

A SOLDIER'S DAUGHTER.

"We cannot hold out much longer."

It was a man's voice in troubled accents that fell on the ears of a young girl, who stood with her shoulder leaning against a hut, within a small stockade in southeastern Arizona.

Time, soon after the close of the Rebellion, when wars and rumors of wars were still floating in the air along the Mexican border.

"Is it then so bad as that, Capt. Dashwood?" said Edith Searle, as she approached the stout figure in blue who stood near. "I thought we were in no immediate danger. You so stated this morning, and surely nothing has since occurred to change the situation."

"Ah, is that you, Miss Searle?" said the commandant of the little post. "I was not aware that anybody was within hearing distance. Forget what I said, Miss; we can only hope for the best. We may come out all right yet."

"But is there real danger, Captain?"

"Of course," hesitatingly. "We have never been free from that, and now—"

"And now?" she questioned eagerly, as he hesitated.

"The truth is, Miss Searle, I have just learned that the ammunition is low—almost out, in fact; and, you see, we cannot expect too much without that."

Capt. Dashwood's voice had a tremor in it that did not escape the notice of the young girl. "She could see that the danger was even greater than he was willing to acknowledge."

"When the ammunition is exhausted the enemy will come in and take possession, captain?"

"Certainly, unless something unforeseen occurs."

"What is within the range of possibilities, Capt. Dashwood?"

"Well, it is possible for Lieut. Hargle to be on the road westward about this time, and he may take this trail instead of the one to the north. It is only a bare possibility, however, and I dare not entertain hope."

The captain was certainly cast down as Miss Searle could see, and yet, somehow the girl had not permitted fear to enter her heart up to this time. Miss Edith Searle was the daughter of a soldier, and had spent several years of her life in a Western fort with her parents. Her father was now dead, and her mother lived in an Eastern State. Edith was now visiting her uncle, Sewall Persons, who lived on a sheep ranch in the Southwest. Indian hostilities compelled the Persons family to seek safety at the nearest military post at Darkwood, where was a small detachment of soldiers under Capt. Dashwood, a brave officer, who had seen service in the war for the Union.

On the afternoon of the day Mr. Persons, wife, niece and two sons, found shelter behind the stockade at Darkwood, several hundred hostiles appeared and made an attack on the place. They were repulsed, with considerable loss to the savages, and the captain would have had little fear of holding the place against a long siege but for the fact that on the fourth day he made the alarming discovery that the ammunition was nearly exhausted. He was in a gloomy mood at the outlook, when Miss Searle addressed him on the morning in question.

"How far is it to Lieutenant Hargle's post, Captain Dashwood?" questioned the girl.

"Thirty miles."

"So near and yet so far," sighed she, with a pensive look in her dark eyes. "Captain, how would it do to send a messenger to the lieutenant, informing him of our condition?"

A half smile raised the drooping moustache of the captain. "That would do it circumstances permitted," returned he, "but they do not."

"I should think somebody might go—Sergeant Ingham, for instance?"

A smile touched his lips at mention of the name of one who had made desperate love to Miss Searle since her advent at the fort. She had met him on several occasions, and quite a flirtation was under way at the time he wrote.

But the captain shook his head. "I will not send anyone," he said. "It would be certain death for a man to venture outside the stockade."

"Yet it is sure to be destruction to us all in any event," said Edith. "I think someone ought to volunteer to go for help. One might succeed in escaping the Indians; besides, what is one life compared to a hundred? I think I'll speak to the sergeant."

The captain said no more, and a short time later he saw Miss Searle in conversation with the sergeant. That her appeal did not move the young soldier the captain could see at a glance.

"You are a coward!" He heard these words as Miss Searle turned and left Sergeant Ingham; but Captain Dashwood considered the sergeant prudent rather than cowardly. Young Ingham had proved his courage on many a hard-fought field, and the taunt flung at him by the soldier's daughter cut him to the quick.

"If she cared for me!" he thought, "she would not ask me to sacrifice my life in this manner. If my superior should send me of course I should go, but I will not be made the sacrifice of a girl's whim. It is by no means so desperate a case as the girl imagines."

The "case" was a desperate one, however, as the sergeant learned when he consulted with his captain a short time later.

"It is highly necessary that the siege should be raised, Captain," said Sergeant Ingham, "and I would advise one of two things."

"I am ready to receive advice," returned the captain.

"We might make a sortie and perhaps rout the enemy," suggested the sergeant.

"I am fearful to attempt it. Some of the men are sick, and but twenty responded for duty this morning. We have two score women and children dependent on our protection, and it would never do to send our whole force against the enemy. What could ten or a dozen men do against a hundred concealed Indians and renegade Mexicans?"

"A serious outlook surely," admitted the sergeant. "I see no other way only to send a messenger tonight in search of help."

"I will not ask one of my men to take so terrible a risk," declared Capt. Dashwood.

"I am willing to take the risk, captain."

"You, Ingham? I thought—"

"Never mind what you thought," interrupted Ingham. "I would not allow myself to be influenced by the whim of a girl. I see the danger is real, and I will undertake to find aid for Darkwood tonight. I do not reckon the danger as great as do you, captain. I have a disguise that may aid me, and once beyond the enemy's line, on a fleet horse, I shall be safe."

After considerable discussion, Capt. Dashwood consented to the plan outlined by his young friend, and shortly after midnight all plans were ready to be carried into effect. It was a moonlight night, and to cover the movements of the messenger, a sudden and furious fire was opened by the garrison on the position held by the enemy.

Meantime, Sergeant Ingham was not the only one astir on this summer night. Edith Searle, without consulting her uncle, resolved to brave the dangers outside, and seek aid for the beleaguered garrison.

She was an excellent horsewoman, and inherited the courage of her soldier father, and it was not a hard matter for her to resolve upon the course she had marked out. In the small hours of the night the besiegers would be wrapped in slumber, save those left to guard the camp. A quick dash on a fleet steed would quickly carry her beyond danger, and then, with the open prairie before her, she could easily elude the foe.

It was thus that the young girl resolved, and in furtherance of such thoughts she saddled her own fleet horse, and made every preparation for departure.

To get through the gate without discovery was the main trouble. Edith knew well that she would not be permitted to go should her mad plans be discovered. It was fully two hours after midnight when she ventured to make the rally.

When she approached the man on duty at the gate, leading the horse, she was inwardly trembling for fear her mad project would now be nipped in the bud. What, then, was her astonishment to see the guard unfasten the gate and swing it quickly.

"Go quickly, and may heaven aid you, Dick! Your disguise is complete!"

A moment later the soldier's daughter found herself outside. The crash of guns from the little fort filled her ears as she sprang to the saddle.

"Now, Vim, go!" cried she, giving free rein to her horse.

Away she dashed, followed not a minute later by a horseman from the stockade. Inside of a minute the yells of savages filled the air, and the fire from the little fort was returned. This was on the opposite side, however, and Edith Searle was in the midst of the enemy before her presence was discovered. The fire from the little fort amazed the Indians and Mexicans so much, Edith dashed through their lines and reached the open prairie beyond without receiving a scratch.

Once here the girl tightened her rein, drew a long breath of relief, and galloped like the wind across the moonlight prairie. She felt that the worst was over, and that she would have little difficulty in reaching Lieut. Hargle, thirty miles away. The morning air fanned her cheek, and played with now and then a stray curl that fluttered about her face.

"It wasn't so dangerous after all," declared the girl, as she drew in long sweet draughts of air. "Captain Dashwood isn't like the soldiers who trained under father, else he would have seen how easy it was to send out a messenger for help."

Even as the words fell from her lips a bullet whistled past her ear, reminding her of the fact that she was not yet out of danger.

Glancing backward she saw three mounted men in hot pursuit. A thrill of alarm struck to her heart then, and she spoke to her horse, urging him to greater speed. A yell from the pursuers was borne faintly to her ears, assuring the girl that the Indians were satisfied with the situation.

It soon resolved itself into a race for life. Edith Searle was a soldier's daughter, however, and knowing full well she had a fleet steed, she believed she should be able to keep beyond reach of her pursuers, consequently she did not feel terrified as another might under similar circumstances.

On over the vast stretch of plain raced the beautiful girl and her three dusky pursuers. Morning broke in the east, yet still the race kept up, with scarcely a change in the situation. Edith's horse was laboring heavily, however, and she feared he could not keep to the work much longer.

Occasionally yells and shots came from the rear, but the young girl rode on unharméd. This could not last. The end must come soon. The pursuers were now gaining perceptibly.

Edith glanced backward to note the fact that one of the Apaches was several rods in advance of his companions, in fact, he was rapidly gaining on her, and must soon come up, a fact that sent a chill over the young girl, who knew too well the merciless nature of the American savage.

"Ah! Heaven have mercy!"

Edith's horse reeled and fell prostrate, nearly crushing his rider, at which demoniac yells from the throats of the pursuing savages, who were now sure of their victim.

Poor Edith! The fall partially stunned her, yet she managed to release herself, and struggle to a standing position as the redmen dashed forward, brandishing their tomahawks in anticipation of the bloody work at hand. The girl had only a small pocket pistol with which to defend herself; this she drew and held in a trembling hand, determined to surrender only with death.

A strange thing then occurred. The Apache warrior in advance suddenly turned in his saddle facing his fellows, and began emptying a revolver in their faces. Once, twice, thrice he fired, and the next instant two riderless horses dashed over the plain. The foremost savage had saved the beautiful victim for himself alone, a fact that did not in the least mitigate the danger in which Edith Searle found herself.

The act of the Apache warrior in slaying his fellows did not reassure the young girl in the least. She held her pistol clutched tightly, resolved on selling her life dearly.

Just before reaching Miss Searle the Indian drew rein and sprang from the saddle, walking swiftly forward. When within a few yards Edith thrust forward her pistol suddenly and fired.

"Ah! I am shot!" cried the savage in good English, at the same time reeling and falling to the ground.

Edith trembled like a leaf in the wind. An awful weariness seemed to possess her limbs. What had she done? Slain a human being with her own hand! The thought was a terrible one. She dared not look at the prostrate Apache, but turned away.

"Edith."

It was a faint yet startling voice calling her name. The girl turned and staggered to the side of the man on the ground.

"Edith—I meant to save you," said the man in a husky voice. The girl knelt quickly and peered into the painted face.

"My God!" she exclaimed, it is Sergt. Ingham!"

She now understood the meaning of the shooting of the two Indians. The revulsion of feeling in Edith's bosom was great. She came near fainting outright. With the memory that she was a soldier's daughter she controlled her feeling, and bent her energies to aiding the wounded man. With her handkerchief she stanchied the flow of blood from a wound in the Sergeant's breast.

There was a horrible fear upon her. If Sergeant Ingham died she was a murderer. It was a terrible thought.

With desperate fear and hope Edith Searle worked over the man she had shot, and in a little time he seemed better.

Glancing to the south she saw a troop of horsemen—Indians, perhaps. In any event she should soon know the worst.

The horsemen proved to be the command of Lieut. Hargle. That officer was on his way westward, and had not thought of touching at Darkwood Post. Edith's news, of course, changed his plans.

Leaving two men with Sergeant Ingham, the lieutenant pushed on to the rescue. The siege of Darkwood was successfully raised, and when Sergeant Ingham recovered from his wound he had won the consent of the soldier's daughter to be his wife.—Portland Transcript.

What a Cake Walk Is.

The cake walk is one of the institutions of slavery, which has survived the emancipation proclamation. The evolution of the cake walk is an interesting study. It is closely allied to the congo, buzzard, and Mobile buck dances, which are in turn related to the South Sea Island hula-hula dances and more remotely, perhaps, to the South American cumbamba. All these are exhibitions in movement and gestures of human emotion, and necessarily are rude and barbarous, but wonderfully fascinating. The cake walk is the highest type of these forms of amusement. It is easy to see how the idea of walking for a cake impressed the imaginative brain of a colored person and caused it to become what it is today. As nearly as can be learned—the cake walking has no literature—the custom originated in the lowly cabins of the colored people in anti-bellum days. It was customary for the slaves to dance a homely sort of square dance somewhat resembling a quadrille, but not so involved nor intricate. There was a time in this dance when every participant walked around in a circle. At first the men and women alone, but in time they began to walk in couples. The reward was a headdress, baked in the hot coals of the hearth and wrapped in a cabbage leaf. This was given to the successful male, while the victorious female was presented with the first piece of molasses candy pulled from a batch made for that purpose.—Cincinnati Enquirer.

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