

# Bound to the North

By Harold MacGrath

## CHAPTER XI.

"Do you know Morgan, I believe that I shall never attend your firing party in the morning?"

"Indeed," Armitage, you'll be there. I wouldn't have you miss it for anything. I thought you had that ten-spot. Well, the game ends."

"So it does!"

Armitage's hand flew across the table with the quickness of an adder's strike and seized Morgan's pistol. He drew back with equal rapidity.

"Stir or make a sound, and I'll kill you, Morgan. You know it. If I have to die, you'll go with me or before me."

Jeanne in the doorway—impelled irresistibly to return—pressed a book against her heart. She had picked it up at random, without thought or purpose.

Morgan stared at the round black muzzle of his revolver; he was paralyzed by the unexpectedness of the coup.

"Call to the sentry to come around and enter the room," commanded Armitage. "Mind the tone!"

The moment the sentry started to obey the command, Armitage drew back his hand and savagely struck Morgan behind the ear. Then he leaped from the window just as Jeanne hurled her book at the candlebrum, accurately!

When her arm was strong again, she determined to return to Washington. To learn for sure the name of the man who had married her and had now become an obsession; she must know or go mad.

She had not the slightest faith in Armitage's statement. He was not the man; she was so absolutely sure of this that no shadow of doubt regarding it ever entered her head. But, ah! if only he had spoken the truth! If only she had married him!

So, adroitly yet simply disguised, Jeanne entered Washington once more, in spite of the grave risks in spite of the imminent dangers. She found an obscure but respectable boarding-house and lived there quietly. To Charles Lowell, one of the eleven whom she had met with Armitage, she wrote a letter.

It was a letter which would naturally arouse the curiosity of a man like Lowell. He took it to Kennedy, who studied it for a few moments; then passed it over to Armitage.

"What do you think of it, son?" he asked.

Armitage read:

"Lieutenant Charles Lowell:

"Will you do me the honor to call if I give you explicit directions how to find me? I have something to say to you which vitally concerns us both.

"Address W-X, general post office."

"What do you think of it, Parson?" countered Armitage. His voice was normal, his hands steady.

"I should tear it up and give it no further attention," Kennedy yawned. "It may be some woman who wants you to get her hubby or brother or son a job with the War Office. The town is full of them."

"Good advice," agreed Armitage. "Tear it up, Charlie. Remember you two are to dine with me tonight at eight. I'm off."

Once in the street Armitage pushed back his hat and wiped his forehead. What should he do? How should he

act?

Lowell started to tear up the note when Kennedy stayed his hand.

"No. Answer it; keep the appointment. If it's a trap, I'll be close at hand. If it's only a political angler—well, I'll still be close at hand. And say nothing to Armitage tonight."

On the following afternoon Lowell was admitted to a modest house in the middle-class district. The light in the room was not very good; but presently he saw the figure of a woman, her back to the window.

"I am Jeanne Beaufort," she said quietly.

"Good heaven!"

"I brought you here to ask a question. Who was the man I married that night? Sometimes it seems as if I were going mad! I am a proud woman." She sank to her knees suddenly. "See, on my knees I ask you! The name, the name!"

"Why in the world should you care? The man did not even touch your hand. You exaggerate the affair. Any court will annul it."

"Is he living or dead?"

"I have sworn never to reveal that man's name. But it was not who married you, or I would break one by one, all the oaths a man might swear to claim you as my own."

He tried to lift her up, but she hung back, a dead weight.

"You shall have twelve hours in which to leave the city—twelve hours and no more." Gently he freed his hands. "Good-by, Jeanne Beaufort; and God take you back safely to your lines."

He passed out into the street. For several blocks Parson Kennedy followed him thoughtfully. There was a third man whom neither Kennedy nor Lowell observed.

Kennedy caught up with Lowell. "Well, what was it about?"

"Good Lord, Parson, I had forgotten all about you! Oh, there was nothing governmental in the affair. I'll let you know all about it in twelve hours."

Kennedy nodded and pretended not to notice Lowell's preoccupation. An idea took form and grew in his infernally bright mind.

Lowell had seen Jeanne Beaufort! The name was like wind upon glowing coals; his hate grew white-hot. It was hatred which had no logic. At her feet he laid the death of six gallant men.

Jeanne Beaufort was Parson Kennedy's obsession, and he proposed to be rid of it that night, once and for all.

The moment he left Lowell, he put his idea into action. He would trap her by promising to give her the name of the man she had married (for no doubt that was the reason for her seeking Lowell); he would use Lowell's name besides.

Oh, she would come to that old attic where she and Morgan had exchanged their bits of information!

It was moonlight outside. Kennedy and his men waited in the dark. They were all squatting on the floor in order to prevent the slightest sound.

As Jeanne entered from her left came the scrape of a match. It flared. She beheld a huge hand, and her fascinated glance ran up the arm to the face above.

She stood face to face with Parson

Kennedy!

"All's fair in love and war," observed Kennedy. "Love for women and war for men. Well, Madam, what have you to say?"

"Nothing."

"There really isn't much to say, is there?"

"You tried to murder my soul; my body is nothing."

Parson Kennedy frowned. He wanted to humble this creature, to wring tears from those unfaltering eyes, to bend her to her knees, to see her hands held out in passionate supplication; he wanted nothing less than that.

"I was a rare fool that night. I should have shot you."

"I gave you back your life once."

"Ha! But why? To save Armitage?"

"Hands up! The first man who turns dies!"

The voice came from the wall behind the clustered troopers. Two of them dropped their muskets, startled. Kennedy, looking over the heads of his men, beheld a yawning doorway and a man in front of it. Two revolvers were leveled steadily in his direction. The stranger wore a mask.

"I have twelve bullets and when I shoot, it will be to kill. Take up that revolver from the table, girl. Now step back toward me. Men, stand aside a little, but take heed not to turn. Quick, girl!"

Even as he spoke, Jeanne was obeying his orders. She drew back from the troopers, who moved aside for her but did not turn. They had recognized the deathnote in that voice.

As the door swung into place, Jeanne's rescuer heard a yell of rage.

"Morgan! Shoot you fools!"

But in the shadows the fugitives mounted safely and away. The man still kept the mask on his face. He had not uttered a single word since entering the lane. He suddenly drew in; and Jeanne's horse stopped of its own accord.

"Charles Lowell," she said rather breathlessly. "I shall always remember what you have done for me this night. You promised me twelve hours. Thank you. Your way is back there, mine yonder. We may never meet again. So, God bless you and keep you safe and whole!"

"Wait!" The voice was muffled. The man drew a folded paper from his pocket and handed it to her. He impulsively kissed the hand that reached out; then he folded the palm over the paper and let the hand fall.

"The horse is mine; keep it. Good-by, Jeanne Beaufort!"

He wheeled suddenly and cantered away.

She thought it strange that he did not raise his mask, inasmuch as she had discovered his identity. When he disappeared, she opened the paper curiously.

The moonlight was clear; but she had no need to read; she would have known that paper in the dark, among all others in the world, by the mere feel of it.

It was her marriage-certificate! She laughed brokenly. She passed through a singularly trying ordeal; and now, out of it all trying, her nerves began to go. She shook with transient vertigo and dared not start

her horse lest she fall.

Henry Morgan! So many things she understood at last. He had left his own name out of the list he had given her—H-R-D-M was on the certificate.

How simple it was! And so blind had been her faith in his loyalty, little as she liked him, that not the least inkling of the truth had ever come to her.

Lowell was sitting in their room when Armitage, looking like a man who had been riding hard and far, entered.

"I took Jeann Beaufort out of Kennedy's hands tonight," said Armitage with a few preliminaries. "Am I a traitor?"

"I don't know, John. She wanted to know from me which of us had married her. I told her that if it had been I, I would have broken every oath to claim her!"

"You," began Armitage—

"Anything wrong?" asked Armitage. Kennedy sipped a glass of sherry and set it on the table. His fingers touched the pistols and he took them up and balanced them on his broad palms. Suddenly he realized that, though the room was very warm, the weapons were very cold.

"Which of you two snatched Jeanne Beaufort out of my hands this night?" he asked with ominous quiet.

(To Be Continued)

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