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AHVOTE'S FATE

The Indian's Tragic Death on Nevada's Sands

KILLED BY HIS COUSIN - HAD TAKEN THE WARPATh AGAINST THE WHITES

Ten Lives Sacrificed In Atonement for a Loved Companion's Betrayal.

Final Justice

Out on the sands of southern Nevada, the fierce eyes dimmed in death, lies the body of Ahvote. Not far from "Death Valley," the famous labyrinth of the Shoshones, where safety possibly awaited him from the relentless pursuit of his trailers, the body of the murderer lies as silent evidence that he has paid the penalty of his crimes. Ten lives were blotted out by him before he resorted to flight from the wrath of the white man and the doglike persistence of his tribesmen sent on his trail with orders never to return without tangible evidence of his death. Ahvote was a Piute.

Nestled in a small valley, almost a canyon, which is near the mighty Colorado river where it breaks the bounds of the majestic, cavernous walls which enclose it for 300 miles, is a small branch of the Piute tribe. There in the western borders of Arizona the few lodges of this wandering offshoot of the great Shoshone nation has an abiding place close to the homes of the paleface, literally carved out of the rocks. Of all these branches of the Shoshone nation, none is more vengefully inclined than the Piute. None is more degraded and insusceptible of civilization. Even the treacherous and rapacious Mescalero are gentlemen to the Piute, the worst of the long list of bad Indians the people of this government have had to encounter. Ahvote was a Piute. He was more. He was a Piute nursing a grievance against not only the white man, but his own tribesmen.

A BROTHER'S CRIME

Ten years ago Ahvote had a brother. When little brown papooses they had gamboled and skipped about the plains of northern Colorado, and with the few seceders from the main tribe of Piute had settled in the mining district of Arizona near the great river. There they grew to manhood, if such a thing could be said of a Piute. At any rate, they reached years of maturity. Ten years ago Ahvote's brother shot and killed a white man. With a yell of defiance and triumph he dodged the fire of the infuriated miners of El Dorado and fled to the fastnesses of the canyons. Here he was safe from any pursuit but that of an Indian.



AHVOTE

But he was not safe from that. The white men held a council and decided that the slayer must be brought to justice. They must take speedy and stern action or all their lives would pay the penalty. Dallying with the Indian when the taste for blood gets into his throat is more dangerous than sleeping with a man-eating tiger. Hence it was decided that the murderer must be found. The tribe was notified that unless satisfactory evidence were furnished of the death of the fleeing criminal the whole branch would be tossed into the raging river. A powwow was held and the Indians notified the white "brother" that

what he said was good; the Indians would find and punish the slayer. Then there was another powwow. Ahvote was present. He favored departing with the rest of the tribe and leaving the white man to execute his own vengeance. But the tribesmen were obdurate. They wanted to remain there, and the law of the Indians was invoked to punish the murderer. That

law provides that when death is inflicted by one Indian he must be punished by the nearest relative. Ahvote was chosen as executioner of his brother. Here is an example of the nature of the Indian. Ahvote upheld the laws of his tribe and stoically set forth to keep the vow forced upon him. He trailed his brother, guarded against surprise and death for himself, and carried back the head of his childhood's playmate for the white man to see.

TEN LIVES FOR ONE

That was ten years ago. Ahvote withdrew from the tribe and set up his lodge apart from all his friends and kinsmen. For ten years he, brooded over his wrongs. For ten years he sat and smoked at the gate of his lodge and dreamed of vengeance. Sullen and intractable, he refrained from outbreak during all those ten years. He was cunning. He was lulling the suspicions of the hated paleface and of his tribesmen. He cared little for the skill or common sense of the white man. He knew and feared the members of his own nation, for they could not be fooled by pretended repentance. So he sat and smoked, and smoked and sat. But he was ripe for the final chapter of a desperate life, and when he opened hostilities he took ten lives for one.

One day as Ahvote sat before his lodge fondly fingering his rifle he saw a couple of teamsters with their teams winding in and out of the tortuous road which leads from El Dorado to Kingman, the latter the county seat of Mojave county. For an instant he crouched as the panther ready for the spring, while the little beady eyes swelled and the hot rush of hate filled his throat with the taste of blood. Like a cat he stole noiselessly forth, and hid himself on the trail where the two men must pass. Here he lay in wait for a long time, patient and grim, his eyes fixed on the teamsters and his finger on the trigger. At last the wagon approached him and the men were in full view, not half a hundred yards away. There were a couple of sharp, reports, two puffs of white smoke, and, Lars Franzen and Ben Jones lay writhing in the road. They died with their boots on.

Ahvote sprang to his feet, gave the Piute yell, and then skulked into the rocks. He was running amuck now, and woe betide the white man who

crossed his path. As he prowled about seeking for more victims he spied a brace of miners Just coming from their work. Again the spiteful crack of the rifle was heard and Chris Nellson fell with a bullet in his head. Charles Monaghan* turned just in time to get the other shot in his head and recognize his slayer, when he too fell, the fourth victim in less than half a day. That night three others whose names are unknown went across the big divide, sent by the shots of the bloodthirsty Piute. Then Ahvote took to the woods. He had slain everybody he could sight, and he made for the canyons which skirt the river from the Moqui desert to the Needles. There he would be safe for a time, at least, from pursuit. No one had seen the deeds of blood, and but for his absence from his lodge, none would suspect. He trailed away to Gold Bug, seven miles away from El Dorado, and went to the cabin of Judge J. M. Norton. There he asked for and obtained shelter and food. He was known as a "peaceful" Indian, for ten years had passed since he executed the law and slew his own brother. Norton gave him food and a bed. and in return the renegade shot the old man in cold blood in the morning before resuming his flight. When the bodies of the two teamsters were found there was a big row in El Dorado. The sheriff of Mojave county was notified, and a search made for the murderer or some trace of him. Ahvote's deserted lodge was the strongest point in the trail. Then the bodies of the miners were found, and Sheriff Rosenberg took up the hunt in dead earnest. The miners of El Dorado, satisfied that Ahvote was the murderer, made the demand for his life. They were in an ugly mood, and but little was needed to make them swoop down on the Piute band and wipe it out. But cooler counsels prevailed, and Ahvote's cousins, Steve and Pete, took up the trail in Indian fashion.

With a knowledge of their man and a skill in woodcraft greater than that of the best dog that ever drew the breath of life, the two cousins started out on a jog trot with the sheriff and his posse. They followed the fleeing murderer unerringly and found the body of Morton as an additional evidence of his thirst for blood. They found the bodies of the other victims, but when the white man was ready to give up they still were not up with Ahvote. Down

into Black canyon they trailed him. Out of the Cottonwood canyon and down in its gloomy depths they trailed along, silent and intent.

TRAILED TO HIS LAIR

Nothing was seen which would appeal to the white man as evidence of the presence recently of any living creature not bird or wild beast. But Steve and Pete, with hanging heads and slouching shoulders, kept pointing to the westward and trotted on and on. They neared the raging river and slunk along the ragged and dangerous shore for a while. Then they grunted and nodded approvingly and, turning to the sheriff, said: "Over there."

Out in the middle of the river, rapid and broken by sunken rocks; swiftly whirling in eddies which make navigation a thing of deadly peril, lies a little island. Not much vegetation is on this island. There is too much volcanic rock thereabouts to propagate vegetation. But it is full of nooks and crannies wherein a man might hide and remain hidden for a long time. Here Ahvote might be ensconced in some one of those little canyons ready with rifle to pick off his pursuers in detail if they attempted to cross the portion of the river on the eastern shore of Cottonwood isle. Hence a halt and council was called.

Sullen and silent, Steve and Pete pointed to the island and insisted that the trail led there. They knew that their prey could not be far away and they sniffed the air as if seeking to fix the exact location. The sheriff and posse finally decided to invade the island, but it must be done after nightfall, as death might be their portion if the murderer caught a glimpse of them. There is reason now to believe that he was lurking there on that shore waiting for the first man who showed up in range. When night fell the crossing was made with difficulty, but in safety. Ahvote's asylum in the island was gone.

PLUNGED INTO DEATH VALLEY

He did not wait for the coming of his enemies. Over across the river in Nevada is the region known as Death Valley, utterly impenetrable to any but the birds, the wild animals and the Shoshones. Here he might hide In

comparative safety, and even if followed lie in wait and add a dozen or more victims to his list. So, over the river he swam, for these hardy Indians



THE RENEGADE PIUTE'S DEATH

sometimes cross the dangerous current thus, and made for the Death valley. But his Nemesis was on his trail, and do what he would he could not shake those two cousins. With morning the exploration of the island was commenced, but Steve and Pete made for the western shore without any ado. There they soon found what they sought, and again they pointed to the west, and again they said, "Over there." And again the party followed and by midday was close on the trail. Here it is that Indian sagacity won. The white men were left behind while the two Piutes sped away into the fastnesses. They separated and kept a close watch for their cousin, whom

they were to kill, and who would return the compliment if he got the drop on them. They made a wide circuit and then back trailed and boldly plunged into the rocks. They had located their man and would be able to give an account of themselves in a short time. Nestled In a cleft in the rocks overhanging the normal path Ahvote lay in wait. Steve marched up the path, but Pete was nowhere to be seen. It is supposed Ahvote knowing the force that was in pursuit of him, became uneasy when he saw but one of the men he knew were after him. At any rate, he let the supposed opportunity slip, and Steve passed in safety and apparently unaware of Ahvote's whereabouts. But Pete was up on the rocks waiting for the time to come when his cousin should lift up his body to peer after Steve. The time came and Pete's rifle rang out. Ahvote received the bullet through the lungs and toppled from his perch into the road as Steve sent in a second shot.

THE LAST ACT

As he lay there gasping for breath, with a froth of blood on his blue lips, the two pursuers walked up to him. Ahvote clutched wildly at his rifle, made a desperate effort to lift it to his shoulder, and failed. Then he glared at his slayers fiercely and sank back to await his death wound. He must die, and at once. With Indian stoicism he waited for the end. "Why did you kill the white men?" asked Steve.

"Hate Injun. Hate pale face. Want kill somebody," was the reply gasped out by the dying desperado as the red gush sprayed over his chest. Then, he faced his cousins with a face set and stern, and refused to speak again. With a common impulse Steve and Pete raised their rifles to their shoulders, and two bullets crushed into the head of Ahvote.

His crimes had been avenged. — Chicago Chronicle.

*Charles Monaghan was the brother of Frank Monaghan of Monaghan & Murphy, frontier merchants of Needles, CA. Another account states that Frank was killed in his cabin while asleep.