

MY LADY OF THE NORTH

The Love Story of a Gray Jacket

by RANDALL PARRISH

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY ARTHUR T. WILLIAMSON

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SYNOPSIS.

The story opens in a Confederate tent at a critical stage of the Civil War. It tells of the love story of a young soldier, Wayne, and a girl, Lydia, who meet in the wilderness. Wayne is a member of the 1st Virginia Cavalry, and Lydia is the daughter of a planter. They meet in a cave where Wayne is hiding from his captors. Lydia is a nurse and she helps Wayne escape. They are pursued by Union soldiers and they have a long and arduous journey. Wayne is wounded and Lydia nurses him back to health. They are eventually captured and taken to a prison. Lydia is separated from Wayne and she searches for him. She finds him and they are reunited. The story ends with them getting married and living happily ever after.

tenant Caton, and will bring you word."

She thanked me with a glance of her dark eyes clouded with tears, but as I turned hastily away to execute this errand, Mrs. Brennan laid restraining hand upon my arm.

"Captain Wayne," she said with much seriousness, "you are very unselfish, but you must not go until your own wounds have been attended to; they may be far more serious than you appreciate."

"I thank you, but I am surprised by the anxiety she so openly displayed, I chanced to behold myself reflected within a large mirror directly across the room. One glance was sufficient to convince me her words were fully justified. My remains of uniform literally clung to me in rags, my bare shoulder looked a contused mass of battered flesh, my hair was matted, and my face bespoken by powder stains and streaked with blood."

"I certainly do appear disreputable enough," I admitted; "but I can assure you it is nothing sufficiently serious to require immediate attention."

"She is in Richmond, stopping with friends, but since my capture we have lost all trace of each other. I was reported as having been killed in action, and I doubt if she even yet knows the truth. Everything is so confused in the capital that it is impossible to trace any one not directly connected with the army, once you lose exact knowledge of their whereabouts."

"Your father, then, is dead?"

"He yielded his life the first year

of the war; and our plantation near Charlottesville has been constantly in the track of the armies. One rather important battle, indeed, was fought upon it, so you may realize that it is now desolate and utterly unfit for habitation."

"The house yet stands?"

"The chimney and one wall alone remained when I was last there," I replied, glad of the interest she exhibited. "Fortunately two of the negro cabins were yet standing. Doubtless these will form the nucleus of our home when the war ceases; they will prove a trifle better than the mere sky."

"The south is certainly paying a terrible price for rebellion," she said soberly, her fine eyes filled with tears. "I am sure I have carried here quite as long as I should, now that I can be of no further service."

As she gazed at her skirts in her hand, proceeding to descend the stairs, I yielded to temptation and stopped her. Right or wrong I must yet have one word more.

"I beg of you do not desert me so soon. This may prove our final meeting—indeed, I fear it must be; surely, then, it need not be so brief a one."

"Our final meeting?"

She echoed my words as though scarcely comprehending their meaning.

"Yes," I said, rising and standing before her. "How can we hope it shall be otherwise? I am not free to remain here, even were it best for other reasons, for I am a soldier under orders. You undoubtedly will proceed north at the earliest possible moment. There is scarcely a probability that it is the great wide world we shall meet again."

"The war will soon be over; perhaps then you may come north also."

"I scarcely expect to do so. My work then will be to join with my comrades in an effort to rebuild the shattered fortunes of Virginia. When the lines of lives diverge so widely as ours must, the chances are indeed few that they ever meet again."

"But surely you can remain here until we leave?" I said, his eyes shining with a fervor that I could not resist.

"Dear Father, I am sorry I cannot pay you a fee now for uniting me in wedlock, but I spent all I had on wedding clothes. I will send you the money just as soon as Dinah gets to work again."

"The preacher got a fee later from a

most passionately, "do not tempt me! Your wish is a temptation most difficult to resist."

"Why resist, then?"

"She did not look at me, but stood twisting a handkerchief nervously through her fingers. The abrupt question startled me almost into full confession, but fortunately my eyes chanced to fall upon her wedding-ring, and instantly I crushed the mad words back into my throat."

"Because it is right," I replied slowly, feeling each sentence as a death-blow. "For me to remain can mean only one thing. For that I am ready enough, if I thought you desired it, but I dare not choose such a course myself."

"You speak in riddles. What is the one thing?"

"A personal meeting with Major Brennan."

The high color deserted her cheeks, and her eyes met mine in sudden inquiry. "Oh, no, no!" she exclaimed with energy. "You and Frank must never meet in that way. You mean a duel?"

I bowed gravely. "I was permitted to aid in defense of this house only by pledging myself to Major Brennan afterwards."

"But why need it be—at least now that you have stood together as comrades?"

"I fear," I said quietly, "that fact will not count for much. We both fought inspired by your presence."

"Mine!" I hardly knew how to interpret her tone.

"Certainly, you cannot be ignorant that Major Brennan's dislike is based upon your friendship for me."

"But there is no reason," she stammered. "He has no cause."

"His reason I must leave him to explain," I interrupted, to relieve her evident embarrassment. "His words, however, were extremely explicit; and to ignore them by departure is to imperil my own reputation in both armies. I would do so for no one else in the world but you."

"How can I ever thank you?" she asked gravely. "Captain Wayne, you make me trust you utterly, and place me constantly in your debt."

"I was standing there apparently alone, but for the dead."

"Then you realize that I am right?"

"Yes," slowly, but making no effort to release her hands. "Yet is no other escape possible?"

"None within my knowledge."

"And you must go?"

"I must go—unless you bid me stay."

"Oh, I cannot; I cannot at such a cost!" she cried, and I could feel her body tremble with the intensity of her emotion. "But, Captain Wayne, our friendship surely need not be severed now for ever? I cannot bear to think that it should be. I am no cold, heartless ingrate, and shall never forget what you have done to serve me. I value every sacrifice you have made on my behalf. Let us indeed part now if, as you say, it must be so; yet surely there are happier days in store for both of us—days when the men of this nation will not wear different uniforms and deem it manly to fight and kill each other."

"The great struggle will certainly cease, possibly within a very few

weeks," I answered, greatly moved by her earnestness, "but I fear the men engaged in it will remain much the same in their natures however they may dress. I can only say this: Were the path clear, I would surely find you, no matter where you were hidden."

"How terrible it is that a woman must ever choose between such evils," she said almost bitterly. "The heart says one thing and duty another all through life, it seems to me. I have so much of suffering in these last few months, so much of heartless cruelty, that I cannot bear to be the cause of any more. You and Major Brennan must not meet; but, Captain Wayne, I will not believe that we are to part thus forever."

"Do you mean that I am to seek you when the war closes?"

"There will be no time when I shall not most gladly welcome you."

"Your home?" I asked, wondering still if she could mean all that her words implied. "I have never known where you resided in the north."

"Stonington, Conn.," she smiled at me through the tears yet clinging to her long lashes. "You may never come, of course; yet I shall always feel now that perhaps you will; and that is not like a final goodbye, is it?"

I bowed above the hands I held, and pressed my lips upon them. For a moment I dared not speak, and then—a voice suddenly sounded in the hall below:

"I am greatly obliged to you, Miss Minor; she is probably lying down. I will run up and call her."

We started as if rudely awakened from a dream, while a sudden expression of fright swept across her face.

"Oh, do not meet him," she begged piteously. "For my sake do not remain here."

"I will go down the back staircase," I returned hastily, "but do you indeed mean it? May I come to you?"

"Yes, yes; but pray go now!"

Unable longer to restrain myself, I clasped her to me, held her for one brief instant strained to my breast, kissed her twice upon lips which had no opportunity for refusal.

"This world is not so wide but that somewhere in it I shall again find the one woman of my heart," I whispered passionately, and was gone.



"I Was Standing There Apparently Alone, but for the Dead."

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