

Buffalo Bill and the Pony Express

Buffalo Bill and The Pony Express

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CONTENTS

I. AIDING AN INDIAN

II. HELPING THE NORTH

III. BILL AROUSES SUSPICION

IV. CAUGHT BY THE INDIANS

V. BIG JIM DIES

VI. EAVESDROPPING

VII. THE RIDERS PLAN A LITTLE SURPRISE

VIII. AN INDIAN ATTACK

IX. HEADING OFF THE REDSKINS

X. BILL GOES TO THREE FORKS

XI. OFF TO MEET THE OUTLAWS

XII. THE SURPRISE ATTACK

XIII. BILL TO THE RESCUE

XIV. DROSE RETURNS

XV. BILL VISITS THE ARMY

XVI. PLANS FOR RESCUE

XVII. CLEVER WORK

XVIII. THE ESCAPE

XIX. BILL FOLLOWS HIS MOTHER'S WISHES

CHAPTER I

AIDING AN INDIAN

Bill followed the trail up the gently sloping grade. He had been working his way northwest and was now in the heart of the Rockies. High above and all about him mountains towered.

Majors had commissioned him to make his way north to the Wyoming Valley on special duty. Bill had made this part of his journey uninterrupted. It was a peaceful mission and he had found opportunity to spend some of his time hunting. The buffaloes were many and the grizzly still was monarch of that region.

It was a wild country and few white men had traversed it. At many points Bill had to make his way afoot, leading his horse through the thick vegetation and underbrush. Then, too, there had been sharp and sudden drops and he had need to be watchful.

He was alert for any quarry which might cross his track and which would appease his noonday appetite. Traveling light, he had planned that the country through which he was to make his way should supply his needs.

He heard a loud crashing in the dense woods close at hand. Instantly on the alert, he made his way to the scene wondering what was causing the commotion.

A big grizzly, slashed and cut, was beating about. He had evidently been through a terrific battle with some other denizen of the forest and he seemed to have been blinded. His body was gashed in many places and his whole head had been fearfully cut.

Bill sent a bullet into the beast but such was its strong vitality that he had to use a second shot.

Bill then cut off a tender part of the beast for himself and set to work to prepare his noonday meal. He had long since become expert in the preparation of food and it was no great task for him.

He continued his way and had made more than thirty miles by four o'clock. The country still continued strange and wild and showed no sign of human visitation.

He was winding his way along a narrow trail below which yawned a dangerous precipice. None but a sure-footed animal would have dared to pass along this narrow lane. But there had been no hesitation on the part of boy or beast.

Then, suddenly, his horse shied and it was only the great skill of the rider which saved them both from going over the precipice. There, almost directly beneath him, was a horse lying prone. As Bill dismounted and investigated, he saw that the horse held his rider imprisoned beneath him. Bill made his way down to see what help he could give. A wounded Indian, who had miraculously escaped being crushed by his falling mount, lay groaning beneath the weight of the horse unable to move. Bill set to work to free the redskin. The boy had learned to consider an Indian as a natural enemy but he had also been taught by the law of the plain and forest not to desert the stricken and the needy.

The red man was finally freed from the weight of the animal. He gave no indication of pain and Bill could not tell how much he was hurt. He was able to move, so Bill helped him up to the trail.

The two men and the horse managed to make their way into a wider trail.

"Does my brother talk the language of the white man?" asked the boy.

The Indian nodded. His was a race of few words.

"Where does my brother wish to be taken?" Bill continued, and the Indian replied:

"My brother's goodness flows like the waters of yonder stream. Lonely Bear thanks him, but he can make his way without help, from yonder point."

Bill did not urge his assistance any further. He felt that the Indian understood that his offer had been made in all sincerity. On the other hand, he understood that the red man did not desire any further help.

They soon reached the point indicated. The redskin made a noble gesture.

"Lonely Bear makes a small voice of his gratitude. But the deeds he would do

for his brother are many and he will remember.”

“It is nothing and only what one man should do for another,” Bill replied.

The Indian took one long look at the boy and was off. Bill watched his retreating figure. If the Indian suffered any or if he were hurt it was past Bill to judge.

Then he made his way to the Laramie and traveled along the river. A few days later found him at the Fort by that name.

Bill did not know that the message he carried was like an early flash of lightning which indicates the coming of a storm. The commandant at Laramie had been instructed to report to Washington with half the troops, leaving the second in command in charge.

For an all-seeing secretary of war was already preparing for the on-coming storm that was ready to break forth at any moment. Long before the firing on Sumter, wise men knew that it had to come.

Bill returned to Leavenworth with the troops. At that point other soldiers joined the first group and at Kansas City they entrained for Chicago.

Bill was glad to see his folks. His mother had been sick and had become an invalid. He decided he would stay home for a few months.

He kept to his decision for almost a week and enjoyed the quiet of home life. He found it a great joy to minister to his mother’s needs — and the two became even more closely attached in those few days.

“Bill,” she begged him again, one day. “I want you to promise me that you will not become a soldier — at least, not while I’m alive.”

“I promise, mother,” the boy assured her. It was important to keep her mind at rest. “I promise, mother,” he repeated.

But man proposes only. Though it was Bill’s intention to stay home for the time — duty and adventure blew their bugle. It was a summons which Bill could never, in all his life, refuse to obey.

CHAPTER II

HELPING THE NORTH

AS the reader probably recalls, mention has been made of the fact that Kansas was a doubtful state. Doubtful in that it had not definitely been placed with the North or with the South.

There were but few Southerners in the state in comparison to the number of Northerners, yet the former had made a brave fight to keep the state for the South. There had been many deeds of violence on the part of the Southerners and on the part of the Northerners, too. But the number of people whose convictions were of the kind for which they would gladly die were no less, no more, on either side. It was a time in which there was much lawlessness and many of the outlaws took advantage of the great difference in the convictions of the two sides to make the cause of the North and the South an excuse for lawlessness.

Lincoln had been put in nomination by the Republican party. Although the opposition to him was keen, he had many friends in Kansas and Nebraska. Men like Majors, men like Davison, stood out fearlessly for his election and they did everything they could to elect their man.

There were just as firm friends for the other candidates, however; men who would go to the limit to elect their favorite.

Lincoln, as we all know, was elected.

Bill had been home but three days when Majors sent for him.

“Bill,” he said, “Davison has asked me for a reliable man to go on a mission of importance. I know you want to stay home for a while but Simpson is in Colorado, McCarthy is somewhere on the trail and there are only two others I would entrust with this mission. Wild Bill, the other man, is known in Missouri or I would send him.

“Better see Davison and decide whether you want to do it,” he added.

Bill had never seen Davison but there was not a man or boy in Kansas who had not heard of this great Kansan and of the strong fight he had made to keep Kansas on the Union side. He was in touch with every move, every effort made by the partisans of the North and of the South. No other man in the United States, with the exception of the chief of the secret service, had more men who obeyed orders as unquestioningly, literally and unflinchingly.

Bill Cody entered into the presence of this quiet man in some wonderment. Davison had been one of Brown's lieutenants. To those who had believed as John Brown did, the death of the latter was that of a martyr. Davison had all the fire of John Brown but mixed with it was the steel of a great and fixed determination that kept him cool and clear visioned.

He was a small man in stature, and at first glance Bill was disappointed. But after the first few minutes the boy could see only the greatness of the man.

As Davison looked up questioningly, Bill said quietly:

"Majors sent me over. He said you wanted to talk to me."

"You are Bill Cody?" the man asked.

The boy replied in the affirmative.

"Bill," — Davison went into the subject almost at once — "I do not need to question your loyalty, first, because you are your father's son, and I knew him. Second, Aleck Majors' word goes with me. Then, too, I have heard what you did with those colored men that the outlaws brought to this state.

"The only question that remains is — 'Are you ready to do a dangerous piece of work to save Kansas and possibly Missouri for the Union?'"

Bill could not refuse. Adventure was straight ahead, adventure and duty.

The man watched the boy keenly.

"You can count on me, on anything I can do," Bill said simply.

"I thought I could," the man said.

“As you know, my boy, the pro-slavers have been able to keep Kansas out of the Union by refusing to give it statehood. The House in Washington voted for it, but the Senate defeated it. Never has the South fought so hard against anything as it did against the admission of Kansas.

“Well, with Abe Lincoln’s election the South has made up its mind to secede. We know that now. That means a big war — how long it will last no man knows. Missouri is even in a worse state than Kansas; the pro-slavers are in control of all the offices.

“There are many men in Missouri who are for the Union. Captain Lyons is there, waiting for instructions and he will not act, of course, until he gets them.

“I have learned that the Southerners plan to attack and take possession of Springfield in Missouri and several other important points. I have sent one of my best men to Lyons but he has been captured by the Southerners. They have discovered his papers and so they know that we are aware of their plans. How I found out, I cannot tell you but I usually have the means.

“I must get word to Lyons who has no way of knowing. It is dangerous because the Unionists are keeping quiet and the Southerners appear to be in the ascendency. They are watching every road. To have Missouri go with the South, means that Kansas will be forced also to go that way.

“Jackson, the governor of Missouri, is with the South and he is trying to get possession of all the forts, arsenals and ammunition.” He put his hand on some papers lying on his desk. “These papers explain everything.”

Davison now stood up and searched the boy’s face for many minutes.

“Bill Cody, will you get these papers to Captain Lyons?”

There flashed through the boy’s mind the Memory of his father and the cause for which he died. He also stood up.

“I’ll do it,” he said.

CHAPTER III

BILL AROUSES SUSPICION

ALONG the shores of the Missouri, Bill made his way. At many points he saw groups of men armed and seemingly waiting for the call to battle. There was the strange stillness that always precedes a storm. Bill was stopped by a number of these groups. He was not questioned any too closely because his youth apparently dispelled suspicion. All went well, until he cut south from the Missouri. The Gasconade winds its way with many twists and turns and it was the intention of the boy to travel along its banks as far as possible and then cut across the country to Salem where, he had been told, Captain Lyons was stationed.

As he made his way south he found feeling for the South running stronger and stronger. He had pitched camp for the night. He felt that he had disarmed whatever suspicion had been aroused and that it would be easy matter to get to his destination without interference. The campfire blazed and in its welcome warmth he prepared for sleep. From out of the shadows three men, attracted by the fire, came forward and hailed him.

Bill answered the greeting and in the same instant brought forth his gun so that it was ready for immediate play.

“Hello, stranger,” said one, “where bound?”

“Down to Salem,” the boy replied.

Then the men came into closer view. With some misgiving Bill recognized one of the men who had been on the last trip he had made with the wagon-train.

“Hello, Bill,” Dawson said, as he also recognized him.

Bill returned the greeting. Then the man told the others who the boy was.

Bill offered some of his food, the little that was left, but the men declined, having already eaten.

The intruders settled themselves comfortably and evidently had no intention of leaving.

“What are you going to Salem for?” asked one of the men, Collins by name.

Bill had no means of knowing whether these men were Yankees or Southerners, and so did not know how to answer. But Davison had given him the names of some of the families in Salem and he found the knowledge to be in good stead at this time.

“I’m visiting the Shaddocks,” answered the boy.

The man eyed him suspiciously but still did not voice any doubts.

The three men drew off and Bill could see they were arguing. Collins and the third man seemed to agree, but Dawson appeared to insist on another point of view. Finally, they came back.

“Dawson thinks your story is true, boy, but we reckon for safety’s sake, we had better take you over to Colonel Owens in the morning.”

Bill said nothing. He bided his time. There were many hours in which to plan.

One thing he knew — he would not accompany these men when morning came.

At two o’clock that night, Bill, who had not closed his eyes, decided it was a good time to make his escape.

Cautiously he arose. He made his way to his horse. Not one of the men stirred. But as he mounted, Collins, who had watched him attempt his escape, called out:

“Where are you bound for, boy?”

“To Salem,” replied Bill, and was off. But his escape was not so easy. The three men were in immediate pursuit, They knew that part of the country, which Bill did not, and Dawson and Collins made through a short cut to head him off.

Bill heard them coming across country and he suspected that they would reach the crossing before him. His mind formed a new plan on the instant. Turning around he headed back along the same road.

But the other man was there to intercept him. As Bill galloped at him the man fired. But his aim was bad and Bill's reply brought him, badly wounded, to the ground.

For one moment the boy was undecided as to what to do next. Then, with the realization that he would be safest on the way to Salem, he turned to meet the two men. The road behind him was no doubt infested by the enemy while the nearer he was to Salem the more certain success would be.

Now the two men could be seen speeding toward him. As they neared they dismounted, for Bill looked very business-like and they felt it safer to make him come to terms from cover.

Bill seemed also ready to dismount. But instead as he bent down to do so, he urged his horse forward. The animal shot ahead in answer to the urge. The men, unprepared, fired wildly at the rider but without success. Bill fired at Collins as he passed and the man fell. He wasted no shot on Dawson who had been friendly. He felt sure that Dawson, now alone, would not care to follow him.

But the shots brought other Rebels to the scene. They pursued Bill who had to put his horse to its best efforts to out-distance the enemy.

Bill was extremely watchful. He realized that the region around Salem had been covered by the Southerners. He decided to travel on the rest of the night. He came upon another group of Southerners about five miles from Salem. He was able to avoid them, but the delay meant that the sun would already be high in the sky before he could arrive at Captain Lyons, headquarters.

CHAPTER IV

CAUGHT BY THE INDIANS

“Well, Bill,” Captain Lyons said, “these papers from Davison determine my actions. There is proof here that Governor Jackson is with the South and that he is planning to raise troops and turn over the fortifications and ammunition to them.

“We shall forstall them by taking immediate action. We have the Southerners confined to the lower hart of Missouri so it should not be too difficult to drive them from the state.”

Bill’s way back was comparatively undisturbed. He was given a warm welcome by Davison. Then he reported for further duty to Majors — all thought of a vacation a thing of the past.

The Indians were making trouble again with the advent of the big war. The garrisons in Colorado and Kansas, as in the West, had been reduced and it did not take the Indians long to realize this fact. They became bolder and bolder and overran much of the territory between the Rockies and the Missouri.

Bill was back in the Service. He and the other men had many hairbreadth encounters with the savages. Comanche, Sioux and Kiowa were rampant and caused much devastation.

On one of his trips Bill had been suddenly beset by fifteen redskins. But his horse was one of the fastest in the Service and it was not a hard matter to make his escape. Yet, in this instance he jumped from the frying pan into the fire.

He was making his way along the trail when an arrow pierced his hat. The next instant his horse stumbled and all about him the redskins swarmed.

It was the one time when the swiftness of the savage was too much for Bill. There were hundreds of the Indians and escape was impossible. They bound the boy and carried him to their camp a few miles away. In order to make sure of him they tied him to a tree. It was evident they were holding a big war council for the Indians were sitting about their fires in animated discussion.

Bill had by no means given up hope. He knew that if the Indians decided for peace he would be freed. But should they go on the warpath before he gained his freedom, his fate was sealed.

Long the Indians discussed the question. The squaws prepared for the evening meal; the Indian papooses played about, some of them watching Bill with much curiosity.

The war council was over. The Indians retired. Bill watched, with more than casual interest, for what was to follow.

It was war — the savages were putting on their war-paint.

Despite the fact that his fate was but a matter of hours, Bill was interested in the scenes that followed. At sundown the Indians had sent forth fleet messengers whose destination Bill could not determine. But at about ten or eleven o'clock other Indians began to arrive. There evidently was to be still another council with another tribe. Bill recognized the newcomers as Comanches. Then an all-night orgy followed. The Indians began to work themselves into a fury. Sometime during the night the wardance began and the sun was high over the distant hill before the swaying, hypnotized savages had ceased their weird dance.

Except for the fact that Bill had been released from the tree so that he could lie down, he was completely ignored by the red-men. But his case evidently was to come up during the morning for he could see several of the Indians looking toward him.

Then one of them arose in great excitement for an Indian. He came hurriedly forward. Bill felt his good fortune had not deserted him. The Indian was one of the late comers.

It was Lonely Bear. He looked long and searchingly at the prisoner. Then a friendly smile came over his face.

“Lonely Bear is sad for his brother’s plight, but is glad that he is given the chance to pay his debt.”

“Lonely Bear is truly a friend in need,” the boy replied.

The Indian returned to his companions seated in council. Long he argued with

them. He must have had great influence, for when he ceased he came back to the imprisoned boy and unbound him. Not an Indian objected.

“My brother is free. He may go.”

But Bill could not move for almost a half hour, so cramped had his limbs become. In the meantime the Indians served him with food and made him comfortable.

It was a narrow escape — this the boy realized. He made his way back to the trail and rode west to meet Drose who doubtless was working east.

When he arrived at the post, Drose was nowhere about. The stock-tender told him that Drose had not been relayed and so had found it necessary to continue west. But he was due in five hours.

Bill required sleep and he needed no urging to devote five hours before the arrival of Drose to refreshing slumber

CHAPTER V

BIG JIM DIES

A HALF-BREED filled with the lust, the savagery of the redskin, combined with the worst traits of the white man — Big Jim — was raising his voice for war, Comanche and Sioux had invited the Kiowas to join them in the attempt to stamp out the hated oppressor. Big Jim knew something of the war between the North and the South and with great cunning was showing the advantage of striking now. The Kiowas had hesitated to join in battle. Not that they were friendly to the white man, for they were not. They hated these strangers who had taken their land and who were pushing them further and further west. But their wise men had seen the folly of resisting — it was a hopeless and hapless undertaking.

So now, despite the soft word's which sounded good to the bucks and to those who had not been in many wars with the men, the Kiowas argued against the words of Big Jim. But for once, their words had no weight.

“If we are strong in numbers we can capture the big, strong house of the white man, for their big chief has called many long-swords to the land where the sun rises. They are weak now and we can take from them many big sticks and powder and shot. Now is the time, brothers, to drive this, scourge from our land.”

Long he spoke, as did the emissaries of the Comanche and the Sioux. The voices of the wise men were weak and the young men, swayed by the seeming ease of victory, swept the council of the Kiowas for war.

Big Jim volunteered to go to the Fort to find out the number of soldiers and settlers left to guard it. Being a half-breed he would not arouse suspicion as would a full-blooded redskin.

So he started off. He hit the trail on which Johnson was working east to meet his relay, Drose. Big Jim hated the white man.

Half white himself, he had always been considered an Indian and he had never forgiven the accident of birth which had made him neither Indian nor white man.

Then, too, he had a strong, overpowering desire for whiskey, and he could never get enough.

Johnson met him. Unconscious of the half-breed, for there were many such at the settlements, he greeted him pleasantly and the two journeyed on together. Johnson carried some liquor with him as a stimulant.

Oftentimes it was needed. He prepared to make his evening meal and invited Big Jim to join him. The half-breed had no hesitancy about accepting.

But Johnson's showing the flask in which he carried the stimulant was his undoing. It fired the appetite of the half-breed; He could not get his thoughts away from it. His whole body craved it.

All of a sudden the crazed beast, without any warning, struck. Johnson never knew what happened for the knife of the murderer brought instant death with it. Fiendishly Big Jim sought the liquor. Though the bottle was half full, he drained it without a pause and then craved more and more.

Then his cunning Indian instinct told him that the relay would carry liquor too. So he finished the trail of Johnson, carrying the latter's pouch to offset suspicion and make his own story more plausible.

Drose met him at the post. The half breed told how Johnson had been killed by two Indians who had fled when Big Jim had appeared. He wanted to take Drose and show him. Drose, not entirely unsuspicious, started off with the half-breed.

This white man was entirely too watchful, the half-breed decided as he rode ahead. Very soon they would arrive at the scene and perhaps it would then be hard to explain. Though Big Jim had drunk a great amount of liquor it had merely made him doubly treacherous and cunning. He must get the relay's liquor before they reached the spot where the lead man lay. Well, then, he would strike at once.

As the half-breed dismounted Drose came up. Quick as a flash Jim fired. The shot struck Drose, shattering his shoulder.

But even as the half-breed fired, Drose's gun also spoke. The white man's gun spoke death even as its owner fell unconscious to the ground.

How long Drose was unconscious he never knew. What saved his life was that such was the nature of the wound that the flow of blood was clogged. The dawn was breaking when he came to. There was a fearful ache in his left shoulder and when he tried to move, the pain sent him back into unconsciousness.

When he rallied again he slowly dragged himself to his horse. He never knew how, he made himself rise and mount his horse. Every move was torture but there stayed with him a great determination to reach the post, no matter how slight the chance of holding on to life.

As Bill made his way westward, wondering at the reason for the delay of Drose, he saw Drose's horse making its way slowly toward him. On its back was a figure which only a miracle had saved from being thrown. It was Drose, unconscious, weak, and with just a flicker of life left in him.

CHAPTER VI

EAVESDROPPING

KANSAS and Colorado were definitely swinging to the North. There was a growing Majority which believed that it was all important to preserve the Union. What happened was most natural. As the Northern sentiment grew, the Southerners departed in increasing numbers to more congenial climes.

Both sides had reckless groups which believed that the only worth-while solution was extermination of those who disagreed. There were many instances in which bands of desperate outlaws would attack, in the least provocation, men whose only crime was that they differed in their beliefs.

Stanton and Carruthers, two of the Express riders, had come into Leavenworth, which was a strong Northern town. It was common belief that they intended to make their way to a point where they could join the Southern army. Bill, McCarthy and the rest of the riders had discussed this point and had unanimously decided that they should be given the opportunity.

“If Stanton and Carruthers were in our place,” said Simpson, “we would expect them to act the same way.”

“And they would,” said Bill. “It’s up to us to give them the chance to get to their homes.”

“I feel as you all do,” said Woods, while the discussion was on, “but it does savor of false sentimentality to let these men get away. It almost seems as if we were helping the South by doing so.”

“On the other hand, consider it from this angle, Woods. These men came here in time of peace. Suddenly, a misunderstanding flares into a bitter struggle. They came among us peaceably, now they are going to leave us in the same way. We, who have been their comrades, owe them that much — to let them go. We must not put this big war on a personal issue. Fight, yes — but for a far bigger thing than our own little selves — our country.”

But there were others in Leavenworth whose sense of chivalry and fair dealing

was not quite so high. There was a strong feeling that it was ridiculous to let these men get away, the thing to do was to make them prisoners.

On his way home from Majors' office a half hour after this discussion, Bill had occasion to pass through a rather lawless part of Leavenworth — close by the Fort. Drose had just come from it with final instructions as to when his regiment was to move to the front. The two, after exchanging greetings, stopped for a few minutes, as it was Bill's intention to continue homeward, while Drose was bound for the office of the Service.

Drose had just finished imparting the information he had obtained and there was that short pause which always comes when people take leave of each other.

Close by stood a small dilapidated cabin. Standing in the shadow of a big tree neither Drose nor Bill could be easily seen.

Two men who had come up the road stopped at the entrance of this cabin.

"The boys are going to meet tonight, Ben. We mustn't let those two Rebels get away," said one.

Bill and Drose exchanged quick glances. "From what I know of Jim Carruthers and Art Stanton you will have a fight trying to stop them," the other commented.

"Well, it's a choice we will give them — if they fight they'll get no mercy. If they come peaceably it means they will be merely placed in the war-prison."

"Better not let any of the riders know about this, Saunders. If they have any inkling of it you will have more than a handful of trouble."

"They won't know. There are just twenty of us and we are going after them late tonight. Come over to Benson's tonight."

"I will. So long, Saunders."

As one of the men went into the cabin, the other went on his way. Bill turned to Drose with a great grin on his face.

"Aren't Ben and Saunders in for a surprise tonight? Come on, Drose, I've changed my mind about going home. There is too much promise of fun and

excitement.”

“Do you know those men, Bill?” asked Drose.

“Of course,” the boy replied. “Saunders has an idea he is a very important individual hereabouts. He is strongly for the Union and he thinks that a man is forever doomed if he is from the South. He is a good deal of a politician, too.”

“Do you suppose we can get our men together in time?” the man asked.

“Not that it matters,” he added, “for we really won’t need them all. But it would be a pity to keep any of them out of the fun.”

“Well, most of them were at Majors’ office when I left. They are waiting for Majors who is away for two days. I imagine they are still there as Alcock had just started a funny story when I left. I didn’t wait to hear it because he had already told it to me one night, when I was his relay.”

“Well, here we are,” Drose offered as they entered the office.

CHAPTER VII

THE RIDERS PLAN A LITTLE SURPRISE

THERE were as many as fifteen of the riders in the office when Drose and Bill entered. Stanton and Carruthers were among them, having arrived after Bill's departure. There was the best of feeling, not a trace of bitterness, for each man knew that there was plenty of time for that; it would be sure to come when they were arrayed in battle rank.

"Well, boys," said Bill, "we're in for some excitement tonight."

He explained to them what he and Drose had heard.

"The thing to do is for Stanton and Carruthers to go off at once," Simpson suggested. "Then it might be a good thing for the rest of us to wait around as a reception committee for our friends. If nothing else happens we can at least enjoy their disappointment."

Stanton hotly interposed. "We are not going to sneak off and let you fellows take up our quarrel."

But Carruthers was of a more thoughtful nature.

"We must do exactly that," he said. "Simpson is right. Can't you see, Stanton, that with us around, whatever happens makes it a fight between Southerners and Northerners. With us out of the way, they can't fight and if they do, it isn't that kind of a quarrel."

"That's it, exactly," approved McCarthy. Within the next hour, the two were off. Bill, Simpson, Woods and Drose escorted them to a point from which they could make their way with a fair amount of safety.

"Goodbye, boys," said Stanton. "Hope we don't meet until we lick you Yanks, good and proper."

"You make us laugh," replied Woods and suiting action to words, he grinned with so much good nature that the two could not take offense at his words. "You

Rebels will be begging us not to let you do what you want to do, in no time.”

“Well,” answered Carruthers, “here’s to good friends and more than that, beloved enemies.”

The six uncovered for a moment. Then the two Southerners were off, while the men who remained watched them depart.

“Just think of it, boys,” Drose said, “it won’t be so long before we’ll be shooting at those fellows.”

In sober mood, they returned to headquarters. McCarthy was already laying plans to receive the men under Saunders.

“In about half an hour, we are going over to the place where the two boys stopped. No lights will show. Two of us are going to pretend to be the men they want. Not one of the rest are to move until the visitors turn on the lights and find our guns pointing in their general direction. Wild Bill has the build of Stanton, and Alcock here will play he is Carruthers.”

About two hours later, twenty men cautiously approached what had been the stopping place of their quarry. As they reached the door, Saunders knocked on the door with the butt end of his pistol.

A muffled voice, within was heard after a moment’s pause.

“What is it, What do you want?”

“We want you both to come out,” was the reply. “Better come peaceably for your own good.”

“Well, the door is open and you can come in,” was the answer, after a moment’s parley. This was going to be easy, Saunders thought. These men were going to be sensible and accept their fate peaceably. He opened wide the door.

“Strike a light, one of you.” he commanded to his men.

One of them did. As the flame spread light about the room the surprised visitor’s saw fifteen grinning men watching them, their guns carelessly playing about. As if by mere accident they seemed to be pointing toward the newcomers.

“Hello, Saunders,” said Wild Bill. “Did you want us?”

“Here we are, very, very peaceable,” drawled Alcock. “Can we do anything for you, always of course, in the most peaceable of ways, according to orders.”

Saunders flushed. He looked about. The men about him, after the strain of the first moment, realized that the joke was on them. They sheepishly returned the grin of the riders.

Saunders, too, saw the joke and laughed. “Well, boys, you’ve outplayed us. Where are the two Rebels?”

“Why, they’ve gone to another party,” replied Simpson, “Previous engagement and all that, don’t you know. Only, they wanted me to tell you that they intended to be peaceable just so long as callers didn’t invite themselves. But then, they’ll never have a chance to prove that, for they have gone, gone away.”

“All right, boys,” Saunders commented, good-naturedly. “Our fight isn’t with you. We simply don’t see it your way, we think you are helping the enemy.”

“Well, we thank you for a very pleasant visit,” Woods told them as they departed. “We admit it could have been more exciting but then again, it couldn’t have been friendlier.”

CHAPTER VIII

AN INDIAN ATTACK

THOSE were stirring days that followed. The sympathizers of the North and South had many conflicts. Against both of them, the Indian, impartial at all times, began his depredations.

Often, there came the strange situation, when the white man, though divided, in bitter struggle for supremacy in the East, found strong need to unite against the common enemy here in the West.

Bill longed to join the Northern army. He felt that he could secure the consent of his mother and, after all, what better thing could any man do than enter the ranks when his country was in danger? So he made application at the recruiting station intending to inform his mother afterwards.

He found, however, that though they were anxious for volunteers, his youth counted against him. Despite his unusual record, the law was clear on this point and so the recruiting Office, with considerable regret refused to accept Bill. Disconsolate, Bill returned to Leavenworth.

Majors at this time was in great difficulty. The Express riders, almost to a man, had given notice that they intended giving up their posts. Most of them were planning to join the Union army. There were a few, however, like Stanton and Carruthers, who were adherents of the South. It spoke gloriously for the personnel of the Express riders, who without any prearrangement, had decided that while in the Service, they would not let the big struggle interfere in any way with their loyalty to the Service or to those connected with it. Once enrolled, the big war would become a personal issue — until then the truce would hold.

Majors, for one, was glad of Bill's youth. But the boy spent many bitter hours as he saw, first Drose, then Simpson, Woods and Wild Bill Hickock go off. He bemoaned the hard luck which kept him youthful.

"Did you ever stop to think, Bill," Majors remarked to him as he watched the boy's despondency, "how much need there is going to be for men on the plains and in the Rockies? Off you youngsters go to where you think you are most

needed, and leave this part of the country to the mercy of the Indians.”

Bill had never given this viewpoint any thought. He was still in that stage of youthfulness which believes that adventure and hazard are ever elsewhere. It never occurred to him that what he did and had been doing was dangerous or brave. It is about the other man's deeds that the glamor always radiates.

“McCarthy is one of the few men brave enough to stay behind. We shall need him and you and many other men before long,” the old man continued. “Things would not be so bad, if there were any assurances as to the good intentions of the Indians. But there is none.”

The need for the Express service dwindled. The trips to the coast and return were now made at rare intervals. But McCarthy, Bill and the one or two other men who stayed on duty were compelled to take long relays. No longer could they travel the beaten track — for the Indian, though slow to take the warpath, — was lurking everywhere. Outwardly friendly, he struck in the night and at such times when the crime could not be placed on any particular tribe.

There came a day when Bill was making his way along the Colorado. The Allen household was close by and he planned to stop there for the evening. He had known Dave Allen for many a day. Allen had settled at this point. It was not too near the local Fort and yet if there were need for it one could make it in three hours of hard riding.

Dave Allen had earned the respect of the local tribes. A fair man, he had convinced them of his intentions to deal fairly. Bill knew of the kindly feeling of the Indians toward him. Ordinarily, he would have ridden to the door without any thought of secrecy. But that sixth sense, intuition or instinct, be it what it may, somehow warned him. As he approached the cabin his caution increased.

Then suddenly he heard rifle shots. Silently he moved forward. It was important for him to get the lay of the land. If there were to be an attack on the cabin, it would be well for him to know the number of the attacking party and so be able to plan for action.

From his vantage point he was soon able to observe that the Indians numbered at least twenty-five. They had encircled the house. A secret attack had evidently been planned; it was equally clear that Allen had not been caught napping.

“If I could let Allen know that I am off for help. The trick is how to let him know.”

It would not be impossible for Allen to hold out against the Indians until help arrived, especially if he knew that that help was coming.

An idea came to Bill. It was possible of execution because of Bill's skill in throwing his bowie, a trick he had learned from Drose who was remarkably skillful and proficient at it. He tore a sheet of paper from the note book which all Express riders carried. On the paper he wrote:

“Keep up courage, Allen. Am off for help.

Bill Cody.”

He carefully tied the paper about the knife. It was his plan to attempt to throw the message through one of the openings from which Allen's household was shooting at the savages. As he raised his arm to make the throw something caught his eye.

What he saw was a redskin making his way through the tall grass toward the house. Flat on his stomach, he was crawling forward so slowly as to be almost imperceptible. The keen eye of Bill was able to detect the movement. The savage, the boy observed, was holding an unlighted torch in one hand. If this Indian could get near enough to the wall of the house, he could do considerable damage and the situation for the Allens would be even more hazardous.

Bill's mind worked like a flash. He turned to his horse, placed the note folded around the bowie, inside the saddle. It would be detected when the search was made, as it was sure to be, upon the arrival of the riderless horse at the Fort.

“Be off with you, Banister.” He spoke to the horse as he would to a human. “Go to the Fort and bring help.”

Without stopping to see if the horse would obey he turned again to watch the crawling redskin making his slow headway.

The horse on his part seemed to understand. After a moment's hesitancy, he was away in the direction of the Fort.

Bill now slowly and very carefully took aim. It was not a hard shot and yet he had no wish to miss it. Too much depended on it. Nor did he. The redskin gave a convulsive shudder and turned over.

Bill realized that it would require quick work to reach the inside of the cabin. Even as the shot left his rifle he made his wild dash for the cabin door. Allen saw him coming and had the door open for him. As it swung to, after the boy, a volley of shots rained against it from the surprised savages.

CHAPTER IX

HEADING OFF THE REDSKINS

“WELL, Bill,” said Allen, “welcome, doubly welcome. But aren’t you somewhat unceremonious? Not that we don’t all appreciate the fact that you do call,” he added.

“Well,” Bill replied, “it’s something to know you are welcome. Not everybody around here is, I notice.” The boy had already made his way to the east wall, which Mary, the youngest daughter, had been guarding and toward which the redskin had been crawling.

“I say, what makes these redskins trouble you? I thought you were on friendly terms with them.”

“I am, Bill. These are strange Comanche. The Indians hereabout, I am sure know nothing of this.”

Bill found that the attack had begun but a few moments before he had arrived. A friendly Comanche had warned Allen.

“We should be able to hold out against these Indians provided they are not reenforced,” remarked Allen.

“Especially so, if they show themselves,” said Bill. He had been keeping careful watch, but except for an occasional chance for a shot, the Indians had kept under cover.

A little later he saw an Indian mount a horse, and start off to the West. Bill decided that he was a messenger sent for reenforcement. Bill realized that he could not stop a message for extra help from being sent, but he decided that that particular Indian would not be the messenger. It was a long shot and the horse was now moving swiftly. The boy sighted his gun. He took a more careful aim than usual.

The shot went true. The rider toppled to the ground. There was a wild yell of astonishment from the Indians. It was a remarkable shot and Allen, who had

come over for a second to take a look, spoke warmly and admiringly of it.

“I think they are sending for reenforcement, Allen,” the boy interrupted in the midst of the latter’s praise. “I’m sure that the one I brought down was on his way with that purpose. Hope that Banister will make his way to the Fort without trouble.”

The Allens showed their surprise at this remark which they could not understand. Bill realized he had not told them of the message he had sent with the horse. He did so now.

“That’s good news, if the horse has that much sense, and if he is not stopped on the way.”

“That last is the only danger,” replied Bill. “I know he will make his way to the Fort if he is uninterrupted.”

Two hours passed. Suddenly Allen called to Bill. From that side of the house one had a clear view of more than three miles. He pointed to a large, moving body.

“More Indians,” Bill decided. “It can’t be our men, for it will take at least three more hours for them to arrive.”

“They’re Indians, all right,” agreed Allen, as the moving mass became somewhat clearer. “More trouble, too,” he added soberly as he viewed his wife and children. The Indians arrived soon after. Stationed beyond the range of the White man’s rifle, they could be seen in earnest debate. The newcomers were evidently urging some action; those who had come earlier seemed reluctant to agree.

Then, as the argument seemed to terminate, those inside the cabin noticed with considerable wonderment that the newly arrived Indians were mounting their horses again. Could they be riding away? It certainly seemed as if that was what they were doing. The Indians who had first come, and a few of the newcomers who had stayed behind, returned to again besiege the cabin.

“I have it,” Bill declared excitedly. “The newcomers are from somewhere near here and have refused to help in the attack upon you.”

“Good for them,” said Allen thankfully. “It shows that even an Indian appreciates square dealing.”

There was, however, little time given them to discuss this piece of good fortune. The remaining Indians, as if embittered by the desertion of their allies, made a vicious attack upon the cabin.

“Now, steady, children,” Allen called. “Be sure you are aiming at an Indian before you fire.” Mrs. Allen and her husband, as well as Bill, were shooting at each Indian who showed himself.

The Indians retired again. They must have decided that they were too few in number to follow that line of attack. They returned to their first method, which was besieging the cabin and waiting for the night when they could move with more safety.

The hours passed. The sun had set and the twilight was fast turning into night. Bill began to worry about the possible failure of the horse to arrive at the Fort. He began to speculate on the chances of Allen and himself being able to hold out through the night.

Then it became dark. Six hours and more had passed since Banister had been sent on his errand. Bill and Allen were almost ready to give up the hope of receiving help from that quarter, when the former perceived a movement among the Indians. He saw shadows mount on other shadows and disappear in the darkness.

Then he heard the gallop of horses. “The troops have arrived,” he called to Allen.

The children gave a shout of joy. Mrs. Allen, who had never murmured throughout the long hours, sank to the ground in a swoon.

Bill realized how much of an ordeal it must have been to her to have her loved ones in such danger all that time.

Lieutenant Perkins rode up to the door.

“Hello, Allen.” Then he saw Bill. “Glad to see you, Bill. From your note we couldn’t tell just what had happened to you. “

CHAPTER X

BILL GOES TO THREE FORKS

WHEN Bill returned to Leavenworth he found the town in great excitement. A daring raid had been made in the near vicinity by the James boys in co-operation with the Youngers. These outlaws, supposedly, were fighting for the South. There was the feeling that this was but the first of many attacks. When Bill reported to Majors the latter said:

“Davison has been asking for you. He wants to see you.”

Bill hoped that Davison would have some special duty for him. He still chafed because of his inability to be of service to his country. The war had been an actual fact for almost a half year. Events, too, had shaped themselves so that it looked exceedingly gloomy for the cause of the North. It is such a time that tries true men’s souls and Bill had proven his manhood many a time. Here he was ready and able to do a man’s work, yet was kept from doing it on account of some silly rule.

It was a proof of the greatness of Davison that he guessed what must have been troubling the boy.

“It’s a terrible thing to be too young, Bill,” he commented whimsically.

Bill saw no humor in it. It was, so he had found. And with the fullness of his grievance upon him he confided in Davison how he had tried to enter the army and had been barred because of the dread affliction of youthfulness.

“I’m not too young to be an Express rider, nor to do special and even important duty. But I am too young to serve my country.”

“Never mind, Bill,” Davison replied understandingly. “I am going to give you another opportunity to do special service. Something that requires picked men and which but few men could do.

“You heard, I suppose, of the raid made by the James boys the other day. We have it on most reliable authority.” The man stopped and searched the boy’s face

as was his habit before confiding important information, then he continued:

“I may as well tell you that one of the men in the confidence of James is a trusted emissary of mine, and that the outlaws are going to make another attack within a few days on Preston. There are many reasons why we must not let them succeed in that, the principal one is that it would supply them with considerable ammunition, as we keep some of our supplies there.

“I have instructed McCarthy to get fifteen men together. He wants you as one of them, although I must confess, I thought you might be too young to be allowed to get into such dangerous work. It will have to be a pitched battle and the James boys, in all probability, will outnumber us.

“Another thing, Bill, and this the reason why I tell you the source of our information. Barnes is the man who is our confidant. We have reason to believe that one of the men, supposedly Unionist and stationed at the Fort, is a Southern spy.

Barnes has informed me, through one of the negroes that came into the Fort the other day, that he will be able to give some information on this point if I can have a man meet him at the Little Fork tomorrow night. McCarthy wants to send you and I approve of his choice when I remember how well you accomplished the last mission on which you were sent.”

It was typical of Davison that he did not question as to whether Bill wished to go on this duty or not. He took that for granted.

Bill saw McCarthy and received instructions and the necessary password by which he would recognize Barnes, and be known in turn.

It was less than a day's journey on horseback, but Bill started off that same night. He intended to travel most of the night and through the early morning. McCarthy had suggested that he get to the Little Fork as early as possible so as not to keep Barnes waiting.

Bill rode hard. It was some time in the afternoon when he reached the tiny river. He made himself comfortable and at the same time kept well under cover.

As he lazily reclined and watched the river, he saw a boat with two men in it make fast on the other side. He felt certain that it could not be Barnes because

there were two men instead of one. Then too, it was not the side of the river on which they were to meet. Furthermore, the hour was entirely too early.

More from curiosity than anything else Bill decided to work his way across and try to discover the purpose of the two men. Of course, he realized that the men's purpose might be a peaceable one but there was always the probability in those disrupted days that strangers were there for no good.

It was more than fifteen minutes before he finally made a satisfactory point where he could see and not be seen, and where, equally important, he could also hear.

The two men had started a fire and were preparing food for their supper.

"I say, Younger," said one, "what time is Dawson due? Didn't he say six o'clock?"

"Yes, Jesse, but he may have been delayed. He ought to be here any minute."

"I wish," said the first voice, querulously, "I had sent Frank with you instead of coming myself."

Bill watched the two with intense interest. For the first time he was able to observe the celebrated outlaws at close hand.

The two men said nothing for a while. Then he heard Younger say:

"I say, James, I'm beginning to suspect that one of our men is a spy. Have you noticed how often the Yanks have been prepared recently?"

"Nonsense," replied Jesse James. "It just happened."

But the other man shook his head. "Well, then," queried James, "have you any idea who it can be?"

"I haven't, of course. If I did I would talk differently."

In a short time it became dark. James grew more and more impatient.

"Dawson probably couldn't get away," he finally decided. "The Yanks must have

kept a sharp lookout and he wouldn't risk it. Shall we go?"

"I suppose so," Younger replied.

The two men made their way into the boat and rowed off. Bill had not dared move. He had had his gun ready and it was not the fear of coping with the two that had kept him quiet. He did not wish to interfere with Davison's plans and a scuffle with the two outlaws would do that. Then, too, he now had a clue regarding a man by the name of Dawson who was evidently a spy in the Union ranks. He regretted the fact that the latter had not appeared.

Bill made his way to the other side of the river. He had hardly reached the appointed place when a man appeared.

"How are you, stranger?" said Bill.

"Oh, pretty well," answered the other. "Where are you from?"

"Brownsville," replied the boy.

You know Davison?" asked the man.

"Hello, Barnes?" Bill was now satisfied as to the other's identity.

"Who are you, young stranger?" Barnes questioned.

"Bill Cody."

After an exchange of commonplaces Barnes came to the point.

"There is a man at the Fort who is bringing information to James. I tried to get his name, but couldn't."

"It's Dawson," the boy: informed him. "How do you know?" Barnes asked in surprise. Bill told Barnes of what he had overheard, including the suspicion of Younger as to a spy in the ranks.

"Hadn't you better come back with me, Barnes?"

But the other shook his head in dissent.

“My work is here and will be for a little while longer.

“Better tell McCarthy to have at least twenty men at Preston,” he continued. “The attack will take place on Thursday, so he has only three days to get there. Tell Davison what you heard, of course, and also tell him that there is a plan afoot for the Rebels to cross from Arkansas in strong numbers and attack Leavenworth.”

“Did you hear either James or Younger say when they expected to meet Dawson again?”

“No, I didn’t. I wish I had.”

“I wish I could tell you something about Dawson,” Barnes added, “but I can’t. The chances are that he doesn’t travel under that name.”

“Yes, I know that. But it is a clue and it may help.”

The two separated. Bill made his return in safety, arriving at Leavenworth in the late afternoon.

He immediately reported to Davison.

CHAPTER XI

OFF TO MEET THE OUTLAWS

IN the dead of the night, McCarthy and about twenty picked men started for Preston. It was hazardous duty and yet each of the men gloried in the fact that he was chosen. It was an indication of merit, ability. One had to be more than brave for Davison and McCarthy to pick him. He had to be keen of wit and be ready to meet any emergency.

Davison had welcomed the news Bill had brought. What Bill had overheard was also important, although, as they soon found out, there was no man at the Fort who went under the name of Dawson. But with such a clue it made the discovery of the spy comparatively easy.

“And when we do find out who he is, he’ll hang, sure as gospel,” Davison had added grimly.

McCarthy had been careful to inform each man of the risks entailed, Jesse James and Younger were both foemen worthy any man’s steel. They were shrewd and under any circumstances able to cope with twice their number.

“And in all likelihood, we shall be outnumbered, in this particular instance,” he was careful to add.

But not one of the men who had been selected had hesitated. The James boys had left in their path many a score which had to be settled. Many of these very men had suffered through their depredations and were anxious for the opportunity to even up the score.

It was a long ride. The men did little talking and to have seen these men pass, grim and silent as the night itself, must have been an awesome sight.

McCarthy called Bill to him as the dawn was breaking through the eastern sky.

“Bill, I intend to camp at Williamson’s. We are to rest for four hours, then continue. I’m going to keep watch for two hours, will you take the other two?”

The boy agreed, glad of the fact that of all these men, McCarthy had selected him for the second watch.

Some of the men decided that they did not need rest. McCarthy instructed each of them as they went their separate ways, not to let any information leak.

Bill wandered away to the nearby woods. He preferred the open for such rest as he took. He had the trick of all men of the plains — he could time his sleep which was always so light that the slightest of disturbances was sure to awaken him.

He had no idea of how long he had slept, when he heard a voice. Instantly he was alert.

“I’m glad you came, Robinson,” one man was speaking. The voice sounded familiar to him, but he could not place it.

“McCarthy and twenty men are on the way to Preston. You will only have about three hours start of us. Be sure you get the information to Younger or Jesse.”

“I don’t know whether I will be able. I’ve been following all of you ever since you left Leavenworth.”

“I suspected you were. But there was no opportunity for me to drop behind without creating suspicion.”

“Well, I’ll do my best. Anything to get these Yankees,” Robinson replied.

There was some more talk, then Robinson started off. The other man also disappeared. Bill tried hard to discover who he was without himself being seen but it was impossible. The voice, however, was familiar; he had heard it before.

He hurried to McCarthy. It took him but a few seconds to acquaint the leader with what he had heard.

“When I come back, we’ll pick out the spy. I’ll meet you all at Turner’s Falls,” he hurriedly concluded.

Robinson had had about fifteen minutes’ start but as Bill mounted his own horse, he had no doubt but that he could make up that time.

“Come, Banister, show some speed.” The horse needed no second urging. He was in fine mettle. Never had he made better time.

At the end of two hours, Bill felt he must be close to Robinson. His gun was ready. He realized how important it was for Robinson not to reach the outlaws, for McCarthy counted on the surprise of his attack as much as on anything else.

Soon he saw his quarry. The man looked behind. He saw the approaching rider and halted with his gun ready.

The boy decided on a bold stroke.

“Dawson sent me. I have important news for you.”

Robinson hesitated, uncertain. In that same instant Bill had him covered.

“Throw up your hands, Robinson. The game’s up.”

Up went the man’s hands. “Why, what do you mean?” He blustered.

“Only this, friend. If you make the slightest move or attempt to escape, I’m going to shoot. And I warn you, I’ll shoot to kill.”

The riders made their way to Turner’s Palls.

They had only a little while to wait for McCarthy. The latter had started his men on the march at once.

Bill brought his prisoner before him.

“Now, Robinson, which of these men do you know?” McCarthy asked.

Robinson refused to tell. First, he pretended he did not know what McCarthy meant; when he could no longer maintain that attitude, he took refuge in silence.

“All right, then. Tie him up and let Watson, who lives here, keep him until we return.”

They were soon on their way. Late in the afternoon, the men arrived at Preston. “Now, Bill, while I go over to see Swanson, who is in charge of the guards here, you keep your weather eye open. As soon as I get back, we’ll lay plans to

discover who the traitor is. We must know that before tonight, otherwise we cannot be sure of anything.”

Bill nodded his head in assent.

CHAPTER XII

THE SURPRISE ATTACK

WHOEVER the guilty man was, he gave no indication of his identity while McCarthy was away. Bill cudged his brains trying to remember the voice and to whom it belonged, but he could not place it. Some of the twenty men he knew but slightly and it must be one of these men. By a process of elimination, he brought the number down to six. They were almost the same build and Bill could not place any of their voices from recollection. He made no attempt at trying to discover the owner, since he had no wish to arouse any suspicion in the guilty man's mind that there was a clue as to his identity.

McCarthy soon returned. He lost no time but set out at once on the task of discovering the culprit.

“Men, there is one of you who has informed Robinson of the purpose of this expedition so that the latter could carry the information to James. I hope you all realize the importance of discovering the man now, before any action takes place. I am able to tell who the man is through one or two channels. I promise you this — before I am through, we will have the guilty man.”

He asked each man several questions. He gave no indication of the trend or the purpose of these and let none of the men know whether he had answered satisfactorily or not. Bill also came under the category of questions.

But McCarthy was asking these questions so that Bill could place the voice.

When McCarthy started to question Williams who was next to last, Bill realized, even before the man answered that he was the man wanted. Williams, however, seemed anxious to answer all questions and Bill gave no indication as to his discovery.

When McCarthy had finished questioning all the men, there was a pause.

“Well, Dawson, we have you, haven't we?” said Bill as he turned to Williams.

That worthy never stopped to argue. He made one wild dash for cover. But

McCarthy was even quicker. His aim was true and Williams, alias Dawson, toppled over, a dead man.

“It’s a better death than he deserved,” said McCarthy, while the men breathed sighs of relief. Although none of the men felt guilty each man was naturally glad to have the guilty one brought to light.

Sometime in the night, the outlaws arrived. The leaders felt certain that the surprise of their attack would make it comparatively easy to overcome the small garrison of eight men left to guard the stores. James and Younger had more than forty men and had no anxiety on that score. Yet with all that, the outlaws moved cautiously. That was one of the reasons for Jesse James’ success, he never allowed himself to become careless.

The attack was made with the suddenness of lightning. But James, much to his surprise, found the eight men prepared. Then he settled his men down to a quick siege.

Just as suddenly and without any warning, McCarthy and his men struck. The outlaws gave a wild yell. There was, however, no intention of retreating. Doggedly they turned to meet the new enemy.

In the surprise of that attack McCarthy’s men had done fearful execution. About fifteen of the outlaws had been either killed or wounded. The rest, however, fought back.

Two of the attackers had been killed. Bill’s own hat had been shot from his head. McCarthy had been wounded but not seriously and he was still able to lead his men.

There was nothing left for the James boys to do but retreat. The leader showed his generalship in managing to do this without loss. While he, his brother Frank, and Younger held McCarthy and his men off for more than five minutes, the rest of the men made their escape. A bullet from Bill’s rifle wounded Frank James, but not seriously enough to put him out of the fight.

The three outlaws then managed to retreat without fatalities. They seemed to bear a charmed life. Younger’s hat was nicked by McCarthy’s bullet but Jesse was untouched.

“I certainly admire those boys,” said Bill. “They don’t seem to know what fear is.”

“They ought to be fighting for a better cause,” McCarthy added. “Even then, they couldn’t stand another scrimmage like this.” McCarthy left ten men behind him and the rest returned to Leavenworth.

“Too bad about Smith and Arnold, but I suppose it is the fortune of war.” McCarthy was referring to the dead men. He had been careful in picking only such men as were without families or dependents.

McCarthy had a long report to make to Davison and Bill was with him when he made it. Robinson had been turned over to the Fort as a prisoner.

“There’s something about Bill that acts like a charm,” Davison commented. “He certainly has been fortunate in discovering things for us.”

“What are you going to do with Robinson?” Bill asked.

“I suppose we’ll put him on trial as a spy. What do you think, Bill?”

“If I had my way, I’d forget some things and hold him only as a prisoner.”

McCarthy agreed with Bill. He felt that the important man to have done away with was Dawson.

“All right, boys, I shall make it a point, however, to tell Robinson just how and why he is treated with such consideration.”

CHAPTER XIII

BILL TO THE RESCUE

WORD came to Bill one day, a week later, that Lonely Bear wanted to see him. An Indian who had been acting as a scout for the colonel of the Fort, had stopped off at Majors' office.

"I want the young chief who rides like the wind," he told Majors who was in the office at the time.

The latter directed him to Bill Cody's home.

Bill was home. The Indian, who had met Bill before, recognized him.

"Lonely Bear sends greetings. He is a day's journey north from here. He wishes to talk with his white brother."

"I shall go to meet my brother at once," Bill had replied. He welcomed the opportunity to meet Lonely Bear for whom he had real affection. Then, too, he had never found a chance to express his gratefulness for the Indian's act of friendship when he had been an Indian captive.

Lonely Bear was waiting at the appointed place.

After the greetings, Bill expressed his gratitude.

"It is but what one brother must do for another. A little thing and I thank the Great Spirit for his kindness in permitting me to be of service to my brother.

"Now, I pray," he continued, "that my brother will listen so that he may be guided by what he is to hear from the lips of his brother.

A white man has come to my tribe. His are the words of the serpent and like the serpent's they are enticing and full of guile.

"There lives at the present time, within a half day's ride from here, the squaw and the two papooses of the Eagle.

“This white man’s people are now, like the Comanche, in bitter battle with the Kiowas, who are at other times their brother”

The white man has spoken to ten of our tribe, the ten who are neither Indian nor white man, for they are both.

“In order that the Eagle, who has plentifully of the white man’s gold, shall give them some of it, this white man wishes to steal the squaw and the papooses of the Eagle. The Eagle will be sore distressed and thereupon he will pay a heavy sum for their ransom.”

“When is this to take place, oh brother of mine?”

“Tonight, brother. Therefore I have told you. For I have learned that the Eagle is your friend.”

Bill did some quick thinking. He did not have time to go to the Fort and bring help. The Eagle was Davison, and Bill knew that he had sent his wife and two children from Leavenworth but two weeks before, immediately after the attack of Jesse James in that vicinity. Davison had decided that the threatening trouble with the Indians would not touch the haven he had selected, as it was to the extreme north and close to the Missouri line.

“Lonely Bear does not like to visit the white man. But if my brother will give me the white man’s mark, he will go for help, even as my brother does what he plans.”

Bill immediately sent written word to Majors and McCarthy. Lonely Bear departed south, while Bill went further north. He had never met Mrs. Majors or her children. But he had no doubt he would make them understand. At the very latest, help would be but two days away and it would be his duty, in the meantime, to keep the half breeds and their white leader at bay. Bill arrived at the Majors’ temporary home. Mrs. Davison, a sweet-faced woman, knew him at once when he told her his name. A young girl, the older of the two children, looked with great respect at him. Bill felt very conscious as the youngest, who was a boy of ten, said, “When I get older, I’m going to be an Express rider and Indian fighter too,” Davison had evidently spoken of him, he decided.

To Mrs. Davison, Bill told the purpose of his call. He had reason to admire her spirit and the way she received the news.

Far from being alarmed, she acted as if the whole thing were but a matter of course. Bill realized that this woman had not left her husband's side for her own safety's sake but because of her children.

"It is very good of you to come to our help", said she to the boy with great simplicity.

"I could do nothing else, of course," Bill replied.

Mrs. Davison broke the news to her children. Neither of them seemed frightened. Donald, the boy, on the contrary, seemed highly elated at the prospect of trouble.

Bill barricaded the house. He had questioned Mrs. Davison as to the nearest point from which help could come. No place, however, was nearer than two hours' journey. He did not dare go for that help; it would mean that during his absence the house would be left unprotected. Nor would he consider sending Mrs. Davison or one of the children.

There was nothing for him to do but "hold the fort," until Lonely Bear brought help.

An hour later, he saw ten men making their way to the house. Bill took the wise course. Without stopping to parley, (he had already observed that they were half-breeds) he aimed at the nearest one, and brought him down.

The other men scattered to cover. Donald in the meantime had brought three guns from the attic. He stationed himself at one of the windows and Mrs. Davison at another. Mary's duty was to reload the guns.

The half-breeds began to feel out the strength of the insiders. Bill was uncertain as to the usefulness of his helpers but they were serving one good purpose in that they hid the strength, or rather the weakness pitted against the attackers.

One of the half breeds stood up to get a better view. It was the last view he ever took, for a shot brought him low.

Bill's eyesight was keen, unusually so. Even at that far distance at which the leader had stationed himself, Bill thought he saw something vaguely familiar about him. It brought to Bill something of the past. The fact haunted him. He felt

sure he had known this man, there was something about him that had left its strong impression.

The attackers had very little relish for the work in hand and were but half hearted in their attempts. Bill could plainly see the leader urging them to the attack.

As the boy watched, he saw the man jump at one of them in furious anger.

It came to Bill with overwhelming force. The man was Arthur. It was this man who had murdered his father.

This knowledge and the sight of the man filled him with cold fury. It, gave him new life.

As our readers know those were days that sometimes called for strong action. In Bill's heart there had never ceased the desire, nor had he ever lost the conviction that, some day, he would meet this man and settle his account. In those days, too, the great West held a strong code. Men settled their own scores, their own feuds. Nowadays that code is not needed. Law and order are supreme, and wisely so.

Bill was able to keep the enemy away for two days and two nights. Not once did he attempt to shoot at the tempting target of the leader. It was his desire to meet the man face to face, so that he could let him know that his foeman was the son of the Cody whom he had murdered in so cruel and cowardly a manner.

Nor did Bill have the slightest desire for sleep in all of those two days. That was due to his training and also because of the hot, burning desire to get his man.

Late the second night, Bill saw a commotion — the shadows seemed to grow more numerous where the enemy was stationed. Then he heard voices, the voice of McCarthy, and then of Davison calling to him.

The besieged made a glad rush to the door. While Davison greeted his folks, Bill turned eagerly to McCarthy.

“Have you got the leader?” he asked.

“We have them all. Why do you ask?” McCarthy questioned as he noticed the unusual excitement of the boy.

“That man is Arthur, the man who killed my father,” the boy replied.

McCarthy started. “How do you know, boy?”

“Oh, I know, I know,” the boy answered with such conviction, that his friend could not question him.

Bill walked over to the prisoners. Picking out the leader, the boy turned to him.

“Do you know who I am, Arthur?” he asked.

The man stared, then shook his head to indicate he did not.

“Well, I’m Bill Cody. You murdered my father, Arthur, and you are going to hang. You are going to hang, do you hear?”

The man cowed. Into his face came dread and terror. Bill looked at him a moment. Then he turned away.

Somehow, looking at the wretch, cowering in this dread and terror, the desire for vengeance left Bill. It was such a small, petty thing to feel when directed against such a miserable creature.

He turned away and saw Lonely Bear, now that his mission was accomplished, departing.

“Lonely Bear must not go until the Eagle knows how much he owes to him,” the boy called.

The Indian stopped. He still wished to go, but Bill would not let him. Instead he called to Davison, who came at once.

“Lonely Bear is my brother and you owe to him the safety of your wife and children.” Bill told of the meeting between the Indian and himself and what followed.

“Your Indian friend came to us with your message,” Davison said freely, “and we came at once. I owe my friend all that life holds dear. When the Great Spirit wills I shall give thanks for the help I can be in return.”

The red man looked into the Eagle's eyes. Then he did a strange thing for an Indian. He offered his hand to Davison who took it in a warm handclasp.

"We shall meet again," he said simply. The next moment he was gone.

CHAPTER XIV

DROSE RETURNS

DROSE had returned to Leavenworth after a month at the hospital. He had been severely wounded at the battle of Wilson's Creek at which Colonel Lyons had lost his life. It would be several months before he would be fit for duty again and so General Fremont, who had succeeded Lyons, had granted him a furlough.

He looked pitifully weak as he hobbled into the office where McCarthy greeted him warmly.

"Where is Bill?" he asked, after he had explained what had happened.

"He is due here tomorrow," was the reply. "He has been out on a special trip to Kearney for the colonel at the Fort."

With McCarthy's help, Drose was comfortably lodged at Mrs. Lawson's house where many of the boys had made it a point to stop whenever their sojourn at Leavenworth was for more than a few days.

Bill called on him the next day, almost immediately after his return. Drose had found that the trip to Leavenworth had used up almost all of his reserve strength and he found himself rather glad to comply with Mrs. Lawson's command that he stay in bed.

"They didn't take long to get you, did they?" asked Bill, after he had exchanged handclasps with the sick man. The boy felt a great affection for his wounded friend but covered it by the flippancy of his remark.

Drose grinned ruefully. He did not tell Bill just how and why he had been wounded. In that splendid charge of Captain Lyons in which the latter had lost his life, Drose had been close at his side. A sweeping whirlwind, he had created terrific havoc among the Confederates until a bullet had brought him down almost at the same instant that another shot had killed the captain.

Instead he briefly told of the battle and he was enthusiastic about the splendid courage of the captain and the hold the latter had had on his men.

“How are the rest of the boys?” Bill asked.

“Harrington called on me the last day I was at the hospital. He reported that Simpson, who had been made a corporal, was missing. He thought that he must be a prisoner as one of the soldiers claimed that he saw him captured.”

“Is that all you could find out?” asked Bill anxiously.

“That is all. Harrington said he and Woods were going to try to find out definitely but he didn’t know just how. If he did find out, he would let you know.”

Bill studied the situation for a few minutes.

“I guess I’ll talk it over with McCarthy,” he decided as he got up to go. “I’ll see you again, Drose.”

But Bill found that McCarthy could offer very little in the line of suggestion as to what should be done.

“It’s the fortunes of war, my boy. You will find that Simpson himself, even though he hates the very idea of being confined at such time, will admit that it is pure hard luck and be willing to let it go at that, always with an eye, of course, to possible escape.”

Bill realized that this must be so. And yet it was not in the nature of this boy to stand idly by, while friends were in need of help. He pondered over the matter for a few days, paying a number of calls in the meanwhile upon Drose, who was recovering but slowly.

Somehow, Bill did not hesitate to confide in the latter. And although Drose agreed with him and understood how he felt, he could offer very little advice and information. He explained the probable location of the enemy as well as that of the Union soldiers.

“Simpson, Woods and Harrington are under Colonel Sigel. When you find the latter two, they may have additional information. That is, if you are really planning to make that journey,” added Drose.

“I can’t see any other way out of it,” the boy replied.

The next morning he reported at the office that he would be away for a week and possibly more. He did not tell either McCarthy or Majors of his plans, and they, schooled in the ethics of the West, did not inquire.

Bill had first thought of making his way directly to Confederate headquarters in Missouri, and seek information there. The only danger in that was the possibility of recognition by someone who knew him, a danger he was ready to risk.

At the last moment, however, he changed his mind. There was the chance that information had been secured by Harrington and Woods and so he decided that he would go directly to Colonel Sigel's headquarters.

The journey to Springfield, took more than two days. Drose had felt. sure that the next battle between the two armies would be fought there. No untoward incident happened to mark these two days.

CHAPTER XV

BILL VISITS THE ARMY

IT was night when Bill reached Springfield. There were signs everywhere to point to the fact that an army was encamped in the vicinity. Bill made his way cautiously and without the least uneasiness prepared a comfortable couch and went to sleep.

The dawn of early morning had hardly displaced the dark of night when he suddenly sat up. Men were approaching. He did not attempt to move. Then the men came into view. One of them spied the boy. "Hands up," he commanded and leveled his gun at the boy.

Bill obeyed. He recognized the men as Union troopers and so had no misgiving.

"Who are you, boy?" one of the other men who approached him, inquired suspiciously.

"A friend," Bill replied. "I am looking for Sigel's division."

"Well, you've found it," the man replied. "If that is all you want, there needn't be any trouble. But you will first have to prove that you are on honest business. A few 'friends' we caught the last few days have proved to be spies."

"How is it you didn't come directly to the camp, instead of hanging around here?" the man who had pointed the gun at Bill, inquired.

Bill explained. The men were not satisfied, however, and brought him with them to the colonel's headquarters.

After saluting the colonel, they reported just how they had found Bill.

"Have you anything to say, my boy?"

"If you can get Harrington or Woods, they'll certify for me. Or, if you want to send to Davison at Leavenworth, you can find out my intentions are friendly," Bill replied.

The colonel gave a sharp command, and in a few minutes the boy's two friends were brought before him.

There was an amused twinkle in the stern officer's eye as the two forgot all the discipline of the army upon recognition of Bill.

"Hello, Bill." Wood, yelled and made a mad rush at him. Harrington, not a whit less exuberant, followed closely and grabbed the boy and hugged him. The two, Woods and Harrington, had had a touch of homesickness, homesickness for the bracing and fascinating freedom of the Service. The life of the army was not a thing to which they could ever grow accustomed, though neither regretted enlisting and each would do it again were the occasion to arise.

"Well," said the colonel, "the evidence seems to point to the fact that you are not a spy.

"You two," and he nodded to Woods and Harrington, "can go off duty for the rest of the day."

The two men almost forgot to salute, in their excitement. Bill then took them out of earshot.

"Have you heard anything of Simpson?" he inquired anxiously.

"No," Harrington replied, "we haven't. The only thing we do know is that one of the men saw him captured after a hard fight. His name is Thompson and he isn't the kind that would volunteer information unless he was certain it was so."

"What did you come down for?" asked Woods.

"Well, I simply want to do everything I can to free him," the boy replied. "If he is really captured, I can at least make the attempt."

Woods nodded.

"We both wanted the colonel to let us go on leave but he couldn't see it. You see, we are tied down pretty well"

"He considers it a reckless waste," Harrington added, "for us to go after Simpson. The chances of freeing him are small at best, so he says, and when you

don't even know where he is imprisoned, it seems foolhardy to make the attempt."

Woods, who knew the boy well, watched him for a few minutes.

"You are going to make the try, anyway, aren't you?" he asked.

Bill nodded. "I can't see how I can help doing that. I realize you two must obey orders, but I am a free lance."

"Good for you," Harrington approved. "I'm glad that Drose was able to get word to you."

"By the way," added Woods, "Drose didn't tell you by any chance that his name was given honorable mention for great bravery at Wilson Creek, did he?"

"Did he know it?" asked Bill.

"Word of it came while he was at the hospital."

"He never said a word," Bill replied, with a great pride in his friend.

CHAPTER XVI

PLANS FOR RESCUE

WOODS, who had left Bill and Harrington early the following morning for more than a half hour, came back in great excitement. Bill in the meantime had been anxiously awaiting his coming after confiding to Harrington an idea that had come to him during the night.

“Just saw the colonel. He’s given one of us permission to go with Bill. Wouldn’t think of it at first. Said the men were too valuable to be allowed to go on quixotic errands, but I could tell he was just arguing against himself. Then I told him a few of the things that you, Bill, have done for Davison and he finally gave permission for one of us to go with you.”

“That’s fine,” said Bill enthusiastically. “Which shall it be?” he added, turning to each friend.

Neither one answered.

“I’ve got it,” said Woods, finally. “We’ll do what we used to do as small boys. Bill here, will write down a number — we two will guess and the one who is nearest it will go.”

“That’s fine of you, Woods,” Harrington said, warmly. “I suppose I really should be letting you go since you went to Sigel. But it is fine of you to let me have a chance to go.”

“Tut, tut,” Woods replied. “It’s just as much your chance as mine. Only you will have to win it.”

Bill in the meantime had written his number down.

“Now guess,” he commanded. Harrington thought for a moment.

“Six,” he said.

“Now you, Woods,” Bill said to the latter.

“Eight,” was the answer.

Bill laughed at the two men as they waited anxiously for his decision.

“I suppose you want to know the winner?” He asked teasingly.

A long arm shot out and the astonished Bill was brought into the, iron grasp of Woods.

“Now, you’ll tell us who won, you cub.”

“I can’t,” Bill replied, breathlessly.

“Why not?” Harrington inquired while Woods still held the boy in an unescapable grasp.

“Because the number I wrote down is seven,” Bill answered tauntingly. It took more than a second for the two men to realize the lie.

“All right, we’ll guess again,” Harrington decided.

Bill had his number ready.

“Three,” said Woods.

“Eight,” Harrington volunteered.

“The number is five,” said Bill, and showed each of them the number.

“Well,” said Harrington, “you deserve to go. But that doesn’t make it less disappointing Here’s luck, boys.”

The three were silent for a few moments. Then Harrington suddenly bethought himself.

“Bill here has an idea that is worth following up and which we should have thought of long ago. Tell it to him, Bill.”

“Why,” Bill offered as he turned to Woods, “I was suggesting the possibility of One of the Rebs in the prison camp knowing the whereabouts of Simpson. It is but a bare chance and yet it is worth following. Don’t you think so?”

“It certainly is,” Woods agreed. “Only the other day a number were brought here. We don’t get the chance to see them, but I am sure we can get permission.”

Woods immediately returned to the colonel’s tent and secured the necessary permission.

“I suppose the Rebels won’t object to answering a question like this. It doesn’t involve information that may hurt their side.” Bill reasoned as the three made their way to the prison camp.

They found no trouble in getting the prisoners to reply. But no satisfaction was found in the replies, however, as none of the captives could tell them anything worth while. Disappointed, they were about to turn away.

“Better see that last batch,” said the sergeant in charge. “They are over at the other end,” and he pointed out the place.

The three, discouraged, decided to follow his advice. Nevertheless, there was little expectancy now of finding the information they were seeking.

They had no sooner entered the new room when Harrington espied Carruthers. At almost the same moment the latter saw them.

“Hello,” he called and grinned ruefully. “Here I am,” he added with a gesture that spoke more than words.

The three friends made no comment as to his plight. It was true and innate courtesy. Instead, they turned the talk to and about the other days.

“By the way,” Carruthers said, and a bolt from a clear sky could not have surprised our friends more. “I saw Simpson down our way. He’s in the same boat as I am. You should have seen the fight he put up before we could get him to accept our hospitality.” And Carruthers laughed as did Bill and the other two at his description.

“Whereabouts is he?” Bill asked.

Carruthers looked at him and then smiled.

“I suppose you boys simply want to know out of pure curiosity. I’ll tell you

because if any friends of mine were to inquire about me, I fancy you would tell them, provided it did no harm to your confounded cause.

“He’s down at Forsyth. He isn’t hurt and seemed to be quite well when I saw him last.”

“Where is Stanton, now?” Harrington asked.

“He’s with the army in the East,” the Southerner replied.

After some further conversation the three left the prisoner who had enjoyed their visit as it broke the monotony of his day.

“What luck!” exclaimed Woods, “To meet Carrie and for him to know about Simpson.”

“Our troubles will now begin,” Bill added. “But anyway, we’ll start in the morning. Shall we?”

“The sooner the better,” Woods answered.

The sun indicated six o’clock the next morning when Bill and Woods who had discarded his uniform for civilian clothes, were off for Forsyth.

Bill’s fertile mind had already evolved a plan which because of its very daringness and simplicity spelled success.

CHAPTER XVII

CLEVER WORK

“HALT, who goes there?”

“A friend,” was the reply. “Got a prisoner, too. Caught him acting suspiciously and reckoned I’d bring him along.”

The sentry eyed the man and the prisoner who was considerably younger, in fact, but a boy.

Undecided, he called for the sentry on the next post. The corporal of the guard also appeared upon the scene.

“What’s your name, friend?” the corporal asked.

“Streeter, Jim Streeter,” the man replied.

“What was this boy doing when you got him?”

“This Yank — at least I reckon he’s Yank — was down beyond. Well, he asked me where the Yankee army was, for one thing. I knew where they were, but then I also knew where you folks were, so I told him I’d show him. Pretty soon, I got his gun and then I made him prisoner.”

“Who are you, boy?”

“I come from Kansas. Haven’t any special business. Just thought I’d see where the Unionists are.”

“Did you come all the way from Kansas for that?”

The boy hesitated. He, it was evident, could not think of the answer.

“I guess we’ll hold you for a while. We’ll show you an army, but it won’t be the Yankee one. Come on, Streeter.”

The captain, after a few further questions, decided to follow the corporal’s

advice. The boy's very answers were condemning.

"Streeter," the captain turned to the captor, "you've kept your eyes open. It's good work. It's a wonder, though, you don't join the army. We need men like you."

"Well, I reckon, I might. Mind, if I stay around a while and decide?"

"Stay as long as you like," the captain answered and turned away. The corporal took the prisoner to the prison camp.

As he entered with him one of the prisoners looked up and saw the boy.

"Hello, Bill," he called. "How did they get you?" There was great astonishment voiced in the question. The corporal pricked up his ears. But the boy made no answer. Nor did the other prisoner inquire any further.

Assured beyond doubt that the boy was a Unionist he reported what he had heard to the captain.

As my readers have surmised, the prisoner was Bill Cody. Some may even have astutely imagined that the captor, Jim Streeter, was no other than George Woods.

Bill's plan had been so simple that it had gotten both of them into the Confederate camp. More than that, it left George Woods active, unsuspected, and on the alert to free them.

Sometime during the night Bill. was able to whisper his plan to Simpson. It was necessary to tell him as soon as possible for he was fearful that if Simpson saw Woods he would make some exclamation that would arouse suspicion. The possibility of that was remote, however, for the astute Simpson had realized quickly that something was in the wind after his first question to Bill.

"Sometime tomorrow, Woods is going to make his attempt. He will try to get the necessary weapons and also, if it is at all possible, he is to try to get horses."

"How are we to pass the sentries?" Simpson asked.

"By tomorrow night, he will know who the sentry is on guard at a certain point and will also know the one in front of this prison. He is going to ask for a permit

to leave the camp so that he can go home and say goodbye. You see, the captain has asked him why he doesn't join the Rebels. If he hadn't Woods would have offered himself. But he had to go home, of course, and say goodbye. That is necessary. He will try to secure a pass to leave the line. The rest will take care of itself."

It need not be supposed that this information was given to Simpson at one time. But the sum and substance of it as above stated took hours and was told in the merest of whispers.

"I reckon I'll join your army," Woods volunteered. "But I figure that the folks at home had best be told and so I'm going to tell them. Mind?"

The captain laughed, and glad to get the volunteer, gave him a pass at once.

"Be sure you get the countersign for the time you are leaving and returning. They change with every relief."

Streeter thanked him. Then he set to work finding out from the corporal who the sentry on post number seven would be that night and the next morning.

"If I leave now, I may get back tonight. Or perhaps I'll get back tomorrow morning. I reckon, I'd like to know who is there so that I don't find myself a dead volunteer."

"When are you going?" the corporal asked.

"Pretty soon, I'm in no hurry. And I haven't seen everything about here yet."

The corporal left him. In the next few hours, without seeming to hurry, Streeter had become acquainted with the guard who was to be at Post Number Seven, and had also found out who was to be in front of the prison camp. In the very first hour of his arrival he had posted himself as to where the horses were stabled. It was for this reason that he had picked Post Number Seven because of its proximity to the horses. He also managed to get inside the prison pen because as he put it very proudly:

"I'm waiting to see my prisoner."

There was no recognition from Simpson, although the daring Streeter grinned at

him.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE ESCAPE

SOMETIME in the dead of night Woods approached the sentry on guard at the prison camp.

He gave the countersign to the man on watch.

“Can’t get used to sleeping like this, as yet,” he remarked. “Did you have the same trouble at first?”

The friendly sentry nodded.

“A little,” he replied. “But now, I’m so sleepy, when the time comes, I’d sleep anywhere.”

Woods, (he need no longer be Streeter), watched his chance. He hated what he had to do but he wasted no scruples over it. Because of his tremendous strength, it had been decided that he should be. the captor and Bill the captive. He could do what had to be done, in the next fifteen minutes as few men could do it.

The startled sentry felt a powerful hand at his throat and another over his mouth. He could utter no sound. Woods strangled the man until he became unconscious. Taking no chances, he bound him and with his big bandanna he covered his mouth so that he could not make the slightest outcry.

“Well, friend, it’s rather shabby treatment, but you won’t be any the worse for it tomorrow,” he murmured. Donning the man’s cap he sauntered inside the camp.

The light of the moon showed through the open window and by it Bill and Simpson, who were watching saw him, rose and came forward.

“All’s well, friends of mine,” said Woods. “Now I must need have some conversation with our friend at Post Number Seven. The horses are over there. Both of you make your way there while I entertain him. Watch me, you can from where the horses are.”

The sentry at the post greeted him surlily. Woods, however, acted in so friendly a manner that he became somewhat mollified.

“I live over that way,” Woods offered. “I guess I’ll go tonight since I can’t sleep and try to get back tomorrow. Here is my pass.” And at the same time he gave the countersign.

The man turned to study the pass. Woods acted quickly. He clutched his throat and throttled the guard, preventing any outcry. He did not release his hold until he could feel the struggling form grow limp in his arms. Not having any other handkerchief to be used in the same manner as he had used the one he had, he was seriously considering the problem of using his shirt when Bill and Simpson came up, leading an extra horse.

“Don’t bother now about any outcries he may make,” said Bill. “Let’s be off.”

They had not gone more than a quarter of a mile when they heard loud shouts and shots. They put on extra speed.

“Well,” said Simpson, “we have some start, at any rate.”

“This feels rather natural,” Woods commented. “We three and trouble behind us.”

“Coming kind of fast though,” said Bill.

“Isn’t that part of the fun?” asked Simpson. “Let trouble come as fast as it will. It is for us to go just the least bit faster. Which isn’t saying how much it means to me to be free.”

“You have to thank Bill, here,” Woods told him.

“You saw what Woods did,” hotly retorted Bill. “And both he and Harrington would have been here long since, if Colonel Sigel had given permission.”

“My boy,” Woods declared sagely, “once upon a time three men came to a stone wall. There was a very rare bird on the other side which each was anxious to get. The wall was too high to climb, entirely too high. Number one decided it couldn’t be done. Number two hammered against the wall without succeeding. Number three studied the situation for a few moments and then imitated the cry

of the bird. Lo and behold, the bird came over the high wall. This is a simple story, all my own, but it brings out my point that the idea is the thing.”

“Was this Bill’s idea, Woods?” Simpson asked.

“He’s the one that got the bird,” replied Woods.

Through all this, the three skilled horsemen did not lessen the speed of their steeds. Side by side they rode, Bill and Woods glorying in the fact that they had been able to successfully execute their daring attempt at rescue.

“I reckon,” said Woods, with a trace of the mimicry in tone and attitude he had assumed before the Rebels, “our friends will be wondering as to how it all could have happened. About this time they are beginning to realize that it was all a hoax. I fear they will not have any respect for me.”

Another two hours’ ride brought them within General Fremont’s line. Then the three returned to Colonel Sigel’s division the next morning. Wood, and Simpson reported at once to the pleased commander.

Bill was greeted warmly by the officer, “Hope you come with us when they let you enlist, my boy.”

The week was ended when Bill returned to Leavenworth. He immediately called on Drose and told him what happened.

“Wish I had been with you,” Drose remarked enviously

CHAPTER XIX

BILL FOLLOWS HIS MOTHER'S WISHES

MUCH to Bill's delight, Davison had been able to arrange for his enlistment in the army. It needed only the consent of Bill's mother.

This, however, was not as easy as Bill had thought. Mrs. Cody had been ailing, she was very weak and she dreaded the fact that the war would swallow her son. She needed him in these last days of hers, for her death was but a matter of a short time. Bill, in many ways, was thankful for the fact that his duties left him with a good deal of time on his hands. For his mother meant much to him. The boy was not of demonstrative nature, yet the loyalty and devotion he held for his dear ones, came from the very innermost depths of his nature.

Regretfully, he gave up all hopes of joining the Union army. He decided he would follow the wishes of his mother. Her last days were not to be made miserable by him, he determined.

It may seem strange to our readers that Mrs. Cody, worrying over possible danger to her son from entrance into the war, should not have worried, doubly so and more, over the everyday dangers which came to him. And yet these dangers did not seem so terrifying to her; they did not have the dread significance that the war held for her.

As we reach the end of these chapters we come to a turning point in the life of Bill Cody. His next span, a period covered by the war — was full of even more dramatic incident. It was not fated that this boy should fail to be of active service to his country at such a time. He found opportunity to serve his country and he did it in his usual daring manner. He made hard tasks appear comparatively easy. As a member of that famous band which coped with lawless gangs of border ruffians he made a name for himself which even in those days of stress, of heroism, of great deeds, stood second to none. He it was, who volunteered to enter the ranks of the Southern army as a spy, when there was important need for information.

There was no period of Bill Cody's life, a life that held nothing but action and daring adventure, which was so full of incident and plot as the years he gave to

the war. The boy soon realized that he could best render service to his country as a scout, serving independently or in conjunction with kindred souls. His nature was such, his skill and his knowledge of the country so wide, that his actual worth as a scout was many times greater than it would have been as a soldier in the ranks. He realized that, but only after Davison and Majors had labored with him and had at last made it clear to him.

In closing this book, it is hard to resist the temptation to deal with these stirring days. However, the telling must needs be left for another time.

For those who are interested in the romantic history of Bill Cody, we promise another tale, dealing with the experiences of this boy as a Lone scout.

After all, dear readers, fiction and truth, as sages have remarked before, are oftentimes indistinguishable.

THE END