

IN TIME OF PEACE.

[MARTHA PIERCE.]

The mountains were round about the plain like a gigantic pair of horns. Between the tips the low red sun hung in a rich dim sky. Stunted sage brush flung vivid blue shadows on the pale soft soil. Wheeling in high, slow circles a solitary eagle looked down upon a lonely rider who galloped away from the rain-swept mountains toward the red west.

Somewhat under medium height, lithe, muscular, he sat his horse with the ease of a plainsman. He might have been taken for a cow-boy, except for a certain erectness of bearing and a squareness of the shoulders which marks the soldier. His flannel shirt, his old slouch hat, his somewhat worn trousers tucked into his boots at the knee, all failed to detract from the dignity of his appearance. His keen eye swept the great circle. No sign, no motion of life in all the distance. The sun was now but a red blur on the edge of the world. His horse's hoofs were muffled to indistinctness by the sandy toilsome soil. He rode slowly looking alertly about him. As the last tinge of red faded from the sky and dusk settled over the plain, he checked his horse on the bank of a narrow stream which here wandered across the arid land, a thin thread of silver, margined with vivid green. The horse splashed eagerly into the ford and thrust his nose nostril deep into the cool water.

"Thirty miles my boy" the trooper said, patting the shining neck, "and twenty miles more to do. Are you good for it?"

The little bay horse lifted his head and turned his intelligent eye, seeking his master, who laughed and reaching forward passed a caressing hand along his neck, turning back to its place a lock of mane which straggled over the smooth sash arch. Then turning, he rode back to the shore, and followed it a little way up stream, to a place where grew a single gnarled and twisted tree in the midst of long luxuriant grass. Here he dismounted, and throwing the long reins on the ground left the horse to feed, while he stretched his tired limbs on the soft grass and ate his frugal supper.

Half an hour later when he went to his horse he walked wearily, and after he tightened the girths, he yawned, stretching his arms over his head, before he flung himself into the saddle.

Splashing into the narrow ford, and scrambling up the further bank, the horse broke into a swinging trot which covered the miles rapidly. A thin young moon cast a dim luster through a sea of feathery clouds. Through rifts in the far deep spaces the stars gleamed.

The plain sped backward under the flying feet of the horse. A range of low mounds rose on the right, grew to hills, and dwindled to mounds again and these melted insensibly into the plain. Again the levels, and from some remote place the dismal howl of wolves carried through the stillness. The trooper shivered and looked over his shoulder. Behind him stretched the long miles of half-lit plain. In the weird light the sage brush was white and ghostly and the long cry of the hungry wolves came to his ears like the cry of lost souls.

He struck in the spurs cruelly and the startled horse leaped into a wild run which lasted until the hideous sound was lost and the silences of the plain again encompassed the lonely rider.

Thus on and on.

The stars paled and the sky grew gray before he climbed a rise that overlooked a shining reach of river. The courier stood in his stirrups and breathed long and audibly, as he caught the gleam of the water and his eye rested eagerly on the group of tents on the

hither shore, snow white in the dawn. A sentry paced along the river bank. Not far from the tents a group of horses contentedly cropped the short grass.

The trooper shook out the reins freely and the horse broke into a run, his blood shot nostrils dilated and his ears set forward alertly.

Suddenly he snorted and shied, then lunged forward again. The next instant the echoes of a musket shot rolled and clattered in the hills across the river.

As the trooper reeled he tore the dispatches from his breast and thrust them under the saddle. As he fell the sentry's rifle answered the single shot. The spent horse with a last desperate effort, galloped on into the camp, where men startled from sleep were rushing wildly for their horses. The bay horse rushed in among them and stood drooping and quivering.

A trooper tore off the saddle. The dispatches fell to the ground. With a white face he carried them to his captain.

Meanwhile a small detail got to horse and climbed the rise from the river.

Moving forward cautiously through the gray dawn they passed the clump of brush where the soldier had fallen and came presently upon a dead Indian with his face on the ground, his arms out-flung, his hands clutching the sand.

The lieutenant examined the hole in his temple. "Done with a 32 revolver. A clean job," he said briefly.

Turning back, wondering, they came upon that which they sought. The dispatch bearer lay on his back with one hand flung over his head. The other clutched his revolver. A dark stream flowed from his breast and soaked the gray soil.

His calm young face was turned toward the mountains, above whose ancient snows streamed the rose colored banners of a new day.

RECONSTRUCTION OF CUBA

The story of the reconstruction of Cuba by Mr. Franklin Matthews, which is to be published in the autumn under the title "The New-Born Cuba," is in many respects one of the most interesting books which the war has called forth, and it may be said that those who are sated with war literature may turn to this book with the certainty of finding it a refreshing change. Perhaps no more striking contrast can be presented of the condition of Cuba at the end of the war and at the present time than the following paragraph from the chapter "Havana Under American Military Rule":

"And as night fell," writes Mr. Matthews, "with a sudden blanket of darkness, and the lights on the streets in buildings, street lamps, and in hundreds of cabs dashing about like so many fireflies, came out; as the throngs appeared on the streets, and the sound of music reached the ear from the public square—one of the most unattractive of all the plazas in Cuba—and scores of masked women were seen riding to a dozen balls, it was interesting to stand on some balcony and watch the attractive and seductive life of the place. The light on old Morro, across the entrance of the harbor, shot its beams up the Prado, over the long rows of Indian laurel-trees that line the promenade of that famous street, and it was easy not to notice the beggars, who, after all, the children eliminated, were not more numerous than along Park Row in New York in the summer time at night, and it was difficult to realize that the city had felt the horrors of war in the starvation of thousands in its streets and public places only a few months before. The city was brilliant, happy, and there was only an occasional odor here and there to remind one that it was not entirely clean."

THE DUCHESS' DILEMMA

RESCUED BY THE ASSISTANCE OF HER AMERICAN COUSIN.

Her Grace, the Duchess of Alton, sat one bright Midsummer morning in her boudoir at Farley Towers. As she gazed through a window over the garden of roses in full blossom, across the sunken Dutch garden, with its quaintly cut yews and stiff, formal beds, on to the park, where deer were browsing under giant oaks she felt at peace with the whole world.

Fate had been kind to Her Grace of Alton, "the young Duchess," as she was generally called. It had decreed that she should be born the daughter of a father who was not only devoted to his children, but was also one of the richest men in the world. It had given her, with a happy disposition, more than her share of good looks. When she reached a marriageable age fate had thrown in her way a young nobleman who bore an historic title, who had none of the vices that vulgar report credits to his class, and who had gained for himself an honorable name in the country of his birth.

To-day, though she had never experienced a grande passion, the young Duchess loved her husband, and she had no reason to doubt that he loved her in return. She had presented the Duke with two fine boys as pledges of her affection; the Duke's family was devoted to her; the people of her adopted land, rich and poor, high and low alike, had shown the greatest interest in the fair foreigner. In society she occupies one of the highest positions—higher than any of her fellow-countrywomen; she had entertained the heir apparent and his wife, and had in her turn been entertained by the most august personage in the kingdom. And as Her Grace watched the roses being rocked by the Southwest breeze she felt that her cup of happiness was brimming over. That morning the Duke had received a letter saying that the "most august personage" would take lunch with the Duke and Duchess of Alton and spend the afternoon at Farley Towers. It was almost the highest honor the "most august personage" could confer on a nobleman, for since she became a widow she had rarely broken bread with Southron subjects of high degree, though she frequently lunched with Northern Presbyterian ministers and partook of a "dish of tay" with Northern peasants.

There was one bitter drop in the Duchess's cup. Her mother was a divorcee and had remarried. In the very exclusive society in her native country of which the Duchess would have been a member had she not been borne away to a foreign land, such a trivial affair as divorce was lightly looked upon; but in the country of her adoption it was not so, for the "most august personage" objected to even the remarriage of even respectable widows; frowned upon divorce and, as head of the Church, anathematized the person who married a divorced man or woman. And so the young Duchess's mother was not a persona grata at the Court of the "most august personage," nor in the society of her Capital.

But Her Grace of Alton was not thinking of her mother as she gazed through the boudoir window. Her reflections, unalloyed with any sense of care, were suddenly interrupted by the entrance of a tall, broad shouldered, handsome young fellow of about twenty-three, with a sunny smile and a mischievous look in his clear blue eyes.

"Here's a cablegram for your Most Worshipful Grace. I met Jeffries carrying it to you, so I thought I'd bring it myself and hear the news."

The Duchess of Alton tore open the envelope, read the despatch, and a look of dismay came over her face.

"Why, Blanche, what's the matter?"

No bad news, I hope."

"Read it, Jack," and the Duchess tossed the cablegram in a most ungracious manner to the young man.

Jack read: "Sail alone today on the Timbuctoo. Will go straight to Farley on landing.—Mother."

"The devil!" he added. "Why, she'll reach here the day before the 'most august personage' pays her call."

"That's just what she will do," answered the Duchess, in a tone that sounded as if she were on the point of bursting into tears.

"Well can't you make it square with the old lady? Get the Arch-bishop of Rumsitoo to tell her that the Queen of Sheba made no bones about receiving foreigners under similar circumstances, or the Lord Chamberlain to swear he has found a precedent in the twelfth century. Precedents cover all the sins of the decalogue in this country."

"Don't be a fool, Jack!" exclaimed the Duchess, getting up and stamping her pretty foot on the floor. "Can't you be serious for once? Where's Alton?"

"I left him in the gun room. Shall I go and fetch him?"

"Yes; bring him here and we three can discuss the matter alone."

Jack Repton was a nephew of the Duchess's father. The young people had been brought up together as children, and were as brother and sister. Jack and Alton, too, were fast friends. Having plenty of money and nothing to do, Jack spent most of the time, since his cousin's marriage, at Farley, where he had become the "tame cat" of the household. A harum-scarum sort of fellow, devoted to sport, he never did a mean thing in his life, and was beloved by everyone in and around Farley, from the scullery-maid to the housekeeper; from the drunken "stopper" to the Methodist minister; by laborer, farmer, and county magnate alike. He had probably but one enemy in the world, and that was the Duchess's mother, Mrs. Von Donop, who would never forgive him for taking his uncle's part in the divorce suit.

"Why, what's this Jack tells me?" said the Duke as he entered the boudoir. "Your mother on her way here? It will never do. The 'most august personage' will think it is a plot on our part to force your mother on her."

"It's no fault of mine, Alton," and the tears began to pour down the Duchess's cheeks. "You know," she sobbed, "I didn't ask her to come."

"Now, my darling, don't cry," said the Duke, soothingly. "Tears won't mend matters. Let us quietly discuss what's the best thing to be done."

"That's right. Let the meeting be called to order. I propose and second that His Grace, the Duke of Alton, be called to the chair. All in favor say—"

"Oh, shut up, Jack! This is too serious a matter for joking," exclaimed the Duke. "Can't you telegraph, Blanche, to your mother, on the arrival of the boat, and say that you will be unable to receive her for a day or two?"

"Alton, she never would forgive me!"

"No, that she wouldn't," added Jack; "and, moreover, you'd never see a cent

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