

DUNRAVEN RANCH

A Story of American Frontier Life.

By Capt. CHARLES KING, U. S. A., author of "The Colonel's Daughter," "From the Ranks," "The Deserter," etc.

Perry's hesitation vanished. "You, you, you, I believe I don't care to be answered, and, raising his cap to the balcony, turned on his heel and hurried to his quarters. Mrs. Bellman stood watching him one moment, then calmly rejoined the party at the gate. "Well," said she with the languid drawl that her regimental associates had learned to know so well. "This has been a day of surprises, has it not? Only fancy our having a beautiful English settler here within reach and never knowing it until today!" "But you had a surprise of your own, did you not?" interposed Mrs. Sprague, who was still chafing over the fact that her lovely and dangerous neighbor should have so monopolized the guest she considered hers by prior right and who meant to remind her this publicity of the neglect of which she had been guilty. "Mrs. Page, you mean?" responded Mrs. Bellman with the same languid imperious manner. "Yes, poor Jenny. She is always utterly used up after one of those long, arduous journeys and can only take a cup of tea and go to bed in a hazy, dazed state. All she wants is to be alone, she says, until she gets over it. I suppose she will sleep till noon and then be up half the night. You'll come in and see her, won't you, Au revoir!" And so, calmly and gracefully and unobtrusively, the dark-eyed dame with her keen, her honest, hearted antagonism, not only the sense of exasperation and defeat.

CHAPTER XV



Two days passed without an event of any kind. Socially speaking, the garrison was enlightened by the advent of Mrs. Page, and every body flocked to the Bellman quarters in order to do her proper homage. When Perry called he asked Parker to go with him, and when the latter seemed ready to leave the former regarding a very palpable hint from the lady of the house, picked up his forage cap and went likewise. For two days the one subject under constant discussion at the post was the event of Miss Maitland's sudden appearance, her perilous run and her daring and skillful rescue. Everybody maintained that Perry ought to be a very proud and happy fellow to have been the hero of such an expedition; but it was very plain that Perry was neither proud nor anything like happy. No one had ever known him so silent and cast down. The talk with Lawrence had helped matters very little. In brief, this was about all the captain could tell him, and it was all his best evidence at best. The officers of the Eleventh and their ladies had, with a few exceptions, taken a dislike to Dr. Quinn before Bellman and Lawrence with their companies of infantry had been ordered to Fort Rossier. The feeling was a little blatt when they arrived, and during the six or eight months they served together the infantry people heard only one side of the story—that of the Eleventh—for the doctor never condescended to discuss the matter. After he was forbidden to leave the post by his commanding officer, and after the announcement of the "blackade" of Dunraven, it was observed that signals were sometimes made from the ranch at night—a strong light thrown from a red lantern was flashed three times and then withdrawn. Next it was noted, by an interpreting member of the guard, that the signals were answered by a light from the doctor's windows, then that he rode his horse and rode away down the valley of the Monee. He was at last taken back at sick call, and, if any one of the commanding officer of his disapproval of orders, it was not done until near the departure of the Eleventh and the doctor was not afterwards actively caught in the act. Things would undoubtedly have been brought to a head had the Eleventh been allowed to leave.

As to the story about Mrs. Quinn and her going, it was observed during the winter that she was looking very pale, and the story went the rounds in the Eleventh that she was stung and suffering because of her husband's conduct. Unfortunately there was some fair criticism at Dunraven who lured him from his own fireside. She had no pretensions among the ladies. She was proud and silent. It did not seem to occur to any one that she was resentful of his desertion of her husband. They were sure she was "pining" because of his neglect or her own. When, therefore, without warning, she suddenly took her departure in the spring, there was a gasp among the loving cronies in the garrison; and she was at an end; she had left her children with her.

"The more I think of it," said Lawrence, "the more I believe the whole thing is capable of explanation. The only thing that puzzles me now is that Quinn was the most courteous and considered me I ever served with. Perhaps he told him this time; we don't know. Perhaps he thought he might be able to find out before he was away when she did, it may have been simply that her health was suffering and she needed change, and went with

his full advice and by his wish, and he simply feels too much contempt for garrison gossip to explain. Very probably he knows nothing of the stories and the oracles in circulation. I'm sure I did not until a few weeks ago. You know, Perry, there are some men in garrison who hear and know everything, and others who never hear a word of scandal."

But Perry was low in his mind. He could not forget Quinn's sudden appearance; his calling her Gladys, and then he hated the thought that it was Quinn who saw him having that confounded tender interview with Mrs. Bellman. Was there ever such a streak of ill luck as that? No doubt the fellow had told her about it! Perry left Lawrence's that night very low, and the next day only a gleam of hope did he receive in the two days that followed. Mrs. Sprague joyfully beckoned him on Wednesday afternoon to read him a little note that had just come from Miss Maitland. Her father had been very ill, she wrote; his condition was still critical; but she sent a world of thanks to her kind entertainers at Rossier, and these words: "I was sorry not to be able to see Mr. Perry again. Do not let me think I have forgotten, or will be likely to forget, the service he and Nolan—did me."

Of Dr. Quinn he saw very little. With the full consent and knowledge of Col. Brainard, the doctor was spending a good deal of time at Dunraven now, attending to Mr. Maitland. Indeed, there seemed to be an excellent understanding between the commandant and his medical officer, and it was known that they had had a long talk together. Upper circles in the garrison were still agitated with chat and conjecture about Gladys Maitland and her strange father; Perry was still tortured with questions about his one visit to Dunraven whenever he was so incautious as to appear in public; but all through "the quarters," everywhere among the rank and file, there was a subject that engrossed all thoughts and tongues, and that was discussed with feeling that seemed to deepen with every day—the approaching court martial of Sergt. Leary and of Trooper Kelly.

As a result of his investigation, Capt. Stryker had preferred charges against these two men—the one for leading and the other for being accessory to the assault on his stable sergeant. Gwynne was still at the hospital, though rapidly recovering from his injuries. Not a word had he said that would implicate or accuse any man; but Stryker's knowledge of his soldiers, and his clear insight into human motive and character, were such that he had readily made up his mind as to the facts in the case. He felt sure that Leary and some of the Celtic members of his company had determined to go down to Dunraven and "have it out" with the hated Britons who had so affronted and abused them the night of Perry's visit. They knew they could not get their horses by fair means, for Gwynne was above suspicion. He was English, too, and striving to shield his countrymen from the threatened vengeance. They therefore determined, in collusion with Kelly, to lure him outside the stables, bind and gag him, get their horses, having once rifled Gwynne of the keys, ride down to the ranch, and, after having a Donnybrook fair on the premises, get back to Rossier in plenty of time for reveille and stables. No sentries were posted in such a way as to interfere with them, and the plan was feasible enough but for one thing. Gwynne had made most gallant and spirited resistance, had fought the whole gang like a tiger, and they had been unable to overpower him before the noise had attracted the attention of the sergeant of the guard and some of the men in quarters. An effort, of course, was made to show that the assaulting party were from without, but it was futile, and Stryker's cross-questioning among the men had convinced them that he knew all about the matter. There was only one conclusion, therefore, that Gwynne must have "given them away," as the troopers expressed it.

Despite the fact that he had been assaulted and badly beaten, this was something that few could overlook, and the latent jealousy against the "cockney sergeant" blazed into a feeling of deep resentment. Garrison sympathy was with Leary and his fellows.

Thursday came, and Sergt. Gwynne returned to light duty, though his face was still bruised and discolored and he wore a patch over one eye. He resumed charge of the stables in the afternoon, after a brief conversation with his captain, and was superintending the issue of forage, when Perry entered to inspect the stalls of his platoon. Nolan was being led out by his groom at the moment, and pricked up his tapering ears at sight of his master and thrust his lean muzzle to receive the caress of the hand he knew so well. Perry stopped him and carefully and critically examined his knees, feeling down to the fetlocks with searching fingers for the faintest symptom of knot or swelling in the tendons that had played their part so thoroughly in the drama of Monday. Satisfied, apparently, he rose and bestowed a few hearty pats on the glossy neck and shoulder, and then was surprised to find the stable sergeant standing close beside him and regarding both him and horse with an expression that arrested Perry's attention at once.

"Feeling all right again, sergeant?" he asked, thinking to recall the non-commissioned officer to his senses.

"Almost, sir. I'm a trifle stiff yet. Anything wrong with Nolan, sir?"

"He is a very sick man, colonel," and it is hard to say what will be the result of this seizure."

"You may want to go down again, doctor, if that be the case—before sick call to-morrow I mean, and you had better take one of my horses. I'll tell my man to have one in readiness."

"You are very kind, sir. I think I would like to go down at reveille, as we have no men in hospital at all now. And, by the way, is Mr. Perry here?"

"I am here, answered Perry coldly. He was leaning against the railing rather, yet unwilling to meet or hold conversation with the man he conceived to be so inimical to his every hope and interest."

"Mr. Perry," said the doctor, pleasantly, and utterly ignoring the coldness of the young fellow's manner. "Mr. Maitland has asked to see you; and it would gratify him if you would ride down in the morning."

Even in the darkness Perry feared that all would see the flush that leaped to his face. Summoned to Dunraven Ranch by her father, with a possibility of seeing her, it was almost too sweet; too thrilling! He could give no reply for a moment, and an awkward silence fell on the group until he chokingly answered "I shall be glad to go. What time?"

"Better ride down early. Never mind breakfast. Miss Maitland will be glad to give you a cup of coffee, I fancy."

And Perry felt as though the fence had been taken to waiting. He made no answer, striving to regain his composure, and then the talk went on. It was Stryker who was talking now:

"Has the ring been found, doctor?"

"Not yet. They will hardly make the attempt while your light is burning here. What I'm concerned about just now is this: We all know that there is deep sympathy for Leary in the command, and it is not improbable that among the Irishmen there is corresponding feeling against you. I don't like your being here alone just now, for they know you are almost the only witness against him."

"I have thought of that, sir," answered Gwynne, gravely, "but I want nothing that looks like protection. The captain has spoken of the matter to me, and he agreed, sir, that it would do more harm than good. There is one thing I would ask—if I may trouble the lieutenant."

"What is it, sergeant?"

"I have a little packet, containing some papers and a trinket or two, that I would like very much to have kept safe, and if anything should happen to me, to have you, sir, and Capt. Stryker open it—and the letters there will explain every thing that is to be done."

"Certainly. I will take care of it for you—if not too valuable."

"I would rather know it was with you, sir, than stow it in the quartermaster's safe," was Gwynne's answer, as he opened a little wooden chest at the foot of his bunk, and, after rummaging a moment, drew forth a parcel tied and sealed. This he handed to the lieutenant.

"Now I will go back and notify the officer of the guard of what I have seen," said Perry, "and I want Nolan saddled, over at my quarters right after morning stables. Will you see to it?"

"I will, sir, and thank you for your kindness."

All was darkness, all silence and peace as Perry retraced his steps and went back to the garrison, carrying the little packet in his hand. He went direct to the guard house, and found Mr. Graham sitting over being disturbed in his snooze by the sentry's challenge.

"What the devil are you owing around this time of night for?" was the not unamiable question. "I thought it was the officer of the day, and nearly broke my neck in hurrying out here."

"But Perry's brief recital of the fact that he had seen some men stealing out of the quarters of M troop in their stocking feet or on tiptoe, and to Graham's complaints. Hastily summoning the sergeant of the guard, he started out to make the rounds of his sentries, while Perry carried his packet home, looked it in his desk, and then returned to the veranda to await developments.

Sergt. Gwynne, meantime, having lighted his young officer to the stable door, stood there a few moments, looking over the silent garrison and listening to the retreating footsteps. The sentry came pacing along the front of the stables, and brought his carbine down from the shoulder as he dimly sighted the tall figure, but, recognizing the stable sergeant as he came nearer, the ready challenge died on his lips.

"I thought I heard somebody moving around down here, sergeant. It was you, then, was it?"

"I have been moving around—inside—but made no noise. Have you heard footsteps or voices?"

"Both I thought, but it's black as your hat on this best to-night. I can't see my hand before my face."

"Keep your ears open, then, there are men out from one of the quarters, at least, and not telling what they are up to. Who's in charge at the quartermaster's stable?"

"Sergt. Kelly of the infantry; some of the fellows were over having a little game with him before tattoo, and I heard him tell 'em to come again when they had more money to lose. He and his helper there were laughing at the way they cleaned out the cavalry when they were locking up at taps. The boys fetched over a bottle of whisky with 'em."

"Who were they?"

"Oh, there was Flanagan and Murphy, of M troop, and Corporal Donovan and one or two others. They hadn't been drinking."

"But Riley had—do you mean?"

Gwynne's face lighted up. It touched him to know his officers were on the lookout for his safety.

"I have heard nothing, sir. The men would hardly be apt to speak to me on the subject, since the affair of the other night. What I fear is simply this—that there is an element here in the regiment that is determined to get down there to the ranch and have satisfaction for the assault that was made on you and your party. They need horses in order to get there and back between midnight and reveille, and are doubtless hatching some plan. They failed here; now they may try the stables of some other troop or the quartermaster's. Shall I warn the sentry that there are prowlers out to-night?"

"Not yet. They will hardly make the attempt while your light is burning here. What I'm concerned about just now is this: We all know that there is deep sympathy for Leary in the command, and it is not improbable that among the Irishmen there is corresponding feeling against you. I don't like your being here alone just now, for they know you are almost the only witness against him."

"I have thought of that, sir," answered Gwynne, gravely, "but I want nothing that looks like protection. The captain has spoken of the matter to me, and he agreed, sir, that it would do more harm than good. There is one thing I would ask—if I may trouble the lieutenant."

"What is it, sergeant?"

"I have a little packet, containing some papers and a trinket or two, that I would like very much to have kept safe, and if anything should happen to me, to have you, sir, and Capt. Stryker open it—and the letters there will explain every thing that is to be done."

"Certainly. I will take care of it for you—if not too valuable."

"I would rather know it was with you, sir, than stow it in the quartermaster's safe," was Gwynne's answer, as he opened a little wooden chest at the foot of his bunk, and, after rummaging a moment, drew forth a parcel tied and sealed. This he handed to the lieutenant.

"Now I will go back and notify the officer of the guard of what I have seen," said Perry, "and I want Nolan saddled, over at my quarters right after morning stables. Will you see to it?"

"I will, sir, and thank you for your kindness."

All was darkness, all silence and peace as Perry retraced his steps and went back to the garrison, carrying the little packet in his hand. He went direct to the guard house, and found Mr. Graham sitting over being disturbed in his snooze by the sentry's challenge.

THE POLICY OF RUSSIA.

The Will Never Permit the Dismemberment of France.

In the Messenger Russe, a review published in St. Petersburg, there is an article upon the future policy of Russia, by Mr. Serge de Tatischeff, the eminent historian and diplomatist. He declares that Russia may remain indifferent to all the misunderstandings and difficulties of Western Europe, but that there is one thing that the Empire is bound at all hazards to resist, and that is the dismemberment of France by Germany or by the quadruple alliance. In opposing such an act, he says, Russia would only be defending her own interests, because a powerful France is absolutely necessary as a counter-balance to the German Empire, which is at present supported by the armies of Austro-Hungary and Italy and also sustained by the naval forces of Great Britain. This was something that was well understood by the Emperor Alexander I. in 1814-15, and later still by Alexander II, when in 1875 he would not permit Germany to invade France for the second time, before she could recover from her disasters and place herself once more on the defensive. Let it be remembered that at the above-named dates Russia was bound to the courts of Berlin and Vienna by treaty, while to-day she is perfectly free to mold her policy according to her own interests and needs. Germany, at the head of the so-called league of peace, already dominates the whole of Central Europe. Two great powers alone preserve their independence and hinder her domination from spreading all over the universe. Hence the absolute identity of their reciprocal interests. If Germany should succeed in conquering France without the interference of Russia, or in conquering Russia, left without the aid of France, there would then not only be no balance of power in Europe, but none in the entire world. All powers and all peoples would find themselves obliged to bow their heads under the yoke of Germany and to acknowledge her universal sovereignty. Therefore, in any struggle with the quadruple alliance it is the duty of Russia to sustain France, just as it is the duty of France to sustain Russia. In the objection that if an alliance were concluded between France and Russia a declaration of war would be the immediate result Mr. Tatischeff replies:

"It is just the same as if two separate army corps, acting against a concentrated enemy, were advised to keep separate for fear of hurting the feelings of that enemy. And how should they be kept separate? By a maneuver which must necessarily lead to defeat! The absurdity of such advice is plain to every body from a purely military point of view, and only a half-blind and incompetent diplomacy fails to see it as a matter of policy. To our eyes it is as plain as that two and two make four that if the peace of Europe is to be assured it must be by an alliance frank and sincere between France and Russia. The conditions of such an alliance are very simple—common defense against the common enemy; mutual guaranty of the integrity of our territories, and an engagement not to conclude a peace otherwise than by common consent. The treaty would contain nothing hurtful to anybody, even if it was not justified by the threatening coalition of the four other great powers known under the name of the league of peace, and which, notwithstanding its name, is precisely the thing that compromises the peace of Europe by the mysterious actions and the constant armaments of its members."

SHAN SUPERSTITIONS.

A Primitive People Possessed by a Belief in Evil Spirits.

The spirits both good and evil have their origin in human beings, and all the common events of life, all phases of good or bad fortune, are regulated by these. Both Hinduism and Buddhism trace to a certain extent, left their traces upon the primitive creed, and the ceremonies of worship are naturally of the Buddhist type. Among the Shans Gudama very significantly ranks as the deity of mercy—an indication that his bloodless rites came as a relief to the older human sacrifices to the spirits. The village and family and household spirits, as the nearest to hand and most active, bulk most largely in the minds of the people, and exercise a very serious influence upon their ordinary life. "Malleous as monkeys, and can only be kept in good humor by constant coaxing," is the sentiment which the people have regarding their unseen companions. Each house has a part assigned to the spirits belonging to it, good or bad. Possession by evil spirit is a common belief, and every malady is attributed to witchcraft or to the influence of some evil being. When descending the rapids of the Meh Ping Mr. Hallett found that his boatman had to propitiate the Pee Pa, the spirits that guard the defile, before they could venture on the descent. These jungle spirits once belonged to human beings who had died a violent death and not received proper funeral rites. All who are killed by the agency have to join their unhallowed company. They direct tigers to the lonely traveler, decoy him into peril in the form of some other animal or by imitating the human voice. More dangerous than the Pee Pa are the Pee Song Nang, the spirits of two disolute Princesses, who, in the form of beautiful enchantresses, lure young men to their doom.—Blackwood's Magazine.

Overlooking It.

A prominent fault to be found with New York drawing rooms is the too great profusion of furniture and bric-a-brac crowded into them. It trips you on the floors, drops down at you from the chandelier and cornices, makes it dangerous to stretch your legs or move your elbows when you sit, and renders it impossible to find a bit of unoccupied wall big enough to lean against. It is a great pleasure, of course, to have lots of pretty things, but they need not all be on exhibition at once. One fashionable woman in this city, who can afford to buy almost anything that strikes her fancy, has a store room in her house filled with bric-a-brac and furniture. Every week a dozen or so of these precious treasures are brought out and arranged about the rooms, and as many others as have been on duty for a time are packed away again. Thus her parlor has always a certain expression about it, so to speak, widely different from the look of a bazaar, highly fashionable, but exceedingly unattractive, that a too well filled room has.

TO BE CONTINUED.

RAISING TURKEYS.

It is well to watch a turkey hen in the spring. She will let you know when she wants to lay. She will hunt around here and there for a suitable place for a nest. When you see her doing this fasten her eye in a yard until she makes a nest and lay, and she will be almost sure to go back and lay in the same place afterwards. Leave the gate to the yard open and you will have little trouble finding her eggs. The turkey hen always covers her eggs, and it is well to leave an egg in the nest. In rearing turkeys the main thing is to keep them dry until they are full feathered. If they once become thoroughly water soaked there is no use trying to do a thing with them. They will all die sure. Their main food while young should be wheat soaked in milk. Corn meal alone kills them. If a little corn meal is fed with bran no evil results will follow, but it will not do to feed it alone.

The trying time on young turkeys is when they are taking on their coat of feathers.

An object glass for the forty-inch telescope to be mounted at the University of Southern California has been taken to Cambridge, Mass. Clark Bros. are expected to spend two years on it before it is ready to use.