

Wolff's Acme Blacking. SEE MY SPONGE? DO AS I DID. SHINE your shoes with WOLFF'S ACME BLACKING ONCE A WEEK!

The Canadian Post. LINDSAY, FRIDAY, JULY 25, 1890.

THE DESERTER. BY CAPT. CHARLES KING, U. S. A.

Author of "Deserted March," "The Colonel's Daughter," "Warren's Faith," Etc., Etc.



HE SPRANG UP AND WENT RIGHT OUT WITH ME.

Within the week succeeding the departure of the Rayners and Miss Travers, Lieut. Hayne's brother-in-law and his remarkably attractive sister were with him in garrison and helping him fit up the new quarters which the colonel had rather insisted on his moving into and occupying, even though two unmarried subalterns had to move out and make way for him.

Mrs. Waldron was an object of jealousy because of the priority of her claims to his regard. Mrs. Hurley—the sweet sister who so strongly resembled him—was the recipient of universal attention from both sexes.

To begin with, the widow Clancy had been captured in one of the mining towns, where she had sought refuge, and brought back by the civil authorities, nearly \$3,000 in greenbacks having been found in her possession.

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What proved the hardest problem for the garrison to solve was the fact that, while Mr. Hayne kept several of his old associates at a distance, he had openly offered his hand to Rayner. This was something the Riflers could not account for.

insisted to crowd him to the wall; and finally there was the almost tragic episode of Buxton's midnight visitation, in which Rayner, willingly or not, had been in attendance. Was it not odd that in the face of all these considerations the first man to whom Mr. Hayne should have offered his hand was Capt. Rayner? Odd indeed! But then only one or two were made acquainted with the full particulars of Clancy's confession, and none had heard Nellie Travers' request.

There was one man in garrison whom Hayne cut entirely, and for whom no one felt the faintest sympathy; and that, of course, was Buxton. With Rayner gone he hardly had an associate, though the esprit de corps of the —th prompted the cavalry officers to be civil to him when he appeared at the billiard room.

And yet there came a day very soon when Mr. Hayne wished that he could go to Buxton's quarters. He had in no wise changed his opinion of the man himself. But the Rayners had not been gone a fortnight before Mrs. Buxton began to tell the ladies of the charming letters she was receiving from Mrs. Rayner—all about their travels. There were many things he long to know, yet could not ask.

There came to him a long and sorrowful letter from the captain himself, but beyond a few matters relating to the company and the transfer of his property, it was all given up to a recapitulation of the troubles of the past few years and to renewed expression of his deep regret.

"The one thing lacking to complete the chain is Gower," said the major as he looked up over his spectacles. "It would be difficult to tell what became of him. We get tidings of most of the deserters who were as prominent among the men as he appears to have been; but I have made inquiry, and so has the colonel, and not a word has ever been heard of him since the night he appeared before Mrs. Clancy and handed over the money to her.

"Of course his testimony isn't necessary. Clancy and his wife between them have cleared you, after burying you alive five years. But nothing but his story could explain his singular conduct—planning the whole robbery, executing it with all the skill of a professional jailbird, deserting and covering several hundred miles with his plunder, then darning to go to the old fort, find Mrs. Clancy, and surrender every cent the moment he heard of your trial. What a fiend that woman was! No wonder she drove Clancy to drink!"

"Will you send copies of her admission with Clancy's affidavit?" asked Hayne. "Here they are in full," answered the major. "The colonel talks of having them printed and strewn broadcast as warning against 'snap judgment' and to confident testimony in future."

Divested of the legal embraces with which documents are usually weighted, Clancy's story ran substantially as follows: "I was sergeant in K troop, and Gower was in F. We had been stationed together six months or so when ordered out on the Indian campaign that summer. I was dead broke. All my money was gone, and my wife kept bothering me for more. I owed a lot of money around headquarters, too, and Gower knew it, and sometimes asked me what I was going to do when we got back from the campaign. We were not good friends, him and I. There was money dealing between us, and then there was talk about Mrs. Clancy's confession and the strong escort and paid off the boys late in October, just as the expedition was breaking up and going for home, and all the officers and men got four months' pay. There was Lieut. Crane and twenty men of F troop out on a scout, but the lieutenant had left his pay rolls with Capt. Hull, and the men had all signed before they started, and so the captain he drew it all for them and put each man's money in an envelope marked with his name and the lieutenant's too, and then crowded it all into some

bigger envelopes. I was there where I could see it all, and Gower was watching him close. It's a big pile the captain's got, says he. I'd like to be a road agent and nab him." When I told him it couldn't be over eleven hundred dollars, he says, "That's only part. He has his own pay and six hundred dollars company fund, and a wad of greenbacks he's been carryin' around all summer. It's a high on to four thousand dollars he's got in his saddle bags this day."

"And that night, instead of Lieut. Crane's coming back, he sent word he had found the trail of a big band of Indians, and the whole crowd went in pursuit. There were four companies of infantry, under Capt. Rayner, and F and K troops—what was left of them—that were ordered to stay by the wagons and bring them safely down; and we started with them over towards Battle Butte, keeping south of the way the regiment had gone to follow Mr. Crane. And the very next day Capt. Rayner got orders to bring his battalion to the river and get on the boat, while the wagons kept on down the bank with us to guard them. And Mr. Hayne was acting quartermaster, and he stayed with us; and him and Capt. Hull was together a good deal. There was some trouble, we heard, because Capt. Rayner thought another officer should have been made quartermaster and Mr. Hayne should have stayed with his company, and they had some words; but Capt. Hull gave Mr. Hayne a horse and seemed to keep him with him; and that night, in sight of Battle Butte, the steamboat was out of sight ahead when we went into camp, and I was sergeant of the guard and had my fire near the captain's tent, and twice in the evening Gower came to me and said now was the time to lay hands on the money and skip. At last he says to me, 'You are flat broke, and they'll all be down on you when you get back to the post. No man in America wants five hundred dollars more than you do. I'll give you five hundred in one hour from now if you'll get the captain out of his tent for half an hour.' Almost everybody was asleep then; the captain was, and so was Mr. Hayne, and he went on to tell me how he could do it. He'd been watching the captain. It made such a big bundle, did the Gower, in all the all-up-and-down—made a memorandum of the amount due each man, and packed the greenbacks all together in one solid pile—his own money, the lieutenant's and the men's—done it up in paper and tied it firmly and put big blotches of green sealing wax on it and sealed them with the seal on his watch chain. Says Gower, 'You get the captain out, as I tell you, and I'll slip right in, get the money, stuff some other paper with a few ones and twos in the package; his seal, his watch

and everything is there in the saddle bags under his head, and I can reseat and replace it in five minutes, and he'll never suspect the loss until the command all gets together again next week. By that time I'll be three hundred miles away. Everybody will say 'was Gower that robbed him, and you with your five hundred will never be suspected.' I asked him how could he expect the captain to let me have so much money in his bags with no one to guard it; and he said he'd bet on it if I did it right. The captain had had no luck tracking Indians that summer, and the regiment was laughing at him. He knew they were scattering every which way now, and was eager to strike them. All I had to do was to creep in excited like, wake him up sudden, and tell him I was sure I had heard an Indian drum and their scalp dance song out beyond the pickets—that they were over towards Battle Butte, and he could hear them if he would come out on the river bank. 'He'd go quick,' says Gower, 'and think of nothing.'

"And I wouldn't believe it, but he did. He sprang up and went right out with me, flinging his overcoat round him; and he never seemed to want to come in. The wind was blowing soft like from the southeast, and he stood there straining his ears trying to hear the sounds I told you of; but at last he gave it up, and we went back to camp, and he took his lantern and looked in his saddle bags, and I shook for fear; but he seemed to find everything all right, and in the next ten minutes he was up, and Gower came and whispered to me and I went with him, and he gave me five hundred dollars, in twenties. Now you're bound, says he; keep the sentries off while I get my horse. And that's the last I ever saw of him. Then a strange thing happened. 'Twas hardly daylight when a courier came galloping up, and I called the captain, and he read the dispatch, and says he, 'By heavens, Clancy, you were right after all. There are Indians over there. Why didn't I trust your ears? Call up the whole command. The Riflers have tread them at Battle Butte and (Captain Rayner has gone with his battalion. We are to escort the wagons to where the boat lies beyond the bend, and then push over with all the horsemen we can take.'

"It was after daylight when we got started, but we almost ran the wagons cross country to the boat, and there Capt. Hull took F troop and what there was of his own, leaving only men left with the wagons, and not till then was Gower missed; but all were in such a hurry to get to the Indians that no one paid attention. Mr. Hayne he begged the captain to let him go, too, so the train was left with the wagon master and the captain of the boat, and away we went. You know all about the fight, and 'twas Mr. Hayne the captain called to and gave his watch and the two packages of money when he was ordered to charge. I was right by his side, and I swore—God forgive me—that through the crack and tear in the paper I could see the layers of greenbacks, when I knew 'twas only some ones and twos Gower had slipped in to make it look right; and Capt. Rayner stood there and saw the packet, too, and Sergt. Walsh and Bugler White; but then two were killed with him, so that 'twas only Capt. Rayner and I was left as witnesses, and now I tell you to Laramie after the campaign did the trouble come. I never dreamed of anything ever coming of it, but that every one would say Gower stole the money and deserted; and when the captain turned the packages over to Mr. Hayne and then got killed, and Mr. Hayne carried the packages, with the watch, seal, saddle bags and all, to Clancy, and never opened them till he got there—two weeks after when we were

all scattered—then they turned on him, his own officers did, and said he stole it, and gambled or sent it away in Cheyenne.

"I had lost much of my money then, and Mrs. Clancy got the rest, and it made me crazy to think of that poor young gentleman accused of it all; but I was in for it, and knew it meant prison for years for me, and perhaps they couldn't prove it on him. I got to drinking then, and told Capt. Rayner that the —th was down on me for swearing away the young officer's character; and then he took me to Company B when the colonel wouldn't have me any more in the —th; and one night when Mrs. Clancy had been asking my hair and I wanted money to drink and she'd give me none, little Kate told me her mother had lots of money in a box, and that Sergt. Gower had come and given it to her while they were getting settled in the new post after the Battle Butte campaign, and he had made her promise to give it to me the moment I got back—that somebody was in trouble, and that I must save him; and I believed Kate, and charged Mrs. Clancy with it, and she beat me and Kate, and swore it was a lie; and I never could get the money.

"And at last came the fire, and it was the lieutenant that saved my life and Kate's, and brought back to her all that pile of money through the fire. It broke my heart then, and I vowed I'd go and tell him the truth, but they wouldn't let me. She told me the captain said he would kill me if I blabbed, and she would kill Kate. I didn't dare, until they told me my discharge had come, and then I was glad when the lieutenant and the major caught me in town. When they promised to take care of little Kate I didn't care what happened to me. The money Mrs. Clancy has—except perhaps two hundred dollars—all belongs to Lieut. Hayne since he paid off every cent that was stolen from Capt. Hull."

Supplemented by Mrs. Clancy's rueful and incoherent admissions, Clancy's story did its work. Mrs. Clancy could not long persist in her various denials after her husband's confession was brought to her ears, and she was totally unable to account satisfactorily for the possession of so much money. Little Kate had been too young to grasp the full meaning of what Gower said to her mother in that hurried interview; but her reiterated statements that he came late at night, before the regiment got home, and knocked at the door until he waked them up, and her mother cried when he came in, he looked so different, and had spectacles and a patch on his cheek, and ranch clothes, and he only stayed a little while and told her mother he must go back to the mountains, the police were on his track—she knew now he spoke of having deserted—and he gave her mother lots of money, for she opened and counted it afterwards and told her it must all go to papa to get some one out of trouble—all were so clear and circumstantial that at last the hardened woman began to break down and make reluctant admissions.

When an astute sheriff's officer finally told her that he knew where he could lay hands on Sergt. Gower, she surrendered utterly. So long as he was out of the way—could not be found—she held out; but the prospect of dragging into prison with her the man who had spurred her in her fascinations was too alluring. She told all she could at his expense. He had ridden eastward after his desertion, and making his way down the Missouri, had stopped at Yankton and gone thence to Kansas City, spending much of his money. He had reached Denver with the rest, and there she knew not how—had made or received more, when he heard of the fact that Capt. Hull had turned over his property to Lieut. Hayne just before he was killed, and that the lieutenant was now to be tried for failing to account for it. He brought her enough to cover all he had taken, but—here she lied—strove to persuade her to go to San Francisco with him. She promised to think of it if he would leave the money—which he did, swearing he would come for her and it. That was why she dared not tell Mike when he got home. He was so jealous of her.

To this part of her statement Mrs. Clancy stoutly adhered; but the officers believed Kate.

One other thing she told. Kate had declared he wore a heavy patch on his right cheek and temple. Yes, Mrs. Clancy remembered it. Some scoundrels had tried to rob him in Denver. He had a fight for life and money both, and his share of the honors of the fray was a deep and clean cut extending across the cheek bone and up above the right ear.

As these family revelations were told throughout the garrison and comment of every kind was made thereon, there is reason for the belief that Mrs. Buxton found no difficulty in filling her letters with particulars of deep interest to her reader, who by this time had carried out the programme indicated by Capt. Rayner. Mid-June had come; the ladies, apparently benefited by the sea voyage, had landed in New York and were speedily driven to their old quarters at the Westminster; and while the captain went to headquarters of the department to report his arrival on leave, and get his letters, a card was sent up to Miss Travers which she read with cheeks that slightly paled:

"He is here, Kate." "Nellie, you won't throw him over, after all he has done and borne for you?" "I shall keep my promise," was the answer.

CHAPTER XL. "I had lost much of my money then, and Mrs. Clancy got the rest, and it made me crazy to think of that poor young gentleman accused of it all; but I was in for it, and knew it meant prison for years for me, and perhaps they couldn't prove it on him. I got to drinking then, and told Capt. Rayner that the —th was down on me for swearing away the young officer's character; and then he took me to Company B when the colonel wouldn't have me any more in the —th; and one night when Mrs. Clancy had been asking my hair and I wanted money to drink and she'd give me none, little Kate told me her mother had lots of money in a box, and that Sergt. Gower had come and given it to her while they were getting settled in the new post after the Battle Butte campaign, and he had made her promise to give it to me the moment I got back—that somebody was in trouble, and that I must save him; and I believed Kate, and charged Mrs. Clancy with it, and she beat me and Kate, and swore it was a lie; and I never could get the money.



WITH ONE SHRIEK SHE SPRANG TOWARDS THEM—JUST IN TIME.

"And so she's really going to marry Mr. Van Antwerp," said Mrs. Buxton to Mrs. Waldron a few days later in the month of sunshine and roses.

"I did not think it possible when she left," was the reply. "Why do you say so now?" "Oh, Mrs. Rayner writes that the captain had to go to Washington on some important family matters, and that she and Nellie were at the sea shore again, and Mr. Van Antwerp was with them from morning till night. He looked so worn and haggard, she said, that Nellie could not but take pity on him. Heavens! think of having five hundred thousand dollars signing its life away for you!—especially when he's handsome. Mrs. Rayner made me promise to send it right back, because he would never give her one before, but she sent his picture. It's splendid. Wait, and I'll show you." And Mrs. Buxton darted into the house.

When she reappeared, three or four young cavalrymen were at the gate chatting with Mrs. Waldron, and the picture was passed from hand to hand, exciting varied comment. It was a simple card de visite, of the style once spoken of as being visible—but it was the picture of a strong, clear cut face, with thick, wavy black hair just tingling with gray, a drooping mustache and long English whiskers. The eyes were heavy browsed, and though partially shaded by the gold-rimmed pince-nez, were piercing and fine. Mr. Van Antwerp was unquestionably a fine looking man.

"Here comes Hayne," said Royce. "Show it to him. He likes pictures though I wouldn't like this one if I were in his place."

Mr. Hayne stopped in some surprise when hailed, greeted Mrs. Waldron warmly and bowed courteously to Mrs. Buxton, who was watching him narrowly.

Want to see a picture of the man you ought to go and perforate?" asked Webster, with that lofty indifference which youngsters have to the ravages of the tender passion on subjects other than themselves.

"To whom do you refer?" asked Hayne smiling gravely, and little imagining what was in store for him.

"This," said Webster, holding out the card. Hayne took it; gave one glance, started, seized it with both hands, studied it eagerly, while his own face rapidly paled, then looked up with quick searching eyes.

"Who is this?" he asked. "The man who's engaged to Miss Travers—Mr. Van Antwerp." "This—this—Mr. Van Antwerp?" exclaimed Hayne, his face white as a sheet. "Here, take it, Royce!"

And in an instant he had turned and was gone. "Well, I'll be hanged if I knew that he was that hard hit," brawled Webster, "Did you, Royce?" "But Royce did not answer."

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