AMERICAN UNION.

VOL. 48. DENTON, MD., THURSDAY, JANUARY 7, 1904. NO. 26.

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SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I.—Ronald is the one prominent member of the Fanshaw household, unappreciated by any of the others, save his brother David. The preceding summer he had saved the life of Evelyn, second daughter of Col. Hasbrooke, the county's greatest planter, and whose splendid home was known as "Carnleigh."

CHAPTER II.—At Carnleigh, James Hardy, a Charleston cotton merchant and suitor for the hand of Caroline, Hasbrooke's eldest daughter, and Capt. Winkie, an admirer of Evelyn, are guests. Evelyn's school days over, Ronald meets her by chance, when she again thanks him for the fight he had made with the angry bull which had threatened her life. She is glad of rebuke he had given Winkie, but a few minutes before, who had condescendingly thrown him a coin for a little fishing bait.

CHAPTER III.—Ronald, returning home with his brother, is overtaken by the Hasbrooke trap. Winkie, holding the reins, tries deliberately to ride Ronald down, the trap coming so near as to knock the basket in his hand to the ground. Ronald determines to have satisfaction.

CHAPTER IV.—The next morning, with two revolvers in his pockets, Ronald makes his way to a place where Winkie may be met. Winkie refuses to fight a man in Ronald's position in life. Ronald, bent on humiliating the coward, grasps him by the collar and deliberately cuts off the buttons and shoulder straps from his uniform. Winkie sneaks back to the house. Evelyn, who had been gathering flowers, tells Ronald she had been eavesdropping. Sorry for what he had done in anger, he gives her the buttons and shoulder straps, that they might be put again on the captain's coat.

CHAPTER V.—That night in the drawing-room at Carnleigh, Hasbrooke tells the sad story of Mrs. Lancaster, one of his guests. In early life during the war, her husband, a confederate officer, had been killed by mountain bushwhackers, and her baby lost, perhaps killed. A little later Capt. Winkie gives a colored account of his meeting with Fanshaw. By a sly stroke Evelyn shows him she knows the true version. When he finds her alone, he threatens to tell her father of her being in correspondence with Fanshaw. She denies having learned of the affair in that way, saying she was a witness, and tells of having the buttons and shoulder straps in her possession.

CHAPTER VI.—One July morning Ronald finds a lynching plot on. A woman has been murdered for her money, and the suspect, caught with blood-stained hands and considerable money, had escaped from the sheriff and known to be in hiding in the swamp. Young Fanshaw determines to thwart the mob.

CHAPTER VII.—The mob beats the swamp, but Ronald goes from man to man, trying to dissuade them from their purpose of lynching the man when captured. Evelyn learns of his noble course, and wants to write a note of encouragement. Mrs. Lancaster, who has been made a confidante, disapproves, but compromises by writing such a note herself.

CHAPTER VIII.—It is after dark when the fugitive is finally captured. Ronald speaks to the crowd, and, on the pretext of showing the crowd how small the prisoner is, he lifts the lad to the saddle, wheels his horse, and is off for the jail at Dunbar. Sydney Hart, ringleader of the mob, finding himself thwarted, fires at the fleeing figure, but David knocks the gun barrel up, so that no one is hurt. Evelyn anxiously watches the road until in the early morning she sees him safely return to his home.

CHAPTER IX.—At the breakfast table the guests at Carnleigh hear of the capture of a negro who has confessed the killing of the woman, and Ronald is lightly praised. Mrs. Lancaster, who is struck by the resemblance to her lost husband, calls [illegible] She learns of Ronald's [illegible] also that on account of [illegible] tions in life, he has no h[illegible]

"I called to see Mr [illegible] shaw," announced the [illegible] home?"

[illegible] Mrs. Fan- [illegible] room just [illegible] me in?" [illegible] visitor [illegible] you [illegible] the [illegible] on [illegible] at him for fully a minute; her eyes were expanded in surprise, and she seemed unable to reply to his compliment. She put her handkerchief to her quivering lips, and when she finally spoke it was with a visible effort at self-control.

"I hope you will pardon me," she faltered, "but your voice is so like that of a dear one who was taken from me a long time ago—my husband, who met a tragic death during the war. Last night when I heard you speaking in the distance I was reminded of him, and now—oh! it is very silly of me, but—you can't imagine how much your voice resembles his, and—" (the speaker swallowed something which seemed to stick in her throat) "then your hair, and eyes, and hands remind me of his so—so very much."

Ronald had flushed red, and seemed at a loss how to proceed.

"I am sorry," he said, finally, "if any features of mine bring up sad recollections."

"I am a silly goose," the visitor said, with a little laugh, which was not quite her own. "I hope you received the note I wrote you yesterday?"

Ronald bowed. "It was the one thing which sustained me—made me work on to the end. I almost lost hope yesterday afternoon. There was not a man on my side, even the sheriff was afraid to open his mouth. A dozen men had threatened to kill me."

His auditor was bending towards him, feasting on his features with wide-open eyes and hands tightly clasped in her lap.

"I was almost sorry I advised you to try to save him, Mr. Fanshaw, when the climax was reached and I realized your own peril; but now that you have triumphed, I am glad I wrote you—oh, so glad! For your work last night has shown me what a noble man you are, and—"

"I think," he said, seeing that she was not going to proceed, "that the usual haste in such matters is not due to the evil natures of these people, but to a certain inability to believe in the innocence of a man accused as this one was."

"It is certainly good of you to defend them as you do," said the old lady, her eyes still bent eagerly, searchingly on his face. "You have heard perhaps of the capture and confession of the real criminal?"

He told her he had just received the news.

"Then," she went on, "the boy will be released, will he not?"

"Oh, at once, of course!"

"Do you intend to see him before he leaves?"

Ronald told her he was going to ride to town and persuade the prisoner to finish his journey by rail.

"Ah, I am so glad, for that is what I came to see you about. I have brought him a little gift; I understand his mother is old and needy. I hope it will [illegible] deliver it to him."

[illegible] great deal of [illegible]

"There is another thing, Mr. Fanshaw," she faltered. "I hope you will forgive me if I am presuming, but since I have heard how hard you are struggling to fit yourself for your chosen profession I have been ashamed of myself for the idle, aimless life I am leading. I have far more money than I can use, even if I were young, and you see I am getting old. If you would only allow me to instruct my banker to—"

He understood what she intended to say and the flush which had died out of his handsome face returned.

"It is most kind of you," he interrupted, "and under some circumstances I might be glad to avail myself of your benevolence, but in my struggles I have found out that all the toil, all the saving, all the deprivations have really been best for me. Besides the worst has passed. I find myself pretty sure of admittance to the bar, and I have really saved up enough to defray my simple expenses for a year or so until I can get started."

Mrs. Lancaster looked crestfallen, but she did not press her point.

"Then I can only hope and pray that all success may come your way, and perfect happiness" (she suddenly thought of Evelyn and sighed).

He seemed to be reading her thoughts, for he started and a grave expression took hold of his features. The color ran out of his face.

"I have made up my mind," he said, simply, "that I am never to have ideal happiness—the sort of happiness that comes to some fortunate people and never to others."

She was sure that he was alluding pointedly to Evelyn, and she felt a sharp tug at her heart-strings. Her eyes seemed to melt on his face; he was so like her dead husband, the sound of his voice was sweeter than a lost chord from some heavenly choir. She stood up and, offering her hand, she pressed his fingers tightly.

"If I had my way you should have all your desires," she said, with a little catch in her voice; "all, every one of them, including the love of the truest, purest girl that ever lived."

"REMEMBER YOU HAVE A TRUE FRIEND OVER THERE."

Then she saw his strength give ways she felt his hand quiver and grow limp in her clasp; his face was working under tense emotion.

"I do not allow myself to think of that," he said, with sudden firmness. "That has been only a dream of mine, a hopeless, vain dream, sent to teach me how grimly real life is."

Tears sprang into Mrs. Lancaster's eyes and she choked up.

"You must not lose hope," she almost sobbed, as she wrung his hand and then quickly released it.

He laughed bitterly. "I never called it hope at any time," he said. "She has only been my dream."

She had reached the door and was looking out into the yard where old Fanshaw, in his untied brogans, hickory shirt and jeans pants, was oiling the axles of a wagon under an apple tree. She overheard the low voices of his two daughters on the porch and Mrs. Fanshaw's heavy tread in the adjoining sitting-room.

"Remember," said Mrs. Lancaster, "that you have a true friend over there."

"Thank you," he replied as she passed out. He escorted her, hat in hand, to the cart and assisted her to her seat. Then, with a twitching lip, he stood watching the cart as it rolled away.

Evelyn was in the garden gathering flowers for the dining-table when he friend returned. She held her arms full of them when the old lady alighted and came down the walk to her. Evelyn studied her face in astonishment.

"Why, dear Mrs. Lancaster!" she exclaimed, "you have been crying."

The old woman wiped her red eyes and began to shed fresh tears

"He is so like my husband,' [illegible] "So [illegible] on his [illegible] eyes [illegible] [illegible] seen." [illegible] told her of her of[illegible] Evelyn broke out, im[illegible]

"And he refused to [illegible] have told you that."

"Yes, he refused," a[illegible] her gave his reasons in [illegible] raised a bunch of pin[illegible] faces they were the color [illegible]

"Nothing," she said, wi[illegible] "nothing under high he[illegible] a man down with such a [illegible] pose as that."

For a moment the two [illegible] silent, then Mrs. Lanc[illegible] Evelyn's hand and presse[illegible]

"I made a little discove[illegible] ing," she said.

Evelyn caught her eye[illegible] still knowingly.

"You have discovered [illegible] me; I knew that a long [illegible] It has made me unspeaka[illegible]

"I discovered further," [illegible] Lancaster, "that he does [illegible] to win you." Mrs. Lan[illegible] twitched a little. "It is [illegible] pains me so much. He lool[illegible] when he made that admi[illegible] most cried in his presence[illegible]

"He does not hope?" s[illegible] and then she caught her b[illegible] red her head and began to [illegible] her flowers. "He does not l[illegible] repeated the words as if to b[illegible] Mrs. Lancaster rose and fo[illegible] up the walk to the house, [illegible] girl, with bowed head and [illegible] passed into the grand hall M[illegible] ter began to think that Evel[illegible] had never really hoped.

Seeing that no one was in [illegible] Evelyn wheeled round sudden[illegible]

"I have never once thought [illegible] that my love would be essent[illegible] well-being—his happiness," s[illegible] looking up into the expectan[illegible] her friend. "But, Mrs. Lance[illegible] should really need me, it w[illegible] duty, before God, to be by [illegible] it would be my duty in spi[illegible] father's wishes, in spite of eve[illegible] on earth."

An anxious look lay in the fac[illegible] widow as she answered:

"I think he has thought the [illegible] over and decided that the idea of m[illegible] riage is out of the question. It was [illegible] that which seemed so sad; poor fellow! he spoke of you as his dream."

"His dream!" Every muscle in Evelyn's face moved; her eyes filled to the brim; it looked as if she wanted to say something else, but was prevented by an overwhelming commotion within herself. She turned suddenly and went into the dining-room.

CHAPTER X.

The summer passed and the fall approached. The cotton, ripened, burst its bolls and whitened on the brown stalks till broad fields of snow lay on all sides of Carnleigh. For awhile Ronald had put aside his studies to superintend the picking, hauling and ginning of his cotton. The weather had been favorable and he had made a good crop. He had not chanced to meet Mrs. Lancaster again after the day she had called, and about the middle of August he learned that she had gone back to Charleston. His informant also hinted that Evelyn was to follow her in October. He was trying to forget certain thoughts about her which had beat themselves into his heart during the summer, and though he felt a sharp pain over the announcement that she was going away, he tried to look upon it as providential.

There were other things, too, which forced themselves upon his attention. Reports were continually filtering through the gossips to him to the effect that Sydney Hart had sworn to be revenged on him for having made him the butt of ridicule on the night of the attempted lynching. The newspapers had given considerable space to the matter, and the local correspondents, being unknown to Syd, dared to write what they would never have said to his face. They made him out even a more desperate outlaw, if possible, than he was, and added a sting to these statements by making a great hero of Fanshaw, who was described as having every grace and virtue that could fall to the lot of one man. Moreover, a little parson, who was visiting in the neighborhood, and was told beforehand that Syd was in an adjoining county, had taken the affair as a topic for his discourse, and among other things which reached Syd with almost telegraphic rapidity, he said that Syd was a coward who was so much afraid of his shadow that he did his evil deeds at night. So when all these things had rankled for two months in Syd's mind, he decided that he could at once prove his courage and [illegible] even by having it out with Ronald [illegible] w.

One day Ronald was [illegible] ng the cotton gin, which was about a mile from the land he was renting, when Dave rode up on top of a big load of loose cotton.

"Hold on, thar, Ron," he called out. "I want to speak to you."

Ronald paused and Dave got down from the wagon and joined him.

"Look heer, have you got anything to shoot with?" was Dave's anxious question.

"Not a thing," returned our hero; "why do you ask?"

Before answering Dave drew his revolver from his hip pocket.

"Well," he said, as he proffered it, "you'd better take this, an' be on the safe side. Syd Hart and Thad Williams is in town, an' they are due 'long heer about now. Syd may pass you without a word; it's all owin' to his load o' rotgut. He kinder likes me, an' I told 'im one day if he ever harmed you I'd make a sifter out'n his damn carcass, an' he knows I meant it; but the sight o' you might make 'im rabid."

Ronald hesitated, but, on being urged, he took the revolver and put it into his pocket.

"I don't want any row," he said, setting his lips firmly, "but I will not be shot down in a public road."

"Now you are talking like a free-born American citizen," said Dave, and he went off to unload his cotton.

Ronald had succeed[illegible] [illegible]ing from his mind the unp[illegible] roused by Dave's fears, [illegible] the creek bridge [illegible] of the d[illegible]

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Mr. Chellus(sternly)—I've come for an explanation.

Miss Gidd[illegible] About what?

Mr. Ch[illegible] want to kno[illegible] w[illegible] [illegible]ing o[illegible]

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