

TAKEN PRISONER BY THE INDIANS.

During the Indian war of 1855-56 it became necessary for Governor Stevens to communicate with certain parties living on Shoalwater Bay. There was at that time no mail or express, or any other regular means of communication between Olympia and any place on either Gray's Harbor or Shoalwater Bay. The Governor got his letter ready and asked me if I would undertake to carry it to the parties addressed on Shoalwater Bay. I was, at that time, quite a young man, on duty at the Executive Office in connection with the Indian war then in progress, and I agreed to carry the letter.

The Governor then instructed me to proceed to the residence of Judge S. S. Ford on the Chehalis River and there hire an Indian and canoe and proceed down the Chehalis River to some proper place near its confluence with Gray's Harbor. There I was instructed to tie up the canoe and proceed on foot, under the guidance of the Indian, to Shoalwater Bay.

I left Olympia on horseback and reached Ford's the same evening, where I explained to the Judge the nature of my business.

Next morning Judge Ford went with me to the Chehalis Indian encampment, near by, and made a bargain with an Indian for the service of himself and canoe on the proposed trip. The Judge very wisely explained to the Indians the nature of the mission, which was simply that of messenger, carrying a letter to be delivered to the parties addressed on Shoalwater Bay.

Here it should be mentioned that there was at that time a large encampment of Quinaiult and Quilleyute Indians on Gray's Harbor, and that they had purchased from a sailing vessel which had recently been there a large amount of whisky. The presence on Gray's Harbor of these Indians from the North was not known at that time to either Judge Ford or the Indian encampment on the Upper Chehalis. It is also proper here to mention that although the Indian war was still progressing, the Quinaiult and Quilleyute Indians had not thus far manifested any open hostility.

The service of an Indian and Canoe being secured, I started down the Chehalis River. Arriving at tide water on Gray's Harbor, we tied up our canoe and proceeded on foot along the beach. We had not gone far, however, until we struck an Indian encampment of Quinaiult and Quilleyute Indians, who promptly seized me as a prisoner, informing me that I and my guide must stay with them until they could hear from their chief, who was encamped some distance further down the Harbor. Accordingly a runner was started off to the principal camp, who, after some two hours absence, returned with orders to bring me and my guide to the main camp. On arrival there I witnessed a fearful scene of drunkenness, a large amount of whisky in buckets, jugs and other vessels, and several drunken Indians lying around the camp. There were, however, a number of sober Indian men, who seemed to be on duty, and a large, middle-aged Indian woman, who appeared to be in command of the camp. I inquired for the Chief and was informed by the men that he was absent (perhaps drunk). They also informed me that the woman was now chief and that I must make my explanations to her.

"Yes," said she, speaking in a loud, commanding tone, "I am the one to whom you must give an account of yourself. And now I want to know on what errand of evil and mischief to my people you have come here?"

To which I replied that my visit had nothing whatever to do with her people or with any Indians whatever; that I was simply the bearer of a letter to a gentleman living on Shoalwater Bay, and that was all. Thereupon I took the letter out of my pocket and showed it to her. She then spoke to the Chehalis Indian, the guide, and asked him what he knew about the object or business of my visit. Then the Chehalis Indian promptly replied, confirming what I had said, and stating fully what Judge Ford had told him before starting down the river.

Then the woman chief ordered the other Indians off to a distance, out of hearing, and then spoke to me as follows:

"I believe what you and your guide say and that you are entirely innocent of any wrongful design against my people. But my tribe, before you reached this lower camp, came to a different conclusion. In other words, they have condemned you to death, and I have no power to change that determination. All I can do is to assist you to escape, which I am willing to do, and I believe you can get safely out of this scrape if you will follow my advice. My people have determined that you can

go no further on your journey to Shoalwater Bay; that you must start back to go up the Chehalis River, and the place where you are to be killed is at the first Indian camp which you reached and passed in coming here. Now you and your guide must pretend to start back, but you must not go as far as the next camp. About half way to that camp you must turn short off to the right through the timber and keep on in that direction, and you will soon strike a trail leading towards Shoalwater Bay. You must take that trail, and you must then **run**, don't walk, but **run** day and night until you get entirely out of danger. And now," said she, "here is some fresh cooked sturgeon which you can help yourself to, and you had better sit right down and eat all you can, for you will need all the food you can swallow."

My guide and I, after having partaken of the fish, then started back, but, following the directions of the woman chief, we did not go over seven miles until we turned off to the right and struck out through the timber. Proceeding in a southerly direction we soon struck the trail she mentioned. Then we started on the **run**, and kept on **running** all that day and nearly all night before reaching the waters of Shoalwater Bay.

Having now arrived at the end of my journey, I lost no time in delivering the letter of which I was the bearer to the party addressed. Having done so, I deemed it unsafe to return immediately to Olympia. So I concluded to remain where I was until the Quinaiult and Quilleyute Indians had left Gray's Harbor on their return north. Fortunately I did not have to wait more than ten days until news came of the departure of those Indians for their northern home. Then my guide and I started back at once, and in due time arrived safely in Olympia.

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