

IRENE THE FOUNDLING;

Or, The Slave's Revenge. By the Author of "The Banker of Bedford."

CHAPTER XL.—Continued.

Mrs. Tompkins, completely overcome, had fainted.

"Now, boys, are you ready; bring him here," said Sergeant Strong. Three or four men laid hands on the planter, but he felled them instantly. They did not expect such resistance from a man of his age, and were not prepared for it. It was not until Mr. Tompkins was stunned by a blow from the butt of a rifle that he was secured and bound; he was then led under the tree and the noose thrown over his neck. Mrs. Tompkins lay still and white on the greenward, and Irene was struggling with her captor and screaming for help. No one noticed the horseman who came dashing furiously down the hill.

"Up with him!" cried the Sergeant, and he seized the rope. At this moment the horseman thundered through the open gate, and just as Strong cried, "Now pull all!" the butt of a heavy pistol struck him on the head, and he fell like a beef under the hammer.

Then, with his hand still uplifted, he rode toward Irene's captor, but the fellow had released her and fled; the horseman fired a shot after the rapidly retreating figure. Then, turning on the remainder of the band, he asked in a voice of thunder, "What, in heaven's name, does this mean?"

Mr. Tompkins, for the first time, saw the horseman's face, and recognized his son, Oleah.

"Why, it's the Lieutenant," stammered one of the men, his teeth chattering with fear. "What does this mean, I say?" he again demanded.

"Why, Lieutenant," said one man, who had the rope in his hand when Oleah came up, "Strong said he was a spy, and he had set the boys on us to-day, and ordered us to punish him; but we didn't intend to hang him."

Oleah's hot temper got the better of him, and he would have shot Sergeant Strong, who was still insensible, and the other ring-leaders, on the spot, had not Irene and her father interfered. All danger being over, the servants came flocking to the scene, and Mrs. Tompkins was carried into the house. These men were a part of Oleah's own company. He ordered them to take the Sergeant, who was beginning to recover, and retire into the woods until he should join them. They obeyed and rode over the hill, quite crestfallen, conveying their wounded sergeant.

Oleah briefly told his father of the attack made on their camp. He said they were taken by surprise, their forces scattered through the woods, but he believed not one drop of blood had been shed, although Diggs was missing, as well as several others. It was thought they had been taken prisoners. Then he again mounted his horse and dashed off, to gather up his scattered forces.

CHAPTER XLII.

Captain Wardle's campaign had been a complete success. He had made twenty prisoners, he had secured most of the arms and the camp equipage, with one hundred and six horses. Vain search was made for the bodies of the dead who had been slain in the fight; none could be found; and from the marks of the bullets on the timber one would judge that no one had been touched, as no traces had been struck lower than twenty feet.

Camp-kettles, tents, rusty fire-locks, and weapons of nearly every description, were scattered about over the ground. The soldiers, the ununiformed especially, entertained themselves with the very exhilarating amusement of shattering against the trees the threshold fire-locks and such other weapons as could not be conveniently carried off. The lumbering of the camp was an interesting occupation—interesting, even, to those who took no part in it. The ununiformed took to lead in this business. Perhaps they regarded it as their special duty to be foremost in it, since they had been in the rear during the attack.

Corporal Grimm and Sergeant Swords were both present, very busy, and trying to look very soldier-like, though their brown homespun and broad-brimmed hats gave them anything but a military appearance. Corporal Grimm kept his jaws in lively motion on a huge piece of pig-tail, while he kept up a lively conversation with Sergeant Swords and other privates. "General Preston," he related that experience at length. This also vividly impressed Sergeant Swords with his experience under Captain Floyd, and he impelled to tell his comrades of it.

All were excellent spirits. Captain Wardle congratulated the men on their coolness and gallant conduct, and the men congratulated Captain Wardle on his coolness and good generalship—all congratulating each other.

About three hours were spent on the late camping ground, the Confederates, and then the entire lot, with their twenty prisoners and the lumber they could carry, started on their return to the Junction. Night overtook them about five miles after they had passed Slaton, and, selecting a suitable place, they camped. There was but one thing to damp their ardor, but one thing had been overlooked, and that was the fact that they were all well mounted; but even rich soldiers must eat, and this little fact had been overlooked. When night came they were tired and hungry, but there were rations only for about one-half of their force, and many went supperless to bed, with a prospect of having nothing to eat before noon the next day.

Captain Wardle felt keenly his mistake in not bringing supplies, and spent most of the night in examining an old blackless drill book to see how the thing could be remedied. Not finding anything in the tactics, he thrust it in his pocket and throwing himself on his blanket, closed his eyes and in a few moments solved the problem. He then went to sleep, and it was not until his lieutenant had dragged him several feet from under his covering that he awoke the next morning.

The sun was up, and so were the men, the latter hungry and ill-natured. "Never mind! Tell the boys I've got this question fixed. They shall all have their breakfast. Tell the bugler to sound the roll-call."

The bluet of the bugle called the men together, and the roll was soon called. "Now," said Captain Wardle, who had been holding a conversation with Captain Gunn, "I think you are hungry—"

"You bet we are, Cap'n," put in a red-faced private. "Set up, sir, or I'll have you court-martialed and shot for contempt." All became silent; the men looked grave and appeared willing to learn from the old, time-honored soldier, Captain Wardle.

"We haven't got enough in camp to feed more than about twenty-five men, so the rest of you will have to forage. Go in gangs of ten or fifteen and hunt your breakfast where you can. The people all around here are secesh,

and it will be a good thing to make them feed Union soldiers once in a while." This announcement was received with applause, and the troops commenced dividing into small squads, the uniformed mixing promiscuously with the ununiformed, and waiting only for instructions where to join the main force, which now, consisting of twenty-five men and the prisoners, mounted their horses and rode off.

The eastern sun, like a blazing ball, was rising higher and higher in the sky as twelve men, among whom were Corporal Grimm and Sergeant Swords, galloped down a wooded road, keeping a sharp lookout for "bushwhackers." Six of these men wore the uniform and carried the arms of the United States Infantry, and six were dressed in citizens' attire and armed with rifles or double-barreled shot-guns. All rode at a furious pace, splashing through the mud and frightening the birds in the woods on either side.

A boy was riding down the road in the opposite direction. He was mounted on a thin, slow-moving mare, of an indistinct color, which might have been taken for a bay, yellow or sorrel. The boy was barefooted, had on a straw hat, rode on a folded sheepskin instead of a saddle, held an empty bag before him, and certainly did not look very warlike. "Halt!" cried Sergeant Swords, drawing an old, rusty sword from its sheath and waving it in the air.

"Halt!" cried Corporal Grimm, drawing a many-barreled pistol, commonly known as a pepper-box, which he flourished in a threatening manner. "Halt!" again cried both, "or we will fire." The boy, being overawed by numbers, felt constrained to pull up the rein.

"Advance and give the countersign!" said Corporal Grimm. "Set up, Grimm! I command this squad!" said Sergeant Swords. Grimm chewed his pigtail in silence. In the meantime the boy seemed undecided whether to fly or to stand his ground, though his face betrayed a strong inclination in favor of the former proposition.

"Who comes there?" said Sergeant Swords, bringing his rusty sword to a salute. "Who are ye talkin' to?" asked the boy, looking around to see if he could possibly be addressing any one else. "I am talkin' to you, sir," said the Sergeant, sharply.

"What'd ye want?" asked the boy. "Who comes there, I said?" answered the Sergeant, more sharply. "Me." "Advance, then." "Do what?" "Come here."

The boy understood this. He had it delivered in just such a tone when he had been violating the domestic law. He advanced. "What'd ye want?" he asked again. "Where can we get our breakfast?" "Dunno," he replied, wondering. "Well, how far is it to the next farm-house?" "Taint more'n a mile."

"Who lives there?" "Old Ruben Smith; but he ain't there now." "Where is he?" "Dunno; says he's gone to the war, him and his two boys."

"Which army?" "Dunno." "Are they Union or secesh?" "Lor bless ye, we're all secesh here." "You are? Well, we are Union. We'll take ye prisoner, then," said Corporal Grimm. "Oh, but I ain't secesh."

"Well, then, you are a good boy," said the Sergeant. "Where are ye going?" "Gwine to Saagtown to git the mail and buy some sugar and coffee."

"Well, you may go on," said the grim soldier, winking at the Corporal; and the boy trotted on, looking curiously back at the men and their blue uniforms and big guns. The cavalcade now galloped on towards the house of Ruben Smith. The steep gable roof soon loomed up in the distance, and after dashing down the lane, around a pasture, through a small wood, they pulled up in front of the house.

"Dismount!" commanded the Sergeant. The men were on the ground in an instant. "Now hitch where you can, and two of you stay on guard while the rest are eating." "Who are ye, and what do ye want," demanded a sharp-visaged, ill-natured looking woman, coming out on the porch as the soldiers entered the yard.

"We are Union soldiers, and we want our breakfast," said Corporal Grimm, as the Sergeant was busy giving orders to the men. "You low, nigger-lovin', abolition thieves, I wouldn't give ye a bite if ye were starvin'," said the woman. "Mother, don't talk that way to them," said a pretty, red-cheeked girl of about fifteen, standing by her side.

"We want breakfast for twelve," said Sergeant Swords, now coming forward. "Well, sir, ye won't git it here. Go to some nigger shanty and let them cook for ye."

"Oh, no, my good woman, we want you to get our breakfast. You are a good lookin' woman, and I know you can get up a good meal." "If I was to cook for ye scamps, I'd pizen the last one o' ye," she fairly shrieked. "We shall have you eat with us, my good lady, and we can eat anything you do," said Sergeant Swords, good-humoredly. The young girl was all the while persuading her mother to be more calm.

"Come now, I'll help you. I'll kindle the fire and carry the wood and draw the water," said the corporal. "Come in my house and I'll pour bilin' hot water in yer face, and scald yer eyes out!" "Don't talk so, mother," urged the pretty daughter. At this moment the kitchen door opened, and a negro girl peeped out. "Say, kinky head, stir up the kitchen fire and get us some breakfast right soon," said Corporal Grimm. The black face withdrew, and the two non-commissioned officers entered the house to see that their bidding was performed.

"None of your business," was the quick reply. "Where are your sons?" asked Grimm. "In Jeff Davis' army, to shoot just such thieves as you are."

"How long have they been in Jeff Davis' army?" "Ever since the war commenced." "How old is this hen I am pickin'?" "I hope she is old enough and tough enough to choke ye to death," said the woman, giving the coffee mill a furious rap. "Your husband must be a very happy man," said Corporal Grimm.

"If he was here, you wouldn't be very happy," she replied, testily. "No, I am happier with his amiable spouse." "There, I hope that'll pizen ye," she said, emptying the ground coffee into a coffee-pot, and pouring boiling water over it. "Make it strong enough to bear up an iron wedge," said Corporal Grimm; then, addressing his men: "Watch the old vixen, for she may pizen us if she gets a chance."

The men needed no second bidding, and as the cooking progressed, they watched more keenly. They were all very hungry, yet none wanted to be poisoned. Breakfast being prepared, the reluctant hostess was compelled to eat with the soldiers, who, being thus convinced that none of the viands were poisoned, did full justice to the really excellent meal.

CHAPTER XLIII.

UNCLE DAN MEANS BUSINESS. Colonel Scrabble found his forces, when the attacking party had retired, somewhat scattered. With Lieutenant Whimple he had sought safety in a hollow tree, whence, after waiting for hours, he issued orders to the lieutenant to go forth and see if the Federal troops had retreated. The lieutenant took a circuitous route, walking on tiptoe, lest he should disturb the slumbers of the dead, until he reached the camp, which the Union soldiers had just left.

Lieutenant Whimple then started to return, meeting on his way Captain Fogg. One by one they picked up men, behind logs, in tree-tops, and thick clusters of bushes, until they arrived twenty in number at the colonel's headquarters, in the hollow tree. Here a council of war was held, and it was decided to send runners through the woods to notify their scattered forces that the enemy was gone; by night one hundred and fifty men had assembled around the hollow tree. They talked, in low determined tones, and all swore to avenge their lost comrades.

Lieutenant Whimple and a score of recruits were still scouring the woods in search of fugitives. They had approached very near the bank of the creek when the foremost man started back, saying, "My God! Just look at that!" "What?" asked a dozen voices, peeping through the underbrush, expecting to behold a masked battery at the least. The sun was low in the Western horizon, and our soldiers could not see the object at first.

"There," said the first speaker, "sittin' right on the bank of the creek, is the devil come out to sun himself." They could now describe an object that might be a huge mud turtle, or might be almost anything a lively fancy could suggest. A closer examination, however, showed it to be a little man somewhat larger than an apple dumpling, but so plastered from his head to his heels with mud that one could hardly tell whether he was black or white.

The men drew nearer the strange object and finally rushed from their concealment. The poor fellow went down on his knees and threw up his hands imploringly. He was covered with the very blackest of Virginia mud, except great, white rings around his eyes and mouth, which gave a most horrible expression to the features.

"Oh! I have mercy, mercy—hem, hem!—have mercy," he gasped, clasping his hands and closing his eyes, "and I will quit this unholy cause." "Why, hallo, Corporal Diggs," cried Lieutenant Whimple. At sound of that familiar voice, Mr. Diggs bounded to his feet, smeared as he was, threw his arms round the speaker's neck and wept for joy.

"Oh! Whimple, Whimple, Whimple! I never expected to behold your face again. Oh! my dear, dear Whimple, you're not killed, are you? Tell me that you are not dead!" Whimple assured him that not only was he alive, but in good health; after allowing the corporal time to recover, they picked up a few more men in the woods, also about forty horses, and returned.

Lieutenant Tompkins, who had been out in search of scattered men, now returned with the sergeant's squad, the sergeant's head bandaged. A hundred curious eyes were turned toward Whimple's squad as they came in; but it was not so much the numbers of the squad that attracted their attention as the mud-covered object that walked in their midst, in regard to which various conjectures were hazarded.

About three hundred and seventy-five men were gathered around the colonel's headquarters, the hollow tree, before nightfall. Something must be done, all agreed. There were several men in the country, the Colonel said, who must either take the oath of allegiance to the Southern cause or suffer death for their disloyalty. Several names were mentioned, among them that of Dan Martin. "The hunter of Twin Mountains?" asked Oleah Tompkins.

"Yes," said Lieutenant Whimple, who had suggested the name. "He is an old friend of mine," said Oleah. "Well, but, Lieutenant Tompkins, we can't afford to screen all your friends," said the Colonel. "Of course, no one can blame you for saving your father, but you can't expect all your Abolition friends will be left un molested. Lieutenant Whimple, take twenty men and wait on old Dan Martin to-morrow."

When morning came, nearly all the horses were needed for the work of collecting the provisions of the scattered forces, foraging for food, and for arms and horses. Corporal Diggs was second in command of Whimple's force, and as he mounted his tall horse, he heard Seth Williams making audible comments on his appearance.

The mounted force galloped away toward the foot of Twin Mountains, where Uncle Dan lived, a distance of about ten miles from the camp. It was near the middle of the forenoon when Uncle Dan, who was sitting in his doorway, saw a cavalcade approaching. Crazy Joe was in the house drawing a map of Egypt, showing by lines how far the famins had extended.

Uncle Dan's fierce mastiff and his hounds seemed to scent coming danger, the latter sending up mournful howls and the former uttering low, fierce howls of anger. "By hokey, I don't like the looks o' that," said the old man, as he observed the armed band approaching his cabin. "Seems like they ain't honest. There's secesh, sure as gun's make o' iron, for there is Jake Whimple leadin' 'em, and 'Rig here, too. Guess he'll do any harm to keep old 'Broken Kibs' handy, in case they should be ugly." As the old man concluded, he entered the house, and, taking his rifle from the rack over the door, leaned it against the wall while he took his seat in the door-way, his

gun within easy reach. He had also placed a large navy revolver by his side. The horsemen had now caught sight of him, and, with exultant yells, galloped up the slight elevation from the creek toward the cabin. "Say, I reckon you'd better stop now and let a fellow know what ye want," cried Uncle Dan, snatching his rifle, and bringing it to a point.

The cavalcade halted, the men looking apprehensively at the snarling rifle and then at one another. Finally, by common consent, all eyes were turned on Lieutenant Whimple. "What do ye want, Jake Whimple?" demanded Uncle Dan in sharp, imperative tones. "We have come to administer the oath of allegiance to you," said Whimple, riding a little nearer, his comrades following close behind.

"Then stop," cried the old hunter, "or I will make it hot for you, for I wot take no oath of allegiance from any one to the Southern Confederacy, 'specially with such a sorry cuss as you." "Then I shall take you a prisoner and bring you to camp," said Lieutenant Whimple, trying to throw some sternness in his voice. "I'll drop some o' you fellars afore ye do that. Now jist advance one step further and see if I don't."

Although they were fifty yards away, they could distinctly hear the ominous click of that rifle which never failed. "I've lost something down here," muttered Corporal Diggs, striving in vain to keep his teeth from chattering, "and I believe I'll go back and see if I can't find it." The Corporal wheeled his big horse around, and galloped down the hill for about one hundred yards, and, dismounting, set about examining very intently the ground behind a large oak tree.

"Whoa, January," he said, shivering, perhaps from cold, as the thermometer was only 65° above in the shade. "If you don't come along peacefully with us we shall have to use force," said Lieutenant Whimple, in a tone of as much severity as he could command. The old man sprang to his feet and brought his gun to his face. "Now, turn about and git from here, or I'll drop some of ye where ye stand," he shouted.

Lieutenant Whimple spurred his horse, which reared and wheeled, and as he turned he fired his pistol at the hunter. The ball passed high over the old man's head, missing its aim by ten feet. "Shoot the old rascal!" he frantically cried, as he saw the fatal rifle aimed at himself. The discharge of the pistol had frightened the horse; they had broken ranks and were now rearing and plunging in every direction.

"Crack!" went Uncle Dan's rifle, and a bullet went through the lieutenant's hat, knocking it from his head. With a wild cry, the lieutenant threw up his hands, and fell forward on his horse's neck, believing, as did the others, that he was killed. The horse tore down the hill, followed by the entire company. Uncle Dan's blood was up, and snatching his revolver he fired three more shots at the retreating cavalcade. At the last shot he saw the dust arise from the back of one man's coat and heard a wild cry.

"Take me by force," said Uncle Dan. "May be," and re-entering the house he reloaded his weapons, to be ready for another assault. Corporal Diggs was still searching for the treasure he had lost, when he heard the shots, and, looking from behind the tree, he saw the whole troop come tearing down the hill, retreating, as it seemed to him, in the midst of a storm of shot fired from a six-pounder.

The Corporal made a spring for his saddle (as he afterward declared), to rally his men, seeing that the lieutenant was wounded, but he could only succeed in grasping the horn of his saddle. Thus clinging, he managed to slip one foot into the stirrup, when the flying horseman thundered by. The Corporal's long-legged horse gave one snort and started at headlong speed. "Whoa, January! whoa, January! whoa, January!" frantically cried the Corporal, clinging to the side of the tall horse, able neither to get on or off, while the excited beast seemed to be trying to cutstrip the wind.

"Whoa, January," cried the Corporal, trying to stop his flying steed, but unable to touch the bridle. "Whoa, January," his arms and legs extended, and his short coat-tail flying, made him look like a spider on a circular saw. "Whoa, January! Oh, Lordy, won't be one stop this horse? I'll—hem, hem—be killed against a tree! Help, help! Whoa, January!"

January by this time had passed the foremost horse in the fleeing cavalcade, and his rider presented such a ludicrous appearance that the men, badly frightened as they were, roared with laughter. Lieutenant Whimple, after swaying for some time in the saddle, plunged off in a helpless heap on the side of the road. Three or four of the men paused to pick him up. The man who had been wounded in the back, fainted and fell from his horse, when another halt was made.

But on thundered January, his rider still clinging to his side and crying vigorously for help. The creek was reached, and January, by one tremendous leap, cleared the ford. The stirrup broke, so did Corporal Diggs' hold. There was a great splash, and there nearest saw a pair of short legs disappear beneath the surface of the water.

When the party came on, they beheld a mud-stained, water-soaked individual crawling on the opposite bank, sputtering and gasping, and swearing he would quit such an unholy cause. The lieutenant soon recovered, though he acted for hours like a man dazed. The severely wounded private was carried to the nearest house, where he was left and medical aid sent for. Corporal Diggs rode behind one of the soldiers until they came upon the fractious January nibbling the fresh grass in a piece of bottom-land. He then mounted his own steed and took command of the company, which he led straight back to camp.

No sooner had the Confederates left Uncle Dan's residence than the latter packed up his few valuables, and, telling Crazy Joe to go to Mr. Tompkins, turned loose his dogs and set out through the woods to the Junction. Uncle Dan surmised the rebels would return in force and turn his dwelling to the earth.

CHAPTER XIV. MRS. JUNIPER ENTERTAINS. Mrs. Julia Juniper was a wealthy widow, of easy conscience and uncertain age. Courtied and flattered alike for her charms and her wealth, for Mrs. Julia Juniper had both, she was the acknowledged belle of the country, the leader of the elite and the ruler of fashion. When Mrs. Julia Juniper gave a party it was sure to be successfully attended, and it needed only to be known that she was to be at a ball to ensure the presence of the very best society in the neighborhood.

The widow was a little above medium height, slender and graceful, with dark, sparkling eyes, clear white complexion, and black hair. She was vivacious as well as beautiful, and her sparkling wit was sufficient to enliven the dullest assemblage. Mrs. Julia Juniper owned and possessed

(as the lawyers say) a large plantation, and the granite mansion she had furnished with lavish elegance. Two or three weeks have passed since the occurrences last recorded, and many startling events have taken place. Colonel Holmes, with his force at the Junction, Col. Jones, McClellan, and fought gallantly at Phillippland on the 31st of June. Abner Tompkins had been promoted to a captaincy, and Sergeant Swords acted as a lieutenant.

Corporal Grimm wore uniform. Uncle Dan Martin accompanied the army as guide and scout, and was of invaluable service, as he knew every inch of the ground over which they had to pass. Colonel Scrabble had been compelled to fall back with his force about forty or fifty miles south, where a large force was assembling near Rich Mountain. The colonel's regiment had been recruited, refitted, and furnished with arms by the Confederate States, and the colonel himself now held a commission. Owing to the fact that Lieutenant Whimple had been disabled, perhaps for life, by his fall from his horse in the race from Uncle Dan's cabin, Oleah Tompkins had been promoted to first lieutenant.

The regiment was now encamped in the neighborhood of Mrs. Julia Juniper, and Mrs. Juniper, a Southern lady with all a Southern lady's prejudices and passions, and intense likes and dislikes, loves our sunny South, and loved every one who was engaged in defending it against the cold-blooded Northern invader, and desirous of doing all she could to cheer the brave hearts of her country's defenders, resolved to give a reception in honor of the regiment. It was at the same time a first meeting and a farewell, for the colonel hourly expected orders to march further east and join the troops massing in the valley of the Shenandoah under Johnston and Beauregard.

It was the evening of the 9th of July, 1861, and the grand mansion of Mrs. Julia Juniper was ablaze with light and splendor. The drawing-rooms, parlors, reception-rooms, and the spacious dining hall were lighted early in the evening, festooned with flags, and lavishly adorned with flowers. The piazza, the lawn, the conservatory, and even the garden, on this evening, were filled with a gay, laughing throng. Mrs. Julia Juniper had ordered all form and ceremony to be laid aside, and desired that her guests should consider her house their home. She met officer and private, as well as the entered, clasping the hand of each with a fervent, "God save our sunny South." More than one young soldier, looking on that lovely face, resolved to fight till death for a cause so dear to her.

Corporal Diggs was present, and as Mrs. Julia Juniper's hand clasped his, and he heard her say: "God bless you, my dear friend and make your arm strong to defend our beloved country," he felt proud that he had not deserted, as he declared he should, after the retreat from Twin Mountains. Mrs. Juniper was everywhere, shading on all the light of her countenance, enlivening all conversation with the rich, warm tones of her voice or her merry, musical laugh.

At least two hundred officers, commissioned and non-commissioned, fell in love with the widow, and twice as many privateers were willing to lie down and have their heads amputated for her sake. Many of our Southern soldier friends were present, among them Howard Jones and Seth Williams, both sergeants now. Corporal Diggs was in ecstasies of delight, but the presence of his old lieutenant, Seth Williams, was a slight drawback at times to his happiness. Mrs. Juniper had introduced the corporal and Seth Williams to two charming young ladies, Miss Ada Temple and Miss Nannie Noddington, both of them bright, lively girls, fond of sport. Miss Temple made herself particularly agreeable to the little apple-dumpling of a corporal.

Mr. Corporal Diggs had on a neat little suit of gray, without shoulder straps, but with yellow braid enough on his coat sleeves to indicate his office and rank. His thick hair was parted exactly in the middle, his bushy whiskers were neatly trimmed, and his glasses were on his nose. He tried to appear witty, making him appear silly enough to enlist the sympathy of any one except Seth Williams.

Seth was bent on fun and mischief, and in Miss Nannie Noddington he found an able accomplice and ally. Corporal Diggs was making an extraordinary endeavor to make himself agreeable to Miss Temple, who laughed at his witless attempts in a condescending way that was wholly irresistible, and Corporal Diggs became brilliant, drawing continually on his immense fund of knowledge, talking science, physics, and metaphysics, history, literature, and art, at last touching on the theme, sacred to love and lovers, poetry.

"Hem, hem! Miss Temple, I presume—hem—you are very fond of poetry," he said, leaning back in his chair, his soulful eyes gleaming through his glasses. "I am passionately fond of poetry, corporal," said the blonde beauty, with a winning smile. "I—hem—hem!—before I entered the army, used to be passionately fond of poetry, but the multifarious duties of an officer during these exciting times will allow no thought of poetic accomplishments."

"He is inflating now," whispered Seth Williams to Miss Noddington. "He will explode soon in a burst of poetical eloquence." Mr. Diggs, as we have seen, had a peculiar stoppage in his speech, occasioned more by habit than by any defect in the organs of articulation.

"Yes, Miss Temple, I—hem, hem, hem!—admire, or rather I adore poetry. The deep sublimity of thought—hem, hem, hem!—given forth in all of poetical expression, and—hem, hem!—as the poet says, 'the eye in fine frenzy rolling.'"

"That was in his 'Ode to an Expiring Child,' was it not?" said Seth Williams, who was one of the group. "No one could repress a smile, and Miss Noddington was attacked by a convulsive cough. "You always have a way of degrading the sublime to the ridiculous, Mr. Williams," said the little corporal, loftily.

"Who of the English poets do you like best, Corporal Diggs?" asked Miss Temple, pretending not to notice Williams' sally and the consequent discomfiture of her companion. "I—hem, hem!" said the little fellow, leaning forward and looking his hands, with as much dignity that he assumed when about to give one of his opinions. "I—hem—hem—rather partial to Scott. I don't know why, unless his wild poems rather suit my warlike nature. I like to read of Marmion, the Lady of the Lake, and the Vision of Don—Don—hem—Don—"

"Quite so," put in Seth Williams. The bright black eyes of Miss Noddington twinkled, but Miss Temple feigned sympathy with the corporal, whose memory was evidently bad. "But—hem, hem!—Miss Temple," he went on, heroic to the last, "that is a sublime as well as a truthful thought of Scott, who says,—hem, hem!—how does it begin? Oh, yes: "O woman, in our hours of ease Uncertain, coy, and hard to please,"

"Squeeze," put in Seth Williams, who was really boiling over with mischief. Miss Temple looked shocked, but Miss

Noddington only buried her blushing face in her handkerchief. The discomfited Corporal Diggs cast a furious glance at Seth Williams, who sat with a face as solemn as any judge on the bench. "Mr. Williams, such talk is very unbecoming any gentleman," said he, rising and looking as furious, to use Seth Williams' own words, "as an enraged potato bug."

"I beg the pardon of all the company," said Seth, whose face was gravity itself. "I wanted to say some word that would rhyme with care, and spoke the first that came to my mind."

"The word, sir, is 'please,'" said Corporal Diggs, reseating himself after entreaty from the ladies, who assured him that it was only a *lappus lingue* on the part of Sergeant Williams. "Now, corporal, do go on and repeat the entire verse, for I do so admire Sir Walter Scott," pleaded Miss Temple, whose roguish blue eyes were sparkling almost as brightly as those of her friend, Nannie Noddington.

"Yes, Corporal Diggs," said the beautiful Nannie, "do go on and give us the entire stanza." "Yes, the entire canto," put in Seth. There was no refusing the appeal from those blue eyes of Miss Temple or the sparkling black eyes of Miss Noddington, so, after a few "hems" and a moment spent in bringing the poem to his memory, the corporal began again:

"O woman, in our hours of ease Uncertain, coy, and hard to please; We first endure, then pity, then embrace." This time both ladies laughed outright, and even Seth Williams could not restrain a smile, while the corporal wondered what in the world could be the matter with them. "Your version is no better than mine," said Seth Williams.

"Oh! Corporal Diggs, you are too cute, you made that mistake on purpose," laughed Miss Temple. The corporal, hearing his witty blunder praised on all sides, concluded to pretend it was an intentional joke, originating from his own fertile brain; Miss Temple smiled on him, Miss Noddington declared him charmingly cute, and the corporal felt himself quite a hero.

After further favoring the company with choice selections, he launched out on history, which he brought down to the present time by allusions to his adventures since he had been in the army. "Have you ever been in any engagement, corporal?" asked sweet Miss Temple. "Yes, Miss Temple, I have been where bullets flew thicker—hem, hem—than hailstones," replied Corporal Diggs. "Where was it?" asked the blonde. "Once at Wolf Creek."

"Were you not frightened?" "I was as cool as I ever was in my life," replied Corporal Diggs, leaning back in his chair, and looking very brave. "That was because you were so deep down in mud and water under the drift-wood," put in Seth Williams.

Corporal Diggs turned a look of wrath on his companion. "Who said I was in the mud and water?" he demanded, fiercely. "Who saw me in the mud and water?" "No one, I don't suppose; but Lieutenant Whimple found you on the bank, looking very much as though you had just left the hands of Crazy Joe."

Before Corporal Diggs could reply, Miss Temple, rising, begged him to walk with her on the piazza. As the two went away, Seth laughed for the first time during the evening, and told a companion the story of Crazy Joe's mud man.

The lawn had been converted into a dining-room, and long rows of tables were spread there; Chinese lanterns hung from all the trees, and an army of black waiters was in attendance. The dining hall had been cleared and fitted for dancing, and already the soft sound of music was heard there, and gay dancers were gliding gracefully through the waltz.

It was nearly two o'clock in the morning, when Oleah Tompkins, tired of dancing, walked into the conservatory, and from there into the garden. His thoughts naturally flew back to his home, to his parents, and to her he had learned to love with all the warmth and ardor of his Southern heart. A hand touched him on the shoulder. He turned and beheld standing behind him a mulatto, one who had played the leading violin in the orchestra. He was between forty and fifty years of age, a man of grave and somber countenance.

"Well, sir, what will you have?" demanded the lieutenant, turning sharply about. "Is your name Tompkins?" asked the man. "Yes. What is your business with me?" "I was anxious to be sure," said the mulatto, "for I assure you, Lieutenant Tompkins, that I may some time be able to give you some valuable information."

"If you have any information to give, why not give it now?" demanded the young officer. "I have reasons that I can not give. To tell the reasons would be to give the information." Oleah looked fixedly into the mulatto's face. There was something unusual about him, something that impressed the young lieutenant strangely, yet, what it was, he could not tell.

"What is your name?" he asked. "They call me Yellow Steve." "How long have you been in this State," asked Oleah, after a pause. "About two years," was the answer. "Have I ever known you before?" "I don't think you ever saw me before." "Well, have you ever seen me before?" "No." "Then what can you say to me that would interest me?" "I can tell you something of the early history of her you call your sister,—something that no one on earth but myself knows. You shall know it in the future."

The mulatto turned, pushed open the door of a Summer house near by, and disappeared. "Stay!" cried Oleah. "By heavens, if you know anything of her, I will not wait, I will know it now." He sprang through the door after the mulatto, but the Summer house was vacant. The strange mulatto had disappeared as suddenly as if he had sunk into the earth. After searching vainly through the garden, Oleah returned to the house. The other musicians (all colored) knew the "yaller man who played first fiddle," but, as "he lived no where particularly," but about in spots, no one could tell where he would most likely be found.

It was late that night before Lieutenant Tomp