

Both Sides OF The Shield

By Major
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One of the Heroes of the
Titanic and President Taft's
Military Aid.

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SYNOPSIS

Palmer, a Boston newspaper man, is sent to Georgia to report social and industrial conditions in a series of letters to his paper. Colonel Turpin, a southerner, thinks Palmer is a lawyer and has come to foreclose the Turpin plantation's mortgage.

Palmer undecodes him, and the colonel, thinking that Palmer is a kinsman, invites him to be his guest at the Pines. Palmer meets Ellen and Bud Turpin and is hospitably received.

He becomes interested in Ellen and learns that the Turpin home is in grave peril through lack of funds. He wants to confess that he is not really a kinsman, but fails to do so.

Squire Hawkins, an elderly man, is courting Ellen. A party is planned in honor of Palmer, who writes his impressions of the place for his paper.

Ellen wears an old brocade gown at the party, and Palmer falls in love with her. Ellen and her friends take take him to the wishing stone.

Cajoling myself into this belief, I hesitated no longer. My mind once made up, I was seized with a fever to write such as I had not known since the first days of my career in journalism.

Taking out my writing pad and throwing myself across the bed, I wrote with an enthusiasm I had seldom experienced. If one has not felt this feverish desire to write he or she cannot appreciate the feelings which prompted me to hold up every detail as I saw it and to lend it color where color might be lacking. Loving Miss Ellen with a passion that absorbed me then, I described her as a holy priest might paint the Madonna whom he worshipped and with the accuracy with which the artist might put upon the canvas the features of his wife and children.

My blood ran more rapidly through my veins as I sketched Miss Ellen in bold relief and as faithfully described her honest father and manly brother. The names and the locality were concealed, but not more effectually than the artist might hide the name of the mother model who sat for the Madonna. One who had known the artist and his model would see in the wrap of the Madonna a shawl the wife had worn for a score of years in the humble neighborhood and in the infant Christ the idealized features of the model's child. When describing Miss Ellen and her family I felt inspired and uplifted and left nothing out which I thought would enhance the letter as a picture. When I had finished it I read it over carefully, altering not a line, even adding here and there a sentence which would lend one more bit of color to the whole.

With this letter I sent a note to the editor telling him that I would remain in the vicinity of Oglethorpe another fortnight unless he wrote me to the contrary. I said there was much more material about Oglethorpe which I thought could be used to advantage. So highly did I think of what I had written that I felt reasonably certain he would make no objections to my plans, and in another two weeks I hoped to have secured Miss Ellen's consent to become my wife.

She seemed to know by intuition what was in my heart and what I had a mind to do, for she avoided being alone with me, and whenever we would walk after that she would ask Bud to go with us. There was a gentle dignity about her during these last few days which kept me at a distance, and if I paid her a compliment she would show annoyance, and when our conversation would become personal in its nature she would remember that she had left something unattended to or would find some excuse to leave me with a half finished sentence on my lips.

I soon saw too plainly that she did not want me to speak to her of love, though she could not prevent my telling her of it with my eyes and by the silent way I would watch her when she would work. Squire Hawkins came again one evening, but she did not walk with him, and once when Bud got up to leave I saw her lay her hand ever so gently on his sleeve, which was sufficient to have kept him in his seat all night long had she wished it.

One morning she received a letter at the breakfast table, and after opening it and glancing at the signature she slipped it in her belt, and when breakfast was over she went quietly out of the room, and I did not see her again that day. For several days, in fact, she avoided me altogether, and I became wretched in the thought that I had been mistaken after all; that she cared nothing more for me than she did for any one else, even Squire Hawkins.

In fact, I was not so very sure about the squire. I heard that he was the richest planter in the county and had the proud distinction of owning the only plantation which was not encumbered with a mortgage. He was an old friend of the family, and Bud liked him, and Miss Ellen herself did not seem to have anything against him. I might be a pauper for all she knew, and so I told myself, but on thinking it over in my room at night I became convinced that Miss Ellen would never marry save where she loved, and that she did not love the squire I could have sworn.

CHAPTER VI. The Scorn of Ellen.

AS the days slipped by she became more like her former self, and one afternoon when it was raining she consented to play a game of billiards with me. Suddenly she stopped, and as I watched her I thought her face perceptibly paled. A moment later there was the sound of horse's hoofs on the gravel, and we heard some one alight.

"Come, Mr. Palmer; I am beating you," she said, with an attempt at gaiety which was but poorly assumed. "It is your shot, and you stand there screaming."

Just then Pickeninny Sam came in to tell Miss Ellen that the squire was in the parlor. She seemed irresolute for a moment, and then her face became hard as I had never seen it before. She laid down her cue and started to leave the room without a word. The blood flew to my face and hot words to my tongue; but, restraining myself as best I could, I cried:

"Miss Ellen, if that man has dared to force his attentions on you or to annoy you—"

She bade me hush. "Squire Hawkins is all that is kind and good," she said. "His only wish is to serve me and my family. You must say nothing against him in my presence, Mr. Palmer."

"That man wants to force you into marrying him, Miss Ellen. 'Tis out-



rageous!" I cried, beside myself with anger. "He is old enough to be your father."

She smiled sadly and said, "Almost old enough to be my grandfather." "Surely any fate is better than that. Such a sacrifice would be shameful. If you must sacrifice yourself at all let me"—

She put a stop to my passionate words, and before the mute appeal in her eyes I stood silent.

"I am going, Mr. Palmer, and I must ask you not to speak what may be in your mind. I have a question to solve which no one in the world can help me to answer, and if I could not solve it without assistance I would be unworthy of the regard or friendship of any man. No," she added, for I had opened my lips to speak again the words of love that rose to them. "If you value my good opinion, be silent."

"Miss Ellen," I half whispered, "do you know how it will end?"

"I do not, Mr. Palmer," and she left me a prey to doubts that seemed to tear my soul asunder. When a woman hesitates I thought it always means yes, and had she not told me herself that she did not know how it would end? I spent the remainder of the afternoon in my room in any agony of despair, and in the loneliness of that great, half emptied chamber I cried to God to prevent such a sacrilege. The next day and even the next one after that I never saw her alone for a moment. Once I asked her to let me speak to her, if only for a minute.

"Not yet," she said. "I am not worthy of your kindly thoughts. I wish you could forget me."

Every day now I was expecting a letter from my paper ordering me to leave Oglethorpe. Each morning I rode to the postoffice as if to meet my fate halfway. I was in an agony of suspense. I resolved that if my orders came before I had reached some understanding with Miss Ellen to resign my post and remain in the vicinity of the Pines until I had either won her for my wife or else forced her to declare herself engaged to Squire Hawkins. I never believed that she seriously considered such a step until she had told me to forget her. Even then I would not despair, but I was resolved that if she thought me poor she should continue to think me such until

she had become my affianced bride. I fully believed her capable of marrying the squire for the sake of lifting the mortgage and freeing Bud from the drudgery that was telling on his health and what was worse, breaking his spirit. For herself she did not think. It was for the others. It had always been for the others. I had reason to think that in the matter of worldly goods I was the equal of the squire, but had I told her of this I verily believe that it would have militated against me, for she would not sell herself to the man she loved, while she might sacrifice herself to one whom she regarded almost as an aged relative. I resolved to stand my ground and fight every inch of it with Squire Hawkins, and I was equally determined to tell my love at the earliest moment, so that there could be no mis take as to my intentions.

The opportunity came sooner than I thought, for, the next day being damp and chilly, we remained indoors, Bud alone being forced to face the rain. Mrs. Turpin had gone into the kitchen to get warm, she said, for the sitting room was damp and bad for rheumatism. I was only waiting for the cologne to go for his afternoon nap to speak what was in my mind to Miss Ellen. Presently she looked up from a book she was reading and said:

"Father, there was another of those letters copied in the Augusta papers yesterday."

As I heard her words my heart seemed to cease pulsation. I had never known that they had seen these letters, for they had not spoken of them before, probably because they did not want me to see them. My face grew scarlet, and I was thankful that the room was gloomy and dark.

"Yes, Ellen," he said, "even some of our own people laugh at us when they get rich, so we can't expect our enemies to do less. Have you got the paper, my dear? I had to laugh over that last description of what we had come to. It was very, very funny."

"Funny! Oh, father, to think that you can see anything funny in such misery as he depicted! The writer does not see with the eyes of a gentleman or else he is blinded by prejudice or prosperity. How I should loathe to be such a man! I did not want you to see this last letter, father, so I burnt the paper. It was too true, too true!" she cried, and I saw her eyes fill with tears.

She laid her book aside and went to the window to mend a rent in the lace curtain, but I thought more to hide her feelings from us. "The writer does not see with the eyes of a gentleman." With that one sentence she had shattered to pieces every argument I had used to myself that day in the room. She had not made use of any choice rhetoric, such as I had used to describe her, nor did she study the effect of her phrasing, but with one natural sentence, spoken from the heart, she seemed to paint me as I was or as she would always think of me after this. I realized how far my ambition had carried me and how low my literary instincts, as I had thought them then, had sunk me. In the reaction I saw myself as others would see me, and in my remorse I believed that I had sacrificed her for some temporary advantage in my profession. And I had fancied that she would understand, forgetting that her scale of honor and truth was as far above mine as heaven is above earth. In the silence that followed I suffered a lifetime of ordinary humiliation. To be unknown and yet denounced was like being alone with truth. My identity should be hid no longer, and I resolved to tell her that it was I she had denounced. As low as I seemed at that moment, I was not so low as to take her hand until I had confessed all. The past month rose before me, and I asked myself if I was indeed a gentleman measured from their standpoint. At any rate, I could not remain one and be silent.

The colonel crossed the room and passed out into the hall. I got up and stood leaning on the back of the chair in which I had been sitting.

"Miss Ellen," I said, "I have something important to say to you. It is not what you think," for a pained expression came into her face. "It is a confession I have to make."

"Yes, Mr. Palmer," she said and turned from the window to face me. The sun had come from behind a bank of clouds and crimsoned the checkered panes of glass, and her hair, catching the rays that filtered through them, framed her in a halo and to me gave her the appearance of a saint. Her face was pale, and her long eyelashes were fringed with tears.

"Miss Ellen," I said softly, "it was I who wrote those letters."

For a moment she did not speak, and when she did her voice seemed passionless.

"Then it was you, after all," was what she said. "I had refused to entertain the thought even until you yourself confessed it. Even now it seems too horrible to believe. And I stopped speaking to my best friend merely because she half playfully suggested that it might be you." She said this more to herself than to me.

"Why did you not tell this to me before?" I said, "and I would have explained?"

"Why did I not tell you?" she asked, her voice breaking with anguish. "Because I thought you were a gentleman and you were our guest. It would have been an insult to have mentioned it. Such a suggestion would have been a reflection on him you ridiculed and on me, whom you would have made believe you loved had you dared to speak the lie upon your lips."

"Love you?" I cried. "I would die for you!"

"It is the only way you could ever prove it now," she said. "Oh," she con-

tinued, "if you had only leveled your ridicule at me alone! But father, poor old father! I am glad he will not see that last letter. He would hardly think that one funny."

She looked at me, and her eyes suddenly seemed to blaze with scorn and contempt.

"Yes, I see it all now, and the wonder is I did not see it before. It was he whom you described as a broken down aristocrat who descended on politics and wrote pieces to the paper telling the president how to run the government. It was mother who dressed in worn-out velvet gowns and sat in state at the dinner her daughter had cooked, and it was I who cooked the dinners and played sonata and nocturnes for the amusement of our guests. God, why did I not see you as you were? Yes, and these are the hands," she cried in anguish and scorn, holding them toward me that I might see them, "that have cooked your meals for the past four weeks, and these are the same hands that played for you while you smoked your pipe and heard father descend on politics! How poor and miserable we must have seemed to you! All that I could have forgiven, but you dared to soil my skin with your kisses. They will burn deep here," she said, pointing to her fingers, "long after your ingratitude has been forgotten."

"Ellen, for God's sake have pity!" I cried. "I have laughed at your poverty as if it were my own. I am rich—I never told this to you before—and I felt that the only use of my wealth in the future would be to relieve the burdens of those you love. This night—this very afternoon—I was going to ask you to be my wife, from which moment your father, mother and brother would have been mine also. It was this very poverty and the fortitude with which you bore it that have made me love you. After you spoke this afternoon I could not tell you of my love until I had confessed first that I was the author of the letters which wounded you so deeply."

"I am glad you spared me that last humiliation. I can never forgive myself for being happy in your company or for spurning the hand stretched out to lift us from this degradation."

"Squire Hawkins," I said in bitterness.

"Yes, Squire Hawkins, whom you would have insulted as you have us. And to think that just because I had listened to him I believed myself unworthy of your love! You must excuse me now," she added in cutting tones, "for I must go to prepare your dinner. I suppose there will be one less to provide for tomorrow!"

She started to leave the room, but I stood in front of her.

"No, I will not go. You do not understand. It was with love welling in my heart that I wrote that last letter. I had been ordered home, and I wrote that letter that I might stay another fortnight. After you had promised to be my wife I would have told you all, and together we would have read it, and in the richness of the future we would have laughed over it together. No, I will not go. I will stay and tell Bud and the colonel. They will understand and plead for me. And if you love me—"

"If I ever did you killed it the moment you confessed to have written so about one you professed to love, one whom you should have protected and have helped to hide from the world that which she feels so degraded her, instead of which you hold it up to publicity and to the scorn of the world. You cannot stay here longer. Don't force me to tell father or my brother. That would be more than I could bear."

She put her hand toward a chair as if to keep her from falling. I came a step nearer, but she drew back involuntarily, standing herself and looking me in the face, and with a voice vibrating with emotion said:

"Don't touch me! I never want to see you nor to hear of you again!"

(Continued in next Friday's paper.)

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Loans and Investments 619,479.01	Surplus and Undivided Profits (Earned) 69,017.55
Real Estate, Furniture and Fixtures 24,000.00	Deposits 569,113.43
Over Draft 7.68	
\$713,130.98	\$713,130.98

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