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J. N. Marchand

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Title: The Victim
A romance of the Real Jefferson Davis

Author: Thomas Dixon

Release Date: June 30, 2006 [eBook #18721]

Language: English

Character set encoding: ISO-8859-1

START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE VICTIM

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Transcriber's note:

Variations in spelling and hyphenation have been made consistent.

THE VICTIM

A Romance of the Real Jefferson Davis

by

THOMAS DIXON

Illustrated by J. N. Marchand

BOOKS BY THOMAS DIXON

The Victim
The Southerner
The Sins of the Father
The Leopard's Spots
The Clansman
The Traitor
The One Woman
Comrades
The Root of Evil
The Life Worth Living

[Illustration: "The man in front gave a short laugh and advanced on the girl" [Page 300]]

THE VICTIM

"_A majestic soul has passed_"--Charles A. Dana

[Illustration: Colophon]

New York and London
D. Appleton and Company
1914

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Printed in the United States of America

TO
THE BRAVE WHO DIED
FOR WHAT THEY BELIEVED
TO BE RIGHT

_Fold up the banners! Smelt the guns!
Love rules. Her gentle purpose runs.
A mighty mother turns in tears
The pages of her battle years
Lamenting all her fallen sons!_

THOMPSON

TO THE READER

_In the historical romance which I have woven of the dramatic events of
the life of Jefferson Davis I have drawn his real character unobscured
by passion or prejudice. Forced by his people to lead their cause, his
genius created an engine of war so terrible in its power that through it
five million Southerners, without money, without a market, without
credit, withstood for four years the shock of twenty million men of
their own blood and of equal daring, backed by boundless resources._

The achievement is without a parallel in history, and adds new glory to the records of our race.

The scenes have all been drawn from authentic records in my possession. I have not at any point taken a liberty with an essential detail of history.

Thomas Dixon.

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

"The man in front gave a short laugh and advanced on the girl"

"You have given me new eyes--"

"We have won, sir!" was the short curt answer"

"Dick saluted and sprang into the saddle--'I understand, sir'"

"Jennie thrust her trembling little figure between the two men and confronted Dick"

"Do your duty--put them on him!"

LEADING CHARACTERS OF THE STORY

The Prologue

1814-1853

Lt. Jefferson Davis, Of the U. S. Army.
Joseph E. Davis, His Big Brother.
Colonel Zachary Taylor, "Old Rough and Ready."

Sarah Knox Taylor, His Daughter.
James Pemberton, A Faithful Slave.

The Story

1860-1867

Hon. Roger Barton, An Original Secessionist.
Jennie, His Daughter.
Dick Welford, A Confederate Soldier.
Joseph Holt, A Renegade Southerner.
Henrico Socola, A Soldier of Fortune.
The President, Of the Confederacy.
Mrs. Davis, His Wife.
Burton Harrison, His Secretary.
Joseph E. Johnston, A Master of Retreat.
P. G. T. Beauregard, The First Hero.
Stonewall Jackson, Of the "Foot Cavalry."
Robert E. Lee, The Southern Commander.
U. S. Grant, The Bull Dog Fighter.
Nelson A. Miles, A Jailer.
John C. Underwood, A Reconstruction Judge.

THE VICTIM

The Prologue

THE VICTIM

PROLOGUE

I

KIDNAPPED

The hot sun of the South was sinking in red glow through the giant tree-tops of a Mississippi forest beyond the village of Woodville. A slender girl stood in the pathway watching a boy of seven trudge

manfully away beside his stalwart brother.

Her lips trembled and eyes filled with tears.

"Wait--wait!" she cried.

With a sudden bound she snatched him to her heart.

"Don't, Polly--you hurt!" the little fellow faltered, looking at her with a feeling of sudden fear. "Why did you squeeze me so hard?"

"You shouldn't have done that, honey," the big brother frowned.

"I know," the sister pleaded, "but I couldn't help it."

"What are you crying about?" the boy questioned.

Again the girl's arm stole around his neck.

"What's the matter with her, Big Brother?" he asked with a brave attempt at scorn.

The man slowly loosened the sister's arms.

"I'm just going home with you, ain't I?" the child went on, with a quiver in his voice.

The older brother led him to a fallen log, sat down, and held his hands.

"No, Boy," he said quietly. "I'd as well tell you the truth now. I'm going to send you to Kentucky to a wonderful school, taught by learned men from the Old World--wise monks who know everything. You want to go to a real school, don't you?"

"But my Mamma don't know--"

"That's just it, Boy. We can't tell her. She wouldn't let you go."

"Why?"

"Well, she's a good Baptist, and it's a long, long way to the St. Thomas monastery."

"How far?"

"A thousand miles, through these big woods--"

The blue eyes dimmed.

"I want to see my Mamma before I go--" his voice broke.

The man shook his head.

"No, Boy; it won't do. You're her baby--"

The dark head sank with a cry.

"I want to see her!"

"Come, come, Jeff Davis, you're going to be a soldier. Remember you're the son of a soldier who fought under General Washington and won our freedom. You're named after Thomas Jefferson, the great President. Your three brothers have just come home from New Orleans. Under Old Hickory we drove the British back into their ships and sent 'em flying home to England. The son of a soldier--the brother of soldiers--can't cry--"

"I will if I want to!"

"All right!" the man laughed--"I'll hold my hat and you can cry it full--"

He removed his hat and held it smilingly under the boy's firm little chin. The childish lips tightened and the cheeks flushed with anger. His bare toes began to dig holes in the soft rich earth. The appeal to his soldier blood had struck into the pride of his heart and the insult of a hat full of tears had hurt.

At last, he found his tongue:

"Does Pa know I'm goin'?"

"Yes. He thinks you're a very small boy to go so far, but knows it's for the best."

"That's why he kissed me when I left?"

"Yes."

"I thought it was funny," he murmured with a half sob; "he never kissed me before--"

"He's quiet and reserved, Boy, but he's wise and good and loves you. He's had a hard time out here in the wilderness fighting his way with a wife and ten children. He never had a chance to get an education and the children didn't either. Some of us are too old now. There's time for you. We're going to stand aside and let you pass. You're our baby brother, and we love you."

The child's hand slowly stole into the rough one of the man.

"And I love you, Big Brother--" the little voice faltered, "and all the others, too, and that's-why-I'm-not-goin'!"

"I'm so glad!" The girl clapped her hands and laughed.

"Polly!--"

"Well, I am, and I don't care what you say. He's too little to go so far and you know he is--"

The man grasped her hand and whispered:

"Hush!"

The brother slipped his arm around the Boy and drew him on his knee. He waited a moment until the hard lines at the corners of the firm mouth had relaxed under the pressure of his caress, pushed the tangled hair back from his forehead and looked into the fine blue-gray eyes. His voice was tender and his speech slow.

"You must make up your mind to go, Boy. I don't want to force you. I like to see your eyes flash when you say you won't go. You've got the stuff in you that real men are made of. That's why it's worth while to send you. I've seen that since you could toddle about the house and stamp your feet when things didn't suit you. Now, listen to me. I've made a vow to God that you shall have as good a chance as any man to make your way to the top. We're going to be the greatest nation in the world. I saw it in the red flash of guns that day at New Orleans as I lay there in the trench and watched the long lines of Red Coats go down before us. Just a lot of raw recruits with old flintlocks! The men who charged us, the picked veterans of England's grand army. But we cut 'em to pieces, Boy! I fired a cannon loaded with grape shot that mowed a lane straight through 'em. It must have killed two hundred men. They burned our Capitol at Washington and the Federalist traitors at Hartford were firin' on us in the rear, but Old Hickory showed the world that we could lick England with one hand tied behind our back. And we did it. We drove 'em like sheep--drove 'em into the sea.

"There's but one name on every lip in this country now, Boy, and that's Old Hickory. He'd be President next time--but for one thing,--just one thing--he didn't have a chance to learn when he was a boy. He's not educated."

The brother paused, and a dreamy look came into his eyes. "We may make him President anyhow. But if he'd been educated--there wouldn't be any if or and about it. Washington and Jefferson and Madison belong to the rich and powerful class. Jackson is a yeoman like your father. But he'd be President. Boy, if he'd been educated! Nothing could stop him. Don't you see this is your country? This is a poor man's world. All you have to do is to train your mind. You've got to do this--you

understand--you've got to do it--"

The man paused suddenly and looked into the Boy's wondering eyes. He had forgotten the child's rebellion. The young pioneer of the wilderness was talking to himself. Again he had seen a vision.

He seized the Boy's arms:

"Don't you see, Boy, don't you?"

The child's mouth hardened again:

"No, I don't. I'm just a little boy. I love my Mamma. She's good and sweet to me and I'm not going to leave her--"

Again Polly laughed.

A smile slowly played about the brother's lips and eyes. He must show his trump card.

"But you don't know what I've got for you--"

"What?"

"Something you've always wanted to have for your own--"

"A pony?"

The man slowly rose:

"Come out to the big road--"

The Boy seized his sister's hand:

"Polly, let's see!"

The girl's eyes grew dim:

"Oh, Jeff, I know you're goin'!"

"No--we'll just see what it is--come on!"

In five minutes they emerged from the deep woods into the clearing around a cabin. Beside the roadway stood a horse and pony, both bridled and saddled.

The swift feet of the Boy flew across the opening, the sister wide-eyed and trembling, close on his heels. He threw his arms around the pony's neck and stroked his head with gentle touch. The pony pressed his mouth against the Boy's cheek in friendly response.

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