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"Hold on now, Tom," said Ashton soothingly. "Don't you go for to get excited. He sure was with her, and I'll tell you about it if you'll keep cool."

The younger man released his hold and walked away a few steps, struggling to control himself. "Go on, Tom. I'm all right. Where were they?"

"Why, I was coming along by the Moore plantation along about nine o'clock, I reckon. That was while you was away in Louisville. I just looked up to the house, casual like, and there was a blot of white against the bushes over under the sycamores. Squinting close, I saw a dark figure alongside it. Now, I thought it was kinder strange, 'cause that was where you used to set and speak Diana, on the bench there, and I didn't see what right any one at all had to be on that bench when you was away."

"Maybe you wouldn't have done it if you was in my place, Tom, but I wanted to make sure. Here was you, Tom White, miles away. And here was some one, maybe not Diana Moore, but some one, setting with a man. So I climbed over the fence and come up close."

"Well?" interrupted White impatiently, as the other paused.

"Well," resumed the other simply, "it was Diana, and the man with her was Barton Johnson."

"After what he's done, after what she knows of him! What were they saying, Steve? What else? Did they seem to be friendly?" asked White breathlessly.

"Yes," said Ashton judiciously, "I should say they was friendly. That's the trouble, Tom—they was altogether too friendly. I didn't hear much they said, but it was enough. And he was setting as close as he could get, with her head on his shoulder, and there you have it."

Ashton had disliked his task from the first, had gone through with it, driven by a sense of obligation, the outgrowth of an almost paternal fondness for White. He had feared an explosion, but none came. White's earlier excitement had passed. A sudden and strange composure possessed him. He sought a chair quietly and faced his old friend. Ashton, rendered quite as uneasy by this foreign reserve as he would have been by the frenzy he had feared, did not break the silence for some minutes. Then he sought clumsily to lead his aid.

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The Two Friends.

"No, Tom, no," he said sadly. "You can't reproach yourself in no way, whatever comes. You've always been fair and square, that I'll stand by." White went on, his eyes fixed vacantly at the empty fireplace, as if seeking the warm glow that once had filled it.

"I wonder if you understand what she meant to me, Steve? You remember how it was when I came here. I had no kin, no friend but yourself, and in spite of the way you stood by me it was a hard road—hard. Then I met her, and that gave me what my ambition had lacked—a definite object. When I came back with my medical degree you welcomed me. That was good, and it was good, too, to feel that I had made myself of some consequence in the town that first saw me as a barefoot vagabond."

"But the one thing I thought of was her welcome, the only thing I had thought of for years. And it was all I could have asked. You remember, Steve, within a month we were engaged. That was a year ago, and I have worked, haven't I, Steve?" The elder man nodded.

"I had almost enough for a home. We planned it together. Then I began to notice Johnson, not much at first but after a time I spoke to her about him. She resented it. I told her, just as I would have in his or any one's presence, that he was utterly discredited, notoriously unworthy—a man who ruined his family and whose father died of shame for him. He had some hold over Moore in gaining entrance to the house, I don't know what."

"It was no quarrel, Steve. After a little she yielded. She gave me her promise, without reservation, that she would never see him again. Then I was called away on an important case. I have been successful, Steve, and I came back to claim her. And now I learn—that you have told me."

"What you going to do, Tom?" asked Ashton uneasily.

"I'll do what must be done, Steve. As I see it, all my life—all any man's life—is a series of tests, tests of fitness, of courage, of intelligence, of worthiness. A simple simile, perhaps, but so it seems to me. As we pass, as we grade, as we measure up to the standard, so we fix our value absolutely."

Ashton wondered at him. White since boyhood had been of a high strung, restless, rather fiery temperament. He could scarce recognize the ardent youth he had known in this grave, pale man who had come into being within half an hour and talked gloomily of

The DAY of the DUEL

THE FINAL TEST

(A TRUE STORY)



"ARE YOU READY?" HE ASKED, FINALLY.

do not care to listen to you." He caught her and she murmured a few words and White bowed. They separated, smiling politely.

"Listen," he said. "If you love the man it is all right. I have nothing more to say. As for him, if he means well by you and acts as it now becomes necessary he should, that, also, will be none of my affair. But I shall watch." She broke from him with an exclamation and movement of repugnance and ran up the steps. He turned back toward his home.

A week later it was common report throughout the county that Diana Moore had broken her engagement to Dr. White and was to be married to Barton Johnson. Comment was not favorable. The young physician was known and respected as a man of ability and of greater promise. Johnson had led a life that left a crop of ugly stories along his track. It was not merely that he had been reckless or dissipated, for that the community was ever ready to look upon with a lenient eye. But forgery and theft, though legally cancelled, according to the rumors, by the sacrifice of the paternal estate, were more serious matters.

White went quietly about his duties. Ashton, who kept fatherly watch upon him, could discern no outward signs of stress or suffering. Only the brilliant boy he had loved was gone, and in his stead was the reserved, grave-eyed man who had looked into the cold fireplace. He no longer had White's full confidence, and he never inquired into the meaning of several long journeys taken by the physician during the next month. He grieved a little over this withdrawal, but made no protest.

Confidences.

"I wonder if you would have told me of this yourself." The deep intensity of his voice rather than his words gave her the clue to his meaning, and her mouth hardened. He dwelt with bitterness in his thoughts upon the fact that she had been ready to meet him on the old footing, to accord him the privileges that he had a right to, as if nothing had happened. "Did you think you could continue to play with me? And for how long?"

She laughed, recovering perfect command and nimbly adjusting herself to the situation. "Whatever else I think, I should say you had changed wonderfully in the last two weeks," she answered audaciously. "Two weeks, and changed?" he repeated slowly. "Yes, you are right. And what of yourself, Diana?" But she parried. He remembered now that it was never her way to be frank and direct.

"What is it, a game? I've never seen you this way, Tom, and I don't think I quite like it."

"It's no use, Diana. You know perfectly well what I mean. I shall not talk about myself, for that past lacks sufficient interest to me at present and can have none at all for you. But I have some remnants of a claim upon you. Have you considered this well? Are you going to be happy? Is he the man to best serve you and protect you?"

His earnestness overbore and swept aside the stinging response she had ready, forcing her to the open, away from subterfuge and frivolity.

"I shall have to be the judge as to what is best for me, Dr. White," she said.

"That would be true if you had fairly dismissed me and had dealt fairly with me. But I find you covering this new affair under our engagement. You seek to continue our relations and to deceive me. What can I think? Is the man honorable, sincere? I know that he is not. Then see how sinister you make it appear when for such a one you are willing to be mean and treacherous."

She rose quickly and started toward the steps. "That is quite enough, Dr. White," she gasped. "I

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"Will He Fight?"

The aged man sat over a pipe at his door one evening when he saw White walking rapidly toward him up the street. The physician had been absent for three days and evidently had just returned from a long and dusty journey. Ashton hailed him cheerfully and pushed forward a chair, into which the other sank. Ashton noted that he looked fatigued, with drawn, pale face and listless shoulders.

"Will he fight?" asked White suddenly. "Perhaps he will and perhaps he won't," said Ashton. "But who is he?"

"Johnson."

"Seen to have heard somewhere that he was pretty likely at them games. Why?"

"Because I've found him out. He's married. I followed his trail back into Illinois. I've seen his wife. She's in an insane asylum, under her name. Her mind is not seriously affected. She showed me a picture of him and the wedding certificate. They were married in New York six years ago."

"What's that got to do with fighting?"

"I must. It's just another test, Steve, that's all, and I've got to meet it. I can't go sneaking to her father or to her with the story, can I? I can't strike him in the dark that way. No, I've got to do my best to rid her of him honorably, acting as her brother would if she had one."

"And what if he gets you?"

"Then my obligation to keep his secret is cancelled. I'll take care to have the truth known. Meanwhile, the clean way and the straight way and the only way for me is to kill him."

"All right, son," said Ashton. "I'm here."

It was not a difficult matter to bring to a head. White had been conscious of the hostile glances of Johnson when they passed in the street, aware that Diana must have repeated enough of his warning to awaken hatred in his successful rival. With Ashton at his elbow the physician waited for Johnson at the post office next morning. Few persons observed the little scene that followed. When Johnson entered the door White stepped up to him and, shouldering him to one side, glanced at him significantly. Johnson

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LINCOLN'S ONLY DUEL.

IN Abraham Lincoln's one meeting on the field of honor no shot was fired, no one was hurt, and but a single blow was struck. That blow was aimed by the future President at a twig, which suffered acute decapitation.

The affair is commonly referred to as "the famous Lincoln-Shields duel," a widely misleading phrase. The fact remains, however, that the great humanitarian was once drawn under the operations of the law and that he sallied forth with a deadly weapon ready to his hand, apparently with deadly intent. His opponent was to have been James Shields, then State Auditor of Illinois and later major general.

Shields was a peppy, swaggering little man who took himself with much seriousness, and was constantly the object of jokes, personal and political. Lincoln was then a member of the Legislature. He wrote a letter to a Springfield paper dated from "Last Townships" and signed "Aunt Rebecca," in which he attacked a certain taxation provision. Incidentally he took a quiet rap at Shields.

Lincoln's broken engagement with Mary Todd was then in process of repair, and the young woman was mightily amused by the young legislator's contrivance. She wielded a sharply satirical pen herself and is suspected of having had a hand in the original letter. Whatever her share in the first, she is commonly credited with the authorship of the second, in which "Aunt Rebecca" proposed to the Auditor, one of whose constituents was a bride in his family. A few days later she also produced some doggerel verse celebrating the supposed marriage of "Aunt Rebecca" and Shields.

There was laughter in Springfield, but Shields was furious. He inquired at the office of the newspaper and Lincoln took the responsibility for the whole "Aunt Rebecca" service upon himself. Soon afterward Lincoln left Springfield and went to Tremont. While he was there two friends, E. H. Merriam and William Butler, drove into town and warned him that the Auditor was close behind, breathing vengeance. On arriving Shields sent a demand for retraction of all "offensive allusions." Lincoln took the stand that the Auditor should have first asked him formally whether he was the author of the articles, would not answer, and declared that a withdrawal of the demand or a challenge was the only possible course for Shields. Shields were accordingly named, Merriam for Lincoln and General Whitesides for the Auditor. Lincoln's condition was not good.

"First—Weapons—Cavalry broadswords of the largest size, precisely equal in all respects, and such as are now used by the cavalry company at Jacksonville."

"Second—Position—A plank ten feet long and from nine to twelve inches broad, to be firmly fixed on edge on the ground as the line between us, which neither is to pass his foot over on forfeit of his life. Next a line drawn on the ground on either side of said plank and parallel with it, each at the distance of the whole length of the plank and three feet additional from the plank, and the passing of his own such line by either party during the fight shall be deemed a surrender of the contest."

He also named time and place, and on September 22, 1842, Lincoln and Merriam drove into the town of Alton, on the Mississippi, with broadswords enough to equip a regiment rattling in the bottom of the buggy.

The suggestion that Shields, who "could walk under Lincoln's arm," should fight his lanky, long limbed adversary with a sword as tall as himself was sufficiently ludicrous. But the preparations went forward with all due ceremony. The one touch of merriment which "Old Abe" added to the situation at this point was the remark that the place selected was "highly appropriate, since it was within easy distance of the cemetery." Shields and Whitesides arrived, and all embarked on the little horse ferry, each second carrying a selection of the huge dragon salutes under his arm.

Landing was effected on a low sand-spit on the Missouri side, where the two principals sat on opposite logs while preliminaries were being arranged. The residents of Alton were extremely curious to view the proceedings. None of them was allowed to step on the ferry, however, and the spectators were limited to those who roved across in shifts. A crowd remained on the levee, watching as best they might.

It was remarked that Lincoln was solemn and unmoved. He sat looking over the river, apparently oblivious of the preparations. Suddenly he reached over and picked up one of the salutes, drew it from its scabbard and felt its edge critically along its length. Then he rose slowly. The others watched him curiously, but his glance was turned upward. After a few seconds he found what he sought, fixed his eye on a certain twig that thrust itself ambitiously out from the foliage far over head and braced himself on his foot. The sword swung out and back, then whistled up in a wide circle, and the twig, neatly lopped, fell to the ground. After this little exhibition Lincoln gravely resumed his seat.

The demonstration of his opponent's terrible reach was promptly cooling to the ardor of Shields, but unexpected intervention removed the necessity of submitting himself as a twig for chopping. Other friends of Lincoln at Champaign had been notified of the affair and arrived in time to reach peaceful negotiations. Honor was finally declared satisfied on both sides and the whole party climbed into the ferryboat once more.

The crowds on the Alton levee were in a great state of excitement as the boat drew near. A figure in stained clothing was seen lying in the bow. Others were stooping over it and one of them was fanning vigorously. Evidently there had been a sanguine attack to the duel, and bets were hazardous as to which had suffered. It was only when the boat drew up to the landing that the agitated spectators saw that the victim of the fray was a log carefully covered with a red shirt. Lincoln and Shields stepped ashore together, conversing amicably.

Lincoln has been quoted as saying that he would have fought in self-defense, and that the blow would have "cleared Shields from the crown of his head to the end of his backbone." Another unverified report more in keeping with his conduct throughout the incident was that he played Shields a game of "old sledge" to determine which should pay the expense of the trip to Alton and that Shields lost.