DUNRAVEN RANCH.

A Story of American Frontier Life.

By CAPT. CHARLES KING, U. S. A., AUTHOR OF "THE COLONEL'S DAUGHTER." "FROM THE BANKS." "THE DESERTER," DTC.

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Following the trail, he rode down stream a full half mile, and still there seemed no break. Nowhere on the other thore was there sign of bridle path leading up the slopes. Turning to his left in name impatience, he cent Noian at rapid lope across the intervening "bottom," and soon reached the bluffs, which rose stretched before him northward, level as a floor, until it met the sky; but it was southward he longed to look, and thither quickly turned. Yes, there it lay—Dunraven Ranch, in all its lonely majesty. From where he gased the nearest building stood a good long mile away. That it was the homestead he divined at once, for a broad veranda ran around the lower story, and white curtains were lower story, and white curtains were visible at the dormer windows of the upper floor. Back of it and on the eastern flank were other buildings, massive looking, single storied affairs, evidently stables, storehouses and corrals. There stables, storehouses and corrals. There was a tall windmill there—an odd sight in so remote a region—and a big water tank.

Perry wondered how it ever got there. Then at the southwest angle was a build-ing that looked like an office of some kind. He could see horses tethered there, and what seemed to be human figures moving about. Beyond it all, to the east and south, were herds of grazing cattle, and here and there in the dim distance a horseman moved over the prairie. This reminded him of the stranger who had given him the slip; and he gazed westward in search of him.

Far up the valley, between him and the distant post, he could plainly see a black object just descending the slopes from the southern prairie to the stream. Not another was in sight that his practiced eye did not know to be cattle. That, then, was his horseman, once more going fort-wards in the valley, after having made a three or four mile detour to avoid him. "Now, what sort of a Christian is that fellow?" thought Perry, as he gazed at the distant speck. "Going to the fort, too. By thunder! I'll find out who he is, anyhow. Now I'm going to the ranch.

Down the clopes he rode. Down the winding trail once more he trotted, peering through every gap among the cot-tonwoods, slaking Nolan's thirst at a lit-tle pool in the stream, and then, after other long half mile, he came to a sudden turn to the right. The road dipped and twisted through the stream bed, rose to the other side, wound through the cottonwoods and then out on the open turf. Huzza! There it stretched up the slopes traight away for the south, straight through a broad gap between two heavy gate posts standing on the stake line of that rigid fence. Nolan broke into a brisk canter and gave a neigh of salutation; Perry's eyes glistened with anticipation as he bent over his charger's neck, keenly searching the odd looking structure growing on his vision as they neared the fence. Then, little by little, Nolan's eager stride shortened and grew choppy. Another moment, and horse and rider reined up short in disappointment. Between the gate posts swung a barrier of cobweb lightness, slender and airy as spider ever wove, but bristling with barbs, stiff as "bullfinch" and unvielding as steel. One glance showed Perry that this inhospitable gate

For a moment he sat in saddle, studying the situation, while Nolan poked his head over the topmost strand of wire and keeping at respectful distance from the glittering barbs gazed wistfully over the inclosed prairie in search of comrade quadruped who could tell him what manner of place this was. Meantime his rider was intently eying the heavy padlock that was secured on the inner side of the gate. It was square in shape, massive and bulky-something utterly unlike anything he had ever seen among the quartermaster's stores. Dismount ing and holding Nolan well back from the aggressive fence with one hand, he gingerly passed the other through the spike fringed aperture and turned the padlock so as to get a better view. It was of English make, as he surmised, and of strength sufficient to resist anything short of a trip hammer. Evidently no admission was to be gained here, he reasoned, and yet it was through here that that horsemen had come but an hour before. Here were the fresh hoof prints in the trail, and it was evident that the rider had dismounted, opened the gate, led his horse through, closed and fastened it, then remounted and ridden away. Perry was plainsman enough to them carefully, a look of surprise came into his face; he bent down and closely examined the two or three that were most clearly defined upon the trail, then gave a long whistle as a means of expressing his feelings and giving play to

his astonishment. "Johnny Bull holds himself too high and mighty to have anything to do with us blarsted Yankees, it seems, except when he wants his horses shod. 'these shoes were set at the post blacksmith shop, or I'm a duffer," was the lieuten-ant's verbal comment. "Now, how was it done without the quartermaster's knowing it? That's the cavalry shoe!"

Pondering over this unlooked for reve

lation, Mr. Perry once more mounted and turned his disappointed steed again down stream. At last, full half a mile farther on, he saw that a wire fence ran southward again across the prairie, as though marking the eastern boundary of the homestead inclosure, and conjecturing that there was probably a trail along that fence and an opening through even if the southeastward line should be found fenced still farther, he sent Nolan through the Monee to the open bank on the northern side, cantered along until the trail turned abruptly southward, and, following it, found himself once more at the fence just where the heavy corner post stood deeply imbedded in the soil. Sure enough, here ran another fence straight up the gentle slope to the south, a trail along its eastern side, and a broad cattle gap, dusty and tramped with the hoofs of a thousand steers, was left in the fence that, prolonged down stream, spanned the northern boundary. Inside the homestead lot all was virgin

Following the southward trail, Perry rode briskly up the long incline. It was herds and their mounted watchers. de was far beyond the ranch buildings, but felt sure that once well up on the prairie he could have an uninterrupted view of them and doubtless meet some of the ranch people and satisfy himself what there was in the stories of their churlish and repellent demeanor. The sun was climbing higher all this time, and he, eager in pursuit of his reconnoissance. gave little heed to fleeting minutes. If fair means could accomplish it, he and Nolan were bound to have acquaintance

with Dunraven Ranch. with Dunraven Ranch.

Ten minutes' easy lope brought him well up on the prairie. There—westward now—was the mysterous clump of brown buildings, just as far away as when he stood, baffied and disappointed, by the gateway on the Monee. Here, leading away towards the distant buildings, was a bridle path. Here in the force was a s bridle path. Here in the fence was a gap just such as he had entered on the tream, and that gap was barred and guarded by the counterpart of the first gate and firmly secured by a padlock that was the other's twin. Mr. Perry's comment at this point of his explora-tions was brief and characteristic, if not objectionable. He gave vent to the same low whistle, half surprise, half vexation, that had comforted his soul before, but supplemented the whistle with the unnecessary remark: "Well, I'll be

Even Nolan entered his protest against such incredible exclusiveness. Thrusting his lean head far over the topmost wires, as before, he signaled long and shrill a neigh that would have caught the ear f any horse within a mile-and then, all alert, he waited for an answer. It came floating on the rising wind, a re-sponsive call, a signal as eager and confident as his own, and Nolan and Nolan's rider whirled quickly around to see the source from whence it rose. Four hundred yards away, just appearing over a little knoll in the prairie, and moving towards them from the direction of a distant clump of grazing cattle, another ing distance; and Perry, his bright blue eves dilating, and Nolan, his dainty, sensitive ears pricked forward, turned promptly to meet and greet the new ar-

For fifty yards or so the stranger rode confidently and at rapid trot. Perry smilingly watched the outturned toes, the bobbing, "bent over" seat, and augular elbows that seemed so strange and out of place on the broad Texan plain. He could almost see the "crop" in the free hand, and was smiling to himself at the idea of a "crop" to open wire gates, when he became aware of the fact that the stranger's mien had changed; confidence was giving place to hes itancy, and he was evidently checking the rapid trot of his horse and throwing his weight back on the cantle, while his feet, thrust through to the very heels in the gleaming steel stirrups, were braced in front of the powerful shoulders of the bay. The horse wanted to come, the rider plainly wanted to stop. Another moment, and Perry could see that the stranger wore eyeglasses and had just succeeded in bridging them on his nose and was glaring at him with his chin high in air. They were within two hundred yards of each other by this time, and to Perry's astonishment, the next thing the stranger did was to touch whirl him spitefully about, and go bobbing off across the prairie at lively can-ter, standing up in his stirrups, and bestriding his steed as though his object were not so much a ride as game of leap-

It was evident that he had caught sight of Perry when Nolan neighed, had ridden at once to meet him, expecting to find some one connected with the ranch, and had veered off in disgust the moment he was able to recognize the uniform and horse equipments of the United States cavalry.

CHAPTER IV.



sibly. From his handsome mount; his garb and his general appearance, Perry set this stranger down as one of the Englishmen residing at the ranch. It was not fear of arrest and capture that sent him scowling away across the prairie; it was deliberate intent to avoid, and this was, to Perry's thinking, tantamount to insult. One moment he gazed after the retreating form of the horseman, then clapped his forage cap firmly down upon his head, shook free the rein and gave Nolan the longed for word. Another instant, and with set teeth and blazing, angry eyes he was thundering at headlong speed, swooping down upon the unconscious stranger in pursuit. Before that sunburned, curly haired, bulkily framed young man had the faintest idea of what

galled him inexpres-

tingly accosting him: "I beg your pardon, my good sir, but may I ask what you mean by trotting away when it must have been evident

was impending. Mr. Perry was reining

in his snorting steed alongside and cut-

that I wanted to speak with you?" The stranger turned slightly and coolly eyed the flushed and indignant cavalryman. They were trotting side by side now, Nolan plunging excitedly, but the English horse maintaining his even stride; and stronger contrast of type and style one could scarcely hope to find. In rough tweed shooting jacket and cap. brown Bedford cords fitting snugly at the knee but flapping like shapeless bags from there aloft to the waist, in heavy leather gaiters and equally heavy leather gloves, the stocky figure of the Englishman had nothing of grace or elegance. but was sturdy, strong, and full of that burly self reliance which is so characterestic of the race. Above his broad stooping shoulders were a bull neck, red dened by the sun, a crop of close curling, light brown hair, a tanned and honest face lighted up by fearless gray eyes and shaded by a thick and curling beard of lighter hue than the hair of his

massive head. He rode with the carcless case and su preme confidence of the skilled horseman, but with that angularity of foot and elbow, that roundness of back and bunching of shoulders, that incessant rise and fall with every beat of his

borne's powerful haunch, that the effect was that of neither escurity nor repose. His middle, too, was the long, flat stated, Australian model, pig akis, with huge rounded leathern cushions circling in front and over the knees, adding to the cumbrousness of his equipment and in no wise to the comfort; but his bit and curb chain were of burnished steel, gleaming as though fresh from the hands of some incomparable English groom, and the russet reins were soft and pliable, telling of excellent stable management and discipline. Perry couldn't help admiring that bridle, even in his temporary fit of indignation.

As for him—tail, slender, elegantly

As for him—tall, slender, elegantly made, clothed in the accurately fitting undress "blouse" of the army and in riding breeches that displayed to best advantage the superb molding of his powerful thighs, sitting like centaur well down in the saddle, his feet and lower , cased in natty riding boots, swing close in behind the gleaming shoulers of his steed, erect as on parade, yet swaying with every metion of his horse, graceful, gallant, and to the full as powerful as his burly companion, the advantage in appearance was all on Perry's side, and was heightened by Nolan's spirited action and martial trappings. perry was an exquisite in his soldier taste, and never, except on actual cam-paign, rode his troop horse without his broidered saddle cloth and gleaning bosses. All this, and more, the English man seemed quietly noting as, finally, without the faintest trace of irritability, with even a suspicion of humor twink-ling about the corners of his mouth, he

replied:
"A fellow may do as he likes when
he's on his own bailiwick, I suppose." "All the same, wherever I've been, from here to Assinibota, men meet like Christians, unless they happen to be road agents or cattle thieves. What's more, I am an officer of a regiment just arrived here, and, from the Missouri down, there isn't a ranch along our trail where we were not 'hail fellow well met' in our camps. You are the first people to shun us; and, as that fort yonder was built for eded, I want to know what there is about its garrison that is so obnoxious to Dunraven Ranch—that's what you call

That's what-it is called." "Well, here! I've no intention of intruding where we're not wanted. I sim-ply didn't suppose that on the broad prairies of the west there was such a place as a ranch where one of my cloth was unwelcome. I am Mr. Perry, of the -th cavairy, and I'm bound to say I'd like to know what you people have against us. Are you the proprietor?"

"I'm not. I'm only an employe." "Who is the owner?" "He's not here now." "Who is here who can explain the

situation?" "Oh, as to that, I fancy I can do it as vell as anybody. It is simply because we have to do pretty much as you fellows-obey orders. The owner's orders are not aimed at you any more than any body else. He simply wants to be let alone. He bought this tract and settled here because he wanted a place where he could have things his own way-see people whom he sent for and nobody else. Every man in his employ is expected to stick to the ranch so long as

his instructions. If he can't, he may "And your instructions are to prevent people getting into the ranch?" Oh, hardly that, you know. We don't

e is on the pay roll, and to carry out

interfere. There's never any one to come, as a rule, and, when they do, the fence seems to be sufficient." "Amply, I should say; and yet were I

to tell you that I had business with the proprietor and needed to ride up to the ranch, you would open the gate yonder. "No; I would tell you that the owner

was away, and that in his absence I transacted all business for him." "Weil, thank you for the information

given me at all events. May I ask the name of your misanthropical boss? You might tell him I called." "Several officers called three years

ago, but he begged to be excused." "And what is the name?"

"Mr. Maitland-is what he is called." "All right. Possibly the time may come when Mr. Maitland will be as anxious to have the cavalry around him as he is now to keep it away. But if you ever feel like coming up to the fort, just ride in and ask for me.

"I feel like it a dozen times a week you know; but a man mustn't quarrel with his bread and butter. I met one of your fellows once on a hunt after strayed mules, and he asked me in, but I couldn't go. Sorry, you know, and all that, but the owner won't have it."

"Well, then there's nothing to do for it but say good day to you. I'm going back. Possibly I'll see some of your people up at Rossiter when they come to get a horse shod."

"A horse shod! Why, man alive, we shoe all our horses here!" "Well, that fellow who rode out of your north gate and went up towards the fort about an hour or so ago had his

horse shod at a cavalry forge, or I'm a duffer." A quick change came over the Englishman's face; a flush of surprise and anger shot up to his forehead; he wheeled about and gazed eagerly, lower-

ingly, back towards the far away build-"How do you know there was— What fellow did you see?" he sharply

"Oh, I don't know who he was," answered Perry, coolly. "He avoided me just as pointedly as you did-galloped across the Monee and out on the prairie to dodge me; but he came out of that gate on the stream, locked it after him, and went on up to the fort, and his horse had cavalry shoes. Good day to you, my Britannic friend. Come and see us when you get tired of prison life." And, with a grin, Mr. Perry turned and rode rapidly away, leaving the other horse-

man in a brown study. Once fairly across the Monce he ambled placidly along, thinking of the odd situation of affairs at this great prairie reservation, and almost regretting that had paid the ranch the honor of a call. Reaching the point where the wagon tracks crossed the stream to the gateway in the boundary fence, he reined in Nolan and looked through a vista in the cottonwoods. There was the Englishman, dismounted, stooping over the ground and evidently examining the hoof prints at the gate. Perry chuckled at the sight, then whistling for Bruce, who had strayed off through the timber, he resumed his jaunty way

In the events of the morning there were several things to give him abundant cause for thought, if not for lively curiosity, but he had not yet reached the sum total of surprises in store for him. He was still two miles out from the fort, and riding slowly along the bottom, when he became aware of a trooper coming towards him on the trail. The sunbeams were glinting on the polished ornaments of his forage cap and on the bright yellow charrens of his snugly fitting blouse. Tall and slender and erect was the coming horseman, a

to the post.

model of soldierly grace and cerring and as he drew nearer and his har went up to the cap visor in solute gesture from his young superior broug an instant pressure on the rein, as horse and man became an animat statue. It was a wonderfully sudd yet easy check of a steed in rapid mo-tion, and Mr. Perry, a capital rider him-self, could not withhold his admiration.

"Where did you learn that sudden halt, sergeant" he saked. "I never saw anything so quick except the Mexican training; but that strains a horse and throws him on his haunches."

"I must get you to show me the knack

some day. I've noticed it two or three times, and would like to learn it. What I stopped you for is this: You've stable serveant ever since sergeant ever since we got here. have you not?'

"Then if anybody besides members of the troop had horses shod at our forge you would be pretty apt to know it?"

"I know that no one has, etr." And a flush was rising to the young sergeant's face and a pained look hovering about his bright blue eyes. Yet his manner was self restrained and full of respect.

Don't think I'm intimating anything to the contrary, Sergt. Gwynne, soldier in the regiment more entirely holds the confidence of his captain—of all the officers—than you. I was not thinking of that. But somebody down there at that big rance below us has had his horse shod by a cavalry farrier—it may have been done while the Eleventh were here—and, while I knew you would not allow it at our forge, I thought it possible that it might be done in your absence."

"It's the first time I've been out of sight of the stables since we came to the post, sir, and the captain gave me permission to ride down the valley this morning. May I ask the lieutenant why he thinks some ranchman is getting his shoeing done here at the post?

"I've been down there this morning. and met a man coming up. He avoide me, and rode over to the south side, and so excited my curiosity; and as they keep that whole place inclosed in a wire fence, and he had evidently come out of the north gate, I was struck by the sight of the hoof prints; they were per-fectly fresh there on the trail, and plain as day. There's no mistaking the shoe, you know. By the way, he rode up to the fort, and probably entered at your side of the garrison; did you see him?"

"No, sir, and, except for breakfast—just after reveille—I have been at stables all the morning. I was there when the lieutenant got his horse." "Yes, I remember. Then no one rode

in from the valley?" "No civilian-no ranchman, sir. The only horsemen I've seen were some Cheyenne scouts during the last two hours, and Dr. Quin-just before sick

"Dr. Quin!-the post surgeon! Are ou sure, sergeant?" "Certainly, sir. The doctor rode into the post just about an hour after the lieutenant left—coming up the valley too. He went right around to his own stable,

over towards the hospital."

A look of amaze and stupefaction was settling on Perry's face. Now for the first time he recalled Mrs. Lawrence's intimations with regard to the doctor. and his connection with the signal lights. Now for the first time it occurred to him that the secret of those cavalry hoof prints at the gate was that no ranchman, but an officer of the garrison, had been the means of leaving them there. Now for the first time it flashed upon him that the Englishman's astonishment and concern on hearing of those hoof tracks indicated that the story of a mystery at Dunrayen in which the doctor was connected amounted to some than garrison rumor. Now for the first time an explanation occurred to him of the singular conduct of the horseman who had dodged him by crossing the Monee. Never in his young life had he known the hour when he was ashamed or afraid to look any man in the eye. It stung him to think that here at Rossiter, wearing the uniform of an honorable profession, enjoying the trust and confidence of all his fellows, was a man who had some secret enterprise of which he dared not speak and of whose discovery he stood in dread. There could be little doubt that the elusive stranger was Dr. Quin, and that there was grave reason for the rumors of which Mrs. Lawrence had vaguely told him.

For a moment he sat, dazed and irresolute, Nolan impatiently pawing the turf the while; then, far across the prairie and down the valley there came floating, quick and spirited, though faint with distance, the notes of the cavalry trumpet sounding "right, front into line." He looked up, startled.

"They're out at battallon drill, sir," said the sergeant. "They marched out just as I left the stables." "Just my infernal luck again!" gasped

Perry, as he struck spur to Nolan and sent him tearing up the slope; "I might have known I'd miss it!"



sauntering back from stables, and as they reached the walk in front of officers' row a dark featured black bearded, soldierly looking captain separated himself from the rest and entered the colonel's yard. The commanding officer happened to be seated on his veranda at the moment, and in close confabulation with Dr. Quin. Both gentlemen ceased their talk as the captain entered, and then rose from their seats as he stepped upon the veranda floor. "Good evening, Stryker," said the col-

onel, cheerily. "Come in and have a seat. The doctor and I were just wondering if we could not get you to take a hand at whist to-night." "I shall be glad to join you, sir, after parade. I have come in to ask permis-

sion to send a sergeant and a couple of men, mounted, down to the Monee. One of my best men is missing." "Indeed! Who is that? Send the men, of course."

"Sergt, Gwynne, sir. The first time I ever knew him to miss a duty." "Your stable sergeant, too? That is unusual. How long has he been gone?"

"Since battalion drill this morning. He was on hand when the men were saddling, and asked permission to take his horse out for exercise and ride down the valley a few miles. I said yes, never supposing he would be gone after noon

ron call; and we were astoniahed when he failed to appear at stables. Perry says he met him two miles out."

'The two culprits!' said the colonel. laughing. "Poor Perry is down in the depths again. He rode up to me with such a weebegone look on his face at drill this morning that I could hardly keep from laughing in front of the who Even the men were trying hard not to grin: they knew he had turned up just in the nick of time to save him-self an 'absent.' What do you suppose can have happened to Gwynne?"
"I cannot imagine, sir, and am in-

willingly overstay a pass; and I fear some accident has happened."
"Is he a good rider?" asked the doctor.

"None better in the regiment. He is a model horseman, in fact, and, though he never alludes to nor admits it, there is a general feeling among the men that he has been in the English cavalry service. Of course, there is no doubt of his bone, and, I fancy, has seen better

What made them think he had been In the cavalry service abroad?"
"Oh, his perfect knowledge of trooper duties and management of horses. It took him no time to learn the drill, and he was a sergeant before he had been with me two years. Then, if you ever noticed, colonel," said Capt. Stryker, aptands attention he always has the fin gers of both hands extended and pointing down along the thigh, close against it—so." And Stryker illustrated. "Now, you never see an American soldier do lish trained soldiers. He has quit it somewhat of late, because the men told aim it showed where he was drilledwe have other English 'non-coms,' you know-out for a long time I noticed that in him. Then he was enlisted in New his things were of English make-what

"What manner of looking fellow is hell asked the doctor. "I think I would have noted him had I seen him."

"Yes, you Englishmen are apt to look to one another," said the colonel in reply, "and Gwynne is a particularly fine specimen. He has your eyes and hair, doctor, but hasn't had time to grow grizzled and bulky yet, as you and I have. One might say that you and the orgeant were from the same shire."
"That would help me very little, since

I was only three years old whe the gov-ernor emigrated," answered the doctor, with a quiet smile. "We keep some traces of the old sod, I suppose, but I've been a Yankee for forty years, and I've been a Yankee for forty years, and have never once set eyes on Merrie England in all that time. Did the sergeant say where he wanted to go?" And the stioner looked up sharply.

questioner looked up sharply.

"Nowhere in particular—down the valley was all. I remember, though, that Mr. Parke said he seemed much exercised over the name of that ranch down Monee-I've forgotten what they call it. Have you heard it, colonel?" "Seems to me I have, but I've forgot-ten. You have, doctor, have you not?"

"Heard what, colonel?" "The name of that ranch down the Monee-an English ranch, they tell me,

"Oh, yes!—that one! They call it Dun-raven Ranch.—Did the sergeant take any of the hounds with him, captain? It ocours to me he might have been running a coyote or a rabbit, and his horse have stumbled and fallen with him. There is no end of prairie dog holes down that

"No, the dogs are all in. I wouldn't be surprised if he had gone to the ranch. That's an English name, and they are all Englishmen down there, I hear. Very possibly that is the solution. They may have tempted him to stay with English hospitality: though it would astonish me there first, colonel, and will go and send them now." And, bowing to his commander, Capt. Stryker turned and left the porch.

The doctor rose, thrust his hands deep in his pockets, paced slowly to the southern end of the veranda, and gazed down the distant, peaceful valley, an anxious cloud settling on his brow. The colonel resumed once more the newspaper he had dropped upon the floor. After a moment Dr. Quin came slowly back, stood in front of the entrance a few second looking irresclutely at the soldier sprawled at full length in his reclining chair, stepped towards him with a pre paratory clearing of his throat as though about to speak, and then, suddenly and helplessly abandoning the idea, he plunged down the short flight of steps, hurried out of the gate and disappeared around the fence corner in the direction of the hospital. Immersed in his paper. the colonel never seemed to note that he had gone; neither did he note the fact that two ladies were coming down the

The soft swish of trailing skirt being insufficient to attract his attention as they arrived nearly opposite the shaded veranda, a silvery peal of laughter broke the stillness of the early evening. Mrs. Belknap's laugh was delicious-soft, melodious, rippling as a canary song, and just as spontaneous. Neither lady had said anything at the moment that was incentive of merriment; but if Mrs. Lawrence had given utterance to the quaintest, oddest, most whimsical conceit imaginable, Mrs. Belknap's laugh could not have been more ready, and her great, dark eyes shot a sidelong glance to note the effect. Down went the paper, and up, with considerable propping from his muscular arms, came the burly form of the post commander. Two sweet, smiling faces beamed upon him through an sperture in the leafy screen, and Mrs. Belknap's silvery voice hailed him in laughing salutation:

"Did we spoil your siesta, colonel? How can I make amends? You see, you were so hidden by the vines that no one would dream of your being there in am-

"Oh, indeed, I assure you I wasn't asleep," answered the colonel, hastily. Won't you come in, ladies, and sit here in the shade awhile?

"We thought we would stroll around until parade," said Mrs. Lawrence, hesitatingly, "and then sit down and watch it somewhere."

"No place better than this," promptly answered the colonel. "You can sit be-hind the vines on that side and see, or, what we would infinitely prefer, sit here at the entrance and be seen. Meantime, I've been unpacking some photograph albums this afternoon, and you can amuse yourselves with those while I put on my harness. Come!"

The colonel's collection of photographs was something the ladies had already heard a great deal of. One of the most genial and popular officers of the army, he had gathered together several large albums full of pictures of prominent men and attractive and distinguished women -not only those with whom he had been associated in his long years of service, but men eminent in national and state affairs, and women leaders in society in many a gay metropolis.

Both the ladies had hoped to see this famous collection the evening before, but the colonel had not then unpacked the albums, and they were disappointed. Now, however, the prospect was indeed

nts ster, and the officer was getting himself into his full dress uniform, the two pretty heads were close together, and two pretty heads were close together, and two pairs of very lovely eyes—one dark and deep and dan-gerous, the other a clear and honest gray —were dilating over page after page of photographed beauty. There was no need to puzzle over the identity of the originals; under each picture the thou ful colonel had carefully written name and address. Absorbed in this treat, they could barely afford time to look up and smile their thanks as the colonel passed, clanking forth at the sounding of adjutant's call, and were too completely engrossed in their delightful occupation to notice what took place at

parade. The long, slender line had formed-The long, slender line had formed—
the infantry companies on the right and
left flanks, their neat and tasteful dress
of blue and whits contrasting favorably
with the gaudy yellow plumage of the
four dismounted troops of the cavalry.
Company after company had taken the
staturesque pose of "parade rest" and its
captain faced to the front again, the adternal man interest about moving to his nest jutant was just about moving to his post on the prolongation of the front rank, and the colonel settling back into the conventional attitude of the commanding officer, when from outside the rectangular inclosure of the parade ground

from somewhere beyond the men's
barracks—there came sudden outcry and commotion. There were shouts, startling. Some of the men in ranks twitched nervously and partially turned their heads, as though eager to look behind them and see what was wrong; whereat stern voices could be heard in subdued but potent censure: "Keep your eyes to the front, there, Sullivan!" "! fast, there, center of Third company!"

The guard, too, paraded in front of its quarters some distance behind the line, vas manifestly disturbed, and the voice of the sergeant could be heard giving hurried orders. Every man in the battalion seemed at the same instant to arrive at one of two conclusions-prisoners all eyes were fixed on the imperturbable form of the commanding officer, as though waiting the signal from him to break and go to the rescue. But there the colonel stood, placid, calm, and apparently utterly unconscious of the dis ant yet nearing clamor. . The adjutant hesitated a moment before proceeding further, and glanced appealingly at his chief; whereupon there came from the blue and gold and yellow statue out on the parade, in half reproachful tones, the quiet order, "Go on!" and the adju-tant, recalled to his senses and with evident expression of his sentiments to the effect that if others could stand it he could, brusquely turned his head to-wards the band and growled, "Sound off!" The boom and crash of drum and cymbal and the blare of brazen throats frowned for a moment the sound of the turmoil without. The next thing the battalion heard or saw was a riderless horse tearing full tilt out on the parade and sweeping in a big circle from the right of the line down towards the point

where the colonel stood.

Following him came a pair of Cheyenne scouts, their ponies scampering in pursuit, but veering off the green as their riders realized that they were intruding on the ceremony of the day. Relieved of his pursuers, the fugitive speedily set-tled down into a lunging trot, and with streaming mane and tail, with head and ears erect, with falling bridle rein and fapping stirrups, he circled rapidly the open space between the colonel and the line of battle, then came trotting back along the front, as though searching in the stolid rank of bearded faces for the friends he knew. Officer after officer he passed in review until he came to Stryker's troop, posted on the right of the cavalry, and there, with a neigh of recognition, he fearlessly trotted up to the captain's outstretched hand. Another minute and two men fell out and made a temporary gap in the rank; through this a sergeant file closer extended his white glove, relieved the captain of his charge

and led the panting steed away.

The men retook their places; the captain again resumed his position in front of the center of his company, dropped the point of his saber to the ground and settled back into "parade rest;" the band went on thundering down the line, countermarched and came back to its post on the right, making the welkin ring with the triumphant strains of "Northern Route," the trumpets pealed the "retreat," the adjutant stalked his three yards to the front, faced fiercely to the left and shouted his resonant orders down the line, three hundred martial forms sprang to attention, and the burnished arms came to the "carry" with simultaneous crash, ranks were opened with old time precision, the parade "presented" to the colonel with all due formality, the manual was executed just as punctiliously as though nothing unusual had happened; first sergeants reported, orders were published, parade formally dismissed; the line of officers marched solidly to the front, haited, and made its simultaneous salute to the colonel, who slowly raised and lowered his white gloved hand in recognition; and then, and not till then, was any one allowed to speak of what was uppermost in every mind-that Sergt. Gwynne's horse had cones in without him, and that the animal's right flank was streaming with blood.

Ten minutes later Lieut. Perry, in riding dress, came burrying down to the colonel's quarters, where two or three officers were now gathered at the gate The ladies had put aside the albums, and with anxious faces were scanning the little group as though striving to gauge from their gestures and expression the extent of the calamity or the possible degree of danger. But Mrs. Lawrence looked fairly startled when her husband's voice was heard for the first time above the general hum of consultation:

"Col. Brainard, Mr. Perry is coming, 1 see, and I presume there is no time to be lost. You have asked if none of us who were stationed here ever visited the ranch, and the answer was no. May 1 suggest that Dr. Quin could perhaps tell something of its inhabitants?"

"Where is the doctor?" asked the colonel, turning suddenly. "Orderly, go and give my compliments to the post surgeon and say I wish to see him here a moment. All ready, Perry? You have made quick work of it." "All ready, sir. At least, I will be

the moment my horse gets here. There go the men running to the stables now. "Capt. Stryker will send a sergeant and four men to report to you, and you are to go direct to Dunraven Ranch. The rest of the troop, with the Cheyennes, will scout the prairie to the east and south. "Twill soon be too dark to trail, but three of the Indians are going back on the horse's track as far as they can. The adjutant is writing a note to the proprietor of the ranch-I don't know

"His name is Maitland, sir." "Is it? Have you been there?"

"I've been around one end of it, outside, but nowhere near the buildings. It's all fenced in, sir, and the gates kept locked."

"What an incomprehensible proceeding for Texas! Wait a moment while I speak to Mr. Farnham; he's writing here at my desk. Gentlemen, come in on the

porch and sit down, will you not?"
But they excused themselves and hastened away to remove their full dress. Capt. Lawrence had no need to call his wife. She bade her companion good evening, thanked the colonel with a smiling glance for the pleasure the photographs had given her, and added a word of earnest hope that they might find the sergeant uninjured. Then she joined her husband, and together they walked quickly away. Mrs. Belknap and Mr. Perry were left for the moment alone. "Can you walk home with me?" she

"Can you walk home with me" she asked, in her low, modulated tones, the great, heavily lashed, swimming dark eyes searching his face. "I have not seen you since they broke in upon our talk last evening, and there is something

I want to ask you."

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Belknap, but I'm on duty, you see," was the young fellow's answer as he gave a tug to the strap of his cartridge belt. "Can't you ask me

"How can I"-and the eyes were of pathetic disappointment—"when they may come out any moment! You did not finish telling me about—about the tassel last nigh... I believe you were glad when they interrupted us. Were you were you

"Nonsense, Mrs. Belknap! I was having too good a time—lots of fun."
"Yes," was the reproachful answer,
"that is what it was—to you—mere fun.

"that is what it was—to you—mere run.
And now you are going away again,
after promising to come in this evening."

"I have to go, Mrs. Belknap. Why, I
want to go, Haven't you heard what
has happened—about Sergt. Gwynner"

"Oh, yes, it is your duty, of course;
but how unlucky!" And the pretty face
was drooping with its weight of disappointment and sadness. She leaned was drooping with its weight of disappointment and sadness. She leaned
against the railing near his gauntlet covered hand, the dark eyes pensively downcast, the dark lashes sweeping her soft,
flushing cheek. "And to-morrow you
are on guard," she presently continued.

"Yes, unless some one has to go on for
me—in case we are not back in the morning in time."

Then it's good-by, I suppose," she said, lifting her eyes once more to his.
"After to-morrow there will be little
chance of seeing you. Mrs. Page will
be here by that time."

Mr. Perry looked at his fair com-panion with a glance that told of much perturbation of spirit. Mrs. Page was an old and cherished friend of Mrs. Belknap's—so the latter had always said—and now she was coming to visit her from a station in the Indian territory. Just why her coming should preven his seeing Mrs. Belknap or her see him was more than the tall subalt could understand. On the brink of an unpardonable solecism, on the very rag-ged edge of a blundering inquiry, he was saved, in her estimation, by the sudden return of the orderly and the re-

appearance of the colonel.

"I've been to the hospital, sir, and to the doctor's quarters; he's not there. They say that's him, sir, riding off yonder." And the orderly pointed to a faint speck just visible in the waning twillight. twilight, far away southe yond the Monee.

Continued next Saturday.

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