



He came up and stood here as she said.

"We are too mistrustful and suspicious," replied the father as he looked from the wagon, still in sight, to the renegades searching the trail. "No one would dare do it with us with the camp only a few miles away, and the man will be back with the pins before sundown anyhow."

He spoke thus to encourage himself as well as his wife and daughter, but neither of the three felt any less anxious. The settler looked to his Winchester to see that it was in order, removed the bridle from the horse and that they might feel while he waited and then stood on the alert for what might happen.

The sun was only a handbreadth above the horizon when the three renegades returned to the wagon and exhibited one of the pins, which they claimed was found a full mile away. A cry was now got in position, the heavy body of the wagon raised so that the wheels could be slipped on the axle-tree and then one wheel was made secure.

The settler and his family watched the three men closely while they worked, but they seemed intent only on helping the people out of their trouble. "We may be rough in looks and had in spots," exclaimed Bob as he wiped the sweat from his forehead with his buckskin sleeve, "but we ain't mean 'nuff to abandon a lone family to the tomahawks of the Indians."

"It is very brave and generous on your part, and I thank you a thousand times over," replied Bob. "I wouldn't have believed that the train people would act so selfishly."

"I reckon we've been paroled out as the worst of the lot, but that don't make us no. I don't claim we are saints, but I do say that when the pinch comes we can be depended on as white men. There comes Pete, and I reckon your troubles are about over."

It was dark now, and the man called Pete was not seen until within a few rods of the wagon. He dismounted on coming up, handed Brown a couple of linchpins and said the train had gone into camp at the river. Brown walked to the wheel which needed the pin and was placing it in position when an sudden great light flashed before his eyes and he sank to the ground in a heap, having been struck on the head with an ax which one of the men pulled from the wagon.

While the women had been nervous and anxious, the arrival of the man with the pins seemed an act of good faith, and they were congratulating themselves on soon rejoining the train when Bob sprang up in front of them, seized one with either hand and said: "Come out of this! We've got ourselves with you!"

"Daniel—father!" shrieked mother and daughter, but there was a laugh from all the men, and Bob pulled the women to the ground with the laughing remark: "Daniel has got particular business on hand just now, and he begs you will excuse him!"

For a moment the women were helpless with surprise and fear. They saw the body of husband and father stretched on the sod, and both realized that he had been struck dead by the renegades. As they stood trembling and helpless, two of the men began hitting the wagon to the wagon, a third was busy robbing the dead, while the fourth looked to the wheels to see if all was right.

"Brave men and women think fast and plan quick. When life is in peril one must not give way to feeling or grief. Both women knew that murder had been done, and both fully realized the plot of the renegades, but after the first shock of surprise and the first moment of weakness their courage returned.

"Run!" It was the mother who whispered the word as she noticed that all the men were busy for the moment. They sprang away together, but separated almost at once, and were hidden by the darkness before being missed. "Jack, you stay by the horse—the rest come along!" shouted Bob, and neither woman was a hundred yards away when pursuit began to be made.

"What did you do today?" asked the father, looking at his wife and daughter. "I was out with the wagon, and I saw the man who was with the pins. He was a white man, and he was very brave and generous on your part, and I thank you a thousand times over."

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