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An Indian Romance

By MILLIE LERDALL

WHERE did you get that old arrowhead, Grandpa?" Were there Indians here when you first came? It's such a funny looking old thing." I marveled as I spoke. And so Grandpa, thus invited, told his story.

"Well, sir, it really was when I first came to this farm that I got that old arrowhead. You know the Indians used to live around in this part of the county many, many years ago—from Spirit Lake east thru here and on into Minnesota. Perhaps that was one reason I came here, for I always did like anything with some historical connection. If I was interested in farming at that time I was just as interested in reading about the Indians and the struggle of the whites during the massacres of 1856.

"Well, sir (that is one of his favorite expressions), I read so much and thought so much about it that Grandma said I might as well be an Indian myself. Then one night the climax came thru a dream. I guess I had been thinking about the Indians more than usual that day, and I read late that night. But first I must tell you about the old Indian legend I was reading that night before I had my dream.

"It may have been at a time when Iowa was awol for all we know. At any rate the Indians claimed it as their happy hunting ground and very few whites had cared to stake out claims after the hostile massacres around the northern lakes in 1850. Inkapudata, one-time leader of the savage Big Sioux tribe, was feared by the whites as was no other Indian chief. Even the Indians feared him—all but one, his son, Chief Big Bear, a stalwart young Indian brave who inherited at once the fierce and savage characteristics of his big Sioux father and the gentler characteristics of his mother, who came from a less savage tribe. Big Bear had only one weakness—his overpowering love for an Indian maiden of the neighboring Sac and Fox tribe. It was weakness to him, because he knew not how to express himself. The he could not see the most savage of warriors on the warpath without a single trace of fear, he could not face a woman and tell her of his love.

"Well, as I was saying," Grandpa continued, "the Big Sioux confined themselves largely to northern Iowa, up around in this part of the country, while the Sac and Foxes lived farther north across the Minnesota line.

"The Sioux, however, were not destined to be satisfied as the sole possessors of northern Iowa for long, for the whites kept pushing gradually westward until one bright morning the Indians were confronted with the proposition of how to dispose of a new element among whites who had dared to disturb their peace and quiet. Chief Big Bear, with all of the barbarism of his savage forefathers rising within him, called a council. But the final decision, reached after hours of deliberation, was to postpone an attack indefinitely in order to keep the enemy in suspense for a while.

"Arrawana of the Sac and Fox tribe, was as universally loved within her tribe as was Chief Big Bear within his. Her talents ran generally to basket and bead making, but specifically she was possessed of the magic power to heal wounds and cure the sick. Messengers came from far and wide to secure her aid on behalf of some sick member of their tribe, and she gave unselfishly of her time that others might benefit from the gift that was hers. It was during one of her frequent visits of mercy among the Sioux Indians that Big Bear had first seen her and began to worship her. But did not everyone love her at first sight? Many times did he look into her dark, laughing eyes for some bit of encouragement, only to learn nothing of what was locked within her heart. Arrawana admired the Big Sioux chief, but love had found no place in her heart as yet. She was too busy ministering to others to think of love. Even the whites in the settlement were fortunate enough to be able to call her friend, and her deeds of mercy included them whenever they needed her.

"Love had always been a thing remote in her life because the moonlight night she discovered it. Leaving a sick child, whom she had finally coaxed to sleep, she slipped down to the creek for a cold drink and to carry back a dampened cloth to cool a feverish brow. As she leaned over the water she saw her reflection in the moonlight and was reminded of the old tradition her mother used to tell her so often. 'Look in the water with the moon over the left shoulder and the face of your lover will be revealed to you,' was what her mother had said.

"Surprised at the overwhelming desire within her to prove that tradition, she yielded, and shifted her position so that the moon would shine over her left shoulder. Quite clearly and distinctly then a picture of her lover was revealed to her, and she gave a startled look around. She saw nothing but empty space and trees in the distance. Chief Big Bear had vanished as silently as he had come.

"She waited a moment and listened. Then, hearing nothing, she turned and started back, choosing a different direction than the one from which she had come.

"She remembered hearing the squaws talking excitedly at dusk, and she knew to handle any sized account. We hope you will be prepared to make a report to "Dad" or the "Boss."

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from that the Big Chief had called his braves together in council. She feared for the whites, for well she understood the impatience and treacherous attitude of this savage tribe. She had been a missionary to the whites in times of sickness—why couldn't she be a missionary in time of danger?

"She slipped noiselessly up to within hearing distance of the group around their campfire. They were too busy to hear her as she gone less quietly, but knowing the penalty for spying she cared not to run no risk. She kept her eyes open for guards and concealed herself in the heavy underbrush of the forest. It was just as she had feared. They were planning to attack the whites at daybreak while they were still sleeping and keep the scalps for a war dance the following night at midnight.

"Big Bear was now truly savage and the plans of treachery originating from his fertile brain would have made his Siouan ancestors burst with pride. Even Inkapaduta could scarcely have equalled him.

"Arrawana, as she watched him, knew that she loved him for his savagery, because she was savage herself, but the womanly spirit within her arose to smother that flame of love for the sake of her heartless village in the white settlement. There was no time to lose. She turned and picked her way cautiously to a safe distance from any possible guard and ran, jumping over rocks as they came in her way and wading streams to cover the distance as quickly as possible. As she approached the settlement a shot was fired that struck her in the shoulder. The whites, alarmed at the mysterious actions of the Indians the day before, were evidently on their guard. But the girl ran on, unafraid, determined to give her warning and get back before she was missed.

"Run for your lives!' was all she could say to the guard before she slipped away again into the darkness of the forest—but that was enough to start action within the settlement.

"Next morning at daybreak the Big Chief knelt beside her lifeless form where she had fallen by the side of the stream, faint from fatigue and loss of blood. The whole tribe mourned the death of this Indian maiden, but the whites never learned that the girl who had ministered so much to them, yes, the girl who had saved them from the mercilessness of the savages had died at their hands. And then the Big Chief, thinking with grief, ended his own life that he might go to the happy hunting ground with her. The heart of every Big Sioux and of every Sac and Fox Indian was filled with grief. The bodies were placed side by side on stretchers supported by
pales out in the open, and according to
an Indian custom, the treasured pos-
session of each were laid on the ground sur-
rounding them. Red men for miles and
miles came to pay homage to the two
who, thru service, had found their way
into the hearts of their people; the one
as an angel of mercy, the other as an un-
exelled leader of red man. An arrow-
head, the most treasured possession of
the Chief, was buried with him to help
his spirit into the happy hunting ground.
To him, in life, it was priceless, because
Arrawana had given it to him as a token
of love, so in death it should go with him
as an emblem of the love that never had
ripened for them.

"That was the legend I read the the
night before my dream," Grandpa con-
tinued without a pause, "So it isn't any
wonder I dreamed what I did. It must
have been about the first night I slept in
this old house. You know the old saying
about dreams you dream in a strange
house always coming true?"

I smiled and said that I did.

"Well," he continued, "a voice was say-
ing to me, 'Go out in your pasture and near
the corner of your grove, beside a huge
rock, you'll find an oak stake. Dig be-
neath that stake and you'll find a hidden
treasure.'

"I can see the three ponds there yet. We
used to have three small ponds of
water over on that part of the farm, but
that was before we had it drained and
tiled. Well, never thought much about
that dream, because I knew I had been
reading a good deal. But the next night
I dreamed the same thing over again, and
after that I thought about it a little, but
still not enough to think of going out
there.

"But the third night, when I dreamed
it again I could stand it no longer. I
awoke and, without even waiting for
daylight, I took a spade and went out
there. The moon was shining and it
was almost as light as day. Sure enough
there was the rock with the oak stake
beside, tho I had never noticed it be-
fore. So I commenced to dig and I'll bet
I dug for an hour or more. Then just
as I was about to give up in despair my
spade struck something hard and I
stopped eagerly to see what I had struck.
The chills fairly flew down my back when
I saw what it was. What could be worse
than a pile of white bones in the moon-
light? Well, sir, they looked so spooky
and ghastly in that cold moonlight that I
threw down my spade and ran for the
house as fast as I knew how to get there.

"The next day I went out to fill up the
hole, but first I thought I might as well
take another look at the bones. And
there I found this arrowhead."

"And do you really think it is the ar-
rowhead of the legend, Grandpa?" I said,
turning it over and over with renewed
interest.

"I don't think nothin' different," he
said, "but buried treasure, indeed, says
I—arrowheads may have been treasure
to the Indians, but I'm darned if I
wouldn't as soon have good old American
gold and silver for mine."

"God gave all men all earth to love, but,
since their hearts are small, ordained for
each one place which should prove be-
loved over all. That place is home, and
they have lived who find it."—Kipling.