The RED MIST

A TALE OF CIVIL STRIFE

By RANDALL PARRISH

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SYNOPSIS.

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Confederate Sergeant Wyatt of the Staunton artillery is sent as a spy to his native county on the Green Briar by General Jackson. Wyatt meets a mountaineer named Jim Taylor. They ride together to a house beyond Hot Springs. In the house Wyatt and Taylor meet Major Harwood, father of Noreen and an old neighbor of Wyatt, who is sent to bed while the two other men talk. Wyatt becomes suspicious, and finds that Taylor has murdered Harwood and escaped.

CHAPTER IV.

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Into the Enemies' Hands.

The major lay dead, with my blood-stained revolver — evidently the weapon which had struck the blow—lying beside him. Dawn would reveal the deed, and I would be discovered alone in the house. Only my wakefulness, my desire to investigate, had interfered with the complete success of this hideous plan. Taylor had prepared himself for this emergency, had deliberately taken the weapon for that very purpose. Where had the fellow gone? And what had become of the negro?

I stood there, lamp in one hand and revolver in the other, staring down at the dead face of this man who had once been my father's friend. Out of the mist floated the face of the girl, the girl who had waved to me in the road. The vision brought back to me coolness and determination. I felt through the pockets of the dead man and found a knife, keys and a roll of bills untouched, but not a scrap of paper. On the floor, partially concealed by one arm, was a large envelope, unaddressed, roughly torn open. It was some document, then, the murderer sought, and he had fled with it in his possession.

Intent now on my one purpose of discovery, my mind active and alert, I began a rapid search of the house. The front door was fastened and barred, proving Taylor had not left that way. There was but one other room on that floor, a kitchen in considerable disorder, as though the servant had made no effort to complete his work; but its outer door stood unlatched. Sam must have gone with the mountaineer in his hasty flight—must be equally guilty. This was the only conclusion possible, and the knowledge that I was left there alone rendered my own position precarious. Harwood had surely never ventured into this doubtful region without having soldiers within call, no doubt in the village, who, if he failed to appear when expected, would search for him. Before they came, and made discovery of the dead body, I must be safely beyond reach. If found there, no defense, no asseveration of innocence, would ever save me from condemnation. Their vengeance would be swift and merciless.

Thinking now only of my own escape unobserved, I felt my way into the night with my bundle. This would be Federal territory; or if not, already, my night's ride would bring me well within their lines before dawn. I slipped instantly out of the soiled suit of gray and donned the immaculate blue, buckling the belt about my waist, and securely hooking the saber. Then I scooped out a hole in the soft dirt and buried the old uniform, tearing my pass into shreds, scattering the fragments broadcast.

It was so lonely and still all about that I felt a return of confidence, a renewed courage. The house behind me, and the stable before, were mere outlines, scarcely discernible through the gloom. Once safely in the saddle, I circled the gloom of the house silently, and followed the roadway to the gate.

Not a light gleamed in any direction and I could recall no other house near by. While it remained in view I could not remove my eyes from the mansion I had just left, or forget the dead body lying there in the dark. The shying of my horse at the gate caused me to note the black something lying against the post. At first I deemed it a mere shadow, but the animal would not respond even to the spur, and I dismounted better to ascertain the cause of his fright. The negro lay there, dead as his master, a knife thrust in his heart. Then it was Taylor alone who had done the foul deed.

There was nothing I could do but flee swiftly through the night. My own position was now far too desperate to permit of my giving any alarm, or seeking to trace the murderer. To fall into Union hands would be my death warrant, irrespective of Harwood's fate, and my duty lay in carrying out the orders of "Old Jack." To allow myself to be captured would spoil everything.

I rode toward Hot Springs as rapidly as I dared, watchful of every deepening shadow, until I came to the first straggling houses. These were dark and silent, and not so much as a dog barked as I walked my horse cautiously forward toward the main street. I saw but one dim light streaming through an uncurtained window of what looked like a law office, and passed close enough to learn that a group of men within were playing cards. It was highly probable these belonged to the major's escort. I passed the place unobserved and rode on into the night, feeling I had escaped from immediate danger. At what I took to be the tavern corner I discovered the road leading to the left and turned in that direction, assured that it would lead directly into the heart of Green Briar. The road ran through thick woods, the darkness intense, and as the way was silent and seemed deserted I gave the animal the spur.

I must have loped along thus for ten minutes, all thought of pursuit already dismissed, and my mind occupied with plans for the future, when the woods suddenly ended in a bare ridge, the ribbon of road revealing itself under the soft glow of the stars. I know not why I heard no sound of warning, but at the instant, a half dozen shadows loomed up blocking the path. I barely had time to rein in my horse before we were intermingled, the surprise evidently mutual, although one of the newcomers was swift enough to seize my animal's bit, and hold him plunging in fright. I clung to the stirrups, aware of the flash of a weapon in my face, and an oath uttered in a gruff voice.

"In God's name! where did you come from? Here, Snow, see what this fellow looks like."

The speaker had a wide-brimmed hat, drawn low over his face, and a cape concealed his uniform. But Snow wore the cap of the Federal cavalry, and I knew I had fallen into Yankee hands.

"I have no objection to telling you my name and rank," I said coldly, "but lower that gun first; I am in uniform."

The rather contemptuous tone of voice employed had greater effect on the fellow than the evidence of his eyes. His arm fell to his side, although he still retained a grasp on my bridle.

"So I see," but with no cordiality in the words. "But that is hardly convincing. Federal officers are rare birds who ride these roads alone. Who are you, sir, and why are you here?"

"Perhaps I may be privileged to ask first by what authority you halt and question me?"

He laughed, and waved the weapon he still held toward the others of his party.

"Our force alone is sufficient authority I should suppose. However, I will set your mind at rest—I am Captain Fox, in command of a detachment of the Twelfth Pennsylvania cavalry."

"Oh, yes," I responded more pleasantly, "of General Ramsay's command. You know Major Harwood, no doubt?"

"We are of his escort," both suspicion and command lost before my cool assurance. "You are in the service, sir?"

"Third United States cavalry; on recruiting detail. I was to meet Harwood at Hot Springs, but was told he had gone to Green Briar."

"By whom?"

"A scout I met by chance; he gave the name Taylor."

The captain swore grimly, glancing across my horse into the face of the trooper opposite.

"Well, this stumps me!" his voice grown suddenly harder. "It doesn't sound straight, for we left him safely in Hot Springs an hour before sundown, and he had no purpose at that time except to wait there for Taylor. Do you carry any papers?"

I drew the official envelope from my pocket, and held it out to him calmly. He opened the flap.

"A little light, Snow—yes, a match will do."

The flame lit up their faces—the officer a thin-faced man with mustache and imperial, his teeth oddly prominent; the trooper older in years, but smooth-shaven, with deep-set eyes and square chin. Their uniforms were dusty and well worn. The others, clustered behind, remained mere shadows. The captain took in the nature of the document at a glance, and I marked a change in his expression before the match went out.

"Oh, I see—you are Lieutenant Raymond. Got to us earlier than you expected. Find many recruits north?"

"No," I answered, taken completely by surprise, but managing to control my voice. "That was why I thought I might accomplish more in this section. Those counties have been combed over." I hesitated an instant, and yet it was best for me to learn what I could. "I was not aware, captain, that my projected visit had been announced."

He laughed, and the second match went out, leaving us again in darkness.

"Nor was it, officially; merely a friendly letter from an officer on Heitzelman's staff to our major asking for you a friendly reception. Camp gossip brought the news to me. You knew Harwood?"

"No; only General Ramsay advised me to confer with him, because of his intimate knowledge of this section. He belonged, I believe, in Green Briar?"

"Yes, we were at his place yesterday; south of Lewisburg. What sort of a looking man was this fellow Taylor?"

I described him minutely, hoping for some recognition, but the captain did not appear to recall any such character.

"We have only been in this region a few months," he said, in explanation, "and I don't remember any such chap. He is none of Ramsay's scouts. What do you say, Snow?"

"Only man like that I've heard of, sir, is old Ned Cowan, and it ain't likely he's left the mountains to go into 'Old Jack's' camp."

Fox laughed, as though the idea amused him.

"Hardly. Cowan is too well known to take the risk. Either side would hang the hound on sight. Well, let's ride along into Hot Springs. You'll come with us, lieutenant?"

There was no excuse left me, no reason that I could urge for riding on alone westward. Indeed, before I could clearly collect my thoughts, I was in the midst of the horsemen, slowly moving east once more over the dark road. Riding as rapidly as the darkness made possible, we clattered into the deserted street at Hot Springs, and Fox cursed vigorously the negligent guard. The sergeant knew little of where Major Harwood had gone, as he had given no orders, and not even intimated the probable time of his return. When last seen he was riding out the south road accompanied only by his servant.

Fox swore again, and ordered the men into saddle, and we swung out at a sharp trot along the dirt pike. I rode next him, but the captain was in such rage I kept silent, knowing well the tragic discovery soon to be revealed. The gray dawn began to steal about us, making objects near at hand visible, and revealing the tired faces of the cavalrymen. There was sufficient light to enable us to perceive the gloomy house in the oak grove, and the motionless form lying beside the gate. Fox drew up his horse with a jerk, and leaned forward staring.

"My God, men!" he exclaimed, choking. "That's Harwood's nigger

"Not Robbery, for Here Is Money and a Watch."

Turn the body over, Green—ah! the poor devil was knifed. Here, a half dozen of you, unsling carbines and follow me—there's been dirty work done. Sergeant, don't let your men destroy those hoofprints in the road. Lively now, lads!"

I advanced with them up the driveway, fearful that if I held back it might later be commented upon. The front door refused admittance, but we entered from the rear. Everything within was exactly as I had left it, and in the parlor, still dark because of closed blinds, lay the lifeless body of Harwood. Fox fell upon his knees beside the motionless form, ordering the windows thrown open, his hands touching the lifeless flesh.

"Dead for hours," he exclaimed in a tone of horror, turning his gaze upon me. "Struck from behind—see, Raymond. What in God's name can this mean?"

He began searching the pockets.

"Not robbery—for here is money, and a watch. But the papers are gone, every scrap of them." He looked about at the men. "The major had his papers with him, did he not, Chambers?"

"Yes, sir," and the young, boyish soldier addressed straightened up. "I was with him when he put on citizen's clothes and he slipped a big buff packet into his pocket."

Fox's bewildered glance met mine.

"Do you know what that packet contained, captain?" I questioned.

"I do not know. Harwood expected to meet Taylor here at Hot Springs, but I think there were others to be here also. The major kept his own counsel, but something I overheard caused me to believe his engagement with Taylor was of a more private nature. Chambers was his clerk, perhaps he knows."

The lad shook his head, his eyes on the dead man.

"I'm certain those papers were not meant for him, sir," he answered slowly. "They were to be given to a scout named Dailey. It was some other business that brought the major here all alone—but he never told me."

There was nothing further to be discovered, and Fox realized the necessity of haste. His orders were prompt. Four men were detailed to bury the body, and then rejoin the column as soon as possible. The others were marched back to the gate, and remounted.

It was an hour later when we came suddenly to the fork, the south branch leading over a long clay hill, the west along a rocky ridge. Fox sprang to the ground and followed the faint prints of the horse we were pursuing for a hundred yards on foot. Some cattle had passed southward, but there was a defect in the shoe of the animal Taylor rode clearly revealed in the clay. The captain came back, a grim smile on his lips.

"The cuss was no Johnny Reb," he said shortly. "That was what I was afraid of, but now I know what to do. We'll save our horses, men, for this is going to be a long ride—that murdering devil is headed for the Green Briar. This is the lower Lewisburg road." He swung up into saddle. "Green, take three men ahead with you, and keep half a mile in advance. Watch out carefully, for there may be graybacks along here. Going with us, lieutenant?"

"About the best thing I can do," I replied readily, "my orders were for Green Briar and Fayette."

"All right, then, but they had small respect for your life when they sent you in there. From all I hear it is like a menagerie of wild animals broken loose—good fighting anywhere. Only trouble will be there is so much at home there will be no need for the boys to enlist. However, that's your affair, not mine." His eyes surveyed his men keenly. "Loosen carbines! Forward march! Trot!"

Silently, save for the jingle of accouterments and the thud of horses' feet, we rode westward, sunlight flecking the dusty uniforms. The pike dipped down into a hollow and, climbing the hill beyond, appeared the figures of the four scouts. Far away was the haze of the mountains.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

J. BARLEYCORN, BAD DRIVER

His Hands Shake, His Knees Wobble and His Conscience Is More Than Half Asleep.

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John Barleycorn is a bad chauffeur. His hand shakes, his knees wobble, his eyesight is poor and his conscience half asleep. And anyone who permits this reckless driver to sit at the wheel of a motor car is a menace to life.

That is why little sympathy is felt for the Baltimore man just sentenced to two years in the penitentiary because, while intoxicated, he ran down and killed a woman. And if this convict fancies himself the victim of a great injustice, he should compare his fate with that of the woman whose neck his carelessness broke.

One does not have to be intoxicated to deserve prison for reckless driving. Nor does one have to be rich, as the Baltimore man is. Indeed, the plight of this man should have an equally sobering effect upon all careless drivers, tipplers, teetotalers, plutocratic and poor.

Russia's Trade Language.

Merchants doing business in Russia are advised by the Merchants' association of New York to use the Russian language in preference to the French in commercial letters to Russian correspondents. As the result of several inquiries on this matter the association a few days ago asked the advice of C. J. Medzikhovsky, commercial attache of the Russian embassy in Washington. He stated that it would be better and more advantageous to use Russian rather than other languages, French included.

Before the beginning of the war German was more widely in use as a business language in Russia than the French language, but at present it is not advisable to use German in any correspondence with Russia. There are a number of firms in Russia with whom it is possible to correspond in the English language, and there are agencies for the translation of English into Russian at Petrograd, Warsaw and other large cities.—New York Times.

Concerning the Dolomites.

The fairyland about Cortina is familiar to thousands of English tourists as "The Dolomites." Dolomite, a rock compounded of carbonate of lime and carbonate of magnesia, takes its name from the French geologist "Deodat de Gratet, Marquis de Dolomeiu," who spent his time in 1789 and the following year, while his countrymen were busy with revolution and war, in visiting this and other Alpine districts. He first mentions this kind of rock in 1791, and the word "Dolomite" first occurs in a pamphlet of 1802 describing a tour of his in the Alps about the St. Gothard and the Simplon. The curious point, noted by Mr. Coolidge, is that the marquis seems to have paid no attention to the dolomite rocks in the neighborhood of his own home, Dolomieu, near Grenoble.—London Chronicle.

Bird Wears Artificial Leg.

Strutting on the farm of John R. Lott, near Freehold, N. J., is the only wild bird in the country that has an artificial leg. This handsome cock pheasant owes its life to the skill of Dr. August R. White, a dentist.

The pheasant, with one leg broken off just above the foot, and apparently injured in a battle with cats, was found on the farm several weeks ago and was taken to the Lott home.

Doctor White, a sportsman, heard of the bird and made an artificial brass leg, which he fixed to the injured stump with silver wires. After the pheasant had worn its new leg a week, the wires broke. Then Doctor White fashioned another leg to fit snugly about the remnant of broken bone, and this time procured a support upon which the bird could walk with apparent ease.

No Record Desired.

"The course you are pursuing," said the idealist, "will not cause you to be remembered by posterity."

"Thanks," replied the political boss, "I was afraid it might."

The Obstacle.

"Wouldn't you like to sit in a gentlemen's game?" insinuated a shifty eyed casual acquaintance.

"Naw!" grimly replied Sandstorm Smith of Rampage, Okla., who is temporarily in our midst. "I'm no gentleman!"—Judge.

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Honest Advice.

"Would you advise a young man to go into Wall street?" asked a friend of a successful broker.

"Yes," replied the broker, "I would. I have often advised rich young men to do that very thing. In fact, that's how I got my money."

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Squared.

"By George, Tom, have you been in a fight?"

"No, I just met an old school chum of mine I used to lick when we were kids and he paid me a debt he's been owing me a long time."

An Inquiry.

He—Our club is to have an outing tomorrow.

He—How much do you expect to be out?

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PROVIDENCE, R. I.—"For the benefit of women who suffer as I have done I wish to state what Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound has done for me. I did some heavy lifting and the doctor said it caused a displacement. I have always been weak and I overworked after my baby was born and inflammation set in, then nervous prostration, from which I did not recover until I had taken Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound. The Compound is my best friend and when I hear of a woman with troubles like mine I try to induce her to take your medicine."—Mrs. S. T. RICHMOND, 84 Progress Avenue, Providence, R.I.

From Mrs. Maria Irwin, Peru, N.Y.

PERU, N.Y.—"Before I took Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound I was very irregular and had much pain. I had lost three children, and felt worn out all the time. This splendid medicine helped me as nothing else had done, and I am thankful every day that I took it."—Mrs. MARIA IRWIN, R.F.D. 1, Peru, N.Y.

From Mrs. Jane D. Duncan, W. Quincy, Mass.

SOUTH QUINCY, MASS.—"The doctor said that I had organic trouble and he doctored me for a long time and I did not get any relief. I saw Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound advertised and I tried it and found relief before I had finished the first bottle. I continued taking it all through middle life and am now a strong, healthy woman and earn my own living."—Mrs. JANE D. DUNCAN, Forest Avenue, West Quincy, Mass.

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