

"Alas that Scottish maid should sing  
The combat where her lover fell!  
That Scottish bard should wake the string,  
The triumph of our foes to tell."  
Leyden.

We did not know that Wolcott, Canton, Smith and their hired thugs and assassins had pulled into Casper some three or four hours before daybreak that morning (the train had stopped at the stockyards, some distance outside of town), had loaded their wagons and headed, before sunrise, northward for the Tisdale ranch along the North Fork of Powder River. After eating breakfast and paying our stable bill, we traveled unconcernedly along. Some seven or eight miles out, we came upon the still smoking camp-fires, where, from appearances, a party of some three score men had made camp. This, as we afterward found, was where Wolcott and his men had stopped for breakfast. The thought that the raiders were ahead of us never once entered our mind.

It was about 10:00 a. m. We had slept late and had taken our time, walking our horses and traveling slowly. Charlie had gathered from his conversations with Smith, Canton and others, that it would be at least the middle of April before the invasion started (from Cheyenne). Therefore, carelessly, and thinking little of danger as we rode along, sometimes for half a quarter or so at a swinging gallop, sometimes trotting, but mostly walking our horses. All the while, we were laughing and joking in the happy, care-free manner of boys. Then suddenly, some few rods below us, topping a gradual rise, we saw the noon-day camp of a large body of men (the invaders). A score or more rifles covered us. Hands in the air, we rode on down and into camp to find ourselves prisoners of Frank Canton, Tom Smith and their Texan desperadoes.

Covered by several rifles, we dismounted, and hands in the air, stood at attention while our six-shooters and Winchesters were removed from our waist and saddle holsters. Then, questioned by Canton, we told our story.

Fortunately for us, they did not think to separate and question us one at a time. Therefore, we were allowed to "invent our tale," and what one said the other, of course, "swore to."

Recognizing Solon as one he had talked with in Cheyenne, Canton fairly "pounced on him" and Charlie was forced to bear the brunt of the merciless examination.

Cool, calm and collected, as always, he was at no loss for words. He readily admitted talking with Canton and Smith in Cheyenne and told them he had thought the matter over, reconsidered, and had come to Laramie City. Meeting me, an old friend, he had persuaded me to accompany him, and after consulting with Fred Hesse and Doctor Harris, we had headed northward for the T. A. Ranch on Crazy Woman Creek, some dozen miles from Buffalo.

Of course, I swore to every statement Charlie made. So sincere were we, that, partly at least, we convinced the raiders that we were friendly. They made no bones about their mission, but spoke openly of their plans and of what they intended doing, and we, to further throw them off the track, cursed roundly Red Angus, Jack Flagg and other men among the homesteaders whom we had reasons to believe they hated and were unfriendly toward.

Finally, we were told to "help ourselves" from the chuck wagon, which, of course, hungry as we were, lost no time in doing. After dinner we were told to mount and ride. This, too, we did with seeming pleasure. Mounted, we asked for our guns, but they were refused. We were told by Canton to "keep quiet and be satisfied that we did not kill you, but let you ride along in good company."

Charlie and I lost no occasion to congratulate each other, always where members of the company could hear. We talked about our good fortune in so soon meeting up with the party. We had feared, we let them understand, that we might fall in with a party of rustlers. Now we were safe, no band of rustlers would dare molest such a strong party. We could, in safety, remain with them until we reached our

destination, the T. A. Ranch. Once there, we felt sure (we let them know) that Harris's foreman would quickly straighten out matters to their, and our, satisfaction.

It took us the balance of that day and all the next one to reach the Tisdale ranch, some forty miles from Casper. The roads were none too good and the great wagons, heavily laden, made slow travel. All this time we rode with them, carefully watched and guarded, but otherwise, unmolested. Several times, men on horseback were met. Each time they were compelled to turn about and accompany us on our journey. Several hours later, they would be released, but each time they were cautioned against mentioning having met the party. Each man, in turn, took this oath of secrecy, and eventually, was allowed to resume his journey. As we were going the same road, it was expected, and we did not demur, that we ride with the party.

Just before we reached the Tisdale ranch, we sighted an approaching horseman. Coming nearer, it proved to be Mike Shonsy, foreman for the Western Union Beef Company, for which Ex-Governor Baxter was superintendent. Shonsy brought the news that there were several rustlers encamped at the neighboring ranch, Knolan's K. C. For a time, Wolcott, Canton, Smith and a few prominent stockmen talked privately with Shonsy, and then we were ordered to press on, to leave the wagons and to hurry to the Tisdale ranch.

The greater part of the next day, Friday, April 8, was spent at Tisdale's ranch waiting for the wagons to arrive. They had been delayed by bad roads, miry crossings and other unlooked-for incidents. Canton planned on blowing up the house (the K. C.) with dynamite, or giant powder, this during the night. The explosives were in the wagons; hence, was the delay.

Charlie and I were as eager, seemingly, to participate in the attack as were any of the invaders. Completely fooled, Canton ordered our guns returned to us and assured us that we would be placed upon the "payroll," and would receive our

\$5 per day. All expenses would be paid and we would benefit, jointly, with all others in the death of each rustler. Charlie completely won Canton's heart by asking, as a special favor, to be allowed the first shot at Red Angus. He said, "Angus once jailed me and had me fined for merely beating up a nester." Charlie, at this time, had never seen Angus. This doubly pleased Canton and Smith, and from then until our escape, we were treated as full-fledged members of the party.

In the afternoon, a few of the men, with Shonsy in charge, were sent out to reconnoiter. Riding with Shonsy, they would be taken for a body of the Western Union Beef Company's employees and no suspicion would be aroused. The balance of the party, Charlie with them (I had been ordered to remain as guard with the teamsters), set out after nightfall.

The plans, as I have said, were to dynamite the ranch (the K. C.) before day-break. To do this, they must reach the ranch house long before dawn. This they planned, but as Burns truthfully said:

"The best laid schemes o' mice an' men  
Gang aft a-gley,"

Daylight had broken when they came in sight of the K. C. and Canton and Smith, wise in their generation, would not allow of nearer approach.

How many rustlers were entrenched at the K. C. no one knew. Rumor gave them credit with numbering twenty or more. That Nate Champion, "King of the Rustlers," was present all were assured, and Champion, as was well-known, was a dead shot and absolutely fearless.

END OF PART FIFTH.