

From the Protector.  
TRUE TO HER FLAG:  
An Incident of the Late War.  
BY FRANK VAUGHAN.

[CONTINUED.]  
More than one pair of glazed and hollow eyes turned gratefully upon the girl, as mounted on a chair, she opened the upper part of the narrow casements, and let in the light and air of Heaven, while the sufferer whom Aunt Phillis had so persistently ignored raised himself upon his elbow and exclaimed in that well-remembered voice whose tone had once been so sweet music to her ear, "Virginia, thank God, we meet once more."

A rapid glance at Aunt Phillis, who instantly picked up her dusky ears, and the entrance of the officer on duty, to whom Virginia made a vain appeal for more comforts for the prisoners, silenced Winthrop for the moment; and when they were gone he had the melancholy satisfaction of watching Virginia as she hurried from bed to bed dressing wounds, changing bandages, and giving liberally of the little her basket contained in the way of cordial and refreshment.

At last, his turn came. "I grieve to see you here, Major Winthrop," she said in an audible tone. Wounded and a prisoner, your fate is hard indeed."

"Not now," said the sick man, a wan smile passing over his handsome features—"not now."  
"I can do nothing for you, if you are so imprudent," whispered the girl reprovingly, as she stooped to remove the bandage from his wounded arm. "Say nothing now, but do your best to get health and strength during the coming week. Next Thursday, I am on duty here again, and if anything can be done for you I will manage it by that time."

And nodding brightly as she turned away, Virginia passed rapidly down the ward, speaking a few words of sympathy and encouragement to the poor sufferers by the way, and leaving Winthrop feeling very much as if an angel had come down and troubled the waters of his spirit, without giving him time to touch the hem of her garment and be healed.

As for Virginia, she was thoroughly ashamed of the quickened pulse and hot ghastly color which the sight of her Northern lover had produced, and leaving all her usual duties unperformed, she turned her steps directly toward her father's house, which, beautifully situated on the banks of the James, was within a stone's throw of the prison itself.

Here, lounging idly in the vestibule, was our old friend Rose, clad in the same coarse hospital uniform as her cousin, but without any indications of active occupation in her surroundings.

"Any news, Virginia," she said, "that you're out so early? What is it, dear?" she asked in an excited tone, as Virginia smiled and nodded. "Capitulation, peace, surrender? Something to eat and something to wear, that's all I want to hear of. I supposed I'm a mean-spirited coward, but I'd embrace any number of Yankee-soldiers to get a new pair of shoes, and something better for my poor digestion than this pint of meal a day which chokes me, Virgy—positively chokes me."

And poor Rose, who was in truth no heroine, absolutely wept as she glanced at the mess of Indian porridge which stood upon the table.

"For shame, Rose, how can you be so childish?" replied her cousin. "If you would only go out and see the real suffering all around you, you wouldn't cry about a mess of porridge. There's somebody over there," she added, glancing out toward the Libby prison, "that you'd like ever so much to see."

"Yank?" inquired Rose listlessly. "Let me see, not Cedilla Fendroy, probably, nor Molly Winthrop; there's no other Yank I want to see much."

"What do you say to Moll's brother?" said Virginia shyly.

"Not Ned Winthrop?" exclaimed Rose with a prolonged whistle. "What a splendid fellow!"

Virginia nodded.

"Going to see him? I'm glad of that. Virgy, we'll help him to escape! Shake not thy raven locks at me. I'm bound to do it, and we'll have an elopement and a marriage, and no end of fun. Don't look so savage, Virgy. We've played at heroes and paladins long enough. I'm sick of the game. It's a precious dull one for girls like us. Besides, it's all up with the Confederacy. Tom said so last night. We may as well make ourselves friends of the mammon of Yankedom, and I'm going to begin at once."

"Tom!" repeated Virginia in a dreamy tone, for she had heard nothing of her cousin's rashness.

"Why couldn't we use Tom's uniform and Tom's pass to help Winthrop out?" interrupted Rose. "Of course we could, and we'll do it, Virgy; that's settled. I declare the excitement has given me such an appetite that I feel as if I might almost enjoy our Arabian repast of great and—nothing."

"The old hen to lay me an egg this morning; it took a deal of coaxing, but she did it; so Tom will have a good dinner any way."

"Happy Tom! he is never forgotten," replied Virginia, smiling and patting Rose's golden head.

"He won't feel very happy when he gets up next week as a foot soldier, or clothes to his back," replied Rose as she capered about the room. "I shall have to say I boiled them down for soup."

This night promised to be dark, and threatened a heavy storm, when in the early gray of the spring twilight Virginia's father and Tom's father set out on their perilous errand of mercy.

To be continued.

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