

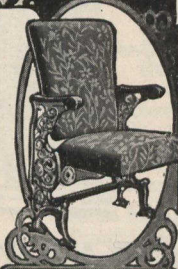
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Jo—The Flower Killer.

(Continued from page 14)

And all this time the young Indian, Jo, was doggedly following an elusive trail that had led him over many weary miles of rough country only to double back toward the Minnichinas Hills. And when at last here was doubt no longer as to where the fugitive was making for, Jo sent back word by a half-breed hunter, with whom he had fallen in by the way, and went on alone as before. At the end of two days more he knew by the signs he was closing in on the quarry he sought.

Sundown found him dismounting in a place of grassy slopes with a brook zig-zagging through. It was an ideal spot to camp for the night, and Jo had soon turned the faithful little cayuse loose to browse while he set about getting a snack for himself. He had to content himself with cold tea, for a fire would have been an open breach of caution. When he had eaten, he filled his pipe, leaned back against a stump, stretching his cramped legs straight out in front of him, and smoked.

Then as it had been every night, so it was now that the inexplicable thing came back to haunt him. Why had he run away? Why had he not stayed and shot down the slayer of the big, good-natured pale-face as he was justified in doing? It was a thing beyond his understanding; something that was a part of his growing which he could not analyse. The strange new voices had spoken to him out of the Illimitable, and the fear had jumped into his feet. Was it that he was afraid, then? Was he not hunting this man now, and would he not now avenge the killing of his friend, the white man? As it had been every night, so it was now that he could not understand.

Jo took his pipe out of his mouth. He placed his hand over the bowl of it and quietly sniffed. Again he cautiously sniffed the air, and his eyes began to glitter, his nostrils to dilate. The rifle was lying in the grass not a foot away from the fringe of his right legging. He put the stem of the pipe once more between his teeth and placidly went on smoking; but his right hand began to edge slowly nearer the weapon—so slowly that the movement was imperceptible.

He felt his fingers in contact with the stock; they crept along till they closed upon the cold metal of the lock. It was lightning, that next movement—a movement that left him kneeling behind the stump, the gun resting on the top of it, the hammer at full cock, and one long brown finger on the trigger.

But the Running Wolf was unperturbed. He was squatting not ten feet away—was squatting against another stump, his rifle lying carelessly across his knees, a long reed pipe held to his mouth. He smoked as if there were no such thing as an enemy in the whole wide world, and as if the thing which was pointing straight at him across the top of the neighbouring stump was a harmless stick instead of a deadly "shooting-iron." Only the glint in his eyes was there to betray him—eyes that not for one second wavered from the eyes beyond the gleaming barrel of the gun.

For fully two minutes thus they looked at each other. Then spoke the Running Wolf in the tongue of the Blackfeet:

"Why you no shoot?" he scoffed.

The younger Indian's tense muscles suddenly relaxed. He raised his head, his eyes still fastened unwaveringly upon the swarthy ugliness of the face before him. The glittering

beads that were the eyes seemed to hold a strange fascination which it puzzled him to fathom; they drew him with the influence of an overpowering will that was other than his own. For the second time he could not shoot; but he knew that he would not run away.

"Waugh!" grunted the Running Wolf. "Why does the spy of the pale-face dogs no shoot? His arm is not the arm of a woman; his blood runs not cold like the blood of the little mouse when the owl cries in the night. Here am I! You see me here, why you no shoot?"

The other was still silent. Still he knelt there, searching the face of the renegade. The latter manner changed abruptly.

"Waugh!" he grunted again. "The spirits have spoken many things to my young brother, the Killer-of-Flowers. He is of the lodges of the Blackfeet, and he has not forgotten the totem of his fathers. And his brothers, the Blackfeet braves, have not forgotten. My brother has grown great on the trails; he knows how to shoot the thunder-sticks of the white men; the winds and the grass and the stars speak to him in one tongue; he has smoked the pipes of the white men, and he has been their friend. It was the will of the Great Spirit.

"But now the spirits of his fathers have called to him and told him many things, and he is the white man's friend no longer, but the mighty man of the Blackfeet. His brothers will soon dig up the hatchet and go once more upon the warpath as did their fathers before them and their fathers' fathers. Running Wolf is not a fool. The palefaces are fools! Running Wolf has killed one and he will kill many more. He will not be killed, for it is not the will of the Great Spirit that he should die. He will kill a few more of the Big White Woman's warriors, and his brothers, the Blackfeet, and the braves from the lodges of the Piegiens and the lodges of the Bloods will come with him upon the warpath and drive out the dogs who have robbed them of the land of their fathers. And my brother, the Killer-of-Flowers, will join them. The Great Spirit has willed it; the medicine-men have so declared. I have spoken."

The long twilight faded slowly out in the sky and the air grew chill with the coming of the darkness. They sat there, talked a little and smoked much—talked always of one thing while the bright-starred night wheeled slowly away into the country of the setting sun. When morning came, they ate together; after that they rode away together. And their way lay farther into the Minnichinas Hills.

Another day's sun was going down before the fight began. Corporal Haines' reining in his wiry troop-horse with a sharp exclamation, had caught sight of three Indians scampering into a small bluff off to the right, and he had immediately whirled about and galloped back to the detachment. The men had then been hastily disposed to prevent escape from the bluff, and the fight was on.

After some desultory firing, Corporal Haines and two constables, together with a civilian who had joined them at the Nine-Mile, made a gallant attempt to rush the position; but the results were disastrous. Corporal Haines came back alone, his left arm dangling useless at his side. Five men at once went after the bodies, but secured only one of them, being driven back by the Indians, who had meanwhile excavated a rifle-pit.

The thing began to assume proportions, and the police fell back to



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