A Soldier's Secret

By Captain CHARLES KING, U. S. A.

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—SYNOPSIS.—

CHAPTER I—Nita Guthrie, a St. Louis girl, is visiting the family of Surgeon Holden, in the camp of the Twelfth cavalry, in Arizona. Captain Rolfe, an officer of the Twelfth, proposes and is rejected. An old love affair is in the way. Nita swoons over some mysterious apparition on the eve of her departure for home. II—After Nita leaves camp Dr. Holden tries to unearth the mystery of her swoon. He suspects that Sergeant Ellis, a recent recruit, and a man with a history, had some connection with it. III—Lieutenant "Curly" Brewster, another officer of the Twelfth, is in love with Winifred Berrien, the daughter of Major Berrien. Captain Rolfe lights upon evidence that another woman claims Brewster's devotion. IV. The society of the fort gives a hop, and Mrs. Knowles, a married flirt from a nearby town, makes a scene with Brewster, at which Major Barrien and Winifred are mystified and indignant. V.—Before Brewster can explain to Winifred about the Knowles woman his troop is ordered to march against the Sioux Indians in Dakota. VI. Major Berrien hears some gossip about Brewster's relations to Mrs. Knowles and bars the lover out from a parting word with Winifred. VII and VIII—The whole Twelfth goes to the seat of war. Captain Rolfe sends a detective to hunt up Sergeant Ellis' career before he joined the army. IX—Major Barrien is wounded in a skirmish. Brewster and Ellis save his life.

CHAPTER XI.

Brewster led his little band of troopers off into the night.

"Who's there?" demanded Brewster from beneath his robes and blankets, as late that night his name was called.

"It is I—Holden. Tumble up, man; I want you quick."

"My God, doctor, is Berrien worse?"

"No, thank heaven, he's sound asleep. Sergeant Ellis was brought in by the guard half an hour ago. He fell exhausted at the lines. We've just brought him to at the hospital tent, and from what I can make out—he's so weak yet—there's something back there out on the prairie, an ambulance and women. I ran over for you as soon as I could, for you probably know him best."

"Be with you in a minute," shouted Brewster, kicking off his moccasins and struggling into his heavy boots. "Lie still, Haddock; you're not wanted," he added. "What time is it, Doc?"

"Long after eleven—near midnight, I judge. Come as quick as you can. I'll go right back."

In five minutes, in the dim light of the hospital tent, Brewster was bending over Ellis' prostrate form. Others had pulled off his heavy boots and were chafing his half frozen feet. Holden had just administered another dose of brandy, but at sight of Brewster the languid, half open eyes began to gleam and the muscles of the lips to twitch.

"Stoop lower, Brewster; he wants to speak to you," said Holden. And Brewster inclined his ear almost to the black mustache.

Then with sudden bound he was on his feet again.

"What!" he cried. "God of heaven, man! do you mean it?" His face was ashen in an instant, but his eyes never quit their questioning gaze. Ellis nodded vehemently, striving again to speak.

"Doctor, do you hear?" cried Brewster, in mad dismay. "He says Mrs. Berrien and Winifred are in the ambulance broken down at Wolf Creek." And without another word he darted from the tent.

Ten minutes more, a dozen men of the "black troop" were bracing cinch straps, buckling throat latches and loading blankets on their astonished steeds. Despite the howling of the gale, half the camp was up and astir, Farquhar among the first. Brewster had his own horse saddled and was astride before any one else was fairly dressed, and by this time Ellis had recovered sufficiently to speak and tell his story. The train from the east came in on time at three, and he was amazed to see Mrs. Berrien's face. No one dreamed of her coming, for the wires were down. The quartermaster ran to meet her, and the sergeant himself hastened to give her good news of her husband. Nothing would answer, though, but that she must go to him at once.

In vain did Major Sterrett plead with her, saying it took five hours to drive over to the cantonment by day and he feared the evening would be dark and stormy. Go she would, and the quartermaster ordered out his own ambulance and best four mule team, with his own driver and a couple of armed outriders. He gave the ladies hot tea, loaded in lots of blankets and robes, and they started about half past three, were in the teeth of the gale at five o'clock, in pitch darkness and off the road at six, and somewhere about seven the mules became unmanageable in the blizzard, whirled short around and snapped off the pole. By this time, too, one outrider was lost, the other was frozen half to death and had been drinking whisky. The driver was so stiff he could hardly move hand or foot, and he and Ellis had the utmost difficulty in cutting loose the mules. There was every prospect of their capsizing the wagon, and they had to get the ladies out until the beasts were free. Then he found they were close to Wolf creek, more than half way, and Ellis determined to push on through the cantonment for help, first replacing the ladies in the covered wagon, wrapping them in furs and blankets and fastening the curtains. The hurricane increased. He and his horse were both blinded, and at last the poor brute stumbled, fell into a ravine and could barely struggle to his feet. Abandoning his horse, Ellis pushed on afoot and reached camp he knew not how. He only remembered hearing that distant tattoo.

Farquhar never hesitated. Brewster never asked. Holden made him and each of his men swallow a cup of steaming coffee, and the colonel took it as a matter of course that Curly was the very man to go.

"You have brandy and blankets in plenty?" he asked. "Holden is loading more into the ambulance, and it follows at once. Off with you now."

Impatient even of this brief detention, Brewster led his little band of troopers off into the night. There was not a man in the Twelfth that wouldn't have faced worst things than a blizzard for old Berrien's sake, and as for this it was but a bagatelle. "All we've got to do is scud before the gale, fellers," sung out Murphy, joyously, as they went cantering out of camp, and in a second more were lost to sight and hearing. Then came the clatter and rattle of the hospital team, the ambulance, weighted down with robes and blankets and a brace of heavy troopers, despite which ballast the light vehicle was well nigh whirled over by the force of the gale. And then Farquhar and the doctor had time to turn to Ellis and to think.

"They must have got my dispatch Tuesday night and left by the earliest train," said Holden. "How utterly outrageous a proceeding! And yet I might have known it of Mrs. Berrien."

Meantime there had been dismay at the quartermaster's depot. Sterrett, noting the increasing severity of the gale at nightfall, had begun upbraiding himself for having allowed the ladies to persist in the rash attempt. He had done his best to persuade Mrs. Berrien and to assure her that the major was doing well; he pointed out to her that they had nothing but rough shelter of log and turf and canvas at the camp; that there was absolutely no place where delicately nurtured women could be cared for. He offered her and Miss Winifred his own warm, snug, though rudely furnished room at the station, and ordered his chief clerk to clear out and sleep in the office. He told her how impossible it was for him to leave his post and his duties of forwarding supplies, and explained that there was no officer to properly escort them. But one by one she had promptly overthrown his objections. Escort? Here was Sergeant Ellis. What better could she ask? As for lack of accommodation at the camp, had she not lived all one winter with her beloved Dick in a Kansas dugout just the year after their marriage? Had she not camped with him on the Yellowstone?—nursed him in a deserted log hut through the mountain fever in the Big Horn? Were there not women, school teachers and the agent's and trader's families there at the agency? What had she to fear for herself or Winifred in the midst of the Twelfth?

"But the regiment is ordered to march tomorrow," said Sterrett. "It is an open secret that the Indians have slipped away from the troops along the Cheyenne, and there's the mischief to pay."

"All the more reason for my being at my husband's side," promptly answered this army heroine. "Dr. Holden will have to go, and Dick will be left practically alone. Winifred and I start at once, even if we have to walk."

Of course that ended the matter. Against such determination he was powerless. Having first done his best to detain them he had then bent all his efforts to the duty of transportation, and now at a late hour in the evening and in the energetic and familiar language of the corral was blaspheming the fate that had led him to yield his better judgment to her importunity. Somewhere about nine o'clock one of the outriders had been dragged off his horse more dead than alive and told a pitiful tale of having been driven before the storm, and he didn't even know how far they had got before he lost sight of the ambulance entirely, but was sure that one and all they had lost the road and now were adrift on the prairie. This was bad enough; but at ten o'clock or thereabout the corral master came in to say that the riderless horse of the other man had just arrived at the gate and, barely able to stagger, was led inside.

"Pete had a flask along," said the corral master sententiously. "That's what's the matter with him."

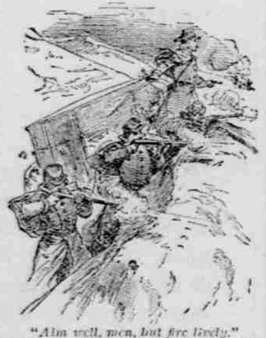
Then Sterrett could stand it no longer. Soldiers there were none to send—they were all over the range, at the cantonment or beyond; civilians were there in plenty, dozens of refugees from the ranches, dozens of railroad men and train hands, one or two disgusted correspondents who had got the "tip" as to impending movements all too late to catch the luckier members of that all pervading fraternity, but who were quick to realize the "scoop" they would have in transmitting to their respective journals full and picturesque details of the Dakota blizzard. It is an ill wind that blows nobody good.

Even though every one told him he could accomplish nothing whatever before daylight, Sterrett had a little party of stalwart frontiersmen duly equipped by midnight and ready to start the instant the gale should show signs of moderating. Hour after hour it shrieked and howled, driving the sheets of snow before it, sweeping the frozen prairie clean as a floor, but whirling dense white clouds into every sheltered gulch and ravine, settling the drifts in the lee of every stack and shed and building at the railway station where, "dead" and abandoned, lay the engine of the eastbound train, the passengers huddling for warmth into a single car and cheerfully discussing the propriety of using the other for firewood.

And then, before the first faint glimmer of dawn, as though spent with its own violence, the gale began to die. The clouds scudding southeastward drew aside, uncurtaining the placid heavens, where the stars were faintly gleaming and then twinkling out of sight. Soon in a blaze of glory and triumph the sun rose slowly over the far distant bluffs and looked down upon the scene of wrath and desolation wrought by rude Boreas in the conqueror's absence; and just then, too, there hove in sight a battered little squad of troopers on spent and jaded steeds, and the sergeant in command rode breast deep into the drift at the south entrance of Sterrett's office and yelled over the intervening shield of snow the stunning question:

"Did the ladies get back all right? We can't find the ambulance anywhere along the Wolf."

CHAPTER XII.



"Aim well, men, but fire lively."

Before quitting the ambulance and its precious freight Ellis had made such examination of the neighborhood as was possible in the thick darkness, and discovered that they were close to the edge of a narrow, winding ravine with abruptly sloping banks, and it was in here that those sagacious mules had sought shelter from the force of the blast. The ambulance was standing on a veritable ridge, exposed to the full fury of the gale, the slope to the rapid running Wolf just in front, the ravine to the right rear. Shouting to the ladies to fear nothing, he had no difficulty, when aided by the driver, in starting the wheels, and the instant the vehicle was partially turned into the track of the storm it was blown backward down into the soft bed of snow, already thick and deep. Here, under the lee of the banks, the stout wagon was comparatively sheltered, for the top of the canvas cover was just a trifle below the general level of the prairie. The mules, startled from their fancied security by the rattle of wheels and canvas as the ambulance was run down the slope into their midst, seized with one of their unaccountable panics tore blindly away up the farther bank and out upon the storm swept level beyond.

Then in the whirling cloud of snow Ellis had remounted, shouted again a few encouraging words to the ladies within, assuring them he and his sturdy troop horse would have no difficulty in reaching camp and bringing aid, urging them meantime to keep snugly bundled in their robes, and with Mrs. Berrien's brave voice and cheery "God speed you, sergeant!" ringing in his ears, he rode gallantly away, forded the shallow stream at the mouth of the coulee and then, facing the gale, spurred forth upon his perilous mission. The driver and the already somnolent Pete, with what was left of the contents of the depleted flask, crawled into the snowbed beneath the wagon body, rolled themselves into their joint stock of robes and blankets and prepared to spend a comfortable night. It was an old story to both.

But, despite all the driver's efforts on the way, the gale had forced them far to the right of the main road and those which paralleled it, the only ones at all familiar to the Twelfth, and when Brewster and his little squad reached the ford, along toward two o'clock in the morning, they sought in vain in every ravine and break—shouted, fired their carbines and sounded their trumpet, all to no purpose. Not an answering cry rewarded their efforts. From Ellis' description Brewster knew that the ladies were so muffled in furs that within their canvas shelter they could hardly suffer greatly from the cold. He was assured that the driver and Pete were with them, also well provided with robes and blankets, and that they were in no immediate danger of freezing; but he could not bear the thought of the long, weary waiting, the dread anxiety, the darkness, the isolation in all that howling wilderness. He could picture Winifred nestled in her mother's arms, wondering, wondering, as the hours dragged by, when, if ever, human aid would come to their relief. At four o'clock he and his party had searched and scouted for half a dozen miles up and down the valley. Some of his best and stanchest men were giving out, and these, with Sergeant Brooks, he ordered to push along with the gale and seek news and shelter at the station.

Three others he posted near the main crossing of the Wolf, under the lee of a little bluff, where they and their horses speedily stamped a hole in the snowdrifts around the hospital ambulance and huddled for warmth—fires they could not light, even had there been a vestige of fuel—and then, with three undaunted campaigners at his back, he had once again turned down stream, following its wanderings in the darkness and feeling for ravines he could not see along the southern bank. Time and again they dismounted and ran beside their horses to restore circulation to the numbed and stiffened feet and fingers. Time and again they plunged waist deep into drifts and the horses floundered to their girths in the powdery snow. At last Brewster noted that here and there far in the northwestern skies the stars were beginning to peep; the clouds were driving away, the dawn was nigh, the hurricane abating. Broader and brighter the daylight stole over the storm swept prairie, streaked here and there with fleecy, winding veins, and when at last the sun arose in its unclouded splendor the gale had died away to a mere ghost of its furious self, and they rubbed the icy fringe from their battered eyelids and gazed long and wistfully up and down that shallow, winding valley, all heaped and tumbled with the driven snow, and saw not a sign of those whom they had rushed to save.

Never for an instant did Brewster relax his efforts. Giving each of his men a pull at the flask, he selected little Murphy as about the most compact and certainly the lightest of the trio, and bade him make his way to camp and tell the colonel that up to sunrise no vestige of the lost ones had been found, and suggest that additional parties be sent out at once.

"Tell somebody to bring my field glass," he added, as Murphy was about to ride away. "If I had dreamed we would have found nothing of the ambulance until this time, I never should have left it. Good luck to you now, corporal. Ride as lively as you can."

Murphy turned promptly away, spurred his unwilling horse through the ice into the black and racing waters of the Wolf and was presently following a little break in the north side which led by a more gradual ascent to the prairie beyond.

"Now, men, one of you ride back toward the party at the ford, poke into every ravine to your left—they're all full of snow; it may be the ambulance is so deep in the drift they could hear no sound. If you find anything, the faintest trace, ride up on the prairie and circle your horse to the left. Morse, you come with me."

"Beg pardon, lieutenant, I think Murphy see's something now," said Morse, indicating the farther shore with a nod of his fur covered head. Whirling eagerly about, Brewster was surprised to see his little Irishman, a hundred yards or so away, crouching low on his horse's back, still in the ravine and up to his girth in snow, and peering cautiously eastward, his eyes just level with the bank. Then he was plainly seen to signal. In an instant Brewster and his men were plunging into the rapid stream, crushing the ice that skirted the shores and bounding out upon the frozen ground beyond. Again Murphy held forth a hand—a warning gesture, not a a beckoning one. "Keep down, keep down," he signaled, and wondering, the little party of troopers cautiously followed into the ravine.

"What do you see?" queried Brewster, eager and agitated.

"Upon my soul, sir, I wish I knew; but it's more like Indians than anything I can think of."

"Indians? where away?" And with a wild fear at heart Brewster gazed over the bank in the direction indicated.

"Indians, and coming this way, sir, or I'm a tenderfoot," muttered Morse, a man who had served in the Twelfth for many a year.

"What on earth can they be doing so far south of the agency? You don't think any of the hostiles have got down this way?"

"They're all hostiles, sir, when there's only three or four ag'in them. It don't matter whether these are from the agency or the Bad Lands now, if they can catch a white man a-napping, and something has brought them out here."

"My God, man! you don't suppose they've heard of the ambulance?"

"They hear things quicker than we do, lieutenant. Day or night, calm or storm, those fellows can all around beat us in getting news."

"And they are coming from the northeast, lieutenant," chimed in Murphy. "That means if they are from the villages near the agency they've circled around our people."

Breathless the little party watched the coming dots. The stream bore to the northeast after a deep bend about half a mile away, and on the farther bank, moving nearly parallel with the valley, about a dozen dark objects could be seen moving at rapid lope, the springing, tireless gait of the Indian pony. Ponies they were unquestionably, and each with his rider. Every moment brought them nearer and nearer, until, as they spread out in extended order across the level surface, it was possible to count their number, eleven; possible to note that every now and then some one of the number in front or on the flanks would rein in suddenly and circle around and stop, as though examining tracks upon the prairie.

"It is not possible the ambulance can have got so far over as that," muttered Brewster. "It is not possible that they can have heard of it in all that fearful storm. Why, Morse, it's madness to think of it!"

"I don't know how far the team may have been driven out that way, sir, but the blizzard came from the northwest, from their left front; it beat across their path all the way and mules won't face it, and if it isn't the ambulance they're after, what can it be?"

"My God, if we only knew where it was!" groaned Brewster. "Come what may, men, we've got to stand 'twixt it and those scoundrels. Here, Murphy, lively now, slip back down into the valley and ride for all you're worth to the ford and bring those fellows back with you, every man of them. Tell them to keep under the bank and ride like hell. Off with you, now." And this time there was no recall; Murphy was out of sight in a flash.

Nearer and nearer rode the savage horsemen, now about a mile away. Already Morse and his silent comrade had swung their carbines out of their leathern buckets, thrust a cartridge in the chamber and loosened others in the woven thimbles. Brewster never for an instant quit his gaze, but his hand had stolen back and loosed the flap of the holster at his hip. The movements of the Indians had puzzled him; they were riding not as though moving on some point already determined, but rather as if searching, feeling their way. Every now and then, too, some of their number cantered to the edge of the bank and seemed to scrutinize the valley.

"Snowdrifts are too deep and plentiful in there, around that bend, sir. That's why they're up on the prairie."

Brewster's heart seemed almost to stand still. All on a sudden the leaders swerved; the blanketed riders could be seen bending low and over as they swung their nimble steeds in circle to the right. And then, then, an instant more, and, tossing the powdery snow all in a fleecy white cloud, there came tearing up out of the depths of some unseen coulee a lively herd of Indian ponies rejoicing in their unwonted freedom and determined not to be herded back to slavery without a struggle.

It was hard to repress the shout of joy that sprang to the soldiers' lips. Then it wasn't the ambulance after all; nothing but this frolicsome band of rascals that, after breaking away from the Indian boys the evening before, had doubtless been driven before the gale, demanding the sending forth of quite a party of the young men in search, even before the storm had fully abated. For a moment the troopers forgot their mission as they watched the chase. Fresh and unhampered by weight of any kind the scurrying band came sweeping along the edge of the distant bluff, following an active, mischievous leader and leaving their jaded pursuers far behind. The Indian knows too much to chase a running horse; he leaves him to his own devices, well knowing he will more quickly stop when unpursued and can then more readily be headed off and turned back to the ways he should go. On came the nimble herd full tilt toward the elbow in the shallow valley, where a broad white streak told of deep drifted snow, and there the leader veered to the left and south and would doubtless have stretched away at racing speed on that course but for one young warrior on a dun colored pony, who with the speed of the wind came darting out across the level surface beyond, gamely, skillfully heading him. Around went the leader once more in a wide circle westward, around the southermost edge of the fleecy drift, and then, with thundering hoofs, the whole troop went bounding away to the west without a living soul to interpose between them and the bald, rolling heights at the far horizon, miles and miles away.

"Go it, pony! I'm glad to see a redskin done for once!" was Morse's jubilant shout. And then, suddenly and sharp, "Good God! What's that, Lieutenant? Look!"

Not six hundred yards away, now, the little band of ponies, following their spirited leader, had suddenly halted at the very edge of some dip or sink in the prairie that lay to the southeast of the snowy rift in which the troopers were crouching, still hidden, they and their horses, from the sharp eyes of the chasing Indians. Then as suddenly, tossing high their scraggy manes, as though with one accord, the nimble brutes whirled to the south, their leader indulging in a fine flourish of heels as he sped away. And now Morse lay against the bank pointing eagerly to a couple of black objects startlingly outlined on the glistening white of the snow, two objects that came plunging up from the invisible depths of the hollow, struggling breast deep in the drifts, and at last reached the edge of the prairie, and, followed instantly by another couple, with their long ears erect, with outstretched neck and eager brayings, clattered away in pursuit of the herd. Brewster knew them at a glance—Sterrett's ambulance mules. Indeed, the broken pole was still dangling between the two in rear and bounding with them over the frozen turf.

And that swerve, that sudden halt and turn to the south end, had cost the band their liberty. Darting along abreast of them, but nearly half a mile away to the south, the warrior on the dun colored pony had shot far out beyond them, and now, sweeping around in a wide circle to his right, rode between them and the broad wastes to the west. Two other Indians were circling in their front, barring the way to the low hills to the south. Others still, straggling far out eastward, reined up so as not to interfere with the "rounding" of the herd, and in a moment or two more these three experts had turned their runaway property in wide sweep back into the shining track of the sun, and in a very few minutes the matter was settled; the ponies were sulkily trotting along the bank beyond the bend, headed for home and hard work again, with the ambulance mules braying at their heels. Here the younger Indians, the boys, took charge, and from the distant slopes, from south and east and from the prairie to the west, the others came cantering toward that sharp angle half a mile away and gathered in eager consultation about one who seemed to be their leader.

All this, and much more, Brewster and his men were watching with bounding pulses, in breathless excitement, Brewster with feelings of mingled hope and despair. Now he knew that the ambulance must be somewhere near at hand, possibly up that long ravine on the south side that slanted in from the prairie not a hundred yards away below them. Surely the banks looked as though there were a good ford at that point. Might not that be the very one of which Ellis spoke? Now, if it were but possible to drop back out of the drifts in which they were hiding and recross the stream, they might yet creep unobserved into the mouth of that gully and feel their way afoot until, somewhere in the snow, they came upon, as he now felt sure they must, the stormbound wagon with its precious contents. From their crouching place it was impossible to see across the ridge that separated them from the ravine referred to; but to the southeast the prairie lay before them, and the keenest eye could detect no sign of hollow between that which lay so near them and that from which those vagabond mules had emerged far out upon the plain. Somehow Brewster felt certain that now at last he was actually within pistol shot of the ambulance, within speaking distance, almost, of the girl he so fondly loved, whose very life at this instant depended not only on his courage, but also on his judgment. One false move would ruin all.

So long as the Indians kept up their powwow at the bend, so long was Winifred safe. The longer they delayed the nearer would it bring Murphy and the men from the main crossing three miles away up stream. Then, six to six, he could laugh at the Sioux. But any one who knew Indians at all knew that the discovery of the mules would only set them to work to find the snow camp from which the animals had broken away. Aye, even as these things flashed through his mind, Brewster could see that they were signaling "halt" to the herd guard, and that two of the youngsters were lashing their ponies out in front of the band and gradually bringing it to a standstill. Almost at the same moment, too, those in consultation separated, three riding swiftly after the herd, while the other three, slowly and cautiously, began to advance toward the hollow whence the mules had emerged. Evidently they expected to find the white man's wagon there.

"Now is your time, men," muttered Brewster. "Quick! Off with your side lines and double them about your horses' fore feet so that they can't even hobble out of the drift. Keep them here. Take your lariat and hopple my horse, one of you. Throw him if need be. I'll watch those beggars down stream. Ah, I thought so," he muttered, "they've grabbed the mules and are examining the harness; that will tell them easily enough they were cut loose after breaking the pole. Quick, men! throw snow by the bushel all over your horses. Roll in it yourselves. Get all the white on you can; then run down the gully as soon as you have your horses hidden and watch for my signal. The moment I say go, bend double and scamper to the ice yonder, then make for the bluffs. I'll follow instantly."

Meekly the two troop horses, after having been led to a deeper point down the coulee, bent their heads and submitted to the lashing together of their fore feet, but Brewster's "Black Jack" was of different mold. He would not yield.

"Over with him, Morse. No time to lose now. Lash him tight or he'll break away," called Brewster. And poor Jack's plunging availed him nothing. A moment more, with a dismal groan he was on his side in the soft, cold bed, the lariat was being lashed and knotted so that even furious struggles could not free him, and then, to add to the indignity, his erstwhile friends and comrades were heaping new insult and a storm of snow upon him. Jack couldn't understand it.

"Ready, men! They're just peeping over in the hollow now. The moment they're fairly in it, I give the word."

Twenty—thirty seconds of breathless silence. Then a quick gesture; a quick, low toned, but imperative "Go!"

Go they did, skimming over the pool above the rapids, leaping the narrow chasm where the black waters, dancing and frothing, had defied the ice king; ducking under the opposite bank; carbines in hand, revolvers at the hip, cartridges gleaming in every belt; and after them, leaping, yet bending low, went Brewster. Another moment and they reached the mouth of the ravine, burst through the powdery drift, and then, Brewster leading, eyes everywhere, almost on all fours, they scurried along half way up the opposite slope, keeping well under the crest and just at the edge of the deep drifts to their right. Fifty—sixty yards they made their rapid way, and then around a little bend and among great heaps and mounds of glistening, shimmering white there rose an odd-shaped heap, only a trifle higher than its fellows, and from the midst of it there projected a dingy, whity-brown canvas, slanting to the north, and with a cry of delight half stifled in his lips Carroll Brewster leaped into the snow, floundered to his armpits in the powdery drift, and in a moment more had forced his way through the fragile white wall before him, had seized the handle of the door and Winifred Berrien, starting from her mother's clasping arms, blinded for an instant by the glare of radiant sunshine, barely able as yet to rally from the stupor like slumber into which she had fallen, heard her name called in the joyous tones she knew so well and saw her lover, a stalwart, glowing, rejoicing young snow god, all sparkling with the white crystals, all glistening in the glorious beams, gazing upon her with a love light in his brave blue eyes that brought instant glow to her own wan and pallid cheek. And then, before she could even speak, before her mother could emerge from the enfolding robes, a shout was heard, then the sudden ring of a rifle shot, followed instantly by another, the spat as of a whiplash on the canvas top. Something tore its way through the roof and front with spiteful "zip."

"Down! down upon the floor! both of you, quick!" shouted Brewster, as he slammed the door, and the next instant they heard the order in his ringing tones, half stifled in the snow. "Fire, men! Keep 'em off! Fire!" They heard the quick bang! bang! of carbines close at hand, the prompt response of rifles distant as were the first, the whistle of lead through the icy air, the shrill yells of battling Indians, the furious gallop of bounding hoofs. Everywhere to their front the rapid fire increased. More yells, partly of triumph, partly summoning additional warriors to the spot, then the muffled beat of coming hoofs, and in the midst of it all Brewster's stern voice, calm and steady: "Aim well, men, but fire lively. Don't let them again get so close as to have a shot at the wagon. Watch that above all." Two—three minutes the sound of battle raged about them, increasing at the front. A soldier voice was heard to say: "There's more of them coming, sir. You can see them down there to the east." And Mrs. Berrien's heart grew faint with fear. Winifred had buried her face upon her breast and closed her ears to the horrid sounds. And then, all on a sudden, the yells of the charging Indians seemed to grow fainter, then sounds of dismay arose among them, then the cries were drowned in the clatter of ironshod hoofs and the chorus of soldier cheers. Murphy and his little squad came whirling up the bank, and Mrs. Berrien's heart poured forth in praise and thanksgiving at the joyous Milesian hail:

"To bell wid 'em, fellers! Sure all B throop's comin—not two miles behind!"

(Continued Next Week.)

The Longest Word.

The longest word in the English language is not "smiles," although there is a mile between its first and last letters, (s-mile-s). One of the happiest words, however, is health; real, ragged, rousing, red faced health. There is neither boon nor blessing like it. Yet thousands have lost it and it stays lost. This need not be. Myriads have regained their health by using Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery. An invaluable remedy for consumption or lung scrofula, bronchitis, asthma, cough, heart disease, fever and ague, intermittent fever, dropsy and many other diseases.

Israels—My daughter Rachel vas goin to get married on Christmas.

Jacobs—Vot you goin to give her?

Israels—If business imbroves between now an den, I vill probably give her away.

All Free.

Those who have used Dr. King's New Discovery know its value, and those who have not, have now the opportunity to try it Free. Call on the advertised Druggist and get a Trial Bottle, Free. Send your name and address to H. E. Bucklen & Co., Chicago, and get a sample box of Dr. King's New Life Pills Free, as well as a copy of Guide to Health and Household Instructor, Free. All of which is guaranteed to do you good and cost you nothing at J. N. Snyder's drug store, Somerset, Pa., or at Brallier's drug store, Berlin, Pa.

Christmas Stockings.

A street urchin stood peering into the window of a toyshop one evening just before Christmas watching a prosperous father buying presents. Bigger and bigger the boy's eyes grew as the purchasing went on. Finally, when it was all over and the man left the store, the lad sidled up to him and with great diffidence asked:

"Wuz all them things you bought fer one boy, mister?"

"Why, yes, certainly," said the man impatiently as he turned away with the bundles under his arms.

The street boy's eyes grew bigger yet.

"Gee whiz!" he whispered under his breath. "Rich men's boys must wear awful big stockings!"

Deaf Two Years, Restored.

My grand daughter Ethel Moore had been very deaf for two years, every cold making her worse, until she could hear only very loud conversation. She also had catarrh of the nose and throat. Dr. Sadler, 804 Penn Avenue, Pittsburg, began to treat her in June, 1891, and in two months had her completely well. It is now over a year and her throat and head are still perfectly clear and her hearing as good as ever.

ROBERT SMITH,
Steno Tavern, 35th Ward,
Pittsburg, Pa.

Dr. Sadler will return from his vacation, Dec. 19th. Take advantage of the Holiday Excursions to visit him.

The man who undertakes to get a living by his wits would have a more regular supply of bread if he would depend more on his muscle.—*Rom's Horn.*

Hosts of people go to work in the wrong way to cure a

SPRAIN,

when St. Jacobs Oil would cure it in the right way, right off.

Read the Bible New Year's Morning.

In many a Welsh household the first thing that is done by each member of the family on rising on New Year's morning is to consult the family Bible with a view to learning from it what the coming year has in store for the person seeking the information. This is done by reading the first verse upon which the eye falls, and the verse in question is believed to foretell in some way the good or ill fortune, the happiness or unhappiness, during the just begun new year of the person making the trial.—*Exchange.*

Bucklen's Arnica Salve.

The Best Salve in the world for Cuts, Bruises, Sores, Ulcers, Salt Rheum, Fever Sores, Tetter, Chapped Hands, Chilblains, Corns, and all Skin Eruptions, and positively cures Piles, or no pay required. It is guaranteed to give perfect satisfaction or money refunded. Price 25 cents per box. For sale at J. N. Snyder's drug store, Somerset, Pa., or at Brallier's drug store Berlin, Pa.

Love and Charity.

If you can make love and charity in your heart chord with the last song the choir sings New Year's day, you can make up your mind that you are a pretty good man after all.—*Kearney Journal.*

Geo. W. Jenkins, editor of the Santa Maria "Times," Cal., in speaking of the various ailments of children said: "When my children have croup there is only one patent medicine that I ever use, and that is Chamberlain's Cough Remedy. It possesses some medical properties that relieve the little sufferers immediately. It is, in my opinion, the best cough medicine in the market." If this remedy is freely given as soon as the croupy cough appears it will prevent the attack. It is also an ideal remedy for whooping cough. There is no danger in giving it to children, as it contains nothing injurious. For sale by Benford's Pharmacy.

Japan's Common Birthday.

The first of the year is really a sort of double festival in Japan, for the Japanese, like the Chinese, reckon their age from that date. A child born 24 hours before New Year's day is called 1 year old on that day, so that it is the birthday of all the Japanese people.—*New York Advertiser.*

Two Valuable Friends.

1. A physician cannot be always had. Rheumatism, Neuralgia, Sprains, Bruises and Burns occur often and sometimes when least expected. Keep handy the friend of many households and the destroyer of all pain, the famous Red Flag Oil, 25 cents.

2. Many a precious life could be saved that is being racked to death with that terrible cough. Secure a good night's rest by investing 25 cents for a bottle of Pan-Tina, the great remedy for Coughs, Colds and Consumption.

Bottles of Pan-Tina sold at G. W. Benford's drug store.

A New Epoch.

As the sun completes his annual revolution through the heavens by touching the southern solstice, and then commences his return to northern latitudes, man is compelled to recognize a new epoch in his own career and is reminded to pause a moment for earnest reflection in order to gather wisdom from vanished months and to forecast the signs of the future.—*Christian Work.*

A. E. Kilpatrick, of Fillmore, Cal., had the misfortune to have his leg caught between a cart and a stone and badly bruised. Ordinarily he would have been laid up for two or three weeks, but says: "After using one bottle of Chamberlain's Pain Balm I began to feel better, and in three days was entirely well. The peculiar soothing qualities which Chamberlain's Pain Balm possesses I have never noticed in any other liniment. I take pleasure in recommending it." This liniment is also of great value for rheumatism and lame back. For sale by Benford's Pharmacy.

Some Good and Bad Omens.

To meet a red haired person on first getting up indicates a dull day in business, and if such a one cross your door on New Year's day you will have an unlucky year. While making a trade, if a cross eyed person looks at you, it indicates that the bargain will be unprofitable. To hear a cricket chirp is good luck, and it is always a welcome sound under the hearthstone of the farmer's house.—*Exchange.*

Lots of Life in them Yet.

People whose forty-fifth birthday is behind them fancy that their power to resist disease is lessened because a cough sticks to them a few days. They change their ideas when they have tried The Pineola Balsam, for its goes right to the spot and makes the irritated throat well. The resinous substances in the pine and other trees will stop a cough every time if combined as they are in Ely's Pineola Balsam, which all wide-a-wake druggists have for sale at 25c.

New Year Bells.

Of all sounds, of all bells most solemn and touching is the peal which rings out the old year. I never hear it without a gathering up of my mind to a concentration of all the images that have been diffused over the past twelve-month. I begin to know the worth of that regretted time, as when a person dies.—*Charles Lamb.*

Free Pills.

Send your address to H. E. Bucklen & Co., Chicago, and get a free sample box of Dr. King's New Life Pills. A trial will convince you of their merits. These pills are easy in action and are particularly effective in the cure of Constipation and Sick Headache. For Malaria and Liver troubles they have been proved invaluable. They are guaranteed to be perfectly free from every deleterious substance and to be purely vegetable. They do not weaken by their action, but by giving tone to stomach and bowels greatly invigorate the system. Regular size 25c. per box. Sold at J. N. Snyder's drug store, Somerset, Pa., or at Brallier's drug store, Berlin, Pa.

The injunction, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," should be especially remembered at Christmas time.

A Christmas Legend From the Alps.

Here and there prevails the strange belief that horses and cattle speak in human language on the night preceding Christmas day. It is a sin to listen to what the animals say, or in any way to try to hear them. Not to believe that they talk is also a sin.

An Alpine story is told of a farmer's servant who did not believe that the cattle could speak, and, to make sure he hid in his master's stable on Christmas eve and listened. When the clock struck 12, he was surprised at what he heard.

"We shall have hard work to do this day week," said one horse.

"Yes; the farmer's servant is heavy," answered the other horse.

"And the way to the churchyard is long and steep," said the first.

The servant was buried that day week.—*Kansas City Times.*

In cases of burns, sprains, scalds, or any of the other accidental pains likely to come to the human body, Dr. Thomas' Eclectric Oil gives almost instant relief.

Not all are able to give golden gifts, or gifts bought with gold. But who is so poor that on Christmas day he may not bestow a pleasant word on some one poorer than himself? Who is so downcast that he may not give a token of sympathy to some fellow mortal in distress, a smile of friendly recognition to some forlorn one? Even a cup of cold water given in the name of him who founded Christmas shall not lose its reward.—Christmas Chimes.

A Miner's Experience.

A Hardy Welsh Miner of Dravosburg Tells a Story of Deep Interest to All.

Across the river from McKeesport is the little town of Dravosburg. Its residents are mostly miners, hardy men who work in the coal pits nearly. Many of them are Welshmen, and such is Mr. Roger Edmunds, a well-known man throughout the valley. When Mr. Edmunds became afflicted with a back trouble that made him practically a cripple his case commanded the attention and sympathy of his numerous friends; but those days are past and gone, the miner once more can do a miner's work; and 'tis the cause of this wondrous change that Mr. Edmunds speaks of here. We will let him tell it as he did to our representative. He says:

"For two years or more I have been a cripple from my back. It would be an impossibility to describe the tortures I have suffered during that time. I could not rise from a chair without aid; required assistance to sit down. I am a coal miner, and I have often crawled to the pit in the morning, so bad was my condition, and be forced to return home again unable to do anything. Sometimes I was so bad I have loaded wagons on my knees, utterly unable to stand up. I tried everything for a cure of my trouble, and exhausted every means that I knew of, but medicine seemed to have lost its virtue so far as I was concerned. I doctored until I finally gave up in despair, completely disgusted, and doubting the existence of a cure for my case, and believing there was no help for me. Some time ago my wife got at the drug store of J. C. Smith, McKeesport, a box of Doan's Kidney Pills, persuading me to try them. I took them to please her, never expecting to be a well man again. I felt better after the third dose. I used three boxes in all, and I am now as strong and supple a man as I ever was. For two years I could only load one wagon a day; at the pit now I frequently load five. My back is strong once more, and my cure nothing short of a miracle. Doan's Kidney Pills have been a blessing to me. I shall never be without them in the house."

For sale by all dealers—price, 50 cents. Mailed by Foster-Milburn Co., Buffalo, N. Y., sole agents for the U. S.

THE KEELEY CURE

Is a special boon to business men who, having drifted unconsciously into the drink habit and awaken to find the disease of alcoholism fastened upon them, rendering them unfit to manage affairs requiring a clear brain. A four weeks course of treatment at the

PITTSBURG KEELEY INSTITUTE,
No. 4246 Fifth Avenue,

restores to them all their powers, mental and physical, destroys the abnormal appetite, and restores them to the condition they were in before they indulged in stimulants. This has been done in more than 1000 cases treated here, and among them some of your own neighbors, to whom we can refer with confidence as to the absolute