



# THE WAY OF A MAN

By EMERSON HOUGH

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soul and accusing me of being nothing more than a savage, nothing better than a man.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### Her Infinite Variety.

At our little village on the following morning Auberry and I learned that the River Belle would lie up indefinitely for repairs and that at least one, perhaps several days would elapse before she resumed her journey up stream. Our plans were changed again, for a young army officer came down from that post with the information that Colonel Meriwether had been ordered out to the posts up the Platte river, had been gone for three weeks, and no one could tell what time he would return. The Indians were reported very bad along the Platte. Possibly Colonel Meriwether might be back at Leavenworth within the week, possibly not for a month or more. This was desperate news for me, for I knew that I ought to be starting home at that very time. I wrote home once more, stating that I was not starting east, but going still farther west.

Auberry, as it chanced, fell in with a party bound for Denver, five men who had two wagons, a heavy Conestoga freight wagon or prairie schooner, and a lighter vehicle without a cover. We arranged with these men and their cook as to our share in the mess box and so threw in our dunnage with theirs, Auberry and I purchasing us a good horse apiece. By noon of the next day we were on our way westward.

At last we approached the valley of the Platte. We were coming now indeed into the great plains, of which I had heard all my youth. A new atmosphere seemed to invest the world. The talk of my companions was of things new and wild and strange to me. All my old life seemed to be slipping back of me, into a far oblivion. Many things became more clear to me as I rode and reflected. In some way, I know not how, it seemed to me that I was growing older.

We had been out more than two weeks when finally we reached the great valley along which lay the western highway of the old Oregon trail, now worn deep and dusty by countless wheels. We pushed up the main trail of the Platte but a short distance that night.

We looked forward to meeting human faces with some pleasure. But an hour or so later as we rode on I saw Auberry pull up his horse, with a strange tightening of his lips. "Boys," said he, "there's where it was." His pointing finger showed nothing more than a low line of ruins, bits of broken fencing, a heap of half charred timbers.

"They've been here," said Auberry grimly. "Who'd have thought the Sioux would be this far east?"

We rode up to the station, guessing what we would see. Five dead horses lay near by, a part of the stage stock kept there. We kept our eyes as long as we could from what we knew must next be seen—the bodies of the agent and his two stablemen, mutilated and half consumed, under the burned out timbers. I saw the bodies, for the lower limbs of all three had been dismembered and cast in a heap near where the bodies of the horses lay.

The third day passed until the sun sank toward the sand dunes and cast a long path of light across the rippling shallows among the sand bars of the Platte. But still we saw no signs of newcomers. Evening was approaching when we heard the sound of a distant shot and saw our horse guard running toward the camp. As he approached he pointed, and we saw a faint cloud of dust coming toward us. The travelers were horsemen, perhaps thirty or forty in all. Following them came the dust whitened top of an army ambulance and several camp wagons. We hesitated no longer and quickly mounting our horses rode full speed toward them.

They were a seasoned lot of Harney's frontier fighters, grimed and grizzled, their hats, boots and clothing gray with dust, but their weapons bright. Their leader approached me when I rode up.

"Lieutenant Belknap?" I exclaimed. "Do you remember meeting me down at Jefferson?"

"Why, Mr. Cowles, how on earth did you get here? Of course I remember you."

"Yes, but how did you get here yourself? You were not on my boat."

"Orders to take this detachment out to Laramie," he said, "and meet Colonel Meriwether there."

"He'll not be back? I was hoping to meet him coming east."

"No," said Belknap; "you'll have to go on with us if you wish to see him."

I'm afraid the Sioux are bad on beyond." He turned toward the ambulance and I glanced that way. There stood near it a tall, angular figure, head enshrouded in an enormous aubonnet.

"Why, that's my friend, Mandy McGovern," said I.

At that moment, descending at the rear of the ambulance, I saw the other one.

It was a young woman who left the step of the ambulance and stood for a moment shading her eyes with her hand and looking out over the shimmering expanse of the broad river. All at once the entire landscape was changed. It was not the desert, but civilization, which swept about us. A transfiguration had been wrought by one figure, fair to look upon. The swift versatility of my soul was upon the point of calling this as fine a figure of young womanhood as I had ever seen.

I was about to ask some questions of Belknap when all at once I saw



"Why, that's my friend, Mandy McGovern."

something that utterly changed my pleasant frame of mind. The tall figure of a man came from beyond the line of wagons—a man clad in well fitting tweeds cut for riding. I imagine it was the same swift male jealousy that affected both Belknap and myself as we saw Gordon Orme.

"Yes; there is your friend, the Englishman," said Belknap rather bitterly. "I meet him everywhere," I answered. "The thing is simply uncanny. What is he doing out here?"

"We are taking him out to Laramie with us. He has letters to Colonel Meriwether, it seems. Cowles, what do you know about that man?"

"Nothing," said I, "except that he purports to come from the English army."

"He's prowling about every military post he can get into."

"With a special reference to army officers born in the south?" I looked Belknap in the eye.

"There's something in that," he replied. "I don't like the look of it. These are good times for every man to attend to his own business."

A moment later I ran across my former friend, Mandy McGovern. In her surprise she stopped chewing tobacco.

"Well, I declare to gracious," she began, "if here ain't the man I met on the boat! How'd you git away out here ahead of us? Have you saw any buffalo? I'm gettin' plumb wolfish for something to shoot at."

What I was doing at that precise moment, as I must confess, was taking a half unconscious look once more toward the tail of the ambulance, where Orme and the young woman stood chatting. But it was at this time that Orme came forward.

"By Jove," he said, "here you are again! Am I your shadow, Mr. Cowles, or are you mine? It is really singular how we meet. I'm awfully glad to meet you, although I don't in the least see how you've managed to get here ahead of us."

I explained to him the changes of my plans that had been brought about by the accident to the River Belle. "Lieutenant Belknap tells me that you are going toward Laramie with him," I added. "As it chances, we have the same errand. It is my purpose also to call on Colonel Meriwether there in case we do not meet him coming down."

"How extraordinary! Then we'll be fellow travelers for a time and, I hope, have a little sport together. Fine young fellow, Belknap. You'll eat at our mess tonight, of course. That's our fire just over there, and I'm thinking the cook is nearly ready. There comes Belknap now."

The confusion of these varied meetings had kept me from learning the identity of the late passenger of the ambulance. I presume both Orme and Belknap supposed that the young lady and I had met before we took our places on the ground at the edge of the blanket which served as a table. I sought a glance at her face, which the next instant was hid by the rim of her hat as she looked down, removing her long gloves. At least I saw her hands—small hands, sun browned now. On one finger was a plain gold ring with a peculiar setting—the figure of a rose carved deep into the gold.

"After all," thought I to myself, "there are some things which cannot be duplicated, among these hair like this, a profile like this, a figure like this." I gazed in wonder, then in cer-

tainly. No; there was no escaping the conclusion. This was not another girl, but the same girl seen again.

Belknap caught the slight restraint

as the girl and I both raised our eyes. "Oh, I say, why—what in the world—Mr. Cowles, didn't you—that is, haven't you?"

"No," said I, "I haven't and didn't, I think. But I think also."

The girl's face was a trifle flushed, but her eyes were merry. "Yes," said she, "I think Mr. Cowles and I have met once before." She slightly emphasized the word "once," as I noticed.

"But still I may remind you all, gentlemen," said I, "that I have not yet heard this lady's name and am only guessing, of course, that it is Miss Meriwether, whom you are taking out to Laramie."

"Why, of course," said Belknap, and "Of course," echoed everybody else.

"Yes," said she, "I'm going on out to join my father on the front. This is my second time across, though. Is it your first, Mr. Cowles?"

"My first, and I am very lucky. You know I also am going out to meet your father, Miss Meriwether."

"How singular!" She put down her tin cup of coffee on the blanket.

"My father was an associate of Colonel Meriwether in some business matters back in Virginia."

"Oh, I know—it's about the coal lands that are going to make us all rich some day. Yes, I know about that, though I think your father rarely came over into Albemarle."

Under the circumstances I did not care to intrude my personal matters, so I did not mention the cause or explain the nature of my mission in the west. "I suppose that you rarely came into our county either, but went down the Shenandoah when you journeyed to Washington?" I said simply, "I have never met Colonel Meriwether."

As we rose from the ground at the conclusion of our meal the girl dropped one of her gloves. I hastened to pick it up, walking with her a few paces afterward.

"The next time we are shipwrecked together," said I, "I shall leave you on the boat. You do not know your friends!"

"Why do you say that?"

"And yet I knew you at once. I saw the ring on your hand and recognized it. It is the same I saw in the firelight on the river bank the night we left the Belle."

"How brilliant of you! At least you can remember a ring."

"I remember seeing the veil you wear once before—at a certain little meeting between Mr. Orme and myself."

"You seem to have been a haberdasher in your time, Mr. Cowles! Your memory of a lady's wearing apparel is very exact. I should feel very much flattered." None the less I saw the dimple come in her cheek.

She was pulling on her glove as she spoke. I saw embroidered on the gauntlet the figure of a red heart.

"My memory is still more exact in the matter of apparel," said I. "Miss Meriwether, is this your emblem indeed—this red heart? It seems to me I have also seen it somewhere before."

"When Columbus found America," she answered, "it is said that the savages looked up and remarked to him, 'Ah, we see we are discovered!'"

"Yes," said I, "you are fully discovered—each of you, all of you, all three or four of you—Miss Ellen Meriwether."

"But you did not know it until now—until this very moment. You did not know me, could not remember me, not even when the masks were off. Ah, it was good as a play!"

"I have done nothing else but remember you."

"How much I should value your acquaintance, Mr. Cowles of Virginia! How rare an opportunity you have given me of seeing on the inside of a man's heart!" She spoke half bitterly, and I saw that in one way or other she meant revenge.

"I do not understand you," I rejoined.

"No; I suppose you men are all alike—that any one of you would do the same. It is only the last girl, the nearest girl, that is remembered. Is it not so?"

"It is not so," I answered.

"How long will you remember me this time—me or my clothes, Mr. Cowles—until you meet another?"

"All my life," I said, "and until I meet you again in some other infinite variety. Each last time that I see you makes me forget all the others, but never once have I forgotten you."

"In my experience," commented the girl, "all men talk very much alike."

"Yes, I told you at the masked ball," said I, "that some time I would see you, masks off. Was it not true? I did not at first know you when you broke up my match with Orme, but I swore that some time I would know you. And when I saw you that night on the river it seemed to me I certainly must have met you before, have known you always, and now?"

"My experience with men," went on this sage young person, "leads me to believe that they are the stupidest of all created creatures. There was never once, there is never once, when a girl does not notice a man who is well, who is taking notice."

"Very well, then," I broke out, "I admit it. I did take notice of four different girls, one after the other, but it was because each of them was fit to wipe out the image of all the others—and of all the others in the world."

This was going far. I was a young man. I urge no more excuse. I am setting down simply the truth, as I have promised.

The girl looked about gladly, I thought, at the sound of a shuffling

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## PROLOGUE.

A young man and a beautiful young woman, lost and alone in a wilderness for months, half starved and in daily peril of death from wild beasts and still more savage Indians—this is the central theme of the most fascinating romance that has come from Emerson Hough's pen. Read and you will learn how love came to them; how they conducted themselves in this trying, unconventional situation; how the man's chivalry and the woman's purity held them steadfast to the ideals of civilization, and how the strange episode brought tragedies, estrangements and happiness.

"Now then, you men," ordered Mandy McGovern, "get some wood out and start a fire right away. This here girl is shaking the teeth plumb out'n her head." Mandy drew forth two flasks, each stoppered with a bit of corn-cob. The one held sulphur matches, thus kept quite dry, and this she passed to me. The other she handed to the young woman.

"Here," said she, "take a drink of that. It'll do you good."

I heard the girl gasp and choke as she obeyed this injunction, and then Mandy applied the bottle gurglingly to her own lips.

Presently we had a roaring blaze started, and Mandy, seating herself comfortably upon a log and producing a corn-cob pipe and a quantity of natural leaf tobacco, proceeded to enjoy herself in her own fashion. "This here's all right," she remarked. "We might be a heap worse off'n we air."

I could not help pitying the young woman who crouched near her at the fireside, still shivering. She seemed so young and helpless and so out of place in such surroundings. The firelight showed in silhouette the outlines of her face. It seemed to me I had never seen one more beautiful. Perhaps she felt my gaze, for presently she turned and said: "Indeed it might be worse. I thank you so much. It was very brave of you."

We had waited perhaps not over an hour, undecided what to do, when Auberry raised a hand. "Listen," he said. "There's a boat coming," and presently we all heard the splash of oars. Our fire had been seen by one of the boats of the River Belle, out picking up such stragglers as could be found. So our little bivouac on the beach came to an end.

I did not get the name of the girl I had seen there in the firelight. What did remain—and that not wholly to my pleasure, so distinct it seemed—was the picture of her high bred profile, shown in chiaroscuro at the fireside, the line of her chin and neck, the tumbled masses of her hair. These were things I did not care to remember, and I hated myself as a soft hearted fool, seeing that I did so.

"Son," said old Auberry to me after a time as we trudged along up the bank, stumbling over roots and braided grasses, "that was a mighty fine lookin' gal we brung along with us there."

"I didn't notice," said I.

"No," said Auberry solemnly. "I noticed you didn't take no notice."

"I suppose you're married," I suggested.

"Some," said Auberry, chuckling. "In fact, a good deal, I reckon. My present woman's a Shoshone—we're livin' up Horse creek, below Laramie. Them Shoshones make about the best dressers of 'em all."

"I don't quite understand"—

"I meant hides. They can make the best buckskin of any tribe I know." He walked on ahead in the dark for some time before he added irrelevantly, "Well, after all, in some ways women is women, my son, and men is men, that bein' the way this world is made just at these here present times. As I was sayin', that's a powerful nice lookin' gal."

It seemed to me that I saw gazing down directly at me one cold, bright, reproving star, starting straight into my

step approaching. "Yon, Aunt Mandy?" she called out. And to me, "I must say good night, sir."

I could not sleep. I looked up again into the eye of my cold, reproving star. But now, to my surprise and

horror, when I looked into the eye of my monitor my own eye would not waver or admit subjection. I rebelled at my own conscience. I, John Cowles, had all my life been a strong man. Now, tonight, I was meeting the strongest antagonist of all my life, the only one I had ever feared. It was none other than I myself, that other John Cowles, young man, and now loose in the vast free garden of living.

Yet I fought with myself. I tried to banish her face from my heart—with all my might and all my conscience and all my remaining principles I did try. I called up to mind my promises, my duties, my honor. But none of these would put her face away. I tried to forget the softness of her voice, the fragrance of her hair, the sweetness of her body once held in my arms, all the vague charm of woman, the enigma, the sphinx, the mystery magnet of the world, the charm that has no analysis, that knows no formula. But I could not forget. A rage flared me against all the other men in the world. I have said I would set down the truth. The truth is that I longed to rise and roar in my throat, challenging all the other men in the world. In truth, it was my wish to stride over there just beyond into the darkness to take this woman by the shoulders and tell her what was in my blood and in my heart—even though I must tell her in bitterness and self reproach.

It was not the girl to whom I was pledged and plighted, not she to whom I was bound in honor. That was not the one with the fragrant hair, and the eyes of night, and the clear cut face, and the graciously deep bosomed figure—that was not the one. It was another of infinite variety, one more irresistible with each change, that had set on this combat between me and my own self.

I beat my fists upon the earth. All that I could say to myself was that here was sweet, sweet and wonderful, here in the mystery of this wide, calm, inscrutable desert.

(To Be Continued.)

John Kopka of Cedar Creek came in to look after his citizenship papers today. Mr. Kopka has been a resident of the United States for twenty-eight years.

Mrs. Robert Sherwood, sr., and daughter, Mrs. Hoover, were passengers to Omaha on the morning train today, where they looked after business matters for a time.

W. T. Smith went to Council Bluffs this afternoon, where he was called on account of the serious illness of his mother-in-law, Mrs. Ferree, who was much worse last night. Mrs. Smith has been at her mother's bedside for some days.

I. S. White of Murray and his granddaughter, Miss Margerite Blatt, of Sidney, who has been attending school at Lincoln the past year, were guests of Mrs. Frank Gobelman today, departing for Sidney this afternoon.

Mrs. C. N. Beverage and little daughter of the vicinity of Murray were visitors in this city yesterday, being guests at the home of Mr. and Mrs. John McNurlin. Miss Ruth Beverage being a delegate from Weeping Water to the Y. W. C. A. convention at Cascade, Colorado, departed for that point yesterday afternoon, and Mrs. Beverage and little daughter had accompanied her to this city.

## LOCAL NEWS

From Friday's Daily.

T. L. Amick went to Omaha this afternoon to get some repairs for his automobile.

L. B. Brown of Kenosha was a visitor in this city today and was a pleasant caller at this office.

Mrs. Lee of Louisville came down on No. 4 this morning to visit Plattsmouth friends for a time.

G. P. Meisinger of Cedar Creek came down on the morning train today to look after business matters for a time.

Ben Dill and wife drove in from their home near Murray yesterday and did some shopping with Plattsmouth merchants.

Threshing Machine for Sale. Gaar-Scott 13 h.-p. engine, J. I. Case Separator, 32, 50 rear. In running order and under shed. Will sell or trade for stock or town property. See T. W. Vallery, Murray, Neb., or write me at Ogallala, Neb. Frank Vallery.

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