

MY LADY OF THE SOUTH



A Fiftieth Anniversary War Story

By RANDALL PARRISH

COPYRIGHT, 1909, BY A. C. MCCLURG & CO.

CHAPTER VII. WITH JEAN DENSLAW.

WE attained the east bank of Salter's creek early in the afternoon, still riding in advance of the main body, but encountering no force of the enemy sufficient to dispute our progress. Guerrillas had suddenly swarmed forth from the mountain lairs, swooped down upon several ill-guarded supply trains, driven off the guards from at least two and rifled the wagons.

Rosserans ordered me to capture Donald. "If you succeed it will mean a captaincy," he said. I routed Daniels and O'Brien from a comfortable campsite and set them to the necessary preparations. I cared nothing for his fad spirit—it seemed a small thing to me then.

"Where would you suppose, Daniels, is the best place for us to begin our search?" I asked.

"Long Sand creek. I don't know what Donald holds out right now, but I reckon if we took the trail of villain Dunn an' held his feet in the fire fer while he'd come mighty nigh showin' us ther spot."

"Daniels," I asked, "what have you got against old Judge Dunn?"

"What hav' I got? Didn't be hold me fer murder? An' wouldn't he never hang me if I hadn't got away? An'



"KING—HOW—HOW STRANGE!"

wasn't that son o' his with Big Jim Donald when they shot inter my cabin up at Bad mounting? An' didn't he

lead their posse that run me across the Cumberland? Maybe ther o' Judge ain't in ther lead, but he's got an enemy in Bill Daniels just ther name."

It was a long night's tramp. I crept silently forth from the cleft where my party slept. Some strange impulse drew me toward the Dunn house. It may have been the memory of Jean Denslaw, yet I persuaded myself it was hope of learning there something of the whereabouts of this Big Don sid fer whom we were searching.

I saw her first, yet with no opportunity to escape, for almost instantly she perceived my presence and flung up one hand. Her eyes filled with apprehension. Fearful lest she should scream I remained motionless, but managed to say: "Do not be alarmed. I am not here to do injury."

"But what are you doing here? You are a Yankee!"

"I command a scouting detachment

back in the hills," I explained, "and came down here seeking information I thought might be gained from your negroes."

"Perhaps you would like to question me?"

"I will test you. Where can I find Big Donald—Big Donald is the name he is known by in our army—the guerrilla leader who holds a Confederate commission."

"And if I knew, do you suppose I would ever tell you? I know nothing of Big Donald."

I could see the flush spring to her cheeks, the swift rising and falling of her bosom, but her unflinching eyes were upon mine.

"Whose house is this?"

"You know already—it is Judge Dunn's plantation, Fairview."

"Are you his daughter?"

"No; merely a guest."

"Of whom does the family consist?"

She hesitated, biting her lips.

"Why do you ask all this? Are you gallantly contemplating an attack on the house?"

"No," I said; "we are soldiers, not guerrillas. I confess it is curiosity more than anything else, and—because I like to talk with you."

"With me, indeed! You have the influence of the north. Who are you?"

"A lieutenant on the staff of General Rosserans."

"What is your name?"

"King."

She drew a quick, startled breath, her hands clasping tightly.

"King—how—how strange! Do you know an Elbert King of your army? A—a sergeant of artillery?"

I waited as if thinking, endeavoring to determine which would be best, to deceive her or confess the truth outright. Something in her face forced me to the falsehood.

"Yes, Reynolds' battery. He was reported killed in our last battle. Did you know him?"

"No, not really; indeed, I have never seen his face. I wondered if you could be the same," her voice faltering over the words.

"That sounds strange that you should know his name and all about him, yet never have seen his face."

"He was not killed, only wounded. He came to our plantation in the night endeavoring to escape into your lines, I aided him."

"Then you surely don't hate all Yankees," I exclaimed, almost eagerly.

"You mistake," with dignity. "He was nothing to me. I assisted him unintentionally, not even knowing he was a Yankee."

"If you had known would you have betrayed him?"

"Not merely as a fugitive perhaps, but as a bearer of important news to our enemies I would."

"And me?"

She looked at me, her eyes almost angry in their gray depths, her lips pressed closely together.

"We are enemies, not friends," she returned calmly. "Is your mission peace?"

"So far as this house is concerned I come in peace, but I come seeking the man Donald. Is he concealed in the house?"

"Not to my knowledge."

"If I return with my men and search the premises?"

"We could not prevent such an outrage," she broke in swiftly. "But it will be needless to call your forces. The house is open. You may make the search yourself."

Had I been older, more experienced and had the invitation come from some other than this quick-witted girl I might easily have questioned its honesty.

"You mean you will act as my guide? Who are within?"

"Judge Dunn, his daughter Lucille and a few house servants; no one you need fear," a touch of sarcasm in the low tone.

"And you are?"

"Jean Denslaw, at your service."

dropping me a courtesy.

"Very well, Miss Denslaw. If you can satisfy me that no guerrillas are harbored here I will see that you are left undisturbed in the future."

We entered the house. I was impressed by the air of elegant comfort displayed in furnishing and decoration.

We went forward to a door that opened to the left of the stairs, and the girl knocked lightly. A deep voice answered, and I followed as she stepped within. I saw dimly the motionless figure of a man directly facing us. The shoulders were broad, Herculean, the head large, massive, crowned by a shaggy mass of iron gray hair, the eyes looking out from cavernous depths. He must have observed my uniform with the first glance, for he burst out in a gruff, snapping voice.

"What's that Yank doing here?"

"Wait, Judge," exclaimed my guide. "It is all right; he is alone, and has entered on my invitation. This is Lieutenant King of General Rosserans' staff."

"You are the first Yankee who ever put foot in my house, sir, and I hope you'll be the last. What do you want?"

She permitted me no opportunity for reply, standing almost directly between us.

"Lieutenant King has a force of men reck in the hills hunting after Big Donald. He came here alone, and I volunteered to let him search the house. I thought you would prefer having it done by one alone rather than by a lot of rough soldiers. Lieutenant King is a gentleman."

The judge evidently was struggling with a temper hard to control.

"It will be merely a matter of form," I endeavored to explain. "We know of your sympathy with this outlaw, and I shall be only too glad to relieve you of all suspicion of harboring him."

"Oh, you do know that, do you, you young whippersnapper. I'm an old man—an old man. I could have fought you once, but not now. Go on and search the house; you are safe enough alone with only a paralytic and two women to oppose you. Lord! but I wish Donald was here."

The girl stepped back, her cheeks flushed from excitement, and touched

any practical result. I began digging out the dirt that had become packed hard in the narrow space and even succeeded in splitting off a silver from the plank itself. I got a broken chair wedged into the office in such a manner as to utilize it as a lever.

I was bending over this crude contrivance when the door was opened hastily a foot or two and something slid forward along the floor. I located a plate heaped with food and a small pot of smoking hot coffee on the floor and took a glance at my watch. Eight thirty; I had been imprisoned for hours!

I am like a famished wolf. There was no sound without, no evidence that I was under any special guard. With heart rapidly beating I crept across to where I had previously been at work, fully determined now to test the efficiency of my improvised lever.

The board came up slowly, the only sound a slight rasping of the nails. By moving my apparatus I thus succeeded in releasing the entire length of the plank. Except for the joists I could feel nothing below, yet it was necessary to dislodge a second board before I could succeed in squeezing my body through the narrow opening. I swing down through the opening thus made and let go my hold. The fall could not have been more than a few feet, yet my knees doubled under as I struck, and I pitched forward upon the floor.

Could it be possible this was the same officer who had just passed up the stairs? I would be connected with the crime.

I sprang forward, aroused to action by the fear that gripped me and peered out. As I leaped across the window and my hand touched something moist, and I lifted it to the light, perceiving the red stain of blood. The murderer had hung there an instant before he dropped.

I would face this like a man. I would ally myself with her and her friends. I would help to trace down the bend guilty of so foul an act. I opened the door and came face to face with Jean Denslaw.

(To Be Continued.)



I SUCCEEDED IN RELEASING THE ENTIRE LENGTH OF PLANK.

my sleeve with her hand. "Come," she said softly.

In the hall she avoided looking at me, apparently merely eager to finish as soon as possible a disagreeable task.

"I feel quite ashamed of thus intruding—I began, conscious of the growing restraint in her manner.

"I have long since learned this part of the incivility of war. My own home has been searched often enough by your soldiery. It is to save this house from such outrage that I have asked you to act in person."

"And I shall perform my duty with all respect."

I felt the swift glance of her veiled eyes was full of thanks, but the long lashes dropped quickly. Yet even this set my heart throbbing as I opened the door nearest my hand.

As I emerged from the dining room she pointed to a small door farthest to the left.

"This is being utilized as a store-room, and the key is kept in the kitchen." She was back in a moment. The room was dark, and I took a single step within. The door crashed behind me, and I heard the sharp click of the key in the lock.

For the first moment I doubted everything. It must be some mistake. A sudden gust of wind had slammed the door shut. I could not conceive this as the deliberate act of Jean Denslaw. I even called her name, believing she would hasten to reprove me. But there was no response, no sound of any kind from without. The knowledge of the girl's deceit hurt me more at first than my own physical condition. I was merely an inquisitive Yankee officer searching for one she felt obliged to protect. The man might even be concealed within the house, or, if not, some clew leading to his whereabouts was to be discovered there. For a long time I smoked my pipe and made no effort to escape. Then I struck many matches, examining everything carefully, yet this was the sum total of my discoveries. There was no way out, and the fact that not the slightest sound reached me suggested an unusual thickness of walls.

Had I been older, more experienced and had the invitation come from some other than this quick-witted girl I might easily have questioned its honesty.

"You mean you will act as my guide? Who are within?"

"Judge Dunn, his daughter Lucille and a few house servants; no one you need fear," a touch of sarcasm in the low tone.

There was not much to encourage

a single strip of flooring, slightly warped at the joint. Scarcely hoping for

woman's voice.

"Have him in here and let him make answer for himself. Surely the three of you are not afraid of one man?"

I heard a new, deeper voice speak.

"Did you say he was armed?"

"He carried two revolvers in his belt."

"Then we shou'd go prepared. Have you weapons with you, Lieutenant?"

"No; they are in my room. I will run up and get them."

Crouching behind the hatrack, I caught merely a glimpse of the man's back as he raced up the circular staircase three steps at a time, but he wore a short gray jacket and long cavalry boots, well splashed with mud. Perhaps I could get upstairs before the officer had secured his weapon and slip into some room having a window. It would not be much of a drop to the ground. I turned to the right, circled the head of the stairs and opened the first door yielding to my touch. I took a single step within and stopped as helpless to move as though paralyzed, one hand clutching my revolver, the other still upon the knob of the door. I stared at only one object—a motionless body lying outstretched upon the floor.

I am like a famished wolf. There was no sound without, no evidence that I was under any special guard. With heart rapidly beating I crept across to where I had previously been at work, fully determined now to test the efficiency of my improvised lever.

The board came up slowly, the only sound a slight rasping of the nails. By moving my apparatus I thus succeeded in releasing the entire length of the plank. Except for the joists I could feel nothing below, yet it was necessary to dislodge a second board before I could succeed in squeezing my body through the narrow opening. I swing down through the opening thus made and let go my hold. The fall could not have been more than a few feet, yet my knees doubled under as I struck, and I pitched forward upon the floor.

Could it be possible this was the same officer who had just passed up the stairs? I would be connected with the crime.

Crouching behind the hatrack, I caught merely a glimpse of the man's back as he raced up the circular staircase three steps at a time, but he wore a short gray jacket and long cavalry boots, well splashed with mud. Perhaps I could get upstairs before the officer had secured his weapon and slip into some room having a window. It would not be much of a drop to the ground. I turned to the right, circled the head of the stairs and opened the first door yielding to my touch. I took a single step within and stopped as helpless to move as though paralyzed, one hand clutching my revolver, the other still upon the knob of the door. I stared at only one object—a motionless body lying outstretched upon the floor.

I am like a famished wolf. There was no sound without, no evidence that I was under any special guard. With heart rapidly beating I crept across to where I had previously been at work, fully determined now to test the efficiency of my improvised lever.

The board came up slowly, the only sound a slight rasping of the nails. By moving my apparatus I thus succeeded in releasing the entire length of the plank. Except for the joists I could feel nothing below, yet it was necessary to dislodge a second board before I could succeed in squeezing my body through the narrow opening. I swing down through the opening thus made and let go my hold. The fall could not have been more than a few feet, yet my knees doubled under as I struck, and I pitched forward upon the floor.

Could it be possible this was the same officer who had just passed up the stairs? I would be connected with the crime.

I sprang forward, aroused to action by the fear that gripped me and peered out. As I leaped across the window and my hand touched something moist, and I lifted it to the light, perceiving the red stain of blood. The murderer had hung there an instant before he dropped.

I would face this like a man. I would ally myself with her and her friends. I would help to trace down the bend guilty of so foul an act. I opened the door and came face to face with Jean Denslaw.

(To Be Continued.)

RURALISTS VISIT SOUTH OMAHA

Olegales to Farmer's Congress

Guests of Union Stock Yards.

TO MEET IN OMAHA IN 1913.

Visitors Return Thanks to Women at Home Doing the Chores—Alied Organizations Elect Officers For Next Twelve Months.

Omaha, Jan. 12.—The delegates attending the Nebraska farmers and allied organizations congress are the guests of the Union Stock yards, South Omaha, today. Special cars took the visitors to the stock yards, where they were shown over the yards and taken through several of the packing houses. A luncheon was given them in the Exchange dining hall, after which a talkfest was held. Bruce McCullough talked on shipping and marketing live stock. O. G. Smith of the Co-operative Shippers' association delivered a short address on "Farmers Shipping Associations."