

Serial Story.

# CAPTAIN ADAIR'S WIFE.

By LIEUTENANT JOHN PAYNE.

## SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

The opening chapter, as is usual, introduces a number of dramatic persons. We are at Fort Huachuca, in Arizona, where a number of soldiers and officers are gathered interested in the capture of Geronimo, an Apache chief, and a band of Indians that are taking the country. We first meet the men, who evidently dislike one Mellish, who is about to be promoted as their sergeant. Mellish is a man of good family, who has come to grief, but who, it appears, trying to pull up. We are then introduced to Lieut. Hecker and his friend Roman, an Irish-Mexican, the son of a Spanish-Mexican mother, and an old gold prospector from the Emerald Isle. He is a charmingly lazy and graceful man, and seems amusing.

CHAPTER II.—This begins on the train which is taking Colonel Marcy, his daughter Mary, and his niece Nina to the fort. Both girls are very beautiful, Nina as a semi-Spanish type, and Mary as a Northerner and an English girl. Captain Adair joins the train, and is immediately much taken with Nina, who is quite conscious of the effect her power and beauty have had upon him.

Chapters III. and IV. describe the party at the Fort, and the progress of two love affairs. In Chapter V. the first of these, the attachment between Captain Adair and Nina develops into an exchange of vows between the two. The girl is greatly distressed at the thought that the Captain must leave her to take part in a dangerous expedition against the Indians, and at his suggestion she agrees to marry him at once.

Chapter VI. reveals some unpleasant facts about Mellish, who it appears has a wife and child whom he has deserted. Chapter VII. as Nina and the Captain are riding home they are attacked by Indians. Adair, grasping the terrible position, aims his revolver to shoot Nina, but his arm is raised up and he falls to the ground pierced by a bullet.

CHAPTER VIII.—On recovering his senses, six weeks later, he finds, to his great distress that Nina has gone home.

CHAPTER IX.—Tells us more of Lieut. Hecker's way of life.

CHAPTER X.—Hecker loses heavily at play, but is reimbursed by Mrs. Savage, who is evidently much attached to him.

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## XI.

As soon as Adair knew that Nina had gone back to her home he began to hope for a letter from her. Every evening, when it was time for the orderly who went down to the station for the mail to come in Adair lay with his face towards the road and looked and longed for some word from Nina. He could look across the parade ground and see the ladies in Officers' Row standing out upon the verandahs, waiting for their own letters from distant homes.

The mail had to be taken into the post-trader's post office and distributed, but the coming of the orderly always meant that the letters would be there in a very few minutes. From the time he saw the dusty blue uniform and the ambling mule disappear up toward the post-trader's, until it was so late that there could be no possibility of a letter, Adair's heart would beat thickly and heavily. He hadn't many correspondents. A letter had been a rare event for him. Many came in these days, condoling with him over his hurt, and congratulating him upon his escape, but every one was put down with a heavy heart. Its contents had been a bitter disappointment.

He had found up the letter he had begun to Nina. It had seemed brutal to follow her, even with a letter, when she had gone and left him. As the weeks went by and convalescence gradually grew into his normal health, he ceased hoping to hear from her. She had repented of her hasty act in marrying him, and with a girl's ignorance of such things, had fancied that in ignoring it she could annul it.

She knew in whom she was trusting, Adair thought. Although the revulsion of that night had taken from her her love for him, it had not taken her confidence in him, or in his loyalty. She knew that he would never betray her secret except at her desire. If she did not want to be his wife she was at liberty.

In Adair was the chivalry born of ideals of loneliness. That in not taking the matter into his own hands

now, he was doing a wrong and a cruel thing to Nina, he did not see. That complications might come; that it was not child's play to be cast aside, but a thing that must be met and faced, that he could not be juggled with, he was not man of the world enough to realise. It seemed to concern only themselves. If Nina desired the marriage to be as though it were not, it should be so.

Adair had refused Mrs. Acton's invitation to be her guest; and it was not pressed. There were new people coming into the Fort, changes being made, but to all this Adair was oblivious. He was even blind to the fact that Colonel Marcy did not treat him with the proud and loving friendship that he had once shown. The great ache in his heart covered every minor pain, and made it as nothing. He lived alone with his own hidden story.

Often at night, when the watch sang out "Two o'clock and all's well," he heard the tramp of Adair's feet as they paced the verandah, and saw the burning point of his cigar in the darkness.

One of the letters which came to Adair he had at first thrown impatiently aside, and then taken up again; and at the third reading he had found comfort in letting his thoughts travel along the line it suggested. An old friend was going to Japan for the winter, and asked him to go with him.

He thought a little bitterly of Nina's plans and how soon they had faded. There was nothing to prevent that wedding journey to the south of France now. The Indian troubles were over; he was entitled to a long leave. Sometimes his fancy ran to day dreams, and it seemed to him that he must be mistaken. He let himself imagine sometimes that he was going to join Nina and they were going off together; and then laughed at himself for his folly. He began dozens of letters to her, endearing, forgiving, tender letters, but he sent none of them. She had left him, and in her own time she would return, or not at all.

His San Francisco friend wrote again, urging him to come upon the twentieth of the month and sail for Japan. "Come," he said, "and see the snows on Fuji-san, see the white foam lace broder the breast of the Indian deep." Come and see the azules on the hillside, and the rice fields taken by pink weed. Come and hear the 'zum zum' of the musmees."

Adair was thin and nervous from his long vigils, his waiting without hope, and after the last letter he went to Colonel Marcy to make application for a long leave.

The colonel's office was full. There were half a dozen officers standing about, on one pretence or another, and they all threw out a greeting to Adair. They liked him, but he was so distant in these days, he kept so much to himself, that they saw very little of him.

He lounged by the window and looked over the "Army and Navy Journal" until the last of the stragglers was gone. Adair had always been so distinctly the colonel's favourite, companion, and almost confidante, that they were naturally left alone together. Now Adair drew up his chair to the table where the colonel sat looking over a pile of papers, with a relief that that strong and sturdy presence always gave him.

The secret which was always in his mind was uppermost now. He was glad Nina had a relative like this; but he wished that it could be otherwise for a little while, that he might tell the colonel the story and ask his advice. Adair's heart was sick of loneliness and repression.

But the face that was turned to him was not the sympathetic one of the old days. The colonel himself was unconscious of the change that had come to him since Mary had told him what she had seen on that scrap of paper. Some great scientist had said that consciousness is but a

little lump which illumines one spot of the brain at a time, and that it has nothing whatever to do with the working of that complicated machine; that an idea is introduced, and the owner considers it, but a trivial incident, and forgets it, seemingly. It passes out of his consciousness, but there in the dark it is working on and on, and knitting itself into the very fibre of the brain, until it becomes a part of the beliefs and reasons.

Adair felt vaguely chilled, and it was in the most formal tones that he made his application.

"You are entitled to a long leave," the colonel said, "and of course you will get it. Where do you think of going?"

"To Japan."

The colonel looked at him sharply. He would not have conceived it possible, two months ago, that he would ever disbelieve Adair, but he did not believe him now.

As for Adair, the colonel's coolness seemed but a piece with the general change in everything. He went back to his quarters with the certainty of his leave, a little more tired and unhappy than when he started out.

Ten days later, he had said good bye to every one, and was on his way to the Pacific slope. He stopped in Tombstone. He wanted to see the old man who had made the marriage service that had made Nina his wife. There had been no question of secrecy then, but it might be important to ask it now.

The door of the little wooden house was closed, and the curtainless windows looked like blind eyes on each side. He knocked and heard the echo of emptiness. There was a head pushed out of the window of the next house, and a woman called to attract his attention.

"Is it Mr. Bland you want to see?" she asked, with the air of one who has information to distribute. "He's dead. He died this Thursday coming a week. They sent the remains back East. It was real sad," and she looked him boldly over in an effort to "place him," as she would have said.

Adair went back down the path, white in the sunshine. There were faded zinnias, almost the only flower that grows hardily in Arizona, down each side. It seemed to Adair that a last link had been broken. He felt like a boy who had a grief, and no one in whom he could confide. He wondered why he could not feel as he had felt before he ever knew Nina. It had only been a short three weeks, but they had made his life anew.

He wondered if all the stories he had heard of the perfidy of women were true; if he were but one of the great army of men who were victims. And then he was ashamed of himself. He blamed himself for taking his girl wife into the horrors of that night—that night when her nerves were already strung to tension pitch. Whatever she did, he would not blame her. Let it be hers to say what their lives should be in the future.

And then at the thought of going away from her so far, his soul revolved. He could not, he could not do it!

He walked the little platform at Benson, where the road ran by which would take him westward to San Francisco and Japan, or eastward to New York and Nina. He must go to her. He would go to her. After all,

she was his wife, and he had the right. It seemed a simple thing to do, after he thought of it as a real possibility.

He went into the station to buy his ticket. The late dayman train came puffing in, and a slender stream of passengers, ranchmen, and miners on their way "back East," or to "Frisco," made their way into the stuffy little ticket office.

Adair felt a familiar slap on his shoulder, and turned to see Hecker's big person at his elbow.

"Hello, Adair, I hear you are off for Japan. Queer way of spending your leave. When I get a chance I get out of this God forsaken country. I want to get into civilisation again. Instead of into heathendom, I'm going to New York, to walk Fifth Avenue and Broadway, and see the wheels go round. You'd better change your mind and come along with me."

All of Adair's rosy visions fled. The cold light of day and practicality came with Hecker.

"Give me a ticket to San Francisco," he said to the man at the window.

## XII.

The long ride over the desert was a terrible journey to Adair. There was despair and misery in his heart for which there seemed no outlet. The terrible loneliness of his life loomed up in awful contrast to those day dreams which, almost imperceptibly to him, had become an integral part of his very life.

Even before he had known Nina, with the naturalness of youth, he had felt himself journeying toward the pot of gold that lay at the end of the rainbow. Now it was past, and had proven fairy coin, turning to dead leaves in his hand. The catastrophe of his life, it seemed to him, had come.

When he left the train at Oakland, he was going toward the ferry boat which would take him across the bay; when he felt his hand grasped in a strong clasp. With a sense of comradeship such as it seemed to him he had never known before, he turned to Morrison.

Morrison had been a classmate of Adair's at the Point, but had made no sort of a record except in the drawing class. Coming from a small town in Missouri, much as Adair had come from his native hills, he had known nothing of brush and paint until they had been introduced to him casually in his school course. Then he discovered his talent. He had resigned immediately after his graduation, and taking the two or three thousand dollars his father had allowed him, had gone to Julien's in Paris, and seen a portrait of his hung in the Salon at the end of his second year.

Morrison was the last man on earth to be taken for an artist by the people in whose minds there is a conventional portrait of the type. He was almost as big as Hecker, but where Hecker's was the bigness of a mastiff, Morrison suggested the wolfhound. Long of head and dark of eye, close clipped as to hair and moustache, abrupt in speech and manner, Morrison was of the size and aspect to command instant respect and attention anywhere. Nature has put into him a passion for colour and form and the poetry of the existing world, a straightforwardness in arriving at his destination, that made him a simple genius.

Adair felt in that first hand clasp the tonic of friendship.

"It looks very much as though your resolve to throw off the weight of the Indian question didn't come any too soon," Morrison said, scanning Adair's face closely as they sat down on one of the seats that ran along the upper deck of the ferry boat. "That wound of yours must have been more serious than you gave me to understand. How did it all happen? You know I was away

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