

The Call of the Tribe

"The most faithful servant I ever had!" said Jim Daley, nodding his head in the direction of the Yaqui Indian, who was squatted on the ground a few yards away from the Ranch house, on the veranda of which the owner of the Cross Bar Ranch and myself were comfortably seated, smoking our cigarettes. "Yes, sir, he is all that. You may talk about your so-called friends, Steve, but when it comes to a case of sticking right to you, there's none can beat the Indian, when you treat him half decent and he takes a liking to you. The Yaqui has been with me now almost three years, and, believe me, I wouldn't exchange him for the best of the other hands on my ranch."

"Indeed," I replied, "but say, Jim, how came you by your dark friend; and how is it that he holds such a strong attraction for you?"

"He blew along here one summer evening, and asked me to take him on. I was short of a couple of men at the time, and although I had never had an Indian on my ranch, I had often heard that they made excellent ranch hands, so I determined to give him a trial, and believe me, it was one of the best deals I ever made. I asked him one day why he had wandered out here, so far away from the Tribe and his native haunts. He told me that he had left his hunting ground because he had been cruelly wronged by a certain white man, who robbed him of his supply of furs—the results of many hard days' labor; and for which he had hoped to reap an ample reward. But that was not the worst of it; for this same man kidnapped his daughter, the pride of his life, who, he thought, would cheer him in his old age. His "Wild Rose" he called her. He afterwards learned that she was dead—murdered, or at least she died from starvation and neglect. With tears flowing down his rough cheeks, he told me his sad story, said he was broken-hearted and had to leave the scenes once so dear to him—the home of his fathers, which lies so far beyond those hills. He wandered along until he met me. I have always been good to him, and he vows to stand by me through thick and thin."

As Daley finished speaking, the Yaqui slowly rose from the ground and stood erect, gazing in the direction of that long line of mountains that extended along the western section of the Cross Bar Ranch. The evening sun was slowly sinking behind the hills, casting a magnificent radiance over the brow of the mountains, as its golden rays were dispersed in all directions. An imposing fig-

ure he made as he stood there before us. I had often read of those majestic Indian warriors, tall and stately, striking respect and admiration into the hearts of all with whom they came in contact, but never before had I seen those splendid portrayals so gloriously exemplified, as when I beheld the Yaqui standing before me in the gathering twilight. Straight as an arrow he stood; his head flung well back on his broad shoulders; his long hair blowing gently in the soft evening breeze; his square determined jaw firmly set; his dark eyes flashing, as he gazed steadily in the direction of the fast fading sun. Perhaps he was thinking of his home so far beyond the mountains; perhaps he was thinking of those happy days with the Tribe, when his little Wild Rose played around his wigwam, and cheered his heart with her childish prattle; or perhaps he was thinking of the man who so bitterly blighted his life, and who some day might pay the terrible price the Indian would demand as his revenge.

We rose from our seats and were about to enter the Ranch house, when a cowboy rushed breathlessly up, and informed Daley that two more of his cattle were dead. No external injury was evident and it appeared as if they had been poisoned.

A scowl broke over Jim's face and he cursed softly under his breath. "That makes five gone in three weeks," he said hoarsely. "I can't understand it, unless someone is playing foul with us. I have my suspicions, but for the present we can say nothing."

The Yaqui was by his side in an instant, a look of intense interest and concern depicted upon his noble countenance.

"Me think some heap bad man around here," he exclaimed, "him not like you. Listen, Yaqui tell you how to get that man. Me watch at night, he come, we catch him, maybe we kill."

"Well, ye'll try not to kill him, Yaqui," replied Jim, "but I like your idea, and we shall try it."

A few miles from the Cross Bar was situated the Black Diamond Ranch. I had learned during my stay with Daley that the relations between the two ranches was anything but cordial, and I only ascertained the cause while out riding one day with some of Jim's cowboys. As we rode along we met with a man of rough and stalwart appearance, whose hard and swarthy face had something cruel and unnatural about it. An unpleasant individual, I judged him as he passed us, throwing a wicked glance in our direction.

"That thar's Bill Lawson, owner of the Black Diamond yonder," said the cowboy nearest me, when the man was out of hearing. "The roughest nut that ever came to these parts. I'm tellin' yuh, thar's no love lost between him and our boss, Daley. I don't know just how it come about, but anyway the boss give him a sound thrashin' some time ago. It appears Lawson wanted to run the whole bloomin' country up here, but Daley showed him that it didn't go, no, siree! I guess the boss is about the only man he's skeered of, and they say he swears to get even with Daley one way or 'nother. I'm told he's a noted vallain, and would just as soon shoot you as say 'Howdy'. He dropped in here some years ago, from Lord knows where, but it's sed he skipped the law fer some crime or other. I'm expectin' to see him plug Daley any day, and it's no harm to say it, but I do be thinkin' it's him that's poisonin' our cattle. Wait and see if it ain't."

I had already noticed that there was no friendship held at the Cross Bar Ranch for the owner of the Black Diamond. At mention of his name, Jim's face became dark and sullen. The Yaqui, too, seemed to hold a bitter hate for Lawson.

"Me no like that man," he told me one day, "him heap bad man. No like Indian—would shoot Yaqui quick. Perhaps some day I kill him, too, maybe."

A few days passed by. The nightly watch was kept at the Cross Bar for the slayer of Jim's cattle. The Yaqui insisted on keeping the watch alone, and no means of persuasion could turn him from his purpose. We wondered then at this strange whim, but realized his motive later.

The first few nights his efforts were fruitless—no cattle-killer came; but at last his vigil was rewarded.

It was long past midnight. The first signs of dawn were already beginning to appear in the East. The Yaqui having decided that another watch had passed in vain, was about ready to quit his post, when his keen eyes perceived the figure of a man creeping stealthily towards the corral. Drawing back into the shadows, the Indian waited in ambush the approach of the intruder, who was slowly and cautiously drawing nearer. He had almost reached the corral when suddenly the Yaqui sprung from his place of hiding and confronted the surprised features of Bill Lawson.

What really happened during the next few minutes we were never able to fully ascertain; and we could only roughly guess from the few scattered facts given us by the Indian.

Lawson, apparently realizing his peril, whipped out a revolver and fired point blank at the Yaqui who, as he sprang upon his enemy, received a bullet full in the right shoulder. Twice more Lawson's gun echoed through the corral, but the bullets went wide of their mark, and ere he could again pull the trigger, the Indian was upon him, and, wrenching the weapon from his grasp, threw it far beyond his reach.

It was a short but terrific struggle in which each combatant fought desperately for supremacy. Bill Lawson was no weakling and was determined to fight to the last. The great loss of blood, however, was beginning to tell on the valiant Yaqui, and a weakness began to overcome him. Had he not been wounded, he would have made short work of his antagonist, but the intensity of the pain in his shoulder made that arm practically useless, and the tremendous strain of the battle was overpowering.

With a violent effort Lawson tore himself free, and with lightning rapidity dealt the Indian a crashing blow on the jaw, which made the Yaqui crumble in a heap on the ground. Perceiving figures advancing rapidly in his direction the victor fled, without waiting to administer any further punishment to his fallen antagonist.

The reports of the revolver and the noise of the combat had echoed in the Ranch house, and in a few moments we were rushing towards the scene of combat, some distance from the house. Coming up we discovered the Yaqui painfully endeavoring to rise from the ground, bleeding profusely from his wounded shoulder, and muttering incoherently.

"Bill Lawson, heap bad man—murderer—kill my Wild Rose—all those years me follow him to kill him—I wait my chance—it come, but him shoot me—says he sent my Wild Rose where he will some day send me and Daley, but me get him yet. Yaqui must have revenge."

"So it's Lawson, all right," said Jim, bending over the Indian to examine his wounds, "thank Heaven, Steve," he continued, a few minutes later "the Yaqui is not seriously injured, and the owner of the Black Diamond shall yet render an account for all his foul deeds."

Three months passed. The Yaqui had fully recovered from his wound and was able to be about his duties on the ranch as usual. A deep gloom or melancholy seemed to have fallen upon him. Perhaps he was thinking of the revenge he had waited for so long, and which so recently had been almost realized. He had traced Lawson to the Black Diamond, and had secured employment with Daley that he might be near the man he hated, to strike the fatal blow when the opportunity presented itself. Revenge was slow in coming. Years he had had to wait. He could not go near Lawson's ranch, for he would be shot on sight, and furthermore, he wanted to get his rival when he was alone, that he might crush him in a man-to-man battle.

Daley, too, had lost much of his cheerfulness. Perhaps he also, was thinking of the common enemy, and was trying to form a plan to rid the country of him. I often wondered why he did not have the law look after Lawson, now that he had found out it was he who was poisoning the Cross Bar cattle, and I firmly believed that Yaqui restrained him from doing so, that he himself might mete the punishment out to the owner of the Black Diamond in the Yaqui fashion.

When I entered the breakfast room one morning, I noticed that I was its only occupant. Jim had gone out early, the servants told me, in search of a calf that had wandered away, and which he thought was among the mountains. It was a beautiful Autumn morning, and after breakfast I decided that I, too, would take a walk in the glorious mountain air. The Yaqui was nowhere to be seen; he had wandered away early in the morning and had not yet returned.

During my stay at the Ranch, I had occasionally heard reference being made to "Dead Man's Canyon," which was a very deep and narrow gorge, situated about the centre of the Cross Bar hills. At the bottom of this canyon stood out conspicuously numerous huge black and jagged rocks, over which a torrent of water was continually rushing, giving forth a weird resonance, which was echoed through the neighboring mountains. It was related that the place received its name from the fact that a rider, many years gone by, while lost among the hills on a dark night, had stumbled over the precipice and was dashed to death upon the rocks below. Ever since, the gorge was known as "Dead Man's Canyon." I had gone there once with Jim out of curiosity, and, although I had no great liking for the canyon, I felt myself in some strange way being drawn towards it that morning. As I approached the gorge,

I was suddenly startled by the sharp crack of a revolver echoing through the hills; followed by two more in rapid succession. Then the air was rent by a confused harmony of angry voices; violent and abusive language fell upon my ears.

As I drew nearer I could plainly detect one voice to be that of Daley. The other was unknown to me, but I instinctively judged it to be none other than that of Bill Lawson. With all haste I ran in the direction of the sounds. In a moment I had scaled the top of Dead Man's Canyon, and there on the opposite side of the gorge, I beheld Jim and his archenemy in a deadly grapple. As I appeared upon the scene, Daley really seemed to be getting the worst of it; he was underneath and his antagonist was doing his utmost to hold him down. I saw Lawson pick something off the ground; I saw the long blue blade of a hunting knife flash in the morning sunlight and——

Down the side of a nearby hill leaped a lithe figure, which sprang with the agility of a tiger at Lawson's throat. It was the Yaqui.

I was over in a moment. The Indian with all his fury let loose, tore into the man he hated. Instead of the peaceful Indian I had hitherto known him to be, I now beheld an infuriated savage, maddened with lust for revenge—the terrible revenge of the Yaqui.

"Ha, Bill Lawson," he yelled, "at last you pay. Last time me weak, you shoot me, but today me very strong, and because you kill my Wild Rose; because you try to kill me; because you try to kill Daley, you now feel heap the revenge of the Yaqui. I kill you plenty."

With his powerful arms increased to twice their strength by rage, he swung his struggling victim high above his head. For a moment he held him poised in mid-air, and then the body of Bill Lawson crashed upon the rocks at the bottom of Dead Man's Canyon, far below.

At last the Yaqui had his revenge.

It was a week later and Jim Daley and I were once more seated on the veranda of the Ranch house enjoying our cigarettes. A ray of cheerfulness was again beginning to shine over the Cross Bar Ranch. Only the Yaqui seemed in low spirits. He appeared sad, as if something was weighing upon his mind.

"I wonder what's ailing the Yaqui," said Jim, when he perceived the Indian coming slowly towards us. "He's been moping around very strangely for the last two or three days. He is not himself at all. I am afraid that he is thinking of leaving me and returning to the Tribe, now that he has gotten his revenge."

As Daley finished speaking, the Yaqui approached and extended both his hands towards us.

"Me go now," he said sadly, "me like you heap, will always like you, would like to stay more, but the Tribe—my people, they call me, I go."

Sadly and with regret, we held his hand for the last time. All Jim's entreaties for him to remain were unavailing. The Yaqui must answer the call. Overcome with emotion, Jim turned away, and the Indian with a final sad glance from his dark eyes, left us, mounted his Broncho and rode off.

Together we watched him depart. We gazed after him till he ascended the steep slope of the mountain. For a moment he paused on its brow, gloriously silhouetted against the western sky whose evening sun was just setting, and then he slowly disappeared from our view, behind the hills.

"Well, that's the last of the Yaqui," said Jim sadly, "would that he had remained with me, but it seems he had to go."

"Yes," I replied, "he is gone in answer to the call of the Tribe."
J. T. O'M. '28

I slept and dreamed that life was Beauty,
I woke and found that life was Duty.
Was thy dream then a shadowey lie?
Toil on, poor heart, unceasingly;
And thou shalt find thy dream to be
A truth and noonday light to thee.

—Hooper.

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