

IRENE THE FOUNDLING ; Or, The Slave's Revenge.

By the Author of "The Banker of Bedford."

CHAPTER XXV.—Continued.

As Irene took her station by his side, the wounded soldier opened his eyes, and vacantly stared upon the group in the room. Irene bent over him, with her hand on her eyes; his eyes rested on her with no gleam of recognition for a moment, and then feebly closed again.

Uncle Dan had ordered a litter made and four men now entered with it, and reported that everything was ready for departure. Oleah was placed upon the litter, and Irene rode beside it, half the men preceding it and half following. Mrs. Jackson, at her earnest request, had been left at the cabin, and the guarded litter was not two miles on its way before her red-headed husband came from the woods, suave and smiling, and the two hurried away toward the gap between the Twin Mountains.

The movements of Uncle Dan were necessarily slow, and it was late at night when they arrived at the plantation. Irene, with Uncle Dan, rode forward to prevent the planter and his wife for Oleah's coming, the others following slowly. We will not attempt to describe the scene that followed—their joy at Irene's return, their astonishment at her story, their anxious alarm when she told them of Oleah's condition. She had hardly ceased speaking, when they heard in the hall the slow, heavy tread of men who carried a helpless burden. A fever had set in, and Oleah was in a critical condition. A messenger was despatched to Snagtown for the family physician, and Uncle Dan left his prisoner and returned to his command at the Junction.

For ten weary days and nights Oleah was unconscious or raving in the delirium of fever, and during all that time Irene was at his side, his constant attendant. When the fever had subsided the man, once so strong and healthy as an infant, lay weak and helpless as an infant, but conscious at last, she was still at his post.

It was on a cold, still winter evening. The snow lay white over the landscape, but candlelight and firelight made all bright and warm within. As Irene returned from drawing the heavy curtains, she opened her eyes and fixed them on her, as he had done many times during his long illness, but this was not a wild vacant stare, it was a look of recognition. His lips moved, but her ear failed to catch the feeble, fluttering sound. She eagerly bent her head. Again his lips moved.

"Irene!" was the faint whisper. "Do you know me, Oleah, do you know me?" she asked, tears of joy shining in her eyes. Only his eyes answered her. Standing she pressed a kiss on his pale lips. With a smile of perfect content he raised his weak arm and put it about her neck.

But there were other anxious hearts to be soothed, and Irene left him for a moment, went swiftly through the hall, and her glad voice broke the silence of the room where sat father and mother and physician. "He will live! He will live! He knows me now."

They hastened to the sick-room. The favorable change was plainly visible, though the patient could not speak above a whisper and only a few words at a time. The doctor issued peremptory orders to keep him quiet and to let him have as much sleep as he could get.

The recovery was slow and for several days yet not certain. The winter was well spent before Oleah was sufficiently recovered to be conveyed to the Junction. His young wife accompanied him.

Oleah was detained a few days before his parole could be signed and then he was allowed to return. During the time he was in the Union camp, he and Steve were frequently thrown together, but no word escaped their lips of welcome or recognition. Abner passed silently and coldly by and Oleah maintained the indifferent bearing of a stranger. Irene saw this complete estrangement and it embittered all her joy.

On the day Oleah was paroled and was about to return home, Abner's company was on drill. The drill passed the drill ground and so near the captain that his brother might have touched him with his hand. Abner, seeing who was passing, drew his cloak about his shoulders and turned coldly away. Winter passed and spring came with its blossoming flowers and singing birds. And not only the flowers awoke, and bird song thrived the air, armies, that had lain dormant all winter, were in motion and the noise of battle was renewed.

The farmers tilled the soil. Negroes, boys and old men, and even women, toiled at the plows, while fathers and brothers, and husbands and sons were engaged in grimmer work.

tight to our bodies, or we would have lost our arms." "Well, I shall have to go to strapping mine soon, I am certain," said the young soldier with an incredulous smile.

"They was awful times when I was out with General Preston!" said the corporal, shaking his head in sad reminiscence. Abner Tompkins was with this train, but having sprained his ankle, he was unable to ride his horse, and had been placed in a wagon. All day long it had rumbled and jolted over the hills of Southern Virginia, and he was tired, sick, and faint with the constant motion. He leaned against the side of the wagon and gazed out from under the cover. He saw a long line of slow-moving, muddy wagons, and to the right a long line of infantry, some of the men wet and weary as they were singing.

Passing one part of the line, he heard a not unusual voice calling: "Oh, that darling little girl, that pretty little girl, The girl I left behind me."

Further a chorus of voices joined in: "All the world is dark and dreary Everywhere I roam."

These suddenly hushed, when the song was completed, and one poor boy, determined to rouse the drooping spirits of his comrades, was heard trying to sing "Annie Laurie."

This was soon interrupted by some wild fellow, who broke out with: "Raccoon up a gum-stump, opossum up a hollow."

Next came "Rally round the flag, boys," roared out by half a hundred throats, and all the popular songs of the day were sung as solos, duets or choruses—all, except "Dixie," for this was not a "Dixie" crowd.

"Poor fellows!" sighed Abner, as he lay back on his couch in the wagon. "Enjoy your jokes and songs if you can; it is small comfort that awaits you. Your only beds will be wet earth to-night—your only covering the lowering clouds of heaven."

Night was fast approaching, and the division commander sent men ahead to determine a suitable location for encampment. A field, with wood and water close by, was selected, and the soldiers soon spread over it. Camp-fires gleamed bright in the darkness, pickets were stationed and guards thrown around the camp.

Abner, who was unable to walk without the aid of crutches, gave his instructions for the night and then returned to the wagon, where he was to sleep. It was not an ambulance wagon, but simply a baggage-wagon, with a couch arranged within for the captain. The wide, desolate field, with its hundreds of blackened stumps, gnarled snags, and drenched and matted grass, soon presented an exciting and not an uncheerful scene. The artillery and ammunition wagons were drawn up in a hollow square in the centre of the camp, and the baggage-wagons formed a circle about them. Then over all the broad acres of the field, from its farthest hill beyond to the ravines beyond, hundreds of camp-fires appeared, and roots and snags vanished as if by magic.

Abner was a patient sufferer, and, when the regimental surgeon came with his lantern on one arm and his box of instruments, medicine and plasters on the other, he underwent, without a groan, the dressing and bandaging, firmly resolving not to have any more spined ankles to be dressed, if he could avoid it.

"Captain—hem, hem!—Captain Tompkins," said a voice, as a head was thrust in the wagon front. "Well, what will you have?" "Are you alone?" "Yes, come in."

Abner had lighted a small pipe of candle, which he had placed on a box at the head of his couch. A little round-faced man, with glasses on his nose, entered the wagon and seated himself on a camp-stool near the box, on which the captain had placed his light.

"Well, Diggs, we have had a disagreeable day for marching." "Yes, captain," said the little fellow, removing a greasy outer cap. "I have thoroughly satisfied me that I am not for the army. A soldier's life may suit coarser natures, but one such as mine, one that recoils from uncleanliness and confusion, and death by torture, should not be brought in daily contact with sights and sounds so repellent."

"I thought," said Corporal Grimm, who had just come to the wagon front, "that you had resolved to become a preacher." Mr. Diggs turned towards the new-comer with an unuttered oath.

The corporal's laugh brought half a dozen soldiers to his side. "Didn't you tell that preacher, that prayed a week for you, that you had talent for a preacher, and that you would be one if only you got out of this scrape?"

"What's the use of bringing up those old things again?" said Mr. Diggs, angrily. "I—hem, hem!—feel satisfied that my vocation lies in the editorial field. I think I shall try my hand in the newspaper business."

"Better try preaching first. Maybe you can assist the chaplain next Sunday." The little greasy outer cap flew into a rage and left the wagon, cursing the fates that would not give him renown.

Diggs having gone, the rest also withdrew, but Abner was not yet to have the rest he so much needed. Scarcely had they gone before the entrance of the wagon was darkened again, this time by that strange person we have known as Yellow Steve. Abner had not seen him since the day he prevented the combat between himself and his brother in the forest, between Snagtown and the Twin Mountains.

"Well, sir," he demanded, "what are you doing here, more than two hundred miles from your usual place of abode?" "Forests and mountains everywhere are my usual place of abode, and have been for the last eighteen years."

"You have been a slave," said Abner. "Yes, sir, and for eighteen years a fugitive. I have become accustomed to constant flying, to battling bloodhounds and their no less brutal owners, to all the mysteries of woodcraft. Many are the bloodhounds that I have put to death, and have sent more than a few negro hunters plunging over the steep cascades and mountain sides to certain death. For eighteen years my life has been devoted to the liberation of my poor race, and I can number by hundreds the fugitives whom I have induced to leave their masters and have guided to where freedom awaited them."

"What are you doing here?" "I am the sutler's steward, and, strange as you may think it, Captain Tompkins, I have come with the regiment in order to be near you, that I may strike you with wonder and horror. In these times life is uncertain, and I may be near you when my time comes. I have written it, and the manuscript can not be lost; my trunk in the sutler's camp, holds it."

"What are you doing here?" "I am the sutler's steward, and, strange as you may think it, Captain Tompkins, I have come with the regiment in order to be near you, that I may strike you with wonder and horror. In these times life is uncertain, and I may be near you when my time comes. I have written it, and the manuscript can not be lost; my trunk in the sutler's camp, holds it."

The strange being was gone, and Abner was left alone to wonder.

CHAPTER XXVII. A PRISONER.

smoke, saddened by the groans of the dying, the tears shed over the dead. Abner Tompkins had been acting principally in Eastern Virginia, Maryland, and Kentucky. His regiment had suffered severely in some of Meade's battles fought in the West. His colonel had been killed at Fair Oaks on the 31st of May, 1862, and Captain Tompkins had been promoted to the vacant place.

It was the 2nd of May, 1863, and Abner and his command, now under General Hooker, having crossed the Rappahannock and Rapidan rivers, were advancing on Chancellorsville, to meet a powerful Confederate force under Stonewall Jackson.

Yellow Steve, who was still the sutler's steward on the morning of the first day's fight at Chancellorsville, came to the Colonel's tent, just as he was preparing to take charge of his regiment.

"Well, Steve," said Abner, "we shall have some work to do to-day." "I should be surprised, Colonel, if we don't," was the reply.

"Do you think those fellows over there will fight?" "I think they will, their guns shine bright enough, and they look dangerous. I went over there this morning before daylight, and I can tell you, it will be nasty getting into that town."

"You over there, Steve? What do you mean?" "I often go over to the rebel camp," said Steve, coolly.

"Do you know that is very dangerous?" "I do not value my life very highly; it has not been worth a straw for eighteen years; all that ever was good with me has been crushed out by the very men who carry those bayonets over yonder. I have a feeling that my time has come and that you will know my story when the fight is over."

The long roll of the drum was heard calling to the field. "I must be going now, Steve," said the colonel, bucking on his sword, "but I will see you when the fight is over, if I live."

Colonel Tompkins mounted his horse, and took his place at the head of his regiment. The order to advance was given, and the entire line moved forward. Abner was ordered forward to support a battery on the extreme right, which was being thrown forward to drive a body of the enemy out of the woods. The battery unlimbered when within point-blank range, and, after the first three or four rounds, the enemy fell back. As the order to advance had been countermanded, the intrepid young colonel pushed his forces to the edge of the wood, pouring in a galling fire on the enemy. By this time the Eleventh Corps, to which Abner's regiment belonged, was fiercely engaged. The enemy poured forth twenty thousand strong and hurled themselves in the Eleventh, which was composed in great part of raw recruits. The attack was fierce, and the Eleventh, being somewhat taken by surprise, were soon forced to fall back.

Colonel Tompkins' regiment had advanced three or four hundred yards beyond the main body of troops, and the falling back of the corps was not noticed until the enemy had them almost surrounded and were pouring in showers of grape and canister, while the face of the earth seemed ablaze with musketry.

"Colonel," cried the adjutant, galloping up to Col. Tompkins, "that infernal Eleventh is routed. They are in flight." Abner's glance swept over the field. He was loth to give up the ground he had won, but they were almost surrounded. Things looked desperate. They must cut their way through and fly with the others, or surrender. Rising in his stirrups, and waving his sword, the colonel shouted in thunder tones which were heard by the entire regiment:

"Yonder is our army. To remain here is death. Cut your way through, every man for himself!" A wild cry went up, and the retreat commenced. As the colonel resumed his seat in his saddle a shell exploded in his horse's face, and, with cue wild plunge, rider and steed fell to the earth, the horse struggling in death, the master struck senseless by a fragment of the shell; in a moment more rebel infantry were pouring over the place in quick pursuit of the flying soldiers.

Abner was only stunned by the shock and fall, and his men were scarcely driven from the field when he sat up and gazed around on the scene of desolation. The roar of battle could be heard in the distance; beside him lay his dead horse, and all the field was strewn with men and horses, dead and dying.

He wiped away the blood that was flowing from a wound in his forehead, and tried to rise to his feet. A Confederate officer, seeing his endeavor, advanced and said: "Are you badly hurt, colonel?" "I think it is only a scratch," replied Abner, holding his handkerchief to his head, "but it bleeds quite freely."

"Let me assist you to bandage your head, and then we will retire to the rear." He bowed Abner's handkerchief about his head, assisted him to rise, and offered him his arm.

"No, I thank you," said Abner, "I can walk alone; I am only a little stunned." "I shall be compelled to take your sword, colonel," said the lieutenant.

"I am glad," said Abner, handing it to him, "that if I must surrender, it is to a gentleman."

Abner was conveyed to the rear of the Confederate army. During that day and part of the next the battle raged, and Hooker was finally compelled to fall back, with a loss of 11,000 men; the enemy, however, suffered an irreparable loss in the death of Stonewall Jackson, who was mortally wounded and died in a few days after. The affair was kept secret in the rebel army as long as possible, and there is yet a difference of opinion as to how he met his death, some asserting that he was accidentally shot by his own soldiers, others that he was killed by sharpshooters, while reconnoitering, and still others claim that he was assassinated.

The fourth day after the battle, several hundred prisoners, Abner among them, were brought before the provost-marshal, their names demanded and placed on a larger roll. As Abner was standing in the ranks he observed a Confederate officer near him. There was something familiar about his figure, and Abner, looking up quickly, recognized him. A soldier's sword was swung over him, a longing to speak to him, to hear his voice, to break down to sweep away, with passionate appeal, this monstrous barrier. But he smothered the impulse; his brother might think him imploring clemency at his hands, and that he would never do.

Oleah's look was only the indifferent glance of a stranger, and he passed on and made no sign.

It was no jealous rivalry that held these brothers apart. Abner felt no bitterness that his brother had won the gentle Irene's love; his feeling for her had not been the one overpowering love of a lifetime, and now he looked after Oleah with the brotherly affection so long suppressed, swelling anew in his heart, and deplored their hopeless estrangement, little dreaming that Irene had come to blame herself as the cause. But Irene was wrong; it was a deeper and had a holy passion that even love had that had worked this evil miracle—a passion which had been nursed in one son by the other's words, in the other by the mother's,

which had grown in intensity, stirring up their very souls within them, and at last overcoming all other feelings.

Colonel Tompkins' name was enrolled on the prison list, and he was marched away with the other prisoners.

CHAPTER XXVIII. OLIVIA.

Abner was kept but a few days at Chancellorsville, when he was sent to Libby prison. Here he remained but a few weeks, when, from some cause, or no cause, unless the hope that change of climate would prove fatal, he was removed to Mobile. Here he was confined for four months during the hottest weather; but, Mobile being threatened, he was removed to a small town in the eastern part of Louisiana, about fifty or sixty miles north of New Orleans, and near the headwaters of the Mississippi; here he was confined in a small stone jail. The town was nearly all French, and the regiment stationed there were nearly all of French or Spanish descent.

The colonel of the regiment, Castello Mortimer, was a citizen of the town. He had formerly been one of the cotton kings of New Orleans; but, on the capture of that city, had removed to Bay's End, where he had a large cotton plantation. Colonel Mortimer was half Spanish and half French, a portly man, open-hearted and pleasant of countenance, with kindly black eyes and thick, iron gray hair.

He was regarded as a generous, whole-souled man, although he had his bitter prejudices. He was a most uncompromising rebel, and although he knew very little about military tactics, was brave and chivalrous. He owned an untold number of slaves, and considered them as his property as a soldier, but on account of his wealth, and, as he was thought not fitted for active service, he was assigned to guard this out-of-the-way place, called Bay's End, and prisoners were brought and left there to be guarded and kept by him. Those brought to the general treatment accorded prisoners. They were furnished with clean straw to sleep on, and their food, though not always the amplest in quantity, or the best in quality, was the best that, in the distressed condition of the country, could be afforded.

Here Abner lingered for two or three months. The glorious tropical winter was coming on; the sun was losing his fiercer heat, and his rays fell with mellowed luster on the earth. The orange and citron groves made the air sweet with their perfume. The fields were yet white with cotton; but there were no slaves left now to gather it. A number of negroes, hired and forced, and whom the boon of freedom had not yet reached, were at work in and near Bay's End.

Colonel Mortimer was anxious about his cotton; as some of the negroes were constantly escaping and flying to the North, he kept a small body of soldiers detailed to watch them while they worked in the fields.

Bay's End was a beautiful village, situated on rising ground, that overlooked distant bayous, lagoons, lakes and sluggish streams, where the alligator revelled in his glory. The colonel had selected the village, on account of its healthy location, for his country residence. He had here a spacious mansion, such as only a Southern knows how to construct; and where, every Autumn, he came with his beautiful Spanish wife. But she had died years before, and the colonel's family consisted of only one daughter, now a young lady.

At the end of three months, after Abner's arrival at Bay's End, Colonel Mortimer appeared on morning at his cell door.

"Colonel," he said, "I shall be compelled to remove you from here. More prisoners are coming, and there is not room for all in this little jug."

"I hope, sir, that you will give me accommodations as good as I have at present," replied Abner.

"I shall be compelled to take you to my own house, every other place being occupied," said the fat old colonel, with a merry twinkle in his black eyes.

"Surely, if I fare as well as my jailer, I can not complain," said Abner.

He followed Colonel Mortimer from the prison, and stood still for a moment, looking about him in the glorious sunshine, up and down the shaded street, and at the orange groves in the distance. Never had nature seemed so beautiful to him before. For weeks at a time he had not seen the light of the sun, except through grates, for the rays that had struggled into his dungeon were shorn of their splendor. Now all the beauty of a tropical climate burst on him at once—the fields of cotton the cloudless sky and the sweet scent of flowers, that continually bloom in this land of endless Summer.

"Oh, beautiful, beautiful!" murmured the prisoner, a moisture gathering in his eyes.

"What is beautiful?" asked the colonel, who was by his side; two soldiers walking in the rear.

"This world, which God has given us," was the reply.

"Yes, it is a beautiful world," said the rebel.

But we know not how to appreciate it, until we have been for a while deprived of the sight of its beauties," answered Abner.

"Yonder is my home," said the Confederate, pointing to a large granite building. "It is not, perhaps, in strict accordance with military discipline, to keep a prisoner in one's own house, but I have no other place for you."

"I wish your home was farther away," said Abner.

"Why, sir?" "That I might longer enjoy the free air and sunshine."

The tender-hearted old colonel wiped his face vigorously with his red bandana, and the rest of the journey was made in silence.

On entering the house, the colonel took his prisoner into a reception room, opening from the hall, to wait until his prison room could be made ready.

"You will be granted some privileges here, that you have not had before," said the colonel. "You will be permitted to walk in the grounds once in every two or three days for an hour or so."

"I shall be very grateful to you for the favor, Colonel Mortimer," said Abner. At this moment his quick ear caught the sound of a gay, girlish voice on the stairway, and the swish of silken draperies. Then the door opened and a young girl entered. She cast a quick, surprised glance about the room, as one will, entering a room supposed to be vacant, to find therein a stranger. For a moment she hesitated.

"Come in, Olivia," said the colonel. "My dear, this is our prisoner, Colonel Tompkins. My daughter, Olivia."

blasting of bugles and the sullen roar of cannon. He blushed like an awkward school-boy, as he bowed before her queenly little figure.

"I am very sorry to see you a prisoner," she said. "It must be very hard to suffer confinement; to know that the flowers bloom and the birds sing, without being able to partake of their joy."

The gentle words betrayed a heart, kind and womanly. Abner felt that to lay down his life at her feet would be the highest bliss a man might hope for.

"I assure you, Miss Mortimer, that prison life is not desirable, but I am more fortunate than most prisoners, while I have your father for my jailer, and his mansion for my jail, I can well endure my captivity."

"Colonel," said the old Confederate impulsively, "I have a notion to parole you and give you the freedom of the place. It will be pleasant for you and easier for me." "For such a privilege, sir, I would be grateful indeed. I already owe much to your generosity, but this I can hardly realize."

"And I shall make Olivia your jailer," said the old colonel, with a quiet laugh, that caused his frame to quiver like agitated jolly. "Then, sir, my imprisonment will be no punishment at all, but rather a lot to be envied," replied Abner.

"My dear, do you think you can guard a man who has led a thousand soldiers to the field of battle?" said the old colonel, with another quiet laugh.

"He don't look dangerous, papa, and I can find him sufficient occupation; busy people, you know, are not apt to get into mischief."

"Do you comprehend, colonel?" said Colonel Mortimer. "She means to make you a galley slave as well as a prisoner."

"Even such servitude, under such a mistress, would be a pleasure," answered Abner. The old Confederate, being part French, was polite, being part Spanish, was chivalrous, and when he had taken into his head to treat his prisoner well, seemed unable to do enough for him. So Abner remained in the colonel's mansion, hardly realizing that he was a prisoner, treated rather as a guest. Since he had been brought to the house of the commander at Bay's End, Abner had greatly improved in personal appearance. By chance he had retained a suit of undress soldier's uniform, which had not been soiled by the dampness of prison. He had been close shaven, excepting his light-colored mustache, and he had his hair trimmed by Colonel Mortimer's own barber. Still when in the presence of the Confederate's beautiful daughter, he always lost his self-possession; his conversational powers, and, in fact, his common sense, seemed suddenly to desert him. He could only listen in silence, or make disjointed, incoherent replies.

Olivia sympathized with the poor prisoner, who was so far from home and friends. She did every thing in her power to cheer him, she misanthropic his feelings and attributed his silence and sadness to the hardships he had suffered during his imprisonment and his long absence from home. She sang and played for him, she read to him, she walked and talked with him, revealing all her past history, telling him of the years she had passed in one of the New England seminaries, of her mother's death in her early girlhood, and of many incidents in her bright pleasant life, to which the war as yet had brought no bitterness.

It was several weeks, after Col. Mortimer had brought Abner to his home, that the shattered remnant of a Confederate regiment, passing through the village, passed to rest. There were not over three hundred men in the regiment fit for duty, and some of these were battle-scarred. Colonel Mortimer invited the commander of this brave little band to his house. He informed his prisoner and his daughter that a brave and distinguished officer would dine with them that day—a young man, a brigadier-general—he could not recall the name, but they would meet him at dinner. Abner and his fair jailer were in the garden when the guest arrived, for, although it was in the month of February, the weather on this particular day was fine, and the garden was yet a pleasant resort.

They went together towards the house, and, passing the low, open window, saw the rebel general engaged in conversation with Colonel Mortimer—a young man, with fine, black eyes, black hair and black mustache.

It was his brother. Abner turned suddenly pale. He detained Olivia for a moment, told her he had been taken suddenly ill, begged her to make his excuses to her father, and left her at the door of the dining-room. The distinguished general dined, and, later on, left with the gallant remnant of his regiment. Olivia was too much rejoiced at the prisoner's rapid recovery to inquire into its cause.

CHAPTER XXIX. THE ALARM—THE MANUSCRIPT.

The fountain gleamed beneath the beams of the Southern moon, gentle zephyrs stirred the waves on the lake below, and the soft breeze wafted sweetest perfumes through the splendid gardens of Colonel Mortimer. Spring had come—Spring more than beautiful in this tropical clime.

Months had passed since last we saw Colonel Tompkins and his beautiful jailer, who now stand side by side by the splashing fountain. To him these months had seemed like a dream of heaven.

Never did he believe that such surpassing happiness could fall to the lot of any human being. Even now, at times, it did not seem real. When he paused to reflect, he thought it must be some delightful dream that would pass and take with it all the brightness of life. Could there be on the face of this earth a being so lovely; a mansion, a village, a country so perfectly delightful? Was it not some wild imagination of some artist that had turned his brain?

No, it was all real. Olivia was not paint and canvas, but flesh and blood; a living reality, though face and form were so beautiful; her voice was sweetest music, and her soul pure as her perfect face. Young as she was, Olivia had had many suitors, but the pale young man from Virginia, with his handsome, melancholy face, had won her heart. Perhaps it was pity that first stirred her soul—pity for the poor prisoner so far from home and friends; pity for his former sufferings, and admiration for his brave record.

He had apparently succeeded in overcoming the mood that had held him silent and abashed in her presence, for now, as they stood in the pale moonlight and listen to the murmuring fountain, which seems, like their own hearts, to overflow for very gladness, the arm of the young colonel in blue clasps the yielding form of his jailer, and it is he who speaks, and she who listens in silence.

Darkness fell over the lake as they lingered. A light moved over the dark waters. The lovers saw it not. Another light and yet another appeared, first mere luminous points or stars, but gradually growing in size as they approached. No one, certainly not the inhabitants of Bay's End, would have dreamed of a floating battery of steamers crossing that shallow lake.

For days the Union forces had been busy damming up all the outlets of the lake, and the water had been gradually rising, occasioning considerable comment among the inhabitants.

Slowly the lights glided over the dark face of the water. As they came nearer, they grew the bulk of three monster gunboats, sweeping up towards the village. The sentry gave the alarm.

Simultaneously with the alarm came a great blinding flash from one of the monsters of the water; then a ball of fire circled through the air, and an explosion shook the village to its centre. Another, another, and another shell, hurled from the gunboats, and came curving through the air and exploded in the streets of the village.

Abner cast a quick glance around, seeking some place of safety for the terrified Olivia. The stone fence that bounded the grounds seemed to offer the most inviting retreat at present. Scarcely had he placed the frightened girl on the opposite side of the wall than water nymphs in the fountain, tearing their wet tresses and peeces and scattering fragments far and wide; then a solid shot struck the mansion.

At this moment a rocket shot up skyward, leaving a long red tail, from the palmetto and orange groves at the north of the village, and wild cheers went up from a land force on that side. The bombardment from the gunboats ceased.

"What is it, what is it?" cried the terrified girl. "Don't be frightened," answered Abner. "You will be quite safe here." "But what is that awful noise? Is the lake blowing up? Is an earthquake coming?" "No, it is gunboats bombarding the town." "Then, let us hasten to the house. We shall be killed here," she cried. "No, no, Olivia, that would not do," he answered, "for they will make the house an especial mark, it being the largest building in the village. Here is the safest place we can find for us present."

The wild yell of lead troops, as they advanced on the village, again rose on the air. The poor girl looked questionably at her companion, speechless with terror.

"They are soldiers, who have come around by land, and are advancing on the village." "Oh, let me go! I must go home, I must go to my father!"

She struggled wildly in Abner's grasp, for he held her fast. "Just listen to me one moment, Olivia," he entreated. "Can you not trust me? I tell you truly that the most dangerous place in town is at your father's house. Already a cannon ball has struck it, and if the present sortie is repulsed the cannonade will be instantly resumed, and it will be battered down."

"But my father is there?" "No, he is in the village, forming his men to meet the attack. This is the only place of safety for you. They will scarcely throw any shells over here, and the fight will be on the other hill."

Bay's End was in a state of confusion. Colonel Mortimer was aroused by the first cannon shot, and was making ready for the attack. The long roll of the drum and the trumpets sounded, and the half-dressed Confederates fell hastily into line. Colonel Mortimer had three field pieces in his camp turned on the gunboats, and they belched forth fire and smoke at the monsters, making the very earth shake. But their most deadly foe was the land force, which was coming down in a solid column.

From behind the stone wall Abner could see the old Confederate colonel leading his men to meet them.

The Union forces advanced up the hill with fixed bayonets.

"Fire!" cried Colonel Mortimer. A roar of fire-arms shook the air, and for a moment caused the advancing line to waver. The fire had but little effect, however. One or two of the soldiers fell, but most the leaden hail swept over their heads.

"Forward!" commanded a voice among that line of dark blue coats, and they rushed up the hill.

"Fire!" came Colonel Mortimer's command again.

Not more than a dozen guns responded. All had been emptied in the first volley, and the enemy was now almost upon them.

"Stand firm!" cried the brave old colonel, waving his sword in the air. "Don't give way an inch! Shoot them down as they come!"

Drawing his revolver, he commenced firing at the line and, several officers followed his example. His men, taking courage, began to reload. The Union forces halted and poured a raking fire into the Confederate ranks. Men fell to the left and to the right of the old colonel, but he was yet unharmed.