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# A History of the Gallant First Nebraska Regiment from Photographs

## A DESERT MADE GLAD.

A True Story of Harvest Time.

By GERTRUDE SMITH.

(Copyright, 1899, by Gertrude Smith.)

The red bud trees came into plink clouds of bloom a month earlier than usual and in July fruit and grain were far in advance of the season.

Mr. Starry was helping Averilla husk sweet corn for dinner out in the shade of the house.

"I never saw anything like the way things grow this year," he said. "Seems like the seeds weren't more than in the ground before they were up and blooming."

"I do two ears to your one, pa!" Averilla answered, catching up an ear of corn and stripping it energetically of its husks.

"Now, you finish the rest and bring them in," she picked up the half dozen ears already husked and started toward the house.

"Who is that just come in sight across the prairie there?" Mr. Starry asked. There was a slight drawl in his tone.

Averilla stopped, shading her eyes with her hand. The interest of a passing wagon was sufficient to arrest even her concentrated energy. The prairie on this side of the house was unbroken, stretching away for miles in soft undulations of color.

To the north and east, unfenced fields of grain joined other fields and white farmhouses showed here and there.

"It isn't John Conant, is it?" Mr. Starry asked.

"Yes, that is just who is it," Averilla's hand dropped at her side. "And now look here, don't you ask him to stay to dinner."

"Why, you wouldn't want him to come and go just at dinner time, would you, Averilla?"

"He can't do any business coming over here to dinner on week days. I guess there would a lot be done if I tramped around the country all the time as he does."

Averilla disappeared within the house. Mrs. Starry came to the door after a moment. She had a bundle around her head and her face looked out white and pathetic.

"You better do as Averilla says, pa. I think myself it looks reasonable people should call John lazy, finding time to come away over here every other day!"

"I didn't know they had quarreled."

"She told him not to come through the week. I think myself Sunday's quite enough."

"And all he's coming for is to show me he can, and I'll show him he can't," said Averilla from within.

He handed her the ears of corn he had finished husking, went on to the barn, and climbing the ladder to the hay mow began pitching down hay for the horses.

John Conant whistled loudly as he unbuckled the harness and led his horses into the barn. He tied them in the two empty stalls and went back and forth giving them their measure of oats.

Mr. Starry went into the shadows of the mow. He knew that the mangers were empty of hay, and that John would next climb into the mow for hay to fill them.

The young man stood in the barn door looking toward the house. A peculiar smile played about his mouth.

"Mr. Starry, you're going to pitch some hay down for my horses, ain't you?" he called out cheerily.

Mr. Starry slowly crawled out of his retreat.

"Good growing weather, isn't it?" the young man called again.

"Good working weather, too," Mr. Starry answered gruffly, as he tossed down the hay.

"O, you don't say so? Wait till you hear what I've come over to tell you. You'll say luck follows them that don't work."

Mr. Starry backed himself out of the mow and down the ladder. John Conant stood waiting to meet him with a broad smile. "Disturbance in the house?" he inquired with a knowing nod.

"I guess you know as much about it as I do," Mr. Starry answered.

"Well, it will all be serene when I tell Averilla what I've come over to tell her. Now, look here, father Starry, you don't want to let that small pepper pod walk over you. I like her pluck and go as much as you do, that's why I took to her, but, by George, she can't run the earth."

"You seem to have come with the idea of stopping a spell."

"That's the size of it. I don't seem about to run, do I?"

"I hope you'll get in and enjoy yourself; that's all I can say."

John Conant leaned in the barn door and talked unasily of the crops and the weather. Mrs. Starry came to the kitchen window.

"Pa, Averilla says you're to come right in to dinner."

John Conant laughed boisterously. "Come along; I'll see you next get hurt," he said. "I've got more to settle with Averilla than I thought. She'll be mighty ashamed of herself when she knows what I've come over to tell her."

Averilla was standing by the stove taking up the sweet corn. A cloud of steam enveloped her. She did not turn her head as her father and lover entered the room.

"You see I wasn't afraid to come in if I wasn't asked," John said, going toward her.

Averilla clacked the cover of the tureen over the corn. "You know what I told you," she answered, without looking around.

"Yes, and you know what I told you, but all that will pass when you hear the news."

"I don't care anything about your news. You went off mad the other night because I said you came here too much, and made people talk, and I say it yet. I've got a little pride, if you haven't."

"And I told you I wasn't to be told what I could do! You've got that to learn right from the start!"

Mr. Starry stood small and intimidated by the young man's side. "Averilla, think before you speak," he faltered.

Averilla put the tureen on the table and grasped the back of a chair. "Well, you'll find, John Conant," she began, and then turned and ran out of the room.

"I must say, for a person as sick as I am, this is thoughtful. If you want to pacify her you go about it in a queer way!"

"I'm not wanting to pacify her!" John Conant answered, savagely. "She's been pacified too often, that's what ails her."

The three sat down to the dinner table in silence. Mrs. Starry sighed occasionally and looked aggrieved.

"You might as well eat your dinner before it gets cold," she said, at last. "Averilla won't come down while you are here."

The young man sat looking dully at the untouched food before him. His anger was increasing with every moment. Suddenly he pushed his plate back and sprang to his feet.

"Well, I'll give her the satisfaction of leaving without my dinner, but I'll give myself the satisfaction of never coming here again. I came over to tell you that the red stone on my south eighty has been found to be valuable, and I've been offered double for my farm that I ever supposed it would be worth, and I'm selling out and going further west."

Averilla in her room under the eaves heard the rattle of the light spring wagon as John Conant drove out of the yard. She went to the window. John had taken the south road

to the village. His mustangs, encouraged by a good dinner, were bearing him rapidly away.

Averilla's anger had lost its white heat. The fields, with their richness of color, were in a mist of tears. The sense of victory was a leaden weight at her heart.

"He'll find he can't have things his way," she said, with firm lips, but the room wheeled dizzily. Her heart told her John had gone with no purpose of returning.

The harvest of small grains was over. The corn, in advance of the season, bore bravely an unusual weight of ears. It had been over a month since John Conant had driven away from the Starrys and left his dinner untouched on his plate. He had made no effort of reconciliation. When they had met at the postoffice in the village Averilla bowed, but he turned his head and walked away without a word.

She heard of the valuable building stone that had been found on his farm, and she saw men at work opening the new quarry, so she knew the place had been sold.

She had driven over to the village with her father one morning at daybreak, and they were coming home.

"I never saw anything like the way things grow this year," Mr. Starry said, waving his whip. "I'll be bound that corn yields fifty bushels to an acre."

A flock of blackbirds rose out of the corn with a whirl of wings and flew away toward the south. Averilla watched the blackbirds, but made no reply.

"What on earth is it?" she called. "Don't sit there, hurry into the house!"

But for hours the cloud apparently stayed in the same position, or moved so slowly that the fear of immediate danger was suspended.

"That isn't a cloud," she answered absently.

"Ain't a cloud? I don't know what you do call it, then? I should say it meant wind."

Mrs. Starry stood in the door as they drove into the yard. She was watching the strange dark, moving mass with a face of alarm.

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It was late in the afternoon. Mr. Starry was standing by his wife's side with his arms about her. She had gone from one nervous convulsion of fear to another, and now lay with closed eyes, murmuring prayerfully.

Nearer and nearer the mighty cloud had crept until the sky was overcast and all the country was in darkness. The cloud parted and the setting sun shone full upon it.

There was a glitter of bright wings. From time to time small particles of the cloud were disengaged and fell about her feet.

"Grasshoppers!" Averilla ran to the door laughing. "It's only a swarm of grasshoppers, ma! Come out and look at them." She had never heard of the grasshopper as a pest.

At first the insects dropped so slowly that the chickens feasted as they fell, then as a shower of hail they covered the land.

For long days the raid continued, and all the wealth of nature yielded to the bright-coated invaders. The brave corn fields were stripped of their leaves, and not a kernel of corn was left for the blackbirds. The stacks of small grain, many of them still unthreshed, were burrowed to the earth. Fruit trees stood bare of fruit and leaves.

After a dream of terrible days the enemy rose on triumphant wings and flew away.

Averilla walked down through the deserted corn rows to the woods. She wanted to be alone, and away from the continual demand her father and mother made on her for sympathy. She sat down under a tree, when she had reached the edge of the woods, and looked away through the mockery of bare boughs.

"I've worked night and day, night and day,

over since we came west. I've made everybody uncomfortable who wasn't working, and this is what comes of it! No one thinks or talks of anything but the crops and how they've worked. I guess I've learned there isn't any account taken of our work nor any virtue in it."

She buried her face in her hands and sat thinking for a long time.

"There isn't anything but just love," she thought. "Everything else can go, but that stays! O, John, I wish you knew how it stays. There wouldn't be any trouble with my pride now, that's all gone, too!"

After a while she got up and dragged herself slowly back to the house. Her father sat in the doorway, smoking.

"John Conant's been here," he said, "he's going to start out west tomorrow. He came to say goodbye. He said he was sorry not to see you again."

"Why didn't you tell him where I was? You knew."

"Ma thought you wouldn't want it. She let on you was up stairs."

"How long has he been gone?"

"There he goes, just over that ridge yonder. He'll never come here again, Averilla. Anyone will say he's done his part."

Averilla turned and ran out to the barn. She threw a bundle over one of the horse's heads, and a moment later was galloping out of the yard.

John Conant heard the clatter of hoofs behind, and, turning, saw Averilla riding toward him. He wheeled his horse about, and rode to meet her, waving his hat in the air. She waved her hand in response. As they met, he sprang from his horse and stood close by his horse's side.

"Well, Averilla, this looks like the girl you are!" he cried. "Did you ride after me to ask me to come back to supper, say?"

She was down in the woods. I hope you didn't think I'd let you come and go if I knew it!"

"Yes, I did think so. I gave up completely."

"What made you stay away all this time, John?"

"Same reason you didn't send for me, Averilla." He had taken her hand. "You're too high up to be satisfactory. Come down here."

She slipped from her horse, with her arms about his neck.

"You've had a pretty hard time, haven't you? Now don't cry! Why you mustn't feel like that!"

"Much good all my work has done me!" she sobbed.

"You needn't reproach yourself a word. I am lazy, just as everybody told you. I'd much rather ride around and let luck come my way than work. It is my luck to be lucky, though. Why, I've sold my farm for the best price, and got a better one out west than you can find around here. The folks were scared out by grasshoppers and almost gave it to me."

She looked at him proudly.

Averilla laughed. "I guess I'll take to riding around with you and see what kind of luck I'll have."

"There it is again. I was just riding around, so I bought up twenty bushels here and forty there, and a couple of hundred here. Everybody else stripped by the hoppers, and here I am with 4,000 bushels worth their weight in gold, and you riding out to meet me and everything all rendered to me."

"I don't deserve a rap's worth of credit. It is just my everlasting luck."

"I heard about your buying up all that wheat. How did you come to do that?"

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the city, trying to sell his hide. There were twenty rattles on it. The snake was very poor and Moses said it would not do to eat and he stuffed its hide and sold it for a good price. Every year Moses makes a good deal of money selling snake oil. He says right down the vertebrae of a rattlesnake is a fatty streak of flesh that makes an oil, when fried, that will cure any case of rheumatism. It is strange to how many people he sells this rheumatic snake oil. He has a long list of certificates from people he has cured. Some of them are from intelligent whites, who declare that the oil has cured when all other remedies have failed. He sells a phial of the oil for \$1 and guarantees a lasting cure.

Moses says his father was an African hoodoo doctor and taught him how to cure all aches and pains with snake oil. The negroes of Sumter county venerate and fear him as a mysterious doctor who can cure when all else fails and look upon his snake oil as something enchanted.

ARIZONA'S PETRIFIED FOREST.

Most Impressive of the Natural Wonders of that Territory.

The Territory of Arizona is a vast museum of natural curiosities, including many of the most wonderful in all the world, says a writer in the Chicago Record. The atmosphere, the climate, the mountains, the soil, the rivers, the forests are filled with phenomena, many of which exist nowhere else. In the desert, three hundred miles square, with Flagstaff as a center, are spread out a variety of wonders of which the people of this country have little or no conception, but if they were in Europe or Asia thousands of our citizens would cross the ocean to see them. Being within only two or three days' journey of Chicago and easy of access by frequent trains of sleeping and dining cars and other modern luxuries of travel they are overlooked by the multitude and are practically unknown.

To my mind, next to the Grand Canyon of the Colorado, the most interesting and impressive of the natural wonders of this great Arizona museum is the petrified forest, which covers nearly 100 square miles, within easy distance, either on foot or horseback, from Billings station, on the Santa Fe railroad, but it can be more easily reached by carriages from Holbrook, where better accommodations can be found. The government explorers have christened it Chalcedony park.

The surface of the ground for miles and miles around is covered with gigantic logs three or four feet in diameter, petrified to the core. Many of them are translucent. Some are almost transparent. All present the most beautiful shades of blue, yellow, pink, purple, red and gray. Some are like gigantic amethysts, some resemble the smoky tobas, and some are as pure and white as alabaster. At places the chips of agate from the trunks that have crumbled lie a foot deep upon the ground, and it is easy to find cross sections of trees showing every vein and even the bark. Comparatively little of this agate has been used in manufacturing, although it is easy to obtain. Manufacturing jewelers of New York have made table tops and boxes and other articles from strips that have been sent them, and if the material were not so abundant its beauty would command enormous prices. Where you can get a carload of jewelry for nothing you are not likely to pay high prices for it.

A bird's-eye view of the petrified forests on a sunny day suggests a gigantic kaleidoscope. The surface of the earth resembles an infinite variety of rainbows. The geologists say this great plain, now 5,000 feet above the level of the sea, was once covered by a forest, which was submerged for ages in water strongly charged with minerals, until the fibres of the trees were thoroughly soaked and transformed into eternal stone. Many of the trunks are still packed in a deposit of fine clay, which was left by the receding waters, but the erosion of the wind has pulverized much of the clay and carried it off in the air, exposing the secrets that nature buried under its surface.

One great tree spans a deep gulch, forty

feet wide. It lies where it fell centuries, perhaps ages, ago, and is a most beautiful specimen of petrified wood. The rings and the bark can be easily traced through the translucent agate, and it is firm enough and strong enough to last as many centuries as it has already spent in its peculiar position. It is undoubtedly the only bridge of agate in the world, and alone is worth a long journey to see.

The Indians of the southwest used to visit the petrified forests frequently to obtain agate for their arrow and spear heads, and the material was scattered over the entire continent by exchange between the different tribes, from the isthmus of Panama to Bering sea. The great deposit here explains where all the arrow heads of moss agate came from, and other weapons and implements of similar material that are found in the Indian mounds and graves of the central and western states. In the stone age the agate of the petrified forest was the very best material that could be obtained for both the implements of war and peace of the aborigines. A scaling knife could be made very easily from one of the chips of agate and could be ground to a very fine edge. Many crystals were used for jewelry and ornament also.

FILIPINO SAVINGS BANKS.

Fancy Iron Chests Secured by the Most Intricate Locks.

Nearly every provincial Filipino of thrifty propensities puts his savings, not in a Manila bank, but in a strong box, says Leslie's Weekly. The box is usually a fancy iron chest of small dimensions, but is secured by locks and bolts enough to defy a Chinese locksmith. The outer keyhole is the finest secret the box and is usually hidden under some moving iron band that embellishes the chest. After raising the first lid there is one or two more that must be opened, and the locks or bars of these are equally hidden—though in most cases simple to the ingenuity of the Yankee soldiers. The whole contrivance is a relic of Spanish feudalism and as a place of safety is an easily-solved toy to the ingenious American.

Irritating stings, bites, scratches, wounds and cuts soothed and healed by DeWitt's Witch Hazel Salve—a sure and safe application for tortured flesh. Beware of counterfeits.

Orange Colored Shirts.

New York Evening Post: A man who has spent a great deal of his time in India says that he found much comfort while there in wearing an orange colored shirt. This was a practical application of the principle recognized in photography, that the sun's rays pass with difficulty through yellow, and may be a suggestion to persons obliged to work in the sun, even in this temperate climate. Orange shirts might be a boon to many workmen.

OH! SO SUDDEN.



He—What is your favorite in the music line? She—Wedding March.