

Selected Story.

A Race for Life.

NOTWITHSTANDING the avidity with which the public press has been following the progress of the expedition, there have been in the exploration and settlement of our Southwestern Territories, during the last ten years, numbers of cases of extreme suffering, thrilling adventures, and even murders of the most diabolical character, which have never been made known to the public. There are many chapters in my own experience which, I have no doubt, would be read with interest by those who like to read of the exciting scenes through which the pioneer must pass while developing and bringing to light the untold resources of our vast Territories, and as none of them have ever been given to the public, I will give the following:

On the 2nd of December, 1865, a little more than a year after the founding of Oregon Goodwin of the town of Prescott and the location of the capital of Arizona, and while the Indians were still harassing and murdering the settlers and miners, throughout the length and breadth of the Territory, William Brady and the writer started from Prescott City across the country east to Santa Fe, New Mexico, a distance of five hundred miles, where we expected to take the stage for the east.

We were equipped with plenty of arms, ammunition, two good horses, a pack mule, plenty of blankets, and provisions for fifteen days, by which time we expected to reach the settlements of the Rio Grande.

The weather was delightful—such weather as is only seen upon the plateau bordering on the Great Cordillera. We expected no snow for at least a month, and it was with great regret, and consequently light hearts, that we rode along that morning, leaving perhaps the warmest country where, for more than two years, we had struggled in our efforts to develop the rich resources of the region, and with the four or five hundred men, laborers, suffered under privations and hardships almost dying of hunger and thirst constantly harassed by hostile Indians with little prospect of success from Government. Although our journey lay through a country infested by hostile tribes for over 200 miles, we had become so used to the dangers of a frontier, that the fact scarcely gave us an uneasy thought. We looked beyond the danger beyond the great plains, into pleasant homes, from which we had been absent for years, and visions of happy greeting which we expected to receive within the month took the place, for the time, of all other thoughts.

Nothing of special interest occurred until the second day, when we met a small party of soldiers, who with the United States Express, had the day before been attacked, the expressman killed, and two others of the party wounded. Discouraging as this intelligence would seem to be, we determined to press forward as rapidly as possible, so as to reach by a little after nightfall the dividing line between the Apaches and the Hispanics, the latter of whom professed to be friendly to the whites. We were yet a distance of twenty miles to the above named point, and it was about 1 p. m. Several times during the afternoon our attention was attracted to white lines of smoke rising at different points in answer to each other, the language of which we knew to portend evil to us—perhaps the most horrible of deaths.

At 4 p. m. we reached the place where the attack had the day before been made. A few broken arrows and a portion of the charred remains of the unfortunate expressman were the remaining evidences of the bloody deed. We did not tarry long here, for the fear that we would be attacked, and the sight of these evidences of the brutality of those who were then digging our footstepers were sufficient to very materially increase our desire to reach a place of safety as speedily as possible.

Just as the sun sank beneath the western horizon we passed into the Huachuca range, and again breathed freely.

Reaching a suitable place we camped for the night. The next morning the wind was blowing a gale, which continued all day, interfering with our progress so much that it was not until we reached Antelope Spring, at the foot of the San Francisco mountains, eighty-four miles from the city of Prescott.

During the day lowering clouds had stretched from horizon to horizon, and there was every evidence of an approaching storm, a circumstance which, as the day was broken, and a portion of the day was stormy, without protection, is something the horrors of which cannot be fully described. And this was a new danger something for which we were not prepared. When morning came, the snow had already begun to fall, and our better judgment prompted us to return to Prescott. But there is a feeling of pride in the breast of every pioneer, which forbids him giving over an enterprise when once undertaken—folds a retreat, what dangers soever may interfere with his advance. So we again mounted our horses and continued our journey.

At night we reached Contin Cave, a distance of sixteen miles, after traveling hard all day. The snow had already fallen to a depth of ten inches, and was still falling. How we turned our horses loose, that they might find something upon which to subsist, and, scraping away the snow, we kindled a fire, cooked our supper, and spreading our blankets on the snow, crawled between them, and were soon lost to the gloomy prospects which surrounded us. Upon awaking the following morning, we were wet with perspiration and weighed down with eight inches of snow, which had fallen during the night upon our blankets, the snow still falling rapidly.

These were never had such experience may try to imagine our feelings as we contemplated the situation—the snow almost two feet deep, and still falling, no food for our animals, less than two weeks provisions for ourselves, with every hope of retreat cut off by the accumulation of snow in the mountains, our advance barred by the same cause and the trail entirely obliterated. To remain was certain death, and the only possibility of escape was to find some place that would serve as a shelter until the storm passed away. The little Colorado river we knew to be about twenty miles distant at the nearest point where we could reach it, and we were not long in satisfying ourselves that our only hope lay in reaching the river, and subsisting upon the flesh of our animals until the snow cleared

away in the Spring, when we could reach the settlements. We knew, too, that upon the river we were liable to fall into the hands of hostile Indians. But there was hope, and after getting some coffee, we set out on our haven without any reference to trail, simply taking a course and following it as near as we could. The snow was beginning to drift, and the wind whistled through the stunted pines and cedars with a low, melancholy sound as we struggled on, sometimes tumbling into a gully filled and hidden by the drifting snow, again coming out when it was only a few inches deep, only to plunge into another drift.

It was impossible to ride, on account of the plunging of the horses, besides it was necessary to walk in order to keep ourselves from freezing. After traveling in this manner for about three miles, we came out of the timber into an open, undulating country, where, though the drifts were worse, we were better enabled to avoid them, and made more rapid progress than while in the timber. By noon the snow ceased to fall, and after night came we were within five or six miles of the river, and could plainly see the line of timber making its course. Fired and hungry as we were, we had no alternative but to push forward; we had nothing out of which to eat, and had to stop short of the timber was certain to be followed by freezing and death. It was now almost impossible to urge our horses forward, and after going a short distance, our pack animal stopped and could be driven no further, and we were compelled to leave him standing upon the black, frozen earth, and we had no doubt he was being devoured by wolves, for they had been annoying us with their dismal howlings since sunset, sometimes approaching to within a dozen yards of us.

It must have been near midnight when we reached the timber, and the inclination to its down and sleep toward the last was so great that it was with the utmost difficulty we could keep on our feet. Several times Brady called out, "I'm no use, I am as tired as I can go no further, and I am dying for sleep."

But I knew only too well what the result would be, and urged him on. At last we reached the timber, and sank down at once, unable to do more.

The next thing to be kindle a fire. The snow was now falling in such quantities that under the snow I had to hunt my wood. After considerable effort, I procured a few cottonwood limbs, and, making up a shavings, and a portion of the pack animal's skin, I made a fire. I was so cold that I could scarcely tell whether I had my knife in my hand or not. At length I struck a match and attempted to light my whittling. The match flickered and went out. I tried a second and third with the same result. As I watched the last of the three go out, I was sitting in the snow, and I felt as if I did not care whether I had a fire or not. A strange thought not unpleasant feeling came over me. I had not the power to rouse myself; was free from pain, and felt perfectly contented, even happy, not very different from the peace of mind which being placed under the influence of chloroform. I could not realize the horrors of my situation. Something seemed to shut out what little light there was, and I could still hear sounds of music in the distance, becoming fainter and fainter until I knew no more.

(To be continued.)

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