

THE DESERTER.

By Capt. CHARLES KING, U. S. A.

Author of "Dunraven Ranch," "The Colonel's Daughter," "Marion's Faith," Etc., Etc.

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PRELUDE.



Hayne stands mutely looking down on the stiffening frame of his father's old friend.

Far up in the northwest, along the banks of the broad, winding stream the Sioux call the Elk, a train of white topped army wagons is slowly crawling eastward.

The October sun is hot at noonday, and the dust from the loose soil rises like heavy smoke and powders every face and form in the guarding battalion so that features are well nigh indistinguishable.

And yet not a hostile Indian has been seen; not one, even as distant vedette, has appeared in range of the binoculars, since the scouts rode in at daybreak.

It has been a long, hard summer's work for the troops, and the Indians have been, to all commands that boasted strength or swiftness, elusive as the Irishman's fleec of tradition.

When the morning sun dawns on the picturesque valley in which the cantonment nestled by the day before it illumines an almost deserted village, and brings no joy to the souls of some two-score of embittered civilians who had arrived only the day previous, and whose unanimous verdict is that the army is a fraud and ought to be abolished.

For four months or more some three regiments had been camping, scouting, roughing it thereabouts with not a cent of pay. Then came the wildly exciting tidings that a boat was on the way up the Missouri with a satrap of the pay department, vast stores of shiekels and a strong guard, and as a consequence there would be some 2,000 men full of money and no one to help them spend it.

when the first contingent arrived, and the commanding officer, recognizing the fraternity at a glance, warned them outside the limits of camp that night, declined their services as volunteers on the impending campaign, and treated them with such calmly courteous recognition of their true character that the eastern press was speedily filled with sneering comment on the hopelessness of ever subduing the savage tribes of the northwest.

When the government intrusts the duty to upstart officers of the regular service whose sole conception of their functions is to treat with insult and contempt the hardy frontiersmen whose mere presence with the command would be of incalculable benefit.

"We have it from indisputable authority," says The Miner's Light of Brandy Gap, "that when our esteemed fellow citizen Hank Mulligan and twenty gallant shots any riders like himself went in a body to Gen. — at the cantonment and offered their services as volunteers against the Sioux now devastating the homesteads and settlements of the Upper Missouri and Yellowstone valleys, they were treated with haughty and contemptuous refusal by that band-box caricature of a soldier and threatened with arrest if they did not quit the camp.

When will the United States learn that its frontiers can never be purged of the Indian scourges of our civilization until the conduct of affairs in the field is intrusted to other hands than these martinet of the drill ground? It is needless to remark in this connection that the expedition led by Gen. — has proved a complete failure, and that the Indians easily escaped his clumsily led forces.

The gamblers, though baffled for the time being, of course "get square," and more to, with the unfortunate general in this sort of warfare, but they are a disgusted lot as they hang about the wagon train as last of all it is being hitched in to leave camp.

Some victims, of course, they have secured, and there are no devices of commanding officers which can protect their men against those sharks of the prairies when the men themselves are bound to tempt providence and play. There are two scowling faces in the cavalry escort that has been left back with the train, and Capt. Hull, the commanding officer, has reprimanded Sergeants Clancy and Gower in stinging terms for their absence from the command during the night.

There is little question where they spent it, and both have been "cleaned out." What makes it worse, both have lost money that belonged to other men in the command, and they are in bad odor accordingly.

The long day's march has tempered the joviality of the entire column. Its near sundown, and still they keep plodding onward, making for a grassy level on the river bank and mile farther.

to inquire into. Now, you might ask him, but I couldn't, don't you know?" responds Hayne, smiling amiably the while into the wrathful face of his superior. It serves only to make the indignant captain more wrathful; and no wonder. There has been no love lost between the two since Hayne joined the Riflers early the previous year. He came from a civil life, a city bred boy, fresh from college, full of spirits, pranks, fun of every kind; a wonderfully keen hand with the billiard cue; a knowing one at cards and such games of chance as college boys excel at; a musician of no mean pretensions, and an irrepressible leader in all the frolics and frivolities of his comrades. He had leaped to popularity from the start. He was full of courtesy and gentleness to women, and became a pet in social circles. He was frank, free, off handed with his associates, spending lavishly, "treating" with boyish ostentation on all occasions, living quite en grand seigneur, for he seemed to have a little money outside his pay—"a windfall from a good old duffer of an uncle," as he had explained it.

His father, a scholarly man who had been summoned to an important under office in the state department during the war of the rebellion, had lived out his honored life in Washington, and died poor, as such men must ever die. It was his wish that his handsome, spirited, brave hearted boy should enter the army, and long after the sod had hardened over the father's peaceful grave the young fellow donned his first uniform and went out to join "The Riflers." High spirited, joyous, full of laughing fun, he was "Pet" Hayne before he had been among them six months. But with the war, and the loss of his father, he came to grief in short order. He would not show that deference to rank and station which was expected of a junior officer; and among the seniors were several whom he speedily designated "unconscionable old duffers" and treated with as little semblance of respect as a second lieutenant could exhibit and be permitted to live. Rayner prophesied of him that, as he had no balance and was burning his candle at both ends, he would come to grief in short order. Hayne retorted that the only balance that Rayner had any respect for was one at the bank, and that it was notorious in Washington that the captain's father had made most of his money in government contracts, and that the captain's original commission in the regulars was secured through well paid congressional influence. The fact that Rayner had developed into a good officer did not wipe out the recollection of these facts, and he would come to grief in short order. Hayne retorted that the only balance that Rayner had any respect for was one at the bank, and that it was notorious in Washington that the captain's father had made most of his money in government contracts, and that the captain's original commission in the regulars was secured through well paid congressional influence.

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It was a thorn in Rayner's flesh, therefore, when Hayne joined from leave of absence, after experiences not every officer would care to encounter in getting back to his regiment, that Capt. Hull should have induced the general to detail him in place of the inviolable field quartermaster when the command was divided. Hayne would have been a junior subaltern in Rayner's little battalion but for that detail, and it annoyed the captain more seriously than he would confess.

"It is all an outrage and a blunder to pick out a boy like that," he growls between his set teeth as Hayne canters blithely away. "Here he's been away from the regiment all summer long, having a big time and getting head over ears in debt, I hear, and the moment he rejoins they put him in charge of the wagon train as field quartermaster. I see, and I can only take that naps. I've put a premium on being young and cheeky—besides absenteeism," he continues, growing blacker every minute.

"Well, captain," answers his adjutant, indignantly, "I think you don't give Hayne credit for coming back on the jump the moment we were ordered out. It was no fault of his he could not reach us." "He took chances I wouldn't take."

"Oh, yes! you kids all swear by Hayne because he's a good fellow and sings a jolly song and plays the piano—and poker. One of these days he'll swamp you all, sure as shooting. He's in debt now, and I'll fetch him before you know it. What he needs is to be under a captain who could discipline him a little. By Jove, I'd do it!" And Rayner's teeth emphasize the assertion.

The young adjutant thinks it advisable to say nothing that may provoke further retort. All the same, he remembers Rayner's bitterness of manner, and has abundant cause to do so. When the next morning breaks, chill and pallid, a change has come in the aspect of affairs. During the earliest hour of the dawn the red light of a light draught river boat startled the outlying pickets down stream, and the Far West, answering the muffled hail from shore, responded, through the medium of a mate's stentorian tones, "News that'll rouse you fellows out." The sun is hardly peeping over the jagged outline of the eastern hills when, with Rayner's entire battalion aboard, she is steaming again down stream, with orders to land at the mouth of the Sweet Root. There the four companies will disembark in readiness to join the rest of the regiment.

Riflers, he knows, are over in the valley of the Sweet Root. The steamer with Rayner's men is tied up at the bank some five miles below, around the bend. The — is far off to the northward across the Elk, as ordered, and must be expecting on the morrow to make for the old Indian "ferry" opposite Battle Butte. The main body of the Sioux are reported farther down stream, but he feels in his bones that there are numbers of them within signal, and he wishes with all his heart the — were here. Still, the general was sure he would stir up war parties on the other shore. Individually, he has had very little luck in scouting during the summer, and he cannot help wishing he were with the rest of the crowd instead of here, train guarding.

Presently Mr. Hayne appears, elastic and debonair as though he had not been working like a horse all day. His voice sounds so full of cheer and life that Hull looks up smilingly. "Well, youngster, you seem to love this frontier life." "Every bit of it, captain. I was cut out for the army, as father thought."

"We used to talk it over a good deal in the old days when I was stationed around Washington," answers Hull. "Your father was the warmest friend I had in civil circles, and he made it very pleasant for me. How little we thought it would be my luck to have you for quartermaster!" "The fellows seemed struck all of a heap in the Riflers at the idea of your applying for me, captain. I was ready to swear it was all on father's account, and would have told them so only Rayner happened to be the first man to tackle me on the subject, and he was so crusty I kept the whole thing to myself."

"Larry, my boy, I'm no preacher, but I want to be the friend to you your father was to me. You are full of enthusiasm and life and spirit, and you love the army ways and have made yourself very popular with the youngsters, but I'm afraid you are too careless and independent where the seniors are concerned. Rayner is a good soldier, and you show him very scant respect, I'm told."

"Well, he's such an interfering fellow. They will all tell you I'm respectful enough to — to the captains I like." "That's just it, Lawrence. So long as you like a man your manner is what it should be. What a young soldier ought to learn is to be courteous and respectful to senior officers whether he likes them or not. It costs an effort sometimes, but you must never know what trouble you are laying up for yourself in the army by bucking against men you don't like. They may not be in position to resent it at the time, but the time is mighty apt to come when they will be, and then you are helpless."

"Why, Capt. Hull, I don't see it that way at all. It seems to me that so long as an officer attends to his duty, minds his own business, and behaves like a gentleman, no one can harm him, especially when all the good fellows of the regiment are his friends, as they are mine, I think, in the Riflers."

"Ah, Hayne, it is a hard thing to teach a youngster that—that there are men who find it very easy to make their juniors' lives a burden to them, and without overstepping a regulation. It is harder yet to say that friends in the army are a good deal like friends out of it—only has to get into serious trouble to find how few they are. God grant you may never have to learn it, my boy, as many another has had to, by sharp experience. Now we must get a good night's rest. You sleep like a log, I see, and I can only take that naps. I've got rid of it!"

"Where do you keep it to-night?" "Right here in my saddlebags under my head. Nobody can touch them that I do not wake; and my revolver is here under the blanket. Hold on! Let's take a look and see if everything is all right." He holds a little camp lantern over the bags, opens the flap, and peers in. "Yes, all here as usual. I got a good green seal and sealed it all up in one package with the memorandum list inside. It's all safe so far, even to the hunk of sealing wax. —What is it, sergeant?" "A tall, soldierly, dark eyed trooper appears at the doorway of the little tent, and raises his gauntleted hand in salute. His language, though couched in the phraseology of the soldier, tells both in choice of words and in the intonation of every phrase that he is a man whose antecedents have been far different from those of the majority of the rank and file.

shout, the long train is whirling ahead almost at the run. All is a thrill with excitement, and bearded faces have a strange, set look about the jaws, and eyes gleam with eager light and peer searchingly from every rise far over to the southeast, where stands a tumbling heap of hills against the lightning sky. "Off there, are they?" says a burly trooper, dismounting hastily to lighten up the "cinch" of his weather beaten saddle. "We can make it quick enough, 's soon as we get rid of these blasted wagons." And, swinging into saddle again, he goes cantering down the slope, his charger moaning with exhilaration in the keen morning air.

Before dawn a courier has galloped into camp, bearing a dispatch from the commanding officer of the Riflers. It says but few words, but they are full of meaning: "We have found a big party of hostiles. They are in strong position and have us at disadvantage. Rayner with his four companies is hurrying to us. Leave all wagons with the boat under guard, and come with every horse and man you can bring."

Before 7 o'clock the wagons are parked close along the bank beside the Far West, and Hull, with all the men he can muster—some fifty—is trotting ahead on the trail of Rayner's battalion. With him rides Mr. Hayne, eager and enthusiastic. Before 10 o'clock, far up along the slopes they see the blue line of skirmishers, and the knots of reserves farther down, all at a stand. In ten minutes they ride with foaming reins in behind a low ridge on which, flat on their faces and cautiously peering over the crest, some hundred infantrymen are disposed. Others, officers and file closers, are moving to and fro in rear. They are of Rayner's battalion. Farther back, down in a ravine, a dozen forms are outstretched upon the turf, and others are bending over them, ministering to the needs of those who are not past help already. Several officers crowd around the leading horsemen and Hull orders: "Halt, dismount and loosen girths." The grave faces show that the infantry has had poor luck, and the situation is summarized in a few words. The Indians are in force occupying the ravine and ridges opposite them and confronting the six companies farther over to the west. Two attacks have been made, but the Indian fire swept every approach, and both were unsuccessful. Several soldiers were shot dead, others severely wounded. Lieut. Warren's leg is shattered below the knee; Capt. Blount is killed.

"Where's Rayner?" asks Hull, with grave face. "Just gone off with the chief to look at things over on the other front. The colonel is hopping. He is bound to have those Indians out of there or drop a try. They'll be back in a minute. The general had a rousing fight with Dull Knife's people down the river last evening. You missed it again, Hull; all the —th were there but F and K, and of course, old Firewater wants to make as big a hit here."

"The —th fighting down the river last night?" asks Hull, in amazement. "Yes—swept clean round them and ran 'em into the stream, they say. I wish we had them where we could see 'em at all. You don't get the glimpse of a head, even; but all those rocks are lined with the beggars. Damn them!" "We'll get our chance here, then," replies Hull, reflectively. "I'll creep up and take a look at it. Take my horse, orderly."

He is back in two minutes, graver than before, but his bearing is spirited and firm. Hayne watches him with kindling eye. "You'll take me in with you when you charge?" he asks. "It is no place to charge there. The ground is all cut up with ravines and gullies, and they've got a cross fire that sweeps it clean. We'll probably go on the other flank; it's more open here. Here comes the chief now."

Two officers come riding hastily around a projecting point of the slope and spur at rapid gait towards the spot where the cavalry have dismounted and are breathing their horses. There is hardly time for salutations. A gray headed, keen eyed, fierce faced old soldier is the colonel, and he is snapping with electricity, apparently. "This way, Hull. Come right here, and I'll show you what you are to do." And, followed by Rayner, Hull and Hayne, the chief rides sharply over to the extreme left of the position and points to the frowning ridge across the intervening swale.

"There, Hull; there are twenty or thirty of the rascals in there who get a flank fire on us when we attack on our side. What I want you to do is to mount your men, let them draw pistol and be all ready. Rayner, here, will line the ridge to keep them down in front. I'll go back to the right and order the attack at once. The moment we begin and you hear our shots, you give a yell, and charge full tilt across there, so as to drive out those fellows in that ravine. We can do the rest. Do you understand?" "I understand, colonel; but—is it your order that I attempt to charge mounted across that ground?" "Why, certainly! It isn't the best in the world, but you can make it. They can't do very much damage to you men before you reach them. It's got to be done; it's the only way."

what to do with these—as I told you last night." Hayne only looks imploringly at him: "You are not going to leave me here, captain?" "Yes, Hayne. You can't go with us. Hark! There they go at the right. Are the packages all right?" Hayne, with stammered faculties, thinking only of the charge he long to make—not of the one he has to keep—replies he knows not what. There is a ringing bugle call far off among the rocks to the westward; a rousing cheer; a rattling volley. Rayner springs off to his men on the hillside. Hull spurs in front of his eager troop, holding high his pistol hand: "Now, men, follow till I drop; and then keep ahead! Come on!"

There is a furious spatter of hoofs, a rush of excited steeds up the gentle slope, a glad outburst of cheers as they sweep across the ridge and out of sight, then the clamor and yell of frantic battle; and when at last it dies away, the riflers are panting over the hard won position and shaking hands with some few silent cavalrymen. They have carried the ridge, captured the migrating village, squaws, ponies, travois, and pappooses; their "long toms" have sent many a stalwart warrior to the mythical hunting grounds, and the peppery colonel's triumph is complete.

But Lawrence Hayne, with all the light gone from his brave young face, stands mutely looking down upon the stiffening frame of his father's old friend, and his who lies shot through the heart.

TO BE CONTINUED.

ODDS AND ENDS.

A Little Nonsense, Now and Then, is Published by the Wisest of Men.

Next to a clear conscience, for solid comfort give us an old boot.

An indirect way of getting a drink of water at many a house is to ask for a third cup of tea.

NEWS OF THE

UNITED STATES

Minneapolis millers comply.

There has been a heavy rain.

The Union Pacific railroads with alid.

Anna III, has nearly 100,000 within its borders.

Rochester was visited by a flagration Thursday.

The floods in Oregon are fears are now past.

Negro residents of Bessie emigration to Africa.

Six thousand people after to Rev. Dr. Talmage in Br.

Four men were badly hurt of gasoline at Altoona, Pa.

An American steamer re and crew of a foundering at.

Fire destroyed the big by the American Matting.

The water front at P swept by the fire, the damage.

The old locomotive work Pa., were blown down by

Sixteen men, of whom were whipped at Newcast day.

A clerk in the express pocketed \$35,000 and skip day.

Nine mangled bodies h from a railway wreck ne Oregon.

Ruth Woods died at 1 Saturday, at the well au 107 years.

The American Building tion of Minneapolis, has b up its affairs.

The Navajo Indians o up in revolt and threaten white settlements.

Conrad N. Jordan has dent of the Lennox Hill E been re-opened.

A little child died in r from arsenical poisoning late cream drops.

Rev. W. F. Nichols, o been elected assistant bi pal diocese of California.

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