

# Little Big Horn Medicine

**Red Men and White, #1**

**by Owen Wister, 1860-1938**

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TO  
*S.B.W. and O.J.W.*  
FROM THEIR SON

## Preface

These eight stories are made from our Western Frontier as it was in a past as near as yesterday and almost as by-gone as the Revolution; so swiftly do we proceed. They belong to each other in a kinship of life and manners, and a little through the nearer tie of having here and there a character in common. Thus they resemble faintly the separate parts of a whole, and gain, perhaps, something of the invaluable weight of length; and they have been received by my closest friends with suspicion.

Many sorts of Americans live in America; and the Atlantic American, it is to be feared, often has a cautious and conventional imagination. In his routine he has lived unaware of the violent and romantic era in eruption upon his soil. Only the elk-hunter has at times returned with tales at which the other Atlantic Americans have departed themselves politely; and similarly, but for the assurances of Western readers, I should have come to doubt the truth of my own impressions. All this is most natural.

If you will look upon the term "United States" as describing what we are, you must put upon it a strict and Federal construction. We undoubtedly use the city of Washington for our general business office, and in the event of a foreign enemy upon our coasts we should stand bound together more stoutly than we have shown ourselves since 1776. But as we are now, seldom has a great

commonwealth been seen less united in its stages of progress, more uneven in its degrees of enlightenment. Never, indeed, it would seem, have such various centuries been jostled together as they are to-day upon this continent, and within the boundaries of our nation. We have taken the ages out of their processional arrangement and set them marching disorderly abreast in our wide territory, a harlequin platoon. We citizens of the United States date our letters 18—, and speak of ourselves as living in the present era; but the accuracy of that custom depends upon where we happen to be writing. While portions of New York, Chicago, and San Francisco are of this nineteenth century, we have many ancient periods surviving among us. What do you say, for example, to the Kentucky and Tennessee mountaineers, with their vendettas of blood descending from father to son? That was once the prevailing fashion of revenge. Yet even before the day when Columbus sailed had certain communities matured beyond it. This sprout of the Middle Ages flourishes fresh and green some five hundred miles and five hundred years from New York. In the single State of Texas you will find a contrast more violent still. There, not long ago, an African was led upon a platform in a public place for people to see, and tortured slowly to death with knives and fire. To witness this scene young men and women came in crowds. It is said that the railroad ran a special train for spectators from a distance. How might that audience of Paris, Texas, appropriately date its letters? Not Anno Domini, but many years B.C. The African deserves no pity. His hideous crime was enough to drive a father to any madness, and too many such monsters have by their acts made Texas justly desperate. But for American citizens to crowd to the retribution, and look on as at a holiday show, reveals the Inquisition, the Pagans, the Stone Age, unreclaimed in our republic. On the other hand, the young men and women who will watch side by side the burning of a negro shrink from using such words as bull or stallion in polite society; many in Texas will say, instead, *male cow* and *caviard horse* (a term spelled as they pronounce it), and consider that delicacy is thus achieved. Yet in this lump Texas holds leaven as sterling as in any State; but it has far to spread.

It were easy to proceed from Maine to California instancing the remote centuries that are daily colliding within our domain, but this is enough to show how little we cohere in opinions. How many States and Territories is it that we count united under our Stars and Stripes? I know that there are some forty-five or more, and that though I belong among the original thirteen, it has been my happiness to journey in all the others, in most of them, indeed, many times, for the sake of making my country's acquaintance. With no spread-eagle brag do I gather conviction each year that we Americans, judged not hastily, are sound at heart, kind, courageous, often of the truest delicacy, and always ultimately of excellent good-sense. With such belief, or, rather, knowledge, it is sorrowful to see our fatal complacency, our as yet undisciplined folly, in sending to our State Legislatures and to that general business office of ours at Washington a herd of mismanagers that seems each year to grow more inefficient and contemptible, whether branded Republican or Democrat. But I take heart, because often and oftener I hear upon my journey the citizens high and low muttering, "There's too much politics in this country"; and we shake hands.

But all this is growing too serious for a book of short stories. They are about Indians and soldiers and events west of the Missouri. They belong to the past thirty years of our development, but you will find some of those ancient surviving centuries in them if you take my view. In certain ones the incidents, and even some of the names, are left unchanged from their original reality. The visit of Young-man-afraid-of-his-horses to the Little Big Horn and the rise and fall of the young Crow impostor, General Crook's surprise of E-egante, and many other occurrences, noble and ignoble, are told as they were told to me by those who saw them. When our national life, our own soil, is so rich in adventures to record, what need is there for one to call upon his invention save to draw, if he can, characters who shall fit these strange and dramatic scenes? One cannot improve upon such realities. If this fiction is at all faithful to the truth from which it springs, let the thanks be given to the patience and boundless hospitality of the Army friends and other friends across the Missouri who have housed my body and instructed my mind. And if the stories entertain the ignorant without grieving the judicious I am content.

Illustration:  
On Horse

Something new was happening among the Crow Indians. A young pretender had appeared in the tribe. What this might lead to was unknown alike to white man and to red; but the old Crow chiefs discussed it in their councils, and the soldiers at Fort Custer, and the civilians at the agency twelve miles up the river, and all the white settlers in the valley discussed it also. Lieutenants Stirling and Haines, of the First Cavalry, were speculating upon it as they rode one afternoon.

"Can't tell about Indians," said Stirling. "But I think the Crows are too reasonable to go on the war-path."

"Reasonable!" said Haines. He was young, and new to Indians.

"Just so. Until you come to his superstitions, the Indian can reason as straight as you or I. He's perfectly logical."

"Logical!" echoed Haines again. He held the regulation Eastern view that the Indian knows nothing but the three blind appetites.

"You'd know better," remarked Stirling, "if you'd been fighting 'em for fifteen years. They're as shrewd as Æsop's fables."

Just then two Indians appeared round a bluff—one old and shabby, the other young and very gaudy—riding side by side.

"That's Cheschapah," said Stirling. "That's the agitator in all his feathers. His father, you see, dresses more conservatively."

The feathered dandy now did a singular thing. He galloped towards the two officers almost as if to bear them down, and, steering much too close, flashed by yelling, amid a clatter of gravel.

"Nice manners," commented Haines. "Seems to have a chip on his shoulder."

But Stirling looked thoughtful. "Yes," he muttered, "he has a chip."

Meanwhile the shabby father was approaching. His face was mild and sad, and he might be seventy. He made a gesture of greeting. "How!" he said, pleasantly, and ambled on his way.

"Now there you have an object-lesson," said Stirling. "Old Pounded Meat has no chip. The question is, are the fathers or the sons going to run the Crow Nation?"

"Why did the young chap have a dog on his saddle?" inquired Haines.

"I didn't notice it. For his supper, probably—probably he's getting up a dance. He is scheming to be a chief. Says he is a medicine-man, and can make water boil without fire; but the big men of the tribe take no stock in him—not yet. They've seen soda-water before. But I'm told this water-boiling astonishes the young."

"You say the old chiefs take no stock in him *yet*?"

"Ah, that's the puzzle. I told you just now Indians could reason."

"And I was amused."

"Because you're an Eastern man. I tell you, Haines, if it wasn't my business to shoot Indians I'd study them."

"You're a crank," said Haines.

But Stirling was not a crank. He knew that so far from being a mere animal, the Indian is of a subtlety more ancient than the Sphinx. In his primal brain—nearer nature than our own—the directness of a child mingles with the profoundest cunning. He believes easily in powers of light and darkness, yet is a sceptic all the while. Stirling knew this; but he could not know just when, if ever, the young charlatan Cheschapah would succeed in cheating the older chiefs; just when, if ever, he would strike the chord of their superstition. Till then they would reason that the white man was more comfortable as a friend than as a foe, that rations and gifts of clothes and farming implements were better than battles and prisons. Once their superstition was set alight, these three thousand Crows might suddenly follow Cheschapah to burn and kill and destroy.

"How does he manage his soda-water, do you suppose?" inquired Haines.

"That's mysterious. He has never been known to buy drugs, and he's careful where he does his trick. He's still a little afraid of his father. All Indians are. It's queer where he was going with that dog."

Hard galloping sounded behind them, and a courier from the Indian agency overtook and passed them, hurrying to Fort Custer. The officers hurried too, and, arriving, received news and orders. Forty Sioux were reported up the river coming to visit the Crows. It was peaceable, but untimely. The Sioux agent over at Pine Ridge had given these forty permission to go, without first finding out if it would be convenient to the Crow agent to have them come. It is a rule of the Indian Bureau that if one tribe desire to visit another, the agents of both must consent. Now, most of the Crows were farming and quiet, and it was not wise that a visit from the Sioux and a season of feasting should tempt their hearts and minds away from the tilling of the soil. The visitors must be taken charge of and sent home.

"Very awkward, though," said Stirling to Haines. He had been ordered to take two troops and arrest the unoffending visitors on their way. "The Sioux will be mad, and the Crows will be madder. What a bungle! and how like the way we manage Indian affairs!" And so they started.

Thirty miles away, by a stream towards which Stirling with his command was steadily marching through the night, the visitors were gathered. There was a cook-

fire and a pot, and a stewing dog leaped in the froth. Old men in blankets and feathers sat near it, listening to young Cheschapah's talk in the flighty lustre of the flames. An old squaw acted as interpreter between Crow and Sioux. Round about, at a certain distance, the figures of the crowd lounged at the edge of the darkness. Two grizzled squaws stirred the pot, spreading a clawed fist to their eyes against the red heat of the coals, while young Cheschapah harangued the older chiefs.

Illustration:

Boasting in Indian Fashion

"And more than that, I, Cheschapah, can do," said he, boasting in Indian fashion. "I know how to make the white man's heart soft so he cannot fight." He paused for effect, but his hearers seemed uninterested. "You have come pretty far to see us," resumed the orator, "and I, and my friend Two Whistles, and my father, Pounded Meat, have come a day to meet you and bring you to our place. I have brought you a fat dog. I say it is good the Crow and the Sioux shall be friends. All the Crow chiefs are glad. Pretty Eagle is a big chief, and he will tell you what I tell you. But I am bigger than Pretty Eagle. I am a medicine-man."

He paused again; but the grim old chiefs were looking at the fire, and not at him. He got a friendly glance from his henchman, Two Whistles, but he heard his father give a grunt.

That enraged him. "I am a medicine-man," he repeated, defiantly. "I have been in the big hole in the mountains where the river goes, and spoken there with the old man who makes the thunder. I talked with him as one chief to another. I am going to kill all the white men."

At this old Pounded Meat looked at his son angrily, but the son was not afraid of his father just then. "I can make medicine to bring the rain," he continued. "I can make water boil when it is cold. With this I can strike the white man blind when he is so far that his eyes do not show his face."

He swept out from his blanket an old cavalry sabre painted scarlet. Young Two Whistles made a movement of awe, but Pounded Meat said, "My son's tongue has grown longer than his sword."

Laughter sounded among the old chiefs. Cheschapah turned his impudent yet somewhat visionary face upon his father. "What do you know of medicine?" said he. "Two sorts of Indians are among the Crows to-day," he continued to the chiefs. "One sort are the fathers, and the sons are the other. The young warriors are not afraid of the white man. The old plant corn with the squaws. Is this the way with the Sioux?"

"With the Sioux," remarked a grim visitor, "no one fears the white man. But the young warriors do not talk much in council."

Pounded Meat put out his hand gently, as if in remonstrance. Other people must not chide his son.

"You say you can make water boil with no fire?" pursued the Sioux, who was named Young-man-afraid-of-his-horses, and had been young once.

Pounded Meat came between. "My son is a good man," said he. "These words of his are not made in the heart, but are head words you need not count.

Cheschapah does not like peace. He has heard us sing our wars and the enemies we have killed, and he remembers that he has no deeds, being young. When he thinks of this sometimes he talks words without sense. But my son is a good man."

The father again extended his hand, which trembled a little. The Sioux had listened, looking at him with respect, and forgetful of Cheschapah, who now stood before them with a cup of cold water.

"You shall see," he said, "who it is that talks words without sense."

Two Whistles and the young bucks crowded to watch, but the old men sat where they were. As Cheschapah stood relishing his audience, Pounded Meat stepped up suddenly and upset the cup. He went to the stream and refilled it himself. "Now make it boil," said he.

Cheschapah smiled, and as he spread his hand quickly over the cup, the water foamed up.

"Huh!" said Two Whistles, startled.

The medicine-man quickly seized his moment. "What does Pounded Meat know of my medicine?" said he. "The dog is cooked. Let the dance begin."

The drums set up their dull, blunt beating, and the crowd of young and less important bucks came from the outer circle nearer to the council. Cheschapah set the pot in the midst of the flat camp, to be the centre of the dance. None of the old chiefs said more to him, but sat apart with the empty cup, having words among themselves. The flame reared high into the dark, and showed the rock wall towering close, and at its feet the light lay red on the streaming water. The young Sioux stripped naked of their blankets, hanging them in a screen against the wind from the jaws of the cañon, with more constant shouts as the drumming beat louder, and strokes of echo fell from the black cliffs. The figures twinkled across each other in the glare, drifting and alert, till the dog-dance shaped itself into twelve dancers with a united sway of body and arms, one and another singing his song against the lifted sound of the drums. The twelve sank crouching in simulated hunt for an enemy back and forth over the same space, swinging together.

Presently they sprang with a shout upon their feet, for they had taken the enemy. Cheschapah, leading the line closer to the central pot, began a new figure, dancing the pursuit of the bear. This went faster; and after the bear was taken, followed the elk-hunt, and a new sway and crouch of the twelve gesturing bodies. The thudding drums were ceaseless; and as the dance went always faster and always nearer the dog pot, the steady blows of sound inflamed the dancers; their chests heaved, and their arms and bodies swung alike as the excited crew filed and circled closer to the pot, following Cheschapah, and shouting uncontrollably. They came to firing pistols and slashing the air with knives, when suddenly Cheschapah caught up a piece of steaming dog from the pot, gave it to his best friend, and the dance was done. The dripping figures sat quietly, shining and smooth with sweat, eating their dog-flesh in the ardent light of the fire and the cool splendor of the moon. By-and-by they lay in their blankets to sleep at ease.

The elder chiefs had looked with distrust at Cheschapah as he led the dance; now that the entertainment was over, they rose with gravity to go to their beds.

"It is good for the Sioux and the Crows to be friends," said Pounded Meat to Young-man-afraid-of-his-horses. "But we want no war with the white man. It is a few young men who say that war is good now."

"We have not come for war," replied the Sioux. "We have come to eat much meat together, and remember that day when war was good on the Little Horn, and our warriors killed Yellow Hair and all his soldiers."

Pounded Meat came to where he and Cheschapah had their blankets.

"We shall have war," said the confident son to his father. "My medicine is good."

"Peace is also pretty good," said Pounded Meat. "Get new thoughts. My son, do you not care any more for my words?"

Cheschapah did not reply.

"I have lived a long while. Yet one man may be wrong. But all cannot be. The other chiefs say what I say. The white men are too strong."

"They would not be too strong if the old men were not cowards."

"Have done," said the father, sternly. "If you are a medicine-man, do not talk like a light fool."

The Indian has an "honor thy father" deep in his religion too, and Cheschapah was silent. But after he was asleep, Pounded Meat lay brooding. He felt himself dishonored, and his son to be an evil in the tribe. With these sore notions keeping him awake, he saw the night wane into gray, and then he heard the distant snort of a horse. He looked, and started from his blankets, for the soldiers had come, and he ran to wake the sleeping Indians. Frightened, and ignorant why they should be surrounded, the Sioux leaped to their feet; and Stirling, from where he sat on his horse, saw their rushing, frantic figures.

"Go quick, Kinney," he said to the interpreter, "and tell them it's peace, or they'll be firing on us."

Kinney rode forward alone, with one hand raised; and seeing that sign, they paused, and crept nearer, like crafty rabbits, while the sun rose and turned the place pink. And then came the parley, and the long explanation; and Stirling thanked his stars to see they were going to allow themselves to be peaceably arrested. Bullets you get used to; but after the firing's done, you must justify it to important personages who live comfortably in Eastern towns and have never seen an Indian in their lives, and are rancid with philanthropy and ignorance.

Stirling would sooner have faced Sioux than sentimentalists, and he was fervently grateful to these savages for coming with him quietly without obliging him to shoot them. Cheschapah was not behaving so amiably; and recognizing him, Stirling understood about the dog. The medicine-man, with his faithful Two Whistles, was endeavoring to excite the prisoners as they were marched down the river to the Crow Agency.

Stirling sent for Kinney. "Send that rascal away," he said. "I'll not have him bothering here."

The interpreter obeyed, but with a singular smile to himself. When he had ordered Cheschapah away, he rode so as to overhear Stirling and Haines talking. When they speculated about the soda-water, Kinney smiled again. He was a quiet sort of man. The people in the valley admired his business head. He supplied grain and steers to Fort Custer, and used to say that business was always slow in time of peace.



By evening Stirling had brought his prisoners to the agency, and there was the lieutenant of Indian police of the Sioux come over from Pine Ridge to bring them home. There was restlessness in the air as night fell round the prisoners and their guard. It was Cheschapah's hour, and the young Crows listened while he declaimed against the white man for thwarting their hospitality. The strong chain of sentinels was kept busy preventing these hosts from breaking through to fraternize with their guests. Cheschapah did not care that the old Crow chiefs would not listen. When Pretty Eagle remarked laconically that peace was good, the agitator laughed; he was gaining a faction, and the faction was feeling its oats. Accordingly, next morning, though the prisoners were meek on being started home by Stirling with twenty soldiers, and the majority of the Crows were meek at seeing them thus started, this was not all. Cheschapah, with a yelling swarm of his young friends, began to buzz about the column as it marched up the river. All had rifles.

"It's an interesting state of affairs," said Stirling to Haines. "There are at least fifty of these devils at our heels now, and more coming. We've got twenty men. Haines, your Indian experiences may begin quite early in your career."

"Yes, especially if our prisoners take to kicking."

"Well, to compensate for spoiling their dinner-party, the agent gave them some rations and his parting blessing. It may suffice."

The line of march had been taken up by ten men in advance, followed in the usual straggling fashion by the prisoners, and the rear-guard was composed of the other ten soldiers under Stirling and Haines. With them rode the chief of the Crow police and the lieutenant of the Sioux. This little band was, of course, far separated from the advance-guard, and it listened to the young Crow bucks yelling at its heels. They yelled in English. Every Indian knows at least two English words; they are pungent, and far from complimentary.

"It's got to stop here," said Stirling, as they came to a ford known as Reno's Crossing. "They've got to be kept on this side."

"Can it be done without gunpowder?" Haines asked.

"If a shot is fired now, my friend, it's war, and a court of inquiry in Washington for you and me, if we're not buried here. Sergeant, you will take five men and see the column is kept moving. The rest remain with me. The prisoners must be got across and away from their friends."

The fording began, and the two officers went over to the east bank to see that the instructions were carried out.

"See that?" observed Stirling. As the last of the rear-guard stepped into the stream, the shore they were leaving filled instantly with the Crows. "Every man jack of them is armed. And here's an interesting development," he continued.

It was Cheschapah riding out into the water, and with him Two Whistles. The rear guard passed up the trail, and the little knot of men with the officers stood halted on the bank. There were nine—the two Indian police, the two lieutenants, and five long muscular boys of K troop of the First Cavalry. They remained on the bank, looking at the thick painted swarm that yelled across the ford.

"Bet you there's a hundred," remarked Haines.

"You forget I never gamble," murmured Stirling. Two of the five long boys overheard this, and grinned at each other, which Stirling noted; and he loved

them. It was curious to mark the two shores: the feathered multitude and its yells and its fifty yards of rifles that fronted a small spot of white men sitting easily in the saddle, and the clear, pleasant water speeding between. Cheschapah and Two Whistles came tauntingly towards this spot, and the mass of Crows on the other side drew forward a little.

“You tell them,” said Stirling to the chief of the Crow police, “that they must go back.”

Cheschapah came nearer, by way of obedience.

“Take them over, then,” the officer ordered.

Illustration:

His Horse Drew Close, Shoving the Horde of the Medicine-Man

The chief of Crow police rode to Cheschapah, speaking and pointing. His horse drew close, shoving the horse of the medicine-man, who now launched an insult that with Indians calls for blood. He struck the man's horse with his whip, and at that a volume of yells chorussed from the other bank.

“Looks like the court of inquiry,” remarked Stirling. “Don't shoot, boys,” he commanded aloud.

The amazed Sioux policeman gasped. “You not shoot?” he said. “But he hit that man's horse—all the same hit your horse, all the same hit you.”

“Right. Quite right,” growled Stirling. “All the same hit Uncle Sam. But we soldier devils have orders to temporize.” His eye rested hard and serious on the party in the water as he went on speaking with jocular unconcern. “Tem-po-rize, Johnny,” said he. “You savvy temporize?”

“Ump! Me no savvy.”

“Bully for you, Johnny. Too many syllables. Well, now! he's hit that horse again. One more for the court of inquiry. Steady, men! There's Two Whistles switching now. They ought to call that lad Young Dog Tray. And there's a chap in paint fooling with his gun. If any more do that—it's very catching—Yes, we're going to have a circus. Attention! Now what's that, do you suppose?”

An apparition, an old chief, came suddenly on the other bank, pushing through the crowd, grizzled and little and lean, among the smooth, full-limbed young blood. They turned and saw him, and slunk from the tones of his voice and the light in his ancient eye. They swerved and melted among the cottonwoods, so that the ford's edge grew bare of dusky bodies and looked sandy and green again. Cheschapah saw the wrinkled figure coming, and his face sank tame. He stood uncertain in the stream, seeing his banded companions gone and the few white soldiers firm on the bank. The old chief rode to him through the water, his face brightened with a last flare of command.

“Make your medicine!” he said. “Why are the white men not blind? Is the medicine bad to-day?” And he whipped his son's horse to the right, and to the left he slashed the horse of Two Whistles, and, whirling the leather quirt, drove them cowed before him and out of the stream, with never a look or word to the white men. He crossed the sandy margin, and as a man drives steers to the corral, striking spurs to his horse and following the frightened animals close when they would twist aside, so did old Pounded Meat herd his son down the valley.

“Useful old man,” remarked Stirling; “and brings up his children carefully. Let’s get these prisoners along.”

“How rural the river looks now!” Haines said, as they left the deserted bank.

So the Sioux went home in peace, the lieutenants, with their command of twenty, returned to the post, and all white people felt much obliged to Pounded Meat for his act of timely parental discipline—all except one white person.

Sol Kinney sauntered into the agency store one evening. “I want ten pounds of sugar,” said he, “and navy plug as usual. And say, I’ll take another bottle of the Seltzer fizz salts. Since I quit whiskey,” he explained, “my liver’s poorly.”

He returned with his purchase to his cabin, and set a lamp in the window. Presently the door opened noiselessly, and Cheschapah came in.

“Maybe you got that now?” he said, in English.

The interpreter fumbled among bottles of liniment and vaseline, and from among these household remedies brought the blue one he had just bought. Cheschapah watched him like a child, following his steps round the cabin. Kinney tore a half-page from an old Sunday World, and poured a little heap of salts into it. The Indian touched the heap timidly with his finger. “Maybe no good,” he suggested.

“Heap good!” said the interpreter, throwing a pinch into a glass. When Cheschapah saw the water effervesce, he folded his newspaper with the salt into a tight lump, stuck the talisman into his clothes, and departed, leaving Mr. Kinney well content. He was doing his best to nourish the sinews of war, for business in the country was discouragingly slack.

Now the Crows were a tribe that had never warred with us, but only with other tribes; they had been valiant enough to steal our cattle, but sufficiently discreet to stop there; and Kinney realized that he had uphill work before him. His dearest hopes hung upon Cheschapah, in whom he thought he saw a development. From being a mere humbug, the young Indian seemed to be getting a belief in himself as something genuinely out of the common. His success in creating a party had greatly increased his conceit, and he walked with a strut, and his face was more unsettled and visionary than ever. One clear sign of his mental change was that he no longer respected his father at all, though the lonely old man looked at him often with what in one of our race would have been tenderness. Cheschapah had been secretly maturing a plot ever since his humiliation at the crossing, and now he was ready. With his lump of newspaper carefully treasured, he came to Two Whistles.

“Now we go,” he said. “We shall fight with the Piegans. I will make big medicine, so that we shall get many of their horses and women. Then Pretty Eagle will be afraid to go against me in the council. Pounded Meat whipped my horse. Pounded Meat can cut his hay without Cheschapah, since he is so strong.”

But little Two Whistles wavered. “I will stay here,” he ventured to say to the prophet.

“Does Two Whistles think I cannot do what I say?”

“I think you make good medicine.”

“You are afraid of the Piegans.”

“No, I am not afraid. I have hay the white man will pay me for. If I go, he will not pay me. If I had a father, I would not leave him.” He spoke pleadingly, and his

prophet bore him down by ridicule. Two Whistles believed, but he did not want to lose the money the agent was to pay for his hay. And so, not so much because he believed as because he was afraid, he resigned his personal desires.

The next morning the whole band had disappeared with Cheschapah. The agent was taken aback at this marked challenge to his authority—of course they had gone without permission—and even the old Crow chiefs held a council.

Pretty Eagle resorted to sarcasm. "He has taken his friends to the old man who makes the thunder," he said. But others did not feel sarcastic, and one observed, "Cheschapah knows more than we know."

"Let him make rain, then," said Pretty Eagle. "Let him make the white man's heart soft."

The situation was assisted by a step of the careful Kinney. He took a private journey to Junction City, through which place he expected Cheschapah to return, and there he made arrangements to have as much whiskey furnished to the Indian and his friends as they should ask for. It was certainly a good stroke of business. The victorious raiders did return that way, and Junction City was most hospitable to their thirst. The valley of the Big Horn was resonant with their homeward yells. They swept up the river, and the agent heard them coming, and he locked his door immediately. He listened to their descent upon his fold, and he peeped out and saw them ride round the tightly shut buildings in their war-paint and the pride of utter success. They had taken booty from the Piegans, and now, knocking at the store, they demanded ammunition, proclaiming at the same time in English that Cheschapah was a big man, and knew a "big heap medicine." The agent told them from inside that they could not have any ammunition. He also informed them that he knew who they were, and that they were under arrest. This touched their primitive sense of the incongruous. On the buoyancy of the whiskey they rode round and round the store containing the agent, and then rushed away, firing shots at the buildings and shots in the air, and so gloriously home among their tribe, while the agent sent a courier packing to Fort Custer.

The young bucks who had not gone on the raid to the Piegans thronged to hear the story, and the warriors told it here and there, walking in their feathers among a knot of friends, who listened with gay exclamations of pleasure and envy. Great was Cheschapah, who had done all this! And one and another told exactly and at length how he had seen the cold water rise into foam beneath the medicine-man's hand; it could not be told too often; not every companion of Cheschapah's had been accorded the privilege of witnessing this miracle, and each narrator in his circle became a wonder himself to the bold boyish faces that surrounded him. And after the miracle he told how the Piegans had been like a flock of birds before the medicine-man. Cheschapah himself passed among the groups, alone and aloof; he spoke to none, and he looked at none, and he noted how their voices fell to whispers as he passed; his ear caught the magic words of praise and awe; he felt the gaze of admiration follow him away, and a mist rose like incense in his brain. He wandered among the scattered tepees, and, turning, came along the same paths again, that he might once more overhear his worshippers. Great was Cheschapah! His heart beat, a throb of power passed through his body, and "Great is Cheschapah!" said he, aloud; for the fumes of hallucination wherewith he had drugged others had begun to make him drunk also. He sought a tepee where the

wife of another chief was alone, and at his light call she stood at the entrance and heard him longer than she had ever listened to him before. But she withstood the temptation that was strong in the young chief's looks and words. She did not speak much, but laughed unsteadily, and, shaking her head with averted eyes, left him, and went where several women were together, and sat among them.

Cheschapah told his victory to the council, with many sentences about himself, and how his medicine had fended all hurt from the Crows. The elder chiefs sat cold.

"Ump!" said one, at the close of the oration, and "Heh!" remarked another. The sounds were of assent without surprise.

"It is good," said Pretty Eagle. His voice seemed to enrage Cheschapah.

"Heh! it is always pretty good!" remarked Spotted Horse.

"I have done this too," said Pounded Meat to his son, simply. "Once, twice, three times. The Crows have always been better warriors than the Piegans."

"Have you made water boil like me?" Cheschapah said.

"I am not a medicine-man," replied his father. "But I have taken horses and squaws from the Piegans. You make good medicine, maybe; but a cup of water will not kill many white men. Can you make the river boil? Let Cheschapah make bigger medicine, so the white man shall fear him as well as the Piegans, whose hearts are well known to us."

Cheschapah scowled. "Pounded Meat shall have this," said he. "I will make medicine to-morrow, old fool!"

"Drive him from the council!" said Pretty Eagle.

"Let him stay," said Pounded Meat. "His bad talk was not to the council, but to me, and I do not count it."

But the medicine-man left the presence of the chiefs, and came to the cabin of Kinney.

"Hello!" said the white man. "Sit down."

"You got that?" said the Indian, standing.

"More water medicine? I guess so. Take a seat."

"No, not boil any more. You got that other?"

"That other, eh? Well, now, you're not going to blind them yet? What's your hurry?"

"Yes. Make blind to-morrow. Me great chief!"

A slight uneasiness passed across the bantering face of Kinney. His Seltzer salts performed what he promised, but he had mentioned another miracle, and he did not want his dupe to find him out until a war was thoroughly set agoing. He looked at the young Indian, noticing his eyes.

"What's the matter with you, anyway, Cheschapah?"

"Me great chief!" The raised voice trembled with unearthly conviction.

"Well, I guess you are. I guess you've got pretty far along," said the frontier cynic. He tilted his chair back and smiled at the child whose primitive brain he had tampered with so easily. The child stood looking at him with intent black eyes. "Better wait, Cheschapah. Come again. Medicine heap better after a while."

The Indian's quick ear caught the insincerity without understanding it. "You give me that quick!" he said, suddenly terrible.

"Oh, all right, Cheschapah. You know more medicine than me."

“Yes, I know more.”

The white man brought a pot of scarlet paint, and the Indian’s staring eyes contracted. Kinney took the battered cavalry sabre in his hand, and set its point in the earth floor of the cabin. “Stand back,” he said, in mysterious tones, and Cheschapah shrank from the impending sorcery. Now Kinney had been to school once, in his Eastern childhood, and there had committed to memory portions of Shakespeare, Mrs. Hemans, and other poets out of a Reader. He had never forgotten a single word of any of them, and it now occurred to him that for the purposes of an incantation it would be both entertaining for himself and impressive to Cheschapah if he should recite “The Battle of Hohenlinden.” He was drawing squares and circles with the point of the sabre.

“No,” he said to himself, “that piece won’t do. He knows too much English. Some of them words might strike him as bein’ too usual, and he’d start to kill me, and spoil the whole thing. ‘Munich’ and ‘chivalry’ are snortin’, but ‘sun was low’ ain’t worth a damn. I guess—”

He stopped guessing, for the noon recess at school came in his mind, like a picture, and with it certain old-time preliminaries to the game of tag.

*“Eeny, meeny, money, my,”*

said Kinney, tapping himself, the sabre, the paint-pot, and Cheschapah in turn, one for each word. The incantation was begun. He held the sabre solemnly upright, while Cheschapah tried to control his excited breathing where he stood flattened against the wall.

*“Butter, leather, boney, stry; Hare-bit, frost-neck, Harrico, barrico, whee, why, whoa, whack!”*

“You’re it, Cheschapah.” After that the weapon was given its fresh coat of paint, and Cheschapah went away with his new miracle in the dark.

“He is it,” mused Kinney, grave, but inwardly lively. He was one of those sincere artists who need no popular commendation. “And whoever he does catch, it won’t be me,” he concluded. He felt pretty sure there would be war now.

Dawn showed the summoned troops near the agency at the corral, standing to horse. Cheschapah gathered his hostiles along the brow of the ridge in the rear of the agency buildings, and the two forces watched each other across the intervening four hundred yards.

“There they are,” said the agent, jumping about. “Shoot them, colonel; shoot them!”

“You can’t do that, you know,” said the officer, “without an order from the President, or an overt act from the Indians.”

So nothing happened, and Cheschapah told his friends the white men were already afraid of him. He saw more troops arrive, water their horses in the river, form line outside the corral, and dismount. He made ready at this movement, and all Indian on-lookers scattered from the expected fight. Yet the white man stayed quiet. It was issue day, but no families remained after drawing their rations. They had had no dance the night before, as was usual, and they did not linger a moment now, but came and departed with their beef and flour at once.

“I have done all this,” said Cheschapah to Two Whistles.

“Cheschapah is a great man,” assented the friend and follower. He had gone at once to his hay-field on his return from the Piegans, but some one had broken the little Indian’s fence, and cattle were wandering in what remained of his crop.

“Our nation knows I will make a war, and therefore they do not stay here,” said the medicine-man, caring nothing what Two Whistles might have suffered. “And now they will see that the white soldiers dare not fight with Cheschapah. The sun is high now, but they have not moved because I have stopped them. Do you not see it is my medicine?”

“We see it.” It was the voice of the people.

But a chief spoke. “Maybe they wait for us to come.”

Cheschapah answered. “Their eyes shall be made sick. I will ride among them, but they will not know it.” He galloped away alone, and lifted his red sword as he sped along the ridge of the hills, showing against the sky. Below at the corral the white soldiers waited ready, and heard him chanting his war song through the silence of the day. He turned in a long curve, and came in near the watching troops and through the agency, and then, made bolder by their motionless figures and guns held idle, he turned again and flew, singing, along close to the line, so they saw his eyes; and a few that had been talking low as they stood side by side fell silent at the spectacle. They could not shoot until some Indian should shoot. They watched him and the gray pony pass and return to the hostiles on the hill. Then they saw the hostiles melt away like magic. Their prophet had told them to go to their tepees and wait for the great rain he would now bring. It was noon, and the sky utterly blue over the bright valley. The sun rode a space nearer the west, and the thick black clouds assembled in the mountains and descended; their shadow flooded the valley with a lake of slatish blue, and presently the sudden torrents sluiced down with flashes and the ample thunder of Montana. Thus not alone the law against our soldiers firing the first shot in an Indian excitement, but now also the elements coincided to help the medicine-man’s destiny.

Cheschapah sat in a tepee with his father, and as the rain splashed heavily on the earth the old man gazed at the young one.

“Why do you tremble, my son? You have made the white soldier’s heart soft,” said Pounded Meat. “You are indeed a great man, my son.”

Cheschapah rose. “Do not call me your son,” said he. “That is a lie.” He went out into the fury of the rain, lifting his face against the drops, and exultingly calling out at each glare of the lightning. He went to Pretty Eagle’s young squaw, who held off from him no longer, but got on a horse, and the two rode into the mountains. Before the sun had set, the sky was again utterly blue, and a cool scent rose everywhere in the shining valley.

The Crows came out of their tepees, and there were the white soldiers obeying orders and going away. They watched the column slowly move across the flat land below the bluffs, where the road led down the river twelve miles to the post.

“They are afraid,” said new converts. “Cheschapah’s rain has made their hearts soft.”

“They have not all gone,” said Pretty Eagle. “Maybe he did not make enough rain.” But even Pretty Eagle began to be shaken, and he heard several of his brother chiefs during the next few days openly declare for the medicine-man. Cheschapah with his woman came from the mountains, and Pretty Eagle did not

dare to harm him. Then another coincidence followed that was certainly most reassuring to the war party. Some of them had no meat, and told Cheschapah they were hungry. With consummate audacity he informed them he would give them plenty at once. On the same day another timely electric storm occurred up the river, and six steers were struck by lightning.

When the officers at Fort Custer heard of this they became serious.

"If this was not the nineteenth century," said Haines, "I should begin to think the elements were deliberately against us."

"It's very careless of the weather," said Stirling. "Very inconsiderate, at such a juncture."

Yet nothing more dangerous than red-tape happened for a while. There was an expensive quantity of investigation from Washington, and this gave the hostiles time to increase both in faith and numbers.

Among the excited Crows only a few wise old men held out. As for Cheschapah himself, ambition and success had brought him to the weird enthusiasm of a fanatic. He was still a charlatan, but a charlatan who believed utterly in his star. He moved among his people with growing mystery, and his hapless adjutant, Two Whistles, rode with him, slaved for him, abandoned the plans he had for making himself a farm, and, desiring peace in his heart, weakly cast his lot with war. Then one day there came an order from the agent to all the Indians: they were to come in by a certain fixed day. The department commander had assembled six hundred troops at the post, and these moved up the river and went into camp. The usually empty ridges, and the bottom where the road ran, filled with white and red men. Half a mile to the north of the buildings, on the first rise from the river, lay the cavalry, and some infantry above them with a howitzer, while across the level, three hundred yards opposite, along the river-bank, was the main Indian camp. Even the hostiles had obeyed the agent's order, and came in close to the troops, totally unlike hostiles in general; for Cheschapah had told them he would protect them with his medicine, and they shouted and sang all through this last night. The women joined with harsh cries and shriekings, and a scalp-dance went on, besides lesser commotions and gatherings, with the throbbing of drums everywhere. Through the sleepless din ran the barking of a hundred dogs, that herded and hurried in crowds of twenty at a time, meeting, crossing from fire to fire among the tepees. Their yelps rose to the high bench of land, summoning a horde of coyotes. These cringing nomads gathered from the desert in a tramp army, and, skulking down the bluffs, sat in their outer darkness and ceaselessly howled their long, shrill greeting to the dogs that sat in the circle of light. The general sent scouts to find the nature of the dance and hubbub, and these brought word it was peaceful; and in the morning another scout summoned the elder chiefs to a talk with the friend who had come from the Great Father at Washington to see them and find if their hearts were good.

"Our hearts are good," said Pretty Eagle. "We do not want war. If you want Cheschapah, we will drive him out from the Crows to you."

"There are other young chiefs with bad hearts," said the commissioner, naming the ringleaders that were known. He made a speech, but Pretty Eagle grew sullen. "It is well," said the commissioner; "you will not help me to make things smooth, and now I step aside and the war chief will talk."



"If you want any other chiefs," said Pretty Eagle, "come and take them."

"Pretty Eagle shall have an hour and a half to think on my words," said the general. "I have plenty of men behind me to make my words good. You must send me all those Indians who fired at the agency."

The Crow chiefs returned to the council, which was apart from the war party's camp; and Cheschapah walked in among them, and after him, slowly, old Pounded Meat, to learn how the conference had gone.

"You have made a long talk with the white man," said Cheschapah. "Talk is pretty good for old men. I and the young chiefs will fight now and kill our enemies."

"Cheschapah," said Pounded Meat, "if your medicine is good, it may be the young chiefs will kill our enemies to-day. But there are other days to come, and after them still others; there are many, many days. My son, the years are a long road. The life of one man is not long, but enough to learn this thing truly: the white man will always return. There was a day on this river when the dead soldiers of Yellow Hair lay in hills, and the squaws of the Sioux warriors climbed among them with their knives. What do the Sioux warriors do now when they meet the white man on this river? Their hearts are on the ground, and they go home like children when the white man says, 'You shall not visit your friends.' My son, I thought war was good once. I have kept you from the arrows of our enemies on many trails when you were so little that my blankets were enough for both. Your mother was not here any more, and the chiefs laughed because I carried you. Oh, my son, I have seen the hearts of the Sioux broken by the white man, and I do not think war is good."

"The talk of Pounded Meat is very good," said Pretty Eagle. "If Cheschapah were wise like his father, this trouble would not have come to the Crows. But we could not give the white chief so many of our chiefs that he asked for to-day."

Cheschapah laughed. "Did he ask for so many? He wanted only Cheschapah, who is not wise like Pounded Meat."

"You would have been given to him," said Pretty Eagle.

"Did Pretty Eagle tell the white chief that? Did he say he would give Cheschapah? How would he give me? In one hand, or two? Or would the old warrior take me to the white man's camp on the horse his young squaw left?"

Pretty Eagle raised his rifle, and Pounded Meat, quick as a boy, seized the barrel and pointed it up among the poles of the tepee, where the quiet black fire smoke was oozing out into the air. "Have you lived so long," said Pounded Meat to his ancient comrade, "and do this in the council?" His wrinkled head and hands shook, the sudden strength left him, and the rifle fell free.

"Let Pretty Eagle shoot," said Cheschapah, looking at the council. He stood calm, and the seated chiefs turned their grim eyes upon him. Certainty was in his face, and doubt in theirs. "Let him send his bullet five times—ten times. Then I will go and let the white soldiers shoot at me until they all lie dead."

"It is heavy for me," began Pounded Meat, "that my friend should be the enemy of my son."

"Tell that lie no more," said Cheschapah. "You are not my father. I have made the white man blind, and I have softened his heart with the rain. I will call the rain to-day." He raised his red sword, and there was a movement among the sitting

figures. "The clouds will come from my father's place, where I have talked with him as one chief to another. My mother went into the mountains to gather berries. She was young, and the thunder-maker saw her face. He brought the black clouds, so her feet turned from home, and she walked where the river goes into the great walls of the mountain, and that day she was stricken fruitful by the lightning. You are not the father of Cheschapah." He dealt Pounded Meat a blow, and the old man fell. But the council sat still until the sound of Cheschapah's galloping horse died away. They were ready now to risk everything. Their scepticism was conquered.

The medicine-man galloped to his camp of hostiles, and, seeing him, they yelled and quickly finished plaiting their horses' tails. Cheschapah had accomplished his wish; he had become the prophet of all the Crows, and he led the armies of the faithful. Each man stripped his blanket off and painted his body for the fight. The forms slipped in and out of the brush, buckling their cartridge-belts, bringing their ponies, while many families struck their tepees and moved up nearer the agency. The spare horses were run across the river into the hills, and through the yelling that shifted and swept like flames along the wind the hostiles made ready and gathered, their crowds quivering with motion, and changing place and shape as more mounted Indians appeared.

"Are the holes dug deep as I marked them on the earth?" said Cheschapah to Two Whistles. "That is good. We shall soon have to go into them from the great rain I will bring. Make these strong, to stay as we ride. They are good medicine, and with them the white soldiers will not see you any more than they saw me when I rode among them that day."

He had strips and capes of red flannel, and he and Two Whistles fastened them to their painted bodies.

"You will let me go with you?" said Two Whistles.

"You are my best friend," said Cheschapah, "and to-day I will take you. You shall see my great medicine when I make the white man's eyes grow sick."

The two rode forward, and one hundred and fifty followed them, bursting from their tepees like an explosion, and rushing along quickly in skirmish-line. Two Whistles rode beside his speeding prophet, and saw the red sword waving near his face, and the sun in the great still sky, and the swimming, fleeting earth. His superstition and the fierce ride put him in a sort of trance.

"The medicine is beginning!" shouted Cheschapah; and at that Two Whistles saw the day grow large with terrible shining, and heard his own voice calling and could not stop it. They left the hundred and fifty behind, he knew not where or when. He saw the line of troops ahead change to separate waiting shapes of men, and their legs and arms become plain; then all the guns took clear form in lines of steady glitter. He seemed suddenly alone far ahead of the band, but the voice of Cheschapah spoke close by his ear through the singing wind, and he repeated each word without understanding; he was watching the ground rush by, lest it might rise against his face, and all the while he felt his horse's motion under him, smooth and perpetual. Something weighed against his leg, and there was Cheschapah he had forgotten, always there at his side, veering him around somewhere. But there was no red sword waving. Then the white men must be blind already, wherever they were, and Cheschapah, the only thing he could see,

sat leaning one hand on his horse's rump firing a pistol. The ground came swimming towards his eyes always, smooth and wide like a gray flood, but Two Whistles knew that Cheschapah would not let it sweep him away. He saw a horse without a rider floated out of blue smoke, and floated in again with a cracking noise; white soldiers moved in a row across his eyes, very small and clear, and broke into a blurred eddy of shapes which the flood swept away clean and empty. Then a dead white man came by on the quick flood. Two Whistles saw the yellow stripe on his sleeve; but he was gone, and there was nothing but sky and blaze, with Cheschapah's head-dress in the middle. The horse's even motion continued beneath him, when suddenly the head-dress fell out of Two Whistles' sight, and the earth returned. They were in brush, with his horse standing and breathing, and a dead horse on the ground with Cheschapah, and smoke and moving people everywhere outside. He saw Cheschapah run from the dead horse and jump on a gray pony and go. Somehow he was on the ground too, looking at a red sword lying beside his face. He stared at it a long while, then took it in his hand, still staring; all at once he rose and broke it savagely, and fell again. His faith was shivered to pieces like glass. But he got on his horse, and the horse moved away. He was looking at the blood running on his body. The horse moved always, and Two Whistles followed with his eye a little deeper gush of blood along a crease in his painted skin, noticed the flannel, and remembering the lie of his prophet, instantly began tearing the red rags from his body, and flinging them to the ground with cries of scorn. Presently he heard some voices, and soon one voice much nearer, and saw he had come to a new place, where there were white soldiers looking at him quietly. One was riding up and telling him to give up his pistol. Two Whistles got off and stood behind his horse, looking at the pistol. The white soldier came quite near, and at his voice Two Whistles moved slowly out from behind the horse, and listened to the cool words as the soldier repeated his command. The Indian was pointing his pistol uncertainly, and he looked at the soldier's coat and buttons, and the straps on the shoulders, and the bright steel sabre, and the white man's blue eyes; then Two Whistles looked at his own naked, clotted body, and, turning the pistol against himself, fired it into his breast.

Far away up the river, on the right of the line, a lieutenant with two men was wading across after some hostiles that had been skirmishing with his troop. The hostiles had fallen back after some hot shooting, and had dispersed among the brush and tepees on the farther shore, picking up their dead, as Indians do. It was interesting work, this splashing breast-high through a river into a concealed hornets'-nest, and the lieutenant thought a little on his unfinished plans and duties in life; he noted one dead Indian left on the shore, and went steadfastly in among the half-seen tepees, rummaging and beating in the thick brush to be sure no hornets remained. Finding them gone, and their dead spirited away, he came back on the bank to the one dead Indian, who had a fine head-dress, and was still ribanded with gay red streamers of flannel, and was worth all the rest of the dead put together, and much more. The head lay in the water, and one hand held the rope of the gray pony, who stood quiet and uninterested over his fallen rider. They began carrying the prize across to the other bank, where many had now collected, among others Kinney and the lieutenant's captain, who subsequently said, "I

found the body of Cheschapah,” and, indeed, it was a very good thing to be able to say.

Illustration:

The Head lay in the Water

“This busts the war,” said Kinney to the captain, as the body was being lifted over the Little Horn. “They know he’s killed, and they’ve all quit. I was up by the tepees near the agency just now, and I could see the hostiles jamming back home for dear life. They was chucking their rifles to the squaws, and jumping in the river—ha! ha!—to wash off their war-paint, and each \_\_\_ \_\_\_ would crawl out and sit innercint in the family blanket his squaw had ready. If you was to go there now, cap’n, you’d find just a lot of harmless Injuns eatin’ supper like all the year round. Let me help you, boys, with that carcass.”

Kinney gave a hand to the lieutenant and men of G troop, First United States Cavalry, and they lifted Cheschapah up the bank. In the tilted position of the body the cartridge-belt slid a little, and a lump of newspaper fell into the stream. Kinney watched it open and float away with a momentary effervescence. The dead medicine-man was laid between the white and red camps, that all might see he could be killed like other people; and this wholesome discovery brought the Crows to terms at once. Pretty Eagle had displayed a flag of truce, and now he surrendered the guilty chiefs whose hearts had been bad. Every one came where the dead prophet lay to get a look at him. For a space of hours Pretty Eagle and the many other Crows he had deceived rode by in single file, striking him with their whips; after them came a young squaw, and she also lashed the upturned face.

This night was untroubled at the agency, and both camps and the valley lay quiet in the peaceful dark. Only Pounded Meat, alone on the top of a hill, mourned for his son; and his wailing voice sounded through the silence until the new day came. Then the general had him stopped and brought in, for it might be that the old man’s noise would unsettle the Crows again.

