

Th' Dividin' Line on Flowerin' Day



WEVE had trouble and tribulation sence th' stranger bought Bull Tongue ranges," old Squire Gray complained gloomily, as he took his gun from the hooks. "Molly, girl, dunno as it's right for you to be out huntin' with me so much — but" — catching the shade of the disappointment in the young face — "reckon you can go this time. But, mind you, it's th' last!"

"Yes, father, the very last," Molly acquiesced, slipping on a discarded coat of the squire, "but the buck we saw on the Rainbow mountain—we mustn't miss him!"

"Squire!" interrupted a shrill voice from the kitchen, "you're raisin' Molly mighty triffin'—shootin' en trompin' arter her like es she were yo' boy-kind, es were killt endurin' th' war."

"Jes so, Hannah Harks; jes so," the squire agreed. "I done—done lost my boys; then Molly's born so long arter, and there's no one else. But this aire th' last time, Hannah. Come along, Molly. If yo're mother'd lived, she'd raised you es a female girl oughter be raised."

And the old man, with Molly tripping along beside him and laughing softly to herself, wended his way down the hill path. Every time was "the last" until Molly wanted to go again. They went down through the pines. Suddenly the squire stopped and rubbed his eyes.

"Mebbe your sight aire better'n mine, daughter," he said; "look south in th' cove neighboring Rainbow mountaine—aire that Grohsman en a passel of men or no?"

"It's him, father—the stranger on our land—cuttin' away the brush. Oh, father, he's going to take Rainbow and the Fightin' Ground!"

"Dunno es he will!" he drawled, striding rapidly forward.

No one knew much of the stranger except that he was from the West, and was seeking health and sport for his grandson Martin in the mountain country. Molly constantly encountered Martin hunting on the ridge. In fact, he seemed to follow the game oftener on the Gray lands than on his own Bull Tongue.

"What aire you about, cuttin' brush on my land?" demanded the old squire.

"I'm cutting the line between yours and mine, if you want to know," the stranger retorted, offensively. "I want you to understand fully what belongs to Gray and what belongs to Grohsman. You don't seem to know!"

"Mebbe I don't," replied the mountaineer, "but Rainbow mountain aire mine. I've helt it, man and boy, these sixty year. My father helt it af' me, en my grandpaw af' him. Whens I'm gone, my gal ther'll hold it arter me!"

"We'll see about that! My claim includes the Rainbow, and I propose to hold it. When I'm gone, my grandson Martin will hold it arter me!" Grohsman flung back.

As the two old men eyed each other, the thickets parted and, one by one, several men emerged. They paused, quite naturally, as though drawn by the discussion and curious as to its outcome.

"I want to move that grave off my land," Grohsman insisted, after scanning the faces of the intruders carefully. "Out west where I come from, people stopped throwing their folks on the prairie twenty years ago. They bury them decently in cemeteries and church yards. And I tell you right now I'm not to be chiseled out of part of my purchase because you are too stupid to understand the line."

"Seems like I'm mostly too stupid," asserted the squire in misleading meekness of voice, "to understand how you can get my land, savin' you bespeak me and pass some money long of it."

"I'm a western man, used to holding my claim by main force. This is the dividin' line, I say! I'm no fool, if you are!"

"My hald aire monstrous thick, stranger. But I mostly hold to my say-so, which aire that your line goes t'other side th' Rainbow."

"Molly, daughter," he added, without turning his head, "the buck must have gone to th' big timber. Go arter him."

Molly dropped out of the group without disturbing its rigid pose. Looking back as she turned into the big timber, she saw the wrathful stranger advance a step in rash defiance. In an instant every weapon of the mountaineers was leveled at him and his men. Molly averted her eyes and ran swiftly into the big woods, so heedless that she ran squarely against Martin Grohsman as he stepped from behind an immense oak.

"Wait, Molly wait! I came here to see you!" he called to her. "You are running like a wild deer. I wanted to say to you that you mustn't blame grandfather. He thinks the land is his."

"How can he when it's been father's always?" she flung back with conviction.

"But, Molly, we needn't quarrel. I don't care a fig about Rainbow mountain. Let them settle it as they like. Let us be friends. Won't you?"

Molly smiled forgivingly. It was hard to hold resentment against Martin.

"You understand, don't you, Martin," she explained, "that's the Fightin' Ground, and Hannah Harks says the men killed there were all carried away, saving this one. I can't say rightly how he came to be left, but mother put wild violets and honeysuckle and lilies from the marsh over his grave, because he's so lonesome-like, though he ain't one of our men. I flower his grave now, Martin, 'stead of mother, every year. I fault your grandfather for wantin' the Rainbow and threatenin' to have the grave moved—onliest I hope father won't hurt him."

"Just promise friends with me, Molly?" he pleaded.

"Dunno but what I will," the girl capitulated. When the Squire came home he was unusually silent and taciturn.

"Molly, daughter," he said, "I've a word to say. I've give warnin' es we'll shoot any prowlin' folks on Rainbow mountain and the stranger has give back word as he'll shoot any of we uns ketcht there until arter the new survey, which I've 'greed to allow. The Grays aire bound to stand in with one another whichever way the survey goes. Th'



young feller, Martin, aire against th' Grays, and you aire a Gray. Mind you what I say."

As the days went by Molly caught glimpses, remote and fleeting of Martin dangerously far in, on ground protected by an armed neutrality. Once they chanced near enough for Martin to call to her. "We're friends, Molly?"

"Yes—yes, Martin, we're friends, this time." "They're done th' surveyin', Molly," Hannah Harks explained, when she reached home, "an th' stranger ain't satisfied. It don't give him Rainbow mountain. They're goin' ter try it over ergin, an' they're all plumb hot, long of it. Whomst steps on Rainbow aire to be drapped in his tracks, 'thout no warnin'. Howsomere, I'm deemin' to flower th' grave whens th' day comes."

The evening before Decoration day Molly was plucking white lilies when the Squire came down the path. "My daughter," he said, in the mild, slow tones that always frightened her, "it hes come to my ears that th' young feller, Martin, prowls continual on th' Rainbow. I've give in to a new surveyin'. But we 'greed t' shoot whomsoever footed on Rainbow mountain. It has come to me that it's th' feller deyin' of us. He aire a comely, proper boy, but a monstrous fool, en seems like they don't know Johnson Gray."

The lilies dropped from Molly's hands. She knew Johnson Gray. Conflicting impulses stirred her. From the chaos one conviction came supreme—she had a promise to keep. It was not being friends with Martin to let him unwittingly anger the Grays.

The young moon had long since vanished behind the peaks, but the stars gleamed in cloudless brilliancy. The peace and sublimity of the mountains seemed too infinite for evil design. And yet the Squire and half a dozen Grays were lying noiselessly in the brush along the dividin' line. Every man's finger was on the trigger, for some one had broken the compact, some one was prowling on the Rainbow.

Across the contested line, a hundred yards back, the dense undergrowth hid the reflection of the moon along other rifle barrels. Grohsman and his men were equally vigilant.

Faintly at first, but growing louder and louder with each step, the scuffle of advancing feet was heard. The watchers—on both sides—crouched in readiness to mete out the deserved retribution. Then the traitors came into view. There, going boldly across the cleared-slope, were Molly and Hannah Harks. They were laden with glistening clusters of white flowers. They walked unafraid along the sinuous path upward to the "lone grave" on the mountain top.

The rifles of the Grays came to earth. The Squire started forward and stopped. His face was white and drawn. Though he could not see them, he knew that other eyes watched the self-same slope of the Rainbow—from the other side—that other fingers, just as remorseless, rested on other weapons. Would they be merciful to this, his only one? Would they?

Across the line the bushes shook audibly and a leveled rifle gleamed in the moonlight a second, but was lowered again. No shot rang out.

The women passed on—unharmd. Their ascending footsteps grew fainter and died away. But, ere either side had opportunity to catch its breath, the sound of other footsteps, ascending the mountain, resounded on the sharp night air.

A breathless wait, a tense straining of the eyes through the openings in the brush along the pathway—and another traitor came into view. Martin Grohsman walked boldly along, glancing neither to the one side nor the other. He, too, was laden with white flowers.

On the Gray side of the line the bushes shook audibly and a leveled rifle gleamed in the moonlight. But no shot rang out.

Unharmd, Martin, too, ascended the Rainbow, his footsteps dying off into the distance along the same path the women had taken.

Suddenly, the bushes on the Gray side of the line parted and a white shirt waved on the end of a rifle.

Almost simultaneously a white shirt held aloft on a rifle barrel was raised on the other side. Squire Gray stepped into the open, holding up the flag of truce. He had done that once before—at Appomattox, with rage in his heart. But it was different now—his Molly had been spared to him.

The stranger appeared from the other side. He, too, held aloft a flag of truce. He had done that once before, also with shame in his heart. But it was different now—his grandson might have been sleeping in the same sleep with his soldier boy.

With unflinching steps the Blue and the Gray advanced slowly to the middle of the "fightin' ground." There they laid their rifles aside. They faced each other silently, awkwardly.

"Stranger," the old Squire began, at last, his voice strangely soft and shaken, "you spared my gal tonight—"

"Out west where I come from we don't shoot women!" the plainsman replied, tersely, but without even a trace of anger or malice in his tone. "And you spared my boy—I guess we're quits. And I guess we've learned our lesson from that boy and that girl and those flowers, ain't we?"

"We hev—but th' Rainbow—"

"That's it—the Rainbow—Look here, Squire Gray, I may as well tell you that just before you waved your flag of truce I got a message that the last survey comes out like the first. I was preparing to signal you when you flew your flag. I'm not wanting to take what I know belongs to somebody else. But I want the Rainbow. I'll buy it, if you'll sell and move that grave. I don't want a rebel sleeping on my land."

"Dunno as you'd be tribulated long of that grave, even if I'd sell, which I ain't willing to do, for him as is in it fit agin us. He were a Yank."

"He was?" Grohsman questioned. "Why that alters everything. A Union soldier? I had a son killed in the war."

"That's sure unlucky. I had three killed in the war," was the slow response. "T'were all I had." "And you care about your enemy's grave? You're a better man than I am, Squire. The grave is safe."

Suddenly Hannah Harks appeared descending the pathway. She stopped, nonplused, at the strange spectacle before her—Squire Gray and the stranger in conversation with their rifles lying on the ground. Then she approached slowly, glancing anxiously from one man to the other. At length she smiled grimly.

"I'm deemin' there won't be no necessity fer a dividin' line arter all," she said, "there ain't none up there on Rainbow."

AIRPLANES IN COMMERCIAL WORK. In eight months, commencing May 1, 1919, Handley-Page commercial airplanes in Great Britain carried 4,029 passengers and 44,235 pounds of freight a total of 72,243 miles, according to the London Times. Between September 2, 1919, and January 8, 1920, the London-Paris air service carried 637 passengers and 16,988 pounds of freight, while 255 passengers and 25,916 pounds of goods were carried by the London-Brussels air service between September 27, 1919, and the first of this year.

FOR A STARTER. "I think," said the solemn professor, "that we shall find a way to communicate with Mars." "Don't you bother about that," replied Mr. Dustin Stax. "If you want to get a neat little endowment from me, you devise some reliable means of getting central to connect me with my office."

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Both Alike. "I can't imagine what Mildred sees in that Smith boy," remarked Mildred's mother. "He hasn't got brains enough in his head to fill a thimble." "Oh, well, I dare say your mother said the same thing about me when I came courtin' you!" replied the girl's father indolently. But he suddenly lost his complacent smile when his wife retorted: "She certainly did, and I was jus' as big a fool as Mildred is now. I wouldn't listen to the advice of my elders."

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Underpaid. "It doesn't seem quite fair." "What doesn't?" "This motion picture comedian gets \$1,000 a week and his dog, who does all the hard work and creates most of the laughs gets only two or three bones a day."—Birmingham Age-Herald.

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