

Then Larry's arms swept about her, and she found herself buried in the comfort of his shoulder.

"Hush, darlin', hush!" he soothed, his hands upon her hair. "Hush, dear! I didn't want to make you cry—only to see you bend a little—only to see you a girl again. Oh, darlin', don't! Every sob is cutting the heart of your Larry!"

"I love you!" wept Miriam from the haven of his shirt front. "Oh, Larry O'Moore, I love you, and I thought you cared for—*her!*"

"I do," affirmed Larry. "She's the dearest girl in the world, next to you."

Miriam lifted her head with a jerk, the tears cutting weird channels down her cheeks.

"Larry!"

"Dry your eyes, darlin', and read this letter if it 'll help you," he soothed.

"You *do* care for her! I knew it! Don't you suppose I know what engagement you had this evening?" she went on recklessly. "It was with her!"

Larry held his peace.

"Wasn't it?"

"Yes."

Miriam was white—very white and trembling a little. Then she steadied herself admirably.

"I see, Larry," she said with sad finality.

"I don't think you do," contradicted Larry; "and you won't—until you read this." He thrust the unsealed letter before her. "Read it!"

Through the mist which obscured her vision she made out the words. At first they seemed to have no meaning:

DEAR AUNT JULIA:

I've just got to tell you again what a brick you are for lending me Vanessa. The scheme worked out wonderfully. Miriam has promised to marry me. At first she wanted to keep on with her infernal old newspaper work, but on second thought she decided that she'd have about all she could do writing nursery rimes, God bless her!

I knew all she needed was the companionship

of a sweet, unspoiled kid like Vanessa to bring her down to earth—or, rather, back to the clouds. Vanessa was a wonder. Don't tell her what a perfect little actress she is, or she'll be wanting to try the stage; but tell her Cousin Larry is coming to see her again soon, and will bring her the biggest box of candy there is.

And now I must close, with all the love in the world from your happy, happy—

LARRY.

"Larry!" exploded Miriam. "She's your cousin?"

"The nicest cousin a man ever had."

"And it was just another one of your tricks, bringing her here?"

"Guilty!" he grinned.

"Larry, you're a rogue!" scolded Miriam, with a little laugh of relief. Then she grew frigid. "But I can't understand," she continued, trying to look severe through her tears, "what made you write this. I'm sure I hadn't said anything about marrying you."

"I wrote it in hope that you would make it come true," said Larry. "But I guess," he concluded sadly, "that I've written a fairy tale."

He rose and walked to the center of the room, his hands deep in his pockets, his face lifted to the bit of night sky framed by the window.

"What you said about loving me was just blarney," he said.

There was a silence—an awful silence that poured into the atmosphere like lead. Then Miriam smiled—an uncertain smile, at first, that wavered like the sun behind April clouds, bursting forth at length in such glory that it would dazzle the eyes to behold it.

"Larry!" she breathed. "Oh, Larry, it isn't blarney!"

He faced her.

"Then, if it isn't, come here and prove it," he commanded. He stood with arms outstretched, his two blue eyes dancing with tenderness. "Prove it!" he ordered again.

And Miriam did.

## AT REST

My love for you is like a tranquil pool  
Set deep among the woodland silences—  
Some indistinct, exotic, liquid jewel,  
From whose dark heart reflected moonlight glances;  
A pallid, placid glow that fills my breast  
And gives it, in rich sadness, mellow rest.

William A. Drake

# Little Dunbar

## A VETERAN SERGEANT'S STORY OF A YOUNG AMERICAN OFFICER ON THE MEXICAN BORDER

By Karl W. Detzer

LIEUTENANT DUNBAR commanded the company. The muster rolls said so in black and white, and therefore it must be true; but he was scarce six months out of West Point, so what might you expect?

A fine little man he was, if you trust us who served under him, but too young, and too earnest, and too fresh from the North. His mind was full of the foolishness he had learned in school. He didn't know old soldiers. It worried him, having no recruits. He thought a commanding officer knew more than the men in his company, instead of their having to look out for him.

We had lived on the Rio Grande so long that alkali dust stuck to the bones of most of us. Dunbar came in the wet season, near the end of March, to relieve Lieutenant Beckett, who was howling at night with the blue malaria. We made him as comfortable as a man can be at that time of year.

A few of us—the sergeants and the older hands—tried to break him in; but he had a way with him—it's the same with all young officers. When we said right, he turned left; and when we said sleep, he sat up half the night.

It's a desolate sector, that forty-mile bank of the lower Rio Grande, from Rabb's Ranch to Donna, a humming swamp in the wet months and a crawling, blowing alkali desert the rest of the year. There is where the weather goes to practice its worst tricks. You must watch it, as you would watch a centipede, or it sticks its claws into you when you are least expecting it.

And the loneliness of the land! Mesquite and cactus, and down on the river bank bamboo and scrub palms growing thick, here and there a few grass houses, sun and white dust, heat and silence—

that's all, for forty miles, from Rabb's Ranch to Donna.

As I said, it was late March, and the Rio Grande was on its last spring tantrum. It flooded over its banks, four miles broad, as far as the Red Barn trail. Our company headquarters were at Progreso, which was the nearest to civilization that you can find on that shore.

Old Saens owned the place, a fine *hacienda*, ruined by bandits and war. His hundred thousand acres across the river in Mexico had been claimed by the government, and on the American side the place was falling into neglect. You could guess that the old house had stood up mighty proud once, with its white, sun-baked bricks, with the church on one side and the *cantina* on the other. Down the long drive to the road half a dozen grass houses were all that was left of the village. Around the stables at the top of the hill our men had thrown up trenches and wire in 1916, to keep off bandits.

Saens removed to Mercedes that year, leaving us his stables to picket the horses, and the house for headquarters. Our orderly room had once been the parlor, as you could tell by the drapes in the windows and the big white crucifix on the wall. There Lieutenant Dunbar called me in to see him, several mornings after he first came down.

"Sergeant Mann," he said, in his best West Point voice—they give them good voices at the Point—"how long have you been in this region?"

"Going on nine years," I told him. "They kept a couple of us here, even through the big war."

"You know the lay of the land pretty well?"

"Yes, sir," I answered.