

THEN AND NOW

(PART TWO)

The House Maid

By (Judge) D. F. Morrow

HISTORIC ROMANCE. 1865-70

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CHAPTER 20

Yes, Will Rapps had survived, the war was ended, and once more he was upon the grounds of his boyhood. He was about five feet, ten, stood straight as the Indian's tree, that is it leaned a little, and Will did. For his head was always erect and his shoulders thrown back, having the appearance of one acting haughty, but it was a natural position with Will. His eyes were blue and large. His hair ginger cake brown and not curly but rather wavy, his skin was fair, but not ruddy, rather clear and the winter winds brought to the surface a cerulean tint. All in all he was a fine-looking young man. Living with the Ohioians for six months and more he had not only learned to read and write, but had taken on a dose of western or Yankee whang in his speech. Captain Firebrand noted this and said, "Will, I will be darned, if you have gotten a Yankee twist in your tongue; but I am glad to see you, and to learn that at least one darned Yank has a heart in him; for you show you have been well treated." Will thanked him and told the Captain that there were lots of good people North as well as in the South, but they were different in many ways. Captain said, "Yes, Will, that may be so, but there is a big lot of darned mean ones up there yet, and I fear they are going to hang many of the southern leaders before the reconstruction is finally over.

I feel sure if that rascalion Booth had not murdered Lincoln, things would have been well for the South; now I fear the worst, but can hope that I am mistaken. Are you going North soon Will?" "Sure, I am Captain, I have provided mother with enough to aid her in another crop and I feel I must go. Mr. Cripsy, the man I have been working for, made me promise to come back and I can't go back on my word, however, much I would like to remain here." "Yes, go Will, always do what you promise and your road in life will be easy. There may be thorns on the way but you will pass." Will took his leave of the Captain after thanking him over and over for lending his mother the ten dollars. The captain with tears in his eyes said, "Don't mention it, Will, I thought you were dead, and never expected to get it, but feel now that your mother will never want for anything, since her boy has come to life."

Many were the scenes like this for years after the war, for there were orphans and widows scattered

throughout the land, which is always the aftermath of war.

But Will was above the average. He showed it in his face, and his acts had spoken approvingly to the Captain. There was manhood in Will and that always spells success.

Christmas day was cold, wind blowing from the North west, but Will was on the go, seeing all his old friends, but his only idol he could not see, for she was housed snugly at the Doog home. There were crowds there and Jane busy, but now and again the laughing eyes of Will's danced before her as she made her rounds in the field of choreism in and about the old home. Will felt good meeting many old chums, and at the compliments paid him by Captain Firebrand, and yet there was something wrong within. Before he left Ohio and the Cripsy home, to come to see his mother he had planned what a meeting it would be, and had also felt meeting with Jane would be the climax, but alas, Jane had by her action, said go way Will. He felt it he knew. She had once loved Will and she felt Will loved her, and saw it in his eyes, at the wedding that he was still Will. But could she give Mr. Peter up, never, for she had learned to love him and then the prestige it would bring to her and her mother if only she could get Mr. Doog and become mistress of the Doog home and fortune. Poor Will had been told what was happening at the Doog home. Madame Rumor said Jane had become concubine, this Will resented, but felt he must stay away and in fact was glad when the day came for him to return to his Ohio place of business and forget, if he might, Jane.

If he had lost Jane, he had his mother, and the respect of Captain Firebrand, and Mr. Andy Cripsy. That was worth living for and he would just go, work hard and forget, Jane, but would always wish her well. Before leaving he told Tom, that was my pal, to tell Jane that for him.

I have just said Tom was my pal and he was till Humpty Dumpty got him but he was no more to me then for he had went and married. I know Will Rapps felt lonely on that Christmas day, for he knew he had lost Jane, and it was no fault of Willis, but I can't see he was more so than I was for I had lost Tom, my favorite pal.

Yes, it was a blue Christmas to me, Tom was gone, for Humpty had, kicking mule, Tom's dog, big hat and the whole push and the worst was with me she had Tom. To lose a sweetheart may be bad, to lose money

may make one weep, but when you lose a sure enough pal, I mean a childhood pal, be it a dog, cat, pig or a boy pal it is something to break the heart of a boy as I was then. My mother told me I could go to see Tom when they moved out, but "lordy", there would be Humpty I said and how could me and Tom pal about? No sair I would never go—Tom was gone for Humpty had him, that was all. I guess Bill felt about the same way about Jane, I know he said to my mother when telling her goodbye that he was going back, but that he felt blue." I knew how he felt, when he said that for I had been "blue" ever since Tom had been taken by Humpty the day before Christmas. No I had not heard Tom coming across the woods at night blowing his o'possum horn, and his old dog Dixie barking every breath. Neither had I seen him coming up the lane on his kicking mule. No I had not seen Tom for two or three days. Not since Humpty took him. The worst thought was I never more would see nor hear him as of old for he was gone, Humpty had him, that's all.

Nell Cripsy was a daughter of Andy Cripsy with whom Will Rapps had hired soon as he was released from prison after the war. Nell was about Will's age, nineteen, about through school and it was she who had helped Will much in learning to read and write. She was very handsome, black hair and eyes. Could ride and drive a horse like a boy. Andy Cripsy had large holdings in the city, but he, his wife and Nell lived out on a farm on the Ohio river just a few miles from the city of Cincinnati.

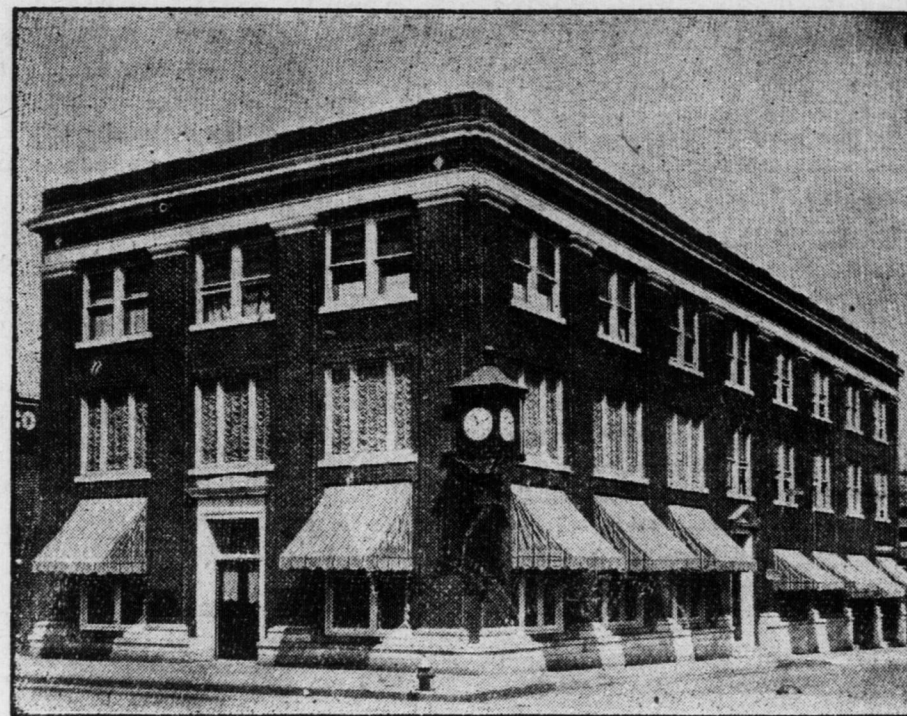
It was here where Will had been employed to work on the farm, tend the cows, looks after the horse and do chores and errands for Mr. Cripsy. It was a great place to live or stay, when compared to a camp life in the Confederate army or a prison life in war times within the enemies lines, and such had been Will's lot for two years, till Mr. Cripsy had hired him.

When one's life has been bettered there is satisfaction, and hope re-views, without which there can be no contentment. While he longed to be back home when he went to work but as the days rolled by, and the thought of going home Christmas passed in his mind he was content and happy. He wrote, or got Miss Nell to write his mother, that he was well and would be to see her Christmas, that was in May, and a long time to wait, but he could for Jane would wait, and his mother would be glad. With this thought his work was a pleasure, and his environments enjoyable. At nights in his room, he poured over his books that Nell and Mr. Cripsy had placed at his disposal. A month past and he could read, then one night he found a copy of the a. b. c.'s on his table. Nell came and showed him how to hold his pen. Thus his routine of work in the day and study at nights went on, till the frost along the Ohio began to show of mornings. Christmas was coming fast and soon he would see mother, the children and Jane. He did, mother was glad and the children rejoiced, but Jane had turned away, and in mute language said, "Oh, Will go away." He did and was back on his job in due time. Will was man all over, had he not been around the Doog home he would have lingered, done some violence, and wore stripes, but he rose above it and said good-bye to mother and children, and tramp, tramp, much of the five hundred miles back to Ohio was his lot but he had said he would go back and he did. The mind of both old and young is a strange machine, and as Will tramped the highways and by ways the machine worked, and in its revolving, Nell came into his mind. She had said when he left, now boy, don't go back down south and let some southern beauty catch you. Why should Nell care, she was too high in social circles for him to even hope. He knew where he had been raised, social distinction had always barred such as he, but Nell had said it and now that he was going back, and Jane lost to him forever, Nell's words kept ringing in his ears. Why he did not know.

(The End)

Farmers of Anson County sold to one another several hundred dollars worth of implements, livestock, hay and other farm products at the Farmers' Auction Sale held in Wadesboro recently.

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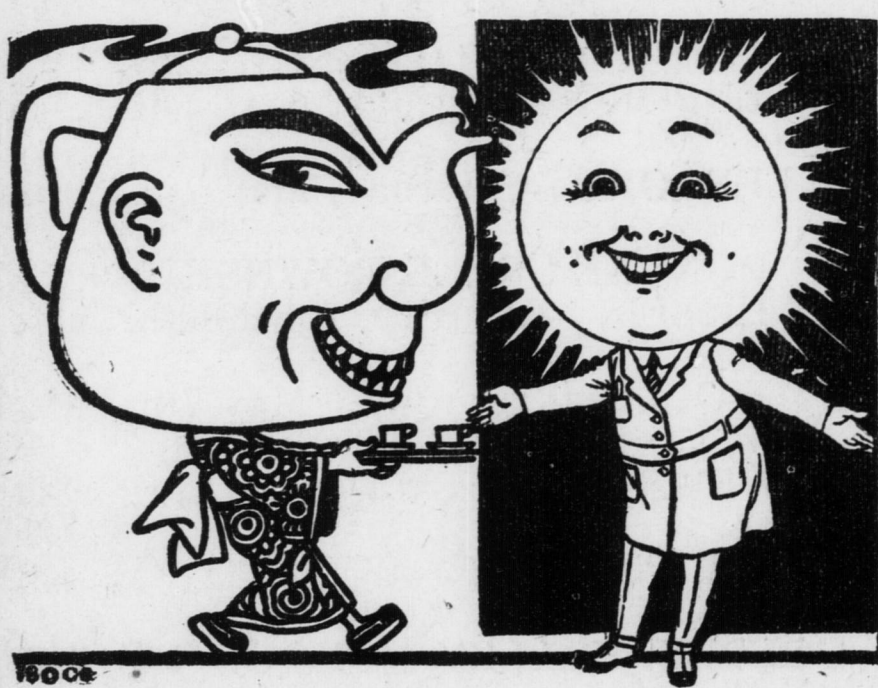
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