

leaving them there. Now for the first time it flashed upon him that the Englishman's astonishment and concern on hearing of those hoof-tracks indicated that the story of a mystery at Dunraven in which the doctor was connected amounted to something more than garrison rumor. Now for the first time an explanation occurred to him of the singular conduct of the horseman who had dodged him by crossing the Monee. Never in his young life had he known the hour when he was ashamed or afraid to look any man in the eye. It stung him to think that here at Rossiter, wearing the uniform of an honorable profession, enjoying the trust and confidence of all his fellows, was a man who had some secret enterprise of which he dared not speak and of whose discovery he stood in dread. There could be little doubt that the elusive stranger was Dr. Quin, and that there was grave reason for the rumors of which Mrs. Lawrence had vaguely told him.

For a moment he sat, dazed and irresolute, Nolan impatiently pawing the turf the while; then, far across the prairie and down the valleys there came floating, quick and spirited, though faint with distance, the notes of the cavalry trumpet sounding "right, front into line." He looked up, startled.

"They're out at battalion drill, sir," said the sergeant. "They marched out just as I left stables."

"Just my infernal luck again!" gasped Perry, as he struck spur to Nolan and sent him tearing up the slope: "I might have known I'd miss it!"

V.

That evening a group of cavalry officers came sauntering back from stables, and as they reached the walk in front of officers' row, a dark-featured, black-bearded, soldierly-looking captain separated himself from the rest and entered the colonel's yard. The commanding officer happened to be seated on his veranda at the moment, and in close confabulation with Dr. Quin. Both gentleman ceased their talk as the captain entered, and then rose from their seats as he stepped upon the veranda floor.

"Good-evening, Stryker," said the colonel, cheerily. "Come in and have a seat. The doctor and I were just wondering if we could not get you to take a hand at whist to-night."

"I shall be glad to join you, sir, after parade. I have come in to ask permission to send a sergeant and a couple of men, mounted, down the Monee. One of my best men is missing."

"Indeed! Who is that? Send the men, of course."

"Sergeant Gwynne, sir. The first time I ever knew him to miss a duty."

"Your stable-sergeant, too? That is unusual. How long has he been gone?"

"Since battalion drill this morning. He was on hand when the men were saddling, and asked permission to take his horse out for exercise and ride down the valley a few miles. I said yes, never supposing he would be gone after noon roll-call; and we were astonished when he failed to appear at stables. Perry says he met him two miles out."

"The two culprits!" said the colonel, laughing. "Poor Perry is down in the depths again. He rode up to me with such a woe-begone look on his face at drill this morning, that I could hardly keep from laughing in front of the whole line. Even the men were trying hard not to grin: they knew he had turned up just in the nick of time to save himself an 'absent.' What do you suppose can have happened to Gwynne?"

"I cannot imagine, sir, and I am inclined to be worried. He would never willingly overstay a pass; and I fear some accident has happened."

"Is he a good rider?" asked the doctor.

"None better in the regiment. He is a model horseman, in fact, and, though he never alludes to nor admits it, there is a general feeling among the men that he has been in the English cavalry service. Of course there is no doubt as to his nationality: he is English to the back-bone, and I fancy has seen better days."

"What made them think he had been in the cavalry service abroad?"

"Oh, his perfect knowledge of trooper duties and management of horses. It took him no time to learn the drill, and he was a sergeant before he had been with me two years. Then, if you ever noticed, colonel," said Captain Stryker, appealing to his chief, "whenever Gwynne stands attention he always has the fingers of both hands extended and pointing down along the thigh, close against it,—so." And Stryker illustrated. "Now, you never see an American soldier do that; and I never saw it in any but English-trained soldiers. He has quit it somewhat of late, because the men told him it showed where he was drilled,—we have other English 'non-coms.,' you know,—but for a long time I noticed that in him. Then he was enlisted in New York City, some four years ago, and all his things were of English make,—what he had."

"What manner of looking fellow is he?" asked the doctor. "I think I would have noted him had I seen him."

"Yes, you Englishmen are apt to look to one another," said the colonel, in reply, "and Gwynne is a particularly fine specimen. He has your eyes and hair, doctor, but hasn't had time to grow grizzled and bulky yet, as you and I have. One might say that you and the sergeant were from the same shire."

"That would help me very little, since I was only three years old when the governor emigrated," answered the doctor, with a quiet smile. "We keep some traces of the old sod, I suppose, but I've been a Yankee for forty years, and have never once set eyes on Merrie England in all that time.—Did the sergeant say where he wanted to go?" And the questioner looked up sharply.

"Nowhere in particular,—down the valley was all. I remember, though, that Mr. Parke said he seemed much exercised over the name of that ranch down the Monee,—I've forgotten what they call it.—Have you heard it, colonel?"

(To be Continued.)

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