

DUNRAVEN RANCH

A Story of American Frontier Life.

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CHAPTER I.



It WAS nearly midnight, and still the gay party lingered on the veranda. There had been a fortnight of "getting settled" at the new post, preceded by a month of marching that had brought the battalion from distant service to this strange Texan station. The new comers had been hospitably welcomed by the officers of the little garrison of infantry, and now, in recognition of their many courtesies, the field officer commanding the arriving troops had been entertaining the resident officers and ladies at dinner. The colonel was a host in himself, but preferred not to draw too heavily on his reserves of anecdote and small talk, so he had called in two of his subalterns to assist in the pleasant duty of being attentive to the infantry ladies, and just now, at 11:45 p. m., he was wondering if Lieut. Perry had not too literally construed his instructions, that that young gentleman was devoting himself to Mrs. Belknap in a manner so marked as to make the captain, his lawful lord and master, manifestly uneasy.

Mrs. Belknap, however, seemed to enjoy the situation immensely. She was a pretty woman at most times, as even her rivals admitted. She was a beautiful woman at all times, was the verdict of the officers of the regiment when they happened to speak of the matter among themselves. She was dark, with lustrous eyes and sweeping lashes, with coral lips and much luxuriance of tress, and a way of glancing sideways from under her heavily fringed eyelids that the younger and more impressionable men found quite irresistible when accorded the rare luxury of a tete-a-tete. Belknap was a big and boisterous man; Mrs. Belknap was small in stature, and soft—very soft—of voice. Belknap was either brusquely repellent or oppressively cordial in manner; Mrs. Belknap was either gently and exasperatingly indifferent to those whom she did not care to attract, or caressingly sweet to those whose attentions she desired.

In their own regiment the young officers found that unless they wished to be involved in an unpleasantness with Belknap it was best to be only very moderately devoted to his pretty wife, and those to whom an unpleasantness with the big captain might have had no terrors of consequence were deterred by the fact that Mrs. Belknap's devotees among the "youngsters" had invariably become an object of coldness and aversion to the other dames and damsels of the garrison. Very short lived, therefore, had been the little flirtations that sprang up from time to time in those frontier posts wherein Capt. and Mrs. Belknap were among the chief ornaments of society; but now matters seemed to be taking other shape. From the very day that handsome Ned Perry dismounted in front of Belknap's quarters and with his soldierly salute reported to the then commanding officer that Col. Brainard and his battalion of cavalry would arrive in the course of two or three hours, Mrs. Belknap had evinced a contentment in his society and assumed an air of quasi-proprietorship that served to annoy her garrison sisters more than a little. For the time being all the cavalrymen were bachelors, either by actual rank or "by brevet," as none of the ladies of the—th accompanied the battalion on its march, and none were expected until the stations of the regiment in its new department had been definitely settled. The post surgeon, too, was living a life of single blessedness as the spring wore on, for his good wife had betaken herself, with the children, to the distant east as soon as the disappearance of the winter's snows rendered staging over the hard prairie roads a matter of no great danger or discomfort.

It was the doctor himself, who, seated in an easy chair at the end of the veranda, first called the colonel's attention to Perry's devoted attitude at Mrs. Belknap's side. She was reclining in a hammock, one little, slipped foot occasionally touching the floor and imparting a gentle, swinging motion to the affair, and making a soothing swish-swish of skirts along the matting underneath. Her jeweled hands looked very slender and fragile and white as they gleamed in the soft light that shone from the open windows of the parlor. They were busied in straightening out the kinks in the gold cord of his fob and in rearranging a little silken cap and tassel that was fastened in a clumsy, man-like fashion to one of the buttons at the side; he, seated in a camp chair, was bending forward so that his handsome, shapely head was only a trifle higher than hers, and the two—hers so dark and rich in coloring, his so fair and massive and strong—came rather too close together for the equanimity of Capt. Belknap, who had expected to take a hand at whist in the parlor.

One or two of the ladies, also, were silent observers of the scene—silent as to the scene because, being in conversation at the time with brother officers of Lieut. Perry, they were uncertain as yet how comments on his growing flirtation might be received. That their eyes should occasionally wander towards the hammock and then glance with sympathetic significance at those of some fair ally and intimate was natural enough. But when it became presently apparent that Mrs. Belknap was actually unfastening the little silken braid that had hung on Ned Perry's cap ever since the day of his arrival—all the while, too, looking shyly up in his eyes as her fingers worked,

when it was seen that she presently detached it from the button and then, half hesitatingly, but evidently in compliance with his wishes, handed it to him; when he was seen to toss it carelessly—then even contemptuously—away and then bend down lower, as though gazing into her shaded eyes, Mrs. Lawrence could stand it no longer.

"Mr. Graham," said she, "isn't your friend, Mr. Perry, something of a flirt?" "Who?" "Ned?" asked Mr. Graham, in well feigned amazement and with sudden glance towards the object of his inquiry. "How on earth should I know anything about it? Of course you do not seek expert testimony in asking me. He tries, I suppose, to adapt himself to circumstances. But why do you ask?" "Because I see that he has been inducing Mrs. Belknap to take off that little tassel on the button of his cap. He has worn it when off duty ever since he came; and we supposed it was something he cherished; I know she did."

Graham broke forth in a peal of merry laughter, but gave no further reply, for just then the colonel and the doctor to left their chairs, and, sauntering over to the hammock, brought mighty relief to Belknap at the whist table and vexation of spirit to his pretty wife. The flirtation was broken at a most interesting point, and Perry, rising suddenly, came over and joined Mrs. Lawrence.

If she expected to see him piqued or annoyed at the interruption and somewhat perturbed in manner, she was greatly mistaken. Nothing could have been more sunny and jovial than the greeting he gave her. A laughing apology to Graham for spoiling his tete-a-tete was accomplished in a moment, and then down by her side he sat and plunged into a merry description of his experiences at dinner, where he had been placed next to the chaplain's wife on the one hand, and she had been properly agrieved at his attentions to Mrs. Belknap on the other.

"You must remember that Mrs. Wells is a very strict Presbyterian, Mr. Perry; and, for that matter, none of us have seen a dinner such as the colonel gave us this evening for ever and ever so long. We are quite unused to the ways of civilization; whereas you have just come from the east—and long leave. Perhaps it is the fashion to be all devoted to one's next door neighbor at dinner."

"Not if she be as repellent and venerable as Mrs. Wells, I assure you. Why, I thought she would have been glad to leave the table when, after having refused sherry and Pontet-Cane for upwards of an hour, her glass was filled with champagne when she happened to be looking the other way."

"It is the first dinner of the kind she has ever seen here, Mr. Perry, and I don't suppose either Mr. or Mrs. Wells has been up so late before in years. He would have enjoyed staying and watching whist, but she carried him off almost as soon as we left the table. Our society has been very dull, you know—only ourselves at the post all this last year, and nobody outside of it."

That is to say, it has been fastened to that button ever since the ball went to night. But I've been mighty careful not to wear that cap on any kind of duty."

"Why shouldn't I? There was no sentiment whatever attached to it. I haven't the faintest idea whose it was and only tied it there for the fun of the thing and to make Graham, here, ask questions."

"Mr. Perry?" gasped Mrs. Lawrence. "And do you mean that Mrs. Belknap knows—that you told her what you have just told me?" "Well, no," laughed Perry. "I fancy Mrs. Belknap thinks as you thought—that it was a gage d'amour. Hallo! look at that light away out there across the prairie. What can that be?"

Mrs. Lawrence rose suddenly to her feet and gazed southeastward in the direction in which the young officer pointed. It was a lovely, starlit night. A soft wind was blowing gently from the south and bearing with it the fragrance of spring blossoms and far away flowers. Others, too, had arisen, attracted by Perry's sudden exclamation. Mrs. Belknap turned languidly in her hammock and glanced over her pretty white shoulder. The colonel followed her eyes with his and gave a start of surprise. The doctor turned slowly and composedly and looked silently towards the glistening object, and then upon the officers of the cavalry there fell sudden astonishment.

"What on earth could that have been?" asked the colonel. "It gleamed like the head light of a locomotive, away down in the valley of the Monee, then suddenly went out."

"Be silent a moment and watch," whispered Mrs. Lawrence to Perry. "You will see it again, and—watch the doctor."

Surely enough, even as they were all looking about and commenting on the strange apparition, it suddenly glared forth a second time, shining full and lustrous as an unclouded planet, yet miles away beyond and above the fringe of cottonwoods that wound southeastward with the little stream. Full half a minute it shone, and then, abruptly as before, was hidden from sight.

DR. TALMAGE'S MOTHER.

The Famous Teacher's Beautiful Portrait of Her Death.

I never write or speak to woman but my mind wanders off to one model—the aged one, who twenty-four years ago we put away for the resurrection.

About eighty years ago, and just before their marriage day, my father and mother stood up in the old meeting-house at Somerville, N. J., and took upon them the vows of the Christian.

Through a long life of vicissitude my mother lived harmlessly and usefully, and came to her end in peace. No child of mine ever came to her door and was turned away empty. No one in sorrow came to her but was comforted. No one asked her the way to be saved but she pointed him to the cross.

We had often heard her, when leading family prayer, in the absence of my father, say: "O Lord, I ask not for my children wealth or honor, but I do ask that they may all be the subjects of Thy comforting grace!" Her eleven children brought into the kingdom of God, she had but one more wish, and that was that she might see her long-absent missionary son, and when the ship from China anchored in New York harbor, and the long-absent one passed over the threshold of his paternal home, she said: "Now, Lord, lettest thou Thy servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen Thy salvation."

The prayer was soon answered! It was an autumn day when we gathered from afar, and found only the house from which the soul had fled forever. She looked very natural, the hands very much as when they were employed in kindness for the children.

MR. BIXBY'S PATENT.

It Was a Good Thing, But Needed a Few Improvements.

"By Jove! I've an idea!" said Mr. Bixby gleefully, while at the dinner table the other day. "Now here we've spent half our time while at the table passing things to each other and it's all nonsense. I know just how it can be done away with and I'll have the thing patented before a month and make a mint of money out of it. I'm going to put in all my spare time on it and I'll soon show you a model of one of the cleverest inventions of the age."

Mrs. Bixby did not say any thing. She was accustomed to outbursts of this kind on the part of Mr. Bixby, who was frequently seized with a mania for inventing and patenting something, and as he had always recovered without mortgaging the house or injuring any of the family, she hoped all would end well this time.

Three days later, after he had worked most of the night before, he came to Mrs. Bixby with his latest "clever invention."

"You see, my dear, what it is," he said calmly as he gave it a whirl. "It's a revolving dining-room table, to do away with this eternal passing of things to each other. When you see any thing out of reach that you want, all you have to do is to give the table a gentle little whirl, and there you have the dish you want right in front of you. Now what do you think of that, my dear? Don't you think our fortune is made, eh?"

"It might work, Elijah," replied Mrs. Bixby calmly, "if you could make several little improvements."

ANTIQUEY OF BILLS.

An Exquisite Little Image Carved in Oak Found in a Roman Coffin.

The other day I went into a store on State street where toys constitute the bulk of the stock. The man at the doll department, although he had been selling dolls until I fancied he looked babyish—"twenty-five years in this business," he said—had not wearied of it.

A day or two later, curiously enough, I found an article in one of the magazines containing an account of the opening of a coffin in Rome. It had been discovered in excavating. The coffin was marble. How many hundred years since it was buried? The name of the dead was deciphered and from the formation of the letters and the bas-relief on the lid it was concluded that the woman—for it was a woman—lived at the beginning of the third century after Christ. She was not one of the nobility, and the name on the sarcophagus showed that her family was Greek.

The surgeon who took out the skeleton and arranged it gives the opinion that the woman was about seventeen years of age at her death. When the coffin was opened a box was discovered, in which were a number of toilet articles still in a state of preservation; a couple of fine combs; a small disk of polished steel; a small silver box, probably for cosmetics; a hairpin, six inches long, made of three pieces of amber. A remarkable discovery was the preservation of myrtle leaves—a wreath with a silver clasp—that had fallen from the head. There was no trace of the features, of course, but the teeth were fine and regular. A ring—an engagement ring?—with a man's name engraved thereon, was found near the skeleton hand. On each side of the head were gold ear-rings, with drops of pearls. Mingled in a heap with the vertebrae of the neck and backbone there were a gold necklace, woven as a chain, with thirty-seven pendants of a green Jasper, and a large locket, with an intaglio in amethyst, representing the fight of a griffin and a deer. Near the left shoulder was lying an exquisite little doll carved in oak.

This, if there was nothing else, would establish the antiquity of the doll.—Chicago Tribune.

And He Probably Did.

MISCELLANEOUS.

—A new post-office in Virginia has been named Poverty.

—A Milpin (Pa.) woman threw some medicine in the fire, and an explosion took place which carried the stove out of doors.

—A man shot sixteen times at a sparrow and finally killed it, but one owl, a log and two cats went along with the sparrow.

—When you want to compliment a woman on the uncertain side of thirty, speak of some one a little older than she is as a "girl."—Somerville Journal.

—As Peter Haur, of Pottsville, was opening a large oyster a strange fish came out. It had eaten part of the oyster. It had the head of a catfish.

—A Newark, Ohio, woman bought a lot of Christmas gifts for her husband and children, and hid them away so carefully that she is now unable to find them for the burial.

—We had often heard her, when leading family prayer, in the absence of my father, say: "O Lord, I ask not for my children wealth or honor, but I do ask that they may all be the subjects of Thy comforting grace!" Her eleven children brought into the kingdom of God, she had but one more wish, and that was that she might see her long-absent missionary son, and when the ship from China anchored in New York harbor, and the long-absent one passed over the threshold of his paternal home, she said: "Now, Lord, lettest thou Thy servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen Thy salvation."

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THE FOOT'S ANATOMY.

Why It Should Be Considered in the Selection of Shoes.

A skillful anatomist says that if we wore shoes day and night our feet would become permanently and hopelessly diseased, but the ailing and change they get while we sleep keep them in tolerable condition.

"The human foot is merely a hand modified for a base of structure to support the body." It is longer and thicker and narrower than the hand. Its solid parts are firmer than the corresponding parts of the hand; the movable parts less movable than those of the hand.

The foot has two arches; one from front to rear composed of eight bones, and another from side to side composed of four. These arches, on account of the cartilages interposed between the segments that compose them, are flexible and give elasticity to the step and gracefulness to the gait. The largest bone in the long arch of the foot is the heel bone, and to this is attached the largest tendon in the body. In this tendon the three muscles which compose the calf of the leg and which are of the greatest value to us in the act of walking unite.

The more nearly the shoe approaches the form of the foot the easier it will be to walk in. High heels are nothing but an injury, not to the foot alone, but to the whole body. They flex the three muscles in the calf of the leg that give firmness to the body, throw the weight of the body on to the ball of the foot, throw the knees forward, and put the whole mechanism out of poise. This is well understood by lovers of field sports and athletics, whose shoes have hardly any heels at all.

The earliest form of foot cover was the simple sandal, secured to the foot by leathers, and often by a button coming between the first and second toes. The material used for shoes and sandals is various, chiefly the skins of animals.

Wooden shoes are much worn in Europe, and are becoming common in this country. The Japanese wear sandals of straw, and South Americans, in some localities, sandals of plaited hemp. The early Greeks wore barefoot, or wore simple sandals; the Romans wore buskins, similar to the moccasins of the American Indians.

The skillful shoemaker or shoe-fitter should understand the anatomy of the foot as well as the art of making shoes, and he should be able to fit each shoe to the foot that is to wear it, but probably not one shoemaker in a million ever dissected a human foot with a view to learning how shoes should be made.

We never think of working with our hands when they are gloved, and all we ask of a glove is that it neatly fit the hand when at rest. But we never think of walking any distance in unshod feet, and what we want of shoes is not covering only, but aid in locomotion. Many a shoe is comfortable enough when one is sitting still that becomes excruciating when one walks in it. Room is not given for the play of the various muscles of the foot, the arches are pressed out of shape, the circulation is obstructed, and the exercise of walking, which should be delightful, becomes intolerable, and the gait which should be graceful and easy becomes limping and awkward.

Judging from the number of misshaped feet one sees when traveling on the horse-cars and crossing the ferries, where the feet of wayfarers are exposed to view there is a great deal of suffering that is not much talked about, and is probably considered incurable. But it might all or nearly all have been prevented but for ill-fitting shoes. And a great deal of this suffering might be escaped if misshapen feet were provided with shoes fitted to them and conformed to their present necessities.—N. Y. Advocate.

WIT AND WISDOM.

—Genius is the infinite art of taking pains.—Carlyle.

—Many a man knows a dollar by sight who does not know its value.

—When a keen ear meets a cutting remark it is natural that a sharp encounter should ensue.

—Every man knows how mean he is himself, but is not absolutely sure about his neighbor; hence his fondness for gossip.

—We have no right to be a cause of disturbance by living in that part of our nature which tends to interfere with the happiness or well-being of our fellow-men.

—If everybody believed every thing that he heard about everybody else, how much better every body would think himself than every one of his neighbors!—Puck.

—With us, law is nothing unless close behind it stands a warm, living public opinion. Let that die or grow indifferent, and the statutes are waste paper, lacking all executive force.—Rural New Yorker.

—A slight divergence at the outset carries the arrow far out of the way at the end, just as a false step in starting gives life a result that is disastrously wide of the mark. To begin well is to begin true, and with a sure aim.

—No enjoyment, however inconsiderable, is confined to the present moment. A man is the happier for life from having made one agreeable hour, or lived for any length of time with pleasant people, or enjoyed any considerable interval of innocent pleasure.—Sidney Smith.

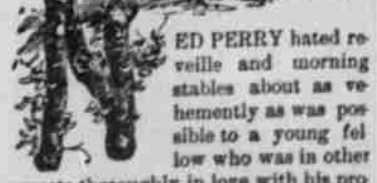
—To men addicted to delights, business is an interruption; to such as are cold to delights, business is an entertainment. For which reason it was said to one who commended a dull man for his application, "No thanks to him; if he had no business he would have nothing to do."—Steele.

—The touch of the lightning on the top of the mountain is only an instant long, yet it may rend the rocks, and defeat the cliff and leave fissures that centuries can not fill up. Let no man say that he is debarré from usefulness by the shortness of his touch with the world.—The Central West.

—Under no circumstances should the expenses exceed the income. It is always more profitable to pay "spot cash" than to contract a debt, which should not be done unless it is absolutely unavoidable. Never should an indebtedness be incurred in anticipation of an expected gain. Expectations are not realizations; the debt is certain and must be met, but the gain—well, "there is many a slip."

—It is the petty details of life that prove threesome and wear us out, rather than the larger. It is the little affairs that worry and work mischief in the nervous system. Lives of simplicity will secure the most freedom from these details, with consequent ease of mind that is conducive to health and long life.

"Keeping up with the times" is what makes a good many of the details of these modern days.



ED PERRY hated re-rails and morning stables about as vehemently as was possible to a young fellow who loved his horse respects thoroughly in love with his profession. A fairer view of the American