

63
mile or two ahead of me, and during one of these rises of the fog, I discovered a lot of Indian ponies on ahead of me about a mile.

missionary?
Giving the signal for the command to stop, I rode back to them and told them there was an Indian village in front of us. Putting the soldiers into a deep ravine so they could not be seen from a distance, I went on as far as I could without being discovered. I could not see the village, but knew it was down in the bed of the creek. I wanted to find out how large a village it was, and whether it would be practicable for our small command to jump it. Cautioning the men not to show themselves, and muffling the bells on the pack mules so they would make no noise, I went forward again and kept watch the rest of the day. As soon as darkness came on I rode down to the village, and found it was only a small affair--thirty-nine lodges and about two hundred people. Disguised as an Indian, I went all through the village, looking for the best point to attack it from. I finally concluded we had sufficient force to capture the entire village.

304 In front of one of the tepis in the village I saw two very fine looking horses. Both animals were on picket lines, and I made up my mind that they were a little too rich for Indian blood, but not too rich for mine. So I just waited around until everything was quiet, slipped up to the tepi, untied the ropes and led the animals out of the village as unconcernedly as if I were taking them to water. They became famous horses afterwards. One was a pinto and the other a black stallion. One of them I gave to a young lady from the east--a Miss Collins--and the other I gave to Big Bat. I heard afterwards that the latter horse was sold back east for five hundred dollars. Telling Captain Mills on my return how the camp was situated, I informed him the best way to attack it would be to jump it at the break of day. We placed one man as sentry, and the rest of us laid down and slept until 3 o'clock. At that hour the command was awakened. We got everything ready, and Lieut. Crawford was detailed to take charge of one party of fifty men, Capt. Mills in charge of another party, and Lieut. Schwatka, with twenty mounted men, was to take charge of and drive off the ponies. The rest of the command we dismounted with the pack train, to follow up with the horses.

→/ Telling them to come on towards the village, I went down to see if the Indians suspected our presence, or if there was anything amiss in camp. I told Capt. Mills to come up as close to the village as he could, until I could go back to him. When I got down in the village, the Indians had turned most all of their horses loose and had gone back into their lodges. In fact, one squaw came out and turned her horses loose when I was in plain sight. They were tied in front of the lodge. She turned them loose while I was watching her. I was lying down on my horse, so I don't think she could see me. She supposed the animal I was on was one of the Indian horses that had been turned loose, and paid no further attention to it.

305 Just as I turned to go back to the command, the Indian horses came stampeding through the village, and when I got up on the hill the command had arrived there. Capt. Mills had reached within seventy yards of the village. As the horses stampeded through the village it woke the Indians up, and they commenced to run out of their lodges to see what the matter was. Seeing there would be no time to place the other company of soldiers on the other side of the village, and that all our chance was to surprise them, we commenced firing on them from where we were. I told Capt. Mills he had lost all chance of capturing the village with the Indians in it; that he had better commence the fight at once. I then went to Schwatka and told him to charge and drive the horses off, and went with him myself.