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Endless Variety in Stories and Pictures

How the Original Klan was Born

STRANGELY ENOUGH, the original Ku Klux Klan began in 1865 as a social club of young men in Pulaski, Tennessee. Its ghostly uniform and ritual frightened superstitious Negroes; and when Klansmen discovered this fact accidentally, they lost little time in recruiting membership to 550,000.

The entire South was organized as an Invisible Empire under a Grand Wizard, the ex-Confederate cavalry hero, N. B. Forrest. At a convention in Nashville in 1867, the Klan announced its objectives:

1. To protect the weak and innocent from the lawless: to succor the suffering, especially widows and orphans of Confederate soldiers.

2. To defend the Constitution of the United States, and to protect the States and people from all invasions of rights and liberties.

Apparently, President Grant did not believe that these objectives were genuine, because he sent a special message to Congress in 1871 urging legislation to curb Klan violence. A series of "Force Laws" were passed to enforce the 14th Amendment, break up secret societies and control Southern elections.

Arrests were made where violence had been rampant, and gradually the organization dissolved. But it had accomplished its leaders' real purpose: to keep Negroes in political bondage.

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