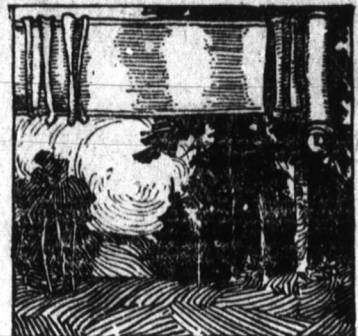


MY LADY OF THE NORTH

The Love Story of a Gray Jacket

by RANDALL PARRISH
Author of "WHEN WILDERNESS WAS KING"

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SYNOPSIS.

The story opens in a Confederate tent at a critical stage of the Civil War. General Wayne imparts to Capt. Wayne an important message to Longstreet. Accompanied by Sgt. Craig, an old army scout, Wayne starts on his mission. The two, after a wild ride, get within the lines of the enemy. In the darkness, Wayne is taken for a Federal officer who came to keep an appointment, and a young lady on horseback is given in his charge. She is a northern girl and attempts to escape but fails. 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 mastiff attacks Wayne. The girl shoots the brute just in time. The owner of the hut, one 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 Mrs. Bungay discovers him to be a disguised impostor, who proves to be Maj. Brennan, a Federal officer whom the Union girl recognizes. While a prisoner Wayne sees files of Confederates pass and knows that Craig has delivered the message. He is brought before Sheridan.

CHAPTER XI.—Continued.

"Very well, sir," he said gravely. "Your fate is in your own hands, and will depend very largely upon your replies to my questions. You claim to have been the bearer of despatches, and hence no spy, yet you possess nothing to substantiate your claim. As your regiment is with Lee, I presume you were seeking Longstreet. Were your despatches delivered?"

"I have reason to believe so."
"By yourself?"
"By the sergeant who accompanied me, and who continued the journey after I was detained."
"Is Lee contemplating an immediate movement?"
"General Sheridan," I exclaimed indignantly, "you must surely forget that I am an officer of the Confederate Army. You certainly have no reason to expect that I will so far disregard my obvious duty as to answer such a question."

"Your refusal to explain why you were hiding within our lines is ample reason for my insistence," he said tartly, "and I am not accustomed to treating spies with any great consideration, even when they claim Rebel commissions. You are not the first to seek escape in that way. Was your despatch the cause of the hurried departure of Longstreet's troops eastward?"

This last question was hurled directly at me, and I noticed that every eye in the room was eagerly scanning my face. I had the quick, fiery temper of a boy then, and my cheeks flushed.

"I positively decline to answer one word relative to the despatches intrusted to me," I said deliberately, and my voice shook with sudden rush of anger. "And no officer who did not dishonor the uniform he wore would insult me with the question."

A bombshell exploded in the room could not have astonished them as did my answer. I realized to the full the probable result, but my spirit was high, and I felt the utter uselessness of prolonging the interview. Sooner or later the same end must come. Sheridan's face naturally flushed, instantly grew crimson, and a dangerous light flamed into his fierce eyes. For a moment he seemed unable to speak; then he thundered forth:

CHAPTER XII.

Under Sentence of Death.
At this late date I doubt greatly if my situation at that time was so desperate as I then conceived it. I question now whether the death sentence would ever have been executed. But then, with the memory of Sheridan's rage and my own hot-headed retort, I fully believed my fate was destined to be that of the condemned spy, unless she who alone might tell the whole truth should voluntarily do so. That circumstances had left me in the power of one whose fierce dis-

like was already evident was beyond question, and I had yielded to his goading to such an extent as to give those in authority every excuse for the exercise of extreme military power. Yet of one thing I was firmly resolved—no thoughtless word of mine should ever endanger the reputation of Edith Brennan. Right or wrong, I would go to a death of dishonor before I would speak without her authority. Love and pride conspired to make this decision adamant.

"Come," said Caton, briefly, and I turned and accompanied him without thought of resistance. At the front door he ordered the little squad of waiting soldiers to fall in, and taking me by the arm, led the way down the gravelled path to the road. I was impressed by his seeming carelessness, but as we cleared the gateway he spoke, and his words helped me to comprehend.

"Captain-Wayne," he said quietly, so that the words could not be overheard, "you do not recognize me, but I was the officer who conducted you to headquarters when you brought the flag in at Wilson Creek. Of course I must perform the duty given me, but I wish you to understand that I wholly believe your word."

He stopped, extended his hand, and I accepted it silently.

"There must be some grave personal reason which seals your lips?" he questioned.

"There is."
"I thought as much. I chanced to overhear the words, or rather a portion of them, which Brennan whispered, and have no doubt if they were explained to the General he would feel more kindly disposed toward you."

It was asked as a question, and I felt obliged to reply.

"I appreciate deeply your desire to aid me, but there are circumstances involving others which compel me for the present to silence. Indeed my possible fate does not so greatly trouble me, only that I possess a strong desire to have freedom long enough to cross swords with this major of yours. The quarrel between us has become bitterly personal, and I hunger for a chance to have it out. Do you know, to a man who would fight?"

even distinguish the retreating steps of the jailer.

Tired as I was from the intense strain of the past thirty-six hours, even my anxious thoughts were insufficient to keep me awake. Feeling my way cautiously along the wall, I came at last to a wide wooden bench, and stretching my form at full length upon it, pillowed my head on one arm, and almost instantly was sound asleep.

When I awoke, sore from my hard bed and stiffened by the uncomfortable position in which I lay, it was broad daylight. That the morning was, indeed, well advanced I knew from the single ray of sunlight which streamed in through a grated window high up in the wall opposite me and fell like a bar of gold across the rough stone floor. I was alone. Even in the dark of the previous night I had discovered the sole pretence to furniture in the place. The room itself proved to be a large and almost square apartment, probably during the ordinary occupancy of the house a receptacle for wood or garden produce, but now peculiarly well adapted to the safeguarding of prisoners.

The solid stone walls were of sufficient weight to afford no chance of reaching the great oak girders that supported the floor above, even had the doing so offered a favorable opening for escape. There were, apparently, but three openings of any kind,—the outside window through which the sunlight streamed, protected by thick bars of iron; a second opening, quite narrow, and likewise protected by a heavy metal grating; and the tightly locked door by means of which I had entered. The second, I concluded, after inspecting it closely, was

hand, which I grasped warmly, for I felt how much depended on his friendship, and resolved to ask him some questions which should solve my last remaining doubts.

"Captain Wayne," he began soberly, looking about him, "you are in even worse stress here than I supposed, but I shall see to it that you are furnished with blankets before I leave. Sheridan is hasty himself, and his temper often leads him to rash language. I am sure he bears you no malice for what you said. But Brennan has his ear, and has whispered something to him in confidence—what I have been unable to ascertain—which has convinced him that you are deserving of death under martial law."

"Without trial?"
"The opportunity of furnishing the information desired will be again offered you; but, as near as I can learn, the charge preferred against you is of such a private nature that it is deemed best not to make it matter for camp talk. Whatever it may be, Sheridan evidently feels justified in taking the case out from the usual channels, and in using most drastic measures. I am sorry to bring you such news, especially as I believe the charges are largely concocted in the brain of him who makes them, and have but the thinnest circumstantial evidence to sustain them. Yet Sheridan is thoroughly convinced, and will brook no interference. The discussion of the case has already led to his using extremely harsh words to his chief of staff."

"I am to be shot, then?"
His hand closed warmly over mine. "While there is life there is always hope," he answered. "Surely it must

be in your power to prove the nature of your mission within our lines, and the delay thus gained, will enable us to learn and meet these more serious allegations."

"If I but had time to communicate with General Lee."
"But now—is there one, no way by which such representation can be given this very day? If not full proof of your innocence, then sufficient, at least, to cause the necessary delay?"

I shook my head. "I know of nothing other than my own unsupported word," I answered shortly, "and that is evidently of no value as against Major Brennan's secret insinuations. When is the hour set?"

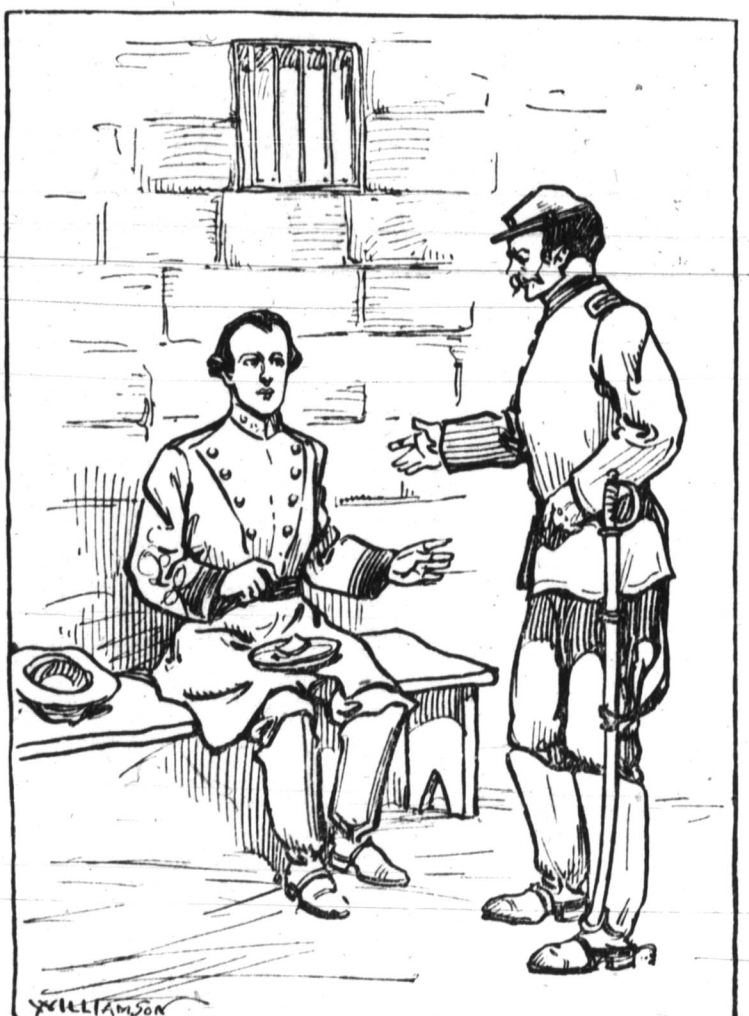
"I am not positive that final decision has yet been reached, but I heard daybreak-to-morrow mentioned. The probability of an early movement of our troops is the excuse urged for such unseemly haste."

I remained silent for a moment, conscious only of his kindly eyes reading my face.

"Mrs. Brennan," I asked finally, recurring to the one thought in which I retained deep interest,— "does she still remain in the camp?"

"She was with the Major at headquarters this morning. I believe they breakfasted with the General, but I was on duty so late last night that I overslept and thus missed the pleasure of meeting her again."

We talked for some time longer, and he continued to urge me for some further word, but I could give him none, and finally the kindly fellow departed, promising to see me again



"I Am to Be Shot, Then?"

with a few hours. Greatly as I now valued his friendship, it was, nevertheless, a relief to be alone with my thoughts once more.

CHAPTER XIII.

A Strange Way Out.
Caton came in once more about the middle of the afternoon, bringing me some blankets; but he had no news, and his boyish face was a picture of pathos as he wrung my hand good bye. Sheridan, he said, had gone down the lines, and both Brennan and himself were under orders to follow in another hour. What instructions, if any, had been left regarding my case he could not say, but he feared the worst from the unusual secrecy. Sheridan expected to return to his headquarters that same evening, as the officers of his staff were to give a grand ball.

I felt no inclination to partake of the ruddy supper laid me, and just before dark I was lying upon the bench idly wondering if that was to prove the last vestige of daylight I should ever behold in this world, when, with out slightest warning, the heavy iron grating in the wall directly above me fell suddenly, striking the edge of the bench, and clattered noisily to the floor. The fall was so unexpected, and my escape from injury so narrow, that I lay almost stunned, staring up helplessly at the dark hole thus left bare. As I gazed, a face framed itself in this narrow opening, and two wary eyes peered cautiously down at me. There was no mistake—that countenance even in the fast waning light and I instantly sat up with an exclamation of surprise.

"Jed Bungay, as I live!"
The puzzled face broke into a grin of delight.

"Holy smoke, Cap," he ejaculated with a deep sigh of relief, "is that you suah? I was so durned skeered I'd made a mess o' it wite that thar iron drapped that I near fied. What be they a goin' ter dew w'ith ye?"

"I have every reason to believe it is their purpose to shoot me at daybreak to-morrow."
"Shoot?—Hell!" He stared at me as if he had just heard his own death sentence pronounced, and his little light, "Shoot ye? Good Lord, Cap, whut fer? Ye ain't 'tine nothin' as I knows on, 'cept ter furrup a bit w'ith that blasted matter, er 'ess I'd a bin a goner long ago."

"That 'Yank' has seen fit to charge me with being a spy, and as I was foolish enough to insist General Sheridan last night, my fate is probably sealed."

This somewhat complex statement seemed to be too much for Jed to grasp promptly.

"Gosh, ye don't say!" he muttered. "Then, durn it, I'm in luck, fer all they've got agin me is potshootin' at a nigger soter up on ther mountings; en ther ain't much, 'cause I didn't hit ther durned cuss."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Neighborly, Anyhow.

Maybe it is design or maybe it's just accident Anyhow, it certainly does look funny to see all the principal taxicab stations bang up against drinking fountains for horses.—New York Mail.



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