

Both Sides OF The Shield

By Major ARCHIBALD W. BUTT, One of the Heroes of the Titanic and President Taft's Military Aid.

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.

CHAPTER VIII. Weary Weeks of Waiting.

I HEN began the weary weeks—and months, it seemed to me—of us—of waiting. The excitement of enlisting and drilling the men, organizing the companies and getting the recruits uniformed acted on me like a tonic.

He looked at me sadly for a moment and said: "Does she live in the south, Howard, and is that why you have stayed away so long?"

I told him yes and turned away my head that he might not see what it had cost me to speak of her. He laid his hand gently on my shoulder and said: "We Palmers have never been lucky there, my son," and I thought I understood many little things in his life and knew then why he never had anything but what was kind to say of that southern country when he heard it under discussion.

Our regiment was only ordered to Camp Meade, but it was a start. The days there were dreary ones, and I shall never forget the shout our boys put up when the order which turned our face to Camp Thomas, at Chickamauga, was read to them.

We mingled with one another from the first on friendly terms; we shared one another's rations and nursed one

another's sick. I met every Georgian with an outstretched hand, for I felt somehow that they had claims on me which the others did not possess.

I had been sent to division headquarters one day with a message from my colonel. As I stepped under the awning of the tent I saw an officer in a major's uniform sitting at a table reading some reports.

"How much he knew I did not know. I was eager to learn. He saw me before I spoke, and, not waiting, as I had done, he leaped from the table, scattering the contents over the floor, and rushed to me with arms outstretched.

"About the same. Nothing ever changes there," he said. "Your father and mother?" I asked.

"Both are well, thank God!" "And Miss Ellen?" I ventured.

"She has never been the same since you were there." He seemed suddenly to stiffen with dignity as he added: "Palmer, if I thought your visit there had wrought this change heaven only knows what I would do."

"Before God I did not!" I cried. "She rejected my love, and that is why I left so suddenly. I will tell you all about it, Bud, as I wanted to do before I left."

"I believe you, Palmer," he said, laying his hand on my shoulder again.

He rushed to me with arms outstretched.



He Rushed to Me With Arms Outstretched.

"But keep your secret, whatever it may be, for it is hers also, and you have no right to betray it."

"Who is with them?" I asked presently.

"My younger brother, little Brent. He is keeping the family alive while I am doing what I can to keep alive its reputation," he said with an attempt at humor that cut me like a knife.

He then told me that it was Miss Ellen who had urged him to go to the front and who had given him the strength to leave the Pines. From his colonel I learned afterward that he had enlisted as a private, but was soon given a commission for an excellent record, and he owed his present place to his ability to handle men and not to political influences.

After that first meeting we saw each other daily, and when not on duty together we would fight our pipes and wander through the dusty and fever-stricken streets, smoke and talk of home, but never did we speak of Ellen, though she was constantly in my thoughts and I believe in her brother's also.

Disease had broken out in camp, and typhoid raged with deadly effect during that long, cruel summer. One evening I went to bed feverish and not feeling myself at all. The day had been one of horror in the camp, and dispatches were flying between headquarters and the war department. The evening shades brought no relief to the tired soldiers. No one seemed to be asleep, and the men were stretched outside their dog tents. The ground was dry and hot, and the moon hung in the heavens like a great ball of fire. Just as the midnight hour was called I heard some one in the direction of the Kentucky regiment, that lay across the road from us, begin to whistle

"The 'Old Kentucky Home.' The notes fell sweet and clear across the tented field. Before he had finished a bar some one took up the tune and whistled a second. One after another joined in the melody, and finally there was hardly a man in the regiment, so it seemed to me, who was not whistling. It died away as suddenly as it had been inspired, and I think the camp slept with sweeter rest for having heard the serenade. I fell into a fitful sleep and waked to partial consciousness only when reveille was sounded.

"If I should die, Bud, will you tell Miss Ellen that I have always loved her and that my last thoughts were of her?" I said in a half whisper.

"His life is dearer than my own," he said. I saw the surgeon nod his head and heard him add that it would take great nursing to pull me through.

"The answer was even shorter. It read simply, 'Keep him alive until I reach there.'"

They told me that her nursing saved my life. One touch from her hand and my delirium would subside, and, though I lay unconscious for days, she took little rest, and when she would lie down it was Bud who would take her place at my side.

"Where is she?" I asked.

"Getting a little needed rest," he answered. "The crisis was passed last night, and she knows you are saved to her."

The big, strong fellow could stand it no longer. He knelt by my bed and, holding my hand, buried his face in the covering. I knew that he was weeping for very joy for his sister. I turned over wearily and laid my hand on his head.

"Bud," I whispered, "has she forgiven?"

"Yes, Howard," he said. "She has told you so herself many a time in the long watches of the night."

I lapsed into unconsciousness again, and when I awoke Miss Ellen was by my side. She it was who told me that my regiment was going and held my hand in sympathy, for she knew how it would hurt me to be left behind.

She read me the president's noble words of praise for the men who had answered to the call for troops and, drawing from her pocket a little slip of paper, read me what the executive had to say of those who had fallen ill with fever and who had served their country only in the camp. It was only a short message from our president in answer to an invitation to come to Chickamauga, but it cheered many a poor fellow who, as I, lay stricken with the fever and who was forced to see his comrades march away to duty at the front. It was the message just as it came, and as she read it her eyes filled with tears.



When I Awoke, Miss Ellen Was by My Side.

Executive Mansion, Washington. Major General Commanding Camp Thomas, Chickamauga: Rejoicing to your invitation, I beg to say that it would give me great pleasure to show by a personal visit to Chickamauga park my high regard for the 4,000 troops of your command who so patriotically responded to the call for volunteers and who have been for upward of two months making ready for any service and sacrifice the country might require.

After that she talked to me of the Pines, and then it was she told me she had never read my letters to her, that she was afraid she might forgive me and that she did not want to do that even in her heart.

She turned to me, and, making a low courtesy, as she had done that April night now many months ago, she said, smiling all the while through her tears: "You were not made for a soldier, my lord. You have been forced to lay aside the sword. You must take up the pen again."

And then I knew for the first time that she had not only forgiven me, but that she had last heard her underood.

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