

**CIHM
Microfiche
Series
(Monographs)**

**ICMH
Collection de
microfiches
(monographies)**



Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions / Institut canadien de microreproductions historiques

© 1997

Technical and Bibliographic Notes / Notes techniques et bibliographiques

The Institute has attempted to obtain the best original copy available for filming. Features of this copy which may be bibliographically unique, which may alter any of the images in the reproduction, or which may significantly change the usual method of filming are checked below.

- Coloured covers / Couverture de couleur
- Covers damaged / Couverture endommagée
- Covers restored and/or laminated / Couverture restaurée et/ou pelliculée
- Cover title missing / Le titre de couverture manque
- Coloured maps / Cartes géographiques en couleur
- Coloured ink (i.e. other than blue or black) / Encre de couleur (i.e. autre que bleue ou noire)
- Coloured plates and/or illustrations / Planches et/ou illustrations en couleur
- Bound with other material / Relié avec d'autres documents
- Only edition available / Seule édition disponible
- Tight binding may cause shadows or distortion along interior margin / La reliure serrée peut causer de l'ombre ou de la distorsion le long de la marge intérieure.
- Blank leaves added during restorations may appear within the text. Whenever possible, these have been omitted from filming / Il se peut que certaines pages blanches ajoutées lors d'une restauration apparaissent dans le texte, mais, lorsque cela était possible, ces pages n'ont pas été filmées.
- Additional comments / Commentaires supplémentaires:

L'Institut a microfilmé le meilleur exemplaire qu'il lui a été possible de se procurer. Les détails de cet exemplaire qui sont peut-être uniques du point de vue bibliographique, qui peuvent modifier une image reproduite, ou qui peuvent exiger une modification dans la méthode normale de filmage sont indiqués ci-dessous.

- Coloured pages / Pages de couleur
- Pages damaged / Pages endommagées
- Pages restored and/or laminated / Pages restaurées et/ou pelliculées
- Pages discoloured, stained or foxed / Pages décolorées, tachetées ou piquées
- Pages detached / Pages détachées
- Showthrough / Transparence
- Quality of print varies / Qualité inégale de l'impression
- Includes supplementary material / Comprend du matériel supplémentaire
- Pages wholly or partially obscured by errata slips, tissues, etc., have been refilmed to ensure the best possible image / Les pages totalement ou partiellement obscurcies par un feuillet d'errata, une pelure, etc., ont été filmées à nouveau de façon à obtenir la meilleure image possible.
- Opposing pages with varying colouration or discolourations are filmed twice to ensure the best possible image / Les pages s'opposant ayant des colorations variables ou des décolorations sont filmées deux fois afin d'obtenir la meilleure image possible.

This item is filmed at the reduction ratio checked below /
Ce document est filmé au taux de réduction indiqué ci-dessous.

10x			14x			18x			22x			26x			30x	
							✓									
	12x		16x		20x			24x		28x		32x				

The copy filmed here has been reproduced thanks to the generosity of:

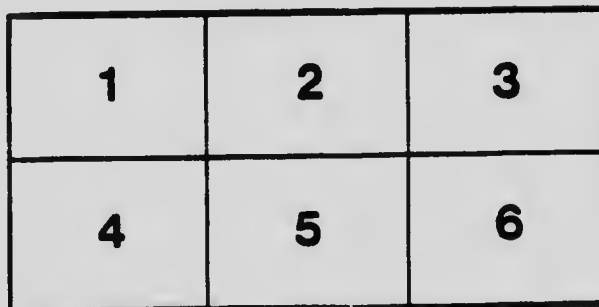
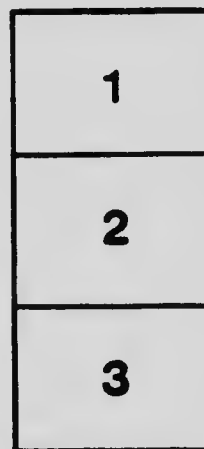
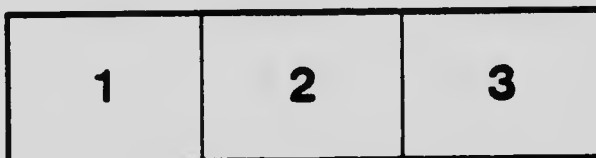
National Library of Canada

The images appearing here are the best quality possible considering the condition and legibility of the original copy and in keeping with the filming contract specifications.

Original copies in printed paper covers are filmed beginning with the front cover and ending on the last page with a printed or illustrated impression, or the back cover when appropriate. All other original copies are filmed beginning on the first page with a printed or illustrated impression, and ending on the last page with a printed or illustrated impression.

The last recorded frame on each microfiche shall contain the symbol \rightarrow (meaning "CONTINUED"), or the symbol ∇ (meaning "END"), whichever applies.

Maps, plates, charts, etc., may be filmed at different reduction ratios. Those too large to be entirely included in one exposure are filmed beginning in the upper left hand corner, left to right and top to bottom, as many frames as required. The following diagrams illustrate the method:



L'exemplaire filmé fut reproduit grâce à la générosité de:

Bibliothèque nationale du Canada

Les images suivantes ont été reproduites avec le plus grand soin, compte tenu de la condition et de la netteté de l'exemplaire filmé, et en conformité avec les conditions du contrat de filmage.

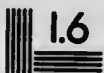
Les exemplaires originaux dont la couverture en papier est imprimée sont filmés en commençant par le premier plat et en terminant soit par la dernière page qui comporte une empreinte d'impression ou d'illustration, soit par le second plat, selon le cas. Tous les autres exemplaires originaux sont filmés en commençant par la première page qui comporte une empreinte d'impression ou d'illustration et en terminant par la dernière page qui comporte une telle empreinte.

Un des symboles suivants apparaît sur la dernière image de chaque microfiche, selon le cas: le symbole \rightarrow signifie "A SUIVRE", le symbole ∇ signifie "FIN".

Les cartes, planches, tableaux, etc., peuvent être filmés à des taux de réduction différents. Lorsque le document est trop grand pour être reproduit en un seul cliché, il est filmé à partir de l'angle supérieur gauche, de gauche à droite, et de haut en bas, en prenant le nombre d'images nécessaire. Les diagrammes suivants illustrent la méthode.

MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



APPLIED IMAGE Inc

1653 East Main Street
Rochester, New York 14609 USA
(716) 482 - 0300 - Phone
(716) 288 - 5989 - Fax

3000

~~54~~
To Jack Hambley

Christmas 1932 from
Ken Rooney



THE THREE ARROWS

WORKS BY EDWARD S. ELLIS

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Blazing Arrow | In the Days of the
Pioneers |
| The Forest Messengers | The Dragon of the Skies |
| Lost Among the Red
Men | The Three Arrows |
| The Boy Patrol Around
the Council Fire | Redskin and Scout |
| Lost in the Rockies | The Boy Patrol on
Guard |
| A Princess of the Woods | Wolf-Ear the Indian |
| Captured by Indians | Astray in the Forest |
| The Daughter of the
Chieftain | Bear Cavern |
| Red Feather | River and Forest |
| The Boy Hunters of
Kentucky | The Lost River |
| The Young Ranchers | Cowmen and Rustlers |
| Ned in the Woods | The Hunters of the
Ozark |
| Ned on the River | The Last War Trail |
| Ned in the Block-House | The Lost Trail |
| Deerfoot in the Forest | Camp Fire and Wigwam |
| Deerfoot on the Prairies | Footprints in the Forest |
| Deerfoot in the
Mountains | Iron Heart |
| The Path in the Ravine | Red Jacket |
| The Pony Express Rider | Two Boys in Wyoming |
| | Chieftain and Scout |





"Such cattle as they did not shoot were stampeded" (*see page 52*).

THE THREE ARROWS

BY
EDWARD S. ELLIS

Author of "Blazing Arrow," "The Forest Messengers," etc.

WITH A COLOUR FRONTISPIECE AND
FOUR BLACK-AND-WHITE ILLUSTRATIONS



CASSELL AND COMPANY, LTD
London, Toronto, Melbourne and Sydney

PC8459

L39

T57

1910z

Juv

P***

Printed in Great Britain

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
1. THE ENCOUNTER ON THE PRAIRIE	9
2. " BROTHERS "	20
3. KURRINGK, THE WAR CHIEF	31
4. A PARTY FROM MISSOURI	43
5. SURGEON AND PATIENT	55
6. A WONDERFUL YOUNG WARRIOR	67
7. A KIDNAPPING	79
8. THE APOSTATE	91
9. SURGEON AND PATIENT	104
10. A SHOOTING MATCH	116
11. A STRANGE DEPARTURE	132
12. A DISTINGUISHED CALLER	144
13. A GREAT BEAR HUNTER	156
14. THE FIRST BLOW FOR FREEDOM	171
15. SOME OF THE LEADERS	183
16. ON THE GUADALUPE	189
17. IN CAMP	204

Contents

CHAPTER	PAGE
18. THE FIRST ARROW	216
19. HEADING FOR SAN ANTONIO	230
20. AT BAY	239
21. THE FLAG OF TRUCE	250
22. THE SECOND ARROW	262
23. BEFORE THE GREAT WAR CHIEF	273
24. COMANCHE CUNNING	285
25. CAPTURING THE CAPTORS	297
26. THE THIRD ARROW	313

PAGE
216
230
239
250
262
273
285
297
313

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

"SUCH CATTLE AS THEY DID NOT SHOOT WERE STAMPEDED"	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
"HE SLIGHTED AT THE BASE OF THE OTHER ANIMAL'S NECK"	18
"CROCKETT'S PLAN WAS TO FELL ANOTHER TREE"	164
"HE SWUNG THE BLAZING EMBER IN A CIRCLE"	218
"BY GRACIOUS, IT'S A FLAG OF TRUCE!"	252

THE THREE ARROWS

CHAPTER I

THE ENCOUNTER ON THE PRAIRIE

WALTER BRINTON spoke softly to his mustang, which instantly dropped to a walk on the Texas prairie.

The youth had caught sight of a horseman as he mounted a slight elevation on the grassy plain, and galloped towards him. He studied the other closely, for the place and time made him suspicious of every stranger. The horse of the latter swung easily forward until little more than a hundred yards distant. Then, seemingly in the same second, the two animals stopped as motionless as statues, while the eyes of the riders were fixed upon each other.

They made a striking picture. Walter Brinton was an American lad not yet eighteen years old, the son of a pioneer living a few miles away. He was strong, lusty, and well

The Three Arrows

formed, with pleasing features and the frontier dress of the South-West, including the stiff-brimmed sombrero, high-heeled boots, and huge spurs. The day of the breech-loading rifle had not come, and young Brinton perforce used the muzzle-loader and flintlock. A powder horn was suspended by a string over one shoulder and a bullet pouch over the other, while the tiny squares of muslin, used as wrappers for the leaden pellets, were carried in a convenient pocket. Before halting he lifted the weapon from where it lay across the saddle and, dropping the reins, grasped it with both hands, ready to raise and fire on the instant.

The Indian who confronted him seemed to be of about the same size, and was a Comanche, one of the most hostile and dangerous tribes at that time in the South-West. He rode without saddle or bridle, for his people rank among the best horsemen in the world. His clothing was of deerskin, such as was the fashion with his race. His long, coarse hair dangled about his shoulders, and was bound at the back of the neck with a piece of deer sinew, while in the crown were stuck a couple of stained eagle feathers,

The Encounter on the Prairie

the thickness of the hair giving sufficient depth to hold the quills. Around his right wrist was a fine golden bracelet, which added to his picturesque appearance. The ornament was probably a portion of the loot gathered in some raid upon the white settlers.

The upper end of a quiver of arrows projected from behind the left shoulder, where the feathered tips could be instantly seized and withdrawn. In the girdle which clasped his waist was thrust a long, keen-pointed knife with a horn handle. The real weapon, however, was a bow almost as long as himself. When he needed the free use of his hands the string was looped over his neck, where the powerful seasoned crescent of wood was held in a diagonal position which did not interfere with the movements of his arms. Whenever he wished, the archer could whisk the bow in front, and it was ready. He had strung it before checking his mustang, and was prepared for action.

The two animals caught the spirit of their masters. Each held his head high, breathed fast through his silken nostrils, thrust his ears forward, and glared questioningly at the other.

The Three Arrows

There could be no doubt of the hostility of the lithe young redskin. He had dashed forward with the single purpose of forcing a fight to the death with the "paleface." Walter Brinton noted that his enemy was holding his bow grasped in the middle, and that the fingers of the same left hand loosely closed around an arrow.

Well aware of the venomous hostility of the Indians of Texas—Comanches, Apaches, Lipans, and all—Walter might have wheeled his mustang at first sight of this redskin, and probably, by putting his animal to a dead run, he would have reached his home in time to escape, for the youth was sure there was no horse on the plains that could outspeed his own Saladin. But the gravest peril would not have tempted our young friend to act the coward. What explanation would he make to his friends? He had a rifle across the pommel of his saddle, and was expert in its use. If there was any advantage to either, it would seem that it was with him, for the fire-arm has ever been held the superior of the more primitive weapon.

Moreover, hot resentment burned in the breast of Walter. He was riding peacefully

The Encounter on the Prairie

over the plain when he was attacked by a redskin who had not been given the first cause of offence. Was the white youth to submit meekly to punishment for a crime that he had not committed? A hundred times no.

Walter was alert, and quickly decided upon his own line of action. He could have raised his rifle and fired before the other had the chance to use his bow; but, after drawing back the clicking hammer, he waited for the first demonstration from his foe. Not for a second did he take his eyes from the dusky countenance, now near enough for him to see the gleam of the black eyes.

The bow was held slantingly, the upper end projecting in front of the archer's right shoulder, and the lower point seeming to rest against the left thigh. Slowly he raised the wooden weapon, closed one eye, inclined his head slightly aside, and aimed along his mustang's head at his foe fifty yards away.

You can see the swift flight of an arrow when you stand at one side of the bowman, as you can sometimes get a fleeting glimpse of the huge cannon ball as it plunges through space; but when either comes straight at you

The Three Arrows

it is not perceptible, except perhaps for a vague instant. The only recourse at such a time is to be "somewhere else" when the missile arrives.

Walter saw the right hand slide deliberately back until it was beside the other's face and the crooked elbow showed well to the right of the shoulder. As the head of the dusky youth inclined to the right, his eye ran along the feathered tip and flint head to the target in a mathematical line beyond.

Suddenly the fingers clasping the cord opened, the bowstring twanged, and the crescent wood straightened with a leap. The missile had been launched, and in the same instant Brinton ducked behind the upright ears of Saladin. He was not the fraction of a second too soon, for as he did so he heard a whizzing whisper, the arrow nipped the orelock of his mustang, and, like a flash of lightning, shot through the spot where the rider's head had been an instant before. As he ducked forward he glanced behind him. Many yards to the rear he saw the missile curve downward, the pointed flint dip into the grass, where the shaft tumbled over once or twice and disappeared.

The Encounter on the Prairie

"A good shot, young man," muttered Brinton, "and now it's *my* turn."

He brought his gun to his shoulder and aimed between the ears of Saladin. But the young Comanche was invisible.

His mustang, knowing what was expected from him, wheeled in the same moment that the arrow left the bow, and, on a dead gallop, began circling around Walter, maintaining so true a course that the circle was perfect. Although the rider could not be seen, the white youth knew where he was. He had flung his body over the farther side so as to interpose the animal between him and the paleface, and sustained himself in this position by hooking the toe of one moccasin over the base of the mustang's neck. Brinton caught a glimpse of the coppery, unpainted face from below, with the flying hair and the point of the bow projecting upward.

The young warrior was fitting another arrow to the string from the shelter of his natural breastwork, and it had now become impossible to detect the second of its launching. Walter, with all his quickness, could not dodge the fearful missile. But at this critical moment he recalled the words of old

The Three Arrows

Martin Sturgis, a veteran of the plains, who had spent all his life in the South-West, and was known as one of the most intrepid of Indian fighters :

“It’s a fav’rite trick with the Comanche and powerful disconsarting till you get used to it. The corner of a redskin’s face under the neck of his horse, when the same is on a dead run, ain’t the best target in the world, and him as shoots at it is apt to become flustered and miss. I done so the first two or three times, and I don’t understand to this day why the critters didn’t get me. Now, a mustang may sarve purty well as a curtain, but a bullet will go plumb through him as clean as a whistle if it is sent straight, not forgitting the varmint that is straddled out on t’other side of the animal, and so even up things. The p’int where the redskin’s toe hooks over the pony’s neck, and where you see a part of the bow he’s drawing to a head, will tell yôu where the varmint himself is planted, and, my word for it, you can fetch him dead sartin. You needn’t doubt it, fur I’ve proved what I say more than once.”

Walter Brinton, as I said, recalled the words of the oracle, and he would have acted

The Encounter on the Prairie

upon his counsel when, after the first flight of the arrow, the situation assumed the nature of that described by the old scout. If the youth should fire and miss—as was probable in the circumstances—he would be at a fatal disadvantage. It would take him several minutes to reload, an interval too precious to be lost. The Comanche would dash in closer, and when he launched his second arrow there would be no dodging it.

Our young friend was incensed, but not enough to lose his coolness in the most dangerous situation in which he had ever been placed. The dusky miscreant had not only made a deliberate attempt upon his life, but persisted, and would keep it up so long as the opportunity offered. Like a cat, Walter watched for the darting of the missile, and he was not kept waiting long. While it was impossible to catch the exact instant, he decided as best he could and again dodged.

He was only partly successful. The arrow flitted like a bird's wing past his shoulder, a sharp twinge telling him the skin had been grazed, though not sufficiently to inflict a wound.

So long as the Comanche continued on the

The Three Arrows

same circle, no shift of position was necessary, since the body of his pony always interposed between him and the young Texan; but, as if in wantonness and to show his contempt for the one whom he already regarded as his victim, he wheeled his horse with a simple word upon the completion of his first circuit, and darted off upon the opposite course. This compelled him to swing to the other side of his steed, and he accomplished it with unsurpassable grace. Before Walter could seize the opportunity, the form whisked over the spine of the steed out of sight, and the redskin began fitting a third arrow to the string.

Walter must risk a shot or be killed. His mustang showed his intelligence and training by gently side-stepping with his forefeet, so as to swing round like a pivot and keep his head pointed at the other animal as he galloped over the circumference of the large circle. Saladin kept this up, the motion so gentle that it did not interfere with the rider's accuracy of aim. He sighted at the base of the other animal's neck, intending thus to reach the rider, and fired at the moment the latter launched his third arrow. It was in

The Encounter on the Prairie

the nick of time, and our young friend "got his man."

The mustang of the Comanche made a frenzied leap, tumbled on his knees, and rolled over in his last struggles. His rider, despite the fact that he was also hit, displayed marvellous dexterity. With a bound he cleared the falling body, but his impetus caused him to turn over twice before he could check himself. The jolt sent his long bow flying into the grass, but in a flash he was upon his feet, defiant and ready for the last encounter.

For only an instant, however, did he maintain his pose, when he sank to the ground. He strove desperately to regain his feet, and partly succeeded, but only one leg was usable. With the other foot dangling and the toe hardly touching the earth, he whipped his knife from his girdle and stood at bay, resolute and unafraid.

CHAPTER II

“ BROTHERS ”

THE sight of his enemy helpless and at his mercy brought an instant revulsion of feeling to Walter Brinton. Resentment gave place to pity. Nothing in the world would have been easier than deliberately to reload his rifle and put an eternal quietus upon the young warrior who, without any excuse, had striven to take Walter's life. Border etiquette would have justified the summary act, and, when the truth became known, those who learned it would laugh at the weakness of the victor.

As has been said, the Comanche was apparently about the age of the white youth. As he stood on one foot Brinton was struck by the comeliness of his features and the symmetry of his figure. He was slightly taller than his conqueror, but it was evident he was not only exceptionally strong, but of wonderful activity. His tumble in the grass had not displaced his quiver or the stained

“Brothers”

feathers in his crown, though the bow lay several paces away.

“Put up your knife,” called Walter. “I ought to shoot you, but I shall spare your life. My race is different from yours, and never denies mercy to a beaten foe.”

As proof of his sincerity, Brinton slipped down from his saddle, flung his gun to the ground, and, with his hand upraised in token of comity, walked towards the Indian. The latter was plainly astonished, for this was not the style of warfare to which he was accustomed. Uncertain as to how his advances would be received, Walter checked himself when a few paces remained between them.

“Howdy?” he asked.

It was evident that the young warrior was not wholly reassured. He seemed to suspect a trick, and, still grasping his long knife, kept his gleaming eyes upon the face of the one who had got the better of him.

“Do you wish that we shall be friends or enemies?” asked Walter, with a touch of impatience, which would have been greater but for the uncertainty whether the other understood the words. Suddenly the thin lips

The Three Arrows

parted with a smile, which showed his white even teeth.

“Ookoo is hurt; he cannot step like you.”

Walter was amazed, for the English words were spoken with perfect accent. Then, with a slight laugh as if to prove the truth of his declaration, the Indian hopped twice on the left foot, with the other leg as useless as a stick.

“You certainly amount to little compared to what you were a few minutes ago, but you may count yourself lucky that you still have the use of one leg.”

Despite the peculiar situation, the predominant feeling with Walter was that of astonishment over the faultless accent of the Comanche. Our friend had talked with many of this race, but none could do more than barely make himself understood in broken English.

What seemed a trifling thing threw the white youth on his guard; in hopping on his uninjured leg the young Comanche moved towards him. This might signify nothing, but Walter suspected it was done to quiet his suspicion and to bring the Indian nigh

“ Brothers ”

enough to strike a lightning-like blow with his knife.

Walter still had his weapon, but dared not depend upon it in a personal encounter. Ookoo would not be the first Indian to rend his benefactor or him who had shown mercy.

For a minute or two the white youth stood half-way between the pony and the young warrior, debating what to do. He decided that if Ookoo made another move in his direction he would warn him to keep back, since his sinister purpose was understood. It must have been that the Comanche read the cause of this hesitancy, for, looking at him with another smile, he asked in his gentle voice :

“ Is Ookoo’s brother afraid of him ? ”

“ Not a bit, but I don’t know what to make of you. I have spared your life, but I don’t believe you intend to spare mine if you get a chance to use that infernal knife in your hand. ”

And then Ookoo did a singular thing. His face expanded into a broader smile, and Walter plainly heard a soft chuckle, as, with a backward flirt of his hand, he flung the weapon fifty feet away, where it dropped

The Three Arrows

of sight in the grass. This left him without any means of defence. Walter was about to imitate him, when the Comanche raised his hand in protest.

“Ookoo asks his white brother not to do that.”

“Why not?” asked the puzzled Walter.

“There is no need.”

The expression of the Indian's face as he spoke these words drove all misgivings for the time from the mind of Walter Brinton. Stepping forward, he knelt in front of the other.

“Let me see how badly you are hurt.”

The young Comanche thrust the injured limb a few inches forward and watched his “white brother” as he made his examination. The legging was tied with a buckskin thong, which Walter carefully unlaced, observing while doing so that it showed considerable blood. He handled the limb with the soothing tenderness of a mother nursing her child's hurt. No murmur escaped the Indian, though he must have suffered keenly. It looked as if the bullet fired by Brinton had fractured the tibia or larger bone below the knee, rendering the leg useless for the time.

“ Brothers ”

The least additional weight would make the pain unbearable.

Such being the conclusion, the obvious question was as to what should be done for the victim of the fortunes of war. Again Ookoo anticipated his conqueror :

“ My brother will go home.”

“ And what will *you* do?”

“ Stay here.”

“ Stay here?” repeated Walter, rising to his feet and looking at the dusky youth in surprise. “ What good will that do you?”

“ Ookoo will wait for his friends to come.”

Walter cast a sweeping glance over the rolling prairie. Since the young warrior had spoken in a light vein, he did the same :

“ I don't see any of your friends.”

“ They may soon be here.”

“ Suppose they do not show up?”

“ It will make no difference to Ookoo.”

A thrill of distrust disturbed Walter, who asked himself whether the other was not confident of the speedy coming of some of his people. If they appeared, the tables would be turned with a vengeance. He looked searchingly at the handsome youth, who,

The Three Arrows

instead of speaking, returned the gaze with the gentle expression shown before. Walter impulsively resolved to trust him "to the limit."

"It won't do, Ookoo; your friends may come and they may not, and you'll be in a fine fix if left alone. You will die, and I should never forgive myself for deserting you. Do you forget that you're my prisoner?"

"Ookoo does not forget."

"And I'm going to do as I please with you."

"Ookoo cannot help."

"No, indeed; I shall take you on my horse and ride to my home. My father knows a good deal more about wounds than I, and he will soon fix you up."

Walter walked the short distance to where he had seen the knife of his prisoner fall, picked it up from the grass, and brought it to him.

"Thank you," said Ookoo, bowing with the grace of a Chesterfield and shoving the blade behind his girdle.

"Will Ookoo's brother let him have his bow?"

“Brothers”

“As sure as you live,” replied the laughing Walter, bringing it from where it lay and passing it to the owner, who slipped the sinew over his neck and made acknowledgment as before.

The next thing was to lift the captive on the back of Saladin, and this looked as if it would prove a hard task. While Walter was hesitating as to the best means of accomplishing it, Ookoo said:

“Let my brother mount.”

“I think it best you should first do so.”

He shook his head, and Walter put his foot into the stirrup and swung into his seat. Then he turned to offer his hand, afraid he could not save the other from painful suffering. The mustang had been brought so near that it was not necessary for the Comanche to move. Grasping his palm, Walter paused for the word to lift. While waiting, he was amazed, for, with the slightest pull upon the offered hand, Ookoo stooped until his left leg was doubled, and then put forth so much quick power that he leaped the full distance, and before Walter could surmise what he was doing, he sat astride of Saladin, behind

The Three Arrows

his owner. No trained acrobat could have performed the feat more cleverly.

“By gracious, Ookoo! you’re a wonder. I couldn’t have done that.”

“Because my brother is no wonder.”

And the Comanche chuckled softly, and Walter, pleased, joined in his mirth, and thought to himself:

“I never heard of a Comanche with a sense of humour, but this one certainly has it.”

It would seem that the relations of no two persons could have been more pleasant than of these two youths, who, meeting as enemies, were transformed in a brief space into warm friends. Such was a fact, and yet, strange to say, the feeling vanished on the part of Walter Brinton before his mustang had traversed a dozen paces.

Ookoo did not place one arm around the other’s waist, as almost anyone would have done in order to hold his seat firm. Even though one leg was halt, he could retain his seat as easily as if in a saddle. He cast a glance backward at his own pony, which had given up his life while striving to save his master’s, and then looked ahead without

“Brothers”

speaking. He must have known the direction in which the paleface's home lay, for this country was familiar to him.

Suddenly the cold perspiration broke out on the forehead of Walter as he realised for the first time that he was utterly in the power of the youthful Indian. Nothing could restrain him, were he so minded, from whipping out his knife and burying it in the heart of his captor.

Walter wondered why he should feel so terrifying a dread when he had given at first his full confidence to the dusky youth. He felt it was because of what he had heard of the Comanches and Apaches. He now remembered that his father insisted that in no possible circumstances was it safe to trust a member of either of those tribes. If an Indian appears loyal, it was because he dared not seem anything else. When absolutely certain that it was safe for him to strike, he would do so with the venom of a rattlesnake, even though the one struck had saved his life a few minutes before.

No keener mental torture is conceivable than that of distrust of those under our charge when they hold us at their mercy.

The Three Arrows

The commander who is compelled to doubt the fealty of his troops is in torment, for he cannot say what turn that enmity may take or when it will leap into flame. Walter meditated reaching back and snatching out the weapon from Ookoo's girdle, but he reflected that such action would precipitate the assault if it was intended, and he shrank from the appearance of distrust, which possibly, after all, was not justified.

CHAPTER III

KURRINGK, THE WAR CHIEF

YIELDING to a whim which he himself did not understand, the young Texan partly turned his head and said over his shoulder :

“ You gave me your name ; mine is Walter Brinton.”

“ It is a good name,” was the odd comment.

It was not what was said, but the voice in which it was uttered that moved our young friend. No parent could have spoken with softer gentleness. Once more and finally the words drove away every misgiving like mist before the sunlight.

“ He is my friend,” was the conclusion of Walter ; “ I am ashamed that I ever thought otherwise.”

“ Ookoo knows the home of his brother,” added the Comanche a moment later ; “ why does he not ride faster ?”

“ It would cause you to suffer, and we shall reach my place long before the sun sets.”

The Three Arrows

Saladin continued his walk for perhaps a half-hour more, during which the riders did not speak. No distrust disturbed the Texan, and a sympathy for the suffering companion stirred him. He glanced down at the wounded leg which hung in sight, just behind the right stirrup. He fancied that the wound had started to bleed anew, for the loosened legging showed more crimson than before.

“I’m sorry I had to shoot him, but if I hadn’t done it he would have perforated me with that arrow he was on the point of launching. None could know that better than he, and he is prepared for the ill as well as the good fortunes of war.”

“Yonder are Ookoo’s people.”

The startling remark was made in the conversational voice that the Comanche had used from the first. Walter glanced here, there, and everywhere, but saw nothing to explain the words. Observing his mystification, the Indian reached an arm over the shoulder of the other and pointed ahead and somewhat to the right. Following the direction indicated, Walter for the first time detected a number of moving specks on the horizon. He could barely make out that they were horsemen,

Kurringk, the War Chief

but they were too indistinct for him to tell their number.

“How many?” he asked.

“Seven,” was the prompt reply.

“And they are Comanches?”

“They are Ookoo’s people,” repeated the young warrior.

“Are they on the war path?”

“The Comanches are always on the war path,” was the reply in tones which rang clearer than any the dusky youth had yet used.

“Do you know their leader?”

“Kurringk, the great war chief of his tribe.”

“I have heard of him; he is the enemy of all Americans.”

“And of all Mexicans,” added Ookoo, thereby referring to an extraordinary complication which marked the Texan struggle for independence. The parties who figured in that fierce revolution were the Americans, or, rather, Texans on one side, with the Mexicans, Comanches, and lesser numbers of the Apaches and Lipans on the other. These three parties mixed up things in murderous fashion throughout a number of years. One

The Three Arrows

incident among many, and one which is authentic, will illustrate the most peculiar feature of that struggle.

One day a party of Texan rangers collided with a larger company of Mexicans who belonged to the main Mexican army under General Cos, the brother-in-law of Santa Anna. The "Greasers" were sent scurrying and took refuge among a mass of rocks near the Brazos. While the Texans were besieging them, they were joined by a large party of Comanches under the noted chief Kuringk, who, with his warriors, united ardently in the attack. For the first time the redskins and Texans were as much allies as the French and Americans at Yorktown. The Mexicans were so brilliantly pocketed and so fiercely assailed that, to use the expressive words of the frontier, they were wiped out by the two forces.

This having been accomplished, the Comanches and Texans, without any delay, pitched into each other with the utmost fury. While it is a relief to say the Indians received a thorough drubbing, the oddity of the affair—repeated, as I have said, many times—was picturesque in the extreme.

Kurringk, the War Chief

The pressing question, however, with Walter Brinton was as to the intentions of the little party of approaching Comanches. They must have descried the mustang with his two riders as soon as or before they themselves were detected. If they chose, they could easily overtake Saladin, handicapped as he was by his unusual burden, besides which Ookoo could not stand the terrific jolting to which he would be subjected by the attempt to escape through flight.

The manifest thing for Walter to do was to set down his companion and leave him to be taken care of by his friends, while Saladin showed his heels to his enemies. Nothing could prove more strikingly the confidence which young Brinton felt in his new ally than his failure to make such a suggestion.

“If it is the best course, he will say so and I shall do it, but the proposal must come from him.”

None the less, our young friend did a lot of thinking as he kept his gaze upon the advancing group. While his faith in Ookoo was firm, he wondered whether the youth would be able to save him from the hatred of the warriors. Would his explanation blunt

The Three Arrows

the edge of their enmity? Could one of their own race persuade them to show friendship to a Caucasian? Even though Walter had acted the good Samaritan when the other was in dire extremity, it was the pale face who had brought about that extremity and the necessity for chivalry on his part.

Walter was debating the disquieting question with himself when the keen-witted Ookoo answered, as if reading his thoughts :

“If they come too near, my brother will stop his mustang, and Ookoo will stand on the ground and wait for his people. While he is waiting, my brother will make all haste before Chief Kurringk and his warriors can overtake him.”

“Ookoo,” said the admiring Texan, “you know a big lot more than I thought you did. My Saladin can’t be outrun by any four-footed animal that ranges the plains of Texas.”

He could not be mistaken in believing he heard a chuckle at his shoulder. Clearly the young Comanche possessed a sense of humour.

The two youths centred their attention upon the horsemen coming in almost a direct line. Walter noted several interesting facts.

Kurringk, the War Chief

Three carried long lances, the ends projecting well above their heads, each displaying a gaudy pennon of some kind of stained cloth. The others had bows and arrows or long-barrelled rifles, generally held across the thigh in front. Not one used saddle or bridle, for they needed them not.

While the little party were jumbled together, one maintained his place a rod or more in advance of the other. He wore a brilliant head-dress of stained eagle feathers, the lower end of which streamed out and vibrated in the wind caused by his own motion.

“That is their chief?” was the inquiring remark of Walter.

“Yes,” replied Ookoo.

Walter reflected that the horsemen were keeping to the course which they were following when they rode into the field of vision. To decide whether this was accidental, he acted on the suggestion of his friend, and veered to the left.

What occurred was singular. The Comanches, whom Brinton had already found to number seven, as Ookoo had said, immediately changed their course, but only to a

The Three Arrows

slight extent. The two groups continued to draw near each other, but the direction remained diagonal. If the red men persisted, the interval would be lessened, but the parties would not meet without further diversion by one of them.

“What do they mean by that?” asked the mystified Walter.

“We must wait and see,” was the reply of his companion, as if he too was in doubt.

When something more than two hundred yards distant, the red men reined up, facing the youths with the heads of all the mustangs lifted high, as if they scented danger. Walter's uneasiness increased, for this brought the Comanches nigher than was pleasant, and to set Ookoo down at the present distance and dash off would be attended with imminent danger to himself.

Six of the warriors held their places, while their chief rode towards the couple, his mustang in a canter, which dropped to a walk that continued until he was within fifty feet of the youths. The narrow interval gave Walter a clear view of the Comanche leader. He was in middle life, or perhaps a little beyond, for the dangling hair which

Kurringk, the War Chief

escaped from under his head-dress showed streaks of grey, and there were wrinkles on his forehead, at the corners of the eyes, and about the lower part of his face. He suggested an iron warrior of prodigious strength and endurance. His nose was thin and markedly Roman, with a broad mouth and firm lips. His head-dress of stained eagle feathers reached well down his back, blending with the ornamentation of the jacket, breeches, leggings, and beaded moccasins, all much soiled from long wear. A knife showed at his girdle, and, as has been said, he held a long, old-fashioned rifle across his thighs in front, while powder horn and bullet pouch were suspended around his neck, as with Walter Brinton and other Texans. Neither he nor any of his warriors showed paint on their faces.

The moment the leader's mustang halted he spoke to Ookoo, who promptly answered. Since the words of each were in his native tongue, the listener understood not a syllable. He was surprised that both quickly became excited and the chief made several animated gestures with his right hand. He seemed to be saying something to the younger which

The Three Arrows

displeased the latter, for he not only replied rapidly, but in a voice as loud as that of the other.

Suddenly both stopped speaking, and the interesting tableau was presented of two youths looking fixedly at a man whose black eyes seemed to bore them through, while not one of the three opened his lips. Then the chief made a slight gesture with his free hand and, whirling his mustang about, galloped back to his waiting comrades.

“Ride on,” said Ookoo, “but turn more to the left.”

Brinton obeyed, still mystified by what he had seen and heard. As the course of Saladin was shifted, his owner kept sharp watch of the group, for he was still uneasy over what they might do. As soon as the chief rejoined the others, all headed eastward, swinging into a rapid pace which soon carried them beyond sight. As they disappeared over a slight rise in the prairie, it was clear that they gave no further thought to the two lads.

The latter had ridden some distance after it was apparent the party had drawn off for good, when the young Comanche asked :

Kurringk, the War Chief

“Does my brother know who spoke to Ookoo?”

“I never saw him before, but I suspect he was the chief you told me about.”

“He is Kurringk, the greatest war chief our tribe ever had.”

“I heard but could not understand what you said to each other.”

The young Comanche accepted the hint:

“He wished Ookoo to go with him after he told him he was hurt. He said his people would mend his wound better than the pale faces; Ookoo told him he had promised to go with his brother and would keep his word. Chief Kurringk grew angry, and so did Ookoo, but by and by the chief gave his consent and rode away.”

“Does he know where I am taking you?”

“He knows your father and you; he has fought your father.”

“Will he do so while you are with us?”

It would seem that the young warrior should have found it easy to answer this question, but apparently he did not. He hesitated before replying:

“Chief Kurringk fights the Texans as he does the Mexicans.”

The Three Arrows

Since the youth volunteered no more, Brinton did not question him further. His own disquieting conclusion was that, despite the fact that a wounded member of his tribe was receiving nursing under the roof of Ezra Brinton, the hatred of the terrible chief would not be quenched nor lessened thereby.

Moreover, Walter was convinced that Ookoo had not told him all that passed between him and the Comanche leader.

CHAPTER IV

A PARTY FROM MISSOURI

THE mustang picked his way down the soft, sloping bank of an arroya several rods in width, and climbed the opposite side. Passing beyond a growth of prickly cacti, he hastily ascended a slight elevation of the plain.

The highest point had not yet been reached when Ookoo remarked :

“ We shall soon see the home of my brother.”

“ You know as much and probably a deal more of this part of Texas than I do,” replied Walter, who, with a slight pressure of the bridle rein, brought Saladin to a halt.

It proved as the young Comanche had said; scarcely a fourth of a mile distant, on the bank of a small, winding stream which ultimately found its way into the Brazos, stood a faded log cabin, with a straddling structure at the rear.

Some five years before the date of the incidents I have set out to narrate, Ezra

The Three Arrows

Brinton, his younger brother Oliver, and a life-long friend, Isaac Fithian, left their home in Missouri to settle in the vast wild region known as Texas. The three had been trappers and hunters in their earliest years, and had buried themselves for months among the recesses of the North-west and fought starvation, hostile Indians, and animals in their task of gathering peltries. All loved the half-savage life, and they would not have given it up when they did except for the marriage of the elder brother. He was the most sagacious and skilful member of the trio. Withal he was fond of books and possessed a fair education. It amused his companions, when starting on their trapping excursions into the depths of the Rockies, that their leader invariably carried several books with him, though it may be said every ounce of baggage counted. There came many hours which would have been unspeakably dreary but for the companionship of the classic authors, and even his companions grew fond of listening to his reading when the wintry winds howled around and the snow drifted against the rude structure where they made their home.

But the marriage of Ezra changed every-

A Party from Missouri

thing. The young lady with whom he fell in love made it a condition that he should give up his long trips into the wilderness of the North-west, and he promptly agreed thereto, challenging her to name anything that was humanly possible which he wouldn't do to please her. She was satisfied, and, being a superior woman, made him very happy. The three partners engaged in cattle raising in their native state, which was sparsely settled; and all was going well when the crushing blow descended. The wife died suddenly, leaving their only child, Walter, about a dozen years old. She had been the best of mothers, and gave her boy excellent training and an education that he could not have acquired in the best school in the state.

The strong man was stunned by his overwhelming sorrow, and would have sunk into a fatal decline had not his two friends succeeded in persuading him to adopt the most drastic remedy possible. Their plan was to go to Texas and continue the cattle business. They knew it was one of the most dangerous regions in the South-west, and that the sparse population included the worst desperadoes and outlaws that could be scooped

The Three Arrows

up from the four corners of the earth. Once in that fearful section, Ezra Brinton would have no time to brood over his grief. A factor in his decision was the ardent wish of his son to emigrate thither. All that Walter knew of the region was that it offered the certain prospect of every sort of adventure, and was therefore the most attractive country in the wide world.

Thus it came about that, with no clearly defined location in mind, the four mounted their ponies and, with two pack horses carrying their luggage, started on their way to Texas. The journey was not only long, but perilous and trying to the last degree. In making their way through the Ozark Mountains they were caught in a terrific blizzard, which would have been the end of men and animals had they not come upon a settler's home, where they stayed for a week before venturing forth again. Then, in crossing the swollen Arkansas, Ezra Brinton, himself the most skilful hunter of all, came within a hair of being drowned. On the edge of the Indian nation, they had a scrimmage with a party of Indians, who held them imprisoned among the rocks for three days, and yet the

A Party from Missouri

wanderers escaped without one of the company suffering harm.

It was characteristic of the three men and boy that not once did one of them hint the least desire to turn back on their trail. They had gathered a good deal of knowledge of Texas on their way thither, and all that they heard, despite many drawbacks, lured them on, until at last the journey came to an end at a point midway between the Colorado and Brazos, somewhat to the south of the little town of Austin, the present capital. In truth, they would have gone farther had they not come upon an old structure which proved so inviting that they decided to make it their home for an indefinite time to come.

The log cabin had been put up some years before, and, with its heavy oaken logs and narrow windows, looked almost as good as on the day it was completed. It was squat, with only a single storey and three rooms. One of these covered half the lower floor and had a broad fireplace, whose chimney of sticks and dried mud was wholly outside of the building. What furniture the place once contained had disappeared long before, probably carried off by the owners or by callers

The Three Arrows

who came after them. The floor was of rough hewn planks, worn smooth by the tramping of feet, and the crevices between the logs had been filled with clay, which had hardened to the consistency of adobe. The straight windows were without glass, and the massive oaken door, by putting forth much muscular effort, could be made to wobble on its rusty hinges. The iron catches for the huge wooden bar remained, and when it was dropped into place the door was as impregnable as the log walls themselves.

A few rods to the rear was a second structure, also of one storey, whose scant fixtures showed it was intended to serve as a stable. Several rude stalls were marked off by tumbledown divisions in the shape of poles, while the major portion could be devoted to storing hay or alfalfa. Here the crevices between the logs gaped without hindrance, and there was no means of fastening the door, which had tumbled from its hinges and sprawled on the ground. The signs indicated that the former occupants of the dwelling had been gone so long that there was hardly a possibility of their ever returning. Should they do so, however, the new

A Party from Missouri

dwellers would give them a cordial welcome. Western hospitality justified the three men and boy in thus taking possession, and they proceeded to do so without hesitation.

It need hardly be said that the three veterans who had spent most of their lives in the wilderness and mountains went forth fully prepared for the inevitable hardships which confronted them. Ezra, who possessed natural mechanical ability, made new shutters for the windows, which could be closed when the weather demanded it, but at other times were left open for ventilation. The mustangs were turned out to grass, and the cabin contained a few simple cooking utensils and more food than would have been suspected. The latter they had purchased at Austin and brought hither. Their blankets and serapes, when spread on the hard floor, made comfortable couches. These were improved by Ezra, who fashioned two sets of frames, which served as bedsteads in each of the bedrooms. Walter took more comfort with his than he had enjoyed for many weeks. Ezra promised to make one for Fithian, but it was never done for a reason that will be made known.

The Three Arrows

The Brinton brothers and their companion had agreed upon what they would do when their wanderings ended and they settled down permanently. They would have plenty of sport, for buffaloes, deer, antelope, wild turkeys, and other game were as abundant here as they had been found all the way from Missouri. As has been said, the little party decided to give their energies to cattle raising, as they had done before leaving home. The Texas prairies abound with grass, and only when the fearful northers shrivel vegetation and real winter descends with cold which bites like the fang of a she wolf is it necessary to give shelter to the animals.

In order to secure the cattle needed for a start, the men made excursions through the surrounding country, sometimes traveling hundreds of miles. The vast area was thinly settled, and only at wide intervals did they come upon any of their own race, though liable to collide with Comanches, Apaches, Lipans, and other Indians at all times. Gradually enough cattle were bought to form the nucleus of a fine herd, and these were driven to the cabin near the Brazos and put out to grass. They required little looking

A Party from Missouri

after, for the pasturage was good, and even during the winters, which were sometimes severe, only a small percentage succumbed.

Business prospered with the ranchmen for several years. They had no trouble in getting all the game needed, while a trip by one of them with a pack horse to Austin, Harrisburg, or another of the straggling towns kept them supplied with ammunition, flour, and indispensable articles of food. Occasionally they received calls from other white men, drawn to the South-west by the mutterings of revolution and the surety of stirring adventure. Such visitors were more than welcome, and formed the only link between our friends and the outside world.

It was decided by the Brintons and their comrades that, when their herd grew to a thousand and were in prime condition, the four would set out on the long drive eastward, where it would be easy to dispose of their property at good prices. The Comanches, however saved them that trouble. One week before the day fixed for the start a howling party of raiders swooped down like a cyclone to make their long-deferred visit. Such cattle as they did not shoot were

The Three Arrows

stampeded and never seen again by their owners. The ranchmen galloped in furious pursuit, and came within a hair of being wiped out by the redskins. Isaac Fithian was killed in the running fight, and Oliver Brinton severely wounded. Only the fleetness of their mustangs saved them, and they counted themselves lucky in being able to reach the cabin, and where Walter was anxiously awaiting their return.

This setback would have discouraged almost anyone. Ezra favoured pulling up stakes and going back to Missouri, but his brother and son opposed, fearing the effect of a return to the scene of his affliction with its distressing memories. In the end he consented to stay in Texas.

At intervals the brothers met small groups of Indians on neutral ground, as it may be called, though each party was always alert and distrustful of the other. It was through such means that the Brintons learned that the Comanches who had wrought so much havoc with the cattle were under the lead of their great war chief Kurringk, who hated "Gringos" and "Greasers" with equal fierceness. The Texans, as they had come to

A Party from Missouri

consider themselves, were warned by others that the ferocious raider was to be dreaded above all others. While still a youth he had won the name of being the most daring of fighters and the unrelenting foe of every white person that lived.

The brothers decided to give up the cattle business. They knew that troublous times were at hand, and all the news thus heard roused their sympathy for the few brave spirits that were preparing to strike for the independence of Texas.

The difference in the tastes of the couple grew with the passing years. Ezra, as has been said, was the superior of Oliver in knowledge, and had a strong liking for reading. Oliver preferred to roam and hunt through the country, sometimes alone and sometimes with his nephew. Often he was absent from rise to set of sun, and not infrequently failed to show up for several days. The larder was supplied mainly by him, with now and then some help from Walter, who seemed to share the preference of his parent for books with more fondness than he had for hunting.

The elder brother found excellent reasons

The Three Arrows

for riding to Austin or other comparatively near-by towns for necessities, and among these necessities were certain to be a number of printed volumes.

“Just as I expected,” commented Oliver to his nephew, when the delighted owner displayed his treasures.

“Brother, the mind needs food as much as the body,” replied Ezra; “that is to say, where there really is a mind. I have heard of persons who knew how to spell simple words and yet wouldn’t give a straw for the best classic ever written.”

The speaker winked to his son as he uttered this scathing rebuke, and the uncle winked in turn to the youth as he retorted :

“And if the aforesaid gentleman with so good taste should curl up and spend his hours in smoking and dozing over his musty books, as some folks I might name do, he would starve to death sure, and I’m not certain it wouldn’t serve him right.”

CHAPTER V

SURGEON AND PATIENT

I HAVE said that Ezra Brinton had more than the usual gift of mechanical skill, and the cabin on the prairie gave more than one proof of this fact. The half-dozen strong, comfortable chairs, table of slabs, shelf in one corner for books, long bench, and other convenient articles of furniture were all the handiwork of the pioneer, and the striking fact was that the only tools used were an ordinary axe brought from his Missouri home and his hunting knife. There was not a single nail to be found about the building, wooden pegs taking their places. Some of these were driven into the log walls, and used mainly as supports for their garments when not in use. Inevitably the shutters were crudely fashioned, but they served their purpose. When the norther raged they could be closed, and the room kept comfortable by means of the fuel that was always piled at the side of the hearth. The windows were

The Three Arrows

too narrow to permit the passage of even a boy, so that nothing was to be feared when the friends lay down to sleep.

The one deprivation was artificial light. They had neither candle nor lamp, the only illumination being from the blaze on the hearth. This could be made so bright that a printed page became legible, but this means was not often employed. The three had the habit of retiring and rising early, the first portion of the evening being generally spent in fragmentary conversation, the friends sometimes sitting for a long while without exchanging a word.

The bedstead in each sleeping-room left scant space for anything else. The brothers occupied one, and Walter the other. He had shared it at first with Isaac Fithian, but after his burial on the lonely prairie it was used by the boy alone. Of course, the floor was bare, and naught else in the way of furniture was to be seen. Their ablutions were made at the running stream near at hand, and the washing of their garments generally fell to the lot of the youth.

The most notable example of Ezra's deftness was the small porch which in the course

Surgeon and Patient

of a few months was built in front of the door. No practical carpenter need have been ashamed of the framework, with its two short benches, firm floor, and strong covering. Many hours were spent in this place when the weather was balmy, and it became the custom of the three to gather there after nightfall, the men smoking their corncob pipes and talking of whatever came into their minds.

Thus it happened that on the mild day late in winter which introduces the incidents of this story, Ezra Brinton was seated on his favourite porch sunk in meditation. His brother had gone on a hunt early that morning, and Walter had ridden in the opposite direction with no special errand or pleasure in view. The pioneer had been reading until his eyes grew weary, when he laid down his book and passed outside. He did not light his pipe, deferring that until after the midday meal. He swung his legs around so that they rested on the long seat, folded his arms, and leaned back against the logs at the side of the door. This was his favourite posture when relaxing.

It cannot be said that Ezra Brinton's

The Three Arrows

thoughts were of the most pleasing nature. He relished the outdoor life, but was beginning to ask himself what the end of it all was to be. No matter what the situation of a man is, he must think now and then of the future, and this was what the pioneer was doing. He had speculated many times as to what probably lay before his son. As for himself, he cared little. He was in the vigour of a strong manhood and would be content to depart when his time came, but what of Walter? Was he to spend the years in this lonely region, with the chances always of being snuffed out as Isaac Fithian had been?

“He ought to be sent back to civilisation, where he can enter upon the career for which nature intended him. Troublous times are upon Texas, and if he stays here he will be drawn into them, as Oliver and I are sure to be—hallo!”

Seated as has been described, the man was gazing dreamily across the plain, when he descried the figure of a mustang approaching over the slight rise to the left of the stream. The pioneer was mildly surprised that the animal was not swinging forward

Surgeon and Patient

at his natural pace instead of advancing at a walk.

“Walter is coming home early, and inasmuch as that young man is always hungry, he ought to be in more of a hurry. What *does* that mean?” Ezra suddenly asked himself, as he swung his feet to the floor and faced round.

The exclamation was reasonable, for he saw that Saladin bore not only his son, but a second person seated behind him. Brinton rose and stepped off the porch to meet them.

“Who can be with him? An Indian, as sure as I live!”

Walter waved his hand in salutation, but his pony continued at a walk. Before he halted, and when only a few rods away, the youth called:

“Hallo, dad! We need your aid here.”

The parent walked farther. Although he was puzzled, what he saw told him the dusky youth was the one in trouble.

“His leg is broken,” explained Walter; “we shall have to help him down, for he can’t bear the least weight on it.”

The young Comanche smiled in his pleasing way and awaited the friendly act of the

The Three Arrows

two. Walter dropped from the saddle so that he and his parent stood beside Saladin while Ookoo was still upon his back. It was a striking picture when he leaned forward with his arms outstretched like a trusting child.

“We shall have no trouble,” said the father; “take his left arm, Walter, and I his right.”

It was easy thus to sustain the weight of the youth, who if he felt pain did not show it. The moment the tip of his moccasin touched the ground he said :

“Let go of me, please.”

“It won't do; you can't walk,” protested the man.

“Let me alone, please,” insisted the young warrior.

Strange as was the situation, Ezra Brinton was amazed to hear a pure-blooded Comanche speak such perfect English. The smiling patient motioned the two aside, and they stood ready to catch him should he stumble. As they withdrew their supporting hands from under his arms, he hopped a single step, and then, putting forth a more vigorous effort, reached the porch, where he

Surgeon and Patient

sat down with the injured limb extended in front of him. Walter slipped off the saddle and bridle from Saladin, and, slapping his haunch, ordered him to look after himself. As he flung the accoutrements on the porch, his father emerged from the cabin with a basin of water and a piece of linen.

"This must be looked after," he said, promptly acting upon his own counsel.

Kneeling in front of Ookoo, who watched his actions, the pioneer carefully turned down the legging from the knee until it was doubled over the ankle above the moccasin. He saw that this had been partly done before and the deerskin was drawn back, but not tied, so as to relieve the pain that would have resulted from pressure.

The leg had not bled much and the blood was clotted. With more skill than would have been expected in the circumstances, Brinton made his diagnosis. The limb retained its straightness, and he was pleased to find that, while the tibia had been fractured, the bone was not broken across. No setting, therefore, was required, only a nursing of the hurt.

In the brief time that had elapsed inflam-

The Three Arrows

mation had begun, and the examination must have hurt intensely, but the stoical young warrior showed not the least evidence of it.

“Your injury is not so serious as I thought. The tibia—that is, the front bone below the knee—has been fractured, but not badly. With care it will soon knit and be as well as ever.”

“Will the good father use splints?” was the unexpected question of the patient.

“Where in the name of all that is wonderful did this young savage learn so much?” Walter asked himself. His father replied to the other question :

“It would be better, but if you will promise to do as I tell you, you can dispense with the annoyance.”

“Ookoo will do as his father says.”

It was the first time the man had heard the name of his patient, and his surprise was great.

“Are *you* Ookoo?” he asked, staring up into the smiling face. The Comanche replied with a nod. Walter could not guess what it all meant. His parent seemed to regret his momentary surprise, and gave his whole attention to the duty before him. The shapely

Surgeon and Patient

leg was bathed and cleaned of the clotted blood, and the surgeon assured himself through the sense of feeling that the injured portion of the bone was in its proper place. Then the limb was swathed in tight bandages.

“You must bear no weight on your foot for some time, and when you do try to use your leg, it must be with the greatest care. I am inclined after all to use splints.”

But Ookoo objected, promising to follow the directions of his surgeon, or “father,” as he called him, who consented to spare him the inconvenience.

The sagacious Brinton had observed more than either of the youths suspected. He saw at once that the wound had been made by a bullet, which must have been fired by the one who brought Ookoo to the cabin. The parent, however, made no reference to the interesting fact. He gave it as his opinion that the patient must remain for several weeks under their roof. In ordinary circumstances a longer stay would have been imperative, but the vigorous, healthy body would give Nature her best opportunity to work her curative process, and the Comanche was sure

The Three Arrows

to mend rapidly, provided always he heeded the counsel of his medical attendant.

The latter rested the foot of the dusky youth on a chair which he brought from within, and excused himself in order to prepare the evening meal. When he moved away he left on the porch seat a volume which he had brought out, though, as I have shown, he spent the time in meditation rather than reading.

Leaning forward, Ookoo picked up the book, turned the first page, and scrutinised the print as if interested in it. Walter recognised the work as "Indiana," by George Sand. His father had managed to secure a copy some weeks before when on a trip to the town of Austin. It contained no illustrations, was in the original French, and had been published three or four years before in Paris. After a time a few copies strayed across the Atlantic to this country, where the French novelist was already gaining vogue. The elder Brinton was the only one of the three who understood the language, and Walter grinned as he watched the young Comanche and wondered what he would do with the volume.

Surgeon and Patient

He scrutinised the first page for a minute or two, and then turned the leaf, his eyes still fixed on the print as if perusing it. Walter saw the black eyes shift as he followed the lines until the bottom was reached, when he did the same with the next page, and turned the leaf with unabated attention.

“It can't be he is really reading!” gasped Walter.

None the less, Ookoo was either reading or making a pretence of doing so. The latter seemed so unlikely that the amazed lad broke in:

“Do you understand that book, Ookoo?”

The Comanche raised his eyes and, looking over the top of the volume, nodded:

“Ookoo finds it interesting.”

“You are Comanche born, are you not?”

Again the patient nodded.

“You have proved that you understand English as well as I or my father, and no doubt you are familiar with Spanish?”

“Yes; Ookoo first learned Castilian, but the Mexican version is so corrupt he cannot speak it as well as French and English.”

“Of course, you talk German, Italian,

The Three Arrows

Russian, Hebrew, Portuguese, and lots of other languages?"

Ookoo caught the humour of the question, but his face was never more serious than when he replied :

"Ookoo knows a few sentences in German; the other tongues are strange to him. Perhaps he will learn something of them one of these days."

"If this thing keeps on," muttered Walter, with a sigh, "I shall be sure I am dreaming; I never saw or heard anything like it."

CHAPTER VI

A WONDERFUL YOUNG WARRIOR

BEYOND a doubt Ookoo enjoyed the astonishment of his host and proceeded to add to the same.

“Does my brother know of George Sand?”

“Only what my father has told me. George is a masculine name, but the French writer is a woman.”

“That is true. She is Amantine Lucile Aurore Dudevant. Her first novel was ‘Rose et Blanche,’ which amounted to little, but ‘Indiana’ is great. Let Ookoo translate some things she says.”

And then what did the young Comanche do but slowly render into lucid English a few of those passionate protests against the pressure of social relations! It was a revelation to Walter Brinton, who listened enthralled. He was thus absorbed when he observed his father standing at the door, his countenance expressing his amazement. The Comanche,

The Three Arrows

observing him at the same moment, ceased reading and closed the book.

“Your translation is perfect,” said the host. “I wish I had your facility in French, for I can read the language better than I can speak it.”

“Ookoo was taught it when he was a small child; if one waits till he is grown the work is harder.”

“There are a good many French inhabitants in St. Louis and other towns in Missouri. My contact with some of them helped me.”

Ookoo glanced sharply at the man.

“Did my father live in St. Louis?”

“My home was to the west of the town, but I often visited it and had many acquaintances there. You know it was a French post at first.”

The Comanche seemed on the point of asking further questions, and Brinton waited for him to do so, but if such intention was in Ookoo's thoughts he dismissed it. The curious fact connected with the situation was that the pioneer was almost certain what the nature of those questions would have been. He knew more of Ookoo than the latter sus-

A Wonderful Young Warrior

pected, but the time had not come for the man to tell what he learned years before.

“My son has an appetite that is ever present with him; he seems always to be hungry, and you, too, must be ready to eat. Let us do so.”

“The words of my father are music in the ears of Ookoo,” replied that young man, as he rose and balanced himself on the good leg. Leaning upon his two friends, the patient carefully worked his way through the door into the larger living-room, where stood the table laden with broiled venison, coarse bread without butter, and coffee with sugar, but lacking milk. The food was well prepared, and the three enjoyed the substantial meal.

The guest's table manners were as faultless as his English. He handled his knife and fork correctly and drank the coffee from his cup, eating with moderation and with deference to the requirements of good society.

“He has lived among civilised people,” was the conviction of Walter, who did not feel sure that his own behaviour at the table was quite as it should be. “I am anxious to hear father tell what he knows about him.”

The Three Arrows

The meal was not finished when the sound of a horse's hoofs on the outside told of the arrival of someone. Ookoo looked up as if not fully composed in mind.

"It is my brother," the head of the household assured him. The Comanche instantly ceased eating and looked at the closed door, while awaiting the entrance of the friend. The latter first rode his mustang to the stable, where the animal was put away, after which the owner pulled the latch-string, and stepped across the threshold, carrying in one hand a large, plump turkey, the fruit of his day's hunt. Tall, thin, wiry, and alert, he was the physical contrast of his brother. He glanced in surprise at the guest, who properly acknowledged the introduction and excused himself for not rising to his feet.

"Our young friend met with an accident to-day," explained Ezra. "His leg was fractured, and Walter brought him here on his horse. He is going to stay with us until he recovers from his hurt."

"And I need not assure him he is welcome," added Oliver heartily, taking the vacant chair and helping himself to food.

"Ookoo saw his welcome before he saw

A Wonderful Young Warrior

the cabin and the faces of his friends," gravely commented the dusky youth.

"Not bad—not bad!" commented Oliver, with a laugh; "couldn't have improved on that myself."

Lacking the knowledge of his brother, Oliver was struck by the pure accent of the Comanche, and wondered much thereat, but said nothing. The other diners kept their places at the table until he had finished his meal, when all arose, Ookoo being helped to the chair which was set back for him. By this time night was closing in. The air had become chilly, and Ezra threw more wood on the fire, which had been allowed to slumber. Turning to his guest, he said:

"I have placed your bow and quiver in your room, which I will show you when you are ready to sleep."

Some time later the young Comanche said diffidently:

"Ookoo will rest if his father will not be displeased."

"Displeased!" exclaimed Ezra reprovingly. "You are forgetting the proper use of English."

The illumination from the vigorous fire

The Three Arrows

revealed the interior of the small room, with its single chair, narrow couch, and the long bow and quiver lying on the bed.

Bidding the three good night, Ookoo, with the usual assistance, withdrew for the evening. When he had gone the father said to his son :

“I knew you would not like to share his room with him, so you will spread your blanket beside the fireplace and sleep there as long as he stays with us.”

“That is better,” replied Walter ; “I don’t mistrust his friendship, but cannot feel well acquainted with him yet. He and I have not been introduced in the conventional fashion.”

When Ookoo was left to himself he stood for a minute, shut from sight by the angle of the opening, and his keen eyes roved over the apartment. What imaginings surged through that subtle brain cannot be guessed, but they must have been of an extraordinary nature. He looked at his bow and quiver lying on the couch, and stood motionless for several minutes. Then, laying the articles on the floor, and without removing his garments, he hopped to the bed, lay down, and carefully

A Wonderful Young Warrior

adjusted himself upon it. He was vastly relieved by the change of posture, and soon closed his eyes as if in slumber. Those in the other room lowered their voices when they spoke as if in fear of disturbing him. Walter, as was his custom, cleared away the dishes, while the men lighted their pipes and smoked in silence.

By and by Ezra rose and silently opened the door and passed out. Looking back at the others, he indicated by a motion of his head that they should follow him. He himself closed the door, and all three seated themselves.

"It has become rather cool, and if you need it, Walter, you may wrap your serape around you. Oliver and I don't mind."

"I am comfortable," replied the lad, as he seated himself.

"Let us sit close together and talk in the lowest tones. I have something to tell you which I shouldn't wish that young Comanche to hear. He can't catch our words, and it would make no difference if he could. Even if he felt curiosity, he is too honourable to listen. Now, Waiter, tell me what took place this afternoon between you and him."

The Three Arrows

Remembering his father's caution, Walter told his story. His relatives listened in silence until he had finished. Then his parent said :

“ I knew as soon as I saw his wound that it had been made by a bullet, and I had no doubt of the identity of the young man who fired the same. My son, you acquitted yourself well.”

“ There can be no question as to that,” added the uncle; “ I am glad you did not forget the recipe for curing the Comanche of his unneighbourly tricks.”

“ I came mighty near being cured myself before doing so.”

“ Your escape couldn't have been narrower ; I shudder when I think of it.”

“ Father, I saw you were surprised to-day when Ookoo told you his name.”

“ I was never more astonished in my life.”

“ That wasn't the first time you heard it?”

“ Sit close and listen.”

The three leaned as near as they could, and only by intense attention did they catch the words of the eldest :

“ Some fifteen years ago one of the

A Wonderful Young Warrior

Spanish missions near San Antonio was besieged by the war chief Kurringk, with more than a hundred warriors. You know the Fathers were always prepared for anything of that nature. The adobe walls were too high to be scaled and would stop a cannon ball. They had a well and running stream of water within the grounds, and a stock of supplies sufficient to last a year or more. All they had to do was to keep out of range of the bows and arrows and wait for the besiegers to become tired. Kurringk and a few of his band had rifles, but they were of the old pattern and not so effective in their hands as the primitive weapon.

“Occasionally the Fathers secured a convert among the Indians and generally had a few neophytes under their care, but were too wise to trust them far, for there was no telling when they would revert to barbarism and turn into the most murderous of foes. The American Indian is untrustworthy by nature, and there’s no tribe in North America worse than the Comanches.

“Kurringk was more persistent than any of his predecessors. His first night attack was so unexpected and well managed that

The Three Arrows

one of the Fathers and a neophyte were killed before the danger was known. Sometimes showers of arrows would curve over and fall within the grounds. Many were tipped with blazing tow, but they did no harm, and the devout Fathers did not allow any of their religious services to be interrupted.

“You would think that after several months had passed in this manner without bringing any advantage to the besiegers they would become weary and go away, but Chief Kurringk was not that kind of a leader. He and a few of his warriors frequently showed themselves in the cleared space in front of the building, emitting tantalising whoops, making insulting gestures, and letting fly with their arrows. Kurringk exposed himself so daringly that more than once the defenders could have brought him down with one of their old-fashioned muskets, but instead of shooting the leader in his tracks they prayed for him and serenely waited for the chief to leave of his own accord.

“One day the defenders were startled by a shout, and, looking over the walls, saw a white man running towards them at his utmost speed. He was hotly pursued by a

A Wonderful Young Warrior

dozen Comanches, who kept their arrows flying when they found they could not outrun him. Two of the Fathers dashed to the gate and unbarred it just in time for the fugitive to bound through the opening, when it was bolted behind him.

“The hero of this exploit was one of the most famous scouts to-day in the South-west. Though called ‘Deaf Smith,’ he can hear as well as you or I, but more than once it has suited him to make believe he could not, and he thus picked up valuable information because of the belief that he could not perceive the explosion of a cannon alongside of him.

“Deaf Smith told the Fathers a strange story. He had learned of the prolonged siege of the mission, and believed he could bring it to an end by a single daring act on his part. He had narrowly escaped death some months before at the hands of Chief Kuringk, and felt venomously resentful towards him. He knew that the leader had an infant son whom he passionately loved. At that time the wife and child were some miles away in a lodge at one of the temporary villages of the tribe. Deaf Smith proposed to steal this young one and bring it to the mission,

The Three Arrows

where it could be held as a hostage, and the most murderous of the Comanche leaders thus be disarmed.

“How the scout hoped to enter a Comanche village, kidnap a son of the chief, and make off with him was beyond the comprehension of those who listened to the astounding proposal. Every one of his hearers assured him that his life was certain to pay the forfeit if he made the attempt.

“‘Mebbe it will,’ coolly replied the scout, ‘but all the same I’m going to try it. What I ask of you is to be on the look out for me two nights from now, from sun-up till sun-down, and when I arrive I expect to have a pack of redskins at my heels, and it won’t do to keep me waiting many hours outside.’

“The Fathers tried their utmost to dissuade Deaf Smith from his wild project, but he could not be shaken, and, waiting until late that night, he stole from the mission on one of the maddest schemes that ever led a brave man to his death.”

CHAPTER VII

A KIDNAPPING

“THE Fathers kept vigilant watch for Deaf Smith, but the night had nearly gone when they caught from the edge of the clearing the faint whistle which had been agreed upon as the signal that was to make known the arrival of the scout. Two of the good men cautiously unbarred the gate, held it slightly open, and sent back the soft reply that told the brave fellow all was well and they were waiting for him.

“A few minutes of anxious silence followed, and then a shadowy figure showed in the stargleam and was seen running towards the mission. He had managed his task so skilfully that none of the Comanches observed him until he had dashed across one-half of the intervening space. They were after him in a twinkling, but he had gained so good a start that he was in no danger. He whisked through the gate a little ajar, and it was instantly fastened behind him.

The Three Arrows

“ He himself was safe, but it had been noted while he was running that he did not bring the infant child.

“ ‘ I tried to do what no man can do,’ he said in explanation.

“ The Fathers could not be blamed for chuckling.

“ ‘ Did we not tell our son that truth?’ one of them gravely asked.

“ ‘ You tell a confounded lot of things that ain’t so,’ replied Deaf good naturedly.

“ ‘ As, for instance, what we said to you last night.’

“ ‘ Don’t get uppish; when you make so many guesses, you can’t help hitting it once in a while. It looks as if you’ll have to stand off Kurringk and his warriors a while longer.’

“ ‘ We are in the hands of God, and are content to abide His will.’

“ Now, when Deaf Smith told his story to the good Fathers it was an outrageous lie, uttered with the purpose of deceiving them. After leaving the mission building the preceding night he had reflected that it would be fatal to his plans to take the kidnapped child to the mission. It was absolutely

A Kidnapping

certain that the Fathers would restore him to his parents, and Chief Kurringk would press them as implacably as before.

“How that wonderful scout managed to do it is beyond my comprehension, but it is an actual fact that he did steal that child from where it lay asleep in the lodge of its mother, and was several miles from the village before the act was discovered. He had the night to favour him, and he knew he could not be trailed before the morrow. He made the best use of his time, but instead of going towards the mission, took the opposite direction, having made up his mind, as I said, not to deliver his captive to the Fathers.

“By wading streams, doubling on his course, and adopting all the artifices known to veteran scouts, he was sure he had rendered pursuit impossible. When morning came he was miles from the Comanche village and secure against Kurringk and his followers.

“You are wondering what Deaf Smith's intentions were regarding the child which he had kidnapped. While he will not hesitate to shoot and slay any enemy, especially if his skin is of a dusky tint, he has a tender streak in his make-up which has caused him to show

The Three Arrows

mercy when his companions did not expect it. It was never his purpose to harm the little one, no matter what happened to himself. When morning came, and the child, wrapped in its blanket and held in his brawny arms, looked trustingly up in the bronzed face, the grim scout's feelings were touched. It wanted to be set down so that it could walk.

"What is your name?" Deaf asked in the Comanche tongue.

"Ookoo," was the reply, as the child began frolicking like a young colt, rejoicing in its new freedom."

"What!" exclaimed the amazed Walter, "you don't mean *him*?" and he jerked his thumb towards the closed door.

"Yes; he's the son of the great Chief Kurringk, and was stolen from his lodge some fifteen years ago. Sh! keep your voice down and listen further.

"Deaf knew that he could not hold Ookoo against recovery so long as he remained in Texas. Sooner or later his father would hit his trail, and he would be followed into the mountains of Mexico or even to the Pacific Coast. The scout decided that the only thing to do was to place the child with civilised

A Kidnapping

persons, where it would be impossible for his father to trace him.

“He started for New Orleans, where he knew he would find plenty of persons who would be glad to adopt the little one, that was not only remarkably beautiful, but the brightest babe Deaf had ever seen. He set out for that city, but had gone only a few miles when he came upon his old comrade, Buck Gillings, in camp. Deaf quickly explained how it came about that he was in charge of the Comanche youngster, and told his friend of his intention of taking him to New Orleans, where he would be beyond reach of his terrible father.

“‘I have a better scheme than that,’ said Buck.

“‘Let’s hear it.’

“‘I’m on my way to St. Louis; let me take the little critter with me. Kurringk will never think of looking there for him.’

“‘And what will you do with him, Buck?’

“‘Take better care of him than you’ll do.’

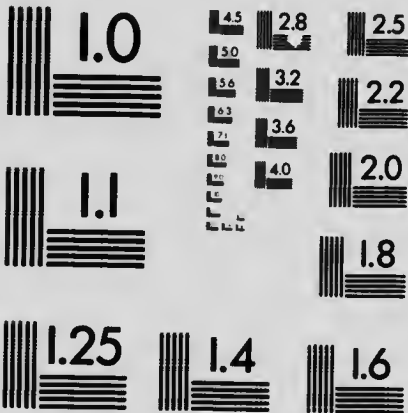
“‘I hope so. What’s your plan?’

“Then those two champion scamps summoned their wits and evolved a scheme,



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



APPLIED IMAGE Inc

1653 East Main Street
Rochester, New York 14609 USA
(716) 482 - 0300 - Phone
(716) 288 - 5989 - Fax

The Three Arrows

ingenious and yet as simple as it could be. Buck would tell the persons to whom he wished to commit the child that its parents had been killed in a fight with the whites, and the little one was found alone and deserted in the Comanche village, which had been raided and burned. Pity had led Buck to take it in charge, but as the scout had no family or intimate friend, he must turn him over to someone who would take care of him.

“‘That’ll fetch anybody,’ commented Deaf Smith; ‘all you have to do is to carry it out.’

“‘You needn’t have any fear I won’t; why, Deaf, I’ve growed to like the papoose in the short time we’ve been together, though I can never expect to be such a finished liar as you.’

“Well, the plan as fixed by these two scouts was carried out to the letter. We are a long way from St. Louis, but Buck Gillings, with his charge, covered it in the course of three weeks, for there was no haste in the matter. When he reached the Mississippi he stole a canoe and paddled up that river, often halting overnight at some of the posts or small towns. At one of these he bought an

A Kidnapping

outfit for Ookoo, consisting of a cap, coat, short breeches, and coarse shoes. Thus he prepared him for his entry into civilised society.

“It could not be otherwise than that the youngster, three years old, should wonder at his strange experience and mourn over the separation from his parents. For several days he pined to that extent that Buck feared he would succumb and die. In his bungling efforts to cheer the little one he informed him that his mother had fallen off a rock into the Brazos and been drowned. His father, in trying to save her, was also drowned, and the child could not reasonably expect to meet them again until he made his advent in the happy hunting grounds which awaited all good little chaps like him.

“Thinking he could improve upon this version, Buck explained that he had made an unimportant mistake. His parents had really been killed by a runaway mustang, which kicked both to death when they were trying to feed him. It is impossible to say what impression these wild yarns made upon Ookoo, but the new life upon which he had entered awoke an interest by and by, and there came a noticeable brightening of spirits. He was

The Three Arrows

too young really to feel his great loss, and seemed soon to forget about his father and mother.

“ An incident which occurred just over the line in Arkansas shows the striking brightness and attractiveness of the young Comanche. Buck had paddled to shore at a small trading post, and secured quarters in a log cabin which served as a resting place for the wayfarers who occasionally passed that way. The massive landlord and his equally massive wife, having no children of their own, offered the scout a liberal sum to allow them to adopt Ookoo. Buck replied that he would be glad to do so, but he must keep his promise to the dying parents to take the child to St. Louis, where he had some wealthy relatives.

“ This story did not jibe with the one he had previously told about finding the little one after his father and mother had been killed. Before Buck could straighten out matters, the landlord struck in :

“ ‘ You say he belongs to the Comanche tribe?’

“ ‘ As sure as you’re sitting there,’ replied the scout, feeling he was now upon safe ground.

A Kidnapping

“ ‘And you’re taking him to his relatives in St. Louis?’

“ ‘That’s what I said and will swear to it.’

“ ‘If he’s a Comanche, born somewhere in the South-west, how in thunder can he have any relatives in St. Louis?’

“ ‘His father explained that his grandmother married a second cousin on her side, which makes Ookoo nephew of his uncle—see here!’ exclaimed Buck, angered by the uproarious laughter of the couple; ‘you hain’t any bus’ness to question me, and I shan’t give you any more answers.’

“ ‘Reckon you better not, unless you make up more reasonable lies than you’ve been telling. Do you know what I think?’

“ ‘I don’t care what you think, and you needn’t take the trouble to tell me.’

“ ‘It ain’t any trouble; you sneaked into some wigwam when all the people were asleep and stole the child.’

“ ‘Wal, what if I did? What are you going to do ’bout it?’

“ ‘You’ll soon learn. I’m a justice of the peace, and shan’t allow you to take that youngster away until you have proved to the

The Three Arrows

satisfaction of the court you have the right to do so. That's what I'll do, if you want to know.'

“ ‘You will, eh? Start the music as soon as you please.’

“ This conversation took place in the evening, after the two had eaten, and when Buck had come down the rickety stairs from putting his charge in the frowsy bed which the two shared. The scout lighted his corn-cob pipe and grimly awaited the outcome, whatever it might prove to be. The landlord arose a few minutes later and passed out, his wife having gone to another part of the house, presumably to look after things.

Buck grew angrier as he smoked and reflected. He had not the slightest fear of this man or any other person, and would have welcomed a fight with him. He waited a half-hour, and shouted for the woman to bring him a candle. She soon appeared with a lighted tallow dip, which she handed to him without a word. He turned and had placed his foot on the lowest step of the stairs, when she said :

“ ‘See here,’ speaking rapidly and looking at him.

A Kidnapping

“ ‘Wal, what do you want,’ he asked, still soured and resentful.

“ ‘I’d like amazing to have that younker you’ve put to bed upstairs, but I don’t want him bad enough to force him from you.’

“ ‘You don’t, eh? I’d like to see you or your husband or anyone else take him from me.’

“ ‘I’m not going to try, but Jim is; he’s gone out for three men that’d rather fight than eat.’

“ ‘That’s the sort of chap I am. Do you mean to tell me them four are going to try to take that young redsk’in from me?’

“ ‘She nodded nervously, adding that she was expected to give what help she could, but her conscience would not permit her to take part in so wicked a thing.

“ ‘Jim would be hopping mad if he knowed what I have said to you, but I ain’t afeard of him, and if he gets sassy I’ll knock him head first down cellar.’

“ ‘Now you’re talking like a real high-toned lady. What do you want me to do?’

“ ‘Take that younker and leave as quick as you can.’

The Three Arrows

“ ‘What! Run away from that scalawag
(a husband of yours?’

“ ‘It ain’t him, but the men he’ll bring
back; you won’t have any show against them
and you’ll lose Ookoo, as you call him, as sure
as you live, or rather *won’t* live, for Tom and
Bill and Mike will be powerful glad of an
excuse to plug you, *and they’ll do it!*’

“ ‘I’m obleeged to you for your loving
words,’ said Buck, turning to go upstairs,
‘but you mought have obsarved that I carry
a rifle, likewise a pistol, not to mention a
fair-sized hunting knife, and I have the
repytation of being right handy with ’em.
I’ve put Ookoo to bed, and don’t like to
distarb him, so when Jim and Tom and Bill
and Mike make their evening call and leave
their cards, you can tell ’em that I’m upstairs
in my room, with the door unlocked, and
invite ’em for me to drop in.’

“ ‘You’re making a great mistake,’
the ponderous wife, with a shake of her

“ ‘That remains to be seen,’ were the
ing words of Buck Gillings, as he deliberately
climbed the stairs to the room where he had
placed the young Comanche in bed.

CHAPTER VIII

THE APOSTATE

“It was only a few steps to the top of the stairs, but in taking them Buck Gillings did a good deal of thinking. The warning given by the wife of the landlord was too vital for him to disregard. Had he been alone, he would have unhesitatingly fought it out with the four men, or even with a greater number; but for the sake of Ookoo he determined to make his getaway with the least possible delay. Aside from the danger of being killed in the desperate affray that impended, he was certain at the best to be wounded. This would leave the kid at the disposal of the couple whom the scout hated beyond expression. Moreover, to neglect every precaution would be to break his word to Deaf Smith, and nothing could persuade Buck to do so base a thing as that.

“The room which he entered was about twelve feet by eight, and contained nothing

The Three Arrows

beside the tumbledown bed, a chair, and a rickety stand with a broken water-pitcher. Buck set the candle on the support and leaned his rifle in the corner. Turning to examine the lock on the door, he found it useless. He smiled at the thought of the absurdity of asking the landlady to tell the callers the door was unfastened.

“Ookoo was asleep. Like his people, he did not remove his clothes when lying down for the night. He lay on his side, his arm doubled under his smooth cheek, his face turned towards the scout.

“‘Hang me if he isn’t the purtiest chap I ever laid eyes on!’ said Buck admiringly. ‘I don’t wonder them folks want to rob me of him, but they’ll find it a tough job.’

“There was no time to lose, for the miscreants were liable to return at any moment. Buck leaned over the bed and gently shook the chubby shoulder. Ookoo opened his eyes and looked up with a trusting smile. Like his race, he had the faculty of awakening on the instant with all his senses at command. ‘Ookoo, we must leave at once,’ explained his friend.

The Apostate

"The child fairly bounded from the bed and stood expectant on the floor. You will remember that Buck could speak Comanche like a native, so he and the child had no trouble in understanding each other. It took only a few seconds for the man to make clear what was to be done.

"The first act of Buck, after the little fellow stood beside him, was to blow out the candle. The room would have been in blank darkness but for the starlight which shone through the window, whose sash was lifted. The Comanche said nothing, for, young as he was, he knew when to speak and when to keep silent.

"From the single window of the room to the ground was perhaps fifteen feet. Buck would not have had the slightest hesitation in hanging by his hands from the sill and dropping the remainder of the distance. The earth could not be very hard, and the shadowy outlines of a stretch of wood showed beyond two or three glimmering lights where other dwellings stood.

"Pausing at the window and listening and looking for a minute, Buck leaned out, and, reaching as far downward as he could with

The Three Arrows

his rifle, let it drop. The faint thump proved it had not suffered harm. Then he told Ookoo, who was waiting at his side, that when he whistled to him he was to jump, and he would catch him in his arms. The child said he understood and would do as directed.

“Buck hung by his hands for a few moments and listened. He heard the rumbling of voices not far off, and let go, landing lightly and with scarcely a jar. Peering in the direction whence came the disturbing sounds, he saw several forms coming towards the tavern. They were vague, but he did not doubt who they were. While their course would lead them close, Buck did not believe they would detect him unless their suspicion was drawn in his direction. He crouched low and felt that everything now depended upon Ookoo, who was at the window waiting for the signal to jump. Nothing would be more natural than after awhile to call out and ask the cause of the delay. But the wonderful young Comanche did not stir nor speak. He had been ordered to wait for the signal, and would have done so had it taken hours.

The Apostate

"The moment the shadows dissolved in the gloom Buck emitted his soft whistle, and almost in the same instant a tiny form dropped from the window and was caught in the arms of the scout, who fairly hugged the little fellow. Snatching up his rifle and holding one small hand clasped, the man started for the river where his canoe was drawn up the bank. Pushing it into the water, he lifted Ookoo aboard, joined him and picked up the paddle.

"He had expected that the landlord and his friends would learn of his flight before he could reach the river, but it must have been their caution in reconnoitring and approaching the door of his room which gave Buck the full time he needed. At any rate, whenever they did find he had left, they were too wise to attempt pursuit.

"Buck's experience at this trading settlement made him more careful than before. By hard thinking he conjured up a story which, strangely enough, was believed by the majority of those to whom he told it, and he reached St. Louis without running into any further unpleasantness.

"I suppose that by this time Buck had

The Three Arrows

come to half-believe the outlandish yarn he had been relating ever since parting company with Deaf Smith. In one respect he was wise, for in the Mound City he made his way straight to the residence of the Right Reverend Joseph Rosoti, whose bishopric extended from St. Louis to New Orleans.*

“Father Rosoti happened to be at home and welcomed his callers. He had laboured for years up and down the Mississippi, and was held in great reverence among the Indian tribes and by the numerous rough characters with whom he was brought in contact. His home was a roomy log cabin, and his only companion and servant, if she may be considered such, was his sister, an ascetic in her tastes, profoundly devout, with learning scarcely second to that of her distinguished brother. It was her delight to give instruction to a class of boys and girls who came regularly to her modest home. She and the good Father were highly pleased to take Ookoo into their family, where he became like a child of their own.

* This learned and devout man assumed his duties in March, 1827, and continued them until his return to Rome, where he died in September, 1843.

The Apostate

“ Buck told of his old story of the young Comanche being the only survivor of his family, and the two believed it. Without dwelling upon what now followed in the life of the child, let me say he spent ten years under the roof of Father Rosoti. He endeared himself not only to the two, but to all with whom he was brought in contact. His mental brightness was phenomenal. He learned to read and speak French, pure Castilian, and English, and was proficient in mathematics and the sciences. Italian was the mother language of the brother and sister, but, despite its resemblance to Spanish, Ookoo made no effort to master it.

“ The dusky youth was the finest athlete of his age. He could outrun, outjump, and outthrow older boys, and managed to learn to ride and become an expert in the use of the bow. Among the few strange dislikes he showed was that towards all firearms. He would touch no weapon except the primitive one. Moreover, he early showed a profound interest in religion. He accepted the faith explained to him, and declared that his highest ambition was to become a novitiate

The Three Arrows

and a priest when he should reach the proper age, and to carry the Word to those of his own race. It was expected by Father Rosoti that he would do so.

“ You are wondering how it is that I came to know so much about this extraordinary youth. All that related to his life in St. Louis was told me by the Father whom I had known and revered for years. I have never clearly understood how it was that in all the time Ookoo was a member of this household the good man never learned the truth regarding him. Four-fifths of the bishop's time was spent in journeying up and down the Mississippi and tramping through the endless woods engaged in his work, and he must have heard of Chief Kurringk and the affliction he had suffered. It may be unjust on my part, but sometimes I have suspected that the Father heard nothing because he closed his ears against such knowledge. He had become so fond of the dusky youth that he had come to believe it was his duty to save him for the great work before him, and he could not bear the thought of failure.

“ Chief Kurringk never ceased to hunt for his stolen child. His messengers were sent

The Apostate

among the neighbouring tribes, and he himself made long trips with a chosen few. The fact of not knowing the identity of the kidnapper was an almost insurmountable obstacle in his path, but some intuition seemed to tell the chief that his child was still living, and so long as he lived, so long was there hope of finding him. At the end of ten years Kurringk located Ookoo.

“How he did it is another mystery, though I can make a fair guess of the means. Deaf Smith and Buck Gillings must have told their story to others who repeated it. Possibly a clue was picked up at the old tavern where Buck came so near losing the child. That part of my story of which Father Rosoti was ignorant was given me by Buck Gillings several years ago, when he called here during the absence of both of you.

“One day Sister Rosoti received a visit from two Comanches. Her brother was in the South, and was not expected home for several weeks. One of the couple spoke Spanish, and asked the privilege of witnessing the exercise of the class which the sister had under her instruction. There was nothing strange in the request, and she welcomed

The Three Arrows

them, as she did every caller. One of the Indians was Chief Kurringk, who sat in a chair by the side of the instructor, and without showing the slightest emotion looked in the face of the star pupil, a handsome youth in his teens, whom he knew to be his son, stolen ten years before. Ookoo, like his fellow classmates, surveyed the visitors with mild wonder, but never dreamed of the truth. Imagine the emotions if you can when Ookoo rose to his feet to interpret some sentences from French into English, and his eyes met those of the iron-faced chief. Kurringk must have said to himself, 'He is my son, but he dreams it not,' and Ookoo did not know even that the visitors were members of the same tribe with himself.

"Immobile, calm, and seemingly uninterested, the two red men kept their seats until the exercises ended. Then, at the invitation of the sister, they accompanied her to another room.

"There the interpreter told their story. The sister was astounded, but she could not refuse to believe, and when they asked that the youth be brought in, she obeyed and withdrew.

The Apostate

“ I can only guess what took place at that strange meeting. Ookoo must have forgotten his native tongue, but he spoke Spanish perfectly, and the Comanche who had acted as interpreter, despite the corrupted form he used, made himself understood to the lad, who realised that he was standing before his father, from whom he had been separated for ten long years. It seems to me that, young as he was when stolen, he must have retained memory of so terrifying an occurrence, as well as of the long journey from Texas to Missouri, though he always remained silent on that point while with Father Rosoti. Finally, the interpreter said that Ookoo's mother was still alive and mourning for him. Would the sister let her look once more upon her son's face before she was laid to rest and went to the happy hunting grounds?

“ An hour later the youth came from the room and hunted up his instructor. She saw that, despite his heroic self-control, he was labouring under intense mental stress. He told of the prayer of his mother and of his longing to see her. What could she say but bid him God-speed, with permission to stay

The Three Arrows

as long as he chose? She was sorry her brother was not at home, but perhaps they would meet somewhere in the South or South-west.

“Ookoo promised to return in three months. He said his father had not urged him to stay with his people; he was to do what he wished and come back when he chose to do so. Asked how soon his father wished to leave, Ookoo replied that he was ready to go at once; his canoe was waiting at the river-side, and he preferred to start downstream as soon as possible.

“Ookoo shook hands with his loved instructor, and, I suspect, would have kissed her had not his iron-featured father been looking on. The chief gravely muttered a good-bye in his own tongue, and on that same afternoon the canoe started down the Mississippi with its three occupants.

“Two, three, and four months passed, and Father Rosoti and his sister were growing anxious, when a letter reached St. Louis from the missing youth. The Father opened it, read it hastily, turned pale, and showed distressing emotion.

“‘Read that,’ he gasped, as, with a

The Apostate

shaking hand, he passed the missive to her.

“She did so, and then almost fainted; for Ookoo had calmly written that he had renounced Christianity and would be a Comanche to his death.”

CHAPTER IX

SURGEON AND PATIENT

EZRA BRINTON suddenly raised his voice to the ordinary conversational tone :

“ I must tell you something curious about Ookoo——”

He abruptly checked himself, rose to his feet, and, reaching out, twitched the latch-string. The door opened without noise, and he peered through. The burning wood in the fireplace filled the room with a soft, ruddy gloom, and the pioneer moved on tiptoe to the opening leading to the sleeping apartment of the young Comanche. The dim illumination showed him lying motionless on his couch, just as he had lain down some time before, and breathing as gently as an infant on its mother's breast.

It was a cunning trick on the part of Brinton. Although he believed their guest was too honourable to listen, he meant to be absolutely certain on that point. If their guest was listening, he would not have time

Surgeon and Patient

to whisk back between the utterance of the words and the opening of the door. That which the pioneer saw removed all misgiving. He resumed his seat on the porch with the others as near to him as before.

“Ookoo’s case was a strange one, but there have been others like it. The tugging of a hundred generations at his heart-strings was resistless. The wild, nomadic life, the stir of the hunt, the thrill of combat, the chance to strike at the race who were destroying his own, the lure of the woods and solitudes, the untrammelled freedom and the opportunity to dash at headlong speed over the prairie—his own master; these appealed to the dusky youth and fanned into flame the yearnings which may have slept within him, but had never died. At one bound he leaped from Christianity and civilisation back to barbarism. Kurringk the merciless is no more of a Comanche than Ookoo, his son.”

Walter Brinton and his uncle had listened in silence to the absorbing narrative. The lad could not wholly accept the harsh conclusion of his parent.

“No doubt, father, he has gone through the strange moral transformation you de-

The Three Arrows

scribe, but he cannot forget the teachings of Sister Rosoti and her brother."

"He can never forget, but he has repudiated them with the same loathing that you would kick a rattlesnake from your path."

"Why did he not bury his knife in my heart when he sat behind me on Saladin and I could not raise my hand in defence?"

"He has a few human traits, but it was not gratitude so much as admiration for the clever manner in which you got the better of him. You can trust him so long as he is under our roof. He will not try to harm any one of us, but after he has gone he will forget gratitude, fleeting friendship, and the Golden Rule. Mark my words," added the father impressively, "we are not through with him yet. Sooner or later he will kill—if he can—me, Oliver, and you. It is in his blood, it is his nature; his murder lust is as hot as in the breast of Chief Kurringk; he knows how to bide his time, but when it comes he will strike—yes, *he will strike!* Make no mistake on *that* point."

Neither Walter nor his uncle made reply to these terrifying words, but followed their relative into the house. The youth, being at

Surgeon and Patient

the rear, pulled in the latch-string, and thus locked the door. More wood was flung on the blaze by Oliver, and the room was illuminated as if at noonday. Uncle and nephew seated themselves, but the other bent over the sticks of varying sizes piled at the side of the fireplace and began pulling them apart as if searching for something. He finally found two fairly straight ones, which he drew forth, and, taking one in his lap, began using his knife upon it, while his friends watched him.

He first measured the length of the stick by holding it off and studying it. Then he trimmed it of all excrescences and smoothed each end. He did the same with the other, comparing and making their length correspond. His next proceeding was to cut two strong pieces something less than a foot long. Into the middle of each he deftly gouged a hole, which went half-way through the stick. Then he stood up the longer pieces on the floor, and with the palm of his hand hammered down in turn the shorter ones at right angles to the larger. They fitted so nicely that no further trimming was needed, and the crutches for Ookoo were complete.

The Three Arrows

“There!” said the artificer, as he held up the two for inspection; “what do you think of them?”

“I can’t say much for their beauty——”

“They were not meant for beauty,” interrupted the artist, “but I think Ookoo will find them useful.”

“It was good of you to think of it, father, and I know he will appreciate your kindness.”

Ezra Brinton glanced at his son. He knew the meaning lurking behind the words, and with a significant smile shook his head. The gesture said as plainly as so many words:

“He will not require the aids long, and when he throws them aside he will be Ookoo the Comanche.”

As softly as a cat Ezra went across the room on his toes, and, reaching through the opening, laid the crutches on the floor beside the bow and quiver. Then he returned and joined the others around the hearthstone, as it may be called.

All noticed that the wind was rising, and the marked drop in the temperature was felt even in the glowing room.

“It’s a norther,” remarked Brinton; “listen!”

Surgeon and Patient

The gale was howling around the cabin, and the draught was felt through the narrow windows. The speaker went to each in turn and secured the shutters so as to leave barely space for ventilation. The logs and ashes were stirred by the wind which roared down the chimney.

Ezra looked across at his brother.

"This reminds us of the Rockies, where we were snowed up for days at a time."

"Yes, and once we were shut in among the rocks for two weeks, lost our horses and all our peltries, and came mighty near losing our scalps. This won't be as bad as that, though it is pretty ugly at times in Texas."

It was yet early in the evening when the two men withdrew to their sleeping-room, and Walter, as previously arranged, made up his couch on the floor. When he lay down he felt the gale was increasing. The "norther," one of those Arctic blasts which swirl across the plains of the South-west with a fury that makes man and animal scurry to cover, was raging, and might continue for days or for only two or three hours. The rattle of sleet sounded like birdshot, and some of the icy particles struck as viciously as if fired

The Three Arrows

through the small openings left in the windows. As the youth looked across, he saw the glitter of the tiny pellets in the firelight, where many lay a long time without melting. As in the old-fashioned colonial dwellings, a person might stand near enough to the hearth to roast on one side while he froze on the other.

The gale rose and fell, becoming so furious at times that the framework trembled. Walter wondered how much more the cabin would stand before breaking apart and scattering over the surrounding country. Then he took comfort in the assurance that it must have become immune because of many a similar test. After a long time he was sure he could detect a slight moderation in the gale, and while thinking thus he sank into slumber, and was the last of the four to open his eyes. He saw the table spread and the morning meal waiting.

“Where’s Ookoo?” he asked, his partial glimpse of the interior failing to show the young Comanche. Before either of the men could reply the door opened, and the smiling youth stepped across the threshold and bade him good morning.

Surgeon and Patient

One of the home-made crutches rested under each shoulder, and he handled the aids to locomotion as readily as if he had used them all his walking life. He seemed to be in high spirits.

"I'll be back in a minute," said Walter, springing to his feet and hurrying outside. The ground was covered with a thin sheet of snow, which gave treacherous footing, and because he forgot the fact, the young man paid the penalty. He was in the act of stepping off the porch when both feet shot up, and he came down with a bump, which caused Ookoo instantly to open the door, while the two men looked over his shoulder. Strange as it may seem, the young Comanche laughed louder than the others.

As a proof of the antiquity of the most common joke of the present day, the father solemnly declared :

"Sinners stand in slippery places."

And, looking up as he hastily scrambled to his feet, Walter shot back the neat retort :

"I see they do, but I can't."

And again the three laughed, and passed into the room. Walter returned with glowing face and keen appetite. Ookoo's leg had

The Three Arrows

been examined by the volunteer surgeon, who expressed his astonishment at the rapidity with which it was healing. The inflammation had disappeared, and the youth was sure he could safely bear a part of his weight on it, but Brinton forbade, and, like a model patient, he obeyed.

Oliver had been to the stable and looked after the horses, so that no work remained after the morning meal was finished and the dishes washed and put away. Ookoo had read enough of George Sand's "Indiana" to become interested, and accepting with a protest the "easy chair," he settled down to spend most of the day in reading. Ezra became equally absorbed in one of the precious classics which he had already twice perused, while Oliver and his nephew were irked by the enforced confinement and longed for a chance to venture outside again.

Walter was surprised by the silence of the young Comanche on one theme. He could not fail to note the wonder of his friends over his book knowledge, which enabled him to read intelligently in three languages, and it would seem he ought to have made explanation of his accomplishment. He could not

Surgeon and Patient

suspect all that Ezra Brinton knew about him, and Walter had already shown his amazement, but neither then nor afterwards did Ookoo utter a hint of the years he had spent under Father Rosoti's roof in St. Louis. It may be he enjoyed the perplexity of those around him.

The severe weather lasted for three days, and then there came a marked moderation of temperature. The three relatives spent many hours outside, but Ookoo was content to stay within doors. He read "Indiana" through, and then tackled "Don Quixote" in Spanish. When the others were present, they were amused to see him laugh over the whimsical misadventures of Sancho Panza. Several times when he came upon something specially entertaining, he translated for the others. The Comanche surely did not lose his sense of humour when he cast off the veneering of civilisation.

The fourth day brought a surprising change of weather. Although it was still winter, the temperature was that of spring. Oliver Brinton told his friends, after the morning meal, that he intended to spend the day in hunting, and they need not look for

The Three Arrows

his return before nightfall and probably not then. Walter longed to go with him, and his father suggested it, but the son felt that he ought to stay with his guest, who, it may be presumed, would not have permitted the self-sacrifice had he suspected the fact.

Ookoo's recovery from his wound was astonishingly rapid. His surgical attendant declared he had never seen anything like it. Despite his prohibition, the patient on this day deliberately laid aside his crutches and walked across the floor with hardly a perceptible limp. He declared he felt no pain and was almost as well as ever. Brinton sternly shook his head, and, with a submissive smile, the youth sank down in his chair again and looked up to the shelf as if longing for a new volume.

It was at this time that Walter excused himself for a few minutes and went out for a stroll in the fresh air. Thus his father and the Comanche were left alone.

"Would you like something to read?" asked the man, and the youth nodded.

"When one has laughed, he grows tired and wants something that will make him think."

Surgeon and Patient

Brinton walked to the shelf, wondering what volume to offer him. Singularly enough the first one he picked up was the wooden-covered Bible which he and the others regularly studied. The pioneer stood for a moment or two with his back towards his guest, and then, yielding to a strange impulse, turned, walked to the youth, and handed him the book.

Ookoo said "Thank you," and opened at the title page. He sat for nearly a minute staring fixedly at the printed page, he and Brinton as motionless as statues, and the latter intently watching the handsome grave countenance. Suddenly Ookoo shut the volume with moderate violence and handed it back to the man. The eyes of the two met, and those of the young Comanche flashed and his thin lips compressed as he shook his head and said in a low but vehement voice:

"Never! never! never!"

CHAPTER X

A SHOOTING MATCH

THREE days later Ookoo insisted that he had no further need of crutches. He proved it by walking round the room after breakfast and for some distance outdoors without the aids. Oliver Brinton had gone off on another of his hunts, so that Ezra and the two youths were left to themselves.

The surgeon would not admit the patient's claim. He gravely shook his head.

"Better wait till all danger has passed than run the risk of a setback which will make you helpless for weeks and probably injure you permanently."

"I can't see that there's anything the matter with Ookoo," interposed Walter, who sympathised with him.

"There are lots of things that are plain to others which you can't see," returned his father rather curtly.

They were seated on the small porch when

A Shooting Match

the young Comanche looked up with an odd expression on his face.

“Will my father listen to Ookoo?”

“With pleasure.”

Then, to the astonishment of parent and son, the dusky youth proposed they should settle the difference of opinion by a shooting match, he to use his bow, and the pioneer his rifle. If the latter won, the loser would hobble about on crutches as long as his medical attendant wished, even though the things irked him; but if he beat the physician, Ookoo should be at liberty to lay the crutches aside and use the legs as nature intended.

Walter danced with pleasure.

“That’s it! That’s it, father! He has challenged you to a shooting match. You claim you’re pretty good, and I suppose you may be called fair; I hope you aren’t afraid of tackling Ookoo.”

The parent was amused and did not hesitate. He had a warranted faith in his own markmanship, and was sure it would be easy to defeat anyone who relied upon the primitive weapon.

“I am no archer,” he replied, “and shall have to use my rifle.”

The Three Arrows

"That is what Ookoo wishes."

"Shall I loan you my gun after I am through?"

"Ookoo does not like firearms; they are not as true as the bow, and," he added significantly, "the bow makes no noise."

"It doesn't become me to boast, my son, but if you propose to leave our differences to such a test, it will be well to resign yourself to the crutches."

Walter now spoke with becoming dignity:

"You will need an umpire to settle your disputes; I'm your man."

"I am satisfied," replied his father, "for, if you are unfair, you are not too big for me to trounce."

"Suppose Ookoo is dissatisfied?"

"He has my permission to do the same."

Then for the only time thus far the young Comanche referred to their first meeting:

"Ookoo tried that once, and does not wish to do so again."

"Attend to your business, Mr. Umpire."

Walter stepped to the bookshelf, took down a book, and tore out one of the blank leaves. Instead of cutting the sheet, he

A Shooting Match

doubled it over several times until he had an octagonal fold some three inches in diameter.

"I need a pin," he said, looking at his father, who carefully raised a flap of his coat and drew out one.

"Don't lose it, for it's the only one owned by this establishment."

"It is in no danger from *you*," was the impudent response; "Ookoo is the one most likely to play the mischief with it."

The parent, in pretended anger, started towards his son, who whisked out of reach before punishment could be administered. The two followed in time to see the youth running to an oak a short distance away. Upon the craggy bark of the trunk, at a height of five or six feet, he managed with little difficulty to impale the white target.

"What is your distance?" asked Brinton of the Comanche.

"What my father likes."

"Suppose we say fifty paces?"

Ookoo nodded, and the man walked to the tree, faced about, and deliberately marked off the number of steps named, the others watching him.

The Three Arrows

"I wasn't sure you could count up to fifty, father, so I did it for you; you guessed right."

The youth raised his hand for attention.

"Listen to the rules: There is to be no swearing by either; in case of a miss, the one making it shall not try to explain or offer excuse" (here Walter looked sternly at his father, who assumed a lamb-like meekness); "he who finds fault with the umpire's ruling shall be declared the loser and pay the umpire a fine of one hundred dollars; no shot counts unless it hits some part of the target."

"Suppose both contestants object to the umpire's decision?" inquired the father.

"In that case, both lose and each pays a fine."

"The wisdom of all the sages rests with my brother," gravely observed the Comanche.

"Which is the most sensible remark, young man, you have yet made. Mr. Ezra Brinton will lead off, and it is to be hoped he will not disgrace his son."

Brinton knew he was opposed by an archer of wonderful skill, and he intended to show him no favour. He outranked his brother

A Shooting Match

and son as a marksman, and while he was confident of defeating the Comanche, he resolved to do it decisively.

The end of the distance selected had been marked by the toe of the pioneer, who adjusted his foot properly, though Walter insisted his parent should wait until the umpire satisfied himself by inspection that such was the fact.

"An umpire can't be too careful," he remarked judicially, as he stepped briskly to one side well out of range. If he meant the observation as a reflection upon his father the latter passed it by and slowly raised his long-barrelled rifle. With the stock against his shoulder, he slightly inclined his head and closed his left eye in the conventional fashion. For several seconds the weapon remained levelled, as rigid and motionless as the tree itself. Standing just behind him, Ookoo and Walter kept their gaze upon the target.

Suddenly the sharp, whip-like crack split the stillness, and the watchers saw a black point appear on the paper near one side. The umpire dashed to the tree and made his inspection. A glance told him the truth.

The Three Arrows

“Half an inch off the centre!” he shouted. “Better than I expected, but it doesn’t drive the nail. Now, Ookoo, see if you can do any worse.”

“My father has done well,” complimented the Comanche, who had strung his bow and now stooped and picked up one of the arrows at his feet.

He was standing without the least sign of lameness, his whole weight resting on the right foot belonging to the wounded limb, and the other lightly poised a little way in front. He slowly drew the arrow to a head while he fixed his gaze upon the white circle of paper on the bark of the tree. Unlike the modern archer, he wore no gloves or covering to protect the fingers with which he pulled the string of sinew back. The shaft was two feet long, with the guiding feather glued at one end, and the sharp, triangular flint at the other. The stick was mathematically straight, the outer part supported on the bulge of the left hand, which grasped the bow near the middle.

Ookoo made so striking a picture as he prepared for the shot that father and son watched him instead of the target. He could

A Shooting Match

not, like his opponent, aim directly at the mark, for, brief as was the distance to be covered, the trajectory of the arrow must be accurately calculated. A hair's variation one way or other would ruin the shot, as none knew better than the archer himself. The upcurve of the parabola was plainly perceptible to the spectators, who were astonished by the strength of the youth, as shown in bringing his right hand behind his ear, his head leaning slightly towards it, after the manner of one in firing a rifle.

A fraction of an inch at a time the right hand retreated until the middle of the crescent bow was two feet from the centre of the taut cord, which broke at a sharp angle where it was grasped by thumb and fingers.

The Comanche had no thought of making a display as he nerved himself for the final test. He held his breath while the string was thus drawn, and then a soft, purring whine was heard for an instant and all eyes turned to the target. The shadowy flight of the arrow could be followed, and a faint thud told when it struck the tree. The feather quivered from the force of the impact, and Walter ran forward to inspect and make his report. The

The Three Arrows

contestants stayed in their places and awaited the verdict.

“Too bad!” he called; “Ookoo beat father by only a quarter of an inch!”

“Explain!” called his parent.

“The arrow struck between your bullet and the pin, but it is only a fourth of an inch nearer. You must do better, Ookoo.”

“If you do,” commented Brinton, “it is all up with me.”

“Ookoo is certain his father will beat him this time,” said the Comanche.

“I’m not so sure by a long shot, but I shall try my best.”

And he did. Walter waited until Ookoo had launched his second missile before announcing the result. He spent several minutes in the examination, and then called that the best he could do was to declare the shots a tie, each having struck within a fourth of an inch of the pin.

In order to make the three a tie, Brinton must win on the third trial, when a fourth effort by each would be necessary. Neither was likely to slight any precaution and was sure to put forth his utmost skill.

“He mustn’t get the idea that I’m fool-

A Shooting Match

ing with him," thought Ezra Brinton, as he raised his rifle and again aimed at the little white target. "Another person might find those two arrows in the way, but they won't bother me."

Ookoo stood directly behind his antagonist, his eye roving over the long barrel to the tree a hundred and fifty feet distant. Walter, much nearer the oak, was at one side of the range, with gaze centred on the target. The rifle cracked, a thin jet of blue smoke shot from the muzzle, and the marksman did not stir except to lower his weapon and look questioningly at the umpire.

"After Ookoo," called Walter.

The Comanche took his place as before and fitted his third arrow to the string. Unexpectedly, he was less deliberate than before. He raised the long bow, and it no sooner assumed its diagonal position than the twang was heard and the graceful missile sped outward on its long parabola. The faint thud was audible in the stillness, and the parallel shafts of all three nestling together had their heads buried so closely to one another that they touched. The bullets had disappeared, but it could not be so with the arrows.

The Three Arrows

Walter was first on the spot. He scrutinised the target and was in doubt for a moment over what he saw.

Just as the others came up, he whirled about and sent his sombrero spinning fifty feet over his head. Then breaking into a jig he shouted :

“Ookoo wins! Hurrah for Ookoo!”

The contestants did not speak. They closed around, peered at the target and, like the umpire, were at first puzzled. The latter added to the mystification by calling :

“Find the pin, father?”

Further examination showed that the third arrow, after wedging between its predecessors and the paper, had grazed one shaft, which deflected it just enough to direct it against the pin, which was twisted out of shape and had fallen, the impact of the arrows holding the target in place. The third bullet had gone as true as the others, but it was beaten.

“Ookoo has driven the nail,” added the happy youth, referring to the favourite exploit on the frontier when the marksman sends his bullet against the nail which sustains the target in position.

A Shooting Match

Brinton reached out his hand to the dusky youth.

"I congratulate you, Ookoo!" he said with the heartiness of the true sportsman.

The modest victor now directed attention to another advantage possessed by the bow and arrow over firearms. Who ever heard of a bullet being used a second time? On the other hand, the young Comanche had done execution with the same missile repeatedly, and as proof of the same he now proceeded to withdraw the three arrows from the oak. The head of each had passed through the thick bark and buried itself in the solid wood. By deft working he extracted each in turn in as perfect condition as before.

"Let me look at them," said Walter, and they were handed to him. With a grin, he drew his hunting knife and proceeded to notch a character on the shaft, just in front of where the guiding feather was glued fast, doing it so lightly that it could not affect the accuracy of the missile's flight. His first intention was to mark the letter "o," but that was rather difficult with the tool he used. He reflected a moment and then fashioned the simple character "v."

The Three Arrows

“What do you mean by that?” asked his father, looking over his shoulder.

“If you are ever inclined to boast of this test—and I don’t see why you should, but there’s no telling—all that Ookoo need do is to show the three arrows marked with the letter which proves that he was the victor. Have I made myself clear?”

“I’ll promise that, if Ookoo refrains from saying anything about this affair, I shall keep mum.”

On their return to the cabin, man and boy inspected more carefully the bow and the arrows belonging to their guest, who told them some things that are worth noting.

“If you should traverse this country and visit different tribes, you will find bows like Ookoo’s made of a single piece of wood, while others are of bone or horn. Some of wood consist of several pieces, backed by sinew or the skin of an animal. Where bone is used, it is composed of sections of the ribs of large animals, spliced and glued together and generally backed by sinew. Sometimes you will find those of the antler of the elk are a single piece, and at other times they are in sections, bevelled at the ends and neatly

A Hooting Match

struck together and spliced. Bows of horn are often made of several pieces similarly treated. The horns of the mountain sheep are often cut into long slender rods which are laid together, glued and backed by sinew.

“Another fashion of sheep horn bow is in a single piece, the horn being cut in a spiral from base to point, the spiral steamed or boiled and then straightened and caused to dry. This type is rare, and you are not likely ever to see one, but they are very powerful and last for ever.

“You do not need to be told of the importance of the arrow, which is really a part of the bow.”

At this point the young Comanche held one of the three arrows which he had used a brief while before and smilingly scrutinised the letter which Walter had scratched. As he named the different parts, he laid a finger upon each.

“The arrow has three parts—the head, the shaft, and the feather. Some shafts are of several pieces of wood, but Ookoo likes a single piece better. You note that the flint has a sharp point and is secured in a split in the shaft by fine sinew wound tightly, which

The Three Arrows

is covered with a glue that hardens and holds it firmly. The feathering is what you may call a modern invention, and there must be tribes in the Far West who know nothing of what to Ookoo is indispensable in aiming the arrow. You observe that the feather is also glued in place, for if it were not it might become loose and mar the aim.

“The bowstring is made of twisted sinew, which is sometimes put on the bow green and allowed to dry. You will find strings among the Apaches and Lipans made of vegetable fibre, and still others of strips of rawhide or the intestines of animals. My brother has noted that Ookoo carries his bow when not needed slung by the string over his shoulder, as his friends do with their bullet pouches and powder horns; but most of the Comanches carry a bow case over their backs. This is a long and narrow bag of skin, just wide enough to admit the unstrung bow. Directly under and parallel to it is the shorter and wider bag for the arrows. The two are attached to a stiff rod of wood, nearly as long as the quiver. Those of Ookoo are a little longer than the arrow, and when he wishes to draw an arrow he seizes it by the feathered

A Shooting Match

portion, so as to prevent it being ruffled. Among the plains' tribes the best quiver and bow cases are made from the skin of the otter, though the hide of the panther is held in high esteem, and often bow cases and quivers are formed from the hide of the buffalo calf."

CHAPTER XI

A STRANGE DEPARTURE

THERE must be such a thing as a "sixth sense," just as there is an unknown force in nature which is all-pervasive and accounts for most of the phenomena of so-called spiritism. By and by the scientists will explain that which at present is inexplicable, but we shall have to wait awhile.

Whether the experience of Walter Brington on the night following the shooting contest between his father and the young Comanche belongs to this category may be doubted, but it remained a mystery to him throughout his life.

You have been told that, instead of sharing his guest's bedroom, he made his couch each evening on the floor at one side of the spacious stone hearth. Being in rugged health and leading an active outdoor life, his sleep was as refreshing as Nature intended it to be with all of us. Rarely did he lie awake for more than ten minutes after

A Strange Departure

relaxing on his blankets, and, as told, he was generally the last one to open his eyes in the morning. When in the woods, lying on the bare ground at night or crouching under the partial protection of a fallen tree, or within a cave among the rocks, he slept soundly till morning, unless some unusual disturbance awoke him.

This being so, how shall we account for his sudden awaking some time after midnight, with his senses as alert as during his fight on the prairie with Ookoo, the young Comanche? One minute he was unconscious, the next wide awake. His posture was so comfortable that he made not the slightest shift, as one is apt to do in similar circumstance. There was not the faintest suggestion of pain or discomfort of body, nor was there any exterior disturbance to explain his sudden wakefulness.

The night was moderately cool, and several sticks had been left burning on the hearth. These had smouldered until only a vague illumination was partly diffused through the apartment. Looking across the room, he could barely make out the two openings leading to the sleeping quarters of his

The Three Arrows

friends. Either his father or uncle was breathing somewhat heavily, but not enough to disturb anyone. In Ookoo's room all was as still as the tomb; he generally slept as gently as an infant.

Puzzled by his wakefulness, Walter lay motionless, his serape across his lower limbs, waiting for sleep to steal over him again. The longer he thus lay, the more wakeful he became, if that can be considered possible.

"It's odd," he muttered; "I never had anything like it before—hello!"

He had caught a sound which came through the windows, whose shutters were open. It was a low, tremulous whistle, so faint that he would not have noticed it except for the absolute silence and his straining senses. It was like the call of a bird, and at first he set it down as such, but to his astonishment it was repeated three times; then, after a longer silence, the same series sounded again, and then once more, after which all became silent.

"I never heard such a call in the woods," reflected the wondering youth; "can it be a signal from some person?"

It was at this moment that one of the

A Strange Departure

smouldering sticks on the hearth fell apart with an almost inaudible rustle, and a tiny spiral of flame burst into life. The additional illumination made the whole room dimly visible. Without stirring, Walter, led by some impulse, looked across at the room of the young Comanche. To his astonishment he saw the dusky youth standing in the entrance with his face towards him.

Ookoo held his bow in his left hand, and the upper part of his quiver was outlined behind his left shoulder. His crutches had been discarded at the close of the shooting match, and his position was as erect as ever.

It flashed upon Walter that the soft call he had heard on the outside was intended for the ears of the young Comanche, who was wakened from sleep by it. Instead of making reply, he was about to answer by going forth and meeting the one who summoned him. He chose to do this without bidding his friends good-bye, and he was now looking at Walter to learn whether he was awake.

The respective positions of the two youths gave the white one the advantage. While the Comanche was revealed in the obscurity,

The Three Arrows

the other was in the shadow made by the corner of the heart, and only the vaguest outlines of his body showed. While aware of this, Walter so feared the strength of that marvellous vision that he partly closed his eyes, though not enough to prevent his observing the movements of the other.

A riot of fancies throbbed through the brain of the lad. He recalled the insistence of his father that the Comanche, having renounced Christianity, had become a thorough Indian in heart, so treacherous in every fibre of his being that he could never be loyal to anyone except his own relatives. It seemed as if he and Walter had formed a genuine liking for each other, and of late Ookoo had shown a fondness for the father; but all this was dissipated by that tremulous call from the night.

A hideous dread suddenly took form in the mind of Walter Brinton. There was no doubt that the summons was to Ookoo and he was about to answer it. Would he go without harming those in the cabin? If he glided out, would not he and the one outside wreak their hatred upon the inmates?

These questions gave way to the more

A Strange Departure

momentous one of Walter's duty in the extraordinary situation. Ought he to shout a warning to his father and uncle that they might save themselves, or should he wait until the young warrior had passed out of the cabin?

"He can kill me if he wishes," was the shuddering thought of the white youth.

When he lay down to sleep he always leaned his rifle in one corner of the room and dropped powder horn, bullet pouch and his hunting knife beside it. He partly disrobed, for he slept better when not encumbered by the articles and extra clothing. Still watching the motionless figure, Walter's misgivings left him to that extent that he decided to make no outcry unless the Comanche advanced upon him with clearly hostile intent.

"When he makes a break I'll yell and bound to my feet."

He figured how he would bunch his serape together and use it as a shield until his friends could rush to his relief.

"*Walter!*"

The Comanche spoke the single word barely above a whisper. The one who heard it did not reply nor stir. He knew it was

The Three Arrows

Ookoo's method of learning whether his host was asleep or awake, and the latter was too wise to be trapped thereby. He continued to breathe as regularly as before, his fear being that the throbbing of his heart would betray him.

Suddenly he became aware that Ookoo was nearer to him than when first seen. He had moved like a shadow across the threshold into the larger room, where he paused after a single step with his bow still grasped in his left hand. From the screen of the partial obscurity Walter saw the gleam of the piercing black eyes. He fancied that the right hand was resting on the hilt of the knife at his girdle, but a more searching scrutiny proved this was not so. That hand was loose, though, should the necessity arise, it could snatch out and wield the weapon so swiftly that no eye could follow the movements.

Seconds were minutes in length, and the situation was fast becoming unbearable. Walter felt that he could not stand it much longer. He must make a break. It was impossible to restrain himself from bounding to his feet with a wild warning, and, gathering

A Strange Departure

the blanket in front, rush upon Ookoo, bear him to the floor and strangle him.

"Does Ookoo's brother sleep?"

The question was asked in the same almost inaudible undertone as before. Curiously enough, it served to steady the nerves of Walter, who neither stirred nor answered, but kept his gaze upon the Comanche.

"I'll wait till he takes one more step," was our young friend's resolution, and the next moment the Comanche took the step.

But, instead of being towards the other, it was to the left, in the direction of the door. His moccasins gave out no sound, and several short paces carried him thither. He was not now so clearly seen, and his back was towards the watcher. The latter saw the right hand go up and knew the young Indian was lifting the latch without using the string, which, as was the custom, had been pulled in before the inmates lay down for the night.

The door was drawn inward in the same absolute silence, and Ookoo's figure was silhouetted against the vivid moonlight for a moment and then shut from view by the closing of the door. This time the listener heard the almost inaudible click as the latch

The Three Arrows

dropped into place, for the cord controlling it being inside could not be used to govern the movement.

Strange impulses often come to persons in perilous situations. Walter Brinton was on the point of bounding to the door and shouting, "Good-bye, Ookoo!" but checked himself; and, stepping aside to the narrow window, watched his late guest as he passed out in the night. His gait was as elastic as ever, and no one needed crutches less than he. Instead of going directly away, he was vanishing round the corner of the cabin. Walter tiptoed to the rear and peeped through the window. The moon was at its full, in an unclouded sky, and for a minute or two the Comanche was fairly visible. He was walking at a moderate pace and did not look behind him. All his interest was centred upon the front.

In a direct line with the vanishing youth, and just beyond, a horseman took form as he emerged from the gloom. Ookoo stopped short, as if to await his approach. The two seemed to be talking, but, slight as was the distance, Walter could not so much as catch the murmur of their voices. Then Ookoo

A Strange Departure

vaulted upward without help, and landed behind the horseman, just as he had done with the help of the youth who shot him. The mustang turned and swiftly carried the two riders beyond sight.

Walter now went to the door of his father's sleeping room and called to him and his uncle. Men trained as they awaken easily, and in a few minutes they knew all that had occurred while they slept. As they were partly clothed, they passed out into the living room and seated themselves, taking care to keep out of the reach of any shot from the windows.

"Of course, there's no doubt as to who that horseman was," said Oliver Brinton.

"None at all," replied his brother.

"Chief Kurringk waited until his son had recovered from his hurt and then came after him."

"Why did he do that?"

"Don't ask me to fathom the workings of a red man's brain. It would seem that he ought to have known Ookoo would go to him sooner or later, but he may have thought he had waited long enough for him."

"I don't understand why Ookoo didn't

The Three Arrows

bid us good-bye," said the puzzled Walter; "he ought to have gone off like a gentleman."

The parent sniffed impatiently.

"I confess I was beginning to feel a liking for the youngster, especially after he beat me in the shooting contest; but I never fully trusted him. You wonder why he did not try to do us harm while he was here. He certainly had plenty of chances, but he never did a thing that looked to me suspicious. Understand me when I say that all his actions were in keeping with his character. He felt something in the nature of gratitude for what we did for him, but that emotion existed only while he was under our roof. Now that he is gone, every atom of it has vanished."

"Do you believe," asked the brother, "that Kurringk will attack us here in the cabin?"

"You are again asking me to read the workings of a Comanche's brain. We may not see him again for weeks or months; but these are troublous times in Texas, with dark days close at hand. He will be an active agent in them, and among all his warriors none will be more murderous than the youth

A Strange Departure

who went out of that door less than an hour ago. His manner of leaving was a warning that he is no longer a friend."

"I am sorry to think that you may be right," said the distressed Walter.

"It is wise to face the truth, and I repeat what I have said, that this isn't the last of Chief Kurringk and his son, Ookoo."

Little did any one of the three suspect how soon this declaration would be justified.

CHAPTER XII

A DISTINGUISHED CALLER

“HELLO the house!”

It was the close of the third day following the strange incidents just narrated, and the three Brintons were about to sit down at the table for their evening meal, when the ringing hail fell upon their ears and the sound of horses' hoofs was heard at the front of the cabin. The diners rose and Ezra drew open the door.

Two horsemen had reined up. The younger was not more than thirty years of age, thin of frame, with long black hair and grave countenance, ornamented by a dark moustache, which much training had caused to turn upward at the ends. He was of reserved disposition, and let his companion do the chief talking for both.

The elder was of massive frame, with smooth-shaven face and strong features, and he looked older than his half-century of years.

A Distinguished Caller

He wore a coonskin cap, as did his companion, and they were attired in deerskin hunting suits, with shoes instead of moccasins. The leader balanced a beautifully ornamented rifle across his saddle in front, and his face beamed with good humour. His long dark hair hung about his shoulders, and his clear blue eyes twinkled.

As soon as the two men and boy appeared on the little porch, the speaker swung out of his saddle, the other imitating him more leisurely, and leaving his animal standing, stepped forward and offered his hand to the three in turn.

"If it's all the same to you we'll spend the night under your roof."

"Make it a week," was the hearty response of Ezra; "you are right welcome."

"Don't doubt it, but we've got a long journey before us and no time to idle. This modest young fellow with me has a name that I don't believe you can guess."

The speaker looked waggishly into the faces before him, while the one referred to smiled, fondled his moustache and remained silent.

"Never having seen either of you before,

The Three Arrows

that is beyond our ken," replied the elder Brinton.

"I don't know what his father and mother called him, but the only name I ever heard was the 'Beehunter.'"

Whereupon the young man gravely shook hands with the trio.

"I'll attend to your horses," said Oliver.

"That's neighbourly; they ain't half as hungry as us, but they never turn up their noses at good food."

The saddles and blanket rolls were removed to be carried into the cabin, while Oliver led the mustangs by their bridles to the stable.

"We generally have a pack horse with us," remarked the elder of the new arrivals, as the four entered the log structure, "but we left him with the boys, as it looked as if we might have to do some tall travelling, and the same proved true, but we'll be with 'em again soon."

The saddles were flung down in one corner, the two rifles leaned beside them, and all seated themselves until Oliver should join them. He appeared a few minutes later, when they gathered round the table, Ezra

A Distinguished Caller

first throwing a heavy stick on the fire, for the weather had become crisp and keen.

All through the meal and afterwards, when the pipes were lighted and the parties sat in familiar converse, Ezra Brinton was haunted by the feeling that this was not the first time he had seen the talkative visitor. There was something in his face that dimly recalled the past, but for the life of him the pioneer could not fasten it in his memory. He concluded at first that it was one of those resemblances which are occasionally met with in life, and yet he soon decided it was more than that. There was nothing in the clear, rather musical voice that he could recall, but the impression would not down.

While nothing of the kind entered the mind of Oliver Brinton, yet curiously enough Walter formed the same impression as his father. The profile was unfamiliar, but not so the broad open countenance.

The mystification with the lad lay in the fact that he was absolutely certain that this was the first time he had ever seen the man. The puzzle was beyond solution.

Ezra Brinton noticed that when their caller introduced his companion by the name

The Three Arrows

of the Beehunter, he made no reference to himself. The omission was so marked that it must have had a reason. Moreover, the conversation had gone on only a little while when the host was convinced that the elder visitor observed their puzzlement and knew its cause. He grinned now and then, and glanced from the face of the parent to his son and then seemed to chuckle to himself. Suddenly he asked :

“I haven't heerd your names.”

Ezra promptly gave them, and the three looked at him for the proper announcement. He removed his pipe and said with a whimsical intonation :

“I wonder if any of you have ever heard of me.”

“I have been struck by something that seems familiar in your face,” replied Ezra, “but it baffles me.”

“Look agin,” said the caller with a chuckle.

“I have done so until ashamed of my ill manners; it is useless.”

Walter sprang from his chair and stepped quickly to the shelf where his father kept his books and papers. His action was so abrupt

A Distinguished Caller

that the others looked curiously at him. Fumbling among the articles, he brought out an almanac several years old and came forward so that the reflection from the fire fell upon it. Standing thus, he glanced from the page to the grinning visitor and then back again. Then he held up the pamphlet so that each could plainly see what interested him.

"That's you!" exclaimed Walter with a laugh.

All saw that he had displayed the title page of a "Davy Crockett's Almanac," one of the tens of thousands which not long before had been scattered like snowflakes over the country. Under the big letters which composed the title was a picture of the famous Congressman and bear hunter himself. It was a good woodcut, and the face and features were those of the man sitting in front of the fire and chatting with the others.

"Well, it's meant for me, but it's a blamed sight better looking than I am," said the guest, enjoying the sensation he had caused.

"Are you Colonel Davy Crockett of Tennessee?" asked the astonished Ezra.

The Three Arrows

"I've been accused of it, and I don't think it's worth while to deny it."

"It was your resemblance to your published portraits that puzzled me. Allow me to shake your hand."

"Put it there," was the genial response.

"And I, too," added Walter, charmed with the rough good nature of the famous backwoods statesman.

A. Crockett took the hand of the youth he looked up in his face, and retaining the fingers in his palm, said with that pleasing frankness which at times was his greatest charm :

"I like your looks ; you are close to manhood ; that furze on your upper lip will need shaving purty soon unless you mean to make a race against the Beehunter here. Texas needs youths like you as well as men like your father and uncle, and I know you will show yourself one no matter where you are placed or what you are called upon to do."

Dropping the hand he patted the muscular shoulder.

"Yes, you have the makings of a *man*, Walter."

"Thank you, I shall do my best," replied

A Distinguished Caller

the youth, much impressed by the kind words and manner of the visitor. Then he resumed his seat and became a listener.

“I have read a good deal about you in the papers,” said Ezra.

“They did have a lot to say of me when I was in Congress, and they nearly spoilt me on my trip north, but,” he added with a sigh, “all that is ended.”

“Why should it be?” asked Oliver Brinton; “you proved yourself not only an able man, but, what is more important, an honest one.”

“And that is what killed me politically; but I don’t regret it, for I value my conscience more than the praise of men. That conscience would not allow me to support Andy Jackson in all his measures, and Old Hickory is a man that never forgets his friends or forgives his enemies. When I ran for office agin I was cheated out of my election and it was he that did it. Instead of writing ‘of Tennessee’ after my name I now put ‘G. T.’”

“What does that mean?” asked Oliver.

“‘Gone to Texas’; I shall never make Tennessee my home agin.”

The Three Arrows

“And why not?”

“From this time on I'm a Texan; I have cast my lot with this State, republic or empire or whatever it may become. They will treat an honest man as he deserves, which is more than can be said of Tennessee.”

Having said this much about one of the most noted Americans of an earlier generation, let me add something more.

David Crockett was a native of Tennessee, of Irish descent, born in 1786, and had so meagre an education that when he reached his 'teens, he did not know the first letter of the alphabet. But he was gifted with strong common sense, high ambition and sound principles. Although his total schooling was six months, he learned to read and write and gained a knowledge of the elements of arithmetic. He was the bravest of men, as he proved many a time during the War of 1812, and in fighting against the Cree Indians on the frontier. This eccentric Tennessean must have had much native ability, for he was elected a colonel of militia and a member of the State legislature while still a young man. A good deal of his fame rested upon his skill as a bear hunter. He was admittedly

A Distinguished Caller

the best marksman in his native State and some of the feats performed with "Betsey," his favourite rifle, seem incredible.

His popularity led to his nomination for Congress in 1827, and his services in that body were so satisfactory that he was re-elected. He became one of the most interesting figures in the national capital. No doubt he felt a homely pride in his peculiar reputation and did what he could to add to it. He dressed in backwoods costume and caused a sensation on the streets as well as in the halls of Congress. Once when introduced at an evening function by the conventional formula: "Make room for Colonel Crockett of Tennessee," he brushed the announcer aside and strode forward, proclaiming: "Colonel Crockett of Tennessee makes room for himself."

His never-failing fund of humour and anecdote was tinged by such sound though quaint philosophy that he won wide admiration. "Davy Crockett almanacs" and "lives" were sold by the thousand and his speeches were published broadcast. Although defeated the third time he ran, he entered the field again and was successful.

The Three Arrows

In the height of Crockett's fame he accepted the invitation of many of his admirers and made a tour through the north and east, where he had never been. He left Washington in April, 1834, and in the course of his excursion visited Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York and Boston. In all these cities he received honours which would have turned the heads of most men.

But as has been intimated, Crockett made the political mistake of arraying himself against some of the pet measures of President Jackson, probably the greatest "boss" in American political history. Old Hickory never forgave a foe, and he put forth all his political power, which was prodigious, to defeat the Tennessean and succeeded.

Crockett had never doubted his election and was stunned when the result became known. He had been overthrown unfairly, but the verdict could not be gainsaid, and the political career of the famous Congressman was closed for ever. He gave way to bitterness and determined to abandon his native State.

"As my country no longer requires my services," he said, "I have made up my mind

A Distinguished Caller

to go to Texas. My life has been one of danger, toil and privation, but these difficulties I had to encounter at a time when I considered them nothing. But now I start anew upon my own hook, and God grant that I may be strong enough to face all that awaits me. I have a new row to hoe, a long and rough one, but come what will, *I'll go ahead!*"

He sorrowfully bade his family good-bye, for the enterprise in which he and a few brave spirits had resolved to engage was a desperate one. He kissed the loved wife and children again and again, and the tears trickled down his bronze cheeks as he hurried towards Mill's Point, there to board the steamer for the voyage down the Mississippi. He was dressed in his homespun suit and carried the beautiful rifle presented to him by his admirers in Philadelphia.

So long as the dear ones could be seen, he kept turning his head and waving back their loving signals, but soon the husband and father passed out of their sight for ever.

CHAPTER XIII

A GREAT BEAR HUNTER

THAT was a memorable evening for Walter Brinton. Davy Crockett seemed to have left all his resentment behind him. It is more than probable that his ambition was stirred by the belief that a new and grander political future awaited him in Texas. By throwing all his energies into the struggle for freedom, he was sure to draw attention to himself, and if he "made good" he was certain of his reward. He would have no Andrew Jackson to stand across his path, and what he had accomplished in Tennessee gave him confidence of the greater things he could do in this virgin field.

The Beehunter had little to say. He sat at one side of the big hearth, calmly smoking his corn-cob pipe, listening to everything, now and then smiling, but never speaking unless addressed. It was much the same with Oliver Brinton, who was deeply interested in everything said by their famous visitor and

A Great Bear Hunter

left to his brother the chief part on their side of the conversation.

Crockett showed a strong liking for Walter, who sat nearer to him than any of the others and drank in everything spoken. The great hunter was at his best. He made all laugh by his quaint wit and entertaining stories. Walter had read the almanac, which professed to give an authentic though extravagant history of the backwoodsman's hunting exploits, and finally the youth asked the Colonel to tell them something of his adventures in the wilds of Tennessee. The genial fellow was nothing loath, and after he had started he kept it up until far into the night. Never before, except when on the watch for the stealthy Indian, had the Brintons sat up so late. But they knew a similar opportunity would never come again to them and they made the most of it.

It would take far more space than I have at command to repeat all that their guest related, but I think it will be of interest to condense a few of his reminiscences, assuring the reader that they are free of exaggeration.

It was in the autumn of 1825, when Crockett had suffered his first defeat in his

The Three Arrows

candidacy for Congress, that he and his son, a large boy for his years, set out on a bear hunt, accompanied by their eight trained hounds. On the edge of a small stream, when they were about to enter a canebrake, the dogs dashed ahead and almost immediately their yelping showed they had struck the trail of some kind of game. A little later the sounds told Crockett the canines had divided into two parties and each had plenty to do.

Father and son imitated the hounds and also separated, the boy looking after one group and the father the other. The man had not gone far, when he came upon five of his dogs that had attacked a two-year-old bear, which was making things interesting for them. Not thinking it worth while to expend powder and ball upon the game, Crockett gave the *coup* with his knife.

He had hardly done so, when the report of his son's gun showed that he was busy and his father hurried after him, arriving just in time to find he had killed a bruin considerably larger than the one despatched by the parent. The latter complimented the lad, not on his courage—for that was a matter of

A Great Bear Hunter

course—but upon his skill, which did not require a second bullet. While they were talking, one of the hounds a short distance away barked. The others broke for him with the man and boy at their heels. The dogs had treed a huge bear, which was ready for fight, but he offered so fair a target among the limbs that a single shot brought him tumbling to the ground. Thus the father and son had bagged three of the animals within a half-hour, an exploit which is rarely equalled even in these days of modern firearms.

As was his rule, Crockett proceeded at once to dress the prizes. The afternoon was so far gone that he set out to hunt a suitable place to camp for the night. He had not gone far when the dogs again scented something and he dashed after them. The trail proved so long, however, that he gave it up and started to return. He was tramping in a leisurely fashion through the woods when he came upon a wan, sickly-looking man weakly grubbing the ground. When asked to explain, he said he was working for a person who intended to settle there. He added that he had no meat for his family and was trying to earn some from his employer.

The Three Arrows

"If you will come with me," said Crockett, touched with pity, "we shall get more food than you can earn in a month of grubbing."

The weary eyes lighted with hope, and remarking that he had never seen a bear killed, added that he would speak to his wife, who lived in a small, tumble-down cabin near at hand. She told her husband by no means to miss such an opportunity, and filled with thankfulness, the sickly fellow, gun in hand, set off with Crockett. Leading the way to where the three bears had been slain, the hunter kindled a fire. The carcasses were salted and placed upon a scaffold beyond reach of prowling wolves. On the morrow, Crockett and his forlorn friend set out upon another hunt. Before nightfall they had killed four more bears. The Tennessean allowed the other to shoot two of them, though it is safe to say he never would have brought them down but for the guidance and help of the famous backwoodsman. As a result, the stranger was given a thousand pounds of good, fat bear meat. He could not express his gratitude. Crockett met him a year later, when he looked plump and was

A Great Bear Hunter

in lively spirits. He said that that single hunt had furnished meat for a whole year to his family.

Hardly had Crockett reached home when one of his neighbours called with word that he was entirely out of meat, and he asked the Colonel to take him on a bear hunt.

“Nothing would suit me better,” said the latter, “and we’ll try our luck, but I’m afeard the animals have gone into winter quarters.”

You need not be reminded that bears hibernate for something like three months each year. Those in the latitude of Tennessee generally take their long sleep from the first of January until April. At the beginning they are fat from the abundance of food eaten in the autumn. They crawl into hollow trees or caves, where they sink into a somnolent state, their only nourishment during the long period being that obtained by sucking the bottom of a forepaw. Such is the common belief, but of course their real sustenance is their own store of surplus fat. When they awake and come forth again they are gaunt, hungry and fierce. If you have any idea of going on a bear hunt try to arrange it for any season except spring.

The Three Arrows

On this memorable venture Crockett was accompanied by his boy and the neighbour. Each was mounted, and they took two pack-horses and their best hounds. They headed for the section where they had already met such good fortune. From the moment of their arrival they toiled hard, but when night came had not succeeded in starting a single bear. It began to look as if the inroad made some days before had scared off the few survivors, but the hunters had no idea of giving up.

The food which the party had brought with them was soon eaten, and Crockett sent his boy to a settler's cabin, some three miles away, to procure meat. The man gave the lad an abundance and urged him to bring his father and friend to his house, promising them plenty of food for themselves and their dogs. The settler said the bears had been very troublesome and had killed a good many of his hogs.

When the boy got back to camp his father and friend were after a bruin that had taken refuge in a large cave, where he had constructed a sort of cabin—as his kind do—in which to snooze through the winter. The

A Great Bear Hunter

dogs were afraid to venture farther until their master urged them on. They made a rush, and the drowsy brute came scrambling out. Crockett's position gave him the best chance, but he stepped to one side and nodded to his friend :

“ Don't be in a hurry ; keep cool.”

His advice was followed, and a second shot was not required. The carcass was dragged back to camp, where Crockett found his boy awaiting him. The next morning they resumed their hunt, selecting the section lying between Obion River and Red Foot Lake. A large lot of timber had been levelled by a recent tornado and to which Crockett referred as a “ harricane.” He was sure he would find plenty of game among the fallen trees, but after riding five miles without coming upon the first sign, he began to fear they were to be disappointed. Soon, however, the keen vision of the veteran sportsman descried an immense black oak with a big hole in the upper portion. It was an ideal refuge for a bear seeking winter quarters, and Crockett started an investigation. The craggy bark was scratched in a way that showed one of the beasts had gone up the

The Three Arrows

trunk, but there were no marks to indicate he had come down again. Now, a bear in climbing a tree never loses his grip, his long sharp nails holding firmly; but he comes down by a series of slips, so it is easy to tell which direction he has taken.

Crockett's plan was to fell another tree so as to cause it to lean against the oak. The one thus cut down was little more than a sapling and could be easily climbed by the boy, who by peeping into the hole, would learn whether the bear was inside. The hunter had swung his axe only a few times, when the barking of the dogs not far off showed they had come upon the winter quarters of another bruin. All hurried to where the hounds were making their rumpus. Sure enough, when the hunters reached the spot, they saw a large bear up a tree in the exact position to offer a fine target. Crockett's friend was so eager to bring down the brute that the veteran yielded, and one shot proved sufficient.

At this juncture, the Colonel missed his best dog, and knowing he would not be absent at such a time unless engaged upon important business, his owner walked to a

icate
ar in
long
omes
tell

re so
The
sap-
ooy,
earn
nter
hen
wed
s of
the
ure
oot,
act
tt's
ute
ved

his
be
on
a



“Crockett's plan was to fell another tree”



A Great Bear Hunter

piece of high ground to listen. He heard the canine's bark, and making his way to him came upon another bear among the limbs of a tree. The target was so fair that a single bullet closed that part of the programme. Returning to his friend, they went to where the boy had resumed his chopping of the sapling, which just then tottered over, but fell in the wrong direction. The lad buried the blade in the oak, and to the surprise of all found that it was only a shell, through which it was easy to cut. Crockett withdrew with his dogs a short distance, to be out of the way of the tree when it crashed downward. While watching proceedings the bear, which was of enormous size, awoke from his slumber, clawed his way up the interior and thrust his snout and head through the opening, as if trying to learn the cause of the racket. He did not like the look of things, and crawling through the natural door, began scratching and slipping down rear foremost. His descent was abruptly hastened by a bullet from Crockett's rifle, but a second was necessary to give him his quietus.

As before, the three bears were salted and

The Three Arrows

placed on a scaffold beyond the reach of the wolves, which would soon be ravening below. The party went into camp, and the next morning the boy was left behind while the men rode towards the fallen timbers. Finding the stream impassable for their horses, the hunters dismounted and began picking their way through the "harricane." They had not gone a dozen rods when they came face to face with a bear of moderate size. Staring at the intruders for a moment the brute lumbered off, followed by Crockett's friend and several dogs, while the leader made for a point where he knew from the cries of the hounds another bruin had been treed. It need not be said what speedily followed. The horses were brought to the spot, loaded with all they could carry and the two made their way to camp, where the lad was patiently awaiting them.

Colonel Crockett had had a most strenuous day, and you would think he would have been glad for a chance to eat, lie down and rest, but the call of his dogs caused him to slip from his saddle and start on the double-quick after another prize. The weather was freezingly cold and the ground

A Great Bear Hunter

so broken by fissures caused by a recent earthquake, that he had to crawl on his hands and knees for a long distance. He traversed a mile in this most trying manner, when he came to the bank of a stream of water of whose width and depth he was ignorant.

What hunter in such circumstances would not have turned about and made haste to the warmth and food of his camp? Crockett, on the contrary, waded into the creek, not knowing at what moment he would drop below the surface; but he felt his way, with the icy current creeping upward until almost to his waist. When he stepped upon dry land again the barking of his dogs was heard, and he pushed on through the wood. The sky was cloudy, without moon or stars, and he was obliged literally to feel his way, but he never hesitated until he came to where his hounds were "whooping it up" at the base of a large, forked poplar. Scanning the limbs above, the hunter dimly made out a huge, dark mass, which he knew was a bear. The brute did not stir, and was evidently scrutinising the canines below. The view was so indistinct that the Colonel started a small fire to help his vision. Alarmed by the

The Three Arrows

blaze, bruin climbed higher and then made his way out on a large limb. This brought him in faint relief against the dark sky, and Crockett fired, but seemingly without effect. He fired a second time, but the brute did not move. He began loading for a third shot when the monster came tumbling to the ground, where he furiously fought the dogs, which leaped upon him. All were so mixed that Crockett dared not fire lest he injure the hounds.

In their fierce struggles the bear rolled over and dropped into one of the fissures made by the earthquake a dozen years before. It was not deep and the fight was not interrupted. Fearing for his dogs, the Colonel did a rash thing by leaping into the seam, knife in hand, crouching directly under the hulk, and ending the struggle with the smaller weapon.

The weather had become intensely cold, and the leathern breeches wetted in crossing the creek were frozen stiff. Even with his iron constitution and tremendous endurance, Crockett saw he must have a fire or he would freeze to death. He gathered with his benumbed fingers such fuel as he could find

A Great Bear Hunter

and started a tiny blaze by means of his flint and steel, but with all his skill he could not secure enough flame to warm his chilled body; it served rather to aggravate his sufferings.

Exercise seemed to be his last resort, and flinging his gun aside he executed a series of jigs, more noticeable for their vigour than their grace. This helped somewhat and might have answered at any other time, but the massive frame was so thoroughly tired out from the severe labours of the day that the pain he suffered was more torturing than the chill of the arctic-like temperature.

He stopped the exercises because he was unable to keep them up. Standing thus, and reflecting upon what he could do, if indeed he could do anything, he felt the fatal numbness stealing through his body.

“A little more of this and it will be ‘Good-bye, Davy Crockett,’” he grimly reflected, almost convinced that his last hour had come. He broke off more limbs and flung them on the blaze, but they threatened to extinguish it altogether and did not add a particle of heat. But all hope was not yet lost. Stumbling to a tall tree of narrow girth

The Three Arrows

and free of limbs for more than twenty feet above his head, he climbed as far as he could loosely clasped the slim trunk with arms and legs and then slid down to the ground as if the sapling were a greased pole. The violent friction caused a responsive glow and he straightway repeated the performance. It may seem incredible, but he kept up this unique exercise all through the night. The warmth thus gained lasted only a few minutes, when up the tree he would climb again and drop to the earth as if from an aeroplane. Beyond a doubt Colonel Davy Crockett's life was thus saved to him.

Rejoining his friends on the morrow, they continued bear hunting with as marked success as before. During the fall and winter Colonel Crockett killed fifty-eight bears, and in the spring, when the hungry animals ventured forth again, he resumed his sport. In the course of a month he shot forty-seven more, which brings the total to one hundred and five bagged in less than a year. If any hunter in these times thinks he can surpass it, he is respectfully invited to try.

CHAPTER XIV

THE FIRST BLOW FOR FREEDOM

THE night was far spent when Colonel Crockett, the Beehunter and their hosts lay down to sleep. All were astir at an early hour, the famous visitor as genial and full of anecdote and quaint sayings as ever. When urged to spend several days at the cabin, he replied that he had not a spare hour at command. He was engaged upon most important business and time was beyond value.

After the morning meal, there was a shaking of hands all round, and the Beehunter mounted, but Colonel Crockett made a signal to Ezra Brinton, which brought the pioneer to his side. The two were so far from the others that no one else could hear the words that passed between them. Leaning on his saddle and ready to swing into the seat, the great backwoodsman talked earnestly to the one who had been so hospitable to him. Brinton listened closely, and now and then nodded, but said little. Finally, the two

The Three Arrows

shook hands again, and the couple headed across the prairie in a southward direction.

The face of Ezra Brinton was thoughtful as he walked to the porch, sat down and silently lighted his pipe. Walter busied himself with clearing away the dishes, while the brother sat opposite the elder and also smoked and held his peace. He was wondering what Colonel Crockett had said, but was content to wait until Ezra chose to make it known.

He was not kept waiting long. His work being finished, the youth came out of the door and joined his relatives.

"I've been expecting it," was the odd remark of the parent, as he straightened up, removed his pipe and looked into the faces of the other two.

"Expecting what?" asked Oliver. "If you will let us know perhaps we may say we've been expecting it also."

"I picked up a good deal of news on my last trip to Harrisburg, though all of it wasn't news to me. You two don't need to be told that Texas has struck for independence."

"That's been in the air for months,"

The First Blow for Freedom

assented Oliver with a nod of his head. "Fact is, there were mutterings of it two or three years ago. I knew it was bound to come."

"Well, it *has* come; the question is, are we going to sit here idling away our time when Texas needs every man she can get? I am ashamed that we have dawdled away the months without offering a helping hand."

"So am I!"

The remark was made by Walter, whose flashing eyes told how deeply his feelings were stirred.

The men looked in surprise at him.

"It is not you so much as we," said his father, proud to hear his offspring speak with such emphasis; "I take the shame upon myself, for I cannot plead ignorance."

"Neither can we," added Oliver, "but I reckon it isn't too late to jump in and help make things hum."

"Colonel Crockett was considerate. He's out after recruits, but he doesn't press anyone; they want none who require urging. I had a chat with him last evening just before we lay down to sleep. It was because of that

The Three Arrows

that he drew me aside this morning and said that every patriot in Texas was needed and needed *now*."

"What did you tell him, father?"

"I agreed, of course, and assured him he could count upon us three. We shall leave to-morrow."

"Why not to-day?" asked the youth, bounding to his feet.

"By heavens! we will!"

And they did.

Which fact brings us to a point where something in the way of "news" must be told.

At the time Colonel David Crockett left his home in Tennessee, there were less than 40,000 white people in the immense territory known as Texas—so immense, in fact, that it is more than twice as large as Great Britain and Ireland. Passing over its early history, it is to be said that the quarrel between Spain and the United States over the boundary line was settled by the acceptance of the Sabine River as such, but the disturbances in the south-west continued. In 1823, Stephen S. Austin, under a grant from the Mexican Government, established a colony in

The First Blow for Freedom

south-eastern Texas and was followed by other settlers. The Mexican constitution was adopted the next year. This united Coahuila, until then a separate province, with Texas, and the Congress of the reconstructed State installed a Mexican as commandant of Texas. He was a brutal tyrant and intensely hated as well as feared. Lafitte, the noted pirate, founded a settlement at Galveston, but it was broken up in 1821. It may be thought that those freebooters reached the limit, but they were no worse than hundreds who flocked thither from the United States. Texas became a land of refuge for the most desperate characters that ever lived. It may be said to have been settled by outlaws.

Although the origin of the name is differently explained, some believed it was founded on the old couplet :

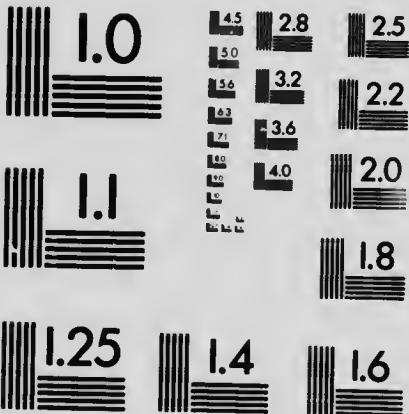
“When the other States reject us,
This is the one that always *takes us*.”

The character of the American immigrants became so unbearable that Bustamante, the Dictator of Mexico, issued a decree forbidding any more coming into the country. This decree had slight effect, and four years



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



APPLIED IMAGE Inc

1653 East Main Street
Rochester, New York 14609 USA
(716) 482 - 0300 - Phone
(716) 288 - 5989 - Fax

The Three Arrows

later was repealed. The outlaws continued to straggle into the section, so rich in natural resources, and the unrest increased. In 1823 the American settlers numbered some twenty thousand. There was little or no law among them, but the general longing for independence led to a convention which decided to separate from Coahuila. The members drew up a State constitution and issued an address to the Mexican Government, at whose head was General Santa Anna.

No more detestable villain ever lived than General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna. As he is to play a leading part in the incidents that follow, you should know something more of him. He was born in Xalapa in 1793 and entered the Spanish army, in which he attained the rank of lieutenant-colonel, in 1821. The next year he joined the movement inaugurated by Iturbide, which resulted in the overthrow of the Spanish forces and the reduction of that province, which was separated from Spain in 1824, when Texas became a part of the Republic of Mexico. Within a year Santa Anna turned against Iturbide, who had then proclaimed himself emperor. Santa Anna spent ten years in

The First Blow for Freedom

fighting for one or the other of the rival claimants. As might be expected, he did not cease his intrigue and warring until he himself secured the presidency of the republic. The wonder is that he consented to wait so long before clutching the prize.*

Amid the unrest when Texas was without organised government, a convention assembled at San Felipe de Austin in October, 1832. The delegates numbered fifty and elected Stephen F. Austin president. The

*Santa Anna had not a vestige of honour. His ambition knew no limit and was checked by no scruples. His declaration that he would not be content in heaven unless he could be the overlord is a key to his character.

When the war with Mexico had become certain in 1845, Santa Anna was enjoying one of his periodical terms of banishment, the sentence being for ten years, with Cuba as his "prison." President Polk offered him a large sum of money from the secret-service fund to betray his country. Of course, he snapped at the offer. The plan was for the United States to place a large force on the southern frontier. Meanwhile, Santa Anna was to return to Mexico, and because of his popularity with the military he was confident they would rally to his support. At the psychological moment he would find himself in so dangerous a situation that he would be compelled to surrender his army. All would have gone well had not the United States agent, A. Siddell McKenzie, of the navy, instead of going secretly to the traitor, so as to divert suspicion, paraded in full uniform when he landed in Havana and rode out to the princely residence of Santa Anna. This spoiled the scheme, for the wretch's treason would have been so obvious that his countrymen would have executed him, as they are so fond of doing with their opponents who are unfortunate enough to fall into their hands in these later days.

The Three Arrows

body disavowed any intention of seeking independence from Mexico, asked for the repeal of the decree which forbade immigration, for free trade for three more years, and, finally demanded separate government for Texas. Santa Anna came into power shortly after and the Texans, believing in his honesty, met again and formed a State constitution. Austin was sent to Mexico to submit the constitution to Santa Anna and the Mexican congress. The petition was denied and Austin was imprisoned for a year. Upon his return he addressed a large assemblage of citizens at Brazoria, saying :

“ War is our only recourse ; there is no other ; we must defend our rights, ourselves and our country by force of arms.”

Santa Anna sent a military force under the command of his brother-in-law, General Cos, to crush the threatened uprising. The citizens were ordered to give up their arms, but since they lived mostly by hunting and needed them as a defence against Indians, they refused. When Cos ordered the surrender of a small cannon by the people of the settlement of Gonzales, they replied by inviting his officer to come and take it. The

The First Blow for Freedom

challenge was accepted and a troop of cavalry was sent for that purpose, but was put to flight by a body of Texans. This little affair was the Lexington of the Texan revolution. It roused the fighting spirit among the people, and Stephen F. Austin was elected commander-in-chief of all the Texan troops. He lost no time in dispatching small bodies of soldiers to seize different points held by Mexicans. Three hundred and fifty advanced upon San Antonio de Bexar, where General Cos had his headquarters. A hundred men, including Colonel James Bowie and Captain J. W. Fannin, were ordered to select a good location for a permanent camp from which operations could be directed against San Antonio. The volunteers stationed themselves at Concepcion, the old Mission station, a little more than a mile south from San Antonio. There they were fiercely attacked by a force four times their own, but with slight loss they scattered the Mexicans and the regular siege of San Antonio began. For some months it was weakly prosecuted, the leaders awaiting the progress of political events elsewhere.

Fifty delegates at Austin declared local

The Three Arrows

State government at an end, selected commissioners to the United States and chose H. W. Smith governor. Sam Houston was made commander-in-chief of the armies and an adjournment was had to Washington Texas, where the Consultation was to be renewed on March 1, 1836. The plan was carried out, and the next day a Declaration of Independence was proclaimed. Sam Houston was again chosen commander-in-chief and a constitution was adopted, with David G. Burnet president of the provincial government.

Meanwhile, the siege of San Antonio seemed doomed to failure. It must be remembered that brave as were the Texans, they lacked discipline. They needed an iron hand to control them, lacking which they began disintegrating. It has been said that one-half the defenders of the Alamo were colonels and each insisted that he outranked all the others. It was something like that in front of San Antonio. General Austin left the army at the summons of the Consultation, as it was called, and turned the command over to General Burleson. He saw the wrangling grow until he became discouraged, declared

The First Blow for Freedom

that it was useless to continue the siege, and proposed to disband the forces.

At this critical moment, Benjamin R. Milam, one of the most noted Indian fighters in the south-west and the idol of the Texans, appeared and made so fervid an appeal that it struck fire in every heart. The quarrelling factions clamoured that he should lead them in an assault. "Who will go with me into San Antonio?" he shouted, and they answered with ardent cheers.

The attack was made the next morning and pressed fiercely for five days. General Cos, when summoned to surrender, insultingly refused to treat with traitors and notified them that he would shoot every one unless they ceased annoying him.

But the time came when he changed his tune. From street to street the Texans fought, driving the Mexicans from the barricades and from house to house, and slaying many in hand-to-hand encounters, until the dismayed Cos saw that it was all over, and hoisted the white flag at sunset on December 9th, 1835.

In the furious fighting a hundred and fifty of the Mexicans had been killed, and more

The Three Arrows

than that number wounded. The Texans had twenty-seven wounded and one killed, and, sad to say, the latter was the dauntless Milam. Five hundred stand of arms, with twenty-one pieces of artillery and an enormous amount of supplies were captured by the Texans. General Cos and his troops received better terms than they deserved. The regular soldiers were allowed to retain their arms and permitted to leave Texas. General Cos gave his parole and on the very first opportunity unhesitatingly broke it.

ans had
l, and,
Milam.
nty-one
amount
Texans.
better
regular
arms
al Cos
oppor-

CHAPTER XV

SOME OF THE LEADERS

HAVING thus hastily sketched events in Texas down to the opening of the struggle for independence, something must be said of the leaders in that struggle.

First and foremost was one of the most unique characters in American history, General Sam Houston. You must never speak of him as "Samuel," for were he living he would resent it. He was a native of Virginia, where he was born in 1793, but was removed to Tennessee when a small boy, his father having died some time before. He was wilful, and while still young ran away from home, went to the Cherokee Indians, whose hunting grounds were near by, and lived three years among them. Then he came back as abruptly as he left and enlisted, in 1812, serving under General Jackson against the Indians. He displayed so much bravery that he won the admiration of Old Hickory, and the friendship between them was never

The Three Arrows

broken. With the coming of peace, he took up the study of law, and his ability caused him to be looked upon as a rising political power. While still a young man, he was chosen a Representative in Congress and was re-elected the succeeding term. In 1827, he was made governor of Tennessee. One of the spectators present at his inauguration describes him as wearing a tall, bell-crowned, black beaver hat, shining black patent leather military stock, standing collar, ruffled shirt, black satin vest, shining black trousers, legs full and the same size from seat to ankle, and a gorgeous red-ground, many-coloured gown or Indian hunting shirt, fastened at the waist by a huge red sash of fancy beadwork, with an immense silver buckle, embroidered silk stockings, and pumps with large silver buckles. When in Washington he wore a sombrero with a brim like an umbrella and a coloured blanket or serape, and naturally attracted a great deal of attention.

Two years after his election for governor he married the beautiful daughter of an ex-governor and immediately they separated for ever. Much was made of this incident, around which was thrown a veil of mystery,

Some of the Leaders

but the explanation was simple. The lady married because of her social ambition and on account of a pique with the young man to whom she was engaged. She told Houston that she had never felt any love for him, whereupon he released her and went off again among the Cherokees, who made a chief of him.

Texas at that time was beginning to attract attention, and Houston, like Colonel Davy Crockett, saw in the region an inviting field for his peculiar genius. He appeared in the territory in December, 1832, and at once became a prominent figure in the revolutionary movements. It has already been shown that when the difficulties began he was chosen to the chief command of the military district east of the Trinity.

In those days, Houston was a profane, hard-drinking man, who took part in many terrible fights. When in Congress he resented an offensive word from Representative Stansberry by caning him in the street. His towering height and swarthy complexion attracted attention, especially when he was clad in Indian dress. He was rash enough to call upon Secretary Calhoun thus attired,

The Three Arrows

and was severely and properly rebuked and compelled to apologise for his lapse from the conventionalities.

If any proof is needed of the great ability of Sam Houston it is furnished by his unequalled career. He represented one State in Congress for two terms, then became its governor, then commander-in-chief of the Texan revolutionary army, attained the presidency of the new republic, was chosen again to Congress, finally elected United States Senator and again governor of Texas.

You have heard the name of James Bowie, and, like nearly everyone, think of him as the inventor of the fearful weapon known by his name. The matter is of slight moment, but it is well to be correct even about trivial things. It was not James, but his brother, Rezin P., who first fashioned the Bowie knife.

These brothers were natives of Tennessee, but became residents of Opelousas Parish when small boys. Their father was in good circumstances, and at his death left the family independent. Rezin was highly educated and a master of the French, Spanish and English languages. The brothers were somewhat

Some of the Leaders

similar in their tastes, though James sought adventure for its own sake and was not so much of a scholar as Rezin. In the month of September, 1827, one of the most notable duels in this country was fought on the sand-bars at Natchez in which the seconds and spectators became involved. During the mêlée, James Bowie, one of the seconds, killed his antagonist with a weapon made out of a blacksmith's rasp or large file. After the fight, Rezin carried the knife to Philadelphia, where a cutler fashioned it into a model furnished by Bowie.

For some years the Bowies were planters in the parish of Lafourche and Terrebonne. Rezin had charge of the interests, James being only an occasional visitor. The brothers had implicit faith in each other and there was never the slightest difference between them. James spent most of his time in Texas, whose independence he was scheming to help bring about in connection with Houston, Austin, Lamar, Fannin, Travis and others. He came home now and then to take counsel with Rezin, who said of him :

“James is too impatient to wait for events; he will hurry them before matters

The Three Arrows

are ripe for action. Sam Houston is the master spirit of the movement. He is a great and prudent man, despite his vanity and buffoonery. Lamar is full of genius and is chivalrously brave, and is truly a noble spirit, but is not practical. Fannin and Travis are enterprising and brave, but not calculated to plan or lead in a desperate fight. So is Lamar; and if there is wisdom enough in these men to follow the counsels of Houston and Austin, their success is certain."

n is the
He is a
s vanity
nius and
a noble
in and
out not
e fight.
enough
ouston

CHAPTER XVI

ON THE GUADALUPE

It was about the middle of the forenoon, on a crisp, sunshiny day, that Ezra Brinton, his brother Oliver and his son Walter, rode from the cabin where they had lived for several years, not one of the three dreaming he would never look upon the crude structure again.

The preparations were so simple that, as the ardent youth had said, there was no reason for delaying their departure. He mounted his matchless Saladin, his comrade on many a hunt and stirring adventure, while his relatives bestrode their fine mustangs. In addition, they took a single pack-horse to carry a few cooking utensils and enough food for two or three meals. Each had his blanket rolled behind him and tied to the cantle of the saddle on the back of his steed. The stable door was left open and the mustangs untied, free to go and come at will. In those days their breed were so numerous in Texas that they brought little money, though they

The Three Arrows

were liable to be picked up by Texan Mexican or Indian.

In addition to rifles, pistols and knives Ezra had an excellent field glass suspended by a cord round his neck. It had served well more than once and was held of high value by the owner. The historical incidents mentioned in the preceding pages, although they had already taken place, were mostly unknown to the little party. Colonel Davy Crockett and the Beehunter were roving through the country in quest of recruits. The Tennessean told Brinton that having done about all that could be done in that line, he and his friends would push on to San Antonio, where it was certain stirring events were at hand. A vague rumour had reached Crockett of fighting in that section, but he knew nothing of the capture and parole of General Cos and his five hundred troops, and the fact of Colonel Travis having established himself in the town, which at that time contained a little over a thousand inhabitants.

It was this statement by Crockett which led our friends to take the same general course, so that it may be said they were on the heels of the bearhunter and his com-

On the Guadalupe

panion. The distance was about a hundred miles, but the couple made much faster progress than their followers, and having started earlier the intervals between the two parties increased, one cause for which remains to be explained.

By maintaining an easy gallop for most of the time, the three expected to reach by sunset the Guadalupe, a stream generally not much larger than an ordinary creek, but subject to such sudden overflow that the bridges on the stage routes to-day are so arranged that they can be raised and lowered to meet the flood that sometimes sweeps everything before it and submerges miles of the surrounding country. After crossing this stream, the course was direct for the quaint old town on the San Antonio River, where they hoped to arrive well within two days.

The surface was mostly level, with slight growth of wood, excepting the common mesquite, which usually displays the character of bushes rather than trees. An occasional rise was traversed, but most of the time the view was unobstructed for miles in every direction. Ezra made frequent use of his glass, scanning all points of the compass, on the alert for a

The Three Arrows

peril which, it may be said, always threatened them. While the little party was so far north as to be out of the zone of danger from the Mexicans, they were in the heart of the "stamping ground" of the Comanches while at no great distance they were liable to collide with the equally ferocious Apaches and Lipans.

There was enough grass even thus early in the season to furnish plenty for the animals and neither they nor their owners had cause for misgivings on that score. Accustomed as we were our friends to go without food for many hours, they decided not to eat until they reached the Guadalupe. They would camp on its northern bank and resume their journey early on the morrow.

Ezra assumed the leadership, with his brother and son galloping a few paces to the rear. The load of the pack-horse was so light that it was no task for him to hold the same pace as the others.

Something like two hours slipped by without incident, when Ezra, sweeping the visible horizon with the glass, drew his mustang down to a walk and then checked him altogether. The others halted and looked towards

On the Guadalupe

the north, that being the direction in which the leader pointed the instrument. It was apparent that he had descried something interesting, though their unaided vision failed to detect it. He sat for two or three minutes motionless, then he passed the glass to Walter, who was within arm's reach.

"Tell me what you make of it."

Walter levelled the instrument at the point towards which his father had been gazing. He was startled by the distinctness of the picture, which seemed to evolve from the air itself. A group of a dozen or more horsemen had halted, like the white men, and seemed to be studying the Texans. As motionless as equestrian statues, they were stamped against the soft blue sky behind them.

"Indians!" exclaimed Walter, with the instrument still pointed. By gazing sharply the two men were able with unaided vision to make out the dim forms on the horizon. "I suppose they are wondering who we can be."

"There is no perplexity on my part as to them," remarked his father.

"Comanches?" ventured Oliver.

The Three Arrows

“Not a doubt of it, and,” significantly, “I’ll wager that Chief Kurringk and his son Ookos are with them.”

“Possibly, father, but they are too far off to make sure—hello!” broke in Walter, excitedly, “there’s a white man with them.”

He passed the glass to his uncle, who quickly brought it into play.

“You’re right,” he said, after a momentary scrutiny; “it looks as if he is the leader.”

“Hardly possible with a band of Comanches,” remarked Ezra, again taking the instrument.

The distance was so great that but for the dress of the individual who had suddenly assumed the chief place of interest, no one of the three would have taken him for a member of their own race. His dress was similar to that of those studying him, and a broad-brimmed sombrero gave the realistic touch which removed all doubt.

“Probably some Mexican renegade,” was the comment of Ezra, keeping the man under scrutiny, “with the possibility that he may be a Texan.”

“Do you think they will attack us?” asked Walter, his hazel eyes sparkling

On the Guadalupe

"Not by daylight or in the open plain."

"Why not?"

"The odds are too heavy against them."

"Do you think that a dozen have any fear of the three of us?"

"It isn't what *we* think, but how the question impresses them."

Retaining the instrument, Ezra held his gaze upon the distant group for a minute or two more, when he added:

"They are in motion."

"Are they heading this way?"

"They are going at right angles to our course."

"What do you make of that?"

"I can't guess, but whatever it means, I don't think we are through with them."

The Comanches, with the white man in the lead, struck their mustangs into an easy gallop until they passed over a rise in the prairie and disappeared. Before the Texans resumed their own course, Oliver called attention to a significant discovery. While all were looking in the direction of the swell over which the Comanches had vanished, he observed a faint column of smoke climbing perpendicularly into the clear sky. It was

The Three Arrows

so attenuated that he would not have noticed it had he not happened to glance towards the exact point where it showed. Comparatively dark at the base, the vapour grew fainter until it was dissolved in the clear atmosphere above.

"Umph! you know what *that* means," said Ezra.

"It shows something is burning," replied his brother.

"Of course, you observe that it is to the right of the Comanches and in a direct line with our cabin and the stables. We hadn't been gone long when a surprise party called; not finding us home, they left their cards."

There was no doubt of it; a band of Indians had descended upon the place and applied the torch, appropriating at the same time the mustangs. Whether they would have done this or tried to do it when the occupants were at home is a question which cannot be answered.

"There's one thing certain," was the comment of Ezra Brinton, "this part of Texas has become popular with the Comanches and we are not likely to get to San Antonio without a brush with them."

"I shall feel more comfortable after we

On the Guadalupe

are on the other side of the Guadalupe," said the brother.

"I don't see why, for there'll be a good ride still before us."

"But with our mounts we needn't fear pursuit; the river might prove a hindrance, but it is clear and open beyond."

If anything could be self-evident it was that the three should lose no time in hunting for some Texas force which they could help in the struggle for independence. There was always danger from the Comanches, and now there seemed to be more of it than usual. Accordingly, at a word from the leader, all struck their animals into a swinging gallop, which carried them briskly towards the Guadalupe, a tortuous stream familiar to all, since they had crossed it more than once in the course of their wanderings over the prairies.

A little disquietude was caused about the middle of the afternoon by the darkening of the sky to the north and a perceptible increase in the chill of the air. What they feared was that a norther would come down from the mountains and make life a trial for both man and beast; but as the day wore to a close

The Three Arrows

without bringing any marked change, hope increased that they would be spared.

When darkness closed in, the Texans caught the gleam of the turbid water and heard its ripple over the stones and between the moderately high banks. A sweeping curve had taken them somewhat out of their course, but on the whole they had done well. Ezra announced that they would ford the stream, which was not deep, and make camp on the other bank, leaving the horses to crop the lush grass around them.

As usual, Ezra was slightly in the lead, and he had approached within a rod of the river when his mare stopped short with a snort of alarm. The Texans had dismissed their fear of Comanches, when this action, quickly imitated by the others, drew attention ahead.

To their astonishment, they saw themselves confronted by a horseman, who had checked his mustang on the brink of the stream and from his saddle was calmly contemplating them.

The first glance of our friends made them think for the moment he was Colonel Davy Crockett, for he was dressed similarly even

On the Guadalupe

to the coonskin cap, and his horse, like that of the Tennessean, was a large bay. A second look, however, showed he was a stranger and wore a full, dark beard.

"Howdy?" he called, with a half-military salute.

"Howdy?" replied Ezra; "this is unexpected, and we are glad to meet you."

"The same to you; I judge you're going to cross this stream?"

"That is our intention; I hope you have no objection," said Ezra with a laugh.

"I'm glad to have your company."

"You seem to be travelling in the opposite direction."

"I seen you coming and rode forward to meet you."

Ezra guided his horse into the stream, followed by his companions and the pack-horse. At no part did the water rise above the bodies of the mustangs, and the bottom was so level that they did not slip. The stranger sat motionless in his saddle, watching them, and when they arrived, shook hands with each in turn. Our friends observed that he was of massive frame and fully armed like themselves.

The Three Arrows

"Who are you?" he asked, when the salutation was over.

Ezra introduced himself and his companions and then asked:

"And who may you be?"

The man's white teeth showed through his thick beard and he answered easily:

"I was thinking that everybody in Texas knowed me."

"Here are three persons who do not."

"Have you ever heard of Deaf Smith?" he asked with an odd chuckle.

"I have," replied Ezra; "and he has the reputation of being one of the best scouts in the south-west."

"I don't know about that," was the modest disclaimer; "but my name happens to be Deaf Smith and I've done a little scouting in my time."

"Well, I can speak for my brother and son and say that there is no one in the world we could be more delighted to meet than you. How is it you happen to be alone?"

"I'm on my way to Santone to help the boys fight Santa Anna—one of the biggest devils ever let loose."

"Which is precisely what we have set out

On the Guadalupe

to do; shall we have the pleasure of your company on our little trip?"

"It rests with you; I'll be blamed glad."

"That, then, is settled; we ought to reach San Antonio by to-morrow night."

"No reason why we shouldn't, unless the infarnal Comanches object."

"That's to be expected at all times; we saw a dozen of them a few hours ago."

"So did I; they was working round to the north; shouldn't wonder if they obsarved you, but I don't know whether they will bother you; if I'm not mistook they had their greatest war chief with 'em, including his wiidcat of a son, which the same they call Ookoo."

"I suspected as much; we saw also a white man."

At this Deaf Smith gave utterance to a sulphurous exclamation and his black eyes flashed.

"I seen him too; he's Carl Beckwith, the greatest of villains—worse than Santa Anna, for the Mexican fights with his own blood, and that skunk fights agin his, for he's a native of Louisiana, the same State that give us Jim Bowie."

The Three Arrows

“That being the case, would it not be advisable for us to push ahead through the night?”

Deaf Smith chuckled.

“What! run away from a dozen Comanches and one white man? All the redskins except the chief and two or three are armed only with bows and arrows and lances. Deaf Smith hain't ever done a thing like that and he's too old to begin. If you want to turn tail I'll bid you good night and camp in the arroya, a stone's throw of this spot.”

His rough appeal struck fire in the hearts of his hearers. Ezra echoed the feelings of the others when he replied :

“We are with you to the end; show us the way to the arroya.”

“Your hoss, like mine, has done some purty tall travelling to-day, and if we've got to make a run for it, they'll be in better shape in the morning than now. Besides, a little sleep will do us all good, or I'm powerful mistook.”

Deaf Smith turned his mustang short round and led the way to the depression in the plain, which was the most suitable location for a camp, since the banks kept off the

On the Guadalupe

chilly wind and in case of attack the natural defence would give them every advantage over their enemies in the open.

The four dismounted, removed the accoutrements from the horses and turned them loose. Deaf Smith said his steed, like the others, was so well trained that he would not wander off unless stampeded by wild animals or Indians. In fact, Smith had depended many a time upon the alertness of his horse when he himself was so worn out that he tumbled over on the ground and dropped asleep.

“They’ll scent a redskin as quick as a bloodhound and give you warning.”

“None the less, it won’t do for all of us to sleep at the same time.”

“Not by a long shot, being as there’s no call for it. I had a good rest last night—enough for two or three days—and I’ll be glad to stand guard fur half the time between now and sun-up.”

“There is no difficulty about that, and now for something in the way of food.”

“That suits me from the ground up.”

CHAPTER XVII

IN CAMP

ALTHOUGH there was a nipping chilliness in the air, the dreaded norther did not come roaring across the prairie. The gulch-like depression called an arroya, which suggested the former bed of a stream that had dried up long before, had a varying width of from fifty to a hundred feet and made a sweeping curve both above and below where the three men and the boy made their camp for the night. A better protection against the cold wind which swept around and over them could not be asked, and Ezra Brinton thanked Deaf Smith for guiding them to so good a shelter.

It was growing dark when the bits were removed from the mouths of the mustangs so that they could freely crop the succulent grass which grew on every hand. The bridles and saddles were not taken off, for it was no idle fear that the party might find so instant need of flight that a delay in getting

In Camp

ready would prove fatal. The Brintons could not forget that roving band of Comanches which they had seen some hours before, and who, as a matter of course, were aware of the presence of the whites in the neighbourhood. The redskins might have pressed on in the direction last seen, so that they were miles away, or it might be the movement was a blind, and in the darkness, which is the favourite time with the treacherous prowlers, they would steal down upon the camp and attack so suddenly that only by flight or a desperate defence could our friends save themselves.

Be that as it may, little or nothing was to be feared for several hours to come. The four separated and soon gathered enough branches and twigs from the mesquite near at hand with which to start a small fire. The big pot, filled with water from the Guadalupe, and a handful of ground coffee, was set upon the blaze, and, nursed by those who possessed the art in perfection, the bubbling delicacy soon gave off its fragrant odour, and all drank from the single tin cup and ate the coarse brown bread and cold turkey. The coffee was sweetened with sugar, but innocent

The Three Arrows

of milk, the condensed fluid being unknown in those days.

Lucifer matches had come into so slight use that they had not yet displaced the flint and tinder on the frontier. The flame that started was so weak that it could not betray the men. The slight vapour which rose was invisible in the darkness, and the glow of the embers could not have been detected at a distance of a hundred yards. No dependence was placed upon it for warmth, for it might have been five times as large without giving out enough heat to benefit the little group.

When all had drunk their fill the moist grounds were left in the pot, which was set aside to serve again in an emergency, and the men produced their pipes. Deaf Smith instead of scattering the brands, gathered them in a heap and carefully covered the pile with the small quantity of ashes that had been collected.

“Why are you doing that?” asked Ezra.

“It’ll save the bother of starting a new fire in the morning.”

“A good idea,” commented Oliver, and the others agreed with him.

The ashes were distributed with such skill

In Camp

that only one or two crimson points showed among them and not the least heat was given out. The four persons looked like shadows grouped around the spot, a glow from one of the pipes being visible now and then, when the smoker made some movement with it. The well-trained mustangs did not wander far, for the abundant grass made it unnecessary. If not molested they were sure of being within easy reach when morning came.

The situation favoured conversation, and the three men talked, while Walter was content to listen. He recalled that in the story told by his father about the kidnapping of Ookoo when an infant, Deaf Smith played a prominent part, and he longed to ask the scout for the particulars, but good taste suggested that he leave such questionings to his parent, who, as if reading his thought, suddenly said :

‘ You know of the war chief Kurringk, Deaf?’

“ Is there a man, white or red or Greaser, in Texas who don't know of that imp?’”

“ And from what you said, you have heard of his son, Ookoo?’”

“ Yas; he's a chip of the old block; if he

The Three Arrows

isn't wiped out purty soon he'll beat the old man in squelching them as ain't of his blood.'

"You know he was trained by Father Rosoti and his sister in St. Louis until he was well grown. Then his father traced him to that city and brought him away. As soon as the youth got a taste of wild life he renounced Christianity and became a savage among savages."

"I have heard something like that."

"Have heard something like that!" repeated the astonished Ezra; "why, it was you who kidnapped him when he was an infant."

Deaf Smith did not reply until he had taken several puffs, when he removed the pipe from between his lips and asked in so low a voice that he would not have been heard had it been otherwise than profoundly quiet:

"Will you do me a favour?"

"Of course, anything in our power," replied Ezra.

"Don't ask me a question about that; don't mention that cub's name agin; I've got a reason which I can't tell you."

"We shall respect your wishes," was the assurance of the leader, but none the less he

In Camp

and his friends thought it was a strange request to make of them.

The conversation which followed mainly concerned the progress of the revolution in Texas. Deaf Smith admitted that the struggle would be a desperate one, but he professed not to have the slightest doubt of its final success. This faith, like that of all Texans, was based upon his contempt of the "Greasers" as fighters. It cannot be denied that there was foundation for such opinion, since it was proved times without number during those fiery days in the Lone Star State. Our neighbours from across the Rio Grande were held in less fear than the Comanches, Lipans and Apaches, but all were usually devoid of chivalry or the first claims of honour.

It was comparatively early in the evening when the four made the rounds of the camp to see that all was right. They took opposite directions and were thorough in their inspection. Every one of the five mustangs had finished his browsing and were lying down near one another, little more than a hundred feet to the north of the camp.

While the elder Brintons felt a pleasing

The Three Arrows

sense of security with so valuable an ally as Deaf Smith, they could not believe it safe to relax their vigilance in the slightest degree. Ezra walked several rods out on the prairie until the starlight failed to reveal him to the others, knelt down and pressed his ear to the ground. Like many in a similar position, he shut his eyes as if it were thus easier to concentrate his faculties into that of hearing.

All was as profound as the tomb. A man might have hidden his approach, but an animal would have betrayed himself while still a considerable distance away. With a sigh of relief, Brinton replaced his sombrero, rose to his feet and made his way back to camp. He found the three awaiting him, all having the same declaration to make—that of failure to detect the least sign of enemies in the neighbourhood.

“It don’t look as if we’ll be bothered by any of them to-night,” remarked Ezra.

“There ain’t one chance in a hundred,” replied Deaf Smith, “but there is that one chance, and we mustn’t forgit it. As I said a while ago, I’ll mount guard till midnight or a little after, and then I’ll call one of you which shall it be?”

In Camp

"Myself," replied Ezra; "don't assume too much, for I'll be ready for my turn."

"How about uncle and me?" asked Walter.

"It will be your turn to-morrow night, unless we reach San Antonio by that time."

Each of the three wrapped his thick blanket about him and lay down to the sound and refreshing slumber which awaits those who live as they should. They were close together, so that the immediate neighbours could touch hands without stirring their bodies. The rifle of each reposed, as may be said, in his arms, where it could be instantly seized and used should a sudden emergency call for it. Ten minutes after lying down the three were asleep.

You will remember the strange experience that came to Walter Brinton some nights before when he awoke from slumber and saw in the dim firelight Ookoo, the young Comanche, standing with bow in hand at the entrance to his sleeping room. The only explanation of his sudden awakening was the warning of that mysterious "sixth sense" of which we all have more or less knowledge. Something of the same nature came to him

The Three Arrows

on this eventful night, though in the latter case we can fix upon what at least is a partial explanation of the puzzle.

When Deaf Smith asked the elder Brinton to say no more about Ookoo, ... instant distrust entered the mind of the youth. This suspicion, if it may be called such, was so shadowy that he could not comprehend it.

"Why should I mistrust him?" he asked himself; "I have never seen him before, and I have heard enough of Deaf Smith to know that he is one of the bravest and most loyal Texans living, and his presence with us to-night is the best piece of luck we have had since leaving home. I am ashamed to speak of it to father or uncle. Better wait till we reach San Antonio."

Through his strong will-power the youth so soothed his misgivings that, as we have shown, he promptly glided off into dreamland after wrapping himself in his covering and lying down by the nearly extinguished camp-fire.

But, as in the former case, his full senses returned without any apparent cause, though it is easy to see that it was due to the feeling that had been with him through the evening

In Camp

conversation. It may seem strange that neither he nor his relatives, nor indeed the famous scout, had the means of telling the time of day or night, except through the few artificial aids within the reach of everyone. In the times of which we are speaking, watches were so much of a luxury that only the favoured few owned them. They were of the old-fashioned "bull's-eye" pattern, which when wound up and in ticking off the minutes suggested the noise of the common threshing machine. They were thick and big, fairly good timekeepers, and cost a tidy sum. The log cabin where the three had made their homes for several years possessed nothing in the nature of a watch or a clock.

On one of his trips to Austin, Ezra Brinton paid twenty dollars for a bull's-eye which he bought from a settler, who guaranteed that as a timepiece it had no superior in the wide world. The pioneer presented it to his son on his birthday anniversary, and the following week, while trying to make the thing run right, Walter dropped it on the floor and smashed it to flinders, which marked the exit of everything suggestive of a horologe from that household.

The Three Arrows

Thus the young man could only guess the time when he opened his eyes and recalled the situation. He judged that it was not yet midnight, though it could not be far from the turn. His father lay on his right and his uncle on the left. The heavy breathing of the two left no doubt of their somnolence. The ordinary sentinel finds it necessary to fight off sleep by activity. He paces to and fro, well aware of the danger of sitting down even for a few minutes, for, as we know, drowsiness is so insidious a foe that activity itself does not always hold it at a distance.

But in situations like the present, the man who stands guard often seats himself and has little trouble in retaining his senses. Should he find sleepiness stealing over him, he rouses up, and by some violent though brief exercise prods his wits to their usual alertness, always taking warning in time.

The irritating distrust had not only turned to Walter, but had become stronger than before. He gently laid the upper part of his blanket off his chest and raised his head for a few inches, listening and trying to pierce the gloom. The embers had long since died down, not a point of light showing,

In Camp

the vivid starlight enabled him to penetrate the darkness.

Deaf Smith was nowhere visible. This signified nothing, for he might be up or down the arroya, faithfully attending to his duties. Walter had no reason for investigating, and wisely decided to wait for something more definite. Barely five minutes thus passed when the form of the man appeared from up the arroya. His feet gave out no sound, his footsteps being as stealthy as if he were stealing into a Comanche camp. He paused for a few moments, listening, and then came forward in the same cautious manner as before.

As yet Walter felt not the slightest uneasiness regarding the disposition or intention of the scout. It was impossible to believe he meditated harm to the three whom he believed were sleeping. None the less, our young friend studied him like a cat watching a mouse.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE FIRST ARROW

WITH the same panther-like tread, Deaf Smith crossed the brief space and stooped at the side of the ashes of the campfire. The next instant Walter, stealthily watching, saw a tiny tongue of flame twist upward. The glare showed that the scout was fumbling with the embers, partly stirred into life by his disturbance of them. Rifle in his left hand, he picked up the glowing stick, held it in front of his face and blew upon it.

With his cheeks serving as a pair of bellows, the red spiral grew until its reflection revealed the bearded countenance, the bright eyes and the upper part of his body. Evidently he was a veteran at this business, for in a short time the flame was fully alive.

If Walter Brinton was puzzled by what he saw, he was more mystified by that which followed. Having fanned the ember into life, the scout started up the arroya,

The First Arrow

occasionally circling the torch about his head as he walked to prevent the blaze from dying out. He never once glanced in the direction of the three forms lying on the other side of the camp, for he was certain they were unconscious.

"I'll find out what he is driving at," was the thought of Walter, who flung his blanket aside, silently arose and started after Deaf Smith.

The course taken by the man was away from that part of the arroya containing the horses. He had gone past the curve in the depression when he turned and ran up the sloping bank. His form was thus brought in relief against the starlit sky, and stood out as if stamped in ink upon the spangled background. Had he looked behind him he probably would have discerned the figure cautiously following, but he felt no apprehension from that point and kept his gaze to the front.

Walter, rifle in hand, hurried up the bank of the arroya. By that time he was so convinced that something "crooked" was going on that he did not pass the crest, but crouched far enough below to peer over with less

The Three Arrows

danger of being seen by the scout should he glance in his direction.

The torch disclosed the figure, which otherwise would have been hardly visible in the stargleam. Deaf Smith had halted and now did an extraordinary thing. He swung the blazing ember in a circle, which began at his knees and passed over his head. When this had been done once, he paused for a few moments and repeated the movement twice. Then he did the same thing in the reverse direction, thus completing three revolutions from right to left and again from left to right.

"That's a signal to someone!" thought Walter, more puzzled than ever. "I can't understand it."

Deaf Smith next threw the torch to the ground and stamped the last semblance of life out of it. This left his bulky form dimly visible in the obscurity. Walter was still trying to figure the meaning of what he had witnessed when the vague outlines of a horse and man took shape, slightly farther out on the plain and to the right of the scout, who seemed to be expecting it, for he started to walk towards the man and animal. Th

ould he

which
sible in
ted and
e swung
egan at

When
or a few
t twice.
reverse
olutions
left to

thought
I can't

h to the
alance of
m dimly
was still
t he had
a horse-
t on the
ut, who
started to
al. The



" He swung the blazing ember in a circle "



The First Arrow

latter was advancing slowly, but in the starlight Walter could not gain a clear view of the rider, whom, however, he suspected to be an Indian warrior.

This singular approach continued until barely twenty yards separated the two. Then the mustang abruptly halted, evidently at the command of his rider. Deaf Smith kept on, but had taken only two or three steps, when the listening Walter caught the twang of a bowstring. With a gasping exclamation the white man threw up his arms, dropped his rifle, toppled over on his back and lay still. The Indian had launched an arrow with deadly accuracy and the career of the scout who had called himself Deaf Smith closed then and there.

The redskin who had discharged the missile wheeled his mustang on his hind feet and was off like a thunderbolt. The sound of the animal's hoofs came back with diminishing force for some seconds after horse and rider had passed from sight.

Within the following five minutes Walter Brinton had awakened his friends and told what had taken place. It was beyond their comprehension.

The Three Arrows

"There can be no denying that signalled to someone, most likely to a party of Comanches," said the father; "but, though being so, why should the Indian who came out of the darkness slay Deaf Smith?"

"Could not the wrong man have answered it?" asked Oliver.

"I don't see how it was possible, but that makes it look as if Deaf Smith deliberately tried to betray us."

"No other construction can be put on his actions," added the brother; "I never dreamed he was that kind of a man."

"And he wasn't!" exclaimed Walter, to whom a sudden light had come.

"What do you mean?" asked his father.

"You remember last summer when I rode with you to Harrisburg and you had a talk with General Sam Houston?"

"I do."

"While you were talking with him, a slim, smooth-faced, hawk-eyed man in a hunter's dress came up to me and asked my name. I told him and then asked who he was. With an odd grin, he said his right name was Algernon Washington and he was a twin brother of the Father of Our Country."

The First Arrow

Several bystanders heard his joke and joined in the laugh at my expense. I turned the jest on him by saying they were twins in one respect—neither would tell a lie. He chuckled as heartily as the others and by and by went off with two of his cronies. After he had gone, one of the party, who had overheard what was said, asked me if I knew who the man was that had his little fun with me. I replied that all I knew was what he told me. The speaker then said the fellow was Deaf Smith, one of the most famous scouts in Texas.”

“Well?” asked the father of Walter.

“That Deaf Smith was not the one who introduced himself to us last night by the same name. I can’t understand why I failed to recall the incident, but it never came to my mind until within the last minute, though I insist I never felt full confidence in him from the first.”

“It looks to me,” said Oliver, “as if the man who has just been shot is the one we saw yesterday with the Comanche war party.”

“That fellow wore a broad sombrero, and this one a coonskin cap like Colonel Crockett,” objected the brother.

The Three Arrows

"What was to prevent his making change before he joined us?"

"Nothing, and that is what he did. He was a renegade who laid his plans to bet us into the hands of Chief Kurringk."

"Granting that, what was the need of such elaboration and pains? He might have slain all three of us when we were asleep, he could have led the redskins straight to our camp or attacked us on the open prairie and we should have had little chance of escaping them."

"They would have run the risk of losing some of their warriors in the fight, and Comanche, brave as he may be, never commits suicide or incurs more risk than he can avoid."

It having been established that the stranger who had worked his way into the confidence of the Brintons had done so with the intent of undoing them and that he was not the Deaf Smith known to history, the mystery remained as to why, after having signalled the Comanches, one of them had come forward as if in answer to the call, and shot the other as he was walking towards the warrior.

The First Arrow

Not one of our friends could formulate any theory that solved this question, but amid their speculations and vain guesses they did not close their eyes to the grave peril that shut them in. The Comanches knew where the three whites had camped, and the latter believed they were in imminent danger of being attacked in the arroya. Still, they hoped that when their enemies found they were on guard they would pass them by.

Ezra pushed up the depression a little beyond where the mustangs were resting; his brother posted himself on the other side, while Walter stealthily crept up the bank nearer the camp than either of them. The night had become so chilly that each kept his blanket wrapped about him ready to throw it aside whenever necessary.

Let it be said of the brothers that both maintained faithful watch throughout the remainder of the night and neither saw nor heard the slightest thing to cause alarm. Not quite as much is to be recorded of the youngest of the trio. He assumed a position near the top of the bank, where he spread his blanket on the ground and lay down upon it, his head elevated just enough to allow him to

The Three Arrows

peer over on the level plain. The place was not the one where he crouched and witnessed the slaying of the counterfeit Deaf Smith for he dreaded to look out at the vague shadowy form upon the ground which told of the just punishment that had overtaken the one who planned to betray those of his own race to their death.

Something like an hour was passed in the prone posture when Walter was startled by what seemed a shadow in the darkness that was moving towards him. He raised the hammer of his rifle, and resting the barrel on the upper edge of the bank held the weapon ready to fire on the instant.

As he looked, the dim form faded from sight. Thinking this might be due to the fixed scrutiny, he glanced in other directions and then centred his vision on the spot as before. He still failed to see anything unusual and concluded that if it were really a man he had withdrawn for the time.

"He will soon be back; I'll hail him and give him a chance, but will stand no nonsense."

With this resolution firing the soul of the youth, he proceeded straightway to fall

The First Arrow

asleep. No Comanche could have asked a better opportunity to steal upon and slay the remiss sentinel than was offered throughout the next few hours, but no assassin came, and for all intents and purposes, Walter might as well have remained where he first lay down, for he was as safe in one place as another. When he opened his eyes with the mental question, "Where am I?" it was answered by a laugh, and he looked around to see his father and uncle grinning at him.

"The joke is on me," said Walter, springing shamefacedly to his feet; "that's the first time I was so careless and it shall be the last."

"You had a hard task," replied his father, "and neither of us blames you; no ill results followed, for which we are thankful. You will be able to keep your eyes open through the coming night should it be necessary."

"And have neither of you seen or heard anything to alarm us?"

"No more than if the Comanches were a hundred miles away."

Standing on the edge of the prairie they scanned the horizon in all directions, but the

The Three Arrows

solitude was like that at "creation's morn. No man, mustang, bird or beast was in sight. To the southward, somewhat left of a direct course to San Antonio, their destination, a mass of rocks covered more than an acre and was distant upward of a mile. The fear that this spot might be utilised by their enemies led Ezra to scrutinise it closely through his glass; but he discovered nothing to cause misgiving.

The three descended the slight descent to where they had gone into camp. Enough fragments of fuel remained to furnish a small blaze, over which they boiled a pot of coffee and ate the last mouthful of food brought from home.

"I hope our next meal will be eaten in San Antonio or in the camp of some of the boys," said the elder man as they made ready to start.

The one thing in the minds of all had not yet been referred to—that was the stark, inanimate form which lay a short distance out on the plain.

"We have no means of giving him burial," said the father, "and shall have to leave him for the coyotes. His was a sad

The First Arrow

fate, but a deserved one. There is little doubt that he was the renegade whom we saw with the war party, and he was plotting to deliver us to the redskins with whom he consorted."

"He has left his pony with ours," reminded Oliver, "and was well armed."

"We may as well take what he left, for it is likely to prove useful before we get out of the woods."

While preparing their own mustangs for mounting, Ezra inspected the animal of the traitor. Saddle and bridle were similar to their own, but the man had carried two blankets with him. One was used to wrap about himself during the night, but the second was rolled behind the saddle.

"I wonder what is inside of it," remarked Ezra; "it's size shows it encloses something."

Unfastening the bundle from where it was tied to the saddle, Ezra unrolled it and all looked in wonderment at what was revealed.

A broad-brimmed sombrero, despite its stiffness, had been forcibly twisted up so as to permit it to be covered by the blanket. No doubt remained that the one whom they saw with the Comanche war party the day before and he who lay stark and stiff on the open

The Three Arrows

plain had been one and the same person, and that person was not Deaf Smith, the famous scout of the South-west.

Ezia flung the hat and blanket to the ground, for neither he nor his friends wished ever to see them again. The animal was a fine one, and it would have been an idle sentiment that prevented them from taking him and the rifle.

The mustangs had been grazing for some time before the bits were returned to their mouths and they were now ready for a hard day's work. The five were left in a group by themselves, while the men and boy climbed the bank of the arroya again, and with a feeling of sadness and depression walked to the lifeless form a moderate distance from the camp. In the minds of each remained the puzzle as to why the man had been shot by one of those whom he was trying to serve.

The victim of his own treachery lay where he had been stricken. In the last struggle he had turned on one side, his position suggesting that of a man who had lain down to quiet slumber. His cap had fallen off, his rifle lay a foot distant from his half-closed palm and one arm was doubled under his head, like a

The First Arrow

sleeper at rest. But that upon which all eyes rested after a glance at the bearded countenance was an arrow which had entered the left breast and passing through the body left the pointed flint showing beyond the shoulder, while the barbed shaft stuck out from the other side. The victim had been perfectly spitted.

The three spectators stood for several minutes silently looking down upon the sad picture, when a sudden impulse caused Walter to step a little nearer, stoop over and examine the shaft of the arrow. He seized the end, bent his head still closer, and then, gazing up at his wondering companions, said in a whisper, "Look!"

As he spoke he touched the shaft with his forefinger. All saw just in front of where the feather had been glued on, the tiny letter "v."

"I made that," added the youth in the same awed whisper.

"And Ookoo launched the arrow that killed him!" exclaimed the father.

CHAPTER XIX

HEADING FOR SAN ANTONIO

THIS startling discovery solved the problem which until that moment had been beyond solution.

Ookoo and his sire, Chieftain Kurringk, were with the Comanche war party that had been seen in the distance on the previous afternoon, and with them also was the white renegade, more wicked and treacherous than the redskins with whom he consorted. Three Texans, each fully armed, were too formidable to be attacked in the open, and their enemies conspired as to the best way of overcoming them. The plan finally fixed upon was that the warriors should make a feint of leaving the neighbourhood, but circle around and come upon them at night from the opposite direction. Well knowing the skill and watchfulness of the Texans in those days, the Comanches were resolute to secure a decisive advantage before attacking.

The plan was simple : the white man went

Heading for San Antonio

forward under the guise of a friend and we have shown he was welcomed. A trifling incident brought about the unexpected end of the miscreant, who carrying out his part, took upon himself the duty of acting as sentinel during the first half of the night. When assured the three were asleep he crept out of the arroya and signalled the fact to Kurringk and his band not far away. The moment had come for the redskins to steal into the valley and slay the Texans before they could raise a hand to defend themselves.

The remarkable manner in which Ookoo now intruded into the business did not become known until long afterwards. By subtle *imnuendo* he raised a doubt in the mind of his father as to the loyalty of the white man. Despite the signal that all was ready, the youth induced the grim chief to send him forward to guard against all possibility of deception. Ookoo rode forth in the night and with his favourite weapon, which gave no betraying sound, sent the wretch to his last account. Then he returned to his parent with the statement that the renegade had planned to betray the Comanches. The Texans were awake, alert and eager for the

The Three Arrows

attack, which they were sure of repelling with serious loss to the assailants. When Ookoo had assured himself that no mistake had been made he took upon himself the duty of punishing the traitor. The word which he carried back to his parent brought a compliment from him, and the party withdrew to form other schemes for the destruction of the white men.

Now, why did the young Comanche slay the villain who was really trying to befriend his tribe and to help them in slaying the Texans? Fortunately, I am able to answer this question.

Two powerful motives actuated Ookoo. The first was his detestation of a white man who had forsworn his own race and people. It may be said that the dusky youth was not blameless in this regard, but much as his course must be deplored he had never raised his hand against an American Indian, nor could he be induced to do so unless in fair combat or because the offender merited punishment. He shrewdly hid his hatred from his father, but when the chance to strike came he delivered the blow effectively without drawing any suspicion to himself.

Heading for San Antonio

His other motive was friendship for Walter Brinton. Despite his burning denunciation by the parent, the young Comanche admired and was grateful to them who had treated him as a brother. He would have been base beyond thinking had he felt otherwise.

This unquestionable fact brings up another question, which I confess is beyond my power to answer. That is: Did Ookoo's good will towards Walter Brinton include his relatives? Would the dusky youth have done what he did had Walter been eliminated from the situation? Although inclined to include the father and exclude the uncle from the active friendship of the Comanche, I am not clear on the point.

There was only one way of extracting the deadly arrow from the body of the victim: that was by cutting off the flint head and withdrawing the shaft. The Sioux and some other tribes display an infernal ingenuity in fashioning their arrows with a gutter from the head to the feathered tip, so that when a man or animal is pierced the blood drips along this small canal and is prevented from clotting and closing the wound. Thus the

The Three Arrows

victim, if not killed, slowly bleeds to death. There was no device of the kind on the missile which Ookoo had used against the traitor, for when the young Comanche launched one of his shafts such aid was not needed.

Ezra picked up the rifle, but did not disturb the powder horn and bullet pouch. Nothing remained to be done, and the three turned their backs upon the body and walked to their animals in the arroya. As they approached the mustangs, the one which had belonged to the dead man raised his head, stared at them a moment and then, with a snort, galloped off. A little way and he thundered up the bank and across the prairie, the stirrups, mane and tail flying as if the animal were in the extremity of terror. Some strange instinct had warned him that things had gone awry.

"It is just as well," remarked Ezra; "we don't need him."

A horseman finds it as awkward to handle two rifles when riding as a boy does to manage a couple of big water-melons. Ezra Brinton therefore added the extra gun to the burden borne by their pack-horse. Each of the three

Heading for San Antonio

held his weapon across the saddle in front, and it must be remembered that he had an old-fashioned, single-barrelled pistol and a good hunting knife in addition, while of bullets and powder there was no lack.

Emerging from the arroya the three drew up side by side, while the eldest brought his glass into play. A long ride was still before them, and at best they could not expect to reach San Antonio before nightfall. No stream of any size had to be crossed and the ground was mostly level, though the formidable mass of rocks, one of the curiosities of the landscape, reared their heads miles away and at a slight distance to the left of the course they expected to follow as the most direct one to their destination.

"I think you will find something interesting to the westward," remarked Walter, and his parent turned the instrument in that direction.

"Rather," was the comment, with the glass still to his eyes.

Across the level stretch of plain, broken here and there by the mesquite growth, a thin column of smoke climbed upward until as in the case of their burning cabin it was dis-

The Three Arrows

solved in the clear air. It was in plain view of the two who used only their unaided eyes, but Ezra detected a peculiarity which escaped their notice. The ascending column did not consist of a simple vertical line as would have been natural in the circumstances, but showed a distinct waving to the right and left to the very crest, which was a twist of itself. Nature could not do anything like that, and it must have been the work of man, and being such was clearly meant as a signal.

“When you have seen all that is worth while to the westward,” said Oliver, “take a look to the eastward.”

In response, Ezra swung the tube to the right, where, to his astonishment, he observed a duplicate of the former column of vapour. It was slightly more distinct, but showed the same oscillating form and beyond a doubt was a second signal, probably meant as an answer to the former.

“This looks serious,” said Ezra, who passed the instrument to his brother for his survey, followed by that of Walter.

It was serious indeed. Two parties of Comanches were signalling to each other, and no doubt the messages back and forth

Heading for San Antonio

had to do with the Texans who were heading for San Antonio. Furthermore, the great war leader, Kurringk, was directing operations, and he and his hot-blooded son were with one band or the other.

If our friends should decide to go forward they must pass between two fires, as may be said, since a detour to the right or left would be too lengthy and take too much time. It would seem that while the red men were so far off enough time was at command of the Texans to get beyond them and their destination, but it looked as if their enemies were manœuvring to bring about that very attempt.

Walter's Saladin was fleet enough to hold no Comanche mustang in fear. With a half chance he would leave their best steeds behind, but the same could not be said of the horses bestrode by the brothers. They were fine travellers, but there were many their equal in speed.

"Ookoo proved a friend last night," said Ezra while the three held their steeds motionless; "and I did him injustice—perhaps, but I am as firmly convinced as ever that no further friendship can be looked for from

The Three Arrows

him. He is with one or the other of the war parties, each of which is strong enough to wipe us off the earth, and even if he is well disposed, he is powerless to help us."

"I believe, father, you are right. If we were free to do as he wishes, he would not harm any one of us; he had the best chance he could ask last night, but nothing of that kind can happen again. His father may have as much love for him as you for me, but he will not permit him to defeat his plans."

"I suggest that we ride towards the rocks; if when we reach them we see nothing of the Indians, let us dash ahead; if they appear in our front we can use the refuge."

"That sounds well," said the brother. "We can stand off a big war party, for we have our firearms, plenty of ammunition, and the rocks will be as good as a fort. Have you ever visited them, Oliver?"

"Some weeks ago I rode near enough to form a good idea of them. They are what you say. Whether we see the Comanches or not, it is wise for us to halt there until the night and then make a new start under cover of darkness."

"We'll try it; come on."

CHAPTER XX

AT BAY

SHREWD and wise as our friends had proved themselves to be in more than one instance, they now made a blunder that is hardly explicable, since the result was to play directly into the hands of their enemies.

In the first place they were misled by their failure to see a solitary Comanche while studying the sign of smoke. They believed the red men to be much farther off than was the fact, an error to which the fugitives awoke when, before they had ridden half the distance between them and the pile of boulders and rocks, the matchless horsemen of the plains developed in alarming numbers, both to the right and to the left. It was seen that they were converging toward each other, so that if the fugitives kept on they would ride into a *cul de sac*, from which there was no withdrawal.

From the arroya where they had encamped to the mass of craggy stone was some five

The Three Arrows

miles, though, as is always the case, the distance seemed less. The Texans, while heading directly for the refuge, kept it nearly in a line that they could make a dash to it whenever it became necessary. They hoped they would not be forced to do this but as the minutes passed and they pushed on, it became more evident that such might be their final resort.

As nearly as could be judged, the two Comanche bands were of about the same strength, numbering half a score or more. Through the glass, Ezra saw they were armed with lances, bows and arrows, a few carrying flintlock rifles like those of the Texans. Twenty-odd men to three would be considered overwhelming, but it is on record that in more than one instance such odds had not saved the redskins from defeat.

The four horses were kept at an easy gallop, the pack animals readily maintaining the pace of the others without seeming discomfort. As the white men drew near the rocks it became certain that there was no possibility of breaking through the cordon which was rapidly assuming form. If the fugitives should wheel about and travel north-

At Bay

ward it would become a straightaway race, with all the chances against them. The day was still young with more than enough time in which to bring the trial of speed to a conclusion. Had it been late in the afternoon, the attempt would have been made without delay.

"We must make our stand among those rocks," said Ezra in his firm voice, when they were within a fourth of a mile of the refuge. The two bands of redskins had substantially come together a half-mile beyond the mass of rocks, and the minutes were beyond value.

The intervals were such that our friends were able to reach the shelter before they could be headed off, and every nerve was strained in the effort. The four mustangs were forced to their utmost speed, Ezra maintaining his place slightly in advance, with his brother at his heels and Walter close to the latter. The pack-horse, with the perverse instinct of his kind, dropped farther back and then abruptly sheered off and made straight for the Comanches in the distance. The minutes were too precious to allow any attention to be paid him or to permit a diversion in the line of flight of the fugitives. The

The Three Arrows

one thing was to "burn up" the ground beneath the hoofs of their animals, and our friends did it.

They were near their destination when it flashed upon Ezra that he had committed a frightful blunder in thus making for the rocks, since it was the very thing the redskins had planned. The device was so simple that the Comanches seemingly had no warrant to expect the party would enter the trap. It was inexplicable, as I have said, that a man with so much experience should thus be deceived, but what is more inexplicable is that neither of his companions perceived the mistake until too late to remedy it. They plunged ahead as if sure of safety when the refuge should be reached.

Having blundered so egregiously, the leader partly atoned for it by quick sagacity. Instead of forcing his mustang into the first opening that presented itself, he jerked the rein and turned him to one side. This compelled the man to ride directly towards their enemies, who were coming on at headlong speed. They brandished their spears and uttered exultant shouts, certain that their victims could not elude them.

At Bay

Halfway along the side, Ezra saw an inviting opening. He reined up his horse with a suddenness that would have hurled the rider over his head had he not braced himself. In a twinkling he was out of the saddle.

"Follow me!" he called, plunging among the boulders and rocks, rifle in hand.

Nothing in the nature of a path or trail was to be seen, but by dodging, darting to the right and then to the left they made good progress for a few rods, when Walter from the rear shouted:

"Look out, father! There are Indians ahead of you!"

A sinewy warrior had leaped up from behind a huge boulder and confronted the fugitives. He had no bow or gun, but brandished a long lance as his only weapon. Grasping this near the middle, he drew his hand back, intending to drive the head through the man who was bearing down upon him, but the Texan had seen his peril in the same instant that Walter shouted his warning. There was no excuse for a miss, and the gun was raised, pointed and fired while the Comanche was in the act of hurling his spear. A "barbaric yawp" clove the still-

The Three Arrows

ness, the warrior leaped several feet in the air and in a convulsive spasm launched the weapon at his assailant, but its course was grotesque, and the formidable missile was so deflected that it whizzed over the heads of all three, and with a ringing impact against the boulders behind Walter, fell to the ground.

The American Indian, as a rule, recoils from a fight in the open and will run from an encounter in which he does not possess a decisive advantage. The startling fall of the leader threw his two companions into a panic, and instead of making a sturdy stand, they scurried away, intent only upon finding safety from the terrible weapons, one of which had just proved its fearful effectiveness in the hands of an expert.

The collision had made it clear to the three Texans that it would not do to dash through the refuge, since they would be compelled to pass out on the plain and place themselves at the mercy of their enemies, who were converging upon the natural fort. The fugitives must make their stand where they were and stake all upon their ability to hold off their assailants until help arrived, or the darkness

At Bay

of night should bring the smallest of chances to steal away.

The promise of either recourse was faint indeed. The Texans were too few in number in those days to cover, except in the most attenuated manner, the thousands upon thousands of square miles, and there was no reason to think that even a small party of their brave friends would be drawn to the spot by the extremity of the fugitives. It was equally idle to believe that the vigilant Comanches, after herding their prey into a trap, would give them the least opportunity to get out of it.

But all this was in the future; the men at bay must secure vantage ground within the succeeding few minutes or all was lost. That piece of good fortune fell to Oliver Brinton.

“To the right, Ezra, quick!”

They had leaped over the prostrate form, and the distance passed was less than two rods. What appeared to be the mouth of a cavern gaped before them. It might be the redskins had planned for this very thing and the Texans would be plunging into disaster; but there were no seconds to give to investigation and the leader did not hesitate. Into

The Three Arrows

the opening he dived, falling on his hands and knees, with his companions right behind him.

“ Hold yourself against a rush,” he called, “ while I reload my gun ; here’s where we’ve got to make our stand.”

If our friends had blundered in thus running into a trap, their enemies now did that which was equally at fault. With the arrival of the mounted warriors, and their scattering among the rocks and boulders, they must have numbered more than a score. If they had joined in a rush upon the whites in the cavern, they could have destroyed them “ root and branch ” in a few minutes. The reason why they did not do so was that they knew the price they would have to pay. Several of the foremost were certain to go down before the rifles of the defenders. The work would be easy for those at the rear, but bad for those in front. The latter position was held in such dread that not even Chief Kurringk was willing to occupy it, though, as has been intimated, he was unquestionably a brave man.

Ezra Brinton obeyed the law of the frontier, which is that the man in peril, as

At Bay

soon as he has fired his gun, must reload it as quickly as possible. Placing himself far enough from the mouth of the cavern to be out of range, he pushed a bullet down the barrel, carefully poured powder into the pan, made sure that the weapon was ready for instant use and then coolly remarked :

“ Now I’m prepared for business. Seen anything?”

“ I caught sight of a head behind that boulder to the left,” replied Oliver.

“ Why didn’t you shoot it?” demanded his brother.

“ It was gone before I had a chance.”

“ Whenever you see a head, hit it; that’s the Irishman’s rule and this is the place to follow it.”

That the Comanches were on every hand was beyond question, for, though not one was seen, they were heard signalling to one another. They held the cavern in too much fear to run unnecessary risks.

When a few minutes had passed, and our friends felt that there was no danger of immediate attack, they made themselves familiar with the refuge which had presented itself so providentially. Without it, they

The Three Arrows

must have been overwhelmed while struggling among the masses of stone.

The cavern may be described as simply an excavation in a perpendicular wall of limestone, probably gouged out by some convulsion of Nature in the remote past. The mouth was one or two feet above the flinty earth, and the roof was high enough to permit an ordinary man to stand erect. The width of the retreat was twice as great as its height, and from the front to the rear was perhaps a rod. It was rock on every hand, with no means of entrance or egress, except by the opening in front. The floor was jagged, and the occupants did not know whether they were within a few feet of or miles from water.

The most that can be said for the fugitives is that, by hurrying into this refuge, they were safe for a few hours; but they had not a particle of food and were without any means of getting a drop of water. If the besiegers were afraid to make an open attack, all they need do was to wait for thirst and hunger to do their work. Meanwhile, in order to stand off the redskins, it was necessary to impress upon them the risk of count-

At Bay

ing upon any lack of vigilance on the part of the defenders.

Ezra Brinton lay flat on his face and peered over the rim of the flinty floor, with the muzzle of his rifle thrust forth. His companions, gazing out, saw only jumbled boulders, massive rocks and yawning fissures.

"Keep back," he said to his friends; "some of them have guns and will use them."

Hardly was the warning uttered when the dull report of a rifle was heard, accompanied by the whine of a bullet, as it entered the cave, and its dull impact against the wall behind them.

CHAPTER XXI

THE FLAG OF TRUCE

"I SAW where that shot came from!" whispered Walter.

"Where?" asked his father, the hammer of his rifle clicking twice as it was brought to a full cock.

"Over yonder, a little to the left; don't you see the smoke?"

The lad directed attention to a broad, flat rock, slightly above the level of the cave. Quick scrutiny showed a faint wisp of vapour which dissolved while the three were studying it. The Indian had raised his head far enough to sight his gun and then dropped from view again. Ezra believed he would try to learn the result of his shot. Such proved to be the fact, for, while the eyes of the Toms were centred upon the rock, the point of a feather showed above, followed by the crown of a head elevated just enough to disclose the parting of the coarse black hair and a pair of serpent-like eyes peer-

The Flag of Truce

ing over the top of the stone. The Comanche must have known the risk he ran, and would not remain in sight more than a few seconds.

The whiplike crack of Ezra Brinton's rifle rang out, and the hideous head vanished as if stricken by a lightning bolt. It may be said that such was the effect of the pioneer's shot.

"That will make them more careful," commented the marksman, who slid backward a few paces and began reloading his weapon.

The result was what was expected. A full hour passed, during which, so far as sight and hearing were concerned, the section was as if our friends were the only living persons within miles of the spot. With three guns and the defenders vigilant, the Comanches knew the risk of exposing themselves to the deadly aim of the whites. Yet the besiegers were not the ones to remain idle. The task of watching the cavern was too monotonous for their liking. While they might resort to it when they saw no other means of destroying the fugitives, they were not content to wait until all other methods proved impracticable.

The Three Arrows

There always remained the certainty of a daring rush, in which the conflict would be fierce and hand to hand; but it has been shown why the redskins rejected a course whose toll was sure to be heavy.

It was a little past noon when a surprising thing occurred—one that was wholly unexpected by the defenders, though it was easily met.

From behind the same broad flat rock, where a Comanche had paid the penalty of his rashness, the point of a lance was seen to project upward like a slight sapling. When a half-dozen feet were in sight it was noticed that, instead of the gaudy pennon of which the red men are fond, it displayed a plain white rag, which was gently waved from side to side, as if to attract the attention of the Texans.

“By gracious!” exclaimed the astonished Ezra; “it’s a flag of truce! I didn’t suspect the Comanches knew the meaning of such a thing.”

“What will you do?” asked his brother.

“Show our respect for civilised warfare. Fortunately, we have always found a use for white handkerchiefs, though it can’t be said

of a
uld be
been
course

prising
unex-
easily

rock,
lty of
s seen
pling.
it was
non of
ayed a
waved
ention

nished
uspect
such a

rother.
arfare.
se for
e said



"By gracious! it's a flag of truce!"



The Flag of Truce

that any one of them is as spotless as it should be. Here goes."

With which the speaker whipped his piece of homespun linen from the pocket of his coat and, partly rising to his feet, fluttered it from the mouth of the cavern. Immediately a tall, sinewy Comanche stepped from behind the rock, and picking his way around the boulders in his path, came to a partially open space, and was still advancing when Ezra called sharply :

"Stop!"

The Indian instantly halted. He had lowered the spear with its emblem, and it was noticed that he had no other weapon in sight—not even a hunting knife at his girdle. Inasmuch as none of the three whites could speak a sentence of Comanche, the leader was wondering how he would communicate with the messenger, when, to his amazement, the redskin, standing less than fifty feet away, called in English :

"Will you surrender?"

Collecting his senses, Ezra advanced a little from the mouth of the cave, where he was in plain sight, and answered :

"Why should we surrender to you?"

The Three Arrows

"Can't help yourself; bime-by make you."

"Don't wait! We are ready for you."

"You have no water; you have nothing to eat; you cannot get away."

"Where is your chief, Kurringk?"

The Comanche pointed to his left with his spear.

"He send me; he say, if you surrender, he will not hurt you; if not surrender, he will kill you all. Chief Kurringk has spoken."

"Suppose we *do* surrender, what then?"

"He will let you go; he will not hurt you."

"Then why the dickens should we surrender at all? What will he gain by it if he keeps his promise? What is the difference between giving up to him and being allowed to leave this place and staying and shooting a few more of you?"

Brinton was so angered by the childishness of the proposal that it was hard to repress his impatience. His reflection was the more galling when he recalled that his own stupidity in being caught in this trap warranted the insult.

The messenger was not gifted in the way

The Flag of Truce

of argument and must have felt his inability to present his side of the case.

“Does the paleface say he will not surrender?”

“He does; he knows that the promise of Chief Kurringk is a lie, and he hasn't the slightest intention of keeping his pledge. All he seeks is to get us in his power without losing any more of his warriors, but he can never do that and——”

Up to this moment the Comanche had stood as motionless as a statue. He now displayed a curious contortion of his body with such lightning-like quickness that all Ezra could divine was that he was in the act of hurling his spear. There was no time for the white man, thus taken unawares, to use his gun; he simply ducked and shouted a warning to his companions. They were so bewildered for the instant that they stared without stirring a muscle. Had the spear been aimed at either of them, the target must have been impaled; but Ezra was the one chosen for a victim, and his instant dodging saved him by a hair's breadth. He whisked his rifle to the front, determined to show no mercy to the miscreant.

The Three Arrows

But the Texan saw him not. He had vanished as if he had never been, disappearing so instantaneously that neither Walter nor his uncle saw whither he went. The surrounding masses of stone gave plenty of hiding places, but how the imp managed to avail himself of them with such marvellous quickness was beyond comprehension.

The three took care to shelter themselves against any further attacks of that nature, and abated in no degree their vigilance.

"There's something about that business which I don't understand," remarked Ezra, when all were recovered from the fluster into which they had been thrown.

"What do you mean by that?" asked his brother.

"What under heaven induced that red-skin to think we should come out and give up our arms for his simple asking? I admit we played the fool in coming among these rocks just as Chief Kurringk schemed for us to do, but why should he think we should do that?"

"He wishes to get us in his power and put us to torture in payment for what we have already done against him," suggested Oliver.

The Flag of Truce

“That presupposes our idiocy; what do you think?” asked the parent, turning to his son, whose face betrayed his perplexity. He shook his head to signify the puzzle was beyond him.

And yet the lad had a theory which did not occur to either of the others, and which he dared not propound through fear of the ridicule it would bring upon his head.

It will be recalled that Walter had never shared his father's distrust of Ookoo. He believed the young Comanche had formed a liking not only for himself, but, in a lesser degree, for his parent. It was this regard which had caused the son to intercede with the chieftain and gain the pledge that, if the three would submit, he would spare their lives.

While this was the belief of our young friend, he saw the grave objections to it. If the chief's proposal was honest, why did he not make Ookoo bearer of it instead of the warrior who, though he spoke English, was a stranger to the whites? The proposal from the dusky youth, in the circumstances, would have had tenfold more weight than when borne by anyone else. More than likely, it

The Three Arrows

would have won over the suspicious pioneer. Moreover, the messenger ought to have made known the nature of the terms when they were asked of him.

With no wish to mystify that which was afterwards made clear, let me say that Walter Brinton was at sea in his theory, which had not the slightest basis in fact.

"I am satisfied that one result of this misunderstanding will be a let-up in the attacks of the Comanches for the remainder of the day," said Ezra.

"Is it safe to count on that?" asked his brother.

"I do not intend to. They know we cannot be fooled into giving ourselves up like three sheep, and thus far they haven't harmed a hair of our heads. The crisis must come to-night."

"What chance have we, father?"

"Very slight," was the grave response; "I can see no way of our stealing out of this place. They will be on the watch for all such attempts and will meet us as soon as we step across the threshold."

"Suppose we could reach the open plain?" asked Oliver.

The Flag of Truce

“ We should be in a worse plight than if we stayed here, for we should be afoot and without the least protection against the whole horde of redskins.”

In the face of his confidence in the friendship of Ookoo, Walter Brinton could not drive a disturbing fact from his mind. Why, if the dusky youth wished to act the part of a friend, had he not done so before the several shots were fired by the Texan in self-defence? Walter had a sentimental hope that Ookoo would manage in some way to open communication with him, but thus far there was no sign of anything of the kind.

The hours dragged slowly by. When the position of the sun showed the afternoon to be half gone, every one of the three would have appreciated a sip of water and a few mouthfuls of food, but the need caused no special discomfort. They had gone without such nourishment for a much longer period when on their hunting trips. No one said anything of their physical wants, for the situation was too solemn for that.

“ I am satisfied,” said Ezra, “ that we have nothing to fear until night.”

“ And what is likely to occur then?”

The Three Arrows

"It is hard to guess. Some of them may try to sneak up close enough to pick one or two of us off. If that occurs, no hope will be left for the survivor or survivors, as the case may be. One moment."

He stole cautiously to the front and scrutinised everything in sight. Not the least evidence of the presence of enemies could be detected anywhere.

"Our sleep was broken last night," remarked the leader; "and we are not likely to have a very quiet time from now on. We ought to prepare, so far as we can, for this trial. Suppose I lie down for an hour, then one of you can take his turn, and after that the other. By that time night will be near and we shall be in full command of our senses."

The wise suggestion was acted upon. Ezra stretched out on the sloping flinty floor and almost immediately sank into unconsciousness. Oliver and Walter placed themselves where they could survey the outside, and occasionally spoke in low tones. Like most men, the leader had the faculty of awaking at any time previously fixed in his mind, and he did not need to be aroused by

The Flag of Truce

the others. Then, as agreed upon, Oliver took his turn. Walter, however, had not yet acquired the ability of awaking when he chose, though the art would probably come to him later in life. So, when he sank into slumber, his relatives left him alone, and as a consequence he rested for a double portion of his allotment. When, at last, he opened his eyes, the afternoon was far gone.

CHAPTER XXII

THE SECOND ARROW

THE cavern in which the Texans had taken refuge faced the west. Enough of the rays of the declining sun found their way about and around the rocky obstructions to flood the gloomy interior with light and make everything as plain as noonday.

For hours the situation had remained unchanged. The three occupants had gained enough sleep to prepare them for the crisis that could not be delayed long after night closed in. When the men and youth peeped cautiously forth, they saw no sign of life and yet they knew that a score of able Comanches were in hiding near at hand, with their serpent-like gaze fixed upon the refuge where the little party was awaiting the fate that seemed inevitable. Should the rising of the morrow's sun find the fugitives still there they would be doomed.

Few words were spoken. The brothers

The Second Arrow

sat well to the rear of the opening, depressed and almost hopeless. It was idle to expect the coming of any friends to raise the siege and scatter the redskins. What could anyone say to lift the pressure that was crushing them to the very earth?

Walter, standing erect as ever, moved toward the entrance, rifle in hand, ready to fire at any human target that presented itself.

"Be careful, son," warned his father; "we are under their scrutiny."

"I shall be ready to dodge back."

He held his gun grasped with both hands, with the hammer lifted, prepared to raise and discharge it on an instant's notice. Standing thus, he scanned the rough, craggy boulders and rocks which were on every hand. The Comanches had received too many proofs of the watchfulness of the defenders to expose themselves to their deadly marksmanship.

Walter had stood in this statue-like attitude for several minutes when something flitted in front of his eyes like the shadow of a bird's wing, and in the same second the thud against the rocks at the rear told him the cause of his start. It was an Indian arrow, which grazed his forehead so closely

The Three Arrows

that he felt the soft brush of the feather as it sped past and fell to the flinty floor with the head shattered. He leaped back and ducked, with the exclamation :

“That couldn't have passed any near without hitting me.”

“You will heed what I say next time,” said his father impatiently; “it is not your fault that you were not killed.”

While the parent was speaking, he crept hastily forward and lay down, with his gun pushed over the edge of the rock in front of him. He knew not whither the shaft had come from, but hoped the one who had launched it, in his eagerness to learn the result, would betray himself enough of himself to give the Texan his opportunity, but the eagle-like vision which roamed over the rocky space descried nothing.

During this brief interval, Walter stepped farther to the rear and picked up the arrow that had fallen to the floor with the triangular flint broken by its forceful impact, though the shaft still dangled from the shaft. Led by a curious impulse, he examined the missile. He was turning it over in his hand when he gasped.

“What is it?” asked his father, backing

The Second Arrow

away from his advanced position and staring at him.

"Look at that!" replied Walter in a weak voice.

He had leaned his rifle against the side of the cavern and, holding the arrow in one hand, pointed with the finger of the other at the small letter "v" scratched in the wood at the side of the shaft in front of the feather.

It was the second arrow of the three with which Ookoo had won the shooting contest over Ezra Brinton some days before. The parent compressed his lips, and his eyes flashed.

"It tells its own story."

"Yes; I never could have believed it," replied the youth, so overcome that he was forced to sit down and lean against the wall behind him.

"What is your opinion now of Comanche honour and gratitude?"

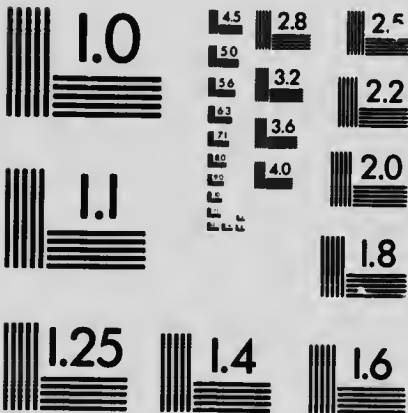
Unspeakably shocked, Walter did not answer; he felt there was nothing to say.

Some minutes previously, Ookoo had assumed a crouching posture behind the rock which sheltered the perfidious warrior when he displayed the flag of truce to Ezra Brin-



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



APPLIED IMAGE Inc

1653 East Main Street
Rochester, New York 14609 USA
(716) 482 - 0300 - Phone
(716) 288 - 5989 - Fax

The Three Arrows

ton. Two paces to the rear of the youth, a screened by the stone, stood a tall, sine redskin, with his black eyes centred up the marksman. He was watching his every action intently. This individual was Ch Kurringk, father of the unsurpassable archer. He carried his rifle and had proposed to fire the shot that was to slay the white lad, who was within easy reach of his weapon; but Ookoo begged that the privilege should be his, and the merciless parent consented with grim pleasure. He was immeasurably pleased at this proof that his brave son had not only renounced Christianity, but had become a Comanche of Comanches.

Ookoo selected his arrow with care. After drawing it from his primitive quiver, he scanned it closely and made sure it was one of the three upon which Walter had scratched the tiny "v" at the close of the memorable test of skill between the dusky youth and the Texan rifleman.

Never did the young Indian take greater pains with a shot. He fitted the notched end against the string of sinew and slowly drew the arrow to a head. Even in making this preparation, he displayed his marvellous

The Second Arrow

woodcraft, for, though Walter was sweeping the ground in front with his searching vision and scrutinised the rocks that had already figured in the incidents of the day, he saw naught of the other youth, who, none the less, had as clear a view of him as he did of the paper target on the trunk of the oak.

After drawing the bowstring to a head, Ookoo kept it thus for a second or two, and then, instead of releasing the sinew, held it firmly between thumb and fingers and allowed it to relax. Then he made the slightest of changes in his poise. The watchful chief interpreted it as proof that his scion meant there should be no miss.

Again the right hand glided slowly alongside the back of the ear, drawing the string with it. When the head of the shaft rested on the closed left hand, and the string was as taut as steel wire, it was held thus another moment, while one eye was closed and its piercing mate glanced along the arrow and at the unsuspecting figure beyond. Then followed the faint twang and the missile darted across the intervening space, grazed the forehead of Walter Brinton and broke against the wall behind him.

The Three Arrows

While, as may be said, this was going on, the archer swung his bow to the left, so as to give him a clear view, and the chief stepped beside him and peered over his shoulder to witness the death of the white youth. The two Comanches saw him recoil unharmed. Knowing the danger that threatened him almost in the same breath, the chief crouched behind the rock in time to elude the scrutiny of Ezra Brinton, who made no effort to avenge the attempt upon the life of his son.

Then occurred a strange conversation between Chief Kurringk and Ookoo.

The veteran of a hundred fights said, if more grieved than angered :

“ You missed ! ”

You and I have never seen an American Indian faint dead away, but Ookoo crouched within a hair of it when he saw the blue arrow he had made. He placed one hand against the face of the rock, as if to support himself. As soon as he was able to command speech he shook his head and murmured :

“ It was not Ookoo, but the Ghost Spirit. ”

Chief Kurringk, like all his race,

The Second Arrow

superstitious to the last degree. With no belief in the God of the white man, he cherished an abiding faith in the Ruler of his people. Still he failed to grasp the singular declaration of his son, who thereupon proceeded to make things clear :

“ When Ookoo pointed the arrow against the pale face, there came a whisper in his ear. At first he did not know what it meant, and then, when he heard the words, he knew it was the Great Spirit that was speaking : ‘ You would slay your brother, for he is a brother, though of different blood ; he spared you when you were at his mercy ; he fed you and his father bound up your wound, and now you seek his life.’

“ When he had said this, I lowered my bow, thinking it a dream that the Evil Spirit had cast over me. Never did Ookoo aim with more care ; the great war chief saw him ; but, just as Ookoo loosed the string, the whisper sounded again in his ears : ‘ You shall not harm your pale-face brother, for I shall turn your arrow aside.’ And the Great Spirit did as he told Ookoo he would do.”

Extraordinary as was this declaration, its impression was vastly deepened by the

The Three Arrows

manner of the Comanche youth. The chief was profoundly stirred. Much as he despised the teachings of Christianity, he had been filled with wonder by the miraculous knowledge which his son had gained under the tutelage of Father Rosoti and his sister. He could speak several tongues, he could read the printed page—always a source of amazement to the red man—and he had seen awe-inspiring truths of the heavens and of the peoples in unknown parts of the world. Was it not likely, therefore, that the youth who had proved his faith in the Great Spirit of his race was given a closer communion with that mysterious Being than was vouchsafed to other red men?

The iron chieftain stood silent, with his eyes upon his son. Then, in a voice that was scarcely above a whisper, he said :

“ Let Ookoo come with me.”

Mindful of the danger from the Texas soldiers, the two picked their way farther from the cañon to an open space, where they were beyond the reach of any rifle shot. Chief Kurring emitted a sharp whistle, repeated three times, which had the effect of bringing all his warriors to the spot. When his keen gaze

The Second Arrow

noted that none were absent, he commanded that three should return to their stations and prevent the flight of the pale faces during the council which he had called.

Finally he made a remarkable address to the band of hostiles, who were ready to follow him to death in any enterprise which he might lead. What he said was to tell them—what most of them already knew—that his son had spent many years among the pale faces in the city far to the north; that he possessed a hundred times the knowledge that was given to any of his race. He had one friend among those people, a youth of his own age, who had saved the life of Ookoo; but Ookoo, to please his father, the chief, and to prove he was at heart a Comanche, had drawn his bow to the head and launched an arrow that would have pierced the brain of the pale face—for Ookoo never missed his aim; but the Great Spirit called to him that he was doing an evil thing and, to save him from succeeding, turned the arrow aside and his friend was not harmed.

“Therefore,” added Chief Kurringk in his most impressive manner, “the pale-face youth shall be spared; none of my warriors

The Three Arrows

shall harm him, but what I say does not
to the two men with him. They have s
my brave Comanches, and no mercy shall
shown them. Chief Kurringk has spoke

Such being the decision which no
dared gainsay, it was meet that the pleas
task of making it known to Walter Brin
should be given to Ookoo. His parent
signified; and, bowing low, the youth tur
and left the astonished group, taking his
with him.

rs

s not refer
have slain
y shall be
s spoken."
h no one
ne pleasant
er Brinton
parent so
uth turned
ng his bow

CHAPTER XXIII

BEFORE THE GREAT WAR CHIEF

EZRA BRINTON was still lying on his face, with the muzzle of his rifle thrust out in front, watching like a hawk for some Comanche to show enough of himself to tempt a shot from the Texan, who was mad clean through.

"I should like to wing that imp of an Ookoo," he muttered; "he would never launch his third arrow."

And while the words were still in the pioneer's mouth, the chance came.

From behind the broad flat rock, whose contour had grown familiar, the young Comanche stepped forth without his bow, which was left leaning against the stone to await his return.

"Well, I'm blessed!" exclaimed the astounded Texan. "Was the like ever known?"

"What are you referring to?" asked his brother, while Walter listened with breathless interest.

The Three Arrows

“There’s that young devil coming toward with a grin. Let him grin all he wants for it’s the last one that will light his pretty visage.”

Ezra sighted his piece before his companions understood what he was doing. He did not fire, because he could not get a shot in a minute before he craved the opportunity, but, when it came, he recoiled from a cold-blooded act. Instead he shouted:

“Keep off! Don’t come any nearer. I’ll shoot!”

Instead of obeying, Ookoo walked straight forward, with the same smile brightening his countenance. He did not hasten or diminish his pace, nor did he speak until within twenty paces of the defenders in the cave. He calmly looked up and called in his own voice:

“Ookoo would speak with his brother.”

“You spoke to him a little while ago,” roared the parent. “I suppose you want to take another shot.”

“Ookoo has no bow,” replied the defender youth; “shoot him if my father wishes.”

“You deserve it, but I don’t fight in the style of the Comanches. If you have a

Before the Great War Chief

thing to say, out with it; but don't forget my gun is pointed at you and my finger is on the trigger, and I'm aching to hustle you to kingdom come."

Walter stepped forward beside his father. He, too, had left his weapon behind, and it was leaning against the flinty wall of the cavern. He had heard the exchange of words, and was led by curiosity to show himself, especially as his parent was prepared to anticipate any treacherous move on the part of the Comanche.

"Hello, Ookoo!" he called, with his usual half-military salute.

The Indian had observed him and returned the salutation. In the same friendly voice as when an inmate of the cabin to the north, he asked:

"Ookoo hopes his brother is well."

Instead of denouncing the youth, Walter asked in a grievous voice:

"Why did you try to kill me, Ookoo?"

Looking up in his face, the strange youth emitted his odd chuckle, with which the other had become familiar, and quietly said:

"If Ookoo had aimed at his brother, would he have missed him?"

The Three Arrows

The truth flashed upon all three electric shock. Ookoo had purposely hitting Walter with his arrow, though he could not have done so by a narrow margin. He had played the trick in order to deceive his father, the chieftain.

"By gracious!" exclaimed Ezra; "what he says is true. He fired from a point much farther away than when he beat me, and he couldn't have missed unless he did so on purpose." Then he addressed the youth who was still looking up at him with his expectant expression.

"We ought to have known it, but not one of us suspected you didn't do your best to blot out Walter."

"Ookoo would die before he would do anything else but that."

And it was impossible to doubt the sincerity of his words.

"You gave us a bad half-hour, but it is all past; will you come up to us?"

"Ookoo wishes his brother to go with him. It is becoming dark, there is no time to waste, but my brother will not be long."

"Have you any objection, father?"

Before the Great War Chief

"None in the world. I have revised my opinion of that particular Comanche. Go where you wish with him, and do whatever you please, so long as it pleases him."

"All the same I should like to know what it all means," remarked Walter.

"You will soon learn. We shall feel no uneasiness about you, and I have a slight hope for Oliver and me—though it is slight indeed."

"Well, good-bye, for a little while, I trust."

Walter leaped down the brief height from the mouth of the cavern to the rocky ground below. The Comanche waited till he stopped in front of him, when he extended his hand.

"Ookoo is glad to meet his brother."

"And I'm mighty glad to meet you."

"Ookoo has talked with his father, the war chief Kurringk; he has told him what his pale-faced brother did for him. The chief says Ookoo must bring you before him, and he will tell you what he will do."

"Suppose the chief refuses?" asked the alarmed Walter, recoiling a step.

"He will not refuse; will not my brother believe Ookoo?"

The Three Arrows

"Lead on."

With the young Comanche a few paces in front, the two youths set out on their way to the spot where the terrible chieftain and his warriors awaited them. The distance was not far, and half of it had not been passed when, to the astonishment of our young friend, a third Indian seemed to rise from the ground and block their path. One by one another and still another came forward to add to the gathering gloom. They seemed not to observe the captive, as he may be called, but talked to Ookoo, their words, though audible to the listener, being, of course, beyond his comprehension.

The curious interview lasted only a few minutes, when the three shadowy figures glided away and were lost to sight. The dusky youth resumed his walk with the wanderer Walter at his heels. They were not long beyond sight of those in the cavern, and were only a little farther when they came upon the picture which remained with Walter Burton to his dying day. The Comanches, numbering more than a score, were seated in an irregular group, most of them upon boulders, a few on the ground, while one

Before the Great War Chief

whom the new arrival recognised at once as Chief Kurringk, rose to his feet. All the others did the same—silent, respectful and attentive.

Ookoo halted on the outer rim of the circle, looked up at his father, and then stepped aside, thus introducing his companion to the chief, whose fiery gaze was fixed upon him. It was a trying situation for Walter, but he met it with admirable coolness. He bowed low in salutation and then stood erect, with his eyes on the grim countenance. Since neither understood the tongue of the other, the chief addressed his son, who acted as interpreter. Let us translate literally what was said.

“You have brought the pale face before me; did he come willingly?”

“He did; otherwise I could not have brought him.”

“What made him willing to come?”

“He knew the Great Spirit was his friend and turned aside the arrow which I had aimed at his heart. He knew that the great Chief Kurringk loves the Great Spirit and will do nothing to offend him.”

“What will my son do with his captive?”

The Three Arrows

"That which the great chief, my no father, wishes him to do. He will guide outside of these rocks and start him on way to meet his friends."

"It is well," and with these words leader strode forward a few paces extended his hand to Walter, who clasped in response. As he did so, he could not thinking how often that same hand had raised against the hated Caucasian, and probably never until now had it met in friendship one of foreign blood.

The faces in that irregular circle remained as stolid and expressionless as if no war understood what it all meant. They looked at the two persons in the foreground heard the words which passed between chieftain and his son. One only of number showed anything approaching emotion. He was Ookoo, who, knowing everything, looked alternately at the face of parent and of his friend. The handsome features were illuminated by a winsome smile and he faithfully interpreted the sentence of the chieftain and himself, so that Walter's understanding kept pace with the conversation.

Before the Great War Chief

While the chief held the hand of the visitor, he said :

“ You are the prisoner of Ookoo. He will take you away and do as he likes with you, but,” and at this point the grim face glowed with ferocity, “ *it is only for this once*. When we meet again, no word from Ookoo will stay the bullet or knife of Kurringk, who, for himself, asks no mercy from the pale face.”

As he uttered the last word, he dropped the palm of Walter, took a single step backward and nodded to Ookoo to interpret his words, which the youth did in spirit and letter.

Now the reader has noted two facts : The young Comanche did not hesitate to lie when he saw anything could be gained by doing so. If lying is a vice, it becomes a virtue at times, not only with the American race, but with others. The “ strategy ” of the military leader consists largely in deceiving his opponent ; and the employment of spies, which has always been accepted as legitimate, is the most flagrant lying that one can conceive. While Ookoo would regard his given word as binding in the face of death, he felt no compunction in weaving falsehood at other

The Three Arrows

times. His insistence of the turning of the arrow by the Great Spirit was unmistakable an invention that it would deceive no one except a superstitious Indian, and him it fooled completely.

Throughout these negotiations not the slightest reference had been made to the Texans that had been left in the cave with no apparent possibility of escape. Everything centred around the youth, and the decision of the chief affected him alone. As soon as Walter saw that his own safety was secure, his distress regarding his father and uncle became torture. What was to become of them? Was there no way open for their escape? Could not Chief Kurringk be induced to include them in the mercy he had shown the youngest?

No sooner had the chief dropped the hand of Walter than the latter turned to Ookoo.

“Tell him I give him thanks for what he has done; say that I accept his words; he is my friend from now until the rising of to-morrow’s sun, then we become enemies, and, though it would be hard for me to raise my hand against the great leader, yet I shall not expect him to stay his own. But,” added

Before the Great War Chief

the youth in a voice tremulous with emotion, "pray him that he will include those whom I have left behind in his mercy. I ask it for only this night. In a few hours the sun will smile upon the earth and we shall all forget we have ever been friends. The mighty chief has done that which will please the Great Spirit, but he will please him far more if he will do that which I pray him to do."

The face of Ookoo was grave as he listened. Hesitating for only a moment, he addressed the chieftain, with Walter listening, as if he would force the meaning of each word into his seething brain. The chief replied with a few sentences, and Ookoo spoke to his friend:

"The words of my brother were told the chief; he says he will think of them; his heart has been stirred by what my brother said of the Great Spirit; the chief wishes to please him, but there are clouds before his eyes. They will soon clear away. Ookoo knows his father, the war chief, and the Great Spirit has whispered in his ear that it shall be as my brother wishes."

Walter's heart thrilled with hope, and he murmured his gratitude to the youth who had

The Three Arrows

proved so loyal a friend. Truth, however, compels me to say that the translation of the Comanche submitted was untrue from beginning to end. No archer understands better how to "draw a long bow" in this sense than one. The substance of what I did say was that Walter accepted the conditions of his release from death, and with the passing of the darkness would vanish the friendship between them. Speaking for himself, Ookoo asked that he be allowed two or three hours to see that his brother was safe and started southward. And as for the two men left in the cavern, the youth said nothing at all, the reported reply of the chief being only a part of the huge fabrication.

WS

n, however,
ation which
ntrue from
understood
" in more
of what he
d the con-
and with
vanish all
g for him-
ved two or
was safely
e two men
nothing at
being only

CHAPTER XXIV

COMANCHE CUNNING

WHEN Chief Kurringk stepped back a few paces, all his warriors still standing, Walter Brinton accepted it as a sign that the ceremonies were ended. The youth again bowed gravely, made a military salute and turned towards Ookoo, to await his will.

The young Comanche also saluted his parent and, without speech, signified by a nod that his brother was to follow him. At this moment the chief took his seat on the boulder from which he had risen and the others resumed their lolling postures.

Ookoo was still without his bow, though he carried his quiver of arrows, and it will be remembered that Walter had left his rifle behind, upon emerging from the cavern. For some minutes neither spoke a word. They had gone but a little way when the white youth noted that the course was different from the former one. While this seemed a trifling matter, it caused a faint misgiving on

The Three Arrows

his part, though he was unable to explain the cause.

The nature of the ground compelled the young Comanche to keep the lead, but the space between the two was always small. They skirted the rocks and boulders, the route being rougher than the previous one, and ere long Walter lost knowledge of the direction of their footsteps. Suddenly passing around a smaller mass of rock, Ookoo stopped as if involuntarily and made an abrupt change of course. Walter, not knowing the cause. Stretched on the ground was the body of a warrior, long since stiffened in death, a victim to the unerring aim of Brinton at the opening of the fight. Ookoo scarcely glanced at it, but halted just beyond sight of the grisly reminder of the hatred between the two races toward another and raised his hand as a warning to Walter to pause.

The leader now emitted a low whistle which was answered by the coming forward of the three warriors with whom he had exchanged words some time before. Again there was a brief consultation, when the three fell away and the youths were left alone.

Walter could form no theory to explain

Comanche Cunning

this incident nor the previous one, but it added to his misgiving.

"Ookoo," he said curtly, "I have proved that I trust you; I cannot doubt your friendship after what has occurred within the past hour, but I am distressed because of my father and uncle. Much as I love life, I cannot accept safety if it is to be denied them."

"Ookoo reads the mind of his brother."

"I shall not leave this place unless my friends go with me."

To his amazement the youth emitted that soft musical chuckle, to which Walter had become accustomed, and which always indicated that his friend was pleased with something.

"What do you mean by that?" demanded the half-angered youth.

"Let my brother follow Ookoo, if he will still trust him."

And without waiting for a reply, the young Comanche resumed his winding course among the boulders. Night had fully come, and the stars were shining from an unclouded sky. Peering in all directions, Walter could not recall having seen anything before, but

The Three Arrows

when he came close to the cavern he identified it at the first glance. Ookoo halted and looked at him.

“Why have you brought me here?” he asked Walter.

“Ookoo will wait while his brother speaks to those whom he loves.”

As much mystified as ever, our young friend hurried over the intervening distance, wondering what it all meant. Everything was as silent as the tomb. He remembered he had heard no firing while absent from the cavern, and his heart fluttered with the thought that all was still well with his relatives. He made haste to the front and peered into the interior, which was so shrouded in obscurity that he could see nothing.

“Hallo, father!” he called, in a guttural voice; “is anything the matter with your uncle?”

When two or three seconds had passed he slightly raised his voice:

“It is Walter; won't you answer me?”

Terrified because of the unbroken stillness, the youth leaped up the slight ascent and entered the cavern. No imagination could picture his shuddering fear as he moved

Comanche Cunning

around in the gloom, his hands outspread and expecting every moment to strike one of his feet against the body of either of the loved ones. He ran his hands over the craggy walls and passed back and forth several times from end to end. He was still groping when his fingers came in contact with a rifle which had been leaned against one of the flinty sides. He knew it was his own weapon and seized it.

The cavern, except for himself, was empty.

"What can it mean?" he whispered, uncertain whether to rejoice or yield to despair. Then he stepped briskly to the entrance and dropped down the slight height. In his absence Ookoo had come nearer and was now close at hand.

"There is no one there," said Walter excitedly.

Once more the faint chuckle was heard, and the young Comanche said :

"*Ookoo knew it!*"

"Why the mischief didn't you tell me? Where are they?"

"A long way off."

"Explain, Ookoo, for it is beyond me."

The Three Arrows

"One of these days my brother
know."

Inasmuch as the dusky friend declined
make the situation clear, it falls upon
to do so.

You have learned that Ookoo in inter-
ing for his "brother" did not refer
remotest manner to the two men left
in the cavern during that critical inter-
Probably you have suspected the reason.
Such intervention would not only
failed, but would have imperilled the
Walter Brinton, inasmuch as doubt
have been thrown upon that mythical
ference of the Great Spirit with the aid
the unrivalled archer. None the less, C
knew that nothing could tempt the young
save himself or, rather, consent to be
without everything being done for his
tives. This certainty on the part of
Comanche caused him to do something
subtlety of which could not have
surpassed.

While acting as a guide to Walter on
way to the chief, Ookoo summoned the
warriors who were on watch and imparted
bit of fiction, which was a gem in its

Comanche Cunning

and withal sounded so reasonable that it was implicitly believed. He told the trio he was taking his prisoner before the chief in order to arrange the terms of the surrender of the whole party who had held the Comanches at bay for many hours. The guard, in accordance with the chieftain's orders, were to withdraw from their station and leave the two men in the cavern to themselves until the return of Ookoo with further commands from the terrific leader. Not one of the party dared disregard so imperative an order, and it was obeyed in spirit and letter. Thus the cavern was left unwatched during the absence of Walter, such absence being of less than an hour's duration.

And it was here that the young Comanche brought into play a cunning which his own parent could not have surpassed. He delayed the return of himself and Walter as long as was prudent, and then set out ostensibly to conduct him "through the lines"; but, in reality, to do exactly what we have shown he did. While still some way from the cavern, he signalled to the three warriors who had been sent to see that the white men did not slip away during the truce, as it may be

The Three Arrows

called. Ookoo learned from them that the supposed commands of the chief had followed, and like humble servants awaited his further orders. The son they would soon be told what they were to do or, rather, refrain from doing.

Ookoo was skating upon exceedingly thin ice. He had given the two men a narrow opportunity, which they must be prepared to accept or it would be too late. They figured that they would do so, and they did. Although he assured Walter that his father had left the cavern, he was far from certain that such was the fact until the two visited the retreat and discovered their absence. This extraordinary youth must have been thrilled when he learned of the success of his manœuvre.

Ezra Brinton was quick to comprehend the delicate situation and the meaning of the extraordinary incidents that were going on.

"Walter is in luck," he said to his brother; "whatever may happen to us, you are safe. Ookoo would not guide him to the chief until he knew what the result would be."

Comanche Cunning

"But what about *us*?" asked Oliver.

"If there is anything certain it is that Kurringk's friendly mood does not include you and me. God helps them that helps themselves, and everything now depends upon us."

"What can we do?"

"A Comanche does not respect a flag of truce, as we learned a little while ago, and yet they have been forced to do so in the present instance."

"I don't get your meaning, Ezra."

"Matters will stand still until the fate of Walter is decided—that is to say, officially decided—for he is in no danger."

"Is it possible that the Comanches have withdrawn their guard over us, while the business is being formally arranged?"

"It is doubtful, but it's our only chance."

"What is your plan?"

"That we leave without another minute's delay."

They hesitated, for it looked at first as if they were about to desert the lad, when in truth it was the other way. Nothing which they might do could harm him, for his innocence of all complicity would be apparent

The Three Arrows

to the chief, whose disposition towards the youth would remain unchanged. Whatever the result the safety of Walter would not be affected one way or the other.

"You are right," said Oliver, after they had talked a few minutes.

The stake was too momentous for the friends to neglect any precaution. At that time, as will be remembered, night had been shut in, and their view of the outside world was as complete as during the day. First, Frank cautiously peered out, shielding himself from detection by such Comanches as were lurking in the vicinity. It was not to be expected that any of them would expose himself to a shot after the proof they had received of the vigilance of the defenders. The fact was therefore, that the Texan was unable to detect the first sign of an Indian presence, nothing.

"I didn't expect to see one," remarked the elder, "and was not disappointed. The single test remains."

He took off his hat and set it over the muzzle of his rifle. Then, lying on his side with his head close to the opening, he slowly thrust the barrel of his weapon forward

Comanche Cunning

the crown showed to anyone on the outside. This manœuvre, one of the oldest on the frontier, was executed artistically, for its success depended upon the utmost care. Had the sombrero been lifted too high or allowed to wobble or appear in any respect as if it were not resting on the crown of its owner, a cunning redskin would have detected the truth, but Ezra made none of these mistakes.

The keenest-eyed watcher observing the hat would have been certain it was supported on the head of a white man who was peering out in search of the truth. If such were the fact, an ideal target would be offered, one that would draw a shot from the besiegers, provided they were not waiting for the white men to do what they did a little later.

Ezra did not overdo the matter. The sombrero remained in sight no more than two or three minutes and was then withdrawn.

"What do you make of it?" asked his brother. "Do you think it was seen?"

"I can't tell; I hope the guard has been withdrawn, but whether they have or not it is our only hope."

The Three Arrows

“And there’s no saying how long chance—if chance there is—will remain.”

“It is do or die; I will go first and you will keep close to me.”

“I’m ready.”

“God be with us!”

rs

long the
main."

t and you

CHAPTER XXV

CAPTURING THE CAPTORS

CROUCHING low, as if hoping thus to screen his body, the Texan stole to the front of the cavern and dropped softly to the more level ground. His companion was directly behind him, and the two stood fully exposed to attack by the Comanches.

Neither so much as whispered. There was no call for any word. The elder was the leader where really there was need of none. Their hearts beat fast, for the following minute or two would decide whether they were to die or be given a last chance of saving themselves. They held their breath as Ezra, still s...ing and stepping noiselessly, began picking his way among the boulders and masses of stone, each with that shivering dread which comes over one when he expects a stunning blow upon his head.

Had the course been unobstructed they would have broken into a headlong dash, but

The Three Arrows

that was impossible and the extremest was necessary. Ezra kept his wits. The direction followed was at right angles to that of Walter and Ookoo, for he dared not take the chance of running into the band of Kingringk. So far as he could, he held to the southern course towards San Antonio, with the intervening country easy to traverse.

The two glided like phantoms among the rocks and around the obstructions, which delayed them exasperatingly. Unexpectedly they debouched upon the edge of the open prairie and, halting, spoke for the first time after leaving the cavern.

Ezra lifted his hat and looked reverently up at the stars, which were beginning to show. His brother joined in the murmur of thanks to the One who had led them thus from what seemed the presence of inevitable death.

“Was there ever anything like it?” asked the elder. “It comes as near a miracle as anything can come in this world.”

“We are not yet out of the woods,” reminded Oliver.

“No; but we have a good start. Do you understand the meaning of all this?”

Capturing the Captors

"Only that it is the doing of that young Comanche."

"Yes; he managed to get the guards away—how, I can't imagine—and left the path open for us."

"We shall have to revise our opinion of that particular Comanche, Ezra."

"I did so long ago—st!"

The sound of a horse's hoofs caused them to glance to the left and shrink back as if to shield themselves from the sight of everyone. Through the faint starlight they saw the outlines of a number of horses cropping the grass and moving aimlessly about. They were the mustangs of the Comanches, which were left to themselves while their owners were otherwise engaged. There must have been more animals, but they were too far off to be distinguishable in the gloom.

"I wonder if our horses are among them?" said Ezra, guardedly.

"More than likely, for the redskins are fond of horseflesh."

"Wouldn't it be fine if we could recover them?"

"Impossible, and we should be idiots if we made the attempt."

The Three Arrows

"You are right, brother. We are
enough to be thankful for without rejecting
what Providence gives us."

The minutes were too precious to be
wasted in words or inaction. The
stretch of plain lay before them and a great
many miles remained to be travelled. There
was no saying how soon the Comanches
would discover the flight of the white men
whom they counted upon as their certain
victims. It might be within a half-hour,
or even less, and with their numbers
mounted on their fleet steeds it would be
easy to run down the fugitives, provided the
pursuers knew the right course. The
pursuers would not be visible before morning,
which time our friends would be far away
if they made good use of the hours at their
command.

"They will know the most likely route
and we must not follow it," said Ezra,
instead of heading south veered to the west-
ward, aiming to circle round and find his
back to the shorter course. This led them
away from the shadowy mustangs brown
to the eastward, which were soon lost
sight in the darkness.

Capturing the Captors

The night was clear and cool. The fugitives were cramped from their long confinement in the cavern, and the exercise was welcome. They strode off with long steps, expanded their lungs, and enjoyed the tramp to the full. They had been highly favoured by the weather, and the promise continued encouraging. It would have been bad had they been caught in a norther, but there was ground to believe they would be spared that suffering.

Since there was no lack of space the brothers walked side by side, glancing to the right and left, in front and rear, and listening for sounds that might mean much or nothing. While they could think of no cause for special fear, none the less it might exist, and it was folly to take chances.

"I am wondering how long it will be before the Comanches learn of our flight," said the elder. "No harm can come to Walter, for the most bone-headed Indian will understand that he had no hand in it."

"I think Ookoo will have a hard time in squaring matters with his father, because the son surely arranged this——"

'The Three Arrows

Both came to an abrupt stop in the instant, for through the still air sounded hoofs of a galloping horse. It was from rear, and the two turned their heads peered into the gloom, but now heard sound. Sometimes what may be called eddy in the atmosphere will carry a noise a long distance, but only for a seconds, when stillness succeeds, to followed perhaps by a more distinct so than before. The Texans were aware of and were not deceived.

"They can't be far off," said Ezra a brief listening; "it is impossible that are pursuing us, for they have nothing guide them, and we are off the course t think we should take."

"There's nothing impossible with a manche at such a time as this—there again!"

The hoof-beats, clearer than before, s to indistinctness and then broke forth v increasing force. Then they became c tinuous, rising and falling regularly.

"I hear but one horse," remarked surprised Oliver, while the two stood mot less, listening.

Capturing the Captors

"There are no more, unless they are following at a distance."

"Can it be Walter?"

"Impossible; he had no way of gaining a mount. So long as there is but the one I'm not disposed to run or dodge; let's wait for him."

The rhythm of the hoof-beats grew plainer with every minute, and it soon became certain that the horseman was approaching in as direct a line as if holding to the invisible trail. No other sound fell upon the listeners' ears and they felt nothing akin to fear as they awaited the stranger, with their guns ready for use. By and by the dim outlines of a mustang loomed to view in the obscurity, and, dropping to a walk, he emitted a snort and came hesitatingly towards them.

Ezra uttered an exclamation of amazement.

"There's no one on him!"

Such was the fact. The animal was without saddle or bridle, proving that he belonged to the Comanches, with long mane and sweeping tail, and evidently was one of their best steeds.

The Three Arrows

He must have been with the group when the Texans saw feeding on the edge of the plain next to the rocks where the couple stood at bay for hours. Why he galloped of his own will after the fugitives cannot be conjectured. All quadrupeds, like birds, are subject to inexplicable whims, which lead them to do things that have neither reason nor logic as their cause. Probably this particular animal had yielded to an impulse to indulge in a gallop, and it was simply a coincidence that it should have led him to the waiting Texans.

“Since he has taken so much pains to show us we ought to show our appreciation of his compliment. Why couldn't he give us a lift?”

As Ezra spoke he noted that the mustang had come to a dead stop, with head thrown up, and he sniffed as if not satisfied with the appearance of the two men in the starlight. The Texan, speaking soothingly, waved towards him with hand outstretched as if to caress him. The pony whirled and trotted away for several rods. Then he faced round and assumed his former pose.

“You don't know how to make friends

Capturing the Captors

with the brute creation," said Oliver; "watch me do the trick."

"I'm waiting."

The younger whistled, chirped, and used the most persuasive words he could think of as he moved more slowly than his brother towards the animal. The latter threw up his head still higher when the man had come within a few paces and dashed off more rapidly than before.

"He has enough of you," remarked Ezra; "this time I'll win him."

It looked as if the mustang really preferred the elder, for though he still showed uneasiness, and made several breaks, he permitted the man to come so near that the outstretched hand gently touched the nose, which he patted, still keeping up his endearing words. Finally, the hand was slipped still higher on the forehead and grasped the forelock, which was luxuriant and hung well below the eyes.

The startled animal threw back his head so violently that the Texan was jerked forward several paces, but he kept his hold, repeated his winning expressions, and, finally, the horse stood still.

"Jump on his back!" called the elder.

The Three Arrows

"What will *you* do?" asked Oliver moving forward.

"The same; we'll make him carry double."

Both, as we know, were fine horsemen and the plan was carried out. Oliver patted the shoulder, gripped the mane, and with a single vault landed astride the mustang, with Ezra only a few seconds behind him.

The animal was never so astounded in all his life. The landing of three hundred pounds of bone and muscle upon his spine must, to put it mildly, have been a shock. It was double the burden he was accustomed to carry, and he failed to understand its meaning, especially as the riders belonged to a race different from that with which he was familiar.

Now had this particular mustang known enough to resort to bucking he would have pitched both intruders off in the twinkling of an eye, for it must be remembered that the animal had neither saddle nor bridle to help them maintain their seats. Instead of that, he gave a snort of alarm and dashed off at a headlong gallop.

"If he will only keep this up he could

Capturing the Captors

serve us better," laughed Ezra; "he'll land us in San Antonio hours ahead of time."

"We are too much of a load for him to hold the pace long."

But the pony, instead of becoming exhausted, seemed to gain vigour by his tremendous exertions. His gallop speedily rose to a dead run, and the wind whistled against the faces of the riders. He burned the ground with his flying hoofs. So long as he could maintain the gait, the Texans might scorn any pursuit by the Comanches. Naturally, it required care for the two to sit securely on the back of the animal, but his pace was easy and they soon came to enjoy the novel sensation of riding bare-back. A leap to one side or an unexpected stoppage, however, was likely to play the mischief with them. They saw no reason why such a mishap should occur, though they did their utmost to be prepared for it.

The splendid burst of speed had carried the Texans a full mile before the younger brother, who occupied the front seat, made a startling discovery. He called over his shoulder to Ezra, who had an arm about his waist:

The Three Arrows

“We’re not going south!”

The other glanced up at the stars, whose appearance he was familiar, and saw that the words were true. They were going at right angles to the course which they took when afoot. Moreover, the brilliant constellations which had been on their right, but were now in front, continued to sweep seemingly in a slow circle, as if the firmament were revolving. The cause was apparent to both; the mustang was bearing farther and farther from his original course, and would soon be heading northward or towards the rocks from which the men had had so narrow an escape. “He is taking us back to the Comanche camp!” shouted the elder; “bring his head to the right, Oliver!”

“How the deuce can I do that without a bridle?” demanded the younger, who none the less was making herculean efforts to effect a change in the course of the animal. Grasping the forelock, he yanked it furiously to the right, but the brute seemed to be unaware of what the rider was trying to do and kept up his furious pace. The situation was serious and Oliver next tackled one of the ears, which he wrenched viciously. He

Capturing the Captors

so violent that the mustang was angered into the most tremendous burst of speed of which he was capable.

"I can't do anything with him," shouted the director of proceedings.

"Maybe he is fond of running in a circle, and if you let him alone he will come back to the right course again," suggested Ezra.

"What good will it do for us to play the circus horse? We can't afford to spend the next day or two in riding round and round, without getting any nearer San Antonio."

"He will soon grow exhausted."

"After he has turned us over to Kurringk and his warriors, who are yearning to get another chance at us."

Even the grotesque hope of the elder was speedily taken from them, for when they perceived that the mustang was heading due north, or nearly so, he did not shift any farther. He may have taken a long time to make the swerve, but he had done it to perfection, and now drew away with the same amazing speed.

Not only that, but he showed thus far no sign of tiring. In the nature of things he

The Three Arrows

could not long keep up the terrific pace, but it would not do to wait for exhaustion to check him, since he was likely to deliver the riders to their enemies before weakness overcame him.

The only possible escape for the Texan was to get to the ground without a minute's unnecessary delay; but to slip from the back of the mustang when he was coursing over the prairie like a thunderbolt meant death or frightful injury. Oliver uttered an angry exclamation and shouted to his brother:

“Brace yourself; I'm going to stop this.”

“How?”

“I'll show you; are you ready?”

“As ready as I can be.”

The sharp crack of a rifle rang out. The mustang emitted a wild whinny, leaped high in air, staggered a few paces, slackening his speed, and then lunged forward on his knees and with a convulsion rolled over. The Texans had no way of bracing themselves and shot over the animal's head with a shock that jarred them almost senseless, and each turned a somersault and tumbled several paces before he could check himself. They were stunned for the moment, but Oliver w

Capturing the Captors

the first to recover his wits. Rising to a bent posture, he looked at his brother :

“ Are you there, Ezra?”

“ I couldn't be anywhere else—and you seem to be with me,” replied his companion as he imitated the action of the other.

“ It was a drastic remedy, but the only one I had,” remarked the younger brother, glancing at the body of the mustang. “ Wouldn't we have cut a fine figure riding up to Chief Kurringk, the prisoners of one of his ponies?”

“ I don't know how far the mustang carried us towards his camp, but we certainly have lost much ground. Let's get our bearings and set our legs to work.”

Oliver was sure they should follow a certain direction; his brother was equally positive that the opposite was the right course, but both were too sensible to rely upon either belief, for nothing in the world is easier than for a person to mix the points of the compass when subjected to so bewildering an experience as had been theirs; but there was no confusion of the glittering planets sweeping across the sky. The two identified enough of them to settle the ques-

The Three Arrows

tion beyond all mistake, and once more they struck southward at a swinging pace.

So much time had passed that they were sure their flight had been discovered by Chik Kurringk, who was not one to let a couple of white prisoners elude him so long as there was the slightest hope of retaking them. This suspicion became certainty when within the following half-hour the brothers again heard hoof-beats behind them. They halted and listened.

“It can't be that a second mustang coming to repair the mishap of the first,” said Ezra with grim irony.

“That could not happen; now is the time to do some tall travelling, brother.”

CHAPTER XXVI

THE THIRD ARROW

Ookoo, the young Comanche, led the way along the winding course from the middle of the mass of rocks and boulders, with Walter Brinton as near to him as the rough nature of the ground would permit. The latter noted that his friend walked as if in haste, though neither spoke until they came to the edge of the prairie. Then the young Texan perceived they were almost among the horses which had been left to themselves. This early in the evening, they were cropping the lush grass. Several raised their heads when the youths passed among them.

Ookoo, facing his companion, emitted that soft chuckle to which the latter had become accustomed, and said in his low voice :

“Let my brother call to his horse.”

Catching his meaning, Walter whistled three times with only a second's interval between the last two calls. If the signal was

The Three Arrows

heard by his horse it would be instantly obeyed.

The animals covered more than an acre of plain, those farthest off being dimly within sight. From the most distant rim, Walter caught a familiar whinny, and immediately the graceful form of Saladin emerged, trotting towards him. Straight on he came. His master stepped forward to meet the handsome animal, which rubbed his nose against the cheek of the youth, who patted and was not ashamed to kiss the silken lips.

"Bless you, my own good friend," he said affectionately, sliding one hand down the smooth neck; "it would have broken my heart had I lost you."

Neither saddle nor bridle had been removed, so that Saladin was handicapped to some extent in browsing with the bit in his mouth, though the difficulty was not great.

Walter handed his rifle to Ookoo, placed his foot in the stirrup, and swung into the saddle. Accepting the weapon from his friend he balanced it across his thighs, as he was accustomed to do when thus riding.

Unobserved by Walter, his dusky friend had deftly drawn an arrow from the quiver

The Third Arrow

behind his shoulder. He now stepped forward and handed it to the other, who accepted it with the smiling question :

“What am I to do with that, Ookoo? I couldn't hit an elephant a dozen feet away with bow and arrow.”

“Ookoo wishes his brother to keep it always,” was the strange reply.

Walter caught his meaning. This was the Third Arrow, which he himself had marked with the tiny letter “v.” The first had done its duty against a traitor, the second had been shattered by the wall of the cavern, and the third was intact and in the hands of Walter Brinton as he looked down from his saddle into the face of the young Comanche.

“I shall keep it as a remembrance of you and the friendship between us. I wonder whether we shall ever meet again.”

“Ookoo and his brother *shall meet soon.*”

Did this American Indian, with his subtlety and woodcraft which approached the marvellous, see even dimly the remarkable events that were close at hand? Be that as it may, his prophecy was destined to come true sooner than Walter suspected.

The Three Arrows

The Comanche, standing at the shoulder of the mustang, reached up his hand, which was warmly clasped by Walter as he leaped from the saddle. Gazing straight into the other's face as revealed in the starlight, the Indian spoke :

“ Good-bye, Ookoo ! ”

“ Good-bye, my brother ! ”

The Indian stepped back a pace to be clear of the mustang and pointed to the south.

“ That is the way to go ; let my brother hasten . ”

A twitch of the bridle rein, a quick word and Saladin was off. A little way farther and the lad turned his head, but Ookoo had vanished. He had done his part, and he must now go to arrange matters with his territorial parent. The precise method by which he accomplished this cannot be known. He must have formulated some wonderfully ingenious fiction to deceive the chieftain. I cannot help suspecting, however, he did not do so, but rather made so persuasive a plea that Kurri gave ear to the pleading of his only child. No people in the world are fonder of their children than the American Indians. So we may admire the mythical Roman who said

The Third Arrow

his son because he disobeyed his commands and thereby saved the army from destruction, but if the incident is true, which I have always doubted, the father proved he was a criminal fool, who ought to have been hanged for murder. I prefer to believe that the Comanche war chief was largely actuated by his affection for his son. It is surely to his credit if such were the fact.

Walter Brinton's thoughts now naturally turned to his parent and uncle. They were somewhere in advance, but he could not believe they had been as fortunate as he in securing their horses. They must be hurrying forward on foot. Saladin swung into an easy canter, a gait which he could maintain for hours without tiring. Several miles were passed in this manner, when the rider was startled by the sound of what seemed a rifle shot. He drew his pony down to a walk and headed in the direction whence came the report.

The sight of the dead mustang filled him with wondering perplexity, for it was impossible to figure out the explanation. He noted that the animal had not belonged to his father or uncle, since he was without saddle

The Three Arrows

or bridle. Nothing could be gained by speculation, and he again spurred Saladin southward at the moderate speed he had displayed from the first. And then, with a cry of thankfulness and delight, Walter came upon his relatives, who were standing in the open plain waiting for him. The youth was out of the saddle in a twinkling, and affectionately embraced his friends one after the other. A few minutes were sufficient to make everything as clear as it could be. Walter insisted upon their taking turns in riding his pony, and they promised to do so as soon as they felt the need, but at present the latter was compelled to remount and ride beside them, for the task of tramping over the prairie was not hard.

“And now for the Alamo!” exclaimed Ezra Brinton, and his companions said, “Amen.”

The sequel to this volume, in which Walter Brinton and Ookoo, the young Comanche, have prominent parts to play, is entitled

“Redskin and Scout.”

by specu-
n south-
displayed
a cry of
me upon
the open
was out
affection-
the other.
to make
Walter
in riding
o as soon
at the lad
de beside
over the

exclaimed
ions said

in which
e young
o play, is

