# NARROW ESCAPE FROM A HORRIBLE INDIAN MASSACRE.

## THE SKULKING DOG.

IN the spring of 1863 I was stationed at Camp Pope, above Fort Ridgely, on the Minnesota river, State of Minnesota, in the double capacity of United States Commissary and Quartermaster. This was after the terrible Indian massacre, whereby nearly one thousand innocent settlers lost their lives by the savages, and after the Government had organized a command of soldiers, under a competent leader, to pursue the hostile Sioux, reclaim the white prisoners, but at any rate drive the enemy into or across the Missouri river, where arrangements had been made to intercept, and if possible, annihilate them.

Camp Pope was situated above Little Crow's village, where the chief of that name had resided, and was in the neighborhood of where the Indian war had been inaugurated, for it was Little Crow himself who marshaled his young warriors to battle, and who was responsible for the horrid butcheries of the whites the previous year. The camp was located some distance from the Minnesota river, overlooked by a ridge of bluffs, with drift granite boulders on the right, and a very pretty valley stretching off up toward Yellow Medicine, the former Indian agency. The place was devoid of trees and seemed admirably adapted to the purpose for which it was chosen, with one exception.

On the right of the camp, looking down toward the Minnesota river, was a thick clump of bushes, and I remember expressing fears when the camp was selected, that the Indians might, under cover of these bushes, especially after the leaves came out, make an attack upon it, but men of greater Indian experience than myself, thought, that by throwing out a guard in that direction, that all surprise could be anticipated, so the camp soon became a young city of bustling life and activity. At last, in June, 1863, the entire command, comprising 4,000 soldiers, with all the necessary essentials for a successful campaign against the hostile savages, set out on its journey, and winding up in the valley already indicated, and passing over the bluff, made an imposing and stirring scene.

Never did I experience a more lonely or a more homesick feeling, as when, towards sundown of that memorable day, I looked out upon that deserted camp, where, only ten hours before, four thousand soldiers, with eighteen hundred horses and mules; with the tread of men, with martial music, with familiar faces, with burning camp fires, with white tents, and streaming flags, were wont to greet my eye—all now gone!—desolate, dark, lonely, dreary! How still! How I longed for wings to fly to get away from myself!—what a terrible depression came upon me! and with a shudder I turned and sought my office, where consolation was to come only in sleep.

Camp Pope was the rendezvous for supplies which might be needed for the expedition after it had left, and for the sick which might be sent back from it. Also for disabled horses and other property belonging to the Government. A small stockade of logs had been

thrown up in case of an attack from the Indians, and inside of this defense was Company I, of the Ninth Regiment, a class of boys who had never smelt Indian gun-powder, and from what I could learn, who really never wanted to, and yet they were all brave men. In the Quartermaster's building was a small squad of soldiers, called the convalescent corps, unfit for duty, but who, in case of an emergency, might be made available. Of eleven horses, not more than two could be put to any use, whatever, and these were kept in readiness in case of an attack. An occasional Indian (no doubt a spy) would peer in upon the camp, but notwithstanding the vigilance of the soldiers, he would contrive to escape.

About ten days after the expedition had left rumors came from the Indian scout-camp, some miles above our own, that tracks of Indian ponies had been seen on the west side of the Minnesota river, and fears were entertained that an attack might be made upon us at any moment. These rumors gained credence, because we all thought it would be a very Indian-like trick to slip round behind the expedition, and pounce in upon our small party; and if any considerable number of Indians had done so, the writer, and many others, would have been *non est*, while the savages would have gained one scalp minus the hair; and therein I always considered I should get the better of our wily enemy, who, I imagined, would grit his teeth as he held up his trophy of a bald and shining pate, out of which he could get no further satisfaction than a—grunt. (Indians don't like bald-headed men.)

The constant fear of an attack had induced the commander of the post to take every precautionary

measure for defense he could. I had brought the horses inside the guard-lines; trenches had been dug about the Commissary and Quartermaster's buildings, while a camp-fire was kept constantly burning inside of the stockade, where our most available men were quartered. The command was so small that only four guards and reliefs could be employed to protect the camp, and, as every day brought confirmatory news of Indians hovering about us, these guards were instructed to watch carefully, and, on the first appearance of any object, halt it three times, and, on the last time, if it did not halt, fire. All parties, being satisfied that an unexpected attack could not be made upon the camp, settled down to quietness and to rest.

It was evening. The sky was overcast with black clouds, and the darkness was almost impenetrable. The wind soughed around the camp, and moaned like some lost spirit, anxious to gain admittance into my little office, where I sat revelling upon the past. Ever and anon, amid the death-like stillness of the night, only the click of a musket could be heard to break the eternal monotony of the blast, as it came in fitful gusts and painted, in imagination, the unrelenting, wandering, dancing skeletons of the red men, who had arisen from their graves to take part in the coming conflict! To me they seemed dodging around the corners, and peeping into the windows, and gathering at the camp-fire, and yet, calm and serene, amid all this outside clamor, I dreamed of home, and friends and loved ones. In an instant my reveries were disturbed by the report of a gun, and seizing my pistol, I emerged into the darkness. In a minute more the camp was all astir, for all realized the impending and probable dan-

ger, and pushing my way rapidly to the camp-fire in the stockade, I met the officer in command, with his hair in many kinks, shirt bosom open, coat off, with no shoes or stockings (it was a warm night in June), and who hurriedly exclaimed:

"Captain, where do you think that report came from?"

I replied, "Guard No. 4. Think they are after our horses."

"No; I think it came from No. 3," he answered, and off he darted into the darkness, leaving me making my way, as fast as possible, to the stockade. In the meantime the soldiers gathered around the camp-fire, and as the light shone upon their pale and frightened faces, the scene was one of a most impressive character. Here I halted, but no news coming from the commander of the post, and fearing that not only he but all the guards had been shot down by arrows, and that any minute we might see the infuriated redskins rushing in upon us, with their war-whoops, tomahawks and knives, I ordered two soldiers to accompany me, and crawling upon our hands and knees, some distance from each other (so that we might not be shot at once), we felt our way in the darkness, to guard No. 4, where we heard subdued voices, and on drawing nearer, found them to be that of the guard and the faithful commander, wo had periled his own life to save that of his command. An explanation followed, to the effect that the guard, who was a half-breed Indian, had discovered a large dog crawling up from the bushes previously alluded to, and that, after halting him three times, he fired, and the animal ran back to the spot from whence he came. We all returned to camp, or rather the stockade, but

there was no sleep that night. Every man was on the alert for the enemy.

A few days after this event news came that Little Crow, who had instigated the war, had been shot near Glencoe, and that his son, who, in the meantime had been captured, stated that his father and seventeen other Indians had decided to take our camp at the time the animal was seen to ascend the hill, and for that purpose had sent forward an Indian in a dog's skin, who was to crawl up to and shoot down the guard with arrows, and then the other Indians were to surprise the command and murder every soul! Had it not been for the sagacity and faithfulness of this half-breed guard, the devilish purpose of Little Crow might have been accomplished, but, finding the camp alarmed through the report of the gun, he and his men made their way toward the settlements near Glencoe to steal horses, where he finally met his death. And thus we escaped a horrible butchery from the same savages, who, but a short time before, had murdered one thousand inoffensive white citizens, escaped simply through the sagacity of a half-breed guard, who, knowing Indian character better than the whites, fired at the dodging animal, which, in the skin of a dog, proved to be a tried warrior of the great Sioux chieftain, who was only waiting with his men to hear that our sentinels had been killed by the silent arrows from his disguised savage soldier, to complete the slaughter of the whole camp! But, in the language of Webster—"We still live."