The Plow Woman

By ELEANOR GATES,
Author of "The Biography of a Prairie Girl."

CHAPTER XII.

THAT night, after Squaw Charley had come and gone, Dallas returned from the lean-to, where she had fed and bedded Simon and the team, to find Marylyn before the hearth, her face flushed and wet with tears. Instantly, all concern, the elder girl knelt beside her.

"Marylyn," she begged, smoothing the soft, unbraided hair spread out upon the robe, "Marylyn, what's the matter?"

A long sob.

"Why, dear baby, don't you fret. We're going to be all right. Dad'll soon be back, Mr. Lounsbury's watching, and we won't lose the little home."

"Oh, it ain't that—it ain't that!" weeping harder than before. "I'm so unhappy!"

It was an answer that smote Dallas to the heart. Some trouble, heretofore concealed, was threatening her sister's peace of mind. And she had not discovered it in time, had not prevented it, had not shielded her as she ought.

"Marylyn, honey, tell me what's the matter."

The younger girl crept closer, screening her eyes.

Dallas lifted her into her arms. Her cheek was feverish, her hands were dry and hot.

Sudden terror seized the elder girl—the old terror that had fastened upon her through all the years of her mother's failing.

"Marylyn," she said huskily, "do you feel that—that you're not as well as you was? Are you afraid you'll be sick like—mother?"

There was an answering shake of the head.

Dallas pressed her close, murmuring her thankfulness, whispering broken endearments. "Oh, Dal's so glad! She couldn't stand it if her baby sister was to suffer. Oh, honey heart, honey heart!"

But Marylyn was not comforted.

"Listen," bade Dallas. "In all your life have you ever asked me to do anything that I didn't do, or to give you anything that I didn't give if I could? And now something's fretting you. I can't think what it is. But you got to tell me, and I'll help you out."

"No, no!"

"I don't care what it is, I won't blame you. If it's something wrong—why, it couldn't be—I'll forgive you. You know that, Marylyn."

Again "No, no," but with less resistance.

"Tell me," said Dallas firmly.

Marylyn looked up. "You'll hate me if I do," she faltered.

The elder girl laughed fondly. "As if I could."

"You promise not to tell pa?"

"Course I promise."

"Oh, Dallas!" She buried her face in her hands. "It's—it's that I—I like him! I like him!"

A moment of perplexity. Then, gradually, it dawned upon the elder girl whom the other meant. In very surprise her arms loosened their hold.

"You do hate me," Marylyn said plaintively.

"No, honey, no—why should I hate you?" Her words were earnest. But her voice—something had changed it. And she felt a strange hurt, a vague hurt that seemed to have no cause.

Marylyn raised herself on an elbow. "He liked me—once," she said. "He showed it just as plain. It was right here—that day the cattle went by."

Dallas got up. She had begun to tremble visibly. Her breath was coming short, as if she had been running.

But the younger girl did not notice. "He stayed away so long," she went on. "Then, today when he came—you remember, Dallas—he just said a word or two to me and laughed at me because I was afraid. And—and I saw that I was wrong, and I—I saw—he liked—you."

"Me!" Dallas turned. She felt the blood come driving into her face. She felt that strange hurt ease and go in a rush of joyful feeling. Then she understood the cause of it and why she had trembled—why that day had been the happiest of her life.

Of a sudden she became conscious that Marylyn's eyes were upon her with a look of pathetic reproach. She began to laugh.

"Nonsense, honey!" she said. "Don't be silly! Me! Why, he'd never like a great big gawk like me!"

"But—but"—

"Me, with my red hair—you know it is kinda red—and my face, sunburned as a' Indian—hands all calloused like—like a man's." She turned back to the dusk through the window. "Oh, no, not me!"

"But you looked so funny just now."

"Did I? Did I?" Dallas stammered out her reason: "Well—well, that was because—because I thought you was going to say it was a soldier." She laughed nervously. "But it was Mr. Lounsbury you meant, honey, wasn't it?"

The suspicion that had troubled the mind of the younger girl was allayed. "Why, Dallas, how could you think such a thing about me! Like a soldier? My, no! It was Mr. Lounsbury—but he don't like me."

She got up and went to the foot of her father's bunk. When she reappeared she was carrying the soap box that held her belongings. Out of the robe once more, she took out and held up to the light of the fire two books and a strip of beaded cloth.

The elder left the window and stood beside her.

"These are what he gave me," went on Marylyn, putting forward the books. "And this"—she showed the bead work—"he asked me to make for him. But today," mournfully, "he didn't even speak of it."

Dallas leaned down and touched her lips to the other's hair. "Baby sister, what did you expect him to do? Hold up a man with one hand and—and reach out for a present with the other?"

Marylyn put away the box. "Anyway he don't like me."

"Like you? Why, he couldn't help it. There isn't a sweeter, prettier girl on the prairie than my little housekeeper."

"He called me the prairie princess," declared Marylyn, but with lingering doubt.

"Now, that shows," said the elder girl. "Don't you worry another second. When he comes again you'll see."

So Dallas soothed and comforted her until she fell asleep, when she lifted her to her father's bed and covered her carefully. Then she drew aside a swinging blanket to let the firelight shine through—and saw that there were still tears on her sister's face.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE medicine lodge of the Indians stood just within the sliding panel of the stockade. Thirty poles, their tops lashed together so as to leave a smoke hole, their bases spread to form a generous circle, supported a covering of tanned buffalo hides seamed with buckskin thongs. Here, barely an hour after Matthews' arrival at Fort Brannon, Squaw Charley entered hastily and thrust some red coals under a stick pile at the center of the lodge. And at once, by the flickering light of his fire, the warriors of the band entered the low entrance and seated themselves in a semicircle.

When Colonel Cummings learned that an interpreter had been found he promptly ordered the completion of preparations for the Jamieson expedition and the calling of a council, unsatisfactory but necessary. The redskins jailed in the stockade must know both the object of the trip and his terms, so that they, realizing their peril, would reveal the whereabouts of the winter camp of the hostiles.

His interview with Matthews threatened a change in his plans. The latter, having listened to the story of the captured women and to the scheme for their rescue, astonished the commanding officer by declining absolutely to take the proposed journey.

"I'd like t' be obligin'," he said, "but I can't go. I didn't know there was goin' t' be any travelin'. There's business that'll keep me here."

"Why, man," cried the colonel, "I've made you a good offer!"

"I ain't a-sayin' y' didn't," was the curt answer.

Colonel Cummings knew to what "business" he referred, but realized that a discussion of it would not aid in bringing the desired consent. He pretended to guess at reasons for the refusal.

"There's scarcely a possibility of trouble during the journey," he said. "Indians don't like to fight in the snow, especially when their families are with them and their war ponies are feeding on cottonwood bark. Besides, their head chief will be sharp enough to see that he'll have to treat and not fight if he wants to save the necks of his favorites. Then, as far as the safety and comfort of my men are concerned, everything is being done. Better reconsider, Matthews."

"Can't do it."

Colonel Cummings left his library, where he had been talking, and sought Lounsbury's advice. The two held a short whispered conversation in the entry.

"Let me have a few words with him," said the storekeeper. Matthews' balking was not altogether a surprise. Nevertheless it was a keen disappointment. He had hoped to be able to send Squaw Charley across the river soon with good news. "Let me see him. Maybe I can bring him around."

They entered the library.

"Matthews," began Lounsbury, "you might as well go along. If you stay you can't get a hold o' that claim." He looked at the colonel's clock. "It's midnight. Your six months are up. If you did have a chance it's gone. Possession 's nine points in law, and Lancaster 's up at Bismarck nailing the tenth."

If the storekeeper's blunt assertions were of any particular interest to the other he failed to show it. He occupied himself with finding a cigar, cutting it carefully and lighting it at the stove. Then he turned about to Colonel Cummings, his glance as it traveled utterly ignoring Lounsbury.

"Not to mention the risks you run with the boys," added the storekeeper easily, amused by the play of indifference.

"Oh, I guess Shanty Town can take keer of itself," observed Matthews, sending up smoke rings.

Lounsbury walked out.

There was but one thing left for Colonel Cummings to do: Ask this man to interpret in the medicine lodge, that at least the Indians might learn their position. Knowing it, they might be prevailed upon to select one of their own number to accompany the expedition and repeat the terms. The commanding officer, rather provoked at Lounsbury, who, he thought, had harmed and not helped his cause, immediately suggested this course to Matthews.

"I can parleyvoo for you there, all right," agreed Matthews patronizingly. "But how you goin'?"

"You and I alone."

Matthews stared. "Carry any guns?" he asked.

"Not when I go into the stockade. The Indians are without weapons. And I like to show them that I trust them."

The other laughed. "You go t' tell some redskins that they 's goin' t' be strung up and y' don't take no gun. Well, not for me, colonel!"

"Then we'll have a guard."

"O. K. I'm with you."

A scout who understood the sign language was dispatched to the stockade. And by the time the braves were settled down before the blaze Colonel Cummings, Matthews and a detail of armed men were before the aperture of the medicine lodge.

The soldiers waited outside the big wigwam, where they made themselves comfortable by moving up and down. Their commanding officer and the interpreter went in. At their appearance the warriors rose gravely, shook hands and motioned the white men to take seats upon a robe placed at Lame Foot's left hand. The air in the place was already beginning to thicken with kinnikinick and fire smoke. The mingled smell of tobacco and skins made it nauseating. Colonel Cummings would gladly have hurried his errand. But Indian etiquette forbade haste. He was forced to contain himself and let the council proceed with customary and exasperating slowness.

The first step was the pipe. A young Sioux applied a burning splinter to a sandstone bowl and handed the long stem to the medicine man. His nostrils filled he gave the pipe to Colonel Cummings, from whom in turn it passed to Matthews, Standing Buffalo, Canada John and thence along the curving line of warriors. When all had smoked the bowl was once more filled and lighted, and once more it was sent from hand to hand. Not until this ceremony had been repeated many times did the council come to speech.

But neither the commanding officer nor his interpreter made the first address. Though the braves guessed that something unusual had brought about an assembly at this hour and though their curiosity on the subject was childishly live, they surpassed their captor in patience. Stolidly they looked on while Lame Foot rose to his feet.

The war priest was not the figure that had led the band south after the battle—not the haughty, stately brave that the sentimentalist loves to picture. He was feathered and streaked as before. A stone mallet hung from his belt. But he wore no string of bears' claws. They had gone the way of the sutler, which was a tasty way, strewn with bright labeled but aged canned goods. And as for his embroidered shirt, it was much soiled and worn, and he had so gained in

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weight—through plentiful food and lack of exercise—that he pressed out upon it deplorably with a bulging paunch.

Pompously, but using no gestures or inflections, he began a rambling, lengthy account of his past deeds of valor. From these he finally swerved to the recital of his people's wrongs. He climaxed after an interminable amount of talking with a boast that awakened the hearty approbation of his sloven fellows. "We but wait for the winter to go," he said, "for in the spring we shall have freedom. Our brothers, who are sly as foxes and swift as hawks, will sweep down upon the pony soldiers and slay them."

He sat down amid a chorus of "Ho, ho!" The semicircle moved and bent and nodded. It was plain that he had expressed a common belief.

There was one Indian not of the council to whom his words meant more than freedom. That Indian was Squaw Charley. A moment after Colonel Cummings' arrival the pariah had crept noiselessly into the lodge and lain down in the shadows. From there, careful all the while to be quiet and to keep himself well screened, he listened to Lame Foot. But when the chief came to his bragging conclusion Squaw Charley forgot his own degradation for a moment and forgot to fear discovery. Was a battle indeed coming? New hope all at once—the hope that he would have the opportunity long desired of getting away from the squaws, old men and the mocking children and going with the warriors! Once with them, even in the role of cook or drudge, the chance might come to do a brave act, such an act as would reinstate him. Perhaps he could wound an enemy and count a coup upon him. Perhaps he could face bullets or arrows to rescue a brother.

His dull eyes glinted like cut beads. In very excitement he raised his bent, spare body.

Hearing the movement Lame Foot glared round, and his eyes fell upon the outcast.

"Woo!" he cried. "A squaw in the council lodge! Woo!"

There was a general turning, and those nearest the pariah made peremptory gestures.

A second Charley stood uncertainly. Then the look of one accused came into his face. He tottered backward through the lodge opening and out into the snow.

The council continued.

A dozen warriors followed the war priest in speechmaking. Each of them said no more than he. To Colonel Cummings' disgust each one said no less. Added to the tediousness of it all were Matthews' interpretations. Toward 3 o'clock, however, the prime object of the meeting was reached.

When the commanding officer at last rose he was in no mood to mince matters. He used few words, but they were forcible. He asked the interpreter to repeat them precisely.

They had their effect. While Matthews was doing this the colonel did not glance away from the council fire, yet he knew that in the semicircle there was genuine consternation. Grunts, startled, angry, threatening, ran up and down the line. Those warriors named for possible execution alone were silent.

Presently one of the others spoke. "If we tell you where to go, how do we know the white chief will not fall upon the winter camp of our brothers as Custer, 'the Long Hair,' fell upon Black Kettle's?"

"I am not going with the pony soldiers," Matthews hastened to say. "Across the Muddy Water, where the road passes, is a wide piece of land which has been stolen from me."

One of the four condemned glanced up. It was Lame Foot. "By the Plow Woman?" he asked.

"By her father. I shall stay until that land is mine again. One of you must ask your chief that he give up the paleface squaws."

Canada John answered him. "A brave can but take the words of the white chief. That is not well. One of a double tongue must go."

"The white chief has but one," said Matthews and tapped his own chest.

A silence followed.

"The journey begins when the sun is little," he added and sat down.

"Will not the white chief wait until spring?" asked Lame Foot, whose guile made up for his physical defect.

The others studied Colonel Cummings' face as the question was put to him. They saw the purpose—postponement, which might bring freedom for them and also a retention of the captive women.

The colonel's answer did not need interpreting. "No!" he said and struck his knees with his open palms.

"Why should two squaws matter?" asked Shoot-at-the-Tree. "Are there not many everywhere? We will give the white chief some of our ponies."

"Your ponies floated, belly up, down the river moons ago," said Matthews.

Twenty pairs of eyes sparkled with hate. That was news indeed!

Lame Foot spoke again. There was a mathematical phase of the terms which troubled him. "Why should four die for two?" he demanded. "Among the whites has a squaw the value of two soldiers?"

Matthews answered gravely that it was so. The brave snorted contemptuously.

Canada John shook his head. "Thus comes much evil because we shot the pinto buffalo."

At that point the hoof sheaths that trimmed a rope near the entrance rattled. The semicircle craned their necks. A plump hand was pulling aside the flap of the lodge. Then through the low aperture and into the light of the fire stepped an Indian woman. She flung back a head shawl and faced red man and white. A murmur came from the braves. It was Brown Mink.

As with the men of the band, plentiful food and no exercise had worked wonders with her. She was less slender and more solid than formerly. Her full cheeks shone like the bulging sides of a copper kettle. But her spirit was little changed. She waited no invitation to speak. She paused for no words. In her earnestness she leaned forward a little.

"Brown Mink is young," she said. "She is but an unfledged crane walking in strange waters. But she speaks with the voice of her father, your mighty chief that was. Canada John talks straight. One of a double tongue must go. The white chief is very angry, so that he plucks the hairs from his hands. The squaws must be brought back or four braves will be choked by ropes. But who can make things smooth? Only the Double Tongue. Promise him much—promise to help him drive the thief from his land."

Matthews straightened up.

She put out one arm and measured a small length upon it. "When our warriors come thus short a space will it take to rid the land," she said. And was gone before any could answer.

There was a long "Ho-o-o!" of assent.

"What's this all about?" asked Colonel Cummings.

"She wants me t' go," said Matthews.

"Well, so do I."

The Indians conferred among themselves. Suddenly, as if they had reached a decision, they fell silent and settled back. Lame Foot spoke.

"In the moon of wild strawberries," he said, "the sun is warm and the grass is growing." He turned to the interpreter. "Ask our brothers to send the women, then, and follow them. We shall go free, and as we go we shall free the land."

"But if your brothers cannot come?" said Matthews.

Lame Foot answered. "The white chief will send us to Standing Rock agency. From there braves will go out to hunt—and arrows fly silently. There are some of two tips. These bite like the rattlesnake"—

Matthews rubbed his chin. He knew that what Lounsbury had told him in the colonel's library was true. All legal and moral claims to the valuable town site across the river were gone. He could secure the land only by underhand means. And here were those who would do what he dared not.

"They make a cunning wound," continued Lame Foot, "and no one finds the arrow."

Colonel Cummings was growing impatient. "Interpret, interpret," he ordered.

"They think it's all up with 'em if I don't go," said Matthews. He looked down thoughtfully. The trip would be a comparatively short one and offered good reward. Whatever happened, if the Indians kept their word with him, he would have both the pay and the land.

"Will they tell me where the camp is?" asked the colonel.

Matthews met his eye. "Ye-e-e-s," he answered, "if I go." He addressed the warriors: "If your promise is a promise"—

An old chief caught his arm. "We are not liars," he said.

"It is a task for a child," added Lame Foot.

"Enough," answered Matthews. To Colonel Cummings he said, "I'm your man, sir."

"Good!"

Then the interpreter and the Indians, with the commanding officer unwittingly taking a part, sealed their compact in a pipe of peace.

(To Be Continued.)

Learn to skate and join the merry throng at the roller rink tonight.

Notice for Publication.

Department of the Interior, Land Office at Lewiston, Idaho, October 19, 1907.

Notice is hereby given that George H. Harbin of Dodd, Washington, has filed notice of his intention to make final five year proof in support of his claim, viz.: Homestead Entry No. 9493, made November 18, 1902, for the lot 4, SE ¼ SW ¼ sec. 10, NE ¼ NW ¼, and lots 1 and 2, section 15, township 33 N., range 5 W., B. M., and that said proof will be made before register and receiver at Lewiston, Idaho, on December 19, 1907.

He names the following witnesses to prove his continuous residence upon, and cultivation of, the land, viz.:

Alexander M. Martin of Dodd, Washington, James Warren of Dodd, Washington, Christopher C. Stanley of Asotin, Washington, and Calvin Martin of Dodd, Washington.

T. H. BARTLETT, Register

Notice of Publication

Notice is hereby given that at 2 p. m., on the 10th day of February, 1908, at Lapwai, county of Nez Perce, state of Idaho, before James McGrath, J. P., proof will be submitted of the completion of works for the diversion of one-half cubic foot per second of the water of Lewis creek and springs, in accordance with the terms and conditions of a certain permit heretofore issued by the state engineer of the state of Idaho.

1. The names of the persons holding said permit are Martin L. Goldsmith and Samuel Lewis.

2. The postoffice address of such persons is Spalding, county of Nez Perce, state of Idaho.

3. The number of such permit is 1097, and the date set for the completion of such work is February 13, 1908..

4. Said water to be used for irrigation and domestic purposes.

5. Said works of diversion will be fully completed on the date set for such completion, and the amount of water which said works are capable of conducting to the place of intended use, in accordance with the plans accompanying the application for such permit, is one-half cubic feet per second.

6.. The amount of lands for which said water is available is 25 acres, particularly described as follows: NW ¼ NE ¼ and SW ¼ NE ¼ section 21, township 36 N., range 4 W., B. M.

JAMES STEPHENSON, JR..,
State Engineer..

NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION.

Timber Land, Act June 3, 1878.
United States Land Office, Lewiston, Idaho, November 4, 1907.

Notice is hereby given that in compliance with the provisions of the act of Congress of June 3, 1878, entitled "An act for the sale of timber lands in the States of California, Oregon, Nevada, and Washington Territory," as extended to all the Public Land States by act of August 4, 1892, Anna Mounce, of Lewiston, county of Nez Perce, state of Idaho, has this day filed in this office her sworn statement No. 3260, for the purchase of the NE 1-4 NE 1-4, Sec. 10, E 1-2 SE 1-4, and SE 1-4 NE 1-4, of Section No. 3, in Township No. 32 N, Range No. 4 W., B. M., and will offer proof to show that the land sought is more valuable for its timber or stone than for agricultural purposes, and to establish his claim to said land before Register and Receiver, at Lewiston, Idaho, on Wednesday, the 15th day of January, 1908.

She names as witnesses: George B. Clark, of Lewiston, Idaho; Henry L. Benton, Guy Mounce, Isaac Deschamp, all of Forest, Idaho.

Any and all persons claiming adversely the above-described lands are requested to file their claims in this office on or before said 15th day of January, 1908.

T. H. BARTLETT, Register.

Notice to Creditors.

In the Probate Court of Nez Perce ..County, Idaho.

In the matter of the estate of Eva D. Nichols, Lola C. Nichols, Fred E. Nichols, Charlie J. Nichols and Ralph E. Nichols, Minors.

Notice is hereby given by the undersigned, F. W. Nichols, guardian of the estate of Eva D. Nichols, Lola C. Nichols, Fred E. Nichols, Charlie J. Nichols and Ralph E. Nichols, minors, to the creditors of, and all persons having claims against the said minors, to exhibit them with the necessary vouchers, within four months after the first publication of this notice, to the said guardian at the law office of Anderson & Elliott, No. 317 Means block, Lewiston, Idaho, the same being the place for the transaction of the business of said estate, in Lewiston, county of Nez Perce, state of Idaho.

Signed and dated at Lewiston, Idaho, this 27th day of November, A. D., 1907.

F. W. NICHOLS,
Guardian, Eva D. Nichols, et al.

Notice for Publication.

Department of the Interior, Land Office at Lewiston, Idaho, November 6, 1907.

Notice is hereby given that Ralph L. McCracken of Woodside, Idaho, has filed notice of his intention to make final five-year proof in support of his claim, viz.: Homestead Entry No. 8851, made January 20, 1902, for the lots 3, 4, 5, 6, 12, 13, 20 and 21, section 17, township 33 N, range 2 W., B. M., and that said proof will be made before register and receiver at Lewiston, Idaho, on December 26, 1907.

He names the following witnesses to prove his continuous residence upon, and cultivation of, the land, viz.:

George McMillen, George Hunderman, Theodore Hartman, John Miller, all of Woodside, Idaho.

T. H. BARTLETT, Register.

Notice for Publication.

Department of the Interior, Land Office at Lewiston, Idaho, November 6, 1907.

Notice is hereby given that Theodore Hartman of Woodside, Idaho, has filed notice of his intention to make final five-year proof in support of his claim, viz.: Homestead Entry No. 9434, made October 17, 1902, for the lots 1, 16, 17 and 18, section 30, township 33 N, range 2 W., B. M., and that said proof will be made before register and receiver at Lewiston, Idaho, on December 26, 1907.

He names the following witnesses to prove his continuous residence upon, and cultivation of, the land, viz.:

George McMillen, George Hunderman, John Miller, Ralph L. McCracken, all of Woodside, Idaho.

T. H. BARTLETT, Register.

Notice for Publication.

Timber Land, Act June 3, 1878.
United States Land Office, Lewiston, Idaho, September 26, 1907.

Notice is hereby given that in compliance with the provisions of the act of Congress of June 3, 1878, entitled "An act for the sale of timber lands in the States of California, Oregon, Nevada and Washington Territory," as extended to all the public land states by act of August 4, 1892, Elizabeth S. Benton of Lewiston, county of Nez Perce, State of Idaho, has this day filed in this office her sworn statement No. 3282, for the purchase of the SE ¼ NE ¼ and NE ¼ SE ¼ of Section No. 10, in Township No. 32 N., Range No. 4 W., B. M., and will offer proof to show that the land sought is more valuable for its timber or stone than for agricultural purposes, and to establish her claim to said land before Register and Receiver at Lewiston, Idaho, on Thursday, the 6th day of February, 1908.

She names the following witnesses:

Henry L. Benton, Isaac Deschamps, Lafayette Mounce, all of Forest, Idaho; Guy Mounce of Lewiston, Idaho.

Any and all persons claiming adversely the above-described lands are requested to file their claims in this office on or before said 6th day of February, 1908.

T. H. BARTLETT, Register.