

Promotion and Myrtle

A Tale of the Royal North-West Mounted Police

By STAFF-SERGEANT WILLIAMS



HAD ridden in to Division Headquarters to draw pay for Eagle Butte detachment and, incidentally, to have a good time. It was fifty-eight miles of a patrol and we had made it by four o'clock so you can wager we had not been camping on the trail. I was not feeling over bright—the prairie grows deathly monotonous after months of nothing but sky and brown grass and the haze of the distant

hills; and you get everlastingly sick of cribbage and poker and the shop talked by your comrades. It was a break in the fog even to come into a little town like Poplar Creek, though it only had four hundred people. There were the trains to look at and four churches and four saloons, one apiece, and a chance to hear the world's news. Besides there were cheery bugle calls and cricket and billiards; life, in fact, such as it was, even to the extent of several passably pretty girls. A fellow misses his women-kind you know. I was banking a bit on promotion as I rode through the gate. A sergeant's life is far removed from that of a corporal or a "buck," and holds pleasures and advantages unattainable by its subordinates. The man-behind-the-gun is all right from a sentimental point of view and a devilish useful fellow; but the officer is the main push after all, and a sergeant's rank is a stepping-stone to a commission in our outfit. So I was speculating on my chances of a rise almost as eagerly as I once dwelt on the prospects of a degree at the 'varsity.

What's that? You ask me what I, a University man, was doing as a corporal of North-West Mounted Police? I'll counter your question with another: what the deuce has it got to do with you? If necessity compelled me to adopt that life you may bet it was not brought about by poking into other people's business. And, after all, don't you think that a corporal's life will compare with that of a sickly, dissipated city clerk or a doctor's assistant on thirty bob a week? It's the corporal in a canter and the field nowhere. Never you mind what I was doing in the Mounted Police; I'll look after that end of the story. You make me tired with your damphool nonsense.

I had put in an application for a pass in mufti that night. Old Staff-sergeant Coote's daughter, Myrtle, was home for good from school in Winnipeg and she and I had a good deal to talk about. Her father was the son of a poor Irish parson and had been a Vet in a cavalry regiment at home, a position he now held in "T" division of the Mounted Police—a decent fellow as ever drew the breath of life. Myrtle—but I won't say anything about her. I rather suspect she is looking over me as I write.

There was a standing order that men coming in on patrol from a distance should remain one clear day in barracks to rest their mounts. However, it was not to be my luck, this time. I had just watered and blanketed my horse when the Sergeant-major walked up the stable, all spurs and hunting-crop.

HELLO, Williams, how are you?" he said. "The Commanding Officer wants you right away in the Orderly Room.

"All right, sir. What's up?"

"Oh, he'll tell you. Corporal Dixon is to take your detachment for a time. I'll get your kit in by the first ration waggon."

In some curiosity I made my way to the orderly room and saluted the Superintendent.

"You sent for me, sir?"

"Yes, corporal: all right, stand at ease," he said, taking up a telegram from his desk. "I have here a wire from Fort Macleod saying that three Blackfoot Indians left their reservation four days ago in war paint and are travelling east. How far is Eagle Butte from Macleod?"

"A hundred and fifty miles by the old trail; about a hundred and twenty across country."

"Ah, say thirty miles a day. Now, you know all that part better than any man in the division. You will take Gabe Latreille, the scout, and Constable Porter who came in with you, and start out at seven tomorrow morning to intercept these Blackfeet. I have sent another party out south—you take the west. The Sergeant-major will detail horses for you. It is no good hampering you with a pack-horse, so carry what rations you can and you must look to the ranches and the nearest detachments for the rest. If you require assistance call on them also for it. We cannot spare the whole division to hunt three men; but they must be stopped. Do you understand?"

Fiction That Grips You

THERE are stories you have read that give you a sort of funny feeling inside—thrill, we suppose you'd call it—that make your heart pound with anticipation. You find yourself helping the hero out of his dilemma and sympathizing with the heroine.

You know the kind we mean!

Just such a story is "Promotion and Myrtle," by Staff-Sergeant Williams, which runs in two instalments, one this month and one next. It is a tale of the North West, and the heroes of the plains—The Royal North-West Mounted Police.

The author speaks from experience. He served five years in the R.N.W.M.P. Consequently the pictures he gives us of service life and romance are vivid.

After leaving the service he went to the United States, joined the Army and fought his way through the campaign in the Philippines, being seriously wounded in the Battle of San Mateo and receiving an honorable discharge from the service. He then returned to Canada and although too old for active service in our Army, at the outbreak of the war he became engaged in the transportation of mules and horses for the use of the Allied armies, at which he is still engaged.

The concluding instalment of "Promotion and Myrtle," in the Christmas number is even more commanding than the first half of the story. It is a sample of the kind of fiction—stories that GRIP you—that Everywoman's World will run through future issues.

"Yes, sir."

"I want that district thoroughly well-scoured. If these beggars take it into their heads to cross the

line into the Dakotas it is dollars to doughnuts they will stir up trouble with the American Sioux. I expect you to use your best endeavours to catch them. Latreille is a good

"Then I stopped short, frozen stiff, with hands above my head and heart beating like a trip-hammer. I was looking straight into the muzzle of a rifle in the hands of a Blackfoot Indian."

man, so, according to your own reports, is Porter. If you are successful you may be sure the fact will be noted in the right quarter. The Division Clerk is typing full instructions. Don't let them get north of the Railroad."

"Very good, sir," I said, coming to attention and saluting.

"I see you have applied for a pass until midnight. Here it is, signed. If you want to go down town before supper, I will excuse you from evening tables. That will do. Send the Sergeant-Major to me."

AND that is about all the formality when men are sent out in the Mounted Police with their lives in their hands, for Blackfeet braves on the war-path are not good to meet.

The task imposed was not as easy as it sounds. Indians are hard to catch at the best of times, and three armed Blackfeet would show fight to a certainty, even if we were lucky enough to trail them. If I returned empty-handed, all kinds of fault would be found; that I knew of old. If, on the other hand, I was successful, there was just a chance of getting my third stripe; but the chance was not a rosy one. Oh, well; it was no good grumbling. An order is an order, as every trooper knows. I ought to have felt proud, but I didn't.

Fate seemed to be unpropitious that day. When I got to Sergeant Coote's quarter's just outside the reserve, with visions of a dainty supper cooked by Myrtle's hands, I found that young lady—Lord! how nice she looked in a new sailor-suit—just setting off in a buckboard to spend a day or two at Beaver Coulee, some thirty-five miles south of west. McNulty, the rancher who was taking her out, was going to stop the night at Gull Lake, nine miles from Poplar Creek, and drive on early next morning. I was just in time to swallow a cup of tea that had been palpably boiled in the hurry of departure—Dash it! I hate boiled tea—and give her a kiss (or two; I forget the precise number) behind the barn. I also presented her with a little pearl handled revolver I had been treasuring up for some time. Your prairie girl would sooner have a present like that than a pair of gloves or a golf-jacket. Then I swore until she stopped my mouth; never mind how.

However, there was one ray in the gloom. Beaver Coulee was right in my line of search and I determined, if possible, to camp at McNulty's ranch next night. We could get a shake-down in the barn and the police boys are welcome everywhere—that's one good thing.

So we kissed again; that is, if my memory is right; and I walked on to town and drank more whiskey than was kind or necessary; but it was true and I didn't have to count a hundred before I did it. She looked so sweet in that new dress, and I had on a well-cut civilian suit. Heigh ho! It would have been a taste of old times when I was—not a corporal of Mounted Police. Do you wonder a poor beggar off the plains takes a drink when he gets a disappointment like that? I don't; I've been there. It is all very well for you fellows who can kiss and cuddle your girl every night until you get sick and tired of each other, because you are both so commonplace and uninteresting. With Myrtle it was different. You simply could not get tired of her.

CHAPTER II.

SAY, did you ever ride on the prairie in the latter part of October, when there is never a cloud in all the great arch of the sky, and just a faint hint of coming frost, and a sunny wind rattling the dry grass, and every breath tingles in your throat like champagne? Then you have not lived. When the antelope stamps at you and scampers away as you round a butte; and the geese are calling overhead;

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