

# Winnetou III

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# Winnetou III

**Translated by  
Marlies Bugmann**

From volume 3 of the famous *Winnetou* Trilogy  
Published first in 1893  
by Karl May (1842-1912)

A story of the Wild West

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Marlies Bugmann  
2008



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## Acknowledgments

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I wish to thank my husband, David Irwin, for his tireless support in my translation endeavours, for his time reading the drafts as well as commenting on the colourful characters who populate May's novels.

Thankyou to Philip Colston for finding 'Mountain Joe' DeBlondy and with him May's 'Joseph's Mountains', as well as supporting my research into many other details of May's tales from the Wild West, such as the mysterious 'heights of San John'; and Will Hutson, for uncovering Florimont's identity.

Last but not least, thankyou to Karl May for giving us Winnetou, Old Shatterhand and friends.



## Translator's Foreword

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In 1893 the *Winnetou* trilogy appeared for the first time. In contrast to other book series, for which the greatest part was based on complete stories previously published in sequel form, May had only a limited volume of existing text to utilise for this trilogy. He, therefore, combined several unrelated tales and rewrote the framework, or the plot. May skilfully re-crafted those individual adventures to fit the storyline; in doing so he created his most famous work. In the third volume, *Winnetou III*, the following existing stories were integrated: chapter one through to four have been created by utilizing 'Deadly Dust', a story that appeared in the periodical 'Deutscher Hausschatz' ('German Home Treasure') in 1880; chapter five through to seven comprise a reworked version of 'Im "wilden Westen" Nordamerikas' (In The Wild West Of North America'), which was first published in 1883 in another magazine called 'Feierstunden im haeuslichen Kreise' ('Merry Hours In The Domestic Circle'). The original chapter eight was newly written for the book version and, by bringing Santer back on the scene, May rounded off the trilogy.

By reusing stories older than the newly written first volume of the trilogy, marked differences within the main

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players are apparent, which can at times feel odd. Nevertheless, *Winnetou III* is an historically important work, as it demonstrates very clearly how Karl May worked and reworked his material.

In the chapter ‘The Stakemen’, May makes reference to a person by the name of Florimont: A lucky connection to an early-American-history enthusiast made it possible to establish Florimont’s identity as that of Captain John C Fremont. The misspelling of Fremont’s name already occurred in earlier accounts of Fremont’s exploits through the uncharted American wilderness, the Wild West. Hutson wrote: “I’m an avid reader of western history, and I saw it misspelled and mangled thusly in a retelling of Fremont’s western exploration, dragging along, of all things, a cannon.” Karl May evidently had access to such accounts.

Chapter 4, ‘In California’, contains a delightful discovery. Old Shatterhand and his friends have an encounter with Mexican vaqueros and May details the vaqueros’ outfits, their weapons, as well as the horse’s saddle and tack at length. When I began translating that passage, I encountered unfamiliar Spanish expressions; upon researching those I discovered that almost the entire description, from the original sombrero: “...low crowned hat with wide brim...” down to the *cola de pato*: “...‘duck’s tail’...” was based on Josiah Gregg’s *Commerce Of The Prairies*, Chapter 11, vol. 1, published in 1844, ‘Style Of Dress In New Mexico—Customs’. Pages 219 and 221 of the same chapter even contain most of the ‘virtues’ of don Fernando de Venango e Colonna de Molynares de Gajalpa y Rostredo and his vaqueros. Naturally, Karl May didn’t speak or read English and his reference source was a translated version of Gregg’s work, *Karawanenzuege durch die westlichen Prairiesen und Wanderungen in Nord-Mejico* by M.P. Lindau, Dresden, Leipzig, Germany, 1845/48 (2 volumes). In honour of Josiah Gregg, I have corrected May’s spelling for the protective leather hoods over the stirrups from ‘tapageres’ to the one penned by Gregg: ‘tapaderas’.

Later in the same chapter, May explains the name and origin of a gang of San Francisco outlaws thus: *The hounds were thieves and murderers who had formed a gang of despots, San Francisco's infamous Sydney Coves, and the residents were only able to get rid of them by uniting against the gang.*

However, research during the translation of *Winnetou III* uncovered this: The Sydney Coves were also called the Sydney Ducks, said to be a group of four Australians of ill repute from Sydney; the name of one of them was John Jenkins. San Francisco's first vigilantes hanged them at Custom House for theft after a mock trial in 1851. A month later, another Australian, James Stuart, was also hung by the Vigilance Committee.

The 'hounds' were unrelated to the Sydney Coves and made up of a gang of fifty or sixty young thugs, initially known as the hounds and later as the San Francisco Society of Regulators. Colonel Jonathan D. Stevenson had brought them to San Francisco as members of his volunteer regiment to fight against Mexico. The hounds were thieves and ruffians whose prime objective was to terrorise Spanish-Americans. They also caused trouble in the mines and other Californian places.

A few pages later, May mentions 'Josefsberge' or 'Joseph's Mountains'. Research didn't bring any reference to such mountains, however, once I established that Lake Shasta didn't exist when May wrote the story, it became astonishingly simple to find the identity of May's Joseph's Mountains. They most likely are the Castle Crags near Lower Soda Springs, where a German named Joseph DeBlondy (also spelled Doblondy) was the first permanent settler in the area. DeBlondy was also called Mountain Joe and he had first come to Northern California as a guide with John C. Fremont. Mountain Joe operated a 'store and boarding house' near Lower Soda Springs on Soda Creek during the 1850's. He was a good friend of Joaquin Miller, Poet of the Sierras. Several of Miller's works were based on

an 1855 battle with Indians near the Castle Crags (with Mountain Joe leading the miners). During that battle, an Indian arrow went through Miller's cheek or jaw and throat and caused a near-fatal wound (maybe the inspiration for Old Shatterhand's knife wound in his jaw and tongue, inflicted by Winnetou). Miller's *Life Amongst The Modocs: Unwritten History* (1874) was published in Europe before May wrote the story that makes up the second half of *Winnetou III*. May regularly incorporated German immigrants into his Wild West stories; in this case, too, Mountain Joe was immortalized with May's 'Josefsberge'.

May's own *Winnetou III* (the German version) contains eight chapters. Chapter eight is more than twice as long as the average of the preceding seven chapters in the 1893 version and incorporates two separate elements (separate in location and separate in focus). In this English version, the last (double) chapter is divided into two separate chapters. Chapter nine, *The Hunt For Santer*, is the consequence of a natural break in the narrative between the events on Nuggettsil and the important events in Tangua's village, where Old Shatterhand is held captive; from the Kiowa village evolves the final chase after the villain Santer.

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The author and translator wishes to advise that May's narrative is of historic value and the text has been translated as published during May's lifetime, and does not endorse or confirm any of the views, terms, interpretations, representations, opinions, cultural sentiments, religious expressions, or conjectures of the original author, Karl May, 1842-1912, or those attributed to his fictional characters, antagonists and protagonists alike, within the translations. Where an inaccuracy of fact has been identified, slight adjustments for ease of reading have been effected; but it was not intended to alter, censor or enhance the work of Karl May. Terms for ethnic groups commonly used by the culture of his era were acceptable in those times and, where

appropriate, have been maintained within the narrative translations, because the use of contemporary, twenty-first century politically correct, and racially or culturally sensitive terms would seem out of place. We ask the reader not to judge.

The spelling of some non-English words has been treated as follows: the German 'sch' has been replaced with 'sh' or 'ch' or 'j' where appropriate and according to phonetic preference; the normal English equivalent letter has been used instead of the occasional foreign language special characters; for German umlaut the internationally accepted alternatives of oe, ae, and ue have been applied. Some German and Spanish expressions and words have been incorporated into passages where appropriate and where indicated that dialogue within the plot occurs in the German or Spanish language. The names and descriptions of some regions and natural features are fictitious but have not been indicated as such. Measurements are expressed in metric system terms, where measurements are expressed in imperial terms within dialogue they have been maintained as such. German syntax may at times be evident; May's excessive use of punctuation marks, especially the comma, semicolon and exclamation mark, has been preserved as far as practicable. Parentheses ( ) contain commentary by Karl May, square brackets [ ] contain notes or references by the translator.

Marlies Bugmann, 2008.



# 1

## The Great Western Railway

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I had travelled a fair distance since early morning. Midday approached, I felt tired and bothered by the hot sun; consequently, I decided to rest and eat lunch. The prairie stretched out in front of me like an endlessly rising and falling plain. Neither a noteworthy animal nor the trace of a human being had come to my attention during the five days since a large band of Ogallala had split up our group. I felt the urge for the company of a sensible creature so that I could find out if, after such a prolonged period of silence, my vocal cords were still working.

There was neither a creek nor a tree anywhere; I didn't have choices to make and could stop where I pleased. When I reached a dale I jumped out of the saddle, hobbled my mustang, took my blanket and climbed up to the top of the next green elevation to stretch out. The horse had to stay down below so that an approaching enemy wouldn't notice it; I had to occupy the highest point to overlook the landscape while I remained hidden on the ground.

I had good reasons to be cautious. Our company of twelve men had departed from the banks of the Platte River to travel along the eastern side of the Rocky Mountains into Texas. At the same time, a number of Sioux tribes had left their camps and were out for revenge because someone had

killed a number of their warriors. We were aware of it but had obviously not applied enough caution and fell into their hands. The Indians had followed us south as we hadn't quite managed to completely wipe our trail. After a hard and bloody battle, during which five of us lost their lives, the survivors were dispersed in all directions across the prairie.

It was important that I kept my eyes open if I didn't want to wrap myself into my blanket one night and wake up in the Eternal Hunting Grounds without a scalp the next morning.

I stretched out, took a piece of dried meat from my provisions, rubbed it with gunpowder in place of salt and tried with my teeth to bring it to a consistency that would enable me to deliver it to my stomach. Then I pulled out one of my roll-ups, my 'home-made' cigars, lit it with my punks and blew smoke rings with the contentment of a Virginian tobacco plantation owner who was smoking the heart leaves of his best goosefoot.

After I'd been resting on my blanket for a while I looked behind me as a matter of routine and noticed a dot on the horizon that gradually moved towards me. I slipped down from my elevation far enough for my body to be covered and observed the object. After a while, I was able to identify the dot as a horse and rider; the latter sat in the saddle like an Indian, stooped forward over his animal's neck.

He had to be about two and a half kilometres away when I first became aware of him. His horse was ambling so slowly that it required half an hour to cover half the stretch. When I looked into the distance behind the rider, I was astonished to spot another four dots moving along his trail. That definitely got my attention. The first rider was a White, he was close enough for me to tell by his clothing. Were the others perhaps Indians pursuing him? I pulled out my telescope. My guess was correct. When they came closer, I could clearly see their weapons and tattoos through the glass and identify them as Ogallala, one of the cruellest warmongering tribes of the Sioux. They were well mounted, while the horse of the White seemed to be a very ordinary

animal. Meanwhile, he had approached close enough for me to observe him in detail.

He was of short, lean stature and on his head he wore an old felt hat with a missing brim, a circumstance that, out on the prairie, would ordinarily not be a reason for a second look, however, in that case it accentuated a conspicuous defect: the man had no ears. The spot where they should have been showed signs of brutal treatment, they were cut off by force. He wore a huge blanket over his shoulders, which completely cloaked his torso. A pair of very peculiar boots covered his partially exposed, skinny legs. The footwear would have attracted ridicule in Europe, however, it was that of gauchos in South America.

The gauchos make them by stripping the skins from a dead horse's hoofless back legs and, while still warm, pull them over their feet and lower legs and leave them to dry: the skin firmly encloses the wearer's feet and calves to form excellent weatherproof boots, which, of course, leave the front and the soles of the feet exposed and force the wearer to walk barefoot.

There was an object hanging on his saddle that was most likely a gun but it looked more like a stick found somewhere in a forest. His horse was an old, camel-legged mare without a tail. The animal appeared to have been put together from the diverse body parts of a horse, a donkey and a camel. Her head was disproportionately large and hung almost to the ground as she walked. Her ears were so long it was scary and they drooped like those of a Newfoundland dog.

Under different circumstances, or as a newcomer, I would have been tempted to laugh about rider and horse but, in spite of the man's peculiar exterior, he appeared to be one of those Westerners whose worth only became clear once one got to know them better. He probably had no idea that four of the white hunters' fiercest enemies were so close to him, otherwise he wouldn't have moved in such a slow and carefree manner and would have turned around occasionally to observe them.

He had approached to within a hundred paces and encountered my tracks. I couldn't tell who was the first to

notice them, he or his horse, but I clearly saw that the mare stopped of her own accord, lowered her head even closer to the ground, attentively eyed my mustang's hoof prints and in addition flapped her ears up and down, back and forth as if an invisible hand tried to unscrew them from her skull. The rider wanted to dismount and inspect the trail more closely; by doing so he would have lost valuable time and so I preempted it with my shout:

“Hey man! Stay low and come closer!”

I moved so that he could see me. Even his mare lifted her head, pointed her ears forward as if she wanted to catch my call like a ball and busily flicked her short, naked tail stump.

“Hey mister,” he replied. “Watch your voice and shout a little quieter; you never know, there could be ears on this here paddock that shouldn't hear anything! Come, Tony!”

The mare moved her endlessly long legs and then stopped next to my mustang without having to be prompted. She gave him an arrogant and malicious gaze, and then turned around and pointed the part of her anatomy at him that was called ‘stern’ on a boat. She obviously was one of those riding animals—not an uncommon occurrence in the prairie—who only lived for their masters and proved too obstreperous and, therefore, useless to anyone else.

“I know exactly how loud I can talk!” I replied. “Where are you from and where are you headed, mister?”

“None of your damn business!” he retorted.

“You think so? You're not overly polite; I can already swear to it before I've spoken two words with you. To be quite honest, I'm used to getting an answer when I ask a question!”

“Hm, yes; you seem to be an elegant gentleman indeed,” he said and gave me a contemptuous gaze. “That's why I'll give you the answer you requested immediately!” He pointed behind him and then ahead. “I come from there and am going there.”

I began to like the man. He definitely mistook me for one of those hopeless Sunday hunters. The genuine Westerner didn't give much thought to his appearance and

had an inherent distaste for anything clean. The clothes of someone who roamed the Wild West for years weren't presentable in public and the wearer suspected anyone who looked clean of being an incompetent greenhorn. I had acquired a new outfit in Fort Wilfers and always made a point of keeping my weapons spotless. Those were two circumstances entirely suited to let me appear inadequate in the eyes of a prairie runner. Consequently, I didn't take the curt manners of the short stranger to heart and answered likewise:

"Then see to it that you go *there*; but beware of the four Indians back *there* on your trail! Haven't you spotted them yet?"

He stared at me from bright, keen eyes and gave me a look with an expression of astonishment and amusement at the same time.

"Not spotted? Heeheehee! Four Indians are after me and I don't spot them! You seem to be a bit of an oddball f'r instance! Those nice people have been hard on my heels since early morning; but I don't have to look around at all because these red mesh'shurs are so predictable. They'll keep a decent distance during daytime and then sneak up on me as soon as I've found a spot to camp. But they might just have figured wrong f'r instance, because I'll double back in a loop that'll take me into their back. I just haven't found suitable terrain until now; I can finally do it between these wavy hills and dales and if you want to learn something and watch an old Westerner how he works it so that he can get at the redskins, then stay here and wait ten minutes. But I reckon you won't because a type like you doesn't seem to have much liking for a whiff of Indian perfume! C'mon, Tony!"

He rode on without giving me another glance and after half a minute already he and his unique mare had disappeared between the undulations.

His plan seemed sensible to me because if I had been in his shoes I would have devised a similar one. He wanted to ride in an arc that brought him behind his pursuers before they realized what he was up to. To reach his objective he

only had to stay down in the depressions. It would also have been better if he cut the arc short enough so that they had to pass him. Thus far, they had been able to observe him and, therefore, knew how far ahead he was; they couldn't possibly know that he was about to turn the table on them.

They were four against one and there was a possibility that I could become involved in a situation where I needed my weapons. I inspected them and then waited for things to develop.

The Indians came closer by the moment, one behind the other. They had almost reached the spot where the stranger's trail and mine merged when the one in the lead stopped his horse and turned around to the others. It seemed strange to them, after all, that the White was no longer in view. They moved close together and held a short powwow. I could already reach them with a bullet from my bear killer. It wasn't necessary, because a shot cracked, and another. Two Indians fell dead from their horses and at the same time there was a loud, triumphant shout:

"Ohiih!" the high-pitched tremolo of the Indian war cry rang out.

It wasn't a Red Indian but the short hunter who came charging out of a nearby depression. He made good on his intention, disappeared behind and reappeared in front of me. He pretended to flee after having discharged his two shots. His mare seemed to have turned into a different creature altogether; she stretched her limbs that the turf cracked; her head with the enthusiastically pointed ears was at full stretch and every tendon, every fibre seemed to be taut. Rider and horse looked like they had become one. The hunter swung his gun around and reloaded it with a confidence that led me to conclude it wasn't the first time he had been in such a situation.

Two shots cracked behind him; the remaining two Indians fired, but none of their bullets hit him. The redskins emitted a furious howl, reached for the tomahawks and raced after him. He hadn't even looked around; he finished reloading and threw his horse about. It was as if the horse could read his mind; she stopped, stretched and stood

motionless like a sawhorse. He lifted the gun and aimed; the next moment I saw two flashes, the mare didn't as much as flinch—the two Indians were shot through the head.

I had thus far lain in firing position, but not pulled the trigger because the stranger didn't need my help. He dismounted to inspect the dead Indians and I joined him.

“Now you know, f'r instance, how to run rings around these red scoundrels, eh?” he asked me.

“Thanks mister! I can see that I might learn something from you!”

My smile must have appeared suspect to him after all; he scrutinized me and then asked:

“Or would you have had the same idea?”

“A *ring* wasn't really necessary. In this terrain, where the depressions within the undulations can hide anyone, it's enough to let them see you at a sufficient distance, then you simply double back. A *ring* is much more appropriate for the open, flat prairie.”

“Really? Where do you get all that? Who are you, eh?”

“I write books.”

“You...write...books?” He took a step back in astonishment and gave me a half worried, half contemptuous smile. “Are you unwell, sir?”

He pointed at his forehead, to make sure that I knew precisely what he meant.

“No!”

“No? Then only a bear can understand you, because I can't! I shoot a buffalo because I have to eat; what reason do you have to write your books?”

“So they get read.”

“Sir, don't take it the wrong way, but that's the greatest stupidity I can think of! Those who want to read a book can write it themselves, every child can understand that. I don't shoot my meat for others either! Alright, you're a bookworm? But why have you come into the prairie, eh? Do you want to write books here f'r instance?”

“I only do that when I get back home; then I recount everything I've experienced and witnessed and many thousands of people read it and know then very precisely

what life on the prairies is like without the need to go there in person.”

“Then you’ll write about me?”

“Of course!”

He retreated one more step; then he came right up close to me, placed his right hand onto the grip of his Bowie knife, and his left on my arm and said:

“Sir, there’s your horse; climb aboard and see to it that you get going if you don’t want several inch of cold, sharp steel between your ribs! Nobody can say a word or move an arm around you without the world getting to know it. Go to where the sun don’t shine; get going immediately!”

The short man reached to my shoulder and yet he was serious with his threat. It amused me greatly, but I didn’t let on and, instead, said:

“I promise only to write good things about you!”

“You’re going! I’ve said so and that’s that!”

“Then I’ll promise you that I won’t write about you at all!”

“That doesn’t count! Someone who sits down to write books for other people is crazy and no crazy person will keep his promise. What are you waiting for, man, my liver is about to crawl over my fingers f’r instance and I’ll do something that won’t be comfortable for you!”

“What could that be?”

“You’ll see in a minute!”

I smiled into his angrily flashing eyes and replied calmly:

“Alright, let’s see!”

“Look at this! How do you like this blade?”

“Not bad; I’ll prove it to you!”

I grabbed him that instant, yanked his arms back, slid my left arm under them, pinned them against me and pressed down on his wrist with my right so that he had to drop the knife with a cry of pain. The unexpected attack had perplexed him so much that I had time to tie his hands together with the strap of my bullet pouch before he even made one evasive move.

“Tarnation!” he shouted. “What do you think you’re doing? What are you going to do with me f’r instance?”

“Hey mister, watch your voice and shout a little quieter; you never know if perhaps there aren’t ears on this old paddock who don’t need to hear anything!”

I let him go and quickly grabbed the knife and the gun that he had put aside when he inspected the dead Indians. He attempted to pull his hands free; the exertion caused the blood to rush to his face but the strap held.

“Leave it be, mister. You won’t get loose before I decide!” I warned him. “I am only trying to demonstrate that a book worm is used to speaking with people the way they speak with him. You pulled your knife on me, although I hadn’t offended you or harmed you in any way. According to the laws of the prairie you’re mine to do with as I wish. Nobody can deny me the right to organise for the cold, sharp blade to sneak between your ribs instead of mine, like you intended before.”

“Go ahead, man,” he grimly replied. “I don’t feel like living with the shame of having been overpowered by a single man, face to face, in broad daylight and without having been able to touch a single hair on him, so it’s alright by me if you extinguish Sans-Ear!”

“Sans-Ear? You are Sans-Ear?”

I had heard much about the famous Westerner. He was a loner because he didn’t think anyone worthy of his company. The Navajo were responsible for him having lost his ears many years earlier. Consequently, he became known across the entire prairie and beyond by the name ‘No-Ear’, which, for some peculiar reason, was made up of two languages.

He only replied to my question when I repeated it:

“My name is none of your business! If I have a bad one, it’s not worth mentioning, and if I have a good one it deserves to be protected from this shame.”

I untied him.

“Here is your knife and your gun; you’re free. Go where you like!”

“That’s going beyond a joke! How can I leave behind the shame of having been defeated by a greenhorn? If it had

been a real fellow, like Winnetou the Red Indian, Long Haller or even a pathfinder like Old Firehand or Old Shatterhand, it would...would..."

I felt sorry for the old chap; he had really taken my prank to heart and I welcomed the opportunity to assuage him, because he had mentioned the name by which I was known around the campfires of the Whites and in the wigwams of the Red Indians.

"A greenhorn?" I asked. "Do you really believe that a greenhorn would be able to play a trick such as this on brave Sans-Ear?"

"What else could you be? You look as if you had just come from a tailor's shop and your weapons are as shiny as if they had been polished for a masquerade ball!"

"But they're good weapons; you'll see! Pay attention!"

I picked up a rock twice the size of a one-dollar coin and tossed it high in the air, swiftly aimed and when it reached the point of equal force between the power of the throw and the pull of gravity, and seemed to hang in midair weightlessly, my bullet hit it and drove it even higher.

I had to practice that shot many hundreds of times before I managed to execute it successfully for the first time; it wasn't a spectacular masterpiece. However, Sans-Ear looked at me with a pair of eyes that seemed to express something akin to shock.

"Heavens, what a shot! Do you get it every time?"

"Nineteen out of twenty."

"In that case you're one of a kind! What's your name f'r instance?"

"Old Shatterhand."

"Impossible! Old Shatterhand must be much older than you, or they wouldn't call him 'old'."

"You forget that the prefix 'old' is often used in a different context, not always to denote age."

"Right! But, hm, don't get me wrong, sir; Old Shatterhand once got pinned under a grizzly bear that surprised him in his sleep and tore his flesh from the shoulder across the chest; he safely patched himself up, but the scar f'r instance must still be very visible!"

I opened my buffalo hide coat and the white deer skin shirt.

“Look!”

“Tarnation, the beast really worked you over! All of your sixty-eight ribs must have been exposed, no?”

“Nearly. It was down south along the banks of Red River and I was lying by the water, next to the bear, forced to look after myself alone for two weeks with this horrible injury until Winnetou found me, the Apache chief whose name you just mentioned.”

“Then you really are Old Shatterhand! Hm, I have to ask you something: do you believe that I am a terrible numbskull f’r instance?”

“No, I don’t think so. You only made the mistake of confusing me with a greenhorn, nothing else. You couldn’t have expected an attack like that from a newling; Sans-Ear can only be taken by surprise.”

“Oho! It seems you don’t need the advantage of a surprise. There aren’t many men with your buffalo strength. There’s no shame attached to being defeated by you. My real name is Sam Haverfield, and if you want to do me a favour then call me Sam!”

“And you can call me Charley, like all my friends. Here’s my hand!”

“Tops, so be it, sir! Old Sam isn’t the man to squeeze just anyone’s fingers; but I’ll shake your hand anytime. Please have mercy and don’t squash mine to pulp! I still need it for a while yet.”

“No worries, Sam! Your hand ought to be able to do me a few more good turns in the future, just like mine is willing to be of service to you. But back to my initial question: where from and where to?”

“I’ve just come down from Canada a little where I’ve kept company with lumber strikers and now I’m headed into Texas and Mexico f’r instance, where there are so many scoundrels that my heart is smiling at the expected bullets and knives that’ll come my way.”

“That’s precisely the road I’m travelling! I’m also headed for Texas and then California and I don’t mind in the

least if I make a short detour via Mexico. Am I permitted to come along?"

"Are you permitted? As if you need to ask! You've been down south and therefore just the man I need. But seriously: do you really write books?"

"Yes."

"Hm! If Old Shatterhand is doing it, then it must be different to how I imagined it to be; but I tell you, I'd rather fall into a bear cave unexpectedly and backwards then dunk a quill into ink; I would never in my entire life get past the first word. But say, how on Earth did these Indians get into this region? They're Ogallala and we have to beware of them."

I told him what I knew.

"Hm! In that case it would be best if we didn't strike roots here. I came upon a respectable trail yesterday. I counted at least sixty horses. The four fellows here must be a scouting party. Have you been in this area before?"

"No."

"About twenty miles from here the prairie turns completely flat and another ten miles farther there's water. That's where the Indians will have gone to water their horses. Of course we'll keep out of their way and head directly south, although we'll only get to water tomorrow morning. If we ride on soon we'll get to the railway that's been built from the eastern states across to the western lands and if we get there at the right time we'll have the pleasure of watching a train rolling past f'r instance."

"I'm ready to go. But what are we going to do with the corpses?"

"What we're going to do? Not much. We leave them here; but first I'll take off their ears."

"We must bury them because our presence will be revealed if they're found."

"They're supposed to be found, Charley; that's what I want."

He carried the dead Indians on top of an elevation, laid them side-by-side, cut their ears off and placed them into their hands.

“So, Charley! Whoever finds them will know immediately that Sans-Ear was here. I tell you, it is an entirely miserable sensation if you want to be cold about your ears in winter but haven’t got them anymore. A long time ago I was careless enough to let Indians catch me. I killed several of them but only sliced the ear off one of them when I didn’t hit him properly with the tomahawk. To mock me they cut my ears off before they attempted to kill me. They have my ears but I’m still alive, because Sam Hawerfield unexpectedly cleared off. But for my ears...well...count this!” He lifted the gun and showed me the countless notches he had cut into the wooden stock. “Every notch represents an enemy Indian who’s no longer alive. Now I’ll add four more.”

He made the four new cuts and continued:

“These are only redskins. Up here there are eight notches for Whites who tasted my bullets. I’ll tell you more about the reasons for it later. I only have to find two more, father and son, the biggest bastards imaginable on God’s wide Earth; when I find them, my life’s work will be done.”

His eyes were suddenly moist and an expression of melancholy, passion and love crossed over his weather-beaten face; I sensed that the heart of the old hunter had once made its presence felt. Perhaps pain or the urge for revenge had driven him, like so many others, into the arms of the rough life in the wilderness because the genuine prairie runner no longer recognized the sublime commandment: “Love your enemies!”

He had reloaded his rifle. It was one of those terrible shooting irons that were quite commonplace in the prairie. The stock had lost its original shape; notch was carved upon notch, cut upon cut; every single mark represented the death of an enemy. The barrel was encrusted with rust, seemed to have become bent and nobody else would have managed to fire an even halfway acceptable shot from it. However, in the hands of its owner, such a rifle was unfailing; the hunter had a lifetime of practice, knew all of its merits, its weaknesses and shortcomings and if he loaded it he bet life and bliss that the bullet was going to hit its mark.

“Tony!” Sam called.

The mare had been grazing nearby. When she heard the call she trotted up to us and stood so conveniently next to Sam that he only had to lift his arm to grab the saddle horn and mount up.

“Sam, you’ve got an excellent horse there! Someone who sees her for the first time wouldn’t give you a dime for her; but if he observes her for a while he soon notices that you wouldn’t sell her for a thousand dollars.”

“Thousand! Pshaw! Not even a million! I know veins up there in the Rockies where I could take out gold by the shovelful, and should I ever meet someone deserving of Sam Haverfield’s affections I’ll show him those placers. No, I don’t have to give my Tony away for money. I’ll only tell you this much, Charley: the man they call Sans-Ear these days was a completely different fellow once upon a beautiful day, full of happiness and bliss, like a day is full of light and the ocean full of drops. He was a young farmer and had a wife for whom he would have given a thousand lives, and a child who was worth ten thousand lives to him. He took his new wife home on his best mare, called Tony. And when the mare produced a filly, healthy, lively and smart like rarely another creature, why shouldn’t he name it Tony, like its mother, eh, Charley?”

“Yes,” I replied, deeply moved about the innocence of the nature that spoke to me out of the unexpected opening in the rough shell.

“Well, then came the ten I mentioned before. They were a gang of outlaws who terrorised the region. They burned down my farm, killed my wife and child and shot my mare. They had no use for her because she refused to carry a stranger; as luck would have it, the filly had wandered off and got lost and was the only one to escape. I came home from hunting and all that was left of my happiness was the young animal. What more can I tell you! Eight of the bastards are dead, I killed them, with bullets from this gun; the two remaining ones will also be mine; once Sans-Ear’s on someone’s trail they can run to the Mongols, they won’t get away from me; that’s why I’m headed into Texas and

Mexico. The young, cheerful farmer turned into a grey prairie runner who's only got blood and revenge on his mind, and the filly turned into a creature that resembles a billy goat more than a good horse; but they're both still holding their ground and they'll bravely keep going until an arrow whirrs, a bullet whistles or a tomahawk strikes one of them down; the other—be it horse or rider—will die of a broken heart soon after.”

With his hand he brushed over his eyes. Then he swung into the saddle and remarked:

“That’s enough of old stories, Charley. You’re the first I’ve told anything about them, although I’ve seen you for the first time in my life today, and you’ll probably also be the last. You might have heard of me occasionally, just as I’ve heard stories about you when I was in the mood to join people around a campfire for a quarter of an hour. That’s why I wanted to let you know that you’re no stranger to me. Now do me a favour and forget that you caught me napping today! I’ll try and convince you that old Sam Hawerfield still got it, regardless.”

I unhobbed my mustang and mounted up. He had said that he wanted to travel south, instead he headed straight west. I didn’t ask him why; no doubt he pursued an objective with that. I also didn’t say anything when he collected the four Indian spears and took them along. He reminded me of my old Sam Hawkens, especially since both had the same first name.

We rode a fair stretch without talking before he stopped his horse and dismounted. He planted one of the spears on the crest of an elevation. I recognized his intention then. The lances became signposts so that the Indians were led to their dead warriors and recognized that Sans-Ear’s revenge had claimed another four victims.

He then opened his old saddlebag and pulled out eight strong rags that he divided between us.

“Here, Charley, get down and wrap these around your mustang’s hooves; on ground such as this they’ll prevent the slightest imprints and the Indians will think that we flew away through the air. You ride south now until you get to the

railroad tracks and wait for me there. I'll plant the other three spears and then follow you f'r instance. We'll certainly find each other and if we miss by a short distance we'll use the cry of the vulture as a signal by day and the howl of a coyote by night."

Five minutes later we had lost sight of each other. Immersed in contemplation, I rode in the direction I had been pointed. The rags wrapped around my horse's hooves prevented it from moving fast and so I dismounted when I had perhaps covered about seven or eight kilometres and took them off. They had served their purpose of concealing our tracks in the vicinity of the spears.

That enabled my mustang to stretch out again. The prairie gradually became flatter and there was the occasional wild nut or cherry bush. The sun was still a few degrees above the western horizon when I noticed a line in the south that stretched almost precisely east to west.

Was that the railroad line? Undoubtedly. I headed for it and my guess was soon confirmed. In front of me was the embankment, like a dam, almost as high as a man was tall, and the tracks lay on top of it.

I felt a peculiar emotion, faint but perceptible. That was my first touch with civilization after a long time in the wilderness. I only had to give a signal and the train would stop, I could go aboard and steam away towards the West or the East.

After I had secured my horse with the lasso I went looking under the bushes for kindling and dry wood for a campfire. One of the bushes grew hard against the embankment. I bent down to pick up a handful of twigs when, to my astonishment, I spotted a hammer lying on the ground. It couldn't have been lying there for a long time because the head was clean and there was no trace of the sort of rust that would have developed after only a couple of days' exposure to the night-time dew. Someone had to have dropped it there, either the same day or the day before at the most.

I first inspected my side of the bank but didn't find anything suspicious; I climbed up to the tracks and searched

again for a long time but to no avail. However, a thick tuft of the fragrant, short grama grass attracted my attention because it was rare in that region. And sure enough, someone had stood on it! The print was fresh, two hours old at the most; the blades around the edge had already recovered because they had only been bent by the outside of the sole, while those in the middle of the foot area had been crushed and still showed the precise heel and toe width. Someone wearing an Indian moccasin had made the footprint. Could Indians be nearby? What connection was there between them and the hammer? Weren't Whites wearing moccasins as well and wasn't it possible that a railroader from a maintenance crew was wearing such comfortable footwear? I couldn't afford to rely upon guesswork and had to find out for sure.

However, I realized that an inspection of the line would have been very risky. There could have been an enemy lurking behind any of the bushes growing on either side of the embankment and I would have been visible over a great distance if I had moved along on top of the dam. Under different circumstances I wouldn't have felt uneasy because of a hammer and would have begun my investigations without hesitation; but since I knew that Ogallala were in the area, I had to treat the smallest matter with the greatest caution. I shouldered the gun and took out the revolver, sneaked west from bush to bush and moved along the embankment a fair stretch but found nothing. The same repeated on the opposite bank as I returned and crossed back to where my horse was grazing—nothing. Then I extended my search east and had no more success at first. I started to once again crawl across the tracks, carefully and on all fours, as low to the ground as possible to return along the other side. Suddenly, I realized there was a moist patch of sand that produced a peculiar crunching noise and gave way under my weight; it seemed to have been freshly deposited for some reason. I dug with my fingers and got a shock; my hand was red from blood and so was the sand. I lay flat on the ground and investigated the situation more closely. Someone had covered a large, deep pool of blood with sand.

A murder had taken place; nobody would have tried to hide the blood of an animal. Who was the victim and who was the murderer? There were no footprints evident on top of the dam because the ground was too compacted; but when I looked along the buffalo-grass-covered southern slope, I discovered the tracks of several people and two continuous lines as if a person had been carried down the railroad embankment with his heels dragging on the ground.

It was too dangerous for me to cross over in the grass, and in that particular spot. The moisture of the blood hadn't seeped into the soil yet, and the tracks were still fresh and distinct, which meant the murder had taken place only a short time before I arrived, and the murderers could still be nearby. I crawled back down the embankment and retreated a stretch, then crossed over and moved east along the southern base of the dam, towards the trail in the grass.

That could only happen very slowly as I had to employ all my ingenuity and skills, make all sorts of distortions and moves to remain out of sight, in case danger was nearby. Luckily the bushes grew closer together along that stretch of embankment. I carefully hid behind each one and tried to look into and through the next before I dared to leap across the gap or snake along the ground and reached the spot below the pool of blood without mishap.

I was lying behind a group of cherry bushes. About eight metres opposite stood a dense bunch of pistachio shrubs. As much as the bush, under which I concealed myself, prevented me from seeing clearly, and as dense as the other shrubs were, I still thought I could see something like a human body under them. The object might have been covered up but it still formed a dark mass that was distinguishable from the surroundings because it didn't permit light to penetrate, and it was as long as a human body. Was it the victim's body? It could also be the murderer. I had to try to find out.

Why did I expose myself to such danger? I could have simply waited for Sam and then ride on with him! A prairie hunter, however, had to know what sort of enemies were in front of him, behind him and next to him; he had to

investigate seemingly unimportant matters because they gave him insights into things that he had to know, things that not even the smartest professors or academics would consider, in order to maximise his own safety. The prairie hunter drew conclusions from the most insignificant incidents, which would have seemed unconnected to the uninitiated; conclusions that often drew ridicule from others but in the end, as a rule, proved correct. While he, perhaps, covered fifty or more kilometres on one day, the next he didn't travel more than half a kilometre because with each step he had to investigate first whether or not it was safe to take it. And even if his caution didn't directly result in a personal benefit, his findings were of value to others; he could give them advice, warn them or given them information; not counting the natural human urge to identify danger and fend off threats, or the attraction of the adventure.

I picked up a small branch that was lying on the ground, put my hat on its tip and pushed it through the cherry bush with some intentional noise so that it looked like someone tried to push through. There was no movement in the pistachio shrubs. There was either no enemy or someone who was too cunning and experienced to fall for such a trick.

I decided to put everything on one card and pulled back, rose and with two leaps crossed the open space. Knife ready, I crashed into the shrubs. Beneath piled up branches lay a human being; I could feel it immediately, but he wasn't alive. I lifted the litter and looked directly at a bloody skull and a face terribly distorted from the death throes. He was a White who had been scalped. I found a broken-off arrow with barbs in his back when I examined the body. I was dealing with Indians on the warpath; hence the barbed arrowhead.

Had they left the area or were they still nearby? I had to know. Their tracks were clearly visible and lead from the railroad embankment out into the prairie. I followed them and moved from bush to bush, constantly expecting a whirring arrow, or having to use my knife. I could see by their footprints that there were four men, two older and two young ones. They hadn't even tried to hide their trail, which

meant they felt completely safe. I was forced to move along on finger and toe tips only, a task that required much practice and not insignificant amounts of strength.

The wind blew from a south-easterly direction and I was heading straight into it; that's why I wasn't too concerned when I heard a horse snorting; it couldn't have detected my scent. I kept crawling and finally got to my destination and as quickly as possible memorized enough so that I could withdraw. Right in front of me I saw around sixty horses grazing between bushes, all with Indian bridles with the exception of two. None of the horses wore saddles as they usually doubled as seats or pillows when Indians made camp. There were only two men standing guard with the animals. One of them was a young man who wore a pair of rough rawhide boots, the former property of the completely naked murder victim. All his clothes and personal things had been divided among his murderers. The young guard was obviously one of the four whose tracks I had followed.

Indians often dealt with Whites who didn't understand their language. For that reason a sign language had evolved between the red men and the palefaces and anyone who entered the Wild West had to understand the meaning of those hand signals. As a consequence, especially during lively verbal exchanges, it often happened that someone accompanied his speech with the corresponding pantomimes. The two guards entertained a lively conversation. The subject of their discussion had to be of great interest to them because they gesticulated, believing that they were unobserved, in a manner that would have ordinarily earned them a chastising gaze by the more sedate, older warriors. They reflexively pointed west, signed 'iron' and 'horse', which meant 'iron horse' and was the Indian term for 'locomotive', and accompanied other parts of their discourse by hitting the ground with their bows, imitating hacking or hammering, indicating firing a gun, stabbing with a knife, or by slashing with a tomahawk. I had seen enough, immediately retreated and wiped any tracks I made as well as was possible. For that reason it took a long, long time before I got back to my horse.

In the meantime it had received company, because Sam's mare was grazing next to him. Her rider was stretched out behind a bush and chewed on a huge piece of dried meat.

"How many are there, Charley?" he asked.

"Who?"

"Indians."

"How do you know they're Indians?"

"Do you think Sans-Ear is a greenhorn, like he thought you were f'r instance? You're mightily mistaken, heeheehee!"

He only laughed in that manner when he knew he was one step ahead of someone. It was the half audible, confident chuckle I had heard from him earlier, and which reminded me of Sam Hawkens.

"Mistaken in what, Sam?"

"Do I really have to tell you, Charley? What would you have done if you had arrived here, had found that there hammer next to the horse, but not your dear Old Shatterhand?"

"I would have waited for him to return."

"Really? I don't believe that f'r instance. You were missing when I got here; something could have happened to you and so I followed you."

"I could have been doing something that you could have ruined with your presence. Besides, I think that Old Shatterhand doesn't do anything without the necessary caution. How far did you follow me?"

"First here, then there, then back and over yonder to the poor man who got extinguished by the Indians. I could afford to go fast because I knew you were ahead of me; when I saw the dead man I realized you were scouting and returned here f'r instance where I quietly waited for you. Well then, how many are there?"

"Sixty perhaps."

"You don't say! Probably the troop whose trail I discovered yesterday. On the warpath?"

"Yes."

"Short camp for the day?"

"They've taken the saddles off the horses."

“Blimey! They’re up to something! Have you noticed anything?”

“It seems to me they want to rip up the tracks so that the next train derails, and then clean it out.”

“Are you crazy, Charley? Methinks that would be quite dangerous for the railroaders and their passengers, wouldn’t you say? How do you know that?”

“I’ve eavesdropped on them.”

“Then you understand Ogallala?”

“Yes. Although it wasn’t necessary, because I was close enough to the horse guards to make out their pantomimes.”

“That can sometimes be misleading. Show me what they mimed!”

I did as he asked; the old fellow jumped to his feet but just as quickly relaxed and sat down again.

“You understood correctly and we must warn the train. But we won’t do anything rash f’r instance, because important things like that need to be considered and discussed very calmly. Sixty, eh? Hm, I can hardly fit ten more notches on my rifle; where am I going to carve them afterwards?”

Despite the seriousness of the situation I nearly laughed out aloud. Sans-Ear was facing sixty Red Indians, and he was worried about his notches instead of being outnumbered.

“How many do you want to do in?” I asked him.

“I don’t know yet f’r instance; I think, though, two or three at the most because they’ll run for the hills when they see twenty or thirty Whites.”

He had also considered the fact that the railroaders and passengers would undoubtedly form our reinforcement, as I had already quietly done.

“The main thing is that we guess the right train. It would be quite annoying if we rode in the wrong direction.”

“Judging by their pantomimes they’re after the mountain train from the West, and that surprises me. The train from the East hauls significantly more goods and things of use to them. We probably have no choice but to separate; one of us goes towards morning, the other towards evening.”

“We would indeed be forced to do so if we can’t find out for sure. It would be different if we knew where and when the trains roll.”

“Who knows! I’ve not sat in one of those things they call a wagon in my entire life; I’d be too scared to decide where to put my feet; give me the prairie and my Tony any day! You didn’t see the Indians doing any work yet?”

“No. I’ve only seen horses, actually. Everything points to the fact that they know when to expect the train and it seems that they won’t be doing anything before dark. There’s only half an hour to dusk at the most, then we’ll sneak up and perhaps find out what we don’t know yet.”

“Alright, that’s how we’re going to do it!”

“But then it’ll be necessary that one of us is being posted on the dam. It’s just possible that the redskins could come over to our side; at least I assume that they will rip up the tracks in our direction because they want to have the battleground between the derailed train and the camp.”

“That’s not necessary, Charley. Have a look at Tony! I never tie her up or hobble her; she’s a gloriously smart beast and has got a reliable nose. Have you ever seen a horse that does not snort when it smells an enemy?”

“No.”

“That’s because there’s only one, and that’s my Tony. Although snorting warns the owner of the horse, it also says a couple of other things, and they are: firstly, it reveals where horse and rider are and, secondly, that the rider has just been warned. That’s why I’ve cured her of that habit, and the smart animal understood me. I always leave her to graze freely and as soon as she detects danger she comes to me and nudges me with her nose.”

“What if she doesn’t notice anything for once, like today for example?”

“Pshaw! We’re downwind of them and you can shoot me on the spot if Tony doesn’t announce a redskin from a thousand paces away. Besides, those fellows have eagles’ eyes and even if you should stretch out flat on top of the embankment it’s still possible that they’ll see you from afar. Relax and stay here, Charley!”

“You’re right, and I shall trust your Tony for now just like you do. I haven’t known her that long, but I’m almost convinced that we can rely on her.”

I pulled out another of my roll-ups and lit it. Sam opened his eyes wide and did the same with his mouth. He flared his nostrils and greedily sucked in the aroma of the weed; all the while an expression of complete delight transformed his face. A Westerner didn’t often get to taste good tobacco although most were dedicated devotees of smoking.

“Oh, wonderful! Charley...is it possible, you have cigars?”

“Of course! Probably another dozen. Do you want one?”

“Out with it! You’re a fellow who deserves an entire bucket full of respect!”

He lit his with mine and swallowed the smoke Indian fashion to release it from the stomach again. His face underwent a transfiguration as if he had ascended to Mohammed’s seventh heaven.

“Hang sorrow, what a delight! Shall I guess what sort of tobacco this is, Charley?”

“Have a guess! Are you a connoisseur?”

“Indeed!”

“Well?”

“Goosefoot from Virginia or Maryland!”

“No!”

“What? That would be the first time I’ve been mistaken. It must be goosefoot, I know this aroma and this taste!”

“It isn’t!”

“Then it is Brazilian Legitimo!”

“Not either!”

“Curacao from Bahia?”

“Nope!”

“Well...what is it?”

“Look at the cigar!”

I pulled out another, unravelled it and handed him the layers separately.

“Are you crazy, Charley, ruining such a cigar! A trapper might just give you five to eight beaver pelts for it, depending on how long he’s been without!”

“I’ll have more in two or three days.”

“In three days? More...where from?”

“From my cigar factory.”

“What? You’ve got a cigar factory?”

“Yes.”

“Where?”

“There!”

I pointed to my mustang.

“Charley, please, only make a joke if it’s funny, f’r instance!”

“It’s no joke, but the truth.”

“Hm! If you weren’t Old Shatterhand I would have to assume that there is something either amiss or too much up there in your head!”

“First look at the tobacco!”

He took a closer look.

“Don’t know it. But it’s good, excellent indeed.”

“In that case, I’ll show you my cigar factory.”

I walked over to my mustang, loosened the girth, pulled a small cushion out from under the saddle and opened it.

“There, grab a handful!” He did.

“Charley, don’t make a fool of me! These are only cherry and pistachio leaves!”

“Correct! And a little bit of wild hemp mixed in. The cover leaf is nothing but a kind of anchusa, probably known as verhally in these parts—we’d call it ox tongue in the old country. The cushion really is my tobacco factory. If I come across any of these leaves I collect them as required, put them in the cushion and place it under the saddle; heat develops; the leaves ferment...there’s my method!”

“Unbelievable!”

“But true! Of course, a cigar such as this is a miserable surrogate, and any impostor with a palate of buffalo hide will throw it away after the first puff; but go and run around the prairie for a few years and then smoke one of those. Your ox

tongues will seem like the best Goosefoot to you then. You've just proved it!"

"Charley, you're moving up in my estimation!"

"Just don't reveal anything to anyone who hasn't been to the West yet! They might mistake you for a Tungus, Kyrgyz or Ostyak who's got his olfactory organ clogged with tar or pitch!"

"Tungus or Ostyak is all the same to me, as long as the cigar is tasty. Besides, I wouldn't even know where to locate those people."

He wasn't going to have his enjoyment diminished by the disclosure of my industrial secret and instead smoked the cigar down to a stub that was so short that he could hardly hold it between his lips.

In the meantime the sun had dipped below the horizon; dusk set in and the increasing darkness reminded us of our venture.

"Now?" Sam asked.

"Yes."

"How?"

"We go to the horses of the redskins together; then we divide, sneak around their camp and meet again behind it."

"Good! And should anything happen that will force us to make a run for it, whereby we could be separated, we'll rendezvous at a point directly south of here. There's a forest that grows from the mountains down into the prairie like a wedge and two miles from the southern tip of that wedge there's a pond where we can easily find each other again."

"Alright! Let's go!"

It didn't seem probable that we would be forced apart, but it was smart and circumspect to account for all eventualities.

We headed off.

It was already dark enough so that we could risk walking upright across the railway embankment. Then we turned left, walked along the bank and kept the knives ready in case of a hostile encounter. Our eyes soon adjusted to the darkness in the prairie; we would have recognized any Indian at a few paces' distance. We moved past the body of the

white man and got to where the horses were kept. They were still there.

“You go right and I go left!” Sam whispered and sneaked away.

I moved around the horses in an arc and came to a space that was clear of bushes where I saw the dark shapes of Indians lying in the grass. They hadn't lit a fire and were so quiet that I was able to hear the rustle of a beetle in the tufts of grass. Somewhat to the side I noticed three sitting figures who seemed to carry on a conversation. I sneaked up as carefully as possible.

When I had come to within six paces of their backs I was astonished to find that one of them was a White. What business did he have with the Indians? He wasn't a prisoner; that was obvious. Perhaps he was one of those prairie thugs who held with Reds or Whites depending on their thievery intentions. He could also be a hunter who had been imprisoned by the Indians and had only been able to save his life by marrying a squaw and therefore belonged to their tribe. But then his suit would have been more Indian; despite the darkness I could make out the cut of the pieces of clothing he wore.

The other two were chiefs and so identifiable by the crow feathers in their tall hair arrangements. It seemed to me that the warriors of two different tribes had combined for the planned undertaking.

The three men sat at the edge of the clearing and close to a bush, which enabled me to get near enough to possibly hear a few words of their discussion. I pushed forward and soon lay so close that I could have touched them.

There seem to be a pause in their conversation. The silence lasted for a few minutes. Then one of the chiefs asked the hunter a question by using the idiom made up of their own and various foreign languages:

“And my white brother knows precisely that there will be a lot of gold with the next run of the iron horse?”

“I know it,” the White replied.

“Who told you?”

“One of the men who works with the iron horse.”

“The gold comes from the land of the Waikur (California)?”

“Yes.”

“And it is supposed to go to the father of the palefaces (the president of the US), who will make dollars from it?”

“That’s correct!”

“He will not get enough of the gold to even make half a dollar from it! Will there be many men riding on the iron horse?”

“I don’t know; but no matter how many there are, my red brother will defeat them all with his brave warriors.”

“The warriors of the Ogallala will take many scalps home and their women and girls will dance for joy. Will the iron horse carry much in the way of useful goods for the red men? Clothing, weapons, calico?”

“It will all be on the train, and more. But will the red men give their white brother what he asked for?”

“My brother will get all the gold and silver the iron horse carries. We don’t require it because there are as many nuggets in our mountains as we like. Ka-Wo-Mien, the chief of the Ogallala...” he pointed with the finger to himself, whereby I recognized him and the other, Ma-Ti-Ru, who was sitting next to Ka-Wo-Mien, “...once met a smart, brave paleface who said that gold is nothing but ‘deadly dust’, made by the evil spirits of the Earth to turn people into thieves and murderers.”

“That paleface was a fool. What was his name?”

“He was no fool, but a very smart and courageous warrior. The children of the Ogallala were assembled near the waters of the Broad Fork, to collect the scalps of a number of trappers who were catching beaver in the region. There was one among the white trappers who wasn’t trapping beaver. They thought he was foolish because he only collected plants and insects and had only travelled there to have a look at the prairie. But wisdom dwelled in his head and great strength in his arm; his rifle never missed and his knife had no fear of the grizzly. He wanted to give the trappers wisdom against the red men, but they laughed at him. That’s why they all died and their scalps now adorn the

wigwams of the Ogallala. He didn't want to abandon his white brothers and killed a number of red men; but we were so many that we pulled him to the ground although he stood firm like an oak in the forest that smashes everything when it falls from the axe of the timber men. He was captured and brought to the village of the Ogallala. We didn't kill him because he was a brave warrior and many girls of the red tribes wanted to be his squaw. Ma-Ti-Ru, the greatest chief of the Ogallala, wanted to give him the choice between the wigwam of his daughter, or death; he spurned the flower of the prairie, stole the chief's horse, took back his weapons, killed several warriors and escaped."

"How long ago was that?"

"Four winters have passed since."

"What was his name?"

"His fist was like the paw of a bear; he smashed the skulls of many red and white men with his bare fist; and that's why the white hunters call him Old Shatterhand."

Ka-Wo-Mien had indeed told one of my earlier adventures. They had taken me prisoner. He had told the truth, although I couldn't help but secretly reproach him for greatly embellishing my persona.

"Old Shatterhand? I know him!" the White replied. "He was present in Old Firehand's hideout when we attacked it to get their cache of pelts. I got away with another two men and wish for the scoundrel to cross my path one day. I'd pay him back the defeat with interest!"

That's when I also recognized him. He was one of the outlaws who had joined the Ponka to attack us in the fortress. Only three of them had escaped. He was one of those prairie pirates that had to be feared more than the most savage Red Indians.

At that point Ma-Ti-Ru raised his hand:

"Woe him if he ever falls into the hands of the red men again! He would be tied to the stake and Ma-Ti-Ru would cut each muscle separately from his bones. He killed my warriors, took my best horse and pushed away the heart of the most beautiful daughter of the prairie!"

If only they knew that the man against whom they made such threats was lying not a metre behind them!

“The red men will never see him again because he’s gone across the great water to the country where the sun burns like fire, where the sand is greater than the prairie, where the lion roars and the men can have many women.”

Occasionally, I had mentioned around a few campfires that I wanted to travel to the Sahara. I eventually did and to my astonishment found out during my latest sojourn in the prairie that the news of it had even reached the Red Indians. I seemingly had more success in becoming famous in the Wild West with the Bowie knife, than with the quill back home.

“He’ll be back,” Ma-Ti-Ru remarked. “Those who drank from the breath of the prairie will thirst for her as long as Great Spirit grants them life!”

He was right. Just like mountain people will become homesick for their mountains and seamen cannot part from the sea, those whom the prairie has captivated suffer a similar fate. I had returned.

Ka-Wo-Mien pointed to the stars.

“My white brother better look at the sky! It is time to go to the road of the iron horse. Are the iron hands we took off the man who worked for the iron horse strong enough to tear up the tracks?”

The question gave me an indication as to who the murder victim was. He was a railroad worker who had travelled along the tracks with his tools to effect necessary maintenance.

“They are stronger than the hands of twenty red men,” the White replied.

“Does my white brother know how to use them?”

“Yes. We should get going now! The train will get here in one hour. My brothers remember that all gold and silver belongs to me!”

“Ma-Ti-Ru never lies!” the chief proudly reassured him when he rose. “The gold is yours, but everything else, including the scalps of the palefaces belong to the brave warriors of the Ogallala.”

“And you’ll give me mules to transport the gold, and men to protect me on the way to the Canadian River?”

“You will have mules and the Ogallala warriors will take you to the boundary of the land of Aztlan (Mexico in the Sioux dialect). And if the iron horse carries many things that Ka-Wo-Mien and Ma-Ti-Ru like they will accompany you even farther to the large city of Aztlan, where your son is waiting for you, as you said.”

Ma-Ti-Ru then shouted something and immediately all Indians rose. I retreated. Not far from the spot where I had been lying I detected a quiet sound, as if a soft breeze stroked the blades of grass.

“Sam!”

I breathed the word rather than spoke it and yet a few paces away the diminutive figure of my companion lifted half out of the grass for a very short moment.

“Charley!”

I crawled next to him.

“What did you see?” I asked him.

“Not much; the Indians, just like you.”

“And hear?”

“Nothing at all, not a single word. And you?”

“Heaps. But let’s go! They’re heading off due west and we must make haste so that we get to our horses in time.”

I sneaked ahead and he followed. We reached the railroad embankment and crossed over to the other side again. We stopped there.

“Sam, get back to the horses and ride half a mile along the railroad, then wait for me. I don’t want to leave the redskins until I know precisely what’s going on.”

“Can’t I do that? You’ve done all the spying thus far so that I have to be ashamed for not having achieved anything.”

“Won’t work, Sam! My mustang obeys you; your Tony would probably refuse to budge if I attempted to lead her away.”

“You’re right there f’r instance, Charley, and that’s why I’ll go now!”

He walked away upright and fast; it would have been a waste of effort to try and conceal his footprints in the dark. I

took up position and lay against the slope on our side. It wasn't long after he had disappeared in the night when I spotted the Indians as they made their way along their side of the bank, one behind the other.

I also moved along the bank and ensured that I stayed level with them. Not far from the spot where I had found the hammer they stopped and climbed up the earthen slope. I drew back behind the bushes and soon after heard the sound of steel against steel and then the loud knocks of a hammer. The outlaw had begun to tear up the tracks with the tools they had taken off the railroad employee.

It was time. I left the scene of the expected skirmish and hurried away. Five minutes later I had caught up with Sam.

"They're working on the tracks?" he asked.

"Yes."

"I heard. If you lay your ear on the tracks you can hear every strike of the hammer f'r instance."

"Let's get going, Sam! The train will be here in three quarters of an hour and we must get to it before they can see it's light."

"Listen, Charley, I won't go with you!"

"Why?"

"If we both leave here we're going to lose precious time with reconnoitring again when we return; if I observe the Indians, I can immediately tell you what's going on when you get back."

"That's true! What about your Tony?"

"I leave her here. She'll stay put."

"Alright! I know that you won't ruin the affair."

"Not me, you can depend on that. Get going, Charley! You'll find me in this spot again."

I mounted up and rode as fast as the night permitted towards the oncoming train. It was necessary to reach it at a great-enough distance so that the Indians wouldn't notice it stopping. The stars intensified and cast their mild shine across the prairie so that I could recognize things fairly well within a few horse lengths ahead. Consequently, my ride gradually increased in speed and I covered almost five kilometres without incident.

I stopped, tied up my mustang and hobbled its front legs as well. The noise of the breaking locomotive might cause it to bolt. I went to collect as much dried grass and kindling as I could find, stacked it and made myself a torch from a few tufts of grass that I tied to a branch I had broken off the nearest bush. I was prepared, laid my blanket on top of the railroad embankment, sat on it and waited for the train. I kept my eyes on the direction from where I expected the train to come, and every now and then put my ear to the tracks to listen.

I hadn't waited ten minutes when I heard a soft rolling sound that intensified with each second. Then I saw a small dot of light appear among the stars in the far distance, close to the horizon. However, it wasn't a star because it kept growing conspicuously larger, and it approached fast. The train was coming.

Then the one spot of light turned into two dots. It was time. I lit the heap of dried branches. It immediately produced tall flames that could probably already be seen from the approaching train. The rolling noise kept increasing; I could already discern the double cone of light produced by the two headlights, which cut through the darkness in front of the train. It had to reach me in about a minute.

I lit my torch, swung it around my head and ran towards the train. The machinist recognized my signal to stop; three shrill whistle blows in quick succession; the breaks screeched when they clamped against the wheels; there was an ear-piercing roaring, rolling, hissing and rattling and the locomotive stopped precisely where my fire burned at the bottom of the slope. The machinist leant out of the machine and asked:

"Hello mister, what's your signal for? Do you want to climb aboard perhaps?"

"No, sir; on the contrary, I'd like to ask you to climb down."

"Wouldn't think of it!"

"You will, because there are Indians up ahead who have ripped up the tracks."

“What are you saying? Indians? Blimey! Are you telling the truth, man?”

“I’ve no reason not to!”

“What do you want?” the conductor had climbed down and walked up to me.

“There are supposed to be redskins in front of us,” the machinist replied in my stead.

“Is that true? Have you seen them?”

“Seen and spied on. They’re Ogallala.”

“The worst scoundrels there are! How many?”

“About sixty.”

“Hell! That’s already their third train attack; but we’ll send them on their way. I’ve been wishing for an opportunity to slap their wrists. How far ahead are they?”

“About three miles.”

“Then cover the lights, machinist! The fellows have sharp eyesight. Listen, mister, I’m grateful to you for warning us! You’re a prairie man, judging by your outfit?”

“Something like that, I’m with someone else who’s observing the Indians until we get there.”

“That’s smart of you. But, gentlemen, give us some room, please! The affair isn’t a mishap but promises to be fun.”

The passengers in the nearest wagon had overheard our conversation and immediately opened all the doors. Everyone hurried along and crowded around us with a hundred comments and questions. The conductor managed to restore the necessary order.

“You transport gold and silver?” I asked.

“Who says?”

“The Indians. They’re being led by a white outlaw who’s claiming the metal as his share while the Indians will get the rest including your scalps.”

“Ah! How can the scoundrel know what we’re carrying?”

“He seems to have found out from a railroad officer; I don’t know how that came about.”

“We’ll find out when we catch him. But tell us your name mister so that we know what to call you!”

“My comrade is called Sans-Ear, and I...”

“Sans-Ear? Goshamighty, a great fellow who’ll be worth as much as a dozen men! And you?”

“Here in the prairie they call me Old Shatterhand.”

“The same Old Shatterhand who got chased by over a hundred Sioux up there in Montana three months ago and who crossed the entire Yellowstone from the snow mountains to Fort Union in three days on snow shoes?”

“Yes.”

“Sir, I’ve heard a lot about you and am pleased to make your acquaintance! How about that! Didn’t you save a train a while ago from being destroyed by Parranoh, the white chief of the Sioux?”

“Indeed. I was with Apache chief Winnetou, the most famous Indian from one end of the prairie to the other. But please, come to a decision! The Indians know precisely what time the train is to be expected and could become suspicious if we hesitate too long.”

“You’re right there. But above all I would like to know how they’re positioned. Someone who’s about to attack an enemy must know what arrangements they made.”

“You’re talking like a big field marshal, sir; unfortunately, I can’t give you details. In order to warn you I couldn’t wait around for them to get prepared and ready to pounce. We’ll find out the necessary details from my friend. When I asked for a decision I only wanted to know whether you’re prepared to attack or not.”

“Of course I’ll attack them,” he zealously replied. “It’s my duty to spoil their appetite for our freight once and for all. You and your comrade alone couldn’t possibly dare to go up against sixty Indians on your own...”

“Pshaw, sir!” I cut him short. “I think we should know best what we can or cannot dare. Sans-Ear took on four redskins in broad daylight and extinguished them all within two minutes and I tell you that we’ll send a few dozen Ogallala into the Eternal Hunting Grounds without needing your help. It’s not as much a matter of numbers as it is a matter of what’s in one’s fist and in one’s head. If I can fire twenty-five shots from my Henry rifle at night, without

having to reload, the Indians won't know whether they're up against two or twenty opponents. Listen, men, do all of you carry a weapon?"

The question was actually superfluous. I knew that everyone of those people carried some sort of firearm; but the conductor had acted as if he was going to direct the affair and I couldn't let him do that. There was more to leading a night-time attack against a troop of Indians than a railway officer's enthusiasm, even if he could be called a capable and brave man. The answer was a unanimous "Yes!" all around and the conductor added:

"Among the passengers are sixteen railway workers and twenty militia headed for Fort Palwieh, they all carry firearms and knives and know how to use them. Besides, there are several gentlemen here who wouldn't want to miss the fun of getting a little under the skin of those Red Indians. Hey, who's in on it, you people?"

Everyone volunteered, without exception, to move ahead, and even if there were some among them who didn't really have the courage for it, they still agreed so as not to be seen as cowards. People such as them weren't going to be of much use to me; it was better if they stayed behind and that's why I said:

"Listen, mesh'shurs, you're very brave men, but not everyone can come along, you must realize that. I can see a few ladies whom we can't leave unprotected. Even if we're victorious, which I don't doubt, it is still possible that the scattered and fleeing Indians come along here and attack the abandoned train. That's why we have to leave behind a few brave men for protection. Anyone who wants to fill that post had better come forward!"

And indeed, eight were prepared to defend the train with their life. They were the husbands of the three ladies, and five travellers who seemed to be more familiar with the price of hardware, wine, cigars and hemp seed than the correct handling of a Bowie knife. I couldn't blame the husbands for their reservations; they had to fulfil their duty towards their ladies after all.

“The train can’t be left without railroad officers. Who’s staying here?” I asked the conductor.

“The machinist with the fireman,” was the answer. “He can have command of these courageous gentlemen. Naturally I’ll go with you and take command of the troop.”

“As you wish, sir! You’ve been in battle against Red Indians quite often?”

“There’s no need! Those Digger Indians only know how to attack their opponents from behind to slaughter them. They always flee when there’s an open and properly structured attack against them. We’ll have light work in any case.”

“I don’t think so, sir. They’re Ogallala, the most bloodthirsty of the Sioux, under the command of the famous chiefs Ka-Wo-Mien and Ma-Ti-Ru.”

“You’re not saying that I should be afraid of them, are you? We’re more than forty men, and I think the affair is very simple. I’ve had the lights covered so that the redskins can’t see the train has stopped and we have been warned. Now we’ll take off the cover; you’ll climb aboard and let the machinist drive right up to the destroyed section. We stop there, jump down and give the fellows a thrashing so that none of them get away. Then we repair the tracks and will have to make up an hour at the most.”

“I must admit that you’ve got all the makings of a capable cavalry captain who knows no better fun than to ride down the enemy with the impact of a full charge. But you’d need different circumstances than those prevailing at present. If you really carry out your plan you’ll send your forty men into certain death and I can’t afford to partake in the execution of it.”

“What? You won’t help us? Are you a coward or just annoyed that you’re not getting to play the leader?”

“A coward? Pshaw! If you have heard of me then it is ill-considered of you to speak that word because Old Shatterhand could easily feel like using his fist on your skull to prove that he wears his name with pride. And as for my being annoyed, I can tell you that, ultimately, I don’t care one way or another who’s got your scalps in an hour, you or

the Indians. But nobody else apart from me has the right to lay claim to my scalp and I'll do my darnedest to keep it for a while longer. Good evening, mesh'shurs!"

I turned away. The conductor grabbed my arm.

"Stop, mister! That's not how it works! I've taken command here and you've got to obey me. I won't leave the train such a distance from the battleground because I'm responsible for any loss. The plan stays as it is: you lead us to the spot and we won't leave the wagons until we've arrived there. A good general must consider every eventuality, even the one that he'll lose the battle. In that case, the wagons will offer us a safe retreat from where we can defend ourselves until we receive reinforcement with the next train from either the East or the West. Isn't it so, men?"

Everyone agreed with him. There wasn't a single frontiersman among them and, therefore, his plan had a semblance of practicality and that roped them in. He was very satisfied with the result and said to me:

"Alright, climb up, sir!"

"Fine! You give the order and I obey!"

A quick jump and I was on my mustang's back. I had already untied the horse during the conversation.

"Oh no, my dearest; I mean the machine!"

"And I meant the horse, sir. Our opinions differ in that respect as well."

"I order you to dismount!"

I pushed my horse up to him, bent down and said:

"It seems that you've never encountered a genuine Westerner or else you'd speak to me in a different tone. Do me a favour and climb onto the locomotive yourself!"

I grabbed him by the chest and pulled him up; some leg pressure brought my mustang hard against the machine; the next moment the railroad general flew behind the weather shield and I galloped away.

The stars were so bright that the bushes didn't present an obstacle and I could ride fast. I didn't need more than a quarter of an hour to get back to Sam.

"Well?" he asked when I jumped from the horse. "I thought you'd bring people!"

I told him why it didn't happen.

"You did good, Charley, very good! A railroader such as him looks down upon folk like us because we can't run to the barber three times a day. They'll naturally carry out their plan and will make a surprising discovery, heeheehee!"

While he chuckled he made the gesture of scalping and then continued:

"But you haven't told me yet what you've learnt back there behind the Indians!"

"Ka-Wo-Mien and Ma-Ti-Ru are the leaders."

"Ah! That means there'll be a battle to delight my old heart."

"There's a White with them who's told them that the train carried gold and silver."

"He'll have that and will leave the rest and the scalps to the Indians?"

"Yes."

"Thought so! A desperado in any case!"

"I know him. He and his cronies once took part in an attack on Old Firehand's hideout, but he had to leave in a hurry."

"What's his name?"

"Don't know; it's of no interest to me because his sort has a different name each day. You've been reconnoitring?"

"Yes. They've divided into two groups and have taken up position on either side of the tracks, about midway between the ripped-up tracks and their horses, where two men are standing guard again. What are we going to do, Charley? Shall we help the railroaders or leave f'r instance?"

"It's our duty to assist them, Sam. Or do you think differently?"

"Wouldn't think of thinking differently! You're correct with that duty thing and besides, think about my ears, they're still not quite paid off. I bet my Tony against a grass frog that there will be a few dead Indians lying along the railroad without their ears tomorrow morning! What's next, Charley?"

"We'll separate as well and place ourselves between the Indians and their horses."

“Alright! That just gave me an idea! What would you say to a good ol’ stampede?”

“Hm! That would be great if we outnumbered them and could refrain from annihilating all of them. But I wouldn’t suggest it here. The railroaders will get the short end of the stick and the two of us can do nothing more than keep the redskins at bay until the next train arrives, or shock them into fleeing. It would be advantageous in both cases if they could get away; if we take their horses we’ll keep the Indians nearby. Don’t you know the common sense rule that you must build a golden bridge for the enemy if required?”

“I’ve only ever heard of bridges made from wood, stone or steel! With all due respect to your opinion, Charley, but if I imagine f’r instance their faces when they want to mount up and can’t find a horse, my fingers start to twitch. And the main thing is: wouldn’t we be able to panic them if we chased the horses at them?”

“We could! But it would be better if we waited for things to develop.”

“That’s alright by me! But there’s one thing you have to let me do in any case!”

“What?”

“Disposing of the two guards. No?”

“I’m no friend of unnecessary bloodshed, in any situation, but I must admit that you’re right—it’s a sad case of self-defence. If the guards are gone the horses are entirely in our hands. Let’s get our own horses to safety first before we do anything!”

We rode a stretch out into the surrounding landscape where I secured my horse so that he had about three paces of room to move. Sam did likewise with his Tony. As confident as he otherwise was with his mare, in case of a stampede the bolting mob of horses could easily gallop in the direction of our horses and drag them away.

We returned in an arc that brought us behind the Indians. The lights of the locomotive were still nowhere to be seen. Either the plan of the conductor had met with resistance after all, or they hadn’t immediately been able to make the decision to carry on without my guidance.

When we got to the horses we could easily recognize the two guards who were patrolling the clearing individually. One of them was approaching the bush where we were hiding. When he walked past, Sam's blade went through his heart. The Indian didn't make a sound. The other met with the same fate when he came past. Someone unfamiliar with the prairie had no idea of the heat of embitterment that drove two races to wage war on each other and walk in the blood of their adversaries with each step their people took.

When I turned away so as not having to witness the killing of the second guard as well, my gaze fell upon a horse that grazed near me. It was one of the two horses that didn't wear Indian gear, and, since all horses were saddled again, wore a comfortable Spanish saddle with large stirrup shoes instead, as used customarily by Central and South American riders. Was it the dead railworker's horse or that of the white desperado? I walked over to it. There were narrow, deep bags strapped to the saddle and I inspected them. They held a few documents and two pouches, the contents of which I couldn't examine there and then. I pocketed everything.

"Now what?" Sam asked. We started walking along the earthen slope.

"We separate; I go to the right and you go to the left. But wait, look there, ahead on the tracks!"

"The train, it truly is the train that comes steaming along f'r instance! Let's stay here for the moment, Charley, and see what transpires!"

They had upheld the conductor's plan after all. The two piercing lights of the machine kept coming closer, but very, very slowly because they had to find the damaged tracks first. We could hear the rolling noise of the wheels before long. It kept getting louder and, finally, yes, the train stopped hard against the break in the rails.

The redskins had to be extremely furious when they realized that their plan had been foiled, and would have guessed that the railroaders were warned. For the latter, the smartest thing to do would have been to remain inside the wagons and keep completely quiet. I hoped they would, but was disappointed when the doors opened and the passengers

alighted to commence the attack. They were going to recognize the stupidity of their action immediately. As the men walked forward they moved within the reach of the bright locomotive lights and offered such visible targets that the Indians couldn't have wished for anything better. One salvo cracked, another, and then an unimaginably horrible, bone-chilling howling arose.

The savages lunged forward with the empty guns in their hands to use them as clubs but found only the dead and wounded because the others had immediately retreated into the wagons. Several of the Indians bent down to take the scalps of the fallen but had to forget about it because they were shot at from the first wagon.

It would have been best to reverse the machine right then. It didn't happen. Perhaps the machinist and the fireman had fled into a wagon with the others.

"Now a veritable siege will begin f'r instance," Sam commented.

"Don't believe so! The redskins know that they only have enough time until the next train gets here and will try to storm this one, although they dislike doing that."

"What about us? It's very difficult to make an informed decision here."

"A decision is only worth something if it comes quickly and is executed just as swiftly. The best tactic of attack would be fire in this case. We must get back to the horses. Each of us rides a semi circle and dismounts every fifty to sixty horse lengths to set the prairie alight. But first we'll get your stampede going to prevent the enemies from a fast attack, although we're taking the means to escape away from them. There's nothing better under the given circumstances."

"Tarnation, that's a bad plan for them! Won't we burn down the wagons as well?"

"God forbid! Although I don't know whether this train carries flammable items like oil or tar, I do know the wagon timbers are strong enough to withstand a grass fire. You'll also have to consider the only means for the Indians not to get roasted: they have to back burn and will do so right next to the wagons, mark my words. If I were in their place, I

would definitely crawl between the tracks under the wagons.”

“Have you also considered the time we will need to get a fire going with our slow punks? We can’t carry torches because they would reveal us.”

“A good Westerner has to be prepared for anything. I always keep a good supply of matches for such circumstances. Here, take some!”

“Bravo, Charley! Now the stampede and then to our horses!”

“Stop, Sam, I got a better idea! We don’t need our horses at all; there are more than enough here. I’ll take the bay right here!”

“And I’ll take the chestnut beside it. Let’s go, cut the lassos!”

We did so and hurried from horse to horse. Then we lit the scrub behind the animals and mounted up. The flames only flickered low along the ground initially and wouldn’t be noticed by the Indians for the moment; we were free to go to work without being revealed by the glow.

“Where will we meet again?” Sam asked.

“Up there, next to the train, not ahead of the flames, between the fires instead. Understood?”

“Indeed. Alright, go on, old chestnut!”

The horses had already become nervous when we cut their fetters. They smelt the close-by fire and began to rear. The breakout was to be expected at any moment. I galloped to the right into the prairie at a radius of a little over a kilometre, jumped down five times to light the grass and was already close to the railroad embankment again when I realized that Sam and I had committed an oversight second to none; we had followed our impulses and forgot that our own horses were tethered in the path of the fire...

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