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MY FIRST CAMPAIGN.

At Fort Yuma, in the southwest corner of Arizona, life had long been monotonous, so we heard with much pleasure that several bands of Apaches had "jumped" their reservations and were on the warpath. Preparations were at once begun in anticipation of expected orders to round the Indians up. Soon we received the orders by telegraph, and at once took the field.

The other officers of my troop were either on leave or on detached service, so I was temporarily in command of my troop. I had graduated from the Military Academy but a short time before, and had been on but few scouts. Still I had seen enough field service to make me quite confident of my ability to command my troop.

The number of hostile Indians was reported at about 50, divided into several bands. As the direction which they had taken was not definitely known, it was considered best for the troops to separate, as a single troop could easily capture a band of the Indians, or even the whole lot in case the bands should unite, while by separating the chances of striking the trails would be greatly increased.

I hailed this plan with delight, for as long as my troop was with any one of the others, I, being the junior officer, could hardly obey the orders given to me. But alone I would be free to exercise my ingenuity.

Visions of success rose before me. Here was an early chance to win fame, and perhaps a brevet as an Indian fighter. I was alone, and would plan the capture I intended to make. Old sergeants with long experience of giving advice to the "youngsters" just out of the academy, but I would make them understand that they need not attempt that with me!

My route was toward the northeast. We proceeded rapidly, searching eagerly for Indian signs, through a desert covered with cactus of many varieties. Snakes, tarantulas, centipeds and other similar creatures abounded.

For two days we did not see the slightest sign of an Indian trail, and I began to fear that I was not to have a chance to win my spurs. But on the morning of the third day we struck an Indian trail, and my hopes rose. They were short lived, for the trail was an old one. We soon lost it and resumed our march in the original direction.

Next day, soon after an hour's halt for dinner, the scouts reported an Indian trail. I hurried forward to inspect it. It was a very plain one, and even to my unpracticed eye it was evident that the band was much larger than we had expected to meet. I concluded that the several bands must, by a preconcerted plan, have concentrated at some point.

I was delighted at this, for instead of capturing one band I should capture all.

Without loss of time I gave the necessary instructions, took precautions to avoid falling into an ambush and gave the order to advance. Old Indian hunters say: "If you see Apache signs, be very careful; if you don't see signs, be much more careful." If the Indians suspect they are being pursued, they will destroy, as far as possible, all signs of their trail. The clearness of the trail we were following assured me that the Indians were blissfully unconscious of our presence.

The scouts, however, were directed to remain near the column, and in order not to lose any of the credit of the capture I followed close on their heels. We moved rapidly, and the trail grew warmer every minute. We were at the most not over two hours behind the Apaches.

It was growing dusk, and I began to fear that we should not come up with them that night, but would be forced to go into camp at dark. The country had become rolling, so that we could not see any distance ahead, and this should have made me more cautious to avoid an ambush. But I did not anticipate anything of this kind, for I still had no reason to think that the Indians had any idea we were close on their trail.

As we came over the crest of a small hill the scouts pointed out to me a thin line of smoke rising beyond the next rise of ground. I at once halted and dismounted my command. Undoubtedly the Indians had gone into camp unsuspecting of our approach.

I could hear my heart beat with excitement and anticipation, but in order to lay my plans correctly it was necessary for me to see the ground myself. After a moment's hesitation I concluded to take the first sergeant with me.

We tied bunches of grass on our heads and then crept forward ten yards apart until we came to the crest of the obstructing hill. I peered over, drew hastily back and took a long breath. There they were! There was no doubt of that, for they were not 100 yards away, and at the first glance I saw that they were almost as many men as I had.

This was rather more than I had bargained for. I had expected to meet ten or a dozen, or, in case the bands had united, 30 at most. However, I was in for it now. It would never do to retreat, and my glory would be all the greater from such a capture.

I took another glance and then beckoned to my sergeant to fall back a short distance for a consultation. As he came up to me without waiting for me to speak he said:

"Lieutenant, I think!"—
"He got no further, for at that point I interrupted him. As he began to speak

the thought flashed through my mind. "There! As I had expected, he is going to presume on his position as an old soldier and give me advice." I did not want any advice. I wanted the credit, and the whole credit.

I knew that his advice would be good, for he was an old Indian fighter and a level-headed man, but that was all the more reason for my not wanting to hear his advice, for no doubt I should be influenced by it, and then I should feel in honor bound to acknowledge his share in the success. Therefore, as he began to speak, I said, perhaps rather too abruptly:

"Never mind, sergeant, what you think. Join the troop and have it ready to attack us soon as I come back."

With a suspicion of a smile on his face, but true to his reputation as a splendid soldier, he obeyed without a word. I again crept forward to the crest of the hill, and protected by my mask of grass made a thorough survey of the ground.

The Indians, as I had expected, behaving themselves absolutely safe, had taken no precautions to guard against a surprise. They had gone into camp on the bank of a small stream, which at this point made a bend away from me and then back again, forming a V, with the Indian camp at the vertex. The stream had at the bend cut into the opposite bank, making it steep and hard to scale.

Their campfires were lighted, and the Indians were evidently preparing supper. Their rifles were stacked a little in advance on one side.

My plan was quickly formed. I would send small detachments up and down the stream to cut off escape in those directions and would draw up my main body behind the crest where I was. They would have perfect command of the camp and could also pick off any one who attempted to escape by scaling the opposite bank.

When everything should be ready, I would advance alone as far down the slope as possible, and as soon as discovered would call on the camp to surrender. At my call my men would appear at the crest with their rifles cocked and aimed. I hoped by this plan to capture the whole camp without firing a shot.

I returned to my troop and carefully explained the plan. Again I thought I noticed one or two peculiar smiles on the men's faces. I paid no attention to them, but made the details for the two parties to cut off the retreat up and down the stream.

I selected trustworthy noncommissioned officers to command these parties and started them for their designated places. I then deployed my men as skirmishers, and after waiting a sufficient length of time for the two detached parties to reach their places I gave the order for the men to advance cautiously to the crest of the hill.

It was quite dark by this time, and with a sigh of relief I saw my plans completed without any alarm having been given.

I cautiously advanced alone till within easy speaking distance, when I stopped in plain view and called for the surrender of the camp, at the same time telling them that escape was impossible.

I was perfectly astounded to see no commotion, no confusion in the camp, but in reply to my summons a voice answered in good English:

"All right, old fellow, we surrender. Now march your men in and have some supper."

I recognized the speaker as one of the captains from the next post, who was in command of a company of Indian scouts, that I had mistaken for a band of hostiles.

The joke was on me, and I had nothing to do but to make the best of it. So, hiding my chagrin as best I could, I gave the order for the men to return for their horses and march into camp.

The captain told me that all the hostiles had returned to their reservation, but when his scouts had reported to him that we were following him he had guessed that we had not heard of their return, but had mistaken his company for the Indians. He had thought that it would be a good joke on me to let me go ahead and capture his company.

After supper, when I went to inspect the horses, the first sergeant said to me: "Lieutenant, I started to tell you that I thought that those were friendly Indians, and when you sent me back to the troop I cautioned the men not to shoot unless I proved to be mistaken."

It would indeed have been a dreadful mistake if any one had been hurt. So I thanked the sergeant for his thoughtfulness and at the same time mentally resolved that the next time I would listen to his advice.

It did not take long after I returned to my post for the story to leak out. But it was a long time before they tired of telling how I captured a company of our own Indian scouts.—Lieutenant J. C. W. Brooks, U. S. A., in Youth's Companion.

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