

Sweet Norine

CHAPTER XXIII.

"I see you comprehend your position exactly," retorted the half-breed, "and now I come to the point that brings me to your tent. You can gain your freedom but in one way, and that is that you tell us how the dwellings of Hadley are built. If anything happened to cause the villagers to band together, what place would they choose, and how are they fortified?"

In an instant the horrible truth broke upon Joe. They were planning a raid upon Hadley village, and a fearful massacre would follow. He thought of his old mother watching and waiting for his return to her, all heedless of her anger, and of Norine, the girl whom he loved better than life itself, and again his thoughts tottered at the bare agonizing thought of her being at the mercy of these savages, and unconsciously he breathed the very words that had fallen from her grandfather's lips when he discovered her flight.

"Better death for Norine—ay, death from the wild beasts that roam the mountainside for her than that she should fall into the hands of the savages."

"I will give you until midnight to think it over," added the half-breed. "I shall then be here for your answer. If you comply, well and good, if you refuse—well, you know what you may expect at the hands of the Pawnees. I have no more to add than that warning."

With these words he vanished quite as deftly as he had appeared, and poor Joe was left alone with his own agonizing thoughts, which were a thousand times more excruciating than the pain which racked his body so cruelly. He had lived all his life on the plains of Washington, and he knew the habits of the dreaded Pawnees, the most ferocious of all the Indian tribes, but too well. He realized that they would keep their word, wring from his lips the intelligence they desired, or torture him at the stake, dancing with fiendish glee around him, enjoying his horrible suffering until death shut them out from his gaze, and ended it all for him.

It mattered little enough to him what became of his body after the soul was freed from its earthly tenement.

Then came the thought to him, he must not die. Heaven had worked for him to do, he must escape from these savages and flee to Hadley, naming and suffering though he was, and apprise the villagers of their danger—ay, and fight until the last drop of blood in his heart was left, in protecting his mother and his dearly beloved Norine.

He realized dimly the fact the villagers would accuse him as being the cause of the massacre, upon his failure to appear at the Great Bear Mine with the wage money of the half-breeds, from the fact that they had needed but a slight cause as an excuse for an outbreak, and this thought was as cruel as death to him, ranking worse than the thrust of a knife in his tortured breast.

But one thought seemed clear to him—he must get back to Hadley or die in the attempt. In attempting to rise, he realized how badly he was hurt. His severe illness had left him terribly weak, and the blows he had received in endeavoring to guard the large sum of money he carried had well-nigh finished him.

Crawling to the door of the tent, he saw that he was in the very midst of the savage domain.

Bitter cold as the day was on this mountain height, the Pawnees seemed impervious to the weather, as the braves, squaws, and even the papooses move to and fro leisurely, the early morning sun shining weirdly upon their half-clad and gayly painted, supple limbs, and the waving eagle feathers that decorated their heads.

To these hardy barbarians the horrors of winter seemed quite unknown, unfeared.

Just where he was, Joe could not quite comprehend, though he realized that it must be upon some level spot on the mountain.

How far was he from Hadley—great Heaven, how far? he asked himself in agony. If he had but been in his usual state of health he would have taken his fate in his hands by making a bold dash for liberty. As it was, he realized that his strength would not hold out on the first mile, and he would fall in his tracks, and the red demons, with his rage at his attempt to escape, would be upon him, and in less time than it would take to tell it, his life would pay the penalty of his daring. No, he must make his escape by stratagem, if it were to be accomplished at all.

He knew that he was the subject of much excited discussion among the braves, who were gathered in little knots here and there, from their glances, furtively cast in his direction, and their fierce gesticulations. Another thing caught and held his attention spell-bound. In the centre of the clearing he observed one of the Indians driving a heavy hickory stake into the ground, while the squaws and children were actively engaged in fetching armfuls of dry fagots, which they proceeded to place around it, chattering the meanwhile in Joe's hearing, but one of their customs—to prepare a fire which should be lighted at night and last through it, the greatest glee.

But when one of the old squaws pointed to his tent, his blood ran cold with horror, for in that moment the meaning of the scene broke upon him—they were building his funeral pyre.

Joe's brain was brave, but even the stoutest heart would have quailed in such a moment.

"Whatever may be my fate, I can meet it like a man, and die like a brave one; but God in Heaven protect mother and Norine when I am not there to aid them," he sobbed, and the tears which coursed down his honest, weather-beaten cheeks were no shame to his manhood.

He felt from the drift of the half-breed's remarks that the Pawnees intended attacking the village within a very few nights. What if they had laid their plans to swoop down upon the village that very night, he had the opportunity to warn them of their impending peril? God give him the strength to save them.

He must make his escape and reach Hadley, even though his life paid the forfeit of the effort. He would lose a dozen lives if they were his to sacrifice in such a cause.

The sun crept higher and higher in the heavens, noon came, then the sun dropped lower and lower, denoting the approach of the oncoming night, and the late evening twilight.

During all the long hours of the day

no one had been near him with food or drink.

He knew but too well the Indian mode of warfare—who they intend to give to the fire-god they serve with neither meat nor drink.

He suggested back to his pallet of skins, threw himself upon them and give himself up to devising plans for his escape.

He knew that it should not be attempted until the shadows began to darken the mantle of darkness would shield him, then he could trust to God, who rules and reigns over all to befriend him in his peril.

As the long hours dragged their slow lengths on he formulated his plans carefully and fully.

Once the half-breed who had spoken with him before paused for a moment in passing and peered into his tent.

Joe lay so still upon his pallet of skins that the man was certain that he must be sleeping. He moved away muttering to himself. It was well for Joe's peace of mind that he did not hear the words on his lips.

The half-breeds had made no attempt to manacle their victim, for, knowing him so well, they had little difficulty in perceiving how very weak and ill he was, and looked upon his attempt to escape as certainly beyond the possibilities; for they had observed that he could not stand on his feet, and concluded that the ugly gash over his temple would soon finish him, even if they did not.

Every moment of that awful and never-to-be-forgotten day seemed an hour's duration, and each hour a year in length, so much torturous anguish was crowded into them. By that time to-morrow, he told himself, he would have saved Hadley, his dear old mother and Norine, or his lifeless body would tell the tale of his heroic attempt.

Lower and lower dipped the winter sun in the western sky.

Already the shadows began to gather in the tent of deerkin. Joe lay with upturned face, his eyes closed, his lips drawn in a tense, straight line, which was the only sign of his excitement laboring within his breast.

With bated breath he watched and waited for the shadows to deepen, and at last he told himself that the auspicious moment had arrived. Would it mean life or death for him? Ah, who could tell!

CHAPTER XXIV.

While Joe had been casting about for some way which might lead him out of his perilous surroundings, a way suddenly opened itself. One of the Indian ponies which were permitted to roam about the encampment at will, drew near his tent—ay, within a couple of yards of the spot where he was crouching. In an instant the valiant young explorer messenger had seized his chance, and with a throbbing heart and quivering pulse he gathered himself together for his leap for life.

If he succeeded in mounting the pony he would at least have a chance of gaining his liberty. If he missed his mark, ah, God, he dared not miss it—there was too much at stake.

In that fatal moment he thought of Norine, the fair, beautiful maiden whom he loved so dearly, and with her name on his lips, mingled with a broken cry to heaven to aid him, he made the terrific plunge.

Heaven had heard his wild prayer. He landed directly astride the animal's supple back.

The action was so daring, so unexpected, that for an instant the Indians were taken completely by surprise, faintly paralyzed with amazement.

For one moment the forms of man and horse are outlined against the stars, then the night swallows them, and at an instant the stillness of death reigns, the savages are trying to comprehend what has happened. Then a mighty war-whoop follows.

A score of dusky leaves leap to the back of their ponies and dash in mad pursuit in the direction our hero has vanished, yelling like veritable demons.

Galloping Joe, whom our hearts are following, heard it, and realized what it meant, even before he reached the summit of the mountain. He had not pursued down the mountain road, but he had hoped to distance them in the intense darkness, but even as he thought crossed his mind the dense, billowing clouds overhead rolled slowly away, and the full moon broke forth, dazzling and bright in its full white glory, rendering every object plainly visible on the broad stretch of almost level ground, which seemed to extend for miles over the mountain. A groan that was almost a sob broke from Joe's lips, for he knew by the increased demonic yell and the arrows that were whizzing about him that they saw him, and were urging their steeds forward.

They were all riding madly onward for one scalp, and that scalp his own. He would be butchered without pity if he fell into their hands, and he knew too, that the inhuman fiends always tortured their prisoners before they showed them the mercy of death.

Hadley's three fiercest warriors were husband, and not even an arrow was directed toward him. This puzzled Joe greatly. Had it not been for the steady onward patter of hoofs in the rear over the hard, frozen earth, Joe would have thought that they had abandoned pursuit of him.

He panted long enough in his mad leap to turn and glance uneasily over his shoulder. His keen eyes discerned but a herd of ponies dashing riderless toward him. He could see no one on their backs, but he instantly divined, by the way they dashed onward, and the steadiness with which they held their course, neither diverging to the right nor to the left, that they were guided by invisible yet firm bands, and he remembered once having heard old Daniel Gordon, the blacksmith, say that this was but a cunning device of the tricky savages. They were lying under the bodies of their steeds to escape observation, as well as perhaps a stray bullet. And, moreover, none save Pawnees—ay, and the best and most daring of their tribe—could ride thus.

Joe felt that it would simply be a matter of which pony—theirs or his—that would hold out the longest.

He pressed his little pony on to renewed speed, again glancing backward, and as though she understood with almost human intelligence all that there was at stake, she shot forward at a terrific rate, which began to tell instantly in the space between pursued and pursuers.

Seeing this, Joe had failed, the Pawnees sat bolt upright on their ponies' backs again. Even in the midst of his

terrible danger, Joe could not help but admire, as he took another glance backward, the firm, centaur-like and yet graceful riding of the pursuing Indians, whose nude bodies gleamed in the moonlight like statues of bronze. Broad-chested and powerful fellows they were, looking warlike and picturesque enough, with their head-dresses of gorgeous feathers, their long, thick hair out behind them like a mane.

Thus they swept on, pursued and pursuers, mile after mile, and a cry of "Thank God!" broke from Joe's death-white lips as he saw a dense forest lying ahead of him. If he could but reach it he might elude them.

As he neared the underbrush he saw a huge white rock looming up ahead of him. Now he knew where he was, a mile or so off from the main road that led over the mountain. At that place on the main road five different express messengers on as many years had met a tragic fate.

Two of them had been killed by white handbills for plunder, and the remaining three by the hostile, blood-thirsty Pawnees for their scalps.

Just as this recollection came to Joe his pony suddenly shied at some thing directly before him, then stood stock still, trembling like a leaf. Joe was not long in discovering the cause of its alarm, for the clear moonlight revealed the skeletons of a horse and its rider.

Joe bent forward breathlessly.

He knew by the ghastly, grinning teeth of the latter, many of which were dark and discolored, that he had been a white man, for an Indian's teeth never decay.

A round hole in the dead man's skull, which the birds or beasts of prey probably both had cleared of every vestige of flesh or hair, indicated that he had met a violent death.

Bits of straps and leather lying about showed conclusively that he had been a mail carrier, who that year before was supposed to have missed his footing in climbing the slippery mountain heights, both horse and rider probably plunging to death down the rocky gorge and into the boiling chasm, where a body would never again be found until the waters of the canyon gave up their dead.

A terrible shudder crept over Joe.

"Poor fellow, what was your fate may be mine ere the morrow's light dawns," he muttered, half addressing the bleached corpse as he forced his pony past it and on into the shadow of the tract of woodland beyond.

To his unspeakable thankfulness he saw that he had distanced his pursuers greatly in the terrific race for life.

He realized that he must have seized the chief of the party, with speed and endurance were so superior to the rest.

He felt that it must be the handwork of heaven that had brought the animal so near him.

He creathed the dark shadows of the forest with a thankfulness words are weak to describe. He knew a dozen ways out of it on the main road, and, sweeter thought than all the rest, he was but five miles up the mountain road from Hadley, and could not see the forest that was so deadly to him, which was lessening the distance.

Once again he drew rein for an instant to listen. He could no longer hear the patter of ringing hoofs thundering after him. "Could it be that the Pawnees had given up the chase?"

For an instant he was doubtful. He might have believed it had he not known full well the nature of this particular tribe—that the Pawnee never never known to give up until he is the victor, or has been vanquished. No, he concluded, they must have resolved to pursue some other tactics.

Perhaps they knew some other path that led to the main road, and had on their ponies in that direction to head him off.

(To be continued.)

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HAMILTON'S MOST PROGRESSIVE STORE

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Ready to Give You Largest and Best Choice In Everything You Buy--And, Best of All, Ready to Save You Money

To-morrow, Saturday, this progressive store is going to demonstrate its supremacy in the dry goods trade by offering to its patrons positively one of the best sale lists ever offered to the women of Hamilton, selected from one of the best and largest stocks that has ever been assembled together by this great store. The store is simply filled with everything that is new, everything one could imagine or desire, every new shade and weave will be found in this splendid collection and don't forget the early choosers secure first choice. Come to-morrow to this splendid store and you will share in the savings, and come early in the day. Come anyway, whether you intend buying or not, you will be made welcome.

Grand Showing and Sale of New Spring Gloves

In Kid and Fabric, all the Leading Shades

Ladies' 12 Buttoned Kid Gloves \$2.28 Pair

Beautiful, Fine French Glove Kid Gloves, in 12-button length, come in all the new tan shades and black, sizes 5 3/4 to 7, regular \$3.00, special for Saturday \$2.28 pair

Celebrated Trefousse Kid Gloves \$2.98 Pair

The Trefousse, a beautiful, fine French Glove Kid, in 16-button length, come in Copenhagen blues, resedas, greens, tans, browns, navies, blacks and whites, every pair fitted and guaranteed, regular \$3.50, special for Saturday \$2.98 pair

English Walking Gloves \$1.00 Pair

A full stock of Ladies' English Walking Gloves, in pretty shades of tans, sizes 5 3/4 to 7 3/4, a nice, fine, pliable Glove, for \$1.00

Suede Kid Gloves 98c Pair

Fine French Suede Kid Gloves, in tans, browns, greys, blacks, two dome fasteners, sizes 5 3/4 to 7 3/4, guaranteed quality, regular \$1.35, on sale Saturday 98c pair

Our Specials in \$1.00 and \$1.25 Kid Gloves

Fine French Glove Kid in leading shades of tans, navies, browns, greys, greens, dark reds, wines, also black and white, all sizes, every pair guaranteed and fitted \$1.00 and \$1.25 pair



Yard Wide Black Taffeta 98c

Regular \$1.50 Quality

About 300 yards only of this Silk to go on sale at the above price: an all Silk Taffeta, French dye and finish, and very strong weave, 36 inches wide and worth \$1.50, on sale to-morrow for 98c

White Wear Specials for Saturday

Corset Covers 25c

Fine Cambric Covers, full front, trimmed with Torchon lace and insertion, lace edging at neck and sleeves, special Saturday 25c

65c Drawers 49c

Ladies' Fine Nainsook Drawers, trimmed with lace and embroidery, umbrella style, with deep full frill; regular 65c, Saturday 49c

Big Saturday Sale of Children's Union Ribbed Stockings

Worth up to 35c Pair, Sale Price 17c

300 pairs of fine Ribbed Children's Union Stockings on sale to-morrow at 34 less than regular, splendid 3/4 Stockings for children's school wear, on sale at per pair 17c

You Like Some People

The first time you see them others do not appeal to you, but they improve on acquaintance. Most people like this store the first time they see it. It improves in the estimation of everybody the better they get acquainted with it.

The reason is, the store has never lost sight of its original ideal—the greatest good to the greatest number.

The desire that keeps this store humming in your interests is the desire to make it positively the best place for you to shop. That's our life work and we take a great deal of pleasure in doing the work the best possible way.

500 Pairs English Lace Curtains

On Sale Regular \$5 Per Pair, Saturday Sale Price \$2.48

This is a sale just to remind you that it is very near to house-cleaning time, a sale that will not be repeated again this season, 39 inches long, are double net, extra fine quality. Come early for this grand bargain, per pair \$2.48



Extraordinary Bargains in Blouses

THIRD FLOOR

\$5.50 Net Waists for \$3.19

Beautiful new White Point d'Esprit Waists, made with fancy yoke over silk slip, and trimmed with Maltese insertion; worth regular \$5.50, Saturday's sale price \$3.19

\$3.50 White Waists at \$2.49

Fine new White Persian Lawn Waists, made with dainty Swiss all over embroidery front, embroidery collar and cuffs, baby back; worth regular \$3.50, Saturday's sale price \$2.49

Just received a shipment of new Tailored Linen Shirt Waists, made with Gibson tuck over shoulder; all sizes; prices \$2.49 to \$2.98

Baby Department

\$2.50 Dresses at \$1.49

Children's Navy Blue Serge Dresses, in sizes 2, 3 and 4; worth regular \$2.50, Saturday's sale price \$1.49

\$1.25 Slips at 69c

Infant's White Nainsook Slips, trimmed with embroidery and lace, worth regular \$1.25, Saturday's sale price 69c

Extraordinary Offering in New Spring Dress Goods

New Shadow Stripe Suitings at \$1.00

Another big shipment of these popular self stripe Suitings just arrived and passed into stock. A big range of new shades to choose from. Come to-morrow and see these new Suitings. The materials are Worsteds, Serges, Melrose and Chiffon Panamas; shades are Copenhagen, navies, tans, browns, greens, greys, fawns, reds and black, specially priced for to-morrow at \$1.00

\$1.00 Satin Amazons for 85c

This cloth is a nice light weight with a bright permanent finish, and will make a splendid, serviceable spring suit, will go on sale for to-morrow only at a big saving for you; new shades of Copenhagen, tans, browns, navies, greens, greys, fawns, etc., our regular \$1.00 cloth, to-morrow at 85c

\$1.00 Black French Voiles and Silk Eoliennes at 79c

Here is a good buying chance in two of our most stylish materials, French All Wool Voiles and Silk eoliennes, splendid bright backs and good wide widths; quantities are not large, so be here early if you wish to share in this bargain; our regular \$1.00 quality, on sale to-morrow 79c

Special Prices in Corset Department

Corsets—98c Regular \$1.25

Two special lines of new Spring Corsets, made of fine imported white batiste, with straight front and long military hips, with suspenders attached at front and sides, or without, sizes 18 to 28 inches, regular \$1.25, for Saturday 98c

Corsets—49c Regular 75c

10 dozen only straight front Corsets with medium high bust, and long, dip hip, made of white batiste and steel lined, sizes 18 inches to 26 inches, regular 75c, for Saturday 49c

Bust Reducers 50c

Bust reducers, made of fine white linen, and lined in front, just the article for wearing under the summer blouses, sizes 31 to 44 inches, regular 75c, for Saturday 50c

Special Sale of Tailor-Made Suits

\$25.00 Tailored Suits for \$14.98

On Saturday Morning at 9 o'Clock We Will Offer 10 Only \$25.00 Suits For \$14.98

Handsome Suits of stripe and check materials, jackets are latest models, all handsomely strapped, silk lined, skirts are latest cut. A smartly fashioned suit, and great value. Regular \$25, special at \$14.98

Covert Coats \$4.95

Beautifully Tailored Covert Coats, Grey, navy and black cloth skirts, excellent fitting garments, all new, up-to-date styles. These coats are worth \$6.50, specially priced for Saturday \$4.98

Tailor-Made Skirts \$2.98

Grey, navy and black cloth skirts, tucked and box pleated, all walking lengths, regular \$4.50, special for Saturday at \$2.98

Exceptional Values For Saturday

Visit Our Busy Staple Section

Nainsooks 18c

42-inch Underwear Nainsook, pure finish, thoroughly shrunk, a special quality for fine underwear, worth 25c, for 18c

Bleached Damask 75c

70-inch Bleached Damask, fine 8000 finish, regularly \$1.00, for 75c

Napkins \$1.50

75 dozen old Napkins, slightly imperfect, pure linen, regularly \$2.50 dozen, for \$1.50

Linen Blouse Lengths \$2.50

Sample lot of Irish Hand Embroidered Blouse Lengths, pure linen, dainty patterns, worth \$3.50, for \$2.50

Longcloth 11c

Fine, round thread English Long Cloth, close, even weave, launders splendidly, worth 12 1/2c, for 11c

Flannelette

36-inch Striped Flannelette, warm, fleecy finish, 1 1/2c value, Saturday 9c yards for 11c

Pillow Cotton

Fine, round thread English Pillow Cotton, close, even weave: 42-inch 17c
44-inch 18c

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