

The Herald and News DUNRAVEN RANCH

A Story of American Frontier Life.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

For at that interview only three were present: Gladys led her brother to the room and closed the door, while good Mrs. Cowan stood weeping for joy down the long corridor, and Dr. Quinn blinked his eyes and fussed and fidgeted and strode around Perry's room with his hands in his pockets, exploding every now and then into sudden comment on the romantic nature of the situation and the fidelity of some people there at Rossiter. "Joy does not kill," he said. "Maitland would have been a dead man if he had died of the week but for this it will give him a new lease of life."

And it did. Though the flame was feeble and flickering, it was fanned by a joy unutterable. The boy within the stricken father believed his stubborn pride and condemnation had driven to despair and suicide was restored to him in the prime of manly strength, all tenderness, all forgiveness, and Maitland's whole heart went up in thanksgiving.

He found that Maitland and Perry would come to him, that he would have them for their faithful help. He had the doctor say to Perry that the moment he could be lifted from his bed he would come to chop his hand and bless him for being a far better friend to his son than he had been a father.

The sergeant's return to the post was the signal for a general turnout on the part of the men, all of whom were curious to see how he would appear now that his life was established. Of course his life was established, but he looked that through and about him, but they crowded with eagerness to everything that was told. "It was just the same as ever," said a group of the boys who had been intimately friendly of them, but always friendly and kind. One thing they were sure of. "You'll be getting your discharge now, sergeant," said Mrs. Reed, the wife of the leader of the band, "and taking up your residence at the ranch, I suppose. Of course the British minister can get it for you in a minute."

"Not a bit of it, Mrs. Reed," was the laughing answer. "I cannot do so. I have been five years, and have been too good a friend to me to turn from. I shall serve out my time with the 'th'."

And the sergeant was true to his word. If old Maitland could have prevailed, an application for his son's discharge would have gone to Washington, but the sergeant positively forbade it. He had eight months still to serve, and he meant to carry out his contract to the letter. Stryker offered him a furlough, and Gwynne thankfully took a week, that he might be by his father's side and help him to better health. "By that time, too, the garrison will have given a little more attention to their and I will have less embarrassment in going on with my work."

Two days before his return to duty, there came a modified sensation in the shape of the report that a trooper of Wayne's company had deserted. He was a man who had been a good trooper, as a lieutenant, and had been following, and when Sergt. Leary heard of his going he was in a state of wild excitement. He hoped to be allowed to go to his captain, and to him he came, and that of his little party of three had seen the man drop from the Maitland's finger the night of the fire at Dunraven, had managed to pick it up and carry it away in the confusion, and had shown it to his friend in Wayne's troop when they got back. The letter he showed him to let him take it, as the father of the man who wore at Dunraven was dead, he said, to be searched.

It was known that he had a grudge against the state, he was one of the men who was by his side at the night of the night they pursued him down and shall never be forgotten. He had failed at the last moment. They believed that he had chosen that night to hide the ring in the sergeant's chest, he could easily have entered through the window. And this explanation, the only one ever made, became at once accepted as the true one throughout the garrison.

During the week of his furlough the sergeant found time for many hours by the bedside of Lieut. Perry who was rapidly recovering, and who by the end of the week had been lifted into a conveyance to be taken to the ranch. Maitland, when he saw that Perry, the young trooper's home was ever watching in his praise. He knew many a fine officer and gallant non-com in the service of the old country, he said, and he himself many a captain and sergeant in that of his adopted land, but the first one to whom he was bound—the first one to win his affection—was the young cavalryman who had met his painful wound in their defense. Old Maitland listened to it all eagerly—he had already given orders that the first trooper he should see should be Perry's—the moment he was able to mount again he was constantly revolving in mind how he could show his appreciation of the officer who had benefited his son. Mrs. Cowan, too, never tired of hearing Perry's praises, and eagerly questioned when the narrator flagged. There was another absorbed auditor, who never questioned and who listened with down cast eyes. It was she who seldom came near Perry during his convalescence, she who sat by and astonished the young fellow beyond measure, the day the ambulance came down to drive him back to the fort, by withdrawing the hand he had impulsively seized when at last she appeared to bid him adieu, and cutting short his eager words with "Mrs. Belknap will console you, I dare say," and abruptly leaving the room.

Poor Nell! In dire distress and perplexity he was driven back to Rossiter, and that very evening he did a most sensible and fortunate thing, he told Mrs. Sprague all about it, and, instead of condoling with him and bidding him strive to be patient and saying that all would come right in time, the little woman's kind eyes shone with delight, her cheeks flushed with genuine pleasure, she fairly sprang from her chair, and danced up and down and clapped her hands and laughed with joy, and then, when Perry ruefully asked her if that was the sympathy he had a right to expect from her, she only laughed the more, and at last broke forth with: "Oh, you great, stupid, silly boy! You ought to be wild with happiness. Can't you see she's jealous?"

And the very next day she had a long talk with Dr. Quinn, whose visits to Dunraven still continued, and one bright afternoon when Gladys Maitland rode up to the fort to return calls, she managed to have quite a chat with her, despite the fact that Mrs. Belknap showed a strong desire to accompany that fair English girl in all three of her visits. In this effort, too, the diplomatic services of Capt. Stryker proved rather too much for the beauty of the garrison. Was it possible that Mrs. Sprague had enlisted him also in the good cause? Certain it is that the day's feature captain was Miss Maitland's escort as she left the garrison, and that it was with the consciousness of impending defeat that Mrs. Belknap gave utterance to the opening sentence of this chapter: Mr. Perry had definitely avoided her ever since his return.

One lovely evening late in May Mr. Perry was taking his first ride on the new horse, a splendid bay and a perfect match for Gladys Maitland's favorite mount. Already had this circumstance excited smiling comment in the garrison; but if the young man himself had noted the close resemblance it conveyed to his father's old horse, he would not have been so much surprised. He was not looking either ill or well. Early in the morning riding with him was an invitation which Perry treated so coolly that the junior stopped to think a moment, and began to see through the situation; and so Mr. Perry was suffered to set forth alone that evening, and no one was surprised when, after going out of the west gate as though bent on riding up the bluffs, he was presently seen to have made the circuit of the post and was slowly entering down towards the lower valley. Out on the eastern prairie another horseman could be seen and presently the two came together. Col. Brainard took down his binoculars and gazed at a far them.

"Gladys!" said he, "these two figures are so much alike I cannot tell which of them is Perry."

"Then the other is Sergt. Gwynne, Colonel," said Stryker, quietly. "Put him in our uniform, and it would not be hard to tell the two figures apart. Mr. Maitland told me last week that that was what he wanted, and I have seen him since he saw Perry."

"How is Mr. Maitland now, do you know?"

"He gets no better. After the first week of joy and thanksgiving over his boy's restoration to him, the malady seemed to reassert itself. Dunraven will have a new major by winter, I fancy."

"The doctor would not say that. Then he is really well at present?"

"By the way, how was it that Gwynne went and deserted? I never understood that."

"He never meant to," said Stryker. "The fool Perry all about it. He was ruined, he went off in his horse and to his own country, and he was a soldier's son, and he was a good one. He put me to bed for a week, and I wrote his letters and enlarged his property with that view, and he called the steward to enable him to see to his state. Down with the steward weighed anchor. Then a man he was over the top of the deck, and he was dead, and he was an expert swimmer, he reached a coasting vessel being near, he had money, but his passage to France, after a few days at Cape Town, and then came to America and ended. I kept a confession out of one of the irregulars who was with him, Perry says, and that was one of the papers he was guarding so jealously. He had given orders to Perry that very night."

"They seemed to take to each other like brothers from the start," said the color sergeant, with a quiet smile. "Maitland, Perry, and Sergt. Gwynne have been riding slowly down the valley. They had come from Dunraven by the hour they reach the northern gate, and they were no longer closed against them—and as they near the house Perry slowly dismounts. 'I'll take the horse to the stable myself,' I want to say, 'my trooper friend, and for the second time the young officer stands upon the veranda at the doorway, then his hand as he leans again the soft melody of the piano floating out upon the still night air. Slowly and without pain he walks around to the east front, striving to move with noiseless steps. At last he stands by the open casement, just where he had paused in surprise that night a month ago, and slowly draws aside one heavy fold of curtain, gazes longingly in at Gladys Maitland, seated there at the piano, just where he first saw her lovely face and form."

Presently, under the soft touch of her fingers, a sweet, familiar melody comes rippling forth. He remembers it instantly, it is the same he heard the night of his first visit—that exquisite "Spring Song" of Mendelssohn's—and he listens, spell bound. All of a sudden the sweet strains are broken off, the music ceases; she has thrown herself forward, bowed her queenly head upon her arms, and leaning over the keyboard, her form is shaken by a storm of passionate tears. Perry hurds aside the sheltering curtain and leaps rapidly across the soft and motionless. She never dreams of his presence until, close at her side, a voice she has learned to know and know well—a voice tremulous with love, sympathy and yearning—murmurs only her name, "Gladys," and, starting up, she looks one instant into his longing eyes.

Sergt. "Gwynne" Maitland, lifting the heavy portiere a moment later, steps short at the entrance, gazes one second at the picturesque scene at the piano, drops the portiere, and vanishes, unobserved.

Things seemed changed at Dunraven of late years. The—there are still at Rossiter, so is Lieut. Perry. It may be the climate or association with an American sisterhood—or—who knows?—perhaps somebody has told her of Mrs. Belknap's predilection, but Mrs. Perry has not yet begun to grow coarse, red faced or stout. She is wonderfully popular with the ladies of the—, and has found warm friends among them, but Mrs. Sprague of the infantry is the woman she particularly favors, and her gruff old kinsman Dr. Quinn is ever a welcome guest at their fireside. It was he, she told her husband long after, who undid the mischief Mrs. Belknap had been able to sow in one brief conversation. "I've known that young woman ever since she wore pinafores, Gladys. She has some good points, too, but her one idiosyncrasy is that every body she meets should bow down to and worship her. She is an Alexander in petticoats, sighing for now towards a conquer, has been a conqueror from the cradle, and—what she can't forgive in Ned Perry is that he simply did not fall in love with her as she thought he had."

Down at Dunraven the gates are gone, the door is very hospitably open. Even is still manager de jure, but young Mr. Maitland, the proprietor, is manager de facto, and, though there is constant going and coming between the fort and the ranch, and the officers of the—there is there at all hours, what makes the ranch so popular among the rank, and the fact that Sergt. "Gwynne," as they still call him, has a warm place in his heart for one and all, and every year when the date of his enlistment in the—comes round he gives a barbeque dinner to the men, where there are feasting and drinking of healths and song and speech making, and Leary and Donovan and even the recreant Kelly are apt to be boisterously prominent on such occasions, but—happily so—for there has been a steady of any kind since their old comrade stepped into his possessions at Dunraven Ranch.

THE END

Did His Duty.

At a time of great danger Napoleon once gave an order to the pickets stationed at the outposts of his camp not to allow anything to pass them. The long, dark hours of the night wore slowly away, and the faithful sentinels kept close watch for the appearance of an enemy, when just before daylight a large dog was seen approaching one of the guards.

The animal was ordered back, but with every demonstration of affection he persisted in passing the forbidden boundary. True to his trust, the soldier raised his gun and fired and the poor creature fell dead.

The report of the shot echoed along the lines, and the camp was awake in an instant to meet the impending danger. But when it was found to be only a dog, and the missing dog of one of the officers, do you think that faithful sentinel regretted obeying his order? No, indeed; and when a dead spy was found nicely concealed beneath the skin of the animal he was doubly thanked that he did his duty.

So it may be hard to withstand the temptations that approach in friendly guise, but conceal deadly foes; but the only safe way is to meet them with the same firm and unwavering principle which prompted Napoleon's sentinel to do his duty.

CASTORIA The Kind You Have Always Bought For Infants and Children.

CASTORIA The Kind You Have Always Bought FOR INFANTS AND CHILDREN.

Of all sweet baby boys for fun, Surely we have the greatest one, Just two years old, robust in size— With golden hair and deep blue eyes.

To six of our most noble eight, For babies' most uncommon weight, Almost pots and pans he finds his place To grace his rosy, smiling face.

Laughing, his pretty dimples shows, His red and fat arms about he throws, Then dances long beside of me— Energetic and like a bee.

Company comes, he's very shy, While on the other hand he's sly, With home folks fondly takes a play— But always let him have his way.

This week he hampered on a jar, And sailed the fences fast and far, Gayly, yet cunning like a coon— He rises early, bright and soon.

Creeps slyly out of his snug nest, Is all day long a household pest; Moonranch of all his eye surveys— No time to write of all his ways.

With rosy cheeks and golden hair, There's none so dear nor sweet nor fair; We scarce complete our work aright— Till J. B.'s tucked in bed at night.

CASTORIA The Kind You Have Always Bought For Infants and Children.

After He Comes Mother's Friend.

THE BRADFIELD REGULATOR CO., Atlanta, Ga.

Florida Central & Peninsular Time Table in Effect Nov. 19, 1900.

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Atlantic Coast Line! FAST LINE Between Charleston and Columbia, Upper South Carolina, North Carolina, Adams and Andrews, N. C.

Southern Railway Condensed Schedule in Effect May 6th, 1900.

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