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BESIEGED IN A CAVE.

A Girl the Principal Actor in a Defense Against Indians.

By MARTHA L. TWEED.
[Copyright, 1909, by American Press Association.]

"Well," said Charlie Elson as he leaned back against the side of the cave and laid down his rifle, almost for the first time in ten days, "I suppose we can consider the siege raised. The Indians would hardly collect their ponies and ride off across the plain with an idea of circumventing us."

"We have an unobstructed view for at least five miles in front, and they could never climb over the mountains behind. It is fortunate for us that Gertie remembered the cave and thought of it as a refuge."

"It is fortunate for us in everything that we have Gertie," returned his sister Kate, smiling affectionately at the seventeen-year-old girl who was crouching near the entrance of the cave, with one arm in a sling.

Of all the party she was the only one wounded, and of all the party it was she who had best acted the part of a man. She smiled back slightly, but without turning her head.

There was something in her whole appearance—her figure, her face, especially her mouth and eyes—that expressed firmness. Muscularly there was in her the same strength. She wore a skirt reaching but a short distance below her knees, a man's gaiters, a jacket buttoning close about her throat and a man's ordinary felt hat, without even a tiny feather in the band.

"When we first saw the Indians," Kate Elson went on, "it was Gertie who whirled the horses round, riding on her pony at their heads and urging them forward, and it was she who insisted on forcing the wagon almost to the very mouth of the lower cave and



SEE COULD SEE THOSE INDIANS HURRYING TOWARD THE CAVE.

on bringing as much of the provisions and supplies up here as we could.

"If it had not been for them and the keg of water she brought up herself when the Indians were almost upon her we could not have held out so long."

"That's so," admitted Charlie Elson candidly. "I do not suppose I would have thought of the provisions myself or even of climbing to this upper cave instead of stopping in the one below. And it's the same about the marksmanship. I have been popping off the gun like a boy does his Fourth of July crackers, for the noise, though maybe that did keep them off a little. But if Gertie's telling shots had not re-enforced my ineffectual ones the Indians would soon have caught on and scrambled up the rocks."

Charlie Elson's voice had been strained and depressed for the past ten days. Now, with the Indians moving across the plain, his tones became care free, almost jubilant. It was his mercurial temperament, and his sister looked across at him indulgently, but lovingly.

Whatever else he might be, careless, incapable, visionary, he was always lovable, always oblivious of himself. It was the careless, visionary nature that had started him west when his little property was lost and the oblivion to self that had caused him to share his scanty means with the weak, emaciated creature they found wandering on the plain—all that was left of a frontier massacre.

He never thought of taking her to a trading post or transferring the burden to some one with means and a settled home. His only thought was that henceforth they would be three instead of two. Later she had developed into a beautiful, strong, lovable girl, to the wonder and satisfaction of himself and Kate.

Now, only three months from the rescue, she was returning the bread upon the waters a thousandfold. As she turned her face toward them for an instant there was something of the same expression in her eyes that appeared in Kate's, though with a difference.

No one could be in the tender hearted, irresponsible man's company long without loving him and wanting to care for him as she would for an affectionate, helpless child.

And in Gertie's life, even before the

massacre of the harsh voiced father and stepmother, there had been little of love and caring for.

"Not many men could have held out so well as you have, Charlie," she said, using the last word hesitatingly, as though not quite accustomed to it. "You have scarcely slept at all since we've been in the cave, and you have kept us laughing most of the time with your funny talk."

"Done fairly well as a rank and file man," he interrupted gayly. "Of course I don't think I lack nerve or endurance. It's only that I need a leader with drawn sword. Now what shall we do? I"—

He was moving toward the entrance as he spoke, and with the last word there came a dull thud, followed by a sharp report. A bullet had flattened against the rock near his head. Gertie caught his arm and drew him back.

"Here," she cried, snatching his hat swiftly and replacing it upon the muzzle of his rifle. "They will not suspect the old trick, as they have just seen you moving. Now!"

She pushed the muzzle of his rifle toward the entrance, so the hat could be seen from below.

Almost instantly there were two more thuds and reports, and this time the bullets passed through the hat and then flattened against the rock.

"That empties their guns," the girl cried. "I know they have no rifles from the way they have been firing. Wait! Let me shoot. I have had more practice than you."

She slipped by him to the cave opening, where she dropped at full length in order to use the rifle with her uninjured arm.

Below she could see three Indians hurrying toward the cave. Evidently they had remained behind, hiding in some crevice in hope of the besieged coming forth when the main body rode away.

Believing their bullets had pierced the head they thought inside the hat and thus deprived the cave of one of its few defenders, they were rushing forward to complete the work before following the main body.

Gertie recognized with a sudden feeling of exultation that the middle Indian was the one she had seen giving directions all through the siege, evidently the chief. With him gone the danger would very likely be over.

There were a quick flash and a report, and then she slipped back into the cave.

"I shot him through the hip," she explained in answer to their inquiring looks. "I don't like to really kill any one, but he won't fight again. He was the chief, so they could not leave him. They are carrying him to their ponies now, which they have concealed somewhere. I don't think they will trouble us any more."

But she was mistaken. Maddened by the loss of one of their number, the two other Indians, after taking him to cover, were seen looking up at the cave and talking to each other, evidently deliberating upon a new plan of attack. They were aware that the party was not strong, but they had no heart for making an attack upon them, entrenched as they were in so strong a position. They wished to circumvent them. Presently by their pantomime the besieged discovered that they had arrived at a conclusion. Then they were seen gathering wood.

"Great heavens!" exclaimed Charlie. "They're going to try to burn or smoke us out!"

"I don't think they will succeed," said Gertie calmly.

"Why?" asked Rob.

"They must get above us and drop the firebrands down before the mouth of the cave. There is only one path by which they can climb, and down there to the left we can see a dozen feet of it. They must pass that point to get above us, and unless we miss them we can shoot them."

"They may make a quick dash," said Kate, who was fast losing her equanimity.

"I can do one of them," said Charlie, "and I know Gertie can do the other."

It was half an hour before the Indians had gathered wood sufficient to make the attempt. Then they disappeared. The besieged got ready to drop them as they passed the open space where they could be seen. Gertie and Charlie each took a rifle, leveled it on a rest with the muzzle pointed to the space, knowing that they would have but a few moments in which to fire. Presently an Indian, covering his side with the wood, shot out into the open. Gertie's rifle cracked, and he limped back. She had shot him in the foot.

They waited some time for the other man, but the next they saw of him he was helping his companion away.

"Now what shall we do?" asked Charlie Elson, some of the old depression returning to his voice. "Our wagon is burned, and all the horses are carried off except the two which got away and ran across the plain. I think maybe they will come back to us when their fright wears off. But how can we go on without a wagon?"

Gertie's face looked thoughtful. "Suppose we don't go on," she suggested. "The land is beautiful around here and the soil rich, and we would always have this cave to protect us should there be any more danger. And then there is a fine spring of water, and"—

There was a look in her eyes which brought Charlie Elson to her side with eager questioning in his own.

"You—you don't mean, Gertie, that—that—why, I'm fifteen years older and an incompetent, and—you do?" as the look in her eyes slipped down into a tender tremulousness about her lips.

"Then we'll stay," a sudden vibrant ring of strength coming into his voice. "We could hardly find a prettier country. We will make a home on the edge of the plain down here."

THE AUDACITY OF BOB SMITHSON.

By MARTHA C. HUTCHINS.
[Copyright, 1909, by American Press Association.]

Edgar Barry, novelist, was sitting in his living rooms when his friend Robert (commonly called Bob) Smithson, manufacturer of drainpipe, entered simultaneously with the postman. Barry took a letter from the latter, tore it open, scowled and threw it in a wastebasket.

"Evidently," said Smithson, "you don't prize your correspondent."

"Oh, these women! They are continually writing me to know what some of my characters mean by such a thing, or how interested they are in the story, or how and when will it end in the magazine or something else, all of which means that they wish to get me to attend a function they're about to give and show me off as their intimate friend."

Smithson picked the note out of the basket and read it.

"Would you object to turning this lady over to me?" he asked. "I might personate you."

"Not in the least."

"She seems to be quite fascinated with your character of Edwin Ostrander."

"Nonsense! She wants to get me to her party. Follow it up, personate me if you like, and you will be lionized."

And so it turned out. A week later the audacious Bob Smithson was present at a musical as Edgar Barry, who had recently risen into prominence through a story that had made a hit. The worst feature about Smithson's performance was that he circulated a report that he had drawn the much admired Edwin Ostrander from himself.

It didn't take long for the fascinating literary manufacturer not of romances, but of drainpipe, to fall in love with Alice Beardsley, who gave her whole heart to the deceiver. Bob proposed to her without realizing what he was doing, and the young lady, carried away by her feelings, accepted him without taking time to think about it. Then Bob awoke the morning after it had happened to a realization of his situation. He wrote out ten confessions and tore them all up. He started six times to go and make a verbal confession and backed out every time, including the one after he had rung the doorbell.

Bob had told Miss Beardsley that he wrote in a room at the Authors' club. He told her this, intending to post Barry, who really did write there, so that if any notes came Barry would know and act accordingly. At 11 o'clock in the morning three days after Smithson's proposal, while Barry was putting some master touches to the character of Edwin Ostrander, the door opened and a servant in the club's livery announced:

"A lady in the reception room to see you, sir."

"A lady! What lady?"

"She says tell 'im I'm his fancy."

"My fiancée?"

The Author's club is a quiet place. Probably that is because authors have no money to spend in clubs. No one was about. The lady, taking advantage of this, had followed the servant to Mr. Barry's workrooms and now appeared, trembling, at the open door. On seeing the author she started.

"I beg your pardon," she said. "I was looking for Mr. Barry."

"I am Mr. Barry."

"Not you; the Mr. Barry."

"I am Edgar Barry."

"I am looking for Mr. Barry, the novelist."

"I write—at least, try to write—novels."

Meanwhile the lady had stepped across the portal much bewildered. A servant approached and announced, "Mr. Smithson!" and in another moment Mr. Bob Smithson entered.

"Oh, Edgar!" cried the lady. "What does it all mean?"

Bob Smithson stood the picture of despair. He shivered and shook. He took out his handkerchief, drew it hastily across his brow, thrust it back into his pocket, tried to stammer something and at last looked appealingly, pitifully, at Barry.

"What is it, Bob?" asked the latter.

"Tell her."

"The lady who"—

"Yes; for heaven's sake straighten it out!"

"Miss"—Barry hesitated. Smithson put in: "Beardsley. If ever there was an angel on earth, and if ever there was a devil and a fool!"

"Hold on, Bob! This is going to come out all right! Don't make it any worse. Miss Beardsley, you are engaged to my esteemed friend Mr. Smithson, I believe."

"I thought I was engaged to Mr. Barry, the novelist." Then, turning to her fiancée, "What is your name, sir?"

"Smithson, sweetheart. Bob—I mean Robert—Smithson."

"Your profession?"

"I—I sell drainpipe."

"Drainpipe! I was not aware that the original of Edwin Ostrander dealt in a conductor of sewage."

"Forgive me."

He stretched out his hands to her, but she turned, and after a rustle in the hall and a slam of the front door there was nothing left but the habitual silence of the Authors' club.

The same evening Mr. Barry called on Miss Beardsley, spoke in the highest terms of Mr. Smithson, told her that he had drawn Edwin Ostrander from him and secured a reconciliation. The engagement has continued.

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