

My Lady of the North

THE LOVE STORY OF
A GRAY JACKET

By RAYMOND PARKESE
AUTHOR OF
"WHEN WILDERNESS WAS KING"

Illustrations by Arthur T. Williamson

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SYNOPSIS.

The story opens in a Confederate tent at a critical stage of the Civil War. Gen. Lee imparts to Capt. Wayne an important message to Longstreet. Accompanied by Sgt. Craig, an old army scout, Wayne starts on his mission. They set within the lines of the enemy and in the darkness Wayne is taken for a Federal officer and a young lady on horseback given in his charge. She is a northern girl and attempts to escape. One of the horses succumbs and Craig goes through with the dispatches, while Wayne and My Lady of the North are left alone. They seek shelter in a hut and entering it in the dark a huge man in a Federal uniform shoots the brute just in time. The owner of the hut, Jed Bungay, and his wife appear and soon a party of horsemen approach. They are led by a man claiming to be Red Lowrie, but who proves to be Maj. Brennan, a Federal officer whom the Union girl recognizes. He orders the arrest of Wayne as a spy and he is brought before Sheridan, who threatens him with death unless he reveals the secret message. Wayne believes Edith Brennan to be the wife of Maj. Brennan. He is rescued by Jed Bungay, who starts to reach Gen. Lee, while Wayne in disguise penetrates to the ballroom, beneath which he had been imprisoned. He is introduced to a Miss Minor and barely escapes being unmasked. Edith Brennan recognizing Wayne, says she will save him. Securing a pass through the lines, they are confronted by Brennan, who is knocked senseless. Then, bidding Edith adieu, Wayne makes a dash for liberty. He encounters Bungay; they reach the Lee camp and are sent with reinforcements to join Early. In the battle of Shenandoah the regiment is overwhelmed, and Wayne while in the hospital, is visited by Edith Brennan. Wayne and Bungay are sent on a scouting detail, and arriving at the Minor place, Wayne meets Miss Minor and Mrs. Bungay, and later Edith appears. Wayne's detachment is besieged by guerrillas. Brennan and his men arrive and aid in repelling the invaders until a rescuing party of bluecoats reach the scene. Brennan challenges Wayne to a duel; the latter fires in the air, and is himself wounded. He bids Edith adieu and she expresses the hope that they may meet after the war.

CHAPTER XXXVII.—Continued.

"Hey, there, you gray-back!" he shouted, "hold on a bit!"

As I came to a pause and glanced back, wondering if there could be anything wrong with my parole, he swung his cap and pointed.

"That officer coming yonder wants to speak with you."

Across the open field at my right, hidden until then by a slight rise of ground, a mounted cavalryman was riding rapidly toward me. For the moment his lowered head prevented recognition, but as he cleared the ditch and came up smiling, I saw it was Caton.

"By Jove, Wayne, but this is lucky!" he exclaimed, springing to the ground beside me. "I've actually been praying for a week past that I might see you. Holmes, of your service, told me you had pulled through, but everything is in such confusion that to hunt for you would have been the proverbial quest after a needle in a haystack. You have been paroled then?"

"Yes, I'm completely out of it at last," I answered, feeling to the full the deep sympathy expressed by his face. "It was a bitter pill, but one which had to be taken."

"I know it, old fellow," and his hand-grasp on mine tightened warmly. "If you have been beaten there is no disgrace in it, for no other nation in this world could ever have accomplished it. But this was a case of Greek meeting Greek, and we had the money, the resources, and the men. But, Wayne, I tell you, I do not believe there is today a spark of bitterness in the heart of a fighting Federal soldier."

"I know, Caton," I said—and the words came hard—"your fighting men respect us, even as we do them. It has been a sheer game of which could stand the most punishment, and the weaker had to go down. I know all that, but, nevertheless, it is a terrible ending to so much of hope, suffering, and sacrifice."

"Yes," he admitted soberly, "you have given your all. But those who survive have a wonderful work before them. They must lay new foundations; they are to be the rebuilders of states. You were going home?"

I smiled bitterly at this designation of my journey's end.

"Yes, if you can so name a few weed-grown fields and a vacant negro cabin. I certainly shall have to lay the foundation anew most literally."

"Will you not let me aid you?" he questioned eagerly. "I possess some means, and surely our friendship is sufficiently established to warrant me in making the offer. You will not refuse?"

"I must," I answered firmly. "Yet I do not value the offer the less. Sometime I may even remind you of it, but now I prefer to dig, as the others must. I shall be the stronger for it, and shall thus sooner forget the total wreck."

For a few moments we walked on together in silence, each leading his horse.

"Wayne," he asked at length, glancing furtively at me, as if to mark the effect of his words, "did you know that Mrs. Brennan was again with us?"

"I was not even aware she had been away."

"Oh, yes; she returned North immediately after your last parting, and came back only last week. So many wives and relatives of the officers have come down of late, knowing the

war to be practically at an end, that our camp has become like a huge picnic pavilion. It is quite the fashionable fad just now to visit the front. Mrs. Brennan accompanied the wife of one of the division commanders from her state—Connecticut, you know."

There was much I longed to ask regarding her, but I would not venture to fan his suspicions. In hope that I might turn his thought I asked, "And you; are you yet married?"

He laughed good-humoredly. "No, that happy day will not occur until after we are mustered out. Miss Minor is far too loyal a Virginian ever to become my wife while I continue to wear this uniform. By the way, Mrs. Brennan was asking Cella only yesterday if she had heard anything of you since the surrender."

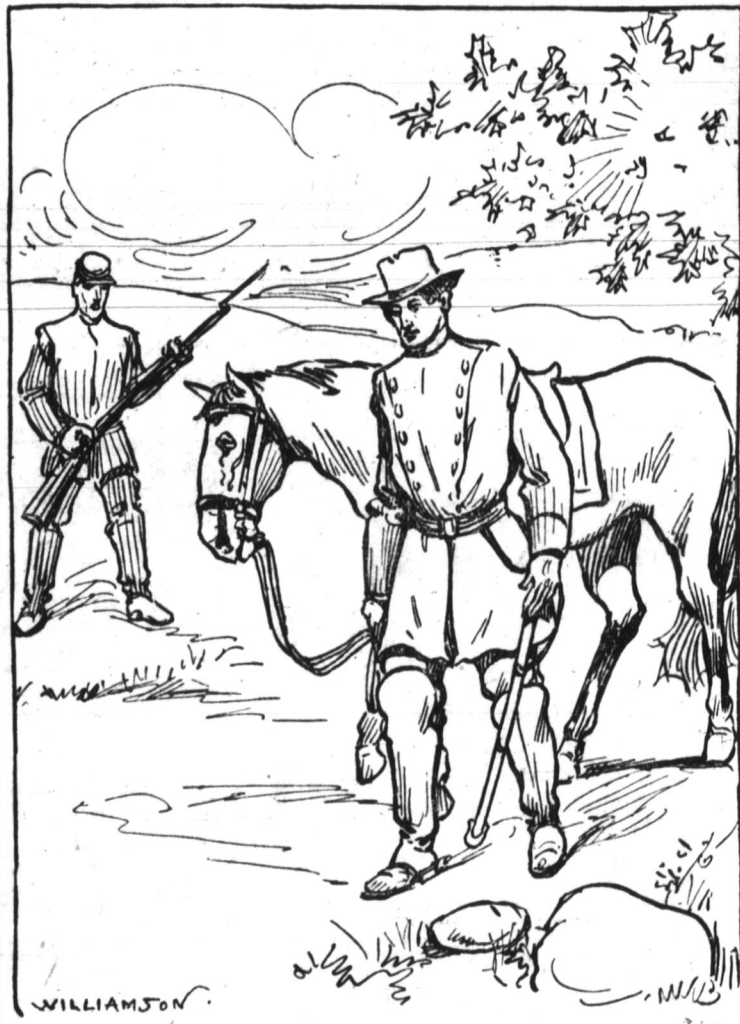
"She is at Appomattox, then?"

"No, at the headquarters of the Sixth Corps, only a few miles north from here."

"And the Major?"

Caton glanced at me, a peculiar look in his face, but answered simply: "Naturally I have had small intimacy with him after what occurred at Mountain View, but he is still retained upon General Sheridan's staff. At Mrs. Brennan's request we breakfasted together yesterday morning, but I believe he is at the other end of the lines today."

We sat down upon a bank, and for the time I forgot disaster while listening to his story of love and his plans for the future. His one thought



"Hey, There, You Gray-Back!" He Shouted.

of Cella and the Northern home so soon now to be made ready for her coming. The sun sank lower into the western sky, causing Caton to draw down his fatigue cap until its glazed visor almost completely hid his eyes. With buoyant enthusiasm he talked on, each word drawing me closer to him in bonds of friendship. But the time of parting came, and after we had promised to correspond with each other, I had stood and watched while he rode rapidly back down the road we had traversed together. At the summit of the hill he turned and waved his cap, then disappeared, leaving me alone, with Edith's face more clearly than ever a torture to my memory of defeat—her face, fair, smiling, alluring, yet the face of another man's wife.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

My Lady of the North.

I walked the next mile thoughtfully, pondering over those vague hopes and plans with which Caton's optimism had inspired me. Suddenly there sounded behind me the thud of hoofs, while I heard a merry peal of laughter, accompanied by gay exchange of words. I drew aside, leading my horse into a small thicket beside the road to permit the cavalcade to pass. It was a group of perhaps a dozen—three or four Federal officers, the remainder ladies, whose bright dresses and smiling faces made a most winsome sight. They glanced curiously aside at me as they galloped past. But none paused, and I merely glanced at them with vague interest, my thoughts elsewhere. Suddenly a horse seemed to draw back from out of

the center of the fast disappearing party.

I had led my limping horse out into the road once more to resume my journey, paying scarcely the slightest attention to what was taking place, for my head was again throbbing to the hot pulse of the sun. The party of strangers rode slowly away into the enveloping dust cloud, and I had forgotten them, when a low, sweet voice spoke close beside me: "Captain Wayne, I know you cannot have forgotten me."

She was leaning down from the saddle, and as I glanced eagerly up into her dear eyes they were swimming with tears.

"Forgotten! Never for one moment," I exclaimed; "yet I failed to perceive your presence until you spoke."

"You appeared deeply buried in thought as we rode by, but I could not leave you without a word when I knew you must feel so bad. Oh, but you, Captain Wayne, you have youth and love to inspire you—for your mother yet lives. Truly it makes my heart throb to think of the upbuilding which awaits you men of the South. It is through such as you—soldiers trained by stern duty—that these desolated states are destined to rise above the ashes of war into a greatness never before equaled. I feel that now, in this supreme hour of sacrifice, the men and women of the South are to exhibit before the world a courage greater than that of the battlefield. It is to be the marvel of the nation, and the thought and pride of it should make you strong."

"It may indeed be so; I can but believe it, as the prophecy comes from your lips. I might even find courage to do my part in this redemption were you ever at hand to inspire."

She laughed gently. "I am not a Virginian, Captain Wayne, but a most loyal daughter of the North; yet if I so inspire you by my mere words, surely it is not so far from my home but you might journey there to listen to my further words of wisdom."

"I have not forgotten the permission already granted me, and it is a temptation not easily cast aside. You return North soon?"

"Within a week."

I hardly knew what prompted me

others. The last time we were together I told you I did not wholly understand you. It is no wonder, when you thought that of me."

"I am going to tell you my story, Captain Wayne. It is not a pleasant task under these circumstances, yet one I owe you as well as myself. This may prove our last meeting, and we must not part under the shadow of a mistake, however innocently it may have originated. I am the only child of Edwin Adams, a manufacturer, of Stonington, Connecticut. My father was also for several terms a member of Congress from that State. As the death of my mother occurred when I was but five years old, all my father's love was lavished upon me, and I grew up surrounded by every advantage which abundant means and high social position could supply. During all those earlier years my playmate and most intimate companion was Charles Brennan, a younger brother of the Major, and the son of Judge David Brennan of the State Supreme Court. As we grew older his friendship for me ripened into love, a feeling which I found it impossible to return. I liked him greatly, valued him most highly, continued his constant companion, yet experienced no desire for closer relationship. My position was rendered the more difficult as it had long been the dream of the heads of both houses that our two families, with their contingent estates, should be thus united, and constant urging tried my decision severely. Nor would Charles Brennan give up hope. When he was twenty and I barely seventeen a most serious accident occurred—a runaway—in which Charles heroically preserved my life, but himself received injuries, from which death in a short time was inevitable. In those last lingering days of suffering, but one hope, one ambition, seemed to possess his mind—the desire to make me his wife, and leave me the fortune which was his through the will of his mother. I cannot explain to you, Captain Wayne, the struggle I passed through, seeking to do what was right and best; but finally, moved by my sympathy, eager to soothe his final hours of suffering, and urged by my father, I consented to gratify his wish, and we were united in marriage while he was on his deathbed. Two days later he passed away."

She paused, her voice faltering, her eyes moist with unshed tears. Scarce knowing it, my hand sought hers, where it rested against the saddle.

"His brother," she paused slowly, "now Major Brennan, but at that time a prosperous banker in Hartford, a man nearly double the age of Charles, was named as administrator of the estate, to retain its management until I should attain the age of twenty-one. Less than a year later my father also died. The final settlement of his estate was likewise entrusted to Frank Brennan, and he was made my guardian. Quite naturally I became a resident of the Brennan household, upon the same standing as a daughter, being legally a ward of my husband's brother. Major Brennan's age, and his thoughtful kindness to me, won my respect, and I gradually came to look upon him almost as an elder brother, turning to him in every time of trouble for encouragement and help. It was the necessity of our business relation which first compelled me to come South and join Major Brennan in camp; as he was unable to obtain leave of absence, I was obliged to make the trip. Not until that time, Captain Wayne—indeed, not until after our experience at Mountain View—did I fully realize that Major Brennan looked upon me otherwise than as a guardian upon his ward. The awakening period pained me greatly, especially as I was obliged to disappoint him deeply; yet I seek to retain his friendship, for my memory of his long kindness must ever abide. I am sure you will understand, and not consider me unwomanly in thus making you a confidant."

"I can never be sufficiently grateful that you have thus trusted me," I said with an earnestness that caused her to lower her questioning eyes. "It has been a strange misunderstanding between us, Mrs. Brennan, but your words have brought a new hope to one disheartened Confederate soldier. I must be content with hope, yet I am rich compared with thousands of others; infinitely rich in comparison with what I dreamed myself an hour ago."

I held out my hand. "There will come a day when I shall answer your invitation to the North."

"You are on your way home?"

"Yes; to take a friend—old upon life, trusting that sometime in the early future I may feel worthy to come to you."

"Worthy?" she echoed the word, a touch of scorn in her voice, her eyes dark with feeling. "Worthy? Captain Wayne, I sometimes think you the most unselfish man I ever knew. Most the sacrifices, then, always be made by you? Can you not conceive it possible that I also might like to yield up something? Is it possible you deem me a woman to whom money is a god?"

"No," I said, my heart bounding to the scarce hidden meaning of her impetuous words, "nor have the sacrifices always been mine; you were once my prisoner."

She bent down, her very soul in her eyes, and rested one white hand upon my shoulder. For an instant we read each other's heart in silence, then shyly she said, "I am still your prisoner."

THE END.

His Right to Title.

A French paper says that a New Zealand chief had just taken up his residence upon a piece of land, his right to which was contested: "I have got an undoubted title to the property," he observed, "as I ate the preceding owner."

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