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FAIR BUT FLEETING.

I saw a little bird that was singing on a tree,
And said "You sing so sweetly, will you come and
sing for me?"
But he spread his dusky plumage, and speed
across the sea.
For the ditty that he warbled was never sung for
me.
I saw the dainty blossom of a white and fragile
flower.
And I said, "Come and bloom for me in the centre
of my bower."
But a white hand, bright as sunshine, came and
plucked it from the stem;
And I trow that it was culled to grace a princely
diadem.
I met a kindred heart, and the heart to me said
"Come!"
And mine went out to meet it, but was lost in
sudden gloom.
Wither wander all these fair things? To some
land beyond Time's sea?
Is there nothing glad and lasting in this shadow-
world for me?

For the Bloomfield Times.

THE MYSTERIOUS FRIEND.

A Story of Old Virginia

"O, MASSA ORLANDO, me glad you come back," she uttered, as soon as she espied her young master. "Me sartin 'fraid dey got you."
"Got me?" repeated the youth. "What do you mean, Elpsey?"
"I mean de two men dat come dis mornin'," returned the old woman, regarding Orlando with a look of evident satisfaction in view of his safe return.
"But who were they? What did they want, Elpsey?"
"Why, I tink dey was after you, massa, but den I don't know who dey be, cause I nebber see 'em before."
"Did they inquire for me?"
"Dey talk 'bout you, massa—an' I tell you how. When you went away dis mornin', I was down to de brook washin' myself. In a minute I hear something make a noise in de bushes, an' I hide myself; den dese two men come out, an' one ob 'em say, 'Dat's him going off into de woods,' an' he p'inted his finger at you. Den de odder say, 'Yes, dat's him—we'll go an' see what he do.' Den dey talk 'bout shootin' you in de woods, an' 'bout Indian dog call Lolowah. Den me tink dat dey go to shoot you, but bress de Lord, you come back safe."
"O, there's nothing to fear, Elpsey," said Orlando, more to quiet the old woman than by way of expressing his own feelings. "I met the two men of whom you speak."
"And didn't dey want to hurt you? Didn't dey try to shoot you?"
"No, no, they were only in search after an Indian and they probably thought I might know where to find him."
"But den what did dey talk 'bout shootin' you in de woods for?"
"I guess they were speaking about the Indian's shooting me. You must have misunderstood them."

Elpsey made no answer to this, for she appeared to think that Orlando was right; and then, in her honest heart she could not conceive how any one could wish to harm her dear, kind young master. Yet she was not without an inkling that all was not right for as the young hunter turned towards the house, she followed him with an eager gaze, and the peculiar shaking of her head plainly told of her doubts.

Nether was Orlando without his fears and doubts, for the whole affair looked dark and dubious, to say the least, but he resolved that his poor mother should not have occasion for worryment, and so he cast off the gloom that might otherwise have settled upon him.

CHAPTER V.

AN ARREST.

It was on the second day after the events

recorded in the last chapter that Orlando Chester took his rifle and prepared to go out in quest of game. He had already passed out from the garden, and had just called his dogs to his side, when he was somewhat startled by the appearance of half a dozen men coming towards him from the edge of the wood; nor were his emotions lessened when he saw that the sheriff was at their head.

"Good morning, gentlemen," said Orlando, as the posse came up.

"Do I speak with Orlando Chester?" asked the sheriff, after he had returned the youth's compliment.

"That is my name, sir," returned the young man, at the same time casting his eyes about to see if he could recognize the two men whom he had met in the forest, but neither of them was there.

"Then," said the sheriff, "I have to ask that you will accompany me to Jamestown."

"To Jamestown, sir? And for what?"

"Simply to answer to a criminal charge that has been preferred against you."

"And the nature of that charge—what is it?" asked Orlando.

"Young man, do you know what has become of the commercial agent's messenger?" asked the sheriff, in return, at the same time casting a scrutinizing glance into the youth's features.

"To what commercial agent do you allude?"

"To Mr. Roswell Berkley."

"And who was his messenger?"

"An Indian named Lolowah."

"Then I have every reason to believe that I shot him," answered Orlando, in a frank, independent tone.

"And for that I must arrest you," said the sheriff, not a little surprised at the readiness with which his question had been answered.

"Arrest me for that, sir?" exclaimed the young hunter. "I am sorry that the red man fell by my hand, but I could not help it. I did the deed in self-defence. Even as I drew my trigger upon him his rifle was aimed at my heart. He had waylaid me in ambush, and in a moment more I should have fallen a victim to his own bullet. Surely, sir, you would not arrest me for that."

"If you killed him in self defence, you will undoubtedly be able to prove it before the court," returned the officer.

"And now, how shall I prove it, if my simple word is not sufficient?" earnestly exclaimed Orlando. "I have no witness but God, for He alone saw the deed."

"I am sorry that this duty devolves upon me," said the sheriff, "but such as it is I must perform it. With your innocence or guilt I have nothing to do—that rests with a power higher than mine. I have simply to arrest you, and I trust that you will now quietly accompany me."

"Sir," urged the youth, while an expression of the deepest agony rested upon his features, "I have a poor insane mother who depends for her very peace and comfort upon my presence. Her already shattered heart would be utterly crushed did she think that danger threatened her son, and she might go down to the grave in the sorrow of her desolation. O, sir, do not then take me away. Let my accusers, if any I have, be brought here, and if the firm assurance, from a heart that never cherished a thought of evil against a human being, can be believed, then will my innocence be established."

"The favor you ask is beyond my power to grant," the sheriff returned, in a tone and manner that evinced a deep sympathy with the young man. "You must go with me to Jamestown, and there I trust you will be enabled to make the court believe in your innocence, even as I do now."

"And have I been really accused of any crime in connection with Lolowah's death?" asked Orlando, while a thankful gleam passed over his countenance, as he heard the sheriff's avowal of a belief in his innocence.

"Crime?" answered the officer, in a tone of deep regret. "'Tis for the red man's murder you are arrested. Lolowah was a servant of the government."

"Murder! No, no, they cannot hold such a charge against me. Such an accusation I could blow to the winds in an instant. I will go with you, sir. But I shall not be lodged in jail, shall I?"

"I think you will, for the present. But you need not fear on that account."

"Fear, sir!" exclaimed Orlando, with a flush of indignation. "For myself I'd care not if a thousand prison doors were barred upon me, but 'tis for my poor mother that I fear. Her shattered mind cannot

comprehend as mine, and she will think me lost to her forever. But if it be God's will that I go, then go I must; but you will allow me to see my mother first, that I may leave her comfort for my absence."

"The sheriff readily assented to this request, and commanding all the self-control of which he was master, Orlando entered the cottage.

"Mother," said he, "I am going to Jamestown, and I may not return to-night; but you will not worry about me. I shall return ere long."

"And you will not desert me, then?"

"No, no, mother."

The young man turned away, for he dared not trust himself longer in her sight, and passing out into the back room, he found Elpsey.

"Elpsey," said he, "I am going down to the settlement, and I may be gone for some time, and during my absence I would have you comfort my poor mother all you can. If she asks after me, tell her I am coming back shortly, and assure her that I am safe. Be smiling and cheerful, and do all you can to ease her mind over its troubles."

Elpsey looked uneasy and sad when her young master turned away, and she shook her head with a thoughtful, dubious motion, for she had not failed to read in his countenance the fears and misgivings which he would have hidden from her, but she asked him no more questions, nor did she say aught calculated to betray her thoughts.

Orlando's faithful dogs crouched at his feet, and it was with much difficulty that he kept them back, but he at length succeeded, though for a long distance he could hear their piteous whinings at being thus deprived of their master's company.

"You seem to know well my path," he said to the sheriff, as the latter struck off into the narrow track that led the way to his boat-landing.

"O, yes," returned the sheriff. "I had it minutely described to me before I started."

"By whom?" asked the young hunter.

"By those who accuse you of the murder," answered the sheriff.

"And they were here the day before yesterday?"

"Yes."

"Then there is some deep-laid villainy in this affair," uttered Orlando, half to himself.

He would have said more, but he knew that he had at present no means of solving the mystery, and feeling that if he said too much, his enemies, whoever they were, might learn of his knowledge, and take measures to screen themselves behind some other mode of attack. He determined, therefore, that he would betray none of the intelligence that he had gained till he should again see Chiron, for he had no doubt that he was both able and willing to befriend him.

At the landing a barge was in waiting, which the young hunter was requested to enter, and ere long he was being rowed swiftly down the river.

When the barge landed at Jamestown, our hero was at once conveyed to the office of the justice, where he found the two men who had met him at the Indian's grave, and who had appeared as witnesses against him. Mr. Roswell Berkley was the man who had issued the accusation, and caused the young man's arrest, and he was present in the office when Orlando was brought in. It required but a few moments for Gilman and Colton—the two witnesses—to tell their story, and ere long the prisoner was committed to answer to the charge of murder. He stoutly persisted in his plea of innocence, but he was coolly informed that he could enter that plea at his trial.

A half hour later Orlando Chester was within the walls of the jail, and as the jailer had received injunctions to look well to his security, he was placed within one of the strongest cells. As the door of the dungeon was closed upon him, the youth sank back upon the hard couch and buried his face in his hands, not caring that the struggling day-beams should fall upon his misery!

An hour, and perhaps more, had passed away after our hero had been thrust within the dungeon, when the bolts of his door were withdrawn, and as the door swung open, Mr. Roswell Berkley entered the cell. Mr. Berkley was a stout-built, middle-aged man, of rather a commanding appearance, but with a countenance far from prepossessing—there being a sort of lurking, mistrustful gleam in his eyes, which gave to his whole face an artful, cunning expression.

As soon as Berkley entered, the door was closed behind him, and after gazing upon the young man for a few moments, as though his eyes had not yet got used to the dim light of the place, he said:

"Young sir, this is a heavy crime with which you are charged; but yet I trust you may go clear. I can hardly persuade myself to believe that you are guilty of actual murder, for you are yet too young to have cherished such criminal feelings."

"Then, why did you accuse me of it?" asked Orlando, who, both from his visitor's appearance and words, did not place the fullest confidence in his condolence.

Mr. Berkley slightly covered beneath the words and looks of the young hunter; but quickly recovering himself, he replied:

"I could not have well done otherwise than to have accused you, for this case is a peculiar one. Lolowah was not only of much service to the authorities, but he was also extensively known and beloved among the friendly Indians about us; and if his violent death were to pass unnoticed by us, it would not only alienate the confidence of his red brothers, but it might bring down their wrath upon us. The two men who saw you bury your victim spread the intelligence abroad, and I could do no less than I have done. But I trust you will yet be able to clear yourself."

"If there be justice in the colony I certainly shall," returned Orlando. "The red man fell a victim to his own intended crime."

"I hope you can prove it," said Berkley, in a half-doubting tone.

"But your hiding the body—"

"Hiding the body!" interrupted Orlando, with an earnestness strongly tinged with contempt. "I buried the body; and do not all Christians the same? Even to one of my dogs I would give a grave; and should I refuse the boon to one who was made in the image of God? Should I have seen the man left a prey for the beasts of the forest, and his bones to bleach upon the surface of the earth? No; in pity and in sorrow I buried him, and I murmured a prayer for his soul. Hiding the body! Out upon such a shallow subterfuge for my arrest! What had I against the Indian? I never had dealings with him, nor did I want aught of his. Everything that he had about him when he fell, now lies by his side beneath the sod that covers him."

Roswell Berkley trembled and shrunk away, as the words of the young hunter fell upon his ear, but at length he said, in a cautious, constrained voice:

"If I remember rightly what Gilman and Colton said, the Indian spoke some words to you after he fell."

"You understood rightly, then."

"And what did he say?" asked Berkley, with an evident attempt to conceal the earnestness which he manifested.

"He said he was dying—that my eye was too quick for him."

"Did he say nothing else?"

"Nothing to speak of. He gave me no communication for other ears than my own."

Mr. Berkley seemed much nettled by the laconic manner of the young man, and once he seemed on the point of leaving the cell, but he turned again, and assuming a sort of a careless air, he remarked:

"You say the Indian was preparing to shoot you."

"I did say so, sir."

"Then did you not ask him why he had attempted your life?"

"Yes."

"And what was his answer?"

This last question was asked with a nervous earnestness, and with a perceptive tremor the speaker awaited answer. Orlando gazed into the face of his visitor with a searching look, and at the expiration of a few moments he replied:

"The Indian endeavored to excuse himself, but yet there was murder on his soul."

"But what excuse did he offer?"

"He offered none."

"You said but now he did."

"I said he endeavored to do so, but as what he offered could be no excuse for my assassination, 'twould benefit you not to know what he said."

"What! Do you mean to insult me?" exclaimed Berkley, entirely losing his self-control. "Do you refuse to answer my questions?"

"I have answered them all," quietly returned Orlando.

"But not as I asked them, young sir. You answer them not plainly. I asked you what the Indian told you as a reason for attempting your life."

"I will not tell you what he said. Is that plain?"

"'Tis too plain for your own good, Mas-

ter Chester," muttered Berkley, "for your unwillingness to reveal the facts stamp you as the murderer of Lolowah. When we meet again I wot that you will be somewhat humbled."

As Berkley spoke he turned and left the cell. There was in his eye a serpent-like look, as he cast his eyes back on the prisoner; and when at length the bolts were once more shoved into their sockets, the young hunter felt that he had just met with one who, to say the least, bore him no good will. Berkley's words, his strange earnestness in asking his questions, and his trembling looks, all seemed to indicate that he knew more than he should have known with regard to the mission of Lolowah. If he had not, then why should he have been so anxious to have known whether the Indian had implicated any one by his dying declaration to the hunter, for that was certainly the object of his inquiries. The more Orlando thought upon the interview that had just passed, the more he became convinced that his case was a hard one; for if Roswell Berkley was his accuser, he had certainly nothing to hope from him, if he might judge from the gentleman's conduct thus far; and then the two witnesses, Gilman and Colton, were evidently nothing but tools in the hands of some paying master, for already had they perjured themselves in their evidence at the justice's office. There they had sworn that they had come accidentally upon the young man when he commenced digging the grave, while Orlando knew that they had been stealthily creeping about his home long before he went forth to bury the Indian, and from Elpsey's conversation he knew, too, that they were fully aware of Lolowah's having come to the forest on purpose to shoot him. Of these circumstances he had said nothing, fearing that if he did, measures would be taken previous to his trial to rebut them, whereas, if he kept all to himself till the trial came on, they might prove of more service to him, especially if he should procure the assistance of some competent advice.

The afternoon passed away slowly and heavily, and as the window of the young hunter's cell looked towards the west, he could easily mark the setting of the sun; and as the glorious orb sank lower and lower, his own spirits seemed to sink with it. His heart looked not upon his own incarceration for the misery it brought to himself, but he could have wept, had he felt less miserable, for her whom he had left in the forest. Towards his mother went forth his heart in sorrow, and he feared it might be weeks ere he could see her again, and perhaps—never!

As that thought passed through young Chester's mind, he started up from the couch upon which he had seated himself as though the grim angel of death had even then intruded upon him; but the idea was so terrible, that he strove to banish it from his mind.

The last rays of the sun were resting upon the prisoner's wall, when the door of the cell was opened, and a small loaf and a mug of water were silently placed upon his stool. After the door had again been fastened upon him, Orlando took the loaf and the mug in his hands and seated himself upon the stool. The bread was yet warm, having evidently been but a short time from the oven; but the prisoner felt not like eating, for the excitement he had undergone, and the fearful conjectures that had just been working through his brain, made him sick at heart, and he laid the food upon the floor. Of the water, however, he partook, for his lips were parched and dry.

Ere long Orlando Chester stretched his weary limbs upon the hard rough couch, and as a sensation of drowsiness began to creep over him he was startled by a low, grating voice by his side.

He started up and peered through the gloom that was gathering about him, but he could see nothing. Again the sound struck upon his ear, seeming to come from the floor, and on looking down he could just distinguish the outlines of two or three large rats gnawing away at his bread. At first he thought of driving them away, but he wanted no food for himself then, and as they would probably bring him more in the morning, he determined that he would let the rats have their fill; and with this idea he sank back upon the couch, and lay so that he could watch them at their repast. But the dungeon grew darker and darker, until the prisoners could see his little companions no longer; but still he could hear them as they industriously gnawed away at the bread, and with the low grating of their sharp teeth yet sounding in his ears, he fell asleep. Continued next week.