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## THE UNDOING OF A DOUBT BY HUGO ST. FINISTERRE, M.D. AUTHOR OF "WHO'S WHO" ETC. ETC.

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Still as I drew nearer the house a fly appeared in the outline when I saw far up the road the figure of a man who was evidently watching the residence of Colonel Mansley, on the lookout to see whether I appeared there. It must have occurred to many of the neighbors that I was likely to go thither whenever I believed the pursuers were thrown off my trail. With Colonel Mansley absent there was no one left to defend the place against the mob, with the exception of the servants, who could not be counted upon for effective work. True, I had a revolver, with two of its chambers loaded, and probably there were additional firearms in the house, but few buildings are more defenseless than the old-fashioned southern mansion, with its low roof and broad spreading rooms that cover a great area of ground. There were a dozen avenues through which an entrance could be forced, while in case of an effective defense on the part of half a score of brave men nothing was easier than to apply a torch and reduce the whole structure to ashes.

This extremity might appear improbable, but nothing is so unreasoning and nerveless as a mob, which will proceed



I reached up and sounded it. To any length rather than be balked of its vengeance. It looked as if all depended upon the promptness with which Colonel Mansley could secure the help of which he was in quest.

Still debating the right thing to do, I entered the grounds of the old mansion and presented myself at the front door, where rested the huge brass knocker. Without hesitation I reached up and sounded it. I had crossed the Rubicon, and it was too late to turn back.

CHAPTER XX.  
Just here it is necessary to digress for a few minutes.  
Cy Walters, the ex-partisan and terrible raider, was never more enraged than when he opened his eyes in the rear room of the old inn at Aldine, roused by the slight noise made by my leap to the ground, and saw that I had escaped. The raised sash and the motionless form of the person explained what had occurred, and he bounded to his feet like a panther, Winchester in hand. His action, however, failed to rouse Archie Hunter, who slept calmly through the stirring incidents that immediately followed. It is easy to see that had he not done so my own situation would have been materially changed.

The exchange of shots in which Cy and I indulged over the rear fence of the garden has been related, as well as my own subsequent movements.  
When the veteran returned to the inn, he crawled through the window from which he had leaped, and, kicking over the chair of his relative, sent him sprawling on the floor and thoroughly roused him from his costly slumber. It is not necessary to record the exchange of compliments. Much as Cy blamed his son, he blamed himself more.  
"This never could have happened in wartime," was his bitter reflection, "but it must be because I'm growing old."

ment until the morning morning, he went to his home, some distance in the country, so angry that he could not sleep. With the unreasoning suspicion of a bad man he formed the belief that a plot was on foot to allow me to escape during the night and that Dungan had instigated it, with my two jailers as his agents.

Gabe knew that the majority of the mob were with him, and to forestall any treachery he set out with his dog for the inn so as to be ready to take my trail if anything of the kind should occur. He arrived to have his suspicions verified, but Cy and Archie were so roused that he could not avoid holding them guiltless in the matter. The pursuit was organized without delay. The bloodhound took my trail, and the three men followed hotfoot.

As the reader has learned, something happened to that brute at the clearing in Black Man's swamp, and for the time being the hunt had to be pushed without his aid.

The pursuers knew they were near the home of the negro Pete, and still under the belief that I was Hank Beyer, suspected I would apply to him for shelter until the hue and cry was over. While Archie and Gabe remained in the background Cy went forward to find out whether such was the fact.

The old habit of caution on the part of Cy came back to him. He knew that if Hank Beyer had taken refuge in the before yielding and would probably receive the assistance of Pete himself. Should that occur the little party would need re-enforcements before reducing the two to terms.

At daylight Pete, in accordance with his promise, climbed the ladder in his cabin to rouse me, but when he observed how calmly I was sleeping decided to leave me alone until breakfast was ready. Accordingly he descended the ladder with that purpose in view when he was startled by a knock on the door. Drawing it inward, he saw Cy Walters, Winchester in hand, standing before him.

The veteran looked calmly in the face of the agitated African and asked in a guarded undertone:  
"Is he up there, Pete?"  
"Who dat?"  
"You know who I mean—Hank Beyer."

"No, sah. He ain't up dere."  
"No use of lying, Pete. I know he's here."  
"I tell yo', Marce Cy, he ain't dere. If yo' doan' b'lieve what I say, go up de ladder and see for yo'self."

This sounded fair, but the old soldier knew too much of war to give an enemy such an invitation to blow out his brains without risk to himself.

"Is he sleep?"  
"Yas, he am sleepin," replied Pete, fairly caught by the question. Cy looked grimly at him for a moment, and then, lowering his voice to a whisper, said:  
"Come with me. Bring your gun along."

Without protest the negro stepped back within the room, picked up his rifle from where it was leaning in the corner and followed the man across the clearing over the path that led to the creek where his dugout lay. Not a word was spoken until they had gone some distance in the undergrowth, the white man leading. Then he wheeled about and demanded:

"What did you mean by telling me Hank Beyer ain't in your cabin?"  
Pete expected this and was prepared. With a look as steady as that of his questioner he replied:

"Marce Cy, I tole yo' de troof."  
Walters was silent for a moment, but he partly raised his hand to strike the impudent negro, who, recoiling a step, added:  
"Dere's a man sleepin in my cabin. He looks like Hank Beyer, but he ain't him!"

"What infernal nonsense is this? I've heard it before. If he ain't Hank Beyer, who the hell is he?"  
"Dat I can't say, but he ain't Hank; dat's sartin sash."

"How do you know he isn't?"  
"How do I know, Marce Cy, dat yo' ain't him? I know it jes' de same as I know dat dat young man am somebody else den Hank."

"But I seen him and so did a dozen others early this night down at the tavern. We all had a fair sight at him, and I reckon we know Hank Beyer well 'nough not to make any mistake about him. Why, yo' fool, he owned up that he was Hank just before the crowd rushed in on him."

"De sound 'lous willain! He lied about it! He ain't Hank any more dan I am, and I'm tolyble sash I ain't him."  
Cy Walters was puzzled. He knew the negro well enough to understand that, preposterous as were his words, he himself believed them. Nevertheless his own convictions were not shaken. In the hope of reaching a solution he conducted Pete farther down the bank to where Gabe Horner and Archie Hunter were impatiently awaiting their leader.

When the explanation was made to them, they received it with scorn. If a grain of doubt had been injected into the mind of Cy, it was removed by the violent protests of his companions, who would not admit even that Pete believed a particle of his own declarations.

"Hank is there asleep," said Archie. "He'll awake pretty soon, and it will take a hot fight to get him. We had best hurry back while we have time."

They set out for the dugout, but Cy compelled them to wait at some distance while he made a reconnaissance. If their man gave evidence of being awake, it would necessitate a material change in the plan of campaign. The three might have little faith in Pete's truthfulness and honesty, but they knew him too well to fear any treachery on his part. He would be at their mercy if he tried anything of that nature. They explained his course on the ground of sympathy for the hunted fugitive.

Just before reaching the spot where the dugout was moored Cy came to a halt, and a strange conversation began, the murmur of which I heard from my hiding place a few paces away, though unable to catch any of the words spoken. It was apparent from the questions of Cy Walters that Pete had succeeded in raising a doubt again in his mind, though it was an infinitesimal one.

"Pete, you still insist that the young man in your house is not Hank Beyer, do you?"

"I doan' obsest, Marce Cy. I knows it."

"Then you must have some reason for saying so which you haven't told me. What is it?"

Pete had a reason which he had not named and which had he done so would have removed the last uncertainty from his questioner, but he lacked the courage to explain its nature. Instead he prevaricated:

"Haven't I explained dat when yo' knows a thing yo' knows it? Ain't dat 'nough, Marce Cy?"

"No," replied the disgusted veteran.

"You've been lying from the first. Lead the way back to your old cabin. If you try any trick, I'll shoot you in your tracks. March!"

### CHAPTER XXI.

Cy Walters had never been accused of possessing an amiable temper, and it will be admitted that his experience during the previous night was of a trying nature. His rasping trials continued.

It was not to be supposed that the fugitive believed to be sleeping up stairs would fire upon an enemy without warning, and therefore Cy's approach to the cabin was unhesitating, though made with caution. As the two stepped across the threshold the white man said in a low voice:

"Go up the ladder and tell Hank I want to speak with him."

"Yes, sah," replied Pete, promptly obeying. It required but a few steps when his head appeared through the opening. One glance was sufficient. Turning his frightened face toward the veteran below, he gasped:

"He ain't here."

"What?" thundered Walters. "Come down and let me see for myself."

The trembling negro descended, and the other recklessly climbed the rounds. The next second he saw that Pete had spoken the truth. Down he came, and in his most dangerous mood.

"Say your prayers," he said with fearful significance. "I'll give you five minutes and no more."

He stopped back with his Winchester partly raised. He meant all he said.

"Marce Cy, if I proves to yo' dat dat man ain't Hank Beyer, how will dat do?"

"But you can't do it unless you produce him before me, and you can't do that."

It was now a question of life and death, and the quaking African told the secret which until then had been locked in his breast. All the time he was talking the grim ex-guerrilla kept his glittering eyes upon the dusky countenance, as if he would pierce him through. Not until the brief story was told did he lower his gun. The action showed that Pete had saved his life.

"We must find him," was the comment of Cy. "Let's go on."

With no definite idea of whether they should direct their steps, they followed the path to the creek, the intention of Cy Walters being to meet his two friends and make known the astounding story he had just heard. Arrived there, the missing dugout revealed my method of flight.

"Hank knocks out all the bloodhounds in the country," remarked the veteran. "None of them can trail him through the water, and has he gone up or down stream?"

There was no way of deciding.

"You may go up the creek, and I'll follow it down. He can't be far off."

On the point of separating, Pete said: "Marce Cy, what I jes' tole yo' am a secret, yo' know."

"Of course, if you wish it to be so."

"Dead I do. It'll save me lots of trouble."

"All right; off with you." And they parted company.

The foregoing shows the injustice done to Pete by his suspicions. He had never had any intention of betraying me, and played the part of a friend from the first, but his welfare had become involved with my own in an extraordinary manner, and his lips were held mute when he would have loved to speak. It required the extremity of mortal peril to unseat them.

I conceded too much to his sagacity when I credited him with discovering in the faint star gleam that which escaped others equally clear sighted under the glare of the lamp at the inn. It was natural that when, from my hiding place under the bank in the dugout, I saw Cy Walters stealthily searching for me, I should neglect no precaution to elude his gaze.

Meantime, with the advance of morning, the vigilantes began gathering at the inn in Aldine, clamorous to complete the entertainment of which they were robbed on the preceding evening. Learning of the startling proceedings in the early hours—though, be it remembered, the agency of Miss Mansley in the business was never suspected—they set out for Black Man's swamp, accompanied by the most ferocious bloodhound for miles around.

And something also happened to that brute which eliminated him as a factor in the solution of the problem.

To be Continued.

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