## DUNRAVEN RANCH.

## A Story of American Frontier Life.

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

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science because of his self denial of the morning, Ned Perry scanned the distant prairie in search of the hunt. It was nearly luncheon time, and he expected to find the party making its way to the little stream whither the baskets, boxes and hampers had been dispatched by wagon some hours before; but when he sighted the quartermaster driving homeward in his buggy he learned from that bulky veteran that rabbit after rabbit had been run, and that the whole party had finally decided to give dogs and horses a cool deink down in the Monce valley before starting northward across the prairie.

"They must be getting down into the valley two or three miles east of the north from there, unless they stir up more game along the Monce. If I were you," said the quartermaster, "I'd ride over to the lunch stand. You won't get there much before the crowd."

Perry thanked him for the information, but, so far from accepting his advice, the young officer turned his horse's head in the direction of Dunraven, and was speedily riding thither with an alacrity that he himself could hardly explain.

In his brief talk with the colonel after parade on the previous evening Perry had told him what he could of the characteristics of Messrs. Maitland and Ewen. The odd letter which had been sent by them had given the commanding officer cause for much thought, and he was desirous, evidently, of gathering from Perry's observations as complete an idea as was possible of their life and surroundings. And still Perry had found it'impossible to volunteer any description of Mise Maitland; he could not bear to speak of her until-until he knew more of the doctor's purpose in his visits to the ranch. He had been detained by his commander just long enough to make it necessary for him to go direct to the Spragues' without leaving his helmet and saber at home. They were waiting dinner for him as it was, but Mrs. Belknap took no note of that circumstance; what she saw was that he had avoided even passing within hail of her piazza both before and

Now, though conscious of no intention of avoidance, Perry rode forth to the meeting of this day with some little mis-giving. In the first place, he knew that he must strive to make his peace with this slighted lady; and yet, in view of forty-eight hours, how utterly dwarfed had that affair-his laughing flirtation with Mrs. Belknap-become! Had any one told him his attentions to her and her marked preference for his society were matters that people were beginning to talk of-some with sly enjoyment others with genuine regret-he would have been grateful for the information, instead of resentful, as, with most men, would be the case ninety-nine times out of a hundred. But he knew nothing of this, and had too little experience to suspect the comments in circulation. She was most interesting-up to the day before yesterday; he loved to ride or dance with her; he enjoyed a chat with her more than he could tell. A most sympathetic and attentive listener was Mrs. Belknap, and her voice was low and sweet and full of subtly caressing tones She had made him talk to her by the hour of his home, his hopes and ambitions, his profession and his prospects, and had held him in a silken bondage that he had no desire to escape.

And yet, as he rode out on the breezy plain this brilliant day, he found all hought of her distasteful, and his eyes, far from searching for the flutter of her trim habit in the distant riding party, uld go a-roaming over the intervening shades and shallows down in the Mone valley and seek the bare, brown walls of Dunraven far across the stream. It was odd indeed that he should have sought this, the longest way round, on his ride in quest of his companions from the

Once again he looked at the isolated clump of buildings from his post of observation on the bluff; once again he saw across the stream and through the trees the barbed barrier that had caused both him and his men such laceration of flesh and temper; once again he saw the shallow valley winding away to the southeast, decked with its scrubby fringe work of cottonwood and willow but this time, three miles away, its accustomed solitude was broken by groups of riders and darting black specks of dogs, all moving northward once more and already breasting the slopes. He should have turned away eastward and ridden across country to join them, but down here in the valley, only a short distance away, absorbed in watching the hunting party, sat Mr. Ewen on a pawing and excited bay. Whatever coolness his rider might feel at this discovery, it was not shared by Nolan; he pricked up his ears and hailed his fellow quadruped with cordial and unaffected pleasure, a neigh that the English bred horse was so utterly uninsular as to whirl about and answer with correding warmth. Ewen caught at his avy Derby and jerked it off his bullet head with an air of mingled embarrass ment and civility, replacing it with similarly spasmodic haste. Perry coolly, but with a certain easy grace, raised his forage cap in response to the salutation, and then, seeing the manager still look-ing at him as though he wanted to say something and did not know how to begin, gave Nolan his head and rode down to short hailing distance.

'We meet on neutral ground out here, Mr. Ewen. I suppose your exclusive employer over yonder can hardly pro-hibit your answering civil inquiries after his health?" And, though he meant to be distant, Perry found himself smiling at the oddity of the situation.

"Do you know, I was just thinking about you," answered Ewen, "and won-dering whether you were with that party sown yonder? The old gentleman is

better, manus. He had two pretty bad

nights, but is coming around slowly."
"And Miss Maitland—how is she?" "Rather seedy. She has had a good deal of care and vexation of late, I fancy, and this is no place for a young girl,

anyhow."
"Well, you have some appreciation of
the true character of Dunraven as a residence, after all!" answerry Perry. "Now, if you can give me any good reason why she should live in this utterly out-of-the way place, you will lift a weight from my mind.

"Oh, they don't live here, you know," spoke Ewen, hurriedly. "She comes here only when her father does. It is her own doing. She goes with him everywhere, and will not leave him. She's all he has, don't you know?"

"I don't know anything about it. You Dunraven people seem averse to any expression of interest or courtesy from your fellowmen, but I'm free to say I should like to know what on earth there is in American cavalrymen to make them such objects of aversion to your master; and I would be glad to know how it is such a girl as that is dragged into such a hole as yonder." Ewen sat in silence a moment, studying the young fellow's face.

"You deserve a better welcome there." he presently answered, "and I don't know that I can do better than to tell you the truth-what I know of it. And let me tell you that if the old man knew of my speaking of it to any one, I'd lose the most lucrative but least attractive place I ever had. Do you see?" "Then perhaps you had better not tell

me. I do not care to pry into secrets." Oh, this is no secret. It was that that drove him here; everybody knew it in England. You were mighty shabbily treated at the ranch, and you requited it y preventing what would have been a bloody row, and by lending us a beloing hand. Even the old man recognizes that: and I think he'd be glad to say so to you, and see you, if you were not just what you are—a cavalry officer."

"Why, what on earth can we have done? If any of our cloth have wronged Mr. Maitland in any way, it is our right to know it and take it up.

"It wasn't your cloth, old fellow." said Ewen, thawing visibly, "but it was the cavalry all the same that broke his heart and his pride, and made his life the wreck it is, and drove him from his home, shunning the sight of his fellow men, all these years-exiling her, too, in the prime of her young life. Mr. Perry, there are only three or four of us at Dunraven who know the story, but we have only sympathy and pity-no blame -for him, though he is the hardest master I ever served."

"How did it happen?" asked Perry. "All through his son. There had been more of them, but there was only the one-Archie-when the Lancers were ordered to South Africa. He was a youngster, only 17, they tell me, and he had just been gazetted to his cornetcy. The old man was all wrapped up in him, for of the three boys the eldest had died only the month before the regiment was ordered on foreign service and the second had been killed in India. Both these two who were gone had made themselves famous among their comrades by their fearlessness and high character, and the old man, of course, could not ask Archie to quit the service just when orders for dangerous duty came. The boy went to the Cape with

his corps, and got into the thick of the Zulu war just at the time of the massaare of the Twenty-fourth at Isandlwhana and the fight at Rorke's Drift. I was at home then, and all England was quivering with grief over such needless sacrifice as was made of that regiment, and all ready to fall down and worship such fellows as Chard and Bromhead who made the superb fight almost at the "They say old Maitland wanted to go

himself, as volunteer or something, with Lord Chelmsford, but it couldn't be His father had fought at Alma and Inkerman, and his grandfather had led the Guards at Waterloo. The whole tribe were soldiers, you know; and now Archie was with the Lancers in Zululand, and the Lancers were going to wipe out the disasters of the first fights of the campaign, and Archie was to uphold the grand old fighting name and come home covered with clory. He was the heir now, and Miss Gladys was but a little girl. I have heard it all from Mrs. Cowan; she was their housekeeper in those days, and a sort of companion, too to Mrs. Maitland, who was very delicate. The old man was very fiery and proud and full of fierce denunciation of everything that had gone wrong in the cam paign; and he offended some people by the way he condemned some officer who was a friend of theirs, and there were others who thought he talked too much; but he fairly boiled over when the news came of how the prince imperial had been abandoned by his escort, and that a British officer and a dozen men had run two miles at top speed from a beggarly little squad of niggers before they dared look round to see what had become of their prince, whom they had left to fight the gang alone. That was old Maitland's text for a month. If any son of his had ever been of that party he would disown, disgrace, deny him, forbid him his sight, cut him off forever. And right in th midst of it all-a judgment, some people said-there came the awful news that Cornet Maitland of the Lancers was to be

court martialed for misbehavior in face of the enemy. "Of course the old man only raged at first; said it couldn't be true; 'twas all some foul invention or ridiculous blunder; but he ran up to London and saw somebody at the florse Guards-that's our war office, you know-and came back looking a century older and simply crushed to earth. Mrs. Cowan says they showed him the official report of a general officer who was called upon to explain why he had not sent certain troops to the relief of an advanced and threat ened post, and he replied that he had sent the order by Cornet Maitland, of the Lancers: had given him an escort of a dozen men and strict injunctions to push through by night, at all hazards, though the way was beset with Zulus, and that he neither went through nor returned, but was found hiding at a kraal two days after, only twenty miles away. The escort returned, and after much cross examination had told the story, separately and collectively, that the young officer had become utterly unnerved towards midnight by the reports from scouting narties and others; had declared to then that it was simply madness to attempt to push through; they would be massacred to a man; and, though they an-

nounced that they were stanch and ready,

he refused, and ordered them to bivopac

where they were for the night, and in the morning he had disappeared. They declared they supposed he had gone back to camp, and after waiting a day they returned, reporting him lost. "When found at the kraal he was de-

lirious with fever, or pretended to be, said the general, and he was brought in under arrest and the trial was to proceed. I don't know how it turned out. He was not court martialed, but permitted to return to England. It was said he told a very different story; that he had begged the brigade major who detailed the escort to let him have half a dozen of his own Lancers instead of the pack of irregulars they gave him; he did not trust them, and feared they would abandon him as they had the prince; but the staff officer said the order couldn't be changed-these men knew the country and all that sort of thing, you know; and there was one fellow in the Lancers who stuck to it that he believed Maitland had tried his best to get through alone. But 'twas all uscless; somebody had to be held responsible, and the failure was all heaped on him.
"Meantime, there had been fury at

home; old Maitland had written casting him off, repudiating-cursing him for all I know-and the next thing there came a messenger from the captain of his ship at Southampton. They brought his watch, his ring, his sword and portmanteaus, and a letter which was writ-ten on receipt of that his father sent him-a long letter, that the old man never read to any living soul, but broods over to this day. The young fellow bade them all good-by; he would not live to disgrace them further, if that was what was thought of him at home, and leaped overboard from the steamer the night after she weighed anchor-no one aboard could tell just when, but he was writing in his state room as she cleared the harbor, and the steward saw him undressing at 9 o'clock. In the morning every thing about his belongings was found in perfect order-his letter to the captain of the ship, the portmanteaus, watch, ring, clothing, etc., just as he described in that letter-and he was no more seen. It was the conviction of all that he must have leaped overboard in the darkness

when far out at sea.
"Then Mrs. Maitland bowed her head and never lifted it again. Then, all alone, and fiercely rejecting anything like sympathy, old Maitland took to travel-came here to America, wandered around the world, shunning men as he would these prairie wolves; and when he had to go to England he would see no one but the attorneys and solicitors with whom he had business. Here at Dunraven he is more content than anywhere, because he is farther from the world. Here Gladys is queen: 'twas she who named it, two years ago, for her mother was a connection of the earl's. But Maitland even here hates to have his name mentioned; and that is why I say he refers all business to me and keeps himself out of everything. Do you see what a weight he carries?"

Mr. Ewen had grown red with the intensity and rapidity of his talk. He removed his hat and mopped his face and brow with a big silk handkerchief, and then glanced again at Perry, who had listened with absorbed interest and who was now silently thinking it over, looking curiously at Ewen the while.

"Have I bored you half to death?" asked the Englishman, somewhat ruefully. "I never told that story before, but it has been smoldering for years."

"Bored? No! I never was more interested in my life. I was thinking what a different sort of fellow you were from the man I met out yonder the other day. Did they never do anything to clear the matter up? In our country it never

would have been allowed to rest there." "It was too far gone; and when the boy killed himself the thing was used by all the government papersyou'd call them 'administration organs' confession of judgment. the Lancers came home there was some talk, but it was soon hushed. Maitland had shut up the old place by that time and gone no one knew where, but I read it in one of the London papers-Truth, I think-a story that two of the irregulars had quarreled with their fellows and after the war was over told a tale that made a sensation in Cape Colony. They said that the young officer was a maligned man; that up to midnight he had pushed on, but every scout and patrol they met warned them that thousands of Zulus were ahead, and that it was madness to try. The men began whispering among themselves, and begged the sergeant to attempt to dissuade the Lancer officer; and he did, and they all

began to talk, but he refused to listen. At last they halted at a little stream and flatly refused to go a step further. He ordered, begged and implored. He promised heavy reward to any one of their number who would come and show him the way. Then they heard the night cries or signals of some war parties across the fields, and the sergeant and most of the men put spurs to their horses; the others followed, and they rode back five miles until they were within our patrolled lines; then they bivouacked, supposing, of course, the Lancer had followed them. But he hadn't: he never joined them all next day, and likely as not he had done his best to get through that strange country by night alone, and had tried to carry his dispatches to the detachment. They knew they must tell a straight story or be severely punished. They were twelve against one when it came to evidence, as the sergeant pointed out, and so they agreed on the one that sent him to Coventry.

"Some of the Lancer officers got hold of this and swore they believed it true; but meantime the government had had the devil's own time in tiding his lordship the general over the numerous blunders he had made in the campaign, and the Lancers were summarily or dered off elsewhere. There was no one left to take up poor Archie's cause at home, and the thing died out."

"By the Lord Harry, Mr. Ewen, it wouldn't die out here! We Yankees would resurrect such a thing if it were

old as a mummy."
"Sometimes I think old Maitland would be glad of the chance to do it, even broken as he is; sometimes, Mrs. Cowan says, he walks the floor all night and holds Archie's last letter in his hands. She thinks he charges himself with having driven the boy to suicide." "Does Miss Maitland never revisit the

old home?" asked Perry, after a moment's thought.
"She goes with her father-everywhere. He is never here more than twice a year, and seldom for more than six weeks at a time. Were it not for her, he would settle down here, I believe. went to Cape Colony and tried to find the men who gave out that story, but one of them was dead and the other had utterly disappeared. There were still six survivors of that escort, the sergeant among them, and he was a man of some position and property. They stuck to the original story, and said the two men who had started the sensation were mere blackmailing vagrants. Maitland advertised everywhere for the missing man, but to no purpose. I think he and Mis-Gladys have finally abandoned all hope of ever righting Archie's name. She was only a child when it all happened, but she worshiped him, and never for an instant has believed the story of his hav ing funked. She's out here riding somewhere this morning, by the way."

"Who! Also Maitiand?" exclaimed Perry, with a sudden start and a flash of eager light in his blue eyes. Ewen smiled quietly as he answered. "Yes. She needed exercise and wanted

to come down to the gate and meet Dr Quin. She went on up the valley, and I wonder she is not back."

The bright light faded quickly as it came; the glad blue eyes clouded heavily. Ewen looked at the young soldier, surprise in his florid face; surprise that quickly deepened into concern, for Perry turned suddenly away, as though look-

ing for his comrades of the hunt.
"I think they're coming now," said
the manager, peering up the valley under the shading willows. "Yes. Won't
you stop a bit?"
"Not now," was the hurried reply.
"Thank you're that they will be to be."

"Thank you for that story; it has given me a lot to think about. I'll see you again." The last words were almost shouted back, for, urged by sudden dig of the spur, Nolan indignantly lashed his heels, then rushed in wrathful gallop towards the eastern bluffs. It was no willful pang his rider had inflicted on his pet and comrade; it was only the involuntary transmission of the shock to his own young heart-a cruel, jealous stab, that came with those thoughtless words. "She wanted to come down to the gate and meet Dr. Quin, and went on up the valley." He would not even look back and see her riding by that man's side.



seemed off his feed" for a day or two. The hunt had been pronounced a big success, despite the fact of Perry's defection-he had not even joined them at luncheon-and it was agreed that it should be repeated the first bright day after muster. That ceremony came off on Monday with due pompand formality and much rigidity of inspection on the part of the post commander. It was watched with interest by the ladies, and Mrs. Belknap even proposed that when the barracks and kitchens were being visited they should go along. Dana had been her devotee ever since the day of the hunt, and announced his willingness to carry her suggestion to the colonel, but Belknap declined. She wanted a few words with Perry, and did not know how to effect her purpose. When he stopped and spoke to her after parade on Saturday evening and would have made peace, she thought to complete her apparent conquest by a show of womanly displeasure at his conduct, and an assurance that, thanks to Mr. Dana, the day had been delightful and his failure to accompany her had been of no consequence at all. The utterly unexpected

'stunner" to the little lady. So far from being piqued and jealous and huffy, as she expected, Mr. Perry justified the oft expressed opinion of her sisterhood to the effect that "men were simply past all comprehension" brightening up instantly and expressing such relief at her information that for a moment she was too dazed to speak. By that time he had pleasantly said good night and vanished; nor had he been near her since, except to bow and look used when she w lked by with Dana She never thought of him as an actor before, but this, said Mrs. Belknap to herself, looks like consummate acting. Had she known of or even suspected the existence of a woman who had interposed and cast her into the shade the explanation would have occurred to her at once; but that there was a goddess in the shape Gladys Maitland within a day's ride of Rossiter she never dreamed for an instant. Believing that no other woman could have unscated her, Mrs. Belknap simply could not account for such utter, such unutterable, complacency on the part of her lately favored admirer in his virtual dismissal. All Sunday and Monday she looked for signs of sulking or

surrender, but looked in vain.

way in which he took it was simply a

Perry seemed unusually grave and silent, was Parke's report of the situation; but whatever comfort she might have derived from that knowledge was utterly destroyed by the way he brightened up and looked pleased whenever they chanced to meet. Monday evening he stopped to speak with her on the walk, holding out his hand and fairly beaming upon her; she icily received these demonstrations, but failed to chill them or him. Then she essayed to make him suffer the pangs of the jilted by clinging to Dana's arm and smiling up in Dana's face, and then she suddenly started: "Oh. Mr. Dana! How could I have been so thoughtless-and this is your wounded side!" Dana protested that her slight weight was soothing balm, not additional pain, and Perry promptly asseverated that if he were Dana he would beg her not to quit his arm, and her eyes tooked scorn at him as she said, "How can you know anything about it, Mr. Perry? You've never been in action or got a scratch, while Mr. Dana"-and now the dark eyes spoke volumes as they looked up into those of her escort—"Mr. Dana is one of the heroes of the fighting days of the regiment." Even that failed to crush bim, while it had the effect of making Dana feel mawkish and absurd. Perry frankly responded that he only won dered the women ever could find time to show any civility whatever to fellows like him, when there were so many who "had records." She was completely at a loss to fathom him, and when tattoo came on Monday night, and they were all discussing the project of a run with the hounds for the coming morrow-a May day celebration on new principles-Mrs. Belknap resolved upon a change of tactics.

Dana was officer of the guard and over at the guard house, but nearly all the other officers were chatting about the veranda and the gate of the colonel's quarters. Thither had Capt. Belknap escorted his pretty wife, and she was as usual, the center of an interested group. Perry came strolling along after reporting the result of tattoo roll call to the adjutant, and Capt. Stryker called to him and asked some question about the men on stable guard. The orders of the colonel with regard to watching the movements of the men after the night roll call were being closely observed, and when the trumpets sounded "taps," a few moments later, several of the troop commanders walked away together, and this left a smaller party. It was just at this juncture that Mrs. Belknap's sweet voice was heard addressing the commanding

officer: "Oh, colonel! Ever since Thursday I have been telling Capt. Belknap about those levely albums of yours; and he is so anxious to see them. Could be have a look at them to-night?"

"Why, certainly," exclaimed the colonel, all heartiness and pleasure. "Come

right in, Belknap, come in—any of you—all of you—where it's good and light."
And he hospitably held open the screen door. Perry had seen the albums a dozen times, but he was for going in with the others, when he felt a little hand pressure on his arm, and Mrs. Belknap's great dark eyes were gazing up into his with mournful, incredulous appeal.

"Don't you know I want to see you?" she murmared so that only he could

And, much bewildered, Mr. Perry waited. She stood where she could look through the screen door in the parlor beyond, watching furtively until the party were grouped under the hanging lamps and absorbed in looking over one another's shoulders at the famous albums: then, beckoning to him to follow, she flitted, like some cerie sprite, on tiptoe to the southern end of the veranda, where clustering vines hid her from view from the walk along the parade. Perry began to feel queer, as he afterwards expressed it, but he stalked along after her, declining to modulate the thunder of his heavy heels upon the resounding gallery. She put her finger to her lips, and, after a nervous glance around, looked at him warningly, beseechingly.

"What on earth's the matter?" was all the perplexed and callow youth could find to say, and in a tone so utterly devoid of romance, sentiment, tenderness -anything she wanted to hear-that in all her experience-and she had had not a little-pretty, bewitching little Mrs. Belknap could recall nothing so humil-

"How can you be so unkind to me?" at last she whispered, in the tragic tremolo she well knew to be effective; it had done execution over and again. But big, handsome Ned Perry looked only like one in a maze; then he bent over her in genuine concern: "Why, Mrs. Belknap! What has hap-

pened? What has gone wrong? What do you mean by unkindness?" She faced him, indignantly now: "Is

it possible you profess not to know?"
"By all that's holy, Mrs. Belknap, I haven't an idea of what you mean to charge me with. Tell me, and I'll make every amend I know how."

He was bending over her in genuine distress and trouble; he had no thought but to assure her of his innocence of any conscious wrong. She was leaning upon the balcony rail, and he rested one strong hand upon the post at the shaded corner, above her head, as he bowed his own to

catch her reply.

For a moment she turned her face away, her bosom heaving, her little hands clasping nervously, the picture of wronged and sorrowing womanhood. His blunt, ragged honesty was some thing she had never yet had to deal with This indeed was "game worth the candle," but something of a higher order than the threadbare flirtations she had found so palatable heretofore. She had expected him to be revealed by this time as the admirer who had only been playing a part in his apparent acceptance of the situation of the last two days; she expected to be accused of coquetting with Dana, of neglect, coldness, insult towards himself; and this she would have welcomed; it would have shown him still a victim in her toils, a mouse she might toy and play with indefinitely before bestowing the final coup de grace. But instead of it, or anything like it, here stood the tall, handsome young fellow, utterly ignoring the possibility of her having wronged him, and only begging to be told how he had affronted her that he might make immediate amends. It was simply exasperating. She turned suddenly upon him, hiding her face in her hands, almost sobbing:

"And I thought we were such-such friends!"

Even that suggestive tentative did not lay him prostrate. Fancy the utter in-

dequacy of his response:
"Why, so did I!" This was too much. Down came the hands, and were laid in frantic appeal upon his breast. He did not bar the way; she could have slipped from the corner without difficulty, but the other method was more dramatic, "Let me go, Mr. Perry," she pleaded.

"I-I might have known; I might have known." The accents were stifled, heart

"Don't go yet, Mrs. Belknap; don't go without telling me what-what I've done." And poor Ned imploringly seized the little hands in both his and held them tight. "Please tell me," he pleaded.

'No, no! You would not understand; you do not see what I have to bear. Let me go, I beg, please; I cannot stay.' And her great dark eyes, swimming in tears, were raised to his face, while with faint-very faint-struggles she strove to pull her hands away, relenting in her purpose to go the moment she felt that he was relaxing the hold in which they were clasped, but suddenly wrenching them from his breast and darting from his side, leaving Perry in much bewilderment to face about and confront the

A little opening had been left in the railing at the south end of the veraudathe same through which the post surgeon had passed the night Mrs. Lawrence had shown to Perry the answering signal light; it was the doctor's "short cut" between the colonel's quarters and his own side door, and soft, unbetraying turf lay there between. Absorbed in her melo drama, Mrs. Belknap had failed to note the coming of the intruder; absorbed in his own stupefaction and his fair part ner's apparent depth of woe, Ned Perry heard nothing but her soft words and softer sighs, until a deep voice at his shoulder-a voice whose accent betrayed no apology-gave utterance to this uncompromising sentiment:

"Mrs. Belknap, this is the thirtieth-

not the first-of April." "And what has that to do with your sudden appearance, Dr. Quin?" swered the lady, with smiling lips but flashing eyes. She rallied from the shock of sudden volley like the veteran she was, and took the brunt of the fight on her own white, gleaming shoulders, needing no aid from the young fellow who stood there, flushed, annoyed, yet too perturbed to say a word even had there been a chance to get in one edge wise. Blunt as he was, he could not but realize the awkwardness of the situation. And to be so misjudged by such a man as Dr. Quin! All this was flashing through his mind as the doctor answered:

"Nothing with my appearance, Mrs Belknap; it was yours I remarked upon You seemed to think it All Fools' day. "Far from it, doctor, when I thought ou miles away."

"Well, well, Mrs. Belknap," said Quin shrugging his broad shoulders and laughing at her undaunted pluck, "I've known you lifteen years, and never have found you at a loss for a sharp retort."

"In all the years you have known me, doctor, as child, as maid, as woman you are the only man in the army who ever put me on the defensive I see clearly that you would taunt me because of this interview with Mr. Perry. Honi soit qui mal y pense, Dr. Quin! You are the last man in this garrison-cavalry and all-who can afford to throw

stones." "Whew-w-w!" whistled the doctor What a little spitfire you always were to be sure! Mr. Perry," said he, turning suddenly on the young officer, "iet me at once apolorize for a very misleading

observation. When I spoke of having known Mrs. Belkmap fifteen years she instantly thought I means to make ber out very much older than she is; and hence these recriminations. She always objected to me because I used to tease her when she was in her first long dresses—the prettiest girl at Fort Leavenworth—and she's never gotten over it. But her father and I were good friends, and I should like to be an honest one to his daughter. Good night to you both."

"One moment, Dr. Quin," said Perry, springing forward. "You have seen fit to make comments and insinuations that have annoyed Mrs. Belknap at a time

have annoyed Mrs. Belknap at a time when she was under my escort...

"Oh, Mr. Perry, not not" exclaimed Mrs. Belknap, laying her hand on his arm. "Not a word of that kind, I implored Hush! here comes my husband."

"Ah, Belknap," said the doctor blandly, as the big captain came hurriedly forth with searching glance along the dark gallery, "here you find me, as usual, trying to be devoted to Mrs. B. whenever I can get you out of the way.

whenever I can get you out of the way. Why the jeuce can't you stay?"
"Oh, it's you, is it, doctor?" answered

the captain in tones of evident relief. "It is far too chilly for this young woman to be sitting here without a wrap, is it not? Come inside, Dolly. Come, doctor. Halloo! what's that?" A cavalry trumpeter came springing through the gate and up on the veranda.

"Is Capt. Stryker here?" he panted. "No. What's the matter?" demanded Perry.

"Trouble at the stables, sir. Sergt. Gwynne's assaulted again." Perry sprang from the veranda and

went tearing across the dark level of the parade as fast as active legs could carry him, leaving the doctor far behind. A he passed the company quarters he noted that several men were leaping from their broad galleries, some just pulling on a blouse, others in their shirt sleeves, but all hastening towards the stables, where dim lights could be seen flitting about like will-o'-the-wisps. One of these troopers came bounding to his side and would have passed him in the race. He recognized the athletic form even in the darkness and hailed him: "That you, Sergt. Leary? What's gone

wrong? "It's thim blackguards from below sir. Who else could it be?"

"Those people at the ranch?" "The very ones, sir. No one else would harm Sergt, Gwynne. Sure we ought to have wound 'em up the one night we had a chance, sir."

Breathless, almost, they reached the stables. The horses were all snorting and plunging about in their stalls, showing every indication of excitement and alarm. From the stables of the adjoining companies other men had come with lanterns, and a group of perhaps half a dozen troopers was gathered about the form of a cavalry sergeant who was sented, limp and exhausted, at the western doorway. One soldier was bathing his face with a sponge; the first sergeant of the troop was bending over and trying to feel the pulse.

"Stand back, you men!" he said, authoritatively, as he caught sight of the lieutenant's shoulder straps. "Leave a lantern here. Now, Gwynne, here's Lieut. Perry. Can you tell him who it

Gwynne feebly strove to rise, but Perry checked him. "Sit down! The docter is coming:

don't attempt to move," panted the young "Tell me what you know about officer. it, Sergt. Hosmer." "Nothing but this, sir. I was in the

office when Trumpeter Petersen ran in and said they were killing Sergt. Gwynne. sent him for the captain and grabbed my revolver and ran here as hard as l could. He was lying just outside the door when I got here, and not another soul in sight. Sergt. Ross, of F troop, and Sergt. Fagan, of B, came with their lanterns from the stables next door; but they had not even heard the trouble.'

"Where was the stable guard?" "Inside, sir, and he's there now. He heard the scuffle, he says, and ran to give the alarm and to protect the sergeant, but the men scattered when he came, and he saw none of them."

"Tell him to come here. Let some of these men go in and quiet the horses. The captain will be here in a minute. and he will want to see that stableman. Who is it?"

"Kelly, sir." By this time Dr. Quin came lumbering heavily up the slope to the stable door. His manner was very quiet and very grave as he bent over the injured man and carefully studied his face by

the light of the sergeant's lamp. The doctor spoke gently: "You know me, sergeant?-Dr. Quin. Can you tell me what struck you? Are you hurt elsewhere than in the head?" Gwynne made no reply for a moment, then faintly answered:

"Stunned, mainly, and one or two kicks after I was knocked down." Then came a deeper voice, quiet but authoritative, and the group that had begun to close in again about the doctor and his patient fell back as Capt. Stryker strode into their midst.

"Sergt. Hosmer, send all these men of the troop back to their quarters at once, and permit no more to come out. Is he much hurt, doctor?" "Somewhat stunned, he says. I've

made no examination yet." The captain looked about him. Except one sergeant holding a lantern, the other troopers, obedient to his order, were slowly fading back into the darkness on their way to the barracks. Only the doctor, Mr. Perry, and the sergeant

remained by the side of the injured man. Then came the question: "Who did this, Gwynne?" No answer. A deeper shade of pain and trouble seemed to pass over the sergeant's face. He made an effort to speak, hesitated, and at last replied:

"I cannot say, sir." "You know, do you not?" Again pained silence and embarrassment. At last the sergeant leaned slow-

ly forward and spoke: "Captain, the men were masked, the voices disguised. I could not see the dress in the darkness. I was struck on the head almost the instant I got outside the door, and it would be impossible for

me to identify one of them." "Do you think it was the same gang you had the trouble with at Dunraven?" "I-could not say, sir."

"Do you suspect any of our own men?" "I-would not say that, sir." 'Where is the stable guard?" asked Stryker. "Send him here.

And presently Trooper Kelly-a wiry little Irishman, with a twinkling eye and an expression of mingled devilment and imperturbability in his face-came forth from the stable door and stood attention. "Where were you when this assault

took place, Kelly?" "At the far end of the stables, sir," replied Kelly, with prompt and confident tone.

"Then of course you saw and know nothing of it." "Not a wor-rad, sir."

Kelly reddened at the very idea. "I'd ha' died first, sir! Sure they'd niver dared" - And then Kelly stopped short. His Celtic pride had been touch-

ed to the quick, and had it not proved too much for even Irish wit?

"How did they get the sergeant out of the stable at this hour of the night?"

"Sure they called him out, sir."

"And the sergeant happened to be down there by the door at the time?"

"No, sir; he was in his room beyant—up there by the forage."

up there by the forage."

"That's a long distance from this door, Kelly; and if he could hear it in his room you could hear it farther away."

"I wasn't farther away thin, air; I was

"I wasn't farther away thin, sir; I was down here when they axed for him."

"Then why didn't you open the door and see who was making such a racket, shouting for Sergt. Gwynne after tape?"

"Sure they didn't shout at all at all, sir; they axed for him quiet and respectable like, an' I wint and told him."

"Ah, yes, I see. And then, having told him, you went away to the far end of the stable."

"Yis sir just so sir, an' the moment

"Yis, sir, just so, sir; an' the mo

I heard the scrimmidge, sir, I ran as hard as I could." "Of course you considered it was none of your business what people might want with the stable sergeant at night."

"No, sir. If he wanted me he had a right to tell me to come.' We differ on that point, Kelly. Relieve him, Sergt. Hosmer."
On the following morning Col. Brainard was surprised to note in Capt. Stry-

ker's column of remarks explanatory of the alterations from the status of the "Sergt. Gwynne from daily duty as

stable sergeant to sick in hospital; Sergt. Leary from duty to arrest, and Private Kelly from duty to confinement."



fact that there was an atmosphere of suppressed excitement over the garrison this May day morning, Mrs. Belknap's hunt came off according to plan, and the three heroines of the previous run rode forth with but slight change of escort. Capt. Stryker felt constrained to remain in garrison; he had a quiet investigation to make, and was observed to be in close conversation with Dr. Quin as the gay party assembled in front of Col. Brainard's quarters. Mr. Perry appeared in

OFWITHSTANDING the

quested the honor of being escort to Mrs. Lawrence, who accepted, yet looked a trifle embarrassed as she did so. Indeed not until she had stolen an appealing glance at her husband and heard his cordial "By all means, dear; Perry can guide you far better than I, and perhaps you'll win another mask," did she thankfully say "Yes." Dana rode with Mrs. Belknap, as before, and it was the colonel himself who suggested to Stryker that Mr. Perry should accompany Mrs. Lawrence this day, and that he, the colonel, should ride with Mrs. Sprague.

Perry had eagerly lent himself to the proposition: he figured that now he could have an uninterrupted chat with Mrs. Lawrence and hear what she had to tell about Dunraven. Just before starting he sought Capt, Lawrence, laughingly told him the terms of their agreement. and begged that he would relax his marital injunction and permit her to give him such details as she happened to be in possession of. "Indeed, Capt. Lawrence," he said, "I ask from no idle curiosity. I have been to the ranch, as you now know, and have good reason asking." To his surprise, the captain replied substantially that, while he had regretted Mrs. Lawrence's impulsive revelations, he had thought it all over and decided that the best way out was that Perry should be told the whole story and be able to see how very little there was to it. He had decided, therefore, to tell him himself; "and this evening, Perry, if you will dine with us informally, we'll talk it over afterwards. Meantime, I prefer Mrs. Lawrence's name should not be mentioned in connection with any story there may be affoat: so oblige me

by saying nothing to her on the subject." This was one matter for reflection and something of a surprise; but there was still another and even greater one. That very morning, just before guard mount, and while he was dressing, Perry shouted, "Come in," responsive to a knock at his sitting room door, and in came Capt. Stryker. The object of his early call was explained in very few words.

"Perry," said he, "I have been over to see Sergt. Gwynne this morning, and the doctor walked back from the hospital with me and told me of your threatened disagreement of last night. If it had not been for that sudden call to the stables I fancy there might have been a quarrel Now, I think you know I'm one of the last men to let an officer of my regiment -especially my troop-be placed in a false position, and-you can afford to leave this matter in my hands, can you not?"

"Certainly, Capt. Stryker." "Then I want you to say nothing to Quin on the subject, and to treat him, as far as possible, as though nothing had happened. His relations with the lady's father and family were, and are, such that she ought to treat him with respect and deference, and to accept his advice even though it be given in a style that Carlyle, his favorite author, is mainly responsible for."

"There was absolutely nothing in-in that ... Well, captain," stammered poor Ned, "I don't know how to say what I want to say." He wanted to say there was nothing in that interview which could possibly be criticised, but it suddenly occurred to him that on the contrary there was a good deal. Then he desired to assure the captain that, so far as he was concerned, there wasn't a suspicion of wrong doing; but-heavens and earth!-that was equivalent to saying the lady was doing all that was open to remark, and nothing would ever induce him to "give away a woman," as he would have expressed it. Perry stammered and reddened all the more, and at last gave it up in despair, Stryker sitting there the while with a quiet grin on his bronzed face and mechanically slashing his boot legs with a riding

switch. "I think I understand the situation, Perry, and there's no great harm done Only, let the matter drop-so far as the doctor is concerned, I mean; I do not presume to obtrude advice upon you as

to anything else."

And, though ne had meditated a different course, and had fully intended hunting up Dana and sending him with a note to call upon the doctor for an "explanation," he was glad to have a man of Stryker's standing cry halt. All the same he was sore incensed against Dr. Quin-mainly because of the jealous pain he suffered at the knowledge of his being so welcomed by Gladys Maitland when he saw fit to visit the ranch:

"Why did you let a gang from that English ranch come here and beat your sergeant before your very eyes?"