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ROUGH RIDING ON THE PLAINS

30 Years Ago. A Trooper's Story.

By ROBERT MORRIS PECK.

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In a few days after leaving the Big Bend we again in our old quarters at Fort Riley; but scarcely had we settled down to garrison duty when an order came for one company of cavalry to return back to the Arkansas to establish permanent camp in some convenient place near the center of the Kiowa's range and on the line of the Santa Fe trail, to protect mail and furnish what protection they could to travel.

This was unpleasant news, and as we contrasted in our minds the comfortable place we would have had in good quarters and light duty, with the discomforts of a winter on the plains, escorting mails, etc., each one sincerely hoped that his company would not be the one detailed to do it; but we were not kept long in suspense, for that evening at dress parade the order was published by the Adjutant detailing Capt. Stewart's company (K) for the unenviable task.

As we were to be obeying orders promptly, whether agreeable or otherwise, we soon had our best uniforms and other articles and property packed away to leave behind us, and were busy making preparations for the trip.

We take plenty of ration and feed and a few tools to build up some sort of temporary quarters by the time it gets to be cold weather, for we know the winters are pretty severe on the plains, and tents are but a poor protection from the piercing winds. We also take along a mowing machine and rake to put up hay for our horses and mules.

Our company headquarters will be left at Riley till their husbands can prepare quarters for them where we are going. The second day after getting the order we load up our wagons, saddle our horses, and make out of the fort, accompanied by a small train of six mule teams hauling our supplies.

Striking the Santa Fe road at Lost Springs, we make no incident worthy of note on the way out to the Arkansas. At the Big Bend we met our detachment of 40 men that had been left there to escort the mail and to protect the wagons to be relieved and allowed to go on into their cozy quarters at Riley. They reported having no trouble with the Indians from Coon Creek to the Santa Fe crossing, but had heard of some emigrants being murdered at points out of their range.

Leaving a detail of 10 men and a Sergeant, of which party I was one, to wait for the next mail from Independence, Mo., Capt. Stewart, with the rest of the company and train, moved on to the Arkansas. When the mail was delivered we were waiting for came up next day we found they were accompanied by an extra wagon hauling some men and material to the Santa Fe crossing, and on the way to wherever we established our winter camp. When we reached Pawnee Fork we found the company which had preceded us encamped in a sheltered spot, about three miles north of the main road, almost surrounded by timber, but having a good view of everything approaching for several miles around the camp being possible from observation.

Our little squad was here relieved and another detail sent to escort the mail as far as the Santa Fe crossing.

THE WINTER CAMP. Officers and men were now as busy as bees making all preparations we could to establish ourselves as comfortably as possible before "the cold, chilly winds of December" strike us, for it is now the fore part of November. Two parties of 10 men, each with non-coms., are kept going, escorting the mails; another detail of 10 men is sent down on the river bottom, about seven miles south of our camp, to cut hay, while the rest are busy building quarters, stables, etc.

We build the houses of sod, turned over with a breaking plow, cut into convenient lengths with shovels and laid up in walls like brick. For roofs we split slabs out of the timber and lay closely overhead to support a foot thickness of mud, which, when dry, forms a very effective roof, but which will certainly be a poor protection against rain. Our floors are the earth. Having no lumber, we hew and split out rough pieces of timber to make doors.

A few window-sashes were brought out from Riley, but as there were not enough of them for all the windows we need, for the rest we cut sashes of the big windows and cover them with canvas. We manage to find stone enough, by hunting over the country for several miles around, to build fireplaces and, by fastening up some old wagon-covers on the inside of the walls and overhead to keep the dirt from falling down on us, our quarters begin to look somewhat comfortable.

While building we still occupy our tents near by. Our traps are kept busy hauling sod, timber, hay, etc. Our hay camp is on the bank of the Arkansas about two miles west of the mouth of Pawnee Fork (near where the town of Larned, Kan., now stands). The Arkansas here is destitute of timber. There is an abundance of game around us, such as buffalo and antelope, and swarms of wild geese, cranes, brants and ducks along the river and adjacent sloughs; but we have little time now to hunt them. We kill enough, however, to keep us supplied with fresh meat. Wolves are very numerous, both big, gray and coyotes. Prairie-dogs abound in every direction, and in the creek (Pawnee Fork) there are beaver and otter.

THE ENEMY SIGHTED. During the daytime we keep but one sentinel on post, and he is posted at a point that commands a good view of the prairie south and west of us for several miles. One day, about a week after our arrival, the sentinel reported that he saw what seemed to be a party of mounted Indians crossing the prairie several miles south, between our post and the hay camp, going west.

The officers got out their glasses and took a look at them, but the distance and rolling ground in that direction prevented a clear view; there seemed, however, to be a party of 12 or 15.

out and had the dead Indians hauled to camp to have them identified. As soon as Atkins saw the bodies he knew them, and told us their names. He stated that these two Indians with their packs had been making a pilgrimage to Pawnee, the Kiowa Chief who was killed by Lieut. Bayard at Wat-ant Creek. They were near relatives of the dead Chief, and in accordance with Indian custom, had gone to his grave, and placed by his side his bow and arrows, shield, tomahawk, scalp, and other paraphernalia of an Indian brave. Atkins saw them at the ranch and talked to them, as did Peacock also, the day before they were killed. He saw them deposit the trinkets in Pawnee's grave, which is near the ranch, and they then started to return to the Kiowa camp, which is supposed to be somewhere west of us. When they first noticed that they were taken by surprise and inclined



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to run for it, but as that seemed to be a hopeless chance, we remained very open ground and we so near them—they seemed to determine to bluff it through, and continued to trot along, driving their pack animals in front, and, casting anxious glances over their shoulders at us as we glared up to them. They held their arms in their hands ready for instant use. One was a large, powerful built fellow, while the other was smaller and slim. The larger one had a rifle across his lap and a bow and quiver of arrows slung over his left shoulder. The other had no rifle, but held his bow in his left hand with an arrow fitted to the bow-string. He also had a full quiver at his left shoulder.

It is difficult for one who is not an experienced frontiersman and quite familiar with the different tribes to tell at a glance to what tribe an Indian belongs. If these two were Comanches, they would be safe, for a while, at least, until Bell could investigate their claim. To do this he would have to lead them to a place where he could find someone to identify them. We concluded that they were either Kiowas or Comanches, but could not decide which.

THE KIOWA AT BAY. Seeing that escape was impossible, as Bell seemed to expect that they would claim to be Comanches, in which case he told us not to hurt them, but if Kiowas he would kill them, each man with his own hand slung carbine and drawn his revolver, as the handiest arm for close work.

When we had approached within a few paces of the Kiowa, he asked us, "You Comanche?" "What was our surprise to hear the biggest Indian exclaim as he drew his bow and arrow and struck his breast with his hand: "No! Me Kiowa!"

We couldn't help admiring the grit of the Kiowa, and he, in turn, proclaimed himself a Kiowa when he must have known that that was his death sentence. Bell simply turned his head and said: "The big Indian understood the remark and raised his rifle to shoot the Lieutenant, but before he could pull the trigger three wounding arrows had struck him through his body, and he dropped off his horse dead.

The other Kiowa started to run, and as he did so turned in his saddle and shot his arrows back at us very rapidly, but not with much precision, as only one of our men was hit. Two horses also got arrow wounds, but were not seriously hurt.

The Indian did not get far before he, too, was brought down. He was not yet killed, but lay on the ground, and we saw as he could draw them from the quiver till someone put a Sharps carbine ball through him, when he fell over, gave a few convulsive kicks, and died.

The man who was shot by one of the arrows was pinned to his saddle—the arrow going through the fleshy part of his thigh and burying the head in the saddle-tree so firmly that the shaft had to be cut off just above the leg and the limb lifted off the piece of arrow, which was simply remarked, "All right," but as John Adkins, who personally knew every Kiowa in the tribe, had just come up from Peacock's Ranch, the Captain sent a team

This makes the crossing of Coon Creek a common camping-ground for most travelers on the "dry route." It must be remembered that there is no water on this route from Pawnee Fork to the Santa Fe Crossing, nor for many miles beyond. On this trip, as we approached the crossing of Coon Creek, and while yet several miles away, we caught sight of a white object, which soon proved to be a covered wagon, as we saw a yoke of oxen, with the yoke on, feeding around on the prairie; but no other sign of life. As we drove up to the still little camp, several coyotes left some strange-looking objects that were lying around the wagon on the ground, and looked off on the prairie, disturbed by our approach. What was our horror as we drove up to the wagon to discover that the strange objects that the wolves had been frightened away from were the naked and mutilated bodies of four white persons—two men, a woman and a boy about 12 years old!

All were scalped and had other marks of brutal butchery and mutilation, besides the blood-stained and bloody clothing of the wolves. The woman's body had been ripped open, and near one of the wagon-wheels, which was bespattered with blood, lay a small child, its face a mass of blood, which proved to be the body of a babe, which had been dashed against the wagon-wheel.

The bodies of the two men and boy had also been horribly butchered. Truly it was a sickening sight. Every bit of clothing had been torn or cut off the bodies, and those of us who had seen a part of similar instances of Indian headhunting before were busy in imagination portraying the probable outrages, indignities and tortures inflicted on these poor people before their final murder.

Knowing the customs of the savage wretches in such affairs, it was easy to imagine the agonizing scenes that had here been enacted. As we walked about the camp and examined the signs and evidences of the tragedy, there was little talk—all seemed dumb with horror. From the signs this was evidently a family of emigrants going to the gold region. Whether these four were all there had been a party of similar instances, but no terms for certain. If there had been another it would likely be a girl or woman, who had probably been carried off as a prisoner.

Knowing the Indian habits, the old hands assured us that they would not remember themselves with the care of men or small children, prisoners, and an old man was found in the wagon, a woman's or girl's) that was too small to have been worn by the dead woman.

While thought and conjecture were silent, we met and talked with many of the men, and with many venerable folks got out some tools, dug a hole large enough to hold all the bodies, gathered up the remains and buried them in the ground. It was interesting to notice that while this rough funeral ceremony was going on, nearly every man in the party seemed to have a long and vigorous conversation against everything eatable and drinkable in the Confederacy, and the latter was not always water, either.

As I previously stated, it was while hooding it over Kentucky that I was filled from a life that up to that time had been filled to the brim with soldierly rectitude. In one brief moment this was all changed through the machinations of another, and that other a mule-whacker. I wish to say by way of digression that I have recently seen this mule-skinner of the Cumberland State, where the forager revelled in all kinds of good things, from a Spring chicken in January to a copper still full of applejack. There my first depression was committed against the 4 people living south of what was then known as the Mason and Dixon line, so designated to divide the free from the slave States. This was the beginning of a long and vigorously-conducted campaign against everything eatable and drinkable in the Confederacy, and the latter was not always water, either.

Some of us were feeling ought not to be considered a weakness, but somehow strong men are generally ashamed to acknowledge this very human trait, and try to hide it, and it is really the evidence of a manly heart. We stopped here long enough to water and feed our teams and get some dinner, and then, after a short rest, we started on about 10 or 12 miles, making a "dry camp" on the prairie. We left the oxen and wagon of the murdered family where we found them, and we were probably taken possession of by the next travelers who passed that way.

That night as we sat around the little stove, and the fire was burning brightly, Riley, who they could be comfortably wintered, and he in good fix for a campaign after the Kiowas next summer. According to a detachment of 25 men of the 2d Inf. (from the companies of Capt. Lyon and Wessels) was sent out from our camp, with the balance of the company and all the horses (except six good ones that we were to keep to hunt buffalo with), would return to Riley.

I am one of the unfortunate 25 detailed to remain here and escort mails all winter. This arrangement separates me from my old bunk, my Jim Cupples, as he is to go back to Riley. While on escort we will ride in six mule wagons—eight or 10 men to the wagon—and travel the route from Pawnee to the mouth of the mails, which is a brisk trot, making 40 to 45 miles a day. Each wagon will carry, besides the men, plenty of grain for feed, and some of the best, and some wood (cut short and split into cord-wood), to be used in places where buffalo-chips are not to be had.

Our quarters and stables being finished, had stacked and other preparations about completed for making ourselves as comfortable as possible for the winter, our hay-makers were recalled from their camp on the banks of the Arkansas, and the Captain, with his party, taking the company horses, rolled out for Fort Riley. Before they started, however, the little herd of ponies and mules were sold at auction and the prize-money divided between the 12 men who were of that party.

Our little post has been named Camp Alert (since named Fort Larned). It is now the beginning of December, and still there are a few Kiowas and other graminis struggling along the road to the mountains. They travel in such small parties, so scattered, so exposed and so unprovided for defense, that it is generally an easy matter for the Indians to get away with them, and when we warn them of their danger it is often hard to make them realize that the blood-thirsty Kiowas are on the watch in earnest.

It is a wonder that any of them get through the range of the hostiles alive. Most of these gold-seekers are well armed, but being unacquainted with the treacherous tricks of the savages, they let the Indians "get the drop" on them. A few days after the departure of the company for Riley, I and nine other privates, under command of a Corporal, were detailed to escort a mail westward as far as the Santa Fe Crossing of the Arkansas.

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The paper has additional work to do—not to mention the expense—in conducting these contests, but it has enjoyment too. It delights in the belief that these contests brighten up our old comrades all along the line. Its editors have many a hearty laugh at the quaint conceits of the contestants. We print a few specimens that all may enjoy them.

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A number of comrades have cautioned us "not to send the money in thousand-dollar bills. Change is scarce around here."

"I enclosed find \$1 to extend my subscription one year, and enclosed find four dollars to extend it another year. If I get full value in another year's reading of just as I was about to strike down his colors, he put his helm hard to port and eluded my grasp. Realizing now that I was losing my vantage ground, and fast falling to win-ward, I unfurled my top-gallant sail, run up the spinnaker, cut the bowsprit, and spread the jibboom to the breeze. I ran along for a time with this spread of canvas, but found I was gaining but little on the turkey, so hoisted my royal mast, rattlings and all, and as it done, I believe, in extreme cases, I braced the yard-arm and let go the poop hatch; when this the black flag from her mast-head, with a full stretch of canvas to the breeze, bearing heavily down upon me. In plain English, the owner of the turkeys, an old man with a big club in his hand, and murder in his eyes, was close after me, yelling, "Let my turkeys alone, you thieving Yankee!" and a whole lot of other stuff that was very ungentlemanly.

The boys in the wagon train enjoyed the race immensely, and were yelling, "Run, young fellow; now you're got him; why don't you hit him over the head with your gun," and "Look out for the old man; he's right on you."

While this was going on some of the boys, who had sided with the old man, encouraged him by yelling, "Catch him, Johnny; hit him a wiack with your club," etc. I assure you there was an unlimited amount of the softest mixed up with the best. Reasoning desperate now, lest I should not only lose the turkey, but fall at the hands of the irate old sinner who was after me, I sprang forward, hit the robber over the head with my rifle, and he fell dead to make up his mind whether it was me, the old man, or "Billy Patterson" who had struck him, had him by the legs and was making pretty lively tracks for the wagon, "midday the cheer of the boys in the train, who were swinging their caps in the air at my success. My enemy, seeing I had gotten away with the turkey, threw up the sponge, so to speak, and abandoned the chase and the turkey also, and with a parting volley of words such as are never seen in Sunday School papers he landed on his heel and went toward his house.

Taking the turkey to camp, we weighed him that evening, when he tipped the beam at 72½ pounds. Yes, we smiled a little, too, at first, but when we remembered that he had weighed the turkey on the scales belonging to the Commissary, we knew it wasn't such a big turkey after all. Everything weighed on the Commissary scales had to be divided by four to get the true weight. Four day's rations never lasted longer than one, and the soldiers had to forage off the enemy for the other three.

Treasury Receipts for Monday, May 27, 1901, \$2,240,904.63.

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Recollections of a Forager.

By JAMES P. SHAW.

I still have a vivid recollection of my first foraging experience. It was down in the old Corn Cracker State, where the forager revelled in all kinds of good things, from a Spring chicken in January to a copper still full of applejack. There my first depression was committed against the 4 people living south of what was then known as the Mason and Dixon line, so designated to divide the free from the slave States. This was the beginning of a long and vigorously-conducted campaign against everything eatable and drinkable in the Confederacy, and the latter was not always water, either.

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The most that can be said at this time, is that all guesses sent in have been carefully kept in a fire-proof safe as if they were thousand-dollar bills, and that they are now being closely compared to find the winners.

The closest guesses win—whichever makes them. That is the only rule there is in awarding prizes. The National Tribune is abundantly devoted and grateful to its army of patrons, who sustain it so generously, but it has no individual favorites. The humblest patron is absolutely on a level with the grandest in these contests.

The paper has additional work to do—not to mention the expense—in conducting these contests, but it has enjoyment too. It delights in the belief that these contests brighten up our old comrades all along the line. Its editors have many a hearty laugh at the quaint conceits of the contestants. We print a few specimens that all may enjoy them.

AN OLD MAN WITH A BIG CLUB IN HIS HAND AND MURDER IN HIS EYES WAS CLOSE AFTER ME."

How it happened. I had been feeling quite unwell for some days, and when the column took up its line of march, the Captain told me to file in the company wagon. At this period of the war—each company was provided with one wagon and ambulance, the former to transport the company plunder, the latter to haul the sick. Besides, there were three wagons at regimental headquarters, for the use of the Colonel and his staff. We traveled in style in those days. What a coming down there was one year later, when but one wagon and three ambulances were allowed to the regiment, and a little later on this number was all

conferred, was a flock of Thanksgiving turkeys. Turning round in his saddle, the mule-skinner said to me, "Young fellow, jump out and get one of them 'ere turkeys—get the biggest one—and be quick about it," too.

Jumping out of the wagon, as ordered, I jumped my gun with me. I was soon over the fence and in hot pursuit of the turkeys. I singled out the largest, and went for him. Seeing my preference was for him, the gobble left his companions and started across the field with all sails set, and I in his wake with visions of turkey for supper—or dinner, if you would rather have it that way—impelling me onward. I pressed him closely, hoping soon to fowl his rider, when he would fall or

easy prey to my voracious appetite; but

easy prey to my voracious appetite; but