A Conscript's Christmas.

BY JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS

From The Century:

"How did Polly know?" Chadwick inquired.

"Danny Lemmons tol' 'er."

"By George!" exclaimed Chadwick. "the woods is full of Danny Lemmons."

"Why, bless your heart," said Spurlock. "he thes swarms aroun' here."

After Spurlock had taken the precaution to possess himself of Chadwick's arms and ammunition he cut the cords that bound his prisoners hands, and the two went down the mountain, chatting as pleasantly and as sociably as two boon companions Chadwick found no lack of hospitality at Uncle Billy Powers' house. His return was taken as a matter of course, and he was made welcome. Nevertheless, his entertainers betrayed a spirit of levity that might have irritated a person less self contained.

"I see he's ketched you Iserl," remarked Uncle Billy with a twinkle in his eye. "He 'lowed las' night as how he'd fetch you back wi' him."

"Yes," said Israel, "he thes crope up behind me. Its mighty hard for to fool these army fellers.

Then and afterward the whole family pretended to regard Spurlock as Chadwick's prisoner. This was not a joke for the latter to relish, but it was evidently not intended to be offensive, and he could not do less than humor it. He accepted the situation philosofically. He even prepared himself to relish Captain Moseley's astonishment when he returned and discovered the true state of affairs. As the day wore away it occured to Chadwick that that the captain was in no hurry to return. Even Uncle Billy Powers grew uneasy.

"Now, I do hope and trust he ain't gone and lost his temper up thar in the woods," remarked Uncle Billy. "I hope it from the bottom of my heart. These here wars and rumors of wars makes the folks mighty restless. They'll take resks now what they wouldn't dassent to of tuck before this here rippit begun, an' it's done got so now that human life ain't wuth shucks. The boys up here ain't no better 'n the rest. They fly to pieces quicker 'n they ever did."

No trouble, however, had come to Captain Moseley. Though he was confused in his bearings, he was as serene and as unruffled as when training a company of raw conscripts in the art of war. After an unsuccessful attempt to find the road he gave his horse the rein, and that sensible animal, his instinct sharpened by remembrance of Uncle Powers' corn-crib and fodder, moved about at random until he found he was really at liberty to go where he pleased, and then he turned short about, struck a little canter, and was soon going down the road by which he had come. The captain was as proud of this feat as if it were due to his own intelligence, and he patted the horses in an approving way.

As Captain Moseley rode down the mountain, reflecting, it occured to him that his expedition was taking a comical shape. He had gone marching up the hill, and now he came marching down again, and Israel Spurlock, so far as the captain knew, was as far from being a captive, as ever—perhaps farther. Thinking it all over in a somewhat irritated frame of mind, Moseley remembered Lovejoy's eagerness to re-capture Spurlock. He remembered, also, what he had heard the night before, and it was in no pleasant mood that he thought it all over. It was such an insignificant such a despicable affair, two men carrying out the jealous whim of a little militia politician.

"It is enough, by George!" exclaimed Captain Moseley aloud, "to make a sensible man sick."

"Lord yes!" cried out a voice behind him. Loooking around, he saw the hunchback following him. "That's what I tell 'em; goodness, yes!"

"Now, look here!" said Captain Moseley, reining in his horse, and speaking some what sharply. "Are you following me, or am I following you? I don't want to be dogged after in the bushes, much less in big road."

[To be Continued.]

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