



THE BLIZZARD

SYNOPSIS.—Word that their nightly frolics are distasteful to a party of "high-toned Britishers" recently arrived at the Lodge, among them an army captain and his sister of the same name as himself, is brought to Jack Kilmeny (known to his intimates as Crumba) and some friends camping on the Gunnison in Colorado. Called to account for the uproar by Dobyns Verinder, snobbish millionaire, member of the British party, Jack snubs that individual and has a friendly chat with Moya Dwight, attractive Irish girl. Jack has no use for his British relatives, two of whom he knows are at the Lodge. While fishing, Kilmeny again meets Miss Dwight, and by her is introduced to the other members of the party, chief of whom are Lord and Lady Farquhar, as "Mr. Crumba." Jack is immensely impressed by the loveliness of Joyce Seldon, companion of Moya. Next day, at Gunnison, the Farquhar party sees "Mr. Crumba" win the bucking broncho championship. He disappears after the contest. On their way home Moya and her companions are overtaken by a sheriff's posse in pursuit of two men who have robbed the treasurer of the County Fair association of the proceeds of the show. The sheriff declares the men are Jack Kilmeny ("Crumba") and his friend Colter. Captain Kilmeny and his sister realize that Jack is their cousin. His participation in the robbery seems assured. Jack meets Moya and convinces her of his innocence of the crime charged against him. Joined by the Farquhar party, Jack's relationship to Captain Kilmeny and his sister is established. He leaves them. With Jack Kilmeny his prisoner, the sheriff makes a short stay at the Lodge. Jack, on leaving, takes the captain's hat instead of his own. In Jack's hat Moya and India discover a paper giving directions for finding a package. Captain Kilmeny and the two girls find it—the money stolen from the fair association. Convinced that Jack is altogether unworthy of her thoughts, Moya becomes engaged to Captain Kilmeny, who has long been her suitor. Meeting Jack, Moya frankly tells him the discovery of the "loot" has convinced her he is a thief. She incidentally reveals the fact that Captain Kilmeny is on his way to return the money. Practically ordering Moya to meet him at the same place in the morning, Jack leaves her. The captain is held up and robbed of the cash, Jack undoubtedly being the thief.

CHAPTER VII—Continued

"My father was a young man when he came to this country. The West wasn't very civilized then. My father was fearless and outspoken. This made him enemies among the gang of cattle thieves operating in the country where his ranch lay. He lost calves. One day he caught a brand blotter at work. The fellow refused to surrender. There was a fight, and my father killed him."

"Oh!" cried the girl softly in fascinated horror.

"Such things had to be in those days. Any man that was a man had sometimes to fight or else go to the wall."

"I can see that. I wasn't blaming your father. Only . . . It must have been horrible to have to do."

"The fellow thieves of the man swore vengeance. One night they caught the chief—that's what I used to call my father—caught him alone in a gambling hell in the cow town where the stockmen came to buy provisions. My father had gone there by appointment to meet a man—lured to his death by a forged note. He knew he had probably come to the end of the passage as soon as he had stepped into the place. His one chance was to turn and run. He wouldn't do that."

Moya, looking at the son, could believe easily this story of the father. "Go on," she nodded tensely.

"The quarrel came, as of course it would. Just before the guns flashed a stranger rose from a corner and sold the rustlers they would have to count him in the scrap, that he wouldn't stand for a six-to-one row."

"Wasn't that fine? I suppose he was a friend of your father he had helped some time."

"No. He had never seen him before. But he happened to be a man."

The eyes of the girl were shining. For the moment she was almost beautiful. A flame seemed to run over her dusky face, the glow of her generous heart finding expression externally.

"I'm glad there are such men," she cried softly.

"The story of that fight is a classic today in the hills. When it ended two of the rustlers were dead, two badly wounded, and the others galloping away for their lives. The chief and his unknown friend were lying on the floor shot to pieces."

"But they lived—surely they didn't die?"

"Yes, they lived and became close friends. A few years later they were partners. Both of them are dead now.

Sam Lundy—that was the name of my father's rescuer—left two children, a boy and a girl. We call the boy Curly. He was down at the camp fishing with me."

She saw the truth then—knew in a flash that the man beside her had run the risk of prison to save his friend. And her heart went out to him in such a rush of feeling that she had to turn her face away.

"You paid back the debt to the son that your father owed his. Oh, I'm so glad—so glad."

"Guessed it, have you?"

"Your friend was the thief."

"He took the money, but he's no thief—not in his heart. In England only a criminal would do such a thing, but it's different here. A holdup may be a decent fellow gone wrong through drink and bad company. That's how it was this time. My friend is a range rider. His heart is as open and clean as the plains. But he's young yet—just turned twenty—and he's easily led. This thing was sprung on him by an older man with whom he had been drinking. Before they were sober he and Mosby had taken the money."

"I am sorry," the girl said, almost under her breath.

He explained more fully. "Colter by chance got a line on what the kid and Mosby were planning to pull off. Knowing I had some influence with Curly, he came straight to me. That was just after the finals in the riding. We hurried out to find Curly. Well, we were too late. While we were looking for our friends so as to stop this crazy play they were going to pull off, Colter and I met the president of the bank. We had known him in the mining country and he held us there talking. While we were still there news comes of the robbery."

"And then?"

"We struck straight back to the corral. Our horses were there. The boys had ridden back, swapped them for their own, and hit the trail. Mosby's idea had been to throw suspicion on us for an hour or two until they could make their get-away. We rode back to the crowd, learned the particulars, and followed the boys. My thought was that if we could get the money from them we might make terms with the association."

"That's why you were in a hurry when you passed us?"

"That's why."

"And of course the sheriff thought you were running away from him?"

"He couldn't think anything else, could he?"

"How blind I was—how lacking in faith! And all the time I knew in my heart you couldn't have done it," she reproached herself.

His masterful eyes fastened on her. "Did your friends know it? Did Miss Joyce think I couldn't have done it?"

"You'll have to ask her what she thought. I didn't hear Joyce give an opinion."

"Is she going to marry that fellow Verinder?"

"I don't know."

"He'll ask her, won't he?"

"She smiled at his blunt question a little wistfully. 'You'll have to ask Mr. Verinder that. I'm not in his confidence.'

"You're quibbling. You know well enough."

"I think he will."

"Will she take him?"

"It's hard to tell what Joyce will do. I'd rather not discuss the subject, please. Tell me, did you find your friends?"

"We ran them down in the hills at last. I knew pretty well about where they would be and one morning I dropped in on them. We talked it all over and I put it up to them that if they would turn the loot over to me I'd try to call off the officers. Curly was sick and ashamed of the whole business and was willing to do whatever I thought best. Mosby had different notions, but I persuaded him to see the light. They told me where they had hidden the money in the river. I was on my way back to get it when I found little Bess Lander lost in the hills. Gill nabbed me as I took her to the ranch."

"And after you were taken back to Gunnison—did you break prison?"

"I proved an alibi—one the sheriff couldn't get away from. We had gilded proof we weren't near the scene of the robbery. The president of the bank had been talking to us about ten minutes when the treasurer of the association drove up at a gallop to say he had just been robbed."

"So they freed you?"

"I made a proposition to the district attorney and the directors of the association—that if I got the money back all prosecutions would be dropped. They agreed. I came back for the money and found it gone."

"If you had only told me that they had no time. My first thought was to tell my cousin the truth, but I was afraid to take a chance on him. The only way to save Curly was to take back the money myself. I

couldn't be sure that Captain Kilmeny would believe my story. So I played it safe and helped myself."

"You must think a lot of your friend to go so far for him."

"His mother turned him over to me to make a man of him, and if she hadn't I owed it to his father's son."

Her eyes poured upon him their warm approving light. "Yes, you would have to help him, no matter what it cost."

He protested against heroics with a face crinkled to humor. "It wasn't costing me a cent."

"It might have cost you a great deal. Suppose that Captain Kilmeny had picked up his gun. You couldn't have shot him."

"I'd have told him who I was and why I must have the money. No, Miss Dwight, I don't fit the specifications of a hero."

Moya's lips curved to a sweet little derisive twist that was a smile in embryo. "I know about you, sir."

Kilmeny took his eyes from her to let them rest upon a man and a woman walking the river trail below. The man bowed and the westerner answered the greeting by lifting his hat. When he looked back at his companion he was smiling implicitly. For the two by the river bank were Lord and Lady Farquhar.

One glance told Moya that her chaplain had made up her mind to drive Jack Kilmeny from the field. Lady Jim looked at her husband. He cleared his throat in some embarrassment.

"Mornin', Mr. Kilmeny. If you have time I'd like to have you look over some ore samples sent from our mine."

The American smiled. He understood perfectly. "I've got all the time there is."

Moya intervened again. "First let me tell you the news. Mr. Kilmeny has been freed of all suspicion in connection with the robbery. The money has been returned and the whole thing dropped."

Farquhar's face cleared. "Glad to hear it." He emphasized his words, by adding a moment later: "By Jove, I am glad. Congratulations, Mr. Kilmeny."

His wife added hers, but there was a note of reserve in her manner. Plainly she was not fully satisfied.

Eagerly Moya turned to the young man. "May I tell all about it?"

He hesitated, then nodded shortly. "If you like."

Her voice vibrant with sympathy, Moya told the story in her ardent way. Kilmeny said nothing, but the corners of his mouth suggested amusement. Something of humorous derision in his blue eyes told Farquhar that the Colorado did not take the girl's admiration as his due. Rather, he seemed to regard it merely as an evidence of her young enthusiasm.

Lord Farquhar shook hands frankly with Kilmeny. "We've done you an injustice. If I had a son I would want him to have played the part you did under the same circumstances."

His wife backed him up loyally but with misgivings. The character of this young man might be cleared, but that did not make him any more eligible. Her smile had in it some suggestion of the reserve of the chaplain.

"I'm glad to know the truth, Mr. Kilmeny. It does you credit. Your cousins won't be back to lunch, but if you can stay—"

"I can't, Lady Farquhar. Thanks just the same. I've got to ride up into the hills to let the boys know it's all right. We'll be leaving tomorrow to go back to work."

"We go tomorrow too. I suppose this will be good-by, then," Lady Farquhar offered her hand.

Kilmeny turned last to Moya. "Good-by, neighbor."

Her eyes did not shrink as the small hand was buried for an instant in his brown palm, but the youth in her face was quenched.

"Good-by," she repeated in a colorless voice.

"Sorry I wasn't able to say good-by to my cousins and Miss Seldon. I understand you're all going up to the mines. Tell Captain Kilmeny I'll try to see him at Goldbanks and make all proper apologies for my bad manners yesterday."

Moya's face lit up. "Do you live at Goldbanks?"

"Sometimes."

He bowed and turned away.

The girl was left wondering. There had been a note of reservation in his manner when she had spoken of Goldbanks. Was there after all some mystery about him or his occupation, something he did not want them to know? Her interest was incredibly aroused.

CHAPTER VIII

A Blizzard

Moya found in Goldbanks much to interest her. Its helter-skelter streets following the line of least resistance, its slapdash buildings, the scarred hillsides dotted with red shafts of smoke beneath which straggled slate-colored dumps like long beards, were all indigenous to a life the manner of which she could only guess. Judged by her Bret Harte, the place ought to be picturesque. Perhaps it was, but Moya was given little chance to find out. At least it was interesting. Even from an outside point of view she could see that existence was reduced to the elemental. Men fought for gold against danger and privation and toil. No doubt if she could have seen their hearts they fought too for love.

Miss Seldon was frankly bored by the crude rawness of the place. One phase of it alone interested her. Of all this turbid activity Dobyns Verinder was the chief proffiter. Other capitalists had an interest in the camp.

Lord Farquhar held stock in the Mollie Gibson and Moya's small inheritance was invested mostly in the mine. The Kilmenys owned shares in two or three paying companies. But Verinder was far and away the largest single owner. His holdings were scattered all over the camp. In the Mollie Gibson and the Never Quit, the two biggest properties at Goldbanks, he held a controlling vote.

It was impossible for Joyce to put her nose out of the hotel without being confronted with the wealth of her suitor. This made a tremendous appeal to the imagination of the young woman. All these thousands of men were toiling to make him richer. If Verinder could have known it, the environment was a potent ally for him. In London he was a social climber, in spite of his gold; here he was a sole autocrat of the camp. As the weeks passed he began to look more possible. His wealth would give an amplitude, a spaciousness that would make the relationship tolerable. As a man of moderate means he would not have done at all, but every added million would help to reduce the intimacy of the marital tie. To a certain extent she would go her way and he his. Meanwhile, she kept him guessing. Sometimes her smiles brought him on the run. Again he was made to understand that it would be better to keep his distance.

The days grew shorter and the mornings colder. As the weeks passed the approach of winter began to push autumn back. Once or twice there was an inch of snow in the night that melted within a few hours. The Farquhar party began to talk of getting back to London, but there was an impending consolidation of properties that held the men at Goldbanks. For a month it had been understood that they would be leaving in a few days now, but the deal on hand was of such importance that it was felt best to stay until it was effected.

One afternoon Moya and Joyce rode out from the canyon where the ugly little town lay huddled and followed the road down into the foothills. It was a day of sunshine, but back of the mountains hung a cloud that had been pushing slowly forward. In it the peaks were already lost. The great hills looked as if the knife of a Titan had sheered off their summits.

The young women came to a bit of level and cantered across the mesa in a race. They had left the road to find wild flowers for Lady Jim.

Joyce, in a flush of physical well-being, drew up from the gallop and

called back in gay dicker to her friend.

"Oh, you slow-pokes! We win. Don't we, Two Step?" And she patted the neck of her pony with a little gloved hand.

Moya halted beside the dainty beauty and laughed slowly, showing in two even rows the tips of small strong teeth.

"Of course you win. You're always off with a hurrah before one knows what's on. Nobody else has a chance."

The victor flashed a saucy glance at her. "I like to win. It's more fun."

"Yes, it's more fun, but—"

"But what?"

"I was thinking that it's no fun for the loser."

"That's his lookout," came the swift retort. "Nobody makes him play."

Moya did not answer. She was thinking how Joyce charged the batteries of men's emotions by the slow look of her deep eyes, by the languorous turn of her head, by the enthrallment of her grace.

"I wouldn't have your conscience for worlds, Moya. I don't want to be so dreadfully proper until I'm old and ugly," Joyce continued, pouting.

"Lady Jim is always complaining because I'm not proper enough," laughed Moya. "She's forever holding you up to me as an example."

"So I am. Of course I flirt. I always shall. But I'll not come a cropper. I'll never let my flirtations interfere with business. Lady Jim knows that."

Moya looked straight at her. "Were you ever in love in your life?"

Her friend laughed to cover a faint blush. "What an infant terrible you are, my dear! Of course I've been—hundreds of times."

"No, but—really?"

"If you mean the way they are in novels, a desperate follow-to-the-end-of-the-world, love-in-a-cottage kind—no. My emotions are quite under control, thank you. What is it you're driving at?"

"I just wondered. Look how cloudy the sky is getting. It's going to storm. We'd better be going home."

"Let's get our flowers first."

They wandered among the hills, searching for the gorgeous blossoms of fall. Not for half an hour did they remount.

"Which way for home?" Joyce asked briskly, smoothing her skirt.

Moya looked around before she answered. "I don't know. Must be over that way, don't you think?"

Joyce answered with a laugh, using a bit of American slang she had heard the day before. "Search me! Wouldn't it be jolly if we were lost?"

"How dark the sky is getting. I believe a flake of snow fell on my hand."

"Yes. There's one on my face. The road must be just around this hill."

"I daresay you're right. These hills are like peas in a pod. I can't tell one from another."

They rode around the base of the hill into a little valley formed by other hills. No sign of the road appeared.

"We're lost, Moya. They'll have to send out search parties for us. We'll get in the dreadful Sunday papers again," Joyce laughed.

An anxious little frown showed on Moya's forehead. She was not frightened, but she was beginning to get worried. A rising wind and a falling temperature were not good omens. Moreover, one of those swift changes common to the Rockies had come over the country. Out of a leaden sky snow was falling fast. Banked clouds were driving the wintry sunshine toward the horizon. It would soon be night, and if the signs were true a bitter one of storm.

"It's getting cold. We must find the road and hurry home," Joyce said.

"Yes," Moya's voice was cheerful, but her heart had sunk. An icy hand seemed to have clutched it and tightened. She had heard the dreadful things that happened during Rocky mountain blizzards. They must find the road. They must find it.

She set herself searching for it, conscious all the time that they might be going in the wrong direction. For this unfettered roll of hills offered no guide, no landmark that stood out from the surrounding country.

Moya covered her anxiety with laughter and small jokes, but there came a time when these did not avail, when Joyce faced the truth too—that they were lost in the desert, two helpless girls, with night upon them and a storm driving up. Somewhere, not many miles from them, lay Goldbanks. There were safety, snug electric-lighted rooms with great fires blazing from open chimneys, a thousand men who would gladly have gone into the night to look for them. But all of these might as well be a hundred leagues away, since they did not know the way home.

The big deep eyes of Joyce shone with fear. Never before in her sheltered life had she been brought close to Nature in one of her terrible moods. From her soft round throat sobbing words leaped. "We're lost, Moya. We're going to die."

"Nonsense. Don't be a goose," her downright friend answered sharply. "But—what shall we do?"

Scudding clouds had leaped across the sky and wiped out the last narrow line of sunlight along the eastern horizon. Every minute it was getting colder. The wind had a bitter sting to it.

"We must find the trail," Moya replied.

"And if we don't?"

"But we shall," the Irish girl assured with a finality that lacked conviction. "You wait here. Don't move from the spot. I'm going to ride round you at a little distance. There must be a trail here somewhere."

Moya gave her pony the quirt and cantered off. Swiftly she circled, but before she had completed the circumference the snow, now falling heavily, had covered the ground and obliterated any path there might be. With a heavy heart she started to return to her friend.

Owing both to the lay of the ground and the increasing density she could not see Joyce. Thrice she called before a faint answer reached her ears. Moya rode toward the voice, stopping now and again to call and wait for a reply. Her horizon was now just beyond the nose of her pony, so that it was not until they were only a few yards apart that she saw Two Step and its rider. Both broncho and girl were sheeted with snow.

"Oh, I thought you were gone. I thought you were never coming," Joyce reproached in a wail of despair. "Did you find the road?"

"No, but I've thought of something. They say horses will find their own way home if you let them. Loosen the reins, dear."

"If you have been in a western blizzard, you know how terrible it is. If you have not, let your imagination run riot."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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(TO BE CONTINUED.)

"Kitchen Cabinet"

The "kitchen cabinet" was a name given to a group of political advisers of President Jackson. They occupied no official positions, but were consulted by the president as private citizens. The principal members of this cabinet were Amos Kendall, William B. Lewis, Isaac Hill, Duff Green and Francis P. Blair. It was the custom of the unofficial advisers, whenever they called upon the president, to go in by the back door to avoid observation—hence the sobriquet of "kitchen cabinet," which is said to have originated among the Whigs.—Kansas City Star.

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Having Faith

There was great joy at the beginning; there shall be greater joy at the end; and, in spite of all the sorrows, by faith in God we have a right to claim a large share of that joy all the way through.—Exchange.