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[[CONTINUED]]

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By virtue of an order and decree of the County Court of Livingston County, Illinois, made on the petition of the undersigned, N. J. Meyer, Conservator of Charles McGovern, Insane, for leave to sell the real estate of said ward, at the Decatur Hotel, A. D. 1900, of said Court, to-wit: on the fifth day of December 1900, I shall on the twenty-ninth day of December in the forenoon and four o'clock in the afternoon of said day, to-wit: at 2:30 p. m., sell at public sale at the front door of the post-office in Dwight, in said county, the real estate described as follows, to-wit: One acre of land situated and described as Lot Five (5) of the North West quarter of Section Ten (10) Township thirty (30) North, Range seven (7) East of the third (3) principal meridian in the County of Livingston and State of Illinois on the following terms, to-wit: Cash at time of sale.

Dated this 6th day of December, A. D. 1900.

N. J. MEYER, Conservator of Charles McGovern, RAY BLANDELL, Solicitor. 8994

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Marshall Dean did not know whether to be glad or sorry. Soldier from top to toe, he was keenly enjoying the command of his troop. He gloried in mountain scouting, and was in his element when astride a spirited horse. Then, too, the air was throbbing with rumors of Indian depredations along the northward trails, and everything pointed to serious outbreak any moment, and when it came he longed to be on hand to take his share and win his name, for with such a troop his chances were better for honors and distinctions than those of any younger soldier he knew. Therefore he longed to keep afield. On the other hand, the visit paid by Jessie's school friend little "Pappoose" Folsom, was to be returned in kind. John Folsom had begged, and their mother had consented that after a week at home Jess should accompany her beloved friend on a visit to her far western home. They would be escorted as far as Omaha, and there Folsom himself would meet them. His handsome house was ready, and, so said friends who had been invited to the housewarming, particularly well stocked as to larder and cellar. There was just one thing on which Gate City gossips were enabled to dilate that was not entirely satisfactory to Folsom's friends, and that was the new presiding goddess of the establishment.

"What on earth does John Folsom want of a housekeeper?" asked the helpmates of his friends at Fort Emory, and in the busy, bustling town. "Why don't he marry again?" queried those who would gladly have seen some unprovided sister, niece or daughter thus cozily disposed of. It was years since Elinor's mother's death, and yet John Folsom seemed to mourn her as fondly as ever, and except in midwinter, barely a month went by in which he did not make his pilgrimage to her never-neglected grave. Yet, despite his vigorous years in saddle, sunshine or storm, and his thorough love for outdoor life, Folsom, now well over 50, could no longer so lightly bear the hard life of the field. He was amazed to see how his sleepless dash to head off Red Cloud and his days and nights of gallop back had told upon him. Women at Fort Emory who looked with approving eyes on his ruddy face and trim, erect figure, all so eloquent of health, and who possibly contemplated, too, his solid bank account, and that fast-building house, the finest in Gate City, had been telling him all winter long he ought to have a companion—an elder guide for Miss Elinor on her return; he ought to have some one to preside at his table; and honest John had promptly answered: "Why, Nell will do all that," which necessitated their hinting that although Miss Folsom would be a young lady in years, she was only a child in experience, and would be much the better for some one who could take a mother's place. "No one could do that," said John, with sudden swimming of his eyes, and that put a sudden stop to their scheming, for the time at least, but only for the time. Taking counsel together, and thinking how lovely it would be now if Mr. Folsom would only see how much there was in this unmarried damsel, or that widowed dame, the coterie at Emory again returned to the subject, until John, in his perplexity, got the idea that propriety demanded that he should have a housekeeper against his daughter's coming, and then he did go and do, in his masculine stupidity, just exactly what they wouldn't have had him do for worlds—invite a woman, of whom none of their number had ever heard, to come from Omaha and take the domestic management of his hearth and home. All he knew of her was what he heard there. She was the widow of a volunteer officer who had died of disease contracted during the war. She was childless, almost destitute, accomplished, and so devoted to her church duties. She was interesting and refined and highly educated. He heard the eulogiums pronounced by the good priest and some of his flock, and Mrs. Fletcher, a substantial person of some 40 years at least, was duly installed.

CHAPTER VI.

The quartermaster's depot at Gate City was little more than a big corral, with a double row of low wooden sheds for the storing of clothing, camp and garrison equipage. There was a blacksmith and wagon repair shop, and a brick office building. Some cottage quarters for the officer in charge and his clerks, corral master, etc., stood close at hand, while most of the employes lived in town outside the gates. A single-track spur connected the depot with the main line of the Union Pacific, only 500 yards away, and the command at Fort Emory on the bluff above the rapid stream, furnished, much to its disgust, the necessary guard. A much bigger "plant" was in contemplation near a larger post and town on the east side of the great divide, and neither Fort Emory nor its charge—the quartermaster's depot—was considered worth keeping in repair, except such as could be accomplished "by the labor of troops," which was why, when he wasn't fighting Indians, the frontier soldier of that day was mainly occupied in doing the odd jobs of a day laborer, without the recompense of one, or his privilege of quitting if he didn't like the job. That he should know little of drill and less of parade was, therefore, not to be wondered at.

But what he didn't know about guard duty was hardly worth knowing. He had prisoners and property of every conceivable kind—Indians, horse thieves, thugs and deserters, magazines and medicines, mules and munitions of war. Everything had to be guarded. The fort lay a mile to the west of and 200 feet higher than the railway hotel in the heart of the town. It looked down upon the self-styled city, and most of its womenkind did the same on the citizens, who were, it must be owned, a rather mixed lot. The sudden discovery of gold in the neighboring foothills, the fact that it promised to be the site of the division car shops and roundhouse, that the trails to the Upper Platte, the Sweetwater, the park country to the south and the rich game regions of the Medicine Bow all centered there, and that stages left no less than twice a week for some of those points, and the whole land was alive with explorers for a hundred miles around—all had tended to give Gate City a remarkable boom. Cheyenne and Laraine, thriving frontier towns, with oarers' offices in full blast from one week's end to the other, and a double force on duty Sundays, confessed to and exhibited pardonable jealousy. Yet there was wisdom in the warning of an old friend and fellow frontiersman, who said to Folsom: "You are throwing yourself and your money away, John. There's nothing in those gold stories, there's nothing in that yamp about the machine shops; all those yarns were started by U. P. fellows with corner lots to sell. The bottom will drop out of that place inside of a year and leave you stranded."

All the same had Folsom bought big blocks and built his home there. It was the nearest town of promise to Hal Folsom's wild but beautiful home in the hills, and, almost as he loved Nell, his bonny daughter, did the old trader love his stalwart son. Born a wild westerner, reared among the Sioux with only Indians or army boys for playmates, and precious little choice in point of savagery between them, Hal had grown up a natural horseman with a love for and knowledge of the animal that is accorded to few. His ambition in life was to own a stock farm. All the education he had had in the world he owed to the kindness of a loving-hearted army woman at Laraine, women who befriended him when well-nigh broken-hearted by his mother's death. Early he had pitched his tent on the very spot for a ranchman's homestead, early he had fallen in love with an army girl, who married the strapping frontiersman and was now the proud mistress of the promising stock farm nestling in the valley of

the Laraine, a devoted wife and mother. The weekly stage to the railway was the event of their placid days except when some of the officers would come from either of the neighboring posts and spend a week with her and Hal. From being a delicate, consumptive child, Mrs. Hal had developed into a buxom woman with exuberant health and spirits. Life for her might have some little monotony, but few cares; many placid joys, but only one great dread—Indians. John Folsom, her fond father-in-law, was a man all the Indians trusted and most of them loved. Hal Folsom, her husband, had many a trusted and devoted friend among the Sioux, but he had also enemies, and Indian enmity, like Indian love, dies hard. As boy he had sometimes triumphed in games and sports over the champions of the villages. As youth he had more than once found favor in the dark eyes that looked coldly on fiercer, fonder claimants, and one girl of the Ogallallas had turned from her kith and kin and spurned more than one red lover to seek the young trader when he left the reservation to build his own nest in the Medicine Bow, and they told a story as pathetic as that of the favorite daughter of old Sintoalaska, chief of the Brule Sioux, who pined and died at Laraine when she heard that the soldier she loved had come back from the far east with a pale-faced bride. There were red men of the Ogallallas to whom the name of Hal Folsom was a taunt and an insult to this day, men whom his father had vainly sought to appease, and they were Burning Star, the lover, and two younger braves, the brothers of the girl they swore that Hal had lured away.

South of the Platte, as it rolled past Folsom and Laraine, those Indians were bound by treaty not to go. North of the Platte Hal Folsom was warned never again to venture. These were the stories which were well known to the parents of the girl he wooed and won, but which probably were not fully explained to her. Now, even behind the curtain of that sheltering river, with its flanking forts, even behind the barrier of the mountains of the Medicine Bow, she often woke at night and clutched her baby to her breast when the yelping of the coyotes came rising on the wind. There was no woman in Wyoming to whom war with Red Cloud's people bore such dread possibility as to Hal Folsom's wife.

And so when Marshall Dean came riding in one gladdening morning, bronzed, and tanned and buoyant, and tossed his reins to the orderly who trotted at his heels, while the troops dismounted and watered at the stream, Mrs. Folsom's heart was gladdened by his confident and joyous bearing. Twice, thrice he had seen Red Cloud and all his braves, and there was nothing, said he, to worry about. "Ugly, of course they are; got some imaginary grievance and talk big about the warpath. Why, what show would those fellows have with their old squirrel rites and gas-pipe Springfield against our new breech-loaders? They know it as well as we do. It's all a bluff, Mrs. Folsom. You mark my words," said he, and really the boy believed it. Frequent contact in the field with the red warriors inspires one with little respect for their skill or prowess until that contact becomes hostile, then it's time to keep every sense on guard and leave no point uncovered.



(To be Continued.)

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