

FORECAST.

Take back, take back the harsh word now. Consider it unspoken. Break, break, though late, the angry vow That better far were broken.

An Army Wife.

BY CAPTAIN CHARLES KING.

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SYNOPSIS.

Chapter I.—Fannie McLane, a young widow, is invited to visit the Graftons at Fort Sedgwick. Her sister tries to dissuade her, as Randolph Merriam, whom she had just married, is on his wedding trip.

CHAPTER III.—CONTINUED.

"You know he was engaged—to somebody—east, and was broken off," said Mrs. Tremaine, "and I hadn't thought of danger until just a day or two ago. Now—if he's going next week, as he says—and she has learned to care for him, what can we do?"

"He is going next week," said Tremaine. "He told me yesterday he ought to go now, and wished to go now. It was Wells who forbade. But Grafton always liked Merriam and Hayne believes in him. Our Florence might do worse, Dot."

"But do you understand?" she said, "do you realize that, just from proximity perhaps, Florence may have learned to care for him, while he is still thinking of his lost love?"

"You mean that—you think it all Florence and not Merriam?" he asked, starting back, and holding her from him, and looking with amazement and incredulity into her eyes—straight into her anxious, tearful face. "Why, Dot, it isn't possible! She—he—he must have learned to care for her. It couldn't be otherwise. Only I hadn't thought of Floy except as a child, and I wasn't prepared."

Like many another father, to whom a daughter is as the apple of the eye, Tremaine could see no fault, no failing in his child. To him she was the fairest, as she was the best, fondest, most dutiful girl in the whole army. One of his favorite plans had been to take her to West Point the previous summer, and let her, as he said to himself, "paralyze the corps." One of the sweet dreams he had often dreamed was of the evening when, with Florence on his arm, he should reenter the old mess hall, which he had not visited since it was bravely decked for the 25th of August hop, the year of his marriage. He had promised to take her thither for the graduating ball, and had pictured her as the belle of the occasion, sought eagerly by the cadets as their partner for waltz or "two-step," and, as in his eyes she was the most perfect creature that ever lived or moved, his one anxiety was lest the boys in gray, always susceptible, should forget that Floy was only a child and live in love with her forthwith. It never occurred to him as a possibility that Floy in her turn might fall in love. But there was no delicious visit for Florence to the Point that year. The moment examinations were over at school her mother started with her for the far west, and Tremaine met them at Santa Fe Junction. Then, after one brief week at Sedgwick, they had started for the cantonment, and there had led their uneventful life until the coming of Randy Merriam, prostrate, with the days of another June. And now, while Florence was in tears and hiding in her pretty room above stairs, this errand, erring, invalid warrior, with no word or sign of being himself sorely heart-smitten, was determinedly talking of going back forthwith to the mountain trails. Tremaine would not let his beloved helpmeet speak, either to Florence or to Merriam, but he fully meant to say more words than one to Merriam himself, and then he thought of his Dairymple, and the famous frock that doughty major donned whenever he sallied forth to ask the intentions of O'Malley's dashing light dragoons, and this reflection gave him pause. If, either by accident or design, the heart of his precious child had become wrapped up in Merriam, then Merriam should not leave the post without an explanation. But there was yet time. It might be that the poor fellow was really sorely smitten himself, and that the tender but unconquered heart of his daughter was touched with pity for his suffering.

Meantime the culprit officer himself had been carefully lifted into the doctor's buggy, and with that excellent practitioner was enjoying a drive. The one thing Wells could not understand was that, while his patient rapidly gained in health, flesh and appetite, he seemed so to droop in spirits. Not one word had been told of Merriam's broken engagement, beyond what Mrs. Tremaine had imparted, and she could give but scanty information. Merriam was grateful for all the care and attention

lavished upon him, grateful for returning strength, for sunshine, fresh air, and the brisk drive along the shores of the winding Catamount, but Merriam was silent, smiled but seldom, and laughed not at all. Merriam was plainly troubled, and that night, when Mrs. Tremaine asked her friend, the doctor, how his patient enjoyed the drive, that gentleman replied that if it did him good he gave no sign. "I believe," said he, "that Merriam is in love, and that's why I cannot understand his eagerness to get back to his troop." And the mother leaped with hope. She, too, had had other plans for Florence than that she should marry a subaltern officer; but if by chance Floy had chosen for herself and fallen in love with one, it could not have been without some persuasion, some pleading on his part. It must be that he was the first to love and to plainly show it.

That night Florence was very quiet. She read aloud to her father, as was her custom, and clung to him as he kissed her good-night. Merriam had gone early to his room, as though fatigued by the drive or rendered drowsy by the unaccustomed motion in the air. Somewhere about three in the morning there was an unusual sound of voices in excited talk near the guardhouse, and Tremaine awoke and was dressing hurriedly, when rapid steps came up the walk, and the sergeant of the guard, with a dust-covered courier, stood at his door. They bore a note from Whitaker. A serious row had occurred between some of the troop and a party of miners and prospectors who had been camping near them for three days. Pistols were drawn, with the result that one miner was killed, two troopers and one prospector were seriously, perhaps mortally, wounded, and several others were injured. Could Dr. Wells come out to them at once for a few hours, at least, and was Merriam able to ride? The young prospector who was so seriously wounded had begged to see him, as he had important information for him, and bade them tell Mr. Merriam that his name was McLane, a son of the man who was about to marry Miss Hayward. A penciled note in a closed envelope accompanied the verbal message for Merriam.

Florence, listening at her half-open door as the captain read Whitaker's dispatch aloud to her mother, shrank back to her bedside, covered her face with her hands and sank to her knees. It was thus she was found a few moments later. Merriam, aroused by the unaccustomed sounds, had lighted his candle and, partially dressed, came forth into the broad hallway of the commanding officer's quarters, and Tremaine met and gave him the message and the note, which latter Randy tore open and read with staring eyes. For a moment he stood confounded, then turned sharply to Tremaine: "Now, sir, I've got to go, and go at once—when Wells does," then turned and hurried to his room.

The captain himself aroused his post surgeon, told him the news, and bade him see and quiet Merriam as soon as possible. The dawn was breaking, and the rosy light was in the eastern sky when the doctor reached his patient, finding him fully dressed and rapidly stowing in his saddle-bags the simple articles of a soldier's toilet.

"This won't do, Randy. You're not fit to stir," said he. But his determination oozed when Merriam, with white face, turned and said: "More than my life's at stake here, doctor—it's a woman's honor, and I'm going, live or die."

CHAPTER IV.

Strange to say, the journey back to the Mesclero seemed to benefit rather than injure Merriam. The doctor vainly endeavored to restrain him—to induce him to shorten the long days' marches, but Merriam declared he was never so well as when in the saddle, and that nothing wearied him so much as waiting. If anything, he seemed less jaded than his physician when, on the third day, they reached the bivouac of the little command, and Billy Whitaker welcomed them to a supper of bacon and frijoles, and calmed Merriam's feverish impatience by the news that the civilian who had so desired to see him was still alive, conscious, but sinking rather than gaining. The miners' camp was a mile away. The dead had been buried, and the feud dropped with the brief prayers with which the bullet-riddled body was consigned to earth. Wells' first duty lay with the two troopers, who were in bitter plight, and no morsel of food passed his lips until he had ministered to them. Then Merriam had to wait until he had swallowed some coffee, and then, taking Whitaker with them, they rode forward to a branch of the canyon, where at nightfall they came in view of the fires of the little camp. Wells made prompt examination of the wounded man, and came out from the rude shelter under which he lay, glanced at Whitaker and shook his head. Presently, with a dazed look on his face, Merriam reappeared. "Billie," said he, "stand here and see that there are no cave-droppers. I—know some of these poor fellow's people, and he has messages to send." The two or three hangers-on took the hint and slouched away. "I may need you to witness his statement later," he whispered. "Come in if I call, but let no one else hear us."

For half an hour the low murmur of voices came from within the "shack," as darkness settled down upon the scene. Then both Wells and Whitaker were summoned, and by the dim light of a camp lantern they knelt beside the pallet of the dying man. "You know both these gentlemen, by reputation, at least," said Merriam, gently, though his eyes were gleaming, his lips quivering, and his hands trembling with some strong and strange emotion. "In their presence I desire you to read over this statement that I have written from your dictation. It is entirely right, say so, sign it, and they will witness your signature, but will have no knowledge of its contents."

For a few minutes hardly a sound save the deep breathing of three powerful, soldierly men and the feeble gasping of the sufferer broke the stillness of the rude shelter. The wounded man lay propped on Merriam's shoulder, but, through weakness from his long illness and the mental excitement of the moment, the latter's trembling grew so marked that Whitaker quickly slipped his left arm under the drooping head and drew his friend away. McLane seemed to gain strength from the vigor of this new support, though he could do no more than whisper thanks. Presently he beckoned to Merriam and pointed to a line on the page.

"I said she was over 43—" he began, then Merriam's hand was slipped over his mouth.

"I'll make any corrections you wish, but do not speak of what is there," said he, and with his fountain pen he erased a word and wrote another. Then the sufferer nodded. "It is all right now," he whispered, and, taking the pen, was lifted to a half-sitting posture and feebly, scratchily wrote as follows: "John Harold McLane, Jr., aged 25; born June 1, 1867, Sacramento, Cal. Died June 1, 1892, Mesclero mountains, N. M." Then, dropping the pen, he fell back to his rude pillow, panting and exhausted. Wells quickly gave him stimulant; then he and Whitaker affixed their names as witnesses. A moment later, when the surgeon remained with his patient, the two young officers clasped hands outside.

"You're weak as a child yet, Randy. What is it, old boy?" "My God! I can't afford to be weak now," was the fierce answer. "I've got to act—to do as I never did before. How long should it take our best rider, our lightest rider, to reach the railway? Telegrams must go east at once."

"If he take the back trail—the one you came in by from Sedgwick—five days and nights, least count. If he go around by the cantonment for fresh horses, perhaps seven."

"My God! my God!" cried Merriam. "Even two days may be too long. You're in command, Billy. I can give no orders, but that courier must start before moonrise to-night. Don't ask me to tell you why."

And within the hour, with a sealed packet addressed to Capt. Lawrence Hayne,—th Infantry, Fort Sedgwick, a slim little Irish trooper was loping, all alone, jauntily back toward the valley of the Bravo, smacking his lips in anticipation of the good liquor awaiting him at Santa Fe Junction the moment his duty was done. Five days and nights had he before him of lonely ride through a desolate, almost desert land, stopping only when necessary to feed

and water and rub down his horse, build his little fire and cook his slab of bacon and brew the battered pot of coffee, and snatch sleep under the stars as was possible, braving Indians, rattlesnakes or mountain lions without a tremor, for the sake of an Irishman's pride in his troop, his love of dangerous duty and his full assurance of a good time at the journey's end.

Another day and a rude grave was dug in the canyon, and the doctor read the simple service of the church over the shrouded form of the young prospector; and then, against that doctor's wishes, but not without his reluctant consent, Lieut. Merriam, with an escort of two troopers, started in person to ride by the shortest trail to Sedgwick.

It was now the 6th of June. It would take him nearly a week to reach and cross the Santa Clara. It might take him eight days to Sedgwick, and every hour seemed a day. Meantime Dr. Wells set about having litter made for the two wounded troopers, and by the tenth of the month had them safely in hospital at the cantonment. He found Tremaine looking anxious, even angered, Mrs. Tremaine troubled on more than one account, apparently, and Florence pale and languid.

"Did Mr. Merriam send no letter?" asked Mrs. Tremaine, after he had told something of their experiences. "There was no time to write. He begged me to give you his love and gratitude, to give it to all, and to say he would write in full the moment he got to Sedgwick. Oh, yes, he is better—much better, but the nervous strain may bring on a return of the fever," said the doctor. Something of solemn consequence, Wells knew not what, had carried Merriam back to the railway. He might have to go east at once. But Randy never reached the railway. Hayne received and read in startled amazement the contents of the packet brought by the courier, and sent at once from the Junction two telegraphic messages—one to Mr. Ned Parry, of the firm of Graeme, Rayburn & Parry, of Chicago; the other to Mr. Abraham Mellen, New York city; received from the latter neither acknowledgment nor reply, and from the former the brief words: "The marriage took place 48 hours ago."

Without any delay, taking only a single orderly, Capt. Hayne rode away northwestward, past the Santa Clara, past the old Mission, and so mountainward until the blue barrier of the Mesclero turned to gray and green, and, almost within its shadows, just as the second setting sun dropped behind its massive crest, he met the trio from the

Catamount—Merriam, a haggard, but determined rider, far in the lead. There was no time for salutation. "What answer?" demanded the lieutenant, abruptly and with wide, burning, bloodshot eyes. "Too late," said Hayne, "too late by 48 hours."

"You don't mean," gasped Merriam, "that they are married already?" "That's what Parry wires," was the brief response. "Here's the dispatch." For a moment Merriam sat in saddle, a dazed, stupefied look in his bloodless face. Then his eyes closed and he seemed about to swoon. Hayne sprang from his panting horse just as Merriam's worried escorts came lumbering to the spot. Together they lifted him from his seat and bore him to a little patch of grass, bathed his temples from their canteens and gave him a goutte of cognac. They made what frontier troops call a "dry camp" that night, just there where the two parties met. There was fuel, a little grass, but no water beyond what they had in their canteens, and with the contents of one of these Hayne brewed a pot of tea while one of the men cooked their frugal supper. They needed no other canopy than that of the heavens in that rare, dry atmosphere, and with the stars for night lights and the waning moon to peep in upon their slumbers later and start the gaun, coyotes at their querulous, unregarded serenade, the troopers slept, or seemed to sleep, until dawn. Twice Hayne awoke to find Merriam staring with burning eyes at the radiant vault aloft, but he wanted nothing, needed nothing. He could not sleep for thinking, he explained, and when the morning came the fever was with him again, and Corporal Tracy galloped northward along the foothills, a long day's ride, to fetch once more the doctor from the cantonment, and with Wells came the ambulance. The cantonment lay 50 miles away to the north, Sedgwick a hundred to the southeast. It was the nearest port in the storm.

"This time Tremaine would have fitted up for him a room in the big, airy hospital, but his better-half intervened. "It would never do after our having had him here before," she said. "He must have his old room under our roof and everything he had before—except Florence."

But when, after ten days of burning fever and desperate illness, Randolph Merriam seemed again to realize where he was, and how weak he was, and how good they had been to him, the first name he whispered, the first thing he asked for, looked for, seemed to long for was Florence—and they let her come.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

PRESENCE OF MIND.

An Actor Who Was Equal to the Occasion. It will be remembered that in the farcical comedy, "Never Again," at the very end of the play, the stage is suddenly darkened just as the schoolmaster and his wife return. The object in darkening it is to get rid of this pair of detestable bores. The people are all on the stage, but, of course, the darkness hides them.

The schoolmaster's voice is heard at one of the entrances. "Oh, they have all gone home," he says, "the room is dark."

Then he and his tiresome wife go away and the lights are turned up, disclosing the rest of the company scattered about the stage.

At a recent matinee one of the rear windows of the opera house stage happened to be without a shade. When the electric lights were turned out a sudden ray of sunshine streamed through this window and made the stage as bright as day.

At the proper entrance appeared the schoolmaster. Probably he was stupefied when he saw the stage, but he concealed his feelings.

"Ha!" he calmly said, "they have nearly all gone home—the room is almost dark!"

Then he made his exit and the electric lights chased the sunlight from the boards.—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

His Parting Admonition. The following amusing passage took place between counsel and witness in a disputed will case. "Did your father give you no parting admonition?" "He never gave much away at any time."

"I mean to say what were his last words?" "They don't concern you."

"They don't concern me, sir," said the barrister severely, "but they concern the whole court."

"Oh, all right," was the reply. Father said, "Don't have no trouble when I'm gone, Jim, 'cos lawyers is the biggest thieves unbang."—Leisure Hours.

An Apt Quoter. A student had been up for examination in Scripture, and failed so utterly that the examiner got exasperated. Finally the latter asked him if there was any text in the whole Bible he could quote. The student pondered and then repeated: "And Judas went out and hanged himself." "Is there any other verse you know in the Bible?" the examiner asked. "Yes; 'Go thou and do likewise.'" There was a solemn pause, and the examination ended right there.—Golden Days.

Took Money with Him. Easterner—I am looking for a man named Sparth, who came here from our section some years ago. Westerner—Look along among those palaces on New street. He has probably made a fortune by this time. Easterner—He had money when he came here. Westerner—Oh! Look in the poor-house.—N. Y. Weekly.

Asafetida is said to be a preventive of disease, but think of the treatment.—Washington Democrat.

A shaggy camel may bear a smooth burden.—Ram's Horn.

PUNGENT PARAGRAPHS.

He (before the wedding)—"You are sure you won't be nervous at the altar?" She (four times a widow)—"I've never been yet."—Tit-Bits.

A Thrust.—Miss Passay—"I dread to think of my fortieth birthday." Miss Pert—"Why? Did something unpleasant happen then?"—Brooklyn Life.

Spoiling His Record.—"You love Harry and yet you have rejected him." "Well, he bragged to me that he never made a mistake about girls."—Chicago Record.

Johnny Hay—"What kind of engagement rings d'ye sell?" Polite Jeweler—"All kinds." Johnny Hay—"Well, I want one that a girl can't sneak out of!" Jewellers Weekly.

Good Hater.—Mrs. Weeds—"Do you like widows, Mr. Grumpy?" Old Bachelor—"I do not, madam. I'd like to forbid marriage altogether in order to wipe 'em out."—Ally Sloper.

"I have learned a new distinction between pessimist and optimist." "What is it?" "A pessimist always calls cream 'milk,' and an optimist always calls milk 'cream.'"—Chicago Record.

Cautious.—"Alfred," she exclaimed, "how do you like my new hat?" "Well," he replied, very slowly, in order to gain time, "I dunno. How much is it going to cost?"—Chicago Daily News.

"Who wrote of the seven ages of man, Johnny?" "William Shakespeare." "And are there seven ages of women?" "I guess so; but she sticks by one of 'em all the time."—Harper's Bazar.

A Maine lady, in telling about the wretched condition of certain roads near Bar Harbor, says they are "fluted in a manner which leads to the belief that the man in charge must be a sewing-machine agent."

A Complete Retirement.—"Is your friend out of politics?" "Out of politics!" echoed Senator Sorghum. "I should say he was. And that isn't the worst of it; he's out of money."—Cincinnati Enquirer.

WANTED A WOMAN FOR SPY. How Spaniards Tried to Induce Miss Chamberlain to Go to Washington.

A woman in Montreal who was approached by the Spaniards to do work for them has been found. Her name is Miss Chamberlain, and her case was reported to the consul-general about a month ago, but the latter and his assistant refused to make known her identity. This is the story she tells:

"About five weeks ago I was introduced to a Spanish gentleman. He was big and dark. His real name I never knew, for I am certain that the name he gave me was not his real one, but I know he was Spanish. He professed to take a great liking to me, and found excuses to see me often. He was very nice, and I must confess I liked him a little. We often talked of the war, but it never struck me at that time that he was in any way personally connected with it. This came later. One day he spoke to me about a certain business of importance he had in the United States, and very much regretted the fact that the war prevented him from attending to it personally. After beating about the bush he finally came to the point that he would like me to go there and look after the matter for him, as he would trust me with his life.

"As he had given me some very beautiful presents, and as I rather liked him, I told him that I would be delighted to assist him if I could, and if he trusted me enough, and besides the idea of the trip rather appealed to me. He was profuse in his thanks at my willingness, and asked me to give him a decided promise then and there. I asked him what sort of work it was and where he wanted me to go. He said that he wanted me to go to Washington and that it would be necessary to get in the good graces of some very high officials. Further than that he would not tell. I asked him for a few days to consider the matter, and he allowed me this.

"Before he went away he asked me for my measurement, and the next day I received a dream of a traveling dress. I began to like the idea more and more, but when he came the day upon which I received the dress and pressed me to go, and when he came for my answer, I told him that I was afraid the trip was too risky. I did not see so much of him after that, and I understood that he sailed for Europe shortly after.

"I often feel sorry I did not go, but then I might perhaps be in prison now."—Chicago Evening News.

Spouting Blue Clay. A strange account is given of the performances of a government artesian well at Lower Brule agency, in South Dakota. When first driven, the well threw up a column of water six inches in diameter. After awhile it began to spout, alternately, sand and water. Recently blue clay has taken the place of both sand and water. There seems to be an endless supply of the clay, and the pressure upon it in the bowels of the earth must be tremendous. It completely fills the six-inch pipe, and issues at the top like a gigantic sausage, rising to a height of five or six feet before it topples over. It is necessary to remove the deposit of clay in order to save the well from becoming buried under it. The clay does not flow continuously, but, it is said, usually commences a little before the advent of windy and stormy weather, indicating a change in the pressure due to the state of the atmosphere.—Youth's Companion.

Unfalling Symptom. Anxious Mother—I am afraid Johnny is ill. Father—My goodness! What does he complain of? "He hasn't begun to complain yet, but I forgot to lock the jam cupboard to-day, and there isn't a bit missing."—Pearson's Weekly.

PLUGGING THE PIANO.

Mr. Gorbely Finds Temporary Relief from the Heavy Pedal by Simple Means.

"It is a familiar fact," said Mr. Gorbely, "or it is a fact at least familiar to all fond parents, that children, without exception, like to play the piano with the hard pedal on all the time. All children like to make all the noise they can, in playing the piano as in everything else. Playing upon the piano without the heavy pedal does not disturb me at all; but the minute the heavy pedal is put on I am greatly disturbed, and the continued sounding of the notes fairly racks me.

"Of course, I can't be forever saying 'don't,' and it's ungracious to say it at all, I suppose, for why shouldn't the children have their fun? And so I hit upon the desperate expedient of blocking the heavy pedal. I have whittled out a nice little piece of soft white pine into a plug just fits into the space under the pedal in the opening in which it works, so that the pedal cannot be depressed.

"It has only been there two days now, but it has been two days of blessed relief. It can't last much longer, because the children are liable to ask me any minute what's the matter—I wonder they haven't asked me long ago—and of course, I'll have to tell 'em, but I am grateful for the rest I have had, and the respite has given me strength the better to withstand, for a time at least, the uproar that will surely come when the children discover the plug."—N. Y. Sun.

The Climate of Cuba. Because of frequent rains in Cuba malarial fevers are a common ailment there, just as they are in many sections of the United States. Ailments of this kind, no matter in what part of the globe they occur, are quickly cured with Hostetter's Stomach Bitters. Besides being a specific for malarial troubles, these Bitters also make pure blood, strengthen nerves and muscles, and firm, healthy flesh. There is no equal for dyspepsia and constipation.

Colored Philosophy. "You kin git yo' daily bread by prayin'," says Uncle Mose, "but de nighty chicken has to be hustled fo'."—Indianapolis Journal.

When a pretty girl has good, hard sense it indicates that she has an uncommonly sensible mother.—Atchison Globe.

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