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CONCLUSION

The colorful history of the San Juan country of Southeastern Utah has long been a favorite with the Era family of readers. For the more complete story of Posey, see the serial, "The Outlaw of Navajo Mountain," by Albert R. Lyman, beginning on page 598 of the October 1936 issue of The IMPROVEMENT ERA. Additional details of the San Juan colonization may be found in the continued story, "Hole in the Rock," by Anna Prince Redd, beginning in the January 1947 ERA, page 16.

Thieves, drouth, dead markets, a bill in Congress proposing to oust them from all their possessions, and now the prospect of building the cribs again on a costly foundation which at best was but a temporary structure and might be rendered useless at any time! Men dropped their hands and relaxed in despair. Yet in the face of all these discouragements Bishop Nielson advised his people to stay, reminding them they had two big, unattained objectives yet ahead. "I've helped to pioneer six Utah towns," he said, and I'm too old and worn-out to begin again. The only move to which I look forward now is the move I shall make when they carry me to the graveyard on the hill." He was in his latter seventies, and he still worked as hard and as long as other men, and in their great love for him his people thought this fidelity was worthy of a better cause. All the same most of them thought a move was inevitable, and another letter was sent to the leaders of the Church, asking them to come again, look the situation over, and say whether they still required the people to stay. In answer to their petition Brigham Young, Jr., Anthon H. Lund, and George Teasdale, of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, came all the way from Salt Lake City, a journey of at least three long days by team from the nearest railroad station, Thompson Springs. "Your task in this country is not accomplished," they said. "This is a very important post: and the great objective in calling you here has not yet been reached. After emphasizing what had been said to the people of the mission on two previous occasions, that the mission was of tremendous importance and would have to be carried on by them or by some other people, the three men asked of each man individually if he were willing to stay. Every man in the meeting consented for them to write his name as one who could be depended on to stay, and Brigham Young, Jr., wrote every name in a little book he carried in his pocket. Silent forces were already at work to bring about many changes. That bill, hanging fire in Congress like a sword suspended by a hair over San Juan for years, resulted at length in the appointment of a special committee to visit the country and see if it were a fit place for the Piutes to live. That committee, astonished and amazed at the unusual region through which they were conducted by guides from Bluff, reported that San Juan was decidedly unfit for the Piutes. Its lack of good streams and farming land, its rocks, its sand, and its drouth made it the wrong kind of country in which to civilize a wild people. Worse than that, its many dens and barriers, its mountain passes, and its corners of safe retreat had already

emboldened the Indians to do what they never would have dared to undertake in some other country, and the longer they lived in San Juan the worse they would be. The committee's adverse report exploded the dreamers' arguments for a legal Indian reservation in San Juan, and someone awoke feebly to the fact that the Piutes had never yet acknowledged the authority of the United States, and it was again proposed that they be appointed a reservation and placed within its boundaries. When the Piutes understood they were not to be approved among their ancient retreats but to be sent to some other country, they resolved as before to do their own appointing and stay in the region of their little valleys east of Elk Mountain. If it had been the Navajos, twenty or thirty thousand strong, a Kit Carson would have been on the job to put teeth into the government's orders, but with this pesky little snarl of Piutes, spoiled children requiring more attention than they were worth, the easy thing, if they began to snivel and threaten, was to let them do just as they pleased. That is exactly what they did, crowing exultantly about their freedom from all outside orders. The killing of that reservation bill, although it eliminated one source of uncertainty, had no more effect on the drouth than it had on the Piutes. The dry spell hung on till that bill was remembered as a lost possibility. The winds blew the grass up by the roots and carried the loose soil out of the fields. The mountains could not be seen for clouds of dust, and the whole face of the country was dark and dreary like the most wretched region in the world. Those who staved, besides the immovable natives, stayed because of their uncompromising devotion to the mission or because they were too poor to move. Like a bright rift in the dark clouds, through which welcome sunshine pours into the gloom, the signs and figures of prosperity began to appear in the drouth. That Co-op shepherd, which they had bought at a seemingly extortionate price to keep the people from being driven out of the country, had increased steadily, even through the dry years, till the bishop who advised them in the first place to buy it as a company herd, advised them now to buy it as individuals. The old settlers of San Juan began to realize that they had survived the drouth, while the winds with their dust clouds had blown most of the buzzards off their roosts and out of the country, guns and all, purifying the range and making it safer than it had been for years. The builders of the fort took heart and bought Carlisle's ranch and the flock of sheep which he still held. This gave them the key to most of the Blue Mountain, cleared now of most of its undesirables where the outlaw empire had flourished. Monticello rose up from her humiliations and abuse and became the county seat. Finding themselves more prosperous as the drouth broke, the old settlers bought the big Cunningham ranch at LaSal. They bought out the Dark Canyon Cattle Company and a number of smaller concerns, and before they were aware of it, they controlled the whole of San Juan County, a region more than six times as extensive as the state of Rhode Island. Prosperity came as the bright sunshine after the storm. With the whitefaced cattle increasing in the big grass, a new and long-hoped-for era was ushered in. The old log huts with their dirt roofs disappeared one at a time to be replaced by homes of brick and stone. Bluff became, with one exception, the wealthiest town for its population west of the Mississippi River. Much of what had been implied in the repeated promises of

prosperity to the holders of the fort if they would carry on seemed to be budding into reality. And yet Problem Two, the Piutes, who had never yet been made a part of the United States, remained deeply rooted in all their evil precedents. a sure prophecy of serious trouble. San Juan, the Piute melting pot for outlaw Indian blood, was sure, as such pots are always sure, to bring forth a more vigorous type. Piute Frank, an old fanatic, bent half-double with some spinal disorder, was the grand high priest of their ignorance at the opening of this century. No white man, though he lived in their country and saw them every day, could give any complete list of their killings. No white man got far enough into their mysterious world to discern how many men, women, and children came under the deadly ban of their superstitions. In that Piute world, as distant from the United States and about as well known as if it had been on the moon, lived ghoulish creatures and monsters defying all description. In their narrow world they held tenaciously to their ancient customs, the same as if the United States had not come and reached all around them for hundreds of miles in every direction. When a man, woman, or child became burdensome from sickness or advanced age, he was thrust out of the wickiup without blankets on some fierce night to perish from exposure or he was left to die for needed attention in some camp from which they were moving. They might return to burn the corpse in a heap of dry limbs or they might avoid the place for years. Major Problem Two, chronic and complicated, was at the door of the people who had been sent by their Church to solve it; they would have to do it alone and in their own way and time. Appointed by some strange destiny to take a prominent, although an inglorious, part in the impending trouble, was Posey. Posey was devoted first of all to the perverted superstitions of his people - fantastic traditions of witches, snakes, and devils, about which he might fly into a holy rage on short notice. Once, with gun in hand, he chased a Mexican out of Johnson Creek Valley for killing a rattlesnake. Posey's second interest was the card blanket, the race track, the horse belonging to someone else. No one wanted to clash with this old troublemaker, men with cattle near his "farms" thought it poor economy to incur his displeasure, and he collected from what he thought were easy victims, carrying his racket on and on to what sometime had to be the breaking point. Finally a warrant was sworn out for Posey's arrest. Triumphant in his threats and sure he was secure with his followers at his back, Posey retired with a back-load of melons and fruit to his wickiup to feast on the spoils of his raid and exult over his latest achievement. Arthur S. Wood, a deputy sheriff, acting as leader, sent a messenger asking Posey to come down and talk it over. Posey refused in contempt. The report of Posey's impudent answer was all it needed to touch off the explosive resolution in the hot pulse of the men and boys waiting at the store. Their fingers fairly itched to get hold of him, and they turned with quick step towards the group of wickiups on the hill. Twelve of them walked; two rode horses. Fourteen men, only two of them carrying arms, setting out to arrest a leading Piute in the midst of his camps! Nothing was ever more promising of trouble before on this firing line. When they reached the doorway of Posey's dwelling, the deputy sheriff repeated the invitation to come down and talk it over. "Yes, me no go," Posey hissed in contempt. At a signal from Sheriff Wood, his

men seized Posey hand and foot, giving him the shock of his life. He struggled and squirmed and thrashed about like a fish out of water, while his squaw snatched up a heavy gun and the Indians from the other dwellings came rushing in alarm. Trouble seemed certain. Not one of the fourteen in that posse bothered to take any notice of the other Piutes as they came rushing with their guns. The fearless disregard of what they might do was more terrifying than any gesture of defense could have been. These other Piutes halted in stunned astonishment, for right there in their camps Posey's hands were being forced together and locked with steel cuffs; he was being dragged from his own wickiup, his big hat left in dishonor behind, his long hair in a humiliating jumble over his head and face. They simply couldn't believe it. It jarred them completely out of gear, and they followed in blank bewilderment. When the posse came into town with their prisoners, a company of Navajos gathered around them, and in the company was Jim Joe, who told Posey in the most uncompromising terms what a yellow coyote he had been in returning evil for good with the friends who wanted to help him. Finding the wind gone unaccountably out of their sails; and being convinced that it was the intention to hold their boasted champion under close guard and go on with legal procedure whether they liked it or not, the people of the wickiups turned back to their camps and sent fast riders in half a dozen directions to gather their fighting men. Before dawn the next day the terrible men of the tribe began to arrive from Allan Canyon, from Alkali, from Montezuma Canyon, and from camps at the foot of the mountain where they were spending the summer. But Poke, the unconquerable, the invincible, who had never bowed to a white man but had cut the scalps off their heads, had not yet come. The fact of the matter is, being no friend to Posey, he never did come. All the same the Piutes intended to fight, but strange to relate, they couldn't find the moment nor the place to make a start. They did agree to guard the road leading up through the cliffs toward Monticello. Without seeming to recognize this blockade, the people prepared to go on with the preliminary hearing, and Justice Peter Allan called his court to order the schoolhouse. The trial went forward as if the Piutes were but a defeated and unimportant minority. Fearlessly and unfailingly Judge Allan, always very matter-of-fact in discriminating between right and wrong, pronounced emphatically against the horse thief, and ordered him appear in the district court at the next session. That ostentatious array of Piutes dropped their jaws in disconcerted amazement. Their fighting blood, instead of heating up to explosive temperatures as intended, fell towards a freezing degree. Posey's mouth sagged at the corners, and he became deflated like a punctured balloon. For twenty-three years he had heard these people pleading and entreating, and it had never entered his imagination they could do anything else. The only thing now was to squirm out of the clutches of these awakened Mormons. He wanted to be free, no matter how white-feather and ignominious the method employed. The fighting men went stringing back to their several places of abode at Allan Canyon, Alkali, and elsewhere. Posey's belligerent little squaw plotted with his sons and his brother, Scotty, for his escape. Visiting him often as he sat dejectedly under the vigilant eye of his guard, they succeeded in getting him synchronized with their plan for his freedom. They would hide with their horses in a jungle on an island in

the river near to a popular swimming hole, and Posey was to persuade his guard to take him there for a cooling bath. The excessive warmth of that August weather gave weight to his pleas, and he waded out into the stream wearing nothing but a disguised look of concern for the perilous possibilities of his plot. Keeping furtive eyes on his guard who sat on a log with a six-shooter thrust in the band of his overalls, Posey found the deepest place in the current and sank from sight. Hugging the sandy bottom he propelled himself down the stream with all possible eagerness. When he had all but drowned in increasing the distance between himself and that six shooter, he rose coughing and gasping in the shallows towards the island and ran as in a handicap race through two feet of water for the bank. The guard fired at the splashing figure, and Posey dodged frantically as the bullet whistled past. As he gathered himself, another bullet sang very near to his naked flesh, and still another seemed to burn him by its close proximity as he plunged into the willows. He had escaped, but the shock and the surprise of it all had left him unstrung like a child that had seen a ghost. And the fighting men on whom he had doted so heavily had slunk away like a litter of scared puppies with their tails between their legs. He saw himself deserted, alone, an outcast, a fugitive. His people had gone back whipped and cowed to meditate the sharp change in policy with the once-tame peacemakers of the fort. Bluff had done the unprecedented. After these twenty-three years of futile effort, it seemed to have accomplished the impossible. Surely this was the long-sought solution of Problem Two. No, it was not. The Piutes were to follow their mad course for yet twenty years. When at the end of those twenty years the Mormons rounded up the Piutes in the schoolhouse, distorted stories of "the Indian war" in San Juan got onto the front pages of the big daily newspapers, and people in cities and towns of surrounding states were overheard to ask, "Where is San Juan? And how does it happen that anybody is still fighting Indians at this late day?" San Juan might have been a long way beyond what was happening on the outside, but the outside was forty years behind what was going on for their benefit in San Juan. Representatives of the United States Indian Service enrolled the tribe in the stockade, the older ones to be supervised in thrift and industry, the children to be placed in school. "What do you Mormons propose to do about the losses to which these people have put you?" asked the Indian agent, McKeen. When he was told it was the intention to forgive and forget, he objected. "Now look'e here," he said, "before you become too forgiving, we want it definitely understood there are certain things these people will have to do from now on, certain conditions to which they must conform." When the essential preliminaries were finished, the bars and fastenings to the gates of "Fort on the Firing Line" were removed, while the people on the outside and on the in stood in a kind of solemn hush of waiting, restrained by mutual awe of this moment from saying a word. When the gate was opened, the Piutes came quietly and meekly out, a people who had been chastised and humbled by their friends, no old grudge nor bitter score to settle later on. They had been whipped into the line of life and safety by those who loved them, most; the only way in which any people can be whipped to take it and call it good. Since then some of the Piute children have completed the lower grades in that building. Some of them have proved

themselves to be natural artists with a keen sense of perception which no one would have expected to find buried away in the dark world of Piutedom. They are not at war with themselves nor with any one else; no bad men are among them. Their best friends are the Mormons with whom they live as near neighbors. The years have served to break down all the hostile misunderstanding and mistrust between the three races in San Juan. Bonds of friendship and confidence extending without discrimination across the race-line are hastening the time when equal opportunity and just arrangements all the way round will make the Piutes and Navajos the equal of any other people.