

The Gallantry of Spider Griffin

When Chase, Staged for Moving Picture Machine, Became Too Realistic

By ARTHUR STRINGER

IT all began through the Tenderfoot insisting on taking a picture of the branding camp. After a deal of argument he had persuaded Timber-Line Ike to plant his massive but much perturbed body fittingly before the grub-tent doorway. There Ike had petrified into a grim and stony figure of discomfort incarnate, not to be dissembled by even that studious subterfuge of a pair of airily crossed legs.

An audible sigh of relief went up from the assembled cow-punchers when the camera had done its worst. As Ike slowly uncrossed his legs once more the stern and wooden expression ebbed from his jovial face, and he gazed at the photographer's tripod with not a little curiosity.

"Uncommon queer kind o' dingus, them photy-graph machines!" he observed, as he meditatively packed down his pipe. "I s'pose, stranger, it ain't mebbe one o' them new-fangled movin'-picture lay-outs? Jus' a common, ev'ry-day, ord'nary cam'ra, I reckon?"

The Tenderfoot tried to explain just how simple it all was, but Ike's thoughts were elsewhere, and he took little interest in either pyrogallic acid or the collodion process.

"I reckon you've seen a heap o' them movin'-picture lay-outs? H'm! I want to know! I s'pose they *do* be some common in the East!"

Then Ike lapsed into deep thought, and the Tenderfoot was not the only man who patiently waited for him to go on.

"S far as I can rope in," he began, "'bout the only movin'-picture lay-out as ever migrated west o' the Touchwood Hills was the one me and Spider Griffin run across up back o' Caribou Bend. And I reckon that one was mebbe some plenty!"

"When me and Spider first tailed in with this yere movin'-picture apparatus, I must allow it weren't doin' a heap o' movin'. Me and Spider, howsomever, were traversin' the prairie kind o' brisk an' speedy, bein' sent out from the old Baldwin Ranch to ride down three or four imported yearlin's a ambitious young Blackfoot was abductin' some forcible. But we can cut them details out o' this yere herd o' talk jus' now, I reckon.

"Jus' up under Caribou Bend we come across this yere movin'-picture feller, sloughed down axle-deep in a muskeg, blaspheming an' slingin' round 'nough nickel-plated cussin' to ballast a gravel-line. He laid out he'd come from down the States somewhere, an' it wouldn't take no government assayer to probe out that he was a teamin' in 'nough apparatus for a stampin'-plant. Still, I allow he was a plum social feller, an' weren't skimpin' none in handin' round 's fine a line o' fam'ly-wrecker 's I can recollect havin' partook of—done up some deceptive in maple-surup tins. He laid out to us candid he was after a set o' pictures showin' something stirrin' in the Injin line. He didn't seem partic'lar 'bout what it was—jus' after anything from a scalpin'-party to a ord'nary Sun Dance. An' seein' me an' Spider was some puzzled, he informed us kind o' apologetic that he was a lecturin' cuss by trade, an' allowed plum open that his old set o' pictures was a fake, an' folks was gittin' onto 'em an' askin' for genooine Injins.

"He allowed them noo views he was after were a-goin' to cost him eight hundred dollars in hard cash; but he was some confident that if he once got his rope onto a good line o' photos of a first-class Injin chase, or such like, he'd rake his pile in off the table agin, plum easy.

"Me an' Spider had our own troubles 'bout that time an' weren't delayin' undooly to shoulder freight waggons out o' four feet o' muskeg. We ambled on some steady, an' four days later run down our yearlin's, secreted some cunning an' Injin-like in a clump o' scrub-birch. But I allow this yere outside card ain't enterin' the game which is now consumin' our time.

"We were nosin' back for home an' mother when we round up this yere movin'-picture sharp agin. He was doin' the light an' airy with a huntin'-camp temporary located just south o' the Big Caribou Reserve. An' a uncommon ornate huntin'-camp it was, rigged out

with 'bout eight Breed guides, all adorned some regardless in Stetson hats, an' buck-skin frills, an' Stoney bead-work; to say nothin' o' three cooks, an' a couple o' racks o' graduated rifles, an' a caravan o' pack-hosses, an' 'nough duffel t' set up a cyanide minin'-camp. Oh, it was a uncommon gorgeous camp, I can tell you!

"But when Spider found out it was a dood couple from Noo York, spendin' a good honeymoon that uncommon wasteful fashion an' tryin' to shoot a grizzly apiece, he was some sot on slidin' away an' boltin', for if there was one thing more'n another made Spider feel dog-mean an' unhappy, it was the sight of a ord'nary woman.

"An' I reckon Spider now moves into this yere game 'bout strong 'nough to allow for a little side-steppin' round that uncommon strange weakness o' his. Spider, I allow, was the dernest bashful cuss as ever run from the sight of a petticoat. Wimmen folk always sent him a-stampedin' clean off the range. He was jus' born that way. 'Tweren't no use buckin' agin natcher: he was scart o' jus' one thing this side o' Hell, an' that was a ord'nary woman!

"'Tweren't that Spider were craven. He mebbe weren't much bigger'n a minit, but now an' then I've seen him lick up an' clean out a hull bar-room without a flicker. Likewise I r'collect the all-round artistic way he laid out big Injin Tim, down on the Macleod Race Track, for playin' hokey-pokey with his cayuse. An' that partic'lar episode was in his jockey days, when he trimmed the scale at a hundred an' eleven pound!

"No, Spider weren't craven, nohow. He jus' had a unwholesome dread o' wimmen-folks, not understandin' the same, as you an' me would; an' took reg'ler to drink, two days steady, when spoke to accidental by a girl.

"Well, soon 's this yere pink an' white Noo York bride clapped eyes on Spider, she laid out he was a uncommon cute little boy, an' wanted to know if he was afeared o' the Injins, an' where he lived, an' who'd taught him to ride so nice. Spider he jus' turned hot an' cold an' couldn't do nothin' much but chew his quirt an' try an' back off some ungracious an' rude, while I was swallowin' a foot or two o' lariat an' trying uncommon hard not to catch Spider's eye, Spider bein' some vindictive an' ugly-actin' when he felt you was kind o' throwin' it over him.

"**T**HIS Noo York girl was a high stepper an' a some speerited animal. An' mebbe a bit wilful. An' seein' she was makin' Spider feel unspeakable mean, she laid out as she took to him like a mother, an' I reckon had a heap o' fun watchin' them treemers an' changin' colours creep over that blasphemous little varmint's seemin' guileless brow, an' him not able to relieve his feelin's none an' too derned upshot even to try pullin' his freight. But Spider's language, when this yere girl was in adjustin' her fly-oil prior to removin' her skeeter-net for grub-time, was some electrifyin' to

them three tenderfoot cooks what had been interferin' none with him nor his'n.

"To cut this yere unnecessary rope off short, Spider'd have stampeded some sudden from that campin' party if the diverting enterprises o' this yere movin'-picture sharp hadn't temporary side-tracked that some speerited young bride. 'Seems this picture sharp 'd bribed 'bout half a hundred o' them dog-eatin', good-for-nothin' Bend Injins to come down from the Reserve togged out gorgeous in war-paint an' feathers an' such-like. He'd put a platform up on a stretch o' level prairie an' 'd got a young squaw to whiten up. His idee was that them uncommon outrageous-lookin' Blackfoot bucks was to chase that squaw round the landscape with knives an' yellin' while the movin'-picture dingus got its work in.

"**B**UT when this yere speerited Noo York bride, who was a-hungerin' for noo sensations 'bout the same 's a April grizzly hungerin' for Saskatoon berries,—when this speerited bride sizes up the lay-out an' sees this uncommon picturesque horde o' hungry-lookin' redskins canterin' an' swingin' across the prairie in that captivat' style, she lay down a trump card what stops the game some sudden.

"'Let them Injins chase *me*!' she sez, with a little laugh. 'I'd be findin' a noo an' genooine kind o' thrill! Besides, I guess mebbe I could give 'em a run for their money!' sez she.

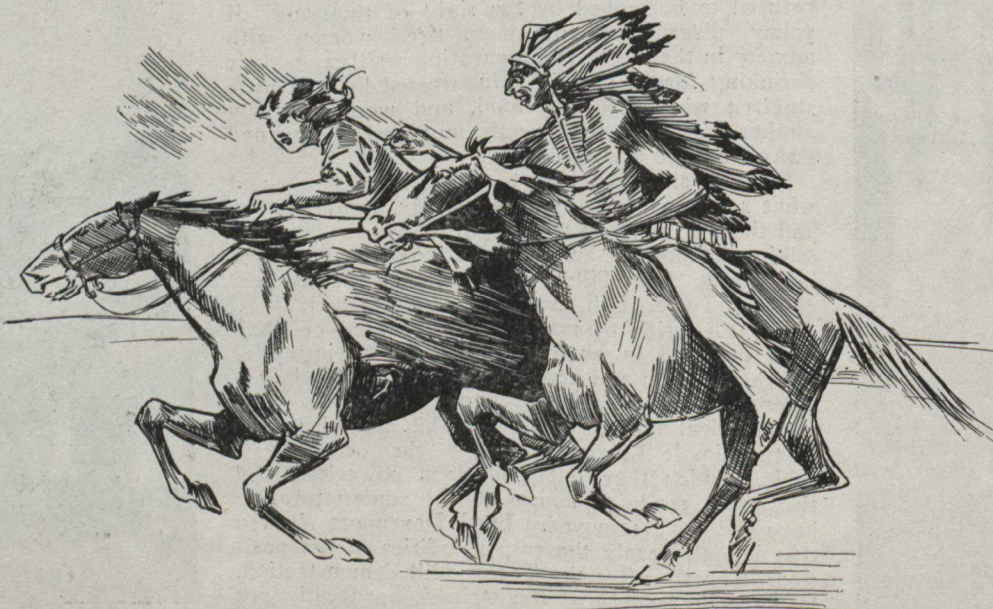
"It weren't interferin' with none o' my stock, an' I allowed I'd no special mission corrallin' up female tenderfeet totin' round their own matrimonial cow-punchers to attend to the tetherin'-stakes and adjustin' hobbles. But right now I want to hold up this yere hand while I lay down a chip or two pertainin' to Injins in general. Some folks has the firm-planted idee that when you slit the poison-sack out of a rattler he's never goin' to try strikin' agin. An' some folks has the equally firm-planted idee that when a ord'nary Injin takes to wearin' Hudson Bay pants an' a collar-button, he ain't a offal-eatin' Redskin no longer. Well, mebbe so. Mebbe not. But I allow Spider an' me knowed a little 'bout Injins. An' from the minit Spider seen that picture-sharp passin' fire-water round surreptitious 'mong them bucks he began to get uncommon restive an' mebbe a little blasphemous.

"Spider weren't sayin' much when old Big Sun an' his half hundred bucks finished up their tea dance, an' palpitatin' with cheap nose-paint, swept round to the startin'-point on their mangey little ponies. But Spider did a heap o' watchin' while the Noo Yorker helps that uncommon high-speerited young wife o' his into the saddle, an' the picture sharp starts his machine a-workin' an' tells 'em to break-away!

"Well, they broke away all right—the girl leadin' an' the Injins after her, licketybelt. She made a purty 'nough picture, that girl, for I must allow she had the makin's of a uncommon handsome woman, tearin' across the open prairie with her yellow hair a-flyin' an' stickin' to her bronco light 's a bird! Even Spider couldn't help agreein' with me it made a mighty takin' scene; an' them Injins swingin' an' yellin' an' a-whoopin' after her. It was some chillin' to the blood, too, I must allow. But neither Spider nor me was seein' jus' what this yere millionaire Noo Yorker up on the platform with the picture sharp was doublin' up an' laffin' over so hard. An' now an' then he'd stop and ask, some proud, if she weren't a sure winner, that girl. Well mebbe. Mebbe not!

"Spider'n me had heard her give that uncommon queerish little scream, same 's a kid 'd do, an' while we could see there was no misdoubtin' it was a extr'ord'nary fine chase, we were also hopin' in the fact that she was gittin' that noo an' genooine kind o' thrill all right.

"There was somethin' wrong, an' anythin' more intelligent 'n a tenderfoot 'd have been onto that fact. Spider sat there watchin' it through the movin'-picture sharp's field-glasses. He was ridin' a cayuse he was some proud of, a Spanish-blooded pinto what



"We could see that Redskin grab."