

A Sketch of the Indian Country.

An Incident Connected With Life at A Western Army Post

Comanche Jim drove into the quarters about noon one hot, sultry day when the wind was blowing a gale across the open prairie, sweeping clouds of dust in its train. He stopped his covered wagon in front of the store and, jumping out, quickly tied his horses. The group of soldiers lounging about the platform of the store hailed him with hearty delight.

"Hello, Comanch! How comin'?"
 "Where y' been, Comanche? Ain't seen you fer a century!"

"How's Comanche Jim?"
 The newcomer did not answer for a moment, but grasping his hat firmly because of the wind, he sprang nimbly onto the platform.

Then, "Where's the colonel?" he asked, hastily nodding to the various ones.

"Over in the adjutant's office. What's up?"

"Nothin'," he said briefly. "Don't bother me now." He was striding away when one of the men straightened from his reclining position and called after him.

"I say, Comanch, hear the news?"
 The other stopped. "Nope. But never mind, it'll keep." He turned away again.

"I can't know. You might as well have it now as later. Why, say, listen here. Miss Jessie—" as the name Comanche Jim whirled about. "Miss Jessie's engaged to the kid and they're to be married next week."

The tall, lithe figure of the cowboy, half Indian, half white man, straightened stiffly, while a dark red flared beneath his brown skin. Then he came back a step.

"What did you say?" he asked quietly.

The other shifted his position uneasily. "Why, it's all over the camp and the colonel confirmed it just this morning. Nice fellow enough—the kid, though he is a little fly, and Miss Jessie's—well, we all know there's nobody can compare with her. You needn't glare at a fellow so."

Comanche Jim stood silent for a moment, then without a word he strode off toward the colonel's quarters.

"Colonel," he addressed the kindly, gray-haired man before him, "is this square about Kid Atherton and—Miss Jessie?"

The officer arose and put out his hand. "Why, Jim, my man, you here this morning? Supposed you were miles away, off in Wyoming Territory. Heh? My girl's engagement? Why yes—yes, it's true. Quite a nice young fellow. Known him ever since he first came to the Fifty-first. Guess they're as happy as two larks; at least Jessie looks it. Only hope Atherton settles down a little more in the future when they're married. Guess he will all, right. Going, Jim? Come back in half an hour, then; I've a little matter we might—"

When Comanche Jim reached his wagon the store was cleared for guard-mount had been sounded and all the men were off to their duty. He hastily untied the team and, jumping into the wagon, drove back of the quarters, over a hill, and down into a hollow where a half-destroyed dug-out nestled amid the tall ranks of prairie grass. Climbing out, he went around to the back of the wagon, pulled aside the curtains of the hood and looked within.

"Never bugged an inch," he muttered while a dark frown clouded his swarthy face. Then he reached in, grasped a heavy body and lifted it out. It was Kid Atherton. The features were those of a young man, handsome, well-formed, but now red and bloated, while from between the parted lips the breath came labored and heavy. The civilian coat was worn and ragged, but the dirty, dust-stained trousers were those of a soldier in the United States army.

Comanche Jim lifted his burden with ease, carried it into the dug-out and deposited it upon the ground. Then he sat down in the doorway and silently regarded the form before him. After several moments, with a sudden movement, the figure turned over and Kid Atherton opened his eyes. They gazed about vacantly until they encountered the dark ones of Comanche Jim regarding him from the doorway.

Then he raised himself on his elbow. "Oh, ish you," he spoke a little thickly at first. "Whast you doin'?"
 "Where you brought me? Shay, why don't shu speak?"

There was no answer.
 "Well, yesh, you—heh?"

Comanche Jim simply looked at him. "Blamed funny—" he looked for a moment, into the dark face opposite him, then suddenly his eyes grew puzzled, he raised his hand to his forehead, looked again toward the Indian, then quickly lifted himself to a sitting position. "My God," he murmured, "My God!"

"Kid Atherton, I won't ask no questions of you and I don't want no explanations, neither. But I found you out there," with a jerk of his thumb toward the prairie, "over near the foothills with that coat on and dead drunk. What you were doin' there, or how you got there I don't ask you, tho' I can guess. All I got to say is that I ain't got much use for them kind of fellows—the kind you look like you belong to. Deserter ain't in my line."

The man before him shuddered and covered his eyes with his hand, but Comanche Jim continued, stolidly.

"When I brought you back I was goin' to hand you as fast as I could over to the colonel an' let him an' the United States settle you as they settle your kind—" He got no further for Atherton sprang to his feet.

"But, my God, man, I was drunk! I didn't know what I was doing. I was wild, crazy! Oh, Comanche, you won't tell them—don't, for heaven's sake, tell them! Think of the disgrace—the horror—and—and—there is Jessie!" He stopped, mutely staring before him.

Comanche had arisen also, his lips tightened, one hand grasping the belt of his leather coat.

"Yes," he said, slowly. "There is Miss Jessie." A moment's pause and Comanche Jim continued abruptly.

"Atherton, I won't tell the folks over to the fort. I won't tell nobody. You're safe enough with me. But, Kid Atherton, I ain't doin' this for you. It's for her—for her, mind you, the sweetest, bravest—" he heaved a sigh. "Well, we'll drop that. I wouldn't care if you went to the dogs tomorrow. I wouldn't lift a finger to keep you back, but when I think of Miss Jessie over there, and the colonel, why, I'd do anything for them. And what you've got to do is to brace up and be a man like you were once, before you got to drinkin' your whiskey and stuff. Kid Atherton," he stepped nearer. "If you marry that girl and if I ever catch you in that low, hound's position again; if you ever touch another drop, I'll tell what I seen last night and today as sure as there's a God in heaven! Now, get out."

When the last of Kid Atherton disappeared over the top of the hill Comanche Jim stood motionless and silent, gazing toward one little cottage down at the end of the row. Then he turned to his waiting team and, mounting into the seat of the wagon, turned his horses' heads in the direction of the prairie and drove away, over to the yoming Territory. M. C.

Mr. Brown and His Wife. (With Apologies to Dickens.)

Mr. Brown was a man. He was not an ape, nor a champanzee, nor an angel, nor a facetious prof., nor a tenor singer, nor a wearer of red neckties. No. Mr. Brown was none of these things. He was a man.

He wore his hat on his head, not in his hand, but on his head like the man he was. He had two eyes, two ears, a nose, a mouth and a wife. In short he was just an ordinary man.

He entertained much affection for his wife because she was very dear to him, and this affection was mutual, because his wife reciprocated it. They did not quarrel nor have differences, and they were very happy because their life was very pleasant.

Now it happened one day that a difference arose between Mr. Brown and his wife. No one could deny that it was a difference. In fact no one attempt to deny it, because no one knew of it except Mr. Brown and his wife, and they did not deny it because they

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were convinced that it was true. It was a difference over a grammatical construction, not over the weather, nor the cooking, nor the gold standard, nor the price of coal, mind you, but over a grammatical construction.

Mr. Brown was in the wrong. It may as well be stated at the outset that Mr. Brown was in the wrong, for, since Mrs. Brown was in the right, it is only logical to conclude that Mr. Brown was in the wrong. He declared and insisted and argued that the word "than" was, is and will be followed by the accusative case, not the nominative, nor the dative, nor the genitive, mind you, but by the accusative. "You don't know any more about it than me," he asserted, as he brought his hand down upon the table with a bang, thus showing his emotion.

Mrs. Brown answered this statement quietly, not loudly nor fiercely, but calmly, thus exhibiting much repose and strength of character.

"You are not wiser than I," she said placidly, speaking in a calm voice.

They discussed the question for some time, and after several hours had elapsed, a though struck Mrs. Brown. Why this thought did not strike Mr. Brown is a matter that must be left to the conjecture of the reader. Suffice it to say that the thought struck Mrs. Brown.

"Let us look it up in a Grammar," she suggested gently, and they did so, thus proving Mr. Brown in the wrong and Mrs. Brown in the right.

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