

TWO WILDERNESS VOYAGERS

belong to black people. They were certainly very dark—they were also illy clothed. Suddenly the voices of these two loping ones were raised in shrill, joyous notes.

"Ina! Ina! we are coming—Zintkala—Etapá—your son—your daughter!"

There was a moment of dead silence then a chorus of exclamations, which expressed the single emotion of amazement.

Then there fell upon the ears of all a wild yearning cry—a mother's cry—and a woman rose from one of the outer groups. Her blanket dropped from her shoulders and she staggered for a moment, clasping a hand to her forehead. Then she ran, though unsteadily, toward the fleet newcomers, and two wee girls, with arms and hair flying, sped at her heels.

The voyagers dropped their weapons and came on more swiftly.

"Ina! Ina! Ina!"

They leaped, panting like blown hares, into the mother's arms. The woman strained them to her bosom. She lifted her face and cried, "My children!—my children!" She could say nothing more.

Two little sloe-eyed girls flung themselves upon the voyagers' bare legs and clamored piteously for attention, shouting that now indeed they knew that tanké and sunkaku had come back to them.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE WARRIOR FATHER'S APPEAL

The Oglalas among the Sioux had reached a conclusion. They had seen Fire Cloud go homeward with the rescued children, having spared a man who had tried to kill them—his own children doubtless—and they knew that their chief soldier's heart had become very soft. They feared even that some evil spirit, suddenly in the moment of victory, had made him witko.

Yet they held themselves in readiness to fight so soon as the Crows and Mountain Indians should make a move in their direction.

While the head soldiers were consulting together, Fire Cloud wheeled his horse and came swiftly back to them. A group gathered about him.

"My children have arrived," he said simply. He removed the war-club from his wrist and tendered it to one nearest. The man took it and others looked on wondering.

"I wish to talk to these Kangi and Mountain Crows," he said. "How, how, speak to them," said some of the older warriors, well pleased.

Immediately Fire Cloud rode toward the enemy, who were moving about in a restless fashion. The chief approached half way, and

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made a sign of amity. Getting no answer, he shouted his name, and soon the Crows and their allies understood that this was the war-chief who had spared a Crow soldier.

A head partisan of the Crows rode out presently to meet the Oglala. This one halted within a few paces of the chief.

"Ho, you that spared the life of War Dog, what do you seek of us?" he inquired.

"If your chief men will come forward and talk I will tell them why we are come into this country," answered Fire Cloud. "We did not come here to fight, unless an enemy should seek us."

"How, I will tell them what you have said," and the partisan turned and rode back to his fellows. After a while the Crows and others signaled their willingness to come forward, and Fire Cloud passed the word to his Sioux. He also arranged, by signs, for the numbers of each which should approach.

After a decorous length of time some two score of the chiefs and partisans of each war-party were seated—while young men held their ponies in the rear—in opposite groups upon the prairie. They did not smoke the peace pipe. None offered it. They wore the dress and paints of fighting men, and held their weapons in hand.

"We will listen to the One-Who-Spares-His-

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Enemy," was the dictum of a Crow chief, and in a tone which implied that none other need talk.

Fire Cloud arose and walked into the space confronting the allies. He was shorn of his war-dress, and carried no weapon. He wore leggins and moccasins and a tall white feather stood aslant from his scalp lock.

He spoke to the Crows and the Mountain People present in Dakota, which was their mother tongue, both being apostate tribes. Yet, had they understood no word of his tongue, these children of the wilderness could have followed every thought in his vivid sign language.

"Ho, Kangi, and you Mountain Soldiers, whose name should be Dakota, I did not think when you came to attack us that I should indeed wish to speak with you.

"Listen, last year I sent my children to be taught of the white people at Traverse des Sioux. These people treated them with rigor, trying very quickly to give them white skins. This was folly, and I have now seen how foolish I myself have been. My children ran away from their school and the Hohé took them. These sold them into a far country.

"When a runner came this spring and told me this, my spirit was broken. I did not wish to live. But this runner who came said also that some of my people in Minnesota were foolishly going to war against the white people. I said, 'Though I

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wish to die, yet my people and their children wish to stay upon the earth,' therefore, I urged them that we should come far into this broken country; that we might not be implicated in war, and that we might as long as possible stand against our enemies.

"When I was yet young the Dakotas lived in a land of great abundance. From the falls of the big river to the Missouri we had all that land. When the white people came among us we always treated them with kindness. We gave them food and many presents. Their settlements seemed a long way off, and we thought they must be destitute, having come so far. What happened? Before my younger children were born, these people had spread across the great river and taken our best country from us. They gave us nothing for the land. They forgot our kindness, and rudely thrust us out.

"Ho, you Kangi and your cousins, you have all seen the locusts which fly upon us and spread themselves upon all the land in the grass moons; how these build their round tepées in the ground, covering all the earth and destroying the grass, so that the buffaloes are indeed driven away, and your hunters cannot find them, and there is hunger and want in your lodges. So do these white people spread; but each one builds his tepée of wood or stone, and abides

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upon his piece of ground and there is no room for anyone on the earth.

"These are indeed moving upon all the earth toward us. I myself have seen them. They will destroy the trees and grass and kill all things that live with us. We cannot resist them. Who is so witko as to believe it?

"How silly it appears that we should be fighting each other, and thus give to these enemies of all Indians better excuse to seize our property! Very soon we shall have nothing to fight about. We shall be searching for the graves of our dead, and shall not find them. We shall inquire whither we may pitch our tepées and no one can tell us. We shall ask of those who have despoiled us where we may find meat for our children.

"Ho, Kangi and you Mountain Soldiers, do you indeed wish it thus? Do you wish to crawl upon your bellies that others may feed your women and children?

"To-day my children arrived, having escaped from captivity. Because of this battle between us they were near to death. But the Waniyan Tanka has indeed saved them, and my heart is glad. I no longer desire to die. I wish to live. I wish my people to be at peace, so that we may save some of our land whereon we may raise our children and bury our dead.

"Listen, Kangi and Mountain Soldiers. When

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the buffaloes came was there any lack of meat and skins for you and for us? Are your children hungry? If so, we will give them meat. If anyone among you is in want let him come to my tepée and I will feed and clothe him. Thus say all these my colleagues and partisans. I have finished."

The Crows and their friends were much astonished at what this Sioux chief had said. They considered the matter gravely and apart for a time. At length an old chief spoke.

"How, Dakotas," he said, "let us indeed prepare the peace pipe. We did not understand why you had come into this country, or we would not have acted thus rudely. You are very welcome to stay all winter at this place."

"How—how, good—good!" cried the Sioux. Immediately these war-chiefs began to approach each other and to shake hands. Pipes passed among them, and they talked for a long time, telling each other such news of distant wars as they had heard.

After they had sat, until nearly sunset, thus talking, two young men of the Crows approached, bearing a covered vessel between them. They set this burden at the feet of Fire Cloud, and removed their blankets, discovering a rude bull boat.

The chief arose to look at this craft, an oblong

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tub, with frame-work of bent willows, covered with a half tanned buffalo pelt. Inside he saw two small blanket rolls, a parflèche filled with small articles and pieces of dried meat, a carcajou's skin, a long knife in a leather sheath, a metal basin much blackened by use, a boy's horn-tipped bow, and a quiver containing three strange arrows.

"Han! han!" said Fire Cloud, "it was thus that my children arrived!"

It is said that these tribes have not fought each other since, except when treacherous ones have been hired to go in search of some village of women and children, which the Great Father's soldiers wished to attack.

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