

Revealed By Fire

What a Discarded Lover's Heroism and Sacrifice Brought Him.

By ADDISON HOWARD GIBSON.

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The full September moon shone down upon a little cabin on the dry prairies of western Kansas, lighting up the faces of a young man and woman who were slowly walking up and down the open space before the door.

"I was so happy, Rachel," the man said, glancing at the strong, beautiful face of his companion, "when I heard your school up in the Wyoming mountains was closed and you were coming home. I thought you were coming to stay this time. I hope so, for Rachel, I've loved you a long time."

Dan Southard leaned toward the girl to study the effect of his avowal on her.

But Rachel Winton betrayed no emotion.

She merely turned her dark eyes from the man's eager face and looked off across the moonlit prairie.

"I've been working and waiting, Rachel," he continued, his voice husky with feeling, "until I had something to offer you. I was sure you wouldn't give up teaching for just anything—you're not that kind."

"But I've loved you ever since two years ago, when we all came out to these prairies together in our covered wagons. I remember, after we were here, how bravely you worked to help your parents get started off comfortably before you went with your uncle to Wyoming to teach that ranch school."

"Dan," she exclaimed almost sternly, "I haven't ceased to remember our old house, which father lost on that security debt, the home we were forced to leave when we came here. Mother and I were not very brave, for we shed tears most of the way, though no one knew it. We came because it was the only thing to do, but this pioneer life is a hard, hard one."

"In my heart I am at war with it and always have been. It takes away youth and kills all high and noble ambitions. See how mother has aged during the two years we have lived here. It makes me bitter. That's why I go back to teach. I'm going to make enough to take them away from this life."

"But, Rachel," he pleaded, "you shall never work as your mother has had to. I promise it," then suddenly, with a catch in his voice, "Say, girlie, there's no truth in the report about your coming for that rich Wyoming ranchman?"

"Mr. Miles has been very kind to me," she answered without pretending not to understand. "He has offered to let father and mother have the lovely home he owns in Denver if I'll marry him. It would be an ideal place for them to end their days in."

"My God, girlie! I couldn't stand it to see you the wife of another!" the young man cried, his strong frame shaken with emotion.

"You mustn't care so much, Dan," she returned, tender pity for his suffering making her tones kind. "Get a better girl to share your home—one who will love you enough to make the best of this hard life."

"Never, never, Rachel!" he answered, with passion, "I love only you. If you could but read my heart and see how much you would surely care just a little for me. Your ranchman, rich as he is, will never love you as I do, Rachel! Never!"

"I couldn't love any man well enough to give up all I enjoy and settle down to this isolated life, this continual treadmill of drudgery," she retorted, turning away, then in a milder tone, "Forget me, Dan."

Forget her! That he would never do—he never could. There was a time—it was when they lived in their covered wagons and camped at night by the trail; yes, and even after they were settled here—that he had thought she cared for him.

Those had been the happiest days in Southard's life. He had never dreamed that she hated those free, rolling prairies so intensely.

Blind to this, he had been toiling on his new claim to get things in good shape before asking her to marry him. Bitterly now he felt that it was all labor lost, for without Rachel Winton nothing was worth while.

After gazing at the girl a moment in silent reproach Southard walked over to his tethered horse, mounted and rode away.

The moon climbed higher as Rachel stood looking after the vanishing horseman.

"Poor Dan!" she murmured. "He is so strong and good. Father and mother love him like a son, but I just can't, can't!" And the tears gathered in her eyes.

"I was intended for something better. If I wasn't, why should I dislike the rough, crude ways of pioneer life so terribly?"

With this question on her lips Rachel Winton entered the cabin, where her parents were already asleep, and sought her couch.

For a long time she lay awake, her mind, much against her will, busy comparing young Southard and Mr. Miles.

Dan's clear cut but somewhat boyish face lost nothing by comparison with that of the bearded, middle aged ranch-

man who had been wooing her persistently for the past year.

Life with one meant the unceasing drudgery of the prairie farm, with the other, wealth to enable her to live wherever she might choose herself and also give her parents a comfortable home.

But which of the men held the key to her heart?

Really she could not tell, but she grew drowsy making herself believe she would be able in any event to compel her mind with its power of judging wisely to control her heart.

Toward midnight she was aroused by a strange pungent smell pervading her little room. Her breathing was not quite free. What could it mean?

She lay for a minute dazed, yet with what sense she could command, trying to discover the cause of the odor that was gaining in strength and stifling power.

Suddenly a great crimson light illumined the small window. With a quick movement Rachel sprang from bed, and as she did so there came to her ears the rapid beat of a horse's hoofs on the prairie road.

Then she heard Dan's voice burdened with awful import.

"Rachel!" he called. "Mr. Winton! Get up! Get up quick! The prairie is on fire!"

"Father! Mother!" the girl called, running to their bed. "Get up! Do you hear? There is a big fire. Yes, Dan," she called from the window as she helped her mother to dress.

"There's not a minute to lose," Southard called back. "The fire is sweeping this way as fast as a strong wind can bring it."

There had been no rain for three weeks, and everything was dry as tinder.

The Wintons understood the terrible danger impending.

Not only the cabin, but stock, crops, even they themselves, were at the mercy of those leaping flames.

"Bring the blankets, quick!" shouted Southard, obeying him instantly, Rachel dragged every blanket out of the house.

Dan had ridden his horse to the little spring in the hollow and was rapidly filling every pail he had been able to find about the place.

Acting under his directions, the girl mounted her father's pony, and she and Dan carried water for Mr. and Mrs. Winton to wet the blankets, this being their only means of fighting the fire.

How they worked and fought! It seemed as if the whole world was arrayed against them, and all the while the moon looked down, cold and uncaring, while the fire swept fiercely onward until it caught in a row of dry cornstalks that reached nearly to the cabin. Here the battle must be fought with renewed energy.

The snuff of the burning grass and grain assailed their nostrils, scorched their throats and blinded their eyes, but with hands torn and blistered they toiled on.

When the old couple fell back overcome Dan and Rachel took their places with the heavy wet blankets and worked side by side. Inch by inch they beat back the angry flames.

Even in that terrible situation the girl felt a singular strength and coolness in working by Southard's side. She felt that the enemy must yield to such grand and compelling superiority.

When the fire attacked them from another vulnerable point it was Dan's exhaustless energy that saved the day.

By sacrificing a patch of ripe grain, through a prompt back fire, the fire was met and made to recoil in wrathful flames upon itself.

After a time the great body of the fire swept away northward, having consumed everything of the Wintons' except cabin and stock.

With a thankfulness in their hearts for the preservation of these, the old couple entered the house and threw themselves upon the floor.

Then Southard and Rachel came back with weary, lagging feet from their last successful onslaught.

"Everything's safe now, Rachel," he said huskily, starting toward his horse.

"Dan," she questioned, a queer choking in her throat, "you are not going now?"

He stopped and looked at her. She had never appeared more beautiful to him than now, with the marks of that great fire battle upon her face, and tattered dress.

"All we have left we owe to you, Dan," she went on, noting his scorched face, bleeding hands and burned clothing.

Then she placed her blackened hand on his shoulder. How he trembled under that touch.

"I don't feel as if I could bear to have you leave us, Dan." There was a tender pleading in her tones.

"The danger's over, Rachel," he reassured her, "and I must ride all the way to Westfield before daybreak."

"Why to Westfield?" she asked.

Without a word he pointed across the blackened prairie toward his claim.

A mass of smoking ruins marked the place where his house and stable had been. She understood.

"You left all you had to come to us, Dan," she said, with a sob. "Now you have nothing left. Without your help everything here, even our lives, would have been sacrificed. Oh, Dan, the light of that fire has given me a sight of my own heart! I see that the true life for me is right here, and if you'll let me I'll help you make another home."

"Rachel!" he cried. "You can't mean it! Do you really love me?"

"I have loved you all the time, my knight of the prairies," she answered as his strong arms gathered her to his breast.

ROSE TO THE OCCASION.

A Female Elephant and a Ready Witted Showman.

That everything should be in its place is a matter not only of convenience, but of necessity for some people and some animals, as the following examples from John Augustus O'Shea's "Leaves From the Life of a Special Correspondent" go to prove. Certain orders of intellect run smoothly in accustomed grooves, but have no ability to meet any unusual occasion. The author describes a visit to a traveling menagerie.

The showman was repeating his lesson like a schoolboy. He was enlarging on the peculiarities of the ostrich of Africa, upon the uncanny form of which the visitors were supposed to be gazing.

"But, my friend," I remarked in an undertone to that functionary, "that is not the ostrich of Africa; that is the pelican of Australia."

"They're always playing jokes on me!" exclaimed the showman plaintively. "How can a cove tell which is which if they goes on a-changing of the cages when his back is turned?"

In the other instance of the value of order it was the animal which was not equal to the emergency. The showman rose superior to such slight vicissitudes of fortune.

In the illness of the regular showman a substitute was furnished with a piece of paper setting forth the elephant's tricks.

"The behemoth will now walk around the ring on three legs!" shouted the showman.

Behemoth did as ordered, and the audience applauded.

"The behemoth will now stand on his hind legs!" The elephant performing his tasks faithfully.

At last a mistake was made in the order. Throwing his whip on the ground, the showman announced that the behemoth would now lift the whip with his trunk. Nothing of the kind happened. The elephant began moving around the ring backward. A negro attendant whispered to the showman:

"That's his next number!"

The showman was equal to the occasion and said:

"Ladies and gentlemen, my favorite is not backing out of his engagement, but he is more polite than I and wishes to make his farewell before he goes. So polished are his manners that he retires as he might at court and presently will follow with the whip."

The Appeal to the Record.

Little Tommy returned sore and trembling from the torture room.

"Doesn't your papa ever thrash you?" he asked his chum, who is the son of a cabinet minister.

"I should say not!" replied the other loftily. "Every time he threatens to cane me I read him an extract from his great peace at any price speech, in which he said: 'These barbarians are like wayward children, but have we on that account the right to take away their heaven sent privilege to do as they please? Let us treat them as we would our own wayward children—plead with them, beseech them, but never coerce them with either gun or rod.'"

"That's a good deal to remember," remarked Tommy.

"Yes, but now he's got so used to it that he drops the cane as soon as I start"—London Answers.

Love the Greater Wisdom.

Wisdom always betrays the love in it. Love, just another warmer, closer name for wisdom, is selfishness absolute. It is the law and the sweetness of the one organism which the universe is.

The eternal strange forces, love and selfishness, faith and godliness, have been submerged—nay, hidden—from human consciousness in the swish and swash of sentimentalism and hypocrisy. They stand, none the less, eternal, complete, the foundation, the one necessity, of the world, the home and character.

They are the inner fact of man waiting to ename him of the chance of completeness.

Where they are not recognized and made at home in the character man finds his life shredded to scraps and rags.—Practical Ideals.

Dodged.

During a lecture on history in a Baltimore educational institution the instructor had given a lengthy disquisition on the character of George Washington, incidentally touching upon his work as the organizer of the Revolution.

"Now," asked the instructor, "if George Washington were alive today what practical part do you think he would play in present day politics, judging from the past?"

A prolonged silence on the part of the pupils followed this. Finally, however, one lad saw a way out.

"Sir," he queried, "wouldn't he be too old?"—Lippincott's.

Attractive Round Trip Rates

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Account of Annual Reunion of United Confederate Veterans, the Southern Railway announces the sale of very cheap round trip rates to Mobile, Ala. and return. Tickets on sale April 23rd-24th-25th with final return limit May 22nd, 1910 or by depositing your ticket with special agent at Mobile and paying a fee of fifty cents you can have final limit extended until May 10th, 1910.

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IMPORTANT NOTICE

At the meeting of the Board of Commissioners on Monday, the following order was passed:

"That it shall be unlawful for any person or persons to drive faster than a walk on the bridge across Tar River at Louisburg. This order also applies to both entering and leaving the bridge. All persons violating this order shall be fined \$2.50 for each and every offence. By order of the Board.

F. S. COLLIE, Chairman.
W. M. BOONE, Clerk.

J P WINSTON

Louisburg, N. C.

Who is busy this week looking after his new building on Nash street requests us to say to his many friends that he has a big lot of clothing and ladies skirts, dresses, etc. In fact you know he has always got a big stock of just what you want at less than what it cost the other fellow. Go to see him when in town.

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Easter Goods

At Egertons - White Front

Our buyer returned last week from the Northern Market, and we have received a great many pretty goods for Easter, consisting of Millinery, Dress Goods and Silks, White Goods, Suitings and Waistings, Laces, Hamburgs and some of the prettiest neck fixings, Collars, Jabots, Ties, Etc., that we have ever had.

SHOES

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Vici Strap Sandals worth \$1.75 for \$1 25
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