

eastern Arizona, where he established a ranch close to the Chiricahua Mountains. He took with him part of his family, including his wife Diana, a large, fine looking woman, notable among her friends for her kindness of heart and and wholesouled hospitality.

The location of the ranch is about seventy miles from, Sonora, Old Mexico, and no very great distance from New Mexico. The region was thinly populated, and there was scarcely an inhabited spot within eight of the Fife domicile. The family were in an exposed position, and consequently in imminent danger from depredations of renegade Apache Indians, who soon began to make raids on the stock.

In February, 1882, Young John Fife, at that time little more than a lad, made a customary trip into the mountains to procure timber. He was accompanied by two hired men, both of them ex-soldiers. They entered a defile with their teams and were in the act of preparing to go to work when something startling occurred. The sound of several shots rung out in the forest, and the three woodsmen soon comprehended that they were being attacked by a gang of naked Apaches, who had taken positions behind adjacent trees and opened a fusillade upon them. Then ensued a determined fight. The Fife men seized their rifles and replied to the savages with the courage common to western frontiersmen. The struggle was brief so far as related to John's companions, who were, in the early stage of the attack, both shot down and almost immediately expired.

Young Fife being left alone in such an unequal struggle, was in extreme peril. He saw that his chances of escaping a violent death were overwhelmingly against him, but he never for an instant lost self control. He made a dash for a cluster of large rocks on the face of a slope and managed to make his extemporized fortification more secure by rapidly filling in some openings with smaller stones.

The Indians changed their positions with a view to commanding the young man's miniature fortress, but every time one of the attacking party showed himself, crack went John's rifle, and his assailants soon learned the necessity of caution. Meantime they kept up an incessant fire, and John's position became, if possible, gradually worse. A bullet struck him in the thigh and ploughed through the flesh lengthwise, and another made an ugly wound in his wrist and, to add to the peril of his situation, he soon discovered that his ammunition was nearly exhausted. A few more shots and he would be at the mercy of the savages. Finally his last shot was fired and he expected that the band would at once rush in and finish him in short order.

The Indians now changed their tactics. John's rifle being silent, they emerged from hiding, but they did not attempt to carry the little fort by storm. It was evident they thought that John was reserving a few shots for close quarters. Anyway they collected a large amount of brush, which they piled all around the hiding place of the young man at bay

and set it on fire, expecting that he would come out and they could then easily shoot him down.

To say that John was in a hot place would be putting it mildly. He was soon in the centre of a circle of fire. The flames roared and crackled, being fanned by a rising breeze. He was lying at full length on the ground, and the fire reached his feet and burned the heel of his boot. His sensations were in unison with the terrible character of the situation. The last ray of hope of escape had about taken flight, when the breeze stiffened and blew the smoke of the encircling fire down the canyon. Suddenly he was seized with an impulse, which occurred as if an audible voice had suggested it. Acting upon it he arose, dashed through the flames and, keeping in the line of the smoke, ran down the canyon. He felt that it was a race for life, and the thought, notwithstanding his wounded thigh, gave impetus to his speed. He never stopped until he had covered a distance of three miles, when he reached a smelter completely exhausted from loss of blood, his tremendous exertion and the tension of his feelings during the ordeal through which he had passed.

The people at the smelter took care of the young man for the time being, and sent a messenger to his father to inform him of what had occurred.

The manner of young Fife's escape was marvelous, but it seems that the Apaches who were waiting eagerly to murder him the moment he should emerge from his hiding place, made no pursuit of him. One of the renegades of the gang afterwards told one of General Crook's Indian scouts the reason for their not doing so. They saw the lad dimly as he passed through the smoke, but were seized with fear and fell back, believing the figure to be his ghost.

It appeared from evidence which afterwards came to light that two of Apaches were killed in the attack and several others wounded.

When the elder Fife learned that his two hired men had been killed, his son wounded and his horses and harness stolen by the wild Apaches, he rode in haste to Fort Bowie. A company of cavalry was at once dispatched in pursuit of the Indians, in the hope of recovering the stolen property. Mr. Fife accompanied the troops, who followed the marauders up to the Mexican line, over which the soldiers could not pass. The savages were, however, encountered by a body of Mexican troops, and in the fight that ensued a number were killed on both sides.

Affairs at the Fife ranch ran along with comparative smoothness until 1884. On the 12th of September of that year Mr. Fife had occasion to go to Tombstone on business. He gave his two sons strict instructions to stay around the house during his absence. This direction was given with a view to the protection of Mrs. Fife and daughter, the latter a fine comely girl of sixteen. After his departure, however, the boys thought there would be no harm in putting in some time in cutting hay on a field only a short distance from the domicile.

There was another male member of the establishment, a Mexican, who had

been hired to cut wood in an adjacent clump of timber. On this particular day this man, an honest, faithful fellow, was engaged in that kind of labor.

Toward noon a Mexican of brutal and forbidding aspect, entered the house. He was a large man. His face was broad, cheek bones high, forehead low and abruptly sloping, while his small dull eyes were restless, furtively glancing from one object to another; just such a fellow as one would imagine capable of any crime on the calendar, including murder. Doubtless this impression was made by him upon Mrs. Fife and her daughter, the only inmates of the house at the time he entered it. Their sentiment of dread was doubtless heightened by the fact that his waist was encircled by a belt filled with cartridges and a large revolver was suspended from it.

The native Mexican is usually suave. Even the criminal class comes within this rule. But this burly fellow was an exaggerated exception. Addressing the mistress of the establishment, he said:

"Give me a melon."

The demand was complied with. After eating a part of the article he announced that he must be supplied with dinner. This decree was also obeyed. The conversation in the meantime conducted was meagre and desultory. The meal concluded the stranger made a remark about something outside the house and told Mrs. Fife to look through the window at it. This she did, when the villain suddenly whipped out his pistol, took deliberate aim and sent a bullet through the body of the unfortunate woman, who fell to the floor mortally wounded.

Miss Aggie, whose heart was filled with grief and anger, took in the full weight of the tragedy. She leaped toward her beloved mother, evidently without a thought of her own danger. She endeavored to raise her prostrate and bleeding form. Then it flashed into her mind that the murderer must be disposed of, and the loquacity of her character asserted itself. The assassin snatched his pistol three times at the heroic girl, but the weapon missed fire. She bounded into the adjoining room and with almost supernatural rapidity snatched her father's gun from its accustomed place, but could not at the moment find the cartridges. In an instant, gun in hand, she was at the door of the apartment which was the scene of the murder.

The hired man who had been chopping timber had heard the shot which struck down Mrs. Fife. Fearing something was wrong he rushed to the house and entered at the same moment that Aggie appeared in the partition doorway. The scene told its own story, so the faithful fellow leaped toward the murderer and dealt him a stunning blow with his fist, which felled him to the floor. He then threw himself upon the prostrate form of the assassin, wrenched the pistol from his grasp, and, unclasping the cartridge belt also took possession of that. When the hired man arose to his feet the murderer sprang up and ran out through the back door and reached the timber before he could be captured.

The hired man notified the two boys