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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A LIEUTENANT AT EIGHTEEN ***



"SERGEANT FRONKLYN DRAGGED THE FORM OF LIEUTENANT LYON OUT OF THE MÊLÉE."
PAGE 299.

The Blue and the Gray on Land

A LIEUTENANT AT EIGHTEEN

BY

OLIVER OPTIC

AUTHOR OF "THE ARMY AND NAVY SERIES" "YOUNG AMERICA ABROAD, FIRST
AND SECOND SERIES" "THE BOAT-CLUB STORIES" "THE GREAT WESTERN
SERIES" "THE WOODVILLE STORIES" "THE ONWARD AND UPWARD
SERIES" "THE LAKE SHORE SERIES" "THE YACHT-CLUB SERIES"
"THE RIVERDALE STORIES" "THE BOAT-BUILDER SERIES"
"THE BLUE AND THE GRAY—AFLOAT" "A MISSING
MILLION" "A MILLIONAIRE AT SIXTEEN" "A YOUNG
KNIGHT-ERRANT" "STRANGE SIGHTS ABROAD"
"THE YOUNG NAVIGATORS" "UP AND DOWN
THE NILE" "ASIATIC BREEZES" "ACROSS
INDIA" "HALF ROUND THE WORLD"
ETC., ETC., ETC., ETC., ETC.

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LIEUTENANT AT EIGHTEEN

TO
MY PATRIOTIC FRIEND
MRS. SARA WHITE LEE
THE MASSACHUSETTS REGENT
OF THE
DAUGHTERS OF THE REVOLUTION
THIS VOLUME
IS RESPECTFULLY AND CORDIALLY
DEDICATED

PREFACE

"A LIEUTENANT AT EIGHTEEN" is the third of the series of "The Blue and the Gray—on Land." The stirring events of thirty-four years ago, when the first gun of the Great Rebellion awoke the nation from its slumber of thirteen years of peace, transformed the older boys of the day into men. Thousands of them who lacked three or four years of their majority, and some of them even six or seven years of it, flocked to the standard of the imperilled Union. While the volunteers were in considerable numbers over the military age, those who were not yet out of their teens were earnest in their desire to be enrolled in the ranks of the loyal army, and in one way or another surmounted the obstacle of their tender age.

The youth of the hero of this volume is not contrary to the facts set forth in the official records of the States; neither does his appearance in a squadron of cavalry constitute an improbability, nor his promotion from the rank of second lieutenant to that of first lieutenant, nor even his appointment on the staff of a brigadier-general. In the rosters of three regiments of cavalry, preserved in the archives of a certain State, the name of a young man of seventeen is given as a first lieutenant; two of eighteen as captains; one of the same age as first lieutenant; and three more of that age as second lieutenants. Deck Lyon's rank, therefore, is not exceptional.

Since the close of the war many high schools in the larger cities, and many other educational institutions, have taught military drill and evolutions in their regular courses; and the students have been organized as companies, battalions, and regiments, and are thus trained in actual practice as officers, from a corporal to a colonel, and as privates, for service in the field if we should again unfortunately be involved in a war with a foreign or domestic enemy.

The important battle of Mill Springs, or Logan's Cross Roads as it is indifferently called in the official reports of the government, is introduced in the story, though not in its minute details. The Riverlawn Cavalry are present, and take part in the action, and the command of the principal character renders important service on the outskirts of the battle-field; and the squadron, either as a whole or in detachments, was busily employed. The State was overrun by lawless hordes of ruffians, of which Shaler, the latest historian of the State, writes as

follows:—

"Deserters from both armies formed bands of outlaws called guerillas. These wretches, without commanders from either army, sheltered in the great forests that abound in nearly all parts of the State, were often strong enough to overcome the domestic forces, and were guilty of many outrages. They brought back to Kentucky the evils of its struggle with the Indians. Men again tilled their fields with their muskets by their sides, and slept in expectation of combat. During this and the following year these parties were hunted down, and, when captured, hanged without mercy. Still their numbers, their daring, and their swift movements, made the struggle as difficult and as bloody as in any year during the last century."

The Riverlawn Cavalry was largely employed in operations against these irregular bodies of marauders; and there were so many of them that the force was kept constantly occupied. The cavalry had plenty of exciting experience; and the hero, in command of his platoon on detached service, proved himself to be not only a brave officer, but a skilful strategist.

Compared with the States farther north, Kentucky had a terrible experience in the earlier years of the war, in her desperate struggle with Confederate and domestic enemies; and she is certainly entitled as a Union State to greater honor and respect for her loyalty and fidelity to the Union, and for sending so large a number of troops as she did "to the front," than any other loyal State.

WILLIAM T. ADAMS.

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CHAPTER I

GRACE MORGAN AND HER TREASURE-CHEST

"Are you an honest man, sir?" asked a very pretty young woman, not more than twenty years old, as she stopped in the open field in front of Sergeant Life Knox of the Riverlawn Cavalry, as it was generally called, though the squadron belonged to a numbered regiment in Kentucky.

The non-commissioned officer was a tall Kentuckian, over six feet high, lank and raw-boned. He looked at the young woman, and a smile lighted up his thin face.

"I reckon I am, Miss; I never robbed a bank, or stole a poor woman's last dollar," he replied, thinking it was a queer question if the lady proposed to trust him on his own recommendation.

"Are you a Confederate soldier, for I see that you wear a uniform?" continued the young woman, looking behind her with a timid glance.

"I am not!" protested Life with earnestness enough to prove that he meant all that he said. "Don't you see that I wear the uniform of the United States army? and, Hail Columby! if I ain't a Union man from the smallest nail in the heel of my boot to the top hair on my Kentucky skull!"

"You won't rob me if I tell you the truth, will you?" asked she very simply, and evidently agitated by painful doubts.

"No, indeed, Missy! I wouldn't do that even if you didn't tell me the truth; not if you lied to me till you was black in the face," replied the sergeant warmly. "But what difference does it make to you whether I am honest or not? I am forty-two, and I reckon you don't think of marrying me without my mother's consent."

"I am very serious, sir, and I hope you will not make fun of me," pleaded the young woman with a deep blush on her face, as she looked behind her and listened.

"I wouldn't say a sassy thing to you for half a Kentucky county; but you asked me a queer question. I'll do anything I kin for you. I reckon I'm an honest man; and I don't reckon you kin find anybody in my county that would say I'm not honest."

"That's enough; you look like an honest man, and I believe you," added the fair woman, as she took from under her clothing a hard-wood box about eight inches long by four in width and depth.

From the effort it required for her to handle it, Life judged that it was quite heavy. It was bound with straps of brass, screwed to the wood; and the sight of it was enough to convince the sergeant that it contained something valuable. Her strange question seemed to be explained by this supposition.

"What is your name, Missy?" asked Life, becoming very sedate all at once; for, rough as his manners were, he had a kind heart, and would not trifle with the feelings of any one.

"My name is Grace Morgan," replied the lady, looking behind her once more, as though she dreaded some peril in that direction.

"Be you afeerd of sunthin', that you keep lookin' over yender?" inquired the cavalryman in kindly tones. "What is it? Tell me all about it."

"You say you are a Union man?" she inquired doubtfully.

"Bet your life on't! I'm orderly sergeant of the fust company of the Riverlawn Cavalry. What's it all about?" asked Life, very tenderly for him.

"Stephen Halliburn, who lives about half a mile over there, is my guardian. About twenty Confederate soldiers, or guerillas, I don't know which, are plundering his house and stable, and they say they will have his money if they have to pull his house down to find it," answered Grace, trembling, and glancing frequently behind her, as though she were in mortal terror of the approach of the enemy.

"Oh, ho, Grace! That's what's the matter, ain't it? We'll soon fix the gorrillas, or the soldiers, whatever they may be," replied Life, as he looked earnestly in the direction of the road, a few rods distant from the spot.

"But I can't carry this chest any farther. I am worn out bringing it so far; for I have been so frightened that all the strength has gone out of me," said Grace, as she placed the box on a rock near her. "I am terribly afraid that Mr. Halliburn will be killed or badly hurt; for he is a Union man, and speaks out just what he thinks."

"We will do what we can for him," added Life, still looking in the direction of the road, and listening for sounds from the north.

"But you are only a single man; and what can you do against twenty ruffians?" asked the Kentucky girl, who still trembled, and did not seem to believe that the stalwart cavalryman could do anything to aid Mr. Halliburn.

"About fifty on us," added Life quietly, still looking and listening. "I'm a scout sent out ahead of half the fust company marchin' this way. I left my horse in the road, to come over this way and take a look, for I had an idee I heerd sunthin' on the left."

"Perhaps you heard the ruffians who are plundering my guardian," replied Grace, brightening up when she learned that fifty Union soldiers were in the neighborhood. "He is a dear good man, and I love him as though he were my father. I would not have left him if he had not insisted that I should do something with the chest, which contains all his money and papers. I can't carry it any farther, for it is very heavy."

"And what were you gwine to do with it?" inquired Life, looking into her pretty face.

"I was going to carry it over to the house of Colonel Ben Halliburn, my guardian's brother, as he told me to do."

"All right, Missy; I'll tote it over to the road, and report to the lieutenant as soon as he comes up with the men," added Life as he picked up the treasure-chest.

It was heavy, as the young woman had said, though it was a light load for the powerful Kentuckian; and he concluded at once that it must contain a considerable amount of gold. In the distracted condition of the State very few had any confidence in the banks, and some had turned their bills into coin for any emergency that might arise. Before he reached the road he saw another scout getting over the fence.

"Get on your hoss agin, Fronklyn!" shouted Life, who walked with long and hurried strides, so that Grace had to run in order to keep near him.

The story of the bearer of the chest had fully aroused him by this time; and he was ready for action, whether it was in a fight, or in the service of the fair maiden, though there was hardly a fibre of sentimentalism in his composition. When he reached the road, Sergeant Fronklyn had mounted his horse, and was waiting for orders from the chief scout.

"Ride back like a streak o' lightnin', and tell Lieutenant Lyon that the gorrillas is cleanin' out a house over yender!" said Life in hurried speech. "How fur back is the platoon?"

"Not more than half a mile," said Fronklyn.

"Go it, and don't let the grass grow under your hoss's irons!"

The other scout went off at the fastest gallop of his steed, and soon disappeared beyond a turn in the road. The Riverlawn Cavalry had been enlisted, drilled, and mustered into the loyal army at the plantation of Noah Lyon, who had inherited the property under the will of his elder brother. The raising of hemp and horses had made the deceased brother, Colonel Duncan Lyon, a rich man, as worldly possessions were gauged in this locality. His property had been fairly divided among his heirs. The plantation had been given to his younger brother, greatly to the dissatisfaction of the elder one.

Titus Lyon, the other surviving brother, was an entirely different kind of man from Noah, as the original owner of Riverlawn was well aware when he gave the place to his younger brother. All of them had come from New Hampshire, the colonel in his early manhood, and Titus a few years before Noah. The latter was a man of character, with lofty principles, while his living brother was far from being a high-toned person. He had always been what is called "a moderate drinker," and his politics had always been the opposite of Noah's in the North.

Titus believed that he ought to have been born a rich man. He was a mason by trade, and had gone to Kentucky to establish himself in this business. For a time he did very well. He fawned upon and tried to flatter his brother; but he drank more whiskey than ever. When the colonel's health began to fail him, he looked forward to the possession of Riverlawn. When it went to Noah he was mortally offended, and an unhappy feud grew into being, though it was altogether on the side of Titus.

The dissatisfied brother, apparently as much to spite Noah, who was an enthusiastic Union man, cast in his lot with the Secessionists. With the money he had received from his deceased brother's estate he became a leader among them. They were bullies and ruffians for the most part, operating at first in the interests of neutrality, the governor's favorite scheme, and in the end falling very naturally into the ranks of the enemies of the Union. Titus raised a company of Home Guards, in which thousands of the citizens of the State were organized, some on one and some on the other side of the question.

Titus was ambitious, and he was chosen captain of his company. He displayed more energy and activity than he had ever manifested in his business, and spent his money recklessly in fitting out and arming his recruits. He purchased a considerable quantity of muskets, cannon, and revolvers, with the ammunition for them. He concealed these military supplies in a "sink," or cave, till he could organize his command. One of Noah's sons discovered them while exploring the creek that flowed by Riverlawn.

When the discovery was reported to his father, Major Lyon, as he was courteously called

before he was entitled to this handle to his name, immediately decided that his duty to his country required him to take possession of the arms and munitions. They were all removed to a building prepared for their reception at Riverlawn. Captain Titus knew, or suspected, that his brother had taken the military supplies, and his wrath knew no bounds. When the Union men held a meeting in a schoolhouse the smouldering fire was fanned into a blaze. The ruffians, led on by their captain, marched upon Riverlawn, proposing to burn the mansion and hang its owner to a tree on the lawn, though Titus denied that he had any such intention, and declared that he had prevented his followers from committing this outrage.

Major Lyon had heard of the threats against him and his property, and he was prepared for the marauders. With the aid of his neighbors, and arming his negroes, he fought the "Battle of Riverlawn," defeating and dispersing the ruffians. Then, as arranged at the Union meeting, he proceeded to raise a company of cavalry. The enthusiasm among the loyal people was immense, and two companies were enlisted and mustered in. Against his wishes he was chosen major of the battalion.

Levi Bedford was his overseer. He was a Tennessee Unionist in whom the planter had unbounded confidence. When the major left his home in command of the squadron of two companies, Levi took charge of his family and estate. This family consisted of a daughter Hope, and a son Dexter, now a lieutenant at eighteen. Noah had brought up in his family from their early childhood the children of a brother who died penniless in Vermont. Artemas, always called Artie, was sixteen, and a soldier in one of the companies. Dorcas, the adopted daughter, was eighteen. They had always been a happy family; and all the young people called Noah and his wife, who treated them as their own, father and mother.

The squadron had been on detached duty. Their first service was to protect a railroad bridge which Captain Titus's company and a troop of Texan cavalry had been sent to destroy in order to prevent the transportation of Union forces to Bowling Green. The Texans were thoroughly defeated, and the Home Guards surrounded, beaten, and captured. The major's brother was sent with them to the North, where he had the opportunity to repent and get sober. His two sons, Alexander and Orlando, half starved and disgusted, had fled from Bowling Green; and when their mother and sisters went back to the North, the two boys had enlisted in the Riverlawn Cavalry.

The next service of the squadron was in repressing guerilla outrages; and they took part in the small battle of Munfordsville. When it was known that the Confederates were marching into Kentucky from the south and east, the squadron was sent to take part in the operations in this quarter. The command arrived at Columbia, from which Major Lyon sent the first company towards Mill Springs, where the enemy were reported to be, by the way of Liberty and Miltonville. The second company were to proceed by Millersville and Jamestown, with the same objective point in view.

CHAPTER II

PREPARATIONS FOR DECISIVE ACTION

Captain Gordon was in command of the first company of the Riverlawn Cavalry. He was an excellent officer, and had been sent down to organize the company, and Major Lyon wished him to take the command of the battalion; but he insisted that the planter should have that position. The wealthy and influential men of the county, among whom the major was honored and respected, persuaded him to accept; and he had finally done so, Captain Gordon being the most strenuous that he should do so.

Tom Belthorpe, the son of a planter residing near Riverlawn, was the first lieutenant. Deck Lyon, as he had always been called by everybody but his father, had proved to be one of "the bravest of the brave," and to have excellent judgment for a young man of eighteen. He was a universal favorite throughout the squadron. In the battles with the guerillas at Greeltop and Plain Hill, Deck had greatly distinguished himself. In the first of these actions, Lieutenant Gilder of the first company had been killed, and his place was vacant. Among themselves the company signed a paper in favor of the promotion of Deck to the grade of lieutenant.

Major Lyon had no knowledge of this movement on the part of the men, or perhaps he would have interfered to prevent its success; but the paper went to higher authority than he, indorsed by Captain Gordon and Lieutenant Belthorpe; and when the commission came it was as much of a surprise to the father as to the son.

Wearing his new uniform, with shoulder-straps, he had fought as bravely as ever at Munfordsville, and had led his platoon with skill and discretion. Though in an attack of cavalry he led his men into action, he was not again charged with recklessness, as he had been in the action at the Cross Roads, as the fight at the other railroad bridge was called. He conducted himself with dignity in his new position, and all of a sudden he seemed to

forget that he was only a boy.

The first company had marched down the road towards the South not more than three miles, before the forward movement was arrested by a messenger, coming in through a path from the road to Breedings with the information that a guerilla or foraging party were approaching a hamlet, evidently with the intention of plundering the houses and out-buildings. It was known that the Confederate forces, who had established and fortified themselves in and around Mill Springs, were destitute of supplies. They were in a hungry or half-starved condition, and their food was obtained mostly by foraging parties sent a considerable distance from their camps.

Major Lyon had divided his squadron at Columbia in order to check the operations of these bodies, some of which were said to be regular partisan bands, robbing and plundering for their own benefit, and not authorized to procure supplies for the Southern army. Captain Gordon had been instructed to be on the lookout for these marauders. The messenger said the party approaching the Breedings road consisted of about thirty mounted men. He decided to send Lieutenant Belthorpe's platoon to attack them, accompanying the force himself, for he could not remain inactive when there was fighting to be done.

The captain had not expected to meet an enemy in the direction of Breedings; but he had received an intimation that trouble might be expected in the region between Columbia and Harrison, though nothing was known in regard to such a raid. The country was cut up by cross-roads, not much more than mere paths, on which several plantations were located, making the territory very favorable to the operations of guerillas or foragers.

"Lieutenant Lyon, I am going with Belthorpe's platoon, for I am more likely to be needed where he goes than where you go," said Captain Gordon, riding up to the young officer. "You will continue on this road till you come to Millersville, and wait there until I join you."

"At Millersville," repeated Deck. "I have studied the map, and I know just where it is."

"I talked with a planter just this side of Columbia, who gave me a hint that marauding parties had a fine chance to operate in the country that will be on your left as you proceed," continued the commander of the company. "If you hear firing, or see anything that looks like a fire, you will attend to the matter."

"Of course I should do so," added Deck.

"I want you to hurry up the baggage wagons, for they are what makes our progress so slow. I need hardly warn you to be prudent, and not expose yourself unnecessarily to a superior force. Don't leave your wagons too far in your rear, for they contain just what the enemy want most. Now, relying as much upon your discretion as your bravery, continue on your march to Millersville," the captain concluded, as he galloped after the first platoon, which had left the road a few minutes before.

Lieutenant Lyon saluted his superior, and then, conscious for the first time in his life that he had been assigned to an independent command, though it was likely to be of brief duration, he sent for the two sergeants of his platoon, and sent them forward as scouts, with two privates to assist them.

"Platoon—attention! Forward—march!" called the young officer, when he had sent the scouts ahead with orders to keep a sharp lookout on both sides, especially on the left.

Life Knox obeyed his orders to the letter, and made the left his particular study; and when he saw something like signs of a plantation in the distance, he dismounted, got over the fence, moving in a direction to satisfy himself that no foragers were in sight. As he was advancing towards the plantation, Grace Morgan came out of a bushy knoll and confronted him. After the interview with her, he had carried the treasure-chest to the road. He had sent the two privates to the left; and as Sergeant Fronklyn galloped off to hurry up the platoon, they rode down the road, and halted in front of him. One of these soldiers was Deck's cousin, Alick Lyon.

"Have you seen or heard anything crooked, Lyon?" asked the chief scout.

"Not a thing, Sergeant; I thought I heard voices one time, but I could make nothing of them. I saw this woman walking across a cornfield;" and he pointed at Grace.

"I saw him too; but I was afraid of him," added the young woman.

"Wasn't you afeerd of me?" asked the sergeant, with a smile on his wiry face.

"No, I was not; besides, I was tired out with the load I carried, and I felt as though I could go no farther."

"How far from here does Colonel Halliburn live?" asked Life.

"It is more than a mile from this road."

"I reckon this box will not be very safe with him, for there's more gorillas runnin' loose about this country than there is skippers in an old cheese. Kin you ride horseback, Grace?"

"Every Kentucky girl can ride horseback," replied she, with the first smile he had yet seen on

her face, perhaps because she expected to be sent to Colonel Halliburn's mansion.

"But we hain't got no side-saddle," suggested Life.

"I can get along very well on any saddle; and I have ridden a spirited animal without any saddle," said the lady.

"Perhaps you would like to enlist in our company," added the sergeant, with a heavy chuckle.

"I should like it first-rate, if it could be allowed," replied Grace, with energy, while her eyes snapped at the idea.

"I shall have to leave that matter to Major Lyon. But here comes the platoon," said Life, as thirty-five or forty men dashed down the road, led by Lieutenant Lyon.

"Where are the enemy, Sergeant?" demanded the officer, as he reined in his panting steed some distance in advance of his men, and in front of Life and Grace Morgan.

"Half a mile or more to the east of where we stand," replied the scout.

"Is there a road or path over there?" inquired Deck.

"This is Grace Morgan, and she can tell you all about it, for she brought me the news," answered Life, presenting the young woman.

The lieutenant raised his cap and bowed politely to the Kentucky damsel; and he could not help observing that she was a very pretty girl, though he had no time to indulge in the phrases of gallantry, even if his fealty to Miss Kate Belthorpe had permitted him to do so. This fair young lady was the sister of Lieutenant Belthorpe, and Deck had made her acquaintance on the evening of the "Battle of Riverlawn," when he had rescued her from the grasp of a ruffian. He was too young to be absolutely in love with the maiden, though he believed she was the prettiest girl in the State of Kentucky.

Miss Morgan repeated the story she had told the sergeant.

"How did you escape from the ruffians?" asked Deck.

"We saw them coming from the direction of Miltonville; and Mr. Halliburn, who is my guardian, sent me to carry his valuables to the mansion of his brother, about a mile and a half from his own house," replied Grace, by this time quite reassured by the presence of the soldiers.

"Have you the valuables now?"

"They are in a box," she replied, pointing to the treasure-chest. "It contains a good deal of money in gold and silver, and it is so heavy that I could not carry it any farther, for I was faint and tired out."

"I will send two of my men to see you safely to the house where you are going," continued the lieutenant, as he glanced at his platoon, which had halted in the road near the place where the maiden stood. "Life, name two of your trustiest men," he added in a low tone to the sergeant.

"Fronklyn and Sandy Lyon," responded Life promptly. "The lady can ride on an army saddle, or even without any saddle."

"Send the men you mention; as our spare horses are with the baggage-wagons, you can wait till they come up. Is there any road, Miss Morgan, across these fields to your guardian's mansion?" added Deck, willing that his men should rest for a few minutes, for he was not inclined to fight his first battle, while in command, without fully understanding the situation.

"There is a rough road across the fields and through the woods to the mansion; but it is very soft and muddy," replied Grace.

"There comes a man across the field!" exclaimed Life.

"That is Win Milton!" cried the maiden, her face suffused with a blush, as though she supposed all the listeners understood her relations to the young man, who was now running with all the speed of his legs across the field.

He was a stalwart fellow, and the maiden's crimson cheeks betrayed the whole story. He was well dressed, and his face was intelligent and expressive.

"I am so glad you have come, Win," ejaculated the blushing beauty, as the young man grasped her offered hands. "What is the news from the house?"

"The ruffians are guerillas, and they are trying to make Mr. Halliburn give up his money, but he declared that he had not a dollar in the house; yet he found time to tell me that you had taken the chest containing it to his brother's," replied Winfield Milton, which was his full name. "The robbers were ransacking the house in search of the money or other valuables; and Mr. Halliburn insisted that I should follow you, for he was alarmed in regard to your safety."

"Mr. Win—I have not heard your name yet," interposed the lieutenant.

"This is Mr. Winfield Milton, of Miltonville," added Grace, with another blush.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Milton, for you can be of service to me. I suppose you are acquainted with this locality?" replied Deck.

"Born and raised in these parts, Captain."

"Lieutenant Lyon, if you please. I have already detailed two of my men to conduct Miss Morgan to the mansion where she wishes to go, for I desire to employ you as my guide, if the lady will consent," continued Deck.

"Certainly I will consent!" exclaimed Grace. "I would guide you myself, if I had not to take care of the treasure-chest."

"I shall be very glad to serve you, Lieutenant," added Win.

Although not ten minutes had elapsed since the arrival of the officer in command, the baggage wagons were in sight. Men were sent to them for two of the extra horses, saddled for immediate use. One of them was given to Miss Morgan, Sergeant Fronklyn received the treasure-chest on his horse, and Sandy Lyon was sent on ahead to scout the path. The lady seated herself on the army saddle, and the party moved off as rapidly as the muddy road would permit.

CHAPTER III

THE LIEUTENANT BAGS HIS GAME

The Riverlawn Cavalry had lost a number of its men, who had been killed in the several actions in which it had been engaged, and a greater number had been disabled by wounds; though both companies had been recruited up to their full standard. The squadron was so popular that more than twenty had applied to enlist after its ranks were full. Deck had, therefore, his full quota, and two more.

"The other horse is for you, Mr. Milton," said the lieutenant, when he was ready to move on to the mansion invested by the ruffians.

"Thank you, Lieutenant Lyon; I left my horse a mile beyond Mr. Halliburn's, when I learned that the guerillas were going in that direction," replied the guide. "I am satisfied, now that Grace is safe."

"There is another band of guerillas or foragers in the direction of Breedings; but the first platoon of our company has gone over to give them a reception, and I don't believe any of them will get as far south as the house to which Miss Morgan is going," Deck explained.

"I hope not, for I am very anxious about Grace," added the guide.

"She is a very attractive young lady," suggested Deck.

"Which makes her peril all the greater," replied her intended, for such he was, as they entered a forest of black walnut. "We have tried to persuade her to go to her uncle's house in Springfield, Ohio; but she refuses to leave her guardian, who has been a father to her from her childhood. I shall get my horse, if the ruffians have not stolen him, and hasten to Colonel Halliburn's, as soon as you have disposed of these villains."

"I shall try to bag the whole of them," said Deck. "But so many prisoners would be a nuisance to me."

"There is a loyal Home Guard in Millersville, if the Confederates have not scattered them; and they would take care of your prisoners," suggested the guide.

"Now, Mr. Milton,"—

"Call me Win, as everybody else does, and that will save time," interposed the young man.

"As you please, Win; the name is shorter, and perhaps you will recognize it more readily because it is more familiar to you than one with a handle to it. Now, I want to know something more about the surroundings of Mr. Halliburn's mansion. I wonder that this gentleman is not a colonel, like most people of any importance in this State."

"He was formerly a clergyman, and sometimes officiates now on an emergency. That fact saved him from any military infliction. Then his brother is a real colonel, and two of the same title would have made confusion in talking about them," the guide explained.

The mud was so deep that no great speed could be made on the march, and the guerillas

were not likely to complete their mission for some hours, for they seldom left a plundered house without requiring a meal to be provided for them. Still, the lieutenant pushed on with all practicable haste.

"How does the land lie about the house?" asked Deck.

"All the land cultivated on the plantation, which contains over a thousand acres, is on the east side of the mansion. Most of the ground on the west of it is in walnut; for in the dry season it is easily hauled to the Cumberland River, and carried to a market during high water. It is a profitable crop to the planter."

"Does the walnut grove reach as far as the mansion?"

"Very nearly. There is a small grove south of the house, and a wooded hill to the north-east of it."

"Very well; I think I have got the idea of it," replied Deck, as he relapsed into silence to study his plan.

Though he had a great deal of confidence in himself, he was fully conscious of the responsibility which rested upon him. Probably if Captain Gordon had suspected that the lieutenant at eighteen would encounter an enemy, he would have come with the platoon himself, though he had quite as much confidence in Deck as in Tom Belthorpe. But the other division was reasonably sure to engage an enemy, and doubtless this consideration had decided the question as to which he should accompany.

"This wood extends around to the north side of the mansion, if I understand the situation," said Deck, when he had arranged the attack in his own mind.

"Precisely so," replied the guide.

"That is on our left; how is it on the right, Win?"

"You come out of the woods into a cornfield; beyond this is a low hill, and beyond it is a grove, where the family walk in warm weather."

"How far are we from the mansion now?"

"Something more than a hundred rods."

"Platoon—halt!" said the lieutenant, suddenly whirling his horse about as on a pivot. "Sergeant Knox!"

Life rode up to him, saluted, and waited for further orders.

"With fifteen men you will move to the left through the woods till you come to the mansion now directly in front of us. Move without noise, and halt your force as near the house as you can without being seen by the enemy, who are too busy to notice anything just now. When the bugle sounds the 'Advance,' you will march at a gallop to the east side of the house. Do you understand me, Life?" said Deck, speaking very clearly, but in a low tone.

"I'll bet I do; shall I repeat the orders?" replied the sergeant.

"It is not necessary."

Deck then directed Corporal Tilford, another non-commissioned officer, to take twelve men and proceed to the right, through the cornfield, concealing himself behind the hill mentioned by Win, and halt in the grove. At the same signal, a second time given, the corporal was to march his men in haste to the front of the mansion. The two detachments went to the left and the right as directed, and the lieutenant continued the march directly to his destination. The stable of the plantation was the first building they saw, for the west side of the mansion was concealed by a dozen lofty trees. If the ruffians were still in the house, they appeared to have taken no precautions to guard against a surprise: for there was no sentinel, and no person could be seen near the mansion.

"Platoon—halt!" said Deck, when he had led his men into the shelter of the trees; but he spoke in a very low tone, for he was not more than fifty feet from the mansion.

Taking the bugler and the guide with him, he crept carefully around the principal building, halting at the corner. From this point he obtained a full view of the ground in front. He counted twenty-two horses, secured to a fence and in other places where it could be done. This he concluded was the force of the enemy. He could hear very loud noises and shouts within the mansion, and the sounds appeared to come from the upper story of the building. It was evident that the marauders had searched the lower part of the house, and were now engaged in going through the upper portion.

"Was it known that Mr. Halliburn had a large sum of money in his house?" asked Deck in a whisper of the guide.

"Probably it was; he kept it in several banks till recently. When he withdrew the money from the banks, the officers of these institutions were incensed against him; for his example would be followed by other influential people, and the banks would be ruined," Win explained in the same low tone.

"Stufton, go to the rear of the house, and send the first six men you come to around to me. Tell them to make no noise," continued the lieutenant, addressing the bugler.

He was not absent more than three minutes, and the men crept around the house as though they had been engaged in a burglarious enterprise, securing their sabres so that they did not rattle. Milton wondered what the cavalryman in command intended to do, but he waited patiently for the outcome. Ordering the men in a whisper to follow him, Deck stole silently to the portico of the mansion on the east side, which was precisely like one on the west.

The front door of the mansion was wide open. Deck stationed his six men on the piazza, close to the building, and then passed into the hall through the open passage. A door on each side opened into as many large apartments. The one on the right was plainly the parlor. On a broad sofa reclined a man with white hair and beard. He lay there, and did not move any more than if the breath had left his body. In the room on the left lay an elderly woman on another sofa, as motionless as the other.

Heavy footsteps could be heard on the floors of the upper story, with the sound of rough voices, from which proceeded a constant flow of profanity. Deck stepped out of the hall to the piazza, and called the men to him one at a time, and then stationed them in the hall surrounding the staircase leading to the second story.

"If any one attempts to descend the stairs, warn him not to do so, and shoot him if he disobeys," said Deck to each of the troopers, who had his carbine in readiness for use.

"Are there any back stairs in the house, Win?" asked Deck in the usual whisper.

"There are, by the dining-room in the rear," replied the guide, who began to understand the method by which the lieutenant meant to operate, but he said nothing.

Deck went to the west door of the mansion, opened it, and called three more men, whom he instructed as he had the others, and stationed them at the foot of the back stairs. Calling a corporal and a private, he sent them to Life and Tilford, with an order to secure all horses, and load their carbines, putting their revolvers in their belts. Then they were to wait for the signal from the bugle.

"Now we will look into the two rooms, and see if the man and woman on the sofas are dead," said Deck to the guide. "Come with me, Win, if you please."

Milton had not entered the house before, and had not seen the persons on the sofas. He followed the lieutenant into the room where the man lay. Going nearer to him than before, he discovered that the gentleman was strapped to the sofa so that he could not move.

"It is Mr. Halliburn!" was the whispered exclamation of Win.

"Hush! Don't speak, sir," said Deck, as he proceeded to remove the straps which bound him, aided by the guide.

"Not a sound, sir!" continued the young officer. "You are safe, and so is Miss Morgan, and also the treasure-chest. Not a word!"

Win assisted him to sit up on the sofa, and then went into the other front room with Deck. The latter warned her as he had the man not to speak, and then asked the guide who she was, while both of them began at once to remove her bonds.

"Mrs. Halliburn," replied Win, who assisted her to rise as soon as she was liberated.

"Now, Win, if you wish to go and find your horse, I can spare you, though I should like very well to have you remain longer."

"I want to see this thing through," answered Milton. "I have seen you pile up all the incidents of this affair, like those in a novel; and now I want to see you pull out the pin in the last chapter, and let everything down in a heap. I suppose Grace is safe with your men to guard her."

"I will vouch for her safety. I am going to pull out the pin now," added Deck, as he beckoned the bugler to follow him to the front or east piazza.

He ordered him to sound the "Advance," and the command was promptly obeyed. The ringing notes of the startling call sounded clearly in the silence of the retired locality, and it could have been heard at least half a mile. Life Knox's force came first, and Deck directed the sergeant to surround the house, and shoot down any guerilla that attempted to escape. The bugle sounded the second call, and Corporal Tilford and his dozen men appeared in front of the mansion. The sergeant continued to station the men till all of them were in position.

The marauders flocked to the windows, and found half a dozen carbines pointed at each opening. It checked their enthusiasm at once. At the staircase those who proposed to descend found as many pieces aimed at them. It looked just then as though Lieutenant Lyon had bagged the twenty-two guerillas in the upper story of the mansion.

CHAPTER IV

A REFRACTORY GUERRILLA CHIEF

The situation did not look hopeful to the ruffians who had taken possession of the mansion. They saw at least forty carbines pointed at them, and the staircase looked like a barred gate to them. Their heavy footsteps could be heard in the lower story as they walked about from one window to another, searching for some avenue of escape. Life Knox was passing around the house, assisted by Corporal Tilford, in readiness to meet the first attempt to resist the fate that was in store for them.

The lieutenant stood at the front door, and occasionally stepped out-doors to assure himself that the house was well covered by his troopers. He was disposed to wait for some movement on the part of the enemy, or to allow them to get accustomed to the situation. He had fought guerillas before; and it was not wise, in his judgment, to force them suddenly into desperation, for they became reckless when pressed too hard.

"You have got them into a tight place," said Win Milton, who was watching the young officer with the most intense interest.

"The circumstances have just fitted the situation for me," replied Deck, who kept his eyes wandering in every direction in search of any demonstration on the part of the ruffians. "Do you know any of the men you have seen about the place, Win?"

"I recognize one of them, and I have seen some of the others," replied the guide. "A fellow who is called Captain Coonly seems to be in command of the gang. He has been the most active Secessionist in Adair County, and the most desperate one. He has an intense hatred of the Union men of the vicinity, and has advocated hanging every one of them. He is a fire-eater of the most pronounced stamp; but the rascal is a coward, I believe, though he has the reputation of being a brave man; yet he is nothing but a bully. You would think, to hear him talk, that he was going to burn up the Cumberland River."

"Is he the long-haired fellow I saw at the head of the stairs, dressed better than the rest of the gang?" asked Deck.

"That is the man. He is well educated, and is a lawyer in Columbia; but the influential and conservative men, who are nearly all Unionists, will have nothing to do with him, and have always looked upon him as a scallawag. He raised a company of Home Guards, but he could enlist only the ruffians of the vicinity," replied Milton, as he drew the picture of the leader of the guerillas; and Deck thought the lawyer was not unlike some of the Secessionists of Butler and Edmonson Counties.

"As you say, we have the ruffians in a tight place, and I want to give them a chance to think over the situation, and take it in," added Deck. "If they want to fight, we can accommodate them at any moment they are ready to open the ball. I suppose they are all armed."

"With old shot-guns, horse-pistols, and antique rifles," replied Win contemptuously.

"But even such weapons will kill; and I don't want to lose my men unless it is absolutely necessary, for they can be put to a better use than in grinding up such blackguards as we have here."

"Don't you think they comprehend the situation by this time?" asked Milton, who seemed to be impatient to see the end of the affair.

"I might as well wait here as at Millersville; for Captain Gordon has gone over to Breedings to settle up a case of this kind, and he may not arrive for several hours yet. I will go into the house and talk with Mr. Halliburn," said Deck, as he suited the action to the word.

"I doubt if he can give you any information you have not already obtained," answered Milton, following the lieutenant into the mansion.

The planter and his wife were found on the sofas where they had been confined; and they seemed to be still paralyzed with terror, for not a few Union men had been hung or shot in the State within the preceding year. Mr. Halliburn was a man of sixty or more. He had been a clergyman during a considerable portion of his life, and he was not at all belligerent in his nature.

"Mr. Halliburn, this is Lieutenant Lyon, of the Riverlawn Cavalry, serving the United States Government," said Win, presenting the young officer.

"I am very glad to see you, Lieutenant Lyon; I may say that I am rejoiced to see you at this time, for I am beset by the children of Satan, who would hang me to the highest walnut in my park," said the venerable gentleman, with a sweetly religious smile on his thin lips, while his eyes lighted up with an expression in keeping with the smile, which excited the reverence of the youthful soldier.

"I am very glad to see you, Mr. Halliburn, for I hope I shall soon be able to relieve you of your troublesome visitors," replied Deck, taking the hand the planter extended to him.

"I am not a man of war or blood, and I have submitted with what resignation I could command to the outrages of these myrmidons of sin," continued the ex-clergyman. "They learned in some manner that I had money in the house, which belongs mostly to my ward, Miss Morgan."

"I have met her, and sent two of my men to conduct her to the house of your brother," added Deck.

"God bless you for your kindness to the child!" exclaimed Mr. Halliburn, grasping the officer's hand again. "When I saw these foes of God and man coming towards the mansion, I understood their mission; and I sent Grace to my brother's with all the money in the house. I hoped to save it for her use, for nearly all of it belongs to her. But where is my poor wife?"

"She is all right, in the sitting-room," replied Win. "I will bring her in," and he hastened to the other front room for her.

Mr. Halliburn told the lieutenant that the marauders had threatened to hang him if he did not tell where his money was concealed. He had told them the truth, that there was no money in the house; but they refused to believe him, and had been searching the house for the last hour. They had opened every drawer and closet, explored the cellar, examined the chimneys at each end of the house, and then gone up-stairs to continue the hunt.

Mrs. Halliburn came into the room, leaning on the arm of Win Milton, who presented her to the lieutenant. She looked like the twin-sister, rather than the wife, of the planter, and the same pious expression was settled upon her face. But Deck had learned all he cared to know at present, and he thought by this time that the guerillas had come to a realizing sense of their situation. He thought it was time for him to attend to them. As he passed out of the parlor, a soldier saluted him.

"One on 'em wants to speak to the commanding officer," said he, pointing to the head of the stairs, where the marauders were huddled together. "This is the lieutenant in command," added the cavalryman, calling to the man who wished to see him.

"What! that boy?" demanded the ruffian.

"Boy or man, I am in command of this detachment of United States cavalry," replied Deck, elevating his head as high as he could get it; and he was quite as tall as half of his platoon. "If you have anything to say to me, say it with a civil tongue in your head."

"That is Captain Coonly," said Win in a low tone.

"I have come to the conclusion that I had better make terms with you," replied the leader of the ruffians.

"I make no terms with thieves and robbers," answered Deck, with dignity enough for a major-general. "I find you engaged in plundering a citizen of the United States, threatening him, and ransacking his mansion. Soldiers do not engage in such work."

"I am in the service of the Southern Confederacy," replied Captain Coonly, evidently somewhat crestfallen.

"Have you a commission about you?"

"Not yet; but I shall have one."

"I look upon you and your gang as guerillas, and I shall treat you as such. Will you surrender to an officer of the United States?"

"No, I won't surrender! I am willing to make terms with you, and will do the fair thing," blustered the captain without a commission.

"I do not make terms with such as you are. We have talked enough on that subject, and you need not say another word about terms; there is no such word in my book."

"My men are all armed in good shape, and they are fighting characters. All I ask is fair play."

"You shall have it; and according to the civil law of Kentucky, that means the inside of a prison-cell for such fellows as you are!" answered the lieutenant coolly and calmly, with no display of anger; for he was trying with all his might to follow the excellent advice his father had given him for his guidance as an officer.

"No civil law about it!" exclaimed Captain Coonly, his wrath stirred up by the mention of a prison. "I am a soldier, and so are my men. I demand terms such as one military officer should give to another."

"I do not recognize you as a soldier in the service of the Confederacy, which would entitle you to military consideration," Lieutenant Lyon declared with as much solemnity as though he had been presiding over a court-martial.

Win Milton could hardly control his risible muscles; for he was inclined to laugh outright as he heard a young fellow of eighteen talk as though he understood military law as well as he did cavalry tactics. But Deck had studied the needed subjects for his conduct as an officer while others slept, and he had improved every opportunity to converse with Captain Gordon

upon the laws and customs of the service.

"I thought you said we should have fair play?" growled Captain Coonly.

"I did; and I explained what fair play was in a case like this. But we have talked enough about terms; and now we will proceed to business, or to fight out this thing, if you so elect," said Deck very calmly but very decidedly.

"But I only ask"—

"You need not ask anything!" interposed the lieutenant. "We have talked enough; now will you oblige me by coming down the stairs?"

"What if I decline to come down the stairs?" demanded Captain Coonly.

"Then I shall interpret your reply to mean that you prefer to fight out this matter."

"But you have us"—

"I have you, and I propose to keep you. No more talk! Come down-stairs, Captain Coonly, or I will order my men to fire!"

The leader of the marauders hesitated, and then took a single step in the descent; he halted there.

"I only want to say"—

"Say nothing more! Come down, or you are a dead man in another second!" added Deck, still calm and resolute.

"Go down, Cap!" said several of his followers as they retired from the dangerous locality at the head of the stairs.

The captain did not hesitate any longer, but descended the steps very slowly, as though he was marching at his own funeral.

"Win, bring all the cords and straps you can find. We shall want a lot of them," said Deck in a low tone to the guide. "Bugler, go with him and help him bring them."

"This is not fair play," said the captain as he landed in the hall.

"No more talk!"



"COME DOWN, OR YOU ARE A DEAD MAN."

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"What are you going to do with me?" demanded Coonly.

"You are my prisoner, and I intend to secure you properly. Give me your sword and pistols."

"I'll see you in"—

"Life!" called Deck, as he saw the stalwart sergeant near the front door.

"Here, Lieutenant!" replied Life as he strode into the hall and made the military salute to his officer.

"Disarm this man!" said Deck, pointing to the ruffian leader.

The tall sergeant seized Coonly by the collar of his coat with his left hand, held him out as though he had been a small boy, unbuckled his sword-belt, and took two revolvers from his pockets with his right. The captain was a middling-sized man, and he struggled in the gripe of the powerful Kentuckian; but he might as well have attempted to resist Hercules himself.

"Now bind his arms behind him," continued Deck.

"I protest, Lieutenant, against this brutal treatment!" stormed the prisoner in a loud voice.

"All right; protest as much as you please, but don't make too much noise about it, or I shall be obliged to have you gagged."

This hint quieted him; and with the aid of the bugler he was secured as the officer had ordered.

CHAPTER V

LIEUTENANT LYON ENCOUNTERS ANOTHER ENEMY

Surrounded by double their own number of soldiers, armed with the best weapons, the marauders imprisoned in the upper story of the mansion could not help realizing that their situation was hopeless. They had not offered to come to the assistance of Captain Coonly when he was in the gripe of the stalwart sergeant; for the carbines of the cavalrymen still covered them, and they saw that they would be shot down if they attempted to descend the stairs without orders, or fired upon their assailants in the hall.

The captain was conducted into the sitting-room, and a man was placed at the door to keep watch of him. But he was harmless by this time; as Win expressed it, "the fun had all gone out of him." Deck began to think he had spent time enough over the affair; and he was in a hurry to return to the Millersville Road.

"Up-stairs there!" he called to the ruffians, who remained there because they could not escape without the certainty of being shot whether they attempted to leave by the windows or the stairs. "Is there any officer among you?"

"Lieutenant Billock is here," replied one of them.

"Let him show himself."

"That is my name," responded a fellow nearly as big as Life Knox at the head of the stairs.

"Your commander is a prisoner, and you rank next to him. What do you propose to do, fight or surrender?" Deck inquired of him.

"What can I do?" asked the big fellow; and he had not the air of a fighting-man, in spite of his ample proportions.

"That is for you to decide," answered Deck.

"We are surrounded by double our own number, and caged here like a lot of mules. Give me five minutes to talk to the boys," returned the guerilla lieutenant.

"All right; but not a minute more than five," added the officer of cavalry, as he looked at his watch.

"What are you gwine to do with 'em when you get 'em?" asked Life in a low tone.

"Turn them over to Captain Gordon when I have done my share of the job," answered Deck.

"We have concluded to surrender," said Lieutenant Billock at the head of the stairs. "I don't see 's we kin help ourselves under the sucumstances."

"Very well; I shall hold you as prisoners, and treat you as I did your captain. Call in six more men, Life."

This additional force, carbine in hand, was stationed in the hall by the officer, with orders to shoot any man who resisted or tried to escape; and the orders were given in a loud tone, so that the prisoners on the floor above could hear them.

"Now you will form a line up there, and march down in single file, six feet apart. Each man will deposit all his weapons on the floor, and go into the room on the left, after his arms are tied behind him," continued Deck.

The prisoners said nothing, and obeyed the order in silence. Lieutenant Billock came first. The bugler was ordered to see that every one put all his arms on the floor, and assist him in doing so. Two men tied his arms behind him, and led him to the sitting-room. All the others followed him, and were served in the same manner. Twenty-two men were counted when the ceremony was finished. The bugler was ordered to blow the Assembly, and the whole platoon gathered in front of the mansion, which faced the east.

Lieutenant Lyon appeared to have studied up his plan, for he was ready to take the next step as soon as all the prisoners had been secured. He next formed his men in two ranks, reaching from the mansion to the fence, where the ruffians had hitched their horses, retaining the sergeant and half a dozen soldiers in the hall, where he stood himself. Then he sent half the prisoners out-doors, with their arms still secured behind them, and directed Life in what manner to mount and otherwise dispose of them.

The sergeant called ten men from the ranks to assist him, and each one of them took a ruffian in his charge. Life had Captain Coonly in his own hands. As the prisoners pointed out their own horses, they were conducted to the fence. The cord or strap was then loosened from the left wrist of each, but remained fastened to the right. They were then required to mount their steeds, which were a sorry-looking set of animals.

"Now you are all right," said Life when the captain was in his seat in the saddle.

"Why don't you take this strap from my right wrist?" asked the prisoner.

"Beca'se I kin make a better use on't," replied the sergeant, taking the strap in his hand, and making it fast to the crupper strap behind the rider.

It was drawn back far enough to prevent the prisoner from reaching it with his left hand. This was a device of Deck himself; and he had treated a prisoner in this manner once before, and it had succeeded admirably, though his man was disposed to resist. Life looked over the work the men had done, and changed some of it when necessary. Half of the cavalymen were then sent for their horses.

They returned mounted in a few minutes, and were placed in charge of the prisoners, under Corporal Tilford. The other half of the ruffians were then mounted in the same manner, and the rest of the platoon went for their steeds in the grove; while orderly Sergeant Life formed the platoon, with the prisoners in the centre, and half a dozen soldiers on their flanks, to check the ambition of any who attempted to escape. All was ready for the march to the Millersville Road, and Deck went in to bid adieu to Mr. Halliburn and his wife.

"I sincerely hope that you will have no more visits from such ruffians," said he as he took the hand of the ex-clergyman. "I am confident this gang will not molest you again. I had my men search them as they laid down their arms, and they found a few trinkets, which I passed over to Mr. Milton."

"All we had of any great value was in the treasure-chest which Grace carried away before the servants of sin entered the mansion. I am under such a load of obligation to you, Lieutenant Lyon, that I shall never be able to repay or reciprocate your kindness to us in our distress; but I thank you with all my heart, and I shall pray daily for you, that you may be saved from peril and temptation in this world, and that we may meet in the happy land beyond the grave."

Mrs. Halliburn expressed herself in the same terms; and the young officer hastened away, attended by Win Milton, who was going to the home of Colonel Halliburn, to assure himself of the safety of Grace Morgan.

"What shall we do with all these guns and pistols, Lieutenant?" asked Win, as he pointed to the pile of them in the hall.

"Anything you like; I don't want them. I advise you to conceal them under the hay in your stable. There must be some servants about this house, though I have not seen one," said Deck.

"There are about thirty of them; but they all fled at the approach of the guerillas. They will all come back now that the danger is over."

The lieutenant mounted his horse, and placed himself at the head of the column, with Win at his side, still acting as guide. Deck then gave the order to march. Milton conducted the platoon to the road by an open field most of the way, and the soil afforded a better footing for the horses.

"What does all that mean, Lieutenant?" asked Win, as they came to a little hill which gave them a view of the road for a considerable distance. "There is a company of cavalry coming down the road at a headlong gallop!"

"Probably the first platoon of our company," replied Deck.

At the same moment Sergeant Fronklyn and Sandy Lyon rode furiously across the field, and halted in front of them, having just returned from their mission to the mansion of Colonel Halliburn.

"Confederate cavalry!" shouted Fronklyn, when he was a considerable distance from the column.

"Battalion—halt!" shouted Deck in his loudest tones.

"It is a small platoon, and perhaps it is a part of the enemy Lieutenant Belthorpe engaged at Breedings. The men look as though they were running away from a force behind them."

"How many of them are there, Fronklyn?" asked Deck hurriedly.

"Not more than thirty, if as many as that," answered the sergeant.

"Life!" called the lieutenant. "Select ten men, and guard the prisoners," he added.

The sergeant took the men from the rear of the column, and Deck ordered the rest of the platoon to march at a gallop. The officer rode at a pace the other horses could not equal, and reached the road far in advance of his command. He wanted a few minutes to examine the situation; but the enemy were within fifty rods of him. At a glance he counted six fours, which made twenty-four men besides the officer.

By the time the lieutenant had made his momentary survey of the approaching force, his platoon reached the road, Win Milton with them. The company's baggage-train had arrived, and had halted about twenty rods to the south of the place where Fronklyn had thrown down the fence when he saw the command were coming. The wagons were guarded by ten men, who had been taken from both companies at Columbia; for Major Lyon had learned there that several counties were overrun with guerillas and foragers, the latter sent out from General Zollicoffer's Confederate force at Mill Springs.

The baggage-guard had been ordered up by Fronklyn, and they were approaching as Deck dashed into the road. If a dozen war-elephants had waddled into the road instead of Deck's command, they could hardly have created more surprise than this force of United States cavalry. The officer in command of the force promptly ordered a halt when he was within twenty rods of his enemy, for he could not help recognizing the uniform of the loyal army.

The young lieutenant had reined in his horse and come to a halt as soon as he reached the road, where he had a full view of the coming detachment. Milton joined him as the men dashed into the road, with Life, who had detailed Corporal Tilford, with the ten men, to guard the prisoners. Deck, profiting by the solemn injunctions of his father when his promotion went into effect, struggled to keep cool and self-possessed. His first impulse was to charge the approaching enemy; and he would have done so if the Confederates had not halted, and given him time to look over his surroundings.

As he took in the situation, he was perfectly satisfied that he could easily defeat the enemy, and the only fear he had was that the detachment would escape. His force was now nearly double that of the Confederates in numbers, and would be more than that if he called in the guard of his prisoners.

"Do you know that force, Win?" he asked as the guide rode up to him.

"I do. They wear the blue and the gray, and they are Tennessee cavalry," replied Milton. "Fronklyn was right."

Deck had a field-glass slung over his shoulder, and he directed it to a point beyond the enemy; for he wished to ascertain if Tom Belthorpe's platoon was in pursuit; but the road was too crooked to enable him to see any distance, for it was bordered in places by walnut forests.

"I don't quite understand this thing," said Deck, musing, as he strained his vision to discover another force at the north. "Captain Gordon was with the detachment that went to Breedings; and if he defeated the Confederates, as he must have done, I don't see how he happened to permit them to escape, for he had better horses than the men in front of us ride, and the captain and Lieutenant Belthorpe are wide-awake officers."

"But both of them are strangers in these counties, while the Tennesseans are probably well acquainted with the country. Zollicoffer has to feed his army on the supplies gathered from the region around him, and his foragers have learned the geography of this part of the State. At any rate, his officers can obtain plenty of guides," replied Milton; "and this one had a better knowledge of the roads and the paths across the country."

Fearful that the Confederate commander would avail himself of his knowledge, and thus elude him, Deck sent Life with ten men into the field on the left, and Fronklyn with the same number into that on the right. The enemy did not seem to like this movement, though it weakened the force in front of him about one-half. The officer arranged his men so that they extended entirely across the road, and then in a voice that might have been heard half a mile, he ordered a charge.

CHAPTER VI

A SMART SKIRMISH IN THE ROAD

The Confederate troopers set up a yell loud and fierce enough to intimidate all the old ladies in the State if they could have heard it; but the Riverlawn Cavalry had heard it before, and its effect was to kindle the wrath of the members of the platoon.

"Unslung your carbines, Life! Unslung your carbines, Fronklyn!" shouted Deck, as the flanking parties dashed into the two fields.

The men had fought hand to hand with the Texan Rangers; and they were roused to the highest pitch of enthusiasm when they found themselves again in front of a regular force of troopers, instead of Home Guards or guerillas. With their sabres in hand they rushed upon the foe with all the speed to which they could spur their horses. The men were fresh; for they had fought no engagement that day, and their work had been easier than the regular marching.

On the other hand, the enemy had perhaps fought with the first platoon, and had been running their horses till the animals were nearly exhausted. But they received the charge like brave men, and stood up to the work. Deck had advanced on the right of his men for the reason that the officer in command of the enemy was on the left of his troopers; for he desired to meet him. He had drawn his sabre; and possibly the remembrance of his meeting on the field with the lieutenant of the Texan Rangers had something to do with his choice of a position.

The squads in charge of Life and Fronklyn had each put in a volley from their carbines as soon as they were abreast of the Confederates, where they could fire diagonally at the enemy so as not to imperil their friends; and two of them had dropped out of their saddles, and doubtless others were wounded. Deck shouted words of encouragement to his soldiers, and almost instantly the conflict became furious. The Confederates fought like demons, and two of the loyal force were seen to drop from their saddles by the men on the flanks.

But the firing ceased as soon as both parties were mingled in the fight; for the two sergeants feared that their bullets might hit the wrong men. At this point the Confederate commander rushed upon the young lieutenant, who was ready for him, though he had not opened the duel. Both of them were skilled swordsmen, and for a minute at least they parried each other's cuts and thrusts. Life realized that his *protégé*, as he regarded him, was in imminent peril; for his antagonist was a heavier and taller man, and the longer reach of his right arm was in his favor.

Deck was hard pressed, and neither officer could even glance at his men, lest he should be caught off his guard. But Deck was still self-possessed, and perhaps the excellent advice of his father saved his life. Life Knox was not afraid of anything, but he trembled for the safety of his lieutenant. He sought a position where he could put a bullet through the brain of the brave Confederate, though he felt that it would be mean to do so. Fortunately for him the sergeant could find no such position.

Ceph, the name of Deck's noble steed, which had been abbreviated from Bucephalus, seemed to Life, whose attention was fixed upon his officer, restive and uneasy: but his rider did not bring him into a leaping posture, as he had done on a former occasion, and had been charged by his superiors with reckless daring; but the charger suddenly stood up on his hind feet, as though he intended to attempt the leap over the Confederate officer's horse on his own responsibility.

But the other steed was too tall for him, and his rider reined him in. At the moment when he was elevated above the head of his opponent, Deck seized his opportunity to deliver a blow upon the head of his foe with his sabre. It struck him on the side of the head, above the ear, cleaving his skull, and he dropped from his horse like a lump of lead. Life was happily relieved at the result of this furious conflict.

He had not been idle during the affair; for he had sent two of his men to remove the fence at the side of the road, and Fronklyn had done the same on the other side. The moment the enemy's brave leader had fallen from his horse, the sergeant ordered his men into the road, leading the way himself, and the other sergeant on the left had followed his example.

"Squad—attention!" shouted the orderly sergeant, after he had formed the troopers in two ranks. "Forward—march!"

He led the charge himself; and they delivered a volley of blows and thrusts, as occasion served them, which ended the strife in less than another moment. Several of the Confederates cried "Quarter!" and not another blow was struck after the word was heard.

"Who is in command of this company now?" asked Deck, as he and his men moved out of the tangle to the sides of the road.

"Leftenant Logan," replied a wounded trooper who had a sabre-cut on the side of his face which was bleeding profusely.

"The fall of Captain Letcher leaves me in command," said this officer, approaching the young lieutenant.

"Do you surrender, Lieutenant Logan?" asked Deck, as he surveyed the fine form and handsome face of the officer, who appeared to be not more than a year or two older than the victor.

"I have no alternative; we are outnumbered, and surrounded by your force," replied the Confederate lieutenant solemnly and sadly.

"I sympathize with you, Lieutenant, though I was compelled to do my duty," replied Deck; and even while he gloried in the success of his command, he was sincerely sorry for the misfortune of the officer, whom he had seen in the road fighting bravely for the cause in this particular field, which was lost from the beginning. "But it is no disgrace or dishonor to you or your brave soldiers to be beaten by double your number."

"I thank you, Lieutenant; and I only regret that we are obliged to be enemies," returned the officer very courteously. "Am I at liberty to attend to my wounded now?"

"Certainly, sir; and I hope your loss is not so great as it appears to be at this moment," answered Deck.

After an action as hotly contested as this skirmish had been, it was surprising how few had been killed outright. Only two of the Riverlawns had fallen never to rise again; but six of the twenty-two Confederates who had gone into the action were past human aid. Four of the blue, and nine of gray, had been disabled by wounds more or less severe, while hardly a single man on either side had escaped without being slightly wounded.

"Have you a surgeon in your detachment, Lieutenant Logan?"

"I have not. He was left with the other platoon near Breedings; but I hope you have one."

"I have not. Ours is with the main body," replied Deck; and the Confederate officer returned to his men.

"Who are the killed in our platoon, Life?" said Deck, when the sergeant came to the lieutenant for further orders.

"I don't like to say so, Leftenant; but your cousin, Orly Lyon, is one of them."

"Poor fellow!" exclaimed Deck. "I am sorry he has finished his campaign so soon; but I am glad he did not die among the enemies of the Union."

"But he fought like a hero in the action, for I was near him when he fell under the sabre of the lieutenant yonder," added Sergeant Sluder.

"Who was the other man killed, Life?" asked Deck.

"Barron, another of the new recruits."

"I am sorry to lose him, for he was a very promising soldier, though he had not been sufficiently drilled. Bury the dead in the field on the right," said Deck as he started for the baggage-wagons, where the wounded had been carried.

Life had detailed a burial party, and Logan had done the same for the men he had lost. Shovels and picks had been supplied to both from one of the wagons. Having attended to this duty, the orderly sergeant was sent to the field to ascertain the condition of the prisoners in charge of Corporal Tilford. They still sat upon their horses, with the right hand made fast at the crupper-strap, and doubtless were anxiously awaiting the result of the skirmish in the road.

"How goes it, Sergeant Knox?" asked Captain Coonly when Life came within speaking distance of him.

"All right," replied the big Kentuckian.

"Haven't the regulars of the Confederate army licked you?"

"Not much; but they have been licked out of their boots, with the third part of them killed or badly wounded. You have no show for gittin' out of this scrape yet."

Tilford reported that the prisoners had not made any trouble; for they all declared that the Riverlawns would be beaten, and they were waiting to be set at liberty. The sentinels over them guarded them very closely, and afforded them no opportunity to make a demonstration, even if they had been disposed to do so; for the soldiers with loaded carbines in their hands, and with orders to shoot any one who did not obey orders, or who attempted to escape, was a fact patent to them all. Life was satisfied with his inspection, and hastened back to the wagons.

When he reached the road, he met two well-dressed gentlemen coming out of the field on the left, from the direction of Colonel Halliburn's house. Both of them were mounted, and were provided with saddle-bags. He was a native of Kentucky, and he promptly recognized them as doctors.

"Mornin', gentlemen," said he, riding towards them. "I reckon you uns be doctors?"

"You are not far from right, soldier," replied the elder of the two.

"Be you Secesh or Union?" demanded Life, as though he had the right to put the question.

"Divide the question, and each can answer for himself," replied the one who had spoken before. "I am opposed to making Kentucky the battleground of this war; and if I fought on either side, it would be with the Confederates."

"Be you of the same mind?" asked Life, turning to the other.

"I am sorry to differ from my friend, Dr. McNairy; but I am a Union man," answered the younger doctor, though he appeared to be at least forty years old. "But what has happened here?" he continued, surveying the surroundings, especially the work of the burial parties.

"There's been a bit of a scrimmage between your friends here and them as runs with t'other doctor; but you are both wanted right now," replied Life.

At this moment Mr. Milton arrived at the spot, and had apparently recognized the two gentlemen as they rode across the field. He saluted them both, calling them by name.

"I've told these doctors what we want of them," added the sergeant.

"But what about this battle, Mr. Milton?" inquired Dr. McNairy, the elder one, who appeared to be about sixty years old.

Milton gave a very brief account of the action, and mentioned that Mr. Halliburn's mansion had been ransacked by the prisoners whom he pointed out in the field.

"Why didn't you hang them?" demanded Dr. Barlow, the young doctor.

"The military officer in command of the detachment here managed the business, and I had nothing to do with the matter; though I would have strung up Coonly if I had had my way, for hanging would do him good. But the lieutenant said that one outrage did not mend another," replied Milton impatiently; for he was anxious to have the wounded cared for.

"The lieutenant is a sensible man," added Dr. McNairy.

"Now, Dr. Barlow, your coming is most opportune; and I hope you will attend to the wounded of the Union force, and that Dr. McNairy will do the same for the Confederates," added Milton.

"It is a mere accident that we happen to be here, for we have been over to perform an operation on the wife of General Macklin; but I am glad to be able to serve the Union wounded, and I am quite willing to do the same for the Confederates."

"I will take care of the Confederates," added Dr. McNairy.

"Now, Sergeant Knox, if you will conduct Dr. McNairy to the Confederates, I will take Dr. Barlow to the Union wounded."

"I'll do that; but tell the leftenant there is a cavalry force comin' down the road, and I reckon it's the first platoon of our company."

Both of them departed on their missions, accompanied by the doctors.

CHAPTER VII

THE BATTLE AT THE BREEDINGS FORT

Dr. McNairy was introduced to Lieutenant Logan, and the surgeon began his work at once. Both of the professional gentlemen had their instruments with them, for they had performed an operation that forenoon. Life remained but a moment after he had done his errand, and hastened to a point where he could obtain a better view of the approaching cavalry force. His supposition that it was the first platoon of the first company proved to be correct, and he awaited its arrival.

The column was moving leisurely, for there was no occasion for haste; and it appeared later that the men had not been idle during the forenoon. Captain Gordon and Lieutenant Belthorpe were riding at the head of the platoon, and as they came to a turn in the road the scene of the late action came into view; and both of the officers were greatly surprised, for neither of them had supposed that Deck would have anything to do but guard and hurry on the baggage-wagons.

"What does all that mean?" asked the captain, as he opened his eyes very wide to take in the

gathering in the road and the fields beside it of men and horses.

"It looks as though Lieutenant Lyon had been doing something there; but I will warrant that Deck has done his duty like a man, whatever he has been at," replied Tom Belthorpe, who had an abundant admiration for the young officer.

"I hope he has not been reckless, as I am afraid he is inclined to be when things get warm around him," returned the captain.

"There comes Sergeant Knox; and things must be quiet in the camp, or he would not have left Deck for a moment," added the lieutenant.

Life had ridden forward to inform the captain what had transpired in the road and at the mansion of Mr. Halliburn; for he believed the officers would be anxious to solve what was now a mystery to them.

"What's going on here, Sergeant?" demanded the captain as soon as Life came within speaking-distance of him.

"We uns have had a bit of a scrimmage here with Confed'rit cavalry," replied the sergeant as he reined in his steed, and saluted the captain.

"A skirmish?" said the captain.

"Well, yes; and it was a rayther lively bout till the enemy surrendered."

"Did they surrender?" asked the commander of the company; for it was not the habit of the Southern troopers to yield, and he had been fighting with a portion of the same company that forenoon.

"They couldn't help theirselves; we outnumbered 'em, and they had to give in or be cut to pieces."

"How is Lieutenant Lyon?" inquired the captain with no little anxiety in his tones and his expression.

"I reckon he's got a sword-cut on the arm; but he's right side up, and don't say nothin' about it."

"What were the losses?"

"We had two killed and four wounded."

"Who were the killed?"

"Orly Lyon and Barron."

"Both new recruits, and one of them is the nephew of Major Lyon."

"The enemy lost six killed, and nine wounded; and the captain in command was in the fust lot, brought down by Leftenant Lyon in a hand-to-hand squabble at the side of the road. Deck fit like a mad rooster. His hoss stood up straight, and gin his rider a chance to git in the cut that finished the officer."

"Lieutenant Lyon was reckless, wasn't he, Sergeant?" asked the captain.

"Not a bit on't! He was as cool as a frozen cowcumber; but he hit hard when his hoss stood up endways," replied Life. "We cleaned out a gang of gorillas afore we had this scrimmage in the road."

"Another affair? Did you have a hard fight with them?"

"No fight at all," answered the tall Kentuckian, with a slight chuckle. "Deck bagged 'em like a flock of wild turkeys in a trap-pen."

"We will hear about that another time," said Captain Gordon as the head of the column arrived at the scene of the fight. "Who are those over on our right?"

"The fust ones is the Confed'rits burin' their dead. The next lot is the doctor fixin' up the enemy's wounded. The surgeon is a Secesh, and we picked up two on 'em as they come across lots from an operation on some woman. T'other is over with our men, and he's a Union man."

"Where is Lieutenant Lyon?"

"I left him over by the baggage-wagons, lookin' out for the wounded. We shall git there in a minute or two."

"What are those men on our left, in the field?" asked the captain as they came to a point where the prisoners could be seen, still in charge of Corporal Tilford.

"Them's the prisoners taken over at the mansion of Mr. Halliburn, half a mile from here," replied Life, as they approached the location of the wounded Union soldiers.

Dr. Barlow had informed Deck of the coming of the first platoon, and he had mounted his

horse to go out and meet them. He was ready to come into the presence of the captain of the company; for he felt that he had done his duty faithfully, and also that he had conducted himself with prudence and discretion.

"What in the world have you been doing over here, Lieutenant Lyon?" asked Captain Gordon, as he rode forward, and grasped the hand of the young officer. "You seem to have been busy here from what Sergeant Knox has told me."

"We haven't had any time to spare, Captain; for in half an hour after we parted events began to thicken upon us, and we have been kept busy ever since," replied Deck.

"I will hear your report later, for my men are tired, and need their dinner. It seems to be all quiet about here now, and we must take a rest here."

"I have ordered our cooks to make coffee, and it will be ready to serve out very soon," replied Deck, as he pointed to the fires in the field behind the temporary hospital; and near them the horses of the troopers and the mules that drew the wagons were eating their oats off the grass. "We shall feed our men on herring and hardtack with the coffee."

Lieutenant Belthorpe ordered his men to picket their horses and feed them; and in another hour the soldiers and their beasts had all been fed. Seated on the grass with his two lieutenants, the captain listened to the report of Deck on the events of the forenoon. When he came to his encounter with Captain Letcher, both of his auditors were intensely interested, though he told his story very modestly.

"I suppose you caused Ceph to stand up on end when you found yourself in a tight place?" suggested Tom Belthorpe.

"I did not," answered Deck very emphatically. "Ceph knows more than some men; but he became restive and uneasy after the captain and I had pegged away at each other for some time, and he stood up of his own accord. I had to hold on with all my might with my left hand; but my horse did not try to leap over the other animal, for he was even taller than Ceph. When I saw the captain's head below mine, I used the opportunity, and made the cut that finished the affair. I was not reckless, as I was once accused of being, but wrongly, Captain Gordon. I have made it a business of mine to-day to keep cool, and not let my impulses run away with me; and I think I succeeded very well."

"Life thinks so too," added the captain.

"I have not said a word to him about it. I have kept my affairs closely in my own head."

"You managed the guerillas admirably, and bagged them very skilfully," said his superior approvingly.

"I think it was largely a matter of luck and chance that I gathered them in without losing a man, or even having a fight," added Deck. "The ruffians were all busy ransacking the mansion in search of the money; and if they had found it, I learned from Mr. Milton that it would have given them over two hundred dollars apiece. I got in without disturbing them, and they did not suspect the presence of my platoon till the bugler sounded the call for my men. Then they were surrounded, and the carbines were pointed at every window, with half a dozen aimed up the staircase. It was easy enough then to bring the affair to a conclusion."

"What are you going to do with your prisoners, Lieutenant?" asked Captain Gordon.

"I turn them over to my superior officer, of course; for I have ceased to be in command now. Mr. Milton informed me that there is a Union Home Guard at Millersville that might take charge of the guerillas," replied Deck, glad to be rid of this responsibility.

"Who is this Mr. Milton?" asked the commander; and Deck told him all he knew about him, and especially that he had been very useful to him as a guide.

"Where is he now?" inquired the captain, as they continued to eat the dinner of hardtack and herring, washed down with hot coffee.

"There he is near the hospital; he has just sat down to lunch with the sergeants," replied Deck, pointing to the group.

"Ask him to join us, Lieutenant," said the captain.

Deck obeyed; and Milton immediately responded to the summons. The lieutenant apologized to him for his want of attention, for he had been very busy every moment of the time. He was introduced to the commander and Lieutenant Belthorpe; and the former thanked him warmly for the service he had rendered, and invited him to join them in the simple repast before them. He freely answered all the questions put to him. He declared that Millersville contained a majority of loyal people, many of whom had enlisted in the Kentucky regiments, while others had formed a Union Home Guard, and were ready to fight to keep the State in the Union.

"I judge that your time has not been wasted this forenoon," said Deck.

"It has not, indeed," replied the commander of the company; and he proceeded to detail his experience with the enemy at Breedings.

He found on his arrival at that place that the marauders were a foraging-party of regular Confederate cavalry, and not guerillas. It consisted of at least a platoon, or half a company. They were coming across the field from the Millersville Road. As soon as they discovered the Riverlawn force, the enemy retreated, as the captain understood it; but they were only hastening to a small fortification of earthworks thrown up by the Confederate Home Guards of the place, who were in the majority in that locality, although there were several rich planters in the district who were Union men.

The fort had been armed with two rusty iron cannons, which had been used for salutes in the time when the Fourth of July had been generally celebrated. But it was not large enough to hold all the cavalrymen, and the second platoon of twenty-five men had been sent to a hill on the other side of the road. The commander sent Lieutenant Belthorpe to attack them there, while he gave his attention to the enemy in the fort.

The two guns, loaded with home-made grape-shot, were discharged; but the gunners were utterly ignorant of the art of handling the pieces, and the scattering bullets all went over the heads of the loyal cavalrymen. The captain did not give them time to repeat the experiment, for he ordered his lieutenant to charge over the earthwork before they had time to load again. The fort had been constructed in a very rude manner, without the help of an engineer; and it was only a sort of windrow of earth, as hay is raked up in a field, and the mounted men had no difficulty in riding over it.

The Confederates had dismounted, turning their horses into a field. This was a fatal mistake on the part of their officer. His men were huddled together with the Home Guards in the small space; and though they fought bravely, they were soon ridden down, and totally defeated. Many of them had been killed or disabled, and the Home Guards had run away as soon as the horses began to ride them down. The officer called for quarter, and surrendered. He and his men were paroled at once.

At the hill Lieutenant Belthorpe had vigorously attacked the second platoon, and soon drove them from their ground. When the victory was won at the fort, Captain Gordon re-enforced Belthorpe with twenty men while the paroling was in process; and the enemy seeing that they were outnumbered more than before, when they were driven from the hill, gave up the fight, and fled at the best speed of their horses by the way they had come. The lieutenant in command pursued them as far as the road, when the recall was sounded near the fort, and they returned to the little village. Captain Letcher was in command of the platoon, and he had continued to retreat, believing that his pursuers were still following him.

CHAPTER VIII

BEFORE THE BATTLE OF MILL SPRINGS

Captain Gordon had related the history of the affair at Breedings, and Deck had learned from Lieutenant Logan considerably more that was not within the knowledge of the commander. As they finished their simple dinner, they discovered a gentleman, attended by a couple of men who looked like mechanics, the latter with muskets on their shoulders, and all of them mounted on fine horses, approaching the camp. The two surgeons had finished dressing the wounds of the injured, and had mounted their horses to depart. The soldiers, the prisoners, and the horses had all been fed, and it seemed to be time for the next movement.

"That is Colonel Halliburn coming," said Milton.

"Is his title simply an honorary one, or is he a military man?" inquired the captain.

"He has been the leading man in the militia for thirty years, though he has never been in active service," replied Milton. "He is past the military age now."

The gentleman was introduced to the party, and he gave Deck the most cordial thanks for the service rendered to his brother.

"How is Miss Grace, Colonel?" asked Win.

"She is well and happy now, though she is much concerned about her guardian, and would have returned to him if I had permitted her to do so; but I am going over to my brother's now, and I shall persuade him and his wife to come to my house, for it is not safe for them to be alone there. I have brought a couple of my men with me; and if we can do anything to assist you here, we are at your service."

"Thank you, sir; we have defeated the enemy on all sides, and we are ready to move on now to join the other company of our squadron," replied the captain. "The next question that we have to settle is the disposition of our wounded, some of whom are not in condition to be moved."

"My house is at your service for this purpose. I have twenty-five men who belong to the Home Guard of Millersville residing in my village; and I have called them out since Miss Morgan came to my house, and they will be able to defend us from any ordinary enemies, so that your men will be safe there," said the colonel.

"I thank you with all my heart," answered Captain Gordon. "I shall avail myself of your kind offer."

"I am the captain of the Home Guards, and Dr. Barlow is the surgeon; and we will attend to the removal of the men. I will look after the matter as soon as I return from my brother's. Mr. Milton and the doctor will remain here till I come."

"I am under very great obligations to you, Colonel Halliburn," added the captain, "and I hope I shall be able to render you any service in a time of need which you may require."

The commander of the company paroled the Confederate prisoners, and permitted them to retire with their horses. They carried their wounded with them on stretchers or on horseback, and marched up the road to join the rest of their company. The bugle sounded, and the first company of the Riverlawns formed in the road. It was only about six miles to Millersville, and the captain decided to march the guerilla prisoners to that town. They were placed between the two platoons, with a guard on the flank; but the fun had all gone out of them, and they were as submissive as whipped puppies. The column marched, and in about two hours arrived at their next destination.

They found a company of about fifty Home Guards, armed with muskets, but without uniforms, drawn up to receive them; for the news of the skirmish had reached the place, and a considerable body of citizens were in attendance as spectators.

"I am Lieutenant Ripley, commanding in the absence of Captain Halliburn the Home Guards, all loyal men, and we give you a Kentucky welcome," said the officer of the Guards, saluting the captain. "What can we do for you?"

"You can take these guerilla prisoners off our hands, for they are a nuisance to us," replied Captain Gordon with a smile.

"Do you wish us to hang them to those trees yonder?" asked the lieutenant.

"I do not ask you to do anything of the kind, though it might do them good to hang them; but we don't treat prisoners in that way, even if they are guerillas," replied the commander with considerable energy. "You can confine them in some building, or let them go; but you must not kill, starve, or ill-treat them, for Union soldiers don't do such things."

It was nearly sundown, and the captain decided to bivouac for the night. The camp was laid out in a field, and the tents were pitched. A supper was cooked for the men, though the commissioned officers were invited to a private house; but they declined the invitations to sleep away from the company, though they ate the supper provided for them in the house of a Union magnate, and repeated again the story of the day's events. The commander inquired particularly for the news from the seat of war in this quarter.

"I understand that General Crittenden has joined the army of General Zollicoffer, and, as he ranks him, has the command of the army," replied the host, who seemed to be a very well-informed gentleman. "I believe most of the Confederate troops on the other side of the Cumberland River are Tennesseans, and that is about all I know in regard to them."

"Do you know where they are located, Mr. Kennedy?" asked the captain.

"We all know that they are on the other side of the Cumberland, about six miles below the point to which steamboats can ascend. Zollicoffer has fortified the hills, three or four hundred feet high, and holds a very strong position; in fact, one of the strongest in the State in the hands of the enemy. It covers the coal-mines and a great many salt-wells beyond the river, and these are of the utmost importance to the Confederacy. But it is well understood in these parts that the army of Zollicoffer is short of supplies, and some say his men are starving in the camps. I know that the Tennessee cavalry are foraging on this side of the river to a considerable extent; and you have met one of these parties to-day, and defeated them. Compared with the guerillas that are operating on their own account in many parts of the State, the foragers are really very mild; for they do not insult women, or take anything from the farmers and planters except provisions; and they treat Federalists and Secessionists just alike, for supplies have become an absolute necessity to their army."

"Troops are constantly arriving from the North; and doubtless they intend to attack Zollicoffer or General Crittenden, whichever it may be, in his position near the Cumberland," suggested Captain Gordon.

"I doubt if Zollicoffer will wait for them to do that; for he must find the Union forces, and beat them, or retreat into Tennessee. Should he stay where he is, he must either surrender or starve."

It appeared subsequently that he decided upon the alternative of crossing the Cumberland, and attacking the Union forces wherever he could find them. He was compelled to do this, as Mr. Kennedy declared, or starve for the want of supplies. Mill Springs, which is the name

given to the battle that was fought by Zollicoffer, though it is called Somerset, and also Logan's Cross Roads, is on the south side of the Cumberland River, and is a post-town. But the battle was not fought on that side of the river, and it is the name of the position of the Confederate army before the battle.

The line of defence, or of attack, as might be, chosen by the Confederate army under General Johnston in Kentucky, appeared to extend across the southern part of the State, and included three strongholds, the first of which was Columbus, on the Mississippi River, on the west; Bowling Green in the centre; and around Mill Springs on the east. General Crittenden, the Southern commander-in-chief in this section, had intrenched himself at Beech Grove, in Pulaski County, on the north side of the river, east of Mill Springs.

Zollicoffer commanded under him, and the battle was fought by him. His position was fifteen miles south-west of Somerset. General Buell, at Louisville, then in command of the Union department which included the State of Kentucky, realized the necessity of reducing this stronghold, and sent General George H. Thomas, the ideal soldier of the war, though not then so well known as at a later period, with a considerable force to this region to accomplish this object. This able general had approached his destination, but had not yet concentrated his force for the attack. It was General Crittenden's policy to beat the Union army in detail before the troops for the assault had been massed for the final attack; but Zollicoffer, forced by his need of supplies, crossed the river in a steamer and other craft, with about five thousand men, and moved towards the north, to attack the force that threatened him.

This was the situation in the vicinity of Somerset and Mill Springs when the Riverlawn Cavalry was marching in the direction of the former place; and one company had reached Millersville, while the other was believed to be at Harrison. The raids in the vicinity by foragers and guerillas had been the immediate cause of sending the squadron to the locality. The first company had camped for the night; and the officers had returned from the residence of Mr. Kennedy, where they had been entertained at supper. The officers and soldiers were tired enough to roll themselves up in their blankets in their beds on the grass; and Captain Gordon was preparing to do so when one of the sentinels informed him that a man at the lines wished to see him, and he believed it was the one who had been the guide of the first platoon in the forenoon, for he gave his name as Winfield Milton.

At the sound of this name, Deck, who had lain down, sprang to his feet. He feared that he had come for assistance against another attack of guerillas or foragers. The captain ordered him to be admitted to the tent, and he soon appeared. He had rendered very valuable service, both to Deck's command and to the company after it was united.

"I am sorry to disturb you, Captain, at this hour; but I could not get away any earlier, for we have been busy over at Colonel Halliburton's, moving his brother and his wife, and transporting the wounded to his mansion."

"I am very glad to see you, Mr. Milton. It is only eight o'clock, and I had not retired," replied the captain. "But I hope you have not been attacked again."

"No, sir, we have not been attacked; and if we had been, we have force enough at the colonel's to defend ourselves, for we have a part of the Home Guards from this town to re-enforce those of the little village," replied Milton. "I came for another purpose."

"I am glad to see you again, Win," interposed Deck, as he grasped the hand of the late guide.

"Sorry to turn you out of bed, Lieutenant Lyon; but I was afraid you would leave before I could get here in the morning," replied the visitor. "I have been talking with Colonel Halliburton since you left, and I have felt not a little ashamed that I am not in the Union army in its time of need. But I have had to look after Grace and her guardian's family, and that is the best excuse I could give to myself. Now they are all settled at the colonel's, and I have come over here to enlist in your company, Captain Gordon, if you will take me. You have lost some men, and I thought you might want some more."

"We have kept both of our companies full so far, and I shall be glad to have so good a man as you are in our ranks," promptly answered the captain. "When shall you be ready to join us?"

"Right now!" exclaimed Milton.

"Is Miss Morgan willing that you should enlist?" asked Deck with a laugh.

"Grace is as good a girl as ever was raised in Kentucky, and she has always been ready to have me go to the war. She is as full of patriotism as a nut is of meat, and says she should be ashamed to make any objection to my going. I am ready to sign the papers, and take all the steps to get into your company, Captain," continued the would-be recruit.

"Our surgeon is with the other company, and you must be examined by a doctor."

Milton drew a paper from his pocket, which proved to be a certificate to his physical qualifications, signed by Dr. Barlow, who had been regularly appointed as an examining surgeon. The Captain wrote down the particulars in answer to his questions, and Winfield Milton was duly enlisted in the service. Deck was especially pleased with the result of this interview, for he had taken a strong liking to Milton.

CHAPTER IX

PREPARING FOR ANOTHER BATTLE IN THE ROAD

The Assembly sounded at five o'clock the next morning; and half an hour later the troopers had their breakfast of coffee, hardtack, and cold beef, the last cooked the night before. Milton was supplied with a uniform and accoutrements from a wagon by the quartermaster-sergeant. He had served in the militia in a company of mounted men raised in his county; and though some of the tactics were new to him, he was at home in most of the duties of the soldier.

At six o'clock, while there was still hardly light enough to recognize a friend twenty feet off, the company was formed; and Life Knox, who was the orderly sergeant, reported the fact to the captain. It was but ten miles to Jamestown, and twenty-five to Harrison, where the two companies were to unite. Life Knox, who had earned the reputation of being the most reliable scout in the company or the squadron, was sent out on this duty with Milton, because the latter was entirely familiar with all the country in Wayne and Pulaski Counties.

They left the camp somewhat in advance of the column. Colonel Halliburn arrived at Millersville just as the company were departing; for he had received important intelligence, brought by a friend who had just come from Robertsport, on the south side of the Cumberland River, where he had been on private business. The colonel rode by the side of the captain for some distance when the company started.

"You must have been up all night, Colonel Halliburn, for you are here in the gray dawn of the morning," said the captain when his visitor joined him. "What is the news from your valley?"

"All is quiet there, though we keep a guard on duty by night and day," replied the colonel. "The doctor, who spent the night at my house, reports that all your wounded are doing well, and that his worst case is likely to recover. But my news is from the other direction."

"From what direction?" asked Captain Gordon, deeply interested by this time in the remarks of his companion.

"From Jamestown, not ten miles from this town. My friend Squire Walcott has just returned from Robertsport, which you know is only a few miles from Mill Springs, and in the midst of Zollicoffer's intrenchments. He belongs to our company, and had some difficulty in getting across the river; but he managed it very well, though he was under suspicion. He walked five miles down the river, and there fell in with a negro who was just landing from a bateau.

"For a silver dollar the negro ferried him across the river. The fellow knew more than the law allows down here, and Walcott contrived to let him understand that he was a Union man; and this won Cuffy's heart, and he told him all the news about the Confederate army posted there. It has been known in these parts that this army has been short of provisions and forage for several weeks, but we did not suppose their supplies were as limited as this negro reported.

"Both the men and the horses are half starved. Bare existence in the camp was a hard struggle; and some of the regiments subsisted on one-third of the ordinary rations, and the horses and mules were hardly in condition for use. The fractional ration consisted of bread alone in many portions of the army. The supplies of the north-east counties had been exhausted; and most of the subsistence had been obtained latterly from Kentucky, gathered in by foragers of the cavalry.

"Cuffy had a son who was the body-servant of a colonel of a Tennessee regiment; and he told his father what he learned in the camp, the most important item of which was that Zollicoffer would soon attack the Federal forces wherever he could find them. He could remain no longer in his intrenchments, with starvation staring him full in the face. Of course I am telling this in my own language, as I translated it from the negro's gibberish.

"But this is not the most vital news to you at this time, though it may be of service to you. Walcott made his way on foot to the cabin where he left his horse, and then rode to Jamestown. At this town he found a full company of the Seventeenth Tennessee Cavalry, who had camped there the night before, living on what was left of the fat of the land; for the place had been raided twice before. They had two wagons with them, and it was evident that they intended to load them with provisions and forage.

"Walcott reached his home at midnight, and immediately called upon me with the news he had gathered. At Jamestown he saw one of the lieutenants flirting with a girl in front of the hotel. This officer was summoned to supper, and his companion hastened up the street. She was the daughter of a storekeeper in the town, which is the county seat of Russell County;

and my friend had often traded there in goods he could not find in the towns nearer home.

"The girl was speaking to her father when Walcott went in; but the keeper of the store welcomed him. He had not much to say to the trader; but he saluted the daughter, and engaged her in conversation. He began by warning her to be very discreet in her relations with good-looking officers of the Southern army. Then he asked her what the company were doing in Jamestown; and she told him they were going to Millersville, and that he would call and see her on his return. She was a very pretty girl, and I hope she profited by my friend's advice."

"But when did all this occur?" inquired Captain Gordon, intensely interested when he heard that the company were coming to Millersville.

"I told you that Walcott got home at midnight," answered the colonel.

"But midnight divides any two days in the month of January, and in every other month in every year. What particular midnight was it?"

"Why, the very last one that ever was—last night. My friend rode half the night in order to give me, as the captain of the Home Guards, this news, as soon as he got to the town, less than half an hour ago. I called on Lieutenant Ripley, and ordered him to muster our company, and get as many volunteers to defend the town as he could. The second lieutenant, who lives near me, will march the men on guard in the little village to town at once. I believe I have told you all I know, Captain Gordon."

"I am exceedingly obliged to you for the information you have given me," replied the commander of the company.

"I am inclined to think I had better take the bull by the horns, and march my company, all but a guard for the town, over here, and join you. My men all have horses, and are well armed, though they are not provided with sabres. Most of them have hunting-rifles, and are dead shots," continued the colonel.

"I shall not object to your marching your company over here, though I think I can handle the enemy alone; but you must use your own judgment," added the captain.

"I would rather fight the battle over here than in the town; and I shall bring my men, and put them under your command, Captain Gordon. I think they are all ready by this time," replied the colonel, as he wheeled his horse, and rode back at a gallop.

The commander communicated the intelligence he had just received to his two lieutenants; and it was heard by some of the cavalymen, from whom it passed along the ranks, till all of them knew that a battle would soon be fought, perhaps within a couple of hours. The captain rode back to the head of the column. He had increased the speed of the company from a walk to a trot while conversing with Colonel Halliburn.

The captain had no doubt that the information he had received was entirely correct; and he hurried his men somewhat, hoping to find a better place for the coming combat than he had yet seen along the road, with woods on each side of the way. But he rode about three miles farther before he came to a location that suited him. It was a hill with a rude farmhouse at the top of it, on the right. The land on this side had been cleared, and the crops had been harvested from it. At the ascent of the hill on the left, about ten acres had been recently cleared, while a continuous forest began at the crest of the hill, and extended as far as he could see.

The captain realized that he could not have found a better location for his purpose in the whole State of Kentucky; and he gave the order to halt and to remain at ease when the company was not more than half-way up the hill. He preferred to make his charge, when it came to that, down the hill; and he had come to a halt where his force could not be seen by an enemy on the other side of the elevation.

Captain Gordon was accounted a skilful strategist; and as he sat on his horse at the head of the column, he matured his plan to meet the attack, or to begin it, as the case might be. He had not waited much more than an hour when the Millersville Home Guard galloped up to the foot of the hill, and halted. The captain rode back to the head of their column, and the colonel in command saluted him. The horses were reeking with foam, and seemed to be well nigh winded, so great was the speed to which they had been urged. It was a horse-raising country, and the animals were of the highest grade.

"My men are now under your command, Captain Gordon, and personally I will obey your orders," said the colonel. "I have explained the matter to my men; and they all understand it, and will recognize you as the commander of the whole force."

"I shall give my orders to you, sir, as the captain of the company, as far as practicable," replied Captain Gordon. "How many men have you?"

"Sixty-four, besides the two lieutenants."

"How many of them are armed with rifles?"

"More than I thought when I spoke to you about them, for there are forty-two of them; and

they are skilled in the use of their weapons."

"Call them from the ranks, if you please, and have the first lieutenant march them to the top of the hill," continued the captain. "If you will go with me, I will explain my plan of action."

"I obey your orders, Captain."

The men with rifles were called out at once, and formed in fours by Lieutenant Ripley. The second lieutenant formed the other twenty-two in the same order. They had muskets slung on their backs, and most of them had heavy revolvers in their belts, the only uniform any of the company wore. The captain sent for a quartermaster-sergeant, and ordered him to bring twenty-two sabres from one of the wagons.

Sergeant Fronklyn was sent for, and he was directed to drill these men in the most important cuts and thrusts of the manual until the men were needed for service. The captain, with Colonel Halliburn, returned to the head of the column, when the plan was explained; and his companion declared that it would make short work of the approaching company.

The riflemen were posted in the woods on the left, and their lieutenant was fully informed what was expected of him. They were to dismount, leave their horses farther in the forest, and then station themselves behind the trees. When the enemy came within rifle-shot of them, they were to pick them off, the column being divided among them, so that all might not fire at the same mark. This was to be the greeting of the Confederate company.

The captain explained to his companion in what manner the main body of the company and its re-enforcement were to go into the action. Twenty men were sent to take away the fence on the right hand of the road; and it was soon removed, in spite of the protest of the farmer. The rails and posts were carried far enough to be out of the way. This work was performed under the supervision of the second lieutenant. It was hardly completed before Deck discovered the proprietor stealing to the east, and evidently intending to reach the road on the descent of the hill. He arrested the man, and he was conducted to the head of the column.

The captain ordered him to be tied to a tree in the shelter of his cabin; for it was plain that he meant to inform the enemy of the presence of the Union company. The lieutenants were then instructed what they were to do; and this had hardly been done, before Life and Milton were discovered riding furiously up the road. They reported the enemy approaching very leisurely towards the hill, and not more than half a mile from it. The sergeant was confident they had not been seen, for they had been careful to keep out of sight around a bend in the road.

The company were still too far down the declivity to be seen till the enemy came to the top of the hill, and the riflemen were likely to bring them to a halt before they could reach that point. The captain had taken a position where he could see without being seen. Sooner than he expected he saw the head of the Confederate column, and ten minutes later the riflemen began the discharge of their pieces. The first man to drop from his saddle was the commander of the company, who was the most conspicuous mark at the head of his command.

CHAPTER X

THE SHARPSHOOTERS OF MILLERSVILLE

The forty-two riflemen of the Home Guard were sharpshooters who had practised for many years with the weapon, both as hunters and by firing at a mark. Some of them were past the military age; and the lieutenant in command of the detachment was sixty years old, and he had won his spurs as the best shot in the town. He was a man of influence, and his skill had procured him his present position in the company.

Lieutenant Ripley was at the right of the line of sharpshooters. He had stationed his men in the woods, and ordered them not to fire till he did so; and they were to load and fire at will after he had given the first discharge. When the captain of the Confederate cavalry dropped from his horse, it was known by whose shot he had fallen. A couple of men were ordered to dismount, and bear him to the side of the roads; and the lieutenant who succeeded to the command ordered a halt.

Captain Gordon and Colonel Halliburn were behind the farmer's house, where they had retired, not to avoid the bullets of the enemy, but to obtain a position where they could see without being seen. The horse of the former stood on a knoll, from which his rider could look over the corner of the low building, and the latter was at his side. Both of them saw the captain of the company fall from his horse.

"Ripley fired that shot," said the colonel. "He was never known to miss his aim when he had fair play."

"That was a good beginning, at any rate," added the captain.

"But why don't the next man in the line fire?" mused the commander of the Home Guard, uttering his thought.

They could not know then the reason; but they learned afterwards that the lieutenant had ordered them not to do so, as he wished to observe the effect of the death of the captain, for he had not moved after he fell. The company seemed to be staggered by the event for the space of a minute. The men all turned their heads towards the woods; and as no shot followed the first one at once, they might have inferred that the fatality to the commander had been the work of an assassin.

This view was immediately confirmed by the captain's successor; for he ordered four troopers to dismount, and go into the woods in search of the murderer. But they did not reach the edge of the forest before fire was opened upon them, and every one of them dropped dead or wounded. The rifle was a terribly effective weapon in the hands of the sharpshooters. The company had certainly fallen into an ambush. The troopers could do nothing on their horses in the woods, and for the moment they were practically helpless.

The fire continued all along the line of riflemen, one discharge at a time, so that no two men should aim at the same soldier or officer; and all along the detachment every one seemed to bring down his man. The lieutenant saw the havoc made in his command; but Captain Gordon did not give the order for his company to advance on the plan he had arranged.

The battle appeared to be fighting itself without any assistance from the summit of the hill, and it was evident that the enemy had no knowledge of any force outside of the forest.

"That lieutenant has just given an order, but I could not make out what he said," observed the colonel. "He is in a tight place, and you have set a very ugly trap for that company to fall into, Captain Gordon."

"The assistance of your company, Colonel, has given me a very decided advantage," replied the captain.

"And you have made excellent use of it. My men are safe in the woods, and the lieutenant seems to be losing his time."

"You can see what his order meant now, for his men are dismounting. They are going into the woods to clean out the enemy, and that is really the only thing he can do," replied Captain Gordon. "It will be time for me to put a finger in the pie very soon, for the protection of your men, if for nothing else."

"You need not trouble your head about the riflemen, for they all have legs; and even Ripley, the oldest man among them, can use his walking-pins as well as any of them. They will retreat through the woods, using their rifles as they retire."

Every alternate man of the company was dismounted, giving the bridle-rein of his horse to one mounted. They double-quickened into the forest; but they began to drop, to cling to the trees for support, or to retire from the field before the observers on the hill lost sight of them. Still Captain Gordon did not give the word to advance.

"Isn't it time for this company to move forward?" asked the colonel.

"Not quite; it is best to wait a short time, till the cavalymen get a little farther into the woods," answered the captain. "Your men are firing quite rapidly now, and are evidently retiring in good order."

"I am not at all concerned about them. They can keep behind the trees, firing as they retreat. The riflemen have hunted through that forest, which extends five or six miles to the north, and they have known every acre of it for years. They are quite at home there; and they will not fall into any creek or mud-hole, as the enemy would without a guide."

"They are brave men, and they have done good work this morning. But it is now time for my company to make a move; for I will not leave your guards to do all the fighting," added Captain Gordon, as he descended from the knoll, followed by his companion.

He had already explained to his two lieutenants in command of the platoons what they were to do at a signal sounded by the bugler. The captain rode to the top of the hill, though he did not expose himself to the fire of the enemy, who were still unaware of his presence. Stufton was near the head of the column, and he gave him the order to sound the advance. He did it with full lungs. Lieutenant Lyon, commanding the second platoon, gave the order to march, and his men started at a trot, which was immediately changed to a gallop. The farmer's fence had been removed by order of the captain when he had arranged his plan for the action; and Deck, on the right flank of his command, took to the field, where they had plenty of space, though recent rains had turned the soil into soft mud. But the speed was kept up in spite of this impediment till the head of the platoon reached the left, or foot, of the Confederate company.

In response to the bugle signal, Lieutenant Belthorpe advanced upon the head of the enemy's column, deploying to the side of the road, and continuing till they filled up the space to the foot of Deck's force. The enemy had discharged their carbines, or other pieces, at random, and apparently without orders; but they inflicted no injury upon the flying horsemen. Deck was the first to give the order to charge; but he had been prohibited by the captain, to whom some one had reported the young lieutenant's custom of leading his men into action, from placing himself in front of his men when he went in upon a charge, unless in a case of actual emergency.

Deck promised to obey this order, and he did so in the advance of his platoon; and when he ordered the charge upon the left of the enemy's column, he was on its right. Every man of the Confederates was encumbered with an extra horse, though as they confronted the Union cavalymen he rid himself of his charge; and thus turned loose, the animals were soon wandering wherever they found an opening. Deck had very nearly his full complement of men, and so had Tom Belthorpe; for the soldiers of the Home Guard had been detailed to guard the baggage-wagons, and picket the rear of the column. One-half of the Confederates had been sent into the woods, and by this time they had advanced a considerable distance in pursuit of the riflemen.

The enemy were at present doubly outnumbered; and though they realized the fact, they fought as though they had been contending man for man. Indeed, they contended desperately against the odds before them, and deserved victory for their steady valor. But with them then it was a "lost cause," and through no fault of their own. Before the Union column had reached the position assigned to them, the lieutenant in command had sent his bugler into the forest to sound the retreat for the portion of the company pursuing the riflemen.

As he returned, the officer shouted at him to give the signal for the charge, and his men promptly responded to it. The fighting then became furious on both sides. The second lieutenant in front of Deck's men was a noble-looking young man, who fought like a lion at bay, and defended himself with great skill from the two Union troopers that assailed him in front; but it was an unequal conflict, and presently he was wounded in the sword-arm, so that he could no longer use his sabre with that hand, and grasped it with his left. He struck with it several times; but he could not handle his weapon as he had before, and he was soon cut near the shoulder of his left arm, receiving a wound which entirely disabled him.

Deck, filled with admiration for the brave young officer, ordered one of the men to lead the horse of the wounded soldier out of the crowd, which he did, conducting him to the side of the Union lieutenant. It was soon reported along the line that the first lieutenant of the Confederates had been disabled, and had retired from the field. By this time the crack of the rifles was again heard in the forest, though at a considerable distance from the road. The captain interpreted these sounds as the retreat of the force of the enemy sent into the woods, the riflemen shooting them down as they retired.

Before this force, more than decimated by the sharpshooters, could reach the road, however they hurried, the other half of the company had been driven to the verge of the forest; but they realized that they were thoroughly beaten, and that any further resistance meant nothing but slaughter. The orderly sergeant of the company, who succeeded to the command, shouted to Lieutenant Belthorpe that he was ready to surrender. Tom repeated the words to the captain, and Stufton was ordered to give the proper signal to bring the attack to an end.

"You have fought like a hero, sir, and I am sorry for you; but you are my prisoner," said Deck to the wounded lieutenant when he was conducted to his side.

"I surrender," replied the prisoner faintly; and it was evident to Deck that he was in great pain from the wound in his shoulder.



"THEY LAID HIM ON THE GRASS JUST AS THE RECALL WAS SOUNDED."

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The Union lieutenant called a man to assist him in dismounting the officer. They laid him on the grass just as the recall was sounded, and proceeded to remove his coat. The blood was flowing freely from both of his wounds, and he was quite faint. But Deck saw at once that the wound was not fatal; and he sent word to the Confederate surgeon, who was attending to the men that were brought into the field in the rear of the column, that he was needed for the officer of his command.

In the meantime, Deck tied up the worst wound of the prisoner with his handkerchief, and did what he could to stop the flow of blood. He used some of the rags with which his mother had supplied him; but the surgeon promptly appeared.

"I am sorry to see you wounded, Lieutenant Lawrence," said the doctor, as he observed the pale face of the young officer; and then gave him a medicine glass full of a dark fluid, which was probably brandy.

"It was a hard fight, Doctor," replied the sufferer.

"But Lieutenant Lawrence has fought like the bravest of the brave, and I am sorry for his misfortune," added Deck.

"Who may you be, sir? I see that you wear the uniform of the blue," said the surgeon, looking him in the face.

"He is a Yankee officer; but he has been kind to me, and had me brought out of the fight when I was utterly disabled," said the wounded officer, apparently revived by the stimulant he had taken. "I am grateful to him for his kindness."

"I am Lieutenant Lyon of the Riverlawn Cavalry," replied Deck. "This gentleman's bravery and skill excited my admiration; and I have done the little I could for him."

"I thank you, Lieutenant Lyon, for what you have done for my friend; and if you are an enemy, you are a noble one, and I honor you for your Christianity on the battle-field," replied the surgeon, as he took the hand of Deck and pressed it warmly. "I reckon all the Yankee officers are not like you, Lieutenant."

"Those in my squadron are," answered Deck.

"Your name is Lyon. I have heard of the Riverlawn Cavalry in Edmonson County, where I have an uncle; and I was thinking you were the major in command of it," added the surgeon, still at work on his patient.

"That is my father," replied the lieutenant.

Life Knox came to Deck at this moment, to announce that another force of cavalry was approaching from the direction of Jamestown, though he had not been able to make out what it was, whether friend or foe.

CHAPTER XI

THE APPROACH OF ANOTHER CAVALRY FORCE

The soldiers on both sides were already engaged in removing the dead to the side of the road next to the woods, and the wounded to the respective hospitals, which had been established in the fields of the farmer. The riflemen had heard the recall, and followed the defeated cavalymen, bearing their wounded, and handed them over to the surgeon, who had called in three medical students to his aid. Lieutenant Ripley had handled his sharpshooters so skilfully that not a single man had been killed, and only three had been wounded.

He had kept his force behind the trees, and fought the enemy at long range, in which the carbines and other firearms were not effective; and this policy explained the absence of all fatalities in Ripley's force. The three wounded men were not severely injured, and only one was disabled.

Deck sent Sergeant Knox to Captain Gordon with the information of the approaching cavalry force which was now the great matter of interest. He sent Life and Milton as scouts, to ascertain "their politics," as the sergeant put it. His eyes were very sharp, and always looking about him, like the skilful seaman when he comes on deck. He reported that he had seen the force descending a hill more than a mile distant, disappearing in a few minutes in the valley below. Life and Milton started off at a gallop, and had soon passed out of sight.

"What does that report mean, Captain Gordon?" inquired Colonel Halliburn, as soon as the two scouts had dashed down the column.

"I am sure I don't know; but if I should infer anything from the appearance of a force at this time, it would be that it was another company of Confederate cavalry," replied the captain. "Can any intelligence of our movements have reached the enemy to the eastward of us, Colonel?"

"It is more than possible that some one going across by the private road passing my brother's mansion may have carried the news of what has been going on at Breedings, and on the road from Millersville to Harrison, but not to Jamestown, for the great wood lies in the route, and no one travels that way."

"It is probable, then, that the force approaching is Confederate, on its way either to forage or to retrieve the disasters to that side in the affairs of yesterday; and all we have to do is to prepare to fight another engagement. I believe the dead and wounded have all been removed by this time. I see that the sharpshooters have assisted my men in this work."

"I sent an order to them to that effect," added Colonel Halliburn.

"I thank you for doing so; and all the more that we are threatened by another force of the enemy," continued the captain. "Your men, especially the riflemen, have rendered very important service in this action, and I shall report it to Major Lyon when the squadron is reunited. The rest of your men have been very useful to us, not only in guarding the wagons, but in the fight with the second platoon. I think you had better send an orderly to Lieutenant Ripley with an order that he remain where he is by the woods; for if we engage another company of the enemy, the riflemen will be needed to act as sharpshooters, and to render the same service as before, though they will probably not be driven back again beyond rifle-shot distance from the road."

"As the enemy approach they will see the hospitals on their left, and that will apprise them that a battle has been fought here."

"We have not time to remove these hospitals, and put everything as it was at the beginning of the engagement; but I shall fight this encounter so far as possible on the same plan as before, for it worked admirably; and we owe the result as much to our fortunate position as to anything else, for it enabled me to place your riflemen where they did the most effective work of the morning."

Captain Gordon had already despatched messengers to his two lieutenants, instructing them to move their platoons back to the side of the hill to the positions they had occupied before the action; and this order was now in process of being executed. Dr. Barlow, though he had been a fighting man at the beginning of the engagement, was now attending to the wounded, assisted by some men he had selected from his own company.

"I think you had better take possession of the house of this Secesh farmer for the wounded. He would have spoiled the morning's work if he had escaped, for he would have warned the enemy of their danger from a superior force."

The captain approved the idea, and instructed the colonel to effect the removal with his own force. The riflemen were also directed to remove the dead into the forest until there was time to dispose of them. The ground was still strewn with the dead, as they had fallen under the destructive fire of the sharpshooters. With the exception of the Confederate hospital, which was near the foot of the hill,—for their own surgeon had chosen the location by the

side of a flowing brook, in the shadow of some mighty walnuts,—the hill presented the same appearance as when the enemy came in sight of it, and had been lured on to their defeat by the deceptive silence of the locality; for not a sound or a moving thing betrayed the peril that surrounded them.

Life Knox and Milton had run their horses to the utmost extent of their ability for over half a mile. When the tramp of the horses was heard, they halted and concealed themselves at the side of the road, at a bend of it; but they had hardly done so before the sound of the horses' feet ceased to be heard, and it looked as though the force had halted. Life dismounted, and climbed a tree not less than a hundred feet in height, which enabled him to see into the low ground on the other side of a slight elevation.

The cavalry were extended along a brook, watering their horses on both sides of it. The trees overtopped the stream so that it was quite dark on its banks, and the distance was so great that Life could not make out whether the men wore the blue or the gray, especially as he had made up his mind that the force was an enemy, and the trees half hid them from his view. He descended from his perch, and waited on the ground till he heard the clatter of a couple of horses near his hiding-place. He obtained a view of these men, and they wore blue uniforms.

"All right!" exclaimed Life. "They wear the blue."

He waited no longer, but darted into the road, followed by Milton. The two men, who were scouting in advance of the company, brought their carbines to the shoulder.

"I reckon you needn't shoot, Keene," said the sergeant quietly.

"Sergeant Knox!" cried the chief scout. "How came you here? Where is your company?"

"They ain't fur from here. Are you piloting the second company of the Riverlawn Cavalry, Keene?"

"Fox and me are treading down the mud for the company."

"All right; we uns will fall back and report to Major Lyon," said Life, and he galloped back to the main body of the company.

The commander of the squadron was riding at the head of the second company, and appeared to be absorbed in his own thoughts. He had learned a great deal about the situation in Pulaski, Russell, and Adair Counties, where the Confederate foragers had raided to secure supplies for the main army, and where, as in many other parts of the State, the independent partisan bands had conducted operations on their own responsibility. A spur of the Cumberland Mountains extended through the eastern part of the first-named county, and most of the region between this range and Virginia was mountainous. It was not so rich in supplies for an army as the territory to the west of it, to which the raiders had confined their depredations.

Major Lyon, like a good soldier, occasionally cast his eyes around him to take in the condition and topography of the country through which he was passing; and he discovered the two scouts as they approached the head of the company. His first supposition was that the first company had fallen into trouble, and that the two scouts had been sent forward to hurry up the other company; for the two, as it had been arranged by the major, were to come together at Harrison, twenty-five miles from Millersville.

Life Knox rode forward in advance of Milton, and the commander of the squadron promptly recognized the tall, gaunt form of the sergeant; and his thoughts dwelt upon the occasion that had brought him this visit. Life approached the major to within a rod of him, when he stopped his horse, and saluted him with his usual deference to his superiors.

"Good-morning, Life," said the commander. "I hope no misfortune has brought you in this direction. Are you escaping from an enemy that has overwhelmed the first company?"

"Nothin' of the sort, Major Lyon," replied Life, a broad smile lighting up his face. "We have met an enemy, and they'd run away if we'd let 'em."

This reply removed the burden of anxiety which had fallen upon the mind of the major when he discovered the scouts, and he smiled in his placid manner with the sergeant.

"Where is your company, Life?" he asked.

"I reckon it ain't more'n half a mile from here," replied the scout.

"I suppose you have news for me," continued the commander.

"Lots on't; but I can say that Captain Gordon, whether he is to meet a friend or an enemy in the cavalry, is comin' down this road. I don't reckon he's worryin' about it; but he may just be a bit anxious to know whether or not he is to fight you. If you don't object, Major Lyon, I'll let Milton ride back and tell the cap'n he won't have to fight no more just yet."

"Send him at once, Life;" and in a minute more the other scout was galloping his horse in the direction of the hill where the first company were posted. "What have you been doing, sergeant?"

"The fust company has fit into three scrimmages, and cleaned out a gang of gorillas," replied Life, as though he realized that he had a good report to make in answer to the question.

"You have been busy; and that explains the reason why I did not find you at Harrison as I expected," replied the major. "Tell me all about it; and as Captain Gordon is not in need of a re-enforcement, we will walk the horses, and listen to your story. Captain Truman, let the men walk the horses."

"Company—attention!" shouted the captain, wheeling his horse. "Walk—March!"

"Place yourself on the left of Sergeant Knox, and listen to his story."

Life saluted the captain, who said he was glad to see him, and took the place to which he was assigned.

"We had not gone two miles from Columbia before a messenger came to us and said that a cavalry force was moving down on Breedings," Life observed. "The captain took the second platoon under Lieutenant Belthorpe, and rushed over to Breedings. Lieutenant Lyon was ordered to march with his platoon and the baggage-wagons towards Millersville," added Life.

"Dexter with an independent command!" exclaimed the young man's father; for he seemed to regard him still as a small boy, and said so.

"He was; but the oldest officer in the squadron couldn't a done it no better," replied Life with enthusiasm; and he proceeded to tell about the appearance of Grace Morgan in the field, and gave a hurried account of the manner in which the guerillas had been trapped and captured.

Then came the battle with the force which had escaped from Breedings, the march to Millersville, the re-enforcement of the Home Guard, and the fight at the hill. The major asked a great many questions, for the sergeant had been obliged to hurry his narrative, and Life answered them.

As they approached the hill, the head of the first company were marching down the descent; for Milton had reported his message to Captain Gordon, who was a little startled when he saw the private returning without the sergeant, fearful that something had happened to him.

The news brought by the new recruit was immediately circulated through the company and that of Colonel Halliburn. The riflemen were called from the forest, and came to the road mounted, with their weapons slung on their backs. The whole force was formed on the slope of the hill; and when the second company marched up the declivity, with Major Lyon at the head of it, they presented arms, and then indulged in a vigorous cheer.

CHAPTER XII

A NEW COMPANY OF MOUNTED RIFLEMEN

The troopers were dismissed for dinner, and all the officers of the squadron assembled in front of the farmer's house while their horses were fed; and it was an interesting occasion. The skirmishes were gone over again more in detail than Life had been able to give them. Deck was required to report his affair at the house of Mr. Halliburn, and he went over it as minutely as his father desired.

"It was very well managed, my son," said the major, who was not especially liberal in praise of the young man as a rule. "You captured the entire gang without firing a gun, though if Captain Coonly had conducted his raid with even ordinary prudence, it would have been otherwise; but it is the business of a commanding officer to profit by the blunders of the enemy."

"It was very handsomely done," suggested Captain Gordon.

"I think it was; but Captain Coonly will not be a great military commander," added the major. "But what has become of the prisoners captured in this affair?"

"We marched them to Millersville, and turned them over to Colonel Halliburn," answered Deck.

"We quartered them in a disused tobacco factory; and probably in time we shall let them go," added the colonel. "We have no use for them; and we can use our supply of provisions and forage much better than in feeding these ruffians and their horses."

"I believe there will soon be a change in the sentiments of the people in this vicinity, or at least the guerillas will find it advisable to cease preying upon their neighbors," said the

major; but he did not explain in what manner this change would be brought about. "How happened you to fall into the fight in the road after you had brought your prisoners there, Dexter?"

"I think my answer to that question ought to come in after Captain Gordon's report of the action at Breedings," replied the lieutenant.

The commander of the first company reported in detail his affair at the fort.

"Captain Letcher, of the Tennessee cavalry, could not get all his men into the fort, and he stationed a platoon on a hill on the other side of the road. I sent Lieutenant Belthorpe to attack them on the hill, while I assaulted and carried the fort, riding the horses over the breast-work, and upsetting the iron cannon. My lieutenant defeated the force on the hills, and drove them across the country till the recall was sounded for them. I understand now that the detachment followed the road towards Millersville."

"They came down that road just as I reached it with my prisoners from Mr. Halliburn's mansion. He is the brother of Colonel Halliburn, here present. The retreating force was under the command of Captain Letcher, and he attacked us as soon as we dashed into the road. We defeated him, with a loss in killed and wounded of nearly half of his command. When Captain Gordon arrived at the scene of the skirmish with the second platoon, he paroled the prisoners. In the afternoon we marched to Millersville."

"Who is the man that came over to the second company with Sergeant Knox?" asked the major. "He was a stranger to me; and I thought I knew every man in the squadron."

"His name is Winfield Milton, of Miltonville," replied Captain Gordon. "My authority as a recruiting-officer is still in force, and I enlisted him on the recommendation of Lieutenant Lyon."

"He is very useful to me as a guide, and for his knowledge of the country for many miles around us. He is the intended of Grace Morgan, who first informed Life of what was going on at the mansion of her guardian," added Deck.

"You did not make any mistake when you enlisted him," said Colonel Halliburn. "I have known him for many years, and I will vouch for him. When I say that he is worthy of Grace Morgan, one of the noblest girls ever raised in Kentucky, I say more than you can understand."

"He came into our ranks this morning; and he has done his duty faithfully as a guide and a soldier, and fought like a hero in the action this morning," added the captain of the first company.

"He ought to be an officer, for he is a very intelligent and well-educated man; and he will be an honor to the service," continued the colonel.

"I have not yet heard the particulars of the skirmish, which seems by the looks of things about here to have swelled to something like the proportions of a battle," added Major Lyon.

Captain Gordon referred to the colonel; and he repeated the story of Squire Walcott, who had brought news from the other side of the Cumberland, and had informed him of the intention of the company of the Tennessee cavalry to move on Millersville.

The commander of the first company then minutely related the details, beginning with his order of battle. The voluntary offer of his command by Colonel Halliburn had proved to be of the greatest importance; for while the cavalrymen had fought like lions, the burden of the action had fallen on the riflemen acting as sharpshooters in the woods.

"They caused the enemy to divide his force in the road, sending half of them into the woods. We owe a debt of gratitude to Lieutenant Ripley, the oldest man in the line, who commanded the riflemen in the forest. He can report that part of the action better than any other person."

"I understood the captain's plan of action, and I did my best to carry it out," said Lieutenant Ripley. "I had forty-two men under my command, and every one of them could split a rifle-ball on a knife. About every one of them dropped his man in the road. When half the Confederates were sent into the woods dismounted to clean us out, I drew them as far away from the road as possible. I believed I could do the best thing for the captain's plan by leading half the enemy as far as possible from any support. If I was wrong, I am willing to be forgiven, for I had only my general orders."

"You did exactly the right thing, Lieutenant Ripley," added the captain. "I waited until you had led them at least half a mile, and then I ordered my two platoons to advance. They charged into the remainder of the company in the road. The enemy were tangled up with the loose horses; and when the officers had all fallen, the force out of the forest surrendered."

"What were our losses, Captain?" asked the major.

"Three men killed, and seven wounded; only one of the riflemen had a wound of any consequence."

"We fought behind the trees, and at long range," interposed Lieutenant Ripley. "I was

ordered to do so."

"Do you know the enemy's loss, Captain Gordon?" inquired his superior officer.

"Fifteen killed, or reported as missing, with no doubt that most of them were killed in the woods, and twenty-one wounded. They fought at a very great disadvantage, and the sharpshooters probably caused the greater portion of their loss."

"I think I understand what the first company have been doing since we parted company at Columbia," said the major. "As soon as you are ready we shall march back to Jamestown. I left Harrison very early this morning. As I did not find you there, as I expected, day before yesterday, and you did not arrive the following day, I became considerably concerned, for your company had the shortest route from Columbia to Harrison, Captain Gordon. The enemy were foraging in all directions west of the hills, and I was afraid you had been overmatched by some of them, and I concluded to march in search of you."

"When I reached Jamestown about eight, I learned that a company of Tennessee cavalry had camped there over night, and had left at an early hour this morning; but I have found you, and your delay is fully explained."

"Have you met the enemy on your way, Major Lyon?" asked the senior captain.

"The company was compelled, about half a mile from Columbia, to deal with a horde of about thirty guerillas; but their officer was not so stupid as the one with whom my son had to deal, and they ran away as soon as they saw us. We pursued and killed about a dozen of them; but they escaped by fording a swift-running stream, and some of them were drowned there. It was not prudent to lose any of my men by drowning; for that was not a proper death for a soldier to die, though it may be just as creditable to his conduct as to fall from his horse on the field."

As usual, the commander of the squadron kept his own counsel, and he did not say what he intended to do when he reached Jamestown. He had come down from Liberty to Harrison, which was on the road to Somerset, where he had expected to join the other company, and wait for orders. He was in possession of the current news, so far as it had been divulged by those to whom the army operations had been intrusted; and his orders were to halt somewhere in the vicinity of Somerset. He was aware that General Thomas had been sent down with a considerable force, and a portion of it was in the vicinity; but it had not yet been concentrated for the attack upon the intrenched camps of General Crittenden and General Zollicoffer.

The Union general was waiting for the rest of the force detailed to take part in the campaign; and had also been detained by the condition of the roads, which rendered it almost impossible to move the baggage-wagons and the artillery. Friday and Saturday it rained incessantly in torrents, and raised Fishing Creek and other streams so that it was impracticable to cross them. The general had with him the Fourth Kentucky Infantry, and a portion of the First Kentucky Cavalry, to which the two companies of the Riverlawn force nominally belonged, though they had been on detached duty thus far since they were mustered in.

Thomas had also with him, or within call, regiments from Ohio, Indiana, and Minnesota. Major Lyon informed his audience of officers that their regiment was somewhere in the vicinity, though he did not know where; but his officers had never seen this force, and were not greatly interested. The regiment had not yet been filled up, though others enlisted later had their full complement of men and companies.

"Don't you think we had better enlist another company?" asked Captain Gordon, who evidently had in his head a big idea.

"I don't know about that; but I am inclined to think we had better leave that to the proper authorities, or to local leaders where men are available, for we are away from Riverlawn and Bar Creek. I doubt if we could find men enough in that vicinity to form another company."

"That was not my idea," interposed the captain. "How many men have you in your company of Home Guards, Colonel Halliburn?" he asked rather abruptly, as he proceeded to develop his purpose.

"I have sixty-two here, and there are about fifty more from various parts of three counties, many of whom seldom meet with us," replied the colonel, wondering what the captain was driving at.

"We have forty-two riflemen here; are there any more of them?"

"As many more, I should say."

"Don't you think it is a great pity that your company, or a portion of it, are not in actual service in the army, where they are so much needed?"

"Well, it is rather necessary to have some at home to look out for the women and children, and to raise food for the army and the people," replied the colonel with a smile, as he began to fathom the idea of the questioner.

"It seems to me that Colonel Halliburn is right in the main, though he might be able to spare a portion of his men," added the major.

"I might as well let it all out at once as do it in driblets," said Captain Gordon. "I should like to enlist your forty-two sharpshooters as the nucleus of a company of mounted riflemen, to be armed as cavalry, except that the rifle shall take the place of the carbine, the men to serve mounted or dismounted, as occasion may require; not a very radical idea, for cavalry are not infrequently called upon to serve on foot, as we have an instance this very day."

"I like the idea very much," returned the colonel.

"I will talk about the matter with my riflemen, and let you know what they think of it at once," said Ripley; and he hastened to his command, who were still eating their dinner.

The plan was talked over by the riflemen, and Lieutenant Ripley heartily approved the scheme, but thought that he might be too old to enlist, though he was still a healthy and vigorous citizen. The plan was not entirely new; for steps had been taken, and perhaps successfully, to organize "mounted infantry" in various places, and the command of Lieutenant Ripley did not essentially differ from such a force.

CHAPTER XIII

A NIGHT IN A JAIL AT JAMESTOWN

Lieutenant Ripley returned from the conference with the riflemen, and reported that thirty of them were willing to enlist in such an organization as that proposed; the others were unable to reply until they had been home to their families. The lieutenant was confident that he could raise the sixty proposed as a beginning within a reasonable time, and the colonel had a similar confidence in the patriotism of the loyal Kentuckians in that part of the State.

The men had finished their dinners, the prisoners had been paroled with the approval of Major Lyon, who was beginning to be in a hurry to march back to Jamestown as soon as the first company had rested from the hard work of the day; and there had been much more of it than could be indicated in the narrative of the principal events.

"I am sorry that we cannot take with us even a small company of those riflemen, for I think they would be very useful in the course of a few days," said Captain Gordon, after the major had given the order to form the column for the march. "It is plain to everybody who knows anything about the movements of the army that there will be a battle within a week."

This statement seemed to fire the enthusiasm of the old lieutenant of the Home Guards, and he talked apart with Colonel Halliburn very earnestly for some time. Then he went over to the riflemen, who had mounted their horses in readiness to return to their homes. He appeared to have proposed something to them, and in a few minutes he hastened back to the group of officers.

"Thirty-six of the riflemen desire to go with you as temporary volunteers for immediate service," said Ripley. "Will you accept them, Major Lyon?"

"I will, though I cannot take them as a part of my squadron, for our ranks are now very full," replied the commander.

"I meant to have them go as an addition to your force, to be under your command," replied the lieutenant.

"Of course there can be no objection to your going with us in this manner, and you will bring up the rear of my command," added Major Lyon, as the orderly sergeants reported that the companies were formed.

The officers took their proper places, and the order to march was given to the captains. Life Knox and Milton were again ordered to scout the road and its adjacent fields in advance. The wagons were ready to fall in behind the riflemen, and the column moved. The company officers kept in their places, but the major went where he pleased along the line. When the column reached the foot of the hill, he fell back to the second platoon of the first company, where Deck was riding on the left of the first section.

"I was so busy that I neglected to ask the names of the men who were killed in the action where you met the enemy on the road from Columbia," said the major, as he wheeled his horse, and took his place by the side of his son.

Deck had noticed that he had asked no questions when the report of the killed was given to him; for something had called his attention away from the subject at that moment. The lieutenant was glad to escape the necessity in that presence of informing his father of the death of his cousin; for this was a family matter, aside from military routine.

"I was glad you did not ask that question then," added Deck.

"I understand you, Dexter; for when I saw Sandy in the ranks I looked for Orly Lyon; but I did not see him. Was he badly wounded?" inquired the commander.

"Worse than that, for he was killed in the action. He fought bravely, and he always did his duty faithfully; for, however it was with his father and his brother, Orly's heart was in the work," replied Deck with no little feeling.

The major was silent for a moment. It was evident that he was moved by the news, though he always controlled himself; for the fact that his two sons and two nephews were liable at any time to be struck down in their youth was present to his mind when he had time to think of such things. Orly was only sixteen, and he was the first of either his own or his brother's family to pass over to the other shore.

"I am more sorry for his father and mother than for him; for he died in defence of his country, and that is the death of the hero and patriot. It will be a heavy blow to his poor mother; and, unlike her husband, her heart was on the right side. She told me when her boys enlisted in the Home Guard, a Secessionist body, that it broke her heart to have her sons fight with the enemies of her country, but that she could be even willing to have them sacrificed on the right side."

"Do you know where Uncle Titus is now, father?" asked Deck.

"He is in a prison-camp, the name of which I have in my valise in one of the wagons. I shall write to him as soon as I have time, and to your Aunt Meely."

In another hour the head of the column arrived in the midst of a pouring rain at Jamestown, which is the capital of Russell County. It was the 17th of January. It had been clear in the morning; but the rain began to fall not a quarter of an hour before the column reached the town. It was almost a deluge, and it was likely to continue into the night. The Secessionist element was predominant in the place; but the major took forcible possession of a number of buildings which would afford shelter to his troopers and their horses.

He found several Unionists, who gave him all the information he needed in regard to buildings, and he put some who attempted to prevent him from occupying the buildings under arrest. The county prison was one of the structures occupied; and the prisoners were confined in it, with troopers enough lodging there to keep them in order.

"You'll catch fits when you fall in with Old Zollicoffer," said one of the prisoners, as Life Knox, who was in charge of the jail, locked him into the cell with half a dozen others.

"We uns 'll be very glad to see Old Zolly, and I reckon we shall pay him a visit afore many days," replied the sergeant.

"If you do, you uns 'll git wiped out," added the man.

"Mebbe we shall do the wiping," said Life, as the keeper of the prison came up to him.

"I reckon I needn't stop here no longer," said he. "But I'll show you a room before I go, where you can sleep in a bed. It's where I sleep, though I hain't got no prisoners in the jug just now. There ain't much civil law afloat around here; and a Secesh man can kill a Union man, and nothing said about it."

"I'm much obleeged to you; and I consayt that you ain't much of a Secesh yourself," answered Life, as his conductor unlocked a door near the entrance to the jail.

"I reckon I ain't," replied the keeper as he led the way into the room and closed the door after him; "but it don't do for me to say much about it here. Them fellers you brought in here would hang me to the first tree they found if they knowed it."

The apartment was not a cell. It contained a bed and some furniture, and the sergeant thought he could be very comfortable in it till morning.

"Which way did your troopers come from, Sergeant?" asked the keeper.

"From the west. We left Millersville this morning," answered Life.

"We had a company of Cornfeds in town last night, and they started for Millersville this mornin'. I reckon you hain't seen nothin' on 'em, have you?" continued the keeper, as he seated himself on the bed while the sergeant occupied the only chair in the room.

"Cornfeds is good," laughed Life; "but I cal'late they don't get much of that sort of feed just now."

"Then I reckon you hain't seen 'em."

"I reckon that we uns have seen 'em; and I reckon them Cornfeds wish just now that we hadn't seen 'em."

"Did you meet 'em?"

"I'll bet we did, about five miles from here; and about one-third on 'em got killed before they

surrendered."

"Surrendered!" exclaimed the keeper. "I thought, when I heerd 'em talk, that no Cornfeds ever did anything o' that sort."

"They got badly chewed up, and they couldn't help theirselves; that's the whole on't. Is there any news floatin' about round here?" asked Life.

"I reckon there is, lots on't. If Thomas ain't already camped round here somewhere, he ain't fur off. They say he's waiting for some general's brigade to jine 'im afore he goes for Old Zolly's entrenchments," replied the keeper, whose name was Butters, as the sergeant learned from him later.

"I reckon our major will find out where he is," added Life.

"This town is about fifteen miles from Mill Springs; and I consayt that there will be a bigger battle than we have had in these parts, or anywhere in the State, before long. General Thomas is sent down here to clean out Old Zolly, and I reckon he'll do it," replied Butters. "I wish I could have a hand in it."

"So you kin if you are so minded. You don't seem to have nothin' to do here now. Ever been in the mili'try?"

"No; but I kin shoot a rifle nigh on to as good as old Ripley over to Millersville, and he can beat any other man at it in Kaintuck."

"Ripley is here with a party of his riflemen, and I cal'late he'll take you into his company if you want to go."

"Where is he now? I'd like to see him, for I've often been over to his place to shoot with him," said Butters.

"He bunks in the jail with some of his company."

"I know a dozen others here who are in the same boat with me; and two more on us were hanged a month ago for shooting a Cornfed sergeant for killing two good Union men."

"I'll find Ripley for you," said Life, as he left the room, intent upon adding more men to the loyal army.

He went through the jail, calling the name of the lieutenant till he found him, and then conducted him to the room of the keeper. Ripley gave his hand to Butters, and was very glad to see him. The bed was wide enough for two, and Life invited the lieutenant to sleep with him.

"No; I reckon I'll take Lieutenant Ripley up to my house, for he's an old friend of mine," interposed Butters; "and he's the only man that can ever beat me shootin' with a rifle. I'm ready to jine for this campaign under him."

"I have thirty-six men now, serving for a short time till we get things settled, and I should like enough to make up a hundred," replied Ripley, as he left the prison with Butters.

He had not been gone ten minutes before Lieutenant Lyon came in. The sentinel on duty showed him Life's room. The visitor was wet to his bones, as the French say; for he had been looking up some Union men his father wished to see, and he had brought them to the hotel where the officers were quartered. One of them was a captain, and another was his host in the town; and the major had been directed to report to the former.

Deck had been sent out to find him; for it was reported that he was in Jamestown, and not in Harrison, where he had expected to find him, but had not. His room had been taken from him for this officer, as he was the lowest in rank of any commissioned officer. His father had sent him out with directions to take a couple of men from the quarters of Lieutenant Belthorpe, who was the officer of the day, and find a room where he could in the town. But he knew that Life Knox was in command at the jail, and he preferred to go there.

"You are wet to the skin, Leftenant!" exclaimed the sergeant, as he admitted him to the room.

"Not the first time I have been so since we left Riverlawn," replied Deck. "You have got a good room here, Life."

"Good enough; but I cal'late to camp on the floor, and give this bed to you, Leftenant."

"Not at all, Life; the bed is big enough for both of us. I am not afraid to sleep with you, if you are not with me."

"'Tain't quite reg'lar; but it's just as you say, Leftenant."

There was a fireplace in the room, and a pile of wood in the corner; and the sergeant went to work at once to build a fire to dry his officer. There was plenty of light wood, full of pitch, in the pile; and in a few minutes a roaring fire was blazing on the hearth. Without asking any questions he proceeded to remove Deck's coat, and assisted him to take off the rest of his clothes, which had not been done before except when he took his baths in the streams.

"Now jump into bed, Lieutenant; give me your shirt, and I will dry the whole of your duds. The room is warm now."

Deck had been so chilled by the rain that he was glad to comply with the sergeant's requests. Life placed the nether garments on the chair before the fire, and then moved up a light table, stretching his sabre from one to the other to form a clothes-horse. At midnight he waked his officer to have him put on the dry shirt, for Deck in the bed had slept like a tired boy. After a look through the corridors of the prison, Life went to bed himself.

CHAPTER XIV

THE AIDE-DE-CAMP OF THE GENERAL

When Life Knox left his bed at an early hour on the morning of the 18th, Deck was still sleeping, for no bugle had sounded to wake him. The rain was still pouring in torrents when the sergeant looked out of the window; and it was not probable that any military movements would be made that day. Breakfast was served as usual, the cooks having taken possession of an old tobacco dry-house the night before.

About nine o'clock, after Deck had gone to the hotel where the officers were quartered, Butters, Lieutenant Ripley, and about twenty more, marched into the jail. The keeper had been riding nearly all night, and had secured this number of riflemen, though he had been obliged to seek them, in part, miles distant from the town. They came with rifles and belts, with powder and ball in horns and pouches, as those from Millersville had appeared. They were ready for duty, and Butters declared that every one of them could shoot very well with the rifles they had used in their practice.

They were introduced by Lieutenant Ripley to the members of his command lodged in the building, and they fraternized like brothers; for the ability to use the rifle with skill and precision seemed to be the bond which united them. The lieutenant of the sharpshooters now had fifty-six men in his company. When Captain Gordon called at the prison, he promoted Ripley to the rank of captain, and made Butters, who was the second-best shot in the corps, lieutenant, though he could not give them commissions. They were then marched to the tobacco dry-house, only a small portion of which the cooks used, and drilled by the new captain.

At the hotel, Major Lyon and Captain Woodbine, an aide-de-camp of the commanding general, who had been sent to Harrison on account of his intimate knowledge of this locality, and was a man of influence in a neighboring county, were discussing the situation. Deck had found him, after no little difficulty, at the house of one of his friends, and reported to him the arrival of the Riverlawn Cavalry, re-enforced by a company of volunteer sharpshooters from Adair County, under the command of Captain Ripley.

"Ripley is an old man, isn't he?" asked Captain Woodbine.

"Sixty, I heard some one say, Captain; but I can assure you he is a very able officer," replied Deck.

"I dare say he is, for I know him well. Now will you introduce yourself, Lieutenant?" said the aide-de-camp with a smile, as he looked over the wet form of the visitor.

"My name is Dexter Lyon, Captain."

"Any relation to the commander of your squadron?"

"His son; but I was promoted from the ranks on the petition of every member of the first company, and all the officers of the squadron except my father," replied Deck; and there was a blush on his wet cheeks, for he feared that the military official would conclude that he had been raised to his present rank by the influence of his father.

"A very commendable delicacy on the part of Major Lyon, but not always manifested in such cases," added the captain. "I heard that one company of Major Lyon's squadron had arrived at Harrison, and that the other was coming by the way of Jamestown. Your company was late, and the major went in search of it."

"We had several skirmishes with guerillas and foraging parties of the enemy, which delayed us."

"Tell me about them," added Captain Woodbine, whose curiosity was aroused; and he kept his eyes very steadily on the young lieutenant.

As modestly as he could, he related the events on the march of the first company, taking care to call his command the "second platoon." The affair at the house of Mr. Halliburton was mentioned; and the manner in which the guerillas had been bagged excited the attention of

the officer, and he asked then who commanded the second platoon.

"I did, Captain," replied Deck, looking on the floor of the parlor.

"It was very adroitly done, and you exhibited very good strategy." Deck bowed, and went on with his narrative. The fight in the road was then mentioned, with its result only.

"This was the same force that captured the brigands, and brought them as prisoners down to the road, was it?"

"The same, Captain."

"And you commanded it in the action that followed?"

"I did, Captain," replied Deck, looking at the ceiling of the room.

The battle of that day on the hill was then described; but in this narration he contrived to keep himself in the shade. He gave the most of the credit for the victory to the riflemen in the woods, though he did not omit to credit Captain Gordon for his plan of battle.

"Where are these sharpshooters now? They appear to have been a very useful body of men," inquired the aide-de-camp.

"Part of them returned to Millersville, where they belong, though thirty-six of them have volunteered to go with us for the present campaign, under the command of Captain Ripley."

"I must see Ripley," mused the official.

"He is at the jail with his men, or he went there with them," added Deck.

"Our carriage is ready," said Captain Woodbine; "and there is room enough in it for you."

It was a covered road-wagon, and Deck judged that the captain had talked with him to pass away the time while he was waiting for the conveyance. They were driven first to the hotel.

"I have heard a great deal about the Riverlawn Cavalry, as you call them, though its two companies belong to the first cavalry regiment," said the captain when they were seated in the vehicle.

"Our men like the name," added the young lieutenant.

"They have rendered most excellent service under that name; and there is nothing to prevent them from retaining it, especially while they are on detached service."

Captain Woodbine was conducted by Major Lyon to the parlor occupied by the officers, where he was presented to them, after which the major, who was disposed to keep his affairs to himself, invited the aide-de-camp to go with him to his room, where he had ordered a fire.

"Lieutenant Lyon, you must excuse me for questioning you so much this evening; but I wanted to know more about you, for I think we shall have use for you," said the captain, as he took the hand of Deck, and drew him aside.

"I was very glad to give you the information you desired," replied Deck, as the visitor followed his father.

"I have to report the arrival of my command, and it is my purpose to move on to Harrison tomorrow," said the major as they entered the room.

"You need not do that, for your command is nearer now where you will be wanted than you would be at Harrison," added the captain as he and the major seated themselves at a table before the fire. "I waited for you till the time you were expected to arrive."

"I was ordered to look out for foragers and guerillas on my way; and I was detained some time near Liberty, in driving off a party of marauders, and I was a few hours late. My first company, which had the shorter route, had not arrived, and I marched in search of it," Major Lyon explained. "I found it about five miles from this town, delayed by several skirmishes with the enemy."

"Your son told me all about them while we were waiting for the vehicle; and he certainly distinguished himself, both by his management of the affair with the guerillas, and by his bravery in the action with the enemy's cavalry," said Captain Woodbine.

"He did very well," replied the major, proud of the good conduct of Deck, though he was not inclined to praise him, preferring to leave that to others. "I suppose the army which is to operate under General Thomas is somewhere in this vicinity."

"A portion of it is at Logan's Cross Roads, as it is called;" and he pointed out the locality on the major's map, which was spread out on the table.

He indicated several other places where bodies of Union troops were, or were supposed to be, located. They had been detained by the almost impassable condition of the roads.

"But the general will attack the enemy in his intrenchments as soon as he can concentrate a sufficient force for the purpose. This heavy rain, I fear, will delay the advance of the troops

in the rear; for it will render the streams, especially Fishing Creek, impassable for the baggage-trains."

"It does not usually rain as it does now for any great length of time?" suggested Major Lyon.

"I have known such a rain to continue for several days; for I live over in Whitley County, in the mountains, about thirty-five miles east of Mill Springs."

"The mountains catch the clouds, and empty them, as they move from the east or the west," added the major.

"We have plenty of rain at this season of the year. I have heard all about the Riverlawn Cavalry, as your son says you prefer to call it. I met Colonel Cosgrove at Louisville, and he gave me a full account of what he called the Battle of Riverlawn. Of your fights with the Texan Rangers at the railroad bridge, Munfordsville, and at Greeltop and Plain Hill, I have read your reports. Without mentioning the nature of the service that will be required of you, I will say that, at my suggestion, the general has important duty for you, Major."

"Of course I am ready to obey the orders that come to me," replied the commander.

For several hours longer Captain Woodbine described the topography of the region in three counties, which he thought it very necessary for him to understand.

"In our engagement with a full company of Tennessee cavalry, our first company was aided by the Home Guard of Millersville; and the riflemen of this body rendered very essential service as sharpshooters stationed in the woods. These men volunteered to serve in this campaign, and we have them with us. I hope I shall be permitted to make use of them. They are well mounted, and every one of them is a dead shot. Captain Gordon, commanding our first company, suggested the idea of organizing a force of mounted riflemen, and a considerable number of them volunteered, and came to Jamestown with us."

"They are simply volunteers under your command; and no application need be made at headquarters to use them, and you can do so, Major," replied the captain, who was understood as speaking for the commanding general; and it was evident that he had influence with him.

At the stroke of midnight both of the gentlemen retired. When they looked out of the window in the morning it was still raining; and it was plain to them that no great progress could be made in military movements while the country was inundated, as it appeared to be from the hotel.

In the forenoon Captain Woodbine visited the companies, and looked over the men; for he plainly depended upon the squadron for particular service. He went to the jail and to the dry-house to see the riflemen who were drilling there under the eye of Captain Ripley and several sergeants from the companies.

Military movements on the eve of battle are not ordinarily impeded by rain, for the soldiers march and fight in spite of the weather; but when the flow of water is sufficient to inundate the country, the situation sometimes compels a suspension of activity, owing to the difficulty or impossibility of moving wagons and artillery. But at this time General Thomas was awaiting the arrival of the regiments from points farther north of his camp at Logan's Cross Roads, and nothing could be done for this reason. But on the 18th the rain ceased; and on the next day, which was Saturday, General Schoepf's brigade, a portion of which had been sent forward before, arrived towards night, and was placed in position.

That evening Captain Woodbine, who had been with the general in command all day, called upon Major Lyon, and directed him to have his squadron, with its volunteer riflemen, in column on the Millersville Road at daylight in the morning of Sunday, for a reconnaissance in the direction of the enemy's intrenched camp at Beech Grove. The major reported that the rifle volunteers had been re-enforced to fifty-six men by the efforts of Butters the jailer.

The commander of the squadron promptly issued his orders to his officers to have his men ready to move at four o'clock Sunday morning.

CHAPTER XV

THE ATTEMPTED ESCAPE OF A WAGON-TRAIN

The details of the battle of Mill Springs, as it was generally called when the accounts of it were published at the time, or, more properly, Logan's Cross Roads, as General Thomas called it in his report to the chief of staff of the Department of the Ohio, are too voluminous to be given at length; and they have been published so many times in various works that it is unnecessary to repeat them. Only such parts as relate to the career of the "lieutenant at

eighteen" will be introduced, though incidentally some of the movements of the army will be included.

The general in his report says: "I reached Logan's Cross Roads, about ten miles north of the intrenched camp of the enemy, on the Cumberland River, on the 17th instant." On the night of his arrival he sent a messenger to Colonel Stedman's camp, ordering him to send forward a long train of wagons, that had halted in the road from the river, under a strong guard, and himself to attack the enemy where they were reported to be.

This train had not arrived at the headquarters of the general; but the reason for its non-arrival was apparent, for the rain had begun to fall in torrents on the afternoon of the 17th, and had continued to pour down for two days. The road was inundated, and the creeks were impassable. On Saturday morning at an early hour the pickets of Wolford's cavalry encountered the enemy advancing upon the Union forces. The Confederates were held in check until General Thomas could order a force forward adequate to give them battle. This was the beginning of the battle of Mill Springs.

The general's camp was on the left of the pike from the river. The Fourth Kentucky, Second Minnesota, and Ninth Ohio were sent forward to hold the enemy, and took positions near Logan's house, while Wetmore's Battery was placed near the Somerset Road. The Confederates advanced on the other side, almost to this road. Three regiments and a battery had moved forward to the north side of a fence which extended east and west on both sides of the pike.

General Crittenden, commanding the army, with his staff, had a position just south of this fence, though Zollicoffer led the attacking brigades. General Thomas immediately ordered an advance of his whole force, and the fighting became general. It was a long and severe battle, with alternate repulses and advances on both sides. The enemy finally retreated to their intrenchments, ten miles distant, but did not reach their works till after dark. As the enemy were marching to the attack, the wagon-train had been discovered mired in a field to which its escort had been driven by the unexpected approach of the Confederates.

It was a long train, and must be loaded with provisions, forage, and ammunition. The famished Southern soldiers, who had nothing but dry bread, and that in small quantities, cast longing eyes at the mired wagons; and a company of Tennessee cavalry was sent to capture them. They were about a mile distant, and were moving a rod or two, in fits and starts, at a time, towards the Jamestown Road, with the escort at the wheels lifting them out of the soft soil. The guard was commanded by a Minnesota lieutenant; and he had kept pickets out in the rear, who had given him early notice of the approach of the enemy.

If the train continued on the pike, it was sure to be captured; but the officer in command determined to make the attempt to escape with his wagons, and with infinite labor and exertion he had made a mile on his way to the road. He was certainly a plucky fellow; but he could not fight a whole brigade of infantry with two companies of cavalry. He had, therefore, taken his chance of reaching the Jamestown Road, and fortunately he had posted himself on the roads and distances of the locality.

The Riverlawn Cavalry, with its riflemen, were in the road some time before Captain Woodbine, mounted on a magnificent steed, arrived at the place of rendezvous. The company were at ease, and the aide-de-camp of the general rode directly to the head of the column and saluted the major.

"I may say now that this was to be a reconnaissance in force, though your command is all the general can send for the purpose," said the captain. "But I have heard of the advance of the enemy, and it may not be necessary to feel of them; so you may send out the platoon under the command of Lieutenant Lyon, in whom the captain appears to have unlimited confidence, by a road I will point out to you, to reconnoitre in the direction of the pike, on which and the road to Somerset the general is encamped."

"Do you expect this force will find an enemy in that direction?" asked the major.

"I do not, though it is possible. That heavy baggage-train must have moved to the north by the pike, if it has not been captured before this time. If Lieutenant Lyon should discover the escort, he will re-enforce it, sending back a messenger to you, Major. If not too late, it is of vital importance that this train be saved, for the general says it has rations enough in its wagons to feed the Confederate army for a week at least," replied the captain.

"How far is it to the pike?" inquired the major.

"It is about five miles; and till the platoon comes to a piece of wood, the lieutenant will have a tolerable road, and through the forest, which is over a half a mile across."

"How far is it to the woods?"

"Two miles, more or less. You had better send two scouts out in advance of the platoon, and do so at once," added the captain; and the major regarded his requests as orders coming directly from the general.

"Send Sergeant Knox and Private Milton to me," said Major Lyon, at the suggestion of Captain Gordon, to Artie, his orderly. "I think Milton knows all about the country in this

vicinity."

"So much the better," replied the aide-de-camp, as the two scouts saluted the major. "Milton, are you acquainted about here?"

"As well as in the dooryard of my father's house in Miltonville. I have been to Fishing Creek as man and boy, and fished it for its whole length," replied the new recruit.

"Do you know the road across the country to the Danville Pike? It is nothing but a by-path to the woods."

"I know it very well, for I have ridden my horse over it fifty times," answered Milton.

"He will do, Major. Send them off at once."

"Excuse me for a suggestion. I think Lieutenant Lyon will do better if he has about half of our riflemen with him," interposed Captain Gordon, when the two scouts had galloped up the road on their mission.

"That is a good idea," added the captain.

"Rather too many men for a young man to command," said Deck's father, shaking his head.

"He is the best officer in the squadron for this duty," persisted the captain of the first company.

Major Lyon yielded the point, for the aide-de-camp had practically ordered Deck to the command of the expedition. The lieutenant marched his platoon ahead of the column, while Captain Ripley detailed thirty of his men, under the command of Lieutenant Butters, to which position the jailer had been elected by the company. Life Knox galloped furiously in advance of Milton for half a mile, till the latter called to him to halt.

"Here is the road across the country," shouted the recruit.

There was a fence across the entrance, which Milton removed without dismounting, for it consisted of only two rails, within his reach. Life rode through the opening, and started his horse into a gallop again. The subsoil was of gravel, with a thin coating of loam on it, not more than three inches deep, so that the animals had a good footing.

"Are we uns in a hurry?" asked Life, turning his head back to see his fellow scout.

"I should say so," replied Milton; "for the wagon-train may be captured before we come up with it if we delay, though we don't know that it is in any danger; but the pike must be crowded with the enemy hurrying on to the attack of General Thomas's force."

"Then I reckon we had better keep the hosses' legs moving lively," replied Life, as he hurried his steed to his best paces.

They soon reached the forest, which extended from one of greater extent on the other side of the pike, though the scouts passed through only a projecting corner of it. Beyond the end of the by-road, Milton explained, was a portion of low ground, through which ran a small stream. It was in this soft place that the wagon-train had mired. But it had advanced a mile from the pike; and Milton declared that it was moving by the longest way to hard ground, the shortest being to the road they had used for two miles and a half.

"There they be!" exclaimed Life; and he reined in his foaming steed to take a survey of the surroundings.

"That escort is having a hard time of it," added Milton.

"Thunder and lightning-bugs!" suddenly exclaimed the sergeant. "There's a whole company of Cornfed cavalry after 'em."

"But they are having as hard a time of it as the escort of the wagons, for their horses mire above their knees," added Milton. "But they are getting ahead very slowly in spite of the soft soil."

"But whar be them Cornfeds gwine?" asked Life, who seemed to be enamored of the name into which Butters had tortured the word. "They ain't gwine the shortest way to the wagon-train."

"They are not; and I don't understand their game," answered Milton.

Suddenly, at an order from the commander of the company, the "Cornfeds" dismounted, and proceeded to lead their horses; but the animals still sank deep in the mud, even without the weight of their riders.

"Whar's that stream you spoke on, Milton?" asked Life, as he continued to study the situation.

"Over to the left of you, and I've often fished it."

"I see it; how fur is it from that company?"

"Not more than a hundred rods from the head of the column."

"Is the bottom of the brook mud?"

"Not a bit of it. It is hard gravel below the top soil of mud."

"Then I reckon I know what them fellers are driving at," said Life, apparently pleased with his solution of the question. "How deep is the water?"

"From one to three feet, I should say."

"That's the idee! Them fellers is gwine to take to the stream," said Life. "How wide is it?"

"From twenty to thirty feet in different places."

"Then it is wide enough for them to march in column of fours."

Life dismounted, and climbed a tree, which afforded him a view of the winding stream. It passed within twenty rods of the mired wagons, and probably the mud was not so deep nearer the woods as it was farther from it. Leading their horses, the company got along faster than before, but still had some distance to go before they reached the stream. The escort of the train seemed to be discouraged at the prospect before them; though they still worked hard at the wheels, and their progress seemed to be slower than when first seen.

"I reckon we shall have a fight on this medder, Milton, and you must ride back and report to the lieutenant," said Life as he descended from the tree. "Them half-starved Cornfeds won't give it up; for a dozen or more wagons, loaded with rations, is a prize to them, to say nothin' of the army in which they train. Your horse is well rested now, and you must make the gravel fly on your way to the road; for I reckon the re-enforcements will be needed as soon as they can get here."

"All right, Sergeant; I will make the distance as fast as we did coming," replied Milton as he started his horse, and immediately hurried him to a gallop.

Life Knox ascended the tree again, seated himself on a branch, and proceeded to watch the "Cornfeds." In about ten minutes more they reached the stream; but they had some difficulty in making their horses go down the steep bank, for the animals were evidently disgusted with their experience in the soft soil. The troopers stamped down the sods; and after making an inclined plane to the water, they rode down into the flowing current. The horses, perhaps concluding that they had made this movement to be watered, fell to drinking as though they had had no water that day.

Life was rather disappointed when he saw the company making so good progress in this novel road, and they soon reached their nearest point to the coveted wagons. The enemy were now within twenty rods of the train. Half an hour had elapsed since Milton left, and it was about time for the re-enforcement to appear.

The sergeant wanted to do something to retard the advance of the company; and, at the top of his ample lungs, he began to give military commands, as though he had a regiment in charge. The enemy heard his voice, and halted where they were in the stream.

CHAPTER XVI

AN IMAGINARY AND A REAL BATTLE

"Company—halt!" yelled Sergeant Knox; and he continued to give orders, as though he were in the act of bringing a column into position.

The enemy halted, as if in obedience to the command of the sergeant on the shore. His commands were plainly heard in the still air of the morning by the troopers in the water; for all of them had turned their gaze in the direction of the woods. But the observer was concealed among the branches of a large tree, and the enemy could see nothing.

The guard of the wagon-train still continued to work at the wheels. So far as they could move the vehicles at all, it was in the direction of the Jamestown Road, still three miles from them. As Life regarded the situation, it was a hopeless case for them, being only twenty rods from the enemy. It is no wonder that they were discouraged, though the officers compelled their men to continue their labor.

The only salvation for the train and the guard was in the arrival of the re-enforcement from the Riverlawn Cavalry and its auxiliary force. He was confident that this assistance would come very soon, and he hoped it would come before the enemy left the stream. Life measured with his eye the direction and distances of the edge of the forest, the train, and the cavalry.

His position was in about the centre of a straight portion of the line of the woods, ending at

a point nearest to the stream. He had been informed that Lieutenant Lyon would command the detachment that was to move towards the pike. This force could do little or nothing with their horses in the meadow, any more than the Confederate company. The sergeant had arranged in his mind just how the affair should be managed, and believed that Deck would hear his advice, as he often had before, whether he followed it or not.

The enemy remained at a halt in the stream, the officers and most of the troopers watching the woods in the direction from which the commands came; for Life had repeated them at intervals for some time. Like a prudent commander, the captain seemed to be unwilling to continue his fight with the mud until the unseen enemy, if there was one, had been seen, and his strength measured.

The sergeant looked at his great silver watch, and found that fifty minutes had elapsed since the departure of Milton. He had calculated closely that the re-enforcement would be on the ground in about half an hour; but probably his impatience had hurried his reckoning, and he made no allowance for the overhanging branches of the trees, which would to some extent impede the progress of the troopers.

But he had heard the sound of the horses' feet as he returned his watch to his pocket. He descended from the tree in hot haste, and rushed up the road with all the speed that his long legs would carry him. He soon discovered his lieutenant riding at the head of his platoon. Deck, as soon as he saw the sergeant, gave the order to walk the horses; for he desired to ascertain the nature of the situation before he reached the scene of the coming action.



"HE SOON DISCOVERED HIS LIEUTENANT RIDING AT THE HEAD OF HIS PLATOON."

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"None o' my business, Leftenant; but I reckon you'd better halt, and take a look at things ahead," said the sergeant in a very low tone to the commander of the force, which consisted of nearly, or quite, eighty men, or more than three-fourths of the strength of the Confederate company, allowing it to be full, as it appeared to be.

Deck promptly accepted the suggestion, and gave the command; for he had only the meagre information conveyed to him by Milton, and he knew nothing whatever of any changes in the situation since he left his companion; and in the space of an hour it was possible that the condition of things on the meadow was entirely altered.

In the same low tone the sergeant suggested that he had better dismount, and go with him to the boundary line of the forest, where he could see for himself the position of the wagon-train and that of the enemy. This was just what the lieutenant wanted to know, and he at once complied with the suggestion of his faithful friend. They went to the point indicated, keeping behind the trees; for Deck did not wish the Confederates to draw any inference from his appearance so near the scene of action.

It required but a glance for the young officer to take in the field of action, while Life was explaining all that he had seen, and especially the taking to the water, like so many ducks, of the enemy. The escort of the train were still laboriously using their shoulders at the wheels of the wagons; while the mules, six attached to each vehicle, were struggling in the mud, and were most unmercifully beaten by their negro drivers. A snail or a turtle would have

beaten in a race with the train.

"They can never get out of that mire," said Deck.

"Never while they travel the way they are going now," replied Life. "They are headed for the Jamestown Road, for I cal'late they don't know nothin' about this road we come by."

"That's a lieutenant in command of the escort," said the commander of the re-enforcement. "I don't think he shows good judgment, for he ought to get out of that mire on hard ground the shortest way he can do so; but I suppose he concluded that he could not get his wagons through the woods without cutting away the trees to make a road."

"This road ain't down on the maps."

"But I see all there is to be seen, Life; and I don't make out why the enemy halts in the water, if they mean to capture that train, and they have force enough to beat the escort twice over."

"I reckon I brought 'em to a halt," said the sergeant, as he described the ruse of his orders to an imaginary force. "I cal'late that cap'n didn't mean to fall into no trap."

"It was well thought of, Life; now I am ready to return to my command," added Deck, as he started for his detachment.

The sergeant wanted to ask the lieutenant what he intended to do, or, in other words, to obtain his plan of battle; for the young officer was about as reticent as his father in matters of this kind. But he had formed his plan, and was thinking it over. The first thing he did was to send Milton, on foot, over to the wagon-train, advising the lieutenant in command of the escort to rest his men, and not exhaust his force with a useless struggle in the mud; for a force was at hand which would assist him in getting the wagons to hard ground.

Deck explained to the sergeant that he had been somewhat delayed, before he left the main road, by Captain Gordon, who had given him precise directions as to his course after he had finished the affair on the meadow, whether he was defeated or successful in his mission; for the rest of the squadron, with the remainder of the riflemen, were to proceed immediately to the south, where the aide-de-camp had work for them in that direction.

"Lieutenant Butters!" called Deck, as he rode to the head of the riflemen's portion of the column.

The late jail-keeper rode to a little opening in the woods, where Deck had halted, and received his orders. He then formed his command in line, probably animated by the drill in which he had been engaged for two days. He then numbered them from one up to thirty. The sharpshooters then dismounted, and secured their horses in the woods. They were again formed in line. The platoon of cavalymen were at rest, and Life was ordered to dismount them, while Deck marched with Butters and his command in single file into the woods on the left of the road.

On this side of the by-path the dividing-line between the meadow and the woods extended due north about a quarter of a mile to a point beyond which the stream and the low ground reached nearly to the main road.

"I want to see the enemy," said Butters. "I can't station my men till I can see what they are to fire at."

"Then we must go nearer to the meadow," replied Deck, as the lieutenant of the riflemen halted his command, and he led the way, both of them keeping behind the trees.

A change in the situation greeted the vision of Lieutenant Lyon as he reached a position where he could see the stream and the enemy.

"The Confederates have dismounted!" exclaimed Deck, as he pointed to the enemy for the benefit of his companion.

"So much the better!" added Butters.

"Of course they intend to attack the escort of the train on foot," said Deck. "All the men of the company are not yet out of the water; but they are marching by fours, with their carbines unslung, and they will fire as soon as they get near enough. I must leave you now, Lieutenant Butters, to bring my men forward," and the lieutenant hastened back to the road.

Butters ran to the left of his line, and marched his force, with the thirtieth man at his side, or next behind him, nearly to the point of the forest, where he stationed the one with the highest number, and then one in reverse order, about six feet apart, till the first number was stationed within a rod of the by-road. He had measured the distance very well, for the centre of his line was a few rods from opposite to the enemy.

Deck was at the end of the road when Butters reached it. He was ordered to fire as soon as he was ready. He had told the men when they were placed to fire as soon as the one on his right had done so. With this rule, no two or more of the riflemen would aim at the same trooper, as they could not fail to do in a volley. The first four of the enemy, with two officers on their left, were moving toward the mired wagon-train.

Milton had by this time reached the escort, and delivered the commander's message. The force had ceased their labors, and placed themselves behind the wagons, though they had their muskets ready for use. The enemy marched without difficulty, for the sod where it had not been broken was tough enough to bear them up; but in places the wandering cattle had cut it up very badly.

Butters in a low tone gave his orders to the first man in the line to fire, and every one would do the same, down to the thirtieth man, without any further command; but he had his rifle in his hand, and he fired himself before he gave the order to the soldier on his left. The crack of rifles began, and followed each other in rapid succession. With the fourth discharge five men had fallen, including the foremost of the two officers on the flank, whom Butters had brought down himself.

Apparently not one of the sharpshooters missed his aim. They adopted the method used in the battle on the hill, and kept behind the trees, so that the enemy could see only the puff of smoke as each weapon was discharged, and the men were out of sight, or nearly so. Not less than twenty men had dropped, either killed or wounded. The sharpshooters were Kentucky riflemen, whose fame had been celebrated in story and song, and their weapon had been their plaything from their earliest years.

Suddenly a hoarse command was heard; but its meaning could not be made out till the men in column dropped upon the ground, and extended themselves at full length, with their feet directed towards the woods. At the same time another order was given nearer to the stream, and the troopers in the water began to remount their horses. The men in the meadow began to crawl back as hurriedly as possible to the brook. The troopers hurried their horses as much as they could in the water, and their progress was tolerably rapid.

The stream continued to extend at about an equal distance from the forest. The men on the ground continued to drag themselves like snakes on the sod of the meadow till they reached the water, and mounted their horses; but not a few of them were shot in their progress, though their position on the ground was not favorable to the aim of the riflemen. Deck saw that the enemy would soon be out of the reach of the rifles if they continued to follow the creek, and he ordered Butters to move his men to the left.

Butters sent the command down the line from man to man till it reached the thirtieth man, who led the file to the point. The riflemen continued to fire as fast as they could load their weapons, but still in the order designated at first. Butters at his first shot after the change of position had brought down the lieutenant in command near the head of the column; and he believed the captain of the company had been the first to fall by the ball from his rifle on the meadow.

The men dropped rapidly under the fire of the concealed riflemen, and an officer who had taken the place of the one near the head of the column in the water was evidently appalled by the havoc in the command. He shouted an order to his men, which could not be understood in the woods; but it was inferred when the men suddenly dismounted, and began to lead their animals, placing them between themselves and the forest.

CHAPTER XVII

THE OVERWHELMING DEFEAT OF THE ENEMY

Sergeant Knox had marched the platoon of dismounted cavalry to a position near the end of the road, in readiness to move to the assistance of the train escort, as ordered by Lieutenant Lyon, when he saw the enemy marching over the meadow towards the wagons. When Deck realized the havoc made by the sharpshooters in the ranks of the Confederate company, he suspended the command to move, and watched the flow of events from the woods. He saw the enemy on the meadow drop upon the ground, and those in the water remount their horses.

Leaving Life in command, with orders to move to the train if the enemy approached it, he made his way over to the point where he could obtain a better view of the troopers in the water. He found them wading in the stream, covered by their horses. Butters was a great horse-fancier, as well as a dead shot with his rifle, and had ordered his men by message along his line not to kill the animals if they could help it.

"You are not doing as much execution among the enemy as you were, Lieutenant Butters," said Deck as he came up with the head of the sharpshooters.

"I am not, for the Cornfeds have made breastworks of their horses," replied the volunteer lieutenant. "I ordered my men not to kill the poor beasts if they could help it."

"I think that was a mistake," added Deck.

"The hosses ain't Seceshers," replied Butters, not exactly pleased with his superior's criticism.

"But every one of the horses is doing more soldier work than any of the men; for he is saving his rider from certain death, and the soldiers can't do that for each other," replied Deck, made somewhat earnest by the tone of the commander of the sharpshooters. "I love and respect a good horse as much as you do; and I sometimes think Ceph, the animal I ride, knows as much as I do, and in his way more. Your men are the most skilful with the rifle as a body I ever saw or heard of. But those horses are not such as you raise in this part of Kentucky, or where I came from. They are mean stock, and though I am sorry to do so, I must order you to shoot the horses; for your compassion for the poor beasts has brought the action to a standstill, and we are doing nothing."

"I don't know but you are right, Lieutenant Lyon; at any rate, I obey your orders," replied Butters, mollified by the compliment to his men and himself, to say nothing of the praise of Kentucky horses.

"Your men have ceased firing," added Deck, who did not believe in any stay of a successful action.

"The men have come to the end of the line, and I have not started a new round," Butters explained.

"Then start it by bringing down the first horse at the head of the column," continued the Riverlawn lieutenant. "Tell the next man to bring down the soldier as the horse drops. Do you know the location of the horse's brain?"

"I ought to; I'm a hoss-doctor to home, and I've had to shoot 'em afore now when they got a broken leg, or were too sick to get well. You'll see whether I know where the brains is," replied Butters, as he raised his rifle and fired. "Fire at the man!" he called to the first number in the line as the animal dropped, splashing his former rider with water, which seemed to blind him; for he was stooping forward, more effectually to conceal his head behind the animal.

Number one discharged his piece, and almost instantly the trooper followed the horse. Butters went to the second rifleman, and ordered him to shoot the next horse, telling him the part at which he was to aim. He proceeded along the whole length of the line, instructing the even numbers to shoot the horse, and the odd the man. Not a man failed to hit his mark, and there was soon a gap in the column. Every officer had fallen, and a panic seized the privates as the death-line marched up the stream. They were brave men; but the horses and men seemed to fall as though they had been prostrated by bolts from heaven, and the men could not see their executioners.

Without any orders, unless the sergeants gave them, the men leaped out of the stream, and ran with all the speed the nature of the ground would permit. The deserted horses remained in the brook, and not another one of them was shot. Not only those who had been more nearly exposed to the deadly fire of the sharpshooters, but those who were far in the rear of them, fled from the field. Of course they had leaped out of the water on the farther side of the stream, and were running to the north, or in the direction of the road from Jamestown to Harrison, and were liable to fall in with the outskirts of General Thomas's camp.

Deck witnessed the utter rout of the company of cavalry, and he proceeded to thank Butters and his men for the very effective service they had rendered. They had fought the battle and won it, and the cavalrymen had done nothing to assist them. The lieutenant of the company of Unionists expressed his opinion loud enough to be heard by all the sharpshooters, that there was not another body of men in the whole country that could equal them in the accuracy of their aim. He should commend them in the highest degree to Major Lyon, and his report would be transmitted in due time to the general in command.

"I will leave you and your men here, Lieutenant Butters, to watch the enemy," continued Deck. "In about an hour or two send me a report of anything that happens about here;" and he hastened back to the foot of the by-road.

The battle had been fought and apparently won; for the Confederates were out of rifle-range in a very short time. A vigorous cheer was sent up about the time that Deck came in sight of the train, proving that they realized their own safety and that of the train. But the young lieutenant's brain was busy, though he ordered his command to return the cheer of the escort.

The wagons, over a dozen in number, were safe from the hands of the enemy; for they had enough to do in the vicinity of Logan's Cross Roads, as the roar of the cannon in the battle was heard in the distance. Deck was studying up some way to extricate the wagons from their miry plight. If he could but procure a sufficient quantity of boards or planks, he could get them to the hard ground. He asked Milton if any could be procured, and was assured that none could be obtained short of Jamestown.

He gave the order to march, and directed Life to go ahead, and select the most favorable ground for the passage. The lieutenant followed him at the head of his command, and reached the train in a short time; and though some of the soldiers had sunk in the mud down

to their knees, they were pulled out of it. The lieutenant of the escort had renewed his struggle to move the wagons forward when Deck saluted him as he came out to meet him.

"Lieutenant Lyon of the Riverlawn Cavalry," said Deck, as he gave his hand to the officer.

"I need not say that I am exceedingly glad to meet you, for you have saved my men and the wagon-train," was the answer. "Permit me to present myself as Lieutenant Sterling of the Ninth Ohio Infantry."

"You have had a hard march from the pike so far."

"I have; the toughest time I ever had in my life, and I have seen some deep mud before," replied Lieutenant Sterling. "Without your timely aid, my command would all have been prisoners, and the wagons been in possession of the enemy. But I am bewildered at the manner in which you have done this thing. I did not see your force till you marched out on the meadow. I heard a number of rifle-cracks, as I judged they were, but I did not see a man."

"It was wholly done by a volunteer company of riflemen, attached to my platoon for this occasion."

"I saw the enemy fall when they started to march over here, and after they took to the stream; but I could not make out the force that fired the shots. There must have been a hundred of them."

"Only thirty of them; but I believe they did not waste a shot," replied Deck. "Will you oblige me by giving me the date of your commission?"

"Whatever the date of my commission, I shall cheerfully resign the command to you; for you have a larger force than mine, and you have fought the battle here that saved me, though you must have been outnumbered by the enemy. My commission bears date Dec. 27."

"I was commissioned two weeks earlier than that."

"Then you rank me, and I am very glad that it is so," answered Lieutenant Sterling; and he proceeded to inform his command of the fact, for all of them had been ordered to suspend work.

"Do you happen to know what any of your wagons contain?" asked Deck, who was ready to address himself to the task of moving the wagons to the forest road.

"They are loaded for the most part with rations for the troops, and grain for the horses and mules, with some general supplies."

"Do you know if there is any rope among the supplies?"

"The quartermaster-sergeant can answer that question better than I can," replied the officer.

"Plenty of it, Lieutenant," replied this man. "It is in the first wagon in the line."

"Bring out at least a hundred feet of inch-rope," added Deck. "You were not moving the wagons to the nearest hard ground."

"My aim was to get them to a road indicated on the map over in that direction," replied Lieutenant Sterling, pointing over towards the one by which the Riverlawns had come from Jamestown. "According to the scale on my map it is about two miles over there."

"That is very true; but, according to the fact, it is less than a third of a mile to the woods where we came upon the meadow."

"But it would take me longer to cut a road through the woods to the road than it would to wallow through the mud to the road."

"But there is a by-road through the woods to the main road."

"I am a total stranger here, and I did not know there was even a path through the woods," added the lieutenant from Ohio, as the quartermaster-sergeant rolled the rope out of the wagon.

Deck called his men, who had been thoroughly rested by their stay in the woods, whether they needed it or not. The long rope was uncoiled; and Life was directed to make the two ends of it fast to the end of the pole, and pass it out through the three pairs of mules. Sixty men were detailed to man the rope in two lines. This required a part of the escort, and the rest of it were ordered to stand by the wheels. The negro driver of the first wagon was told by Life to go to the rear end and push; but this was done only to get him out of the way, for his brutality had disgusted both the lieutenant and the sergeant, as both of them believed in kindness to animals. They had seen the beatings bestowed on the animals before; and Deck, looking through his glass, was satisfied that the mules did not pull a pound under the beating. Perhaps they were disgusted with the failure of their efforts to move the wagon, as well as by the blows heaped upon them.

Life patted them on the neck, and coaxed them, and he certainly succeeded in bringing them

to a good-natured condition of mind.

"Now, boys, straighten out them ropes!" shouted Life to the soldiers who manned them. "Pull steady for all you're wuth! Now, my beauties! Hi! now! Come, my beauties!" said he, taking the nigh head leader by the head, and leading him along.

To the astonishment of the men looking on, this mule made a flying leap nearly out of his harness, and then pulled as steadily as a well-trained horse; and the rest of the team followed his example. Life seemed to have some hypnotic power over a horse, and it appeared that he had the same influence over the mules. The men tugged at the rope, and the wagon was hauled out of the mire.

"Keep it moving!" shouted Deck. "If you stop, it will mire again. Keep it a-going!"

The men seemed to regard the work as a sort of enjoyable farce; and they cheered each other along, and some of them took to singing. They did not seem to be exerting all their strength, but the wagon moved along at quite a lively pace. If they had stopped two minutes, the wheels would have sunk down into the mud.

"John Brown's wagon got stuck in the mud,
And we pull it through the black miry flood,
As we go marching on,"

sang the soldiers; and in a few minutes more they landed the first of the wagon-train high and dry in the by-road.

Here one of the riflemen was waiting for the lieutenant, being a messenger from Butters.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE FLAG OF TRUCE ON THE MEADOW

The soldiers thought it was nothing but amusement to drag the wagon out of the mud and haul it to the woods. Sixty men and six mules made comparatively easy work of it. It was nearly dinner-time, and Deck had ordered the meal to be served on the meadow to those that remained there of the escort. During all this time the heavy guns had been thundering in the vicinity of Logan's Cross Roads; and as the day advanced the roar was perceptible nearer, indicating that the enemy had been driven from the first field towards the south.

The men proceeded to eat their dinner from their haversacks, while the quartermaster-sergeant had taken rations from the wagon for the portion of the escort that had come over to the woods. As soon as Lieutenant Lyon had given his attention to the needs of his men and horses, he turned to receive the message of the rifleman. Life gave his personal attention to the six mules that had come over, and they were supplied with a very liberal feed of corn and oats.

"Lieutenant Butters directs me to report to you that the enemy are returning across the meadow, flying a flag of truce at the head of the column," said the rifleman when Deck indicated that he was ready to hear him; and only a few minutes elapsed while he was giving his orders.

"How many men are returning?" asked the lieutenant.

"They were too far off for us to count them; but we guessed there were about sixty of them, for they must have lost at least forty in killed and wounded, to say nothing of the latter who were not disabled. Lieutenant Butters wants to know what to do about the flag of truce."

"How far off are they now?" asked Deck.

"They were some distance beyond the stream when I left, about half an hour ago."

"Return to Lieutenant Butters; tell him I will be with him very soon, and ask him to send half his men, good strong fellows, to assist in getting the wagons out of the mire," replied Deck; and the rifleman left in obedience to the order.

The men and the animals were all busy with their dinner, and the presence of the lieutenant was no longer necessary for a time. He spoke to his orderly sergeant, who was eating his dinner with the mules, and started for the point, eating the contents of his haversack on the way. On his arrival he found Butters engaged in selecting the men to send over to the assistance of the cavalymen.

"Gittin' wagons out of the mud ain't exactly the work for sharpshooters," growled Butters as Deck approached him. "But I have called for volunteers."

"It is the work of soldiers to do whatever is to be done," replied the cavalry officer, who was not pleased with the growl, or the tone in which it had been made.

"It is not exactly the work of sharpshooters to work in the mud," returned Butters, apparently unwilling to have his men ordered away from his immediate command.

"You are volunteers; and if you object to obeying my orders, you may march your men back to Millersville," replied Lieutenant Lyon with dignity enough for a major-general.

"Do you mean to send us back?" demanded Butters angrily.

Deck saw that, from the first, the lieutenant in command of the riflemen was afflicted with an attack of the "big head," and considered himself as the practical superior of the young officer who was his military superior by the order of the major commanding. The cavalry officer was not "puffed up" by his position, but he felt the necessity of maintaining his dignity as the chief of the entire force on the ground.

"I do not send you back, but I give you permission to retire from the field," added Deck.

"I should like to ask who has done all the work that has been done in this place?" demanded Butters.

"I admit that your men have done the most of it," answered the lieutenant, when the entire thirty riflemen had gathered near to hear the dispute; "but if you are not willing to obey my orders, I can get along better without you than with you. If you desire to retire from the field, I have nothing more to say."

"No! no! no!" shouted half the men.

"You can do as you please, Lieutenant Butters," added Deck, when he realized that a majority of the riflemen were with him.

They had seen Deck in the thickest of the fight at the hill, and heard all about his conduct in other actions from the members of the company with whom they had fraternized at the jail, and it is not stating it too strongly to say, in figurative terms, that he was the idol of the Riverlawn Cavalry.

"I was calling for volunteers, and meant to obey your order, Lieutenant Lyon," said Butters.

"But you objected to it, and there is no emergency in the present situation."

"Volunteers to work in the medder, walk over to my right!" ordered the lieutenant of the riflemen, though with very ill grace.

Deck's ideas of discipline were of the severe order, and it was against his principles to call for volunteers for any ordinary service, though proper enough for that of a desperate nature; for it was his opinion that soldiers should obey orders without any question, and he was on the point of countermanding the call, when every one of the riflemen rushed over to the side indicated.

"Lieutenant Butters, you will detail fifteen men for duty in connection with the cavalry, and send them over to the end of the by-road," said Deck in his usual quiet tones; and turning on his heel without another word, returned to his men, finishing his dinner on the way.

He heard some rather strong talk before he passed out of earshot, and it was plain the riflemen were giving their officer some points in military discipline. Not a word was said about the enemy; for Deck saw that they were still at a considerable distance beyond the creek, and he intended to return as soon as he had started his force for the other wagons. The fifteen volunteers promptly appeared. The removal of the wagons from the meadow was given in charge of Sergeant Knox, and Deck went again to the point where Butters was waiting for him.

"I reckon I was wrong in the little muss we had a while ago; but I'm ready to apologize for it," said the commander of the riflemen. "I hain't got used to strict military discipline; but I shall be all right after this."

"It isn't necessary to say anything more about that matter," replied Deck. "The Confederates that you defeated so handsomely have reached the stream; they are still showing the white flag."

"I reckon they are in a bad way; but I don't see what they come back for," added Butters, pleased to find that the lieutenant had nothing more to say about his insubordination.

"Let your men take their rifles and follow me," added Deck, as he began to descend the slope to the meadow.

"Hallo! Hallo!" shouted a voice in the direction of the by-road.

"That's a man in uniform," said Butters, as he discovered the person.

The cavalry lieutenant reascended the bank, and saw the individual in uniform. Without saying anything he hastened towards him.

"I am exceedingly glad to see you, Captain Woodbine," he said, as the aide-de-camp extended his hand to him. "I am greatly in need of advice from a person of your experience."

"But you seem to have done exceedingly well without any advice so far; for the sentinel in the road informed me that you had saved the wagon-train, had defeated a company of Confederate cavalry, and brought one of the vehicles to the hard ground by an expedient of your own," continued Captain Woodbine, still shaking the hand of the lieutenant. "I see that boys sometimes become men of experience all at once, when an emergency is presented to them."

"I have done what I could here," replied Deck, studying the soil under his feet.

"With twenty years' experience no one could have done better," said the captain heartily; "and not many could have done so well. But I suppose you would like to learn something about the battle which is still in progress, though the enemy have been driven a considerable distance to the southward."

"We have been hearing the heavy guns here since we reached the meadow, and I should be very glad to know the result, for I hope our squadron will have some hand in the fight," replied Deck, looking with interest into the face of the visitor.

"You have already had some hand in it, for you have rendered one company of Confederate cavalry *hors de combat*, and saved that supply-train; and the general has had some anxiety about it, for it would be a godsend to the enemy, half starved as they are. Thus you have rendered a double service to our army. But what are you doing over here?"

"I will show you in a few minutes," answered Deck; and he gave a brief account of the action with the enemy in the meadow and in the creek, and their final flight to the north. "I don't understand why they are coming back under a flag of truce."

"I understand it very well. If they had gone as far as the woods you see about a mile beyond the creek, they would have come on the flank of our army; and very likely they were fired upon, and compelled to retire, for the battle is still raging in and beyond that wood."

"I conclude that they want to surrender; and sixty prisoners of war, with their wounded, would be an encumbrance to me," added Deck, as they reached the border of the meadow.

"What were you about to do when I came, Lieutenant?" inquired the captain.

"I was going out to the spot by the stream where the bearers of the flag have halted."

"Can't the man in command of the riflemen do that?"

"I would not trust him with such business," replied Deck. "He is a good enough sort of man, but he is troubled to some extent with the malady called the 'big head,' and he is an ignorant fellow, and his greatest virtue is his skill with his rifle."

The aide-de-camp went to as open a place as he could find, waved his cap over his head, and then beckoned vigorously for the enemy's cavalymen to come to the wood. He repeated the sign several times, and then they crossed the stream and moved towards the point.

"That's all right," continued Captain Woodbine, as he took the lieutenant by the arm, and conducted him out of the hearing of the riflemen. "This matter is delaying me; but I think we can manage it. I have received a messenger from the general, who was the bearer of a letter, hastily written with a pencil on the field, to the effect that the enemy has been beaten, and are falling back. He believes that it will be a rout before night; and the First Kentucky Cavalry has been sent over here to harass the defeated army of Zollicoffer, who was killed on the field."

"That is all good news," said Deck.

"But the end has not come yet. I was sent over here on account of my knowledge of the country, to convey the general's orders to such commanders as I might meet; and while I am delaying here I am afraid the Kentucky regiment will pass the head of the by-road, and I shall fail to see the commander."

"But I can send one of these riflemen to the main road, with a written order to await the arrival of the regiment, and direct the force to wait," suggested Deck.

"Call up the messenger," added the captain, as he proceeded to write the order in his memorandum-book; and it was sent by the mounted rifleman.

"The general feared that a flanking force might have been sent over by Zollicoffer by this road; and that is the reason that I asked the general for the use of your squadron. He particularly charged me to help along the wagon-train if it was not already captured, as it certainly would have been if the lieutenant commanding the escort had not taken to the meadow. Now I am in haste to get your squadron and the rest of your regiment, for you belong to it, in a position where this force will be available in checking the retreat of the enemy, and you may have more fighting to do before night, or in the evening."

At this moment Lieutenant Sterling of the train escort touched his cap to his senior in rank, and reported that the wagons had all been hauled to the woods, and were in the by-road.

"How many men have you, Lieutenant?" asked the captain.

The chief of the escort looked at Deck, and did not answer at once.

CHAPTER XIX

THE RIVERLAWN CAVALRY ON THE FLANK

The aide-de-camp was a stranger to Lieutenant Sterling, who therefore hesitated to answer such a question; but Deck immediately introduced him to the staff-officer, adding that he had saved the wagon-train from the enemy by taking to the meadow, and had brought it over a mile through the mire.

"You have done well, Lieutenant Sterling, and I will mention the matter to the general," said the captain.

"Thank you, Captain Woodbine. I have forty men, besides the quartermaster-sergeant and thirteen mule-drivers," added the chief of the escort very respectfully.

"You are a commissioned officer?"

"I am, Captain."

"You may retire, but remain within call."

"The presence of this officer solves the difficulty," continued the aide-de-camp. "He has to conduct his wagons within our lines, and he can take charge of the prisoners after you have disarmed them. They do not seem to be disposed to fight, and the escort is sufficient. They will be here in a very short time. Lieutenant Sterling!" he called.

This officer hastened back to the point, and saluted the captain; and this time he noticed the gold cord of a staff-officer on the sides of his trousers, which had been concealed before by a clump of bushes in which he stood. He had been an officer in the regular army, a West Pointer, who had resigned in "piping times of peace."

"I have to assign you to an important duty in addition to your present service, and I have no doubt you will perform it as well as you have the conduct of the wagon-train," said Captain Woodbine.

"I should certainly have been captured if Lieutenant Lyon had not fought and beaten the enemy's cavalry," replied the chief of the escort.

"It would not have been your fault if you had been. What is left of the enemy will be placed in your charge, and you will march them to our lines beyond Jamestown. They will be disarmed as soon as they come in," said the captain.

Lieutenant Sterling was then sent over to the road with a message to Life Knox to march the cavalry, dismounted, to the point, and to bring over his own men, except a guard for the wagons and the horses. They were on the ground as soon as the Confederates reached the forest. They came on foot, and left the horses where they had been abandoned.

An orderly sergeant, as he appeared to be from the chevrons on his arm, advanced and asked for the commanding officer; and Deck was pointed out by the riflemen, as his men ascended the bank to the solid ground. He presented himself to the lieutenant, and saluted.

"I am Sergeant Pfeffer, and we desire to surrender, for we can do nothing more," said he.

"Where are all your commissioned officers?" asked Deck.

"They are all killed or badly wounded," answered the sergeant.

"How many men have you now?"

"Fifty-eight; and we started out early this morning with a full company," returned Pfeffer, with no little bitterness in his tones.

"You will march your men in single file along this bank, and deposit your arms of all kinds on the ground," said Lieutenant Lyon.

He directed Life to supervise the ceremony, sending the weapons by his own men and the riflemen to the wagons; and the quartermaster-sergeant was directed to load them in the vehicles. Deck hurried the business, for the aide-de-camp was impatient at the delay. As soon as this duty had been accomplished, and Lieutenant Sterling was thus in condition to handle the prisoners, Deck ordered the cavalrymen and the riflemen to return to the road, mount their horses, and form in the usual order, in column, under the command of Sergeant Knox.

Captain Woodbine instructed Lieutenant Sterling to have the prisoners, under a guard of his own men, bring in the wounded, bury the dead, and lead their horses to the forest. He was told to be very cautious, and to shoot any prisoner who attempted to escape or make any serious trouble. With forty men, armed with muskets of the best quality, the captain declared that he could control the greater number of prisoners.

The aide-de-camp, who may take command of any body of troops in the field if he finds it advisable to so, and Lieutenant Lyon hastened to their horses, and mounted, and the column moved up the road. Lieutenant Sterling proved himself to be a man of energy and determination. He drew up his command around the prisoners, and then addressed them. He told them what they were to do, and warned them that any man who attempted to escape, or offered any opposition to his orders, would be summarily shot.

Forming the remains of the company by fours, with his own men on the flanks, he marched them to the stream. They were first required to dispose of the dead and wounded, who numbered over forty, and to do what they could to aid the latter. Quite a number of them who had not been disabled had been hit and more or less injured, and the lieutenant had excused the worst cases from duty.

The horses were all led to the point, and the wounded who were able to ride them were mounted. It was late in the afternoon when the cumbersome column was ready to move. Lieutenant Sterling's infantry had worked hard all day, and were considerably fatigued by their hard labor at the wheels of the wagons. He mounted the best horse he could find, and gave a steed to each of his men. A horse was also given to each wounded prisoner able to ride him; but the others were required to go on foot, for the officer would not trust them with horses for fear they might attempt to escape.

The prisoners had the head of the column, the mounted ones in their rear, with a file of the mounted infantry on each flank of them. The wagons completed the column, with guards on each side of them, mounted like the others. Each vehicle had a led horse behind it; for there were more of them than of prisoners. The lieutenant, mindful of the instructions of Captain Woodbine, kept a careful watch over his charge, riding up and down the line on both sides. In due time, though not until in the evening, he delivered the wagon-train to the chief quartermaster at the camp, and the prisoners to the provost marshal. He was highly commended later for his efficient service.

It would require a whole volume to give the details of the battle, as it began in the early morning, and continued with more or less intensity till evening, when the enemy were driven back to their intrenchments on the Cumberland River. General Thomas cannonaded till dark, and he intended to storm the works the next morning.

Lieutenant Lyon's command, accompanied by Captain Woodbine, reached the Millersville Road in the middle of the afternoon, where they found a portion of the First Kentucky Cavalry waiting for them, detained there by the written order of the aide-de-camp. The column was reformed, and marched with all haste for a distance of two miles, where the captain turned into another by-road, made by teams hauling out wood from the forest, and running parallel to the one by which the force had reached the meadow, and nearly to the pike.

At a point on this road Captain Woodbine had sent the companies in advance of the First Kentucky, by what looked like a cattle-path, to a position in the woods where they might intercept the retreating enemy, or at least annoy them. The Confederates were moving to the south by the pike and each side of it, the infantry passing through the miry region. The Riverlawn portion continued on the same road till they came in sight of the intrenchments on the north side of the Cumberland, where the rear of Major Lyon's command was drawn up.

At this time in the afternoon no considerable portion of the enemy had advanced near their intrenchments, and there appeared to be nothing for the squadron to do. The major wanted to know what his son had been doing; and Deck gave him a brief account of his operations at the meadow. Not a man had been lost in the affair, which had been fought by the sharpshooters behind the trees near the point. The artillery's guns were still booming on the air in the distance.

Captain Woodbine had chosen the position to be occupied by the squadron; and he had sent the remainder of the regiment to which it nominally belonged to a point farther north, for reasons of his own which he did not explain, but probably he desired to keep the Riverlawns by themselves.

The riflemen were now reunited; and while Deck was telling his story to his father, Captain Woodbine conducted the body, now under the command of Captain Ripley, from the hill behind which the two companies of cavalry were stationed, so that they could not be seen by the enemy, to another hill which commanded the pike and the meadow. Here he posted them, and gave the commander his orders.

From this height the sharpshooters could harass the enemy retreating over the pike, and also the two regiments of infantry retiring over the low ground, the first of which was within twenty rods of the hill. It was evident that it was marching towards ground to the west of the hill, where the ascent was less difficult. They were within range of the riflemen, and the

fight in this section of the field was extremely likely to begin here. But the First Kentucky Cavalry was posted near them, and would be obliged to bear the brunt of it.

Captain Woodbine went to these troopers, and moved them to a more favorable position, where they could support the sharpshooters; for they were nearly, if not quite, as efficient as a battery would have been in the same place. Directly in front of the Riverlawn Cavalry was a hill overlooking the intrenchments of the enemy, which sheltered the command from the guns if they were fired in that direction; and the aide-de-camp rode his horse up the declivity, which was partially covered with trees.

Then he dismounted, hitched his horse, and placed himself behind a tree, where he could see all the force he had taken under his command, and all the approaches of the enemy who were hurrying down the pike and on both sides of it. Just then he wished he had half a dozen regiments of troops, for he believed that with a sufficient force he could cut off the retreat of the enemy to his works.

He had five companies of cavalry and fifty-six riflemen, less than a single regiment; and he could only impede, but not check, the retreat. Major Lyon surveyed the country around from all points; and when he saw the captain on the hill, he ascended it in order to make a startling proposition to him.

"We are within half a mile of the enemy's intrenchments, Captain Woodbine," the major began.

"Hardly as near as that, Major," replied the aide-de-camp.

"A quarter of a mile would make no difference with my plan."

"Ah, then you have a plan?" replied the captain with a smile.

"I am not an engineer, as I believe you are; but I have been looking over those earthworks. I see a place where I believe I could ride my squadron over them; and I presume there is not a large force there, for it has the river on one side. We have something less than six hundred men, all mounted, and I fancy we could ride over the artillerymen it contains."

"I don't believe you could get into the works, in the first place," returned the captain with a laugh. "If you did get in, you would find yourself outnumbered two to one."

"I should be willing to feel of them, at any rate," added the major.

"Do you suppose a general with ability enough to command an army of five or six thousand men would be so stupid as to march from his intrenchments, and, going away ten miles to attack another army, would leave his base of retreat insufficiently manned?"

"I supposed they would have been sending up re-enforcements to the battle-field all day; and they could not have done that without reducing greatly the number in the works. However, I am not a very experienced soldier, Captain Woodbine, and I am willing to admit that I should not have undertaken the enterprise on my own responsibility," replied the major.

"Of course it may be possible that the garrison within the fort has been reduced to a number equal, or even less, than your force; but I should say it would be foolhardy in the extreme to make such a venture without a certain knowledge of the extent of the force behind the breastworks. But the riflemen have opened on the regiment nearest to them," added the captain, as the crack of a rifle was heard on the other hill, not more than a quarter of a mile distant.

Other shots followed in rapid succession; but they were fired one at a time, in accordance with Captain Ripley's tactics.

CHAPTER XX

THE FLOWING TIDE OF THE ENEMY'S RETREAT

Both of the officers on the hill brought their field-glasses to their eyes, and directed them to the regiment in the meadow, which was having more difficulty in advancing than before; for near the higher ground the cattle had cut up the sod much more than farther off. The men scattered about more in their efforts to avoid the soft places.

"Those men fire with remarkable precision," said Captain Woodbine. "A soldier drops at every shot they fire, and they discharge their rifles at the rate of at least ten shots a minute."

"They can't stand that long," added the major.

As he spoke, the regiment broke into a run for the woods. They gave no further attention to the picking of their way, and struggled in the mire towards the high ground; but the

merciless riflemen did not suspend their fire, and the soldiers continued to fall as the regiment advanced. In a few minutes it looked as though half the first company had fallen, either killed or wounded.

The second company, and those in the rear of it, faced about, and retreated; and, having a better sod than those nearer the hill, they ran with all the speed they could command, though some of them sank down in the mire, and were pulled out by their companions. When they had fallen back out of rifle-range, they directed their flight towards the pike.

The regiment in the rear halted when they saw the flight of the one in front of it. It was too far off for accurate firing. The men seemed to be appalled at the flight of the other regiment; and through their glasses the two officers could see that the commanding officer was making a speech to his men, but neither of them could see the extent of the casualties of the retreating command.

Doubtless the colonel of the regiment, ashamed of the conduct of the fleeing infantry, was rallying his men for the advance; for presently it resumed its march. But at that moment a new factor in the contest was presented to the aide-de-camp. The roar of a heavy gun was heard in the direction of the intrenchment, and both of the spectators on the hill looked in that direction. A cloud of smoke rose in the air, and at the same moment, almost, the explosion of a shell was seen on the riflemen's hill. The branches of the trees were cut off and twisted, and the sharpshooters rushed down the declivity as though their own weapons had been turned against them.



"THE SHARPSHOOTERS RUSHED DOWN THE DECLIVITY."

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"Those riflemen have probably never been in a battle before," said the captain, apparently unmoved by the sight that greeted his eyes.

"I should hardly expect to see them stand up against that sort of thing," added the major. "I never saw a shell explode before, and it must be very trying to the nerves of an inexperienced soldier."

"He gets used to it after a time. But that shell must have killed or wounded some of Captain Ripley's command, though neither shells nor bullets are so destructive to human life as they appear to be at first."

"I don't understand how that shell happened to be fired into the hill, for they could not see into the meadow where so many have fallen," said the major.

"The information was probably sent into the fort by some officer on duty on the pike, near the earthworks, with an order to shell the second hill. But I think you had better return to your command, for your cavalry may be wanted at any time," suggested the captain.

"That colonel has rallied his men, and they are now marching very steadily towards the higher land," said the major, as he rose from the seat on a rock he had occupied.

"Ripley has done better than I expected, and he appears to have placed his men again. No doubt the bursting of the shell so near them startled his force, and the riflemen fled from

impulse," continued the staff-officer. "But he is a brave old man, at any rate; for he has mounted to the highest point of the hill, and he is watching the fort with all his eyes. It is a dangerous position, and I am afraid there will be a military funeral soon at Millersville."

But he was shielded by a large tree on the summit of the hill in the direction of the enemy, and was giving his whole attention to the intrenchments. The captain was observing the regiment which was now rapidly approaching high ground, though it had moved much farther from the pike than the first.

The major had mounted his horse, and was about to rejoin his squadron.

Before he started, and when the approaching force was beginning to mount the bank, the rifles were heard again, and the leading men of the first company dropped from the bank. Not more than three or four shots had been fired before a tremendous yell was heard coming from the riflemen's hill, and the sharpshooters fled down the slope. It appeared as though Captain Ripley had watched the fort for a purpose, and, when he saw the flash of the great gun, had ordered his men to run, and they had done so. They had no time to spare, but they had a second to spare before the shell exploded.

It did not appear that any one was hurt; at least, no one fell. The captain observed the riflemen with the utmost intensity; and as soon as the missile had spent its power, the men sprang part way up the hill, and placed themselves behind the trees. The first company had obtained a footing on the hard ground, and the first thing they did was to form and march at the double-quick towards the hill from which the death-dealing balls had come.

Major Lyon was a prudent as well as a brave man, and he galloped his horse away from the spot with all decent celerity; for to remain there another minute was almost certain death. The staff-officer was too old a soldier to get excited at such a time, but he kept a tree between himself and the approaching company of Confederates. The riflemen opened before the company could fairly form; and, as the distance for such riflemen was insignificant, a man fell with every rifle that was fired.

The fall of these men in the first rank, every one of whom was dropped, seemed to madden the men behind them, and they rushed forward on the run; but Ripley's policy was most disastrous to them, for the second rank of four soldiers fell, either killed or badly wounded. At this time Major Lyon, in obedience to an order from Captain Woodbine, with his entire squadron galloped upon the scene of action. Captain Gordon charged into the first company of the regiment of infantry.

The first platoon, under Lieutenant Belthorpe, struck the head of the column as it hastened forward to dislodge the sharpshooters, whose fire was so destructive to them; and Lieutenant Lyon, with the second platoon, took the company on the flank. This charge, so far as the first company of the Confederates was concerned, threw the riflemen out of the battle; for their bullets were in danger of bringing down some of the blue as well as the gray.

Captain Ripley perceived this difficulty, and ordered his men, as usual, by passing the word from mouth to mouth along his line, for his men to give their attention to the second company of the enemy's infantry, which had just begun to mount the bank from the low ground. Colonel Wolford, in command of the First Kentucky Cavalry, was in another part of the field, pursuing the retreating regiments in their ten miles of flight from the hills, where the brunt of the action had been fought; and Major Lyon was in charge of the detachment sent to assist in flanking the enemy in this quarter.

The staff-officer had ordered up this cavalry. He had mounted his horse, and given the order in person, going on the field in actual command of the force, leading it to the point where the second company were mounting the bank. Portions of the enemy's army had been well drilled, though this could not be said of all; and General Crittenden in his reports lamented the want of discipline in some of his regiments. General Schoepf was more emphatic and decided in regard to this same want of drill on the part of the Union mounted men. In the report of a skirmish he says:—

"The cavalry under my command, as usual, behaved badly. They are a nuisance, and the sooner they are disbanded the better.... Is there no such thing as obtaining a regiment of *reliable* cavalry? Such a regiment is indispensable with this brigade at this time. The absence of such troops has kept me in the saddle until I am nearly worn down with fatigue."

Such remarks could not have been made of the Riverlawn Squadron; for its men had been as thoroughly drilled as those in the regular army, and the character of its troopers was much better than the average. It is not strange that there should have been a foundation for the severe comments of the general in the case of men enlisted, and almost immediately hurried into actual service, as was necessary in some parts of the State, though his caustic strictures were not applicable to all the mounted men of Kentucky.

Such ruffians as those against whom the battle of Riverlawn was fought, at an earlier stage of the war, had found their way to a greater or less extent into the Union army. But, whatever might have been truly said of portions of the cavalry, it was not true of the companies of the First Kentucky Cavalry; for in spite of their need of more drill, they were brave and good men, and fought like heroes when they had their chance at the enemy.

Captain Woodbine led them into action himself, though he was ably supported by the regular officers. They made an impetuous charge while the riflemen were picking off the men in the rear of the actual fighting. The havoc was so great that the infantry could not stand it, and they began to fall back to the rear. Then they fled to the west, in spite of the efforts of their officers to rally them, as had been the case on the field in many instances that day.

The fierce charge of the Riverlawns was too much for the first company of the enemy, outnumbered two to one. This was the first time that the squadron had met infantry in the field, and their opponents were well drilled in resisting the attack of mounted men. But they soon began to fall back, and retreated to the hill where Captain Woodbine had observed the first part of the struggle. The cavalry could not operate to advantage here on account of the roughness of the ground, and the trees. They resorted to the carbine, and kept up an effective fire.

The first company passed up the hill; but it did not pause there, but began the descent on the other side, which would bring them to the pike, near the breastworks of Beech Grove. A shell burst on the sharpshooters' eminence; but Captain Ripley resorted to his former expedient, and the way was now clear for his men to retreat to the level ground below for the moment.

The second company of the infantry on the meadow had retreated to the woods, half a mile away, perhaps hoping to find a passage through to their works. At Mill Springs the Cumberland River makes a turn at right angles with its course below, flowing from the north to the south for about two miles. The Confederate breastworks extended across the neck of land formed by the river and a stream on the west for two miles. The camp occupied by the enemy before the battle was protected by water on three sides.

The example of the second company on the meadow was followed by the others, and for the present they were all out of the action. The first company appeared to have lost at least one-fourth of its men; but it had fought all there was of the action. The Riverlawn charge had disordered its men; but they had gone in tolerably good order up the hill, and had begun the descent of it, while the squadron were picking off the men with their carbines.

"Lieutenant Lyon, go around the hill, and take them on the flank as they come down!" shouted Captain Gordon.

Deck obeyed the order promptly; and his men were full of enthusiasm as they followed him. The roughness of the hill had impeded the movement of the enemy's company, and the second platoon of the cavalry was in season to attack them. The foot-soldiers used their bayonets, and for a few minutes there was a terrific struggle. But before any result could be reached, a mob of the enemy's infantry and cavalry rushed into the space between the road and the pike, carrying friends and enemies with it, as before the sweep of a tidal wave on a stormy sea.

This disorderly body, coming from the pike and from the field beyond, carried all before it, and the second platoon of the Riverlawns could not understand the cause of the sudden commotion. The roar of artillery, not distant from them, soon revealed the cause of the stampede. The batteries of the Union army had moved forward just before dark; and volleys of grape or shell would have made a fearful slaughter among the disordered bodies of the retreating enemy, and they had fled in the utmost confusion.

CHAPTER XXI

DECK FINDS HIMSELF IN A TIGHT PLACE

The enemy were utterly demoralized, crazed with terror, devoid of reason and common-sense. The Mississippi, Alabama, and most of the Tennessee regiments of the Southern army were disciplined and steady troops in which such a panic would have been impossible; but there were others even worse than those described by General Schoepf, and the latter were always in the advance during a retreat. It was such as these that formed the rabble seeking to obtain shelter behind the breastworks.

In the mob reason was dethroned, and even common-sense had taken wings; for the fleeing mass were in more danger from each other than from the fire of the artillery, and whole sections of them were borne down by those pressing forward from the rear, and were crushed by the feet of men and horses.

Deck attempted to resist the flow of the tide towards the works; but he might as well have tried to counteract the great bore of the Amazon. His sabre was in his hand; but he had not the heart to use it upon the terrified mass, who had thrown away their muskets and knapsacks on the field, because they impeded their flight. A battery of artillery in retreating had mired one of its guns in one of the soft places in the field, and had abandoned it, as

stated by General Crittenden.

With his great strength, assisted by a few others, Sergeant Knox had striven to open a way for the escape of the platoon to their former position; but they struggled in vain against the crazy and senseless mob. A company or platoon of Confederate cavalry had forced its way into the crowd nearly to the ground occupied by Deck's force, though they had used their sabres to accomplish it. Life had pushed his horse forward in the direction he wished to go; but the mob seized the animal's bridle to save themselves, and, by stress of numbers, had crowded him back.

One of the openings in the breastworks was near the spot; and the rabble in front of the cavalymen pushed forward, and entered the intrenchments, thus making way for those behind them. But that was not the direction Deck and his command wished to go, and they resisted the mob as long as they could.

"I think we shall have to use our cheese-knives," suggested Life, as they were crowded forward in the passage to the fort.

"No, Life! That would be a terrible slaughter of unarmed men, and I will not do it," replied Deck. "I would rather be taken prisoner than murder these helpless and terrified people."

"Threaten them with the pistols if they don't get out of the way," the sergeant proposed. "They are jamming us into the fort."

"You might as well threaten them with the pistols if they don't fly away up into the air, for they can't move," returned the lieutenant. "This is not a battle; only a struggle for life on the part of the retreating enemy."

Life said no more. The space between the platoon and the hill from which the infantry had retreated, and which Deck had attempted to flank, was full of men retreating from the grape of the artillery which had now opened upon them, full of struggling forms intent upon reaching the shelter of the breastworks. There was no passage there.

"Lieutenant, the rest of the squadron is formed near the hill, and they are draggin' in squads of prisoners," said Life Knox.

"Are they using their sabres?" asked Deck.

"No; they have sheathed them, and all they do is to shove 'em in like city policemen."

"Neither the staff-officer nor my father would shoot or cut down unarmed and unresisting men; but perhaps they expect to capture the whole army at a later hour. I can't do what they will not do," added the lieutenant. "But"—

He did not say what he intended, for the cavalry company, which had forced its way into the midst of the crowd, began to drive their horses forward, the rabble behind them pressing on in that direction. The pressure was too great for the Riverlawns to withstand, and they were pushed forward in spite of their best efforts to hold their ground.

"We might as well go with the tide, Life," said Deck hopelessly, as he gave way to the pressure.

"No man can help hisself here," replied the sergeant.

"We may as well make way for this rabble," added the lieutenant. "They will shove each other away from the entrance, and when the coast is clear we will take our chance of getting out of the fort."

Life Knox yielded the point; for, if they were not to cut their way through the crowd, this was absolutely the only thing they could do. They were pressed forward into the intrenchment. Deck observed as he gave way to the pressure behind him that the soldiers from the field, or near it,—for not a few had not been in the battle,—hastened from the entrance to the works, towards the middle of it; in fact, they were ordered to do so by the guard in charge of the camp, which extended for over a mile across the tongue of land formed by the Cumberland and the creek that flowed into it near Robertsport.

Lieutenant Lyon did not follow the example of the fugitives, and there was still nothing but a rabble near the entrance; and the guard, with its officers, were a considerable distance from him, and could give his command no orders. Instead of doing as others did, he led his force to the verge of the great river, down to which the high banks, amounting almost to cliffs, descended at an angle of about forty-five degrees.

The lieutenant could do nothing, but he kept up a tremendous thinking all the time. By this time he was conscious that he had been forced into a tight place. He reined in his steed when he had advanced perhaps the third of a mile across the camp, defended by the breastworks, and gave the order for his men to halt; but it was not spoken with his customary vim, for he was somewhat depressed by the situation.

He was in a Confederate camp, and all his powers of mind were directed towards the means of getting out of it; for it would have broken his heart to hand over his fifty men as prisoners to a Southern officer. He looked at the entrance; but that was as crowded as at any time before, and it was impossible for him to march out that way. Then he looked down the steep

and lofty banks of the Cumberland. His horses and those of his troopers could swim like fishes; for it had been a part of the drill at Riverlawn to exercise the animals in the water, and they had often crossed Bar Creek with their riders on their backs, and they had even swam them over the Green River, though never in the rapids.

Deck considered a plan for descending the banks to the stream, swimming the horses a mile or two down the river, and then of escaping across the country to the position of the rest of the squadron. He was about to ask Sergeant Knox for his opinion, when the company of Confederate cavalry which had been next to his force outside the works rode over to the side of the camp he had chosen, and halted a few rods from his position.

But this body did not seem to be in a belligerent mood, and did not appear to take much notice of the platoon. Possibly they were ashamed of their conduct on the field; for they had been the first of the enemy's cavalry to arrive at the works, and they must have been among the first to run away. The men did not look like a fair specimen of the cavalry of the other side which the troopers had seen.

"We must get out of this place somehow," said Deck to the orderly sergeant, who had brought up a little behind him.

"I don't believe there is many more outside who want to get into this place," replied Life; "and I reckon the major will be looking this way for us, for he couldn't help seeing that we had been crowded in here."

"I don't see that he can do anything for us, unless he fights the whole force of the enemy outside; and I know they are not all cowards, like some of these fellers what worked harder to get into this fort than they would to git inter the kingdom o' heaven," answered Life.

"I don't look for any help from the rest of the squadron. If we don't get out on our own hook I think we shall have to stay here," replied Deck. "What do you think of escaping by the river? We can easily swim the horses down the stream a mile or two; for there is not much current near the shore, though it is strong in the middle of the river."

The sergeant rode over to the high bank, and looked it over in an apparently careless manner, so as not to attract attention, as far up as the great bend just above Mill Springs. He shook his head significantly as he resumed his former position.

"The swimmin' is all right after you git the hosses inter the water; but you've got to crack the nut afore you kin eat it, Lieutenant."

"Is there any difficulty in cracking the nut?" asked Deck.

"I reckon that's whar all the diffikilty comes in. It has rained like Niagery for two days, and it has been doin' not quite so bad all this afternoon. Them banks is as soft as an Injun bannock half baked; and there ain't no foothold for hosses. I wouldn't resk it for two per cent a month," returned Life very decidedly.

Probably the sergeant was correct in his view, though Deck thought still that it was practicable. General Crittenden swam his cavalry over the river in the night, but some of his men and horses were drowned in the attempt. He found the descent of the steep banks a great obstacle to his retreat. But the crowd at the entrance to the intrenchment had diminished considerably, and the lieutenant began to think he could cut his way to it with less peril than he could swim his force in the river, especially as it was beginning to be dark.

Another circumstance came in the way of the execution of the plan. Perhaps the company of cavalry near him had noted the examination of the banks of the river by the lieutenant and the sergeant, and may have had a suspicion of what was passing through their minds. At least, it soon appeared that the captain of the company had other views in regard to the disposal of the Riverlawns. He had moved his command nearer to the platoon, and stretched it across the camp some little distance.

A little later, a mounted Confederate officer rode to this end of the line. He looked over the Southern company first, and asked to what regiment it belonged. Deck could not hear the reply in full, but only that it was a Tennessee regiment. Then he rode a little farther, and seemed to be somewhat astonished when he saw a force wearing the blue.

"What is that force in the corner, Captain?" he asked of the officer to whom he had spoken before, while he continued to observe the body in blue.

"It is a Yankee platoon of fifty men that we captured a mile or more from the breastwork," replied the Confederate captain; and it could be seen that his men smiled when he gave this reply.

"To what regiment do these troopers belong?"

"I don't know certainly, but I reckon it was a Kentucky regiment."

"How happened you to capture half a company, and not the whole of it?"

"Well, you see, Major, the Kentucky regiment had better horses than our Tennessee regiment, and they worried us a heap. We were retreating, for we had been flanked by a force four times as big as ours, and this regiment pursued us. Our regiment turned on them,

and whipped them soundly. My company was fighting this platoon, and we surrounded them, and made them prisoners."

"Was that Kentucky regiment of cavalry full?" asked the major, with a frown on his brow.

"It was, Major, for I counted the ten companies," returned the captain without wincing. "This platoon fought like wildcats; but my men stood up to the work like heroes, as they are; and when we had surrounded them, they could not help themselves, and we drove them before us to the camp."

"I have no doubt that you will be promoted to the rank of brigadier-general for your meritorious service; but my information differs somewhat from yours, for I have learned that the only Kentucky cavalry on the field was four companies of the First, four others being on detached duty on the Millersville Road."

"But you see, Major, my informant may have given me incorrect reports," stammered the captain.

"Who was your informant, Captain? You counted the companies of the Kentucky regiment yourself."

"I may have been"—

"Probably you have been; but you have said enough. I have heard from your company before to-day," added the major, as he rode over to Lieutenant Lyon. "Did you surrender to Captain Staggers yonder?"

"I did not!" replied Deck with abundant emphasis.

"Did you hear what passed between him and me?"

"Every word of it."

"Was anything the captain said true?"

"Not a word of it! And you will excuse me, Major, but I intend to cut my way out of this camp!" shouted the lieutenant, loud enough to be heard by all his troopers, and they straightened themselves up for the work.

"Platoon—charge!"

At full gallop the force started for the entrance, now not obstructed.

CHAPTER XXII

A LIEUTENANT AMONG THE "MISSING"

Major Walthal was very gentlemanly and very polite; but it appeared at once that he was not willing to permit the escape of the platoon, good-looking and well-dressed as were the officer and the men. He could not help observing the contrast between the Riverlawns and the Confederate company near them. Captain Gordon, who had been the principal instructor of the squadron, was very neat and precise about his person, and had always required the troopers to keep their uniforms and arms and their horses, with their equipments, in good condition.

On the contrary, this particular company of the enemy presented a slovenly appearance; quite in contrast, also, with some other regiments of their army. The major was a soldier of the highest type, and he could not fail to see the neatness of the Riverlawns. Very likely he was sorry to prevent the young lieutenant from carrying out his intention to leave the camp; but his ideal as a military officer was to do his duty.

Deck's troopers had drawn their sabres; and, with Life Knox in front, they made an impetuous rush towards the entrance. The sergeant was even more in earnest than usual; his horse was well trained, and when his rider pressed his knees against his flanks, he darted off with fury enough to satisfy the determined horseman.

"Halt!" shouted the major; but he might as well have addressed the wind or the rain. "Surround them, Captain Staggers, as you did on the field! Cut off their retreat if there is any manhood left in you!"

He led the way himself, though he could do nothing more, for he had no sabre; nothing but his dress sword. Perhaps the captain felt the necessity of redeeming himself after the number of lies he had told; and he gave the order to charge the impetuous platoon, leading the onslaught in person. The position of his company was nearer to the entrance than that of Deck's command; but Life had spotted him, and rushed upon him.

In spite of his shouting, there was little vim in the movement of the captain. He made an awkward cut at the sergeant, who easily parried it, and brought the sharp edge of his sabre down upon his shoulder, near the neck, and the officer dropped to the ground as though a bullet had gone through his brain. His horse turned, and had nearly upset the major in his flight, and it was evident that the animal was not accustomed to this kind of business. If the major could have obtained a sabre, he would have done better work, and perhaps the platoon would have been checked in its onward movement.

Deck, mindful of the many lessons in prudence he had received from his father and his captain, had taken a position on the left of his command; but the enemy were not there at that moment, though the Confederate troopers, under the second lieutenant, were surrounding the Riverlawns from the rear as they advanced. Deck realized that whatever was done must be accomplished in a moment or never, and he could not restrain himself, but galloped to the front.

Ceph, his horse, began to put his education into practice, and stood up on his hind feet before the first trooper that came in front of him. At that moment the lieutenant cleaved the skull of the man in twain. The enemy did not fight like the Texan Rangers with whom the young officer had been pitted before. In fact, they fell back, and began to use their pistols. One of the Riverlawns dropped from his steed with his face covered with blood.

The lieutenant saw with intense regret that this man was Sergeant Fronklyn; but he was apparently only stunned partially by the bullet, for he sprang to his feet with the aid of a comrade, though his horse had gone with the forward movement of the platoon, and was out of his reach. At about the same moment the second lieutenant of the Southern company, who was a gigantic Tennessean, led his platoon to the left of the Riverlawns, and pushed on towards their front.

This big fellow was a brave man, whatever might be said of the greater portion of his comrades, and had his eye on Deck, who had just brought his sabre down upon the trooper whose head he had split in twain. The Southron dashed up to him, and levelled a blow with his weapon at the head of the young officer, just as the latter was turning to confront the enemy in his rear. This movement evidently disturbed the aim of the lieutenant, and turned the sabre in his hand.

But the blow came down with the flat side of the blade upon Deck's head. It stunned him, and his brain whirled. He dropped from Ceph, just as that intelligent animal rose again on his hind feet to confront the new enemy; but there was no one in the saddle to strike the blow that might have killed or disabled the giant who had done the mischief to the intrepid young officer. Corporal Tilford, who was a powerful man, dashed his horse against the Tennessee lieutenant, and struck him in the rear, just as the latter had done to Deck. His aim was better, and he did not permit the hilt to turn in his hand, and the giant finished his earthly career there.

Sergeant Fronklyn, though wounded himself, had strength enough to drag his officer to one side of the platoon, so that his form might not be crushed by the advance of horses' feet. The troopers had seen the fall of the lieutenant, and naturally enough, supposing that he was killed, were excited to new fury by the disaster, and rushed upon the enemy, who were crowding them on both sides. They fought with an impetuosity which the enemy could not withstand, and a large portion of the latter justified their record for that day by running away.

There were individual instances of bravery on the part of the foe; but, as a whole, the attack upon the Riverlawns was feeble and nerveless. It was fortunate for the entrapped platoon that it was not set upon by some other company of the Confederate cavalry, rather than one which had run away from the field of battle; for in that case they might all have been prisoners of war.

Sergeant Knox remained at the head of the platoon, and after he had struck down with his powerful right arm two or three that confronted him, he was avoided by the enemy; but he continued to shout encouraging words to the men, who did not flinch a hair from the troopers that beset them in double their own numbers.

"Now forward, my boys!" he cried, as he saw that the entrance was clear for the passage of the body.

The men pressed on, upsetting the enemy in their path, though most of them had fallen back out of the reach of the sabres of the Riverlawns; and with this renewed effort they passed through the entrance and out of the intrenchments. But they had no sooner reached the outside of the works than they discovered the rest of the squadron in a fight at the foot of the first hill, with a whole regiment of Confederate cavalry. Captain Woodbine had occupied this hill at the beginning of the fight in this section, and on it Captain Ripley and his riflemen had been posted later.

The two companies of the First Kentucky were moving forward; but there was not room enough for them to manoeuvre. As usual, the sharpshooters were making havoc in the ranks of the regiment, and the head of the column was falling back to escape the deadly rifle-balls. Life halted his platoon, and looked them over, puffing like a steam-engine from the violence of his excitement and the fury of his exertions to save the command. The prospect before

him was not encouraging, for the enemy had some troops outside of the works.

"Where is Lieutenant Lyon?" demanded he of Corporal Tilford, as the latter rode up to him to give him information in regard to the officer in command of the platoon.

"I am sorry to say we left him in the enemy's camp," replied the corporal.

"Left him there!" exclaimed Life, with something like horror in his expression. "Was he wounded?"

"Worse than that, I am afraid," answered his informant.

"You don't mean to say he was killed, Corporal?" asked Life, looking as though he had lost the only friend he had in the world.

"I don't know for certain that he was killed, and should report him with the missing," replied the corporal.

"I don't understand it," continued the sergeant. "The lieutenant was always able to take care of himself."

"I can tell you just how it was, if you want to hear it in this place," returned Tilford, as he looked about him, and discovered a company of infantry coming out of the fort, and another approaching across the field. "We shall soon be surrounded here."

The sergeant looked about him, and the prospect near the fort was not encouraging. He gave the order to march, and led the way. The ground was hard here, and he galloped his horse at his best speed towards the second hill. The main body of the Riverlawns had a favorable position between the first hill and the end of the breastworks. The enemy had come down the pike. Between the two hills the two companies of the First Kentucky Cavalry had been skilfully posted by the senior captain when he found that there was no space between the hill and the intrenchments for his command.

Major Lyon, as it was afterwards stated, had started to the entrance of the fort, for the purpose of aiding the escape of the second platoon of the first company. Before he had advanced more than a few rods, his force had been attacked by the regiment which had just escaped from the field of battle. They had been ordered by some superior officer on the ground to attack the major's command; and the regiment had rushed into the narrow defile, where only a portion of it could be brought into action. The sharpshooters were rapidly reducing the numbers at the head of the column, though the ranks were immediately filled up by the sections behind them.

Life led his platoon, diminished in numbers by only three men besides the lieutenant, to a point in the field abreast of the farther side of the first hill. At this place he could see the riflemen posted behind trees and rocks, plying their deadly office with the utmost diligence, and after the manner the captain had ordered on the hill and at the meadow. He was operating upon the head of the enemy's column. The sergeant found that there was space enough between the hill and the end of the breastworks for him to charge the regiment on the flank, and at least make a demonstration in that quarter.

The Confederate column was losing its men at a fearful rate in its first company, and the second was sent to dislodge the concealed force on the hill. They moved gallantly forward, and began the ascent of the slope; but the ground was rough, and covered with trees and rocks, though the former were scattered just enough to enable the sharpshooters to fire over and between them. The advancing force were nearer the riflemen than the companies on the ground, and they dropped almost as fast as they went forward, and the company was soon recalled.

Sergeant Knox conducted his platoon through the opening, and fell upon the third company just as the second were approaching the position they had occupied before. As usual, his men fought furiously, and very unexpectedly a panic ensued. The Confederates evidently believed that they were flanked by a large force, and began to fall back towards the intrenchments, crowding the companies in the rear before them.

The men in the first company continued to fall in appalling numbers before the riflemen's unerring aim. The Riverlawns pressed them with renewed zeal, and they fell back into the gap made by the flankers. In this manner the second platoon came into their proper position, while the first company, now re-enforced by the two companies of their regiment, marched into the fort; and the fight for the time ended there. By this time it was beginning to be dark, and it was not likely that the battle would be renewed that night. The work of the next morning was to attack and carry the intrenchments.

The battalion had been under the command of Captain Woodbine, the staff-officer, from the time when the two companies in the rear had been brought into the action. He ordered his force to return to the end of the roads by which they had arrived. Major Lyon led his squadron back to the point indicated, and halted his men there. As soon as he had done so he rode back to look over his command. The riflemen were recalled. It was found that they had lost four men in killed, and nine wounded, most of them by the shells from the fort.

Both companies reported their loss in general terms. Dr. Farnwright had established his

hospital in the rear, and had a considerable number of patients. Captain Gordon could only report for half of his command, for the other half had been absent. The major passed on to the second platoon, and was startled to see that it was in command of the first sergeant.

"Where is Lieutenant Lyon?" he asked, choking down the emotions that agitated him.

"Missing, Major," replied Life.

"Missing?" repeated the father of the lieutenant. "I will hear your report later;" and he rode back to the head of the column.

CHAPTER XXIII

WITHIN THE CONFEDERATE LINES

The fall of the gigantic Tennessee lieutenant had created something like a panic among his cavalymen who were pressing forward to flank the Kentuckians; and Sergeant Fronklyn, his face still covered with blood, seized the opportunity of their retirement to the rear to drag the form of Lieutenant Lyon out of the mêlée, and place him on the bank of the creek which bounded the camp on the west.

His first care was to wet his handkerchief from his canteen, and wash the blood from his face, so that he could see better. Then he felt of his wound which was somewhat swollen, and found the scalpskin was torn away from his head just above the temple. The bullet from the pistol of the trooper had glanced across his head with force enough to stun him without making a very bad wound. He washed it with the handkerchief, and then tied it over the top of his head, and under his chin.

He realized that he had had a very narrow escape from death; for if the ball had hit him an inch lower, it would certainly have killed him. He took a long draught of water from his canteen, and felt better. He was very thankful for his escape, and believed he should recover from the wound in a week. He knew that he was a prisoner; but it was probable that the Union army would open fire upon the intrenchments the next morning, and would capture it in the end, be it sooner or later.

He had seated himself by the side of the motionless form of his officer, not doubting that he was dead, though he immediately proceeded to satisfy himself on this question. He placed his hand on his heart. He had been a student in a medical institution at the time of his enlistment, and had made considerable progress in his studies, and had assisted Dr. Farnwright in the hospital when the occasion would permit.

The organ of life was still beating, and he uttered an exclamation of satisfaction. Thus encouraged, he continued to investigate the condition of the lieutenant. He could find no open wound, but there was a considerable swelling on the top of the head. He was convinced that the case would not be fatal. Taking the patient's handkerchief from the inside of his coat, he wet it thoroughly from his canteen. Then he unloosed the belt, and opened wide his coat.

He sprinkled the face from the wet handkerchief, and then bathed it very patiently for half an hour. At the end of this time the patient opened his eyes, slowly at first, and soon had them wide open. He recovered his consciousness later, and complained of a nausea at his stomach, and he continued to have an increase of the symptom till he had discharged the contents of that member.

"I feel better," said he very faintly, as he looked about him, and seemed to be bewildered. "Who are you?" he inquired; for it was too dark by this time for him to see anything distinctly.

"I am Sergeant Fronklyn," replied his attentive nurse. "Don't you know me, Lieutenant Lyon?"

"I should know you if I could see your face," replied Deck with a stronger voice.

"It is becoming rather dark about here. Have you any pain, Lieutenant?" inquired the sergeant.

"None of any consequence, Fronklyn; but my head aches," answered Deck. "Where do I happen to be just now?"

"Don't you remember what took place an hour ago, or more?"

"I have an idea that I was in a fight; but it all came to an end very suddenly," replied Deck, raising his head, and then sitting up on the ground.

"You were in a sharp fight, and you have lain here like a log for half an hour or more. I was afraid that you had been killed; but I thank God with all my heart and soul that you are still living," said Fronklyn very devoutly.

"Some of it comes back to me now," said the patient, as he looked about him as if to ascertain where he was; for his companion had not informed him on this point. "I had just struck down a trooper with my sabre when I heard the tramp of a horse behind me. I was about to wheel so as to face him, when I felt a blow on my head, and I can remember nothing more."

"You fell on the field, as I had before you."

"Are you wounded, Fronklyn?"

"I am slightly; and my case seems to be something like yours, though it was a pistol-ball that brought me down. I saw the trooper aim a great horse-pistol that might have been a hundred years old, and I have no doubt that the bullet was as big as they fire in those ancient flint-lock muskets. It stunned me for the moment; but I was on my feet at once, and saw you fall," the sergeant explained.

"Are you much hurt, Fronklyn?" asked Deck.

"Only a flesh-wound that will heal up in a week, or less. When I can get at my knapsack I will put a plaster on it."

"But you have not told me where we are, Fronklyn, and I cannot tell for the life of me," continued the lieutenant, looking around him again.

"Don't you remember that we were in the enemy's fortification when the fight went on?"

"I remember that. We had been crowded into the enemy's intrenchments by the crazy mob. A Southern captain claimed our platoon as the prisoners of his company; and that made me so mad that I ordered our men to charge upon them, and fight their way out of the fort," returned the wounded officer, whose mind seemed to be clear enough by this time.

"And that was just what we were doing when both of us went down; though I was on my feet soon enough to drag you out of the fight," replied the sergeant.

"What has become of the platoon?"

"You were on the flank, and Life Knox got in at the head of the men, dropping every Confederate that came in front of him; and the rest of our fellows were not far behind him. None of them were captured; but two were killed, and probably some of them were slightly wounded."

"The men are not prisoners, then?"

"They are not."

"How is it with us?"

"I suppose we are prisoners, for we are within the enemy's lines; but no person has been near us as we lay here. I think the Southerners have all they can attend to at present, and doubtless they are getting ready for a fight to-morrow morning; for General Thomas will certainly clean them out before he has done with them."

"What is to be done with us?" suggested Deck.

"That is a question, Lieutenant."

"Well, the next business in order is to get away, for I have no fancy for being taken to the South, since the Confederates have no provisions for their own men, and as prisoners we would starve with them," said Deck. "I haven't had my supper yet, and I feel a little faint. I have enough to eat in my haversack."

"So have I; for we were so busy at noon, that I did not have time to eat much dinner, though it was served as usual. I think we had better go to supper now, and then we will look about us."

Both of them began to eat from their haversacks, and they made a hearty meal of it. The lieutenant declared that he felt all right then, and his head did not ache half so bad as it had when he first came to himself. In the excitement of the day Deck had eaten very little. He had been careful that his soldiers had their dinner, but he had been too busy to attend to the matter himself. He had become somewhat faint while within the breastworks before the charge. At any rate, he felt a great deal better after he had eaten his supper.

"I wonder what they are doing in here," said he, looking to the middle of the camp, though it was now so dark that he could not make out anything.

"Of course there is going to be another battle in the morning, and the enemy here are getting ready for it," replied Fronklyn. "General Thomas was sent down here to capture these works, and drive the enemy away from this region, and he is going to do it. He is a regular army officer, and he understands his business."

"What do you suppose has become of your horse and mine, Fronklyn?" asked Deck, as he looked about him again. "I wouldn't lose Ceph for everything else I have in the world."

"I saw him pressing forward with the men after you had fallen, and it seemed as though he meant to do some fighting on his own account," replied the sergeant. "I fancy that both our horses went with the men out of the fort, and that they will be cared for, even if they are wandering about in the fields."

"The question just now is how we are to get out of this scrape," said Deck, as he rose from his seat on the wet ground. "I don't like the idea of going South as a prisoner, and not much better being paroled, and tied up in idleness for I don't know how long. We must get out of this place, Fronklyn."

"I am entirely of your opinion, Lieutenant; but I don't see any chance to do so now," replied the sergeant. "They have closed up the entrance by which we were forced in; for it is as dark there as all along the breastworks."

"No men appear to be stirring in this part of the camp, though there are plenty of them not ten rods from us," added Deck.

"But there is a line of sentinels all along the inside of the breastworks. I made out the men before it was as dark as it is now. If it wasn't for them we could climb over it, and go back to our camp," said Fronklyn. "Our men have two or three batteries on the field, and they are firing at intervals. The artillerists inside the fort are standing by their guns, and they fire them once in a while to show that they are awake."

"I think we had better reconnoitre the situation, and we may find some hole we can crawl through," suggested Deck, as he walked towards the creek which bounded the intrenchments on the west.

"Do you expect to get out this way?" inquired the sergeant.

"Perhaps we may possibly do so," replied the lieutenant.

"Impossible; I have looked into that creek before. It is wide near the river, and after the freshet of the last three days it is a rushing torrent, and the great river is not much better out in the middle," protested Fronklyn.

"Well, we must do something," Deck insisted earnestly. "I am going to move over where there is something going on. We can't afford to waste our time while we have any of it on our hands."

"All right, Lieutenant; I will follow you wherever you go," returned the sergeant.

Deck led the way towards the centre of the camp; but he had not gone two rods before he stumbled over the form of a dead trooper, one of the number who had been unhorsed in the charge of the platoon. Half a dozen more of them lay near the spot where the heaviest of the fighting had been done. Probably the wounded had been picked up and borne to the hospital.

"Lie down, Sergeant!" said Deck, as he did so himself.

A mounted officer rode along the line of sentinels as far as the creek, evidently assuring himself that all was safe in this part of the camp. He paused a moment at each of the guards, and finally turned his horse and rode back the way he had come.

"We must get over by the river, and see how it looks there," said Deck when the officer had passed out of hearing.

"Then we had better snake it; for if we stand up it may attract the attention of the sentinel nearest to us," suggested the sergeant, as he began to crawl after the manner of the reptile he had mentioned.

The lieutenant followed his example; for he realized that a moving object could be made out in the darkness. By this slow process of locomotion they reached the bank of the river, and heard the dull flow of the water from the middle of the great stream. The bank was high and steep; and it was soft and wet. From this point they could see a steamboat,—a small affair. It was headed up the river; but the light of the fires in the forward part of the craft enabled them to see her, and to make out her position.

On the shore above her there was a considerable crowd of men; but the observers were too far off to be seen distinctly. They could make out by the light of the steamer's fires two large flatboats, and a much smaller craft was made fast to the stern of the steamer. Deck had an idea, but he did not mention it. Stepping over the bank of the river, he began to descend the steep and slippery declivity; and Fronklyn, with a mental protest, followed him.

A NIGHT ADVENTURE ON THE CUMBERLAND

It was walking by the feeling rather than the sight; for the black waters of the great river seemed to make the darkness more dense than in the camp above. Deck's lessons in reasonable caution came to his mind; and he had quite as much need of them as on the field of battle. A misstep might precipitate him into the dark waters of the rushing stream.

He did not "lose his head," which was exceedingly serviceable to him at the present moment. He had said nothing to his companion in regard to this perilous descent in the darkness, for he was sure Fronklyn would protest against the difficult and dangerous enterprise upon which he had entered; but he was willing that he should follow him, or remain in the camp, as he might think best.

The sergeant was a courageous man, as had often been demonstrated on the field of battle. He was not only loyal to the government, but to the lieutenant; and he would have sacrificed his life rather than abandon him in the present emergency. At the same time, he could see but little hope in the present venture, whatever it might be; for the lieutenant had not informed him in regard to his purpose in descending to the stream.

If he had seen the boat that was made fast to the stern of the steamer, it had no significance to him. He had never been a boatman; and the little craft was not suggestive to him as it was to Deck, who had spent much of his time on the waters of Bar Creek and Green River since his father moved from New Hampshire to Kentucky. He had not spoken of his plan to his associate, partly from the force of habit as an officer, and partly from the fear of being overheard by some one on the shore above. They had crawled, "snaked it," nearly half a mile, and had come to a point near the body of the Confederate troops.

It was not easy to stand up on the miry slope of forty-five degrees, and the feet of the leader had a tendency to give way in the mud. He took an angling course, which would require him to move five or six hundred feet up the river before he reached the water. He had left his sabre where his companion had removed it; but he still wore his belt, which he had replaced after he came to his senses; and the small revolver was suspended where the hip pocket would have been if his trousers had been provided with one.

He had nothing on that impeded his movements. Their slow progress in "snaking" it for so long a distance led the lieutenant to believe it must be ten or eleven o'clock in the evening. He continued his march on the diagonal of the slope, but with the greatest difficulty; and he often had to stop and rest from the exertion of the struggle with the mud. At the end of an hour, as Deck judged it might be, he had made about one-third of the distance to the water, and halted to recover his breath. At this pause in the descent Fronklyn came up with him. Both of them were out of breath, and neither of them spoke, though they were out of hearing of the enemy.

"This is a hard road to travel," said Deck, when he was more nearly in possession of his wind.

"That's right; but why we are travelling it I will be hanged if I can see," replied Fronklyn, his tones indicating that he was much disgusted with the present situation. "You did not tell me what you intended to do, Lieutenant."

"Because I did not wish to inform any of the enemy who might be within earshot of us," replied Deck. "I did not go off at half-cock when I started on this tramp. You have a first-class pair of eyes, Sergeant; and I supposed you would use them, and could see for yourself what I was about."

"I have used my eyes for all they are worth; but I will be hanged if I can see what you are driving at through this mud."

"Have you seen a steamboat anywhere on the great river?"

"I reckon I have; but I don't take it that you are going to her."

"That is just where I am going," answered Deck impressively and decidedly.

"Going to the steamboat!" exclaimed the sergeant incredulously.

"Precisely so."

"Then I suppose you expect to procure a passage in her across the river, if that is where she is going; and I can't see what else she is here for."

"I don't know why she is here, for I am not in the counsels of the enemy."

"You seem to be in a fair way to become better acquainted with the Southern army."

"The steamer may have brought supplies for this camp; and according to all accounts the soldiers inside of the breastworks are in need enough of them. I don't know what she is here for, though I have a suspicion that our forces will not find the enemy in their intrenchments in the morning. But, Sergeant Fronklyn, you are disgruntled, as I have never seen you before."

"Because it seems to me you are running as fast as the mud will permit you into the very jaws of the lion; or, if that is too figurative for your plain common-sense, into the hands of the enemy. You are a lieutenant, and they will be glad to get you; for they have not bagged many officers in the last twenty-four hours," replied Fronklyn.

"Sergeant, if you are dissatisfied with my movements, we are not in the camp or in the field, and you are at liberty to retire and look out for yourself."

"I would drown myself in the river before I would do that!" protested the sergeant warmly. "I hope I have not said anything disrespectful, Lieutenant. On the field I have followed you wherever you chose to go, or wherever you chose to send me. I have no doubt you know just where you intend to go, and just what you intend to do; but I am in darkness, and wish for light. I am going it blind; but I will follow you, even if it be into a Confederate prison-camp, Lieutenant!"

"I have no secret to keep from you, my dear fellow," said Deck, reaching out, and grasping for the hand of his companion, which he found, and pressed earnestly. "We have stood together on some fighting ground, and we will not fall out here, though we may fall down this slippery bank. You can see that I could not stop to make explanations within reach of the sound of the enemy's voices. What's that just above you, sergeant?" asked he, pointing to something on which a gleam of light from the steamer's fires fell.

"It looks like a board," replied Fronklyn; "it may be of use to us in making our way along this bank. I will get it;" and he went up the slope about a rod, and returned with it.

It was a board about ten feet long, and not more than six inches wide, and had probably been dropped from the camp above. The sergeant laid it down, and then seated himself upon it, Deck following his example.

"We may come to gullies made by the rain, and this board will help us in crossing them. I had nearly lost my balance in getting over one of them," added Fronklyn.

"I could not explain before, but I am ready to do so now," said Deck, taking up the conversation where he had left it before.

"Perhaps I ought not to ask an explanation; for I have been accustomed to obey your orders without asking a question, or to follow wherever you led the way," returned the sergeant.

"I have given you no order, Fronklyn; and, if I had, you are no longer under my authority. After a ship is wrecked the sailors look out for themselves," continued Deck. "You have seen the steamer; and you can see it better now than at any time before, for the firemen are piling in the wood, and the furnace doors are open."

The blazing fires under the boiler cast their light on the river and the banks, illuminating the scene ahead of her, but not astern, fortunately for the fugitives seated on the board, or they might have been seen, and their uniforms distinguished by the enemy. Some of this light was reflected to the stern of the steamer, through the openings on the main deck.

"I can see the steamer plainly enough now," said Fronklyn. "It looks as though ropes had been passed from the top of the banks down to the vessel."

"Very likely those are to assist the officers and privates to descend to her; and I wish we had a rope here to help us along," added Deck. "But do you see the small boat hitched to the stern of the steamer?"

"I can see it now plainly enough; but I had not noticed it before."

"I saw it when I first discovered the steamboat, and I have been making for it ever since. I was afraid if I said anything that little craft would be placed out of our reach before we got to it."

"I understand it all now!" exclaimed Fronklyn. "I hope you will excuse me for grumbling, Lieutenant, when I could not make head nor tail to your movement."

"That is all right, my dear fellow; only trust me first, and grumble afterwards, the next time. But we must be moving on."

"What about this board? It is rather heavy to lug the rest of the way," said the sergeant, as he lifted one end of it. "Shall we leave it?"

"It may be of use to us. If I had a pole about six feet long it would help me very much, and perhaps save me from sliding down into the river."

"If we could break the board in two in the middle, it would make two staffs for us."

"We can do that," added the lieutenant.

"How?"

"Shoot it in two."

This answer looked like a joke to the sergeant, and he gave his opinion that the board could not be broken in two in the middle without splintering it from one end to the other. Deck

declared he could manage the case, and asked his associate to find the middle of the piece of lumber. By the time he had done so the lieutenant had taken out his revolver, loaded with six cartridges.

Placing the muzzle of the barrel on the board where Fronklyn pointed to the middle, he fired, repeating the operation till he had discharged it six times. The holes made by the balls were about an inch apart. The reports from the revolvers were only cracks; and, so far as they knew, no one heard them but themselves. Fronklyn put his foot on the board, and then with his hands hold of one end of it, lifted it till it snapped on the line of the bullet-holes. Each of them took one of the pieces, and renewed their tramp.

Deck kept the lead, as before, and placed the board on the lower side; and the sergeant did the same. The staff was as useful to them as the alpenstock to the mountain climber in Switzerland. It enabled them to double their speed, at least, and with much less labor than they had made their way before. The doors of the furnaces on the steamer were closed now, but they could see men descending by the lines to the gang-plank of the steamer.

In due time they arrived within ten rods of the small boat of which they desired to obtain possession. The furnace-doors were again opened to put in more fuel, and the scene was lighted by the blaze again. As a matter of prudence, the lieutenant lay down on his board, and the sergeant did the same.

"Now, Fronklyn, I will make my way to the boat, and bring it down for you to get in; for both of us need not incur the risk of doing this work."

"All right; I agree with you in regard to the risk, but I will do this instead of you," replied Fronklyn.

"Are you accustomed to handling a boat, and especially to rowing?" asked Deck.

"I never handled a boat at all, and never rowed one in my life," answered the sergeant.

"Then I must do this job;" and the lieutenant started on his mission.

Some of the soldiers had gone aboard the steamer, though he could see none on the after deck. Deck approached the river very cautiously, lying down on his board not less than three times when he thought he was observed. King Fortune favored him, for the current of the stream kept the boat swinging out and in. Watching his opportunity, he caught hold of the stern, and leaped into the boat as though nothing ailed his head, either outside or inside.

He dropped into the bottom of it, and peered over the deck of the steamer. Then he hauled on the painter till he brought the little craft up to the taffrail, where with no little difficulty he cast off the rope. He could see the soldiers on the upper bank, and those on the forward part of the steamboat; but they were all too busy to bestow any attention upon him. The current bore the tender rapidly down the stream.

When it had gone to a safe distance, Deck seated himself in the stern-sheets, and put his board in the scull-hole, and forced the boat to the shore, though not without a great deal of difficulty and labor. Fronklyn was on the lookout for it, and sprang lightly into the fore-sheets, making a spring on his board stick. The current took the boat, and no further exertion was necessary. They had escaped from the fortifications, and they were satisfied.

CHAPTER XXV

A BOAT VOYAGE DOWN THE GREAT RIVER

The tender in which Deck Lyon and his companion had embarked was a keel-boat such as is usually suspended by two ropes from either end to the upper extremity of a pole, like an ensign staff. It was about twelve feet long, and was not likely to upset, even in the turbulent water at the middle of the river which drained the Cumberland Mountains in the south-eastern part of the State.

Very heavy rains had been falling for several days, overflowing brooks and creeks so as to make many of them impassable; and the great river was swollen, though not to an unusual height in the rainy season. Deck made no effort at first to direct the craft, for he was well-nigh exhausted by the fatigues of the day and his efforts to escape from the fortification.

He kept his seat in the stern-sheets, as Fronklyn did in the forward part of the boat, which was still abreast of the camp, but well under the high bank of the stream. The enterprise was a success so far, and they were so well pleased to escape from the immediate vicinity of the enemy that they were not disposed to do anything but rest themselves. But in a few minutes they had recovered their breath, and ceased to pant from their exertions.

Left to its own guidance, or that of the current, it had whirled about two or three times; but

Deck was too tired to be disturbed by this movement. Their uniforms were wet through; for it had rained all the afternoon and evening, and the tender had considerable water in her bottom. Under any other circumstances they would have been very uncomfortable; but their satisfaction at the escape from a prison or prison-camp in the near future was the uppermost thought in their minds, and for a time it banished the annoyance of wet and cold.

"If we whirl round like this it will make us dizzy," said the sergeant as a mild joke. "What makes the boat do so?"

"The tender is so happy to get out of Confederate hands that it wants to dance, and it is indulging in a waltz," replied Deck as another pleasantry.

"I wish it wouldn't do so, for I don't like the motion. I suppose you don't intend to continue this voyage down to New Orleans; for that would not be a more agreeable locality than the Beech Grove intrenchments," added Fronklyn.

"I don't believe we shall care to go as far as that."

"How far down do you mean to go, Lieutenant?"

"That depends; if we can get the craft under control, I don't think we need go much farther," said Deck, as he began to feel about in the bottom of the boat.

"What are you fishing for, Lieutenant?" asked his companion.

"I think you had better not use that word any more at present."

"What word?"

"Lieutenant; for I don't care to have my rank published any more on this cruise, for some one on the shore might hear it. Call me Deck; and as you are not a sergeant here any more than I am a lieutenant, I will not call you so; but I forget your first name, as I have never used it."

"They all call me Ben among my friends."

"Very well; Ben it is."

"I am satisfied, Deck, though it seems a little off now to call you by your given name, cut short, though we used to do so before you were promoted. But what are you feeling for?" asked Ben, as his companion continued to poke about him.

"I was trying to find the oars which belong in this boat," replied Deck. "See if you can find them near the bow."

Both of them made diligent search in every part of the boat; but no oars could be found, and it was evident that they were kept on board of the steamer.

"No oars; that makes it bad for us," added Deck.

"I can make a paddle out of my board," suggested Ben.

"Do so if you can," replied Deck as he picked up his own staff.

By this time, after sitting still for a while, both of them were chilled by the wet and the night air, and they needed exercise of some kind to warm them. Ben had a large and sharp knife in his pocket, and he began to whittle the board like a typical Yankee. Deck put his staff into the scull-hole, and made an effort to steer the tender, and thus prevent her from whirling. As a rudder it was a failure; but as an oar, heaving around the stern, he succeeded with much exertion in making a tolerably straight course.

"That village must be Robertsport," said Deck, who had carefully studied all the localities in this region on his map. "There is a big bend of the river here, and we might as well go ashore there as farther down."

"What has the bend to do with our going ashore there, Deck?"

"The water in the river has a tendency to flow straight ahead, Ben; I learned that at Big Bend, on the Green River, near Riverlawn."

"I know the place very well," added Ben.

"When we come to the bend below the village, the current will be likely to shoot us over near the opposite shore."

"But that will take us to the wrong side of the river, and we shall have to get across it afterwards; and, besides, the enemy will be on that side."

"I don't figure it out in just that way, Ben; for the current will take us to the north side of the stream. The river turns to the left, or south; but the water wants to go straight ahead, and that will cast us on the side where we are now: don't you see?"

"Well, I don't see. I am no boatman, and I won't raise any objection," replied Ben. "Here is your paddle. I had to cut it out in the dark, and work by faith, and not by sight, so that it is not handsome."

"It does first rate, Ben; but we shall have to do some hard work in holding the tender to the shore when the current throws it on the bank; and probably it is just as high as it is at the fort."

"I will do my share of the work if you will tell me how, Deck."

In a few minutes more the boat began to feel the current as it came to the bend, and they could hear the roar of the water as it was dashed against the shore. With the paddle Ben had made, Deck contrived to keep the tender from whirling about, though he had to work very hard to do so. With the bow pointed to the shore, which he could now make out in the gloom of the night, she was going ahead very rapidly, having now the full force of the stream.

"What am I to do, Deck?" demanded Ben, who did not feel at all at home while the craft was in the midst of her gyrations.

"The boat is going head on against the shore; but I don't know what sort of a landing-place it will prove to be. But whatever it is, take the painter in your hand"—

"Who?" cried Ben.

"The painter. The rope made fast at your end of the tender," replied the skipper of the craft impatiently; for the sergeant was entirely ignorant of nautical terms. "Take the end of the rope in your hand, and jump ashore as soon as it touches the land."

"All right; I understand you now," responded Ben, as he seized the painter, and stood up in the fore-sheets as well as the rolling of the boat in the current would permit.

"Now for it!" shouted Deck, as he felt the bottom of the boat strike on its keel.

Ben said nothing, but sprang over the bow of the boat, upon what seemed to be a flat shore, with the rope in his hand.

"Hold on with all your might, or I shall go down stream!" called Deck, as he vigorously plied his paddle in an effort to heave around the stern of the boat so that the current might strike it on the broadside.

The action of the stream helped him, and, assisted by the strength of Ben at the painter, the tender was thrown high and dry on the gentle slope where it had struck. The landing had proved to be a much less difficult task than Deck had anticipated, perhaps because he had skilfully handled the craft so that the current did most of the work.

The leader of the enterprise jumped from the stern-sheets upon the ground, which was a part of the tongue of land formed by the great bend, and extending to the south. Then Deck had a chance to look around him, though it was too dark to make out the situation.

"Where are we now, Deck?" asked Ben.

"I never was here before; but I guess we are not more than six miles below the intrenchments of the enemy on the Cumberland, and they have another breastwork on the south side of the river," replied Deck, as he continued to look about him.

"Where is Robertsport, of which you spoke a while ago?"

"That's on the opposite side of the river, not more than a quarter of a mile higher up. I suppose you are satisfied now that you are on the north side of the stream, and not on the south, as you anticipated, Ben," said Deck.

"Yes; I reasoned that matter out, and found you were right. I suppose you are about used up by this time. I wonder what o'clock it is."

"I have a watch if you have a match."

The sergeant took a tin box from his pocket, and lighted a match from it, and held it under his cap. Deck produced his watch, and found that it was twenty-five minutes past one.

"Later than I supposed," he added.

"We have been on our feet nearly twenty-four hours, and I think you must be about played out," said the sergeant with a gape. "I am tired out; and you are still young, too young to go without your regular sleep."

"But I shall survey this locality before I do anything else."

"I am with you."

"I did not expect to find anything like a flat surface here," continued the lieutenant, as he started to walk towards a high bluff in the direction from which they had come.

It was only a couple of rods from the water, and the flat space where they had come ashore was evidently made by the caving of the earth along the bluff, when the river had been even higher than at present. It was a hill which had possibly turned the river aside from its westerly course to the south at some remote period in the past. There was just such a bluff on the other side of the tongue of land, and possibly a hill there had again changed the

river's course to the westward. But Deck's theory explained the presence of the fortunate flat where they had landed.

"Now we must find a way to get up on the hill above the high bluff," said he, as he led the way up the river.

Beyond the bluff the bank of the river was the same as it had been all the way from the fort, and the flat came to a sudden ending.

"Here is a flatboat," said Ben, who was the first to discover it. "Somebody must live near here."

"This looks like a path up the bank," added Deck, who had been studying the river above. "I think this must be a ferry, Ben; though I should suppose the ferryman would find it hard work to get through the current that brought us down."

It was plain that some work had been done on the path leading up the bank, which was diagonal with the steep slope. It had been dug out, and in the steepest parts there was something built for a fence or a hand-rail. On the opposite side of the river from Robertsport there was a road to the one extending from Harrison to Somerset. Doubtless the ferry, if there was one, was for the use of travellers into Wayne County, all of which lay on the south side of the river.

The fugitives were ready to mount the bluff by the path; but first they went back to the boat, which might be of use to them later if they had occasion to renew the voyage down the stream. They drew it back, and concealed it behind a huge rock which the current had laid bare. Then they mounted the path to the top of the bluff. Not ten rods from the shore they found a cabin, around which were some fruit-trees and the dried stalks of corn, showing that the land had been cultivated.

"This is some negro's house," said Ben, as they halted under a tree not two rods from the cabin, which was nothing more than a shanty.

"It looks like one. Very likely the ferryman lives here," replied Deck. "But there is some kind of a row going on in that cabin."

"It seems to be lighted up as though something was happening there at this time of night. We will go up nearer and look into the matter," returned Ben, as he walked towards the cabin, and stationed himself at the only window on that side of the building.

They listened for some time, and heard the voices of four different white men, as they judged from their dialect.

"I done tole you I can't cross de riber to-night. We should all be drowned, shore," replied an unmistakable negro.

CHAPTER XXVI

FOUR FUGITIVES FROM THE BATTLE-FIELD

The whinnying of a horse near the two wanderers attracted their attention, and Fronklyn went over to look at the animal. He found four of them hitched to the trees, all of them wearing cavalry saddles. The sergeant still had his carbine slung at his back. He unslung the firearm, thinking he might have occasion to use it. He knew the lieutenant had reloaded his revolver after making with it the holes across the board which had proved so serviceable to them.

In his report to the Confederate authorities at Richmond, General Crittenden alludes to a battalion of cavalry, of which some officers and privates were absent on furloughs, and of which all but about twenty-five ran away. It is possible that the four troopers who were trying to force the negro to ferry them over the river belonged to the number.

"Cavalry," said the sergeant as he returned to the lieutenant.

"They have threatened to shoot the negro if he don't ferry them over to Robertsport," added Deck, who had remained at the window of the shanty. "They called him Cuffy; and when they threatened to kill him, he rushed out of the house. I saw him go into the barn or outhouse in the rear. The men lost sight of him when they followed him out, and perhaps thinking he had gone to his boat, they went off in that direction. Let us find the negro."

They went to the shanty, which did duty as a barn; but Cuffy had concealed himself, and they could not find him. Deck called him by name several times; and if the ferryman was not extremely stupid, he could understand that neither his voice nor his speech was that of the troopers.

"Who's dar?" responded the negro, after a long delay.

"Come out here, and we will help you out of your trouble," added Deck.

"Who be you uns?" inquired Cuffy, which proved later to be his real surname.

"We are your friends."

"Whar dem sogers now?" asked the terrified ferryman.

"They moved off towards the river."

"Den dey done gone to steal my boat!" groaned the negro, coming out of his hiding-place with a gun in his hand.

As the wanderers followed him out of the barn, they saw in the darkness that his head was thickly covered with white wool, and he must have been well along in years. He evidently kept his gun and ammunition in this out-building, for he had a powder-horn and shot-bag suspended from his shoulders.

"What are you going to do with that gun, Cuffy?" asked Deck, who was rather astonished to see him armed.

"I's gwine to shoot one of dose men if dey try to kill me, as dey done sworn dey would," replied the ferryman.

"Better not do anything of that kind, Cuffy," said Deck. "We will stand by you, and we can fire shots enough to kill the whole of them."

"Who be you uns, Mars'r?" asked the ferryman, gazing at them, and trying to make them out in the darkness.

"We are Union soldiers, just escaped from the enemy," answered Deck.

"Bress de Lo'd!" exclaimed the negro. "Dem men was Seceshers, and is gwine to steal my boat. It's all I have to make a little money for de contribution-box, and ef I lose it I'm done ruinged."

"Never mind the boat, Cuffy," continued Deck, as he led the way to the four horses; for he had seen the Southrons go off on foot, and knew they had not taken them. "Mount one of these animals, Ben."

He led out one of them, and put himself in the saddle, while the sergeant did the same with another.

"Can you ride a horse, Cuffy?" asked the lieutenant.

"I done ride 'em all my life."

"Get one of the others, then. Can we get to the ferry on horseback?"

"For sartin, Mars'r; some folks goes down to de boat on hosses, and we swim 'em ober de riber," replied Cuffy, as he mounted the animal he had chosen. "My son comes ober dat way."

"Now lead the way to the ferry. Do they know where you keep your boat?"

"Dunno, Mars'r; but I reckon dey find it."

Cuffy conducted the wanderers nearly to the Harrison road, and then took a path towards the river, arriving in a few minutes at the head of the descent to the flat below.

"Not too far, Cuffy; fall back a little, where the men cannot see you," said Deck in a low tone.

"But I's gwine to shoot 'em if dey touch my boat," said the owner, his determination indicated in his tones.

"Don't do it, and don't let them see you," added Deck in a low tone, but with energy enough to impress the negro.

"Dey gwine to steal my boat!" groaned Cuffy; and his agony seemed to be intense. "Den whar I git any money for de missions?"

"Never mind your boat, man. I saw it down below; it is not worth much, and I wouldn't give two dollars for it," said Deck somewhat impatiently.

"I takes folks ober de riber in it, and some days I makes twenty cents wid it. Can't affode to lose it, Mars'r," protested Cuffy.

"If you lose it, I will give you another."

"Dat so? Whar's yo' boat?"

"It is down below there, and you will not have to wait a single hour for it."

"Whar you git dat boat, Mars'r?"

"No matter about that now; I will tell you when we have more time," replied Deck, as he rode his horse to a tree, followed by both of his companions, and secured him to the sapling, as did the others.

Returning to the bank, they lay down upon the ground, where they could see the four troopers without being seen. They had found the negro's flatboat, and carried it to the stream. This was done, perhaps, half a mile above where the wanderers had landed, and the current was not so violent as it was where the water concentrated all its force against the lofty bluff.

The Southrons put the boat into the water after they had tipped it over, and emptied out the leakage or the rain which it contained. Then they seated themselves equidistant fore and aft in the rickety craft, and pushed off.

"I knowed dey was gwine to steal my boat," groaned Cuffy again, as the skiff receded from the shore.

"Don't say that again!" said Deck, disgusted with the ferryman. "If you do, I won't give you any boat for the one you lose!"

"I lub dat boat, Mars'r. Berry ole friend ob mine," pleaded Cuffy.

"Say no more about it; perhaps you will get it again, for those men only wish to get across the river," added Deck in a milder tone. "You would not take them over, and they intend to ferry themselves across."

"I can't ferry dem ober in de night, when de riber is ragin' like a roarin' lion seekin' wem he mout devour. No, sar; ef Mars'r looks long enough, he's see dem men all devoured like as ef de ragin' lion had 'em in his gills," said Cuffy very impressively, as though he was within hail of a funeral. "Don't b'lebe dey done been converted."

Two of the troopers had paddles, or something that was a cross between a paddle and an oar; for the wanderers had seen them in the boat in the darkness. They forced the skiff out into the current, headed directly for the opposite shore. They did very well so far; but in a few moments more the full strength of the stream struck them, and the flimsy craft was carried down the stream at a rapid rate. They were farther out than the keel-boat had been; and the rushing water, lifted into waves by its own force, began to tumble about as it would have done in the wilder rapids of Niagara.

None of the four were skilful boatmen, and there seemed to be no one in particular in the skiff to take the lead. As usually happens on such occasions, the two men without paddles were frightened, and stood up, which was the worst possible thing they could do. The two who were managing the boat did not agree as to the method of handling it, and each wanted his own way of doing it. Each of them was sure he could do it, and that the other could not.

The couple with the paddles could not use them; and the skiff whirled as it mounted the waves, and then it heeled over from one side to the other. The two men who were standing up jumped from one side to the other; then one of them lost his balance, and tumbled overboard. The second tried to save him, and one of the two with the paddles went to his assistance, the result of this, throwing the weight nearly over on one side, capsized the boat, and the next instant all four of them were floundering in the uneasy tide.

"De boat done tip over!" exclaimed Cuffy, as though his companions on the bluff could not see for themselves what had happened.

"Perhaps we can save the men!" said Deck, as he rose from the ground and ran with all his might to the path leading down to the landing of the ferry, closely followed by the sergeant.

"Sabe de boat!" shouted Cuffy, trying to keep up with them, though he soon fell far behind them.

The lieutenant was first to reach the foot of the path, and saw the four unfortunates whirling through the agitated current, directly towards the bluff where the keel-boat had been thrown on the flat. They were too far out for him to reach them, and he could do nothing. It was plain that not one of them could swim, and if they had been able to do so at all they could have done nothing in the boiling flow of the rapid current. They were swept down the stream, and being farther out from the shore than the other boat had been they were not dashed upon the flat.

Deck and Fronklyn watched them till they disappeared behind the bend, though one was seen to go down before he reached it, and the others must soon have followed him. The skiff had gone on ahead of them, and was the first to pass beyond the view of the observers. The lieutenant, with the hope that he might save the men if they were thrown on the flat in an exhausted condition, had nearly reached the high bluff. The sergeant had ceased to hurry when he realized that nothing could be done for the doomed troopers. They had to pay the penalty of their own folly.

Fronklyn and Cuffy soon joined Deck, the negro putting all his strength into his lamentations for the loss of his boat. He did not seem to realize that four men had just passed into eternity; but Deck had more charity for him after he said he loved the flimsy craft, and

reproached him no more.

"Your boat is gone for the present, but you may find it again," said Deck with an effort to comfort him. "It will be cast ashore by the current, or be drawn into some eddy. When the river gets quiet again, you can go down stream and find it in some place where the logs gather on the shoal places."

"I dunno, Mars'r; how kin I go down de riber when I done lose my boat?" demanded Cuffy.

"Come with me," said Deck, as he led the way to the rock behind which they had left the steamer's tender. "There is a boat you can use till some one claims it."

"Glory Hallelujah!" exclaimed the negro, when he saw the keel-boat; and he was skilled enough to perceive even in the darkness, that it was a vastly better one than the skiff he had lost.

"Whar you git dat boat, Mars'r?" asked Cuffy, disturbed by the suggestion that some one might claim it.

"Can you keep a secret, Cuffy?" asked Deck.

"Kin keep a hund'ed on 'em."

"That's too many for one man to keep," replied the lieutenant, who decided not to admit, as he had before intended to do, in what manner they had escaped from the enemy's camp. "This boat belongs to the steamboat up by Mill Springs; we have no further use for it, and we shall leave it here. But you haven't lost anything of any value to-night. We shall want two of the men's horses, as they have no further use for them, and you can keep the other two, Cuffy. You can sell them for money enough to make you rich."

"Bress de Lo'd!" cried the ferryman.

"Come along now, and we will go back to your shanty," said Deck, as he led the way to the tree where the horses had been secured. They all mounted, and rode back to the cabin, where the tired trooper and his officer went to bed in the barn on some straw they found there.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE OWNER OF THE MANSION ON THE HILL

Cuffy took care of the horses, for two of them were to belong to him, giving them even a feed of corn-meal mixed with water, which was all he had to give them. He hitched them in the barn with the exhausted soldiers of the Riverlawn Cavalry, though it was rather close quarters for them. Deck preferred the out-building to Cuffy's bed, which he offered them.

It was four o'clock in the morning when the lieutenant and the sergeant retired upon their bed of straw, though there was plenty of it, and it was a luxury to men who had been accustomed to lie at night on the ground. They had been fully twenty-four hours on their feet, and had been through a great deal of excitement during the day and the night. They were asleep about as soon as they struck the bed.

Cuffy came to the barn about nine o'clock in the forenoon to attend to the horses. He led them all out to water, and then gave them another feed in tubs. His guests had complained of fatigue, and he allowed them to sleep as long as they desired.

It was noon when Fronklyn awoke, and he had slept his full eight hours. Deck put in another hour; for he was younger than his companion, and needed more sleep. The sergeant had worn his overcoat all the day and night, though he had several times been tempted to throw it away, especially when they were climbing down the steep bank of the river. He was glad he had not done so when he went to bed on the straw.

He had given his blanket to Deck, though it required a great deal of persuasion to induce him to accept it; but Fronklyn had an overcoat. It was not so cold as to interfere with the slumbers of the weary soldiers; and when they woke they felt like new men. They went to a brook that flowed through the negro's farm, and had a thorough wash to freshen them up. The sergeant then renewed the plaster on his head, and examined the wound of his companion. The swelling had nearly all gone down, though there was still a soreness there; but the patient felt well enough for duty.

"Here we are, Ben; what is the next move on the checker-board?" said Deck, as they returned from the brook to the barn.

"Considering what we have been through since the sun went down last night, I think we are

very well fixed to-day. We have a couple of horses to go where we please, and all we have to do is to ride back to the outside of the Beech-Grove camp of the enemy; for we have seen enough of the inside of it," replied Fronklyn.

"We can't be many miles from it; and when we get there I think we shall find our army in possession of it. That steamer whose boat we borrowed, and the other craft about there, must have been busy ferrying the enemy across to the Mill Springs fortification," added Deck. "But what do you suppose has become of all those cavalry men, and infantry too, that ran away from the battle-field?"

"I don't imagine that a great many of them went back to the intrenchments, and probably most of them are wandering about the country in this vicinity," replied the sergeant. "The farmers' corncribs, if there is anything left in them, will suffer for the next week. They are not bashful, those fellows; and I have no doubt they will visit the houses, and order meals as they would at a hotel."

"We are liable to meet them on our way back to the camp; and if we have anything they want, they are likely to take it. Your blanket and overcoat would be useful to them, and so would the horses. But I fancy they would move about in small parties, and we may be able to take care of ourselves. You have your carbine, and I have my revolver."

"That looks like a big house on the hill back of us," said Fronklyn, pointing to the mansion.

"Mornin', Mars'rs!" shouted Cuffy, coming from his shanty to meet them. "You done git up; I don't 'sturb you, coz I knowed you was tired out."

"We are glad you didn't, and we feel first-rate this morning. Whose house is that on the hill?" asked Deck.

"Dat's de mansion ob Cun'l Hickman, my ole mars'r," replied Cuffy. "He owns all de land 'bout here, mor'n tousand acres. He let me live on dis corner when he want me to run de ferry, and I stops here eber since."

"Then he must be very rich."

"Rich! Dat ain't no name for't. He's got more money'n de Bank ob London, 'n I reckon he could buy out de State of Kaintuck. He's pow'ful rich, Mars'r."

"Is he a Secessionist?" asked Deck.

"Cun'l Hickman! Secesher! No, sar! He's de out-en-outenish Union man in Kaintuck," returned Cuffy, whose politics were not at all in doubt with his guests. "De Seceshers done raided his place fo' times; yesterday was de last time, 'n I reckon dem fellers dat wanted me to ferry 'em ober de riber in de night is de ones dat did it. I done seen 'em on de hill fo' dark. I done see lots o' men wid guns, and some on hossback dis mornin' strollin' 'long de riber an' ober de country."

"Which way did they come from, Cuffy?" inquired Deck.

"Most on 'em com 'd down de Harrison road, an' some on 'em was beat'n' across de farm."

"Have you heard of the great battle that was fought over by Logan's Cross Roads?" asked the sergeant.

"I don't hear ob no battle," replied the negro, opening his eyes wide enough to let them drop out of their sockets. "Gollywhimpers!" suddenly exclaimed Cuffy, turning his gaze towards the mansion on the hill, "dar comes de cun'l on a hoss!"

The lieutenant and the sergeant looked in the direction indicated by the ferryman, and saw a man riding down the hill at a breakneck speed. As he came nearer they saw that he was a person over sixty years of age, with long, flowing white hair, like one of the patriarchs of old. He wore a soft black hat, well back on his head. He looked behind him frequently, as though he expected something to transpire in that direction. As Cuffy said, his mansion had been raided several times, and he might have got used to such events.

"W'a—w'a—w'at's de matter, Cun'l Hickman?" shouted the ferryman, before the gentleman came within ten rods of him.

The rider did not check his speed till he reined in his horse in front of the negro and his guests. He looked at the two officers without giving any attention to Cuffy, and seemed to be astonished to find them there.

"I see that you wear the blue," said the colonel, addressing Deck, whose shoulder-straps apparently excited his attention.

"We belong to the army of the United States, sir," replied Deck.

"Then how do you happen to be here?" demanded the colonel in a tone and with a look of great severity.

"It would take some time, Colonel Hickman, to answer your question in full," returned Deck; "but I will say that we marched and fought yesterday from four o'clock in the morning till dark, and were practically prisoners in the camp of the enemy at the end of the day, but

escaped in the night in a boat we took from a steamer alongside the fortifications at Beech Grove."

"Excuse me for speaking somewhat abruptly, Lieutenant, and give me your hand; for I honor every man that fights or works for his country," continued the colonel. "I am somewhat too old to do either, or I should not be at home."

Deck took the proffered hand, and it was warmly pressed by the planter, and he extended the same courtesy to the sergeant.

"My mansion is beset by a band of ruffians, and I have been obliged to flee for my life," pursued the planter, glancing back at his house as though he expected to see the flames rising from it.

"Do they mean to burn the mansion?" asked the lieutenant, misinterpreting the glance of the owner.

"Not at all; I have no fear that they will do that, for they are looking for my money, for I have some concealed on my premises where they will never find it," said the planter with a significant shake of the head, which was as much as to say, "I have euchred them!"

"I suppose the banks in this part of the State are no longer safe repositories for valuables," added Deck.

"They are not, and I keep a comparatively small amount for current expenses at hand. This same band raided me three days ago, and threatened to hang me in front of my mansion if I did not give up my money; but I would burn the bank-bills rather than permit them to fall into the hands of these miscreants. I had a horse ready as soon as I saw the ruffians coming down the private road from Millersville; and I keep several of my negroes on the watch for them. I escaped on my horse before, as I have done this time."

"How many are there in this band, Colonel?" asked Deck.

"My negroes counted ten of them. These raids are not uncommon events; and there were two or three of them within less than ten miles, sometimes by the enemy's foragers, and sometimes by partisan gangs. The mansion of Mr. Halliburn was captured a few days ago; but a very clever young lieutenant, whose name was Lyon, in command of a detachment of cavalry, entrapped the whole gang of ruffians in the house, and made prisoners of every one of them, without the loss of a man."

"Perhaps I know more about that affair than you do, Colonel Hickman; for my name is Lyon, and I happen to be the officer to whom you allude," replied Deck, looking at the ground.

"Lieutenant Lyon! Is it possible?" exclaimed the planter, taking the young man's hand again.

"But we will not talk about things that are passed and gone, Colonel," interposed the young officer. "I wish I had my platoon, or even half of them, here. Now, what can we do to aid you in this trouble, and free you from the annoyance of such enemies?"

"As you have only a sergeant with you, I don't see that you can do anything, my young friend; though I am as much obliged to you for your good intentions as though you had a whole army behind you," said the planter. "I have been a soldier myself, and I was one of the young Kentuckians that fought in the battle of New Orleans under General Jackson."

"Have you any arms at your mansion, sir?" inquired Deck, as though he had some scheme in his head.

"Plenty of them; enough to supply half of your platoon."

"Can you get back to your house without being seen, Colonel?"

"Easily; back of my house is an avenue, planted with trees, by which I once made my escape while they were looking for me. You can see it on the south side of the hill; and it extends down to the river, the last part of it on the tongue of land, so that it has the stream on each side of it," the old soldier explained.

"If you have such a quantity of arms, where do you keep them?"

"In the spring-house, the brick building on the brook, which you cannot see from here. I have five sons and one daughter; two of the boys are in the army, and three are past the military age, though they belong to the Millersville Home Guards, and were called out for duty three days ago. I expect them home soon; but they have been gone four days now. My overseer, his assistant, and two mechanics, went over to see the fight yesterday afternoon, and they have not yet returned."

"Dar dey is, Mars'r Cun'!" shouted Cuffy, pointing to the Harrison road, down which three mounted riflemen were riding.

"I am glad to see them," added the planter, as the men came up the hill.

The father greeted them heartily, and they began to tell what service they had rendered during the preceding day on the right flank of the field of battle. One of them happened to turn his head, and saw Deck; and, interrupting the conversation that was going on, he

shouted,—

"Lieutenant Lyon!"

The other two, who had also been with the riflemen under command of Captain Ripley, repeated the exclamation.

"We fought under the command of Lieutenant Lyon most of the day yesterday, and he is one of the ablest and bravest officers in the service," said one of the sons. "He is"—

"We will hear that another time, Mr. Hickman; and you may have a chance to fight under me to-day, for your father's mansion is beset by a band of ruffians, who threaten to hang him," interposed Deck. "We muster six men now, and I propose to clean them out."

It was talked over for a little while, and the party soon rode off to one of the openings of the avenue by the river.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE FIGHT BEGINS AT GROVE-HILL MANSION

Colonel Hickman led the way; and, like most Kentuckians of good estate, he rode an excellent horse. He hurried the animal beyond the capacity of the two cavalry horses which had come into the possession of Deck and Fronklyn, and he reached the avenue by the river considerably in advance of the others. He rode into the opening, and disappeared behind the trees.

By this time the lieutenant had an opportunity to examine this approach to the mansion. The road was not more than thirty feet wide, with three rows of trees on each side of it, so that it was really a grove consisting of a variety of trees. It had evidently been laid out many years before, for the ground was completely shaded. The mansion faced the Millersville road, and in the rear of it was quite a village of out-buildings.

The planter halted as soon as he was in the avenue, and waited till the others joined him. After all that had been said about him by the sons, he was willing to leave the management of the affair to Lieutenant Lyon; for, young as he was, he had obtained some experience in defeating and capturing such marauders as those who had taken possession of the great house on the hill. The ruffians were after the colonel's money; a gentleman as wealthy as he was reputed to be must have a considerable sum on hand, as he had admitted, for the payment of his ordinary expenses.

Deck had asked but few questions in regard to the situation, preferring to inform himself more fully when he had seen the premises. The avenue, or grove, was as the owner had described it. At the point where the party had passed into it, the mansion could not be seen at all through the dense foliage of the trees; and the approach to it was entirely safe, even if the ruffians had placed some of their number on guard outside of the dwelling. The covered road was not entirely straight, for several bends and curves made it more picturesque than it would otherwise have been.

It was certainly a very pleasant place for a ride on a warm day; and the young lieutenant had taste enough to appreciate and admire it, though under the circumstances he could not use much of his time in examining its beauties, which he would have been pleased to do at a more convenient season. Just then he looked at it as a strategist rather than as a lover of art.

"I don't quite understand, Colonel Hickman, how you succeeded in getting away from your mansion without having a bullet planted somewhere in your head or body," said Deck, as he surveyed the surroundings. "You came directly down the hill, and not through this avenue."

"As I have told you before, I have been on the lookout for these miscreants since their former visit, when they threatened to hang me to one of my trees if I did not give up what money I had on hand," replied the planter. "I was alone on the estate, and of course I could not defend myself against ten men armed with rifles or muskets. I kept half a dozen of my negroes on the watch upon the road, to notify me of their coming. I had my horse saddled and bridled all the time. As soon as I was informed that the ruffians were coming, I hastened to the stable, mounted, and rode down the hill by the shortest way, in the direction of the road to Harrison. I did not expect to obtain assistance before I reached Jamestown, where I thought some of the Federal troops might be posted. I was glad to find you at Cuffy's, and rejoiced to meet my sons again."

"If there are ten of the ruffians, we shall still be outnumbered," added Deck. "But I hope we shall be able to outmanœuvre them."

"My sons are riflemen, and they are dead shots at a long distance," said the colonel.

"I am aware of that, for I have seen them shoot with the rest of Captain Ripley's men. I think we had better be on the march," added the lieutenant. "We will send out a couple of pickets to feel the way for us. Sergeant Fronklyn shall go for one, and with him one of your sons, to show him the way and explain the situation."

"Warren shall accompany him, and can give him all the information he needs," the planter decided.

The sergeant and the planter's son started the horses, and rode off at full gallop; but they did not continue at this speed for more than half-way to the top of the hill, and they soon disappeared at a bend in the avenue. Deck and the rest of the party followed.

"I think we had better leave our horses here," said Fronklyn, as he reined in his steed. "The sound of the horses' feet may betray us."

"I obey your orders, Sergeant; but the villains will not hear us at this distance," replied Warren Hickman. "I have no doubt they are looking for the money in the house."

At this suggestion they rode some distance farther; and, turning another bend, Fronklyn discovered a three-story building at what appeared to be the end of the avenue. He stopped his horse, and was decidedly opposed to riding any farther. He could not yet see the mansion; but through the trees he saw several other buildings.

"What is the three-story house?" asked the sergeant.

"That is the stable; but it is built on the side of the hill, and there are only two stories on the front," replied Warren.

Both of the riders dismounted; and, after securing the horses to the trees, they walked to the stable. The lower part was a cellar in the side-hill, and appeared to be used as a place for storage. The planter's son led the way into this apartment, and then mounted the stairs leading to the middle story. There were half a dozen horses there, and stalls for as many more. The doors were wide open, and the pickets, or scouts, moved about very carefully.

Warren then looked out of the doors and windows; but not a person could be seen, except some negro men and women, who appeared to be skulking about the premises, apparently ready to run away in case of danger. The sergeant and the rifleman had both unslung their firearms, and were ready for business if they discovered any of the marauders. The planter's son then ascended to the hayloft, and from the windows there surveyed all that could be seen of the premises from them.

"We don't get ahead much," said Warren, as he descended the stairs. "I must get at one of the servants, though they all seem to keep out of harm's way."

"It is time for us to know the situation here," replied Fronklyn, as he followed his companion down the stairs.

As a matter of precaution, Warren closed the great doors, though a smaller one was left open on one side of them. They found that all the horses in the stable were saddled and bridled for use. While he was wondering what this meant, a dozen blacks rushed in through the open door. They seemed to be greatly alarmed.

Adjoining the stable on each side were the carriage-houses; and Warren hastened into one of them, supposing that the marauders were pursuing them; but no enemy followed them. The negroes went into the stalls, and began to lead out the horses.

"What does all that mean, Warren?" asked Fronklyn in a whisper.

"I don't know," replied the planter's son, as he cocked his rifle, and returned to the stable. "What are you about here?" he demanded.

"Mars'r Warren!" exclaimed several of them.

"What are you going to do with the horses, Phil?" asked Warren.

"Who shut the big doors, Mars'r Warren?" asked Phil, who appeared to be an upper servant of some kind.

"What are you going to do with the horses, Phil?" exclaimed the planter's son angrily.

"I thought the robbers had got into the stable, and I wanted to save the horses," replied the servant, breaking down at the tone of the master's son.

"You are lying, Phil! You would not have dared to come into the stable if you had supposed the robbers were here."

"We was gwine to run away on de hosses," added a very black fellow.

"Don't know who shut de big doors, Mars'r, if de robbers don't do it," said another, who was evidently a field-hand.

"I didn't think there was more'n one of them here," added Phil, as he held up a revolver with which he had armed himself after the departure of the planter. "I meant to kill him, and get

away with the horses."

"Perhaps you would have done so."

"I do it for sure."

"Now, where are the robbers?" asked Warren.

"In the house. We don't see any for more'n half an hour. I think they looked part of the house over to find the money, and then went up-stairs to hunt for it," replied Phil, who appeared to be an intelligent fellow, far superior to the rest of them.

"Very well; you may get on the horses, and ride down the avenue till you meet the colonel," added the son of the planter. "Now, Sergeant, we will find the condition of things in the house."

The negroes led all the horses down an inclined plane into the cellar. This was not an uncommon device in large cities to economize space; but the planter had caused it to be built for just such an emergency as the present, and he had made his escape in this manner from the estate. The terrified servants mounted the horses in the cellar, and entered the avenue by the way Warren and the sergeant had left it.

The two scouts passed out of the stable by the same door. Keeping behind the outbuildings, they reached the side of the mansion. Passing entirely around it, they looked in at every window very cautiously; but were unable to see a single guerilla on the lower floor. By an outside door they went into the cellar of the dwelling. They found several places where the earth had been dug up, but not a man was to be seen.

"Now, Warren, I am going up-stairs; and I should like to have you return to the avenue, and bring up the rest of our party as quickly as possible," said Fronklyn in a low tone.

"Up-stairs!" exclaimed the planter's son. "Do you mean to throw away your life?"

"Not if I know myself; but I wish the lieutenant was here," replied the sergeant, who had noted the stairs that led to the next floor.

"I will do as you say, Sergeant; but I hardly expect to find you alive when I come back," answered Warren.

"I believe I can take care of myself; and I think these ruffians have put themselves just where we want them," said Fronklyn, recalling the strategy at Mr. Halliburn's mansion.

Warren left the cellar by the same way they had entered, and made his way around the outbuildings to the avenue. Fronklyn stole up the stairs, after he had removed his shoes, and looked into half a dozen rooms on the first floor. The carpets had been partly torn up, the furniture overturned and broken up, the closets ransacked, and abundant other evidence that the search for money or other valuables had been completed in this part of the mansion.

On the floors of the second story he could hear the tramp of shoes, the cracking and snapping of furniture, and the rough speech of coarse men. The search for money was still in progress; and the planter's son was sure the marauders would not find that which they were seeking. The money might be safe, but that was certainly not the case with the mansion and furniture.

In the great hall, in a corner behind the front door, the sergeant found a large steel safe, with its door wide open, and entirely empty. The planter had evidently removed his valuables, including his books and papers, to what he believed was a more secure depository for them. The robbers had drawn it out from the corner, plainly to search behind it for the hidden treasure. Fronklyn opened the front door of the mansion, and then deposited himself behind the safe, the house door concealing him on the open side.

His carbine was in condition for immediate use, and he had taken a revolver from the horse he had ridden belonging to the trooper who had perished in the river. The noise up-stairs continued, and he had become somewhat impatient for the appearance of the rest of the party. He was inclined to "open the ball;" but he concluded that it would be a piece of rashness for him to do so, and he refrained from doing anything. Between the door and the safe he obtained a full view of the head of the staircase.

"There comes the planter!" shouted some one in the hall above.

"Hang him!" yelled another.

"Down-stairs all together!" cried the first speaker, who was perhaps the leader of the ruffians.

He was the first to appear at the landing. Several voices repeated the cry to hang the colonel. At that moment a shot was heard, and the first ruffian came tumbling down the steps. The next instant the one behind him shared his fate, and both of them lay motionless at the foot of the stairs.

A moment later Deck rushed in through the open door, followed by the three riflemen.

CHAPTER XXIX

A NEW METHOD OF OPERATIONS

The fall of the two ruffians evidently created a panic among the robbers, for they all retreated from the head of the staircase. They could not see the person who had fired the shots. Fronklyn had used the heavy revolver of the trooper, reserving his carbine for more difficult practice. There was a pause, for no more victims were in sight.

"You are in a dangerous position, Lieutenant Lyon," said the sergeant, as soon as Deck rushed into the hall.

"Where are you, Sergeant?" asked the officer, as he retired from his exposed situation.

"Behind the safe," replied Fronklyn. "Ask one of the planter's sons if there are any other stairs from above."

"Another staircase at the rear of the hall," answered Warren.

"Go there quick!" said Deck, as soon as he had mastered the situation. "If any one attempts to come down, shoot him on the instant! But let them surrender if they will do so."

"Surrender!" exclaimed Harlan in disgust. "I don't feel exactly like letting one of the men that want to hang my father surrender."

"Let them surrender!" replied Deck very decidedly.

"From my position I could manage the whole of them," interposed the sergeant.

"You are in a safe place to do so," added the lieutenant.

"Some of the party ought to look out for the outside of the house, or the ruffians will escape from the windows," suggested the sergeant.

"Colonel Hickman is out-doors, with his negroes, to keep watch of the windows," answered Deck. "You have begun the fight here on the plan we adopted at Mr. Halliburn's."

"I was thinking of fighting it out alone when one of the ruffians up-stairs shouted that Colonel Hickman was coming; and the cry was to hang him. They started to come down, and I dropped two of them; the others ran away. I can dispose of them as fast as they show themselves," Fronklyn explained.

"Give them a chance to surrender before you kill them, Sergeant."

At that moment a shot was heard from the rear end of the hall, and the lieutenant hastened to ascertain the occasion of it. One of the ruffians had attempted to come down the back stairs, and Warren had put a rifle-ball through his head. There were only seven of the marauders left in the house, and the two parties were equalized.

"Up-stairs!" hailed Deck, when the third ruffian had fallen.

"What's wanted?" shouted some one who was prudent enough to keep out of sight.

"You may surrender if you prefer that to being shot," replied Deck.

"On what terms may we surrender?" demanded the spokesman of the second floor.

"No terms."

"Do you mean to murder us all?"

"It would serve you right. You came here to hang Colonel Hickman, and you would have done so if he had not found friends to assist him in defending his property and his life," added the lieutenant with proper indignation.

"We did not intend to hang him if he gave up his money. He is a rich man, and he could afford to part with some of it," said the spokesman.

"That is the argument of pirates and robbers. If you wish to surrender, say so; and do it quick!"

"We have nothing more to say," returned the spokesman.

For an hour longer the situation remained the same. But it required only Fronklyn at the main staircase, and Warren at the rear one, to keep the seven ruffians where they were. The villains were all armed, the planter said; and the lieutenant was not willing to sacrifice the life of even a single member of the loyal party. But the sergeant was impatient to terminate the affair. Deck had seated himself in the parlor in the midst of the broken furniture, where he could talk with the sergeant.

"This is becoming rather monotonous," said the latter.

"I don't think it is prudent to go up and attack the ruffians," replied Deck.

"But I think that something can be done from the outside," suggested Fronklyn.

"What?" asked Deck.

"I don't know."

"I will go out and see if anything can be done. I should like to return to the camp of the Riverlawns; for I suppose my father and the others still believe that you and I were killed in the fight at the intrenchments," replied Deck, as he passed out of the house at the front door.

He found Colonel Hickman on the end piazza of the mansion, seated in one of the armchairs. But he was astonished to see the display of arms near him; and he concluded that the weapons the planter kept in his spring-house had been brought up by the negroes to the piazza. At least a dozen rifles were standing against the side of the house, and a box of revolvers was near them. On each side of the colonel was a brass field-piece, with several boxes which he supposed contained ammunition for them.

"You seem to be ready for battle, Colonel Hickman," said Deck, as he surveyed the armament.

"I am ready; and I expect to have a use for these rifles and field-pieces before night," replied the planter.

"To-day?" queried Deck.

"I expected three times as many as came this morning; but I suppose the rest of them have cleaned out some other mansion. The ruffians in the house promised to come with thirty men when they were here before. If all the white men belonging on the plantation had not been absent, we should never have let this lot of infernals come near the place."

"But I think we had better get rid of the lot here now before we entertain another horde of them," suggested the lieutenant.

"The sergeant appears to have locked up the ruffians in the second story as though he meant to keep them there the rest of their natural lives," replied the planter. "We have not yet lost a single one of our number."

"It is the policy of war to save your own men while you destroy the enemy," added Deck. "The next thing to be done is to drive the ruffians out of the house."

"That seems to be easier said than done," replied the colonel, with an inquiring look at the young officer. "How do you propose to do it?"

"I don't know that it can be done; but there is nothing like trying. I suppose you are still a rifleman, Colonel Hickman?"

"I am, as I have been since I was a dozen years old. I have my old rifle here," he answered, pointing to the dozen of them resting against the side of the house. "I judge that you have some plan in your busy young head, Lieutenant. I am ready to obey all your orders, without regard to my age."

Deck stated his plan, which he had arranged after a survey of the surroundings of the mansion. It involved a change of position among the men, the most important of which was placing the planter behind the safe in the hall, thus releasing Fronklyn for more active duty. The colonel was willing, and even glad, to take the position assigned to him, and, like a good soldier, asked no questions.

"But what about the attack you expect this afternoon?" asked Deck.

"I have put my servants on picket, as they have been for several days. They are all mounted, just as they came back from the avenue. They are all faithful to me, though I don't expect them to do any fighting; but they can keep watch as well as white men."

"Then, if you are ready, Colonel, we will go to the front hall of the house," said the lieutenant, as he led the way.

At the door he called the sergeant from behind his breastwork, and put the planter in his place. The old soldier had hardly shown himself in the hall before a shot was fired down the stairway. Doubtless one or more of the ruffians had been on the lookout for the appearance of a man in the hall below; and as the planter passed behind the open door, the opportunity had been used.

Fortunately the venerable planter was not hit; for the enemy had only such old flint-lock guns as General Crittenden describes in his report of the battle of Mill Springs, and they were far from being reliable weapons. The bullet shattered the edge of the door, and no other damage was done. The veteran proved that he was still an active man; for as soon as he was behind the steel fortress, he cast a searching glance up the stairs.

On the landing he discovered a head on the floor; for the man who had fired the shot was lying where he could see down into the hall. It would have been better for him if his feet had been where his head was; for the planter raised his rifle, and fired at almost the same

instant. His companions drew his body back without exposing themselves to the deadly fire from the hall.

"Flickens is killed!" exclaimed one of them; and the enemy were one less in number.

The planter, with his rifle in position for instant use, fixed his gaze upon the head of the staircase; but no one now was to be seen there. Deck and the sergeant had passed into the parlor, the door of which was next to the safe, after the colonel had discharged his rifle.

"Are you all right, sir?" asked the lieutenant, stopping in a safe place near the door of the apartment.

"I am better off than the fellow I just hit in the top of his head," replied the planter. "I wish another of them would try that experiment again."

"I know you can hold this position, and I will see what can be done elsewhere," returned Deck, as he moved towards the door of the rear room.

"You need not be concerned about me; I can finish the affair if the villains will only show themselves," replied the colonel; and his cheerful tones indicated that he was happy in his new position.

Deck and Fronklyn passed around into the rear of the hall, where they found Warren Hickman standing at the door of the dining-room, where he could not be seen from the head of the back stairs. He was informed that an attempt would be made to drive the enemy from the second story. He was to remain in his present position. The lieutenant and the sergeant passed out at the back door into the kitchen, some distance from the mansion. Here they found the other two sons of the planter, watching the windows on that side of the house.

The end of the cook-room extended back into a grove of trees which surrounded the mansion, and which had given Deck his first suggestion of his method of future operations. Taking the two Hickmans with them, the four went through a window into the grove. The building containing the kitchen concealed them from the view of the ruffians, if any of them went to the windows.

The trees around the mansion, like those in the avenue, were large, and the foliage dense. Deck explained to his companions his plan, and then directed one of them to proceed by the grove to each of the sides of the house, reserving the one by the stable for himself.

"What then?" inquired Fronklyn.

"Each of you will sling his rifle, and then climb a tree commanding all the windows on his side of the mansion," replied Deck. "When you see one of the enemy at a window, use your rifle. I shall be on the stable side."

The lieutenant, who had provided himself with a rifle on the piazza, followed the grove in the direction of the stable, outside of all the out-buildings, while the other three proceeded the opposite way. There were no trees between the mansion and the stable; but Deck made his way to the hayloft, which commanded a view of all the windows of the former. He waited long enough to enable his companions to secure their places in the trees, and then opened a window, which enabled him to obtain a safe position for himself.

While he was waiting, he took a couple of horse-blankets from the harness-room, and fastened them up before the only two windows in the loft. This made the place quite dark, though there was light enough to enable him to find his way. Then he kneeled about ten feet from the open window, darkened to within a foot of the bottom. From this point he discovered, by looking through the window directly opposite his opening, three men sitting on a bed.

He fired his rifle, and saw one of the ruffians drop on the floor.

CHAPTER XXX

THE SURRENDER OF CAPTAIN GRUNDY

Deck Lyon reloaded his rifle without a moment's delay; then resuming his kneeling posture, he gazed at the window again. The ruffian had fallen forwards from the bed, and his companions had picked him up. The observer could see that he had not been killed. The other two laid him on the bed, and it was evident that he had been severely wounded. They examined him, but of course the result could not be known to the lieutenant.

While one of them was tying a handkerchief around the head of the wounded man, the other went to the window. A pane of glass had been broken, and this must have assured him that the ball had come from outside of the mansion. Then he proceeded to look about the

surroundings in search of the person who had fired the shot, confining his gaze to the ground. If he had reasoned at all over the matter, which perhaps his education did not enable him to do, he might have realized that the bullet did not come from the ground.

The man had thrown the window wide open, and was making a very scrutinizing examination of every part of the courtyard. He could see plainly whatever was in front of the window; but this did not seem to satisfy him. He thrust half his body out of the opening, looking both sides of him, as though it had been possible to fire a rifle around a corner. The fellow was certainly stupid enough to be shot, and Deck did not wait any longer to do his work.

The ball struck him in the head as he was stretching his neck to the utmost to enlarge the extent of his vision to a point from which the fatal bullet could not possibly have come. If he could have imagined a line from the round hole in the pane of glass to the point where his comrade's head had been, it would have pointed directly to Deck's locality when he discharged the rifle.

The ruffian dropped from the window-sill to the ground with a heavy thud, and did not move again. The ball had penetrated his brain, and he was the victim of his unscientific observations. But the lieutenant did not remove his gaze from the open window. It seemed very like slaughter to shoot down the enemy in this manner, and a twinge of conscience disturbed him. But he reasoned that he had given the ruffians a chance to surrender, which they had refused to accept. Then they were pirates, robbers, making war for gain against friend and foe alike.



"THE BALL STRUCK HIM IN THE HEAD."

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The third man in the room did not remain there any longer. He could hardly have known what became of the one at the window, unless he had heard the crack of a rifle, and failed to see him again. Under these circumstances it was not difficult for him to reason out the conclusion that the chamber where he was must be a dangerous locality, and he sought a safer place.

The lieutenant continued to watch the window, but no enemy appeared in the room again. It had proved to be a chamber of death. He had hardly lost sight of the foe before he heard the crack of a rifle in the grove. The two Hickmans there were riflemen, and Deck did not believe it would be possible for either of them to fire without killing or wounding his man; but he heard but one shot, and probably four of the land pirates were still living.

Deck waited some time for the sound of another shot, but in vain. He did not believe another ruffian would enter the fatal room commanded by his position, and he decided to seek a more promising place for his operations. Since the shot he had heard, he was confident that none of the enemy would show themselves at the windows. He descended to the cellar of the stable, and then, by the way he had come, reached the kitchen, and then the parlor, at the door of which the planter was fortified.

"Anything new, Colonel Hickman?" he asked.

"Yes, indeed!" exclaimed the sentinel over the staircase. "What have you been doing outside? Something has happened."

"I think we have reduced the enemy by three, and perhaps more," replied the young officer; and he proceeded to explain what he and his companions had been doing.

"You think you have knocked down three or more of the robbers?"

"As many as that."

"Then that explains it!"

"Explains what?" asked Deck, as much puzzled by the exhilarated tones of the planter as by his questions.

"One of them hailed me some time ago, and wanted to see the one in command. I told him the commander was not in the house, but was conducting the fight outside. He asked me to send for him, but I refused to do so. I did not intend to interrupt your operation; for I never take another's command away from him," replied the colonel, indulging at the same time in a chuckle, to which he was somewhat given when pleased.

"Do you know what he wanted?"

"I do; for he shouted down the stairs that he and the rest of them desired to surrender."

"Then we will let them do so," added Deck, who was not disposed to fight after the battle had been won.

"What shall you do with them after they have surrendered, Lieutenant?" asked the planter, plainly much interested in the question.

"I shall do nothing at all with them; I am not the judge or the civil power of Russell County. We have beaten the enemy, and I have nothing further to do with the matter," answered Deck.

The colonel decided not to ask any more questions, though the lieutenant suspected he intended to dispose of the prisoners as he thought best.

"Up-stairs, there!" shouted the planter. "The commander is here now."

"Ask him to come up here, and we will arrange things," returned the ruffian with unblushing effrontery.

"The commander will do nothing of the sort," replied the colonel indignantly. "Do you really believe that he would trust himself with such cutthroats as you are?"

"We will agree not to hurt him, though he has used us very unfairly," said the spokesman. "He has tried to murder all of us!"

"You deserve to be hung; and it would be too merciful to shoot you!" roared the colonel, his wrath getting the better of him.

"Do Union men hang their prisoners?" demanded the ruffian bitterly.

"Prisoners!" exclaimed the planter contemptuously. "You are such prisoners as they shut up in the penitentiary, or hang in the public square."

"Can I see the commander?" asked the spokesman, quite gently by this time.

"I will see him if he comes down into the parlor," said Deck. "I shall make prisoners of them; but I wish to stipulate that neither Sergeant Fronklyn nor myself shall have anything to do with punishing them, either by hanging or shooting after they have surrendered."

"The commander will see you down-stairs; but I will shoot any other that attempts to put his foot on the first stair," shouted Colonel Hickman.

"I will come down," replied the spokesman; and he came to the head of the staircase with a gun in his hand.

"Halt!" cried the planter. "Leave all your arms up-stairs! Have you any pistols about you?"

He passed his musket to one of the others, and did the same with a couple of pistols when the colonel mentioned them. Having complied with the order, he came down the stairs. He was directed to the parlor in which the lieutenant was waiting for him.

"Are you the commander here?" he inquired.

"I am. May I ask what you are?" demanded Deck, without rising from the armchair in which he was seated.

"I am called Captain Grundy."

"Not Mrs. Grundy?"

"Captain Grundy," replied the ruffian, with something of dignity in his looks and manner.

"Have you a captain's commission?"

"Not yet."

"In what service are you?"

"In the service of the Confederate States of America."

"In what regiment?"

"In no regiment; in a company organized by my government."

"A company of Partisan Rangers?"

"But in the service of my country."

"Are you a Kentuckian?"

"I am."

"And your service is to roam over your native State, killing, robbing, plundering your fellow-citizens; a highwayman, a thief, and a murderer," continued the lieutenant very severely. "This is the second time you have visited this mansion for plunder; but you don't come out of it so well as you expected," said Deck with a sneer, evident in his tones as well as his looks.

"Where is the rest of your company, Captain Grundy?"

"On duty in another county."

"But you expect the balance of your command here some time to-day?"

"There will soon be a time when the treatment we have received here will be returned with compound interest," said Grundy with a savage and revengeful look on his ill-favored countenance.

"You wished to see me; what is your business?" demanded the lieutenant.

"I am ready to surrender. You and your gang have murdered nearly all my men here in cold blood. I can do nothing more, and I must yield," replied Grundy.

"Are you a lawyer, Captain?"

"I am not; I am a horse-dealer."

"I should think you might be!" sneered Deck. "Do you think it is right to ride over the State, robbing your fellow-citizens, threatening to hang a planter to a tree for refusing to give up his money?"

"In the service of my country, yes! Kentucky belongs to the Confederacy; and those who fight to keep the State in the exploded Union are traitors, and should be treated as enemies of the State and the Confederacy."

"Suppose I should visit your house, demand your money, and hang you if you did not give it up? Would that be all right?"

"That is another matter," growled Grundy.

"Precisely; the same boot don't fit both feet," returned Deck.

"I am your prisoner; but you need not thorn me with your Union logic."

At this moment the lieutenant heard the voice of Davis Hickman in the hall, talking to his father. He called him into the parlor, and requested him to bring a quantity of cord or straps to him; and he went for them.

"What do you want of cords and straps?" asked Grundy.

"To bind my prisoner."

"Do you mean to hang me?"

"I do not; I leave that job to the regular hangman. He will perform it in due time, I have no doubt," replied Deck, as Davis brought in the cords.

"I don't mean to be tied up like a wildcat," said the captain doggedly.

"Then you do not surrender; and if you wish to do so, you may go up-stairs again."

"I surrender; but I will not be bound like a nigger!" exclaimed Captain Grundy, as he sprang away from the lieutenant, and ran into the back room.

"What's the matter now, Phil?" demanded the colonel, as the mulatto of this name rushed into the hall, panting more from excitement than physical exertion, for his horse was at the door.

Both Deck and Davis pursued the captain; but they were taken off their guard, and neither of them succeeded in getting hold of the ruffian. He fled to a window which some one had

left open, leaped out, and ran towards the front of the mansion. Davis fired his rifle at him; but being "on the wing," he failed to bring him down. Deck, believing that the fight was finished, had left his rifle in the parlor.

"The Lord save us, Mars'r Cun'l!" shouted Phil, as he broke into the hall. "The ruffians, more'n twenty of 'em, is coming up the road on hossback, at full gallop!"

It looked like another fight against great odds.

CHAPTER XXXI

AN UNEXPECTED RE-ENFORCEMENT

Captain Grundy's claim that he was in the Confederate service was undoubtedly pure fiction; and he did not even pretend to have a commission of any kind, not even as a Partisan Ranger. The Riverlawn Cavalry had rendered important service to the State in the suppression of guerilla bands, acting under no authority whatever, plundering and killing Union men. Grundy's force consisted of over thirty men. They were mounted, and doubtless had stolen the horses they rode from the plantations they had raided.

They were simply brigands; they wore no uniform beyond a belt, and had taken no part in the battle of the day before. Their leader was an enterprising man, and seemed to be operating at the same time in several places. Their sole mission was to rob the planters; and they were especially eager to obtain money, though it was a very scarce article in the State.

Lieutenant Lyon had talked with Colonel Hickman about the band, and he had gathered much information in regard to their operations in the northern and western counties. The planter was a fighting man, as well as a strong Unionist. He had been aware of the approach of the gang, and while he had seven white men living on his estate he had felt abundantly able to defend his property.

His spring-house was his arsenal; and it was well stored with arms and ammunition, including two field-pieces. He was not a man to be intimidated, as many loyal citizens had been; and he had made his preparations to give the brigands a warm reception when they paid him a visit, as he had no doubt they would.

After the return of the colonel with his re-enforcements from the ferry, Deck Lyon had not had the opportunity to examine minutely the premises, especially outside of the immediate scene of operations. He had followed Captain Grundy from the mansion when he escaped from the parlor in company with Davis. The latter had fired at him; but the density of the grove interfered with his aim, and the ruffian had suddenly disappeared.

Outside of the grove there were no trees, and the lieutenant saw on a hill the mounted gang riding at full speed towards the elevation on which stood the mansion. The road was a private one, and very narrow. Deck counted twenty-four riders in the distance, for they rode two abreast. As he and his companion came out of the grove to the front of the mansion, the officer discovered something that looked like a mound of earth on one side of the road to the mansion.

"What is that, Davis?" asked Deck, pointing at the work.

"That is the governor's fortification," replied the rifleman.

"The governor's?"

"Not the governor of the State, but my father's."

"What is it?" asked the lieutenant curiously; for he had not been able to make out the use of the mound.

"Come in a little nearer to the mansion, and you will see," replied Davis; and he led the way across a corner of the grove.

"It looks like a fort," added Deck as he obtained a view of the inside of the earthwork.

"That is just what it is," said his companion. "The governor has kept a squad of the servants over on the hill you see at the farther end of the valley through which the road passes, as sentinels. They all have horses; and when they discover the approach of an enemy, they gallop to the mansion, and notify the colonel. We are as careful of our lives here as you have been since you came."

"What's coming now?" inquired Deck, as he heard the tramp of footsteps behind him.

"The governor's coming, and I think we will go and meet him," replied the planter's son; and he led the way through the grove towards the great house.

It was quite a procession that advanced at a rapid pace from beyond the building. At the head of it rode Colonel Hickman, mounted on the horse he generally used. Next behind him came his sons Warren and Harlan. Then came Phil, leading a mule harnessed to a wagon, with all the other servants following it. Last of all came the two field-pieces Deck had seen on the piazza, each of them drawn by two mules. About a dozen negroes appeared in the rear and on the flanks of the column; and the lieutenant wondered where they had come from, though there was a village of huts some distance from the stable.

"How many of the robbers are left in the second story of the mansion?" asked Davis, as the procession approached.

"Only two, I think, though I am not sure," replied Deck; and he proceeded to reckon up the number that had been put out of the way. "Only two."

"Enough to burn the house," added Davis.

As he spoke he raised his rifle and fired. The lieutenant looked at the house, and saw one of the ruffians fall at the open window, over the piazza. No doubt he and the other ruffian who remained in the house had heard the commotion on the premises, and Phil had shouted loud enough to be heard in every room. The one who had gone to the window evidently could not control his curiosity, and it had cost him his life.

"Probably the other has looked out the window also, and has seen the approach of the rest of the gang," said Davis, as he reloaded his rifle. "He can leave now if he wants to; for there is no one left in the house to prevent him from going. But I don't like to have another added to the number of the enemy."

The rifleman walked over to a point where he could obtain a better view of the other window. It was open, but no one could be seen in the room. Very likely he had heard the report of the rifle which killed the other, or the noise of his fall. At any rate, he did not show himself.

"No more game here just now," said Davis; and he and Deck walked over to the fort.

They found the two brass guns in position for use, and Warren in charge of them. Four of the servants, including Phil, were his assistants. The dozen rifles Deck had seen on the piazzas, and the heavy revolvers, were leaning against the trees, or hanging from the branches. The mule-wagon was in the grove, containing the ammunition; the mules harnessed to the fore-trucks of the gun-carriages were at a safe distance, and everything seemed to be ready to open fire upon the enemy.

"Colonel Hickman, you are much more familiar with the situation here than I am," said Deck when he met the planter. "You are a veteran soldier, and I am glad to resign the command, and pass it over to you."

"I accept it, for I know the ground, as you say; but I shall be happy to have your counsel," replied the colonel.

"I have none to offer at present. I will take a rifle, and act with your sons, though they are better riflemen than I am."

"All we have to do is to blaze away when the enemy begin to rise the hill, and I shall use the same weapon. Warren is the chief gunner, and he has trained some of the servants to handle the guns," said the planter, looking down the hill.

"Can any of your negroes handle a rifle, Colonel?" asked Deck, recalling the time when his father's servants had been armed with muskets, and had made good use of them at the "Battle of Riverlawn."

"Some of them can; but I have scruples against arming them for fighting purposes."

"So had my father; but when it came to the question of defending himself and the members of his family against a mob of ruffians such as those now approaching your mansion,—for they threatened to burn his house and hang him to a tree,—he did not hesitate," added Deck, recalling the stirring events of that time. "Of course there was no place for them in the army, though the overseer has kept them in training for the defence of the family and the plantation."

"We have no time to discuss that question now, and the negroes are assisting Warren at the guns," replied the colonel. "But who is that man over on the left? He seems to be running with all his might towards the column of the robbers."

"That must be Captain Grundy who surrendered and then ran away," answered Deck. "But he is too far off even for the riflemen."

The chief of the brigands had taken a wide sweep in order to reach the approaching force of mounted men, and was now about as far from them as from the colonel's fort. The face of the country was uneven, and he soon disappeared behind a hill. Lieutenant Lyon had endeavored to obtain some information in regard to the Riverlawn Cavalry of Warren Hickman as soon as he found the time to do so. But the riflemen were quartered apart from the mounted men, and he knew very little about the squadron. In the morning it was

ascertained that General Crittenden's forces had evacuated the fort, and crossed the river. The sharpshooters, being no longer needed, had been dismissed, and the planter's sons had gone directly to their home.

"There comes Cuffy the ferryman, riding with all the speed he can get out of his poor horse," said Warren, as he pointed to the negro coming across the field from the Jamestown road. "He is devoted to the governor; and I think he brings news of some sort, good or bad."

Between the mansion and the road there was a hill which prevented them from seeing the road; but the negro soon reached the fort, which was his nearest point. He drew in his rein, and stopped his steed at one end of the breastwork. He was out of breath, apparently from excitement rather than exertion.

"Dar's a whole comp'ny of sodjers on hossback comin' down de road!" shouted Cuffy, as soon as he could collect breath enough to speak.

"What are they, Cuffy?" demanded Warren.

"Sodjers! Mars'r Warren."

"Of course they are soldiers; but on which side do they belong?"

"Dressed in blue, Mars'r Warren. Mus' be Union."

"The force must be one, or both, of your companies, Lieutenant," added Warren. "I heard something said about sending them on a reconnoissance when Captain Woodbine dismissed the riflemen. Where is the company now, Cuffy?"

"Dey done halt behind dat hill, and send two men to de top ob it," replied the ferryman, who was quite cool by this time.

"Here comes the governor; and he will be glad to hear Cuffy's news," added the chief of artillery. "We shall be able to drive the brigands off now."

"Drive them off!" exclaimed Deck. "I hope we shall be able to do something better than that."

"What better than that can we do?" asked Warren.

"Do you want to put them in condition to raid the next plantation, and hang the owner if he won't give up his money by to-morrow?"

Colonel Hickman came into the fort, and his son promptly gave him the welcome news. He added that Lieutenant Lyon had some views of his own in regard to the situation, and did not believe in simply driving the enemy away.

"I should be glad to hear your views, Lieutenant," said the planter, turning to the young officer.

"Of course the major or captain in command of the cavalry does not know the country in this vicinity, though Cuffy says men have been sent to the top of the hill to obtain information," said Deck. "But they can see nothing, for there is another and higher hill between them and the enemy. With your permission, Sergeant Fronklyn and myself will join our company if they are in the road. Perhaps the entire squadron is there."

"What is your plan, Lieutenant?" asked the colonel, a little impatient in his manner.

"We ought to capture every one of that gang; and it can be easily done."

"How?"

"I don't know who is in command of the force; but I should suggest to him to send half of his command to a position under cover of the hill nearest to the road, and the other half around the north end of the same hill," replied Deck earnestly. "We shall have them between the jaws of a vise then!"

"Excellent, Lieutenant!" exclaimed the colonel. "The coming of this force is a godsend to us. You and the sergeant can go at once; but you must both have better horses than those old stags the runaways left."

The planter selected two of his best animals for them; and they galloped across the field to the road. As they approached the Riverlawns they were recognized, and a hearty cheer welcomed them.

CHAPTER XXXII

DECK LYON'S PLAN OF BATTLE

Lieutenant Lyon soon ascertained that the force in the road included the two companies of the squadron. The cheers of those who were on the right of the column brought Major Lyon and Captain Woodbine to the front; and as soon as they learned the cause of the cheering they rode forward to meet the returning wanderers.

"I am glad to see you again, Dexter," said the major, as he extended his hand to his son.

"I am just as glad to see you, father," replied Deck, returning the hearty pressure of the hand.

Sergeant Fronklyn was greeted in the same manner, and heartily welcomed by the commander of the battalion. The staff-officer had halted a couple of rods behind the major, to permit the father and son to meet without being observed.

"You come back as from the grave, or a Confederate prison," said the major, still holding the hand of his son, and betraying more emotion than he was in the habit of manifesting.

"I have been neither in a grave nor a prison," answered the lieutenant very cheerfully.

"We concluded that you had been either killed or captured; and I am rejoiced to see you again alive and apparently well."

"I am as well as I ever was in my life; but we must not stop to talk now, father, for the services of your command are greatly needed in this vicinity," said Deck.

"Where?" demanded the major, releasing his son's hand, and beckoning to the staff-officer, who immediately rode to the spot.

"I am very glad to see you again, Lieutenant Lyon," said Captain Woodbine, grasping the hand of the young officer. "We feared that you were a prisoner, or that something worse had happened to you."

"But Dexter tells me that my force is needed here, Captain Woodbine," interposed the major; "and we must hear his story at some other time. Where are we needed, my son?"

"On a hill a mile from here is the mansion of Colonel Hickman," replied Deck, pointing in the direction of the house. "Part of a gang of guerillas have been in possession of it all the morning, and threatened to hang the owner if he did not give up his money."

"It is the old story," added the major.

"But we have shot all but one or two who were in the mansion; and the rest of the gang, twenty-four of them the servants say, are now approaching the hill," continued Deck.

"Then we will not remain here another moment. I sent Knox and Sluder to the top of the nearest hill to make an observation," said the major.

"They cannot see the ruffians, for there is another hill that conceals them," Deck interposed. "I know the lay of the land here, and if you will allow me to give advice which is not asked for I will do so."

"Certainly!" exclaimed the staff-officer, who was the superior of the major. "State your plan at once, Lieutenant."

"By this time Captain Grundy, the leader of the gang, has joined his force. They are advancing by a private road from Millersville," Deck explained. "Colonel Hickman has two field-pieces behind a breastwork, and a few riflemen; and he is ready to give the ruffians a warm reception, though the enemy are four to his one. My advice is that the second company march towards the mansion, with Sergeant Fronklyn as guide, and halt under cover of the hill nearest to the private road. Let the first company march in the opposite direction, with me as guide, and halt behind another hill near the private road."

"Very good!" exclaimed the major. "That is all clear enough; and the plan is to put the enemy between the jaws of a vise."

"That is just what I said to Colonel Hickman when I explained the plan to him," added Deck.

The major led the way up to the main body of the troopers. While the commander was giving his orders to the two captains of the companies, the two sergeants returned from the hill, and reported that nothing was to be seen in any direction, for the view was obstructed by other hills. When Knox had made his report he happened to see Deck. He rushed upon him, grasped him in his arms, and lifted him from the ground as though he had been a baby, hugging him in a transport of rapture, to the great amusement of officers and soldiers.

"I was afeared you had gone where you couldn't hear the bugle-call, littl' un, and I bless the Lord with all my might that you ain't food for the worms or the crows," said the big Kentuckian fervently. "You oughtn't to gone off without me; but I reckon"—

"That will do for now, Sergeant Knox!" shouted Captain Gordon. "We have no time for long stories. Attention—company!"

As Deck rode to his place at the head of the second platoon, Captain Gordon and Lieutenant Belthorpe grasped his hand, and spoke a word of welcome to him. The men in the ranks

greeted him with pleasant words. The first company countermarched; and as the captain came to the position of the second lieutenant, he directed him to march at his side in his capacity as guide. Fronklyn took a similar position at the side of Captain Truman, and both companies moved as the guides directed.

"You have had a hard time of it, Deck," said Captain Gordon as they left the road and entered the field.

"Not very, Captain. Both Fronklyn and myself were knocked from our horses; and it would have been all up with me if the sergeant had not dragged me out of the *mélée*. But I was only stunned by the flat side of a sabre, as Fronklyn was by a pistol-bullet," Deck explained.

"But you were within the breastworks of the enemy?"

"We were, forced in by the crowd of runaways from the battle-field. We both came to our senses, kept out of sight for a while, then took possession of a boat astern of a steamer, and floated down the Cumberland to Robertsport, or a little farther, and got ashore. I haven't time to tell the whole story. Three sons of Colonel Hickman were with Captain Ripley's riflemen; and with them we met the colonel. We cleaned out the robbers from his mansion. I think we had better halt here, Captain Gordon, and do a little scouting."

The suggestion was promptly adopted, and the company came to a halt just at the foot of the first hill. Deck and Knox were sent to the top of the next hill on foot, both armed with carbines. There were trees and bushes on the summit, but not on the sides, of the elevation. They took a position in the shelter of this growth, but the guerillas were not yet in sight. They must have halted for some time; and Deck conjectured that Captain Grundy must have joined them, and had taken the time to tell his story.

"I see nothing of them yet, Life," said the lieutenant, after he had surveyed the country in all directions.

"Which way they comin', Deck?" asked the sergeant.

"You can see the road across the fields at the foot of this hill. I think the first company is in the right position where it is now," said the lieutenant. "The second company will halt under cover of the same hill. Neither of them can be seen from that road till the enemy have advanced half-way up the hill to the mansion."

"I thought the company was to move to the lower end of the hill, where we uns is," suggested Knox.

"That was my first view of it; but there is no need of going any farther. I did not suppose there was any chance to conceal the position of the force where they could get at the enemy in good season. I have not been over this ground; only seen it from the mansion hill. We are all right as we are. Now, Life, you will return to the company; tell Captain Gordon to remain where he is till I give him a signal with my handkerchief on this carbine."

As he spoke, the lieutenant proceeded to tie the white signal to the weapon.

"Then he will go at a gallop through the valley between these two hills, and fall upon the enemy in the rear, as the second company attacks in front. Do you understand it?" continued Deck.

"I reckon I do; but am I to leave you here alone?" demanded the sergeant.

"Of course you are," replied the lieutenant with a laugh. "Do you think I can't take care of myself?"

"You didn't do it last night."

"I think I did, for here I am. Hold on a minute! I think we can arrange this matter a little better. The second company will not know when to make the attack."

"Are you gwine to lay out the whole battle, Deck?" asked Life.

"I am going to do what I can to make it a success, and to capture every one of those ruffians. If one of them escapes it shall not be my fault," replied the lieutenant in vigorous speech. "Ask Captain Gordon to rig a signal like this one, and send a messenger to Major Lyon, who has gone with the second company, so that he will understand its meaning. When I wave my signal twice, it will be for the second company to attack; when I wave it once it will be for the first company to fall on the enemy's rear. The major is not more than half a mile from the first company. Now go, Life, and don't let the grass grow under your feet."

"All right; but I reckon you are the commander-in-chief of this battalion, Deck."

The long-legged Kentuckian went down the hill with long strides; and in about three minutes he saluted Captain Gordon, and delivered his message. Then he was ordered to mount his horse, and ride over to deliver the instructions to the major.

"That is an excellent plan of Lieutenant Lyon, and it will prevent any confusion," said the captain as the sergeant was mounting his horse.

In a few minutes more Knox came into the presence of Captain Woodbine and Major Lyon.

He described the arrangement for the signals.

Sergeant Fronklyn and Bugler Stufton were stationed on a knoll where they could see the signal when it was given by Captain Gordon, and the musician was to sound the advance.

"These signals are a capital idea of your son, Major," said the staff-officer in the hearing of Life Knox, as he was starting on his return to his company.

Deck was left alone; but in spite of the solicitude of the Kentuckian, he did not regard himself as in any danger, for the guerillas were not likely to explore the hills on their way to the mansion, where Captain Grundy doubtless expected to make an easy victory over the force defending it. He was not aware that cannon were to figure in the contest; and with his large force he could easily overcome the small number behind the breastwork. He was confident that there was a large sum of money concealed in the mansion, or in its vicinity; and he was fully determined to hang Colonel Hickman to one of his own trees if he did not disclose the hiding-place of the treasure.

It was fully half an hour before Deck saw anything of the approaching guerillas. Four mounted men were the first indications of the advance of the enemy. They seemed to be the pickets of the main body. They rode in couples, and did not trouble themselves to scout the hills on their left; for they could not have had any suspicion that there was a large force of cavalry anywhere near the mansion. The pickets moved on slowly till they came to the beginning of the ascent of the hill, and there they halted. They had nothing to report, and they awaited the coming of the force.

From his position behind the bushes and trees Deck could see the mansion, and the road leading up to it. The pickets had hardly halted before the main column came into view. They marched by fours, two in the road, and two in the field, and in very irregular order. The lieutenant observed them with intense interest, and counted them as they advanced. Instead of twenty-four, as the negro scouts had reported, there were thirty-eight of them. They had either been re-enforced, or the scouts had not seen them all. They marched very confidently, and began the ascent of the hill.

When they had ascended about half the distance to the summit, one of the cannon pealed, and three men were seen to fall from their horses. The assailants had evidently not expected to encounter artillery, and the result of the first discharge checked them. At this moment Deck twice waved the signal. A minute later the blast of the bugle was heard in the distance, followed immediately by the onslaught of Captain Trueman's company.

Deck observed the impetuous charge. Captain Grundy appeared to have ordered his command to deploy to the right; but they had no time to do so, for the troopers dashed into them in front. The guerillas could not hold their ground for a moment against this fiery charge. They broke, and began to retreat by the way they had come. Deck waved his signal once; and Captain Gordon's company dashed through the valley, and confronted the ruffians in their hot retreat.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE DEFEAT AND SURRENDER OF THE GUERILLAS

The moment Deck Lyon had given the signal for the first company to advance, he ran down the hill with all the speed he could command, to a tree where Life had hitched his horse in readiness for him. It was not the animal he had ridden from Colonel Hickman's mansion, but Ceph, the steed he had trained and used from the beginning of his career as a soldier. He was very intelligent, and seemed to understand precisely what was required of him in action; though he sometimes overdid his part, as when he tried to leap over the horse of his rider's opponent.

The lieutenant did not feel quite at home on any other horse. The baggage-wagons of the squadron had been halted in the road with a sufficient guard, and the spare horses included not a few picked up on the battle-field of Mill Springs. Ceph whinnied vigorously, and pawed the sod with his forefeet when he saw his master running down the hill. These were his expressions of rejoicing to meet his rider again.

But Deck, who was anxious to be at the head of his platoon on the field, could only pat him on the neck and stroke his nose as he unhitched him. Life had attached a sabre to the saddle for his use, for he was sure that he would want one. Mounting hastily, he disengaged the weapon, and started in the direction his company had taken. If the rider had fully informed his steed what he wanted, the animal could not have understood him any better; for he darted away at his swiftest gallop, and bounded through the valley like the flight of an arrow. Deck had slung his carbine over his shoulder, and carried the naked sabre in his hand, with the scabbard attached to his belt.

As the lieutenant advanced he obtained a view of the field, and could measure the progress of the action as far as it had gone. Four shots had been sent from the fort; though after Captain Grundy had scattered his men, the last two were less effective than the first two. Up to this time the guerilla leader evidently believed that he had no enemy except the few men in the vicinity of the mansion. It was after the second gun from the breastwork that Deck had given the signal for the advance of the second company.

At the onslaught of this company, consisting of about eighty troopers, Grundy could not help seeing that he was outnumbered two to one, and that his opponents were trained soldiers, mounted upon excellent horses; and he had no alternative but a hasty retreat. He led them in the direction of the road; but at this time Deck had given his second signal, and the first company were stretching across the field to intercept his flight. It must have been an appalling sight to him, and he saw that he must be ground to powder between the upper and the nether millstone.

Deck had reached his place at the head of his platoon, which Life Knox was glad to yield to him. Captain Gordon was on the flank at the left. His command was stretched across the field, and were a wall of steel against the farther retreat of the enemy. It was about half a mile from the second company, which was driving the guerillas before it upon the point of their sabres. The captain called a halt when the head of his column had reached what appeared to be a swamp, and faced them to the enemy, ready to charge upon the broken ranks of the ruffians.

"This can be nothing but a butchery," said Captain Gordon, as he reined in his horse in front of his second lieutenant; and his tones and his manner indicated his disgust at this sort of warfare.

"When I was in the mansion, Captain Grundy surrendered to me; but when I proposed to secure him with cords and straps, he broke away from us, and we were unable to recapture him," added Deck.

"It is not usual to bind captured prisoners," suggested the captain.

"But we had only half a dozen men, and I would not trust the fellow out of sight," replied Deck. "But I have secured my prisoners when they were guerillas, and not soldiers."

"No doubt you were right in dealing so with these ruffians," added the captain. "I think we have this gang where not one of them can escape, and perhaps we may have to bind them as you did their leader."

"There goes the recall!" exclaimed the lieutenant, as the bugle-notes sounded across the field from the right of the second company, where Major Lyon had taken his place.

"There is a white flag displayed in the centre of the enemy's line," added Captain Gordon. "Your father does not relish a butchery any more than I do."

The commander of the company took his field-glass from its case, and directed it towards the position of the major. The troopers fell back, evidently at the command of their officers, at the signal, stretching nearly across the field.

"Look through my glass, Deck, and tell me what is going on there," said the captain, as he handed the glass to the lieutenant. "There is a tall gentleman there who is a stranger to me; and he seems to be talking and gesticulating very earnestly."

"That is Colonel Hickman, and it is easy enough for me to guess what he is talking about," added Deck.

"But the major seems to be as dignified as he always is, and don't appear to be much moved by what the other is saying. But what is the matter with Colonel Hickman?"

"He believes in hanging these fellows as fast as they are taken, though perhaps he would be satisfied to see them cut down before the sabres of our men. I had to tell him squarely that no prisoner should be hung, or punished in any manner, except by the law of the land," replied Deck.

"Does he believe in firing or charging on a flag of truce?"

"Doubtless he believes that a flag in the hands of these fellows is not entitled to be respected."

"Major Lyon is the right man to settle the question, with the advice of Captain Woodbine," said Captain Gordon. "While they are discussing it, we will move forward;" and in a loud tone he gave the order to march, which was repeated by the subordinate officers.

The long line moved forward, at a walk, about half a mile, and halted forty rods in the rear of the disordered ranks of the enemy. Presently a sergeant rode across the field, passing to the left of the guerillas, and making his way to the centre of the first company. It proved to be Sergeant Fronklyn, who saluted the captain.

"It is the order of Major Lyon, Captain Gordon, that you send Sergeant Knox, with ten men, to the right of your line, to prevent the escape of any of the enemy to the swamp. Also, that you send Lieutenant Lyon to headquarters," said Fronklyn, delivering his message.

On the right of the line four of the ruffians had attempted to flee from the scene of the anticipated surrender; but Lieutenant Gadbury had ordered four of his men to fire upon them. One had been wounded, and the others had returned to the ranks. This was the occasion of the order to send Knox to the border of the swamp. Deck went with Fronklyn to the major by the same way the sergeant had come. On their arrival the lieutenant found Grundy had come over to interview the major, attended by a man bearing the flag of truce.

"You are treating these ruffians as though they were regular soldiers, Major Lyon; and I protest against it!" exclaimed Colonel Hickman, just as Deck saluted the major.

"I can answer you better when I have heard what Captain Grundy has to say," replied the major with his usual dignity and gentleness.

"He is not a captain; he has no commission or authority of any kind from the State or Nation," protested the planter.

"I can understand and appreciate your feelings, Colonel, in the face of the outrages to which you have been subjected; but I shall be greatly obliged to you if you will permit me to discharge my duty without further interruption. I have been the victim of similar indignities; but I cannot order men who probably intend to surrender, to be hung, or to be shot down in cold blood."

Upon this appeal Colonel Hickman was silent, though evidently very much against his will. Captain Grundy approached the major at a signal from him. He was asked to make the communication he sought to offer under the flag of truce.

"My troop are fighting-men; but of course, surrounded by six times their number, we should all be sabred or shot down in a few minutes. Against this odds I do not intend to fight," said the guerilla leader, who was evidently a man of some education, and conducted himself with some degree of dignity.

"Do you propose to surrender?" asked the major.

"I do, if reasonable terms are held out to me," replied Captain Grundy.

"What do you consider reasonable terms?" inquired the commander of the squadron.

"That we should lay down our arms, retain our horses, and retire to our homes, returning to our usual occupations," answered the captain of the ruffians.

"That is better terms than a defeated company of regular troops of the Confederate army would have any right to ask for or expect," added the major with a smile.

"I have named what I consider fair terms under the circumstances; and now I will ask what terms you are willing to make," continued Captain Grundy.

"No terms at all," replied Major Lyon very decidedly. "I do not regard you as soldiers in the service of the Confederacy, but as lawless marauders, cutthroats, and murderers."

"Good!" exclaimed Colonel Hickman. "That is hitting the nail on the head."

"Many gentlemen who support the Confederate side of the question have expressed the same opinions to me. I can make no terms whatever with you, Captain Grundy. The surrender must be unconditional."

"Do you propose to put us in irons, or bind us with ropes and straps, as the young officer at your side did?" demanded the guerilla chief bitterly.

"I should feel entirely justified in doing so if the circumstances required such an extreme measure; but with the ample force under my command I don't think such a step would be necessary, though my men would shoot down any one who attempted to escape."

"Your terms are very unfair and very unchivalrous; and I should judge that you were a Yankee, as I am told that you are," growled the marauder.

"Doubtless you consider the robbing of a private mansion, and threatening to hang the owner if he don't inform you where he has hidden his money, chivalrous deeds; but I do not so regard them. We are wasting time. Do you surrender, or shall I order my men to charge upon your column?" demanded the major.

"What do you intend to do with us after we have laid down our arms?" asked Captain Grundy, after he had glanced at the files of troopers on both sides of his command.

"Though the State of Kentucky is in a very disordered state, the civil law is still in force in most parts of it. I shall deliver you over to the civil government whose laws you have broken."

"Hemmed in as my men are by six times their number, I have no alternative but to surrender, unfair and outrageous as the terms are," replied the marauder, with a despairing look as he glanced again at the loyal troops that surrounded his company.

"The terms are better than you deserve, and if I had my way I would hang you to the nearest tree as a beginning!" shouted Colonel Hickman.

"I may have a chance to do you that favor, Colonel, before many weeks have gone by," added the outlaw.

"You sent for me, Major Lyon," said Deck, stepping forward, and saluting his father. "I am ready for any duty to which I may be assigned."

"Captain Woodbine wants both you and Sergeant Fronklyn as guides; for both of you have become acquainted with this locality," replied the major, as he proceeded to give orders for the conduct of the surrender.

The first company was moved up, and the guerillas marched in single file between the two, laying down their arms, though a couple of sergeants searched them for pistols and knives. Lieutenant Blenks, with the second platoon of the second company, was detailed to march the prisoners to Jamestown, which was the capital of Russell County, where they were to be delivered to the sheriff. It was not a long march, and the platoon rejoined the squadron on the bank of the Cumberland at dark.

The next day a mob took Grundy from the jail, and hung him in the village; and possibly Colonel Hickman knew more about the affair than any other single person.

The colonel was the highest type of a Kentucky gentleman, and no one not in his difficult position could fully comprehend his apparently ferocious views.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE GATHERING OF A NEW COMMAND

The guerillas were disposed of, and it did not appear that there was any other enemy in the vicinity. Major Lyon marched his squadron back to the road where he had left his wagons. Captain Woodbine, at the invitation of Colonel Hickman, visited the mansion, and required Deck to go with him. As they rode up the hill the lieutenant gave the details of his escape from the Beech Grove breastworks, the drowning of the four fugitives, and the defence of the mansion of the planter.

Colonel Hickman rode with them, and listened to the narrative, and stated that the young lieutenant had conducted the defence, and that all the gang who gained admission to the house, with the exception of one or two, had been killed or wounded. On their arrival at the mansion the party visited every room. Those on the lower floor exhibited the havoc made by the ruffians in their search for the planter's money.

Deck pointed to the safe in the hall, and explained in what manner Sergeant Fronklyn had covered the staircase; and the body of the first man who had attempted the descent lay where it had fallen. Then they went up-stairs. The same havoc appeared in all the apartments. The bodies of two men who had been instantly killed at the windows, and several other wounded ruffians, lay on the beds.

"The assault was skilfully and safely managed," said the staff-officer, patting the lieutenant on the back.

"Lieutenant Lyon has been the hero of the day on my premises, and he has placed me under ever-lasting obligations to him," added the colonel. "With a very insignificant force we had cleaned out the ruffians from the house when the approach of the main body of the gang was announced by my servants, who had been scouting beyond the hills. The coming of the cavalry has probably saved my mansion and my life. As the villains supposed, I have a considerable sum of money concealed; for I could not trust it in any bank in the present condition of the State. I should like to reward the lieutenant"—

"I would not accept any reward for simply doing my duty," interposed Deck.

"But I hope it will be in my power to serve you, young man."

"I am too happy to have served you, Colonel Hickman, to need anything more than the approval of my own conscience," replied Deck, moving off.

"I am not without influential friends, Lieutenant Lyon, and you may hear from me when you least expect it," continued Colonel Hickman, as he followed the young officer, and grasped him by the hand.

"I do not ask for any influence in my favor. I am a second lieutenant at eighteen, and I ask for no promotion to which my services do not entitle me," replied Deck proudly. "I have sent the horse you were kind enough to loan me back to your stable; and now I am at your service, Captain Woodbine."

Both of the officers mounted their steeds, and the planter showered benedictions upon them

as they rode off. Deck had had some conversation with the three sons of the Colonel, and they had been as hearty in their commendations of the young officer as their father. The staff-officer then informed his companion that the Riverlawn squadron had been sent out on a reconnoissance down the river, and that the battalion was subject to his orders.

"Then you wish to go to the river?" suggested Deck.

"I do; as soon as possible," replied the captain.

"Then we will take the avenue, which is the nearest road;" and Deck led the way into the grove, and they soon reached the great bend of the stream where he and Fronklyn had effected their landing, and near Cuffy's ferry.

At this point Captain Woodbine took his field-glass from its case, and carefully examined the country on the other side of the river. Deck had no idea what he was looking for, and he said nothing. As he had come with the Riverlawns, it was evident that he had a mission to carry out; but so far he had kept his own counsel. Possibly he did not yet know what he should do. The Confederate army, or the greater portion of it, had effected its escape across the river in the steamer the fugitives had seen where they took the boat, and in other craft gathered there.

General Crittenden had abandoned a vast quantity of arms and munitions for which he had not sufficient transportation, and the Union army had taken possession of them in the morning. The cavalry had attempted to swim their horses over the swift-flowing river, but a great number of them had been drowned. The shore for a considerable distance below the breastworks was covered with dead horses, and with the bodies of men who had run the risk of riding their steeds through the angry stream.

"It will be impossible for the army of the enemy to remain in the fortifications they have erected at Mill Springs," said Captain Woodbine, as he closed the field-glass, and returned it to the case. "They were in a starving condition on this side of the river, and they must be worse off on the other side. We will ride up the stream, and see what there is to be seen."

The staff-officer led the way, and Deck followed him in silence. He wondered what the captain was driving at, but he asked no questions. At Cuffy's ferry the captain found the ferryman, and halted to write a note in his memorandum-book, which he tore out, and directed the negro to deliver it to the commanding officer of the squadron when the force arrived.

"It is only an order for your father to wait till we return," said the captain; and then he rode on. "Do you know your way along the river, Lieutenant?" he asked a little later.

"No, sir; Fronklyn and I came down to this bend in a boat, of which the ferryman has taken possession, as I told him to do, for he had lost his own. But you will soon come to a swollen stream that flows into the river; and you cannot get across that, for the banks are very high and steep," replied Deck.

The captain continued on his way at a slow walk, for the horses mired in the soft soil, keeping his gaze fixed on the opposite shore. At the end of half an hour they came to a little hill, at the foot of which the tributary stream discharged itself into the Cumberland. The staff-officer directed his glass to the other shore, and there was nothing to obstruct his vision.

"As I supposed," said he, turning his horse, and starting on the return to the ferry.

"It is pleasant to have your supposition confirmed," Deck ventured to remark.

"My supposition was that the Confederate army would march to the south at once, and I have seen the column moving in that direction on the road that leads to Oak Forest," said Captain Woodbine, revealing his object for the first time, though he said nothing about his purpose in marching the Riverlawns to the river.

Deck asked no questions, but when they had gone half-way to the ferry the sound of several bugles was heard ahead of them.

"Our squadron appears to have arrived," said he.

"Perhaps it has," replied the captain with a smile.

"That is an artillery call!" exclaimed the lieutenant, as he recognized the sounds; and he was not a little astonished.

"I should judge that it was," added the captain.

His companion was not communicative; and Deck said no more, for ten minutes would explain the mystery that bothered him. In less time than he thought he obtained a view of the ground near the ferry; and the first thing that confronted him was a battery of four guns. In the field were plainly to be seen two companies of cavalry, dressed in United States uniform; but they were not the Riverlawn Squadron.

"That is not our battalion, Captain Woodbine," said he, amazed at the appearance of this strange force.

"It certainly is not," answered the staff-officer.

"Two more companies of cavalry comin' down de road, Mars'r," Cuffy volunteered to inform them.

"Those must be the Riverlawns, as you call them, Lieutenant."

The two companies of cavalry near the river and the battery were taking their rations from their haversacks, and Captain Woodbine did not disturb them. By this time Major Lyon's command had halted in the road, the head of the column near Cuffy's house. A trooper, running his horse, was approaching; and Deck saw that it was his brother Artie, who rode up to the staff-officer, saluted him, and reported the arrival of the squadron by order of his father.

As soon as he had delivered his message, he grasped the hand of the lieutenant; for they had not yet come together in the hurry of the events of the afternoon. The meeting was such as two loving brothers could not help making it. Artie congratulated Deck on his escape and his present safety; for the story of his adventure with Fronklyn had been circulated through both companies, and there was no occasion for the lieutenant to repeat it.

"I say, Deck! what is going on here? What is that battery of light artillery and the two companies of cavalry doing here?" inquired Artie very earnestly.

"They seem to be taking a late dinner out of their haversacks," replied Deck, who was not a whit wiser than his brother.

"I could see that for myself," added Artie, laughing.

"That is all I know about it; and if you want to know anything more, you must ask Captain Woodbine, for I fancy he is the only person on the ground who understands the matter."

"I should as soon think of asking General Thomas, if he were here; for I suppose he knows all about it wherever he is."

"No doubt of it; and the captain is his only mouthpiece about this region. But if we wait a while I have no doubt we shall know all about the situation, though I do not expect to be supplied with a copy of the staff-officer's orders."

"Of course not."

"Orderly!" called the officer mentioned.

Artie, who answered to this designation near his father, rode up to the captain, and saluted him with even more than usual deference; for just now he seemed to be a sort of mysterious personage, in whom all power in this locality resided.

"If you have finished your interview with your brother, for I do not wish to hurry you, as we are in no special haste while the three companies are eating their dinner, you will deliver this order to Major Lyon."

"We have finished, Captain," replied Artie, surprised at the kindness of the staff-officer, who had been writing in his memorandum-book, and had torn out the leaf, which he tendered to the orderly.

Artie took the folded paper, and galloped back to the head of the Riverlawn column. Though he was a boy of eighteen, like his brother, but really only his cousin, he was not tempted to read the order he was carrying, greatly as his curiosity was stimulated; for it was a matter of honor with both of the young men to "mind their own business," and especially not to meddle with that of others; and either of them would have been a model postmaster, in whose keeping even postal-cards would have been sacred.

The three companies nearest to the river finished their dinner, and Deck looked the men over as they prepared to resume their places in the ranks. The horses had all been supplied with a feed of oats, poured upon the cleanest spots to be found on the grass, which had been somewhat kicked up by the tramp of horses. The men went to their steeds, and the lieutenant thought they were fine-looking men; and some few of them were as tall and bony as Life Knox. The members of the battery "hitched up" their animals again, and then took their seats on their horses and the gun-carriages and caissons.

Major Lyon, evidently in obedience to the order he had just received, had given his commands to the captains of the two companies, and they were marching them into the field behind the ferry-house; and in a few minutes they had formed in double ranks on the west side of the ground, north and south. Then the two other companies of cavalry formed in the same manner on the north side of the field, east and west. The battery came into line on the south side, and the whole made the three sides of the square.

The formation of the square was completed; and Deck, who had been instructed to accompany Captain Woodbine, was directed to summon the two majors in command of the squadrons into his presence. He shook hands with both of them, calling them by name. Then the order was given by the captains to present arms. The staff-officer raised his cap, and bowed.

"I will now cause my commission to be read to you," he continued, handing the document to Lieutenant Lyon, and directing him to read it, which he did in a voice loud and clear enough to be heard by all on the field.

CHAPTER XXXV

A FIRST LIEUTENANT AT EIGHTEEN

The reading of the commission was an unusual proceeding; but the recipient of it appeared to consider it advisable, especially as several changes in the organization were to be announced. The document was dated back over two months, and made him who had been known as Captain Woodbine on the staff a brigadier-general. A chorus of cheers resounded all along the lines as Deck finished the reading of the commission, especially from the Riverlawn Cavalry.

General Woodbine acknowledged the compliment with dignity. He explained that his commission had been in his keeping since the date appended to it; but he had preferred to retain his position on the staff of General Thomas, who had insisted that morning that he should assume the rank to which he was entitled; for the services of one so well acquainted with the country, both in Kentucky and Tennessee, were needed at this time.

He had been permitted to select the force to form his brigade, and he had chosen those that he regarded as best fitted for the duty to which he expected to be assigned. Major Lyon would retain the command of the Riverlawn Cavalry, and Major Richland that of the other squadron of Kentucky cavalry, while Captain Batterson would remain at the head of the battery on the field, attached to the brigade.

"Lieutenant Lyon, of the first company of the Riverlawn Squadron," continued the general, "is promoted from the rank of second to that of first lieutenant; and I have the pleasure of presenting to him his commission;" and he handed to him the important document.

A spontaneous volley of cheers burst from the ranks of both companies of the Riverlawns, for Deck was as popular in one company as in the other; and it was continued till the general stopped it with a wave of his hand.

"First Lieutenant Lyon is appointed to serve on the staff of the general in command," added the commander of the brigade. "Second Lieutenant Herndon is also promoted to the rank of first lieutenant, and he will come forward to receive his commission. He is also appointed to serve on my staff."

An outburst of cheers followed from the Marion Cavalry, as they had chosen to call themselves, in which both the Riverlawns and the battery joined. Lieutenant Herndon rode forward to the position of the general; and Deck observed him with the most intense interest, for he was likely to be his most intimate companion in future campaigns. He was a young man of not more than twenty-one, but he was six feet in height, well built, and quite muscular. He had a decidedly handsome face, with a very pleasant expression; and Deck was sure that he was popular with the ladies. The general presented his commission to him, which he received with a graceful bow.

"Lieutenant Lyon, let me introduce to you Lieutenant Herndon; and as you are now members of my military family, I hope you will be good friends," said General Woodbine; and the two young men grasped each other's hands, and the meeting was as cordial as it was promising for the future.

"The major, in consultation with the captains of the companies in which the vacancies occur, will fill them by appointing acting second lieutenants; and, if practicable, I will thank them to send me the names of those selected at once," continued the general, as he fell into conversation with his newly appointed staff-officers.

In less than five minutes a messenger came from each of the battalions bearing the names of the appointees; and in both cases they were the orderly sergeants of the companies.

"Eliphalet Knox is appointed acting second lieutenant of the first company of Riverlawn Cavalry, and Thomas Jefferson to the same position in the first company of Marion Cavalry; and they will be obeyed and respected as such," said the general, as he read the names from the papers.

This announcement was received with cheers, as the others had been, and the business of the occasion was finished. The parade was dismissed. The baggage-wagons, each drawn by eight mules on account of the condition of the roads and fields, an abundant supply of which had been collected on the field of battle, and taken from the breastworks at Beech Grove, were in the road.

Deck and Life were heartily congratulated by officers and soldiers; and Captain Gordon expressed his regret at the loss of such a useful lieutenant as the appointee on the staff of the general had been.

The general then gave the order for the brigade to form for a march though it was six o'clock in the afternoon; and the new aids performed their first duty as such in carrying the order to the commanders of the three bodies of troops. It was ascertained that the commission of Major Lyon antedated that of Major Richland, and the right of the column was given to the Riverlawns. Of course there was no end of conjecture as to where the brigade was to march; but the general did not whisper a word in regard to his destination to any one.

The brigade marched but about five miles, and it was after dark when it halted and went into camp. The general had been unusually taciturn on the way, and it was evident to his aids that he was troubled about something. The tents were pitched, and the horses picketed. In his marquee the commander of the expedition placed his maps on the table, and began to study them with an intensity which prevented the other members of his family from saying anything, even between themselves, though he had required them to remain near him.

"Neither of you officers, I believe, has ever been on staff-duty," said he, suddenly whirling about on his stool, and facing them.

Neither of them had ever served except as the officer of a platoon.

"Then you must learn in the beginning that absolute secrecy is required in my family, in regard to all orders and military movements," added the general.

"I have already learned that lesson," replied Deck.

"I have learned it now; and my lips will hereafter be like the shell of an oyster," added Lieutenant Herndon, who was such a pleasant fellow that he had already excited the admiration of his associate on the staff.

"I am exceedingly anxious to learn upon what point the enemy on the other side of the river are moving," continued General Woodbine, speaking in a very low tone so that the sentinel outside the tent could not hear him. "I satisfied myself this morning that they are moving to the southward; but they would be obliged to follow the road to Oak Forest if Crittenden intended to recross the Cumberland, and make a raid into Kentucky to obtain supplies; therefore I am entirely in the dark."

"I should say that it would not be a difficult matter to obtain the information you need, General," suggested Deck.

"How?" demanded the commander, fixing an earnest gaze upon the face of the lieutenant.

"The Confederate army is so crippled for the want of horses and mules that it can move only at a snail's pace," answered Deck. "A company could be sent over"—

"Quite impossible!" exclaimed the general. "We have no boats, though they might be obtained farther down the stream."

"A couple of scouts, then," added the lieutenant.

"Whom could I send on such an errand?" asked the commander with a smile.

"Me for one; and I should be willing to go alone if I knew the country," replied Deck very promptly. "My horse Ceph would take me over the river."

"Have you forgotten the dead horses that strewed the shores of the stream, and the four men who were drowned in trying to cross in a boat?"

"Those men were no boatmen, and I have had some experience in that line. I am willing to take my chances of getting over, sir."

The subject was discussed for a full hour longer, and Deck carried his point; but he concluded that he was unwilling to risk the loss of Ceph, and would go over in Cuffy's boat, and find a horse on the other side. It was decided that he must have some one with him who was acquainted with the region they were to visit, even to a considerable distance into the State of Tennessee. Life Knox was sent for; and he informed the general that he had travelled all over the country mentioned several times when he was buying horses for a trader, though it was many years before. He was willing to go anywhere and do anything with Deck.

"I suppose you know very well, both of you, that if you were caught, and your mission understood, you would be hung or shot without benefit of clergy," said General Woodbine impressively.

"We shall come back, and with the information you want, in forty-eight hours," replied Deck confidently.

"Do you intend to go over in the full uniform of a staff-officer?" inquired the general.

"I think not, sir. If you will leave the matter to Life and me, we will manage all the details."

"Very well; you will perhaps find my command at Burkesville when you return," added the general, rising from his seat at the table; and taking the hands of the scouts, he wished them a safe return, and they left the tent.

They walked back to the shanty of Cuffy, and found him seated in his kitchen. Not a word was said to Major Lyon about the enterprise of his son; and Deck could not bid good-by to his father, his brother, or to the many friends he had in the squadron. Both of them were in uniform, and they had no difficulty in passing the guards.

Cuffy was not only a ferryman, but a river-driver. He made a business of picking up whatever floated down the stream, not excepting the dead bodies of men and horses, the former for their clothing and whatever their pockets contained, and the latter for the saddles and bridles on them. He buried the bodies of the men in a pit he had made for the purpose, drying and storing in his house portions of their clothing.

It required a good deal of talking and a handsome reward to induce the ferryman to exhibit his stock of clothing; but from it the scouts took what they needed; and were soon clothed in rusty and damaged Confederate uniforms of privates. They bargained for the use for two days of Cuffy's boat, and embarked about midnight on their mission. The Cumberland was still in a turbulent condition; but Deck had seen enough of the stream to enable him to avoid the dangerous places. At the point where Deck and Fronklyn had landed, they had a hard battle with the raging current; but the skill of the lieutenant and the strength of Life carried them safely through the peril.

At daylight in the morning, they discovered a creek flowing into the river from the south side. They pulled up this stream five or six miles till the shallow water interrupted their further progress. They concealed the boat very carefully, and then proceeded on foot up the stream till they came to a house, more elaborate than most of the dwellings in this region. They found a negro cutting up wood near the house. He told them that it was the home of Colonel Bickford, who had been very badly wounded in the battle on the other side of the river, and had reached his residence the night before.

"We want some breakfast," said Deck.

"Can't hab it, Mars'r. Missus won't feed no more runaway sodjers," replied the servant.

"Perhaps she will," added Life, as he led the way to the house, and entered the kitchen without an invitation.

He could see in the next room that a table was set, and the cook was putting the food on the table. Without asking any questions, Life entered the room, and seated himself at the table. The cook protested, and then screamed with all her might, which brought the lady of the house to the apartment. Another black woman went to the door, and called to the man they had seen at the woodpile.

"I am sorry to trouble you, madam," said Deck, as politely as the landlord of a summer hotel. "We have been travelling all night, and we are very hungry."

"I can't help that; I won't feed any more runaways. Leave the house this minute, or I will call my servants to eject you!" stormed the lady.

"Call 'em, marm," replied Life, taking one of the pair of revolvers he carried from his pocket, and placing it at the side of his plate, Deck following his example.



"THE UNWELCOME VISITORS POINTED THEIR WEAPONS."

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The lady deemed it prudent to retire; but four stout negroes appeared at the door. The unwelcome visitors pointed their weapons at them, and they fled at the sight of them. The two black women became very tractable, and the wanderers ate their fill of ham and eggs, supplemented with waffles. Deck left his thanks and two dollars for the lady of the house, and they retired. They went to the stable next, where they found four horses. They took from the harness-room a couple of plain saddles and bridles, with which they prepared the two best horses for their own use. Mounting them, they hastened up the road on the bank of the creek.

CHAPTER XXXVI

SCOUTING IN THE ENEMY'S COUNTRY

Colonel Bickford was evidently a gentleman of taste, for he had selected a beautiful locality for his residence; but the scouts had not yet learned whether he was a Unionist or a Confederate. They were still in Kentucky, though not more than ten miles from the Tennessee line. When they had ridden a couple of miles, they met half a dozen negroes, with fishing-rods on their shoulders.

"Going a-fishing?" asked Deck, as he reined in his steed.

"Yes, sar. De sodjers done took all de meat in de country, and all de corn. Niggers can't git not'in t'eat 'cept out ob de creeks," replied the foremost of the party, who was a light mulatto.

"Who lives in the house a mile or two down the stream?" continued Deck.

"Cun'l Bickford."

"Oh, yes; he is a Union man," added Deck.

"No, sar!" exclaimed the mulatto vigorously. "Cun'l ob a Tennessee regiment. Whar you git his coach hosses?"

"I'll tell you about that next summer; but we only borrowed them for a couple of days. He is badly wounded I heard."

"Yes, sar; fotched home on a stretcher from Monticello, whar he com'd wid de army."

"Why didn't he come down to Newberry along with the army?" asked Life, who knew precisely where he was when Monticello was mentioned.

"De army don't come dis way, dey foller de road by de Souf Forks."

"Where do they go then?"

"Dunno, Mars'r; dey don't tell whar de go," replied the mulatto, shaking his head.

This man seemed to be intelligent, and know more about the region than most of the negroes. Deck bade them good-by, and resumed his march.

"I dunno's we need go any furder," said Life, after they had gone a few rods.

"I hope we shall be able to obtain more reliable information than from the reports of these darkeys," replied Deck, who was in favor of doing the work thoroughly.

"Jest as you say, Lieutenant; but if they had come down this way we'd 'a' seen some stragglers," answered the Kentuckian. "I reckon I know just whar they are gwine, 'cause I've been over the road myself. They'll foller the South Fork, and strike Jamestown, Fentress County, and from there make for Gainsborough, where they can git steamboats to tote them to Nashville."

"There is a village ahead," said Deck.

"That is Newberry" (as it was then called).

They went into the place, and found a grocery store and post-office. They halted near it, and spent some time in a consultation. At Jamestown they could determine with certainty where the army was going. It was a little over twenty miles, while the road the army had taken was quite thirty, though the roads were better by the latter route. Deck promptly decided to proceed to Jamestown. They deemed it advisable to avoid the towns, especially Albany, the capital of the county; and it seemed to be necessary to provide themselves with a quantity of food, for they might not be able to procure a dinner or a supper as readily as they had a breakfast.

They dismounted, and entered the store. They found the postmaster half asleep behind his counter; and when Deck inquired if he had anything to eat, he replied in a very sulky manner that he had nothing. He had been robbed of about everything he had that was eatable by runaway soldiers like themselves, who had deserted from the army.

"Haven't you got anything?" persisted Deck.

"Not a thing; a dozen of you runaways came here last night, and took everything I had, and never paid me a cent for what they carried off, and threatened to shoot me if I made a row about it. I can't afford to keep store for sech fellers," protested the man, with intense disgust.

"But I have a little money, and I am willing to pay for whatever we obtain," added the lieutenant.

The storekeeper raised his head sharply, and appeared to be wide awake at these words.

"Don't you think you could raise something for us?" asked Deck.

"Provisions is mighty skeece down here, for the army has picked up everything they could find; and we are as poor as starved turkeys."

"Well, if you hain't got nothin', of course we can't git nothin'," added Life.

"If you're gwine to pay for what you have, I might raise somethin' for you," said the storekeeper. "I bought two mighty handsome chickens yesterday, and had to give a dollar apiece for 'em. My wife roasted 'em last night, and hid 'em away for our own use. If you don't mind payin' two dollars apiece for 'em, you shall have 'em."

"All right; bring them along," answered Deck.

The man left the store, and was absent about ten minutes, when he returned with the chickens. They were quite large, and were a toothsome morsel for hungry men. Deck then called for a dollar's worth of crackers, which the storekeeper had to bring from their hiding-place outside the building. General Woodbine had provided him with five gold half-eagles, which the lieutenant had concealed in as many different places about his own and Life's person, and a few dollars' worth of silver.

Deck paid in gold for the provisions. The postmaster, who looked like a happy man since he saw the precious coin, wrapped the chickens in papers, putting a little package of salt with each; and the wanderers stuffed them into their capacious pockets, finding also space enough for the crackers.

"We are all right now," said Deck, as they left the shop, and hastened to the tree where they had left their horses.

"We sha'n't starve, nohow," replied Life.

When they came in sight of the horses, they discovered with surprise and chagrin four men, evidently deserters from the Confederate army, two of whom were untying the bridles of the

animals. One of them had succeeded in doing so, and was about to mount the steed.

"What are you about thar?" demanded Life, as he stalked towards the man who had a foot in the stirrup.

The deserter stopped for an instant, and then leaped on the horse.

"I reckon we need those hosses more'n you uns do," replied the fellow coolly and impudently.

"I reckon you won't have 'em," replied Life. Reaching up his long right arm, and grasping the man by the throat, he dragged him from the animal in the twinkling of an eye, pitching him on the ground as though he had been a piece of carrion; and he lay there looking at the stalwart form of the Kentuckian, not much inclined to close with him.

The sergeant held the horse recaptured, which he had ridden so far, and Deck advanced upon the other. But the other two went to his aid, and planted themselves between Deck and his steed. They did not appear to be armed, having doubtless thrown away their heavy flint-lock muskets, though they might have pistols in their pockets.

"I reckon you uns can't have these hosses," said one of the men in front of the other two.

"I reckon we can and will," replied Deck, drawing one of his revolvers from his pocket. "Out of the way!"

The fellow in front made a spring at the lieutenant with the evident intention of wresting the revolver from him; but Deck was too quick for him, and fired. He dropped his right hand, and covered his shoulder with the left.

"Leave that horse!" shouted Deck, aiming at the man who was at work on the bridle.

At this moment Life, who had mounted his horse, rode to his side. The one who had stood near the wounded man was feeling in his pockets, when the tall Kentuckian rode upon him, and seizing him by the collar lifted him clear of the ground, and flung him nearly a rod from him. He struck heavily against a log, and did not move again. Life then rode up to the man at the other horse, and would have served him in the same way if he had not run away into the woods. Deck unhitched the horse, mounted him, and both of them rode off at a gallop.

"We shall be likely to meet more of them carrion," said Life; "for the woods and the roads are full of 'em."

"It is best to avoid them if we can," suggested Deck.

"I reckon we kin; for we're gwine to strike across the country," replied the sergeant, now an acting second lieutenant, as he took from his pocket a small compass, which had served him in the wilds of the far West.

A little farther along, Life turned into a cart-path in the woods, and then halted. Poising the compass, he watched the needle for some time.

"This path is just what we want; for it runs to the south. I went through here somewhere with four horses, and a nigger for a guide, years ago on my way to Nashville. It ain't more'n five miles to Elliott Roads, and then a little more'n twenty to Jamestown. I cal'late we'll git thar to-night."

In about an hour they came to the end of the cart-path. Life used his compass again; and they continued, aided by the position of the sun, till they came to another path, leading to the south. The Kentuckian said they saved about ten miles by taking this cross-cut; and they soon reached the main road. Avoiding the two villages of Elliott's Roads and Pall Mall, as they were called then but not now, by going around them, they returned to the main road again.

It was a hilly region; for the Cumberland Mountains were not more than ten miles from them, covered with forests, and hardly cultivated at all. In a lonely place they turned into the woods to feed the horses. Behind his saddle, Deck had a grain-bag containing half a bushel of oats in each end, provided by the forethought of the Kentuckian at the stable of Colonel Bickford. A liberal feed was emptied on the ground in a clean place, which the horses greedily devoured.

The riders produced the chickens; and one of them soon disappeared with a corresponding quantity of the crackers. A mountain brook rippled near them, and the thirst of both men and horses was slaked in its clear waters. Perhaps each of the scouts had slept an hour in the boat by turns, and they put in another hour at this halt, as much for the benefit of the horses as for that of the men. Refreshed and invigorated by the food and the sleep, they renewed the march. About three miles farther on, as they were descending a hill, they were not a little astonished to see half a dozen men stretch themselves suddenly across the narrow road, blocking their passage.

Like the others they had encountered at Newberry, they were plainly deserters; and two of them had muskets which they pointed at the scouts. Three to one was a large odds. Even Life believed it was more prudent to run than to fight; and wheeling his horse, he bade Deck follow him. The forest was open enough to permit the passage of horses, and a couple of

rods back the leader turned into the woods. Deck followed him closely; and they made a sweep around, and then struck out for the road again. But they were checkmated by the deserters, who ran down the highway to intercept them. They formed across the road again, the two armed ones taking aim at them.

The ruffians had got in ahead of them, and again the two muskets stared at them. Both of them drew their revolvers, for they had no idea of being stopped in the execution of their mission.

"Hallo, you uns!" shouted one of the men. "We don't want to hurt you; but we want them hosses, and we must have 'em."

"You can't have 'em!" shouted Life.

"And if you've got any grub we want that!" called another of the ruffians.

"Out of the way!" yelled Life, as he spurred on his horse.

As they started, the armed men fired. Neither of the scouts fell from his horse; but Deck clapped his right hand upon his left arm close to his shoulder. He did not keep it there for more than a moment, but grasped his revolver. The two horsemen rode down the ruffians, firing their weapons with great rapidity. Two of the assailants had fallen in the road, and two more had been hit. The scouts drew their second pistols, and continued to fire. A third fell, and then the others ran into the woods, hiding themselves behind the trees.

The result was decisive enough to satisfy the riders, and they went off at a lively gallop. The work of that day was done; and though they saw other skulkers, they were not again attacked. At five o'clock in the afternoon they reached the vicinity of Jamestown, the capital of Fentress County. They could not help learning, both from sights and sounds, that there was great excitement in the village. A convenient and partially wooded hill lay on their right, which they decided to ascend.

This elevation commanded a complete view of the village and its surroundings; and they witnessed the approach of General Crittenden's army. It did not halt, but proceeded to a more convenient camping-ground. It moved out of the place by the Livingston Road; and this settled the question in the mind of Lieutenant Knox, and they had accomplished their mission.

"We have nothin' to do now but to git back to the brigade," said Life.

"Shall we start back to-night?" asked Deck wearily.

"Does your wound pain you, my boy?" asked the Kentuckian tenderly.

"Not much; but I am willing to admit that I am very tired," answered Deck.

"This is not a good place to stop over night," added Life.

"I could ride all night if it were necessary."

"No; but we will halt somewhere near where we did for dinner to-day."

Life led the way down the hill to the road. Everybody in the village had gone to see the army; but they met a negro half a mile from the place, and the Kentuckian questioned him. He confirmed the conclusion at which they had arrived; and they rode on till they came after dark to the spot where they had halted at dinner-time.

Life had dressed the wound of his companion, which was a slight affair. Deck had brought with him the bandages and salve his mother had given him, and the injury was doing very well. The horses were watered and fed, and half of the remaining chicken was consumed by the riders. The scouts stretched themselves on the ground, where they slept the sleep of the just for five hours.

At one o'clock the horses were saddled, and the march was resumed. In the forenoon of the next day they reached Newberry by the route they had taken the day before. They had eaten the last of the chickens and crackers, and they stopped at the post-office to obtain more. The storekeeper had procured and cooked two more, which he was glad to sell at the same price, with an abundant supply of crackers. He added another half-eagle to his funds, and became very friendly to them. But he asked no troublesome questions, not even to what Confederate regiment they belonged. He wished them a safe and pleasant journey, and they proceeded on their way.

Their boat was not where they left it; and they rode along the creek till they discovered it in the middle of the stream, occupied by two negroes, who were fishing. Life ordered them to bring it to the shore, to which the fishermen objected, for they were having remarkably good luck. But when the Kentuckian pointed his revolver at the speaker, they pulled to the shore at once. Deck noticed that they handled the oars very well; and he offered them five dollars if they would row the boat to Cuffy's ferry. They turned loose their horses, and they made their way back to their own stable.

The offer was a godsend to the negroes, and they promptly accepted it. Without their services the scouts would have been in a bad situation, for Deck's wounded arm rendered

him unfit to row against the current of the great river. He had learned the dangerous places, and under his direction the ferry was reached in safety.

"Whar you done been to, Mars'rs?" asked Cuffy as they landed.

"We ask questions, but don't answer them," replied Deck. "Bring out our uniforms, and have two horses ready for us."

The scouts, after they had washed themselves, put on their uniforms, and again they looked like Union officers. Cuffy set the two negroes over the river; and with two dollars and a half in the pockets of each, they were satisfied with their day's work. The brigade with the light battery attached had marched, and were doubtless in Burkesville at the time the scouts arrived at the ferry. Deck and Life, one or both of them, had slept most of the way during the long and hard pull up the river, and they were in tolerable good condition when they landed.

Cuffy had the four horses left at the ferry by the deserters who had been drowned, and the two officers took the two best ones. It was all of forty miles by the roads to Burkesville, where the general said he might be on their return. After the best supper the ferryman could provide for them, they started on their journey, following the river.

On their arrival, about midnight, at Creelsboro', they were agreeably surprised to find the brigade there. The general had given them the countersign, and the lieutenants were promptly recognized by the sentinels. They were conducted to the tent of General Woodbine, who was called by his servant.

"I am very glad to see you, Lieutenant Lyon; and you also," said the commander, as he took them both by the hand. "I did not expect to see you before to-morrow. Have you obtained the information I need?"

"We have, General," replied Deck. "We saw the Confederate army on the march through Jamestown, and on the way to Livingston, which makes it certain that General Crittenden is going to Gainsboro'."

"Where he can obtain steamboats to convey his army to Nashville," supplemented the general. "I am satisfied now. I feared that Crittenden might march from Monticello, when I saw him headed in that direction from Oak Forest, by the way of Seventy-Six to the river, and then cross to Burkesville, and pick up the supplies of which he is in such great need. I must await further orders here. I have no doubt you are very tired, and one of the sentinels will conduct you to your tents."

"I think Lieutenant Lyon had better see Dr. Farnwright before he goes to sleep," said Life.

"Is he wounded?" asked the general, with interest and anxiety.

"Only slightly. We had a skirmish with half a dozen deserters from the enemy, and licked 'em handsome," added Life.

The officers were shown to their tents, and the surgeon sent for. The wound was carefully dressed, and the doctor said it would be well in three days. He slept soundly after the long and hard journey; and the surgeon had ordered him to remain in his tent if the brigade did not march in the morning, which it did not. The first persons to call upon him were his father and his brother.

"Where have you been, Dexter?" asked Major Lyon, after his wound had been considered. "I did not know you had been absent till this morning, though I missed Lieutenant Knox when I saw Sergeant Fronklyn at the head of his platoon."

"Life and I have been away on secret service; and for further particulars you must apply to General Woodbine," replied Deck with a meaning smile.

"I shall not apply to the general," added the major. "I am glad your wound is no worse; and I hope your new duties on the staff will be agreeable to you."

"I know they will, especially if I get my share of the fighting," answered Deck.

But the story of this campaign of the Riverlawn Cavalry, ending with the decisive battle of Mill Springs, is completed. Deck Lyon has won and obtained his promotion, and has entered upon a new sphere of duty, in which his bravery, skill, and enterprise enabled him to distinguish himself.

Before noon a messenger, escorted by a squad of cavalymen, arrived at the camp with sealed orders for General Woodbine, and bearing a large bag of letters for the officers and soldiers. There were several for Major Lyon and for his two sons. They were from home; and everything at Riverlawn was quiet and prosperous, with no evidences of war near the family.

Levi Bedford kept a watch every night at the fort named after him, and the fifty-one negroes were as tractable as usual. A number of them had been drilled for service in case of need, but fortunately there had been no occasion for their services. Through his sister Dorcas, Kate Belthorpe sent her regards to Deck, and he had something to think of as he sat in his tent.

Among the major's letters was one which had been forwarded from his brother Titus, then in

a prison-camp in the North. He had written before, and the major had replied to his letter. Titus had been informed that his two sons had enlisted in the Riverlawn squadron, and were good soldiers. Titus had no whiskey ration, or the means of obtaining liquor. It was plain from his letter that he was forced to be a sober man; and his sentiments were much more reasonable than they had ever been before. The major wrote to him again, informing him that his son Orly had been killed in action while bravely doing his duty as a soldier.

General Woodbine had his orders; and the information obtained by the scouts showed that he had no mission on this part of the frontier of Tennessee, and he must wait for further instructions. He sent a full account of the situation in this portion of Kentucky, in which there was no Confederate force of any magnitude,—none except guerillas and home banditti. But orders soon came, and the cavalry brigade and light battery were moved to the westward.

Those who are disposed to follow Deck Lyon in his further military career through marches, battles, and adventures, will find it set forth in the succeeding volume of this series, taking its title from the official position of the hero, "ON THE STAFF," though he is now a first lieutenant at eighteen.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A LIEUTENANT AT EIGHTEEN ***

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