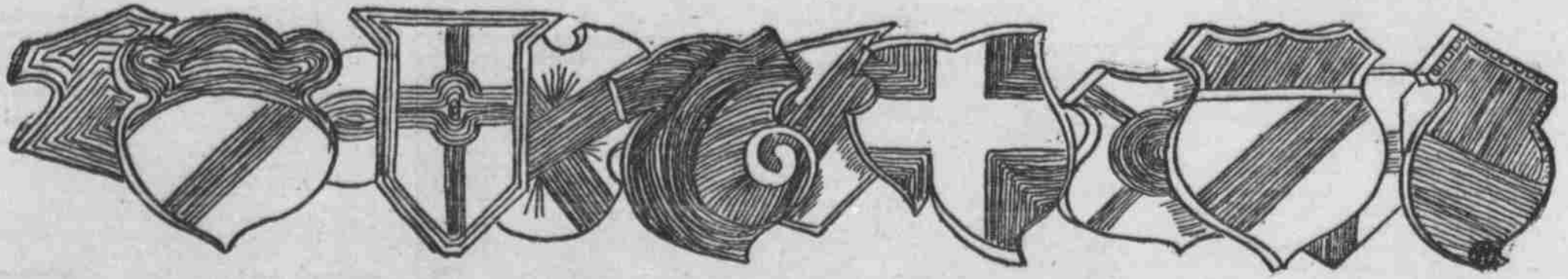


A Little Traitor to the South--A War-Time Com-



edy With a Tragic Interlude by Cyrus Townsend Brady

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CHAPTER IV.
Strong Room and Strong Man.

AS SHE heard his departing footsteps on the porch the poor girl threw herself down upon her knees and lifted up her hands.

"The south and--and--he, mistaken but still--ah, where is my duty? The ship and Rhett Sempland! I love him. I cannot let him go! It would be wicked. God pity me! But how, how to prevent it? If I can only delay him until tomorrow, I can tell the general everything, and--is there a way, is there a way, oh, God?"

She thought deeply, every atom in her being concentrated on the problem which tore her between love and duty, devotion to the cause of the south and those other appeals, which, finding lodgment in her heart, moved her so profoundly. She wrestled with the question as to where her duty lay as Jacob wrestled with the angel of old, and if she did not conquer, at least she decided. Determining on a desperate course of action, she rose to her feet and sharply struck a bell by her side on the table. The house was an ancient mansion when it had been rented by her aunt and herself three years before. It dated back to colonial times. There was a strong room in it, the windows of which were barred. It would make a safe prison for anyone. He should be put in there and be kept there until morning. He would be safe there. No harm would come to the ship and when the general knew he would forgive her. She would tell him the first thing in the morning. It would cause her lover pain and grief, this summary action of hers, but she could explain it to him, too; and he would forgive her and she would reward him with herself! There was compensation, she thought proudly and tenderly.

"Caesar," she said as the aged butler made his appearance in response to the bell, "send Joe and Sam and Cato to me. Boys," she continued as three stalwart young negroes presented themselves before her soon after, "Mr. Sempland is coming here tonight to see me. I--he--" she found it somewhat difficult to explain. "General Beauregard wants him detained here. I cannot let him get away. Show him into the strong room on the other side of the house when he asks for me, and then lock the door on him. Don't let him get out under any circumstances until tomorrow; but on no account are you to do him any hurt. You hear? You understand?"

"Ya-as, Miss Fanny, I specs we does," answered Cato, the oldest and most intelligent of the three.

"Caesar, you show him into the strong room. Say I will meet him there in a moment. He won't suspect anything. I reckon. The rest of you stay in the passage, and as soon as he enters lock the door upon him. Don't neglect that! He'll try to get out. He may break the door down. But you must keep him there even if he attempts to kill you--unless I say for you to release him."

The three slaves were devoted to their young mistress and, accepting her orders without a question, they at once began their preparations to carry them out. As they were talking together a light step sounded on the porch. There was a ring at the door. The men hurried to their places of concealment. Miss Fanny Glen hid in the dark drawing room, as Caesar shuffled along the hall to the front door.

"Your mistress has sent for me," said Sempland. And from where she stood in the drawing room Fanny Glen's heart leaped at the tones of his voice.

"Yes, sah," returned the darky, obsequiously ushering him through the hall. "Step right dis way, sah, Mass' Sempland. Miss Fanny done axes you to go in dis room at de end of de passage, sah. An' she told me she gwine be wid you in a minute, sah."

The room was one which Sempland had never entered before. It was small, furnished like a library or office, with several large closets and an old iron safe, and had two grated windows and one heavy mahogany door. It had formerly been used as an office and as a treasury room. Seeing the visitor safe within, Caesar calmly withdrew, and as he adroitly coughed violently in the passage Sempland did not hear the ponderous key turning in the old-fashioned lock. He waited a few minutes and then as time was precious he looked around for a bell. Seeing none

he walked to the door, laid his hand upon the knob, and tried to open it. It did not give.

"Locked!" he muttered in surprise. Raising his hand he struck a light blow on the panels, but there was no reply. Then he called out and received no answer. He struck and called again and again, his voice rising to a shout, while his hands were bleeding from the blows he had rained on the hard surface. Finally a voice came to him faintly through the door.

"Wat's the matta, sah?"

"Impossible! For what reason?"

"Because I--"

"By heavens, this is maddening! You don't know what you do! I am ordered tonight on a hazardous expedition. I must be at my post in ten minutes. Let me out instantly!"

"I know," returned the girl.

"Well, then, why don't you open this door? I will say nothing of this--"

"I cannot."

"Why not?"

"I--I--do not wish you to go out on the

ship--" said the girl so softly that he could scarce hear her. "You will forgive me when you understand. I shall release you tomorrow. Mercy! Have pity on me, I am almost crazy!"

"Do you know that you will dishonor me? If you care let me go."

"There is another reason. I will not have the Wabash blown up. There is a--"

"Another man?" shouted Sempland. "You are a coquette! Let me out, I say! I will get out! My God, was ever a man in



"THROW DOWN YOUR ARMS AT MY FEET, YOU BLACK HOUNDS!" SHOUTED SEMPLAND. "QUICK! OR I FIRE!"

"Open this door instantly, you black dog! Where is Miss Glen?"

"She's a-comin', sah."

"I wish to see her immediately!" he cried imperiously, battering again upon the door in furious rage, which was stilled the instant he heard her voice outside.

"Mr. Sempland?"

"What is the meaning of this action, this outrage, Miss Glen?" he cried. "You sent for me. I came. Why am I locked in here? Open the door! I must leave immediately!"

"You are locked in here by my orders, Mr. Sempland," said Fanny Glen nervously,

David.

"What is it to you? How dare you interfere? You said I had done nothing but lie in prison," he replied. "I will show you tonight."

"Not tonight."

"This is madness! Think what you are doing!"

"I can't help it."

"Why not?"

"Because I--"

"In God's name, what do you mean?"

"I will not have you take the risk. It is certain death to you, and the admiral's

such a situation?"

He beat and hammered on the door until his bruised hands bled again. He shook it in its frame like a madman. He was exhausted by the violence of his efforts and of his passion. Through it all the girl stood in the hall frightened nearly to death. What mad scheme had she entered upon? Had she strength enough to carry it through? The three servants were terrified also, their eyes rolling in their sockets, their hands nervously fingering their weapons. Suddenly another voice, Caesar's, broke through the turmoil, reaching even the ear of the desperate man on