

WALKER'S VENGEANCE.

Between the years 1868 and 1865 a full thousand people heard the story of Grim Walker. That was during the fiercest part of our civil war, and minor incidents were speedily absorbed and forgotten. I doubt if there are a score of people living to-day who can recall the details of this singular man's adventures, and I do not remember that anything save a brief outline of the massacre of this family has ever appeared in print.

I was a pony express rider on the Overland route. That meant helping to guard stages, carrying a light mail on my saddle, forwarding dispatches, taking my turn to act as agent of some stable and various other things which need not be explained. There were then several great trails leading west from the borders of civilization, and all were more or less traveled, but the favorite routes were from St. Joseph and Council Bluffs, the one being known as the northern and the other as the southern route. I was on a route along the Platte river, west of Fort Kearney, which was sometimes fifty miles long and sometimes 125, according to the way the Indians were behaving and the number of men we had for service.

Grim Walker was a pioneer named Charles O. Walker, from near Iowa City. He was a giant in size, naturally sour and taciturn of disposition, and his family consisted of a wife and three children. While the country was excited over the civil war, and travel by the overland had almost come to a stop except in cases of necessity, Walker and others formed an immigrant party to make a push for the golden land. When I first heard of them they numbered twenty wagons and sixty or seventy people, and were on the Platte, east of Kearney, which was then dangerous ground. When the outfit reached Kearney some were for turning back, others for electing a new captain, others for settling down near by and establishing ranches. It seemed that there were three or four different factions in the party, and several bitter quarrels had resulted. In the then state of affairs 200 brave and united men could have scarcely hoped to reach the Colorado or Wyoming line, for the Indians were up in arms on every trail and thirsting for blood and scalps. When it was known, therefore, that Grim Walker, as he had come to be known, had been elected captain of a faction and intended to push on at the head of only seven families, which could muster but nine fighting men, soldiers, hunters, Indian fighters and overland men argued and scolded and predicted. Not an argument could move Grim Walker. Not a prediction could frighten one of his adherents. It appeared to them to be a case where manhood and pride were at stake, and when it was hinted that the military would restrain them they made secret preparations and departed at night. It was a awful thing for those bigoted and determined men to drive their wives and children, consisting of twenty-two people, to a horrible death, but nothing short of a battle with the military would have stopped them.

They left Kearney one night about 10 o'clock, drawing away quietly and traveling at their best speed. They could not have gone ten miles before being discovered by the Indians. A party of twenty of us left over the same trail at noon next day, and we had gone only fifteen miles when we found evidences that the little party, which was keeping along the Platte, had been attacked. This must have been about daylight. Soon after sunrise they had been driven to shelter in a grove of cottonwoods, but before reaching it one of the men had been killed and scalped, a wagon had broken down and been abandoned, and stray bullets had killed a woman and a child as they covered down behind the cargo of the wagons. At 4 o'clock in the afternoon we came to the grove, driving away the last of the savages, but we were too late. Such a spectacle as we there beheld was enough to sicken the heart of the bravest Indian fighter. The little party had been attacked by about 200 redskins, and the fight had lasted for half a day. As near as we could figure from blood spots on the earth fourteen Indians had been killed, and there were bloody trails to show that as many more had been wounded. The foolhardy men had died game as an offset. We made out that their camp had been carried by a charge, and that the last of the fighting was hand to hand. Five of the women had been carried off into horrible captivity, while all others had been butchered—all save Grim Walker. The bodies had been cut and hacked and mutilated in a terrible manner, but we could have identified Walker by his size, even had he been decapitated. The immigrants' horses had all been killed, the wagons plundered and burned, and the savages were bundling up some of the plunder when we came in sight and drove them away. All that was left us was the sad work of burying the corpses.

A month later we heard that Grim Walker had escaped from the fight, breaking out of the grove and riding off on a horse just as the conflict closed in. Men belonging to the Overland had met and talked with him east of Kearney. He had three wounds, but seemed unconscious of them as he briefly related the story of the fight, and vowed that he would have the lives of five Indians for every white person who had perished. Nothing further was heard of him until June of the following year. I was then in government employ as a scout and dispatch rider, and was on the Smoky Hill fork of the Kansas river, twenty miles west of Fort McPherson, riding with two other scouts, when we came upon Grim Walker. He had gone east after the massacre, and had built for himself a bullet proof wagon. It was a great cage on wheels, and everything about it was made of iron. Wheels, box, bottom, top—every part of it was bullet proof. It was pierced or looped in fifty places for musketry, ventilated at the top and was drawn by four mules. The man must have had considerable means at his disposal to pay for a vehicle like that, and he had come all the way from Council Bluffs alone. The interior was fitted up with a sleeping berth, iron tanks for holding food and water, and he had come back to the plains to keep his vow. But for his grimness the idea would have raised a laugh. He must have been on scout for many long days, and he certainly had passed through many perils.

We heard afterward that as he reached the fort one afternoon, and it became known that he would push on, every effort was made to dissuade him. For a time he was silent, grim, deaf. Then he pointed to the northeast and said: "There lie the bones of my children and friends, and I will not rest until I have avenged them thrice over."

They told him the country was alive with hostiles, and that every rod of the way was beset with perils; but as the sun went down he harnessed his mules to the iron tongue, climbed into the saddle, and without a nod of farewell to any one he rode to the west in the gathering gloom—more grim, more determined, more of a devil than a human being. He had traveled a good share of the night over a country in which death lurked in every ravine; but the watchful savages had not espied him. He had traveled until mid-afternoon next day along a trail where savages outnumbered the snakes twenty to one, but somehow they had missed him. We were riding at full speed for the fort, keeping the shelter of the dry ravines and the valleys, and expecting at any moment to be pursued when we ran upon Grim Walker. His wagon stood on the open prairie, at least half a mile from the river and the shelter of the cottonwoods. The four mules had been unharnessed and turned out to graze, and the man was cooking his supper at a campfire, the smoke of which would draw Indians for ten miles around. Our astonishment when we found him there alone kept us dumb for a few minutes. We sat on our horses and stared at him, and he greeted our presence by a mere nod. When I recognized him as Grim Walker I began to suspect the enterprise he had on foot, and after I had put a few questions he briefly explained:

"I am here to kill Indians. You can look my wagon over if you care to." It was what I have described. He had a barrel or more of fresh water, a lot of flour and meat, a small stove to cook on and a perfect arsenal of firearms. It was evident that the Indians could not get at him with bullets, nor tomahawk, nor fire, and it would take weeks to starve him out. There was only one thing that troubled the man. His stock would be killed off at once when he was attacked, and he would then have no way of moving his wagon. We helped him out of his dilemma by agreeing to take the animals to the fort. The harnesses were piled into his house, and it was understood that he would come for the mules when he wanted them. He had a compass, and we gave him the exact bearings, and as we rode away he was preparing to toast another piece of meat, seemingly utterly unconcerned over the dangers of his surroundings. As to what happened him during the next three weeks I had a few meagre details from his own lips, but plenty of information from warriors who afterward became "friendly." That is, when licked out of their boots half a dozen times, their villages destroyed, many of their ponies shot, and their squaws and children driven to temporary starvation, they cried for peace in order to recruit and make ready for another campaign.

The campfire which Grim Walker built saved the three of us from being ambushed. A warrior told me that forty savages were between us and the fort when the smoke led them to believe that a large party of immigrants must be camped in the bottoms. It could only be a large party which would dare build such a fire in a hostile country. The warriors were all drawn off by a signal to attack the larger game, and before sundown that evening 200 murderous redskins were opening their eyes wide at sight of the one lone wagon anchored on the prairie under their noses. How did it get there? Where were the horses or mules? Was it occupied? They must have asked themselves these questions over and over again, but there stood the wagon, grim, silent, mysterious. The whole band finally moved down for a closer inspection, believing the vehicle to have been abandoned, and hopeful that something in the shape of plunder had been left behind. They had come close—they had entirely surrounded the vehicle—when a sheet of flame darted from one of the port holes, and Grim Walker had begun to tally his victims. Before the redskins could get out of range he had killed seven of them, using shot guns and buckshot. It was only when they came to return the fire that the savages discovered what sort of a vehicle had been hauled out there among them. They wasted hundreds of bullets before they ceased firing, and with a rifle Walker killed two more of them before night set in.

The superstitious nature of the Indian would have driven him away had he not burned for revenge. And too, it was argued that the wagon must contain something of great value to have been built that way, and greed was added to the thirst for vengeance. They believed that the bottom of the box, at least, was of wood, and about three hours after dark a number of warriors, each having a bunch of dry grass under his arm, crept forward to the vehicle to start a fire under it. They crept as noiselessly as serpents, but before a man of them had passed under a double barreled shotgun belched forth its contents, and two more bucks set out for the happy hunting grounds. Next day, refusing to believe that a wagon could be bullet proof, the Indians opened a fusillade, which was maintained for two hours. They were behind trees and logs and under cover, and not a shot was provoked in response. Various schemes were concocted to get at the wagon, which was finally believed to contain a party of hunters, but none promised success. At noon, however, a number of young warriors volunteered to carry out a plan. There were twelve of them, and they were to approach the wagon in a wide circle. The idea was to seize and upset it, and thus render the occupants harmless. The circle was made, and it gradually narrowed until the signal for a rush was made.

The man within—grim, silent, watchful—let the circle close, and the warriors seize the wheels before he opened fire. It would have taken a dozen stout men to have lifted two of the wheels off the ground. He shot down three of them and the others fled in terror, and half an hour later the wagon remained in that spot, an object of curiosity to scouts and hunters—an object of awe and menace to

the savages. Then, one morning just at daylight, Grim Walker came into Fort McPherson for his mules. He was going to move his iron cage to a new field. He replenished his provisions and inside of two hours was off again, having spoken less than fifty words during his stay. It seemed as if he had grown taller, fiercer—more grim and revengeful. There was something pitiful in knowing that he alone had survived the massacre; something appalling in the knowledge that he had become a Nemesis whom nothing but blood would satisfy.

The wagon was moved north to the headwater of the Saline Fork. One who has been over the route will wonder how it could have been done. It was attacked there one forenoon about 10 o'clock by a band of thirty warriors, who had been raiding on the Solomon's river. The mules were staked out, and Grim Walker sat at his camp fire. The warriors charged up on horseback, believing they had a hunter's or surveyor's outfit, and while they stamped and secured the mules, four of them were killed from the loopholes of the cage. They came back again, and another was killed and two were wounded. Then they discovered what sort of an enemy they had to deal with and withdrew. Grim Walker and his wagon remained there for a month. When the Indians would no longer come to him he set out in search of them, and he became a veritable terror. Twenty different warriors whom I interviewed between 1864 and 1867 told me that Walker was more feared than a hundred Indian fighters. He killed everything he came to that was Indian, including squaws, ponies, children, and dogs. No camp felt safe from him. He had the ferocity of a hungry tiger and the cunning of a serpent. He used his iron wagon as a headquarters, and made raids for fifty miles around.

During the summer our scouts saw Walker or his wagon once a fortnight. He was last seen alive on Sept. 2, on the Republican river, when he had a fresh Indian scalp at his belt. He had then blown up his wagon with gunpowder and abandoned it, although he did not state the fact. His hair and beard had become long and unkempt, his clothing was in rags, and there could be no doubt that he had gone mad. On the 15th of the month, as I rode with an escort of soldiers south of where he was seen on the 2d, and fifty miles from the spot, we found him dead. He lay on a bare knoll, on the broad of his back, with his arms folded over his breast and his rifle by his side. His eyes were wide open, as if looking at the buzzards sailing above him, and we soon satisfied ourselves that he had died from natural causes. He had a dozen scars and wounds, but disease had overpowered him, or his work had been done. He had exacted a full measure of vengeance. Better for the Indians had they let his immigrant party pass in peace, for he had brought mourning to a hundred lodges.—New York Sun.

Digestibility of Breadstuffs.
Dr. Walzen Muller, the German physiologist, remarks upon the common idea that an admixture of bran with flour renders the latter much easier of digestion, and asserts that the smallest comminution of the grain, as well as the amount of husky portion retained in the well known Graham flour, produces a slight irritation of the digestive organs, which results in the separation of the pepsin from the husk of the grain, admitting of its mixture with the gastric fluids, thus greatly facilitating the process of assimilation; this mechanical irritation, particularly in the case of the aged and weak, being otherwise producible only by the use of alcoholic and similar stimulants.

Dr. Muller is of the opinion that bread should not be made without salting, for the reason that the starch of the flour contains a large amount of the salt of potash, which neutralizes much salt in the system. Again, dry bread which has been baked some little time is most healthful, as the chewing process must of necessity be thorough and the bread consequently fully salivated previous to its entrance into the stomach. He also particularly urges the desirability of mixing the dough of bread with milk.—Chicago Tribune.

Care of Horses' Feet.
It is generally conceded by horsemen that lameness originates chiefly in the faulty treatment of the horse's foot. This fact suggests several recommendations for the mitigation of the evil: First, bare feet. It may be stated as a general proposition that any horse with fairly good feet need never be shod at all. In the barefooted horse the heels spread out, the frogs descend, ridges form upon the soles, giving to the bottom of the feet a good purchase upon either a rough or smooth surface. He soon learns to rely upon himself and so adjusts his equilibrium to motion that he neither strains himself, nor slips nor stumbles. Horsemen have often given this plan a short, faint-hearted trial, but on the first manifestations of foot soreness at the end of a few weeks, and before the feet have become injured to the change, usually have the shoes replaced again.—Spirit of the Turf.

The Tree of Death.
On the New Hope battlefield was a tree upon which the soldiers nailed the inscription "Tree of Death." Several Federals were killed behind the tree by Confederate sharpshooters. The tree was in advance of the Federal line, and was about 300 yards from the Confederate works. It was used by Federal skirmishers, who would stand behind it and load and then step out and fire. Confederate sharpshooters went along the Confederate line for nearly a mile in each direction, and then being so far from the side of the tree that they could see behind it, by a cross firing made it as dangerous to stand behind the tree as to stand in front of it. Seven Federals were killed behind the tree, and it came to be known as the "Tree of Death."—Atlanta Constitution.

Has Visited Mecca.
Sir Richard Burton, the celebrated African and Persian traveler and author, who at the present moment holds the post of British consul at Trieste, is the only European living who has visited the Mohammedan holy city of Mecca.

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