

Old Doctor Bill

CHAPTER XVIII

Feeling exposed and weak in manpower, other villages of the Piute country decided to imprison neighboring camps of Indians. A second stirring episode occurred the same day as the Indians were massacred at Circleville, and not far from Fort Sanford on the Sevier River to the north. General George A. Smith ordered Captain John Lowder to take a detachment and capture the Indians encamped above Panguitch. Lowder, with some 14 men, saddled and set out. They located the redskins about nine miles up Fish Creek.

To avoid alarming the Indians, the militia adopted a risky expedient. They divided into small groups and rode into camp a few at a time with ostensible casualness. This could have resulted in decimation of the force, but the Indians were evidently not preparing for battle. A considerable part of the detachment reached the center of the camp without any fighting.

Trouble commenced, however, when Captain Lowder demanded the Indians' guns. One of the Piutes was known to whites as Old Doctor Bill because of his dignified appearance, white hair and some pretensions to medicine man status. He became incensed. He glared about, shaking his head and insisting he could not find his gun. The militiamen found the weapon hidden in brush behind his wickiup. Old Doctor Bill was even more angry when he saw his gun taken by the whites.

Another Indian approached Captain Lowder and held a gun up to him as if surrendering it. The captain grasped the barrel. Quick as a weasel the Indian raised the stock and thus brought the gun up level with the officer's chest.

Meanwhile Old Doctor Bill had turned warrior, too. Surrepti-

tiously he had picked up a bow and fitted an arrow. He fired into a group of whites. The missile buried itself in the side of James Butler. The white-haired brave continued shooting. Several white men fired at him. One bullet severed three fingers from the hand that had been drawing an arrow. He turned and ran, loping through the high sage, veering from side to side in hope of dodging bullets. One ball hit him, brought him down. He rose, but a white horseman overtook him and smashed a rifle barrel down on his head. The blow destroyed both Indian and rifle.

Captain Lowder was still in peril. He had thrust the muzzle of the menacing gun aside and was trying to wrest the weapon from the Indian. Despite his wound, Butler was first to act. With the arrow sticking out of his side, he rushed to his officer's aid.

"Shoot him!" cried Captain Lowder.

Butler fired his double-barrelled gun and killed the brave. The white man was taken to Panguitch to have his wound dressed.

"Two men laid hold of that arrow," asserted William Ashworth, "but they couldn't pull it out. We were afraid the sinew lashings that held the arrowhead to the shaft would loosen and leave the head inside him. But with three men working at it, they finally pulled it all out."

The other Indians were held prisoners until Colonel Dame ordered them liberated.

MIDNIGHT AMBUSH

The fifth of the struggles that make Piute County remember April 21 and 22, 1866, has elements of romantic pathos.

Indians crept up on the public corral at Monroe, Sevier County, on the night of the 21st. They attempted to break in and let out the stock. They were driven away by guards. Messengers galloped off at daybreak to Richfield and Glenwood. These towns joined Monroe in raising a small company. One member of the troop was Christian Christensen, a young man who had recently become betrothed to Nicoline Bertelsen.

The militiamen set forth on the trail of the raiders about midnight. Down in the Sevier River bottoms the white men found many cattle gathered. Evidently Indians were quietly rounding up a large number before driving them off.

A small log fort was situated near the river, about a mile away. Captain Pierson ordered his men to go stealthily to the palisade. Near the fort, they came to a fence with high brush growing along it. They had barely passed the fence when guns blazed at their backs. Indians lay concealed among the rabbit brush.

"Oh, my God!" cried Albert Lewis. He fell from his horse dead. Christian Christensen wheeled his horse halfway around. He received a bullet in the side. It struck his pistol, driving a fragment of the butt into him. James Mortensen and John Petersen were also wounded.

Leaving John Wilkenson with the dead and wounded, the others rode into the fort. Soon Major Allred and Peter Christensen returned. Allred and Wilkenson carried Christian Christensen to the fort.

The Indians drove the cattle southward along the valley then up Rock Canyon. In the morning the white men pursued for several miles. They were reenforced by men from Circleville. But deciding that it would be foolhardy to follow the Indians into the mountains and invite more ambushes, they turned back.

For three weeks Christian Christensen lay fighting for life. But he lost. On his death bed, however, he married his betrothed, Nicoline.

Still another raid occurred a week later. Standing picket guard near Fairview, Thomas Jones was killed and William Avery wounded. These depredations came so swiftly that they roused the leaders of the white men to the first concerted action of the conflict. The entire Territory began organizing for war.