from these made a fierce attack on Custer, to rescue the herd of ponies. Custer soon found that he had nearly two thousand fresh Indians to fight. Many men in such a strait would have lost their heads and retreated; not so Custer. He was bound to give those fellows a lesson, to make them fear the white man for some time to come.

He strung out most of his men in a skirmish line, to keep off the Indians awhile, then detailed a firing-party to destroy the village and shoot the ponies, only keeping enough of these to mount his prisoners. The Indians, maddened at the sight, attacked the cavalry fiercely, but without success. They were so cowed by Black Kettle's fate that they fought feebly. No sooner was the village in ashes than Custer called in his men, mounted, formed line, and marched right at the next Indian village, as if he meant to repeat the operation.

That settled the business. The Indians waited no longer. They had found their match at last in the "Yellow Devil-Chief," as they called Custer after that time. No sooner was the Seventh fairly on its march, than the whole Indian force scattered. There were Kiowas and Comanches, Arapahoes in plenty, and another small band of Cheyennes, but they all fled in haste, though twice as numerous as the soldiers.

It was about five miles to the nearest camp, but before the column arrived there not an Indian could be seen, while the lodges were found standing, full of stuff, and all deserted. Not even a lodge-pole had been taken.

By the time Custer reached the camp it was dark, and the moon had not yet risen. He halted awhile, sent out scouts who found no Indians, then turned and marched off straight across country to his wagons, which he found safe in camp. Not an Indian had been near them. He concluded that he had done enough for one trip, so he dispatched California Joe and Jack Corbett across country to carry the news to General Sheridan, and followed them, the next day, himself.

Camp Supply was reached in safety, and General Sheridan reviewed the regiment, complimenting it highly on its successful expedition. From that day forth there was no more trouble with the Indians of the South-west. Custer had cowed them completely. Satanta and the Kiowas came in that winter, after some trouble, and ceased hostilities. Before March, 1869, the Arapahoes had followed their example; and early in the spring Custer had completed his triumph by chasing down the last band of the Cheyennes under Medicine-Arrow, who surrendered without a fight.

Such was the first and grandest of all the Indian campaigns of General Custer, the greatest Indian-fighter of the American army.

CHAPTER XXI.

PEACE—VISITORS—THE ENGLISH LORD—A GRAND BUFFALO HUNT.

The final pacification of the Indians of the Southwest by the efforts of General Custer occurred in 1869, and raised his reputation as an Indian-fighter far above that of any officer of the army. A brief recapitulation of what he had done will show the reason for this feeling. He was recalled from arrest in September, 1868. Before that time he had only had three months' experience on the plains. In six months from September, 1868, that is in March, 1869, Custer and the Seventh had destroyed one band of Cheyennes, compelled the tribe of Kiowas to come into their reservation, persuaded the whole tribe of the Arapahoes to follow their example, and finally captured the last of the remaining Cheyennes, and brought them to peace. No one else had ever done half so much, except with an army behind him.

Peace now reigned on the plains for several years, and Custer among the rest had an opportunity of enjoying the reward of his labors. The Seventh was scattered among the frontier posts, and Custer himself, with a few companies, took command at Fort Hays, where he spent some of the happiest years of his life, till 1871, when he was ordered away to the States.

The first summer he was overrun with visitors from the East and Europe, who wanted to see the famous Custer and enjoy a buffalo-hunt. First came a young English lord, who had been making the tour of the world. He was a great rider, a crack shot, very fond of hunting. He had shot tigers in India, and came to America to see if the Yanks had anything in the way of game worth killing. This young lord came to Newport soon after his arrival, and all the rich people in society petted him.

The young ladies, however—women are contrary creatures, you know—didn't much like the patronizing way this young lord talked about the plains. It seems that he once said:

"It's nothing to kill a buffalo, my dear Miss Blank. You see, when a fellow's killed tigers and elephants, all the rest seems very tame. You've nothing very dangerous on the plains. Buffalo! why all you have to do is to ride fast enough to catch them, and shoot straight. You see, these fellows on the plains brag a good deal."

Then the beautiful Miss Blank was nettled, for she had a brother on the plains, and she had been doing a good deal of boasting about the buffaloes he had killed.

So she flashed out:

"Very much obliged, my lord, for your opinion, but perhaps you wouldn't say so if you'd seen a buffalo."

"Oh, well, you know, that's all very well, you know, but—"

"And as for killing one, I'll bet you a dozen pair of gloves you can't kill a buffalo on your first hunt."

This nettled the young lord in turn, and when Miss Dash and Miss So-and-so and all the rest joined in to tease him about the buffalo, he finally declared that he'd start for the West next week, have one hunt, and bring back at least one buffalo tail, or lose a dozen pair of gloves to each lady.

So down to Fort Hays he came by railroad, with a letter from General Sheridan to Custer, and a party was at once organized.

This hunt was a very splendid one, for there was a large crowd of hunters. Besides the English lord and the friend who traveled with him, there were several officers of the Seventh and a party of excursionists from St. Louis, who arrived just as the hunt was starting out. The band of the regiment was along and there was quite a train of ambulances and wagons, besides the horsemen of the party.

They started from the camp of the regiment early in the day, and marched away about twenty miles

before they went into camp themselves. Custer's summer post was at Big Creek, about fifteen miles from Fort Hays, but the soldiers had scared all the game long before, so that it was necessary to get outside of their circle before hoping to find a buffalo. The hunting party camped by a little running brook, and the Indian scouts were sent out in all directions to find buffalo signs, while supper was being cooked.

About an hour after sunset they returned, with the news that buffalo were grazing or lying down in several large herds, not two miles from camp.

This encouraged every one, and pistols were cleaned, rifles looked to, saddles overhauled that night. It was arranged that in the morning the hunters should start out after breakfast, and then the night was devoted to sleep.

The party was very large now. The English and the officers of the Seventh were nearly thirty strong, and the St. Louis people had more than a hundred, among whom were some forty ladies. One of these ladies, the beautiful Miss T., of Cincinnati, had actually expressed a determination to ride out with the hunt, and as she was known to be a splendid rider there was much curiosity expressed as to whether she would kill a buffalo, for she carried two revolvers.

At last the dawn began to streak the east, and long before sunrise the whole camp was alive, breakfast dispatched, and horses saddled. Just as the sun showed his face, the hunters rode out of camp, and no sooner had they topped the next swell than, sure enough, there was a grand herd of nearly a thousand buffalo, dead to windward, peacefully feeding on the prairie grass.

Now the hunt was arranged, all the horsemen and Miss T. strung out in a skirmish line, riding abreast about thirty feet apart, at a slow pace, toward the herd. They numbered about sixty riders all told.

In the center was Custer, Miss T. next to him, the two English lords on either side. It was understood that they should keep abreast till the herd started, after which it was to be every one for himself.

It was pretty hard work to hold in the horses, for the sight of so many companions, and the scent of the distant buffalo blowing down on the fresh morning breeze, excited them greatly. The buffalo were hungry, and, as usual, feeding heads up wind, so that the line was within a quarter of a mile before they took the alarm. Then arose a great grumbling bellow, and the mass of huge black beasts started off at a trot, breaking into a lumbering gallop after a few steps.

Now the line of hunters started, full speed and went racing away for the herd. Custer, on his thoroughbred, the English lords, and Miss T. were ahead, being better mounted than any one else, and they soon found themselves nearing the herd. Now they were close to them in the dust, and the buffalo began to scatter. The beasts could not run so fast as in the spring, for the summer grasses had fattened them and spoiled their wind, while the horses were in splendid condition. As the game scattered, the horsemen dashed into the main herd, and the cracking of pistols began. The English lord was determined to win his bet, and he dashed in, singled out his buffalo, and finished him in short order, with three shots. Little Miss T. had shrunk from the center of the herd, but she was away after a single buffalo, closely followed by two orderlies, detailed by Custer to take care of her. The plucky Western girl fired away at her buffalo, and by dint of hard riding and perseverance brought him to bay after three shots. Then she might have had a hard time, but for the orderlies, who dashed in, firing and distracting the buffalo's attention, so that presently he stopped, the blood flowing from his mouth, tottered, and sunk down dead. You may fancy how delighted was Miss T., but she was far from satisfied. No sooner had one of the orderlies cut off the tail of the bull to give to her as a trophy, than she must needs be off again after another buffalo, that was

coming in her direction. Wonderful to relate, she ended by killing this fellow, too, but not till she had emptied the twelve barrels of her revolvers, and been chased round and round by the buffalo. Luckily she was so light, and her horse so good, that the brute never got near her, and the ordies had no excuse for interfering till it was time to cut off the tail of the second buffalo.

In the mean time, the rest of the party had not been idle. There was enough noise to make one imagine a regular battle was going on, but buffaloes and hunters alike were scattered all over the prairie in a cloud of dust, a very few minutes' gallop taking them miles away. At last they began to return, slowly, with tired horses, every man talking at the top of his voice, and all boasting of their success, if they had killed anything. We have said nothing of Custer, but he had made a splendid score for all that. He was now an old, experienced buffalo-hunter, and seldom took more than two shots to finish his game. He had killed seven buffalo, and the English lords had killed four apiece—pretty good for beginners.

But they had stopped sneering at the prairies. "By Jove, general, it's not so tame as I thought. One old fellow charged me as viciously as a rogue elephant. It's royal sport."

That was the oldest lord's opinion, and his friend confirmed it. He had narrowly escaped death twice. Once the buffalo's horn grazed his horse's side and ripped his saddlecloth off, and another buffalo threw him, horse and all, falling dead within two feet of the prostrate hunter.

That day's dinner was a jolly one. Eighty-two buffalo had been killed, and the wagons were all loaded with meat to go back to camp. The champagne flowed, and Miss T.'s health was drank again and again, as the Diana of the Prairies. Next day the hunters and excursionists went back to Fort Hays, and the party broke up.

This hunt was but one of many such pleasant excursions, which made the summers of 1869 and 1870 the most delightful of Custer's life. His little wife was with him, and his sister Maggie, now just grown up to be a young lady; the officers of his battalion were devoted to him, and made with their families a pleasant circle of society. In the winter, when visitors came no more, the regiment was cantoned at Fort Hays, the men in comfortable barracks, the horses in open stables, the officers in cottages. Then they used to get up private theatricals, the officers and ladies taking part, the audience being composed of the soldiers and civilians employed at the post, nearly a thousand people in all. As the show was free, you may be sure that the theater was full every evening, and that the actors had plenty of applause.

So passed away the time, pleasant and peaceful, till the summer of 1871, when Custer received orders to proceed to Louisville, Kentucky, while the whole of the Seventh Cavalry was taken from the plains, and divided, a company here and a company there, throughout the Southern States.

Custer, with only two companies, was stationed at Elizabethtown, a small place about forty miles from Louisville, and there he remained, with little or nothing to do, till 1873.

His brother, Tom Custer, who was now a captain in the Seventh, was ordered to South Carolina, but his sister Maggie was married to Lieutenant Calhoun just about this time, and as Calhoun was appointed post-adjutant to Custer, they were naturally pretty close together, so that the little family circle was not broken up entirely.

To occupy his leisure, about this time, Custer began to write sketches of his life on the plains, and even commenced a memoir of his services during the war, but these latter were never finished, and he only wrote at intervals and by fits and starts, to occupy his mind and cure his uneasy restlessness. Custer was a peculiar man in this respect, that he always wanted to be up and doing something, and

never could long enjoy leisure. The two years he passed in Kentucky were uneasy and restless years, and he was very glad in the middle of 1872 when he was summoned by telegraph once more to his beloved plains.

This time, however, it was not for Indian service, but only for another grand buffalo-hunt, which most of our readers will remember. At that period the United States was honored by the visit of Prince Alexis of Russia, who was received with great cordiality by the people. Not very long before the Emperor of Russia had liberated all the serfs of his empire, a measure which so nearly resembled the emancipation of the American slaves that it had endeared the Russians to the Americans. Then the Russians had stood our friends in the Civil War, and had sold us the whole of Alaska for a small price, which helped to make us like them. Altogether, no foreign prince ever received such a hearty welcome as the Grand Duke Alexis did when he came to America.

And Alexis wanted to see a buffalo-hunt, so General Sheridan thought he would send for Custer to show him one.

He could not have sent for a better man.

CHAPTER XIV.

TOUR OF THE STATES—BACK TO THE PLAINS—FIGHT WITH SITTING BULL.

The Grand Duke Alexis was on his way out West when Sheridan telegraphed Custer to come to Fort Riley. The young prince had been in New York a few weeks before, thence to Niagara Falls, then all the way to San Francisco on the Pacific Railroad, which was now open from end to end. The running of that road had cleared the plains of the Indians, and there was no more danger in those places where Custer had followed after the Cheyennes only three years before. Buffalo were much scarcer, however, which was a disadvantage for sport, as much as the absence of Indians was an advantage for safety.

Custer got into the train and was whirled away to the West, arriving in due time at Fort Riley, where the Grand Duke had already made his appearance. The famous scout, Cody, was also there—Buffalo Bill himself in person—and a splendid hunting-party was speedily organized, with a band of music and everything to suit. At least a hundred Indian scouts had been engaged, who roamed far and wide over the plains, marking down herds of buffalo and driving them toward the fort, so as to make game seem plentiful. It was all very well for common folks to have trouble in finding game, but every one was determined that the Grand Duke should find plenty.

The appointed morning came, and Alexis rode out with Custer to the hunting-grounds. The Grand Duke was and is a splendid-looking fellow, six feet high, broad and strong, with a pleasant face, always friendly. He wore a jacket and trowsers of strong gray cloth, high boots and a fur cap, and carried one handsome revolver. His horse was of course a splendid animal, the best money could buy or hire.

Custer wore his well-known frontier dress, with its fringed cape and sleeves, while his long curls flowed down over his shoulders. He carried the new Springfield carbine, just then introduced in the army, and his piece had been altered into a sporting rifle by a gunsmith, making it a very handsome weapon. He had brought on from Louisville a new horse, a perfect thoroughbred, and no doubt Alexis thought that if all the American generals were like Custer, they were a handsome set of fellows.

As they got near the hunting-ground down came Buffalo Bill, full speed, to meet them. Cody was splendidly dressed, in the same gayly-ornamented buckskin suit that he afterward used in the "Scouts of the Prairie," on the stage. Of course it was not his working-dress, but Alexis never knew the difference, and he was delighted with these handsome costumes all round him. Then the Indian scouts, who had been driving buffalo, came up in new blan-

kets, and all gay with feathers. They reported buffalo over the next hill.

It is needless to describe this hunt any further, for all buffalo-hunts are much the same, and this was no exception.

The Grand Duke turned out to be a good rider and shot, and killed his buffalo like a good fellow. Custer shot two, and Buffalo Bill, with his peculiar knack, finished five in as many shots. Long practice had shown him just where to aim to kill every time.

The Grand Duke spent several days buffalo-hunting, and accumulated quite a little store of trophies, and he was so much delighted with Custer's frank courtesy of manner, that when the hunt was over he invited the general to come with him on the rest of his trip through the United States, first going back with him to Louisville, where they met Mrs. Custer, whose quiet, ladylike demeanor pleased the prince as well as the gallant look of the general. Custer received permission from head-quarters to accept the invitation, and Mrs. Custer joined the party, which made quite an extended tour of all the Southern States, ending at New Orleans, where a Russian frigate waited for Alexis.

So there was our poor farmer's boy, the son of the village blacksmith at New Rumley, traveling about the United States on terms of equality with the heir of the greatest empire in the world, his little wife holding her own among the prince and nobles, as if she had been born to a throne. It was a sight peculiar to America, and hardly possible anywhere else.

The Alexis trip over, Custer returned to Louisville and wore through the next year of idleness as well as he could. In the early spring of 1873, to his great joy, the Seventh Cavalry was once more ordered to the plains, and himself with it.

The occasion was this: it had been determined, since the Pacific Railroad had succeeded so well, having pacified all the Indians to its south, that another road, through the more northerly territories, should be run. This determination proved, in the end, very disastrous, inasmuch as the new line ran through the territories of the Sioux, and the Sioux were the only Indians that had so far almost always had the best of the government in battle.

However, it was settled that the road should be surveyed, and a military escort, consisting of the Twenty-second Infantry and Seventh Cavalry, and General Stanley, with Custer second in command, was ordered to accompany the surveyor's party.

Custer concentrated his regiment at Memphis, the companies coming in from all round the States where they had been scattered, all very glad to get there. They took boat up the Mississippi and Missouri to St. Paul, where they landed, marching then overland up the Missouri to the village of Bismark, in Dakotah. Opposite to Bismark, where the Northern Pacific road then terminated, was Fort Abraham Lincoln, where the expedition was to concentrate in May. It was now the beginning of April, but the winter was not yet over in those high latitudes, for the column was overtaken at Yankton Agency by a tremendous snow-storm, which nearly froze them all, and left a yard of snow on the ground. Several ladies were with the column, including Mrs. Custer, who always marched at the head of the troops when she was allowed, and these ladies had a hard time in the snow. However, it proved to be the last storm of the season, for a few days after warm weather set in, and by the time they reached Fort Lincoln, not a trace of white was on the ground.

Here, to their great disappointment, the ladies found that all their ride had been in vain, for the baggage was ordered back, and the regiment received directions for speedy service in the field with the Stanley Expedition to the Yellowstone River.

The ladies, very reluctantly, had to take the cars at Bismark, and Mrs. Custer returned to Monroe. Custer and the Seventh soon started with the Stanley column. Here a strange meeting occurred between Custer and an old friend and enemy of his,

General Rosser, late of the Southern army. After the surrender of Lee, poor Rosser, like many another brave fellow who fought on the losing side in the Civil War, found himself cut adrift with no way to make a living except by beginning life afresh. Having been through West Point in the same class with Custer, he was a good engineer, so he made his way up to Minnesota, entered service with the new railroad as a laborer, and worked his way up to be chief engineer. Now, therefore, it happened that he and Custer, who had not met each other since the surrender at Appomattox, came together two thousand miles away, and eight years later, as friends and comrades.

As you can fancy, they had many a pleasant talk over their old battles, explaining movements to each other. Those eight years, and his own success had taken away all the bitterness of past defeats from Rosser, and he and Custer became very close friends ever after.

The column started from Fort Lincoln in the spring as soon as the grass was well up, and proceeded due west toward the Yellowstone River on the line where the railroad was projected. Their early progress was quite rapid, the plains being quite smooth till they came to the line of the Little Missouri, beyond which the "bad lands" commenced. These bad lands are horrible places, scamed with broad deep fissures, almost impassable for wagons, and frequently delayed them so that the train would only make five miles a day. The distance from the Little Missouri to the Yellowstone was less than two hundred miles, but the ways were so difficult that it was not till July that the great river was reached. Then Custer proposed to General Stanley that he, Custer, should go ahead every day with two or three companies of cavalry, pick out a good road, and leave a broad trail for the wagons to follow. General Stanley was only too glad to assent to this arrangement, which soon brought Custer into quite a handsome fight.

In the early party of the journey no Indians had been seen, and even on the Yellowstone it was some time before any indications of their presence were met. As it turned out, however, the column was being watched all the time, and by no less a person than the now celebrated chief, Sitting Bull.

Sitting Bull was the most daring, obstinate and implacable of all the Indians of the North-west. When the whole Sioux nation made peace with the whites, when Red Cloud and Spotted Tail, with all their braves, had come in and settled on the agencies, Sitting Bull alone held out. With a little band sometimes of less than a hundred warriors, he remained out in the deserts round the Yellowstone, proud of his independence, and secure, as he thought, from the power of the government. As long as the Yellowstone country was not wanted, Sitting Bull was left alone in his glory, but the coming of the Stanley column showed him that he must fight if he hoped to drive out the whites. All the summer, while Stanley's great train of wagons was slowly creeping along the plains, Indians had been seen passing to and fro between Sitting Bull's little band and the different tribes on the agencies of the Missouri river. Here the Indians used to get guns and cartridges, ostensibly to hunt, while they slipped off, one or two at a time, really to join Sitting Bull.

Therefore, there was very little to wonder at when Custer, one fine morning, while reposing his little squadron of about ninety men, some ten miles ahead of the main column, was suddenly attacked by Sitting Bull, with at least three hundred warriors, who drove the soldiers to the bank of the river, and besieged them there for several hours.

They could not budge Custer and the Seventh, however.

As usual, the soldiers fought on foot, sending their horses into shelter, and, as usual, the Indians wasted their time "circling," throwing away ammunition, when their first charge had been repulse.

How long Custer might have held out, as he was situated, is uncertain, but the timely arrival of two squadrons of the Seventh extricated him from his dilemma. The way these came to be sent up was in consequence of Indian carelessness.

It seemed that, beside the main party attacking Custer, there were small bands of Indians roaming about, one of them led by a smooth-faced, smiling dare-devil of a Sioux, named Rain-in-the-Face. This scamp happened to come on two peaceable quiet old men, who belonged to the main column, but who had fallen into the habit of roaming away to collect curiosities, of which the Yellowstone country is full. Rain-in-the-Face came on these two old men, Dr. Houzinger and Mr. Baleran, and killed them both, leaving their bodies so that the advance of the column found them. He also killed a straggler of the Seventh, named Ball, at a spring.

The finding of these bodies of course made General Stanley very anxious about Custer's detachment, and he at once sent off the rest of the Seventh to help their leader. The new force had not arrived within three miles when the wary Indians spied it, and began to draw off. Custer, with the quick decision natural to him, divined the presence of his friends, and determined to give his enemies a lesson.

Not waiting for the reinforcement he mounted his men, charged Sitting Bull, and drove him helter-skelter for nearly ten miles before he stopped, then came slowly back to camp, with the loss of only two men wounded.

This was his first Indian-fight since 1869, and ended in a triumph won against tremendous odds. Only a few days afterward down came Sitting Bull again, this time on the main expedition, with a much larger force. It was computed at the time that there were at least fifteen hundred Indians in sight, so many allies had joined Sitting Bull.

This time, however, the chief did not get off so easily. He had not calculated on the presence of a battery of small rifle-cannon which was in the train, carefully hidden.

Custer was given the main management of this fight, and encouraged the Indians to come on by throwing out a small force at first. No sooner were the Indians fairly in sight, clustered in crowds out of carbine-shot than the artillery pitched a few shells into them, and sent them flying, completely demoralized.

After that the expedition had no more trouble from Sitting Bull, except small annoyances. At the end of the summer it broke up, having returned to Fort Lincoln.

Custer was ordered to take post till further directions at Fort Rice, Dakota, twenty miles from Lincoln.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BLACK HILLS EXPEDITION—CAPTURE OF RAIN-IN-THE-FACE.

The close of the Yellowstone Expedition left Custer in a quiet, pleasant post, and enabled him to enjoy a leave of absence, which he spent, with his little wife, in a trip to the East. Every fall, or nearly so, Custer used to receive these leaves, and they created a good deal of jealousy among other officers, who grumbled at Custer for being a "pet" of the Government. The real reason he received them was that he did his work so well that the Government thought he deserved extra favor when the work was over.

The leave over, he returned to Fort Rice for the long, dreary winter of Dakota, and, as usual, managed to enjoy himself in spite of every discomfort. In the spring of 1874, he was ordered to Fort Lincoln, and very soon after the famous Black Hills Expedition was organized and put under his command.

It was this expedition that brought Custer most prominently before the people in his later years. The whole of the circumstances surrounding it were so romantic that the whole United States was interested

in it. In the first place, the Black Hills was a peculiar region, peculiar in this, that it was the only part of the United States territory that had never been thoroughly explored by white men.

The Indians considered it with superstitious awe, as a country surrounded with enchantment. No white man, with the exception of one or two hunters, had ever been through it, and it was generally believed that even those hunters who claimed to have been there were inventing stories. Two United States officers, Captain Reynolds and Lieutenant Warren, both afterward major-generals of volunteers, had taken parties around it in 1855 and 1859. Captain Reynolds went up the Yellowstone by boat, and Lieutenant Warren's party went by land from Fort Laramie, but neither succeeded in exploring the Black Hills. Reynolds did not try, and Warren was stopped by the Sioux and compelled to return. In 1874, as in 1859, there stood the Black Hills, as they are marked on the map, a little cluster of hills, rising in the midst of the barren plains of the Yellowstone, silent, mysterious, clothed from base to summit with dark pine forests, fitly named.

What was in those dark recesses no one knew. They covered a space about as large as the State of Connecticut, within a hundred miles of Fort Laramie, yet totally unknown.

The overland route to California ran near them, but no venturesome traveler had ever penetrated their recesses.

The Indians at the agencies, questioned about the Black Hills, could or would tell nothing about them, except that they were *medicine*—that is, enchanted.

At last, one day, two Indians out on a spree, and pretty drunk, came into a fort and exhibited some gold-dust, which they wanted to exchange for whisky. Of course this set the traders to questioning them, and by dint of plying them with liquor, they managed to extract from them that the gold came from the Black Hills. Then of course the excitement began, and every frontiersman was anxious to go to the Black Hills. But every frontiersman also knew that his chances of finding gold were as one to ten of losing his scalp. It was moreover far from certain that the Indians had told the truth about the gold.

To add to the difficulties surrounding the Black Hills was the fact that the Government, by solemn treaty with the Indians, in 1838, had promised never to take the hills away from the Indians, nor to allow settlers to go there. In the same treaty, however, there was a stipulation that the Government itself might, if it wished, send exploring parties through the country. No sooner did the gold story spread than the Government ordered an expedition to start from Fort Laramie, consisting of the whole of the Seventh Cavalry, two companies of infantry, a battery of Gatling guns, a train of six hundred wagons, and a number of Indian scouts. This expedition, nearly as strong as the Stanley column of 1873, was put under the command of Custer alone, and, as usual, where he was uncontrolled by others, it was completely successful.

Custer started from the fort in June, and marched to the Black Hills, which he reached in July, entering from the north, and passing right through the heart of the mysterious country. He found it all and more than had been reported by the hunters in old times. The first valley where he halted was a perfect garden of wild flowers, so brilliant and various that the officers at breakfast were able to gather no less than *seventeen* different kinds of blossom without rising from their seats, but just reaching down round the table. The botanist of the column counted over two hundred different species in the first morning, and the soldiers, as they rode along, gathered garlands for their horses' heads, hardly stooping from the saddle. By unanimous consent they called this place Floral Valley.

Then, as they advanced through the hills, they came on forests of oak, beech, maple and ash, heavy pine wood, open patches of rich prairie, every vari-

ety of farming land. The hills were full of brooks, some with sweet water, some with a strong alkaline flavor. In the beds of these rivulets there were strong indications of gold, and at every halt some of their people washed out several dollars' worth of dust. For a long time no human beings were met, but game was so plentiful and tame that it seemed a shame to shoot it.

Through the Black Hills marched the Custer column in 1874, and the expedition seemed to be one long picnic. A small family of Indians, with half a dozen warriors, was found, but no one else came near them. It seemed, as the reports had said, that the Indians had a superstition as to the Black Hills, which kept them out of it. The probable reason was their fear that if the presence of gold was once thoroughly known, the white men would pour in; and so it subsequently proved.

When Custer's expedition returned and the general's report was published, the Black Hills gold fever set in at once. There was a tremendous excitement. Miners began to rush in before the winter began, and some forty or fifty started a little fort all by themselves, which they named Custer City. They found plenty of gold and a mild winter, but out in the States a perfect storm was raging about Custer's report. One professor began to write letters to the papers, declaring that Custer was a fraud, that there was no gold in the hills, that it was a shame to let men go there, and so on. All the same, miners continued to flock in, and the facts, every day being developed, confirmed Custer and made out the learned professor to be an ignoramus. Custer had said there was gold, and gold there was, first a little, then a good deal. Finally, a second expedition, under an old hard-headed infantry officer, called Colonel Dodge, was sent out in the spring of 1875, to see whether Custer's report was so much exaggerated as the professor said. The result of this expedition completely vindicated Custer. Even hard-headed old Dodge, with every disposition to find fault, had to own up that the Black Hills was a lovely country, and the presence of gold was made certain by a great rush of miners, who established a second city and then a third.

Then the Government began to interfere to stop mining, and General Crook was sent with a strong force to take the miners away. He found that the miners were twice as numerous as his soldiers and better armed, but by dint of persuasion he induced them to leave. No sooner had he escorted them to the settlements, however, than they slipped off again, and took twice as many more with them, so that Crook was obliged to give it up as a bad job. One of the most troublesome of the whole lot proved to be Old California Joe, who turned up quite unexpectedly. He used to travel off with the soldiers, when they found him in the hills, quite peaceably, till they got to the settlements, and then just as coolly bid them good-by. When next they heard of him, it was back in the hills, playing seven-up with the miners.

All this summer, however, Custer was idle, up at Fort Lincoln. The only event that occurred to him was the capture of Rain-in-the-Face, the Indian who had killed Dr. Housinger and Mr. Baleran, two years before. All that had been known of them was that their bodies had been found, but who did it, except Indians in general, no one knew. That summer, however, one of Custer's white scouts, down at Standing Rock Agency, heard a drunken Indian called Rain-in-the-Face bragging, at a great wardrobe, how he had killed two white men.

Rain-in-the-Face never dreamed that Charley Reynolds understood his language. The Indians are very fond of these dances, whenever there is an issue of supplies at the agencies, and they will stay up all night, dancing and howling, telling about the men they have killed and what very great warriors they are. They are excellent pantomimists, and act their stories with great spirit. Rain-in-the-Face was so proud of his two white men that he sung his

song over and over again, till the scout was certain from the description that it was these two old men he had killed. Then he rode to Fort Lincoln and told Custer.

Custer at once sent a squadron of cavalry, under Captain Yates and Captain Tom Custer, who succeeded, after some trouble, in capturing Rain-in-the-Face. It was a very risky thing to do, for the soldiers were only sixty strong, and there were at least six hundred armed Indians at the agency, but they caught the murderer unawares, and then promised the Indians, who gathered menacingly round, that if they stirred a finger to rescue him he should be shot at once. It was Tom Custer who arrested Rain-in-the-face, and the two officers finally succeeded in getting him off from the agency into the fort.

Then Rain-in-the-Face was kept in the guard-house for several months, Custer trying his best to make him confess to the murder. This, however, was useless. Never was there a quieter and sweeter-faced Indian than Rain. He looked as if he would not harm a fly. He protested that he knew nothing about the murder, loved the white men, and all the rest, but Custer cornered him at last. Every day he used to have him alone in his room and question the scamp, till at last he extorted a confession from him, which Rain directly afterward denied. His friends and relatives came to visit him and beg for his life, but Custer held on to him and was determined to send him to the States to be tried.

While he was in the guard-house, Rain-in-the-Face had his picture taken, and a quiet, smooth-looking fellow he is, very much like a woman, with a sweet smile, but a strange, treacherous look in his eyes.

After all, however, it was not destined that Custer should send Rain-in-the-Face to his trial. After the Indian had been some months in the guard-house, he made his escape by cutting a hole in the rear, one stormy night, and went off to the hostiles under Sitting Bull, in safety. From thence he sent Custer an insolent message, the next summer, to say that he had sworn to kill him, and especially he sent word to Tom Custer that he would cut his heart out, and be revenged for that time he was arrested by Tom.

The brothers laughed at the threat. They had heard such things before. They little dreamed that the day was coming, less than a year from that time, when Rain-in-the-Face would keep his oath.

The summer of 1875 went on, and the winter came. As usual Custer got his leave to visit New York, and this time he stayed several months, having received several extensions. In the mean time, however, the entrance of the miners to the Black Hills had created great trouble in the North-west, and news came in from all quarters that 1876 would probably see a tremendous Indian war, for the whole Sioux nation was preparing to go on the war-path.

It was therefore determined by General Sherman, as he had determined in 1868, to attack the Indians, if possible, before they got ready to attack him, and to start all the men available after Sitting Bull, as soon as the weather got clear enough to move troops.

Accordingly orders were issued that three columns should start after Sitting Bull, who was known to be somewhere in the country to the south of the Yellowstone River, between the Powder and the Big Horn, and to hunt him out.

One of these columns, under General Gibbon, was to start from Fort Ellis, Montana, at the sources of the Yellowstone, and to move east. A second was to start from Fort Laramie, under General Crook, about 1,500 strong, to move north to the same point. The last came from Fort Lincoln, and was denominated the "Custer Column," having the Seventh Cavalry, some infantry, and a battery of Gatling guns under Custer himself.

CHAPTER XVI.

DELAYS—THE BELKNAP TRIAL—CUSTER SUPERSEDED—CROOK SURPRISED BY SITTING BULL.

The project for conquering Sitting Bull looked very nice on paper, and appeared, to many people, certain of success. It was supposed that the Sioux chief had, at the utmost, about eight hundred warriors, and the different columns were to aggregate about two thousand eight hundred men, all coming at him at the same time. General Gibbon's force was quite small, and all cavalry, about four hundred men; Crook had twelve hundred, and the Custer column was to be the same strength.

It was late in March before the soldiers were able to move, and then, at last, Crook started from Fort Laramie. This post was so far south of Fort Lincoln that the snow had melted, and every one thought spring had come when the column had started. They were undeceived before three days had passed, by the coming of a tremendous snow-storm, followed by the thermometer going below zero, a way it has in the North-west. Every expedition that starts before May in those latitudes has the same experience, and almost the same storm to encounter.

Custer and Gibbon, being further north, were still shut in by the deep snow, and unable to move; and Crook had the first campaign all to himself. Just as Custer had done at the Washita, seven years before, Crook found the country clear of Indians, and his scouts found a village down in a river valley, which they might have taken by surprise had they been led by a man like Custer.

This village was that of a great friend and ally of Sitting Bull, a Sioux chief called Crazy Horse. He had about a hundred and fifty lodges, or some six hundred warriors. These were struck by General Reynolds, who commanded Crook's cavalry, and the village was taken and burned, while the herd of ponies was captured. Owing, however, to the laziness or misbehavior of some of the commanders of the detachments surrounding the village, the Indian warriors got off with very small loss, killed several soldiers, recaptured their ponies, and left General Reynolds with the barren honor of an empty victory which crippled Crook's column so much that it was obliged to return to Fort Laramie to refit.

It was fully intended that the Custer column should have started next, but here a strange train of circumstances set in, which ended disastrously for the nation. It so happened that the then Secretary of War, Mr. Belknap, was being tried in Washington for bribery in selling a post-tradership, and some meddling people took it into their heads that General Custer knew something about the matter. Accordingly, he was summoned post-haste to Washington, by a subpoena, to testify before a committee of Congress. The real fact was that he knew nothing of importance on the subject, and tried hard to be excused from going. He telegraphed to the committee, telling them how he was detailed to command an expedition in the field, and begging to be examined at Fort Lincoln. It was no use; they would have him, and he was obliged to go. The end of the matter was that he was kept in Washington nearly two months, waiting to be examined, and that when his testimony was taken it brought him into a personal quarrel with the President, who took Mr. Belknap's side in the trial.

When, at last, Custer was let off, he started at once for the West, to get back to his station, and was stopped at Chicago by a telegram from General Sherman, who, by order of the President, directed General Sheridan to detain Custer and send off the expedition without him.

This of course was a terrible blow for Custer. A great many men in his position would have left the army, disgusted with such treatment, publicly humiliated without proper cause. Custer, however, was remarkably patient of injury, and quite determined to live down the slight. He felt convinced

that the President misunderstood him, and would do him justice in the end. He remonstrated so well with General Sherman, and finally with the President himself, that the latter relented so far as to allow Custer to go on the expedition, in command of his own regiment, though General Terry was ordered to take command of the whole column.

Custer was quite content to do as he was ordered. General Terry was a very fine officer, and a generous-hearted man, and he trusted Custer implicitly. He himself had won all his experience in the civil war, never having been in the field against Indians, and he was quite content to take Custer's advice in all matters connected with the expedition.

So, at last, in the middle of May, 1876, the Terry Column, that should have been the Custer Column, started from fort Lincoln, on the same route, taken by the Yellowstone expedition of 1873, and marched in search of Sitting Bull.

We will not detain ourselves over the incidents of the early part of this march. It was begun too late in the year to surprise the Indians, and Sitting Bull was gathering in fresh forces every day.

It will be remembered that his supposed haunt was somewhere to the south of the Yellowstone River, between the Big Horn and Powder Rivers. If the reader will take a map and look at the country, he will find that the Missouri River describes nearly a quarter-circle all round this region, at a distance of some three hundred miles. It is rather important to remember this fact, for the reason that all along the Missouri exists a line of large Indian agencies, each averaging about five hundred warriors, fed, clothed, and armed by the government, and that, all through the summer of 1876, the Indians from these agencies were going off across the plains to join Sitting Bull at the same time that Crook, Gibbon and Terry were hunting for him.

The Indians went on horseback, in small squads, with two or three ponies apiece, carrying nothing but themselves and arms. They lived on buffalo, or antelope, or wolf, or rabbit, or anything they could find, and the ponies got fat on the spring-grass, while they traveled thirty miles a day. No wonder they outstripped a slow column of soldiers, with their hundreds of wagons, who could move no faster than the slowest team.

The result was that when the scouts of Terry and Gibbon at last met, on June 1st, on the Yellowstone, at the mouth of Tongue River, Sitting Bull had somewhere about three thousand warriors, of half a dozen different tribes, all snugly corralled in the valley of the Big Horn, no one exactly knew where, and lay midway between Terry and Crook, who was now slowly advancing from the south.

Now at last the campaign commenced in earnest. The two army columns were about two hundred and fifty miles apart, and the country between them was very little known. Captain Reynolds, in 1855, had been up some of the streams, but outside of these the maps were quite loose and full of conjecture. So Crook and Terry began to feel for Sitting Bull by scouting over the country.

Crook had quite a large force, and he was soon joined by a number of Indians from the Snake and Crow tribes, when he slowly advanced north toward the Yellowstone, encamping at the head-waters of the Tongue River about June 15th. The country of Sitting Bull was found to be traversed by the following rivers, all running north with the Yellowstone, counting from west to east—the Big Horn, Rosebud, Tongue, and Powder.

These streams had others running into them, called the Little Horn, Little Rosebud, Little Powder. The Snake scouts soon brought Crook word that a big Indian village was pitched in the valley of the Little Rosebud, and Crook started to find it, June 10th. Now, for the first time, he began to march in earnest, passing over forty miles, and arriving within about eight miles of Sitting Bull's village at night. Had he only been active enough to have marched on all night, as Custer did at the

Washita, there is little doubt but Crook might have surprised Sitting Bull. As it was, he allowed his Snakes and Crows to go on a spree that night, and put his men into camp.

Next morning, at daybreak, instead of surprising Sitting Bull, Sitting Bull surprised him, by a furious attack with nearly three thousand warriors, who charged again and again, drove back one of his wings, and were only driven off at last by the infantry. Crook lost a good many men, and was again so much crippled that he had to fall back to the Tongue river and send for reinforcements.

In the mean time, Terry and Gibbon, far away to the north, knew nothing of all this. They were hunting about for a trail that would lead them to Sitting Bull. Small parties of Indians had been annoying Gibbon before he met Terry, but since their junction all these fellows had vanished.

It became necessary to send out a scouting party. Terry could not spare Custer for this duty; he needed him too much at headquarters. It was determined, therefore, to send out Major Reno, the next senior officer of the Seventh, with six companies of that regiment, to ride up the Powder River to Little Powder, thence round the Tongue or Rosebud, and back to camp at the mouth of the Tongue. It was thought probable that he might come on a trail somewhere. Reno reached the Little Powder in five days, without seeing a sign of Indians, but as he reached the Tongue on his way back, he came across a large, broad lodge-pole trail, leading southward toward the Rosebud, and his scouts pronounced it not much over a week old.

Reno was a cautious officer, too cautious to follow such a large trail with only six companies any further than to make sure that it did not scatter. As soon as he had satisfied himself on this point, he made for headquarters, which he reached on the evening of the 21st June. There, of course, his news produced considerable excitement, and Terry resolved to strike for the Indians at once.

It must be remembered that every one there was perfectly ignorant of Crook's repulse, three days before. The latest news they had was about the Crazy Horse fight, where there were less than six hundred Indians, and all Terry feared was that the new trail might be that of a wandering band, which would escape if not followed promptly. Together with Gibbon's force, the combined column now numbered sixteen hundred men, with about twelve hundred cavalry and a huge train. Terry at once determined to send Custer off on the hunt with the Seventh Cavalry, by the direct trail, while Gibbon was to move up the Yellowstone by the Big Horn valley, and Terry himself would follow Custer with the infantry and train.

Custer was ordered to follow the trail and use his own discretion as to what he should do, as Terry, in his written instructions, said that he had "too much confidence in your zeal, energy and ability to wish to impose upon you precise orders, which might hamper your action when nearly in contact with the enemy." This was a splendid compliment to Custer, nearly as proud as the one he received in 1868, when Sherman and Sheridan asked for him to end the Indian war. General Terry recommended him, however, to make a wide detour, and send through scouts to Gibbon's column, so as to prevent the Indians from slipping out between the two. His whole idea in the orders seems to have been that the Indians might slip off.

On the afternoon of the 23d June, 1876, a date that will be remembered for many a long year, the Seventh Cavalry, nearly eight hundred men strong, saddled up, broke camp, and moved out to pass in review before General Terry, ere they set out on that memorable march. Men and horses alike looked splendid, and all felt confident of success. They were so used to victory that they believed themselves to be invincible.

There rode Custer at the head, in his jaunty buckskin suit, with a broad, shadowing gray hat set on

his short, wavy hair. He had shorn his long curls in 1871, while in Kentucky, and dressed, when in the States, as quietly as any one.

Then there was Adjutant Cooke, the beauty of the regiment, over six feet high, weighing two hundred, with a straight Greek face, and the most magnificent black beard you ever saw. All the girls were in love with gallant Cooke, the "Queen's Own," as they called him.

There was Tom Custer, the general's double, a little youngster, just as nervous, active and handsome, one of the smartest cavalry officers in the service. Calhoun, just as big as Cooke, and even handsomer in his peculiar style, with a soft delicate face of the same Greek type, fair hair and dark eyes. Calhoun was Custer's brother-in-law. Then there was Major Reno, rather stoutish, with a face something like that of Napoleon, but spoiled by a little mustache. There was Captain Fred Benteen, with a clean-shaven, young-looking face, bold and hearty, while his hair was very curly and nearly snow-white. These were the principal officers who figured in the fight that followed, though there were others whose names will come in later.

To judge how the regiment felt about the coming fight, a word or two will suffice. A lady once asked one of the officers of the Seventh if he had any idea of how many Indians it would take to whip the Seventh Cavalry all together. He hesitated, pondered, and finally said that he did not believe they could get together enough Indians on the whole plains to whip the Seventh. And he believed it, as did all. They had never seen, for at least ten years, more than two thousand Indians together, and they had whipped the Indians one to four many a time.

So they rode off on the trail of the Indian band to find Sitting Bull, as if they were going to a wedding.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ENEMY FOUND—CUSTER'S LAST BATTLE.

On the 23d of June, 1876, in the afternoon, the Seventh Cavalry left camp at the mouth of the Rosebud river, where it empties into the Yellowstone, and marched up the Rosebud twelve miles, going into camp at sunset. It was Custer's, and all good cavalry generals' practice, when beginning a long and severe march, to make a short journey the first day. Men and horses, first starting from a camp where they have long tarried, always need a little seasoning, and are apt to become too weary if marched hard the first day.

Next day, refreshed by their rest, with muscles got into good training by their first day's experience, they pressed on much more rapidly, following the broad lodge-pole trail that told how large a village had preceded them. They passed several Indian camps, where the trail diverged, or where other bands had formerly encamped, but saw no Indians.

When they had made thirty-three miles, they again went into camp. This was the 23d of June. Next day, the 24th, the trail was much fresher, and the camps more recent. The column made twenty-eight miles that day, and went into camp at sunset, when the scouts were sent out in all directions to hunt for sign. The moon was only four days old, and the scouts had but a short time to work. At half-past nine they came back, and Custer called his officers together and gave them the news.

The scouts reported that beyond a doubt the Indian village was in the valley of Little Big Horn, which was divided from the Rosebud by a ridge of hills. These hills must be crossed, and it would be impossible to do so in the daytime without being seen by the Indians. It must be done in the dark, and they must be prepared to move in an hour and a half.

At eleven o'clock, accordingly, the Seventh moved silently out of camp, and started on their weary march in the dark, to cross the divide. They moved on for three hours, when the scouts came in to say that the divide could not be crossed before daylight, so that all their trouble was thrown away.

The next best thing to do was to make coffee, and feed and rest the horses, so that they might be fresh for the fight, which was now certain to take place. The regiment rested from two to five o'clock, and then resumed its march after sunrise, crossing the divide at eight o'clock June 25th, 1876. At that time, midsummer, the sun rises at about four o'clock in those high latitudes, and it begins to be light at half-past three, so that they really would have gained nothing by pushing on all night.

At eight o'clock they entered the valley of the Little Horn, that vale of death, from which so many were never to return, and their Indian scouts detected moving figures on the ridges in the neighborhood. These were the scouts of Sitting Bull.

No sooner did these fellows see the dust of the cavalry rising over the hills, than they turned, laid whip to their ponies, and made for the village, which Custer's Indian scouts declared they could see, fifteen miles off. The white men could see nothing, even with telescopes; but the Indians were too old at their trade to be deceived. They had seen the faint smoke of the village morning fires high in the air, and knew the village must be there.

Clearly it was no use waiting or hiding; nothing was left but to push on, and get to the village before the Sioux scouts, or with them. So away went the column at a long, slashing walk of five miles an hour. It was no use to trot, the distance being too great to pass at that pace without running the horses, and coming in blown. As they pressed along, Custer called up Major Reno, his second in command, and Captain Benteen, the senior captain, and divided his regiment into three battalions on the march. He intended to try the tactics which had succeeded so well at the Washita, and during the civil war, by attacking the enemy in front and on both flanks at the same time. There were twelve companies in the Seventh, and one had to be left as a guard for the pack train. The other eleven were thus divided: Custer kept five with himself for the main attack, gave three to Major Reno, and three to Captain Benteen. The company with the packs was left with Captain McDougal.

Then away went the column after the Sioux. The village was invisible to all but the friendly Indians, and Custer was so cautious and fearful that they might be mistaken, that he sent Captain Benteen off to the left front, in case lurking bands might be waiting to harass his flanks and rear. Benteen was ordered to sweep everything before him, and to rejoin the main trail as soon as he was sure the flanks were clear. Reno's battalion was at the left of the main column, where Custer rode with the scouts, and the Seventh pressed on in three short columns, Benteen left, Reno center, Custer right. Benteen very soon went out of sight behind some hills, but returned to the main trail about twelve o'clock, at which time Custer and Reno were about three miles ahead.

At last, about twelve o'clock, the columns were in full sight of the end of Sitting Bull's village, where a great commotion was plainly observable. A cloud of dust hung over the village, and the Indians could be seen tearing down their lodges in the wildest confusion, warriors galloping to and fro, everything in a turmoil. With Custer, as we know, to see was to act, and there was nothing in all his career so striking as his capacity to break up and destroy a flying foe. He was descending the valley on the right bank of the Little Horn, and the village was scarcely two miles ahead, on the opposite bank, stretching down-stream, and partially hidden by the bluffs on the river bank. Now was the time to strike.

He beckoned to Reno and hurriedly said:

"Move forward, major, at as rapid a gait as you think prudent, then charge, and the whole outfit will support you."

Reno bowed obedience, and took off his column at a fast trot down to the river, crossing at a ford, then halted ten minutes to gather his battalion, formed line, and galloped down toward the village. By

this time the cloud of dust that hid the Indians was thicker than ever, and a number of brave were galloping toward him.

No sooner did Custer see Reno fairly into the fight than away he went, at a gallop, down the river, to find another ford and catch the Indians in flank and rear, his favorite movement.

About a mile below he was hidden from view by some tall bluffs, from whence he could see the whole village and Reno's battle-field. In that moment he saw that there were at least twenty-five hundred Indians to fight, and probably three thousand. There he halted, and sent back a trumpeter, with a hasty note to Captain Benteen, whom he judged to be on the back trail, as he was.

"Benteen, come on, be quick, big village, bring packs, bring packs."

Such was our hero's last order, and that trumpeter was the last living white man that ever saw the face of gallant Cavalry Custer.

No sooner was the note gone than away went Custer and his five companies, and were lost to sight behind the bluffs.

In the mean time Major Reno threw out his three companies into line and galloped at the village, driving back a swarm of Indians with perfect ease. He had one hundred and twenty officers and men and twenty-five scouts and guards, one hundred and forty-five in all. He charged right ahead, for nearly two miles, at the edge of a great cloud of blinding dust, till he came to a patch of wood in the river bottom, beyond which lay the edge of the village. Not a man had been hurt, so far. Through the wood he went, and then he suddenly halted.

Before him was a tremendous cloud of dust, which entirely hid the village, and a great swarm of Indian warriors came tearing down out of the cloud, full speed, flogging their little horses, yelling like wolves, and firing away a perfect rain of bullets as they came, bull's that went whistling overhead, cutting the leaves off the trees. The crowd was so immense, and the sounds so horrible, that Major Reno halted as if struck by lightning. In great haste he dismounted his men, sent his horses into the wood, and lined its edge with skirmishers, who began firing.

The Indians could be seen, still coming on, about half a mile off, shying off from the front of the soldiers, and sweeping to the left, as if to drive them into the river. They came tearing on like devils incarnate, and Major Reno suddenly cringed his mind. He called for the horses, and ordered the men to "prepare to mount." This took them back into the wood in a great hurry. The Indians, thinking it a retreat, gave a tremendous howl of triumph and came tearing on faster than ever, past the wood, to get behind the soldiers. In a moment more the men were mounted, as if to charge, and almost as soon dismounted again.

Reno had almost concluded to hold the wood, when a patter of bullets hissing through the leaves told that the exultant foe had reached the other side.

Then Reno suddenly made up his mind. He saw himself overwhelmed by numbers, and determined to retreat to the river. A moment later, the whole command was mounted, and galloping toward the stream in a confused mass, the Indians racing after them on all sides, firing away at close range with their Winchester rifles. Away they went, helter-skelter, for the ford, men dropping by the way, to be pounced on in a moment by the Indians, scalped and hacked to pieces. Down at the river the rout was horrible, as men and horses plunged in, crowding together, the Indians firing into the huddled mass of fugitives, without meeting resistance. Up the bluffs went the foremost, Reno ahead, his hat gone, his face pale, his battalion utterly beaten. Almost as soon as he reached the top of the hill a skirmish line was seen coming down the trail toward him. It was Benteen, who had received Custer's order, and was slowly advancing.

A moment later, far down the river, they heard

hots, and a great commotion set in among the Indians behind Reno. Their fire ceased, and away all went, full speed, toward the village, leaving Reno and Benteen alone on the hill, while the firing down the river increased every moment into volleys so close and incessant that the Indians afterward compared it to "tearing cloth."

Custer was at them!

But Reno was in no condition to enter another fight. His men were cowed, and he himself seemed to have lost his head entirely. He waited on the hill till Benteen's men had all got up, and soon after Captain MacDougall came hurrying in with the pack-train. All this time the firing down the river was heard at intervals, when the wind lulled, sharp and fierce as ever; but, as a fresh gale was blowing, there were times when it was inaudible. Only the officer of the command seemed to realize that Custer might be in terrible danger. This was the second captain of the regiment, Captain Weir, a devoted friend of Custer. He was nearly crazy with anxiety, imploring Reno and Benteen to advance, telling them that Custer was being massacred, that Custer was calling for them. It was useless. Neither would advance. They believed that Custer was retreating. No one could believe, apparently, that it was possible for him to be defeated.

Poor Weir was nearly frantic, he could do nothing. He could not order out his company, but he could go himself. In a fit of desperation, he called his orderly and three old soldiers whom he could trust, and started off, only five men, to try and find Custer.

He rode rapidly, and the country was deserted. When he had got about a mile off, he topped a bluff, and saw the whole valley below full of Indians, galloping to and fro.

Looking back, he saw his own company, led by Lieutenant Edgerley, coming after him. The brave fellows could not desert their captain, and had started, without orders, to rescue him. Reno and Benteen, with the rest, remained on the hill behind, still watching.

Now the Indians caught sight of Weir, and came tearing to meet him. His little company was soon enveloped and fighting hard, falling back on Reno. In half an hour more it was driven in, and the whole river side was all covered with Indians, coming for Reno and Benteen.

The remnant of the Seventh Cavalry, 280 men, made a hasty breastwork on the hill, and defended themselves with desperation, repulsing every assault of the Indians.

They had been waiting idly on the hill from half-past two till six, but now they had it, hot and furious, till sunset.

Night gave them a spell of rest, but next day the battle raged furiously, all the time it was light, the Indians charging right up to the breastworks, the cavalry losing heavily.

On the third day the Indians suddenly decamped, and the cause of their departure was speedily made

clear by the arrival of General Terry's column, which came up in the afternoon.

Then, at last, the Seventh were enabled to go to the place where they heard those volleys on the 25th, and learned the terrible truth. There, in the valley of the Big Horn, lay Custer and his five companies, every man dead, and most of them so hacked to pieces as to be unrecognizable. The trail showed that Custer had gone down the river and charged toward a ford, where he was met by the Indians and driven back. His attack must have taken place after Reno's rout, for all the Indians left Reno to go and fight Custer, as we have already seen.

The line of Custer's retreat was marked by dead bodies, to the top of a little hill where he made his last stand. To cover the retreat, Lieutenant Calhoun's company had first been thrown out, and every man had fallen in his place on the skirmish line, with Lieutenants Calhoun and Crittenden in their places, according to the tactics, a little in rear of their men. There they lay, where they had been killed, doing their duty to the last, facing death like men. A little further on lay captain Keogh's company, similarly disposed, another little band of heroes. Then, on the top of the hill, lay a mass of dead men and horses, and in their midst, with a smile upon his lips, as if asleep, lay the body of gallant Cavalry Custer, with his brothers close to him, brave Captain Tom Custer, Boston Custer a little way off, with little Antie Reed, Custer's nephew. Then, around their chief, fallen as they fought, were handsome Colonel Cook, Captains Yates and Algeron Smith, Lieutenant Rely and the rest of that devoted little band. Not a soldier escaped.

But one man, a Crow scout named "Curley," got out of the fight alive, by disguising himself in a Sioux blanket during the confusion, and so escaping to the Big Horn River, where he met the Government steamer. He told the story, the same which was marked by the trail. He told how the Indians poured out in vast numbers, surrounding Custer, how they charged again and again, driven back every time by the soldiers, as long as Custer lived. How the presence of that heroic soul cheered up and inspired the men, the position of the bodies proved; every man had fallen in his place. When Custer died, the remnant were all massacred, almost unresisting. Their heart was broken.

The grandest testimony of his valor was found, however, in one wonderful fact. Among all the mutilated bodies, stripped and hacked to pieces, without another exception, Custer lay, with a bullet in his brain, another in his heart, but otherwise totally untouched. So brave was he that even Rain-in-the-Face, the man who shot him, respected his dead foe too much to offer him an indignity. He had kept his oath, but he could do no more.

So ended the life of the flower of the American army, the brave, the gentle, the heroic, the people's idol, Cavalry Custer. God bless him, and may we see more like him.

EDWARD L. WHEELER

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