

CHATTANOOGA



A FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY WAR STORY
BY F. A. MITCHEL.

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SYNOPSIS

Private Mark Malone, U. S. A., sent as a spy to Chattanooga by General Thomas is saved from guerrillas by Souri Slack. Disguised as a countryman, Mark starts for Chattanooga with Jakey, Souri's brother. Mark is to send Souri her red handkerchief in a parcel.

Mark and Jakey are given shelter by Laura Fain and her mother. Laura suspects Mark is a Union soldier in disguise. He confesses that he is. Laura is a Confederate. She prevents her lover, Captain Cameron Fitz Hugh, C. S. A., from detaining Mark.

Mark learns that a big Confederate army is massing at Chattanooga and planning a northward dash. He attempts to escape from Chattanooga.

He carries Jakey in safety past the picket line and unexpectedly meets a band of Confederate deserters. He and Jakey are then taken prisoners.

Mark is imprisoned as a spy. Jakey sends Souri's handkerchief to her by a negro. Mark, defended by Fitz Hugh, is sentenced to death.

Souri receives her handkerchief and, disguised as a colored girl, goes to Mark's rescue. She becomes a servant in the jail.

Souri and Mark exchange clothing, and with a blackened face Mark passes the guard. Bloodhounds follow him. He takes to the river.

Reaching the Fain house, Laura conceals him and gives him food and new clothing. She upbraids him for seeking her protection.

Souri and Jakey are sent home by the Confederate provost marshal. Mark poses as Professor Rhett of South Carolina in the Fain home.

He sends Uncle Daniel, a negro, to Chattanooga for further military information. Captain Fitz Hugh, calling unexpectedly, captures Mark.

Laura insists that Fitz Hugh permit Mark to escape. He does so, and their engagement is broken. Mark, Laura and her mother start for Nashville.

Mark, endeavoring to pass a Confederate picket, says he and Laura are Mr. and Mrs. Green. They are detained. Mark and Laura agree to be man and wife in reality.

Fitz Hugh appears, hears that Mark and Laura are married and aids Mark to escape. Mark reaches the Union lines in safety.

Laura and her mother rejoice Mark, and a legal marriage is performed. Mark assures Laura he will be a spy no longer.

actly feel satisfied to put the elder brother in a place given up to the servants."

"What nonsense, Laura! We are taking a great risk to let them into the house at all. Heaven grant that the horses are not all taken before morning. The man may be in league with a band of guerrillas, for all we know."

The daughter withdrew, for the moment quite impressed with her mother's prudence. As she stepped out on the veranda Mark rose respectfully and stood looking into her black eyes with his blue ones. Her mother's caution fled away before that honest countenance.

"You can have some supper," she said, "if you care to eat it in the lower hall, and you can sleep—you can sleep!"

Mark was bowing his thanks.

"Would you mind sleeping in?"—She paused again.

"The barn? Certainly not."

"You know these are troublous times," she said apologetically, "and we are alone. I mean we haven't many men in the house," she quickly added, conscious of having made known the household's weakness to a stranger.

Mark smiled. The young lady was looking at him as he did so, and she thought he had a very charming smile.

"We will sleep anywhere you choose to put us. Leastways we ain't particular."

The first sentence was spoken in his natural way; the second in dialect. Mark's manner of speaking to her was singularly mixed.

"I suppose you men are fighting our battles," he remarked to relieve an awkward cause.

"Papa is away."

"Have you no brothers?"

"Yes, one; he is fighting for the Confederacy."

"And your father—is he at the war?"

"No; papa does not care much about the war."

"Perhaps he's a Union man."

"Well, yes, Papa is Union."

Mark concluded to hazard a surmise.

"Was he driven out?" he asked.

"Not exactly," she said, with a frown. "He's gone north, though."

She did not like to tell the whole story to a stranger, who was gradually getting a good deal of information. Her father had come to Chattanooga from the north years before, where he had married a southern woman. After the opening of the war, on account of his pronounced Union sentiments, he had been warned several times to leave, and his family were much relieved when he was well away from the danger that threatened him.

"You are divided," said Mark, "as we are. Now, my little brother hyar's a Union boy. I'm Confederate."

There was a pause, and the girl, remarking that she would see about their supper, turned and went into the house.

It was quite dark before supper was announced. The mistress of the house came out, and as Mark saw her eyeing them both he knew that she came to



tenions."

"And you go to Chattanooga tomorrow?" asked the mother.

"Yes, ma'am; I callate ter do some traden thar."

"And you will return this way?"

"I reckon I'll be along hyar in a few days."

The mother arose and walked with all the stateliness of a southern high born matron into the house. There she resumed the book she had been reading earlier in the evening.

Mark had kept up his assumed character very well during her presence. Now that he was left alone with the daughter he was put to a much severer test. He had been so used from his childhood to meet a refined bearing with one equally refined that he found it difficult to avoid doing so now.

"Don't you love to look at the stars, Mr. Slack?" asked the young lady.

"Waal, yas, Miss—"

"My name is Laura Fain."

"I hev always been fond o' the science of"— He paused; he suddenly remembered that poor "white trash" were not usually versed in any of the sciences.

"Astronomy," she supplied.

"Waal, yas."

"How did you come to learn astronomy?"

"Oh, I don't know nothen 'bout it," he said quickly. "I hearn a man at Jasper talken onct. He said a heap o' quar things."

"What bright star is that?" pointing.

"Venus, I reckon."

"I wonder how far it is from us?" she said musingly.

"Venus? Why, Venus is sixty-eight millions of miles, I reckon."

"I happen to know that's a correct answer."

Mark suddenly became conscious of having forgotten himself. He recollected his critical position and resolved to proceed with greater care.

"How far is the moon?" asked Miss Fain.

"The moon's a hundred million miles, I reckon."

"Oh, no. You're far out of the way there. It's only about two hundred and forty thousand miles."

"Waal, now!" exclaimed Mark in well feigned surprise.

She looked searchingly at him, but Mark looked as if he had simply received an interesting piece of information.

"Do you like poetry?" she asked, changing the subject.

"Some'at."

"My favorite poet is Tennyson. Is he yours too?"

This was dangerous ground for Mark. He had a special fondness for poetry, and was more likely to betray himself on this than on any other subject.

"No," he said; "I love Shelley best."

"Why, Mr. Slack, how can you understand Shelley? I can't."

"Waal, he is kinder obscurelike."

"Do you remember any of his poems? If you do I would like to hear you repeat 'em."

"Waal, I mought give you a few lines of the 'Ode to the Spirit o' Nature.'"

"Please do."

Mark would have done well to let the "Ode to the Spirit of Nature" alone; but with a beautiful girl beside him, the half moon sinking in the west and all nature in repose, he momentarily forgot his assumed character entirely. Suddenly he awoke to the consciousness of having given the whole poem in his natural tone and with his ordinary accent.

"Mr. Slack," said his listener when he had finished, "did you learn that from a man in Jasper?"

"No—no—I—waa," he stammered. "I read it in a book."

He stole a glance at his companion, but failed to detect any unusual expression on her face. He took courage.

"What do you raise on your plantation?" she asked.

"Oh, we put in some potatoes and corn and straw this year."

"Straw?"

"No, no; not straw." Mark was as little conversant with the farmer's art as he was familiar with the poets. "I mean hay."

The girl looked at him and smiled.

"The wheat was all gotten in early this summer, I am told," she remarked casually.

"Yas, we got in ourn early. We jest finished up before I kem away."

"Why, Mr. Slack?"

Mark knew that he had blundered again.

"Wheat is gathered in July," she informed the young farmer.

"I mean the corn," he said wildly. "The corn comes later. It is ripening now."

Mark felt it was all up with him so far as deceiving Miss Fain as to his being a farmer, but he struck out boldly to undo some of the mischief.

"Waal, you see, Miss Fain, to tell the whole truth, dad he don't reckon much on my farmen. He says I oughter be a perfessor or some'n o' that sort."

"A gentleman, for instance."

Mark made no reply. For the first time he detected irony in her tone.

"Mr. Slack—if that is really your name, which I don't believe—you are certainly not very complimentary to my sense of perception."

"How so?"

"In trying to make me think you are not an educated gentleman."

Mark saw the futility of keeping up the sham with Miss Laura Fain any longer. He resolved to give her so much of his confidence as was necessary to keep her from betraying him.

"I will be frank with you. I am not what I have pretended, but I am not here to injure you or yours."

"Are you a Union man?"

"Yes."

"A northerner?"

"Yes; but let that suffice. You would regret it if I should confide anything more to you. Yet from this brief interview I have learned to trust you sufficiently to place my life in your keeping."

She thought a moment. A faint shudder passed over her.

"I don't want to know your secret."

"Will you tell your mother what you have discovered?" asked Mark anxiously.

"Not for worlds."

"You suspect"— He paused and looked at her inquiringly.

"Yes, yes. Don't say any more. Don't breathe another word. Only go away from here as soon as possible."

"I shall go tomorrow morning. I shall always hold you in grateful remembrance. You are a splendid— a lovely woman. I owe you"—

"Yes, yes; go—go early."

She rose and went into the house. In a few minutes a colored boy came out and told Mark that he would show him to his room. As Mark had been there before, he knew this meant that he was expected to retire for the night.

As he went by the parlor he glanced in. The mother sat by a lamp on a "center table" reading. Miss Fain's face was also bent over a book. It was white as the margin of the page she pretended to read.

CHAPTER IV.

GLORIOUS PERIPHY.

WHEN Mark went down stairs the next morning, followed by Jakey, they were invited into the breakfast room.

Laura Fain was there, but her mother was not. Mark looked at Laura, but she avoided his gaze. He asked after her mother.

"Mamma scarcely ever gets up to breakfast," she said as she poured out a substitute for coffee.

During the meal she said but little, and that was only on commonplace subjects. She seemed to have more on her mind than the soldier who was taking his life in his hands, and studiously avoided looking at him at all.

After breakfast Mark followed his hostess through a door opening into a sitting room on the opposite side of the hall from the parlor.

"Miss Fain," he said, "I know too well the station of your family and southern customs not to accept as a gift the hospitality you have afforded. I can only express my indebtedness, and the hope that some day the war may be over and I can come down here and show my gratitude for something of far more moment to me than a night's lodging."

He paused, and then added:

"May I ask a question? Are you a Union or a Confederate girl?"

"Confederate."

Mark looked at her uneasily.

"I inferred from what you said last night that you will not betray me."

"I will not."

"But you think you ought to."

"I do."

Mark stood gazing at her. She was looking out of the window with a troubled expression.

"Miss Fain," he said, "you may be doing wrong; you may be doing right. At any rate you are acting the part of a woman, and this act makes you in my eyes the loveliest woman that lives."

The words were scarcely spoken when the muscles of the girl's face contracted into an expression of horror. Mark could not understand why his speech had so affected her. The natural uncertainty of his position impelled him to look about him for the cause. Glancing out of the front window he saw an officer in gray uniform on horseback in the act of reaching down to open the gate.

"Come quick!" she said, seizing his arm. "No, no! Mamma! She doesn't know. Oh, what shall we do?"

Mark took her by the hand and spoke to her coolly, but quickly. "Call Jakey for me, and we will both go down stairs and from there to the barn. We can then go out without meeting this officer, for he is doubtless coming in. There is no especial danger. We shall meet plenty of soldiers before we return."

She flew out of the room to find Jakey. While she was gone Mark watched the approaching horseman. He was a fine specimen of a southern man—tall and slender, with long black hair, mustache and goatee and a fine

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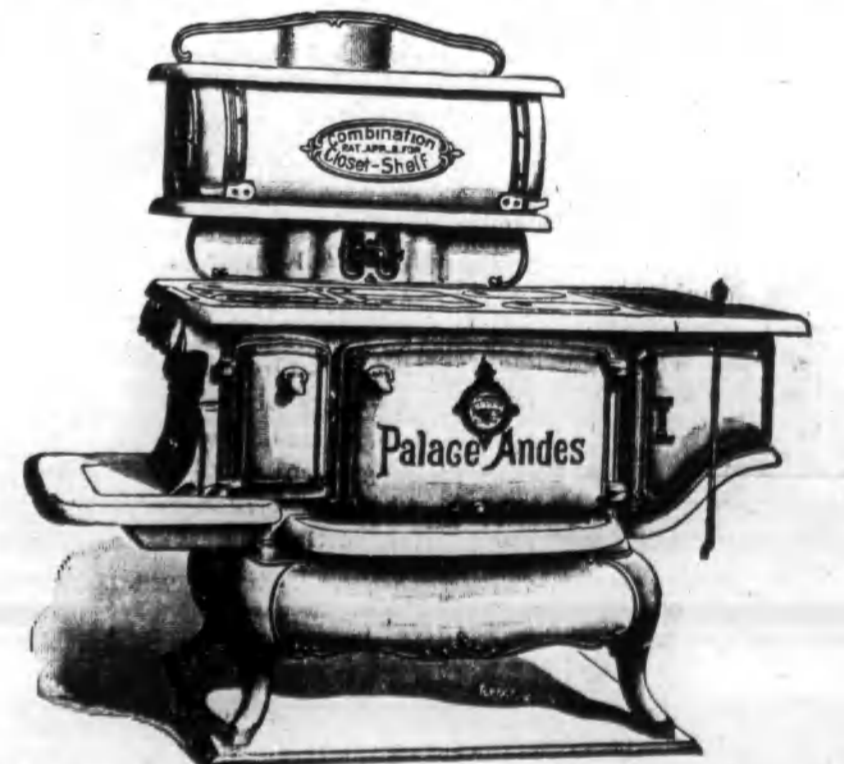
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