



# THE WESTERN HOME MONTHLY

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## Little Friend Coyote.

By George Bird Grinnell.

It was in the summer when the Blackfoot and Piegan tribes were camped together that the Blackfoot, Front Wolf, first noticed Su-ye-sai-pi, a Piegan girl, and liked her, and determined to make her his wife. She was young and handsome and of good family, and her parents were well-to-do, for her father was a leading warrior of his tribe. Front Wolf was himself a noted warrior, and had grown rich from his forays on the camps of the enemy, so when he asked for the young woman her parents were pleased—pleased to give their daughter to such a strong young man, and pleased to accept the thirty horses he sent them with the request.

In those days, in the long ago, such intertribal marriages were common, for the two great camps often travelled together in quest of the buffalo, sometimes for a whole winter and summer, and thus the young people became acquainted with each other. Again they would be separated by hundreds of miles of rolling plain.

After their marriage the young couple continued to live in the Piegan camp, for Front Wolf had many friends there of his own age, who begged him to remain with them. They liked to go on raids under his leadership better than with any one else. It seemed to his wife as if he were always away on some expedition, so seldom was he at home, and as she had learned to respect and love him, she was very lonely during these long absences. One summer, only two or three days after his return from a successful war-journey against the Crows, he said to his wife: "It is a long time since I have seen my parents. Now I think it time for me to visit them and give them some horses. If you have any little things you wish to send them, hurry and make them ready, so that I may take them."

"I have some pretty moccasins for your father," said Su-ye-sai-pi, "and a fine buckskin dress for your mother; but I am not going to send them. I want to go with you and present them myself. It seems as if you do not care at all for me. Here you are just home from a long journey, and yet you would start right out again, without thinking about me at all."

"No," Front Wolf replied, "it is not that I do not love you; you may go with me if you insist on it. I did not like to ask you to make the trip, for the distance is great and there is danger on the way."

Su-ye-sai-pi was happy. She began her preparations at once, and only laughed at her parents when they urged her to remain with them, telling her that the plains swarmed with war parties in search of scalps and plunder, and that she would surely be killed.

At this time the Piegans were hunting on the Lower Milk River, but

the morning that Front Wolf and his wife started away, the whole camp moved too, for the chiefs wished to pass the hot season along the foothills of the great mountains. At the last moment five young Blackfeet, visitors in the camp, decided that they too would return home, so they set forth with the couple, and helped drive the little herd of horses that Front Wolf intended to give his relatives. The northern tribe was thought to be summering on the Red Deer River, and a course was roughly

taken for the place where it joins the Saskatchewan. This brought the little party, after three or four days' travel, to the Cypress Hills, or, as they were named by the Indians, the Gap-in-the-middle Hills. They reached the southern slopes of the low buttes one morning, after being without water all the preceding day, and prepared to camp and rest at the edge of a little grove, close to which a large clear spring bubbled up from a pile of sunken boulders. They did not know that a large camp of Kutenais was just behind the hill where they stopped, and that one of their hunters, seeing them coming, had hurried home and spread the news. Su-ye-sai-pi had scarcely started a fire when the warriors from the camp

were seen to be approaching the little party from all directions, completely hemming them in. Although these two tribes, the Blackfeet and Kutenais, had once been very friendly to each other, they were now at war. When the strangers approached, one of them, the chief, who had learned Blackfoot in other days, called out, "Don't fire; we are friends; we will not harm you."

Front Wolf and his friends had drawn the covers from their guns, prepared to fight and to sell their lives dearly, but when Front Wolf heard this, and saw that the strangers made no motions to shoot, he lowered his rifle and said: "They intend to make peace with us; I guess they are tired of being at war with our people. Do not be afraid; they will not harm us."

The chief came up first, and shook hands with Front Wolf and the rest, saying: "I am glad to meet you. Our camp is near. Come over to my lodge, and we will feast and smoke."

These were kind words. The little party of Blackfeet did not doubt that they were sincere. They packed up again, mounted their horses, and rode around the hill to the lodges. The chief invited them to stop with him, and they rode toward the big lodge in the centre of the village, where many people were gathered. There they dismounted, when suddenly their arms were taken from them by the surrounding crowd, and they were pushed into the big lodge. It was a very hot day, and all around the skin lodge-covering had been raised for several feet to allow the cool breeze to pass beneath it, so the prisoners could see all that was happening without. Their little band of horses was quickly divided and led away; and then the chief and all the men had a long talk.

Presently the chief came inside, and sat down in his accustomed place at the back of the lodge. Following him four warriors entered, and seizing the young Blackfoot who sat nearest the door, led him out some little distance from the lodge, where one of them brained him with a war-club, and then every one tried to get a piece of his scalp, or to plunge a knife into his body. In a moment his hands, feet, and head were severed, and women were pushing and kicking and pounding the mutilated parts here and there, singing as they did so the shrill song of revenge. The Blackfeet looked on at this terrible butchery of their friend with horror, but in stolid silence, all save Su-ye-sai-pi, who gave a frightened cry when she saw the poor fellow struck down, and clasping her husband by the arm, buried her face in his breast. The chief smiled but did not speak. Presently another one of the young Blackfeet was led out, and met the fate of the first one. One after another, when his turn came, each arose and accompanied his captors without struggle or cry, and met his death as a true warrior should.

At last all had been killed except Front Wolf and his wife, and presently they came for him. Su-ye-sai-pi clung to him and cried and begged, but her husband himself put her from

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