

MY LADY OF THE SOUTH



A Fiftieth Anniversary War Story

By RANDALL PARISH

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CHAPTER XVI. FROM BATTLE TO LOVE.

I SAW them rise swiftly to their feet and slip noiselessly along the protecting side of the cabin, the dull gray of the eastern sky already rendering things slightly visible, but I waited for nothing more. We likewise had our work to accomplish. A dozen swift steps brought us to the horse herd, nor did we fire a shot, the single guard being so surprised at our unexpected appearance as to fall even in speech.

The horses were tied along a rail fence, completely equipped, exactly as they were captured at the time of first attack, and my little party swung lustily into saddle, gathering up the bridle reins of as many other horses as we could safely lead. As I held my own bunch back a moment, so as to give all the men time to gather more closely in, three shots—two the sharp reports of carbines, the third the gruffer note of a musket—sounded beyond the negro cabins, while in the dim light of the dawn I caught glimpses of men gathering around the corner of the house. Then more shots began to sputter along the north side, two of the swiftly running figures dropping in their tracks, with spits of flame shooting forth from the black shadow of bushes lining the driveway. The surprise was complete, the two squads performing their work thoroughly. Now it was our turn.

"Forward!" I cried, my voice barely audible above the hubbub of hoofs. "Hold them to it, boys!" The others met us at the corner of the house, the daylight sufficient by now to make identity certain; slinging their carbines, they grasped the nearest reins and sprang up into the saddles. They could fight now in their own way—with the reckless dash of the trooper.

We swept down the broad driveway in two lines, the men widening their distances so as to give room for saber play. The gray dawn already revealed our surroundings clearly—the ash covered roadway, the bushes along its edge, the row of trees beyond, a long tobacco shed at the left, the half open gate almost directly in front.

As we whirled recklessly about the corner, every man riding low, every eye forward, we saw the enemy at the edge of a grove, some kneeling, others standing. It was merely a glimpse, and then they fired an instant too quick perhaps—the irregular cracking showing lack of discipline, the cloud of smoke hiding them again from us. I felt my horse leap as if touched; two or three in our front rank went down, but there was no halting. My mount caught his stride, and I drove in the spur, yelling the charge, hearing the thunder of hoofs behind mingled with an exultant cheer from the men.

We drove through the rising smoke like a thunderbolt and were on them, our revolvers spitting viciously to right and left, our horses pawing at the fleeing figures and at the clubbed muskets with which they sought to fight us back. We went through them as if they had been paper; some ran for the fields, scrambling over a fence, but the main body, still bunched together, firing as rapidly as they could reload, Dodd cursing in the midst of them, made for the shelter of the grape arbor. The fierceness of our rush carried us through the grove out on to the turf of the open lawn, the men struggling with their horses in an effort to reform. Out from the front door sprang the four troopers left within, running eagerly for the riderless animals, while the two guards from the negro cabin came spurring madly around the corner of the house, anxious to join their comrades. Half formed, the men spurring their frenzied horses into

some semblance of line, we swept down upon the fleeing guerrillas, seeking to overtake them before they could attain shelter. It was a helter-skelter race, the bang of musketry punctuated by the sharp revolver reports and the shouts and yells of the combatants. We reached the rear runners, riding them down remorselessly, but our horses swerved at the arbor entrance, two plunging forward, throwing their riders, the others debouching sharply to the left, the troopers sawing at the reins in vain effort at control.

It was fully daylight now, every surrounding object clear to the eye, and my little squad circled about, instinctively forming themselves for another charge. I swept them with my eyes, debating whether to try an advance on horseback or to dismount and endeavor on foot to dislodge the enemy. Suddenly O'Brien swept his hand to the east, and I perceived a party of horsemen emerging from the woods, breaking into a sharp trot the instant they attained the open ground. The movement was plain enough—Thellen had arrived, already understood the situation and was pushing his force forward to strike us in the rear.

"Close up, men! By fours into line! Ride for the gate and the road beyond. Corporal, take the lead, and I will cover the rear. Don't spare your horses."

Every man knew, realized fully, the peril threatening us. Dodd's gang had not yet perceived the advance of reinforcements and were holding their fire, expecting us to charge. Instead, we wheeled to the right and rode straight at the open gate. Behind us, but not yet within shooting distance, we could already hear the pounding of the hoofs of Thellen's column as they spurred forward in pursuit. A few muskets barked from the grape arbor. Some fellow lying hidden in a corner of the fence let drive, sending the corporal headlong. Then we were outside on the hard packed road, the men riding recklessly, bent low over their pommels, urging their horses to the utmost.

I must have been fifty feet to the rear and, trusting to my horse, half turned about in the saddle so as to watch our pursuers. I never knew what happened, whether the animal stumbled or fell from a wound, but everything blotted out in an instant as I came crashing down to earth. My last memory was of seeing Thellen's horsemen crowding through the gate, a hundred yards away, yelling and shaking their guns.

I was in an invalid's chair when I consciousness, lying as I had, yet fully dressed, some way as my hands groped about, telling me this, for everything was speckled before my eyes, I thought of Judge Dunn and of the chair in which he sat when I last saw him. I felt a dull ache extending through both body and head, and slowly the disfiguring mist cleared from before my eyes, and I began distinguishing objects. The room was large and square, having four long windows, three of the curtains being drawn, the fourth sufficiently raised to permit a gleam of sunshine to extend partly across the rich carpet of dark green.

The situation puzzled me. My captors would not show much mercy, for we had certainly cost them dearly, and I could not imagine Calvert Dunn or Dodd bringing me into such comfortable quarters as these. Either other influence had prevailed or else Federal re-enforcements had arrived in the nick of time and driven the guerrillas from the field. This was the most reasonable supposition, for by now I was beginning to guess where I was—this must be the front chamber of the Dunn house. I had explored it in the dark, yet recalled enough of the interior arrangement to feel convinced of its identity.

I moved my limbs, testing them,

fearing I must be hurt more seriously than was apparent to account for all this care, yet discovered them equal to every requirement. I was partly upon my feet, with a hand grasping the arm of the chair because of a slight sensation of dizziness, when the door was pushed silently back and a woman took a single step within, instantly pausing, her eyes upon me. It was a face I had seen but once before, yet instantly recognized—the rather weak face of Lucille Dunn, its only claim to beauty the large dark eyes. My sudden return to life and activity must have greatly surprised her, for she stood staring at me in speechless bewilderment; then, before I could move, she slipped back into the hall and disappeared. I had advanced half across the room when Jean came in quietly, closed the door behind her and faced me, her lips firmly set, her eyes upon mine.

"I had not anticipated so rapid a recovery," she said. "You were still unconscious when I left a very few moments ago."

"You have been my nurse?"
"Lucille and I together; perhaps I may call myself the head nurse."
"Am I a prisoner, Miss Denslow?"
"You are not. Colonel Donald and I are not entirely ungrateful. You have been left here wounded and in our care, but at liberty to depart whenever you are able and desire to do so. We do not care to feel under obligations to you personally."

"You speak very coldly."
"As I have ample reason to. If Lieutenant Elbert King will be seated I will explain the situation more in detail."

I sank back into the chair, instantly aware that she knew me now, that the moment I had dreaded so long had arrived. There was a certainty in her tone that convinced me any denial would be useless.

"First I will explain briefly your present position," she began, "so that henceforth there can be no misunderstanding between us. During the retreat of your men—the majority of whom got safely away—your horse was shot and you were thrown upon your head and rendered unconscious. That occurred soon after daylight this morning, and you have remained in that condition until a few moments ago. It is now late in the afternoon. The mounted men followed your troopers, skirmishing with them as far as the ridge road, but some of those on foot, finding you still alive, brought you back here. Through the authority of Colonel Donald you have been left here practically unguarded. We have no desire to be outdone in courtesy by a Yankee."

"Colonel Donald, then, has recovered? Does he remain here?"

"He has regained sufficient strength to resume command. His chief lieutenant was killed during the action, and he felt obliged to accompany his men for the present."

"And Lieutenant Dunn?"

She smiled slightly, a welcome relief to the fixed sternness of her lips.

"He would have liked greatly to remain as your guard, but was persuaded to convey the prisoners and wounded to the Confederate camp. I imagine he may return when that duty has been completed. There seems to be some hatred between Lieutenant Dunn and Lieutenant King."

"Entirely upon the part of the former, although, I confess, not wholly without cause. The exigencies of war have compelled me to handle Lieutenant Dunn somewhat roughly on two occasions, yet that should be excusable between fighting men. There may be other reasons."

"What, may I ask?"

I met her questioning eyes fairly, convinced that a certain amount of boldness would not be amiss and eager to learn the real nature of her feelings.

"Principally Miss Jean Denslow."
"Oh, indeed?" very prettily simulating surprise. "And what possible interest can you both have in that young lady?"

"You ask seriously? Who could be more deeply interested than I?"

"Then I will answer frankly. If I mistake not, you were at one time engaged to Lieutenant Dunn."

"Very true."

"And you are now married to Lieutenant King?"

She leaned back against the dresser, her cheek flushed, evidently struggling for self control.

"Are you not mistaken? I had supposed my husband to be Sergeant King of Reynolds' battery."

I leaned toward her across the chair arm, endeavoring to see into the depths of her eyes, but she veiled them behind lowered lashes.

"He was Sergeant King at the time of your marriage, yet I think you have no doubt as to who he is now."

"I have not had a great deal at any time," she said, looking at me directly. "Although I could not be sure. The night of that unfortunate occurrence you seemed to regret my predicament and expressed a desire to make my burden as light as possible. Would it not have been best when you came here to have informed me as to your identity?"

"Yes, if the relationship between us had been the same."

"Had been the same! What do you mean?"

I took a deep breath, mustering my courage to face whatever fate might have in store.

"This, Miss Jean," I said gravely, my voice trembling in spite of every effort to hold it firm. "Since then I have learned to love you."

For a moment her intense surprise robbed her of all power of speech, her round throat swelling, one hand pressed upon her heart. So still was every thing I could hear a bird singing with

out and the rustle of wind through the leaves.

"You have learned to love me—me?" she faltered at last incredulously. "I did not expect to hear you say that, Lieutenant King."

"Yet I have said it," I insisted. "because it is the truth, and it is time, is it not, that the truth should be known between us?"

Her head drooped upon her hands, her arm supported by the dresser, and she remained silent, her slight form trembling perceptibly.

"Do you blame me for what occurred that night?"

She uplifted her eyes quickly, looking frankly into my face.

"You perhaps did the most natural thing, although I sincerely wish it had never occurred. No, I do not blame you; I—I have never felt in that way toward you. It is strange, is it not? straightening up and now looking me again frankly in the eyes. "There is certainly every reason why I should feel otherwise. I have no sympathy with your cause; all I love is connected with the south and I am a thorough rebel. Seeking to serve your flag you did me as grievous an injury as a man could do to a woman. At first I was angry, indignant. I could have killed you and for my anger just, I can never understand the change that came over me, for when we finally parted that night we were almost friends. I have never been able to think of you since as an enemy."

"You have thought of me, then?"

"Could I do otherwise? Sergeant King certainly wrought havoc enough to make immediate forgetfulness impossible. Then Lieutenant King appeared—the artilleryman changed into a cavalry officer—but in voice and manner continually reminding me of the former. I did not know you were the same, but suspected it. I wanted to avoid you, yet that was impossible, and I have been compelled to accept your help, to trust and confide in you. Not only am I personally indebted to you, but you have served others who are near and dear to me. I had almost forgotten you were a Yankee, except for the constant reminder of your uniform. I even felt that we were destined to friendship, in spite of all the barriers between us, but now—now you have spoiled everything."

"Is that how?"

"By your avowal—your expression of feeling toward me. You must have spoken those words in jest, and yet they are not easily forgotten."

"In jest!" and I arose to my feet, indignant that she should even suggest such a possibility. "Miss Denslow, you do not mean that; surely my sincerity can be felt. Perhaps I ought not to have spoken thus; it may be you have no right to listen. But I insist I have said no more than the truth. I realize now that from the moment of first seeing you while conversing with the old negro in the shed on your father's plantation, I was unusually interested in you. That first impression might, indeed, have passed away had we not again been thrown together upon terms of peculiar intimacy. A certain tie was contracted between us which caused me to think of you even while we were absent from each other. I could not remain indifferent under such circumstances—could you?"

She hesitated, drawing slightly back, yet her honesty compelled a frank avowal.

"No, I—I could not be entirely indifferent."

"Human nature would prevent," I went on, encouraged by even this slight admission. "But our relationship was not destined to end even there. Some strange fate seemed to draw us together. My duty led me here, to meet you again under peculiar circumstances, and in the midst of peril compelling you to trust me. I believe now, Miss Denslow, that the seeds of love were in my heart from the moment of our first meeting, but the intimacy of the past few hours has brought the blossom. Legally, I am your husband, and I cannot forbear telling you that my heart is yours also, although I feel I have no right to say this or to force myself between you and another."

(To Be Continued.)

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ALEX HUNTER WALKED FORTH FROM THE PRISON CELL A FREE MAN TODAY

The Evidence Against the Prisoner Failed to Show That He Killed John Wagner, or That There Was the Least Motive for Him to Do So, After the Examination of Numerous Witnesses.

From Wednesday's Daily.

Alex Hunter was released from prison and walked forth from the Glenwood court room this morning a free man, the presiding judge of the district having, on motion of defendant, on the assembling of court this morning, instructed the jury to bring in a verdict for the defendant, acquitting him of the crime charged against him.

The trial of Alex Hunter, charged with the murder of John Wagner, whose body was found on September 15 last, lying beneath the curved trestle west of Pacific Junction, has been going on since last Monday in the district court of Mills county. The state took up all of yesterday presenting its case, twelve or more witnesses being sworn, and all of the material testimony for the state was heard except that of W. J. Streight, who dressed Wagner for burial, and Mr. Streight not being in Glenwood when his testimony was reached, he was not placed on the stand.

Genung & Genung, the attorneys who appeared for Hunter, filed a motion yesterday at the close of the day's hearing, asking the court to direct a verdict, and argued the phase of the case that no motive for the killing had been shown, which was material, and the court took the matter under advisement until this morning.

So confident was Mr. Genung that his theory of the case was correct that after the court adjourned he phoned G. D. McMaken of this city to notify his brother and all of the witnesses subpoenaed for the defense not to come to Glenwood in the morning, as the case was practically ended, and that Hunter would be acquitted.

This morning, on inquiry, Mr.

Genung informed the Journal that the court directed a verdict for the defendant this morning. In talking with Mr. Genung we learned that the state failed to show anything except that the defendant and Wagner were together and both drunk on the day Wagner was last seen alive. The actions of Hunter after the discovery of the body of Wagner were hardly that of a guilty man. On the day that Wagner's body was brought to Plattsmouth, about 9 o'clock in the evening, Hunter appeared at the home of Jesse Hiner, and then said he wanted to see Guy McMaken early in the morning as he expected to get a job with him on the Clarinda paving job. Mr. Hiner was alone at the time and invited Hunter to remain over night, which he did, and left the next morning about 5 o'clock to go to the McMaken office.

Hunter's attempted escape and flight afterward was explained by his attorneys in a very plausible way. Hunter, who was addicted to the over-indulgence in the use of alcoholic liquor, had been threatened by the authorities that he would be sent to an inebriate asylum at Oskloosa, Iowa, and when any stranger came along Hunter imagined the stranger to be an officer and would dodge out of the way.

The lack of motive and the fact that the state made no attempt to show the manner of Wagner's death or what was the probable cause of his death, served to make the chain of evidence so weak that the court did not believe it would sustain a verdict of guilty, hence the action of the court in instructing the jury to acquit the defendant.

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Broker, Fall River, Greenwood County, Kansas.

In County Court.

From Wednesday's Daily. In the county court today Judge Beeson was engaged in hearing the final account of the administrator of the Elizabeth Buster estate. Attorney William Delles Dernier and William Buster of Elmwood were in court looking after the matter.

There is no better medicine made for colds than Chamberlain's Cough Remedy. It acts on nature's plan, relieves the lungs, opens the secretions, aids expectoration; and restores the system to a healthy condition. For sale by F. G. Fricke & Co.

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