

ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, APRIL 22, 1899.

## How Warren Saved the Baby.

For an hour Warren had lain under water, his toes buried in the muddy bottom and his head beneath the long prairie grass which drooped over the edge of the lake like a fringe. The water was not cold, for it was August, and the sun shone down warily enough.

No, it was not the temperature of the water which had chilled the boy through and through and left him there at the lake edge, half paralyzed. It had been a slow, ascending column of smoke, spreading like a cloud at the top, a cloud which seemed to shut out light and warmth—and hope. For the smoke came from the burning of his home, a quarter of a mile away across the prairie; and he had left his mother and his baby sister there but a short time before. He had dared venture no closer, and had thrown himself into the lake, because a dozen maddened Sioux Indians were circling about the building as it burned.

The scene was in Minnesota, far out in Blue Earth County, on the prairie beyond the head of Buttercut Valley,—the Coulee des Noyer Blanc of the restless old Sieur Le Sueur, who had come upon it with his little company of voyageurs in his felucca and birch canoes back some time in the eighteenth century.

It was now the year 1862; and on this August afternoon, his father being away at the village of New Ulm, Warren Heath had chanced to go to the house of their nearest neighbor, a mile away, on an errand, leaving his mother and the baby at home. He could not foresee, any more than could the thousand settlers so soon to be massacred, that it was to be the day of the bloody uprising of Little Crow and his band.

It was while the boy was returning that he saw the flames and the Indians on their ponies, and threw himself into the lake, to escape what he felt must already have been the fate of the two defenceless beings in the house.

He had been in the water an hour, never once taking his eyes from the column of smoke. Now it was beginning to grow less, and he realized that he no longer heard the strange cries of the Indians. He drew himself up so that he could see the heap of smoldering ruins, but the savages were gone. From a little rise of ground a few steps away he could see them riding rapidly off, driving the cattle before them. There was not a movement around the house.

Warren clutched at the trunk of a little cotton-wood for support, and turned his eyes away, and for the first time looked in other directions. There was a column of smoke coming up from the neighbors' house he had just left; and in other directions were other smoke columns. The savages had come in separate bands, and had wiped out the little settlement in an hour. Perhaps he was the only living person left. He felt he must do something or he should faint; suddenly he started, and ran blindly toward what had been home.

He stopped in the garden, gasping for breath, his heart thumping wildly. House and barn were but two blackened, smoldering mounds. But he thought afterwards that it was the most joyful moment of his life because, as he cast his eyes down, there, almost at his feet under some broad-spreading rhubarb leaves, were his mother and the baby—alive.

The woman started up as he sank beside her on his knees. "Go back, go back, Warren!" she said in a strange whisper; "don't come here—they will see you!" She took her hand from where she had it clasped tightly over the baby's mouth, but clapped it back again as the little one uttered a cry.

"No, they've gone," whispered the boy. "Don't smother Milly."

She sat on the ground looking at him in a dazed way, the baby in her lap, her hand still stifling its cries.

"They've gone," he went on; "I saw them. I was in the lake. We can go somewhere and be safe."

She was still looking at him. Then suddenly she said, still whispering: "Come, we must get to the cornfield. We can hide there. They'll come back. Help me a little—I think I hurt my ankle—I fell going down the cellar stairs. What—what's the matter with my arm?"

Her left arm was hanging helpless by her

side. Warren felt of it. "It's broken, isn't it?" he said, simply.

"No matter—we must get to the cornfield. I saw them coming and ran down cellar with Milly. I fell on the stairs. Then I heard them breaking open the cellar door and I came up the outside stairs and got here. They were all inside and didn't see me. I must have hurt my arm, too, when I fell. I can't walk," she added, sinking back on the ground, "but I can crawl as far as the corn. Hurry, Warren—the, I sure, come again!"

He took the baby, and, half supporting his mother, they made their way slowly and painfully to the sheltering corn. The little one, though half-dead with the way its mother had held it to still its cries, kept up a vigorous protest.

Warren and his mother talked it over and decided that Mr. Heath was probably safe at New Ulm, as he had not decided to start for home till late in the afternoon. He would surely come with help. Even if he did not come till morning, they would be pretty safe there in the corn. The greatest problem seemed to be food for the baby which had been weaned, yet could not be kept alive on the solid food that the boy and his mother might subsist on.

Just as it was growing dark Warren crept out to the house and succeeded in fishing up from the cellar some salt pork, half cooked by the fire; he also threw some ears of corn into the hot ashes of the stove, and allowed them to roast. These would sustain himself and his mother, but they would not do for little Milly.

"Surely they'll come in the morning, if they don't get here to night," said Mrs. Heath; "they or the soldiers from Fort Ridgely."

Even the baby slept pretty well, though plainly in want of food. But morning brought no food for her. She rejected the scorched corn and the half-burned meat, though the other two found it acceptable. The sleep had helped the woman's spirits, and she was even more hopeful than on the night before. And she needed all her hopefulness, for the day passed without sight of human being except for a band of Indians galloping by a half mile to the north. But the baby was in a sad way. She had at last sucked eagerly at the strips of fat pork, but it had disagreed with her, and as night approached she grew hot and feverish. When the sun, big and red, went down upon them for the second time there among the corn, the woman said:

"Warren, there is no help coming to-night. Perhaps everybody is killed, and there is no one to come. Perhaps your father is killed, and she choked back a sob. "You and I, Warren, could live here for a long while, maybe, but Milly is sick and starving. I want you to take her in your arms like the big, strong boy you are, and carry her to New Ulm. Never mind about me. I will stay here until they come, or— You must go now, to-night, while it is dark, and you will be less apt to be seen by the Indians. Don't think about me—save yourself and Milly. God, I am sure, will take care of you—and perhaps of me."

The boy sat on the ground silently looking at her for a long time; then he rose, and without a word began to prepare for the journey.

The stars were shining brightly, and there was a faint glow in the east, as of moonrise, when Warren, the baby in his arms, crept down the rough road to the Minnesota river. He was already three miles on his way, having come down Buttercut Valley to reach the main travelled road which ran along by the river to New Ulm. The houses on the way he had found to be blackened heaps, and he had seen no sign of life.

The baby at first had cried and moaned, but had now sunk into a nervous sleep, from which she started every few moments with a little plaintive cry. As he came down to the main road, which here ran close to the river, he caught the first glimpse of the moon over the bluffs. It was a welcome sight to Warren, since to carry the baby gently over the rough roads he needed all the light possible.

He had gone a little way up the main road when, coming round a turn, he heard a splash in the river to the right. He crept behind some sumacs and knelt down. Trees shut off most of his view of the river, but he could see the nearer shore. The splashing in the water continued, and he was soon certain that some one was fording the shallow stream. His first thought was of soldiers from Fort Ridgely. He strained eyes and ears, but his hopes fled as a dozen horsemen scrambled up the bank to the road ahead of him, and he made out by their blanket and head dress that they were Indians. They paused in the road. At that instant the baby again nestled about and cried plaintively.

"Hush, Milly, hush!" he whispered, rocking her in his arms softly. She struggled and cried louder. He cast a glance ahead and saw that the Indians were in a listening attitude. The baby started to cry again, when, in a sudden impulse of terror, he turned and ran back along the road as fast as he could, past where he had joined it and on down the river till he sank in the shadow of some bushes, exhausted.

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The flight seemed to have quite tired out the baby, also, and she only moved her arms weakly and drew her breath in quick gasps. Warren listened, but he had no pursuers, so he concluded that the Indians had not made out what the noise was; but he instantly decided that the idea of his going to New Ulm must be abandoned. In the other direction lay Mankato, a dozen miles or a little more away.

His father was at New Ulm, but after all, the important thing was to reach people who had food for the baby. Indians might be lurking between him and Mankato, but he knew positively that they were in the other direction. It could not be much, if any, past eleven o'clock, and he would hurry to Mankato.

Two hours later Warren was still tramping on. The moon was now high, and there was no difficulty in following the road, which was fairly good. He had seen or heard nothing of Indians. He had passed two or three blackened piles where houses had evidently stood, but mostly the road lay close to the river, where the land had not invited settlement.

The baby seemed to be growing weaker and her cries fiercer and more plaintive. Much of the time she lay in a sort of stupor. Little as she had always seemed to him—and she was small for her age—she was proving a heavy burden for so long a walk, and his arms ached. But he forgot it all when she opened her eyes, clutched wildly at the vacant air, and began to cry with her old strength.

He spoke to her soothingly, and changed her position. She only screamed the louder; then she stopped, her whole frame relaxed and her breath came in choking little sobs. Warren stopped and looked at her; then suddenly he was struck with a greater terror than when he had seen the Indians.

"She's dying! She's dying!" he cried. "Milly, Milly! Oh, I must get somewhere, and find somebody!" and he started on a run down the road.

The next moment he stumbled and fell headlong. Instinctively he held the baby from him and saved her from harm, although he was bruised on the stones himself. As he jumped up and gathered her again in his arms, he saw a building at some little distance across a field. It took but a minute or two for him to reach it. It proved to be a small barn which had in some way escaped; the house near by was in ruins. He pushed open the door

and entered. There seemed to be no life within.

He laid the baby on a pile of hay in the corner. She was drawing her breath in short, quick little gasps. He explored the building for anything in the shape of food. There were harnesses and tools scattered about, showing that the owner had been driven away or killed by the Indians.

Warren was turning back to where the baby lay, disappointed, but again ready to take up his burden and press on, when another idea struck him. He ran out and around the barn. He could see a fence farther up the hillside, and started for it. His heart leaped when he looked over it and saw cattle lying in a large yard. The gate stood open—they had evidently been browsing about the bluffs when the Indians came, and so escaped, returning home according to custom later.

Warren closed the gate and approached them. They sprang up, four or five cows and some calves, and retreated. For ten minutes he tried to get up to the cows, but all to no purpose. Then he ran back to the barn. The baby was as he left her.

He began rummaging about feverishly, and soon came upon a long picket rope. Back up the hill he went, making a slip noose as he ran. He knew the hopelessness of trying to throw it over the head of any of the creatures, now thoroughly alarmed at the appearance of a stranger, so he spread the large loop on the ground near the fence, and stood off at the other end of the rope, at the same time starting the cattle along the fence.

The first time he failed, but on the second trial he pulled up the rope sharply, and one of the cows was struggling at the other end with a forward foot caught in the noose. She backed into the fence corner, and he approached cautiously and slipped a noose made in the other end of the rope over her horns. Then he tied this to a post and ran back to the barn, too excited almost to know where he was.

Yes, the baby was still breathing with the same little gasps. Could he find nothing in which to bring the milk? There must be something which would answer; but search as he might, he could not lay his hands on it.

Seconds seemed to him precious. He seized the baby and ran with her, back up the hill. The next moment he was kneeling at the cow's side. He propped the baby up on his knee with one arm, and directed

a warm, white stream of the milk toward her face.

His aim was poor enough. It went into her eyes, her nose, and anywhere except into her tiny mouth. But at last it did hit the mark. At first she sputtered and tried to turn her head; then she caught the taste, and began to swallow the welcome fluid eagerly. She drank all she needed for an excellent meal. Fifteen minutes later he was trudging down the road, the baby sleeping peacefully in his arms.

It was broad daylight, though not yet sunrise, when Warren came up to a dozen white men, mounted and armed, serving as a guard outside of Mankato, and told his story to them. One of them dismounted and helped him up, the baby still in his arms, and still sleeping peacefully, as she had done every moment since the stop at the barn. Then with another guard they galloped away to the village. Here, despite the terror which the dreadful massacre had wrought, there was no lack of kind hands to care for the baby.

With the little one safe Warren had only one idea—to return and rescue his mother. The situation of the town, however, was so desperate that it was late afternoon before those in authority would detail men to make the attempt. Then a band of twenty, well mounted, started, with Warren as guide.

The sun, again big and red, was almost setting when they sighted the place. Another little group of horsemen were turning away from the ruins of the house. As Warren came nearer he recognized one of them as his father. The next moment the man started to grasp the boy in his arm, but Warren drew back and pointed to the corn-field, saying, "Over there—she's there—come on!" and he led the way.

And there on the ground they found the mother, still alive, although too weak to speak above a whisper. But the food which they had brought revived her, although perhaps no more than the sight of her husband and son and the news that her baby was safe, so she stood the painful journey to Mankato, with strength enough left to press Milly to her bosom with her one sound arm when she came; although the next moment the arm was about the neck of the boy who had so nobly carried the baby through such dangers.

—HAYDEN CARRUTH.

The man who hesitates is lost, but the woman who hesitates is won.