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No. 2

## THE LOOM OF LIFE.

BY EREN E. REKFORO.

I've watched the busy loom of life  
And seen the web it wove  
To many threads of wrong and strife  
How few there were of love.

Day in, day out, the loom goes on:  
Time tires not as she weaves  
The web as varied in its hues  
As autumn's falling leaves.

Dark tints of error and deceit,  
And want, and woe, and sin,  
As flies the shuttle back and forth  
The weaver weaveth in.

Oh, weaver at the fireless loom,  
That stops not, and grows not old,  
Grow you not weary of your work,  
As runs the world away?

And do we furnish every day  
A thread of love or sin?  
God help us for the web of life  
A golden thread to spin.

## The League of Three; OR, BUFFALO BILL'S PLEDGE.

A Story of a Trail Followed to the Bitter End by the Three Famous Scouts, Buffalo Bill, Wild Bill and Texas Jack, the "Princes of the Plains."

BY COLONEL PRENTISS INGRAHAM,  
AUTHOR OF "WILD BILL, THE PISTOL DEAD SHOT," "MERLE, THE MUTINEER," "GOLD-PLUME, THE BOY BANDIT," "BISON BILL, PRINCE OF THE REINS," "CRIMSON KATE," "LONE STAR, THE COWBOY CAPTAIN," ETC.

### CHAPTER VI. THE TRAITOR GUIDE.

"BUFFALO BILL!"

The voices of the teamsters uttered the word in chorus, for the name, spoken by Kiowa Carl, had told who was the stranger, and all knew him well by reputation, though not one of the train had before seen him, excepting the traitor guide.

Kiowa Carl was a man of consummate nerve, and he regained his coolness at once, and said in as free and easy way as that in which Buffalo Bill had addressed him:

"Yes, and it is not the first time you have had the drop on me, Cody."

"And I warn you to beware of the third," was Buffalo Bill's response.

"Yes, for the tide must turn; but what means this attack on me now?"

"It means that I have caught you at your old tricks of devilry, and thwarted you."

"To what do you refer?"

"You were leading this train into an ambush, at the head of which, doubtless, was your old red-skin friend Black Face."

The guide turned deadly pale at this bold accusation, but no muscle of his face quivered as he said savorily:

"You have no proof of this, Buffalo Bill."

"By the Rocky Mountains! but I will have, though, before another sun shall rise."

"Up with your hands, sir!"

The last was given in a tone that was decided.

The guide hesitated, and Buffalo Bill repeated:

"Up with your hands, Kiowa Carl!"

"You have no right to make me a prisoner. I assert that right, sir! Will you obey?"

"Not and I call on my employer and his men to aid me against you," Carl cried, sliding from his horse and confronting the scout.

"They will do nothing, and if you love life, worthless as yours is, I shall tell you but once more to throw up those blood-stained hands of yours."

"Obey, or take the consequences."

The revolver was held so firmly as though in a vise, and all saw that Buffalo Bill meant all he said.

Wholly at Buffalo Bill's mercy Kiowa Carl, with a bitter execration, raised his hands above his head.

Stepping forward, it was but the work of an instant for Buffalo Bill to disarm him, and then, taking the lariat from his saddle-born he ordered the guide to remount his horse, which Kiowa did with a somewhat reluctant grace again in the saddle Buffalo Bill bound him securely hand and foot, tying his feet beneath his horse.

"Now you are safe for the present, and if my suspicions are verified this night, with the permission of the gentleman I will shoot you as I would a mad dog."

Then turning to Mr. Markham, Buffalo Bill continued:

"I would advise you, sir, to at once follow your tracks back to the regular trail, pressing on until you reach your camp of last night, even if darkness overtakes you."

"But we will have no guide, sir, and—"

"If this man does not lead you back to that camp, then I will kill him, so help me Heaven."

"Do you hear me, Kiowa Carl?"

"I do."

"See to it, then, that this train goes not again off the trail, if you value life."

"And where do you go?" asked Kiowa Carl.

"That is my business; but rest assured I will be on hand to execute sentence against you if you play any of your tricks."

"You will return soon, sir, I hope, for your words imply that you intend leaving us," said Mr. Markham.

"Yes, sir, by daylight, or soon after, I will be back."

"Yet, should I not, press on once more, and I will join you at your next camping-place."

Raising his broad sombrero, with a smile and bow, he called to his horse, and throwing himself into the saddle, dashed away across the prairie, while Mr. Markham, trusting implicitly in the man, put his train to the right about and began retracing his trail down the Loup.

### CHAPTER VII. A STRANGE METAMORPHOSIS.

BUFFALO BILL had ridden but a short distance from the train when he came to a sudden halt, and there sat in his saddle, like a man in deep thought.

After a minute's halt he turned his horse and galloped back toward the train.

Surprised at his return, Mr. Markham halted the train, and when he came up asked:

"Well, sir, have you changed your mind about going on?"

"No, sir, but I would like to have you move the train on, excepting one wagon and your traitor guide."

Mr. Markham seemed surprised, but gave the orders at once for the rear wagon to stop back for awhile, and he and Kiowa Carl, whose bridles were hitched to the back of the wagon also did so.

"What does that strange man intend now?" murmured Madge, as she rode on, riding by the side of the ambulance in which sat Miss Samantha Doolittle, the old maid housekeeper, who was in ecstasies over the physique and handsome face of Buffalo Bill.

"Kiowa Carl, I will trouble you to change horses with me," said Buffalo Bill, quietly.

The guide looked at him with surprise, and said in a surly tone:

"Why ask what you have the power to do without the asking?"

"And I will also change clothing with you, and borrow your arms, for I know you are a man to keep some of the best weapons."

"In Satan's name, do you intend to rob me?"

"So, Kiowa Carl, for I leave mine in the train."

"Quick, off with your duds, or I will help you."

"I will not."

"Do you mean it?"

"I do, for I shall not aid you in any devilish trick you may have formed to ruin me."

"I will take them off of you."

"You cannot."

There was a tone of defiance in the voice of the man in spite of his bonds, and Buffalo Bill answered:

"Mr. Markham, I hate to hit a man when he is down, but I must do it."

"Again, Kiowa Carl, will you exchange clothing with me?"

"You have no answer."

Quick as a flash the iron arm of Buffalo Bill shot forth from the shoulder, and the knuckles of steel fell full in the unprotected face of the prisoner.

Like a log he dropped to the ground, and instantly Buffalo Bill bent over him and after undoing the lariat coils quickly disrobed him of his outer clothing and hat.

"I hope you have not killed him, for he fell like a dead man," said Mr. Markham, who could not understand the strange conduct of Buffalo Bill.

"No fear of that, sir. I struck him to save a struggle, for I saw that he would not yield, and I merely stunned him."

"But what is your intention, sir?"

"You shall see."

Throwing off his own outer clothing Buffalo Bill said to the teamster:



Wholly at Buffalo Bill's mercy, Kiowa Carl, with a bitter execration, raised his hands above his head.

"Here, pard, pull these on him."

"I'm darned if I dress him up in your rig, Buffalo Bill, for he don't deserve it; but I have some old togs in the wagon as will do as well, an' they'll astonish him, for they belonged to a honest citizen, which are myself," replied the teamster, and he dragged out a pair of coarse pants, a slouch hat, full of holes, and a woolen shirt, and began to pull them upon the still unconscious man, while Buffalo Bill was rigging himself out in the clothing of the man.

"There, now he do look well, an' you must take keer, Buffer Bill, yer don't let her devilment in them clo's strike in, for it are a disease that are ketchin'."

Both Buffalo Bill and Mr. Markham laughed at the advice of the worthy teamster, and the latter said:

"I do not know, sir, what your intention is, but I shall take care of your clothing and arms for you until you come to claim them."

Buffalo Bill made no reply, but stepping to his saddle pocket drew forth what appeared to be a bundle of hair.

But, upon unrolling it, it proved to be a long false beard, of almost the exact hue of that of Kiowa Carl.

"Oh, curse you!"

The oath came from the guide, who had suddenly returned to consciousness, and readily understood what his enemy intended.

"Ha! ha! Kiowa Carl, I can play you pretty well, can't I?" and Buffalo Bill rumbled up his hair, put on the false beard, pulled the slouch hat over his eyes, and did look the very counterpart of the traitor guide.

Taking the weapons and horse of Kiowa Carl, and leaving his own in the care of Mr. Markham, he rode away once more, and so much resembled the traitor guide that the rest of those in the train, seeing him depart, believed that for some reason Buffalo Bill had returned and set the prisoner free.

After watching him for some moments, in company with the teamster, the prisoner himself, Mr. Markham rode on after the train, and all were surprised at the change that had taken place, and which Seedy Sam, the wagon driver, explained in his quaint way to his pards, while Madge heard from her father's lips what had occurred.

"I am confident," he muttered, "that old Black Face lies concealed in the timber yonder, with a score or two of braves, and that Kiowa Carl was leading the train into the ambush, and was to share spoils with the red-skins."

"Great heavens! what a fate would that beautiful girl have suffered!"

"I shudder to think of it, and if I am right, Kiowa Carl will do no more harm in this world, once I lay my clutch upon him again."

Now I'll see if I am right before the sun is set half an hour, and if my rig will bear muster with old Black Face."

He then rode quietly on, the timber ahead rising before him dark and threatening, and his keen eyes searching its depths for some sign of a foe.

As the sun touched the distant prairie horizon, he was within a mile of the timber, which jutted out from the river to a considerable distance, and formed a secure hiding-place for a thousand savage foes within the shadow of its large trees and thickets.

After long and untiring peering into the timber, Buffalo Bill was rewarded by discovering a moving form.

The word escaped his lips like an exclamation, and peering still more closely, he continued:

"As I thought, Kiowa Carl meant devilry."

"Ah! there come several of the red rascals to meet me, or rather to meet him, as they believe, or I am mistaken."

"Now, Buffalo Bill, you are placing your head in the lion's mouth, and look out, or it may be snapped off."

With a light laugh, as though he relished and defied the great danger he was running, Buffalo Bill arranged his toilet more to his taste, as he deemed it necessary, looked to his arms, and rode quietly along toward the timber.

Five horsemen had come out of the timber, and were riding leisurely toward the scout, as though to meet him, and yet exhibiting toward him no hostile demonstrations.

They were Indians, in all their glory of war-paint and feathers, and one rode slightly in advance of the other four.

"The devil himself, as I live!" said Buffalo Bill.

Then a moment after he added:

"Old Black Face has noticed that the train has turned back, for he evidently had lookouts in the tree-tops, and he is coming to ask me, or rather Kiowa Carl, as he thinks, the reason."

"Well, the train was too far off for him to see anything going on of a suspicious nature."

It was now growing dark, and when Buffalo Bill drew within a couple of hundred yards of the Indians, he was confirmed in his opinion that Kiowa Carl had turned traitor to his own

race, and that Black Face was his ally in devilry, for as yet no hostile sign was shown by the red-skins.

Upon getting within a few lengths of the Indians, Buffalo Bill, imitating, as nearly as possible, and he was a good mimic, the voice of Kiowa Carl, called out at random:

"Does the Black Face frown at his white brother, that he brings not the train into the timber?"

"The pale face spoke crooked to the Black Face, to bring him here with his warriors."

"No."

"Yes, for his white brother came two suns ago and told the Black Face to be here."

"He came with his warriors and he saw the white chief coming over the prairie, and far behind him the wheel-tepees of his people."

"Then the Black Face saw, and his warriors saw, that the pale-face turned back to the wheel-tepees, and then they went toward the rising sun, on the trail they had come, while my brother comes on alone."

"The Black Face talks of what his eyes have seen," said Buffalo Bill, speaking in the Sioux tongue perfectly.

"But he knows not what his brother, Kiowa Carl, has to say."

"The Black Face will listen," said the chief, evidently greatly disappointed at having seen the train turn back.

"Let the Black Face have his ears open then."

"His braves, in the tree-tops, may have seen a pale-face runner, on horseback, join the train."

"The braves of the Black Face said so."

"Aha! I'll make this old wretch tell me all he knows," muttered Buffalo Bill, while aloud he said:

"That was a horse brave of the pale-face chief, sent to order the wheel-tepees back to the Platte, as many white soldiers are on the track of the Black Face."

The Indian chief, in spite of his stoicism, started and glanced nervously at his warriors, while Buffalo Bill continued:

"The brother of the Black Face heard all, and he told the chief of the wheel-tepees which trail to take, and where to camp, and sent word to the captain of the horse-braves that he would go on and find the Black Face and his warriors, and then come and tell them where to strike his village."

The old chief fairly shouted with rage at this bold assertion, failing to see that there was a pretended motive, and Buffalo Bill cried:

"Let the Black Face hear, for, by telling the horse-braves of the whites this crooked story, he could come on and meet his red brothers, let them know where and when to strike the wheel-tepees, then go back and tell the pale-face chief a false trail for his warriors to take, and lead them into an ambush which my brother here can have ready."

"Ugh!" said the Black Face, now seeing through the supposed ruse of his pretended ally.

"Ugh!" grunted the four warriors, delighted at the prospect of blood, booty and scalps before them.

"The Black Face has heard," said the chief, as though anxious to hear more and not willing to show curiosity to do so.

"I guess you have, you old villain, and if I don't fill that ugly head of yours full of lies, it will be because my tongue sticks to the truth too fast to pull it off," mentally observed Buffalo Bill, while aloud he continued:

"The Black Face knows the Lone Tree, toward the setting sun."

"The Black Face has been there," was the pompous reply.

"Two suns from this the wheel-tepees will camp there."

"Ugh."

"Let the Black Face creep upon the camp by night, leaving their ponies far out on the prairie, and his braves can do their work."

"Ugh," and the grunt was one of satisfaction most intense.

"His brother will be there, and when the braves of the Black Face have many scalps at their belts, and their ponies are loaded with the booty of the pale-faces, I will lead them on to the spot where the white warriors can be met in battle and defeated."

"Ugh! my white brother is a great chief."

"Let him come to my camp," said the delighted savage.

"No, for I must be off on the trail to seek the white chief."

"The White Panther, the pale-face brother of the chief is in the camp and would see the Kiowa Carl."

Buffalo Bill fairly started at the name, for he had long heard of the renegade white, known as White Panther, whose crimes had forced him to seek refuge among the red-skins.

He knew him to be also a companion of Kiowa Carl, and did he meet him at once would his disguise be penetrated, and death would quickly follow, and death of the most awful torture that Indian cruelty could devise.

Remembering that Mr. Markham had told him Kiowa Carl had secretly met a white man on the prairie, he felt assured that White Panther, as the Indians called him, and Salt Lake Saul as he was known in the settlements, must be that individual, who had gone on ahead, when his pard became the guide of the train, for no other purpose than to get old Black Face as an ally.

He knew he had to be most cautious, not to betray ignorance, so asked, as a feeler:

"Why did not the White Panther come with my red brother, the Black Face, to meet me?"

"The Panther has ridden hard, and was tired and asleep."

"Ah! but he must have eyes like the stars now, for I want him to guide the wheel-tepees to the Lone Tree."

"The Black Face will tell him."

"It is well, and I will start on the back trail."

"Let the Panther have a swift pony and follow."

"It shall be as my white brother says," replied the old chief, and bidding the red-skins farewell, Buffalo Bill started upon his return, greatly rejoicing in his discovery, and the accomplishment of his ruse.

He had gone but a short distance when he called back to Black Face to bid the White Panther to hurry on after him, and there came back the answer:

"The Panther shall have my swiftest pony, and will soon be with my white brother."

"It will be a sad moment for him when he is, or I am mistaken," muttered Buffalo Bill, as he rode on his way, plotting mischief against the man on whose head a reward was offered as a renegade and red-handed murderer.

### CHAPTER IX. ENTRAPPING A PANTHER.

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