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A RACE BETWEEN DIXIE AND DAWN

BUT the sun sank next day from a sky that was aflame with rebel victories. It rose on a day rosy with rebel hopes, and the prophetic coolness of autumn was in the early morning air when Margaret in her phaeton moved through the front pasture on her way to town—alone. She was in high spirits and her head was lifted proudly. Dan's boast had come true. Kirby Smith had risen swiftly from Tennessee, had struck the Federal army on the edge of the Bluegrass the day before and sent it helter-skelter to the four winds. Only that morning she had seen a regiment of the hated Yankees move along the turnpike in flight for the Ohio. It was the Fourth Ohio Cavalry, and Harry and one whose name never passed her lips were among those dusty cavalymen; but she was glad, and she ran down to the stile and, from the fence, waved the Stars and Bars at them as they passed—which was very foolish, but which brought her deep content. Now the rebels did hold Lexington. Morgan's Men were coming that day and she was going into

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town to see Dan and Colonel Hunt and General Morgan and be fearlessly happy and triumphant. At the Major's gate, whom should she see coming out but the dear old fellow himself, and, when he got off his horse and came to her, she leaned forward and kissed him, because he looked so thin and pale from confinement, and because she was so glad to see him. Morgan's Men were really coming, that very day, the Major said, and he told her much thrilling news. Jackson had obliterated Pope at the second battle of Manassas. Eleven thousand prisoners had been taken at Harper's Ferry and Lee had gone on into Maryland on the flank of Washington. Recruits were coming into the Confederacy by the thousands. Bragg had fifty-five thousand men and an impregnable stronghold in front of Buell, who had but few men more—not enough to count a minute, the Major said.

"Lee has routed 'em out of Virginia," cried the old fellow, "and Buell is doomed. I tell you, little girl, the fight is almost won."

Jerome Conners rode to the gate and called to the Major in a tone that arrested the girl's attention. She hated that man and she had noted a queer change in his bearing since the war began. She looked for a flash of anger from the Major, but none came, and she began to wonder what hold the overseer could have on his old master.

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She drove on, puzzled, wondering, and disturbed; but her cheeks were flushed—the South was going to win, the Yankees were gone, and she must get to town in time to see the triumphant coming of Morgan's Men. They were coming in when she reached the Yankee head-quarters, which, she saw, had changed flags—thank God—coming proudly in, amid the waving of the Stars and Bars and frenzied shouts of welcome. Where were the Bluegrass Yankees now? The Stars and Stripes that had fluttered from their windows had been drawn in and they were keeping very quiet, indeed—Oh! it was joy! There was gallant Morgan himself swinging from Black Bess to kiss his mother, who stood waiting for him at her gate, and there was Colonel Hunt, gay, debonair, jesting, shaking hands right and left, and crowding the streets, Morgan's Men—the proudest blood in the land—every gallant trooper getting his welcome from the lips and arms of mother, sister, sweetheart, or cousin of farthest degree. But where was Dan? She had heard nothing of him since the night he had escaped capture, and while she looked right and left for him to dash toward her and swing from his horse, she heard her name called, and turning she saw Richard Hunt at the wheel of her phaeton. He waved his hand toward the happy reunions going on around them.

"The enforced brotherhood, Miss Margaret,"

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he said, his eyes flashing, "I belong to that, you know."

For once the subtle Colonel made a mistake. Perhaps the girl in her trembling happiness and under the excitement of the moment might have welcomed him, as she was waiting to welcome Dan, but she drew back now.

"Oh! no, Colonel—not on that ground."

Her eyes danced, she flushed curiously, as she held out her hand, and the Colonel's brave heart quickened. Straightway he began to wonder—but a quick shadow in Margaret's face checked him.

"But where's Dan? Where *is* Dan?" she repeated, impatiently.

Richard Hunt looked puzzled. He had just joined his command and something must have gone wrong with Dan. So he lied swiftly.

"Dan is out on a scout. I don't think he has got back yet. I'll find out."

Margaret watched him ride to where Morgan stood with his mother in the midst of a joyous group of neighbors and friends, and, a moment later, the two officers came toward her on foot.

"Don't worry, Miss Margaret," said Morgan, with a smile. "The Yankees have got Dan and have taken him away as prisoner—but don't worry, we'll get him exchanged in a week. I'll give three brigadier-generals for him."

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Tears came to the girl's eyes, but she smiled through them bravely.

"I must go back and tell mother," she said, brokenly. "I hoped——"

"Don't worry, little girl," said Morgan again. "I'll have him if I have to capture the whole State of Ohio."

Again Margaret smiled, but her heart was heavy, and Richard Hunt was unhappy. He hung around her phaeton all the while she was in town. He went home with her, cheering her on the way and telling her of the Confederate triumph that was at hand. He comforted Mrs. Dean over Dan's capture, and he rode back to town slowly, with his hands on his saddle-bow—wondering again. Perhaps Margaret had gotten over her feeling for that mountain boy—that Yankee—and there Richard Hunt checked his own thoughts, for that mountain boy, he had discovered, was a brave and chivalrous enemy, and to such, his own high chivalry gave salute always.

He was very thoughtful when he reached camp. He had an unusual desire to be alone, and that night, he looked long at the stars, thinking of the girl whom he had known since her babyhood—knowing that he would never think of her except as a woman again.

So the Confederates waited now in the Union hour of darkness for Bragg to strike his blow. He

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did strike it, but it was at the heart of the South. He stunned the Confederacy by giving way before Buell. He brought hope back with the bloody battle of Perryville. Again he faced Buell at Harrodsburg, and then he wrought broadcast despair by falling back without battle, dividing his forces and retreating into Tennessee. The dream of a battle-line along the Ohio with a hundred thousand more men behind it was gone and the last and best chance to win the war was lost forever. Morgan, furious with disappointment, left Lexington. Kentucky fell under Federal control once more; and Major Buford, dazed, dismayed, unnerved, hopeless, brought the news out to the Deans.

"They'll get me again, I suppose, and I can't leave home on account of Lucy."

"Please do, Major," said Mrs. Dean. "Send Miss Lucy over here and make your escape. We will take care of her." The Major shook his head sadly and rode away.

Next day Margaret sat on the stile and saw the Yankees coming back to Lexington. On one side of her the Stars and Bars were fixed to the fence from which they had floated since the day she had waved the flag at them as they fled. She saw the advance guard come over the hill and jog down the slope and then the regiment slowly following after. In the rear she could see two men, riding unarmed. Suddenly three cavalymen spurred

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forward at a gallop and turned in at her gate. The soldier in advance was an officer, and he pulled out a handkerchief, waved it once, and, with a gesture to his companions, came on alone. She knew the horse even before she recognized the rider, and her cheeks flushed, her lips were set, and her nostrils began to dilate. The horseman reined in and took off his cap.

"I come under a flag of truce," he said, gravely, "to ask this garrison to haul down its colors—and—to save useless effusion of blood," he added, still more gravely.

"Your war on women has begun, then?"

"I am obeying orders—no more, no less."

"I congratulate you on your luck or your good judgment always to be on hand when disagreeable duties are to be done."

Chad flushed.

"Won't you take the flag down?"

"No, make your attack. You will have one of your usual victories—with overwhelming numbers—and it will be safe and bloodless. There are only two negroes defending this garrison. They will not fight, nor will we."

"Won't you take the flag down?"

"No!"

Chad lifted his cap and wheeled. The Colonel was waiting at the gate.

"Well, sir?" he asked, frowning.

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"I shall need help, sir, to take that flag down," said Chad.

"What do you mean, sir?"

"A woman is defending it."

"What!" shouted the Colonel.

"That is my sister, Colonel," said Harry Dean. The Colonel smiled and then grew grave.

"You should warn her not to provoke the authorities. The Government is advising very strict measures now with rebel sympathizers." Then he smiled again.

"Fours! Left wheel! Halt! Present—sabres!"

A line of sabres flashed in the sun, and Margaret, not understanding, snatched the flag from the fence and waved it back in answer. The Colonel laughed aloud. The column moved on, and each captain, following, caught the humor of the situation and each company flashed its sabres as it went by, while Margaret stood motionless.

In the rear rode those two unarmed prisoners. She could see now that their uniforms were gray and she knew that they were prisoners, but she little dreamed that they were her brother Dan and Rebel Jerry Dillon, nor did Chad Buford or Harry Dean dream of the purpose for which, just at that time, they were being brought back to Lexington. Perhaps one man who saw them did know: for Jerome Conners, from the woods op-

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posite, watched the prisoners ride by with a malicious smile that nothing but impending danger to an enemy could ever bring to his face; and with the same smile he watched Margaret go slowly back to the house, while her flag still fluttered from the stile.

The high tide of Confederate hopes was fast receding now. The army of the Potomac, after Antietam, which overthrew the first Confederate aggressive campaign at the East, was retreating into its Southern stronghold, as was the army of the West after Bragg's abandonment of Mumfordsville, and the rebel retirement had given the provost-marshals in Kentucky full sway. Two hundred Southern sympathizers, under arrest, had been sent into exile north of the Ohio, and large sums of money were levied for guerilla outrages here and there—a heavy sum falling on Major Buford for a vicious murder done in his neighborhood by Daws Dillon and his band on the night of the capture of Daniel Dean and Rebel Jerry. The Major paid the levy with the first mortgage he had ever given in his life, and straightway Jerome Conners, who had been dealing in mules and other Government supplies, took an attitude that was little short of insolence toward his old master, whose farm was passing into the overseer's clutches at last. Only two nights before, another band of guerillas had

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burned a farm-house, killed a Unionist, and fled to the hills before the incoming Yankees, and the Kentucky Commandant had sworn vengeance after the old Mosaic way on victims already within his power.

That night Chad and Harry were summoned before General Ward. They found him seated with his chin in his hand, looking out the window at the moonlit campus. Without moving, he held out a dirty piece of paper to Chad.

"Read that," he said.

"You have ketched two of my men and I hear as how you mean to hang 'em. If you hang them two men, I'm a-goin' to hang every man of yours I can git my hands on."

"DAWS DILLON—Captin."

Chad gave a low laugh and Harry smiled, but the General kept grave.

"You know, of course, that your brother belongs to Morgan's command?"

"I do, sir," said Harry, wonderingly.

"Do you know that his companion—the man Dillon—Jerry Dillon—does?"

"I do not, sir."

"They were captured by a squad that was fighting Daws Dillon. This Jerry Dillon has the same name and you found the two together at General Dean's."

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"But they had both just left General Morgan's command," said Harry, indignantly.

"That may be true, but this Daws Dillon has sent a similar message to the Commandant, and he has just been in here again and committed two wanton outrages night before last. The Commandant is enraged and has issued orders for stern retaliation."

"It's a trick of Daws Dillon," said Chad, hotly, "an infamous trick. He hates his Cousin Jerry, he hates me, and he hates the Deans, because they were friends of mine." General Ward looked troubled.

"The Commandant says he has been positively informed that both the men joined Daws Dillon in the fight that night. He has issued orders that not only every guerilla captured shall be hung, but that, whenever a Union citizen has been killed by one of them, four of such marauders are to be taken to the spot and shot in retaliation. It is the only means left, he says."

There was a long silence. The faces of both the lads had turned white as each saw the drift of the General's meaning, and Harry strode forward to his desk.

"Do you mean to say, General Ward——"

The General wheeled in his chair and pointed silently to an order that lay on the desk, and as Harry started to read it, his voice broke. Daniel

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Dean and Rebel Jerry were to be shot next morning at sunrise.

The General spoke very kindly to Harry.

"I have known this all day, but I did not wish to tell you until I had done everything I could. I did not think it would be necessary to tell you at all, for I thought there would be no trouble. I telegraphed the Commandant, but"—he turned again to the window—"I have not been able to get them a trial by court-martial, or even a stay in the execution. You'd better go see your brother—he knows now—and you'd better send word to your mother and sister."

Harry shook his head. His face was so drawn and ghastly as he stood leaning heavily against the table that Chad moved unconsciously to his side.

"Where is the Commandant?" he asked.

"In Frankfort," said the General. Chad's eyes kindled.

"Will you let me go see him to-night?"

"Certainly, and I will give you a message to him. Perhaps you can yet save the boy, but there is no chance for the man Dillon." The General took up a pen. Harry seemed to sway as he turned to go, and Chad put one arm around him and went with him to the door.