

DUNRAVEN RANCH. A Story of American Frontier Life. By CAPT. CHARLES KING, U. S. A.



WILIGHT still hovered over the broad expanse of prairie when Lieut. Perry and his little party, after a brisk canter down the valley, reached the

barbed inclosure of Dunraven, and the young commander led unhesitatingly to the gateway on the northern line. A sergeant of his troop and two private soldiers were his escort at the moment;

In the few minutes which elapsed between the announcement of the doctor's departure and his solitary and unexpected return and the arrival of the little mounted escort, Perry had time to tell the colonel something of the situation down the

Monce and to make a rough sketch of the inclosure and the distant buildings. The direction taken by the doctor, up to the moment when the black speck disappeared from view in the waning light,

was very apt to lead him, if he rode far enough, to some point on the wire fence which spanned the western limit of Dunraven; but that point would be at least five or six miles south of the valley.

Perry's orders were, in case nothing was seen or heard of Sergt. Gwynne while on the way thither, to enter the inclosure and make inquiries at the ranch itself. Meaning, the Cheyenne scouts had been hastily summoned from their lodges along the Monce just above the

post and sent scurrying forth upon the prairie to trail the horse's foot prints and so work back as far as possible before darkness interposed. Capt. Stryker, too, and a dozen of his best men, had mounted and ridden forth in long, scattered lines across the eastern plain; and these parties were all five miles out from the post before nightfall fairly hid them from

view. One thing the sergeant had to tell Mr. Perry which confirmed him in the belief that the sooner they got to Dunraven the quicker they would be at the scene of their comrade's mishap, whatever that might prove to be.

"You had no time to visit the stables and examine the wounds on the horse's flank, but as they rode away from Rosster he turned in the saddle and called to the non-commissioned officer of his side.

lights, she lifted up a pair of soft, shaded, music eyes and saw him.

Then, through the deepening twilight he strode, following the trail that led southward up the slopes. Five minutes' brisk walk along the springy turf brought him to the crest and in view of the lights at the ranch buildings, still some six or seven hundred yards away.

Already he could distinguish those in the main building, the homestead, from those more distant still, in the store rooms and office. Far over among the stables and corral he heard the deep baying of hounds, and he wondered if it was to be his luck to encounter any untripped dogs.

"My father is at home, but I fear he is not well enough to see you. Mr. Even is with him, and he might know. Will you—would you step in one moment, and I will go and ask?"

"Thank you very much. I wish you would trouble yourself. I presume I can go over to those stable building, or wherever it is the men sleep; they would be most apt to know if my sergeant has been seen."

He listened to the swish of her trailing skirts through the dimly lighted room beyond, through an invisible hallway, and then to the quick pit-pat of her feet upon the marble hallway.

He heard a door quickly opened; he heard men's voices in low, eager, excited talk; he heard her sweet tones once more, as though in expostulation, saying something about the sergeant, lost or wounded, and they were merely inquiring for him; he heard a stern, harsh intonation of "Silence! that will do!"

He waited five or ten minutes, and still no one came; but the murmur of voices in subdued but earnest conversation was again audible on the second floor, and at last a door was opened and he heard the same stern tones that had commanded his silence before, and this time they said:

"That is entirely my affair! I will see the gentleman myself, and let him know my opinion of this impudent and—burglarious intrusion."

"Whew!" whistled Mr. Perry to himself at sound of these menacing words. "This is bearding the lion in his den with a vengeance! Now trot out your 'Douglas in his hall,' and let's see what it all means. I've seen a girl, anyhow, and he can't take that back, even if he turns me out."

The young soldier had been standing by a center table, coolly scanning the pictures on the walls, and determining to present a rather exaggerated picture of nonchalance as reward for the hostile language of the proprietor of Dunraven. He expected to hear an outburst of invective when the proprietor asked the porter; but no one had passed the porter; then he halted short, and Mr. Perry, turning suddenly, was amazed at the pale, startled, yet yearning look in his quivering face.

The moment the young man confronted him there came a sudden change. It was with evident effort that he controlled himself, and then, after brief searching study of Perry's face, accented him, coldly and with sarcastic emphasis:

"I regret you so consider it, Mr. Maitland, as I believe you to be—"

"He is utterly mistaken, then," answered the Englishman, "and I resent—"

"Nothing has passed between you, Mr. Maitland," answered Perry, a little tartly now.

"I am glad," said Perry, swinging lightly into the saddle, "and mind you this, sir: I go with well warranted suspicion of some of the faces of yours here being responsible for the non-appearance of my stable sergeant. If he is not found this night you may confidently look for another visit. I say that to you also, Mr. Maitland, and you owe it to your fair name that there has been no bloodshed here to-night."

Old Maitland's tremulous tones were heard a second in reply when he was interrupted by a coarse voice from the crowd of ranchmen, many of whom were gathered about Perry as he sat in the saddle, and an applauding echo followed the loud tummy:

"Give the swell a lift, Tummy; 'will teach him better manners.'"

Almost instantly Perry felt his right foot grasped and a powerful form was bending at the stirrup. He had heard of the trick before. Many a time has the English trooper, taken unawares by hurling him with sudden lift from below, but Perry was quick and active as a cat. Seat and saddle, too, were in his favor.

"What do you fellows want here?" was his brusque and loud inquiry as he sprang from the piazza and stood confronting the sergeant, who was quietly seated in the saddle, and the question was promptly echoed by three or four burly men who, in shirt sleeves and various styles of undress, came tumbling in the wake of their leader and stood now a menacing group looking up at the silent trooper.

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"To what circumstance do I owe this honor of this intrusion?"

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THE PRETTIEST OF THE SEASON. Down this wide and busy street trip the beauty and youth, as well as the age and adipose tissue, of feminine New York, and beside the slim, graceful young daughters of the millionaires waddle the fat old mothers.



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The terrible hutchesses have lately appeared two or three times in dark maroon, brown and gray sherry dresses, with buttoned leggings, carrying guns and walking along trying to look as though they thought they could make folks believe that they were about on their guns for fun.

This is the time when the short jackets and small shoulder cape are in season, and muffs and long sealskin coats are not ripe yet.

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