

CHAPTER XI.

1879.

(Note, by the Author.—Before moving onward in time as far into the Twentieth Century as the Beet Sugar Industry must carry us, had we not better stop at the point in 1878 where the most thrilling and dramatic story in connection with Weld county began? This was the incident leading up to the Meeker Massacre and all that followed; and, though the tragedy itself occurred more than 200 miles to the west of Weld county, yet all the people involved in it were Weld county people. And it connects with Weld in still another vital incident—the thrilling rescue of the young Indian girl from the burning stake in 1863, which occurred in Weld county, and which had its repercussion in the rescue of the captive women held in the camp of the Indians more than sixteen years later. The whole story follows:)

1878—NATHAN MEEKER TAKES INDIAN AGENCY AT WHITE RIVER.

1879—FRICTION DEVELOPS. MEEKER CALLS FOR HELP. GOVERNMENT RESPONDS WITH TROOPS.

Follows—

THE THORNBURG DISASTER — THE MEEKER MASSACRE, THE CAPTIVITY OF THREE WOMEN AND TWO CHILDREN,

And—

THEIR RESCUE BY A GOVERNMENT COMMISSION, AIDED BY THE POWERFUL INDIAN WOMAN, SHAW-SHEEN.

Then, Back to Weld,

1863—FOR THE RESCUE OF THE INDIAN GIRL FROM THE BURNING STAKE, BY WHITE SOLDIERS.

The sources from which the following facts were taken were:

For the story of the Meeker Massacre, the captivity and rescue of the three women and two children of the White River Agency where Nathan Meeker was Agent in 1878-9, the *History of Greeley and the Union Colony* by David Boyd has been our main dependence. Other Histories have contributed but Boyd has taken first place by reason of the superior opportunities that

were his for getting information first hand. He was a fellow colonist with Nathan Meeker; he knew in a neighborly way all the circumstances leading up to Meeker's acceptance of the Agency; had talked with him intimately on the occasion of his return visits to the colony, and, after the return of Mrs. Meeker and her companions from captivity, had talked with them and learned the story as only they could tell it. Psyche Boyd, daughter of the historian now living in Greeley, states that her father wrote the stories while they were still fresh in his memory and gathered them all into his history later. The book was published in 1890.

For the incidents requiring documentary proof the Indian Bureau at Washington has yielded data of unquestionable reliability. One Congressional document of especial value was found in the Records as Miscellaneous Document o. 38, Second Session of the 46th Congress. In it is a transcript of the testimony taken by the Committee on Indian Affairs of the House of Representatives, begun on January 15, 1880 and ordered printed on May 1, 1880. It fills 204 pages in Volume 4, and gives the testimony of Governor Pitkin, Josephine Meeker, Chief Ouray, the lesser Chief Jack and other Indians, Captain Payne of the 5th U. S. Cavalry and several others with more or less intimate knowledge of affairs at the Agency and of what has been called the "massacre" of the Thornburg troops on their way to the Agency. And for the story of Shawsheen, who, as a young Indian girl was rescued from death at the stake by a detachment of white soldiers from LaPorte reliance is placed on the official statement of Major Whitely who that year was Indian Agent for the Utes, and on the published stories of J. N. Hollowell of LaPorte and others; and for the part of Shawsheen in the rescue of the captive women, first, the statements of the women themselves on their return to Greeley, and, later, that of the only then living member of the government commission that effected the rescue. Today all the actors in the sad drama have passed from the stage of life, but reliable documents and the recorded evidence of witnesses remain to tell the story.

TWO HISTORIC TRAGEDIES

After Union Colony had been established and was a going concern, Nathan Meeker applied to the government for an Indian Agency and was appointed to White River. This was in the spring of 1878.

Two motives have been assigned for his desire for an Agency: First, that he had put all his worldly possessions into the enterprise of colony building and now found himself without means to carry on farther; and, second, that he had long cherished the dream of winning the Indians over to civilization and wanted an opportunity to try out his theories. Both motives seem to have had influence.

Nathan Meeker may have been overconfident of what he could do, but he had the courage of his convictions and was eager to put it to the test. Time, with the tragic ending of his experiment, proved that in the application of his theories he had been mistaken, but when this was demonstrated the time when other theories could be substituted had gone by.

The foundation stone of his theory was *work*. He believed that the Indians could be taught to work as the white man worked and that they would become happy and contented in so doing. He believed they could be trained to dig ditches, plow fields and cultivate growing things until they would see in their efforts the development of the country and come to accept the new ways as better than the old.

But in this idealism he failed to take into account the tremendous hold on Indian character of the traditions and habits of the race running far back through the ages and shaping mental attitudes as the mold shapes the molten metal poured into it. He failed to see that character so formed could not yield in a day, a year, or a generation to the new mold, and he was not prepared for the slower process; so resistance seemed to him obstinacy.

He also failed to give due consideration to the deepseated resentment that rankled in the Indian heart against the race that had dispossessed him of what he felt to be his rightful heritage. These misunderstandings were the pivotal points upon which

all Nathan Meeker's efforts turned to tragedy; upon which his experiment failed.

The following story told by David Boyd as told to him by Nathan Meeker will serve to illustrate the conflict. The story was published in the Greeley Tribune at the time and was headed simply "Jane".

It seems that Jane had spent most of her childhood life in the home of a white family and had received a fair education. By a strange crook in the Indian character, though they so strenuously objected to the establishment of a school at the Agency, yet they accorded Jane a place in their councils not usually enjoyed by women.

Although her early life in the white family had been pleasant, yet when she reached womanhood's years blood seemed to assert itself and she returned to her own people and married the dandy of the tribe, a young warrior named Parfiet.

When Nathan Meeker arrived at the Agency in the spring of 1878 a garden had been planted for Jane; whether by her own hand or some other was not stated; but before it was ready for cultivation the time came for the Indians to go off on their annual hunt, which would probably last all summer, Jane and her husband being among the hunters. When the garden began to show need of care, Nathan Meeker looked upon it, and, loving all useful growing things as he did, could not see it die; so he hoed, and pulled weeds, and carried water, and the result was that when the hunters returned Jane had a wonderful garden. Naturally she was pleased and proud, but her sense of obligation was fully expressed when she gave to Nathan Meeker three beets at a time, three different times out of her harvest of ten bushels. Her potato crop was fine, too, and this she sold to Meeker at the market price of three cents a pound.

The spring of 1879 found Jane again with a garden planted, but again Boyd's story fails to state who planted it. As usual, the Indians prepared for their annual hunt, Jane and Parfiet among them. But now Nathan Meeker thought the time had come for an understanding about the garden, so he told Jane that before she left she must make some arrangements for its

care or stay and take care of it herself, the arrangements of last year being, as he stated, "played out".

"Played out?" asked Jane, "how so?"

Then he explained that if she went off and left her garden, either no one would touch it, or, if any one did it would belong to that one instead of to her; that she and her husband must stay all three moons and take care of the garden if they wanted it, and he ended with the words: "If you want anything you must work for it same as white people do. Do you understand?"

"But what is the reason?" asked Jane, "that white men cannot do the work as before? They are used to it; they understand it. and we don't."

"But I tell you," replied Meeker, "it won't do. I worked your garden last year, carried hundreds of pails of water and you had a nice garden and got lots of money for it; it will be easier this year because we now have a ditch, but you must do the work yourself. You and all the other Indians must work. I want you to tell them what I say so they will understand and not go off and leave the work for us to do."

"But, Mr. Meeker," asked Jane, "aren't you paid for working?"

"Yes, but not for you."

"Then what are you paid for?"

"I am paid to show you how to work and to help you to help yourselves."

"But Utes have heaps of money; what is it for if not to have work done for us?"

"I'll tell you, Jane. This money is to hire me, and others, to teach you how to work, so that you can be like white people; we get rich by working. You are not to be waited on like children and supported in idleness all your lives; you have got to take hold and support yourselves or you will be sure to have trouble. And I want you to tell this to all the Indians."

"But aren't all these cattle ours? and all this land? Isn't it all Ute country to do with as we like and to have always?"

"The cattle may be, but the country is not."

"Then whose land is it? and whose is the money?"

"The land belongs to the government and is yours *if you use it*; but if you won't work and use it and if white men come and raise potatoes and onions and beets, the crop will be theirs and you will have nothing. This thing can't go on forever. It is time for you to turn in and take care of yourselves and have houses and other things like white people. Now do you understand?"

"Yes, I understand; but I cannot tell you, Mr. Meeker, how bad you make me feel by talking that way. Nobody ever did so before."

"I can't help it, Jane, it is the truth, and the sooner you all come to know it and act upon it the better. I will help you all I can. You can have plows and hoes and seed and everything you need; but you must take hold and help yourselves as white people do."

After this interview, Meeker stated, "Jane went away sorrowful." No doubt she carried the word as instructed to her people, and no doubt they talked it over. Nor is there any kind of a doubt that the feeling thus engendered played an important part in bringing on the final crisis. Boyd states that most of the Indians gave up the hunt that summer and stayed at the Agency and worked, being driven to it by a force, as he puts it, "like a galvanic shock." They worked wholly under compulsion and without the slightest conviction that it was right they should do so.

So throughout the summer of 1879, though obedience was rendered, rebellion smouldered, and the day of reckoning came on apace.

But not only was the resentment of the Indians slowly taking shape, but it is more than simply possible that certain white men helped it along. Being human Nathan Meeker had his faults, but dishonesty was not one of them. He was strictly on the square in all his financial dealings with the Indians and he despised the graft and trickery of others. His son Ralph shared this sentiment and stirred up great hostility among the grafters by his ruthless expose of their dealings. He was a correspondent of the New York Times and hesitated not to use its columns for

this purpose. All this was laid up against the father and there is not a doubt but the grafters worked upon the Indians to incite their worst passions against him. Nothing that Meeker or any of his family did was right; all was wrong; the school that Josephine tried to establish was made to appear as a menace to the future of the race.

Perhaps the Indians were not hard to convince on that point, but at any rate the idea became firmly established that if they allowed their children to be educated in the white man's schools they would forsake the sacred traditions of their own race, and thus the Indian character would die out in the land of its nativity. They did not put it quite that way; rather they said that if they allowed their children to go to the white man's school their boys would soon cease to hunt and shoot and become as worthless as the white man's boys.

So the school became a thorn in the Indian flesh while the young white teacher strove on, hoping against hope that the prejudice against it might die out. But it never did. It was too strong; and, possibly, too assiduously cultivated.

When the summer had passed away the smouldering fires of resentment began to sputter; mutterings were heard, growing louder and more distinct with each passing day. Nathan Meeker sensed the crisis now imminent and knew the situation was out of hand. Realizing this he did the only thing that seemed to him possible—he appealed to the government for help. Then he waited as on the edge of a volcano, while the perilous days passed on. No word came counselling relaxation of discipline or the pouring of oil on the troubled waters; perhaps the time had passed for the effectiveness of such measure; when the government did respond it was with military aid; the Agent was notified that troops were on their way and would soon reach the Agency.

And now comes the tragic story of

THE THORNBURG DISASTER.

Perhaps the culminating controversy between the Agent and the Indians should be given first, partly because it shows the Agent's belated yielding of a point and the making of an effort

toward compromise. Six months earlier it might have saved the day and left this Chapter forever unwritten; but it could not that day.

The controversy was over the plowing of a certain tract of land of about two hundred acres. Jane and her husband and a subchief named Antelope representing the Indians of the Agency, vigorously objected to the plowing, claiming the land as pasturage for their horses. So far had they gone in their determination to keep the tract unplowed that, during the absence of the Agent on his last visit to Greeley they had built a corral on it, and this they most emphatically refused to move. They declared—Jane as spokesman—that this was "Ute country," had always been and still should be; that it was the spot the Utes wanted for their horses and that they meant to keep it for that purpose. Besides, the Utes did not want any more of their land plowed up—there was too much plowed already; and that all they wanted was to be left unmolested by the white man. This was the irreconcilable conflict: the Indians resisting what they considered further encroachments and the Agent trying to carry out the instructions of his government.

The plow was ordered out, but before a single furrow had marked a path across the tract, came two Indians with guns and forbade the plowing. The man at the plow—who happened to be Shad Price—turned to his employer for instructions; he was told to go ahead. With much apprehension he returned to his work, but soon a bullet whizzed past, so close that he could feel the breath of its passing. Then it was that Agent Meeker gave the first sign of yielding; he ordered the plow stopped and sent for Chief Douglas.

Other Chiefs were called in and a council was held, at the end of which a compromise was reached by which the Agent agreed to a limitation of the ground to be plowed. This was a real compromise, both sides yielding, but too late to be effective. The clouds still gathered and the storm was soon upon them.

Here the scene shifts to a military setting.

Governor Pitkin and General Pope, Commander of the Western Division, had backed Nathan Meeker in his appeal for

help and now were informed that a force from Ft. Steele under command of Major Thornburg was on its way. The command consisted of about 160 men divided into three companies of cavalry with a wagon train carrying supplies.

Before Thornburg reached the Reservation he was met by a group of five Indians and asked to halt his troops outside and with five of his men accompany the Indians back to the Agency. Jack, an influential young Indian who spoke the English language well, headed this group. In his testimony given several months later before the Committee of Indian Affairs in Washington he gave as his reason for asking this of Major Thornburg that he wanted the Indians' side of the controversy to get to the government. He said the Indians were dissatisfied with Agent Meeker because he was a "bad man"; that he wanted them to work and they did not want to work; that it was not in the Treaty that they should work; that the rations and annuities were to be paid them for their land, not for their work, and that Agent Meeker had no right to withhold rations when they did not work. (In strict construction of the law a point well taken.) Moreover, he stated, Agent Meeker's daughter was there to teach a school and the Indians did not want a school. If they educated their children and plowed their lands, that was the white man's civilization and they did not want the white man's civilization. What they wanted was their own country and their own civilization. These were the points he said he had meant to lay before the military commander as representing the government.

The place where Jack and his men met Major Thornburg was at Bear River, about sixty miles from the Agency and forty-five from the north line of the Reservation. Jack asked Major Thornburg to not take his soldiers inside the Reservation. He asked the Major why they had come and was told that they had been sent by the government because the Indians were burning the timber. Jack replied that it was not the Indians but white men prospecting for gold who had burned the timber. He asked if Agent Meeker had sent for the soldiers and if it was their intention to go on to the Agency. Thornburg replied that it was; that trouble had been reported and he was sent to find out what

it was. Jack told Thornburg that he could find out best by taking five of his men and going with him to the Agency for a council with Meeker and the Chiefs.

At first Thornburg refused, possibly through lack of confidence; but while they were still talking came a messenger from the Agency, E. W. Eskridge, with a letter from Agent Meeker, strangely enough containing the same request; and now it was accepted, the plan to be carried out the following day.

Thornburg moved his soldiers on to Williams Fork, sixteen miles nearer the Reservation, and there they were met by another group of Indians and again by the messenger Eskridge with another message from Agent Meeker repeating the same request. Meeker stated that the approach of the troops had caused great excitement at the Agency and he feared immediate trouble if the whole force should arrive. Thornburg again agreed to take an escort of five and come to the Agency, but later in consultation with his officers decided upon another plan. He would appear to concede to the desire of the Indians by taking an escort of five and riding toward the Agency, but—and this was his undoing—would leave the order with his officers that at an appointed time, instead of remaining behind, they should break camp and follow. It but proved his unfamiliarity with Indian character to suppose this could be done. True, he and his selected escort could ride toward the Agency in company with the five who had brought the request, but that did not mean that the movements of the command would not be known; and the sequel proved that the hills were full of Indians whose watchful eyes were trained upon the soldiers every moment, and that when the start was made that act was construed as a breach of faith.

The soldiers moved on to Milk Creek, arriving on the morning of September 29, the day that has gone down in history as marking the double tragedy of the Thornburg distaster and the Meeker Massacre. But the soldiers moved no nearer the Agency, for it was here that the deadly encounter took place. Who fired the first shot will never be known, but the story as gathered from testimony later given is substantially as follows:

The Indians swept in between Thornburg and his wagon

train, cutting off supplies; Thornburg and thirteen of his men fell in the first few minutes; every officer except Lieutenant Cherry was killed or wounded; Cherry's horse was shot from under him; all mules belonging to the wagon train were killed. The casualties among the Indians was never known, Jack in his evidence being nocommittal, but claiming a small loss. The fight lasted about 45 minutes.

When it was over the remnant of the Thornburg command was in dire distress, their condition desperate; they had no way of knowing the strength of the Indians or their further plans. They gathered about the wagon train and threw up breastworks of the bodies of dead animals—and men, covering them as best they could with dirt and taking shelter within the circle formed. The first fight was over but stray bullets were still coming from the hills and another attack might develop at any minute.

As darkness fell on that terrible day and the hours dragged their slow length along the suffering within that grewsome inclosure grew steadily worse; the wounded and dying begged for water, but water could only be had when some one risked his life in a dash to the creek to get it; more than one was picked off as he ran the gauntlet with his precious burden.

The situation fell to Lieutenant Cherry, the only living unwounded officer. If only word could reach military headquarters at Rawlins, Wyoming, help would come, otherwise ultimate annihilation must certainly be their portion. Could any messenger possibly go through with his life? A hundred and sixty unmarked miles lay between Milk Creek and Rawlins, every foot of the way beset with danger. Was there a soldier still living brave enough, or daring or reckless enough to try it? This was a situation to call forth heroism, and, at the crucial moment it appeared. A young soldier, only a boy, light of weight and slight of build, wiry of muscle and courageous of spirit stepped forward. He would go. And now comes the matchless story of—

JOE RANKIN, THE HEROIC MESSENGER

The Picture—Night. Black darkness. The moans of the wounded and dying. The agonized and never ceasing cry for

water. The bodies of the dead lying thick upon the ground, and a soldier boy, with hand on bridle leading the horse he could not see and both threading their way carefully among the bodies. This was Joe Rankin and his faithful steed. When their feet no longer touched the bodies and the moanings grew fainter Joe Rankin judged that they were in the clear; then, leaping lightly to the horse's back, he touched the rein and off they sped on one of the most perilous and heroic rides in history.

On and on they flew over rough and uncertain roads, guided only by a lone star that Joe knew led northward. Hour after hour they sped onward. Daylight came, and passed, and night closed down again, yet not for one moment did they stop for rest or water until a hundred and sixty miles had slipped beneath their feet, and, at the midnight hour of September's last day they stumbled into military headquarters at Rawlins, more dead than alive. Mustering his last reserves of strength Joe slipped from the back of his horse and stumbled into the military office with the tragic news, while his faithful horse stood quivering and spent outside. (Do we ever give those faithful animals their just award of appreciation for the courage, the sacrifice, the unmeasured services rendered? For their wordless and unstinted devotion to the creature man? It is doubtful.)

Later on that same night two other messengers—heroes too—started on the road to Rawlins, expecting at any moment to come upon the slain body of Joe Rankin. The name of one was Gordon, the other Ed Mansfield, a Greeley boy. On the way they were intercepted by Captain Dodge who, with a company of forty-one colored cavalry had been sent into Middle Park to protect the settlers there. How Captain Dodge and his troops happened to be on the way where they could be intercepted by the two messengers is explained by this incident:

Sandy Millan was a mail carrier whose route ended at Hot Sulphur Springs. It was probably on the afternoon of September 28 that his duties carried him through the Milk Creek country, where he saw on the one hand the troops of Major Thornburg moving toward the Agency and on the other the hills filled with

Indians. He rightly concluded that trouble was brewing, so hurried on the end of his route, delivered his mail pouches and drove rapidly toward the place where Dodge and his men were scouting. He met them at the ranch of Barney Day between Kremmling and Hot Sulphur Springs and told them what he had seen. Captain Dodge asked Millan to act as guide back to the scene of threatened conflict, which he was doing when the two messengers from the Thornburg camp were intercepted. And then it was that the whole company hastened forward with all possible speed.

They covered the eighty miles of uncertain road by double quick movement and reached the besieged remnant of the Thornburg command at break of day. This ride has gone down in military annals as one of the most daring military movements ever accomplished, not only because of the incredibly short time in covering the distance, but also of the danger.

Two days later, October 2, 1879, General Merritt at Cheyenne, having received the message carried by Joe Rankin, acted as swiftly as possible in the massing of troops from Cheyenne, Salt Lake, Ogden and Fort Steele. He had a force of 300 cavalry and 250 infantry in wagons, and covered the distance of 160 miles in less than two days time, reaching Milk Creek on the morning of October 5. There the whole Command headed for the Agency, and it is said that General Merritt on reaching that place and seeing the ghastly evidences of the bloody orgy, turned aside and wept like a child. And well he might. Strewn upon the ground were eleven bodies, all more or less mutilated but that of Nathan Meeker worst of all; a log chain had been fastened about his neck, his body dragged over the Agency grounds, and finally pinned down by a wooden stake driven through the mouth. No words could be too strong in condemnation of this savagery if only such words could come from a race whose own hands were clean; but this the white race cannot claim so all that can be done will be to charge the crime to the insanity of bloodlust that always comes from blood spilling, and from which no race can claim exemption.

AT THE AGENCY. THE MASSACRE

*The Story as Told by Flora Ellen Price, One of the Captives,
to Sarah E. Dresser, Sister to Frank and Harry Dresser,
Two of the Victims.*

Here the scene shifts back again to the Agency and to the afternoon of September 29, 1879. There is no better way to give the story than from the lips of an eye witness who lived through it all.

Flora Ellen Price was one of the women of the Agency, the story of whose captivity and rescue will follow. She was the young wife of Shad Price whose hand had guided the plow and whose face had felt the swish of the bullet as it sped by on the morning of the day when the final controversy had arisen over the plowing of the two hundred acre tract of the Indians' pasture land. The body of Shad Price was found among the slain at the Agency. The young wife, Flora, told the story to Sarah E. Dresser, sister to Frank and Harry, two of the victims of the massacre, after the return of the captives to Greeley. The conversation is from Boyd's History. Asked by Miss Dresser for the story Flora Price said:

"After breakfast Monday morning, September 29, my husband loaded his Winchester and laid it across the table saying: 'we may have trouble today, so don't be alarmed if I should run in after this gun!'

'Early in the afternoon Mr. Meeker started one of his employes with a message for Major Thornburg who, with his troops, was on his way to the Agency. (See footnote.)

"After dinner the men went to work as usual. Shad and Frank Dresser were on a wagon in front of the storehouse and Arthur Thompson was on the roof. I heard a shot and saw Arthur fall; he plunged headlong from the roof. In an instant Frank ran into the house and Josie handed him Shad's gun. Frank said, 'they have shot Harry; I saw him fall' An Indian

Footnote—This was the third message sent by Meeker, the other two being received as already stated. This one was found on the body of Eskridge, the messenger, about two miles from camp.

came to the door; Frank shot; the Indian fell but was not killed. Then we all ran into the milk house, locked the door and hid under the shelves. The windows of the room we had just left were riddled with bullets. We stayed in the milk house until about five o'clock. Once while we were there we heard footsteps near the door but thinking it was an Indian we did not open the door. We had reason to believe later that it was my poor husband, for his body lay near the door.

"It must have been about five o'clock when we heard the crackling of flames and smelled smoke. The house was burning. Frank said, 'maybe we can all make it to the sage brush.' He still held the rifle and we all started. In a moment Mrs. Meeker fell, shot in the hip. An Indian named Cojos caught me and another caught Josephine. My two children were with us and they were caught, too."

Here Flora Price broke. They said it was never possible for any one of the captives to tell the story straight through without a break. So here the story is taken up from other sources, mostly from Boyd's History. Another entirely reliable source was the testimony before the Congressional Investigating Committee, already noted at the beginning of this Chapter. First, from Boyd as told to him by the captives in fragments after the rescue:

The big Indian who shot Mrs. Meeker was not of the White River Utes. If it could be believed that he felt regret as soon as the bullet struck, it would account for his next act; he stooped over the prostrate form of the fragile woman and raised her to her feet as gently as a white man could have done, speaking compassionately in good Indian English. "Do not be afraid," he said; "me no more shoot; me mighty sorry you hurt; but me MAD when white soldier kill many Indian."

He gave her his arm and half led half carried her to the Agency office, just outside the door of which she saw the body of her husband, face upturned to the sky, calm and serene. She bent over and kissed him. She always believed the big Indian brought her there so that she might have this last farewell, and she never forgot the act. Whether meant for a kindness or not

it gave her comfort when later she heard of the finding of the body by General Merritt, and knew that the mutilation came after life had gone. It seems an inconsistency in the Indian character that the big Indian could first shoot the defenseless captive, then overwhelm her with kindness. Remorse alone can account for it.

After Mrs. Meeker had said farewell to her life partner she entered the office and picked up a big book that lay open on the desk. It was a copy of the Pilgrim's Progress and she kept it with her throughout captivity. She hugged it up close in her arms as the big Indian led her away and placed her on a horse among the captives and captors now leaving the ravished Agency. The captives were never near enough to speak to each other and soon the darkness fell (leaving only dim outlines discernable to the sight. But Mrs. Meeker came to know that the captive group consisted of herself, Josephine, Flora Price and the two small Price children, May three years old, and Johnny, eighteen months. May was with Josephine and Johnny was with his mother. Each of the captives had an escort. But the one who had put Mrs. Meeker on her horse was not hers; he had disappeared and Chief Douglas had taken his place. An Indian named Persune had Josephine and Cajos Flora.

Thus they traveled for many hours. Dusk grew into dark and the darkness deepened, but on they went. After a time Douglas left Mrs. Meeker and went to Josephine. He called her a "white squaw", and worked himself into a frenzy as he recited incidents leading up to the massacre; his anger mounted higher and higher as he talked and three times he placed his gun at the breast of the captive in threatening manner. The girl never flinched but told him in steady tones that she was not afraid of him nor of death.

Toward the middle of the night they pitched their tent, and soon thereafter a runner arrived bringing news of the Thornburg battle. Now all men except those needed to guard the captives left for the scene of battle. They did not return for several days, not until after the captives and their captors had stopped, at

least temporarily, and then it was with orders from Ouray that all hostilities were to cease.

Camp was moved frequently during the first days, but finally had settled in a beautiful valley on Plateau Creek in Mesa county, at the spot destined to be the scene of the thrilling rescue.

WHAT THE GOVERNMENT DID

To get the right background for the rescue it will be necessary to leave the captives and go to the seat of government and see what is being done there.

When news of the massacre and captivity reached Washington the government took time to investigate. That was, of course, necessary, but it brought an eternity of anxious waiting to the captives. In due time, however, (three weeks) the government was convinced that a massacre had occurred and that three women and two children were being held in captivity. Then Secretary Carl Schurz sent an order to General Adams in Denver to pursue the Indians and rescue the captives.

General Adams acted promptly. He selected four men as aids, one a newspaper man, one a man with long association among Indians and two as Indian guides and interpreters. Late in October they reached the camp where the captives were being held. General Adams carried with him not only a demand from the U. S. government for their release, but also an order from Chief Ouray, head of the whole Ute tribe.

In the absence of Head Chief Ouray the lesser Chiefs of the tribe had taken over the situation at the camp where the captives were being held. They hurriedly called a war council of all chiefs below Ouray and on the arrival of General Adams and his aids, gathered in the big council tent with set, determined faces. There was a war party and a peace party and they were perilously near evenly divided. The peace party stood steadfastly for obedience to Ouray and the United States government, and the war party was as determinedly against that position; They stood unitedly together on killing the men but divided on

whether the women should be killed also or held as perpetual captives. To the surprise of General Adams and his aids a woman sat among the councilors.

WHO WAS THE WOMAN AND WHY WAS SHE THERE? 1863 HOLDS THE ANSWER

To get the proper setting for this hairtrigger situation and to know the woman who sat among the chiefs and why she was there, it will be necessary to go back sixteen years in time and more than two hundred miles in distance to the region that is now Weld and Larimer counties and the year that was 1863, and describe an earlier dramatic incident that had narrowly escaped tragedy and now working out its sequel.

This story is gathered from reliable sources, a part of which was the statement of an eye witness which has been verified by historical documents and by records on file in state and military quarters. The *History of Larimer County*, written by Ansel Watrous, founder and editor of the *Ft. Collins Courier*, and published in 1911, records on page 107 the first act in the drama so far as the white race is concerned. It is found in the pioneer experience of an early settler, J. N. Hollowell, and is, briefly, as follows:

Hollowell, then a young man, arrived in the valley of the Big Thompson in October of 1860. He built himself a cabin a mile and a half southeast of present Loveland. One day, suddenly out of an afternoon nap, he awoke to find his cabin filled with Indians. This was in the fall of 1863. Startled he arose from his couch when the feathered and painted leader of the Indian band pointed to a small looking glass that hung on the wall and then to Hollowell's hat and spoke what seemed to be the only English word he knew; he said "swap?" in the form of a question, and Hollowell rightly took it for granted that he had something he wished to trade for the hat and looking glass, so when the Indian pointed up the Big Thompson. Hollowell got up, took the hat and looking glass and followed.

About half a mile distant was the camp of the Indians. The leader opened one of the tepees and came out leading a young Indian girl, pushed her against Hollowell and reached for the hat and looking glass. Hollowell was naturally embarrassed. Tightening his grip on his own property he said decisively: "No; no swap;" and turned to leave. Then the Indians, he thought at least two hundred in number, set up a howl that, if not actually curdling the blood in his veins, at least lent speed to his feet and enabled him to do a record breaking sprint back to his cabin. He locked the door and sat down with palpitating heart, not knowing what to expect next. But nothing happened. That night he could hear the constant "thump, thump, thump" of the war dance all night long. The next morning the Indians broke camp and left. But there was an aftermath.

Company B of the First Colorado Volunteers in camp at La Porte at the time had been notified of Indian disturbances and ordered to investigate. Here arises some confusion in the different accounts of what happened next, confusion as to location, not as to main facts. The Watrous History states that the soldiers forded the river near the present town of Evans and climbed up on a bluff from which they saw a large group of Indians on the opposite bank in great commotion and excitement. This would place the position of both soldiers and Indians on the Platte, while later investigations have placed the scene on the Poudre just north of the present site of Greeley. But all agree that as the soldiers, who rode at breakneck speed, came nearer the Indian group they were horrified to see a young girl tied to a tree with fagots piled high around her and an Indian on his way with a torch while the rest of the group danced wildly around the tree and the terrified victim. The soldiers descended upon the group just in the nick of time; in another instant the flames would have enveloped the helpless girl and life would have gone out in terror. They rushed into the circle, scattered the fagots in every direction and cut loose the trembling girl; the Indians, who were completely surprised, fled in wild confusion. The soldiers took the girl back to their camp at La Porte, and when Hollowell saw her he recognized her as the one the

Indians had tried to trade to him for his hat and looking glass.

The girl, it was later learned, had been captured from the Utes three years before by a raiding band of Arapahoes who had later passed her on to the Cheyennes.

From La Porte the rescued girl was sent to Denver in care of Governor Evans who in turn sent her to Middle Park committed to the care of Major Whitely then Agent to the Utes, and by him eventually returned to her own people alive and well amid great rejoicing on the part of the tribe.

This much the records tell, but none can tell the feelings of the girl who had been rescued from death at the stake. White men had rescued her and from that moment a consuming passion filled her heart for an opportunity to do something to show her gratitude to the white race. For sixteen years she waited and then her opportunity came. It was on that October day in 1879 in the council tent of the Indians on Plateau Creek, when the lives of three women and two children, and five white men who had come to their rescue, hung in the balance.

The Indian name of the girl was Shawsheen; it had later been changed by white people to Susan, losing both rythm and beauty by the change. Her brother, Ouray, became Chief of the Utes; she married Chief Johnson, a local chief of the tribe.

Now we will return to the council tent and draw another picture.

THE FINAL SCENE OF THE RESCUE.

SHAWSHEEN PAYS A LONG DEBT. A THRILLING PICTURE.

General Adams has just made an impassioned speech and an uncompromising demand for the release of the captives, but the issue hangs as by a hair. A pipe is lighted and starts around the circle. Each Chief that stands for peace, smokes; those for war, pass it on. It reaches Chief Johnson. He is the last. Half have smoked and half have not. For an instant Chief Johnson holds the pipe suspended in his hand as though he would hold

the moment. And now the lone woman arises. With a determined look she tosses one corner of her shawl up over her shoulder, stands for a moment, then steps into the circle. With slow and stately tread she sweeps the circle, giving each Chief a keen and searching look. Finally she stops in front of Chief Douglas and the pent up feelings of sixteen years burst forth in a speech that electrifies her hearers. Douglas and Jack, who have stood for the killing of the men and keeping the women captives, go down under the torrent; they drop their heads and slip from the tent, followed by all who have stood with them, until finally only the peace party remains, Shawsheen standing like a statue until the last man disappears. And General Adams hesitates not to give the Indian woman a handshake that holds all of deep gratitude, honor, and the acknowledgment of a great deed accomplished. It was not until later that he knew of the motive whose force had carried her through.

* * * *

The whereabouts of Shawsheen during the troubles at the Agency has never been known, but it is certain she was not there; the released captives declared they had never seen her until they met her at the last camp, but in all the stories they told of captivity she was mentioned, and always with gratitude. They told of her taking Mrs. Meeker into her own tent and caring for her throughout captivity; of her saving Josephine from the abuse of Douglas and Jack; of her commanding young Indians to carry water for Flora Price and of her biting and scornful rebuke of Douglas when she saw him kick over a bucket of water and order Flora to carry another up the steep bank of the creek. Flora Price had been given the task of carrying water and Josephine that of cooking the food. Shawsheen had taken an interest in the children, too, and had watched with eagle eye the treatment accorded all the captives.

THE RETURN OF THE CAPTIVES

Mrs. Meeker, Josephine, Flora Price and the two children returned to Greeley, meeting ovations at every stop of the train from Alamosa on, the greatest of all being on their arrival in

Greeley. Many doors opened to Mrs. Price and her children, for they had no home as had Mrs. Meeker and Josephine.

Soon after their return the town granted a pension of \$500 per year to each of the women. After a time Mrs. Price and her children left Greeley and diligent search on the part of this History has failed to trace their wanderings or discover present whereabouts—if still living. Senator Teller secured for Josephine a position in the Interior Department in Washington which she held, making many friends along the way, until her untimely death on December 30, 1882.

The last twenty-six years of Mrs. Meeker's life were spent partly in the family home in Greeley, now the Meeker Memorial Museum—and partly with relatives in New York State. Her death occurred on October 4, 1905.

There is a spot in the Greeley cemetery where in mortality, the Meeker family are reunited; Nathan the father, Arvilia the mother, Josephine, Ralph the oldest son, another son George who died in Evans while Greeley was being organized, Mary A. whose married name was Fullerton, and, last of all, Rozene, who died at the Greeley hospital in 1935. A brown marble shaft near the center of the grounds marks the final resting place of this noted family.

THE MEMORIAL AT THE AGENCY

At first the bodies of Nathan Meeker and all his employes were buried where they were found, but in the fall of 1880 those of Nathan Meeker and W. H. Post were shipped to their old homes and the others removed to a higher mesa; a few months later they were again moved, this time to the spot where they now rest, in Highland Cemetery just south of the town of Meeker which has, since the massacre, been built on White River on the edge of the mesa overlooking the valley.

A large granite boulder, erected by the people of Meeker, marks the center of the spot with the graves clustering around it. A square has been hewn out of one of the sides, its surface polished and the names of the men engraved thereon. This is the inscription:

This Native Granite Stone, Erected
By The Citizens Of
Rio Blanco County, Colorado,
In 1927

And Dedicated To The Memory Of
NATHAN C. MEEKER
United States Indian Agent
Who With His Government Employes
Was Massacred By The Ute Indians At
The White River Indian Agency, One
And A Half Miles West of This Spot
September 29, 1879

EMPLOYES:

W. H. Post	Frank Dresser
Henry Dresser	E. W. Eskridge
Mr. Price	Arthur L. Thompson
George Eaton	Fred Shepard
Carl Goldstein	Unknown Teamster

And so ends the most thrilling Chapter connecting Weld county with the time and history of one of the most tragic events of the transition period from the old order to the new; and so ends the life story of Nathan Meeker without whom the town of Greeley might not yet be.