

BRINGING IN THE RENEGADES



By Captain E. A. ("Jack") Hart

Drawing by W. Herbert Dunton

DURING General Hazen's administration of Indian affairs, he was very successful in persuading marauding Indians to come into the reservations. They had been driven from one hunting ground to another, and for a long time had fought at a disadvantage, and were gradually coming to the conclusion that it might be better to live at their ease on the reservation, with good Texas beef and Government blankets furnished them, than to depend upon the buffalo for food and covering. Already these animals were far more difficult to kill than when I first came into the country.

There still remained at large and hidden somewhere in the Southwest a band, originally Comanches, reinforced by outlaws from various tribes, each member of which had been guilty of some act for which he knew he deserved punishment from the white man. These were known as the "renegades," and while they were at large no one was safe. They were a constant menace, especially to the settlers coming into that part of Texas bordered by the Red River of the South.

In order to make the terms of our treaty with the Indians good, it was deemed expedient to forgive the bad ones, and to take all into the agencies on the same footing. This was hard for the Indians to understand; they feared that, once in the white man's power, they would receive the punishment they knew they deserved; so the guilty ones hid.

After vainly trying to communicate with these culprits, the Government offered a substantial reward to anyone who would go out and induce them to come in and be good. No one volunteered. The reward was doubled; but still no one seemed to want the job. It was repeatedly increased, until it amounted to a tidy sum and was open to anyone willing to try for it.

Didn't Want Any Boys

I WAS ambitious to go into the cattle business, and this reward, together with my savings, would enable me to make a fine start; so I determined to try it. One morning I rode over to headquarters and told General Hazen that I should make the effort. I saw an incredulous smile on his face as he looked me over and said, "Jack, my boy, isn't this a pretty big undertaking?"

But so anxious was he to get them in, that he listened to me. I told him I thought I could succeed where an older man might fail, because the Comanches looked upon me as their "Good Medicine" and seemed to think that in some manner I belonged to them. He reluctantly gave his consent. I was just twenty years old, and my fair com-

plexion and yellow hair made me look even more youthful; but what I lacked in age I tried to make up in equipment. I had a good horse and saddle, and was dressed in a full suit of beaded buckskin. In my belt was a pair of Colt's revolvers, and I carried a short Winchester; for brave attire is by no means unimportant when you wish to make a good impression upon Indians.

When it became noised about the agency that at last some one was going after the outlaws, it excited interest, and many were the expressions of doubt. More than one old and knowing head was shaken over the prospect of my return, and many were the stories told of the Indians' treachery to white men who had gone among them; but my mind was thoroughly made up.

Out on the Journey

MY course lay northwest, toward the western end of the Staked Plains and the main Canadian River. Passing over the west end of the Wichita Mountains, the view was clear for many miles. The country was rolling, and looked as though it would not be at all difficult to cross; but the ravines were very deep, making it necessary to keep on the divides, and often I rode many miles out of my way on account of them. I traveled all day, and at night camped where my horse could graze upon the rich gramma grass that abounds in that section of country. I did not dare to make a fire, for at night it attracts attention; but at my supper of hardtack and lay down to sleep. Just at daybreak I gathered some dry twigs, and with my sheath knife dug a hole in the ground. I then set three stakes about this hole, spread my blankets around them, and sat down inside and made a small fire, over which I boiled coffee and cooked bacon. This, with hardtack, made a good breakfast.

The two days following passed without interest, except that I saw a herd of buffalo, which seemed to have been lately disturbed, probably by Indians, though none was in sight.

On the morning of the fourth day I hid my horse in a ravine and climbed a high hill to look about me. Away to the north I saw "smokes," and as my eyes became accustomed to the distance I counted many of them. This, I knew, meant Indians. Here I watched all day, and as they did not move I knew I had located a camp; but what camp was it?

At dusk I saddled my horse and, noting well the direction, picked my way among the ravines nearly

all night. Finally I caught the smell of smoke, and occasionally saw a bright spot in the sky, as some squaw livened up the fire. Evidently they thought themselves safe; they would have been more cautious had they not felt certain that there were no soldiers near.

Dismounting in a hollow, I tied my horse's head up high so he could not whinny in case he saw another horse, and started on foot for a good look at the camp. It was difficult to approach, and by the time I had made an estimate of the number of Indians in it day was breaking, and it was necessary to return to my horse.

Now came the hardest part of the plan I had mapped out, and that was to hide myself and horse for the day, and keep my nerve with me until time to act. A thorough knowledge of Indian character and customs, gained by nearly five years' experience among them, had taught me what I now stood in need of,—patience and nerve, and plenty of each.

An Indian admires what a white man would call impudence; and while they will chase, kill, and scalp a poor devil caught out in the open country, they will treat him very differently if he walks boldly into their camp and proceeds to make himself at home. The laws of hospitality are well defined with them, and, though they are born thieves, they will not steal from a visitor in their camp, and they expect a man within their camp to help himself to as much as he wants in the way of food. Should they borrow anything from another camp, they always return it as they have agreed; but if they take a particular fancy to the borrowed article it had better be guarded in the future.

All day long I studied over these things and cut grass for my horse with my sheath knife; for my plan was to enter their camp before dark. Once during the day an Indian boy who was herding some ponies came quite near; but he rode away without discovering me.

Into the Enemy's Camp

THE day was a long one; but evening came at last. I saddled up, mounted my horse, and, throwing my blanket round myself, Indian fashion, with my broad brimmed hat hidden under it, I rode out into the opening. In the dusk it would have been hard to distinguish me from an Indian, and thus I rode boldly into their camp.

No one noticed me at first, and even the dogs did not take the trouble to bark at me. When about the middle of the camp I dropped my blanket across my horse, put on my hat, and called out "How, how!" Immediately there was a stir among the men, and all grunted with surprise. I dismounted and made signs

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