

hundred yards was too narrow a margin for security.

A rifle cracked, there in the rear, and then others, in an irregular volley. No harm was done; but Mark heard the vicious singing of the balls as they flew about him. Dorothy was in greater danger than he. Knowing this, he turned and caught her with one arm about her waist. "Let go!" he ordered, and swung her to a seat in front of the saddle horn, keeping his hold upon her there, clasping her against him, sitting erect to make a shield for her with his big body.

They were nearing the end now. He could see the figures of the men standing by the wagons with rifles in hand. The pursuers were keeping on with their haphazard firing. At the very last he was hit; his hat was carried away; he felt a sharp sting of pain where the ball cut along his scalp, and then the warm blood flowed over his cheek. Then from the camp he heard a command shouted in Cannon's huge voice: "Fire!" and forty rifles dashed together. A cheer mingled with the echoes that rolled back from the hills. The Sioux had followed too far. Turning for one quick backward look, Mark saw that they had swerved from their course, sweeping off to the left in a wide circle. A wounded pony was plunging upon its knees, struggling to rise, and three bodies were tumbled shapeless on the sand of the trail. And here was safety.

The hasty camp had been well contrived. The wagons were drawn together at the side of the trail in a half circle, its base opening toward the river, whence little danger was to be feared. Against the wheels and in the spaces between the wagons were piled boxes and bales taken from the loads, and within this rough barricade the oxen and horses had been gathered and secured. At the center of the camp were the women and children, encircled by piles of freight. The place was strong for defense; the faces of the men were alight with eager excitement.

Mark's wound was slight. When he had given Dorothy, white and half-fainting, into Mrs. Cannon's arms, he went to the river and washed the blood away; then returned to where the men lay, behind the barricade, and told of what had befallen. Frick heard him in silence; but Cannon was less contained. Moisture stood in beads upon his face; the cord-like veins of his neck and forehead were swollen, and his coarse red beard bristled. While Mark spoke, the giant was chanting a string of rugged oaths, as though he were saying over a litany.

"I'm going back to see what's become of Jack," Mark said at the last. "He's afoot out there somewhere." But Frick shook his head.

"No," he said. "What good would it do, in the dark? If they haven't found him, he'll take care of himself; and if they have found him, one man couldn't do anything, nor twenty, likely. We can't spare enough. It's hard; but here's where we're needed most. We're not done with them yet. They'll come back again before morning. All we can do is to wait."

But the waiting proved weary. A tiny fire was kindled at the river's edge, for making coffee; then the blaze was extinguished for safety, leaving the camp in total darkness. After the hasty supper, eaten where they lay upon the ground, the men fell into a watchful quiet, with a curious commingling of courage and fear. Only two or three of the company had had experience with savage warfare; for the others, anything that might come would be a surprise. As the hours passed, here and there one drowsed lightly upon his arms, and now and then there was a fitful murmur of speech; but outside the camp the gloom and silence were profound.

Midnight came and Forrester had not appeared. Mark's anxiety for the boy was mounting high, yet when he compelled himself to think coolly of the chances, he felt that he was impotent to aid. What had befallen, these two days, had put a new and curious aspect upon the things that made his life; his hopeful contriving, his staunch desires, had come to naught, will and purpose seemed numbed. Ever and again, as he lay in his place, there arose before him the picture of Dorothy and Forrester, as he had seen them standing together in the heart of the evening solitude, and the image stung him with passionate pain. Once he crept softly to the place where the women and children were sheltered, hopeful of a word with Dorothy; but he could not find her in the darkness and after a moment he returned to his post and lay down again to his dull waiting. His nerves were strung to the point of snapping; every least sound—the tramping of the beasts near by, or the stir of the rising night wind in the dried grass—made him start.

Suddenly, past midnight, one of the men near him gave a startled cry:

"Look there—west! They're going to burn us out!"

Two or three hundred yards away, and to the windward, showed a flare of yellow flame in the wild grass, rising lazily, then bending lightly before the breeze. Then another appeared, and another, spreading out slowly until they were joined in a low line, gathering in volume momentarily, making a little isle of light in the enveloping darkness. The danger was apparent enough; the grass at the riverside, where the wagons were, was thick and tall and powder dry.

"Quick boys!" Frick shouted. "Pull up the grass around the wagons, outside here—quick!"

They set to work with all their strength, baring a strip of earth at the western side of the camp, to make a barrier against the approach of the fire. Some of the women came from their shelter to help, and others brought sheets of canvas, soaked from the river, piling them where they could be used for beating out the flames.

There was not much time for preparation. The wind had caught the fire at once, sweeping it forward with a rush. The glow had turned the darkness into a ruddy twilight, through which the hills and plain showed spectrally, the bodies of the laboring men coming out in sudden relief against the white background of the wagons. From beyond the fire rifles began to crack, and the balls sang close, all around; yet the men kept to their work heroically to the last, tearing at the tinders herbage, until the flames burst roaring upon them, and they were driven back against the wagons, blinded and choking. But after a moment they caught up the drenched sheets of canvas and were at work again, whipping madly at the fire in a hand-to-hand struggle.

It was soon over. The feathery grasses burned out almost in a flash, and there was left only a broad bed of embers, glowing with a sullen red. The wagons had escaped harm, save one, where a tongue of flame was licking along the edge of the canvas. One of the men sprang upon a wheel and ripped the burning strip away with his knife; then, with a choking cry, he threw his arms above his head and fell backward headlong to the sand, lying in a huddled, convulsed heap, with an iron-pointed arrow through his throat, the blood flowing from between his lips in a crimson flood.

"Look out!" Frick screamed. "Here they come! Get back!"

They leaped to their places within the barricade, seizing their rifles. Across the burned space from the hills, like an aftermath of the fire, swept a horde of the Sioux, a full hundred, flying like dusky phantoms, yelling like a chorus of demons.

"Wait, wait!" Frick shouted, his voice shrill with frenzy. "Aim and shoot low. Wait! Now—Fire!"

Then came the shock and terror of chaos. The effect of the close-range volley was murderous, as the men knew by the screams of mortal agony. But the Sioux were too near and the charge too impetuous to be checked. With inhuman rage the line flung itself against the barricade, ponies and men in inextricable confusion, with a hellish din of outcry and the flash and rattle of rifle shots. The cooler-headed ones amongst the defenders lay in their place of retreat beneath the wagons, crouched to the ground, loading and firing as they could, careful that every shot should count to the utmost; but the fury of the onset drove others out of their shelter, back toward the center of the camp, where they stood together fighting, every man for himself. No order was possible; no single voice could be heard.

The barricade had withstood the shock perfectly, save in one place, where an emigrant's wagon was overturned, making a gap in the line. Through this gap a half dozen of the savages plunged with reckless daring, falling upon the group within; and there the fighting was almost breast to breast. Lying where he was, with a conscious deliberation that even then surprised him, Mark leveled his rifle against one of the ponies and fired. The beast reared and fell heavily, crushing his rider beneath him. Again he fired, and another of the riders dropped his uplifted arms and dropped forward upon his pony's neck, clinging there limply for a moment before he fell to the ground and lay inert. Those who remained of the mad band turned and escaped as they had come.

The attack swerved off then, passing swiftly to the eastward; but there the horde wheeled and was back again, galloping furiously along the wagon line, the Sioux lying upon their beasts' sides, firing beneath the ponies' throats. Three times they passed thus. But the men of the camp had gathered again to their places, and at each charge their rifles told.

The body of the freighter who had first fallen still lay outside the line of the wagons. At the last onset, one of the Sioux, with insane daring, rode close, flung himself from his pony, and stooped over the dead man, drawing his knife. Mark saw and scrambled to his feet; but Cannon was before him. Wholly heedless of danger he had leaped from his concealment into the open, flinging himself upon the Indian with a deep-throated bellow, casting his huge arms about the naked body and crushing it against his own. One mighty forearm was set across the dusky throat, and the painted face bent backward, grinning, the eyes starting—back and back until the neck snapped with

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a hideous sound. The giant threw the lifeless body from him and stood erect with the roar of an enraged beast.

Another volley from the rifles beneath the wagons, and the Sioux fled, yelling, firing at haphazard, becoming mere vague shapes in the hanging smoke-haze, and disappearing. Then fell silence, save for the stir of the wind, that fanned the lingering embers of the burned grass to a dull glow.

For a long time Mark lay, his face buried upon his arms, his heart pounding, his brain reeling. Voices began speaking about the camp, but he heard no word distinctly. By and by he arose and staggered to the women's shelter.

"Dorothy!" he called. "Dorothy!" She came to him at once. He took her cold hand in his, holding it against his breast, bending above her across the low barrier.

"Thank God!" he breathed. She did not speak, but put her arms about his neck, clinging to him in a passion of sobs. Presently he released himself gently.

"I'm going to see what's become of Jack," he said. "I can't stand this any longer. Dorothy—" He took her bowed head between his hands, turning her face to his with a tender strength, then stooped and kissed her upon the lips. "Good-bye!" he whispered, and left her.

He crept stealthily to the river bank, avoiding being seen, and followed the water's edge downstream for a little distance, until he had passed beyond the camp. Then he threw off his boots and entered the water, wading out until he had found his depth, and there suffering himself to drift with the rapid current, listening keenly, keeping a sharp watch upon the bank.

Three hundred yards below he saw a figure moving through the willow thickets toward the camp. Swimming closer, he made sure that it was Forrester; but he was cautious. He withdrew again toward the middle of the stream, until his feet touched bottom near a small island that was covered with scrub growths. Then he called across the water quietly:

"Jack! Jack!" He saw the figure pause and stand in an attitude of listening.

"Jack!" he called again, with greater confidence. "Out here! This is Mark."

The answer was a shot. He felt that he was struck—somewhere—he could not be sure where. There was no agony of pain, but only a dull consciousness, as of one half awake, that some dreadful thing had come upon him. He sank once beneath the water; then with a despairing strength he waded toward the island—falling—crawling on hands and knees through the shallows, dragging himself out upon the sand and lying there at his length, closing his eyes wearily.

Once he awoke, chilled through and through, yet wanting the will to stir, and sinking back into unconsciousness. And again, half aroused, he wondered if he dreamed or if he heard in reality the rattle of rifles and the lusty noise of battle; but ere he could be sure, oblivion fell upon him.

(To Be Continued.)

FAIRIES OF HALLOWEEN.

Continued from Page One.

view; and certain species are able to transform themselves at will, assuming the shape of animals not infrequently. In Germany the Little People are of a decidedly mischievous turn, and do a good deal of petty thieving. With the Trolls of Scandinavia it is much the same, and a story is told of one instance where a goblin of this variety asked a young man, in a casual way, to deliver a letter for him. The missive coming open accidentally before it was delivered, the bearer was nearly drowned; for the wicked dwarf had inclosed an entire lake in the letter, with the intention to destroy somebody he did not like. To prove the tale, the lake in question may be seen to this day, near the village of Kund, in Norway.

The elf-dwarfs of Germany dwell mostly underground. They are wonderful workers in gold and silver, as well as in other metals; and miners frequently hear the sound of their tiny hammers in the depths of the mountains. Some of them are known as Kobolds, and from them the metal cobalt gets its name. But the most dreaded of the goblin miners is found in Wales, and is called the "Ladder Dwarf." He is a malicious hunchback of frightful appearance, and finds amusement in kicking the rungs out of ladders just before an accident occurs, so that the men are unable to escape.

In America we do not appear to have any Undines or other water sprites, such as frequently inhabit streams and lonely pools in Europe. They have been known to carry off children, and even women, on occasions. Then there is, in Denmark, another very strange species of elf-woman, who has a youthful and very beautiful appearance. But she is always careful to keep her face toward anybody to whose view she presents herself, because in the rear she is scooped out and hollow like a trough.

The Pennsylvania "Dutch" have brought with them to this country a wealth of fairy lore. In the neighborhood of their communities there are always plenty of goblins. And, if you ask them about the matter, they will tell you many mysterious and wonderful things you never heard of before—for example, about the spirits that dwell in the Christmas tree. In every Christmas tree there is a fairy, who brings good luck into the house, and who survives, bestowing a blessing upon the Yuletide festivities, until the tree has withered. Then she dies.

The Rocky mountains are full of goblins, some of them the oddest and most gruesome ever imagined. But nearly all of them seem to be of Indian origin; at all events, white folks know comparatively little about them. One species is a flying head—simply a head with wings, that is to say—and is rather terrific. To the aborigines of this country (as is usually the case with savages) there was more than a suggestion of the supernatural behind everything that went to make up their environment. But the gnomes and fairies of the Indians are being buried in the graves of the fast-vanishing copper-colored people; and, if we ourselves would maintain an adequate supply of such Little Folks, we must encourage importations of them from the Old World, which, largely by reason of the great antiquity of the races there established—races whose folk-lore traditions date back many thousands of years—is productive to an unlimited extent of all sorts of supernatural material.

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