

Written for MASSEY'S ILLUSTRATED.

An Apache Raid.

BY ANNIE TAYLOR, TORONTO.

"Is it really Apache, Ralph?" I asked. "Where did you get it?"

"It" was a curious necklace which my brother had brought home, with other curiosities, the results of a trip through the Indian Territory.

"Where did I get it, Rosie? Well, I bought it of an old Indian woman, at a lonely little station among the hills. Yes, it's 'real Apache.' I thought some of you might like it. Here is something prettier," he said, turning over the things.

"I should like this best, Ralph."

He asked me if I was interested in the Apaches, but I would not tell him; I was afraid he might laugh at me. I think anyone would if they had seen me, in my own room, twisting the necklace round the frame of a portrait that always stood on my table, only a girl's face, the flaxen hair curling over a forehead too broad for beauty, blue eyes that some said were cold, but then they did not know her, my Mehetabel. And this is the story about her.

To quote Wordsworth, "We are seven," Ralph, myself, Tom, (tiresome Tom, we call him sometimes, and he is), the twins, Ned and Ben, Richie, and our darling baby May. She is past eight, and I am twice as old, so of course I am supposed to care for her. Our mother died when she was a baby, that is one reason why the boys are so wild. I know some people think I ought to fill her place, which shows how much they know about it, but I am afraid I don't do as much as I ought to.

Well, last spring Tom took Apache fever. The boys at school lent him some of those horrid books. Papa would not have them in the house, so he read them at school, and went wild over them. The twins followed, and even Richie (who is rather snubbed by the elder boys, and, therefore takes me more into confidence) sighed for revolvers and bowie knives. "The Scout of the Rocky Mountains" must have had a life of bliss compared with Tom's school teacher, I think. Things grew worse and worse. Bridget came to me threatening to give in instant notice, and leave our home desolate. It appeared that Tom had taken her clothes line, and was striving to emulate the exploits of a certain "Lasso Lem." I managed to soothe her, and she consented to remain.

It had been settled we should spend the holidays in Muskoka at the house of Captain Grey with whom papa was acquainted. I and the other children were to go first, papa following in two or three weeks. The boys were delighted, but I had my misgivings. I thought if Captain Grey has any fire arms, that will be the end of Tom. I only hope he won't shoot anyone else. In the midst of my packing came May. "Rosie," she said, "don't go. Tom says there are lots of Indians there. I won't go" and with that she stamped her little foot determinedly. "May" said I, sternly, "you are a very naughty little girl; go away directly, the Apaches would not have you anyhow." She turned away, her eyes full of tears, her lips quivering. "May darling" I said, as I clasped her in my arms; "sister did not mean to be cross, but I am very busy. Don't cry, dear; do you think papa would send his little girl, where there was anything that would hurt her. That's right; now run away and play, and don't mind what those naughty boys say."

The trip on the cars would have been delightful, but for those horrid Apaches. May nearly jumped out of her seat when the conductor called out the name of a station, and cast scared glances at a good-tempered looking colored man sitting opposite. I got "Evangeline" hopelessly mixed up with the "Adventures of Apache Jack," which were being discussed on the seat behind me. At last I closed the book in despair, and had to listen to an account of Jack's encounter with sixteen Apaches at once, savagely hoping he would be killed, but he was not. At last we reached our destination, the train stopping hardly long enough for us to get out.

Captain Grey, whom I had seen once before, was waiting on the platform. He introduced his little daughter Mehetabel, a quiet girl about thirteen, in a print dress and sunbonnet, but not at all shy. She made friends at once, and after supper took us round the place. They had lived there nearly all her life, she said; just those three, her father, mother and herself, shut away in the woods, until the railway came. Her father was station master. When we had gone over the farm, and learned how to pronounce her name, Richie began carefully "Me-he-ta-bel. Are there any Apaches here?"

"Any what?" said she, opening her big eyes wide in astonishment.

"Why, Apaches," said Ben. "Wild Indians, don't you know?"

"I thought the Apaches lived somewhere round Colorado," answered Mehetabel.

"Don't they ever make raids here?" asked Richie.

"Don't you know better than that, Richie Morgan," she answered, laughing.

"Richie is a donkey," said Tom, loftily. "Pretty good shooting hereabouts, I suppose."

"But Indians" cried Ned, "I don't care for anything else, aren't there some here?"

"Plenty" said Mehetabel. "Only yesterday while I was reading in the kitchen, I felt some one was near, and sure enough there was an Indian woman standing beside me, her large basket on her back, held by a strap across her forehead. I should think it made her head ache. She had come to sell baskets; they often do."

"Of course, you are pretty friendly with them, but I expect they are troublesome enough to some folks here," said Tom.

"They are rather troublesome to me" she said gravely, "as they come into the house without making the least noise."

"You don't seem to understand," said Tom. "I mean, do they make raids, steal horses, and that kind of thing?"

"And have their war-paint on," said Ben, "and hold their

Pow-wows and war dances. Were you ever at one of their meetings?"

"Father took me to their church once," she innocently answered, "he knows their language, I don't; but still I liked the singing."

"Did they sing war songs and dance?" asked Richie eagerly. "It was the Lord's day," said Mehetabel very quietly, "and they sang hymns."

"You must think us heathens, Mehetabel," said I, "but the boys' heads have been turned by reading dime novels."

"Yes," she said, rather bewildered. "You see the bush across the track; well, that is the berry patch, and we will make some raids there, you will like that, and you can explain about the Apaches."

One day, while I was sitting in the garden with a book in my lap, it being too hot even to read, Mehetabel joined me.

"Rosie," said she, "don't you think something ought to be done for the Apaches? Tom was showing me a book about them yesterday, and I have been thinking of it ever since."

"So they have been trying to make you believe those stories?" said I.

"I suppose they are true," she answered; "I don't like their style much, but I thought perhaps they were written by the men themselves."

"You thought the Apaches wrote them? That would be the climax of their atrocities. But Mehetabel, your mother would not like you to read such things."

She stood looking at me in silence for a moment. Then she said "How nice it must be to read lots of books and know so much. I could never go to school, and I have not time to read much. I wish—"

"What would you do if you were educated?"

"I think I would go to the Apaches."

"As a scout?" I said.

"No" she answered, flushing a little, "I am foolish, but I should like to do something for them, as they never heard of our Lord. I don't mean the men, but the children. I might—"

"Teach them the error of their ways," I interrupted. "You might start on Tom. I am always expecting to find him and the carving knife missing one morning."

And she actually took me at my word; tried to coax the boys out of their ideas, and having the resources of the farm to help her in her laudable effort, she partly succeeded. But just as I was hoping that we had heard the last of the Apaches, Tom stumbled upon the Captain's gun, and levelled it at Mehetabel. She turned as pale as death.

"It isn't loaded," said Tom, putting it down, "what's the matter with you?"

She hesitated for an instant, then answered, rather unwillingly "I remember, when I was a little thing, some men went out after a bear. I met them, and they said they would shoot me instead, just for fun, but I thought they meant it. It was only a minute. One of them said, don't tease the child, but I never forgot it, and since then I cannot bear the sight of fire-arms."

After that confession every atom of her influence over the boys was gone. They acted as though she had sought their friendship under false pretences, and despised her accordingly. And she felt it. I tried to console her with my books, as she had more time now, but she did not seem quite happy.

Hotter and hotter grew the weather, every breath of air seemed to come as from a furnace, and so it did, for near us were miles of blazing woods. All day the smoke-haze hung over us, and at night there was a dull red glow in the sky. I noticed the Captain seemed rather anxious. One morning he was missing from the breakfast table (a very unusual thing) and Mrs. Grey took his place in the telegraph office.

"What do you say to a day in the berry patch," said Tom.

"I'm going."

"Just the thing," chorused the twins.

"Will you come?" said Richie, turning to Mehetabel.

"I should not think there was any danger," she answered, looking across at the smoky woods, "but I wish father was here."

"Danger I listen to her," said Tom; "she's afraid one of her squaws will come and carry her off captive in a big basket. Come along, boys."

"May I come too?" cried Richie. "And me?" said May.

"I don't care," said Tom.

"Richie and May, you don't leave this place without some one to look after you," said I.

Richie pouted, and looked entreatingly at Mehetabel, while May burst into tears, and she yielded.

I dozed in the coolest place I could find, while the others toiled through the bush wood. Few and smoke-dried were the berries, and when they reached the woods, they threw themselves down under the trees, and there stayed till past noon.

"Was there ever such a disgusting place," said Tom; "nothing to do, and too hot to do it, if there was."

"Let's dress up as Apaches," said Ben, "and make a raid somewhere."

"Glorious," cried Ned. "I'll be Red Moon, and berry juice will do for war paint."

"Oh, yes," said Richie, "and who shall I be?"

"You and the girls must be the Whites," said Tom, jumping up, "you stay here while we get ready. Won't we have fun."

"And off they went, while the 'Whites,' by Mehetabel's directions, intrenched themselves in a low-branched tree, armed with sticks.

With a wild war-whoop the Apaches appeared.

"Good afternoon," said Mehetabel. "Warm day, isn't it? What may you want?"

"Blood," replied their undaunted chief.

"Water would be more acceptable, I should think," she answered. "Your face needs washing, young man."

"I am Big Buffalo," said Apache number two, seeing his chief was somewhat at a loss; "will the white maiden deign to come down?"

"I would answer, I would tell you," said the white maiden, "in the language of the Ojibway, in the language of the Dakotahs, only I don't know them, so Little Musquito—excuse me if I get your name mixed up, I will not come down. Richie, if you dare laugh at me, I'll throw you down to those awful Apaches."

With muttered threats, the Apaches departed, taking the lunch basket, and berry pails with them. Mehetabel sprang to the ground.

A sudden chill came over her. Through the woods came a sullen roar, broken now and again by the crash of a falling tree.

"Take care," said Richie; "there's some trick."

"They won't catch me with their tricks," she answered. "I will see what we had better do, and you must do just what I tell you, or the Apaches will have you, and I have nothing but a thimble with a hole in it, to ransom you with."

Hastily pressing on to a more open space, her worst fears were realized. Back among the trees, was a dense white smoke, rolling very slowly toward her; underneath it, as she well knew, were long tongues of flame, creeping along like serpents, curling themselves round the trees, eating into their roots until they fell crashing to the ground, while the flames leapt upward in triumph. She looked around her at the tangled brushwood, and she knew that once there, the fire would sweep through in a few minutes.

She hurried to where the boys sat and breathlessly told them that the woods were on fire.

One look at her, another at the woods, and they were off.

"Stop," she cried, "the children."

But they did not heed her. One moment she stood, then her calm sense came back. "Jesus, Master, make me strong," she murmured, as she rushed towards the tree where they sat unconscious of danger. She knew there was time to reach the station, but if the children became aware of their danger they might be paralyzed with fear and any delay would be fatal. They must not know, she thought. Catching a spray of leaves, and fanning herself, lest her face should betray her, she called out "May, Richie, this way."

They came down and followed her, as, with desperate energy, she made a way through the bushes, forcing them aside, trampling them down, and every little while glancing upwards at the well-known landmarks. Oh, how slowly they were going, she thought—every moment seemed almost an hour.

"I never was so hot in my life," said Richie; "but hurry, May, the Apaches are on our trail you know."

"I don't know what that is," said May, "I have torn my dress very much, and Rosie will say I am naughty."

"Rosie won't say anything," said Mehetabel, "just keep on a little while, darling. We must not let ourselves be caught now, you know."

So they pressed on till nearly half the journey was over, and very thankfully did Mehetabel hail the sight of a narrow path which wound through the thicket.

"Mehetabel," panted poor May, "I am tired and sick; please don't leave me."

"I am just about dead," said Richie.

Mehetabel lifted May in her arms and said, "Now, Richie, you are not half a boy if you can't keep up with me."

Thus urged Richie trotted bravely down the path and Mehetabel followed with steady rapid steps, her lips tightly pressed together.

I was roused from a brief nap by an unusual noise and looking towards the station I saw several men with their teams.

Captain Grey was there also. The woods beyond were blotched out by a white smoke-cloud, and up from the berry patch, black columns of smoke streaked with crimson flame were beginning to rise.

I dashed through the garden, crushing Mehetabel's asters under my feet in my excitement and then stopped suddenly as with a shrill whistle the train swept by, its woodwork blackened and smoking in the race through the burning woods. Papa was beside me.

"Well, Rosie," he asked; "where are the others?"

"There!" I replied, pointing to the blazing woods.

I was about to rush forward again, but everybody came round me, asking questions. And then from out of the smoke came Mehetabel and the children.

"Hurrah!" cried Richie, "we've beat the Apaches. What's up?"

The men gave a rousing cheer, and I caught May up, and much to the darling's astonishment and regardless of torn dresses, covered her with kisses.

Mehetabel without saying a word, went hurriedly into the house.

"Where are the boys?" excitedly asked papa.

"We are all right, sir," replied Ned, sheepishly. He had appeared from somewhere, when he saw the children were safe. I saw Ben standing near the fence, but Tom was nowhere to be seen. I went after Mehetabel, and found her kneeling at her bedside, crying bitterly.

"Let her alone, Rosie," said her mother softly, and I did so.

The fire continued to burn fiercely, keeping Captain Grey and the others hard at work.

Then up came Tom—

"Oh, Tom!" I cried, "how could you leave those children to die?" I could not say more; there were not enough words in the English language to express all I felt. He said nothing, but went inside the house, washed himself, and brushed his hair and clothes till supper time, as a kind of penance, I think, and that was the end of the Apache raid.

"There's no danger now, Rosie," said papa, coming in, "the fire is leaving us."

I went off to look for Mehetabel and found her standing by the table, very pale, cutting bread.

"Mehetabel," I said, "what can we do to you in return for what you have done for us," and taking the knife from her hand, I made her lie down on the lounge. "Mehetabel Gray, if you attempt to get up I'll pile the family Bible on top of you."

"An original way of showing gratitude," she said. "Rosie, do you know those men will want some supper, and your father, too."

"Those men shall have some supper," said I, setting to work.

"As for papa, he will be content with anything to-night."

"Mehetabel, you are a heroine, like the women poets rave about—women whom brave men loved and died for. I thought the race had died out."

She looked very uneasy.

"They will like some pie and preserves," she said. "Rosie, I would rather you would not talk so. I am a Christian, you know (yes, I did know), and I only did what was my duty as one. Would you have left May to die in the woods?"

"No," I answered, cutting the pie with unnecessary energy.

"Then I only did what you would have done, in the same place, so you see I did nothing remarkable."

I didn't see it in that light.

"Mehetabel," said I, filling : "do you remember that poem we were learning? 'Their's not to reason why, their's but to do, and die.' They only did their duty, yet, 'all the world wondered.'"

"Not but the soldiers knew 'some one had blundered,'" she answered, a quiet light coming into her eyes, "I know my Leader never can."