

In the Desert.

A Story Illustrating the Horrors of War

By H. B. WELSH.

CHAPTER II.

When Margaret entered the little sitting-room, allotted to her by her landlady in Spottiswoode street, it appeared to her as if she were in a new world, breathing a new air.

How dull and dingy that sitting-room had looked to her formerly, with its dreary neutral-tinted paper, its faded carpet, its shabby haircloth sofa and chairs! Now it might almost have been paradise, so bright and joyous were the eyes that looked round on it.

Margaret sat down by the little round table and covered her eyes with her hand.

"I thank Thee, O God!" The whisper came from the very depth of her soul, and Margaret Crawford believed in God with all her soul. "Thou has given me the best of all earthly gifts."

The door behind her opened abruptly, and Margaret looked up with a start as her landlady, a somewhat vinegary spinster, entered.

"You're in, Miss Crawford? I didn't know what to do about that telegram; it came just after you left at 1 o'clock."

"A telegram? I have not seen any telegram!" exclaimed Margaret, a thrill of fear passing quickly through her, and dispelling the joy and hope that had been thrilling her whole being. "Where is it, Miss Tait?"

"There it is on the mantelpiece. I thought you couldn't fail to see it there the instant you came in," retorted Miss Tait, with some reproach in her tone. "The yellow envelope was indeed in a prominent position; but Margaret's eyes had been too full of bright visions to notice it."

She seized it and hastily tore it open. It was brief; but each word sank into Margaret's head like a drop of cold, heavy lead:

"Your father very ill. Come at once. No time to be lost.—Adamson."

Margaret's first feeling was one of sharp, intolerable anguish; regret for the thoughts that had been occupying her mind only a few minutes ago, at the very moment, perhaps, when her father was struggling with his last breath; her second, a feverish desire to rush to him, or to what remained of him, at once. She raised her face, and even Miss Tait was struck by the expression of white, stricken anguish upon it.

"It is my father; he is very ill. I must go at once," said she, her lips set together in a line of pale resolution. "Miss Tait, can you help me? Tell me when I can get a train to Bolton."

"I fear not until night now, Miss Crawford," said the landlady. She hurried away and came back to say there was one at 9 o'clock, not sooner. It was not yet 5.

Margaret rushed out to send a telegram, then came back to put a few things away in a bag. The landlady brought in her tea, and she tried to swallow a little, feeling that she must keep up her strength at any cost.

How those slow hours of intolerable waiting passed Margaret never afterwards knew; nor how she got through the dismal night journey, with the terrible fears, regrets, and overwhelming sense of sorrow that were pressing so hard upon her. But,

"Be the day short, or be the day long. At last it ringeth to evensong."

And at last Margaret found herself, in the middle of the night, at her destination. She took a cab and drove straight to the house, situated in one of the pleasantest parts of the smoky Lancashire town, in which her father lived.

It was a small house, presided over by a middle-aged housekeeper, James Crawford was by no means in the influential position Miss Minnie Whyte had assigned to him. He was merely the teller in a bank there, and his income was small.

As soon as Margaret rang the bell there was the sound of hasty footsteps within, and the round, comely face of Jane Adamson appeared in the doorway as the door opened.

"Oh, Miss Margaret, I'm glad to see you!"

"My father, how is he?" exclaimed Margaret. Her voice sounded low and hoarse; her throat was parched with the long journey and her own feverish anxiety.

"Still living, thank God! and still able to speak; but he's been calling out for you ever since he took bad, Miss Margaret, and I haven't known what to do with him," answered the good woman. "It's like as if he'd a something preying on his mind, Miss Margaret."

"What is wrong with him? Has the doctor said?"

"He says it's his heart. It's quite worn out, and won't do its work, he says. He had a terrible attack today when I sent the telegram, and we thought he was gone; but he got over that, and he has had one or two since. He's getting weaker by degrees, the doctor says."

"I'll go in at once," said Margaret, flinging off her hat and cloak. "No, Jane, nothing to eat just now. I will have something presently."

She opened her father's door noiselessly and entered.

"Is that you, Jane?" asked a feeble voice. "Has my daughter not come yet? Oh, God grant she may come before I die!"

Crossing the room quickly, Margaret

was at his side, and, bending down, kissed the grey, chilly lips.

"It is I, dear father," she said gently. "I came as soon as I could. I would have been here long before if I could have got a train; but I am here, and shall not leave you now."

"Thank God!" said the feeble voice. Margaret, drawing back a little, could plainly see death written on the cold, grey face, in the dulling eyes, on the damp forehead. She had left her father a few months ago a hale, hearty man, whose hair was hardly yet touched by time; she came back to find him dying.

James Crawford had never been the face of a strong man, and there was little resemblance between father and daughter; yet he had been handsome, and in his youth he had been a popular man after the kind called "good fellows." And two women had loved him much—his wife, who had died many years ago, and his daughter, who had always had for him that kind of procreting love which a strong woman gives to a weak man, even though she be his daughter.

She knelt beside him now, soothing him with hands of tenderness and womanly comfort; but the dying man tossed restlessly from side to side.

"Give me something to strengthen me, Meg," he said, calling her by the old name no other had ever given her. "There is something on the table there; it will give me strength for a few minutes to tell you what I have to tell."

Margaret poured out a little of the liquid and held it to his lips. A faint glow came into the grey face and dimming eyes, and in a few seconds he began to speak, in low but distinct tones.

"I have a confession to make, Margaret, before I die. I cannot go into the other world, into the presence of Infinite Holiness, with so great a sin unconfessed. It is a fearful thing to die, Meg. One would willingly give all one possesses, or ever did possess, to undo all the past then; but we cannot—we cannot! Oh, my God, there is no forgiveness of sins in that sense—none, none!"

A terrible sickening fear had slowly risen in Margaret's heart as he spoke. Was it true, then what had always been said about her father? If so, it seemed to Margaret at that moment as if she desired nothing else but to lie down and die beside him; but the next moment her womanly desire to help, to comfort the poor repentant soul came with full force upon her and she laid her hand gently on his breast.

"Dear, dear father, whatever you have done, whatever sin you have been guilty of, there is forgiveness."

The dull eyes looked at her with a pitiful expression of appeal.

"If I had made restitution I might then hope for pardon; but I have made none. I have lived as if I had never done that fearful wrong. Margaret, listen while I tell it, for time is growing short."

"But why tell it, dear?" she pleaded gently, close to his ear. "Do I not know already what it was? You were guilty two years ago, as people sometimes said."

"No, no!" he said, with a gasp. "You are mistaken—mistaken, Meg. It was not that. I was guiltless there; I knew nothing of the fraud."

"Thank God!" cried Margaret quickly. "But the weak, chill, tremulous hand stopped her."

"Guiltless of that; but a greater sin lies on my shoulders, Margaret. Yes, far greater, because the man I robbed trusted me as his own brother—yes, even to the end."

"Listen, for I must speak quickly. It is ten years since it all happened, Margaret. I was then manager of the branch of the Western bank in Glasgow, as I was later on. You were only a school girl of 12 at the time."

"I had an old friend who had been a schoolmate years ago. He had been abroad, but had come home some months before, and he called to see me. He told me he had a large amount to invest—it is not necessary to say how much."

"At that time, Margaret, I was in desperate straits. I knew that if money was not forthcoming very shortly I should lose my position, for the bank depended very much on this branch of it, and I had been sent to work up a connection."

"My friend wished to invest his money in some mining shares, but meantime, for security, placed it with me. A terrible temptation seized me. If I could only secure this money I could keep the bank afloat."

"An opportunity came. The devil always sets such opportunities for men. One day my friend's son, young Cleland—"

A strange sound, half cry, half sob, broke from Margaret's lips; but the dying man did not hear it. He went on, taking no notice of Margaret.

"Young Cleland called at the bank. He had a check, payable to himself from his father. He presented it, and I paid it."

"When he was gone the devil entered into me. By one stroke of the pen I could transfer John Cleland's fortune to myself—at least, sufficient of it to save my purpose. I yielded to the temptation; I fell."

"When John Cleland called I gave him his son's check, with the altered amount entered in it. He looked at it, then, without a word, rushed from the office like a madman. Shortly afterward I heard that he had died immediately on reaching home. The doctors said it was from shock acting on a diseased heart; but who can know? Who can tell?"

"And then again, after the first shock, temptation came to me. No one knew of the transaction; he had not seen his son after leaving me. The fraud would never be discovered if I kept silence, for Cleland had told me no one knew what amount he was worth, not even his wife, Margaret. I robbed the dead. I kept that money; I saved my reputation and my position; and the widow and children had the remainder of the money which had been committed to my charge."

"For ten years that sin has been upon my conscience; but, as time passed, restitution and confession became more and more impossible. God alone knows how fearful my qualms have been, yet I kept silence. I have done nothing to atone. My God! I have sold my soul for that miserable twenty thousand! I am lost to all eternity!"

His voice sank, coming now only in gasps, and a terrible greyness overspread his face; his breathing became fearfully labored, and every breath he drew seemed almost to be the last. Margaret, her own face pale and set, looking hardly less deathly than the dying man, bent over him and once more held the strengthening liquid to his lips. But now it seemed to have but little effect. Life had ebbed too far to be brought back; it was already almost merged in the shoreless sea of eternity.

But one thing Margaret must know; one thing she must be sure of, ere the eternal silence fell.

"Father," she whispered—and no one hearing that terrible, hollow whisper would have thought it came from Margaret Crawford—"let me try to make restitution, atonement. Only tell me one thing—what is the name of the son of whom you spoke?"

The fast glazing eyes looked at her as if uncomprehendingly for a moment; the dying man struggled for breath.

"His name is—Paul Cleland. He lives—"

Then the voice died away into a whisper, and there was no more.

A long, long breath, then a pause, another, a choking sigh, and the sinning soul had passed over into the presence of the Judge.

And Margaret Crawford, with no tears, but a face of white agony and despair, knelt by the dead.

(To be continued.)

KANSAS AND MISSOURI

GAIN IN THEIR WEALTH WITHIN THREE YEARS.

Bank Deposits More Than Doubled Under This Republican Administration—A Comparison of the Increase in Values of Live Stock and Staple Crops.

The Democratic party is notoriously an anti-prosperity party, and the farmers and wage-earners in Kansas and Missouri must not allow themselves to be led away by the false promises and calamity howling of their friends who are assembling today in national convention.

Missouri has gained \$128,000,000 in wealth under this Republican administration.

The state of Kansas has gained almost \$100,000 in wealth under this Republican administration.

These substantial facts, showing that great prosperity has visited Missouri and Kansas during the last three years, should not be forgotten by their citizens during the whirl and excitement of the Democratic convention.

Our statements are from official figures and show the increase in wealth in these two states to be as follows:

KANSAS.

	1896.	1899.
Live stock	\$ 80,049,272	\$132,759,873
Crops	83,303,684	111,391,831
Bank deposits.	17,147,169	33,505,101

Total	\$180,500,116	\$277,656,805
INCREASE		\$97,156,689
in 1899.		

MISSOURI.

	1896.	1899.
Live stock	\$ 93,718,709	\$113,806,338
Crops	58,219,870	78,411,465
Bank deposits.	53,921,953	141,726,449

Total	\$205,860,532	\$333,944,300
INCREASE		\$128,083,768
in 1899.		

In Kansas it will be noted that the farmers have gained \$80,000,000 through the increased value of their live stock and principal crops this year as compared with 1896. In Missouri the farmers have gained \$40,000,000 this year alone from the same source. The following detailed statement of values of live stock is official, being taken from the returns of the department of agriculture:

KANSAS.

	Jan. 1, 1896.	Jan. 1, 1900.
Horses	\$20,609,057	\$26,695,789
Mules	2,845,995	3,827,859
Cows	13,778,371	22,999,438
Cattle	33,903,604	62,401,253
Sheep	413,964	835,534
Swine	8,498,279	16,000,000

Total	\$80,049,272	\$132,759,873
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MISSOURI.

	Jan. 1, 1896.	Jan. 1, 1900.
Horses	\$23,609,549	\$24,891,718
Mules	6,914,427	7,210,321
Cows	17,359,416	18,868,307
Cattle	32,565,492	36,981,329
Sheep	1,475,953	1,854,711
Swine	12,718,709	24,000,000

Total	\$93,718,709	\$113,806,338
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In Kansas the largest gains to farmers have been in their cattle and hogs. This they well know, because their returns when selling their live stock have been so much larger this year than they were under a Democratic administration.

The next table shows the improvement in the price of the staple crops grown by farmers, which represent an increase of \$28,000,000 for Kansas, and over \$20,000,000 for Missouri:

KANSAS.

	1896.	1899.
Corn	\$4,592,121	\$9,405,306
Wheat	14,400,505	19,963,383
Oats	3,809,401	8,608,470
Barley	19,065	859,455
Hay	13,316,122	18,045,678
Potatoes	2,015,803	4,259,866
Wool	150,667	249,673

Total	\$83,303,684	\$111,391,831
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MISSOURI.

	1896.	1899.
Corn	\$35,353,730	\$48,874,519
Oats	3,374,583	4,871,844
Cotton	747,689	1,324,800
Hay	15,996,275	19,339,962
Potatoes	2,435,869	3,502,998
Wool	311,724	497,312

Total	\$58,219,870	\$78,411,465
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Corn, oats, hay and potatoes show the largest gains in both states. While wool is not so much grown here as in the far western states, still the increase under protection in the value of the clip has been satisfactory to those farmers who raise sheep.

In Missouri this year's cotton crop was worth almost twice as much as it was in 1896 under the Democratic administration.

Lastly, an examination of the number of bank deposits in Kansas and Missouri is full of facts upon which our citizens can congratulate themselves. The figures are taken from the last annual report of the comptroller of the currency:

In the state of Kansas there were 53,151 people who had bank accounts in 1894; last year there were 100,840 bank accounts in that state.

In 1894 the total deposits in Kansas amounted to \$17,147,169; last year the total amount of the deposits was \$33,505,101.

There has been an increase of practically 100 per cent, both in the number of people who had money to deposit in the banks, and in the total amount of money on deposit in Kansas.

In the state of Missouri there were 117,367 persons who had bank ac-

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