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# Ray's Recruit

.....BY.....

CAPTAIN CHARLES KING, U. S. A.

AUTHOR OF "THE COLONEL'S DAUGHTER," "FROM THE RANKS," ETC.

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(Continued.)

It was a light, open phaeton, drawn by two spirited bays, whose fine action and well made harness won his instant approval. Beside the carriage trotted the stocky, burly major whom he so well remembered the day of his first interview with Dana in the office. On the other side rode Dana himself, a handsome young soldier, and, far more interested in them than in the possible occupants of the vehicle, Hunter was looking upon them with a soldier's eye, keenly appreciative of Dana's graceful, easy seat and of Mainwaring's good, if bulky, horsemanship when he suddenly became aware of the fact that instead of turning in at the gate the driver was heading straight southward, evidently intending to drive around to the main gate instead of passing, as Hunter had some, through that portion of the post best known as "Sudstown."

Another minute, and they must flash past him, not ten yards away, with only that low picket fence between them. Already the sentry had halted and presented arms, both officers touching their caps in acknowledgment. Already the swift team was darting past the gate. The lady occupants of the stylish vehicle were whisking into view, and, yielding to sudden and uncontrollable impulse, Hunter whirled about, jumped the shallow ditch and sprang behind the nearest of the little houses devoted to the use of the married soldiers. In that one swift glance at the fair occupants he had seen a face at sight of which the blood went rushing to his own. There, side by side, were Mrs. Mainwaring and the young lady whom he had picked up in his arms the night that "head on" collision at Alkali Flats.

### CHAPTER VII.

Major Stannard had won his bet, and Mainwaring was more than usually "grumpy" in consequence. Ray and his men, riding like the wind, had run down the train robbers before they reached the Dry Fork, and in a long stern chase had overhauled first one man, then another, until darkness set in and hid the leading fugitives from sight. Seven lively specimens of the border ruffian were the captives of the sorrel troop by nightfall, and, closely guarded, these were the men turned over next morning to Mr. Sheriff Conway when, that much fatigued officer and his posse reached the spot where Ray and his men had made camp the night before. Ray himself, with a dozen troopers, had pushed on at daybreak following the trail of the fugitives in hopes of capturing the more prominent members of the party, who, as it turned out, had most of the ill gotten booty while his lieutenant, Mr. Scott, remained in charge of the main body and of the prisoners until the arrival of the civil authorities, who promptly disarmed and obtained possession. Conway and his posse, rejoicing, turned homeward at dusk with their disheveled prizes, hoping to reach Butte and receive a triumph by evening of the next day. Seven train robbers were more than had ever been caught before in the history of the territory, and great would be the rejoicings. Securely bound, the reckless captives, each man lashed to the stirrup of some one of the numerous posse, trudged painfully along the homeward trail. Silent, resolute, almost defiant, no one of their number would give the whisper of a hint as to the identity of the leaders or of one another. All were strangers to Butte. Neither Conway nor his deputies had ever seen one of their faces before. Lieutenant Scott had lost no time in

# HEART DISEASE

is a symptom of Kidney Disease. A well-known doctor has said, "I never yet made a post-mortem examination in a case of death from Heart Disease without finding the kidneys were at fault." The Kidney medicine which was first on the market, most successful for Heart Disease and all Kidney Troubles, and most widely imitated is

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saddling and pushing on after his captain, two of the posse riding with him so as to give the possibly necessary civil sanction to the arrest of the robbers and to take the customary civil credit for the same, naively explaining, "You fellows in the regular army don't need it; we do, or there's no chance for Conway's crowd next election."

And on his triumphant homeward way what was more natural than that Conway should march through Ransom, the following evening just as the ghost-like column in white stable frocks came swinging up to barracks through the gloaming? As the shortest road ran close to the men's quarters, it happened that the burly sheriff, with his captive train, went clattering by the long wooden porches, and such troopers as happened to be excused from stables--precious few in Atherton's regiment--came rushing out of quarters to see them. All the companies had had to "stand to heel" and have their stalls inspected before they started up the slope, but in Ray's stable were only a few horses, and the few men under charge of Sergeant Merriweather had already gone to barracks and were there when Conway came through, and of this few was the new trooper, Hunter.

Still wearing his white stable frock and looking a trifle tired and somber, the recruit had stopped at the corner of the porch and was gazing with but languid interest at Conway's motley cavalcade when Merriweather joined him. "A precious lot of jailbirds," said the sergeant, as the party came jogging by, sheriff and deputies grinning affably, and many of the latter shouting words of condolence to the stay at homes who hadn't been partakers with

them in the glories of the chase and capture. Four prisoners had trudged wearily by, while Trooper Hunter replied briefly but without especial civility to the sergeant's remark. Then came the fifth, whose eyes, haggard and hunted looking, glanced up just one second at the man in stable frock at the edge of the porch and instantly there was a flash of recognition. Sergeant Merriweather, turning to his companion in surprise, saw him gazing after No. 5 with an expression of amazement and dismay upon his handsome face.

"Then you've met one of these fellows before, have you?" said Merriweather, with instant suspicion.

But Hunter answered never a word, and, turning short, plunged into the shadows of the great, gloomy barrack.

Not for 48 hours longer did Captain Ray return, and with him came the two deputies and one more prisoner. The others, so said the hoof tracks, had scattered during that first night over the face of the earth, and even the trail soon became indistinct on the hard prairie beyond the Ska, but enough was known to warrant the statement that two of the number had gone toward the agency away to the northeast and that their mounts were evidently blooded stock, far swifter than Ray's, for never once had their leaders been in view, and there was no use in further pursuit. Huddled in the county jail, the eight malefactors were awaiting the action of the civil authorities and their identification by the railway people, while Ray and his returned men shook off the dust of travel and settled down to garrison duty again. The first thing demanded of Sergeant Merriweather was an account of his stewardship and the progress of the new trooper, and Merriweather looked solemn and mysterious and was finally understood to say that he had nothing to complain of in him, but he "reckoned other people might," whereupon Ray made him speak out. The Kentuckian could not tolerate insinuation or innuendo in a soldier, and Merriweather told the story of the mutual recognition of Hunter and the unknown captive.

It was the evening of his return to Ransom and just before tattoo, which in those days was always accompanied by a roll call.

"See if Hunter is in quarters," said the captain, "and send him to me." And Merriweather hastened on his errand.

No. The men in barracks said the small recruit was out somewhere. "Maybe he's gone down to pay his respects to Mrs. Merriweather, sergeant," sneered an ill conditioned fellow, a man no other liked, yet who had served with the old troop over half a dozen years. Merriweather knew it would never do to notice the remark, but it stung him all the same. "Find him, you, and tell him the captain wants him at once," said he to the would be sneerer, then slammed the door behind him and sprang out into the night. He had not been home for nearly an hour, and he needed, he told himself, a drink, so thither he went.

Bright lights were burning in some of the quarters, dim ones in others, but in his own the light seemed lowered to the verge of darkness. Not two yards from his door the tall figure of a man in soldier overcoat loomed into view, and,

peering closely at him, Merriweather discovered the recruit.

"Where you been, Hunter?" was the sharp, stern demand.

"Looking for you, sergeant," was the quiet reply.

"Who sent you?" And there were both anger and suspicion in the tone.

"Oh, no one. I wished to speak with you a moment. I want some advice."

"There is no need of your coming here, then. You've seen me a dozen times in the last two days. Why didn't you ask it then?"

For a moment the younger man was silent; surprise and disappointment clouded his face. So, too, there crept into it a shade of indignation, and it showed plainly in the tone of his reply.

"I had no need of it then," was the answer, as the younger soldier looked squarely into the eyes of the senior. Then, just as when angered by the overbearing ways of Major Mainwaring, Hunter's high spirit overmastered his resolution to take men and matters as he found them, and his eyes, too, flashed angrily. "Whatever thought I had of it ten minutes ago," he said, "is gone now. I won't trouble you."

And with that he would have gone his way, but Merriweather, smarting with jealousy and suspicion, threw himself across his path.

"You go no farther, young man, till you hear what I've got to say. This is the third time in less than a week you've been prowling here around my door. Keep your distance in future. D'ye understand? No man enters that house except on my invitation. Now you go to Captain Ray and tell him I sent you."

For a moment the tall young soldier stood there, too astonished to make reply. He had heard the men talk of Merriweather as "tough on recruits." He had understood that new men must take a great deal of bullying from the elders--that it was purposely done to try their temper and test their sense of subordination. Hitherto he had looked upon Merriweather's asperities as having no personal significance. Now, for the first time, it flashed upon him that he was singled out for harsh, overbearing and abusive language from a man coarse by nature, mentally, physically and socially his inferior. All on a sudden the hot blood boiled in his veins, and, forgetful of his new obligations, reckless of anything but his wrath, Trooper Hunter hit out straight, hard and well, taking Merriweather squarely between the eyes and knocking him flat. The resounding thwack of the blow, the heavy crash of the fall, were echoed from the doorway by a woman's startled cry, and the next thing Hunter knew as he stood there still quivering, his fist clinched and ready to dash again at his floored victim, not feebly struggling to his knees, the slender form of the sergeant's wife was bending over

the beaten man. Then she threw herself upon her knees beside her prostrate husband.

"You've struck him cruel hard," she moaned. "Oh, you shouldn't have minded what he said, Mr. Hunter. He's awful jealous. There, Danny, still--sit still," she pleaded soothingly. "Run for a little water, Mr. Hunter. He's bleeding fearful. Do be still, Danny. Sure the gentleman never set foot inside your door nor spoke a word to me. You're foolish, Danny." She strove to staunch the blood with her handkerchief, but he was slowly regaining his faculties and thrust her rudely away, and then she saw he was fumbling inside the breast of his coat, and gave her strength. Hunter had taken a dipperful of water from the barrel on the side of the little hut and was bringing it, dripping, wondering as he carried what would be the outcome of this impulse, but she met him half way, seized the dipper and bade him go. "Quick," she parted. "Don't stop a instant now. Get away before he comes to himself or he'll shoot. Go instantly please, Mr. Hunter, or maybe he'll hit us too."

(Continued.)

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