

CAMPAIGNING ON THE PLAINS

BY BUFFALO BILL

FROM "TRUE TALES OF THE PLAINS"

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I HAVE been many times asked if the solitude of the plains was not burdensome and oppressive to a man who was traveling along some of the vast expanses of the west, where for hundreds of miles there was no one to see but himself, his horses, a boundless level of prairie grass, the blue sky above, with its sun by day and its stars by night. At first the question seemed strange, but I soon understood how a man who has lived all his life in daily touch with Broadway might go melancholy mad in a single day in a region where he could see and hear absolutely nothing but the wonderful panorama of nature and its voices. There was a multitude of things around him to arouse interest, which to the plainsman meant safety or danger, life or death, but which would mean to such a man, indeed, no more than so many blades of grass. This silent excitement of the solitary ride over the broad prairie, where the city man would see nothing but dull monotony, was something more excitingly fierce than anything I had seen in a town, and I had seen Wall street crazed. I have watched street riots, I have witnessed royal pageants, and I have seen men lynched. These things stir the blood, but they all seem pale to what I have felt when out alone on a scout.

Consequently the scout on duty was compelled to invent ruses of his own to assist him in emergency. And when some extremely dangerous mission had to be undertaken the scout often puzzled the commander by refusing aid in the shape of a squad or any chosen number of soldiers to accompany him. But actually it was the part of discretion to do so, as going alone or with one or two chosen comrades whom you knew to be true blue was a precaution that favored your own safety, as every scout naturally picked the very best mounts and rode one and had what is called a "lead horse," well trained, to follow and stand by him in every emergency. He had only himself to look out for, and with a good lead horse in a race for life had a fresh remount. Therefore I always kept myself well provided with well trained steeds, who became wonderfully proficient in scenting danger and even game. The fact that your horses were unshod was another puzzle to a trailing Indian, as a shod horse print gave him a clue to a white man's presence or the proximity of the military. One of my ruses was to take with me a bugler of the Fifth cavalry named Kershaw, who developed a capacity for comradeship in such adventures. Kershaw, after retiring from the army, became chief of police at Chester, Pa., near Philadelphia, and died there several years ago. Generally I preferred, like others, going alone, as then I had only myself to look out for.

I took Kershaw with me often, as I knew the country was infested with



The triple call threw them into confusion. large bands of Indians, when it was too dangerous to travel in daytime and your object could be best accomplished in the night. His value as "a striker" can be best explained by the following incident: On one occasion we slept during the day in a well wooded box canyon, near a little stream of water, with plenty of grass for the horses to browse on, and at the same time we were hidden from view. Toward evening, when we thought it convenient to continue our scout, just as we were about to emerge from our hiding place a large band of Indians assembled down the canyon to camp for the night. Mounted as they were, it was useless for us to attempt flight, so, moving farther backward in the woods, we remained concealed until they had settled down. There was no way to get out except a dash through the Indian village. We dared not stay till daylight, as they

might find our trail, and they would have us corralled, so we quietly waited until they had settled down, when we mounted and sneaked toward the edge of the village, where there was an avenue of escape. Their faithful dogs, of course, alarmed the camp, so the best we could do was to make a dash out, wheel and fire as quick as we could, and Kershaw with his faithful bugle blew the charge. Ridding quickly around the village, we made another little firing at them and sounded the bugle charge again. A repetition of this at another point and a bugle charge threw them into confusion, stampeded their ponies, prevented their quick mounting, and while they went in one direction Kershaw and myself were riding in another. Naturally, of course, this gave the Indians something to think of in the night while we got to the post and informed Colonel Royal of the location and, with Major Brown, Captain Bache, Lieutenant Jack Hayes and a detachment of cavalry, went on the trail, which was followed for two days, and the Indians were severely punished, with but few casualties on our side.

Getting fresh meat for Fort Sheridan, we were greatly annoyed at times on our buffalo hunt by being jumped by the Indians, who in those days were generally out with the same object. Many a hot skirmish or many a run for it was necessary. Buffalo naturally were some distance from the fort, and I thought of a trick by which I could give my red brothers a surprise. In a run for it a few miles from the fort was a hogback that furnished a good defensive position, and I had often noticed that it had a long, deep, bushy ravine. It was in the nature almost of a natural fortification. So I thought how I could get them to repeat their many attacks on me when I ran to this particular point, from which I could signal for help to the fort with hasty grass fires and "smoke that talked." Buffaloes were at the time plentiful, so I secured Kershaw and about fifteen good marksmen, with provisions for the trip, and started out before daylight for the hunt. Hiding the soldiers in this ravine, we proceeded on our journey and had not the wagons half filled before my striker, Bill White, announced Indians in the distance, "and a big band, too," said Bill. Away we went for the hogback, and it was lickety split, with the Indians gaining on us every minute. We reached it, threw our wagons into position, packed our buffalo hams out for breastworks, threw some straw about and gathered up some dead grass to make a signal. The Indians, seeing it, knew that relief would come and they hadn't a moment to lose if they wanted our scalps. On they came, dashing around. Myself and teamsters and five or six of us banged away at them, they circled around and drew off, as they commonly did, and at a distance of about seventy-five yards from the ambush. As usual, they bunched together, listening to the wrangle of the chief. Bang! Bang! Bang! And the old Winchester began to talk from the ravine, while Kershaw with his bugle blew the charge, the Indians tumbling here, there and everywhere out of their saddles, the rest scattering with the speed of jack rabbits in all directions. Assembling on the distant hills, they realized that the jig was up, particularly when they saw the cavalry coming in the distance. Somehow or other during the remainder of the season they never seemed to molest the butcher wagon with the same appetite. And the fort always had fresh meat.

A country of such vast expanse, unsettled save for a few forts as places of refuge and succor so comparatively few in number as to be, as it were, like pebbles on the seashore, rendered the campaign in winter, with the blizzard conditions, not only hazardous and dangerous, but even if successfully combated attended by excruciating suffering. This the old army officers and soldiers of the early campaigns will never forget, the physical discomforts and mental worrying with climatic conditions far exceeding those that defeated Napoleon in his winter campaign in the region about Moscow.

I relate two or three examples. On one occasion I was out with some of the Fifth cavalry under the command of Lieutenant Bache, a descendant of Benjamin Franklin and a member of a well known Philadelphia family and, by the way, a magnificent young officer, who in various campaigns showed a bravery and dash that one would not associate with his aristocratic bearing and extreme gentility. A blizzard arose. Fortunately we were near shelter in the shape of some bluffs and scattered wood. When the blizzard was over it was necessary for us to strike out on the path of duty. The thermometer was away below zero and the wind cutting and sharp.

On coming back from the lead to consult with Lieutenant Bache I passed by him to caution the sergeants to look out for their men from the cold and see that they did not become drowsy, and on my return I found indications of numbness and drowsiness even in the case of the lieutenant. I aroused

him, and appealed to him to pull himself together, but he was just in the humor to resent it. In consequence I had to take the law into my own hands and shake him up in lively style, first taking the precaution of slipping his revolver and placing it out of his reach. As he did not respond to my efforts on the horse, I simply dismounted, pulled him from the horse and used him in what one would think a rather rude and rough manner. In fact, I had to make a punch bag and football out of him, much to the astonishment of some of the young troopers, who came up and were going to avenge my apparent discourtesy to their officer, though some of the older men explained its necessity. Eventually I got the lieutenant on his feet, and while our horses were being taken care of an old sergeant and myself hustled him along on a little foot race until we got his blood in circulation, and so, overcoming the danger, we eventually arrived safely at the fort.

On another occasion when out with General Eugene A. Carr, with whom I consulted and who, by the way, was one of the best posted and equipped Indian fighters and frontiersmen on the roster of the army, we both concluded that on account of the peculiar balmy condition of the weather a blizzard would be the next thing in order. So we resolved to strike camp early, as we were then in a bleak country



and over fifty miles from wood and water. This wood and water were in a lower country, where there was only one gap which would furnish descent into the valley, and that had to be reached by careful attention to direction.

Starting early and getting the point of the wind, we had not gone far before old Boreas began his revels. General Carr, of course, gave orders to the commanding officers of companies in regard to preventing drowsiness of the men and to quit them in case of any of them succumbing to the cold. I shall long remember that trip, for it was necessary for me to go by the wind and not flinch from it, for in the blinding blizzard we would all soon be lost. The direction brought the wind against my left ear, and, as the storm soon became so blinding that even a black horse could not be seen ten feet from the picket ropes, lariat lines were scattered along to guide the men, who kept so close almost as to touch each horse's tail. But I dared not change my position for fear of losing the direction, so for eight hours I held my left cheek and ear against the storm and, of course, suffered greatly from frostbite. I dared not dismount, as did many of the others, General Carr himself walking nearly all the distance, leading his horse. I had stuffed my ear with a piece of saddle blanket, but notwithstanding that the eardrum was frozen, and for a time it gave me intense pain and suffering, and up to the present day it has quite affected my hearing on that side. But by this pertinacity we reached the gap, and when I had made the point successfully and the descent down into the canyon became assured there were never 1,500 men who let out such yells and peans of joy.

On another occasion I had a very trying experience when General Penrose's command had been sent to reconnoiter the surrounding country by General Sheridan and were known to have been somewhere in a blizzard. Not hearing from them for several days, we knew they were up against it, but as all trails were covered and obliterated by the drifting snow it was a serious problem to find them. General Carr, of course, consulted with me in the matter, and he relates the incident in detail in "Carr's Campaigns" of my success in finding the men. In this instance, knowing in what direction they had gone, I had to travel fifteen miles to find a ridge that they would cross and that the storm would blow the snow away from and leave bare. Following this ridge for five miles or more, I found the trail of their horses and wagons where they had crossed and by the hoof tracks located the direction in which they had gone. I succeeded in reaching them, snowed in and in a terrible condition, for everything had been eaten up to such an extent that the horses and mules had eaten the manes and tails of each other. Returning the next day, relief was sent, and the commands became reunited.

NEXT WEEK—"TWO FAMOUS INDIAN FIGHTERS."

"QUOUSQUE TANDEM."

Statue of Cicero by Vincenzo Alfano in Academy of Design Exhibition. An interesting feature of the recent exhibition in New York of the National Academy of Design was a statue of the Roman orator Cicero by Vincenzo Alfano. Mr. Alfano before coming to this country in 1898 was a professor for nine years of the industrial museum in Naples and was also professor in the Royal Academy of Fine Arts. The figure of



THE STATUE OF CICERO BY VINCENZO ALFANO.

Cicero, entitled "Quousque Tandem," was originally executed by the sculptor for the Naples exhibition of 1898 and received the municipal prize of 1,000 lire for the best work of the display. It was exhibited at the Louisiana Purchase exposition of 1904 and received a medal there. In the statue which is life size, Cicero is represented as just rising from his chair in the Roman senate to deliver his famous denunciation of Catiline.

Mr. Alfano modeled most of the sculptural decorations of the new and much talked about City Investing building on Broadway, one of the most elaborately adorned business structures in New York.

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Mortals desire and conquer every foe Save death, but those who doubt or hesitate, Condemned to failure, penury and woe, Seek me in vain, uselessly employ me— I answer not, and I return no more.

—John J. Ingalls.

The Guessing Game.

A pompous English peer, an important figure in the upper chamber by reason of a very long and very bushy beard, had dismissed his valet for the night. Shortly afterward, however, he was much annoyed to hear peals of laugh-

ter from below and called back the man to explain. The valet answered that it was just a little joke, but his lordship would have none of it and demanded details angrily. "Well," admitted the man, with reluctance, "it was really a little game we were having, my lord." "What game?" "Well, my lord, a kind of guessing game." "Don't be a fool, Walters, I rang for you in order to get an explanation. What guessing game are you playing? Guessing what?" "We blindfolded the cook, to tell you the truth, my lord, and then one of us kissed her, and she had to guess who it was. The footman held the mop up, and she kissed it and then cried out, 'Oh, your lordship, how dare you?'"

To Store 6,000 Cars. Pennsylvania railroad officials in Harrisburg are looking for room sufficient to store from 6,000 to 7,000 coal cars, on account of the decrease in coal trade which has fallen off nearly one half during the past few weeks. The cars will be stored in Harrisburg and Enola yards, and at points along the Philadelphia division. That does not indicate a revival of business.

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