

CHAPTER XI. By Capt. Charles King, U. S. A.

Author of "DORRIS RANCH," "THE COLONEL'S DAUGHTER," "MARRION'S FAITH," ETC.

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CHAPTER XI. TAILED to the about the Nevada stage, and wanted to discuss Gourko and the Balkans or some other folk thing; what in thunder have I to do with campaigns in Turkey?—and I thought he meant those nigger soldiers the British have in India...

It was very generally known throughout Fort Warren by 10 o'clock on the following morning that Mr. Hayne had returned to duty and was on the line...

"Excuse me, captain, I shall be engaged all morning," answered Mr. Hayne, and walking on down the row. Nearly all the officers were strolling away in groups of three or four.

While he could not be invited where just a few infantry people were the other guests, from a big general gathering or party, he, of course, could not be omitted...

But it was not the end, by a good deal. Some of the ladies of the infantry, actuated by Mrs. Rayner's vehement exposition of the case, had aligned themselves on her side against the post commander...

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she was at her mercy, and she knew well that to lose her would well nigh break his heart.

They went down to the creek one fine morning early in April. There had been a sudden thaw of the snows up the gorges of the Rockies, and the stream had overflowed its banks, spread over the low lands and flooded some broad depressions in the prairie.

"No woman in that group could fail to note the leap of sunshine and gladness to his face, the instant flush that rose to his cheek.

"I spoiled a serenade for you a few nights ago. I was officer of the day, and I caught sight of a man gazing up at your window after midnight.

"You were in a mood, it is said, that all could hear."

"You, Mr. Blake! How can that be possible?"

"I am willing to let company commanders experiment at least once or twice on their theories, so you can try the scheme; but we of the old hand have some years of experience with the Clancys, and were not a little amused when they turned up again in our midst as accredited members of your company."

"So do I, sir; and as I saw the man both before and after his confinement, I am not so sure that it was necessary to confine him."

"I submit to your decision, sir," said the surgeon, "and I apologize for anything I may have asked that was beyond my province. Now I wish to ask a question for my own guidance."

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CHAPTER XII. "If it's only when he's drunk that conscience pricks him and the truth will out, then we must have him drunk again," quoth this unprincipled practitioner.

That same afternoon Miss Travers found that a headache was the result of confinement to an atmosphere somewhat heavily charged with electricity.

"Quite an unnecessary piece of information. I saw him as well as you. He has just gone there."

"I have seen no one; and if you mean that Mr. Hayne has gone to Maj. Waldron's, I shall not."

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was as easy to arrest any soldier under such circumstances," replied her sister, with majestic wrath, "and I will not tolerate it that you should criticize his conduct."

"I have made no criticism, Kate. I have simply made inquiry; but I have learned that no one else could have made me believe."

"Nellie Travers, be careful what you say, or what you insinuate. What do you mean?"

"I mean, Kate, that it is my belief that there is something at the bottom of those stories of Clancy's strange talk when in the hospital. I believe he thinks he knows something which would turn all suspicion from Mr. Hayne to a totally different man. I believe that, for reasons which I cannot fathom, you are determined Mr. Hayne shall not see him or hear of it. It was you that sent Capt. Rayner over there last night."

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CHAPTER XIII. "Well, sir, I should say it was a young woman."

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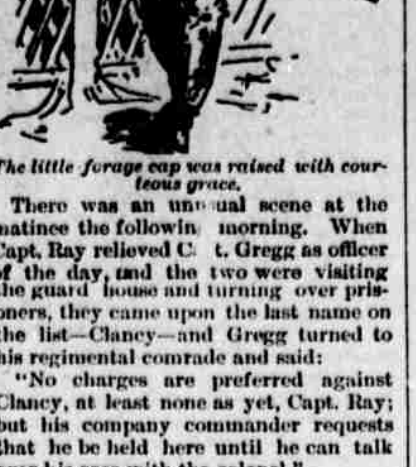
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Private Clancy struggling in the grasp of two or three soldiers.



The little forage cap was raised with courteous grace.



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