

IRENE THE FOUNDLING ;

Or, The Slave's Revenge.

By the Author of "The Banker of Bedford."

CHAPTER VII.—Continued.

There was a ring at the bell, and the girl who answered the summons ushered in Uncle Dan, closely followed by Crazy Joe.

"Good evening," said the old man, as he entered the cozy sitting-room. "How do you all do?"

"Pretty well, Uncle Dan. How are you and Joe this evening?" returned Mr. Tompkins, rising and grasping the hand, rough hand of the old hunter.

"We are both pretty well," said Uncle Dan, shaking hands with all present. "I tell you what's a fact, it's getting cold out, and no mistake, snowing just like a cat's paw."

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The Union was shattered, and a new Nation was rising out of the ruins and fragments of the old.

Mr. Diggs concluded to espouse the cause of the new Nation. He would raise a company of volunteers to fight its battles; he would be captain. From captain he would be promoted to brigadier-general, or commander-in-chief.

Mr. Diggs' fertile imagination planned a glorious future for himself. Other men had risen from obscurity to renown, and why not he?

He strutted about with his hands thrust deep into his pockets, reveling already in his future greatness. The new and powerful Nation was his all-absorbing theme. When he met any one he would say:

"Well, what's the news, and what's the prospect of war?"

The prospect was very good, every one thought.

One day, talking with a young man about his own age, but cooler and less blood-thirsty, Mr. Diggs said they were too slow about fighting. Since the surrender of Twigg's in Texas no other event had transpired, and such indifference was monstrous.

"Don't be in a hurry, Diggs," said his friend. "Let them have time for consideration."

There's no need of consideration, I am ready now. I will go, like Marion, to avenge my country's wrongs," said Diggs.

"This is war against our own countrymen," said his friend, "and I don't think there is a place in either rank for me."

"There is a place for me," said Diggs, strutting about with his hands in his pockets and expectorating profusely. "My country needs me, and I reckon there's a place for me."

"Will you take a colonelcy to commence with?" his friend asked, with a smile.

"I don't expect a colonelcy at first," said Diggs. "I want to start at the foot of the ladder, as captain, and gradually rise until I am commander-in-chief."

"You would make such a noble-looking general!" said a bystander, surveying the fat little fellow.

"You can talk, Howard Jones, but I—hem! hem!—have always had a taste for military life."

"You would make such a fine-looking commander," said Jones. "Mounted on a tall charger you would yourself strike terror to the enemy."

"Can you prove that all generals were small men?" said Diggs, strutting about.

"Of course they were; but you would kill all your enemies. They would die with laughter when they saw a general on a horse nineteen hands high, looking like a bug on a log."

"O, talk sense, Jones."

"On a big war-horse you would look very much like a bug on a log," said Jones. "But wouldn't it be grand for Crazy Joe's mad-mom to turn out a general?"

"Can you talk sense, or are you a fool?" roared the exasperated Diggs; and, unable longer to endure the ridicule of his companions, he turned abruptly around and left the crowd gathered about him.

The winter of 1860-61 passed away; but little had been done in Snagtown save mustering and speech-making. Those in favor of open rebellion were in the minority in the neighborhood, but those in favor of neutrality in the majority; but those in favor of standing for the Stars and Stripes the smallest class of all.

Patrick Henry Diggs was in a dilemma. His ambition pointed him to the battle-field, that his great abilities, which no one seemed to appreciate, might be shown to the world. The idea of a new Nation dazzled him and showed a path as splendid for his willing feet to follow. But he felt reluctant to draw his sword against the flag of Washington and Marion. He was sure, however, that these turbulent times meant something great for himself. He never lost an opportunity to muster in the ranks of the Home Guards to make a speech.

The eastern part of Virginia seceded on April 17, 1861, but the southwestern portion, about Snagtown, was at peace, save from the mustering of Home Guards to protect home and families from the incursions of either army.

Jones to keep him on the track were unavailing. He commenced to speak about the Stars and Stripes.

"Oh, thunder! go back to Rome if you can't make a better secession speech," said Jones.

The truth was that Mr. Diggs, like a great many others at this time, hardly knew which side he was on. When he swore to preserve the Union at all hazards, his astonished friends pulled him down.

A call was made for volunteers, and Mr. Diggs was the first to enroll his name. Though calling themselves a Home Guard, these volunteers were really enrolled in the army of the Southern Confederacy. Oleah Tompkins was among the first to thus espouse the Southern cause.

The clouds of war grew darker and darker every hour. At any moment the storm might burst in all its fury. Snagtown was in a constant state of excitement as the crisis approached. Her more timid citizens trembled with dread.

Henry Smith, a farmer's son, a young man of limited education, but of strong common sense, stood in the street one bright morning, engaged in conversation with Seth Williams, a well-to-do citizen.

"Come, now, Henry," said Williams, persuasively, "you had better come in with us. The time has come, or will soon come, when our homes will have to be defended. We shall be overrun with scoundrel hirelings, who will rob and burn and murder as they go. Our families will need protection, and this duty devolves on us."

"But, Seth, some say the Home Guard will be marched South into the Confederate army."

"Oh, nothing of the kind," said Williams. "Our only object is to protect our homes from the soldiers of both sides, and to meddle with neither unless they invade our State."

"I think we are justified in protecting our own interests; but, though I despise Abraham Lincoln, I cannot raise my hand against the old Stars and Stripes."

"Oh, there is no danger that you will be forced into the Confederate army. We are only organizing a Home Guard now; if we raise troops for the South, that will be another thing."

"When do you meet again?" asked Harry. "To-morrow night; we go into camp next week in real earnest."

"Where?"

"On Wolf Creek, about three or four miles away, between here and the Twin Mountains."

"Where do you meet to-morrow night?"

"At the school-house on the road between here and the Twin Mountains."

"I will be there," said Harry. As Williams walked away, a young man who had been observing the two with keen interest, approached Harry and said:

"I can tell what you and Seth Williams were talking about."

"I will give you three guesses, Abner," said Harry, laughing.

"He was trying to persuade you to enlist in the Home Guard."

"That was just it," replied Harry. "Don't do it, Harry, or you will regret it. I tell you the Home Guard is only a cover, and every one who enlists will be in the Confederate army in three months. Unless you mean to take up arms against your country, keep clear of the Home Guard."

"I don't want to fight in Lincoln's army, nor do I want to enter the Confederate ranks, so I thought the Home Guards would be the place for me."

"Don't you enlist," said Abner Tompkins, "or you will regret it."

As Harry walked away, Mr. Diggs came along, his short legs, in rapid motion, resembling the thick spokes of a wheelbarrow, and his head inclined backward at an angle of forty-five degrees, and his glasses, as usual, on his nose, and his little fat hand thrust deep into his pockets.

I have joined the Confederate army—hem—no, I mean to say I am going to join the Union army in a day or two. That is, I don't know exactly which army I shall join yet—and I come to bid you adieu."

Irene looked a little puzzled and felt not a little annoyed at this address. There was something she did not like about Mr. Diggs' manner.

"Will you come in?" she said, "and I will see you presently."

Mr. Diggs accordingly re-entered the house, and Irene went up to her room to change her dress. She managed to detain herself until tea was announced and then invited Mr. Diggs to the dining-room.

After tea the little fellow followed her back to the parlor, and she resigned herself to be bored for an hour or more by him, but did not yet suspect the real cause of his visit.

"Hem, hem!" began Mr. Diggs, "Miss Irene, these are troublous times."

"They are indeed," answered Irene, from her seat opposite the log-cabin Mr. Diggs. "We don't know how long the war will last."

"No, we do not," said Irene, who really did not imagine what was to happen on this occasion.

"Hem, hem! two large armies are raising."

"So I am informed," said Irene. "And they mean destruction to each other."

"I fear some damage will be done."

"Hem, hem! Sumter has fallen."

"So I have heard."

"Dances take it," thought Mr. Diggs, as she is as cool as an iceberg, and I am getting flurried. What had I better say or do next? Then a short pause.

"Some of your friends will doubtless take part in the coming struggle," he finally said. "I fear they will be rash enough to do so."

"And some may go to return no more,"—voice and eyes were growing pathetic. "Alas! such is too often the fate of war."

"I have concluded to enter the army."

"A great many young men are now talking of going into the army."

"I feel that my country needs my services."

"You are patriotic."

Mr. Diggs felt flattered.

"You are—hem—hem, very kind, Miss Irene, to attribute patriotism to me. Patriotism, true patriotism, is one of man's most noble attributes."

"I agree with you."

"But, Miss Irene, it is hard to go, even to our country's aid, and leave behind friends dearer to us than life."

can not live in peace with the North; the next best thing is to separate."

"That's so,—hem, hem!—that's so," said Mr. Diggs.

"Then why refuse to enter the Confederate army? The South is your country, and if you want military renown seek it in the ranks of your country. If they call you a rebel be proud of the name. Washington and Marion were rebels."

Mr. Diggs was completely won back to the Southern cause; and, assuring Oleah he would be with them the next night, drove away.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CHASM OPENS.

The storm clouds were gathering dark about the Tompkins mansion. The heads of the household were silent on the question, each knowing the different feelings and sympathies of the other. Their sons were also silent, but there was a fullness in their silence that foretold the coming strife. There was one member of the once happy household who could not comprehend the trouble, whose very gentleness kept her in ignorance of the threatened danger.

Yet neither love nor loving care could keep her from knowing that trouble was brewing. She could not but notice the coldness gradually growing between the two brothers. Brothers whose affection she once thought no earthly power could lessen, were growing daily colder and more and more estranged. Every morning each mounted his horse, and rode away alone, and it was always late in the night when they came home, never together. Gloomy and silent, the morning meal was hurried through, the pleasant conversation that had always accompanied it, was heard no more, if we except the efforts of Irene, who strove with all her power to infuse some of the old-time harmony and brightness into the altered family.

It was the evening of Mr. Diggs' visit to the Tompkins mansion, one of those clear bright evenings when the curtains of night seem reluctant to fall, and the fluttering folds seem held apart to reveal the beauty of the dying day. Irene sat by the window, gazing up at the dark blue vault, and listening to the far-off song of a whip-poor-will upon the lonely hillside. Nature to her had never seemed more calm or lovely. The moon serenely bright, shed mellow light over the landscape, and the dark old forest, on whose trees the early buds had awelled into green leaves, lay in a quiet repose. Only man, of all created things, seemed unresting. Far down the road she heard the clatter of horses' hoofs. At all times now, day and night, she heard them.

Clatter, clatter, clatter—sleeping or waking, it was always the same, always the beat of hoofs. To her it seemed as if ten thousand dragons were constantly galloping, galloping, galloping down the great road; somewhere their marshalled thousands must be gathering. Horsemen singly, horsemen in pairs, horsemen in groups, were galloping, galloping, until her ears ached with the awful din.

As she looked, a horseman came dashing down the hill; he passed through the gate and down the avenue.

"That must be either Abner or Oleah," thought Irene. "Six months ago, they would have gone and returned together."

When he stepped on the piazza, the moon fell on his face and revealed the features of Abner Tompkins. He came rapidly up the steps and into the house. Staying only a few moments in the room below, where his parents were, then came directly to Irene's door and knocked.

She bade him come in.

"Irene," he said in tremulous tones, "I have strange news for you. I must leave tonight for months perhaps, perhaps forever, my home, my parents—and you."

Irene sprang to his side eager and excited.

"Why, Abner, what do you mean?"

"Is it such a surprise to you? I will try to speak calmly, but I have only a few moments to stay. I have a load on my heart that I must unburden to you."

"What is it?" she said; drawing a low stool to his feet and seating herself, she took both his hands in her own. "Tell me what troubles you, let me share it with you. Who should share your troubles if not your sister?"

"Irene, what I have to say will shock you."

"No, no, it will not. If you have done anything wrong, I shall be sure it was not your fault."

"No, you misunderstand me; it is nothing I have done," he interrupted.

"Then what is this secret, brother?"

"I am not your brother."

Irene had promised that his secret should not shock her, yet had a bombshell burst at her feet, she could not have been more astonished.

She sprang from the low stool, and stood with clasped hands, the color fading from her face, her slight form awaying as though she had received a blow.

he said. "You always choose this arbor in moonlight evenings."

"Ah! Heaven be praised, Irene, darling Irene, that you know nothing of it!"

"Abner left to-night, perhaps never to return here," she went on, wiping the tears from her face.

"I see you have been weeping, dear Irene. I have more news for you. I too have to bid you good-night for a long farewell. I march to join the main army, and shall soon leave you, Irene, without telling you of something I have long kept a secret."

Irene could not speak; sobs choked her voice. Then from Oleah's lips fell those same startling words:

"I am not your brother."

She sat motionless. Then it must be true. They could not both be mistaken, could not both possess the same hallucination. If any one was mad, it was herself. But Oleah went on in his quick passionate way:

"You are not my sister, dearest Irene, and that you are not gives me only joy. When you were left at our house a tiny baby, I claimed you for my sister, and when I learned you could not be my sister, I said you should one day be my wife. I loved from the first time those bright eyes laughed into mine, and that loved me grown with my growth, and strengthened with my strength, until I have taken possession of my wife's being. O, Irene, Irene, you can never know how deep is the love I have borne you from early childhood. I could not leave this little one without telling you that I loved you with more than a brother's love."

He paused, and Irene remained silent.

"Speak, Irene! Will you not speak?"

She was still silent, her large dark eyes fixed and staring, her white lips motionless, her whole form rigid as a statue. She thought of Abner's parting words, and pain and terror filled her soul. Had she entered this happy home only to bring discord, to widen the breach between the two brothers?

"O Irene, Irene," he pleaded, "by the memory of our happy childhood I implore you, speak once more before I go. Say that you will love me, that you will pray for me—pray for my safe return, pray for my soul if I fall in battle!"

"I will pray for you, Oleah, to heaven day and night, for you are my brother."

"But will you give me your love? O Irene, if you only knew how dear you are to me, you will surely learn to love me."

"I have always given you a sister's warmest love, Oleah," she replied, "and this is all too new, too strange, for me to change so suddenly."

"But you promise you will change," he asked eagerly.

"I can not promise yet," she said. "I do not know myself, and neither do you comprehend your own feelings."

"Irene, dearest, I have known myself for years. Try to love me, and pray for me," he said, and taking both her hands as she came to his side, "for now I must go." He stooped and pressed a kiss on those white lips, and Irene was alone. Soon she heard again the hoof-beats of a flying horse, and knew that Oleah had left his home.

When he had returned to bid farewell to his home, Abner Tompkins, before entering the house, walked down the gravel walk, through the avenue of grand old elm walls, the outer gate was reached. Here he paused a moment, and gazed up at the moon riding through the dark blue, fathomless vault of heaven; then he turned his gaze upon the spacious pillared mansion, his pleasant home, that he was to leave that night, perhaps forever. It was the home of his childhood; beneath its roof dwelt those he loved; and feelings of sadness filled his heart as he realized the fact that he must leave it. On his right lay the great road, the road that in his boyhood, he had imagined, led to far-off lands and fairy kingdoms; the road he had thought must be endless, and had desired to follow to its end. Across the road was the forest where he and his brother had so often wandered. Every spot seemed hallowed and sanctified with memories of childhood, and associated with every object and every thought was that brother from whom he was gradually drifting away. He stood beneath the old hickory tree, whose nuts he had gathered, and whose topmost branches they had climbed in their adventurous boyhood. To-night all were fading away. He was going to different scenes, to see strange faces, to meet hardships, danger, perhaps death; worse than all, to draw his sword against that very brother whose life had so long been one with his.

(To be continued.)

MOTHERS!

Castoria is recommended by physicians for children teething. It is a purely vegetable preparation, its ingredients are published around each bottle. It is pleasant to taste and absolutely harmless. It relieves constipation, regulates the bowels, quiets pain, cures diarrhoea and wind colic, kills few worms, destroys worms, and prevents convulsions, soothes the child and gives it refreshing and natural sleep. Castoria is the children's panacea—the mother's friend. 35 doses, 25 cents.

BLACKMAILERS ARRESTED.

CLEVELAND, Oct. 11.—Ruth Whitfield, aged 19, and her aunt, Emma Whitfield, 42 years old, who live at 42 Howlett street, were arrested yesterday afternoon on the charge of blackmail, preferred by Professor Albert A. Michelson, of Case School of Applied Science, and one of the most widely known educators in Ohio.

I HAVE BEEN a severe sufferer from Catarrh for the past fifteen years, with distressing pain over my eyes. Gradually the disease worked down upon my lungs. About a year and a half ago I commenced using Ely's Cream Balm, with most gratifying results, and am to-day apparently cured.—Z. C. WALKER, Kirtland, N.Y.

MY DAUGHTER and myself, great sufferers from Catarrh, have been cured by Ely's Cream Balm. My sense of smell restored and health greatly improved.—C. M. STANLEY, Merchant, Ithaca, N.Y.

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