

*Startling Indeed Were the Ghostly
Night Riders That Haunted*

The Old Burying Ground

A Complete Novelette

By EDGAR LLOYD HAMPTON

HISTORICALLY speaking, the Clearwater River, in the Western part of the state of Idaho, has never been anything more important than a rather indefinite location, with a name attached.

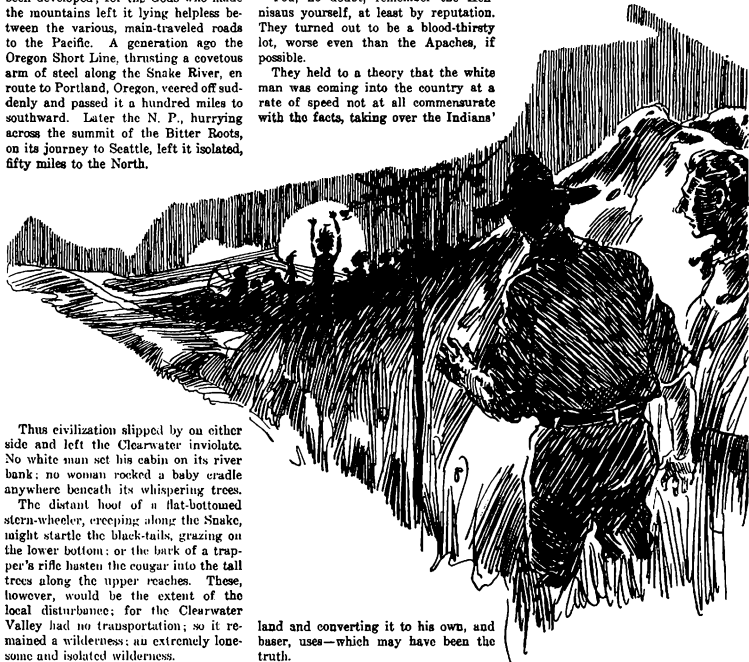
That is to say, its basin has never been developed; for the Gods who made the mountains left it lying helpless between the various, main-traveled roads to the Pacific. A generation ago the Oregon Short Line, thrusting a covetous arm of steel along the Snake River, en route to Portland, Oregon, veered off suddenly and passed it a hundred miles to southward. Later the N. P., hurrying across the summit of the Bitter Roots, on its journey to Seattle, left it isolated, fifty miles to the North.

And now I must withdraw a statement of a moment ago. Because, after all, the Clearwater was something more than a place with a name attached; it was the last retreat of the Kennisau Tribe of Indians—the very last retreat, of the very last of the tribe.

You, no doubt, remember the Kennisau yourself, at least by reputation. They turned out to be a blood-thirsty lot, worse even than the Apaches, if possible.

They held to a theory that the white man was coming into the country at a rate of speed not at all commensurate with the facts, taking over the Indians'

In any event, the Kennisau became greatly agitated over the situation. No less a personage than Old Chief Pohuntihac himself, who started out with the intention of becoming, and remaining, a Christian—went to the extremity of a trip to Washington, D. C., to tell his



Thus civilization slipped by on either side and left the Clearwater inviolate. No white man set his cabin on its river bank; no woman rocked a baby cradle anywhere beneath its whispering trees.

The distant hoot of a flat-bottomed stern-wheeler, creeping along the Snake, might startle the black-tails, grazing on the lower bottom; or the bark of a trapper's rifle hasten the cougar into the tall trees along the upper reaches. These, however, would be the extent of the local disturbance; for the Clearwater Valley had no transportation; so it remained a wilderness: an extremely lone-some and isolated wilderness.

land and converting it to his own, and baser, uses—which may have been the truth.

brother Christians the nature of his trials and tribulations.

He went in great pomp and state, arrayed in a quantity of war bonnets, beads and blankets, riding a milk-white horse with a silver mane and tail. And he returned, with his war bonnets, beads and blankets; and his milk-white horse, yet without his pomp and state. He also returned a heathen, and with a new opinion about white men.

Thereafter it transpired that, as the Western emigrant trains crept weary and slow-footed, down the Bitterroot Range into the Snake River Basin, en route to the Willamette Valley, Pohnotihac and his confederes dropped casually down the river in canoes, and slew the wayfarers, without favor and apparently without fear.

This un-Christian procedure continued over a period of two or three decades, yet the expedient was without avail; the white man continued to arrive. And, as a somewhat ironic corollary, the red man continued to depart. From a large and powerful tribe, inhabiting a two-thirds of what later was to be the state of Idaho, the Kennisauis shrank to half their former size, and dropped to the lower basins of the Snake and Salmon Rivers.

It was immediately after they had occupied this, the latest of their retreats, that the O. S. L. learned that it required the lower Snake River Basin in the carrying out of its railroad plans. So the now highly indignant Kennisauis shrank again, and further reduced themselves. This time it was the valley of the Salmon. Whereupon, certain prophets of Destiny inaugurated the would-be towns of Whitebird, Leland and Lewiston, and impudent steamboat pilots began to blow loud-mouthed whistles along the banks of the Salmon. So the Kennisauis—such as now were left of them—folded their tents like the Arabs, and silently stole away up the Clearwater basin, where they sat down grimly to await the end.

Old Chief Pohnotihac had long since died as the result of a broken heart—died, still a heathen. And they had buried him a heathen, amid much evidence of splendor, upon the shore of the upper Clearwater, near a point later known as Deadman's Hill, among the tombs of his contemporaries. He was left in this final resting place, together with his various war accoutrements and an abundance of food and blankets; and, because the milk-white horse refused to die, they killed it and buried it with him, so that he would not be required to walk to the Happy Hunting Grounds.

Thus at the time of this writing the Kennisauis were an all but extinct race: they had passed with the buffalo—or the buffalo had passed with them, whichever you choose to put it. There were those who maintained that the tribe had been wholly exterminated, and others who disagreed with this contention. It was remembered that the government, not requiring the Clearwater Valley for any other purpose, had given it to the Kennisauis as a Reservation, though at a period so remote that the Department may have forgotten all about the incident.

There also had been a report that a biological expedition, out in search of the missing link, in about the year 1913, had unofficially mentioned running across signs of extinct villages along the upper Clearwater, and numerous Indian burying grounds somewhat resembling, in their general characteristics, those of the White Plains Apaches.

Moreover, the S. P. & S. surveying crew, who had run the line to the upper Clearwater coal deposits, a couple of summers before, remembered having seen, upon one or two occasions, the smoke from remote camp fires, and the occasional flash of a red and blue blanket against the background of forest green.

Beyond these meager facts, however, the subject was shrouded in mystery—a sort of halo of dead, or half-dead, memories. All that was known for sure was that the Kennisauis had made their final stand in the upper Clearwater Basin; and that now, under the urge of immediate necessity, the S. P. & S. was about to construct a railroad up the said basin—in defiance of the laws of gravity, the ghosts of vanished tribes, the forms of those, if any, that yet remained, and all other obstacles and impediments, both seen and unseen. Because, as above suggested, the coal deposits at the head of the Clearwater, had begun to attract attention.

CHAPTER TWO

WE PITCHED our construction camp at the foot of Deadman's Hill, where the Little Chewelah enters the Clearwater, some forty miles up from its confluence with the Salmon.

Perkins, the S. P. & S. superintendent, had transferred us in a body from that unfinished stub-line running unto Burns, Oregon. The immediate job before us consisted of a roadbed, beginning at Deadman's Hill and continuing twenty miles up the left bank of the Clearwater, across the Wild Rose Prairie. The survey was already in; it was for us to follow this survey, lay the grade, run

the cuts, make the fills, (there were no tunnels) and prepare the ballast ready for the ties and rails.

Our outfit comprised some three hundred construction hands, six or seven orange-peel steam shovels, for the cuts and grades, a half-hundred horse teams for the plows and scrapers, sleeping tents, repair shops, cookhouses—an ordinary railroad construction outfit. Perkins had simply handed us the job and told us to do it, so there was nothing to be said on the subject—except that it was a man-sized job, considering the time at our disposal; for we had arrived on the ground not until early in August, and we were expected to finish before the winter set in, though no one of course knew when that would be.

Weatherford, therefore, had sent Courtney up ahead of time, to establish the camp and get things in working order; we followed a couple of weeks later—Weatherford, Charley Eaglefeather and myself.

You, of course, have heard of Charley Eaglefeather. He is (or was) what they called an "educated Indian."

Not only was Charley Eaglefeather an educated Indian, but he was an educated Kennisau Indian—to state the case as it should be stated. Moreover, he had royal blood. He was the descendant of old Chief Pohnotihac, grandson of Witehpa, and direct heir to the Kennisau throne, if there had been any throne left.

That is how they came to educate him, at least so they say. In any event, the Indian agent snapped him up from in front of his father's tepee, one fine morning while he was yet a beady-eyed child, shooting his toy arrows at imaginary foes, and packed him off for a five-year siege at Carlisle.

Here, a wealthy Boston spinster, touring the country in search of information—meanwhile intent upon the proverbial Indian uplift—espied him, expressed an abrupt prejudice in favor of his snappy black eyes and, descending upon him, fed him consecutively, and at her own expense, to Harvard University, the Ann Arbor Law School, and the Boston Polytechnic.

He came forth from these trials and tribulations about the most highly educated Indian one ever saw: educated—if I must tell the whole truth—in devious ways far beyond the mere sciences and the classics. For his accomplishments included—in addition to fancy waistcoats, ice-cream sodas and red ties—the fine arts of football, baseball and tennis.

Those of you who are not too young will remember in particular the brown-

skinned Aborigine, who electrified the college world by pitching Harvard to success in a fourteen-inning game, three to two, on the Princeton campus, upon that memorable afternoon in May, 1911. Well, that was Charley Eaglefeather, only he did it under his Christian name.

It was this same Eaglefeather who, during the following summer, played the all but unbeatable Quigley to a standstill on the Poughkeepsie clay courts, for the New York state championship. Upon Thanksgiving Day of that same year he ran eighty-five yards down the center of the Yale field, for a touchdown, and so saved the game. And it is still a matter of local gossip, around the lounging-rooms of the Baltusrol Golf Club, that it was an Indian—an educated Indian—who was runner-up to the redoubtable Spivvins himself, in the amateur state championship match, which went to the thirty-eighth hole before the red man finally finished, one down.

"Some Indian!" you will say.

And so he was. In fact, Eaglefeather was "runner-up" in a number of respects, including gambling debts and expense accounts, the latter of which, in time found their way to the house address of Miss Selina Pennington, of Boston.

But those old days had long since passed. Eaglefeather had resigned himself to the sterner facts of life. He was a construction engineer now, assistant to Weatherford of the S. P. & S. Moreover he was about to participate importantly in the building of a line of railroad up the desolate valley of the Clearwater, among the tombs of his ancestors, so to speak, and in a region over which he should have been king.

CHAPTER THREE

AS BEFORE mentioned, we three came down the Clearwater that first evening, together. And I shall not soon forget the manner of our coming—certainly not now, in the light of the events and wholly inexplicable later events.

We approached the valley by the northern route, dropping down from Spokane to Lewiston, thence over the divide to the upper Clearwater, and so down the river basin, across Wild Rose Prairie.

As we entered Wild Rose Prairie, bearing southward toward the base of Deadman's Hill, we came unexpectedly upon the Indian village. It lay to eastward of the river, over against the foothills. As we issued around an abrupt bend in the trail, there it was suddenly before us, huddled in an open area among the

trees on the bank of a swift-running stream. It gave the odd impression of bursting upon us.

Not that it was large enough to cause much of an explosion; rather it was its diminutive appearance that surprised us. There were not to exceed a dozen tepees, ancient as to lineage, weatherbeaten, and sagging at their centerpoles.

In the foreground there may have been a dozen Indian men, reclining at ease, smoking their long-stemmed pipes, not less inert even than their environments. Back and forth through the village moved stolid, grim-faced women, brown-skinned and wrinkled, sagging heavily at the hips as they waddled about, intent upon their household affairs.

Throughout the camp were a score or more of children at play. They were half, or wholly, nude. At our approach they leaped up, to run swiftly and without sound, like a flock of frightened quail, dodging behind the tepee flaps, vanishing into the shrubbery, dropping into the tall grass, and at once became invisible. Thereafter we could feel the urge of brown faces and beady-black eyes peering furtively at us from out these various retreats.

An Indian, huge, fat, long-haired and greasy in appearance, squatted over a smoking campfire on the creek bank, frying fish. He must have been a democratic Indian to be thus employed in the presence of his squaws.

"How, George?" said Weatherford, addressing him.

The fat Indian twisted slowly, still squatting, to look at us with great dignity over his shoulder.

"How," he said, without surprise.

"We're going to build a railroad up here," Weatherford explained. "A railroad up the Clearwater—you sabel!" Weatherford was mixing his English with Chinese.

The Indian looked at him a moment stolidly, without emotion of any sort. "Hyeu cultus!" he said, succinctly. "Halo cumtuz!" (Very bad; no understanding). Then he returned to his fish-frying.

"Can't he talk English?" asked Weatherford.

"I guess he could if he had to," admitted Charley Eaglefeather.

"Then he just won't!"

"Well—he didn't," said Charley Eaglefeather.

We moved on down the trail, not speaking further for the moment, thinking—at least I was thinking—of the look on that old warrior's face—a look both droll and foolish, under the circumstances, squatting there, as he was, greasy and fat and squalid, over his little

old smoking campfire. Yet this look, somehow, reminded me of an eagle in a cage, it was so silently dignified, so quietly defiant, so full of well-suppressed emotion. It was like the look of a king who has lost his throne, yet is still a king.

"Who are they—Kennisau?" Weatherford asked.

"They are Kennisau—yes," admitted Eaglefeather.

"All that is left of them?"

"It may be... perhaps," Charley Eaglefeather replied impersonally.

Weatherford's eyes took on a reminiscent look. . . . So this was all that was left of the Kennisau—a handful on a river bank, squatting about campfires: an extinct people, an all but vanished race, crowded to the final brink by the restless urge of that thing called "organized society"; clinging, nevertheless, tenaciously to their dead memories and the region of their last retreat. . . . And here was Charley Eaglefeather, Harvard graduate, football hero—matinee idol, as it were—son of a king, heir apparent to a throne that had vanished, home at last to the land of his youth, to the region over which he should be ruler—come for the purpose of building a railroad!

"And the one frying fish over the campfire?" inquired Weatherford, turning suddenly to Eaglefeather.

"The one frying fish over the campfire," echoed Charley Eaglefeather, "is Witchips, Chief of the Kennisau tribe!"

We passed on down the trail to the scene of our forthcoming activities.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE S. P. & S. construction camp lay sprawled over a flat area, a quarter of a mile wide, along the east bank of the Clearwater. It was a quiet enough place in the day time, deserted by all save only the mess hands, or now and then a slow-footed courier. After five o'clock in the evening, however, it became a wildly cavorting mass of humanity and horses, crawling, cursing, kicking, filling the silent valley with a medley of echoing sounds, which sobbed themselves into silence somewhere toward midnight.

We were working hard, against time. Weatherford issuing orders, and Courtney driving the construction crew at top speed. We had been told to get results. It sometimes snows along the Clearwater in September, always in November, and we hoped to finish the grade before it came.

Things seemed to break unfavorably for us, however, right from the very first; we appeared to be having an un-

usual amount of bad luck. Sometimes a job does go like that—all sorts of petty interruptions; unexplainable, too.

They began to get onto Courtney's nerves early in the game.

"That's always the way with a rush order," he growled. "The more hurry, the less speed. I wish we hadn't overlooked that rigging equipment. I can't work but five of the steam shovels now, and we need all seven of 'em, to get through."

"Well, do the best you can," advised Weatherford patiently. "It does seem as if we're having a little more than our share of bother, though."

"Bother!" barked Courtney. "Well, I should say we are! The dump train went off the track three times yesterday—only three times, you understand? And two grade teams went over the embankment—two, in one afternoon! Can you beat it? The men aren't working very good either, somehow."

"Oh, that's all imagination," said Weatherford expansively.

"No, it isn't imagination," Courtney declared. "I don't know what it is, but somehow we're not getting results as we should—not like we usually do. I can't tell what the trouble is, though," he repeated, puckering his brows.

"Well, it's all in the day's work," said Weatherford philosophically. "We'll get through somehow, I guess; just keep on plugging."

"And, say!" Courtney turned on his heel as he started to leave. "This survey we're following calls for a ten-foot cut right through that damned Indian graveyard, over at Number Two Hill!"

"Well," said Weatherford, gazing at him impersonally from across a stack of figures upon the desk. "Run it through, then!"

"But it's a graveyard!" protested Courtney. "An Indian. . ."

"Well, they're all dead, aren't they?" inquired Weatherford, a barely perceptible twitching at the corners of his mouth.

"Yes, I know! But we're having enough trouble already, without stirring up the dead," said Courtney, with an embarrassed little laugh.

"When did you ever become so superstitious as all that!" inquired Weatherford, dryly.

"I'm not superstitious!" Courtney defended indignantly. "But—Well—the men don't—"

"If the survey calls for a cut through a graveyard," said Weatherford, measuring his words to give them greater weight, "then we go through a graveyard! We didn't make the survey; we're simply up here to follow out in-

structions. And we're building a railroad." Weatherford returned diligently to his figures. . . "There's gotta be graveyards, somewhere," he added, half apologetically, dropping into the vernacular, "and there's also gotta be railroads."

Throughout the aforesaid mysterious mishaps—call them such, although they did seem to be running oddly toward the specific, as if some method, or general plan, were in operation back of them—Charley Eaglefeather displayed no emotion of any sort. You cannot get emotion out of an Indian, under ordinary circumstances. Not that it is not there—you simply can't get it out. You may look him in the face persistently for a hundred years, and yet not read his thoughts. He has them, all right; yet, such as they are, and whatever they are, they remain as safe in his charge as the secrets of the Pyramids.

Eaglefeather's work consisted in leveling the grade behind the construction crew—telling them when to break off, and when to go on.

This work he did efficiently, and without comment. He never had been much of a talker, even in his most loquacious moments, and he did not talk now. The incidents that first day at the Indian village had not since been mentioned by him, nor the tribe itself, nor his ancestors, nor the things we were doing to the family graveyard. He simply continued stoically about his task, looking at you—when he did look at you—with that poker-face gaze of his, which reminded you of a stone image, except that it was much hotter.

By the end of the fourth week of our sojourn at the foot of Deadman's Hill, the situation had gotten so badly on the nerves of the temperamental Courtney, that he took the matter up again with Weatherford.

"We've just got to do something about it," he said puckering his brows, as he always did under perplexities. "At least a hundred picks and shovels have disappeared from these diggings since we started work, forty or fifty within the past twenty-four hours."

"You hadn't told me that," breathed Weatherford.

"Well, I didn't hardly miss 'em at first—not until that big bunch went, yesterday. You know, I think it's the Indians that are doing it."

"Why; did you find some live ones when you went through their graveyard?" Weatherford smiled.

"No, but we found plenty of beads, arrowheads, and tomahawks, and a couple of tons of perfectly white bones." Courtney shivered. "There are some

live ones around, though, for all that," he added. "What I'd like to know—" He turned to gaze suddenly, wide-eyed, at Weatherford, as he spoke—"What I'd like to know is, who opened those flood gates into Number Two Cut, last night!"

"Why, were they opened?" Weatherford straightened up suddenly, interested.

"Yes, they were opened—opened up wide. Three feet of water standing in the cut, this morning; had to drain it out before we could go ahead. And those gates didn't open themselves, either," Courtney added significantly.

"There may be some Bolsheviks among the crew," suggested Weatherford.

"No, I don't think so," Courtney's attitude was positive. "The crew's all right. So that isn't it. The fact remains, however, that we left the dump-train standing on the siding when we closed down last night, and this morning it was in the ditch: been run down and shunted off at the switch—lying on its side."

"Might have broken loose," suggested Weatherford thoughtfully.

"Sure, it might!" barked Courtney. "Those gates might have opened themselves, too;—but they didn't. I tell you there's something going on around here—something that's getting clear past us, without us seeing it!"

Courtney's voice held a tragic note; clearly he was both baffled and worried.

"I don't think it's the Indians, though," said Weatherford.

"Well, who is it, then?" Courtney demanded, helplessly. "Somebody's doing it; it's just got to be Indians, of some sort."

"I'm sure I don't know who it is," said Weatherford, with a worried stare. "Yet it's a situation that'll have to be looked into."

CHAPTER FIVE

NOW it is a fact that we had seen no Indians since the first day of our arrival. We had observed, it is true, their horses—they had a large number of horses, two or three hundred, I should think—grazing, always at a great distance out over Wild Rose Prairie.

Also, we had noticed occasional plumes of smoke rising against the blue sky from remote campfires, and heard, sometimes, faint though garish Indian sounds—the weird chant of the harvest dance, the monotonous boating of tom-toms.

Yet these sights and sounds were always distant—far away, as if they were but memories. In truth, they had from the first seemed more like memories than realities—memories of a once vast and

ruthless, but now lost or depleted, ancestor. In a sense the thing was symbolic.

The weather was of that wonderful type we sometimes dream about, which comes so clear and still in September across the western plateaus. The earth lay silent, motionless—decked in an endless multitude of autumn colors. Above it the sun beat down, white-hot and brilliant, like a spotlight on a painted picture. The very universe seemed holding its breath, as if in a tense attitude of listening.

Out of this silence arose the endless coughing of the steam shovels, the sudden shriek of the donkey whistle, the rattling bump of couplings, the burst of escaping steam, the hoarse shouts of men, echoing mile upon mile up and down the valley, as the S. P. & S. construction crew drove headlong and with feverish haste, at its work on the Clearwater line.

Charley Eaglefeather, in his general demeanor, had not particularly changed. He pursued his task as before—stoically and without comment.

Yet, observing him more closely, I felt sure I could discern a subterranean difference. There seemed to be a deeper—in a certain respect, a wilder—look in his eyes. At times it reminded me of the look on the face of Chief Withepa as he squatted there that morning beside his campfire, gazing at us over his shoulder: the suppressed look of an eagle in a cage, or of a king who has lost his throne, yet is still a king.

We had finished the cut at Number Two Hill; we were beyond the Indian burying ground now. Not only had we bisected this region with a forty-foot railway cut, but in our haste, and absence of alternative, we had desecrated the surrounding area, grooving and scalloping the earth's surface, scattering, with plow and scraper, the little stone pyramids that marked the final resting place of warrior and chieftain, for a hundred yards or so on either side.

Yet throughout this unhalloved transaction Charley Eaglefeather spoke no word, vouchsafed no sign of protest. He simply and painstakingly leveled up the grade behind the construction crew, and continued as before, speechless.

This statement, however, could not equally apply to the construction gang. The fact that they sensed some abnormal condition began to play upon their imaginations. There must have been ancestor-worshippers among the S. P. & S. crew, or heathen of some sort. In any event, they raised a considerable hue and cry over the situation, built drama out of it, even hyperbole; raked over the

dead past hundred years of Kennisau history, assembled and digested it—or failed to digest it, and so had mental dyspepsia.

As for the rest of us, we proceeded with our work as best we could, under the prevailing handicaps. Courtney set a night watchman over the flood gates at Number Two Cut, with orders to keep an eye on the construction train. We had laid a temporary wire up the Clearwater to the N. P. main line, connecting the work at large by phone; Weatherford, therefore, called up Spokane, ordering more picks and shovels; and that was the end of the pick and shovel incident.

CHAPTER SIX

IT WAS, I believe, the second night after Courtney had placed the watchman at Number Two Cut, that the fellow reported.

He did it abruptly; he all but broke down the door getting into the improvised office. Courtney and I were there at the time, figuring over the next day's yardage. The fellow seemed greatly exercised.

"There's a bunch of Indians over at Cut Number Two," he babbled. "Actin' awful queer. Two or three hundred of 'em. Better come along, quick!"

Courtney and I, of course, hurried over to investigate.

Sure enough, there they were. In number they could not have exceeded a dozen. It was close to midnight. The moon was beyond its first quarter; it hung low against the western horizon, casting a pallid, yellow light across the enshrouded valley.

Through this light we saw them dimly—more as if they were shadows, and not realities. They were in full battle regalia. Above their heads in the saffron glow loomed their huge war bonnets. The many-colored blankets, swathed tightly about their forms, flapped in the night wind. Their faces, as they turned them now and then toward the moon, appeared streaked and blotched with the horrid masks of war paint.

We drew up close beside the string of flats, and stood there watching them silently. Their actions seemed more than curious; they went stooping along the ground, fumbling about, moving here and there across the desecrated area, to eastward of Number Two Cut.

"They're putting back the stones!" Courtney gasped, with a sudden intake of breath—"rearranging the stones to mark the desecrated graves. . . God!" he burst forth abruptly, clutching me by the arm. "See those things they've got!

Look, man, they're bows and arrows!—They're not guns, they're bows and arrows! Indians don't use bows and arrows, nowadays!"

"Let go my arm," I growled, shaking him off. . .

The things they carried were bows and arrows. They wore them looped across their shoulders, in a manner to stand up straight, as they went stooping about, smoothing out the corrugated earth, picking up stones and rearranging them in little round heaps. They did it all silently, making no sound of any sort, simply stooping about, there in the night, arranging little heaps of stones. There was something terribly pathetic about it.

And then, a sudden puff of night wind crossed the prairie, wailing dimly through the tall grass as it went, and I stood rubbing my eyes, staring foolishly. For they had vanished—vanished as they came, without a word or sound, leaving the night suddenly empty!

"Where did they go?" I heard myself asking, idiotically.

And then my blood seemed suddenly changed to water, at the pressure of a hand upon my shoulder. I turned to confront Weatherford; he had come up behind us as we stood watching.

"Did you see them?" I whispered.

He nodded his head.

"I saw them disappear," he said, in a matter-of-fact voice.

"They were fixing up the graves," I explained weakly, and kept hold of Weatherford's arm.

"Yes," he said, with an odd quirk in his speech. "It's a shame, isn't it! . . . We've got to build our railroad, though," he went on in a grimmer voice, "even if we do have to. . ." He tossed his hands and did not finish the sentence. "In the interest of commerce!" he added presently, with a drool look. "Poor fellows! They never had a single chance, against the white man."

"Did you see their bows and arrows?" urged Courtney, with a hysterical giggle. "A little out of date—eh?" and he laughed again—a hollow laugh that echoed there in the night. "Only an Indian knows how to disappear, like that!" he added, as if to reassure himself.

It must have been about five o'clock in the morning—the same morning—that the camp cook came knocking at my door, awakening me out of a not too refreshing sleep. The camp cook arises before daybreak, of course; he came, now, to report: everyone appeared to be reporting, nowadays; it seemed to be the fashion.

The nature of the cook's report was that, as he went out to the wood-rick for kindling to build the fire—at about three-thirty o'clock in the morning—he noticed a horseman, a solitary horseman, riding back and forth along the ridge over by Cut Number Two.

It was still very dark; yet he could distinctly see him, so he claimed. The man was an Indian. He was gaudily attired in beads and blanket, paint and war bonnet. He was a tall, large Indian. He sat very straight and dignified upon his horse, like—well, something like a chief. He carried bow and arrows, and a war axe. He wasn't doing anything, though, in particular—just riding back and forth among the graves, as if he were on an inspection tour.

As for the horse—the cook was most positive about the horse; it was a milk-white horse, with a silver mane and tail. He even saw the dew glistening on its silver mane and tail, saw it throw up its head and whinny once, as if it were lost and looking for its mates. They weren't doing any damage, though—not making a sound of any sort—just moving back and forth like shadows, there in the dark, among the graves. They seemed to have risen up suddenly out of Cut Number Two, he said; and they later rode back into Cut Number Two, and so disappeared. When he looked up again they were gone.

"I thought I ought to come and tell you, sir," he said. "They weren't very plain, of course, not much plainer than shadows. And yet . . ."

He continued to hang on his heel, there at my doorway, obsessed with a surfeit of words, as if he wished to remain forever talking.

"I thought I ought to come and tell you, sir," he repeated.

"Go on and get about your breakfast," I ordered him, roughly; "this is a railroad construction camp, not a kindergarten; the thing we need here is food!"

CHAPTER SEVEN

WE HAD a yet more definite experience than this, however, with the chimerical white horse and its silver mane and tail.

This time it was the night-watchman himself. We three—Weatherford, Courtney and I—were sitting in the kittle office, discussing the next day's work. It was late at night—eleven-thirty, at least.

Suddenly we heard a fusillade of rifle shots, over by Cut Number Two. We sprang up and rushed pell mell through the doorway, into the night, and across

the interval in the direction of the sounds.

We found the watchman leaning weakly against a drive-wheel of the donkey engine fumbling with his rifle in an effort to reload it.

"What went with them?" he gasped, hysterically, as we came up and dropping his gun, he caught Weatherford by the sleeve.

"What went with what?" asked Weatherford, thrusting him loose.

"They rose up out of Cut Number Two," he said, his teeth chattering, "and started across the old burying ground, straight toward me. I called out to them to halt. But they didn't do it. Then I opened fire on them—began to shoot, as fast as I could. But somehow I couldn't hit them, at all. So they came straight on, slow and dignified as fate, not making a sound—straight at me, till I could see the whites of their eyes, and hear them breathing. God! I simply couldn't miss, at thirty yards!"

"Yet, I did miss!" he gasped, in a shivering whisper, "I emptied my repeater straight into them, at thirty yards, and never turned a hair! And then I ran—as fast as I could; I came here! Where are they, now?"

"What are you talking about?" demanded Weatherford, shaking him savagely.

"An Indian!" he whispered. "An Indian chief, all in war paint and blankets; riding a milk-white horse, with a silver mane and tail! Where did they go?" The man trembled all over as he talked; his face was a white as death.

"They didn't go anywhere!" said Weatherford, angrily. "Because they weren't here. You go to the camp doctor and have him give you a good stiff drink of brandy."

"Hell!" swore Courtney, twisting his hands together. "Of course, they weren't here. Of course, there wasn't any—"

There came a sudden whistling in our ears; an object flashed hot and hissing past our heads, and stuck quivering in the framework of the donkey. I reached a trembling hand and pulled it out. It was an Indian arrow, crowned with a head of flint.

Weatherford turned toward Courtney with a gesture of precision:

"You'd better 'phone Fort Hardie, tomorrow morning," he announced, "and tell them to send over the cavalry, and clean these Indians out. We've just got to finish this railroad," he added, parenthetically. "And as for the rest"—he turned to me abruptly—"You go out, tomorrow morning, and look over their

herd—and see if there's a milk-white horse there, with a silver mane and tail."

I went, as ordered; but I found no milk-white horse with a silver mane and tail.

CHAPTER EIGHT

WE SAW them again the next night, just after the sun had dropped below the western horizon, leaving the valley in shadows.

We had gone into a conference, Weatherford, Courtney and myself, over the question of veering the survey up beyond Camloops Creek, in an effort to reduce the grade. We three simply came together beside the lumber heap in front of the company office, and began to talk. Eaglefeather was coming out of the bunk-house at the time. Since the question in a measure involved his part of the work, Weatherford invited him to join us.

I gave the Indian a second, keener, look as he came walking silently, tall and dignified into our midst. And I saw at once that he had changed for the worse. His usually smooth hair was disheveled. His face was pinched and set. There was a drawn look about the corners of his tightly-closed mouth, and a wild, though wholly inscrutable, expression in his eyes. With all the force at his command he appeared to be struggling against some tense emotion which seemed continually on the verge of overcoming him. His attitude reflected tragedy.

It was but natural that we soon switched from the subject of grades and crossings, to that other subject which lay furtively in the back of each of our minds; because by now the situation had passed far beyond the scope of trivialities. It had become a real problem.

"There are only a dozen of them Indians, at the most," said Weatherford, reassuringly. "They'll not make us any real bother."

"Real bother!" snorted Courtney. "I sure hope it don't get any worse than it is already. What do you make of that white horse incident last night?"

"Oh, they've got a white horse hid around somewhere," said Weatherford, expansively. "That night watchman was just excited; that's how he came to miss them. And it's a good thing that he did."

"The bunch of grave diggers was back again last night," said Courtney, ominously, "heaping up little piles of stones, as before. The cook saw them."

"Well, it's too darned bad," commented Weatherford. "What made those fool surveyors run the line where they did, anyhow? Any idiot should have

known better than that. You can't blame the Indians for being mad. . . So they were back again last night, were they?"

"That's what the cook says. He saw them." Courtney stood staring at Weatherford. "The cook saw them. Yet the night-watchman couldn't see them at all," he added. "The two of them stood shoulder to shoulder, looking; and the cook could see them, and the night-watchman couldn't." Courtney laughed shrilly. "What d'y' think of that?"

Weatherford gazed at him steadily for a moment.

"I think we had better change the night-watchman," he said quietly.

But Courtney was not so easily diverted.

"Strange, the cook could see 'em and the watchman couldn't," he mused, abstractedly. "Yet they were there! Snooping around among the graves, like their feelings had been hurt, and they hadn't power to mention it. Say! Do they ever come back like that, I wonder? I remember once. . ."

But Weatherford cut him off sharply. "Fahaw, now!" he said disgustedly. "That's a foolish line of talk for a business man. They've all been dead a hundred years. . . Haven't they?" he added; and he gazed about at us slowly, impersonally, as if he expected an answer to his question.

Courtney turned suddenly to Eaglefeather.

"What do you think about it, Charley?" he asked, with a little twisted grin.

Eaglefeather stared at him for a moment intently, without speaking; then his gaze wandered off into the gathering darkness.

"I don't know whether they're dead or not," he said. "But I don't believe they are!"

"Oh, pshaw!" Weatherford laughed his provoked laugh again. "That's all foolishness, Eaglefeather. Get the idea out of your mind. It's that bunch of Indians over by Lost Creek—juse them, and nothing more."

"I guess you're right," argued Courtney. "I ought to know! The darned fools kept banging around on their tom-toms, last night, and doing their war chants, over by Deadman's Hill, till I couldn't sleep a wink. Getting onto my nerves, too, I guess."

"The Kennisaws were not beating tom-toms last night," said Charley Eaglefeather. "Nor doing any war chants, either."

"You mean to tell me they weren't beating tom-toms from ten o'clock till midnight, over by Deadman's Hill?"

Courtney's face had taken on a look of positive alarm.

"They were not," said Eaglefeather, quietly. "I was with them until after midnight myself, at their camp in the Elk Creek Basin, many miles from the place you mention."

"Then who was it beating tom-toms, I'd like to know?" Courtney almost shrieked. "What in the—"

He paused with a sudden intake of breath, his face frozen in a look of utter stupefaction.

"There they are, now!" he whispered tensely, and pointed toward the distant top of Deadman's Hill.

The sun had slipped behind the western rim; the valley beneath the ridges lay swathed in the gathering shadows. Yet the top of Deadman's Hill, a half mile distant, still caught the last rays of upper light.

And there, among the scattering pines, upon the abrupt shoulder of the precipice, stood the milk-white horse and its rider, silent and erect like a statue of William II. at Coblenz; while behind this apparition ranged a group of horsemen, blanketed, and with war accoutrements, standing at attention.

For a moment they remained thus, as if frozen into their background of scenery, standing out clear and distinct under the last rays of the setting sun:—a chief and his warriors, ready to move forward—as if a spotlight had been turned suddenly upon the final phase of a tableau, out of history.

Then the light waned, faded, disappeared entirely, leaving the whole earth wrapped in deeper opaque shadows. And the apparition was gone—vanished with the light.

It was the voice of Eaglefeather that aroused us from our stupefaction. He had uncovered, suddenly, and he stood thus, facing the top of Deadman's Hill. Across his darkly expressive features there had come the wrapt look of a zealot; his eyes burned with an unnatural fire.

"Pohontihac!" he whispered, reverently. "Pohontihac! The Chief has returned!"

"Silence, Eaglefeather!" cried Weatherford, shaking him by the shoulder. "Cut out that sorcery, man! Nobody has returned, there's nothing unnatural. . ."

But the Indian gave no heed to this command; for Eaglefeather had begun to talk, at last.

"They have returned," he echoed in a hollow voice, twisting his hands together. "The Kennisaws have come back to claim their ravished lands. This is

the final move. There's trouble on the wind, tonight."

"Calm yourself, Eaglefeather!" Weatherford's voice took on a pleading note. "It's only the Kennisaws, I tell you—the remnant of the tribe. They haven't come back. They haven't. . ."

"The north wind blows," the Indian ran on in a sing-song voice, rocking himself gently back and forth with his chant—"The north wind blows. The cicadas have ceased to call. The crows fly in long lines to the mountain tops; There's a ring around the moon, tonight!"

The look on Weatherford's face had changed suddenly to one of alarm.

"Man, you're beside yourself!" he begged. "Don't carry on so—don't do it, I say! You know there's nothing unnatural about it. You know. . ."

But the Indian had passed beyond the pale of argument; he was back again in the paleolithic age; the superstitious of a thousand years had returned upon him, multiplied.

"The gods of the Kennisaws are angry tonight," he ran on, swaying himself back and forth rhythmically, in a weird half-dance, tossing his arms above his head. "Their souls are wracked with sorrow—they hear the sounds of much weeping. The spirits of the dead make medicine. The north wind will rage for a sign; the forests will moan for the sorrows of those who weep. The spirit of the great Pohontihac comes for revenge. Beware of the north wind! Death rides through the heavens tonight. . ."

Thus he raged on in his hideous incantation, eyes wide and staring, head erect, shoulders squared, rocking himself luridly back and forth, the look of a seer upon his tense and agitated face.

We stood staring at him, amazed and speechless, there in the gathering night. No one within our little group held the power of further utterance. For the cycle of life stood inert; the very earth itself loomed forth, devoid of perspective. The groove of time seemed suddenly to have slipped back and left him once more a savage, among his savage ancestors. For Charley Eaglefeather, abruptly and without warning, had returned to Idolatry.

CHAPTER NINE

THE storm broke about ten o'clock at night—a high, dry wind blowing out of a half-clear northern sky, under a fitful moon.

It set the tall grass singing like Aeolian harps, moaned through the scattering clumps of buckbrush, and roared in the tops of the cottonwoods

over back of the cook-house. Its voice stirred the S. P. & S. construction camp to an activity far beyond its normal, filling the night with the thumping of many hoofs, the sound of hurrying feet, and the loudly issued call of orders.

My badly-shaken nerves denied me sleep. So I walked about the construction camp—in and out among the improvised buildings, up and down along the different spur tracks, back and forth across the open intervals—finally, after the lapse of an hour or so, through a tiny universe which slept again, though more or less fitfully.

The wind raged on, rising ever in intensity. Yet the night was not wholly opaque. Across the intervals the camp buildings peered like gray ghosts out of the darkness. Through the pale saffron glow I could see the dim outline of Dead-man's Hill looming like a shadow across the northern sky. Overhead the clouds, snow white or ink-black, with pink and silver edges, fied on and on across the face of a porcelain moon.

The night seemed filled with an extra dread, the air surcharged with currents of electricity. The thing—whatever it might turn out to be—was not yet at an end. Of this I felt quite sure. Perhaps it was only beginning—who could say! The slumbering camp slept on; only the night-watchmen were about, moving like wraiths along their various beats. And I, whose nerves denied me sleep, kept additional watch and ward, listening, waiting intensely, senses keyed to the breaking point, against that thing which should—at least which might—next transpire.

THEY appeared to be coming from the north—riding with the wind and the night, as it were, down across Wild Rose Prairie.

I could hear the vague though well-defined rumble of significant sound, rising and receding, and rising again, like the roaring of a storm on a distant mountain side. No physical thing made itself manifest, as yet—no object was visible to the human eyes; yet I keenly felt the approach of this nameless menace.

Filled with a sudden wish to rise above my environment, and so attain a point of greater safety, I climbed upon the lumber heap in front of the company office, and there stood, buffeted by the high wind, peering northward, wide-eyed, into the night.

The sounds had grown louder, now, increased to a rattling roll—the steady, persistent roll of hundreds of horses' hoofs, hard-driven, beating upon the

grass-grown surface of Wild Rose Prairie.

They were bearing down upon us—coming in the direction of the construction camp. Presently a dim outline became visible, more like the moving shadow of a cloud, spread thin and stringlike across the flat surface of prairie, vague yet forever moving, working up and down, traveling continually toward us through the saffron night, like the wind passing over a field of wheat.

The sleeping construction camp heard the increasing urge of sound, and stirred again into life. Lights winked on suddenly in the cook-house and the sleeping quarters; door slammed, voices called shrilly across the darkness. The S. P. & S. had arisen once more to action. Beyond all other sounds I could hear the squealing of the frightened horses in the company corrals, the scamper of feet, the sharp thud of hoofs against the sides of the enclosure; and, rising thinly out of the aggregate rush of noise, the voice of Weatherford at the telephone in the little office back of me, calling persistently for Fort Hardie, and the cavalry.

A hand grasped me tensely by the sleeve, and I turned. It was Courtney; he had climbed upon the lumber heap beside me; he stood now, white-faced and trembling at my elbow.

"A stampede!" he whispered. "They have sprung a stampede—turned their range horses loose upon us!"

But it was not a stampede. For those horses—deployed, as they were, in a thin skirmish line of cavalry across Wild Rose Prairie, running low and with muzzles tense and outstretched—they had riders! Riders, in blankets, paint and war bonnets, who sat their steeds erect and full of dignity. They were led by a figure on a milk-white horse with a silver mane and tail.

Thus they came on swiftly toward us. Yet they gave forth no sound—made no undue motion; they simply drove straight ahead, silently, inexorably, like spectres riding down the night.

"See how still they are!" gasped Courtney suddenly, clutching me by the arm. "As if they were dumb!—not able to make a noise of any sort!"

I shook his hand free from my sleeve. "Why shouldn't they be still?" I hissed back at him foolishly. "There's nothing to make a noise about."

"Shadows of the dead past!" I heard Courtney breathe with a half sob, his voice trailing off into a whisper.

Up along the S. P. & S. right of way they came, through Cut Number Two, over the half-finished grades, across the desecrated burying grounds, with an endless roaring of hoofs, like the rush of

a rising gale. The night wind rattled the dry quills of their war bonnets, streamed through their black, disheveled hair, whipping their blankets out straight like streamers behind them, as they came along. Yet they gave forth no human sign nor sound: they simply rode circumspectly on through the night.

"God! They can't move!" Courtney gasped. "See, they can't move—they can't turn their heads!"

The frenzy of this half-demented man seemed to unsettle my reason, obsess my mind, so that I heard what he heard, saw only what he saw. Thus I beheld this strange aggregation of shapes, fossilized in this their supernatural calm, come swiftly on, as if pulled by unseen hands across the darkness. Their chins were up, their shoulders held erect; each right arm, reaching high and defiant, clutched aloft a bow and a sheaf of arrows. Yet no emotion stirred the muscles of their bodies, no feature changed upon those paint-smear'd faces. They simply sat like images of bronze, their eyes, wide and unblinking, gazed fixedly ahead, as if frozen in their sockets.

"Blind!" Courtney whispered, half hysterically. "Totally blind! Oh, pitiful, pitiful!"

Thus for a brief instant they flashed across our view. In that instant the carth spun dizzily around, losing all form and focus. For they rode—or seemed to ride—straight through the construction train, asleep upon the siding; through the seven steam shovels; through the cook-house, and the hundred tents of the sleeping quarters; through the little office itself, where Weatherford still sat calling frantically for the cavalry—through, and on—and left things standing as before!

The S. P. & S. construction camp joined in the brief commotion, with a slamming and banging of doors, the call of frantic voices from out the sleeping quarters. Yet these, with the steady beating of hoofs, were the only sounds.

Our own horses, catching the swift contagion, screaming and kicking, leaped against the corral gates and, riding them down, flowed out upon the prairie to join the wild night orgy.

So they passed, thundering away southward down the Clearwater Basin. The noise diminished, grew less and less, coming vaguely and yet more vaguely across the growing distance, sank finally to a low grumble on the night wind, and so disappeared. Once more the S. P. & S. construction camp lay wrapped in its garment of silence and repose.

Presently, out of this silence, there arose the wailing note of a lone coyote,

howling to the moon, from the shoulder of Deadman's Hill.

CHAPTER TEN

THE cavalry arrived next morning at daybreak, in charge of young Captain Farnsworth, spick and span and "spiffy;" not far removed, mentally, from West Point, and showing it by his actions. Weatherford gave him the details.

Yes; he would round up the darned Siwashes—sure, he would. In about ten seconds, too.

He proceeded to do so, though not in ten seconds. At two o'clock in the afternoon he called past the camp to report.

"There weren't any Indians, to speak of, after all," he smiled, "less than a dozen bucks, all told—same number of squaws, thirty or forty naked children, and about a hundred dogs.

"But, say!" he explained, to Weatherford. "Those Indians haven't been doing anything. They're perfectly harmless—quiet as mice; haven't made a move in twenty years—so Alderson says. We found 'em over back of Deadman's Hill, cooking their breakfast—frying fish over a little old smoky campfire, too lazy even to stand up. I'll run 'em over to the Fort for a couple of days' discipline, however," he added, "and then turn 'em loose again. You don't need to worry about 'em, though; they're perfectly harmless."

"Don't you ever think it!" said Weatherford grimly. "They pulled a perfectly good stampee on us last night—run off all our horses: took us till half an hour ago to get 'em back. By the way," he added, looking suddenly at the officer, "You didn't happen to see anything of Charley Eaglefeather, did you? He's an educated Indian—one of the S. P. & S. crew. He's clean gone, and we don't have an idea where to find him."

The Captain hadn't seen Charley Eaglefeather, however. Neither did the S. P. & S. crew ever see him again. For he had vanished as completely as if the earth had swallowed him up, leaving no trail behind.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

WELL, the storm brought the snow upon its heels within the next twenty-four hours.

Forty-eight hours later came a long-distance telephone from Perkins, ordering us down to the Grant's Pass District, in Southern Oregon, where it doesn't snow in September, nor in October either, for the matter of that. The next spring the war came; and I forgot all about how to build railroads, and didn't get back for two years.

They finished the Clearwater stub-line, though, in the meanwhile. I know; I rode over it one day last week. That's

how I came to tell you this story. I was en route to the new coal fields. I'm working for the Government, now, and the Department figured this new Clearwater coal might be good enough for the Navy. So they sent me up to investigate.

I got off the train at Waverly, a place once better known as Deadman's Hill. Call it sentiment if you like, I don't object. I simply wanted to look the place over again.

The smoke of an Indian village attracted my attention, over against the foothills on the bank of the Little Chewclah. So I went in that direction.

An Indian, fat and squalid and greasy was squatting over a little smoky campfire at the creek's edge, frying fish.

"How, George?" I said.

"How," he replied.

And then, still squatting, he twisted to look at me over his shoulder.

"Why! Charley Eaglefeather!" I gasped, all but collapsing in my amazement. "Of all things! How on earth did you get here?"

Still squatting there, he gazed at me for a moment over his shoulder, silently, inscrutably, yet with great dignity, like an eagle in a cage; or like a king that has lost his throne, yet is still a king.

"*Hieu Clatawah!*" he said, finally, "*Halo Cumtuz!*"

Then he returned again to his fish-frying.