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Chapter 10

In the year 1851, President Brigham Young sent colonies to extend the Mormon territory to the south. Those who went had to fight four adversaries: the Utes, the Navajos, the renegade whites, and nature, which seemed at times the greatest adversary of all. No treaty with the United States could guarantee the settlers from the depredations of the Navajos. Even Kit Carson who displaced the Indians had found it impossible to quell them. Jacob Hamblin and Thales Haskell genuinely loved the Indians, and time after time won them to a reluctant peace, only to have it broken again because of the actions of the renegade whites. But at last the Mormons had begun their settlement, in the face of Indian attack and nature.

Eight miles out over the torturing up-hill-and-down, the wounded man in agony begged them to stop, and they camped on a bleak slope with no shelter from the wind that night nor from the blazing sun next day. They had nothing at all to relieve the torture of that ghastly wound—they hadn't so much as a drink of water to give him. They thought best not to go back with a bucket to the river, and the nearest water in any other direction which they knew, was seven to nine miles away. The Hall brothers had come with them, and, in the early morning, one of them started with a bucket for Lake Gulch, the other one tended the horses, and Hyrum Perkins started for Bluff to bring help—a wagon—a doctor or a nurse and first-aid material, for the wounded man could not be moved again on a horse. Lem Redd gave all his time to his suffering companion, but there was little he could do to soothe the pain and no materials with which to dress the wound, full as it was of splintered bone. In the afternoon of that first day on the shadscale slope, the shattered limb became swollen and discolored, and in spite of all they could do, it seethed with maggots. Their supply of rags possible for bandages were almost minus to begin with, and the prospect looked dark indeed. Even if the desperados did not find their way to the east side and follow them, it still looked impossible to keep Lyman alive till help could come. The fact of the matter is, the thieves did find an old boat, but instead of getting across and trying afoot to overtake the outfit that had left on horses, they went down the river, and one of them reached Lees Ferry, carrying the guns and the clothes of the other. In that shadscale camp with nothing to look forward to but the arrival of a wagon from Bluff, or to the arrival of the dread shadow with his scythe, Jody Lyman seemed to have but few wretched days left. His leg, twice its natural size, and seeming to be already in the first stages of decay, looked like a death warrant without appeal. One man spent his whole time carrying water from Lake Gulch, faraway over the rocks and sand, and yet there was never enough in camp. They pondered deeply for something on which to hang their hope; experience had taught them how Providence can intervene at the last minute; but there seemed to be only one way for him in this wilderness, and that was to send an angel from heaven. But he had angels in other places than heaven, and he sent one of

them. Up over the dreary profile of that shad-scale ridge appeared a band of Navajos, old Pahlily in the lead. Riding straight to the distressed camp and swinging down from his cayuse, he took the situation in at a glance, his eyes bright with interest and sympathy. "What are you doing for this man?" he asked in his native tongue, and Lem Redd gave him to understand he did not know what to do. "Where do you get your water?"

he inquired in kind solicitude. When he was told they carried it from Lake Gulch, he smiled pityingly, and calling for their bucket, he handed it with a word to one of his men who trotted off over the hill and returned in fifteen minutes with the bucket full of water. The Navajos knew from smooth rock in that direction there should be water pockets still full from the last rain, and the hole they found is still called Jody's Tank. Bending low over the wound, the brave examined it carefully, "Go, gather some leaves of the prickly pear," he ordered, "burn the needles off, and mash the leaves into a pulp. Put a poultice of this on the wound." It worked like magic; it kept the wound in healthy condition; and in due time a wagon came and ground slowly back over the long, long road to the fort. A sorrowing company came out on the sandhills to meet the wagon, and as they heard the story of what had happened, the details of murder premeditated and carefully planned, they saw the hideous outlines of problem three as a thing more to be dreaded than they had supposed. These cutthroats would plan to take their scanty means of support wait deliberately to murder them if they tried to recover it.

The people of the fort could not wait in ambush to kill. Lem Redd could have killed the fellows there in the willows, but he took care not to shoot near them. These killers, like snakes in the grass, had a frightful advantage, and were more to be feared than either one of the native tribes. Yet in this latest tragedy there was one bright spot: They saw old Pahlily and his followers saving a man of the fort from certain death. The people liked to hear it, to tell it. Some of the more hopeful one even foresaw a time the Navajos would help drive the outlaw element from the country. What a thrill it would have been then to know how nearly that dream was to come true. But it was not true so far-the big cattle companies at the base of the mountain were still giving work and shelter to the fugitives, and they gathered like buzzards to an ill-smelling carcass. They stole from the companies, of course; they stole continuously such things as they could take out of the country, and in a small way it saved the people of Bluff. It was the policy of these cattle companies to curry the favor of these desperados in self-defense. The people of the fort could not afford to encourage them at all, and this withholding of encouragement tended to breed the hatefulness which is to be expected in the hearts of thieves.

Jody Lyman lay helpless in Bluff a long time before he was able to limp out on crutches. His leg was always crooked, always a source of serious trouble, and agonizing up operations were performed to re- move some lingering splinter of bone. He was the first martyr in the war which was to end all Indian troubles in Utah by establishing law and order in San Juan County. True, he lived thirty years or more after that time, but it was a living death, and when the end came, it

was the direct result of that bullet. The thief had caused a long delay to the repairs on the ditch by running away with the Bluff horses, and it was some time in October before the citizens of Bluff could begin looking again at that hundred rods of river where the ditch had been, and plan either on making a ditch there or on moving out. The very life of the mission hung on that hundred rods of seeming impossibility. The bishop declared firmly they would entertain no proposition involving the abandonment of the mission. He said they must make the ditch, that they would make it, all difficulty and other trouble notwithstanding. They began in the fall, building down the stream from the place where the river surged in against the cliff, and building up the stream from where it turned out from the cliff. With such cottonwood logs as they could find up and down the river, they would build in the water a kind of house twelve by sixteen feet, weighting it down a piece at a time with stones, and filling it in with brush and rock. With the one house filled in and covered with earth, they would move out on it and build another house in the water beyond. In this way they built houses from above and houses from below till their buildings met in the middle of the hundred rods of lost ditch. With this foundation standing five feet above the river, they scraped in sand and earth along it to make a bank, had the cliff for the other bank, and called it a ditch. It took them all winter to get it ready for the water, and that section was known for years afterwards as The Cribs. Some parts of it cost fifty dollars a rod, valuing work at going wages. They figured that with the completion of The Cribs, they had overcome the most serious difficulty of their ditch in the sand. They were to find out that it was the beginning of a long program of worse things still.

Up the river twenty-five miles from the log fort, stood Mitchel's trading post. His son, Herndon, along with a Mr. Myric, had been killed on the reservation in the winter of 1879-80. The old man credited the Navajos with the murder, and down in his heart he cherished a pronounced bitterness towards them. The Piutes, ten times more insolent than the Navajos dared to be, had no better standing at the post than the tribe across the river, and relations between them and Mitchel were always badly strained. In the spring of 1882, they suddenly reached a breaking point when hot words led to a flourish of guns and then an exchange of shots. Mitchel ordered a detachment of soldiers to come posthaste from Fort Lewis for the upholding of his dignity and the maintenance of his rights. The Piutes withdrew in ugly humor to register their fuming emotions in the indiscriminate slaughter of cattle belonging to the people of Bluff. Nothing could be more disturbing to the Navajos than the appearance of soldiers on their border, and when the uniformed fighting men came into view, they drew back with their livestock towards the interior of the reservation. But they found it a difficult matter to crowd with their herds onto the ranges of their self-assertive neighbors, and a comparatively easy matter to move over to the range of the peace-pleading Mormons, and their sheep began to strip the country around Bluff of every spear of grass. The mission was always woefully vulnerable to the bad humor of all the unprincipled men and all the unstable elements around it, yet however discreet and diplomatic it had to be to keep in good favor with the

savages, it had all the same, to maintain an aggressive fight every day and night to hold its own and to outgeneral the surprise plots being framed against it. These flocks of Navajo sheep took a stranglehold on them which they knew they could not survive for many weeks. It would deprive them of horses to work or to ride, of cows to milk, and it would constitute a precedent which could not fail to starve them out of the country. The Mormons met in council and decided to send a man at once to the nearest Indian agent on the reservation, begging that the sheep be called back to their own side of the river. In an hour of dark discouragement their representative returned, reporting that the agent had informed him in surly tones that the Navajos had as much right to graze the north side of the river as anyone else. Were they whipped? Would they have to give up; and go, leaving their hard-earned Cribs and fields and homes and hopes and move out? They would surely have to find a way to move the invading sheep or move themselves.

They met in council again. They prayed. Then the bishop and his co-workers seemed to rise to the occasion with wise suggestions, and with inspiring resolution. They would go boldly over the head of that Indian agent who had pronounced against them, but they would go humbly as on their knees in distress of pleading to higher authority, praying for deliverance from this unbearable imposition. Everybody in the fort prayed that their delegate would have charm to win favor. When word came that the higher authority had listened with sympathy and ordered the intruding sheep back to their own territory, deep gratitude prevailed in the fort. The San Juan Co-op, with its slow-crawling freight outfits of six-horse pony teams and two wagons, traveled back and forth regularly over that long slim road to Durango, and it gradually became a substantial source of revenue. Their increasing trade with the Indians gave each stockholder a freighting job at regular intervals. They loaded out with pelts and wool and blankets, and loaded back with flour and merchandise for themselves and for the store. The business looked so promising that William Hyde put up a store on the river ten miles below Bluff, at what is known as Rincone, the corner where the pioneer company had to make a road up San Juan Hill. This Rincone store, although it was begun with the best of intentions, was contrary to the advice of Erastus Snow for the people to stay together. However much justification there seemed to be for making the store at the time, it was destined to result in the greatest tragedy of the mission. These stores with their tempting display of goods, and their indispensable custom of barter and pawning, became danger points of contact where unforeseen friction might develop explosive temperatures on short notice. The Indians would crowd the store lobbies, looking for anything on which they could put their sly hands, and trouble would have started often with the Navajos but for the influence of men like Jim Joe. Once when five dollars went mysteriously from sight, and every Navajo in the store swore he was innocent, Kumen Jones sent for Jim Joe who listened indignantly, and going with long strides to the store made Long John return the money. The face of Jim Joe, full-blooded Navajo, with light-brown eyes and eagle-beak nose, was always welcome in Bluff. Holding to standards of honor high above the masses of

humanity whatever their shade, he was yet, like other reformers, able to make but little impression on his own degenerate people. Both tribes made it an essential part of their business to steal when-ever they could find or make an opportunity. They preyed on each other as they had done for ages along the river, especially around this crossing, but the Mormons had livestock and imported goods which were peculiarly attractive, somehow more worth taking, and they hadn't learned to keep watch on their pos-sessions day and night. Also the Mormons did not go on the warpath because of their losses. Old Nucki, the picture of guile-less honesty, would inquire often how many days it was till Sunday, and being pleased with the old man's interest in matters so important to them, the people would always tell him. How foolish they felt when they discovered his reason for wanting to know, for they discovered that he was driving away their cattle and butchering their milk cows while they were worshiping unsuspectingly in the old log meetinghouse. Not only impious Frank, but the long-faced Nucki! It was still a vexed question whether the little flower of friendship could survive among such rank thistles as this.