



The Devil's Own A Romance of the Black Hawk War By Randall Parrish

CHAPTER XI.

The Story of Elsie Clark.

The next two hours dragged dreadfully slow, in spite of my pretense at steady work, and the fact that my thoughts were continuously occupied.

A cautious whisper, sounding almost at my very ear, caused me to glance up quickly, startled at the unexpected sound. I could perceive nothing, although I instantly felt convinced that whispering voice had issued from between the narrow slats defending the

small stateroom window. No one was in sight along the deck, and the rag I was wielding hung limp in my hand.

"Who was it that spoke?" I ventured, the words barely audible.

"Ah did—the prisoner in the stateroom. Have both those men gone?"

"Yes; I am here alone. You are a woman? You are Rene Beaucaire?"

"No, Ah am not her; but Ah know whar Rene Beaucaire is."

"You know? Tell me first who you are."

"Elsie Clark. Ah am a mulatto, a free negress. Ah bin helpin' Massa Shrunk, an' cookin' fer him. Yer know what it was whut happened down thar?"

"I know part of it, at least—that Shrunk has been killed. I was at Shrunk's cabin and found the bodies. Tell me exactly what occurred there."

"Whut's yer name?"

"Steven Knox; I am a soldier. Rene must have told you about me."

"No, sah; she never done tol' me nuthin'. Ah didn't much mor'n see her enyhow, fur as that goes."

"Not see her! Then she is not confined there with you?"

"Wiv me? Dar sin't nobody confined yer wiv me. Ah just sin't set eyes on nobody since Ah done got on board, 'cept de cook. Ah reckon dem white men ain fer ter tote me soufe, an' sell me fer a slave; dat's whar Ah's locked up yere dis way. But Ah sure does know whar dis yer Rene Beaucaire wus."

"Where?"

"Wal, sah, it was 'bout like dis: Long 'bout three o'clock in de mornin' of Bill Sikes cum up frum de lower pint, a-drivin' his kivered wagon, an' made Massa Shrunk git up er bed fer ter git him anoder team o' hosses. Den dey done routed me up fer ter hustle up sum grub."

"Sikes; who was Sikes?"

"He lives down by de lower pike, sah; he's an abolitionist, sah."

"Oh, I see; he and Shrunk worked together. He helped with the runaway slaves."

"Yes, sah. Ah's bin called up that way afore. So Ah just nat'raly went ter work cookin', an' purty soon dey all ov 'em cum straglin' in ter de cabin fer ter eat. Dar was four ov 'em, sah; her voice a husky whisver. 'Bill Sikes, totin' a gun in his han', a free nigger whut dey called Pete, an' two wimmin. De bigger one was a quadroon, maybe 'bout forty years ol', an' de odder she wus much more'n a gal; an' dar wus nuthin' ov de nigger 'bout her, 'cept it mought be de hair, an' de eyes—dem was sure black 'nough."

"You learned who they were?"

"Course Ah did. Sikes he 'splained all 'bout 'em ter Massa Shrunk, an' Ah heerd whut he sed. Ah was a waitin' on 'em. We all ov us helped fer ter put 'em in de wagon, hid undeh a lot o' truck, an' den Sikes he done drove 'em out thro' de bluffs. Ah done walked wif de gal, an' she tol' mor' 'bout herself, an' whar she cum frum; an' dat wus her name, sah."

"Her name? Whut name?"

"Rene Beaucaire; de quadroon woman, she wus her mother."

I could scarcely voice my surprise, the quick throbbing of my heart threatening to choke me.

"She claimed that name? She actually told you she was Rene Beaucaire?"

"She sure did. Why? Want't that her name?"

"I do not know," I confessed. "Perhaps I shall understand better, if you go on. What happened after they left?"

dat, til 'bout de time de steamboat done hit us; an' 'bout de next thing Ah wus yanked up yere on deck."

"But there was another woman on the keelboat when it was sunk—a prisoner also. Surely you must have seen her," I insisted.

"Ah saw her—yas," eagerly. "But Ah don't know who she wus, sah, nor whar she ever cum frum."

"Then she is not there with you?"

"No, sah; Ah's yere all 'lone. Ah reckon, tho', she sure mus' be on board sunwhar. All whut Ah does know is, dat de gal called Rene Beaucaire sure ain't on board; fer she, an' her mah, am at Beardstown long fore dis, an' a headin' right smart fer Canada; while Ah's headin' fer down soufe. Ah's just told yer all dis, Mister White Man, 'cause you's a frien' ob de Beaucaires—yer wus, wusn't yer?"

"Yes," I said soberly. "I am; and, if I can find any chance to help you, I am going to do it, Elsie. Don't talk any more—the captain is just coming out of the pilot house."

As greatly as this brief, hastily whispered conversation had served to clear up certain puzzling matters in my mind, the total result of the information thus imparted by Elsie Clark only rendered the situation more complex and puzzling. Evidently the other prisoner had not been confined on the upper deck, but had been more securely hidden away below, where her presence on board would better escape detection. For what purpose? A sinister one, beyond all doubt—the expression of a vague fear in Kirby's heart that, through some accident, her identity might be discovered, and his plans disarranged. I comprehended the part he intended Elsie Beaucaire to play in his future, and realized that he cared more to gain possession of her, to get her into his power, than he did to obtain control of the slave. This knowledge helped me to understand the predicament which this revelation put him into, and how desperately he would strive to retain the upper hand. If, in very truth, she was Judge Beaucaire's white daughter, and could gain communication with others of her class, bringing to them proof of her identity, there would be real men enough on board the Adventurer to rally to her support. We were already sailing through free territory, and even now he held on to his slaves rather through courtesy than law. Once it was whispered that one of these slaves was white, the daughter of a wealthy planter, stolen by force, the game would be up.

But would she ever proclaim her right to freedom? If she was indeed Elsie Beaucaire—and even as to this I was not as yet wholly convinced—she had deliberately assumed to be Rene, doing so for a specific purpose—that object being to afford the other an opportunity for escape. Why, she had not so much as trusted me. From the very beginning she had encouraged me in the belief that she was a negress, never once arousing the faintest suspicion in my mind. Nothing, then, I was convinced, short of death or disgrace, could ever compel her to confess the truth yet. Kirby might suspect, might fear, but he had surely never learned who she was from her lips—that she was Elsie Beaucaire.

The conviction that this young woman was white, educated, refined, the daughter of good blood—no feeling negress, cursed with the black strain of an alien race, a nameless slave—brought to me a sudden joy in discovery I made no attempt to conceal.

"Elsie Beaucaire, Elsie Beaucaire"—the name repeated itself on my lips, as though it were a refrain. I knew instantly what it all meant—that some divine, mysterious hand had led from the very hour of my leaving Fort Armstrong, and would continue to lead until the will of God was done. It was not in the stars of Fate that such villainy should succeed; such sacrifice as hers full of its reward.

Nevertheless, in spite of this resolve, and the fresh courage which had been awakened within me by the faith that from now on I battled for the love of Elsie Beaucaire, no immediate opportunity for service came. I could only wait patiently, and observe.

I was convinced that Kirby, wha' ever might be his ultimate purpose regarding the girl, had no present intention of doing her further injury. He contemplated no immediate attempt at forcible possession, and would be well satisfied if he could only continue to hold her in strict seclusion. The thing he was guarding against now, and while they remained on board, was escape or discovery.

It was about the middle of the following afternoon when the Adventurer poked her blunt nose around a point of land, and came into full view of the squalid hamlet of Yellow Banks. A half-hour later we lay snuggled up against the shore, holding position amid several other boats made fast to stout trees, busily unloading, and their broad gangplanks stretching from forward deck to bank. The roustabouts began unloading cargo at once, a steady stream of men, black and white, burdened with whatever load they could snatch up, moving on an endless run across the stiff plank, and

up the low bank to the drier summit. It chanced to be my good fortune to escape this labor, having been detailed by Mapes to drag boxes, hales and barrels forward to where the hurrying bearers could grasp them more readily. This brought me close to the forward stairs, down which the departing passengers trooped, threading their insecure way among the trotting laborers, in an effort to get ashore.

Reynolds' troops, all militia, and the greater part of them mounted, were an extremely sorry-looking lot—sturdy enough physically, of the pioneer type, but bearing little soldierly appearance, and utterly ignorant of discipline. The men had chosen officers from out their own ranks by popular election, and these exercised their authority very largely through physical prowess.

We had an excellent illustration of this soon after tying up at the landing. A tall, lank, ungainly officer, with a face so distinctly homely as to instantly attract my attention, led his company of men up the river bank, and ordered them to transport the pile of commissary stores from where they had been promiscuously thrown to a drier spot farther back. The officer was a captain, to judge from certain stripes of red cloth sewed on the shoulders of his brown jean blouse, but his men were far from prompt in obeying his command, evidently having no taste for the job. One among them, apparently their ringleader in incipient mutiny, an upstanding bully with the jaw of a prize fighter, took it upon himself openly to defy the officer, exclaiming profanely that he'd be d-d if he ever enlisted to do nigger work. The others laughed, and joined in the revolt, until the captain unceremoniously flung off his blouse, thus divesting himself of every vestige of rank, and proceeded to enforce his authority. It was a battle royal, the soldiers crowding eagerly about, and yelling encouragement impartially first to one combatant, and then another.

"Kick him in the ribs, Sam!"

"Now, Abe, you've got him—crack the d-n cuss' neck."

"By golly! that's the way we do it in ol' Salem."

"He's got yer now, Jenkins, he's got yer now—good boy, Abe."

Exactly what occurred I could not see, but when the circle of wildly excited men finally broke apart, the big rebel was lying flat on his back in the yellow mud, and the irate officer was indicating every inclination to press him down out of sight.

"Hav yer hed 'nough, Sam Jenkins?" he questioned breathlessly.

"Then, blame ye, say so."

"All right, Abe—yer've bested me this time."

"Will yer tote them passels?"

The discomfited Jenkins, one of whose eyes was closed, and full of clay, attempted a sickly grin.

"H—! yes," he admitted. "I'd sure admire ter dew it."

(To Be Continued.)

Put it in The Bulletin.

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SCOPE OF A. R. C. NURSE WORK WILL BE GREATLY EXTENDED

As an outline of the work of the Red Cross nurse, the following article written by an official of the Bend chapter, is published at the request of the local A. R. C. organization:

The Bend Chapter of the Red Cross has been very fortunate in securing the services of a public health nurse. This work, under the supervision of the local committee on Nursing Activities, is part of the great National Red Cross peace time program. The plan is to have at least one trained public health nurse in every county in the United States. We are glad that Deschutes County is falling in line early.

The work covers infant welfare, the pre-school child, the expectant mother, tuberculosis, schools, and bedside nursing. In her work, Miss Margaret Brems, our nurse, inspects children for physical defects and recommends a remedy to the parent. She visits the home to secure the cooperation of the parent and to assist in any possible way in correcting the trouble, gives short hygienic talks to the children, conducts Little Mothers' Leagues in which the older girls are taught the simple daily care of a baby, and keeps down the spread of contagious diseases.

The bedside nursing can be given in Bend every other day, as Miss

Brems is in town on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday from 9:00 a. m. to 5:00 p. m.; office upstairs in the Bend Co. Building. On the other days she is working on other parts of the county. The home nursing is for anyone who wishes to call for this service. It includes such things as baths, taking temperature and pulse, making the patient comfortable for the day and executing the doctor's orders. The nurse may not give bedside care after the first call without a physician in attendance. Care cannot be extended to those suffering from contagious diseases. A fee of 75 cents is charged per call. If a family is unable to pay this amount, it does not bar them from receiving the same attention. This fee is turned back into the Red Cross revolving fund which is used for running expenses.

Since Miss Brems has been in Deschutes County, she has inspected the schools at La Pine, Redmond, Terrebonne, Tumalo and Sisters. Many of the children have had physical defects corrected but the work is only well begun. Two well attended Mothers' Meetings were held at Terrebonne and Redmond. The recent Baby Week held at Bend had an attendance of 60.

The work has been much hampered by the lack of a means of

transportation, but now that the County Commissioners have granted the nurse a car, we expect to see still greater results reaching out to the more isolate districts.

The work of the Public Health Nurse deserves the attention and hearty cooperation of every citizen in this County."

REV. SHARKEY HEADS CHURCH AT ROSEBURG

Left on Monday for New Work—Father Urban O'Riordan, of Cork, is Successor.

Rev. Father Adrian Sharkey, for the last four years assistant minister at St. Francis Catholic church in Bend, left Monday morning for Roseburg, in which city, he will head the church. There are many members composing the congregation in Roseburg, and the church building was erected only three years ago.

As successor to Father Sharkey, Re. Urban O'Riordan, of the Franciscan Capuchin order, has arrived from Cork, Ireland. He was born near Kilkenny about 26 years ago, and pursued his classical studies in the Franciscan Capuchin college at Rochestown. His philosophical and theological courses were taken in Cork, and he was ordained as a priest 18 months ago.

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