

TRIDE of BATTLE

A Romance of the American Army Fighting on the Battlefields of France

By VICTOR ROUSSEAU

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CHAPTER XV.—Continued.

And with the blow all his strength returned, all his energy and zest for battle. He forgot everything. Waving the sword, he hurled himself into the attacking ranks. They gave, and with a cheer the defenders swept on into the main street, Mark leading them.

How he fought that day he never knew; long afterward he would see visions of it in sleep, and battle pictures that forever eluded his waking consciousness. Round the little village from unexpected places, hideous death traps caught the unwary and venture some, sometimes a street was filled with a jostling mob, too packed to use their steel, tearing at one another with fists and teeth. There was no order, and the command fell to him who laye the key to the day's fortunes, the tide ebbed and flowed. Company after company came up on either side. Now advancing, now driven back, the Americans fought from street to street and back again. Machine guns opened fire and killed. Through all that nightmare Mark fought at the head of his company, looking like a madman, as they said of him afterward. When he came to himself at last he found himself, unwounded, save for his bleeding arm, from which the bandage had long since fallen, and in command of a battalion.

They had driven the Germans from the last house of the village. The day had saved the day. The reserves had come pouring in. On the ridge beyond the enemy was marshaling for a last counter-attack.

Mark looked about him. Lieutenants, captains who should have commanded companies, mingled with privates and non-coms, were following, as if hypnotized, this middle-aged private with the red cross on his arm. As Mark looked his heart swelled with the consciousness and pride of leadership. And, at his glance, a roar went up from the ranks, caught up from man to man and sent echoing into the distance.

And Mark was swept away by unconquerable enthusiasm. It was his day, the day of which every soldier dreams.

"Come along, boys! Break them up!" he shouted, and ran forward.

With one resounding cheer the lines swept after him. A ripple of machine-gun fire caught them, but could not hold them. Over the fallen they pressed on, cries of triumph upon their lips, the faces set above the gleaming helmets, unmarked by a single purpose. And now they were upon them.

Mark fought in the bloody swirl. Blades thrust at him, bullets tore his tattered uniform. Once he was down, and he saw a giant rush at him with clubbed rifle. He raised his arm, and tried to drive with his sword, but missed. Then the uplifted rifle fell harmlessly beside him, and the giant fell forward, dead, over him, pinning him to the ground, and covering him with his blood. A bayonet thrust had passed through his body.

And, looking up bewildered, Mark thought he saw Hartley's face look into his own.

Next moment Mark was on his feet again, and Hartley lay vanished. But already the last fusillade was over. The Germans had fled.

Mark stood still, gasping. The men were crowding all about him, waving their helmets on bayonet points, cheering him, shaking his hand. Across the field two mounted men were riding. They came up to the ridge, and one, a white-haired old officer, stepped to the ground and wrung Mark's hand.

"My thanks—our country's thanks to you!" he cried. "What is your name?"

Mark looked and saw the General's insignia upon the officer's shoulder-strap.

"Weston," he answered.

And suddenly he remembered Eleanor, and, adumbrated and humiliated, and yet strangely elevated, he began to push his way back through the crowd.

He turned into the street of the fallen, dead bodies lay everywhere, and already some of the ambulance men were succoring the wounded. Broken guns,

and again he stood face to face with Kellerman.

Eleanor released him and stood, still clinging to him, at his side, her hand drawn through his arm. The contrast between the two men was extraordinary. Kellerman looked as if he had just stepped into his uniform; his gloved hands, his adjusted belt, the crosses in his tunic were those of the fashion-plate. Looking at Mark, he saw a dirty, grimed, almost unrecognizable figure, with uniform that hung about him in great tatters, blotched and stained with blood.

"You said he would not come back!" cried Eleanor. "You see he has come back. What have you to say more?"

"You misunderstand me, Eleanor—" "I understand you now for the first time in my life. I liked you, Major Kellerman. I trusted you and I believed in you. When you told me that you were working to get Captain Wallace back, I recognized you as a traitor, and proud of you both, and happy. What did you do?"

"What did he do?" cried Kellerman furiously. "Why should you believe evil things of me, because he said them?"

"He never spoke one word against you."

"When the decision has already been made by an impartial court, anxious to clear a soldier's character, if that were possible?"

"Because I have a woman's instinct, Major Kellerman."

"Enough of this," interposed Mark. "He snapp'd the last word out in irony so bitter that Kellerman winced. "So you've cheated the firing party. Private Weston!" he said, with his hand on his sword.

"O, call me Mark while you're about it," answered Wallace. "Or please remember that I am no longer under your command, nor a soldier in the American Army. Technically I am a dead man, Major Kellerman, and dead men—"

"Tell no tales, eh?" responded Kellerman savagely. "Well, here we stand man to man, and the conditions warrant plain speaking. It is not my business to place you under arrest. But if I do so, you are aware that your life will be worth about five minutes' purchase. So go, Mr. Weston, or Wallace, or whatever you call yourself now. Go—if Miss Eleanor here says the one word that will set you free. Go—and in this confusion you will have a reasonable chance to escape, with those ready to help you against me."

"The one word?" Eleanor gasped.

"The one word 'yes,'" responded Kellerman.

"I will never become your wife, Major Kellerman."

"So you told me the other day, after leading me to suppose that it was your intention," answered Kellerman easily. "Stop, Mr. Weston, if you please, and let me finish. War doesn't leave much sentimentality in a man. We know that life is worth, and we know that life's a matter of breathing. When we were in America I might have accepted my dismissal, Eleanor. But here we three stand under the naked heaven, like ants on a hill. All artificial distinctions have fallen away. I've loved you for many months, Eleanor, and I want to marry you. That's the bald truth of it. In order to persuade you, I am willing to let this gentleman escape—to facilitate his escape, even to make our marriage dependent on my success. That's fair, isn't it? And what have you against me? Is it my fault that he was court-martialed and sentenced to death for striking an officer?"

The man's effrontery took Mark's breath away.

"My answer," responded Eleanor steadily, "is 'no.' And even if you could send him to his death it would still be 'no.' Because he himself would wish that. But you can't harm him. Something convinces me that all the harm that has come to him has come from you. And it tells me, too, that your power has ended. 'No,' is my answer. 'And yours, Mr. Weston' asked Kellerman, looking at Mark.

Mark, unable to reply, pointed toward the opening of the recess. Kellerman turned and strode toward it. Then he turned.

"There's one thing more to say," he said. "Your action in dismissing me, Miss Howard, savors of the romantic. You've a certain high-strung idealism in it, due to the circumstances of your upbringing. It was that, I believe, which made you think it your duty to follow your adopted father's lead. I think you ought to know the man who you are. Your father died on the battlefield of Santiago. He was a fugitive from justice. He was the notorious Hampton."

Mark uttered a cry. He sprang toward Kellerman, but Kellerman dealt him a blow that sent him stumbling among the bricks.

"That's a lie, Kellerman!" said Colonel Howard quietly.

The old Colonel's eyes were wide open. He laid his hands laboriously upon the edge of the brick wall and, with a great effort, raised himself to his feet.

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Kellerman gulped and moved toward the entrance for the last time. The General turned.

"Halt, sir!" he commanded. "Colonel Howard, will you have the goodness to go to the man on the way. I bet your pardon, Colonel! Not badly hurt."

"Nothing much, sir," answered the Colonel, attempting to make the passage.

The General gave him his arm and assisted him, and when he stood still, placed one arm about him to steady him.

"Do you recognize that man?" he asked.

The Colonel stiffened; Kellerman fell back against the wall.

"Who a living man?" cried Colonel Howard. "It's Hampton!"

Though airplane battles are tremendously exciting for all those participating in them, it is not always in actual conflict that the nerves and wits of flyers are tested to the utmost. Many adventures may be met in tamer pursuits.

Every now and then comes the roar of a gun from below, followed by flashes of blue and red, sharp, angry explosions right and left, front and rear; the disappearance in flames sometimes of what all then had been a welcome companion on the wing, the drone of some hardy adventurer, trouncing endeavoring to climb into the night, and now and then the awful spectacle of a machine emerging safely from a smoke cloud only to go smash into another traveling in a different direction.

On a general small, a hideous explosion, smoke, human cries, flames and then, with volcanic intensity, the sudden plunging into the abyss not only of what a few moments previously were two magnificently equipped bomb throwers, but four human souls, brave, proud, youthful and adventurous—Washington Star.

Due to metal shortage Germany has instituted rationing of metals. The fractionally marked coins are no longer of copper and nickel, but are forgings of Siemens-Martin steel. The coinage of copper was discontinued in 1917. Aluminum had been coined to a small extent before the war; the small cent coins, one and two pfennig pieces, are now made of aluminum, which is more attacked by ordinary water, soda, salts, etc., than by distilled water. Zinc coins have recently been introduced. Zinc coins had been used in French Indo-China; they are again more apt to corrode, especially when impure with lead, cadmium and iron, in distilled water than in ordinary water; they turn yellow-brown, but assume a pleasant gray tint in soda and salt. On the whole, the cheapest iron coins have answered best.—Engineering.

Industrial Exemption. Conscription boards have their troubles, and occasionally a tragedy, but once in a while they have a little joke, too. The local draft board at Stuttgart thinks it has a "good one" on the third district appeal board.

Recently the Scottsburg board sent up papers of a man who sought exemption because of marriage since August 5, 1918. In due time the papers were returned by the appeal board with the ruling, "deferred classification refused. Place can be filled by another."

It is presumed that the appeal clerk wrote a reason for refusal of an appeal for exemption on industrial grounds on the papers instead of the one intended for case.—Indianapolis News.

Found. "Aha!" hissed the Pullman porter. "I have found the secret of his berth!" And he took a flask from under the passenger's pillow.—Cartoons Magazine.

Correct. A funny one occurred in Judge Wood's court the other day, observes the Los Angeles Times. It was a divorce case and the witness was

and again he stood face to face with Kellerman.

Eleanor released him and stood, still clinging to him, at his side, her hand drawn through his arm. The contrast between the two men was extraordinary. Kellerman looked as if he had just stepped into his uniform; his gloved hands, his adjusted belt, the crosses in his tunic were those of the fashion-plate. Looking at Mark, he saw a dirty, grimed, almost unrecognizable figure, with uniform that hung about him in great tatters, blotched and stained with blood.

"You said he would not come back!" cried Eleanor. "You see he has come back. What have you to say more?"

"You misunderstand me, Eleanor—" "I understand you now for the first time in my life. I liked you, Major Kellerman. I trusted you and I believed in you. When you told me that you were working to get Captain Wallace back, I recognized you as a traitor, and proud of you both, and happy. What did you do?"

"What did he do?" cried Kellerman furiously. "Why should you believe evil things of me, because he said them?"

"He never spoke one word against you."

"When the decision has already been made by an impartial court, anxious to clear a soldier's character, if that were possible?"

"Because I have a woman's instinct, Major Kellerman."

"Enough of this," interposed Mark. "He snapp'd the last word out in irony so bitter that Kellerman winced. "So you've cheated the firing party. Private Weston!" he said, with his hand on his sword.

"O, call me Mark while you're about it," answered Wallace. "Or please remember that I am no longer under your command, nor a soldier in the American Army. Technically I am a dead man, Major Kellerman, and dead men—"

"Tell no tales, eh?" responded Kellerman savagely. "Well, here we stand man to man, and the conditions warrant plain speaking. It is not my business to place you under arrest. But if I do so, you are aware that your life will be worth about five minutes' purchase. So go, Mr. Weston, or Wallace, or whatever you call yourself now. Go—if Miss Eleanor here says the one word that will set you free. Go—and in this confusion you will have a reasonable chance to escape, with those ready to help you against me."

"The one word?" Eleanor gasped.

"The one word 'yes,'" responded Kellerman.

"I will never become your wife, Major Kellerman."

"So you told me the other day, after leading me to suppose that it was your intention," answered Kellerman easily. "Stop, Mr. Weston, if you please, and let me finish. War doesn't leave much sentimentality in a man. We know that life is worth, and we know that life's a matter of breathing. When we were in America I might have accepted my dismissal, Eleanor. But here we three stand under the naked heaven, like ants on a hill. All artificial distinctions have fallen away. I've loved you for many months, Eleanor, and I want to marry you. That's the bald truth of it. In order to persuade you, I am willing to let this gentleman escape—to facilitate his escape, even to make our marriage dependent on my success. That's fair, isn't it? And what have you against me? Is it my fault that he was court-martialed and sentenced to death for striking an officer?"

The man's effrontery took Mark's breath away.

"My answer," responded Eleanor steadily, "is 'no.' And even if you could send him to his death it would still be 'no.' Because he himself would wish that. But you can't harm him. Something convinces me that all the harm that has come to him has come from you. And it tells me, too, that your power has ended. 'No,' is my answer. 'And yours, Mr. Weston' asked Kellerman, looking at Mark.

Mark, unable to reply, pointed toward the opening of the recess. Kellerman turned and strode toward it. Then he turned.

"There's one thing more to say," he said. "Your action in dismissing me, Miss Howard, savors of the romantic. You've a certain high-strung idealism in it, due to the circumstances of your upbringing. It was that, I believe, which made you think it your duty to follow your adopted father's lead. I think you ought to know the man who you are. Your father died on the battlefield of Santiago. He was a fugitive from justice. He was the notorious Hampton."

Mark uttered a cry. He sprang toward Kellerman, but Kellerman dealt him a blow that sent him stumbling among the bricks.

"That's a lie, Kellerman!" said Colonel Howard quietly.

The old Colonel's eyes were wide open. He laid his hands laboriously upon the edge of the brick wall and, with a great effort, raised himself to his feet.

"That's a lie," he repeated.

"It is no lie, Colonel Howard. You told the whole staff at Captain Wallace in the hospital tent. Never mind how I know. I know."

"You damned, dirty spy!" said the old Colonel.

"A confession," answered Kellerman blandly. "My words were strong ones, Colonel Howard. Deny them if you can. You said, 'A thousand years of hell wouldn't atone for that crime.' You said, 'It was calculated, cold-blooded deliberation.' You said, 'The case against Hampton was absolutely proven. He was to have been hanged as soon as we captured Santiago. He was born rotten. He sold his country to pay his gambling debts.' And you called him by the worst name one man can call another. That was why you tried to persuade Mark Wallace not to adopt Hampton's child. Like father, like daughter."

He swung round upon Eleanor, and for the first time seemed to lose his self-control.

"That's no you are!" he cried. "The child of a wretched traitor, who worked in the war department with Colonel Howard and me, a man without honor, entangled with a wretched woman spy, who sold our secrets. And that man—"

your adopted father, whom you love and revere, spied on us in turn, watched him read his letters, went through his pockets, snarled him, trapped him, brought him to his deserts—and adopted you."

Eleanor staggered toward the Colonel, her arms raised imploringly, and cried in a choking voice:

"Say it's untrue! Only say that it's untrue!"

"It's a damned lie," said the Colonel; but there was not the least conviction in his voice.

"It's the truth!"

"It's true, then—it's more or less true," said Howard wearily.

"It's not true!" shouted Mark. "Remember, Colonel, the man's face had been practically blown away. How do we know that it is Hampton who was with the child? It might have been another. We don't know for sure, and we can't know. I've never believed it. I wouldn't ever dare to let myself believe it."

"You found his papers," said Kellerman.

Nobody answered him. Eleanor went up to Mark and raised her white face to his. "Tell me what you think, Captain Mark," she pleaded.

And once more Mark was mute. She read his face as if by inches. She turned toward Kellerman. "Now will you go?" she asked.

Kellerman saluted her with mock formality. "I'll go," he said, "but he's spent his chance. A spy's daughter and a spy!"

The ambulance bearers appeared at the entrance to the recess. They bore a stretcher. Propped up in it, swathed in a bloody cloth of bandages, was Hartley.

"There he is!" he cried, pointing his hand in triumph. "I've held 'em here this way. He's here, sir!" he cried to some one outside the office.

The stretcher bearers set down their burden on a ledge of the wall. Into the little place strode the General.

His appearance there exercised a paralyzing effect upon them all. Kellerman was the first to recover his self-possession. He saluted stiffly.

"This man," he said, pointing to Mark, "is the prisoner who was to have been executed this morning."

The General,