WAKALONA

The Capture and Rescue of the Princess of the Platte.

BY CY WARMAN.

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The old engineer and I had dragged our chairs round to the south side of the hospital and were enjoying, as well as the weak and wounded could be expected to enjoy, the mountain air and the morning. June was in the mountains, but the snow was still heavy on the high peaks. The yellow river, soiled by the Leadville smelters, and still freighted with floating mush ice splashed by on its way to Pueblo and the Terre Caliente. The little gray, glad-faced surgeon came along presently and told Frank that he might go home on Saturday, and that made the old engineer, usually a little mite cranky and irritable, as happy as a boy about to be loosed from school.

"Say, Frank," I began, "have you ever known an Indian girl who could, by any stretch of imagination, be considered handsome?"

"Yes," he said thoughtfully, placing his well foot on the top of the railing and frowning from mere force of habit. "We were laying at North Platte at the time, that being the end of the track, and there I knew a Pawnee maiden who was really good to look upon. I never knew her name—we called her 'Walk-a-lone' at first, because she seemed never to mix up with the other squaws—but when Slide McAlaster, the head brakeman on the construction train, began to make love to her he named her Walalona, which he thought a more fitting title, inasmuch as she had already been called by Colonel Cody the princess of the Platte.

"Walkalona's father, Red Fox, was one of the bravest of the Pawnee scouts, and his daughter was naturally something of a belle among her people. She was tall, tawny, graceful, willowy and wild. It was a long time before Slide, big, blonde and handsome, as he was, could gain the confidence of the stately princess. It was months before she would allow him to walk with her, and even then the feathered head of a jealous buck could always be seen peeping from the high grass and keeping constant watch over the girl. Wakalona, like the other women, worked in the fields when there were any fields to be worked, and at other times made herself useful about her father's tent. Her mother was dead. She was the only child her father had and he was very proud of her. In a battle between the Sioux and the Pawnees, near Ogallalla, the Sioux had captured Wakalona and her father and Buffalo Bill had rescued her, almost miraculously, from four of their foremen, three of whom they had slain. After that the Sioux had marked Red Fox and his daughter as their own, and many lures had been set to ensnare them. At North Platte Red Fox had planted a little field of corn, and it was here, when the sun was low, that Slide used to woo the dark-eyed princess of the Platte. I used to watch her working in the field, and when we whistled she would always pause in her labors and look up to make sure that it was the whistle of the 49, although she never looked up for the whistle of any other engine. I think as she began to lose her heart to McAlaster that she came to know the sound even of the bell and the rattle of the spring-hangers on the old work engine. 'Jim' was McAlaster's real name. We called him Slide because he could never set a brake, if he used both hands, without twisting it up so tight that the wheels would slide, so marvelously strong were his long, sinewy arms. When we were coming into the Platte on a summer's evening Slide used to jump off the engine, where he always rode, open the switch, close it behind the caboose and then stroll over into the little corn field where Wakalona worked.

"Now she always knew he was coming, but, like her white sisters, she liked to play that she didn't, and when he would steal up behind her and catch her in his arms (if no one was looking) she would start and shudder as naturally as a country school ma'am.

"We went in the ditch one day. Slide had his ankle sprained and was obliged to ride in that evening on the caboose. I whistled, as usual, for the station and in the twilight saw the Indian girl still working in the field and waiting for the sweet surprise for which she had learned to wait. As we pulled in over the switches I glanced out into the field again, feeling sorry for Slide and for his sweetheart as well, but now she was nowhere to be seen. When we had made the big brakeman comfortable in the hospital tent he signaled me ahead, and when I bent over him he pulled me down and whispered 'Wakalona,' and I knew what he meant. I found her father and told him that the brakeman had been hurt and asked him to allow his daughter to see the sufferer in the surgeon's tent. Red Fox was much surprised. We had been an hour late coming in that evening, it was new dark, and Wakalona had not been seen by any of her people since the setting of the sun. I told the warrior that I had seen her working in the field as we were nearing the station, and now, when I looked again a moment later she was gone.

"With a start the brave chieftain threw up his hands, and then controlling himself with a great effort, he signed to me and I followed him out into the field. The Indian put his face close to the ground, and when he straightened up he looked all about him and said: 'Sioux.' I brought a white light from the locomotive and by the light of it the wily Indian made out that two of the hated tribe had slipped up behind the helpless girl and seized her and carried her away. Presently he brought a blade of corn to me and upon it there was a tiny drop of blood, and yet he insisted that his daughter had not been killed. Later he assured me that she had not been carried, but had walked away, taking a different direction from that taken by the Sioux. Now I saw it all. She had heard our whistle and while she waited for her lover the panther-like Sioux had stolen upon her.

"What mental anguish must have been hers when she realized that instead of the protecting arms of her fair god, the arms of murderers were around her. Love, like the locomotive, is a great civilizer; Wakalona had tasted the joy of love, and life had become dear to her. The past, to her, was veiled in dark mystery, the future was little better, but already she had begun to feel that beyond it all there must be a brighter and better world. Once she had asked McAlaster about the future and he, touched by the earnestness of her nature, had told her in his own way a story his mother had told to him many a time—the story of the Christ. 'Think of a big awkward clown like me,' said Slide, 'trying to unravel the mysteries of the future—trying to convert this white-souled woman who, without knowing it, has been the means of making me a better man.'

"I've noticed all along, though, that love of a good woman always makes a man gentler, braver and better.

"When Red Fox had explained to me that Wakalona had not been killed, but had wandered away, I urged him to call the scouts and search the plains for her, but he shook his head. 'It is true that my child has not been killed,' he said sadly, 'but she is dead. It is true that she still walks the earth, but she is dead to me and to all her people,' and the great brave bowed his head in silent sorrow.

"Then I remembered having heard that an Indian who had lost his scalp was looked upon as one demented or dead, and I knew then what had happened to be Princess Wakalona.

"How best to break the news to poor McAlaster was a question over which I pondered on my way back to the camp. He was strong and sensible. He had seen many a comrade pulled out of a wreck mangled almost beyond recognition. He had been in more than one Indian fight, but he had never lain helpless upon a stretcher and listened to a tale such as I might tell, and I would not tell it. I'd lie first, and so I did. And while I framed a story of how Wakalona had gone that very day to visit a neighboring camp, the poor princess wandered over the prairie. All night she walked the trackless wilds, and when the stars paled laid down upon the damp earth to sleep. She knew that she was expected to die—that she ought to die, but she shunned death. Not from any dread of it, but for the love of life. No doubt she fully intended to die, but she would put the thought of it by for a little longer and dream of the pale-faced brave. Ah, he might love her still, who could tell, for the white people were so strange. She slept and doubtless dreamed of the little field, of her father, of the twilight time and of the sweet surprise of her lover's arms about her, and then she started up suddenly, putting her hand to her head and the recollection of her misfortune made her heart sad, and soon she slept again.

"When she awoke the sun was high in the heavens. She was hungry and thirsty. The blood had dried in her midnight hair, and now she went down to the river to drink and bathe her fevered face. Then she sat by the river for a long time, trying to make us her mind to die, but she could not. There was a certain amount of mystery about the river, and she liked to look upon its quiet face. Where did it come and where was it going. Then, in her wild way, she likened her life to the river. Where did she come from and where was she going? She couldn't make it out. Only she remembered that her teacher, the brakeman, had said something about another world beyond the sky; but he was still in this world, and she lothed to leave it, and so she sat all through the long summer day with her hands locked over her knees, rocking to and fro, half crooning and half moaning:

"When the great red sun is half in the sky,
And half in the earth, then the dead must die."

"She knew that she was counted among the dead by her people, and if she returned to them she would be crowned in this river when the sun went down.

"Yes, it was clearly her duty now to die, and she would drown herself at the set of sun. Having reconciled herself to her fate, she fell asleep, and when she awoke the sky was all studded with stars. She had slept over the death time, and now must wait another sunset. She went down to the river and bathed her face. O! the mystery of the river; where did it come from and where was it going? Would it bear her back to her lost lover? No, it was flowing toward the morning, and would carry her farther away. She turned away, haunted by the conviction that she had no place in this world, for she had heard them sing in the death chant:

"The sadows lie upon the shore,
The dead shall walk the earth no more."

"And yet she could not put out of her heart the longing to live, and, setting her face from those she loved, she wandered out over the starlit plain. All night she tramped through the sagebrush with never a pause for rest or sleep, and when the red sun swung out of the earth she tramped on and on. The sun poured its pitiless rays upon her wounded head, her soiled mantle trailed upon the dewy earth, her tired feet were torn and bleeding, and yet to all these ills she gave no thought. Vaguely now she remembered that she had a fixed purpose, a certain duty to perform, and that was to be the end of all. She must not lose sight of the river, but even now when she looked for it the river was not to be seen. Her lips were parched, her throat seemed to be burning. The wide waste o'er which she wandered lay quivering in the white glare of the noonday sun. Away at the outer edge of this shipless sea the gray air trembled, her brain whirled, she swooned and fell to the earth.

"The cool night wind was about her when she came to herself again, but she could remember but dimly the events of the past, and so, half dazed, she wandered on. Late in the afternoon she came to a little station where there was a lone operator and a water tank. The station agent gave her food and offered her shelter, but she shook her head, and asked him where the river lay. The spectacle of a woman wandering about half crazed, half starved and alone, was a sad one, and the operator, feeling his own utter loneliness, tried to persuade her to stay. Pointing to the west, she began to chant:

When the great red sun is half in the sky
And half in the earth, the dead must die.

"Then she bared her bowed head, he saw the little round spot where the skin had been cut away and understood. This revelation, however, caused the agent to redouble his efforts to save the hapless maiden from herself.

"After much coaxing he succeeded in getting her into his little room in the rear of the telegraph office, where she soon fell asleep. The sun went down and still she slept and he knew she was safe, at least for another day. The darkness deepened on the desert waste, the evening wore away, the operator got 'good night' from the dispatcher at Omaha and fell asleep in his chair. Presently he was awakened by a sound as of a door closing softly. He stole into the little back room only to learn that his guest had gone. He slipped outside and listened, but save for the doleful cry of a lone wolf, the night was voiceless, and he returned to his narrow room.

"Next day, when the sun was falling away in the west the operator, sitting at his little table, noticed a shadow in the door and looking up beheld the sad face of the Indian maiden, gaunter and sorrier than before. Again he gave her food, and from his medicine chest, which in those days was furnished by the company to all agents and conductors, he brought medicated bandages, which he bound about her torn ankles, and ointment, which he put upon her wounded head. After that she continued to come to him every day, to accept a meager meal, and at night to steal away and sleep upon the prairie with only the stars above her. At the end of a fortnight she was almost well again. Now the woman that was in her nature caused her to long for some one to whom she might tell her story; in whom she might confide; and she told it, as well as she could, to the agent. He helped her to arrange her hair so as to hide the hateful scar at the top of her head, and persuaded her to return to her people. 'If the white man loved you once, he will love you all the more now, and will save you from your people if they try to molest you,' was the agent's encouraging advice and she determined to return.

"Slide McAlaster's severaly sprained ankle had become strong and he was at work again. The name of Wakalona was never mentioned by the Indians, for to them she was dead. It was never mentioned by the whites when it could be avoided, for no one cared to tell the awful story to the brakeman, and so he lived from day to day, expecting her to come home. His was the only cheerful face in the camp during those two weeks. He was happy in the morning, hoping that the day would bring her back, and happy again at night, for there was one day less of waiting for her return. And she did come back. One night when the rain was pouring down she opened the door of her father's tent and waited to be welcomed home. The old scout was pacing his tent, for he had not ceased to grieve for his daughter, but now that she had returned to him, as one from the grave, her coming served only to augment his misery. At sight of her he had taken a step or two toward the tent door, and then pausing to look upon her for the last time, his face grew grave as he pointed a long arm down the darkness. In a hoarse voice he uttered those ominous words, 'The shadows lie upon the shore—to the river, begone!' With a despairing look the princess turned back into the rain-swept night, and now a new danger confronted her. The guards had seen her at the tent door, by the dim light of a grease lamp, and now they seized and bound her. Her father had left to her the one chance of flight; the guards had shown less pity. And while she sat, bound and guarded, in a darkly lighted tent, her lover slept and dreamed of her coming, not 100 yards away. The day dawned grudgingly, the darkness seemed reluctantly to leave the earth, the sun remained behind the dark clouds, from which the rain continued to fall in torrents. At noon the rain ceased, the sun came out, meadow larks caroled free in the blue above, but the helpless Wakalona lay fettered in a rain-soaked tent. The story of her capture was kept a profound secret, for the Indians knew that the United States army officers would interfere if they learned that the princess was to be put to death. In the darkness of their ignorance they believed that they were doing their duty.

"On account of the rain we had not gone out that day, but late in the afternoon an order came from the dispatcher for us to run light to Omaha to bring out a train of steel. As we pulled out over the switches I noticed a great crowd of Pawnees down by the river near the railroad bridge. As we approached we could see that they were waving their hands and putting up wierd signals. Now as the engine, still creeping along, worked the water out of her cylinders, neared the bridge, McAlaster suddenly cried: 'Wakalona,' and leaped from the engine. I stopped the engine and, looking over, saw Wakalona seated in a canoe with her head bowed down almost to her knees. A stalwart Pawnee sat in one end of the canoe holding a single oar, while another Indian, equally well proportioned, sat near the girl, whose feet were fettered and whose hands were bound behind her back. Now the whole band began to chant:

The shadows lie upon the shore,
The dead shall walk the earth no more.

"The sun sat like a great red wheel that had sunk hub-deep in the sand, and when half of the rim was below, and half above the earth, the second stanza of the death chant arose from the river, as the boat was pushed out into the stream:

When the great red sun is half in the sky
And half in the earth, the dead must die.

"Now for the first time Wakalona, lifted her eyes, and she beheld her lover leaping from the shore. A few strokes brought him within reach of the little boat and he climbed aboard. The Indian at the oar stood up and faced him. The big brakeman swung his long right arm, caught the Pawnee under the ear, and over he went. Reaching down he lifted the other Indian bodily, turned him half over, and with all his might drove him head first into the sand at the bottom of the river.

"While this was going on the little bark was drifting rapidly toward the bridge. McAlaster cut the cord that bound the woman, seized the oar and made the land just before the engine. Lifting the girl in his arms he ran up the dump, placed her in the caboose, and we were off. As we reached the east end of the bridge I looked back and saw the baffled band swarming in from the west, but even as they ran the sun went down, the death hour had passed, and they turned back to their tents.

He Lifted the Other Indian Bodily, and With All His Might Drove Him Head First Into the River.

Fashion Makers.

Punch: Foreman—"We need a few lines to complete a column."

Rural Editor (wearily)—"Well, say 'The Prince of Wales has begun wearing old clothes, because they are more comfortable.' Perhaps it will start a fashion that you and I can follow."

EASTER AT JERUSALEM.

How the Ceremony Is Observed Today in the City of Our Savior.

On Easter eve the visitor in Jerusalem will find a scene presenting in every aspect the mysterious and jealous east, a picture worthy of study in many lights, and one which blends with the strictly oriental the noisy confusion of European life. The ceremonies are held in the church of the Holy Sepulchre, which may be regarded, not merely as the center of worship of Christendom, but also the cathedral church of palestine and of the east. This church is the model of all the circular churches of Europe. Above the great rotunda of the nave the dome stretches, with the sky showing through the opening in the center, which, like that in the Pantheon, admits the light and air of day. The galleries extend immediately beneath; in the northern one, which belongs to the Latin convent, the Frankish portion of the audience are assembled.

For the spectacle which is shortly to take place nothing could be better suited than the form of the rotunda, with its galleries above for spectators, and its vast open space below for the great mass of pilgrims and their festival. The enormous concourse of them now within the church walls have slept in their seats during the preceding night.

The chapel of the sepulchre stands below the galleries, a queer-shaped edifice of brown marble, with a consumptive-looking cupola, in its meager roof, tawdry flowers in tawdry vases, and a whole forest of slender tapers, while over its top is stretched a blue curtain to preclude the rain which may be admitted through the opening in the dome.

Finally the Whole Space in the Circle Between the Troops is Continuously Occupied by a Whirling Race of These Wild Figures.

It is divided into two chapels, the one on the west contains the sepulchre, the eastern one shelters the Stone of the Angel, and is occupied by the Greeks and Armenians. A round aperture shows upon its northern side from which the holy fire is to issue for the Greeks, while a corresponding hole exists upon the south side for the Armenians. The only part of the church reserved for the poor copts is a little wooden chapel at the western extremity, attached from the outside, and farther west is that of the still poorer Syrians, whose poverty (and, synonymously, whose inability to remove them for decorating purposes) has probably saved to the world the so-called tombs of Joseph and Nicodemus, which lie within the precincts and on which the chief evidence of the genuineness of the spot rests.

Between the legion of pilgrims who sit or stand wedged round the chapel of the sepulchre, and another equally dense mass which has by this time formed round the walls of the church itself, extends two circles or lines of Turkish soldiers, stationed to keep order if possible.

For the first two hours the crowd wait patiently, but about noon the circular lane is suddenly disturbed, and group of wry, thin men, with hollow cheeks deeply bronzed, and eyes of almost evil brightness. They wear red tarboushes upon their heads, and have brown woolen blankets fastened over their left shoulders in such a manner as to leave the right arm free. These men are Arabs, and rush wildly around until caught by one of the Turkish soldiers. It appears to be somewhat in their belief that unless they run around the sepulchre a certain number of times the fire will not come—may be some strange remnant in their blood of the funeral games and races around the tomb of an ancient chief in the desert.

These gambols become contagious, and the spectator in the gallery sees first 20, then 30, then 50 men joining in what appears to be a mixture of football, leap-frog and prisoner's base. Some of the participants are dressed in sheepskins, some are almost naked; on and on they leap, clapping their hands, catching hold of each other, lifting one of themselves upon their shoulders and rushing on with him until he is thrown off and another seized in his place.

To this mad dance wild howls are at times added, the burden of which is, "God save the sultan," "This is the tomb of Jesus Christ," "Jesus Christ has redeemed us."

The excitement increases in magnitude and extent, until finally the whole space in the circle between the troops is continuously occupied by a whirling race of these wild figures, much like the witches' Sabbath in "Faust," wheeling round and round the sepulchre in a mad caravan. The frenzy gradually subsides as out of the Greek church in the rotunda's east a long procession issues with embroidered banners, supplying in their ritual the lack of images, and begins to defile around the sepulchre.

Hedged in by the soldiers, the pilgrims remain in their places, giving vent to a wild succession of yells, through which, from time to time, are caught the solemn chants of the church of Basil and Chryzostom.

At last two lines of Turkish soldiers join and fall in behind. The crisis of the day is now approaching, for the presence of the Turks is supposed to prevent the descent of the fire, and it is at this point that they are driven, or consent to be driven, out of the church. One great movement sways the multitude from side to side as the mob burst with mock violence upon the troops and break through the procession, until standard bearers, bishops and priests flee before the tremendous rush.

The bishop of Petra, who is the especial representative of the patriarch, is now hurried to the chapel of the sepulchre, and the door closed upon him, and the whole great church is one heaving sea of heads, and bare outstretched arms, which resemble nothing so much as the branches of a forest quivering in some violent tempest. In the midst of this frantic uproar stands the chapel of the Holy Sepulchre enveloped in awful silence, and involuntarily the spectator thinks that if there is to be indeed a display of miraculous power the time is come now, and that the very stones should cry out against the wild fanaticism without and the wretched fraud within, by which the chapel is at this hour desecrated.

Suddenly a brilliant flame appears inside the aperture to which a short time previous the representative of the patriarch has been conducted.

The light burns brightly and steadily and signifies in the belief of every pilgrim present the descent of God himself upon the holy tomb. As every educated Greek acknowledges and knows, the flame is kindled by the bishop within.

Slowly the tapers are lighted at the holy fire and distributed among the great throng until the spark spreads from hand to hand and to the onlookers in the galleries the area below is one wide blaze of thousands of burning candles, and at this juncture the bishop is carried out from the chapel on the shoulders of the people, half fainting, in order to give the impression to the congregation that he is overcome by the glory of the almighty, from whose immediate presence he is believed to have come.

As he is borne out of the church, a mounted horseman, stationed at the gates, gallops off with a lighted taper to communicate the sacred flame to the lamps of the Greek church in the convent at Bethlehem.

The pilgrims rush to and fro, touching their faces and breasts with the fire to test its supposed harmlessness. The pressure upon the single entrance is enormous, and many are carried out of the crush in an overpowered state.

Out into the streets pour the multitude, deformed and ragged old women with skeleton hands, handsome Armenian men and matrons, diseased and filthy children, bronzed young athletes and peasants, until the dirty courts, which look like the haunts of witches, take on the semblance of life, and the rubbish encumbered gardens, shaded by dusty fig and cypress trees, and the deserted alleys teem once again with humanity's eager, pressing throng.

Men clothed in long, dirty garments, with a rag bound over their heads, glide furtively through the more deserted thoroughfare, sinister faces peer from windows, and rags hang from many houses.

Some of the countenances beam with health, like russet apples glowing in the autumn sun, and at many street corners are disposed groups of these pilgrims, carrying their whole wardrobe on their heads in great bundles, eating raw onions and salads, and biting great curves out of their wedges of black bread.

As for the Israelites proper, centuries of degradation have for the most part imbruted the physiognomy of the chosen people of God, but here and there a beautiful black-eyed child, with hair like vine tendrils, may be seen rolling about in the dirt, or a patriarchial-looking old Abraham with flowing beard. Hagars, too, and Rebeccas may be found among the Jerusalemites of today, and old Sarahs, fat, repulsive and scolding, abound.

When the profound repose of evening fills the ancient city, the great church is once again thronged in every part, except the one chapel of the Latin church, filled and overlaid by a mass of pilgrims, wrapped in deep sleep and waiting for the midnight service, which is to end the eventful day, and usher in Easter morning.

The European spectator goes back to his inn full of enthusiasm and disgust. He has lived through centuries, as it were, in a few hours, and feels old and exhausted.

Jerusalem is a Babylon, a world, a chaos, sitting among her ruins like an odalisque upon a tomb, awaiting her hour.

Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

It is beautiful, it is horrible; it is a city unbound, scattered and deformed, neither laboring, thinking, nor creating, while civilization beats at her gates, and assaults her in her streets.

She dreams and slumbers in the shadow of her past, and takes no heed.

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