



The DAY of the DUEL

THE PORTION OF HATE



THE speaker paused in the midst of a bitter tirade and continued to pace the floor with hands clasped behind him. The stoop that the position gave to his figure thrust his head forward and accentuated the unnatural length of thin jaw from angle to chin. His straight, scanty hair, a pale, unhealthy yellow in color, stood awry about a strangely bulging forehead. The hint of wildness in action and appearance was offset by cold gray eyes, a competent guard that bespoke full command at will.

"You see how it is, Farquhar," he resumed more quietly. "To think of these things sometimes drives me frantic. But who would be proof against it? Here am I, twenty-five years old, a son of my father as truly as this pitiful, whining girl, brought up to wealth and the taste for more, and yet without the prospects of a roustabout. I tell you he will never leave me a sou marquee."

Farquhar, a fashionably dressed man, nearing thirty but affecting an almost boyish juvenility of attire, with fresh cheeks and carefully tended hands, was playing with a riding crop.

"As the elder of the two he should certainly do as much for you at least as for your half-sister," he said.

"But he will not. He has transferred to me the resentment he bore against my poor mother before her death, though Heaven knows she had the greater cause to hate him. He cancelled the account, as he thought, when he legitimized me."

"You think there is a chance, then, if your sister does not marry?"

"I admit I think it possible. He grows irascible, senile. He wishes to see his name continued. It has become an obsession, a fixed idea with him. I have studied this sister of mine, Ellen. As much as one may understand a woman, I believe that she has set her heart fully upon Menefee. If their marriage can be permanently prevented, if they can be parted, she will give herself up to moping and pining. So she does at present when he leaves her."

"Now, observe how I see it. If she yields to despair, refuses to wed with any other, she will completely overbear our father's patience. He will abuse her, threaten her, and yet she has enough of steel somewhere within her concerning such matters, planted there by some providential notions of sentiment. Weak in other things, she is strong in this—that she must love as pleases her. Mind that I have watched and analyzed her. Well, and the result? Our father, seeing nothing but a dead branch in her, may transfer some of his affection to me, and once I have a hold upon him his fortune is mine. It is his hope and pride in her that make me now little better than an outcast."

Would Break the Romance.

Farquhar smiled and tapped his boot. "But in building this air castle you have overlooked your first step. She is engaged to Menefee; he is alive, very much so, and in full possession of the field. And you have no means with which to break the pretty romance."

David Richard gazed with a faraway expression at his friend a moment and then resumed his nervous pacing of the room.

"There are ways," he said briefly. Farquhar watched him and yawned. "Well, Dickie, God knows I wish you all luck. You were never meant to waste your talents in obscurity. And then, not to recall an unpleasant subject, there is the little matter of dollars owing me which, to be frank, I see little chance of your paying unless you get a portion of the estate."

Richard waved the suggestion aside. "You know perfectly well that you will lose nothing by me. Even if this falls I can find some means to erase our account. Just now this appears to be the best opportunity that offers and you can wait."

"I have done little else for some time, Dickie," returned Farquhar with a grimace. "But there, don't glare at me! You're a great man, Dickie! It sticks out all over you. I shouldn't care to be furnished with a diagram of all the schemes you may devise when the case becomes desperate. Just keep them from me, will you, Dickie? But I'd go long odds on your fetching up at the top of the pile."

Richard accompanied the scented favorite of Vicksburg society to the hotel where they usually spent their afternoons with a group of the wealthy young men, who found a turn at the cards or dice desirable before the evening meal. Nothing more on the subject so near to the tardily recognized son of the old cotton planter, Moore Richard, was exchanged between them.

At that hour George Menefee, the young Kentucky attorney, who had come to Mississippi a year before, was riding from his office toward the Richard mansion. Dismounting at the steps, he found Ellen Richard awaiting him with outstretched hands. He was a big man, with strong, heavily moulded face, and had done well in his profession. His love for the girl dated from their first meeting, soon after his arrival. She was small, not dashing, beautiful, but fair and dainty, with a charm that came from grace of manner and sympathetic, expressive features.

Urged to Name the Day.

Before they sought a corner of the lofty columned porch she led him into the house for a word with her father. Old Richard, white, lined, crippled prematurely in mind and body by disease, greeted him shrilly.

"Well, George," he said, extending a feeble hand to the other, "there you are again, and Ellen." He looked from one to the other, nodding approval. "Come, now, when is it to be? You have set the day, eh? I suppose the old man can't be in the secret, eh?" He shook a finger at them, laughing weakly but with faintly good nature and an almost pathetic desire to play the complacent parent in the match.

"George thinks we would better wait for a month or two, until the Frost case is decided," said the girl, looking down.

"Now, why—why?" the invalid complained. "Here's a pretty how-de-do, when the old man must urge you young folks before the parson. It was different when I was young," he added, shaking his head. "George, my boy, set the day. What difference if you win or lose the case? There are others, and I know you for a skillful lawyer. But I am not strong or well. I want to see you happily married. It is the one thing I can take satisfaction in, sitting here almost help-



AGAIN HE MADE A SLIGHTING REMARK CONCERNING MENEFEE.

less, to see my daughter well provided for. Will I have to kidnap both of you and make you tie the knot?"

Menefee smiled at the strange situation, then turned to Ellen. "Let it not be said of me that I refused to take the prize," he said gayly. "I was only trying to be wise and dignified, Mr. Richard."

"Wise and dignified! At your age? Leave that to me. If you have a fault, George, it is a morbid notion that you must play the ancient. Settle the date now and let's have it over with."

"I see I made a mistake in not consulting you before," said Menefee, laughing. "You have most effectively banished all those long-legged plans that I, left to myself, so carefully devised."

"And you must live here," the aged man went on eagerly. "What are we to do with this great house otherwise? I want to see you both near me. You can have the whole east wing to yourselves."

And so the arrangements were made, old Richard cackling in happiness at the success of his abrupt interference, Menefee and Ellen beaming upon him, upon each other and upon the future in general. When David Richard reached home late that evening he learned from his negro servant that the wedding had been set for the last week in May, just a month off.

Shaping His Schemes.

Confronted by the final wedding of the forces which, as he conceived, held him from his inheritance, the young man set to work to consolidate the schemes which had formed vaguely in his mind. David Richard was proud, ambitious, unscrupulous. Even-minded observers had noticed the coldness of his father toward him, but had assigned the situation to reasons which contrasted sharply with those he advanced himself.

The young man had never touched his parent's affection. He had been a party to several adventures undertaken by the set he followed which had cast a shadow upon all involved. He had been disobedient, headstrong and impatient of restraint. The result had been to widen steadily the breach between the elder man and himself. There were few among the planter's friends who could bring the indictment of harshness against him in his treatment of his son, though there were many to blame him for his earlier domestic tangle. Still others held that he was now expiating his fault and saw in David's disposition the promise of a judgment upon the father.

The young man, with the sharp, balanced intelligence which lurked beneath all his outward eccentricity and recklessness, had gauged the situation correctly. All his father's pride of race and personal vanity were now centered in seeing an heir or heirs to his large fortune. Lacking sympathy with David, from whatever reason, he had drawn the closer to Ellen. The marriage of the half sister meant that David would obtain but small share of the patrimony. If, on the other hand, he could thwart Ellen, make the marriage impossible, he foresaw that the petulant irritability of the invalid might be aroused to any height by disappointment and her refusal to wed another. At that point David meant to step in with changed demeanor, follow his father's wishes in all things and reap the reward.

But how to compass his end? He had already searched for some hidden entanglement in Menefee's past that might serve as a weapon without result. He had thought for a moment of fighting the young lawyer, but had recoiled from it. Aside from dislike of the risk, even if successful, he could not appear as the architect of Ellen's misfortunes. And Menefee had killed his man twice in Kentucky.

The day of the wedding was still two weeks off when David joined his usual group of companions at the hotel, to find there one who of late had been a stranger to them. This was Alexander McClung, one of the most remarkable characters of Mississippi, feared by all and admired by the young spirits that had made of him a hero. A tall, commanding man of fierce and distinguished appearance, he was known throughout the South as a professional duellist. His

victims numbered twelve, and in every meeting he had killed his opponent.

McClung Quarrelsome.

He was quarrelsome and vindictive, and only the fact that he came of an excellent family and that he was quick to resent the slightest hint of avoidance assured recognition for him in social circles. David had always treated him with the most profound respect and now saluted him cordially. The friendship between them had begun to grow at the time when David's differences with his father first became a matter of common report. The young man knew the reason.

Years before McClung had courted the woman who was Ellen's mother. She had refused him and had married the planter Richard. McClung, who had not acquired his desperate reputation at that time, was supposed to have nourished the bitterness of the disappointment ever since. He had been high to Richard that only secured the ill health of Richard had pressed the planter from his deadly pistol. He had never seen the daughter. The fact that no love was lost between David and his father recommended the young man to the duellist's friendship.

It was during the course of conversation with McClung that evening that the seeds of a plot germinated in David's mind. McClung confided a need of money. Richard replied that he thought the lack could be easily remedied.

"I have heard you used to practise law some years ago," he said.

"Yes," said McClung, "there was a time when I carried the green bag or its equivalent. But it is long since I worried with the musty profession."

"Then here is your chance," said David. "The Frost case has been a gold mine for every pettifogger in town during the year of your absence. The attorneys have flocked here like buzzards to a sick horse, and every man with a pretence to the law has been sure of service on one side or the other. The two Frost cousins are involved in elaborate litigation over a rich estate. Now, I am close to one of them, and I think I can induce him to engage you. Would you accept?"

"With all celerity, my dear Richard," answered McClung. "Unpleasant as it may be to acknowledge, the fact remains that I am in straits. I should be under great obligations if you could procure me the employment."

The matter rested there and David visited Daniel Frost next morning. He had cultivated his acquaintance with the litigant, and the fact that Menefee was of course for the opposing cousin had contributed to his friendliness. He now had reason to congratulate himself upon his foresight. Daniel Frost knew of McClung, and what was of more profit with him, was familiar with his reputation. He was quite willing to add to his array of counsel a man whose ability as a pleader might be open to question, but whose accuracy with firearms would make him a redoubtable figure in any argument. David left him and returned with McClung. A satisfactory adjustment was soon reached.

Arranging the Two Men.

"Colonel," said David, after they had left Frost, "there is only one man on the other side of this case who is capable of holding it up. The rest of them are stuffed figures, and they'll drop like a shot when they see you in court. Menefee is the name of the chap I mean. He's a newcomer from Kentucky and a close friend of my father. I won't say but what he's game, and clever, too. If any one stands against you at a pinch he will be that one."

"All right, Dickie," was McClung's response. "Let him stand from under. I'll go to meet some of my conferees in the case and brush up on my erudite grasp of the subject."

David understood the sidelong glance that accompanied these words. McClung knew, as he knew and Frost knew, that the presence of the duellist was valuable merely as an intimidating force. He was ex-

pected to have much more dangerous ammunition than that supplied by Blackstone in reserve.

David was on hand to watch the development of his scheme at the next sitting of court. The surprise and consternation among the legal forces of Benjamin Frost occasioned by the unexpected appearance of McClung in the ranks of their opponents were evident. Noble flights of eloquence were restrained and the day's proceedings, taken up by cross-examination of Daniel Frost's witnesses, were sufficiently dull. McClung took no active part in the struggle, but sat among his associates, silent, observant and menacing. Menefee, whose specialty was sustained speaking, was also idle during the cross-examination.

Summing up did not begin until the close of the week and David was again on hand. Menefee's effort was masterly and convincing. It was evident that he was the biggest man in the case and that he had a sure grip upon it. The feeling among those in the courtroom when he had finished was that this stranger from Kentucky would pull his client through to victory during the closing engagements of the notable fight. When he sat down McClung arose to respond. The duellist was calm and deliberate. He was a ready speaker, and during his first remarks he presented a fairly clear version of his side. This done, he carefully injected into his speech a thinly veiled insult directed against Menefee. A murmur arose from the crowded room.

David, who was sitting beside Farquhar, leaned toward his friend and pressed his arm. The dandy looked inquiringly at him a moment and then nodded in understanding. Menefee's strong face was flushed with anger. The presiding judge tapped to still the commotion and McClung proceeded. Again he made a slighting remark concerning Menefee, accompanying it this time with a direct and piercing glance at the Kentuckian. A moment later he sat down and one of the other lawyers for Daniel Frost took up the routine. But David knew from Menefee's face that the first step toward his purpose had been won.

Demanding an Apology.

He received confirmation of his belief while the crowd was leaving the courtroom after adjournment. He had pressed to McClung's side. On the steps they were confronted by Menefee, who stepped directly up to the duellist.

"Sir," said the Kentuckian, "I shall have to ask you to withdraw the remarks you have just made so far as they apply to me personally. I find no objection to your legitimate support of your client, but I cannot allow what you directed against me to pass."

McClung looked him coolly over from head to foot, then glanced absently beyond him into the street.

"Is that Farquhar I see over there?" he asked of David, apparently oblivious to Menefee's existence. The Kentuckian's temper flared. He came closer. "You are unbearable, sir. I demand an apology."

Still McClung seemed not to hear. He turned toward David to make another remark. In the heat of his anger Menefee struck him lightly. "Perhaps that will make you listen to me," he said.

McClung faced his opponent in earnest with a glance of terrible intensity.

"No man ever struck Alexander McClung and lived," he said, and the quiet but penetrating quality of his voice took all suggestion of bombast from the words. "You can now do the listening, sir. You will hear from me." Menefee bowed and walked quickly away.

Word of a duel impending between the two leaders in the day's session in the Frost case spread rapidly. As to the probable outcome of the conflict there was some difference of opinion. While McClung was notoriously proficient with his weapons, it was pointed out that hard living must have had its effect and that Menefee was a stranger to the field of honor. The Kentuckian was much younger and must be conceded the advantage of steady nerves and a clean life.

Menefee had some hope of keeping word of the approaching encounter from the Richard mansion, but in this he did not count upon David. The planter's son knew that nothing could now intervene to prevent the

meeting, and he gave himself the pleasure of acting as the bearer of the evil news to his father and his half-sister.

Hearing the Evil News.

Ellen was prostrated. Old Richard became agitated, and in his anxiety suffered an attack of his malady. His daughter's distress aggravated his irritability and he denounced Menefee bitterly. He looked upon the duel as an affair directed deliberately against his peace of mind. What was the fellow thinking of to fight almost on the eve of his wedding? He awaited the Kentuckian's daily visit with impatience, but Menefee did not come. Instead he sent a brief note saying that he had been detained on business at Vicksburg at midnight.

The planter stormed, but Ellen read the message aright. She returned an answer informing her betrothed that she knew of the duel and begging him to meet her at the gate of the Richard home that evening.

There were few abroad in Vicksburg at midnight. A light breeze was stirring. A few frayed clouds drifted athwart the moonlight from time to time. The town had sunk to rest. A tall figure moved slowly with noiseless step, along a road leading past the Richard house. In an open space, where a patch of silver spread to the broken edges of the shadows, the figure was discernible as that of a tall, thin man of middle age. He walked with his hands clasped behind him and his chin sunk upon his breast. He took no heed of his surroundings, following the path and mechanically. As he went on one of the ragged curtains drew across the moon and he continued in darkness.

A woman's voice, tearful, pleading, broke upon his reverie and he stopped abruptly. His outstretched hand rested upon a fence railing as he stared into the black vacancy ahead. Suddenly the veil above was withdrawn and light shone dimly upon a strip of lawn close beside him where he could look through the close bushes. A man was standing there, and the white drawn face was that of Menefee. Kneeling at his feet, with both hands holding one of his and with upraised, appealing eyes, was Ellen Richard. The hidden witness of this scene reeled and caught the railing again for support. His gaze was fixed wildly upon the woman's face. Once more a film of cloud blotted out the moon in obscurity. With a strange, strangled cry he staggered back to the path and began to run, uncertainly, in the direction from which he had come.

The duel between Menefee and McClung was fought in the presence of a large crowd of spectators. Concealment was unnecessary. The spirit of the community was wholly in favor of such affairs and privileged persons attended a meeting as they would any other spectacle. When the principals were ready to make their stand it was with difficulty that those present could be forced back to clear the necessary ground.

Rifles at Sixty Yards.

McClung had named Mississippi rifles at sixty yards, and since that condition had been made public betting had favored Menefee's chances. Besides the fact that sympathy was with him as against his antagonist, it was believed that he was more familiar with this particular weapon than the duellist. McClung's choice occasioned considerable surprise, since all his previous encounters had been fought with pistols.

McClung was in a savage temper and still further alienated the support of the spectators by his quick answers to his seconds and his belligerent attitude. The Kentuckian, on the other hand, was courteous and gentle, taking care to ease and showing no change of manner that would indicate fear, nervousness or resentment. He returned McClung's angry glare steadily. The rifles were loaded and placed in the hands of the combatants. The seconds stood aside. The crowd watched breathlessly.

"Are you ready?" asked McClung's second sharply.

"Ready," answered both men firmly.

"Fire! One, two!"

At the word "two" Menefee's rifle rang out. Bark was seen to fly from the trunk of a tree back of McClung and in line with him. The bullet had passed just above his head. To the astonishment of all, McClung's weapon did not answer, and suddenly the duellist, with a furious oath, hurried it from him. It fell in the sand some thirty feet away, burying its muzzle deeply. McClung stamped about, raving. The rifle had hung fire.

The duellist's actions were those of a madman. He could not be calmed. He shook his fists, swearing that a spell had been put upon him.

"I knew it! I knew it!" he cried incoherently. "She is fighting for him! She always hated me. But I'll get him yet. I demand my shot, my shot!"

After ten minutes his seconds brought him a some show of reason. The rifle was recovered and the sand shaken from the barrel. When the men had taken their positions again McClung had forfeited the good will of all the spectators by his behavior—all but one, for David was there.

Once more the space was cleared and the silence fell. Once more they answered the second.

"Fire!"

The word had scarcely been pronounced ere McClung discharged his weapon. Menefee's finger had not yet closed upon his trigger. There was a metallic crash and the Kentuckian, dropping his weapon, sank to the ground, his face covered with blood. A physician ran to him and lifted him. The wounded man tried to speak, once, twice, then collapsed limply. It was found that the bullet from McClung's rifle had smashed the lock of Menefee's rifle. A jagged fragment had been hurled deep into the young man's brain, killing him almost instantly.

In the Frenzy of Triumph.

McClung held his place after firing. Rising to his full height he peered through the smoke toward his antagonist. He was intensely excited. "Is he dead? Is he dead?" he asked his second, who ran toward him. "Yes," was the answer. "A splinter from the lock went through his head."

McClung dropped upon his knees and pressed his rifle affectionately to his bosom, while the crowd watched him in amazement. The duellist handled his weapon as he might a child and kissed it. "I won," he muttered. "I could not shoot him; she kept the bullet from him. But I killed him!"

Six months later the planter Richard and his daughter were buried within a few days of each other, the latter having taken her life with her own hand after her father's death. David Richard was left in full possession of the large estate.

McClung never fought another duel, chiefly because of the fear in which he was held. Belief steadily gained ground that the man's reason was affected. He served as an officer in the First Mississippi Rifles during the Mexican War under Jefferson Davis. After his return he became morose, shunned company and gave himself up to a solitary and melancholy existence.

One day toward the end of his life he visited the cemetery and asked to be shown the grave of Ellen Richard. When the custodian led him to the Richard family plot and pointed out two stones bearing the name, asking him whether he meant the mother or the daughter, he became confused and had to be helped to his home.

He was found dead in bed one morning, his favorite duelling pistol, with which he had killed a dozen men, still in his hand. He had shot himself through the right temple.

"On the Bayou Road," Next Week.