

SAVAGE GUESTS THANKSGIVING IN A HORSE CAMP

BY WAYNE BURROWS

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SOME scattered sod buildings and a sod corral pitched on a treeless bank constituted the lone Circle Dot horse camp on the Rickaree. There the sun in summer blazed fiercely, and through other seasons the wind made ceaseless assaults. But the weather was well warded off by the sod structures, each with its heavy projecting dirt roof and thick walls, without other opening than a door in one gable end.

Each heavy door, stanch in its deep casing, had its rough surface further roughened by innumerable circle dots burned into the wood with a small branding iron. The corral itself, with its circling wall and its snubbing post in the center, was another circle dot branded on the wild spot, marking its subjugation by the Circle Dot outfit.

Subjugation, indeed, went on daily in the circular corral, where the prisoners range horses raced round and round in unavailing attempts to escape the dreaded rope. The Circle Dot outfit numbered some twenty veteran riders. Even Bradley, the youngest of them, had passed a good part of his twenty years in the saddle.

He was the "breaker," a dangerous office, requiring the dashing courage and supple body of youth. Brad had also a supremacy of spirit which so raised him above the rest that the foreman held him as one with himself.

By the corral gateway the boys had gathered one morning to see Brad mount a tough range mare whose vicious origin was betrayed by the Spanish character brands scarred on her blue roan hip and thigh.

Brad's fifty pound saddle completely covered her short coupled back as she

stuck in a potato at his plate fared dimly down the great pine board, where tins were often laid for twenty riders.

Brad took up a late weekly paper mechanically. On the first page were some headlines that meant much to a plainsman's eye—"Another Indian Scare, Cheyennes Driving Off Stock on the Republican." But from repeated reading they had lost their first startling effect and gave Brad only the pleasure of thought that the Indian scare might hasten the return of the Circle Dot outfit. His eyes passed to a column where, unnoticed before, were a few paragraphs headed "Thanksgiving Proclamation."

"Thanksgiving in a horse camp!" Brad ejaculated, with a horse laugh. Then, as if the idea had pleased him, he laughed in a minor key.

"The boys hev been a-tendin' on me a long time—a long time," he said to himself. "The boys was mighty good." He thought of the evidences in the adjoining storeroom—the humps and hams of buffalo, the saddles of antelope and white tail deer, the braces of wild geese, ducks and prairie chickens, all lavishly provided for him alone.

"They loved I had to eat lots of w't meat to sorter brace me up," he muttered, a little shamefaced, as he glanced at his plate, where the remnant of a slapsack and the rim of a slice of "salt horse" told of a Spartan supper.

"That's the sort of grub the boys is gittin' now," Brad went on in apology to himself. "An' it's good enough for me. I'm mighty glad all them things they put in their ain't tched yit. An' I don't jes' cook up the whole caboodle an' build a pile or two extra in case

where the Rickaree lost itself in the sand on its way to the Republican. Brad's heart was in his eyes as he watched it come creeping, creeping.

Now it rolled and swelled, and now, coming on with whirlwind speed, it took shape on either side in rounded puffs that rose and broke and were ever renewed. Noting this, the broncho breaker threw both hands exultingly above his head and cried, "The calal-lada!" for the herd was coming straight for the corral.

Brad straightened up for one last assuring look. Then, instead of a familiar figure in a flapping hat and camel shirt, his amazed eyes caught sight of a black crown with a feather. He saw a braided long lock, a scarlet blanket blown backward from a wild rider, and then the figure vanished in the dust.

At this sight Brad dropped down on the stack. Along the center line of its top a heavy pole had been laid to hold down the hay in the wind. In the depression made by the pole in the yielding hay Brad now flattened himself out.

He had no time in his disabled condition to seek other hiding place, for already the head of the horse herd thundered in the open corral, and he heard the blowing and trampling of the excited beasts circling about.

Then came the bang of the gates closed violently, and the rattle of the chain that held them. Then voices, harsh, discordant, speaking Indian words, arose from the side of the corral. Brad blessed his leanness as he crouched close to the pole. He blessed the wind that had muffled the hay all along the top of the stack.

The height of the stack's top, however, as well as its wind ruffled edges and the depression in its center in which he lay, effectually hid him from the Indians standing almost directly below him, and he could not see them himself without lifting his head. But from his high place he could overlook the buildings beyond, and as a shout came from that direction he cautiously peered out through the apertures of hay.

At the corner of the cook house a Cheyenne, dismounted, stood calling and waving his hand toward the corral. At first glance Brad was sure the Indian saw him, and he instinctively reached for the six shooter in his belt.

His apprehension, however, quickly changed to indignation as he noticed that the fellow was flourishing in his hand a fat roast goose which Brad had taken particular pains to brown to a shade. The Indian called vociferously to his companions.

A shout in response came from below Brad, and he heard the sounds of moving horsemen. As they came across his line of vision on their way to the cook house he counted five other Cheyennes.

From the stack Brad could see the grin on the face of the Indian as he pointed within where the others rode up. Then there were laughs, cries of pleased surprise and distinctly audible sniffing of the gratifying odor from the open door. Five savage riders dismounted and vanished in the cook house, leaving the man of the goose to guard their ponies.

The sight and, above all, the sounds of their feast made Brad's soul rage within him. Nor was it at all quieted when, now that the Indians about the corral were gone, he looked over in it and saw that they had rounded up every Circle Dot horse on the range.

For an instant only in looking in the corral he had taken his eyes from the Indian watching over the ponies, but the man had vanished in that moment. Brad surmised that, seeing no sign of life about the place, he had joined his fellows at the feast within.

A fine stuffing themselves they would, he well knew, search for the maker of that feast with other intent than thanksgiving. It was useless for him to lie there. Where should he conceal himself securely? Somewhere he must go, and that quickly.

Brad slipped to the ladder, clasped either long side piece with a knee and arm and began to slide down. But as he started his eyes swept over the corral and saw every horse in it looking up to him. Their eyes, staring and glassy, seemed to appeal to him for more plunder than any speech.

Swiftly down he slid, and the corral wall rising up, hid the horses from his sight. But as he struck the ground on his sound leg he had no further thought of seeking a hiding place for himself.

He stepped to one side of the stack and boldly surveyed the cook-house. Not an Indian was in sight. The six ponies, with heads down and rears trailing, stood motionless before the door.

"I reckon I'll jes' money up to that door, see'n they're all so busy with that grub inside," Brad thought to himself. "I'll jerk the door to an' hitch the chain over the steeple, an' I've got 'em corralled."

His quick movement gave no indication of the pain it cost him. Indeed, he hardly felt the pain as he stole to the back of the building, slipped along the wall and gained the corner near the door.

All his senses were on a strain, and he felt rather than heard a moccasined foot inside step for the door. Forgetting then all about his lame leg, Brad made a rush for it, his six shooter cocked in his hand.

On the threshold he encountered the guardian of the ponies coming out. So close were the two that Brad actually thrust the muzzle of his six shooter against the buckskin's chest and breast of the Indian, who with a yell of surprise and terror darted nimbly back and instinctively swung the door shut against Brad's extended weapon.

Brad snatched the chain and hooked it over the staple. Hardly had he stepped to one side when there came a rattling, muffled, from within. Half a dozen bullets splintered the door and whizzed harmlessly over the prize beyond.

"Blaze away!" Brad chuckled. "If you can stan' the smoke in there, I can stan' to hear them bullets sing on here."

A chorus of coughs came from within. Then, half-strangled by the powder smoke pent up in the tight structure, the prisoners made a rush against the door.

"Say, then, let up on that!" said Brad coolly. As the rush was repeated he stepped directly in front of the door and in turn sent a shot through it.

The report of his big six shooter was answered by a yell from within, accompanied by the sound of scuffling feet as the Cheyennes sought the corners at each side of the door for safety. Then all was silence, broken only by an occasional cough.

"I reckon I'd better light out," said Brad, to whom the very stillness of that cage of tigers was ominous. "Tevon't take 'em long to claw outer that, an' I reckon when they do I'll jes' leave 'em to hoof it."

He had no difficulty in catching the ponies by their trailing ropes. Tying them securely nose to tail, he led them thus to the corral. There he threw open the double gates and with a whoop and a whirl of his lariet sent the glad herd scurrying in safety out on the plain. Then he climbed on one of the captured ponies, led the others in a string behind him and took his slow way down the Rickaree with many a backward glance at the alien cook house.

Brad's faith in the coming of the boys, after all, was not ill founded. Late in the afternoon he met them returning. And, though his lame leg pained him severely from the unwanted exercise, he kept his place among them as they rode for the camp spurred on by his tale.

They reached the camp at nightfall, but it was only to find Brad's prisoners had withdrawn the stovepipe, enlarged its hole through the roof and so escaped.

Brad's chagrin was evident as he gazed at the bones of the bird and beast that covered the table where the Cheyennes had stuffed themselves before leaving.

"Well, I reckon they've eat up pretty nigh everything," he said disconsolately. But he gradually brightened up as the boys demonstrated to his satisfaction that there was still enough left for twenty hungry riders.

GRATEFUL JAILBIRDS.

They Tell Missouri Governor Their Reasons For Thanks.

The following is a copy of a sketch headed "Why We Are Thankful," written by the prisoners in jail at Missouri, Mo., last Thanksgiving day and placed in the hands of the sheriff with the request to let the light shine on it:

Dear Governor—We have read your Thanksgiving proclamation with interest and will abide by your suggestions as well as we may be able in our limited environments. Although unjustly shut out from the world at present, we have much to be thankful for. The papers are not pitching into us and calling us bad names like they do Mr. Rockefeller, Senator Platt, Willie Hearst and other men with a larger measure of liberty. Our appetite is the best of us, and we don't have to take treatment for insomnia.

We are not nervous concerning our glaze and holdup men, and our diamonds are the least of our worries. Nobody comes round and tries to work us on wild cat mining stock or sell us gold bricks. The coal man hasn't come after his money, and we don't look for him. Snow, ice, sleet and wintry winds are nothing to us. We don't have to get up early Sunday morning and fix for Sunday school.

Three times a day, week in and week out, we get beans, corn, sodas and wall water, except on holidays, when there's a double dose of water.

In looking over these matters we feel that we are best far beyond the common run, for which we are deeply thankful. We feel satisfied. We don't care to get any nearer where you live, much as we like you. Your ways are not our ways, and we wish to be particular and lead a quiet, orderly life. We are, respectfully,
WILL MITCHELL,
"KENTUCKY BOY"
ET AL.

FAMOUS FAST AND FEAST.

One Preceded and One Followed the Civil War.

Queerly enough, both national fasts and national Thanksgivings were affected by the civil war. President Buchanan appointed a day of national fasting and prayer to avert civil war. Republican governors of states in some instances ignored it and in others took notice of it in a way to rub their noses against Buchanan and his party into their proclamations. Democratic governors, south and north, under the form of an appeal to the deity, canonized Republicanism to the best of their ability.

As President Buchanan called the nation to prayer to avert civil war, so did President Lincoln call it to thanksgiving for victories in a civil war to the end that more victories might bring union and peace. Of course, as Mr. Buchanan was ignored or satirized in antipathetic political quarters in the north, so was President Lincoln criticized and even abused in the south where the Union forces were not in control. But as Mr. Buchanan was the pioneer in a national fast day and as Mr. Lincoln was the pioneer in a national thanksgiving day it is well to remember that sectional conditions in a sectional war moved both and that the great national observance which we now have was born in the throes of fratricidal civic contention.—Brooklyn Eagle.

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BRAD MADE A RUSH FOR IT, HIS SIX SHOOTER IN HAND.

stood humped up, with all four feet planted close together. Blinded by a broad band drawn down securely over her eyes, she dared not run, but her nervous jaws incessantly champed a bloody foam from the Spanish bit.

"Throw the steel to her, Brad, the minute you hit the saddle," cautioned the foreman. "Don't give her no show to throw herself."

Taking the check piece of the bridle in his left hand, Brad drew her head around on her shoulder. His right hand gripped the saddle horn, his left foot was thrust to the high heel of his boot in the stirrup, and with the sure and easy movement of a bird lighting on a yielding bough he sat in the saddle.

Leaning forward, he reached out and drew up the blind. What followed may be given in the foreman's own words:

"Well, she jes' bucked an' bawled an' twisted herself over half an acre of prairie for an hour an' throwed herself twice, an' Brad stayed right with her till she pitched over on her head an' broke her own neck an' one of Brad's legs jes' above the fetlock joint."

Then, lying for weeks on his bunk waiting for the bone to knit, Brad fell to quilt plaiting for occupation. Each of his dozen spurred and noisy nurses was provided with a quilt adorned with horsehair tassels and intricate Spanish knots which his fingers alone knew the trick of tying when at last Brad was permitted to try his weight on his leg. It bore him, for his body had shrunk as a wild horse plucked by the foot shrinks and loses the fire of his eye. Brad's eyes, too, were gentled. His long hair, that had tangled on his pillow-like witches' stirrups, had been "roached" off by the boys, and he was in a measure subjugated.

It was late in November when the last of his attendants, not sorry to join the outfit gathering horses down on the Republican, rode away. Brad, just able to hobble from his bunk to the cook house, was left alone.

He sat in the cook house one evening at his solitary supper. A tallow candle

they fetch up here by Thanksgiving day, an' that's the day after tomorrow, 'cordin' to the almanac!"

All the next day, far into the night and again on the following morning of Thanksgiving day the cook house steamed, and Brad sweated over the fire and chuckled as he thought of the surprise of the boys.

By this time he had but one thought—he desired it so much that he had come to be sure of it—the return of the boys in time for his feast, his thank offering to them. As for other thanksgiving on the day, Brad thought of that part also as he muttered, "Mighty lucky it wain't my own neck 'tild that there ole blue roan!"

Brad's faith in the coming of the boys certainly had no reasonable foundation, yet he reiterated to himself: "They is bound to git in. Ef they wain't comin' their own selves, then blame Cheyennes er sum'n else 'ud fetch 'em along on time."

Moon came. The table was laid for twenty riders, and to welcome them a mighty odor of roasted flesh and fowl rushed from the open cook house door out on the prairie.

All was in readiness. Nothing was left for him to do but quietly wait. But from house to creek and back again and then to the corral Brad hobbled and halted and looked, and looked in vain.

Along the back of the corral and almost touching it the winter's supply of hay was stacked, and up the long ladder against one of the high stacks Brad slowly and painfully climbed, the better to scan the plain.

The Thanksgiving days of Brad's boyhood had been under gray eastern skies. Now his eyes noted a white cloud in the west, but its whiteness only made the sky more supple yet, and through its filmy intervention the sunlight filtered only the more yellow on its yellow plain.

Not all the glory of the sun could gild to any homeliness the sod buildings of the horse camp. Brad felt their loneliness, penetrate his heart. Then his faith in the boys' coming was freshened by the appearance of a tiny cloud of dust on the horizon away beyond

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