

# BRIDE OF BATTLE

A Romance of the  
AMERICAN ARMY  
Fighting on the Battlefields of  
FRANCE



By VICTOR ROUSSEAU

"You know that?"  
"I followed you here. Tell me the whole truth about this business, and I'll stand by you to the end."

"I'll trust you to the limit—but I won't tell you, Captain Wallace. Some day, perhaps, but not now. I'll stand by you, and I'll fight at your side, sir. But I won't tell you. And that's the only condition on which I can agree to what you propose."

"Not if, but when?" cried Hartley, with a sudden outburst of conviction. "I'll tell you then—yes, Captain Wallace. And till then we'll fight together to pull down this nest of conspiracy and prove your innocence to the world."

After a moment he added, "I think we'd better be making a move out of here, Captain Wallace!"

He pushed open the cellar door and led Mark along the basement passage



Led Mark Along the Basement Passage.

until a gleam of moonlight appeared in front of them. They emerged into a little garden, a replica of the one next door. There was no policeman on guard. In a moment they were in the street and in safety.

Mark, who had already recovered from the effects of his blow, save for a splitting headache, took a car with Hartley, and half an hour later the two were again in Mark's rooms.

"So you were packing?" asked Hartley, looking about him. "What were you going to do?"

"I don't know," answered Mark. "It's queer, being broken like this—I've nothing, no prospects, only a little money. I have to earn a living."

"It'll be the army," said Hartley. "You'd be a sergeant in no time; you'd run through the ranks in about a couple of years. And then you've won. You've conquered fortune. And you're in a position to do a little quiet working to straighten out your tangle and run down the Kenson gang. And then I'll help you, for when the time comes I can tell what I know. At present I can't. I'm waiting—"

He burst into an expletive, and his face was twisted with anguish. The man seemed under the stress of some overpowering emotion.

"And how about your own part in this affair, Hartley?"

The man winced as if Mark had struck him. Mark put out his hand, took Hartley's, and shook it warmly.

"You're right, Hartley," he said quietly. "I'm ready to sink my name, then, and we'll go in together as comrades, and by Heaven we'll set the whole crooked business right!"

## CHAPTER X.

"Weston! Hey, there!"  
Mark, who was sitting at the entrance of the tent which he shared with five other privates of the Medical Corps, looked up at the sound of the name to which he had grown accustomed. At the sight of the corporal who had hailed him, he flung down the grooved strip of metal, known as the "soldier's friend," with the aid of which he had been polishing his buttons, and hurried obediently forward.

"The train's in from the base with the sisters and doctors to meet the convoy that we're expecting from the front. Every man's on duty until the job's finished. Report to the matron with Hartley."

Mark nodded, and departed at a run

toward the door of the base hospital, at which the matron, fidgeting impatiently, was awaiting the assembling of the orderlies.

It was war, and the echoes of the far distant guns were all about them daily, though war had never passed that way.

Under the name of Weston, Mark had enlisted in the medical branch of the service. It was a lowly branch, despised by those who knew nothing of its activities. But the choice had been between that and nothing, for the first fighting contingents to be sent overseas embraced only the regulars, not those of the draft. Mark had enlisted rather than wait, especially since he knew that Colonel Howard, with Kellerman and his staff, were already in France.

And somewhere within a few square miles was the base of the American activities, the headquarters from which the mobilization in France was being directed.

"Hurry up to the surgical ward!" said the matron, as Mark reached her. "And you, too, Hartley," she added.

The two men scrambled up the stairs. At the opposite end of the building, an old converted chateau, the convoy had halted. Other orderlies were carrying out the stretchers with their living, mangled burdens.

A group of the newly arrived doctors and nurses was coming up the stairs. They were all ready for their work. Mark no longer saw anything but the wounded men. Dripping with perspiration, he hurried from the ward to the pack store and back, innumerable times, struggling under great piles of towels and bedding.

"Must have been a stiff fight," panted Hartley, as they passed each other. Mark responded with a movement of the head. It must have been a fight, to have brought all those serious cases down to the base hospital.

"Weston, you're to go into the operating room!"

The nurse who addressed him spoke as to a servant.

"Yes, Sister," he answered, and braced his shoulders and hurried to obey.

The patient, already etherized, had been brought in. Mark, watching the patient narrowly as the surgeon probed the wound, knew nothing but his task until the surgeon nudged him familiarly in the side while one of the nurses was sponging his forehead.

"I know your face, orderly," he said. "Where was it?"

Mark started and looked into the quizzical gray eyes of one of the army doctors from an Arizona town, whom he had dined at the mess.

"I think you are mistaken, sir," he answered quietly.

The surgeon searched his face, and, like a decent man, admitted his error.

"Another poor devil gone down," he thought, as he turned to his work.

There were three more operations following, and Mark sighed with relief as the last man was carried away. He took a scrubbing brush and bar of soap and knelt down to clean the floor, while his fellow attendant scoured the splashed table and carried away the towels.

Mark was conscious that the nurse still lingered, and he went on with his scrubbing. Somehow he did not want to meet her eyes.

She came toward him and stood near him, by the table. Something splashed down to the floor—then something else. Mark raised his head. They were tears, and others followed them down the nursing sister's face. The girl was Eleanor.

She put out her hands blindly. "Oh, Captain Mark!" she whispered.

Mark felt himself beginning to shake; fate seemed to have played a wretched trick on him just then.

"Why, Captain Mark! Why—why did you do this?" asked Eleanor.

"Hey, Weston!" called his fellow orderly from the door of the sterilizing room; and then, seeing him with the sister, withdrew.

"You heard my name?" asked Mark. "I heard it, Captain Mark. Won't you tell me what it means, what it all means?"

"What it all means?" he repeated vaguely, wondering at the concern on her face.

"Why you disappeared as you did from Washington. I knew that you had applied for leave of absence, because you had overworked in the hot weather. But you—never came back." Her voice broke into a sob.

"The Colonel didn't think it strange. He wouldn't admit that there was any reason, except that you must have gone back to your regiment. Did you and he quarrel, Captain Mark? It's unthinkable. I could learn nothing about you, but Major Kellerman had said you were tired of the work and might have got some appointment out of the service. Their tales were con-

triving. And you weren't on the army list any more. Won't you tell me, just because—you know—because—"

Mark could hardly restrain his feeling.

"I'll tell you," said Mark, raising his eyes. "I was accused of treachery, of betraying secrets to enemies of my country—"

Eleanor laughed in a little, mirthless voice. "You're still the same, Uncle Mark," she whispered. "Did you think I would believe that?"

"It was not true," cried Mark, nettled and desperate. "But it was found that I frequented gambling houses—"

"You are so fond of money, Uncle Mark!"

"I wanted money. You were rich, and I wanted your esteem. I wanted to move in your circles, to win your favor, as others could—"

She gasped and grew red; he saw that his arrow had gone home, and went on pitilessly.

"When I was at your reception you had smiles for everyone."

"That's enough, Captain Wallace," she said, with an indrawn breath. "You insulted me the last time we met, you know, or probably have forgotten. I—I see that all my thoughts of you were wrong. I was always a burden. And when you didn't write so many years, and when you didn't come to see me, I thought—oh, I'll tell you now, since you have humiliated me as deeply as it is possible to humiliate a woman. I thought you stayed away and kept away because you liked me, and because you were afraid that I might come to care for you, and ruin my prospects among the rich young officers. I thought it was a sort of absurd, misplaced, quixotic chivalry, Captain Wallace."

Wallace was choking. So she had known!

But he had won his miserable game, as he realized from her next words:

"It was a foolish idea, Captain Wallace, and now I've given it up, and I know that men aren't so idealistic and chivalrous as I have imagined them. But—she bent forward—"I don't believe you are a traitor, Captain Mark!"

And over her head Mark saw the tall figure of Kellerman in the doorway.

The recognition was mutual and instantaneous. Kellerman's surprise was changing into a sneering challenge when Eleanor turned, saw the newcomer, and, with a superb effort of will, smiled at him.

"So I see you got here, Sister Howard," said Kellerman, with a forced laugh.

"Just in time," answered the girl. "Have you come to order us all up to the trenches?"

"Some of you, but not the ladies. No, I'm attending the General on his tour of inspection of the lines."

The talk grew indistinct as they drifted away. Mark, staring after them in a stupor, saw Kellerman nod toward him, and fancied that the girl made a gesture of pleading.

Neither had noticed him. He reflected savagely that already Eleanor was coming to take his status for granted, as the other sisters did.



The Surgeon Searched His Face.

## CHAPTER XI.

By evening the rush of work had died down, and the orderlies, save those on duty, were given the customary leave.

Leave meant Etaples, with its comfortable little inn, the chatty landlady and her pretty daughter.

Mark strode toward Etaples. He had an intense longing for the lights and comfort of the little inn. But he had not gone more than a hundred paces when Hartley hailed him.

"Going into Etaples?" he asked. "Do you mind my going with you?"

"Frankly, yes, Hartley," answered Mark. "You won't mind my saying so? I want to be alone after—"

"I know, old man," said Hartley, drawing back. "Sorry if I bothered you."

But Mark swung round on him. "Hartley, answer me one question," he said. "What has Miss Howard ever had to do with you? Why have you been watching her for six or seven years?"

Hartley began to walk along the road at Mark's side. He was a dark

guyling sound before he answered. "Has it occurred to you, Mark, that the Kenson woman has been operating in Washington for a good time now?"

"I suppose so," Mark answered.

"You know everything was prepared for years before the war began. The system had ramifications in every department of the government. You know Colonel Howard was in touch with it as far back as the Cuban war?"

"Good Lord, yes, but—"

"And a man is only a pawn in such a game. Good God, don't question me, Mark! I've been a tool of hers, but I'll swear that I never worked against the government. I learned little by little of the whole accursed nest of spies. I obeyed their orders because—well, I can't tell you now—but I worked against them too. I've done them more harm than good. I had my motives—selfish ones, despicable, perhaps; but I was never a traitor. Good God, Mark, haven't you seen how your faith in me has begun to make a man of me?"

Mark took Hartley's hand and gripped it. It was the best and the only possible answer. In their tacit understanding they went on toward the inn together.

Outside the inn they saw an auto, with a soldier chauffeur in charge. Hartley gripped Mark's arm.

"Do you know whose that is?" he whispered. "Kellerman's!"

The landlady came to the door. "Bonsair, mesieurs," she said smiling. "This way tonight, if you please."

She led them round by the side, into the kitchen, where they found half a dozen privates drinking light wine and teasing the landlady's daughter as she served them.

There was nothing in this to the men; they were often turned out of the dining room-parlor when officers put in an appearance. But—this was Kellerman! Mark looked at Hartley and saw intense excitement on his face, which he was trying most evidently to restrain.

He ordered beer of Annette, and followed her toward the outhouse in which the liquor was stored. The girl was a friend of his, perhaps because, more serious than the rest, he treated her with less badinage than was customary among the soldiers. As she moved out of the lighted room into the shadows outside the merriment fell like a mask from her face.

"What is it, Annette?" asked Mark. "Ah, monsieur, it is tragic!" said the girl, pausing at the outhouse door.

"She is one of my countrywomen. The accent is of the south, or some outlandish part, but she is French—and she has come a long way to meet him, and he will not have anything to do with her. How did she get through the lines?"

"Who, Annette?"  
"The lady with the American officer. Listen, monsieur! Listen, then!"

They were standing in front of the outhouse, which was set near an angle of the old-fashioned building between the parlor and the kitchen. They could hear the imploring voice of the woman, and the subdued answers of Kellerman.

Then, elusive against the dark angle of the building, Mark perceived Hartley. He was standing under the high sill of the window, in such a way that Mark thought he could see through the chink between the sill and the lower edge of the blind. Eavesdropping as he evidently was, Mark felt that something justified his presence there.

Annette perceived him at the same moment. She started, and then shrugged her shoulders.

"Eh bien, monsieur, it is their affair!" she said lightly, and went into the outhouse. She was too wise to interfere with her customers. Mark hardly noticed her departure. He was watching Hartley.

Suddenly the door opened and the woman came down the steps that led into the little vineyard behind the inn. She raised her heavy veil to dab a handkerchief at her eyes, and at that moment Mark recognized Mrs. Kenson.

He remained rooted to the ground in astonishment. But it was more than that; he felt suddenly trapped, as if the woman's presence there was vitally connected with his own problems, as if he were the victim of some far-reaching scheme with which he could not grapple.

A minute later Kellerman appeared and stood upon the step above her, looking into her upturned face with his habitual sneer.

"It is all over then?" asked Mrs. Kenson.

"Since you compel me to be frank—yes," answered Kellerman. "It has been over for years, Ada. To think that you should have put us all in this

danger! You haven't told me how you got here, or how you sent me that message."

"How I got here? Does that matter? Well, I came up in a peasant woman's dress, as one of the repatriated. I sent you the message through a boy, who knows nothing—his wits were thrashed out of him by the Germans. He left the note—he won't trouble you. And I suppose now I'm to go back."

Suddenly she broke into a shrill invective. "I'm to go back, after the thousands of miles that I came, because you are the only man in the world who has ever meant anything to me! I gave my life to you. How many years have you played with me? Answer me! And now you fling me from you as if I were nothing, because of—oh, do you suppose I haven't heard of you and Miss Howard? I'll call her that! But take care! I can be dangerous when I am aroused, and I see now—I see clearly now, if never before!"

Mark's blood seemed to freeze as he listened. He had unconsciously drawn near Hartley.

"You are talking wildly, Ada," muttered Kellerman. "Are you going to ruin everyone? Do you want to hang? For you will, Ada. There's no sentimentality in war. Now I'm going to do the riskiest thing I ever did. I'm going to take you back behind the lines in my auto. By a miracle of good luck I have the password for the night. Come! And we'll talk over matters on the drive back!"

"Come, Ada!" said Kellerman; and then he turned sharply and confronted Mark.

For an instant he stood as if transfixed; then, with an oath, he leaped at

him and struck him a blow in the face that sent him reeling backward.

Ada Kenson turned and ran toward Mark with a scream. She did not recognize him, Mark could see that.

The discipline of a lifetime held Mark steady. He stood confronting Kellerman, but did not raise a hand even to guard himself. Kellerman glared at him in speechless fury. And even then it seemed a little singular to Mark that Hartley disappeared, so swiftly and silently that neither the man nor the woman knew he had been there.

Then Kellerman burst into hysterical laughter.

"It's the spy from the war department," he cried. "The fellow we pitched out of the army for treachery, masquerading here in uniform. A blank wall and a firing squad for you tomorrow, my man!"

Ada Kenson sprang between them. "He doesn't mean that!" she cried, peering into Mark's face dubiously. She recognized Mark now, but Mark could see that the recognition meant little to her; probably he had been only a trivial incident in her career. "Listen to me!" she whispered in Mark's ear. "He has been drinking. It will be all right. Just go back and keep this to yourself. You'll get a fifty-dollar bill by the next post, and ten every month afterward, so long as you don't see anything. Understand? He isn't responsible—"

Mark turned away in disgust, but he imagined the warped mind that caught at this hope of secrecy.

He went back into the kitchen. The soldiers were still there, one or two hailed him; the incident had occupied only ten minutes. Annette made a little mouth at him from the doorway. But Mark was searching in the room for Hartley.

"Your friend went home, I think, monsieur le soldat," said Annette in banter.

Mark strode out of the inn without a word. Hartley's disappearance did not disturb him. Hartley was strange; but he felt that he had relied too much on Hartley. It was for him to act. He would go to the Major in charge of the hospital, tell his story, and do the only thing possible. He had no doubt any longer that Kellerman and the Kenson woman were partners in a far-reaching conspiracy against his country, though he had never before allowed himself to accept the obvious deductions from the Washington episode. His mind moved slowly. His purpose had been to redeem himself; now he meant to reveal everything.

And suddenly, out of the mist of years, he recalled Colonel Howard's story of Hampton. Kellerman had been the chief agent in Hampton's tragic fall. Suppose Hampton had been innocent! Suppose that Eleanor's father had been a brave and loyal man, whose hideous ruin and abominable death might be posthumously vindicated?

The blood rushed to his head at the thought of it. The burden of the knowledge of her father's shame, and of its probable effect on her if ever she learned had weighed heavily upon Mark's heart since that night in the tent in Cuba.

Then the blood receded, leaving him as cold as a stone. For he recalled Ada Kenson's words to Kellerman. So the hunter was hard upon the quarry—perhaps he had already snared her. Eleanor had liked Kellerman. He forced back his thoughts, strode straight to barracks and turned in.

(To be continued)

No one is recommending Berlin as a pleasure resort at present.

## PINKY DAININESS IN SUMMERY VOILES



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Departs		
No. 1, Baker	8:3 A. M.	
Sumpter	1:05 A. M.	
Arrives		
Prairie	2:1 P. M.	

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