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DESERTER

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

Author of "DUNRAVEN RANCH," "THE COLONEL'S DAUGHTER," "MARION'S FAITH," ETC.

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[CONTINUED.]

CHAPTER III.



Alone in the colonel's presence.

The officers of Fort Warrener were assembled, as was the daily morning custom, in the presence of the colonel commanding. It had long been the practice of that veteran soldier to require all his commissioned subordinates to put in an appearance at his office immediately after the ceremony of guard mounting. He might have nothing to say to them, or he might have a good deal; and he was a man capable of saying a good deal in very few words and meaning exactly what he said. It was his custom to look up from his writing as each officer entered and respond to the respectful salutation tendered him with an equally punctilious "Good morning, Capt. Gregg," or "Good morning, Mr. Blake," never omitting the mention of the name, unless, as was sometimes tried, a squad of them came in together and made their obeisance as a body. In this event the colonel simply looked each man in the face, as though taking mental note of the individual constituents of the group, and contented himself with a "Good morning, gentlemen."

When in addition to six troops of his own regiment of cavalry there were sent to the post a major and four companies of infantry, some of the junior officers of the latter organization had suggested to their comrades of the yellow stripes that as the colonel had no roll call it might be a matter of no great risk to "cut the matinee" on some of the fiendishly cold mornings that soon set in; but the experiment was never designedly tried, thanks, possibly, to the frank exposition of his personal views as expressed by Lieut. Blake, of the cavalry, who said, "Try it if you are stagnating for want of a sensation, my genial plodder, but not if you value the advice of one who has been there, so to speak. The chief will spot you quicker than he can a missing shoe—a missing horseshoe, Johnny, let me elaborate for your comprehension—and the next question will be, 'Mr. Bluestrap, did you intentionally absent yourself?' and then how will you get out of it?"

The matinees, so called, were by no means unpopular features of the daily routine. The officers were permitted to bring their pipes or cigars and take their after breakfast smoke in the big, roomy office of the commander, just as they were permitted to enjoy the post-prandial whiff when at evening recitation in the same office they sat around the room, chatting in low tones, for half an hour, while the colonel received the reports of his adjutant, the surgeon and the old and the new officer of the day. Then any matters affecting the discipline or instruction or general interests of the command were brought up; both sides of the question were presented, if question arose; the decision was rendered then and there, and the officers were dismissed for the day with the customary "That's all, gentlemen." They left the office well knowing that only in the event of some sudden emergency would they be called thither again or disturbed in their daily vocations until the same hour on the following morning. Meantime, they must be about their work—drills, if weather permitted; stable duty, no matter what the weather; garrison courts, boards of survey, the big general court that was perennially dispensing justice at the post, and the long list of minor but none the less exacting demands on the time and attention of the subalterns and company commanders.

The colonel was a strict, even severe, disciplinarian, but he was cool, deliberate, and just. He "worked" his officers, and thereby incurred the criticism of a few, but held the respect of all. He had been a splendid cavalry commander in the field of all others where his sterling qualities were sure to find responsive appreciation in his officers and men—on active and stirring campaigns against the Indians—and among his own regiment he knew that deep in their hearts the —th respected and believed in him, even when they growled at garrison exactions which seemed uncalled for. The infantry officers knew less of him as a sterling campaigner, and were not so well pleased with his discipline. It was all right for him to "rout out" every mother's son in the cavalry at reveille, because all the cavalry officers had to go to stables soon afterward—that was all they were fit for—but what on earth was the use of getting them—the infantry—out of their warm beds before sunrise on a wintry morning and having no end of roll calls and such things through the day, "just to keep them busy?" The real objection—the main objection—to the colonel's system was that it kept a large number of officers, most of whom were educated gentlemen, hammering all day long at an endless routine of trivial duties, allowing actually no time in which they could read, study, or improve their minds; but, as ill luck would have it, the three young gentlemen who decided to present to the colonel this view of the case had been devoting what spare time they could find to a lively game of poker down at "the store," and their petition for "more time to themselves" brought down a reply from the orsacular lips of the commander that became immortal on the frontier and made the petitioners nearly frantic.

For a week the trio was the butt of all the wits at Fort Warrener. And yes the entire commissioned force felt that they were being kept at the grindstone because of the frivolity of these youngsters, and they did not like it. All the same the cavalrymen stuck up for their colonel and the infantrymen respected him, and the matinees were business like and profitable. They were rarely unpleasant in any feature, but she particular morning—two days after the arrival of Mrs. Rayner and her sister—there had been a scene of somewhat dramatic interest, and the groups of officers in breaking up and going away could discuss nothing else. The colonel had requested one of their number to remain, as he wished to speak to him further, and that man was Lieut. Hayne.

Seven years had that young gentleman been a second lieutenant of the regiment of infantry, a detachment of which was now stationed at Warrener. Only this very winter had promotion come to him, and, of all companies in the regiment, he was gazetted to the first lieutenancy of Capt. Rayner's. For a while the regiment when by itself could talk of little else. Mr. Hayne had spent three or four years in the exile of a little "two company post" far up in the mountains. Except the officers there stationed, none of his comrades had seen him during that time.

No one of them would like to admit that he would care to see him. And yet, when once in a while they got to talking among themselves about him, and the question was sometimes confidentially asked of comrades who came down on leave from that isolated station, "How is Hayne doing?" or "What is Hayne doing?" the language in which he was referred to grew by degrees far less truculent and confident than it had been the first week thither. Officers of other regiments rarely spoke to the "Rifers" of Mr. Hayne. Unlike one or two others of their arm of the service, this particular regiment of foot held the affairs of its officers as regimental property in which outsiders had no concern. If they had disagreements they were kept to themselves; and even in a case which in its day had attracted widespread attention the Rifers had long since learned to shun all talk outside. It was evident to other commands that the Hayne affair was a sore point and one on which they preferred silence. And yet it was getting to be whispered around that the Rifers were by no means so unanimous as they had been in their opinion of this very officer. They were becoming divided among themselves as to his guilt or innocence. Rumors were afloat that those who felt their views undergoing a reconstruction were compelled to admit that just in proportion as the case of Mr. Hayne rose in their estimation the reputation of another officer was bound to suffer, and that officer was Capt. Rayner.

Between these two men not a word had been exchanged for five years—not a single word since the day when, with ashen face and broken accents, but with stern purpose in every syllable, Lieut. Hayne, standing in the presence of nearly all the officers of his regiment, had hurled this prophecy in his adversary's teeth: "Though it take me years, I will live it down despite you; and you will wish to God you had bitten out your perjured tongue before ever you told the lie that wrecked me."

No wonder there was talk, and lots of it, in the "Rifers" and all through the garrison when Rayner's first lieutenant suddenly threw up his commission and retired to the mines he had loosted in Montana, and Hayne, the "senior second," was promoted to the vacancy. Speculation as to what would be the result was given a temporary rest by the news that war department orders had granted the subaltern six months' leave—the first he had sought in as many years. It was known that he had gone east; but hardly had he been away a fortnight when there came the trouble with the Cheyennes at the reservation—a leap for liberty by some fifty of the band, and an immediate rush of the cavalry in pursuit. There were some bloody atrocities, as there always are. All the troops in the department were ordered to be in readiness for instant service, while the officials eagerly watched the reports to see which way the desperate band would turn; and the next heard of Mr. Hayne was the news that he had thrown up his leave and had hurried out to join his company the moment the eastern papers told of the trouble. It was all practically settled by the time he reached the department; but the spirit and intent of his action could not be doubted. And now here he was at Warrener. That very morning during the matinee he had entered the office unannounced, walked up to the desk of the commander, and, while every voice but his in the room was stilled, he quietly spoke:

"Permit me to introduce myself, colonel—Mr. Hayne. I desire to relinquish my leave of absence and report for duty."

The colonel quickly arose and extended his hand:

"Mr. Hayne, I am especially glad to see you and to thank you here for all your care and kindness to our men. The doctor tells me that many of them would have had to suffer the loss of noses and ears, even of hands and feet in some cases, but for your attention. Maj. Stannard will add his thanks to mine when he returns. Take a seat, sir, for the present. You are acquainted with the officers of your own regiment, doubtless. Mr. Billings, introduce Mr. Hayne to ours."

Whereat the adjutant courteously greeted the newcomer, presented a small party of yellow strapped shoulders, and then drew him into earnest talk about the adventure of the train. It was noticed that Mr. Hayne neither by word nor glance gave the slightest recognition of the presence of the officers of his own regiment, and that they as studiously avoided him. One or two of their number had indeed risen and stepped forward, as though to offer him the civil greeting due to one of their own cloth; but it was with evident doubt of the result. They reddened when he met their tentative—which was that of a gentleman—with a cold look of utter repudiation. He did not choose to see them, and, of course, that ended it.

Nor was his greeting hearty among the cavalrymen. There were only a few present, as most of the —th were still out in the field and marching slowly homeward. The introductions were courteous and formal, there was even constraint among two or three, but there was civility and an evident desire to refer to his services in behalf of their men. All such attempts, however, Mr. Hayne waved aside by an immediate change of the subject. It was plain that to them, too, he had the manner of a man who was at odds with the world and desired to make no friends.

The colonel quickly noted the general silence and constraint, and resolved to shorten it as much as possible. Dropping his pen, he wheeled around in his chair with determined cheerfulness:

"Mr. Hayne, you will need a day or two to look about and select quarters and get ready for work, I presume."

"Thank you, colonel. No, sir. I shall move in this afternoon and be on duty to-morrow morning," was the calm reply.

There was an awkward pause for a moment. The officers looked blankly from one to another, and then began craning their necks to search for the post quartermaster, who sat an absorbed listener. Then the colonel spoke again:

"I appreciate your promptness, Mr. Hayne; but have you considered that in choosing quarters according to your rank you will necessarily move somebody out? We are crowded now, and many of your juniors are married, and the ladies will want time to pack."

An anxious silence again. Capt. Rayner was gazing at his boot toes and trying to appear utterly indifferent; others leaned forward, as though eager to hear the answer. A faint smile crossed Mr. Hayne's features; he seemed rather to enjoy the situation:

"I have considered, colonel. I shall turn nobody out, and nobody need be inconvenienced in the least."

"Oh! then you will share quarters with some of the bachelors?" asked the colonel, with evident relief.

"No, sir;" and the answer was stern in tone, though perfectly respectful; "I shall live as I have lived for years—utterly alone."

One could have heard a pin drop in the office—even on the matted floor. The colonel half arose:

"Why, Mr. Hayne, there is not a vacant set of quarters in the garrison. You will have to move some one out if you decide to live alone."

"There may be no quarters in the post, sir, but, if you will permit me, I can live near my company and yet in officers' quarters."

"How so, sir?"

"In the house out there on the edge of the garrison, facing the prairie. It is within stone's throw of the barracks of Company B, and is exactly like those built for the officers in here along the parade."

"Why, Mr. Hayne, no officers ever lived there. It is utterly out of the way and isolated. I believe it was built for the sutler years ago, but was bought in by the government afterwards. Who lives there now, Mr. Quartermaster?"

"No one, sir. It is being used as a tailors' shop; half a dozen of the company tailors work there; but I can send them back to their own barracks. The house is in good repair, and, as Mr. Hayne says, exactly like those built for officers' use."

"And you mean you want to live there alone, Mr. Hayne?"

"I do, sir, exactly."

The colonel turned sharply to his desk—once more. The strained silence continued a moment. Then he faced his officers.

"Mr. Hayne, will you remain a few moments? I wish to speak with you. Gentlemen, that is all this morning." And so the meeting adjourned.

While many of the cavalry officers strolled into the neighboring club and reading room it was noticed that their comrades of the infantry lost no time at intermediate points, but took the shortest road to the row of brown cottages known as the officers' quarters. The feeling of constraint that had settled upon all was still apparent in the group that entered the club room, and for a moment no one spoke. There was a general settling into easy chairs and picking up of newspapers without reference to age or date. No one seemed to want to say anything, and yet every one felt it necessary to have some apparent excuse for becoming absorbed in other matters. This was so evident to Lieut. Blake that he speedily burst into a laugh—the first that had been heard—and when two or three heads popped out from behind their printed screens to inquire into the cause of his mirth that light hearted gentleman was seen sprawling his long legs apart and gazing out of the window after the groups of infantrymen.

"What do you see that's so intensely funny?" growled one of the elders among the dragoons.

"Nothing, old mole—nothing," said Blake, turning suddenly about. "It looks too much like a funeral procession for fun. What I'm chuckling at is the absurdity of our coming in here like so many mutes in weepers. It's none of our funeral."

"Strikes me the situation is damned awkward," growled "the mole" again. "Here's a fellow comes in who's cut by his regiment and has placed ours under lasting obligation before he gets inside the post."

"Well, does any man here know the rights and wrongs of the case, anyhow?" said a tall, bearded captain as he threw aside the paper which he had not been reading, and rose impatiently to his feet. "It seems to me from the little I've heard of Mr. Hayne and the little I've seen, that there is a broad variation between facts and appearances. He looks like a gentleman."

"No one does know anything more of the matter than was known at the time of the court martial five years ago," answered "the mole." "Of course you have heard all about that, and my experience is that when a body of officers and gentlemen find, after due deliberation on the evidence, that another has been guilty of conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman, the chances are a hundred to one he has been doing something disreputable, to say the least."

"Then why wasn't he dismissed?" queried a young lieutenant. "The law says he must be."

"That's right, Dolly; pull your Ives and Benet on 'em and show you know all about military law and courts martial," said the captain, crushingly. "It's one thing for a court to sentence and another for the president to approve. Hayne was dismissed, so far as a court could do it, but the president remitted the whole thing."

"There was more to it than that, though, and you know it, Buxton," said Blake. "Neither the department commander nor Gen. Sherman thought the evidence conclusive, and they said so, especially old Gray Fox. And you ask any of these fellows here now whether they believe Hayne was really guilty, and I'll bet you that eight out of ten will flunk at the question."

"And yet they all cut him dead. That's prima facie evidence of what they think."

"Cut be blowed! By god, if any man asked me to testify on oath as to where the cut lay, I shouldn't be had cut them. Did you see how he knowed Foster and Graham this morning?"

"I did, and I thought he deemed ungentlemanly in him. Those fellows did the proper thing, and he ought to have acknowledged it," broke in a third officer.

"I'm not defending that point; the Lord knows he has done nothing to encourage civility with his own people; but there are two sides to every story, and I asked their adjutant last fall, when there was some talk of his company's being sent here, what Hayne's status was, and he told me. There isn't a squarer man or sounder soldier in the army than the adjutant of the Rifers; and he said that it was Hayne's stubborn pride that more than anything else stood in the way of his restoration to social standing. He had made it a rule that every one who was not for him was against him, and refused to admit any man to his society who would not first come to him of his own volition and say he believed him utterly innocent. As that involved the necessity of their looking upon Rayner as either perjured or grossly and persistently mistaken, no one felt called upon to do it. Guilty or innocent, he has lived the life of a Pariah ever since."

"I wanted to open out to him, today," said Capt. Gregg, "but the moment I began to speak of his great kindness to our men he froze as stiff as Mulligan's ear. What was the use? I simply couldn't thaw an icicle. What made him so effective in getting the frost out of them was his capacity for absorbing it into his own system."

"Well, here, gentlemen," said Buxton, impatiently, "we've got to face this thing sooner or later, and may as well do it now. I know Rayner and like him, and don't believe he's the kind of man to wilfully wrong another. I don't know Mr. Hayne, and Mr. Hayne apparently don't want to know me. I think that where a man has been convicted of dishonorable—disgraceful conduct and is cut by his whole regiment it is our business to back the regiment, not the man. Now the question is, where shall we draw the line in this case? It's none of our funeral, as Blake says, but ordinarily it would be our duty to call upon this officer. Shall we do it, now that he is in Coventry, or shall we leave him to his own devices?"

"I'll answer for myself, Buxton," said Blake, "and you can do as you please. Except that one thing, and the not unusual frivolties of a youngster that occurred previous to this trial, I understand that his character has been above reproach. So far as I can learn, he is a far more reputable character than I am, and a better officer than most of us. Growl all you want to, comrades mine; 'it's a way we have in the army,' and I like it. So long as I include myself in these malodorous comparisons, you needn't swear. It is my conviction that the Rifers wouldn't say he was guilty today if they hadn't said so five years ago. It is my information that he has paid every cent of the damages, whether he caused them or not, and it is my intention to go and call upon Mr. Hayne as soon as he's settled. I don't propose to influence any man in his action; and excuse me, Buxton, I think you did."

The captain looked wrathful. Blake was an oddity of whom he rather stood in awe, but popularity and respect in which he was held in his own regiment. The —th was somewhat remarkable for being emphatically an "outspoken crowd," and for some years, thanks to a leaven of strong and truthful men in whom this trait was pronounced and sustained, it had grown to be the custom of all but a few of the officers to discuss openly and fully all matters of regimental policy and utterly to discountenance covert action of any kind. Blake was thoroughly popular and generally respected, despite a tendency to rant and rattle on most occasions. Nevertheless, there were signs of dissent as to the line of action he proposed, though it were only for his own guidance.

"And how do you suppose Rayner and the Rifers generally will regard your calling on their black sheep?" asked Buxton, after a pause.

"I don't know," said Blake, more seriously, and with a tone of concern. "I like Rayner, and have found most of those fellows thorough gentlemen and good friends. This will test the question thoroughly. I believe most of them, except, of course, Rayner, would do the same were they in my place. At all events, I mean to see."

"What are you going to do, Gregg?" asked "the mole," wheeling suddenly on his brother troop commander.

"I don't know," said Gregg, doubtfully. "I think I'll ask the colonel."

"What do you suppose he means to do?"

"I don't know again; but I'll bet we all know as soon as he makes up his mind; and he is making up his mind now—or he's made it up, for there goes Mr. Hayne, and here comes the orderly. Something's up already.

Every head was turned to the doorway as the orderly's step was heard in the outer hall, and every voice stilled to hear the message, it was so unusual for the commanding officer to send for one of his subordinates after the morning meeting. The soldier tapped at the panel, and at the prompt "Come in" pushed it partly open and stood with one white gloved hand resting on the knob, the other raised to his cap visor in salute.

"Lieut. Blake?" he asked, as he glanced around.

"What is it?" asked Blake, stepping quickly from the window.

"The commanding officer's compliments, sir, and could he see the lieutenant one minute before the court meets?"

"Coming at once," said Blake, as he pushed his way through the chairs, and the orderly faced about and disappeared.

"I'll bet it's about Hayne," was the apparently unanimous sentiment as the cavalry party broke up and scattered for the morning's duties. Some waited purposely to hear.

The adjutant alone stood in the colonel's presence as Blake knocked and entered. All others had gone. There was a moment's hesitation, and the colonel paused and looked his man over before he spoke:

"You will excuse my sending for you, Mr. Blake, when I tell you that it is a matter that has to be decided at once. In this case you will consider, too, that I want you to say yes or no exactly as you would to a comrade of your own grade. If you were asked to meet Mr. Hayne at any other house in the garrison than mine, would you desire to accept? You are aware of all the circumstances, the adjutant tells me."

"I am, sir, and have just announced my intention of calling upon him."

"Then will you dine with us this evening to meet Mr. Hayne?"

"I will do so with pleasure, sir."

It could hardly have been an hour afterwards when Mrs. Rayner entered the library in her cosey home and found Miss Travers entertaining herself with a book.

"Have you written to Miss Van Antwerp this morning?" she asked. "I thought that was what you came here for."

"I did mean to, but Mrs. Waldron has been here, and I was interrupted."

"It is fully fifteen minutes since the left, Nellie. You might have written two or three pages already; and you know that all manner of visitors will be coming in by noon."

"I was just thinking over something she told me. I'll write presently."

"Mrs. Waldron is a woman who talks about everything and everybody. I advise you to listen to her no more than you can help. What was it she told you?"

Miss Travers smiled roguishly: "Why should you want to know, Kate, if you disapprove of her revelations?"

"Oh," with visible annoyance, "it is to—I wanted to know so as to let you see that it was something unfounded, as usual."

"She said she had just been told that the colonel was going to give a dinner party this evening to Mr. Hayne."

"What?"

"She—said—she—had—just—been—told—that—the—colonel—was—going—to give—a dinner party—this evening—to Mr.——Hayne."

"Who told her?"

"Kate, I didn't ask."

"Who are invited? None of ours?"

"Kate, I don't know."

"Where did she say she had heard it?"

"She didn't say."

Mrs. Rayner paused one moment, irresolute: "Didn't she tell you anything more about it?"

"Nothing, sister mine. Why should you feel such an interest in what Mrs. Waldron says, if she's such a gossip?" And Miss Travers was evidently having hard work to keep from laughing outright.

"You had better write your letter," said her big sister, and flounced suddenly out of the room and up the stairs.

A moment later she was at the parlor door with a wrap thrown over her shoulders. "If Capt. Rayner comes in, tell him I want particularly to see him before he goes out again."

"Where are you going, Kate?"

"Oh, just over to Mrs. Waldron's a moment"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Ebon T. Marshall, of Rincon, Cal., suffered so from corns on his little toes that he had the toes cut off.

Snow at Howland Flat, Sierra county, Cal., was seventy-five feet deep at the last measuring.

Americans stand first among the nations of the world in the manufacture of finished iron and steel products.

Symptoms of Catarrh.

A profuse and many times excessively offensive discharge, with "stopping up" of the nose at times, impairment of the sense of smell and taste, watering or weak eyes, impaired hearing, irregular appetite, occasional nausea, pressure and pain over the eyes, and at times in the back of the head, occasional chilly sensations, cold feet, and a feeling of lassitude and debility, are symptoms which are common to catarrh, yet all of these are not present in every case. Dr. Sage's Catarrh Remedy cures catarrh in its worst forms and stages. It is pleasant to use, and contains no poisonous or caustic drugs. Of druggists, for 50 cents.

Antiquity of Football.

The game of football was well known in England prior to 1175, but it was never regarded with favor by the law, and in the reign of Edward III (1363) an act was passed forbidding it. During the reign of Richard II (1388) a similar law was enacted, and again, under the Scotch kings, James I (1424) and James II (1457), it was "decreeted and ordained that the football and golfe be utterly cryed down and not to be used." In 1471 James III and in 1491 James IV passed similar statutes. James I of England also opposed it in his "Basilikon Doron." He writes: "From this court I debarre all rough and violent exercise, as the football, meeter for lameing than making able the users thereof." And in the reign of Elizabeth, his predecessor, a true bill was found against sixteen persons for playing the unlawful game. In Gloucester days a youth was indicted for playing the game.—Canada Law Journal.

About Paper.

A new mill for the manufacture of paper from moss has been recently established in Sweden. Paper of different thickness and pasteboard made of it have already been shown, the latter even in sheets three-quarters of an inch thick. It is as hard as wood and can be easily painted and polished. It has all the good qualities, but none of the defects, of wood. The pasteboard can be used for door and window frames, architectural ornaments and all kinds of furniture. The ceiling of the assembly chamber at Albany, N. Y., is made of papier-mache. It is a model of of its kind, and appears so like marble as to deceive the most expert eye. The latest idea is to use paper instead of wood for lead pencils, by using a patent preparation by which it can be cut as easily as the softest wood.—St. Louis Stationer.

Early Locomotives.

On the day of the competition—Oct. 6, 1839—the "Rocket" was the only locomotive ready, and the trial of the "Novelty" was postponed until the 11th, when the pipe from the forcing pump burst and brought it to a speedy termination. This was repaired in the course of the day, and the engine made several trips in the absence of the judges. On its trial before the judges, on the next day, a "green joint" yielded, and the choleric Ericsson somewhat too hastily, smarting under what he considered some unfairness, withdrew his engine, and the award was given to Stephenson, who had alone "fulfilled every stipulated condition."—Col. W. C. Church in Scribner.

No Wonder She Envied Bridget.

A rich society lady told her servant, "I wish I could be as strong, healthy and full of life as you are"! The lesson is plain. The girl had plenty of exercise, and constitutional health and contentment. Riches will not buy health, always, but broken-down women can find a sure relief in Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription. It is a powerful, invigorating cordial, and restorative tonic, and imparts strength to the whole system in general, and to the uterine organs and appendages in particular. For "run-down," debilitated and feeble women generally it is the greatest earthly boon.

Highest of all in Leavening Power.—U. S. Gov't Report, Aug. 17, 1889.

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