

HIS WORD OF HONOR.

A Tale of the Blue and the Gray.

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CHAPTER II.

The young officer seemed to have expected this refusal. He advanced a step nearer and dropped the strictly formal tone used heretofore.

"Colonel, the interview I seek at Springfield is of infinite importance to me. I will be perfectly frank with you. I suppose you know the relation in which I stand to Mr. Harrison's family."

"The wealthy owner of the neighboring plantation, our most bitter enemy. Yes, I have heard of it. It was said that you were engaged to his daughter, and at the outbreak of the war made a sacrifice for your convictions."

"I did not make it; it was forced upon me. Mr. Harrison broke my engagement to his daughter, without permitting me even an explanation. The outbreak of hostilities prevented my hastening to my fiancée. I was forced to join my regiment. The letters I sent remained unanswered. I do not even know whether they reached her hands. For months I suffered the tortures of uncertainty. This morning an accident revealed that Miss Harrison, who, I supposed, had long since fled to some place of safety, was still in Springfield. It is the last, the only possibility of obtaining any certainty. I beseech you to grant it."

The colonel's eyes rested with evident sympathy on the young man, who was indeed his favorite, and whose ill-repressed emotion showed how keenly he suffered from this state of uncertainty; but he shook his head.

"Even should I grant you the leave of absence, and you reach the plantation unharmed, who will guarantee that Harrison, after what has occurred, will not see in you merely an officer in the enemy's service and deliver you up?"

"Deliver me up?" cried William, hotly. "The man who was betrothed

by eight o'clock this evening, I shall believe that he is either dead or dishonored."

William's eyes flashed, but they met his commanding officer's gaze, steadfastly.

"Believe the former! If I am alive at that hour, I will be here."

"Then go—on your word of honor."

"On my word of honor."

William saluted and left the room. The colonel gazed after him a few seconds, then said in low tone:

"Poor boy! I would ten times rather have sent him to meet the enemy than into this temptation."

CHAPTER III.

An Unexpected Visitor.

It was the afternoon of the same day. The sun was lower in the west, but the heat had not yet lessened, and all the blinds in the spacious mansion of Springfield were closed. The extensive estate had, as yet, been spared the devastation of war. It was in the immediate vicinity of one of the principal recruiting-stations in the South and owed it to this circumstance alone that, for the present at least, it could afford its inmates absolute safety.

A pleasant dusk pervaded the sitting-room, whose doors opened upon the wide terrace. The glaring sunlight in the garden outside could not find its way into the apartment, whose doorways were protected by blinds and curtains; and a little fountain, whose jet rose amid a circle of tropical plants, diffused its cool, glittering drops through the sultry atmosphere.

A young girl of perhaps eighteen was half reclining in a rocking-chair. Her little head with its wealth of dark hair was flung wearily back, her eyes were closed, and the long black lashes formed a sharp contrast to the pretty but somewhat pallid face. Her thin white dress, which, though intended

weeks. What is the use of this fierce haste? Why should the wedding take place beside my father's sick-bed?"

"Because it is your father's last wish and will, as you know from his own lips. He wants to know that you will be safe and sheltered in a husband's arms when danger assails us, and he has my promise that I will protect you and his property to my last breath."

"As soon as it becomes yours—I don't doubt it."

Edward's brows contracted angrily. A dark frown shadowed his face.

"What does that mean, Florence? Do you doubt my love? You know that it is bestowed on you alone, not your estates, which, in the storms of war, may be destroyed, like so many which have already been ruined. You must trust me. I shall certainly not sacrifice you to any principle, as others have done."

The allusion was distinct enough. Florence's head drooped, but her tone betrayed rising indignation, as she replied:

"Was I sacrificed? You say so, and so does my father, but I have never heard it from William's lips, and you were always his enemy. I cannot understand his giving up the struggle so quickly, not even making an attempt to change my views, and sometimes I fear—"

She did not finish the sentence, but her eyes, which rested with unmistakable suspicion on her cousin's features, expressed the thought which she did not utter in words. But there was no change in his countenance, and the answer was equally unmoved and cold.

"Surely, you read the letter in which he broke with your father? Was not that plain enough? He knew the price that would enable him to possess you. It would have cost him only a single word to call you his; yet, instead, he delivered a political lecture on manly honor, duty, conviction and the rest of the set phrases. Well, he followed his conviction and gave you up."

The young girl's pale face began to flush, and her lips were closely compressed. This was the goad which had conquered her resistance, forced her into the new bond; it produced its effect now.

"Yes, he gave me up," she repeated, bitterly. "Well—I have given him up, too."

"And cannot you yet shake off the memory? You have been candid with me, Florence, cruelly candid. I was forced to hear from your lips that that other still held the first place in your heart, that only filial duty won your consent to my suit. Be it so! I will venture the risk, even with this statement. I will cope with this arrogant German, who does not know what love is, who has never felt the full pulse of genuine passion. For me, no price is too high for the prize of possessing you. I would overthrow all that stood between us, were it even what I held highest. Resist as you may, I shall yet win you—you and your love."

There was really a touch of genuine passion in the words, and the ardent gaze which rested on the young girl proved that Edward Harrison was not playing a mere game of calculation. Florence unresistingly left the hand he had seized in his clasp. She was half-unconsciously under the thrall of this man, whom she feared, for whom no voice in her heart pleaded, yet who exerted an almost demoniacal power over her.

(To be continued.)

A Prehistoric Cemetery.

Workmen terracing King hill, an old landmark of northwestern Missouri, which is to be converted into a residence suburb of St. Joseph, have unearthed a prehistoric cemetery. The remains of a race of dwarfs, not allied with any tribe known to have inhabited this territory, and unaccounted for by Indian legend, repose on the summit of King hill. A feature remarkable in itself and especially marked in connection with the dwarfish remains of prehistoric man found in this summit is the discovery of human bones, evidently those of a giant, probably more than seven feet tall and big boned. Low, flat heads, with small intelligence and marked animal propensities, characterized this people. Heavy jaws and strong, well-preserved teeth carry the records of their lives forward. Brutes, human but inhuman, self-reliant, they are savages of a lower order than any we know today. Yet they honored their dead. Shells such as are found on the banks of many inland streams, plentiful on the sandbars of the Missouri, overlooked by King hill, and stones of unusual hues, worthless in the commercial marts of today, the playthings of children, were deposited in the graves.—Chicago Record.

With the Comma Left Out.

"Whenever she asks me to do anything," soliloquized Mr. Meeker, pensively, "I always go and do it like a fool."

"Yes," said Mrs. Meeker, who happened along in time to overhear him, "whenever I ask you to do anything you always go and do it like a fool."—Chicago Tribune.

Knew What He Wanted.

Canvasser—"I have here a work—"
Master of the House—"I can't read."
Canvasser—"But your children—"
Master of the House—"I have no children (triumphantly), nothing but a cat."
Canvasser—"Well, you want something to throw at the cat." He took the book.

In life's battle one must either be a struggler or a straggler.



A western lady, who formerly lived at Cambridge, Mass., writes entertainingly of what she declares was the happiest Christmas of her life. The climax of this merry occasion was a house party given at the home of her uncle not many miles from Cambridge. The lady writes:

"My uncle owned a big place about twenty miles from town, and every year he invited all his relatives to spend the Christmas holidays with him. He was a widower with two children—a son 26 years old and a daughter of 17. This girl, my cousin, Stella, was one of the brightest and most fun-loving girls I have ever known. I was just two years her senior, and between us we managed to stir up that house party to a degree nothing short of startling! Twenty people beside our family were invited, there being altogether about thirty guests in the house. Among them were a young lawyer from New York (for whom I immediately conceived a violent admiration), a naval officer, three Yale men from New Haven, my two brothers, an antique female cousin of ours (age unknown), some girls from New York and a young married couple from St. Louis. Before the end of a week Stella and I had almost originated a divorce case, where the young St. Louis couple were concerned. Of course, there were some other people, but they were sort of chaperones, old fogies who didn't count much. Well, that year the 25th of December fell on Wednesday, and the guests were invited from Dec. 23 to Jan. 2, and I can tell you we made Rome howl. My brothers and I, with our parents, arrived at our uncle's late Monday morning. The snow had been falling steadily for thirty-six hours, and was many inches deep.

"We drove from the little rickety station three miles 'cross country to the farm. We were the first arrivals, and we made good use of the advantage over the other invited guests. The next train, at 4 o'clock, brought them all, and at 5 they came shouting and singing up to the house, on sleighs, wagons and carriages, borrowed from the farmers all over that part of the country. Well, the first evening was passed in the big dining room, all of us crowded about the roaring log fire. That is, all of us, excepting the young lawyer from New York and myself. We were seated on a chintz-covered soap-box, off in a dim corner of the room, discussing—er—the possibilities of effect of mistletoe on—ah—mankind. Before the candles were brought in to announce the 'time for disappearing,' we two had begun to understand each other. It was our first meeting, but in the country, and at Christmastide, people become acquainted very quickly.

"The next morning we all arose at 8 o'clock, and after the jolliest kind of a breakfast, we hauled in great bunches of evergreen, reels of crow-foot moss, and pile after pile of holly and mistletoe. We spent most of the day on step ladders or tables, hammering and tacking the Christmas decorations in place. And in the evening my uncle had a big pine tree brought in and set up in the parlor. We had each brought scores of little packages from town to present on Christmas morning, and these were suspended from the branches of the tree. Mistletoe was everywhere, and so were the girls. The consequence will be readily understood—the men were not of the variety known as shy.

"It was long past midnight when we trooped off to our rooms and 2 o'clock struck before the last good night rang down the darkened hallway. As soon as all was quiet, I stole from my room, and tip-toed down the corridor to my cousin Stella's door. It was locked,

but I tapped gently, and was soon admitted. We two girls slipped down stairs, where I had told the butler (an old servant of my uncle's) to wait for us. And then we put our three heads together and concocted a grand scheme for the undoing of everybody in the house. We tugged and hauled that big over-loaded Christmas tree from the parlor, through the hall into the library, and then we exchanged the names on all the presents. It was almost daylight before we finished, but we were amply repaid for our trouble.

"By 9 o'clock everybody was dressed and down stairs, exchanging greetings and gifts. Stella and I were the last to arrive, and our entrance was the

signal for a grand rush to the parlor. And lo! the big Christmas tree had flown. My uncle was enraged, the guests much excited, and the young lawyer from New York looked very much amused. A search was promptly instituted, and of course the tree was found in the library, standing in stately solitude.

"Who on earth could have put it there? No one knew—and no one could guess—Stella and I were particularly obtuse. And after awhile the presents were distributed. The young married woman's card was inclosed in a bundle of embroidered flannel petticoats to 'my darling husband,' and 'darling husband' presented his 'little love' with a volume of Mother Goose tales, and a red bathing suit; my old maid cousin received a Dutch pipe and a pair of hunting trousers; my uncle got a half dozen tulle veils and a pair of gold garter clasps."

THOSE CHRISTMAS CHILDREN.

The little folks at our house—they talk like anything
'Bout Santa Claus comin', an' what he's goin' to bring;
An' mother never has to scold, or tell 'em 'bout the noise—
They're just the sweetest little girls—the best of little boys!

'Cause why? They know that Santa Claus knows ever'thing they do,
An' while he's loadin' up his sleigh he's watchin' of 'em, too!
An' them that minds their mother, they gets the most o' toys—
They're just the sweetest little girls—the best o' little boys!

They've just been writin' letters to Santa Claus each day,
An' tellin' him just what they want, an' showin' him the way
To where our house is, so he'll know just where to leave the toys
Fer just the sweetest little girls—the best o' little boys!

They're longin', longin' for the days and night to go,
An' all o' them are happy, an' they make their mother so!
She never has to scold 'em, or tell 'em 'bout the noise—
'Cause they're the sweetest little girls—the best o' little boys!

Use Plenty of Paper and Cards.
No child of today would consider a present half a present—except, of course, those that Santa Claus with his own hands hangs upon a tree or thrusts into a stocking—unless it were hidden in manifold paper wrappings at the bottom of a box with a bright colored Christmas card lying on top of it. Anyone accustomed to being with children will appreciate the pleasure that the accessories of their Christmas gifts give them. Every scrap of ribbon, the tiniest card, the very scraps of bright wrapping paper, are all hoarded, and used somewhere for decoration. The little girl makes ashes of the ribbons and dresses for her paper dolls of the tissue wrappings, while the cards serve as priceless works of art on the walls of her playhouse.

The lucky man is the man who sees and grasps his opportunity.



"THEN GO—ON YOUR WORD OF HONOR."

to his daughter—the man whom he once called son?"

"Everything is possible in these times. Surely you must know his character."

"I expect any act of hostility toward in his house. He is a southern gentleman, and a man of honor. I am safe with him."

"We will hope so; but another and graver peril threatens you there: If you are still regarded as the son of the house, every effort will be made to win you over to their cause. Suppose that—you should not return?"

William started as if an insult had been hurled in his face.

"Colonel, I am an honorable man."

"I know it; but you are human. You are young and passionately in love. Even the strongest natures succumb to such a conflict. At that time, you had no choice, you say. Probably it will be so now. And when the prize is before you, when your affianced wife weeps and pleads, and the whole happiness of your life depends on a single word—avoid the temptation, Lieutenant Roland. I advise you as a friend."

The young officer had turned pale, but his voice sounded firm and resolute as he replied:

"I beg you to grant me the leave of absence—on my word of honor."

Burney paced up and down the room several times in silence, at last he paused.

"At the utmost, I could grant you only the afternoon. You must return at sunset, and it is a long distance. You will have barely three hours at Springfield."

"A single one would suffice for the conversation on which my whole future depends—I repeat my request."

"So be it then. With caution, it may perhaps be possible to avoid the peril which threatens you on the way. I shall rely upon your prudence."

"Depend upon it, colonel."

Burney approached the young man and, putting his hand on his shoulder, said with deep earnestness:

"Till sunset then! It is now noon, if Lieutenant Roland has not returned