

THE ALAMANCE GLEANER.

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SPRINGTIME

Novelized by Porter Emerson Browne From the Play of the Same Name by Booth Tarkington and Harry Leon Wilson

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CHAPTER I—M. de Valette dwells on his plantation in Louisiana during the period of Andrew Jackson's military career, 1815. The servants procure candles to burn before the coffin of a dead slave. II—Raoul, middle aged cousin of De Valette, comes to meet the beautiful 17-year-old daughter, Madeleine de Valette, who has been betrothed to him in marriage by De Valette. III—A dancing girl, D'Academie, appears and is revealed as a former sweetheart of Raoul, whom he has discarded. IV—Madeleine meets M. Raoul for the first time and describes him as "quiet and old gentleman." V—Madeleine meets Gilbert Steele, a dashing young American, and they fall deeply in love with each other love at first sight. But she tells him she is betrothed to M. Raoul de Valette. VI—Steele is antagonized by Madeleine's father and, believing the girl lost to him, goes to war with Jackson's troops, joining Wolf's sharpshooters. Madeleine flees from her home to escape Raoul and to join Gilbert Steele, and in the forest she meets the dancer L'Academie. VII—Madeleine is discovered by Gilbert, and they tell each other of their love for one another. The young girl insists on remaining with her love.

Chapter 8

ON, on, down the winding forest trail, followed the lover and his lass. The girl drew close to Gilbert among the shadows which began to deepen. Her face, upturned to his, glowed with the glory of a newborn love, and in her wondrous eyes shone the mysterious dancing lights that reveal to him who searches them the purity of the soul of a woman whose abiding faith is in her God. Came fainter the sound of the shrill life, fainter the rattle, rattle of the brass rimmed drums, fainter the faint refrain of the singing men, and with not a sound came to the ears of the enraptured wanderers save the rustling of the leaves above them as the evening breezes rocked to sleep



"THIS YOUNG LADY IS FAR FROM HOME. WILL YOU KEEP HER HERE UNTIL MORNING?"

In their nests the song birds that had made glad the day. "Gilbert, Gilbert"—her voice rested fondly on his name—"I am getting so very tired. You must take care of me." The young soldier noticed that the girl's steps had become slower; that she dragged heavily on his arm and her cheeks had begun to pale. The daughter of the house of De Valette, he knew, was unused to continued physical exertion, and the roughness of the path added to her burden. In the first flush of his joy for him and her determination of her love for him and her determination which followed to accompany him he had not stopped to consider just what complications might arise from her action. She had said that she must go with him, which seemed to settle the entire matter, so far as were concerned these two young people, untried in the ways of a suspicious, formal world. Now Gilbert Steele saw that something must be done. Madeleine must have rest, she must have food, and she must have a place to sleep. She began to falter. "Madeleine," he said tenderly. He stopped in the tree fringed path and supported her with his arm around her waist. He pointed upward toward the white, and with his other hand, Thro-

The door finally opened. Gilbert awaited tensely the answer. The planter again appeared. "Come in and explain to my wife, and if you can satisfy her that you're all right you can leave the young person here for the night." With a sigh of relief at the glimmer of hope held out to him Gilbert half carried his charge across the threshold and into the living room of the planter's house.

He explained that the girl had strayed into the woods in search of wild flowers, had lost her way, that he had fortunately come across her and had guided her to the planter's house, from where she could return home in the morning. No, he had had no opportunity to take her to her own home, because the distance was very great and he was compelled to join his soldier comrades or else prove disobedient to his superior officer—something he would under no circumstances do.

The planter's mate surveyed them both with keenly penetrating eyes. Perhaps she guessed that the handsome soldier had not told her all of his story or very much of the truth of the situation. Perhaps she knew that the bewildered gaze of the wearied young girl as she listened to her companion's story revealed it to be a pure and, so far as she was concerned, an entirely unnecessary fabrication.

Perhaps the kindly woman knew intuitively that before her were two hearts that throbbled sorely for one another, and she questioned not the story. She gave them food and drink, and when it came time for the soldier to face the wild tramp to his camp she withdrew quietly from the room, leaving them to bid each other farewell. "Do not leave me; do not go," the girl pleaded, with Gilbert. "You must never be away from me again, and if your voice quavered—"they will shoot you—you will be killed."

"No, no; it is a soldier's duty to brave anything whatever danger may occur. My country has called me, and I must respond. Besides, dear one, there's no danger. Those red coats don't know the country. They stand up in line in the open, while we shoot them from behind trees and from ditches where we lie concealed." She shuddered at his description of the horrible thing which she vaguely understood to be war. A strange, terrified look came into her eyes.

"You say that is not so," she uttered. "There is danger. You will be killed. I feel it. I know it. I can feel it now." Her eyes closed, and she clutched his arm with both her tiny hands. "I can see you now lying beside a rock; there is a whole in your forehead; there is blood on your face, Gilbert, and lying all around you are men whose arms and legs are gone." She recoiled away from him and away-ward backward. He sprang to her and saved her from falling. "Yes," she went on prophetically, her voice rising—"yes, Gilbert—my Gilbert—and I can see the man who killed you. There he is crouching over her. He is laughing and holding his gun, and his face—oh, his face is the face of Raoul de Valette!"

As she cried out these last words her voice broke into a despairing wail, and she fell forward limply in her lover's arms. She was unconscious. The planter and his wife responded to the lady's frantic cries, and they carried the precious form up into a bedroom, where the woman applied restoratives. When Madeleine finally opened her eyes and looked about her world was sent to the anxious soldier waiting below.

"You had better go now. She is all right," advised the planter. "She will be taken home in the morning. If you go near her again in the morning she will faint again, so my old woman says." Gilbert Steele took up his hat and, with a heart overwhelmed with sadness, plunged desperately out into the darkness.

A vague, intangible sense of impending doom smote him. He fought it off manfully, but it would not down. The girl's words, her manner, her closed eyes that saw as he warned him of his fate, made him tremble for the morning.

Gilbert Steele was not a coward. Yet for the first time in his life he was possessed by physical fear. In his elementary young life he had not been accustomed to analyzing his feelings or his emotions. Events had come too quickly to permit him to discover that there was such a form of self-examination as psychology. Had he known something about this introspective as well as projective science he would have been able to comfort himself with the reflection that the unerving fear that threatened to master him was solely the result of the overwrought and temporarily distracted mind of the girl he loved.

But to Gilbert Steele, stumbling through the atypical pitch of the night, the closed eyes that saw had penetrated into the hidden world of the things that were to be, and try as he would he could not shut out from his own vision the crouching body that wielded a gun and the face that laughed—the face of Raoul de Valette!

on the right flank or the British line; then these attackers would fall back behind the fortifications. It devolved upon Steele and his associates to aid in covering the retreat of the attacking division and to repel the onslaught of the Britishers, which, it was well calculated, would follow.

The maneuver, as briefly indicated, was one of great strategic importance to the American side. General Jackson had outlined it to his staff, and they unanimously indorsed it.

The onslaught began. The American valiantly assailed the forbidding lines of grenadiers. Cannon thundered; rifles spat their deadly missiles, sword-blades glinted before the brightness of blue steel became dulled with blood, men and horses writhed and screamed in the death agony, prayers and curses were heard on every side amid the awful din, men who had souls and men who had lost their souls went down in the hellish holocaust as no more, fathers stabbed fathers and rode them down with sharp shod chargers, cowards killed cowards, all on a springtime morning, for the ghoulish imp of mischief was running amuck among mankind, eager for the harvest of tears, suffering, and death.

A false king had decreed that honest men should murder one another in order to support his dishonest government, and so his men went forth to battle, slaying humans in a cause they little knew was unholy.

Gilbert Steele lay in the trench, barely deep enough to shelter him from the singing messengers of lead that threatened him.

The exultation of the fighting man combating his mortal foe sent his blood a-tugging, thrilled his throbbing heart, captured his soul.

The fears of yesterday, the premonitions of the night, were gone. He was going to win, and he was going to live—for Madeleine.

The impulse to jump from the muddy trench and to rush single handed across the bullet swept field before him to the succor of his hero comrades, who were hard to hand with the foe, almost controlled him for the moment—then he gritted his teeth and mastered himself.

He loaded his hot barreled matchlock. Again and again he laid the smoke blackened barrel across the earthen mound and coolly aimed at a point above the belt line of a red uniform. He was one of Wolf's sharpshooters, and he meant "this day to justify the reputation of that carefully picked band of patriots—men who could shoot the left eye out of a wild turkey at fifty paces!"

And live up to that reputation he did.

Heard suddenly from the lips of Gilbert's commanding officer was the cry of "Ready, men! Form into line! Fix bayonets! Go at them, boys! Charge!"

Almost before he realized what had happened Gilbert found himself in the way of a wild, triumphant dash across the open death zone that separated the trenches from the enemy.



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"FORWARD, MARCH!" AT LAST THE WELCOME ORDER CAME.

promised their neck in the forest, up the river, that he would not delay if given permission to stop a few moments to talk with a young lady. He had failed to keep his promise to the letter, for he had not caught up with the squad of backwoodsmen under Wolf's command when they reached their boats at the river's edge.

They had waited and hallooed for him. He did not appear and had been compelled to walk the entire way to the camp, arriving after midnight, thus trying him for the work of the day in which every ounce of energy he could command would be required.

Yes, the captain had been angry so well known that he was not perturbed in any way. Therefore the lady's associates were certain that this subject was not the one that was worrying him.

Perhaps after all, it was the girl that the men with Wolf had seen him with who was responsible for his drooping spirits. Yes, that must be it, the men finally reasoned. But they could not understand why of all men Gilbert Steele should be disturbed over a girl. Surely a youth of his make-up and personality would never lack attention from admirers among the women folk. No, indeed! Of this they were assured.

forced by two regiments of fresh troops, concealed in the forest beyond, had shattered the attacking force of Americans kept their flank from being turned, had maintained their general alignment and held their position.

The utter rout of the attackers was imminent unless support arrived speedily.

Hand to hand, face to face, arm to arm, man to man, fought the stubborn grenadiers who were at Waterloo with the rawboned, untrained heroes of the backwoods.

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