

## White Star

Written for the Western Home Monthly by H. Mortimer Batten.

**C**ROWNING the low ridge that overlooks White Star City in Western Alberta, is a great cairn of grey stones which stands out against the skyline so conspicuously that strangers visiting the city are almost certain to ask why it is there. They are told it is in memory of White Star, and this is the story of why it came to be built.

It was in the early days, long before Western Canada became the Dominion of Canada, that Ralph Inman and his family built their lonely little trading post on the bank of Tumbledown River. Inman had four children. His son Shem, a boy of fifteen was the oldest, and the remaining three were still more or less in their infancy when the events to be described took place. Their nearest neighbors were sixteen miles away at Only Ford, which has since become White Star City—then a tiny mining camp of a dozen huts or so, and the trail that lay between them was extremely rough and tortuous.

Unfortunately Ralph Inman was a man of violent temper, and though he knew well that the safety of his home and family depended upon the good faith of the Indians with whom he traded, he was one day forced into a quarrel with a Sioux chief named Grey Eagle. Grey Eagle came to the store, and took a fancy to a pair of daintily beaded moccasins, in return for which he offered the filthy old wolf robe he was wearing. Shem, who was in charge of the trading post, shook his head and said—"No trade."

Grey Eagle was evidently out looking for trouble. He glared into the boy's face, then taking the knife which hung at his hip he tapped the counter threateningly with it. "You trade pretty blame quick," he answered, then taking up the moccasins he stowed them away in his wallet.

Shem, alone as he was, realized the folly of quarreling with this man, and did not attempt to recapture the moccasins. He had no idea that his father had returned, and had been listening to their conversation outside the door.

Though Ralph Inman knew it was necessary for him to keep on good terms with the red men, he knew equally well that it would not do to allow things of this sort to happen, otherwise some of the Indians might make a regular practice of visiting the store when he was away and trying to procure goods by bullying the weaker members of his family. In that direction danger certainly lay.

As Grey Eagle turned towards the door Ralph Inman appeared upon the threshold and barred the way. "What are you doing with them moccasins?" he enquired sternly. "You give them back to Shem pretty blame quick."

"I give Shem wolf robe. Keep moccasins," was the Indian's insolent reply.

"No you don't," snarled Inman, and in an instant he had torn the wallet from Grey Eagle's possession and thrown it to the boy.

With a snarl the Indian drew his knife, and rushed at the trader. Shem was just in time to land the man a stunning blow with a rusty beaver trap, which upset his calculations, and next moment the trader's fist went home with a force that sent Grey Eagle crashing among the store boxes. Inman snatched up the wolf robe, and throwing it over the red man's head rushed him and his possession through the doorway, to fall headlong down the low wooden steps.

Grey Eagle, bruised and shaken, picked himself up with such dignity as he could command, and stood glowering through the open door. Had he been an ordinary Indian such treatment would have taught him a lesson, and he would probably have been more judicious in his trading thereafter, but unfortunately he had more grit and backbone than most of his red skinned kindred. As he turned to go Ralph Inman saw from the expression in the Indian's eyes that he had made a bad enemy, and that Grey Eagle would never forget the treatment he had received at the trading post that afternoon.

II

In those days the Sioux Indians were the terror of many an isolated settler. By far the most warlike tribe, they were

in the habit of making long and bloody raids into the hunting grounds of the Crees and Salteaux, and though in many parts they were at peace with the white men, there was always a danger that their warlike instincts would get the better of them.

For some months after the events last described, nothing was seen of Grey Eagle at the Tumbledown River trading post, and Ralph Inman and Shem had almost forgotten the incident when one evening they were rudely awakened to the recollection of it.

The two were fishing near to the shanty when suddenly they heard the report of a muzzle loader, which was quickly followed by a hoarse, short bellow. The sound came from the direction of the shanty, and in that direction, with all possible haste, they made their way. Scarcely had they reached the edge of the clearing when they saw their cov-lying under the rough snake fence, shot through the heart. This they knew was an act of revenge, and immediately recalled the quarrel with Grey Eagle. Then, as they hesitated, Shem caught his father by the sleeve, and pointed towards an adjacent thicket. For a moment they caught sight of the drawn face of Grey Eagle peering at them through the trees, then came a second report, and from the place where the Indian was crouching issued a white

cloud of smoke. The bullet cut into the ground at their feet, scattering gravel over them, and without further hesitation they doubled for the shelter of the trading post.

Scarcely had they gained it when a blood curdling yell rose from the adjacent bush, and a dozen or more braves, each armed with Hudson Bay rifles, leapt into the open, and took up places of shelter behind boulders of rock and burnt rampikes.

Mrs. Inman had been quick to realize the peril of the situation. Her worst dream had come true, and she knew now that the Sioux were upon them. Immediately she heard the first rifle shot she ran into the large store room, and opened a trap door in the centre of the floor. This door communicated with an underground pit, five feet or so in depth,



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