

Some Wonders from the West.

XXV.—A ROMANCE OF REAL LIFE.



Oft has it been stated that truth is stranger than fiction that the aphorism has become trite ; yet it is an undeniable fact that every day there are enacted dramas that would make the fame of an author, and yet which are permitted to pass unnoticed.

Such a real life romance has been disclosed by the announcement that the Rev. Joseph Griffis, who for the past five years has been the pastor of the South Presbyterian Church of Buffalo, New York, would resign his pulpit and devote the rest of his life to missionary work among the Indians of the Western United States. Thus is added the dramatic climax to a life that has been replete with adventure.

Born in Texas, the hero of this chequered career was stolen at the age of two years by Indians, who massacred his mother. The child was raised as an Indian boy and knew no other life than that of the red men, nor did he learn that he was not one of them by birth until he was ten years old. When sixteen years of age he enlisted in the United States army, deserted for a fancied grievance, was captured and sentenced to death, but managed to escape. He was forced to flee, and from that time he has been by turns tramp, member of the Salvation Army, evangelist, theological student, minister, and missionary.

"Despite my youth spent as a savage," he remarked in a recent interview, "I have not a drop of Indian blood in my veins. This is a fact I find hard to realize when I recall the eagerness with which I went to the chase, followed the war-path, and exultingly returned to the wigwam with the scalp of my enemy dangling from my belt.

"In 1864 my father, a well-to-do American ranchman, moved to the south-western part of Oklahoma, bordering on Texas. At this time the West was the real Indian frontier ; the war-cry of the Indian was a familiar

sound, and the massacre of the white men a horrible but frequent sight. My father was one of a little handful of hardy Americans who formed a small settlement on the site of what is now Gainesville.

"One day the Kiowa Indians, who were the least friendly of any of the tribes, and who were strong in numbers and skilled in warfare, made a raid on the settlement. The whites were taken completely by surprise, and with the exception of a few who were taken as captives were brutally massacred. My mother

fell in the fight, for these red men had no mercy on women or children, but an old Kiowa warrior, who is still alive and well remembers the scene, told me many times that she defended her life and mine with fierce courage ; 'fought like red squaw,' he would exclaim, enthusiastically.

"My father had gone to a neighbouring town on the day of the massacre. When he returned to his home he found the settlement deserted, houses burned, and bodies of his neighbours and friends charred and mutilated.

"He searched long and earnestly for me, and offered a large ransom for

my return, but the Indians, fearing punishment, hid me safely and refused to give me up. Where I lived until the death of my parent I do not know, but when he died I was taken to the wigwam of Big Bow, the chief of the Kiowas.

"I can recall my life from that time very vividly. Big Bow was very kind to me, and his squaw cared for me with all the tenderness an Indian mother is capable of bestowing, and they are very fond of their children. I entered into all the sports of the Indian youth, trained myself in the handling of the bow and arrow, and could bring home game of which any huntsman might be proud.

"When I was about ten years old something occurred which changed my life and made me a wanderer. I was travelling with a small band of Indians under Big Bow, and just as we were about to pitch our tents we



THE REV. JOSEPH K. GRIFFIS (WHO WAS KIDNAPPED BY INDIANS).
From a Photo. by A. Hillman.

were captured by a company of American infantry. A soldier, who seemed friendly towards us, called me to him and commenced questioning me. He asked if I were a Kiowa. I answered that I was, and that Big Bow and his squaw were my mother and father. The soldier seemed to doubt this statement, remarking that I did not look much like an Indian despite my togs, for I dressed in the regular Indian costume, paint, skins, feathers, and everything that marks the red man's clothes from those of the whites. I was just leaving my questioner when he called me back and asked to see my left arm. He had noticed the vaccination mark that proved me to be of white origin. The commanding officer then took me to Big Bow and asked him to tell my history. This he refused to do at first, denying indignantly that I was a white man's son, but, after much persuasion, he was finally induced to tell my history.

"The officer of the infantry took me in charge, and, with the aid of Big Bow, who thought it might be to my advantage to be thrown among my own people, got in communication with my uncle, who lived in Texas. When my identity was proved my uncle came for me and took me with him to Texas, where I was forced to put aside my Indian habits and live the life of a civilized white boy.

"This restraint soon became irksome, and I longed to go back to the wild, adventurous, roving life of the Kiowas. I loved the rough kindness of the Indians, their courage, and restless, roving ways. I detested the mean, hampering, little conventionalities of the whites, and I made up my mind to return to the life that was a part of me.

"After staying long enough with my uncle to gain his trust and confidence, and when the strict watch that had been kept over my comings and goings had been released, I slipped out of the town and ran away to join the Indians.

"I journeyed for days over the prairies and mountains, enduring all manner of hardships, but happy in the fact that I was free and on my way to the people I loved. I had lost track of Big Bow, and I doubt if he would have kept me with him had I returned, for he felt that I should be given back to my people. After travelling for several weeks without falling in with the Indians I finally struck through the forests to a camp that I had often heard of. There I met some straggling Utes and became one of them.

"This tribe met with reverses, and I joined the Cheyennes, and, later, a little band of Kiowas. For six years I led the roving life of these tribes, hunted, fought, and lived with them, and at times forgot that I was a 'pale face.'

"In 1878, although I was not more than sixteen, I enlisted in the United States Army. I was put in Company K 16th Infantry, and did scout duty for some time. I won an important horse-race, which attracted the attention of Captain Crews, of the 4th Cavalry, and thinking to do me a kindness he offered to engage me as scout and interpreter on soldier's pay. I accepted the commission and served two and a half years, when we were sent on the trail of a band of Cheyennes, who had left the reservation on a foraging expedition. Because of an insult I had received at the hands of the com-

manding officer I had several months been planning to desert. Two soldiers went with me on the trail, and when we met the Cheyennes we joined them, but were soon met by the soldiers, who were too strong for us and overthrew the band.

"The Indians, being mounted, fled, and we alone were captured and taken back to camp. I was given a drum-head court-martial and sentenced to be shot at retreat. Just before the execution was to take place Captain Crews said he had decided to postpone it for thirty days, during which time I



THE REV. JOSEPH K. GRIFFIS IN THE COSTUME OF HIS FOSTER FATHERS.
From a Photograph.

was to be put in the guard-house at Fort Reno for safe keeping.

"In the guard-house with me was a young soldier known only by the name of 'Gee Wiz,' a daring chap and jolly comrade. We often talked together about our captivity and planned means of escape. One day when the vigilant watch was relaxed somewhat Gee Wiz cut a hole in the roof of the guard-house and, watching our chance, we crawled through the aperture out into the bright daylight, warm sunshine, and fresh air. In a few minutes the whole camp was roused, and a hot chase commenced. We had the start, and soon were lost to the pursuers. We went seventy-five miles south, nearly starving *en route*, but enjoying our freedom and chance to live. When we were at a safe distance from camp Gee Wiz and I separated, and I have never seen him since. For three years I roamed about the country, living the life of a tramp, and finally I drifted to London, Ontario.

"It was in this city that I first knew the Salvation Army. I was roaming around the streets in an aimless fashion when I was attracted by the service they were holding in

the open air, and stayed a while to listen. The sermon made a deep impression upon me, and I after that attended many meetings, until I became converted and joined the Army. While still in London I was sent to gaol for beating a drum in the street, contrary to the law, and during my imprisonment I studied the English language. After my release I joined the Salvation Army once more and remained with them for three years, when I became an evangelist, and ten years ago I was ordained minister and came to Buffalo.

"Not until four years ago did I secure immunity from the death sentence which was pronounced upon me for deserting. And now I am preparing for a missionary's life, and in a few days I shall be back to Oklahoma and the scenes of my boyhood to work among my red brothers. My knowledge of their language and character will help me greatly in my work. Having been one of them for so many years I know best how to appeal to them, and I shall consider my early years well spent if they assist me to civilize the red men and help them to a better life."

XXVI.—A WHITTLER OF GENIUS.

By C. B. SMITH.

IN looking over my old numbers of THE STRAND, as I often do, I ran across the article on whittling in the June number of 1900 by Mr. J. W. Russell, which attracted my attention, which he calls wonderful, which I do not gainsay. But as you have possibly heard that the "Yankee" is a whittler of reputation the world over, and as I have a friend whom I think most wonderful, I thought I would call your attention to some of his work, which is done only for pastime as he has an idle opportunity.

He is Dr. J. H. Brown, of Hamilton Place, Boston, Mass., one of our noted dentists, a gentleman now about sixty-five years old, who enjoys probably the best practice of anyone in our city. I have prevailed on him to allow me to photograph an assortment of pincers from one to sixteen joints

each; the smallest was made from one-quarter of a match, and less than $\frac{1}{2}$ in. long, with a perfect joint, which I saw him make in 15 min. The largest one has sixteen joints, and is made from a piece of wood $\frac{3}{4}$ in. thick. This one was made in four hours.

The wonderful part is the fact that there is no piecing or glueing, but all made from one piece of wood. He has many times offered to anyone 1,000 dols. who has not seen his to cut one like it in four days. In all his wood-work he uses a pocket-knife.

Dr. Brown is a genius in many ways mechanical, and can make almost anything that comes into his head, either with metal or wood. He once had in his house a miniature landscape, made by himself, 3 ft. by 5 ft., with a fountain in the centre made of shell, playing



From a photograph of DR. J. H. BROWN.