



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.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Yoke.

WHEN she started to the south on the following morning I rode far at the rear under guard. I recall little of our journey toward Laramie save that after a day or two we swung out from the foothills into a short grass country and so finally struck the steady upward sweep of a valley along which lay the great transcontinental trail. I do not know whether we traveled two days or three or four, since all the days seemed night to me and all the nights were uniform in torture. Finally we drove down into a dusty plain and so came to the old frontier fort. Here, then, was civilization—the stagecoach, the new telegraph wire, men and women, weekly or daily touch with the world, that prying curiosity regarding the affairs of others which we call news. To me it seemed tawdry, sordid, worthless, after that which I had left. The noise seemed insupportable, the food distasteful. I could tolerate no roof and in my own ragged robes slept on the ground within the old stockade.

I was still guarded as a prisoner. I was approached by none and had conversation with none until evening of the day after my arrival. When I ate it was at no gentleman's table, but in the barracks. I resented judgment, sentence and punishment, thus executed in one. Evening gun had sounded, and the flag had been furled on my second day at Laramie, when finally Colonel Meriwether sent for me to come to his office quarters.

"Mr. Cowles," said he, "it is time now that you and I had a talk. Presently you will be leaving Laramie. I cannot try you by court martial, for you are a civilian. In short, all I can say to you is to go, with the hope that you may never again cross our lives."

I looked at him a time silently, hating not him personally as much as I hated all the world. But presently I asked him, "Have you no word for me from her?"

"Miss Meriwether has no word for you," he answered sternly, "nor ever will have. You are no longer necessary in her plans."

"Ah, then," said I, "you have changed your own mind mightily."

He set his lips together in his grim fashion. "Yes," said he, "I have changed my mind absolutely. I have just come from a very trying interview. It is not necessary for me to explain to you the full nature of it."

"Then she has sent for me?"

"She will never send for you, I have said."

"But listen. At least I have brought her back to you safe and sound. Setting aside all my own acts in other matters, why can you not remember at least so much as that? Yet you treat me like a dog. I tell you I shall not leave without word from her, and when I leave I shall make no promises as to when I shall or shall not come back. So long as one chance remains—"

"I tell you that there is no longer any chance, no longer the ghost of a chance. It is my duty to inform you, sir, that a proper suitor long ago applied for my daughter's hand, that he has renewed his suit and that now she has accepted him."

THE WAY OF A MAN

By EMERSON HOUGH

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FOR A TIME I sat staring stupidly at him. "You need speak nothing but the truth with me," I said at last. "Colonel Meriwether, I have never given bonds to be gentle when abused."

"I am telling you the truth," he said. "My daughter, Miss Meriwether, is engaged to Lieutenant Lawrence Belknap of the Ninth dragons. You feel your honor too deeply touched? Perhaps at a later time Lieutenant Belknap will do himself the disgrace of accommodating you."

"If I killed him," said I finally, "how would it better her case? Moreover, before I could take any more risk I must go back to Virginia. My mother needs me there most sadly."

"Yes, and Miss Grace Sheraton needs you there sadly as well," he retorted. "Go back, then, and mend your promises and do some of those duties which you now begin to remember. You have proved yourself a man of no honor. I stigmatize you now as a coward."

"You speak freely to your prisoner, Colonel Meriwether," I said slowly at length. "There is time yet for many risks—chances for many things. But now I think you owe it to me to tell me how this matter was arranged."

"Very well, then. Belknap asked for permission to try his chance with me—before I came west to Laramie. He assigned him to bring her there. He was so. He has been out with me all the summer searching for you and has not been back at Laramie more than ten days. Oh, we all knew why you did not come back to the settlements. When we came in he guessed all that you know. He knew that all the world would talk. And, like a man, he asked the right to silence all that talk forever."

"And she agreed? Ellen Meriwether accepted him on such terms?"

"It is arranged," said he, not answering me directly, "and it removes at once all necessity for any other arrangement. As for you, you disappear. It will be announced all through the army that she and Lieutenant Belknap were married at Leavenworth before they started west and that it was they two and not you and my daughter who were lost."

"And Belknap was content to do this?" I mused. "He would do this after Ellen told him that she loved me?"

"Stop!" thundered Colonel Meriwether. "I have told you all that is necessary. I will add that he said to me, like the gentleman he is, that in case my daughter asked if he would marry her and leave her at once, until she of her own free will asked him to return. There is abundant opportunity for swift changes in the army. What seems to you absurd will work out in perfectly practical fashion."

"Yes," said I, "in fashion perfectly practical for the ruin of her life. You may leave mine out of the question."

"I do, sir," was his icy reply. "She told you to your face, and in my hearing, that you had deceived her, that you must go."

"Yes," I said, dully, "I did deceive her, and there is no punishment on earth great enough to give me for that—except to have no word from her!"

"You are to go at once. I put it beyond you to understand Belknap's conduct in this matter."

"He is a gentleman," I said, "and fit to love her. I think none of us needs praise or blame for that."

He choked up. "She's my girl," he said. "Yes, all my boys in the army love her—there isn't one of them that wouldn't be proud to marry her on any terms she would lay down. And there isn't a man in the army, married or single, that wouldn't challenge you if you breathed a word of what has gone between you and her."

It seemed to me so unspeakably sad, so incredible, that one should be so unbelievably underestimated.

"Now, finally," resumed Colonel Meriwether, after a time, ceasing his walking up and down, "I must close up what remains between you and me. My daughter said to me that you wanted to see me on some business matter. Of course you had some reason for coming out here."

"That was my only reason for coming," I rejoined. "I wanted to see you upon an important business matter. I was sent here by the last message my father gave any one—by the last words he spoke in his life. He told me I should come to you."

"Well, well, if you have any favor to ask of me out with it, and let us end it all at once sitting."

"Sir," I said, "I would see you damned forever before I would ask a crust or a cup of water of you, though I were starving and burning. I have heard enough."

"Order!" he called out. "Show this man to the gate."

It was at last borne in upon me that I must leave without any word from Ellen. She was hedged about by all the stern and cold machinery of an army post, out of whose calculations I was left as much as though I belonged to a different world. I cannot express what this meant for me. For weeks now, for months, indeed, we two had been together each hour of the day. I had come to expect her greeting in the morning, to turn to her a thousand times in the day with some query or answer. I had made no plan from which she was absent. I had come to accept myself with her as fit part of an appointed and happy scheme. Now, in a twinkling, all that had been subverted.

It was thus that I, dulled, bereft; I, having lived, now dead; I, late free, now bound again, turned away sullenly and began my journey back to the life I had known before I met her. As I passed east by the Denver stage I met hurrying throngs always coming westward, a wavelike migration of population now even denser than it had been the preceding spring. They came on, a vast, continuous stream of hope, confidence and youth. I, who stemmed that current, alone was unlike it in all ways.

One thing only quickened my lagging heart, and that was the all prevalent talk of war.

At last, after weeks of travel across a disturbed country, I finally reached the angry hive of political dissension at Washington. Here I was near home, but did not tarry, and passed thence by stage to Leesburg, in Virginia, and so finally came back into our little valley and the quiet town of Wallingford. I had gone away the victim of misfortune; I returned home with a broken word and an unfinished promise and a shaken heart. That was my return.

I got me a horse at Wallingford barns and rode out to Cowles' Farms. At the gate I halted and looked in over the wide lawns. It seemed to me I noted a change in them as in myself. The grass was unkempt, the flower beds showed little attention. I opened the gate for myself, rode up to the old stoop and dismounted for the first time in my life there without a boy to take my horse. I walked slowly up the steps to the great front door of the old house. No servant came to meet me grinning, I grandson of the man who built that house, my father's home and mine, lifted the brazen knocker of the door and heard no footstep anticipate my knock. The place sounded empty.

Finally there came a shuffling footfall and the door was opened, but there stood before me no one that I recognized. It was a smallish, oldish, grayish man who opened the door and smiled in query at me.

"I am John Cowles, sir," I said, hesitating. "Yourself I do not seem to know."

"My name is Halliday, Mr. Cowles," he replied. A flush of humiliation came to my face.

"I should know you. You were my father's creditor."

"Yes, sir, my firm was the holder of certain obligations at the time of your father's death. You have been gone very long without word to us. Meantime, pending any action—"

"There has a button from thy coat," she said reprovingly. "And what is this scar on thy neck; thee did not tell me when thee wrote, Jack, what ails thee?" She looked at me closely.

"Thee is changed. Thee is older. What has come to thee, my son?"

"Come," I said to her at length and led her toward the steps of the little church.

Then I broke out bitterly and railed against our ill fortune and cursed at the man who would allow her to live in servants' quarters—indeed, railed at all of life.

"Thee must learn to subdue thyself, my son," she said. "It is only so that strength comes to us, when we bend the back to the furrow God sets for us. I am quite content in my little rooms. I have made them very clean, and I have with me a few things of my own—a few, not many."

"But your neighbors, mother, the Sheratons?"

"Oh, certainly, they asked me to live with them. But I was not moved to do that. You see, I know each rosebush and apple tree on our old place. I did not like to leave them."

"Besides, as to the Sheratons, Jack," she began again—"I do not wish to say

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one word to hurt thy feelings, but Miss Grace?"

"What about Miss Grace?"

"Mr. Orme, the gentleman who once stopped with us a few days?"

"Oh, Orme! Is he here again? He was all through the west with me. I met him everywhere there. Now I meet him here."

"He returned last summer and for most of his time has been living at the Sheratons'. He and Colonel Sheraton agree very well. And he and Miss Grace—I do not like to say these things to thee, my son, but they also seem to agree."

"Go on," I demanded bitterly.

"Whether Miss Grace's fancy has changed I do not know, but thy mother ought to tell thee this, so that if she should fidget—why, then?"

"Yes," I said slowly, "it would be hard for me to speak the first word as to a release."

"But if she does not love thee surely she will speak that word. So then say goodby to her and set about thy business."

We rose and walked down to the street of the little town, and at the tavern bar I secured a conveyance which took us both back to what had once been our home. It was my mother's hands which at a blackened old fireplace in a former slave's cabin prepared what we ate that evening. Then as the sun sank in a warm glow beyond the old Blue Ridge and our little valley lay there warm and peaceful as of old I drew her to the rude porch of the whitewashed cabin, and we looked out and talked of things which must be mentioned. I told her—told her all my sad and bitter story from end to end.

"This, then," I concluded, more than an hour after I had begun, "is what I have brought back to you—failure, failure, nothing but failure."

We sat in silence, looking out into the starry night, how long I do not know. Then I heard her pray, openly, as was not the custom of her people. "Lord, this is not my will. Is this Thy will?"

After a time she put her hand upon mine. "My son, now let us reason what is the law. From the law no man may escape. Let us see who is the criminal. And if that be thee, then let my son have his punishment."

"But one thing I know," she concluded, "thee is John Cowles, the son of my husband, John; and thee at the last will do what is right, what thy heart says to thee is right."

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(To Be Continued.)

Carpenters

START FIGHT

Begin Contest on Iowa Fair for

Failure to Hire Union Men.

OVER BUILDING OF BLEACHERS

Bill to Increase Power of Cities to

Deal With Social Evil to Be Urged

Before the Next Legislature—Paint-

ers Meet Next at Sioux City.

Des Moines, July 27.—Union car-

penters have started a big fight

against the state fair because some

carpenters are employed in building

work on the grounds who do not be-

long to the union. The superintendent

of the grounds employed a number

of men on the building of additional

bleachers and it was discovered they

do not belong to the union. A com-

mittee got no satisfaction from the

fair officials.

Painters to Sioux City.

T. M. Buck of Des Moines was elect-

ed president of the Iowa State Master

House Painters and Decorators' as-

sociation. Sioux City was chosen as the

place for holding the third annual con-

vention in 1913, and all legislative

questions will be referred to a com-

mittee appointed for that purpose.

Paul Presley of Dubuque was named

vice president, A. H. Van Foss of

Sioux City, secretary, and N. F. Wilant

of Cedar Rapids, treasurer.

Dealing With Social Evil.

A bill to increase the power of cit-

ies in dealing with the social evil will

be presented to the legislature next

winter. It is being framed now by

the inter-church council. Secretary

Graves called at the municipal build-

ing to confer with councilmen on the

proposed taxicab ordinance.

TO FIGHT COAL BARONS

Fort Dodge Workmen Incorporate

to Operate Mine.

Des Moines, July 27.—Laboring men

of Fort Dodge are the incorporators

and directors of a new Iowa corpora-

tion formed to fight the recent edict

of the coal barons, that the price of

coal must go up. Articles of incorpora-

tion were filed here. The working-

men are banding together to furnish

coal to themselves at cost of produc-

tion. The capital stock is only \$5,000

and the shares are only \$5 each. The

plan is to go into the coal mining busi-

ness on a co-operative basis and the

articles also provide for the establish-

ment of a company store to be oper-

ated in connection with the co-opera-

tive mine. This is the first time la-

boring men of Iowa have joined in a

co-operative scheme to fight the state

organization of mine owners. Organ-

izers of the incorporation, which is

known as the Fort Dodge Laboring

Men's association, are well known la-

bor leaders there.

Fort Dodge Dam Project.

Webster City, Ia., July 27.—The low-

est bidders on the proposed big \$80,000

dam projected by the city of Ft. Do-

dge are the firm of Sullivan & Terrell

of this city. The matter of

construction of this immense mun-

icipal project will be submitted to the

voters of Fort Dodge, July 31, at which

time the proposition to levy \$80,000

in bonds will be voted upon.

Boy Loses Both Feet.

Clinton, Ia., July 27.—Herbert Carle-

ton, sixteen-year-old son of Mr. and

Mrs. H. Carleton of Wheatland, had

both his feet cut off when he fell under

a Northwestern train near his home.

He was trying to climb onto a refrig-

erator car with ice tongs in his hands.

They caught and threw him under the

moving train. He may recover.

Family Stricken With Typhoid.

Grinnell, Ia., July 27.—Mr. and Mrs.

William McDowell and ten children

compose the family at Oak Grove, five

miles south of this city, where ty-

phoid fever has already stricken seven

members. A daughter, aged about six-

teen years, died before noon the

mother also passed away.

Reinert Chokes to Death.

Diagonal, Ia., July 27.—H. H. Rein-

ert, local druggist and one of the best

known business men of Ringgold coun-

ty, choked to death at this home here

on a piece of beefsteak. The meat

lodged in his throat while he was eat-

ing supper. Efforts to dislodge the

obstacle were futile.

Niles Will Run for Congress.

Cedar Rapids, Ia., July 27.—Fred A.