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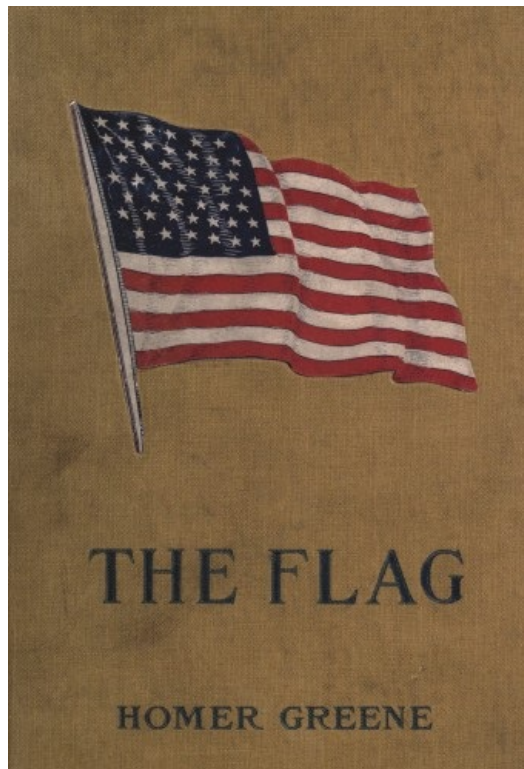
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# THE FLAG

By

**HOMER GREENE**

Author of  
"The Unhallowed Harvest,"  
"Pickett's Gap," "The Blind Brother," etc.



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HE GLARED DEFIANTLY ABOUT HIM

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**THE FLAG**

**CHAPTER I**

Snow everywhere; freshly fallen, white and beautiful. It lay unsullied on the village roofs, and, trampled but not yet soiled, in the village streets. The spruce trees on the lawn at Bannerhall were weighted with it, and on the lawn itself it rested, like an ermine blanket, soft and satisfying. Down the steps of the porch that stretched across the front of the mansion, a boy ran, whistling, to the street.

He was slender and wiry, agile and sure-footed. He had barely reached the gate when the front door of the square, stately old brick house was opened and a woman came out on the porch and called to him.

"Pen!"

"Yes, Aunt Millicent." He turned to listen to her.

"Pen, don't forget that your grandfather's going to New York on the five-ten train, and that you are to be at the station to see him off." [Pg 2]

"I won't forget, auntie."

"And then come straight home."

"Straight as a string, Aunt Milly."

"All right! Good-by!"

"Good-by!"

He passed through the gate, and down the street toward the center of the village. It was the noon recess and he was on his way back to school where he must report at one-fifteen sharp. He had an abundance of time, however, and he stopped in front of the post-office to talk with another boy about the coasting on Drake's Hill. It was while he was standing there that some one called to him from the street. Seated in an old-fashioned cutter drawn by an old gray horse were an old man and a young woman. The woman's face flushed and brightened, and her eyes shone with gladness, as Pen leaped from the sidewalk and ran toward her.

"Why, mother!" he cried. "I didn't expect to see you. Are you in for a sleigh-ride?"

She bent over and kissed him and patted his cheek before she replied, [Pg 3]

"Yes, dearie. Grandpa had to come to town; and it's so beautiful after the snow that I begged to come along."

Then the old man, round-faced and rosy, with a fringe of gray whiskers under his chin, and a green and red comforter about his neck, reached out a mittened hand and shook hands with Pen.

"Couldn't keep her to hum," he said, "when she seen me hitchin' up old Charlie."

He laughed good-naturedly and tucked the buffalo-robe in under him.

"How's grandma?" asked Pen.

"Jest about as usual," was the reply. "When you comin' out to see us?"

"I don't know. Maybe a week from Saturday. I'll see."

Then Pen's mother spoke again.

"You were going to school, weren't you? We won't keep you. Give my love to Aunt Millicent; and come soon to see us."

She kissed him again; the old man clicked to his horse, and succeeded, after some effort, in starting him, and Pen returned to the sidewalk and resumed his journey toward school. [Pg 4]

It was noticeable that no one had spoken of Colonel Butler, the grandfather with whom Pen lived at Bannerhall on the main street of Chestnut Hill. There was a reason for that. Colonel Butler was Pen's paternal grandfather; and Colonel Butler's son had married contrary to his father's wish. When, a few years later, the son died, leaving a widow and an only child, Penfield, the colonel had so far relented as to offer a home to his grandson, and to provide an annuity for the widow. She declined the annuity for herself, but accepted the offer of a home for her son. She knew that it would be a home where, in charge of his aunt Millicent, her boy would receive every advantage of care, education and culture. So she kissed him good-by and left him there, and she herself, ill, penniless and wretched, went back to live with her father on the little farm at Cobb's Corners, five miles away. But all that was ten years before, and Pen was now fourteen. That he had been well cared for was manifest in his clothing, his countenance, his bearing and his whole demeanor as he hurried along the partly swept pavement toward his destination. [Pg 5]

A few blocks farther on he overtook a school-fellow, and, as they walked together, they discussed the war.

For war had been declared. It had not only been declared, it was in actual progress.

Equipped and generalled, stubborn and aggressive, the opposing forces had faced each other for weeks. Yet it had not been a sanguinary conflict. Aside from a few bruised shins and torn coats and missing caps, there had been no casualties worth mentioning. It was not a country-wide war. It was, indeed, a war of which no history save this veracious chronicle, gives any record.

The contending armies were composed of boys. And the boys were residents, respectively, of the Hill and the Valley; two villages, united under the original name of Chestnut Hill, and so closely joined together that it would have been impossible for a stranger to tell where one ended and the other began. The Hill, back on the plateau, had the advantage of age and the prestige that wealth gives. The Valley, established down on the river bank when the railroad was built through, had the benefit of youth and the virtue of aggressiveness. Yet they were mutually interdependent. One could not have prospered without the aid of the other. When the new graded-school building was erected, it was located on the brow of the hill in order to accommodate pupils from both villages. From that time the boys who lived on the hill were called Hilltops, and those who lived in the valley were called Riverbeds. Just when the trouble began, or what was the specific cause of it, no one seemed exactly to know. Like Topsy, it simply grew. With the first snow of the winter came the first physical clash between the opposing forces of Hilltops and Riverbeds. It was a mild enough encounter, but it served to whet the appetites of the young combatants for more serious warfare. Miss Grey, the principal of the school, was troubled and apprehensive. She had encouraged a friendly rivalry between the two sets of boys in matters of intellectual achievement, but she greatly deprecated such a state of hostility as would give rise to harsh feelings or physical violence. She knew that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to coerce them into peace and harmony, so she set about to contrive some method by which the mutual interest of the boys could be aroused and blended toward the accomplishment of a common object.

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The procuring of an American flag for the use of the school had long been talked of, and it occurred to her now that if she could stimulate a friendly rivalry among her pupils, in an effort to obtain funds for the purchase of a flag, it might divert their minds from thoughts of hostility to each other, into channels where a laudable competition would be provocative of harmony. So she decided, after consultation with the two grade teachers, to prepare two subscription blanks, each with its proper heading, and place them respectively in the hands of Penfield Butler captain of the Hilltops, and Alexander Sands commander of the Riverbeds. The other pupils would be instructed to fall in behind these leaders and see which party could obtain, not necessarily the most money, but the largest number of subscriptions. She felt that interest in the flag would be aroused by the numbers contributing rather than by the amount contributed. It was during the session of the school that afternoon that she made the announcement of her plan, and delivered the subscription papers to the two captains. She aroused much enthusiasm by the little speech she made, dwelling on the beauty and symbolism of the flag, and the patriotic impulse that would be aroused and strengthened by having it always in sight.

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No one questioned the fact that Pen Butler was the leader of the Hilltops, nor did any one question the similar fact that Aleck Sands was the leader of the Riverbeds. There had never been any election or appointment, to be sure, but, by common consent and natural selection, these two had been chosen in the beginning as commanders of the separate hosts.

When, therefore, the subscription blanks were put into the hands of these boys as leaders, every one felt that nothing would be left undone by either to win fame and honor for his party in the matter of the flag.

So, when the afternoon session of school closed, every one had forgotten, for the time being at least, the old rivalry, and was ready to enlist heartily in the new one.

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There was fine coasting that day on Drake's Hill. The surface of the road-bed, hard and smooth, had been worn through in patches, but the snow-fall of the night before had so dressed it over as to make it quite perfect for this exhilarating winter sport.

As he left the school-house Pen looked at his watch, a gift from his grandfather Butler on his last birthday, and found that he would have more than half an hour in which to enjoy himself at coasting before it would be necessary to start for the railroad station to see Colonel Butler off on the train. So, with his companions, he went to Drake's Hill. It was fine sport indeed. The bobs had never before descended so swiftly nor covered so long a stretch beyond the incline. But, no matter how fascinating the sport, Pen kept his engagement in mind and intended to leave the hill in plenty of time to meet it. There were especial reasons this day why he should do so. In the first place Colonel Butler would be away from home for nearly a week, and it had always been Pen's custom to see his grandfather off on a journey, even though he were to be gone but a day. And in the next place he wanted to be sure to get Colonel Butler's name at the head of his flag subscription list. This would doubtless be the most important contribution to be made to the fund.

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At half-past four he decided to take one more ride and then start for the station. But on that ride an accident occurred. The bobs on which the boys were seated collapsed midway of the descent, and threw the coasters into a heap in the ditch. None of them was seriously hurt, though the loose stones among which they were thrown were not sufficiently cushioned by the snow to prevent some bruises, and abrasions of the skin. Of course there was much confusion and excitement. There was scrambling, and rubbing of hurt places, and an immediate investigation

into the cause of the wreck. In the midst of it all Pen forgot about his engagement. When the matter did recur to his mind he glanced at his watch and found that it lacked but twelve minutes of train time. It would be only by hard sprinting and rare good luck that he would be able to reach the station in time to see his grandfather off. Without a word of explanation to his fellows he started away on a keen run. They looked after him in open-mouthed wonder. They could not conceive what had happened to him. One boy suggested that he had been frightened out of his senses by the shock of the accident; and another that he had struck his head against a rock and had gone temporarily insane, and that he ought to be followed to see that he did no harm to himself. But no one offered to go on such a mission, and, after watching the runner out of sight, they turned their attention again to the wrecked bobs.

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Aleck Sands went straight from school to his home in the valley. There were afternoon chores to be done, and he was anxious to finish them as soon as possible in order that he might start out with his subscription paper.

He did not hope to equal Pen in the amount of contributions, for he had no wealthy grandfather on whom to depend, but he did intend to excel him in the number of subscribers. And it was desirable that he should be early in the field.

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It was almost dusk when he started from home to go to the grist-mill of which his father was the proprietor. He wanted to get his father's signature first, both as a matter of policy and as a matter of filial courtesy.

As he approached the railroad station, which it was necessary for him to pass on his way to the mill, he saw Colonel Butler pacing up and down the platform which faced the town, and, at every turn, looking anxiously up the street.

It was evident that the colonel was waiting for the train, and it was just as evident that he was expecting some one, probably Pen, to come to the station to see him off. And Pen was nowhere in sight.

A brilliant and daring thought entered Aleck's mind. While, ordinarily, he was neither brilliant nor daring, yet he was intelligent, quick and resourceful. He was always ready to meet an emergency. The idea that had taken such sudden possession of him was nothing more nor less than an impulse to solicit Colonel Butler for a subscription to the flag fund and thus forestall Pen. And why not? He knew of nothing to prevent. Pen had no exclusive right to subscriptions from the Hill, any more than he, Aleck, had to subscriptions from the Valley. And if he could be first to obtain a contribution from Colonel Butler, the most important citizen of Chestnut Hill, if not of the whole county, what plaudits would he not receive from his comrades of the Riverbeds?

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Having made up his mind he was not slow to act. He was already within fifty feet of the platform on which the gray-mustached and stern-faced veteran of the civil war was impatiently marching up and down. An empty sleeve was pinned to the breast of the old soldier's coat; but he stood erect, and his steps were measured with soldierly precision. He had stopped for a moment to look, with keener scrutiny, up the street which led to the station. Aleck stepped up on the platform and approached him.

"Good evening, Colonel Butler!" he said.

The man turned and faced him.

"Good evening, sir!" he replied. "You have somewhat the advantage of me, sir."

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"My name is Aleck Sands," explained the boy. "My father has the grist-mill here. Miss Grey, she is our teacher at the graded school, and she gave me a paper—"

Colonel Butler interrupted him.

"A pupil at the graded school are you, sir? Do you chance to know a lad there by the name of Penfield Butler; and if you know him can you give me any information concerning his whereabouts this evening?"

"Yes, sir. I know him. After school he started for Drake's Hill with some other Hill boys to go a coasting."

"Ah! Pleasure before duty. He was to have met me here prior to the leaving of the train. I have little patience, sir, with boys who neglect engagements to promote their own pleasures."

He had such an air of severity as he said it, that Aleck was not sure whether, after all, he would dare to reapproach him on the subject of the subscription. But he plucked up courage and started in anew.

"Our teacher, Miss Grey, gave me this paper to get subscriptions on for the new flag. I'd be awful glad if you'd give something toward it."

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"What's that?" asked the man as he took the paper from Aleck's hand. "A flag for the school? And has the school no flag?"

"No, sir; not any."

"The directors have been derelict in their duty, sir. They should have provided a flag on the erection of the building. No public school should be without an American flag. Let me see."

He unhooked his eye-glasses from the breast of his waistcoat and put them on, shook out the paper dexterously with his one hand, and began to read it aloud.

"We, the undersigned, hereby agree to pay the sums set opposite our respective names, for the purpose of purchasing an American flag for the Chestnut Hill public school. All subscriptions to be payable to a collector hereafter to be appointed."

Colonel Butler removed his glasses from his nose and stood for a moment in contemplation.

"I approve of the project," he said at last. "Our youth should be made familiar with the sight of the flag. They should be taught to reverence it. They should learn of the gallant deeds of those who have fought for it through many great wars. I shall be glad to affix my name, sir, to the document, and to make a modest contribution. How large a fund is it proposed to raise?" [Pg 16]

Aleck stammered a little as he replied. He had not expected so ready a compliance with his request. And it was beginning to dawn on him that it might be good policy, as well as a matter of common fairness, to tell the colonel frankly that Pen also had been authorized to solicit subscriptions. There might indeed be such a thing as revoking a subscription made under a misleading representation, or a suppression of facts. And if that should happen—

"Why," said Aleck, "why—Miss Grey said she thought we ought to get twenty-five dollars. We've got to get a pole too, you know."

"Certainly you must have a staff, and a good one. Twenty-five dollars is not enough money, young man. You should have forty dollars at least. Fifty would be better. I'll give half of that amount myself. There should be no skimping, no false economy, in a matter of such prime importance. I shall see Miss Grey about it personally when I return from New York. Kindly accompany me to the station-agent's office where I can procure pen and ink." [Pg 17]

Aleck knew that the revelation could be no longer delayed.

"But," he stammered, "but, Colonel Butler, you know Pen's got one too."

The colonel turned back again.

"Got what?" he asked.

"Why, one of these, now, subscription papers."

"Has he?"

"Yes, sir."

Colonel Butler stood for a moment, apparently in deep thought. Then he looked out again from under his bushy eye-brows, searchingly, up the street. He took his watch from his pocket and glanced at it. After that he spoke.

"Under normal conditions, sir, my grandson would have preference in a matter of this kind, and I am obliged to you for unselfishly making the suggestion. But, as he has failed to perform a certain duty toward me, I shall consider myself relieved, for the time being, of my duty of preference toward him. Kindly accompany me to the station-master's office." [Pg 18]

With Aleck in his wake he strode down the platform and across the waiting-room, among the people who had gathered to wait for or depart by the train, and spoke to the ticket-agent at the window.

"Will you kindly permit me, sir, to use your table and pen and ink to sign a document of some importance?"

"Certainly!"

The man at the window opened the door of the agent's room and bade the colonel and Aleck to enter. He pushed a chair up to the table and placed ink and pens within reach.

"Help yourself, Colonel Butler," he said. "We're glad to accommodate you."

But the colonel had barely seated himself before a new thought entered his mind. He pondered for a moment, and then swung around in the swivel-chair and faced the boy who stood waiting, cap in hand. [Pg 19]

"Young man," he said, "it just occurs to me that I can serve your school as well, and please myself better, by making a donation of the flag instead of subscribing to the fund. Does the idea meet with your approval?"

The proposition came so unexpectedly, and the question so suddenly, that Aleck hardly knew how to respond.

"Why, yes, sir," he said hesitatingly, "I suppose so. You mean you'll give us the flag?"

"Yes; I'll give you the flag. I am about starting for New York. I will purchase one while there. And in the spring I will provide a proper staff for it, in order that it may be flung to the breeze."

By this time Aleck comprehended the colonel's plan.

"Why," he exclaimed enthusiastically, "that'll be great! May I tell Miss Grey?"

"You may be the sole bearer of my written offer to your respected teacher."

He swung around to the table and picked up a pen.

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"Your teacher's given name is—?" he inquired.

"Why," stammered Aleck, "it's—it's—why, her name's Miss Helen Grey."

The colonel began to write rapidly on the blank page of the subscription paper.

*"To Miss Helen Grey;  
Principal of the Public School  
Chestnut Hill.*

"MY DEAR MADAM:

"I am informed by one of your pupils, Master—"

He stopped long enough to ask the boy for his full name, and then continued to write—

"Alexander McMurtrie Sands, that it is your patriotic purpose to procure an American flag for use in your school. With this purpose I am in hearty accord. It will therefore give me great pleasure, my dear madam, to procure for you at once, at my sole expense, and present to your school, an appropriate banner, to be followed in due season by a fitting staff. I trust that my purpose and desire may commend themselves to you. I wish also that your pupil, the aforesaid Master Sands, shall have full credit for having so successfully called this matter to my attention; and to that end I make him sole bearer of this communication.

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"I remain, my dear madam,  
Your obedient servant,  
"RICHARD BUTLER."

January 12th.

Colonel Butler read the letter over slowly aloud, folded the subscription paper on which it had been written, and handed it to Aleck.

"There, young man," he said, "are your credentials, and my offer."

The shrieking whistle had already announced the approach of the train, and the easy puffing of the locomotive indicated that it was now standing at the station. The colonel rose from his chair and started across the room, followed by Aleck.

"You're very kind to do that," said the boy. And he added: "Have you a grip that I can carry to the train for you?"

"No, thank you! A certain act—rash perhaps, but justifiable,—in the civil war, cost me an arm. Since then, when traveling, I have found it convenient to check my baggage."

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He pushed his way through the crowd on the platform, still followed by Aleck, and mounted the rear steps of the last coach on the train. The engine bell was ringing. The conductor cried, "All aboard!" and signalled to the engineer, and the train moved slowly out.

On the rear platform, scanning the crowd at the station, stood Colonel Butler, tall, soldierly, impressive. He saw Aleck and waved his hand to him. And at that moment, capless, breathless, hopeless, around the corner of the station into sight, dashed Pen Butler.

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## CHAPTER II

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Pen was not only exhausted by his race, he was disappointed and distressed as well.

Whether or not his grandfather had seen him as the train moved out he did not know. He simply knew that for him not to have been there on time was little less than tragical. He dropped down

limply on a convenient trunk to regain his breath.

After a minute he was aware that some one was standing near by, looking at him. He glanced up and saw that it was Aleck Sands. He was nettled. He knew of no reason why Aleck should stand there staring at him.

"Well," he asked impatiently, "is there anything about me that's particularly astonishing?"

"Not particularly," replied Aleck. "You seem to be winded, that's all."

"You'd be winded too, if you'd run all the way from Drake's Hill."

"Too bad you missed your grandfather. He was looking for you."

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"How do you know?"

"He told me so. He wanted to know if I'd seen you."

"What did you tell him?"

"I told him you'd gone to Drake's Hill, coasting."

Pen rose slowly to his feet. What right, he asked himself, had this fellow to be telling tales about him? What right had he to be talking to Colonel Butler, anyway? However, he did not choose to lower his dignity further by inquiry. He turned as if to leave the station. But Aleck, who had been turning the matter over carefully in his mind, had decided that Pen ought to know about the proposed gift of the flag. He ought not to be permitted, unwittingly, to go on securing subscriptions to a fund which, by reason of Colonel Butler's proposed gift, had been made unnecessary. That would be cruel and humiliating. So, as Pen turned away, he said to him:

"I've put in some work for the flag this afternoon."

"I s'pose so," responded Pen. "But it does not follow that by getting the first start you'll come out best in the end."

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"Maybe not; but I'd like to show you what I've done."

He took the subscription paper from his pocket and began to unfold it.

"Oh," replied Pen, "I don't care what you've done. It's none of my business. You get your subscriptions and I'll get mine."

Aleck looked for a moment steadily at his opponent. Then he folded up his paper and put it back into his pocket.

"All right!" he said. "Only don't forget that I offered to show it to you to-day."

But Pen was both resentful and scornful. He did not propose to treat his rival's offer seriously, nor to give him the satisfaction of looking at his paper.

"You can't bluff me that way," he said. "And besides, I'm not interested in what you're doing."

And he walked around the corner of the station platform and out into the street.

When Aleck Sands tramped up the hill to school on the following morning it was with no great sense of jubilation over his success. He had an uneasy feeling that he had not done exactly the fair thing in soliciting a subscription from Pen Butler's grandfather. It was, in a way, trenching on Pen's preserves. But he justified himself on the ground that he had a perfect right to get his contributions where he chose. His agency had been conditioned by no territorial limits. And if, by his diligence, he had outwitted Pen, surely he had nothing to regret. So far as his failure to disclose to his rival the fact of Colonel Butler's gift was concerned, that, he felt, was Pen's own fault. If, by his offensive conduct, the other boy had deprived himself of his means of knowledge, and had humiliated himself and made himself ridiculous by procuring unnecessary subscriptions, certainly he, Aleck, was not to blame. Under any circumstances, now that he had gone so far in the matter, he would not yield an inch nor make a single concession. On that course he was fully determined.

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On the walk, as he approached the school-house door, Pen was standing, with a group of Hill boys. They were discussing the accident that had occurred on Drake's Hill the day before. They paid little attention to Aleck as he passed by them, but, just as he was mounting the steps, Pen called out to him.

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"Oh, Aleck! You wanted to show me your subscription paper last night. I'll look at it now, and you look at mine, and we'll leave it to the fellows here who's got the most names and the most money promised. And I haven't got my grandfather on it yet, either."

Aleck turned and faced him. "Remember what you said to me last night?" he asked. "Well, I'll say the same thing to you this morning. I'm not interested in your paper. It's none of my business."



You get your subscriptions and I'll get mine."

And he mounted the steps and entered the school-room.

Miss Grey was already at her desk, and he went straight to her.

"I've brought back my subscription blank, Miss Grey," he said, and he handed the paper to her.

She looked up in surprise.

"You haven't completed your canvass, have you?" she asked.

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"No. If you'll read the paper you'll see it wasn't necessary."

She unfolded the paper and read the letter written on it. Her face flushed; but whether with astonishment or anxiety it would have been difficult to say.

"Did Colonel Butler know," she inquired, "when he wrote this, that Pen also had a subscription paper?"

"Yes. I met him at the station last night, when he was starting for New York, and I told him all about it."

"Was Pen there?"

"No; he didn't get there till after the train started."

"Does he know about this letter?"

"Not from me. I offered to show it to him but he wouldn't look at it."

"Aleck, there's something strange about this. I don't quite understand it. Is Pen outside?"

"Yes; he was when I came."

"Call him in, please; and return with him."

Aleck went to the door, his resolution to stand by his conduct growing stronger every minute. He called to Pen.

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"Miss Grey wants to see you," he said.

"What for?" inquired Pen.

"She'll tell you when you come in."

Both boys returned to the teacher.

"Pen," she inquired, "have you obtained any subscriptions to your paper for the flag fund?"

"Yes, Miss Grey," he replied. "I think I've done pretty well considering my grandfather's not home."

He handed his paper to her with a show of pardonable pride; but she merely glanced at the long list of names.

"Did you know," she asked, "that Colonel Butler has decided to give the flag to the school?"

Pen opened his eyes in astonishment.

"No," he said. "Has he?"

"Read this letter, please."

She handed the colonel's letter to him and he began to read it. His face grew red and his eyes snapped. He had been outwitted. He knew in a moment when, where and how it had been done. He handed the paper back to Miss Grey.

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"All right!" he said. "But I think it was a mean, underhanded, contemptible trick."

Then Aleck, slow to wrath, woke up.

"There was nothing mean nor underhanded about it," he retorted. "I had a perfect right to ask Colonel Butler for a subscription. And if he chose to give the whole flag, that was his lookout. And," turning to Pen, "if you'd been half way decent last night, you'd have known all about this thing then, and maybe saved yourself some trouble."

Before Pen could flash back a reply, Miss Grey intervened.

"That will do, boys. I'm not sure who is in the wrong here, if any one is. I propose to find out

about that, later. It's an unfortunate situation; but, in justice to Colonel Butler, we must accept it." She handed Pen's paper back to him, and added: "I think you had better take this back to your subscribers, and ask them to cancel their subscriptions. I will consult with my associates at noon, and we will decide upon our future course. In the meantime I charge you both, strictly, to say nothing about this matter until after I have made my announcement at the afternoon session. You may take your seats."

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The school bell had already ceased ringing, and the pupils had filed in and had taken their proper places. So Aleck and Pen went down the aisle, the one with stubborn resolution marking his countenance, the other with keen resentment flashing from his eyes.

And poor Miss Grey, mild and peace-loving, but now troubled and despondent, who had thought to restore harmony among her pupils, foresaw, instead, only a continued and more bitter rivalry.

Notwithstanding her admonition, rumors of serious trouble between Aleck and Pen filtered through the school-room during the morning session, and were openly discussed at the noon recess. But both boys kept silent.

It was not until the day's work had been finally disposed of, and the closing hour had almost arrived, that Miss Grey made her announcement.

With all the composure at her command she called the attention of the school to the plan for a flag fund.

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"Our end has been accomplished," she added, "much more quickly and successfully than we had dared to hope, as you will see by this letter which I shall read to you."

When she had finished reading the letter there was a burst of applause. The school had not discovered the currents under the surface.

She continued:

"This, of course, will do away with the necessity of obtaining subscriptions. Honors appear to be nearly even. A prominent citizen of Chestnut Hill has given us the flag—" (Loud applause from the Hilltops;) "and a pupil from Chestnut Valley has the distinction of having procured the gift." (Cheers for Aleck Sands from the Riverbeds.) "Now let rivalry cease, and let us unite in a fitting acceptance of the gift. I have consulted with my associates, and we have appointed a committee to wait upon Colonel Butler and to cooperate with him in fixing a day for the presentation of the flag to the school. We will make a half-holiday for the occasion, and will prepare an order of exercises. We assume that Colonel Butler will make a speech of presentation, and we have selected Penfield Butler as the most appropriate person to respond on behalf of the school. Penfield will prepare himself accordingly."

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By making this appointment Miss Grey had hoped to pour oil upon the troubled waters, and to bring about at least a semblance of harmony among the warring elements. But, as the event proved, she had counted without her host. For she had no sooner finished her address than Pen was on his feet. His face was pale and there was a strange look in his eyes, but he did not appear to be unduly excited.

"May I speak, Miss Grey?" he asked.

"Certainly," she replied.

"Then I want to say that I'm very much obliged to you for appointing me, but I decline the appointment. I'm glad the school's going to have a flag, and I'm glad my grandfather's going to give it; and I thank you, Miss Grey, for trying to please me; but I don't propose to be made the tail of Aleck Sands' kite. If he thinks it's an honor to get the flag the way he got it, let him have the honor of accepting it."

[Pg 34]

Pen sat down. There was no applause. Even his own followers were too greatly amazed for the moment to applaud him. And, before they got their wits together, Miss Grey had again taken the reins in hand.

"I am sure we all regret," she said, "that Penfield does not see fit to accept this appointment, and we should regret still more the attitude of mind that leads him to decline it. However, in accordance with his suggestion, I will name Alexander Sands as the person who will make the response to Colonel Butler's presentation speech. That is all to-day. When school is dismissed you will not loiter about the school grounds, but go immediately to your homes."

It was a wise precaution on Miss Grey's part to direct her pupils to go at once to their homes. There is no telling what disorder might have taken place had they been permitted to remain. The group of Hilltops that surrounded Pen as he marched up the street and explained the situation to them, was loud in its condemnation of the meanness and trickery of Aleck Sands; and the party of Riverbeds that walked down with Aleck was jubilant over the clever way in which he had outwitted his opponent, and had, by obtaining honor for himself, conferred honor also upon them.

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Colonel Butler returned, in due season, from New York.

Pen met him at the station on his arrival. There was no delay on this occasion. Indeed, the boy had paced up and down the platform for at least fifteen minutes before the train drew in. During the ride up to Bannerhall, behind the splendid team of blacks with their jingling bells, nothing was said about the gift of the flag. It was not until dinner had been served and partly eaten that the subject was mentioned, and the colonel himself was the first one to mention it.

"By the way, Penfield," he said, "I have ordered, and I expect to receive in a few days, an American flag which I shall present to your public school. I presume you have heard something concerning it?"

"Yes, grandfather. Your letter was read to the school by Miss Grey the day after you went to New York." [Pg 36]

"Did she seem pleased over the gift?"

"Yes, very much so, I think. It was awfully nice of you to give it."

"A—was any arrangement made about receiving it?"

"Yes, Miss Grey appointed a committee to see you. There's to be a half-holiday, and exercises."

"I presume—a—Penfield, that I will be expected to make a brief address?"

"Of course. Miss Grey's counting on it."

"Now, father," interrupted Aunt Millicent, "I do hope it will be a really brief address. You're so long-winded. That speech you made when the school-house was dedicated was twice too long. Everybody got tired."

His daughter Millicent was the only person on earth from whom Colonel Butler would accept criticism or reproof. And from her he not only accepted it, but not infrequently acted upon it in accordance with her wish. He had always humored her, because she had always lived with him, except during the time she was away at boarding school; and since the death of his wife, a dozen years before, she had devoted herself to his comfort. But he was fond, nevertheless, of getting into a mild argument with her, and being vanquished, as he expected to be now. [Pg 37]

"My dear daughter," he said, "I invariably gauge the length of my speech by the importance of the occasion. The occasion to which you refer was an important one, as will be the occasion of the presentation of this flag. It will be necessary for me, therefore, to address the pupils and the assembled guests at sufficient length to impress upon them the desirability, you may say the necessity, of having a patriotic emblem, such as is the American flag, constantly before the eyes of our youth."

His daughter laughed a little. She was never awed by his stately manner of speech.

"All the same," she replied; "I shall get a seat in the front row, and if you exceed fifteen minutes—fifteen minutes to a minute, mind you—I shall hold up a warning finger; and if you still trespass, I shall go up and drag you off the platform by your coat tails; and then you'd look pretty, wouldn't you?" [Pg 38]

Apparently he did not find it profitable to prolong the argument with her on this occasion, for he laughed and turned again to Pen.

"By the way, Penfield," he said, "I missed you at the train the day I left home. I suppose something of major importance detained you?"

Pen blushed a little, but he replied frankly:

"I was awfully sorry, grandfather; I meant to have written you about it. I didn't exactly forget; but I was coasting on Drake's Hill, and there was an accident, and I was very much excited, and it got train-time before I knew it. Then I ran as fast as I could, but it wasn't any use."

"I see. I trust that no one was seriously injured?"

"No, sir. I bruised my shin a little, and Elmer scraped his knee, and the bobs were wrecked; that's about all."

Colonel Butler adjusted his glasses and leaned back in his chair; a habit he had when about to deliver himself of an opinion which he deemed important. [Pg 39]

"Penfield," he said, "a gentleman should never permit anything to interfere with the keeping of his engagements. If the matter in hand is of sufficient importance to call for an engagement, it is of sufficient importance to keep the engagement so made. It is an elementary principle of good conduct that a gentleman should always keep his word. Otherwise the relations of men with each other would become chaotic."

"Yes, sir," replied Pen.

Colonel Butler removed his glasses and again applied himself to the disposal of his food which had been cut into convenient portions by his devoted daughter.

But his mind soon recurred to the subject of the flag.

"A—Penfield," he inquired, "do you chance to know whether any person has been chosen to make a formal response to my speech of presentation?"

Pen felt that the conversation was approaching an embarrassing stage, but there was no hesitancy in his manner as he replied: [Pg 40]

"Yes, sir. The boy that got your offer, Aleck Sands, will make the response."

"H'm! I was hoping, expecting in fact, that you, yourself, would be chosen to perform that pleasing duty. Had you been, we could have prepared our several speeches with a view to their proper relation to each other. It occurred to me that your teacher, Miss Grey, would have this fact in mind. Do you happen to know of any reason why she should not have appointed you?"

For the first time in the course of the conversation Pen hesitated and stammered.

"Why, I—she—she did appoint me."

"Haven't you just told me, sir, that—"

"But, grandfather, I declined."

Aunt Millicent dropped her hands into her lap in astonishment.

"Pen Butler!" she exclaimed, "why haven't you told me a word of this before?"

"Because, Aunt Milly, it wasn't a very agreeable incident, and I didn't want to bother you telling about it."

Colonel Butler had, in the meantime, again put on his glasses in order that he might look more searchingly at his grandson. [Pg 41]

"Permit me to inquire," he asked, "why you should have declined so distinct an honor?"

Then Pen blurted out his whole grievance.

"Because Aleck Sands didn't do the fair thing. He got you to give the flag through him instead of through me, by a mean trick. He gets the credit of getting the flag; now let him have the honor of accepting it. I won't play second fiddle to such a fellow as he is, and that's all there is to it."

He pushed his chair back from the table and sat, with flaming cheeks and defiant eyes, as if ready to meet all comers.

Aunt Millicent, more astonished than ever, exclaimed:

"Why, Pen Butler, I'm shocked!"

But the colonel did not seem to be shocked. Back of his glasses there was a gleam of satisfaction in his eyes which Pen could not see. Here was the old Butler pride and independence manifesting itself; the spirit which had made the family prosperous and prominent. He was not ill-pleased. Nevertheless he leaned back in his chair and spoke impressively: [Pg 42]

"Now let us consider the situation. You received from your teacher a copy of the same subscription blank which was handed to your fellow-pupil. Had you met your engagement at the station, and called the matter to my attention, you would doubtless have received my subscription, or been the bearer of my offer, in preference to any one else. In your absence your school-fellow seized a legitimate opportunity to present his case. My regret at your failure to appear, and my appreciation of his alertness, led me to favor him. I am unable to see why, under these circumstances, he should be charged with improper conduct."

"Well," responded Pen, hotly, "he might at least have told you that I had a subscription blank too."

"He did so inform me. And his fairness and frankness in doing so was an inducing cause of my favorable consideration of his request."

Pen felt that the ground was being cut away from under his feet, but he still had one grievance left. [Pg 43]

"Anyway," he exclaimed, "he might have told me about your giving the whole flag, instead of letting me go around like a monkey, collecting pennies for nothing."

"Very true, Penfield, he should have told you. Didn't he intimate to you in any way what I had done? Didn't he offer to show you his subscription blank containing my letter?"

"Why—why, yes, I believe he did."

"And you declined to look at it?"

"Yes, I declined to look at it. I considered it none of my business. But he might have told me what was on it."

"My dear grandson; this is a case in which the alertness of your school-fellow, added to your failure to keep an engagement and to grasp a situation, has led to your discomfiture. Let this be a lesson to you to be diligent, vigilant and forearmed. Only thus are great battles won."

Again the colonel placed his glasses on the hook on the breast of his waistcoat, and resumed his activity in connection with his evening meal. It was plain that he considered the discussion at an end.

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### CHAPTER III

[Pg 45]

It was on an afternoon late in January that the flag was finally presented to the school. It was a day marked with fierce winds and flurries of snow, like a day in March.

But the inclement weather did not prevent people from coming to the presentation exercises. The school room was full; even the aisles were filled, and more than one late-comer was turned away because there was no more room.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Riverbeds were to have the lion's share of the honors of the occasion, and the further fact that resentment in the ranks of the Hilltops ran strong and deep, and doubly so since the outwitting of their leader, no attempt was made to block the program, or to interfere, in any way, with the success of the occasion.

There were, indeed, some secret whisperings in a little group of which Elmer Cuddeback was the center; but, if any mischief was brewing, Pen did not know of it.

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Moreover, was it not Pen's grandfather who had given the flag, and who was to be the chief guest of the school, and was it not up to the Hilltops to see that he was treated with becoming courtesy? At any rate that was the "consensus of opinion" among them. Colonel Butler had prepared his presentation speech with great care. Twice he had read it aloud in his library to his grandson and to his daughter Millicent.

His grandson had only favorable comment to make, but his daughter Millicent criticised it sharply. She said that it was twice too long, that it had too much "spread eagle" in it, and that it would be away over the heads of his audience anyway. So the colonel modified it somewhat; but, unfortunately, he neither made it simpler nor appreciably shorter.

Aleck, too, under the supervision of his teacher, had prepared a fitting and patriotic response which he had committed to memory and had rehearsed many times. Pupils taking part in the rest of the program had been carefully and patiently drilled, and every one looked forward to an occasion which would be marked as a red-letter day in the history of the Chestnut Hill school.

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The exercises opened with the singing of "The Star Spangled Banner," by the school. There was a brief prayer by the pastor of one of the village churches. Next came a recitation, "Barbara Frietchie," by a small girl. Then another girl read a brief history of the American flag. She was followed by James Garfield Morrissey, the crack elocutionist of the school, who recited, in fine form, a well-known patriotic poem, written to commemorate the heroism of American sailors who cheered the flag as they went down with the sinking flag-ship *Trenton* in a hurricane which swept the Samoan coast in 1889.

#### THE BANNER OF THE SEA

By wind and wave the sailor brave has fared  
To shores of every sea;  
But, never yet have seamen met or dared  
Grim death for victory,  
In braver mood than they who died  
On drifting decks in Apia's tide  
While cheering every sailor's pride,  
The Banner of the Free.

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Columbia's men were they who then went down,  
Not knights nor kings of old;  
But brighter far their laurels are than crown  
Or coronet of gold.  
Our sailor true, of any crew,  
Would give the last long breath he drew  
To cheer the old Red, White and Blue,

## The Banner of the Bold.

With hearts of oak, through storm and smoke and flame,  
Columbia's seamen long  
Have bravely fought and nobly wrought that shame  
Might never dull their song.  
They sing the Country of the Free,  
The glory of the rolling sea,  
The starry flag of liberty,  
The Banner of the Strong.

We ask but this, and not amiss the claim;  
A fleet to ride the wave,  
A navy great to crown the state with fame,  
Though foes or tempests rave.  
Then, as our fathers did of yore,  
We'll sail our ships to every shore,  
On every ocean wind will soar  
The Banner of the Brave.

Oh! this we claim that never shame may ride  
On any wave with thee,  
Thou ship of state whose timbers great abide  
The home of liberty.  
For, so, our gallant Yankee tars,  
Of daring deeds and honored scars,  
Will make the Banner of the Stars  
The Banner of the Sea.

The school having been roused to a proper pitch of enthusiasm by the reading of these verses, Colonel Butler rose in an atmosphere already surcharged with patriotism to make his presentation speech. Hearty applause greeted the colonel, for, notwithstanding his well-known idiosyncrasies, he was extremely popular in Chestnut Hill. He had been a brave soldier, an exemplary neighbor, a prominent and public-spirited citizen. Why should he not receive a generous welcome? He graciously bowed his acknowledgment, and when the hand-clapping ceased he began:

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"Honored teachers, diligent pupils, faithful directors, patriotic citizens, and friends. This is a most momentous occasion. We are met to-day to do honor to the flag of our country, a flag for which—and I say it with pardonable pride—I, myself, have fought on many a bloody and well-known field."

There was a round of applause.

The colonel's face flushed with pleasure, his voice rose and expanded, and in many a well-rounded phrase and burst of eloquence he appealed to the latent patriotism of his hearers.

At the end of fifteen minutes he glanced at his watch which was lying on a table at his side, and then looked at his daughter Millicent who was occupying a chair in the front row as she had said she would. She frowned at him forbiddingly. But he was as yet scarcely half through his speech. He picked up his manuscript from the table and glanced at it, and then looked appealingly at her. She was obdurate. She held a warning forefinger in the air.

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"I am reminded," he said, "by one in the audience whose judgment I am bound to respect, that the time allotted to me in this program has nearly elapsed."

"Fully elapsed," whispered his daughter with pursed lips, in such manner that, looking at her, he could not fail to catch the words.

"Therefore," continued the colonel, with a sigh, "I must hasten to my conclusion. I wish to acknowledge my deep indebtedness to your faithful teacher, Miss Grey, by reason of whose patriotic initiative the opportunity was presented to me to make this gift. I wish also to commend the vigilance and effort of the young gentleman who brought the matter to my immediate and personal attention, and who, I am informed, will fittingly and eloquently respond to this brief and somewhat unsatisfactory address, Master Alexander Sands."

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Back somewhere in the audience, at the sound of the name, there was an audible sniff which was immediately drowned by loud hand-clapping on the part of the Riverbeds. But Colonel Butler was not yet quite through. Avoiding any ominous look which might have been aimed at him by his daughter, he hurried on:

"And now, in conclusion, as I turn this flag over into your custody, let me charge you to guard it with exceeding care. It should be treated with reverence because it symbolizes our common country. Whoever regards it with indifference has no patriotic blood in his veins. Whoever lays wanton hands on it is a traitor to it. And whoever insults or defames it in any way, deserves, and will receive, the open scorn and lasting contempt of all his countrymen. Ladies and gentlemen, I have done."

The colonel resumed his seat amid a roar of applause, and when it had subsided Miss Grey arose to introduce the respondent.

"This beautiful flag," she said, "will now be accepted, on behalf of the school, in an address by one of our pupils: Master Alexander Sands." [Pg 52]

Aleck arose and made his way to the platform. The Riverbeds applauded him vigorously, and the guests mildly, as he went. He started out bravely enough on his speech.

"Colonel Butler, teachers and guests: It gives me pleasure, on behalf of the Chestnut Hill public school, to accept this beautiful flag—"

He made a sweeping gesture toward the right-hand corner of the platform, as he had done at rehearsals, only to discover that the flag had, at the last moment, been shifted to the left-hand corner, and he had, perforce, to turn and repeat his gesture in that direction. There was nothing particularly disconcerting about this, but it broke the continuity of his effort, it interfered with his memory, he halted, colored, and cudged his brains to find what came next. Back, in the rear of the room, where the Hilltops were gathered, there was an audible snicker; but Aleck was too busy to hear it, and Miss Grey, prepared for just such an emergency as this, glanced at a manuscript she had in her hand, and prompted him: [Pg 53]

"So graciously given to us—"

Aleck caught the words and went on:

"—so graciously given to us by our honored townsman and patriotic citizen, Colonel Richard Butler."

Another pause. Again Miss Grey came to the rescue.

"No words of mine—" she said.

"No words of mine," repeated Aleck.

"Sure, they're no words of yours," said some one in a stage-whisper, far down in the audience.

Suspicion pointed to Elmer Cuddeback, but he stood there against the wall, with such an innocent, sober look on his round face, that people thought they must be mistaken. The words had not failed to reach to the platform, however, and Miss Grey, more troubled than before, again had recourse to her manuscript for the benefit of Aleck, who was floundering more deeply than ever in the bogs of memory.

"—can properly express—"

"—can properly express—"

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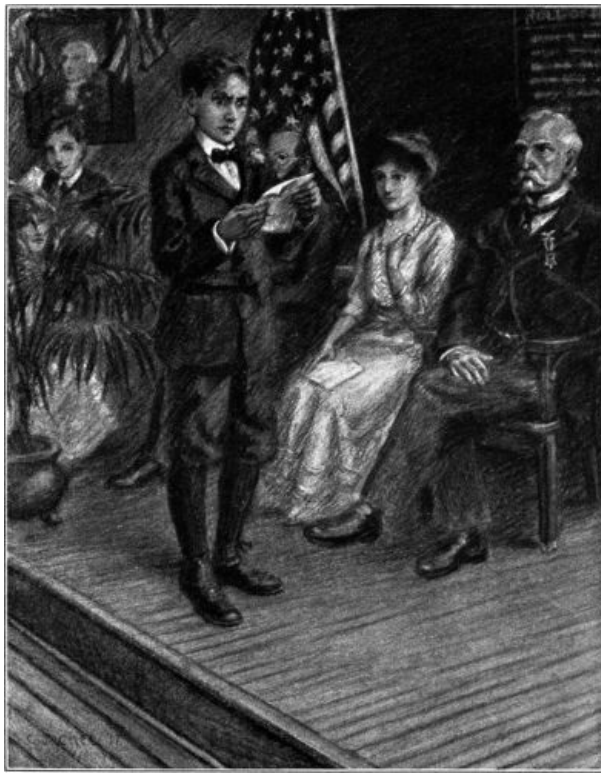
Another pause. Again the voice back by the wall:

"Express broke down; take local."

The situation was growing desperate. Miss Grey was almost at her wit's end. Then a bright idea struck her. She thrust the manuscript into Aleck's hand.

"Oh, Aleck," she exclaimed, "take it and read it!"

He grasped it like the proverbial drowning man, turned it upside down and right side up, but failed to find the place where he had left off.



**ALECK TURNED IT UPSIDE DOWN AND RIGHTSIDE UP, BUT  
FAILED TO FIND THE PLACE**

Again the insistent, high-pitched whisper from the rear, breaking distinctly into the embarrassing silence:

"Can't read it, cause teacher wrote it."

This was the last straw. Slow to wrath as he always was, Aleck had thus far kept his temper. But this charge filled him with sudden anger and resentment. He turned his eyes, blazing with fury, toward the boy by the rear wall, whom he knew was baiting him, and shouted:

"That's a lie, Elmer Cuddeback, and you know it!"

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At once confusion reigned. People stood up and looked around to get a possible glimpse of the object of Aleck's denunciation. Some one cried: "Put him out!"

Two or three members of the Riverbeds started threateningly toward Elmer, and his friends struggled to get closer to him. An excitable woman in the audience screamed. Miss Grey was pounding vigorously with her gavel, but to no effect. Then Colonel Butler himself took matters in hand. He rose to his feet, stretched out his arm, and shouted:

"Order! Order! Resume your seats!"

People sat down again. The belligerent boys halted in their tracks. Everyone felt that the colonel must be obeyed. He waited, in commanding attitude, until order had been restored, then he continued:

"The young gentleman who undertook to respond to my address was stricken with what is commonly known as stage-fright. That is no discredit to him. It is a malady that attacked so great a man and so brave a warrior as General Grant. I may add that I, myself, have suffered from it on occasion. And now that order has been restored we will proceed with the regular program, and Master Sands will finish the delivery of his address."

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He stepped back to give the respondent the floor; but Master Sands was nowhere in sight. In the confusion he had disappeared. The colonel looked around him expectantly for a moment, and then again advanced to the front of the platform.

"In the absence of our young friend," he said, "whose address, I am sure, would have been received with the approbation it deserves, I, myself, will occupy a portion of the time thus made vacant, in still further expounding to you—"

But at this moment, notwithstanding his effort to avoid it, he again caught his daughter's warning look, and saw her forefinger held threateningly in the air.

"I am reminded, however," he continued, "by one in the audience whose judgment I am bound to respect, that it is not appropriate for me to make both the speech of presentation and the address on behalf of the recipient. I will, therefore, conclude by thanking you for your attendance and your attention, and by again adjuring you to honor, protect and preserve this beautiful emblem of our national liberties."

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He had scarcely taken his seat amid the applause that his words always evoked, before Miss Grey was on her feet announcing the closing number of the program, the song "America," by the entire audience.

Whether it was due to the excitement of the occasion, or, as the colonel afterward modestly suggested, to the spirit of patriotism aroused by his remarks, it is a fact that no one present had ever before heard the old song sung with more vim and feeling.

The audience was dismissed.

Colonel Butler's friends came forward to congratulate and thank him. The Hilltops, chuckling gleefully, with Elmer Cuddeback in their center, marched off up-town. The Riverbeds, downcast and revengeful, made their way down the hill. But Aleck Sands was not with them. He had already left the school-building and had gone home. He was angry and bitterly resentful. He felt that he could have faced any one, at any time, in open warfare, but to be humiliated and ridiculed in public, that was more than even his phlegmatic nature could stand. He could not forget it. He could not forgive those who had caused it. Days, weeks, years were not sufficient to blot entirely from his heart the feeling of revenge that entered it that winter afternoon. [Pg 58]

It was late on the same day that Colonel Butler stood with his back to the blazing wood-fire in the library, waiting for his supper to be served, and looking out into the hall on the folds of the handsome, silk, American flag draped against the wall. There had always been a flag in the hall. Colonel Butler's father had placed one there when he built the house and went to live in it. And when, later on, the colonel fell heir to the property, and rebuilt and modernized the home, he replaced the old flag of bunting with the present one of silk. Indeed, it was on account of the place and prominence given to the flag that the homestead had been known for many years as Bannerhall. [Pg 59]

Pen sat at the library table preparing his lessons for the following day.

"Well, Penfield," said the colonel, "a—what did you think of my speech to-day?"

"I thought it was great," replied Pen. "Pretty near as good as the one you delivered last Memorial Day."

The colonel smiled with satisfaction. "Yes," he remarked, "I, myself, thought it was pretty good; or would have been if your aunt Millicent had permitted me to complete it. It was also unfortunate that your young friend was not able fully to carry out his part of the program."

"You mean Aleck Sands?"

"I believe that is the young gentleman's name."

"He's not my friend, grandfather."

"Tut! Tut! You should not harbor resentment because of his having outwitted you in the matter of procuring the flag. Especially in view of his discomfiture of to-day."

"It wasn't my fault that he flunked."

"I am not charging you with that responsibility, sir. I am simply appealing to your generosity. By the way, I understand—I have learned this afternoon, that there exists what may be termed a feud between the boys of Chestnut Hill and those of Chestnut Valley. Have I been correctly informed?" [Pg 60]

"Why, yes; I guess—I suppose you might call it that."

"And I have been informed also that you are the leader of what are facetiously termed the 'Hilltops,' and that our young friend, Master Sands, is the leader of what are termed, still more facetiously, the 'Riverbeds.' Is this true?"

Pen closed his book and hesitated. He felt that a reproof was coming, to be followed, perhaps, by strict orders concerning his own neutrality.

"Well," he stammered, "I—I guess that's about right. Anyway our fellows sort o' depend on me to help 'em hold their own."

Pen was not looking at his grandfather. If he had been he would have seen a twinkle of satisfaction in the old gentleman's eyes. It was something for a veteran of the civil war to have a grandson who had been chosen to the leadership of his fellows for the purpose of engaging in juvenile hostilities. So there was no shadow of reproof in the colonel's voice as he asked his next question. [Pg 61]

"And what, may I inquire, is, or has been, the *casus belli*?"

"The what, sir?"

"The—a—cause or causes which have produced the present state of hostility."

"Why, I don't know—nothing in particular, I guess—only they're all the time doing mean things, and boasting they can lick us if we give 'em a chance; and I—I'm for giving 'em the chance."

Reproof or no reproof, he had spoken his mind. He had risen from his chair, and stood before his grandfather with determination written in every line of his flushed face. Colonel Butler looked at him and chuckled.

"Very good!" he said. He chuckled again and repeated: "Very good!"

Pen stared at him in astonishment. He could not quite understand his attitude.

"Now, Penfield," continued the old gentleman, "mind you, I do not approve of petty jealousies and quarrelings, nor of causeless assaults. But, when any person is assailed, it is his peculiar privilege, sir, to hit back. And when he hits he should hit hard. He should use both strategy and force. He should see to it, sir, that his enemy is punished. Have your two hostile bodies yet met in open conflict on the field?"

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"Why," replied Pen, still amazed at the course things were taking, "we've had one or two rather lively little scraps. But I suppose, after what happened to-day, they'll want to fight. If they do want to, we're ready for 'em."

The colonel had left his place in front of the fire, and was pacing up and down the room.

"Very good!" he exclaimed, "very good! Men and nations should always be prepared for conflict. To that end young men should learn the art of fighting, so that when the call to arms comes, as I foresee that it will come, the nation will be ready."

He stopped in his walk and faced his grandson.

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"Not that I deprecate the arts of peace, Penfield. By no means! It is by those arts that nations have grown great. But, in my humble judgment, sir, as a citizen and a soldier, the only way to preserve peace, and to ensure greatness, is to be at all times ready for war. We must instil the martial spirit into our young men, we must rouse their fighting blood, we must teach them the art of war, so that if the flag is ever insulted or assailed they will be ready to protect it with their bodies and their blood. Learn to fight; to fight honorably, bravely, skillfully, and—to fight—hard."

"Father Richard Butler!"

It was Aunt Millicent who spoke. She had come on them from the hall unawares, and had overheard the final words of the colonel's adjuration.

"Father Richard Butler," she repeated, "what heresy is this you are teaching to Pen?"

He made a brave but hopeless effort to justify his course.

"I am teaching him," he replied, "the duty that devolves upon every patriotic citizen."

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"Patriotic fiddlesticks!" she exclaimed. "I have no patience with such blood-thirsty doctrines. And, Pen, listen! If I ever hear of your fighting with anybody, at any time, you'll have your aunt Millicent to deal with, I promise you that. Now come to supper, both of you."

It was not until nearly the close of the afternoon session on the following day that Miss Grey referred to the unfortunate incident of the day before. She expressed her keen regret, and her sense of humiliation, over the occurrence that had marred the program, and requested Elmer Cuddeback, Aleck Sands and Penfield Butler to remain after school that she might confer with them concerning some proper form of apology to Colonel Butler. But when she had the three boys alone with her, and referred to the shameful discourtesy with which the donor of the flag had been treated, tears came into her eyes, and her voice trembled to the point of breaking. No one could have helped feeling sorry for her; especially the three boys who were most concerned.

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"I don't think," said Pen, consolingly, "that grandfather minded it very much. He doesn't talk as if he did."

"Let us hope," she replied, "that he was not too greatly shocked, or too deeply disgusted. Elmer, your conduct was wholly inexcusable, and I'm going to punish you. But, Pen, you and Aleck are the leaders, and I want this disgraceful feud between you up-town and down-town boys to stop. I want you both to promise me that this will be the end of it."

She looked from one to the other appealingly, but, for a moment, neither boy replied. Then Aleck spoke up.

"Our fellows," he said, "feel pretty sore over the way I was treated yesterday; and I don't believe they'd be willing to give up till they get even somehow."

To which Pen responded:

"They're welcome to try to get even if they want to. Were ready for 'em."

Miss Grey threw up her hands in despair.

"Oh boys! boys!" she exclaimed. "Why will you be so foolish and obstinate? What kind of men do you suppose you'll make if you spend your school-days quarreling and fighting with each other?"

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"Well, I don't know," replied Pen. "My grandfather thinks it isn't such a bad idea for boys to try their mettle on each other, so long as they fight fair. He thinks they'll make better soldiers sometime. And he says the country is going to need soldiers after awhile."

She looked up in surprise.

"But I don't want my boys to become soldiers," she protested. "I don't want war. I don't believe in it. I hate it."

She had reason to hate war, for her own father had been wounded at Chancellorsville, and she remembered her mother's long years of privation and sorrow. Again her lip trembled and her eyes filled with tears. There was an awkward pause; for each boy sympathized with her and would have been willing to help her had a way been opened that would not involve too much of sacrifice. Elmer Cuddeback, even in the face of his forthcoming punishment, was still the most tenderhearted of the three, and he struggled to her relief.

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"Can't—can't we make some sort o' compromise?" he suggested.

But Pen, too, had been thinking, and an idea had occurred to him. And before any reply could be made to Elmer's suggestion he offered his own solution to the difficulty.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Miss Grey," he said, "and what I'll get our fellows to do. We'll have one, big snowball fight. And the side that gets licked 'll stay licked till school's out next spring. And there won't be any more scrapping all winter. We'll do that, won't we, Elmer?"

"Sure we will," responded Elmer confidently.

Aleck did not reply. Miss Grey thought deeply for a full minute. Perhaps, after all, Pen's proposition pointed to the best way out of the difficulty. Indeed, it was the only way along which there now seemed to be any light. She turned to Aleck.

"Well," she asked, "what do you think of it?"

"Why, I don't know," he replied. "I'd like to talk with some of our fellows about it first."

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He was always cautious, conservative, slow to act unless the emergency called for action.

"No," replied Pen. "I won't wait. It's a fair offer, and you'll take it now or let it alone."

"Then," said Aleck, doggedly, "I'll take it, and you'll be sorry you ever made it."

Lest active hostilities should break out at once, Miss Grey interrupted:

"Now, boys, I don't approve of it. I don't approve of it at all. I think young men like you should be in better business than pelting each other, even with snowballs. But, as it appears to be the only way out of the difficulty, and in the hope that it will put an end to this ridiculous feud, I'm willing that you should go ahead and try it. Do it and have it over with as soon as possible, and don't let me know when it's going to happen, or anything about it, until you're all through."

It was with deep misgivings concerning the success of the plan that she dismissed the boys; and more than once during the next few days she was on the point of withdrawing her permission for the fight to take place. Many times afterwards she regretted keenly that she had not done so.

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## CHAPTER IV

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When Pen told his grandfather that a snowball fight had been decided upon as the method of settling the controversy between the Hilltops and the Riverbeds, and that Miss Grey had given her permission to that effect, the old gentleman chuckled gleefully.

"A very wise young woman," he said; "very wise indeed. When will the sanguinary conflict take place?"

"Why," replied Pen, "the first day the snow melts good."

"I see. I suppose you will lead the forces of Chestnut Hill?"

"I expect to; yes, sir."

"And our young friend, Master Sands, will marshal the troops of the Valley?"

"Yes, sir; I suppose so."

"You will have to look out for that young man, Penfield. He strikes me as being very much of a strategist."

"I'm not afraid of him."

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"Don't be over-confident. Over-confidence has lost many a battle."

"Well, we'll lick 'em anyway. We've got to."

"That's the proper spirit. Determination, persistence, bravery, hard-fighting—Hush! Here comes your aunt Millicent."

Colonel Butler was as bold as a lion in the presence of every one save his daughter. Against her determination his resolution melted like April snow. She loved him devotedly, she cared for him tenderly, but she ruled him with a rod of iron. In only one matter did his stubborn will hold out effectually against hers. No persuasion, no demand on her part, could induce him to change his attitude towards Pen's mother. He chose to consider his daughter-in-law absolutely and permanently outside of his family, and outside of his consideration, and there the matter had rested for a decade, and was likely to rest so long as he drew breath.

That night, after Pen had retired to his room, there came a gentle knock at his open door. His grandfather stood there, holding in his hand a small volume of Upton's military tactics which he had used in the Civil War.

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"I thought this book might be of some service to you, Penfield," he explained. "It will give you a good idea of the proper methods to be used in handling large or small bodies of troops."

"Thank you, grandfather," said Pen, taking the book. "I'll study it. I'm sure it'll help me."

"Nevertheless," continued the colonel, "there must be courage and persistency as well as tactics, if battles are to be won. You understand?"

"Yes, grandfather."

The old man turned away, but turned back again.

"A—Penfield," he said, "when you are absent from your room will you kindly have the book in such a locality that your Aunt Millicent will not readily discover it?"

"Yes, grandfather."

The winter weather at Chestnut Hill was not favorable for war. The mercury lingered in the neighborhood of zero day after day. Snow fell, drifted, settled; but did not melt. It was plain that ammunition could not be made of such material. So the battle was delayed. But the opposing forces nevertheless utilized the time. There were secret drills. There were open discussions. Plans of campaign were regularly adopted, and as regularly discarded. Yet both sides were constantly ready.

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A strange result of the situation was that there had not been better feeling between the factions for many months. Good-natured boasts there were, indeed. But of malice, meanness, open resentment, there was nothing. Every one was willing to waive opportunities for skirmishing, in anticipation of the one big battle.

It was well along in February before the weather moderated. Then, one night, it grew warm. The next morning gray fog lay over all the snow-fields. Rivulets of water ran in the gutters, and little pools formed in low places everywhere. War time had at last come. Evidently nature intended this to be the battle day. It was Saturday and there was no session of the school.

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The commander of the Hilltops called his forces together early, and a plan of battle was definitely formed. Messengers, carrying a flag of truce, communicated with the Riverbeds, and it was agreed that the fight should take place that afternoon on the vacant plot in the rear of the school building. It was thought best by the Hilltops, however, to reconnoiter in force, and to prepare the field for the conflict. So, sixteen strong, they went forth to the place selected for the fray. They saw nothing of the enemy; the lot was still vacant. They began immediately to throw up breast-works. They rolled huge snowballs down the slightly sloping ground to the spot selected for a fort. These snowballs were so big that, by the time they reached their destination, it took at least a half dozen boys to put each one into place. They squared them up, and laid them carefully in a curved line ten blocks long and three blocks high, with the requisite embrasures. Then they prepared their ammunition. They made snowballs by the score, and piled them in convenient heaps inside the barricade. By the time this work was finished it was noon. Then, leaving a sufficient force to guard the fortifications, the remainder of the troops sallied forth to luncheon, among them the leader of the Hilltops. At the luncheon table Pen took advantage of the temporary absence of his aunt to inform his grandfather, in a stage-whisper, that the long anticipated fight was scheduled for that afternoon.

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"And," he added, "we've got the biggest snow fort you ever saw, and dead loads of snowballs inside."

The colonel smiled and his eyes twinkled.

"Good!" he whispered back. "Smite them hip and thigh. Hold the fort! 'Stand: the ground's your own, my braves!"

"We're ready for anything."

"Bravo! Beware of the enemy's strategy, and fight hard. Fight as if—ah! your Aunt Millicent's coming."

At one o'clock the first division returned and relieved the garrison; and at two every soldier was back and in his place. The breast-works were strengthened, more ammunition was made, and heaps of raw material for making still more were conveniently placed. But the enemy did not put in an appearance. A half hour went by, and another half hour, and the head of the first hostile soldier was yet to be seen approaching above the crest of the hill. Crowds of small boys, non-combatants, were lined up against the school-house, awaiting, with anxiety and awe, the coming battle. Out in the road a group of girls, partisans of the Hilltops, was assembled to cheer their friends on to victory. Men, passing by on foot and with teams, stopped to inquire concerning the war-like preparations, and some of them, on whose hands it may be that time was hanging heavily, stood around awaiting the outbreak of hostilities. [Pg 76]

Still the enemy was nowhere in sight. A squad, under command of Lieutenant Cuddeback, was sent out to the road to reconnoiter. They returned and reported that they had been to the brow of the hill, but had failed to discover any hostile troops. Was it possible that the Riverbeds had weakened, backed out, decided, like the cowards that they were, not to fight, after all? It was in the midst of an animated discussion over this possibility that the defenders of the fort were startled by piercing yells from the neighborhood of the stone fence that bounded the school-house lot in the rear. Looking in that direction they were thunderstruck to see the enemy's soldiers pouring over the wall and advancing vigorously toward them. With rare strategy the Riverbeds, instead of approaching by the front, had come up the hill on the back road, crept along under cover of barns and fences until the school-house lot was reached, and now, with terrific shouts, were crossing the stone-wall to hurl themselves impetuously on the foe. [Pg 77]

For a moment consternation reigned within the fort. The surprise was overwhelming. Pen was the first one, as he should have been, to recover his wits. He remembered his grandfather's warning against the enemy's strategy.

"It's a trick!" he shouted. "Don't let 'em scare you! Load up and at 'em!"

Every boy seized his complement of snowballs, and, led by their captain, the Hilltops started out, on double-quick, to meet the enemy. [Pg 78]

The next moment the air was filled with flying missiles. They were fired at close range, and few, from either side, failed to find their mark.

The battle was swift and fierce. An onslaught from the Riverbeds' left, drove the right wing of the Hilltops back into the shadow of the fort. But the center held its ground and fought furiously. Then the broken right wing, supplied with fresh ammunition from the reserve piles, rallied, forced the invaders back, turned their flank, and fell on them from the rear. The Riverbeds, with ammunition all but exhausted, were hard beset. They fought bravely and persistently but they could not stand up before the terrific rain of missiles that was poured in on them. They yielded, they retreated, but they went with their faces to the foe. There was only one avenue of escape, and that was down by the side of the school-house to the public road. It was inch by inch that they withdrew. No army ever beat a more stubborn or masterly retreat. In the face of certain defeat, at scarcely arm's length from their shouting and exultant foe, they fought like heroes. [Pg 79]

Pen Butler was in the thickest and hottest of the fray. He urged his troops to the assault, and was not afraid to lead them. The militant blood of his ancestors burned in his veins, and, if truth must be told, it trickled in little streams down his face from a battered nose and a cut lip received at a close quarter's struggle with the enemy.

The small boys by the school-house, seeing the line of battle approaching them, beat a retreat to a less hazardous position. The girls in the road clung to each other and looked on, fascinated and awe-stricken at the furious fight, forgetting to wave a single handkerchief, or emit a single cheer. The men on the side-path clapped their hands and yelled encouragement to one or other of the contending forces, in accordance with their sympathies.

The first of the retreating troops, still contesting stubbornly the foe's advance, reached the corner of the school-house nearest the public road. By some chance the entrance door of the building was ajar. A soldier's quick eye discovered it. Here was shelter, protection, a chance to recuperate and reform. He shouted the good news to his comrades, pushed the door open and entered. By twos and threes, and then in larger groups, they followed him until the very last man of them was safe inside, and the door was slammed shut and locked in the faces of the foe. Under the impetus of the charge the victorious troops broke against the barrier, but it held firm. That it did so hold was one of the providential occurrences of the day. So, at last, the Hilltops were foiled and baffled. Their victory was not complete. Pen stood on the top step at the entrance, his face smeared with blood, and angrily declared his determination, by one means or another, to hunt [Pg 80]

the enemy out from their place of shelter, and drive them down the hill into their own riverbed, where they belonged. But, in spite of his extravagant declaration, nothing could be done without a breach of the law. Doors and windows must not be broken. Temporarily, at least, the enemy was safe.

After a consultation among the Hilltops it was decided to take up a position across the road from the school-house, and await the emergence of the foe. But the foe appeared to be in no haste to emerge. It was warm inside. They were safe from attack. They could take their ease and wait. And they did. The minutes passed. A half hour went by. A drizzling rain had set in, and the young soldiers at the roadside were getting uncomfortably wet. The small boys, who had looked on, departed by twos and threes. The girls, after cheering the heroes of the fight, also sought shelter. The men, who had been interested spectators while the battle was on, drifted away. It isn't encouraging to stand out in the rain, doing nothing but stamping wet feet, and wait for a beaten foe to come out. Enthusiasm for a cause is apt to wane when one has to stand, shivering, in rain-soaked clothes, and wait for something to occur. And enthusiasm did wane. A majority of the boys wanted to call it a victory and go home. But Pen would not listen to such a proposal.

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"They've run into the school-house," he said, "like whipped dogs, and locked the door; and now, if we go home, they'll come out and boast that we were afraid to meet 'em again. They'll say that we slunk away before the fight was half over. I won't let 'em say that. I'll stay here all night but what I'll give 'em the final drubbing."

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But his comrades were not equally determined. The war spirit seemed to have died out in their breasts, and, try as he would, Pen was not able to restore it.

Yet, even as he argued, the school-house door opened and the besieged army marched forth. They marched forth, indeed, but this time they had an American flag at the head of their column. It was carried by, and folded and draped around the body of, Alexander Sands. It was the flag that Colonel Butler had given to the school. Whose idea it was to use it thus has never been disclosed. But surely no more effective means could have been adopted to cover an orderly retreat. The Hilltop forces stared at the spectacle in amazement and stood silent in their tracks. Pen was the first to recover his senses. If he had been angry when the enemy came upon them unawares from the stone-wall, he was furious now.

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"It's another trick!" he cried, "a mean, contemptible trick! They think the flag'll save 'em but it won't! Come on! We'll show 'em!"

He started toward the advancing column, firing his first snowball as he went; a snowball that flattened and spattered against the flag-covered breast of Aleck Sands. But his soldiers did not follow him. No leader, however magnetic, could have induced them to assault a body of troops marching under the protecting folds of the American flag. They revered the colors, and they stood fast in their places. Pen leaped the ditch, and, finding himself alone, stopped to look back.

"What's the matter?" he cried. "Are you all afraid?"

"It's the flag," answered Elmer Cuddeback, "and I won't fight anybody that carries it."

"Nor I," said Jimmie Morrissey.

"Nor I;" "Nor I," echoed one after another.

Then, indeed, Pen's temper went to fever heat. He faced his own troops and denounced them.

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"Traitors!" he yelled. "Cowards! every one of you! To be scared by a mere piece of bunting! Babies! Go home and have your mothers put you to bed! I'll fight 'em single-handed!"

He was as good as his word. He plunged toward the head of the column, which had already reached the middle of the public road.

"Don't you dare to touch the flag!" cried Aleck.

"And don't you dare to tell me what I shall not touch," retorted Pen. "Drop it, or I'll tear it off of you."

But Aleck only drew the folds more tightly about him and braced himself for the onset. He clutched the staff with one hand; and the other hand, duly clenched, he thrust into his adversary's face. For a moment Pen was staggered by the blow, then he gathered himself together and leaped upon his opponent. The fight was on: fast and furious. The followers of each leader, appalled at the fierceness of the combat, stood as though frozen in their places. The flag, clutched by both fighters, was in danger of being torn from end to end. Then came the clinch. Gripping, writhing, twisting, tangled in the colors, the lithe young bodies wavered to their fall. And when they fell the flag fell with them, into the grime and slush of the road. In an instant Pen was on his feet again, but Aleck did not rise. He pulled himself slowly to his elbow and looked around him as though half-dazed.

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That Pen was the victor there was no doubt. His face streaked with blood and distorted with passion, he stood there and glared triumphantly on friend and foe alike. That he was standing on

the flag mattered little to him in that moment. He was like one crazed. Some one shouted to him:

"Get off the flag! You're standing on it!"

"What's that to you?" he yelled back. "I'll stand where I like!"

"It's the flag of your country. Get off of it!"

"What do I care for my country or for you. I've won this fight, single-handed, in spite of any flag, or any country, or any coward here, and I'll stand where I choose!" [Pg 86]

He stood fast in his place and glared defiantly about him, and in all the company there was not one who dared approach him.

But it was only for a moment. Some impulse moved him to look down. Under his heels the white stars on their blue field were being ground into the mire. A sudden revulsion of feeling swept over him, a sense of horror at his own conduct. His arms fell to his sides. His face paled till the blood splashes on it stood out startlingly distinct. He moved slowly and carefully backward till the folds of the banner were no longer under his feet. He cast one fleeting glance at his worsted adversary who was still half-lying, half-sitting, with the flag under his elbows, then, his passion quenched, shame and remorse over his unpatriotic conduct filling his heart, without another word he turned his back on his companions, thrust his bleeding hands into his pockets, and started up the road, toward home; his one thought being to leave as quickly and quietly as possible the scene of his disgrace. No one followed him, no one called after him; he went alone. He was hatless and ragged. His rain-soaked garments clung to him with an indescribable chill. The fire of his anger had burned itself out, and had left in its place the ashes of despondency and despair. Yet, even in that hour of depression and self-accusation, he did not dream of the far-reaching consequences of this one unpremeditated act of inexcusable folly of which he had just been guilty. He bent down and gathered some wet snow into his hands and bathed his face, and sopped it half dry with his handkerchief, already soaked. Then, not caring, in his condition, to show himself on the main street of the village, he crossed over to the lane that skirted the outlots, and went thence by a circuitous and little traveled route, to Bannerhall. [Pg 87]

In the meantime, back in the road by the school-house, Aleck Sands had picked himself up, still a little dazed, but not seriously hurt, and soldiers who had recently faced each other in battle came with unanimity to the rescue of the flag. Hilltops and Riverbeds alike, all differences and enmities forgotten in this new crisis, they joined in gathering up the wet and muddy folds, and in bearing them to the warmth and shelter of the school-house. Here they washed out the stains, and stretched the banner out to dry, and at dusk, exhausted and sobered by the events of the day, with serious faces and apprehensive hearts, they went to their several homes. [Pg 88]

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## CHAPTER V

When Pen reached home on that afternoon after the battle of Chestnut Hill, he found that his Aunt Millicent was out, and that his grandfather had not yet returned from Lowbridge, the county seat, fourteen miles away. He had therefore an opportunity, unseen and unquestioned, to change his wet clothing for dry, and to bathe and anoint and otherwise care for his cuts and bruises. When it was all done he went down to the library and lighted the gas, and found a book and tried to read. But the words he read were meaningless. Try as he would he could not keep his mind on the printed page. Nor was it so much the snowball fight that occupied his thoughts. He was not now exulting at any victory he had obtained over his foes. He was not even dwelling on the strategy and trickery displayed by Aleck Sands and his followers in seeking protection under the folds of the flag; strategy and trickery which had led so swiftly and sharply to his own undoing. It was his conduct in that last, fierce moment of the fight that was blazoned constantly before his eyes with ever increasing strength of accusation. To think that he, Penfield Butler, grandson of the owner of Bannerhall, had permitted himself, in a moment of passion, no matter what the provocation, to grind his country's flag into the slush under his heels; the very flag given by his grandfather to the school of which he was himself a member. How should he ever square himself with Colonel Richard Butler? How should he ever make it right with Miss Grey? How should he ever satisfy his own accusing conscience? Excuses for his conduct were plenty enough indeed; his excitement, his provocation, his freedom from malice; he marshalled them in orderly array; but, under the cold logic of events, one by one they crumbled and fell away. More and more heavily, more and more depressingly the enormity of his offense weighed upon him as he considered it, and what the outcome of it all would be he did not even dare to conjecture. [Pg 90]

At half past five his Aunt Millicent returned. She looked in at him from the hall, greeted him pleasantly, said something about the miserable weather, and then went on about her household duties. [Pg 91]

Dinner had been waiting for fifteen minutes before Colonel Butler reached home, and, in the mild excitement attendant upon his return, Pen's injuries escaped notice. But, at the dinner-table, under the brightness of the hanging lamps, he could no longer conceal his condition. Aunt Millicent was the first to discover it.

"Why, Pen!" she exclaimed, "what on earth has happened to you?"

And Pen answered, frankly enough:

"I've been in a snowball fight, Aunt Milly."

"Well, I should say so!" she replied. "Your face is a perfect sight. Father, just look at Pen's face."

Colonel Butler adjusted his eye-glasses deliberately, and looked as he was bidden to do.

"Some rather severe contusions," he remarked. "A bit painful, Penfield?"

"Not so very," replied Pen, "I washed 'em off and put on some Pond's extract, and some court-plaster, and I guess they'll be all right." [Pg 92]

The colonel was still looking at Pen's wounds, and smiling as he looked.

"The nature of the injuries," he said, "indicates that the fighting must have been somewhat strenuous. But honorable scars, won on the field of battle, are something in which any man may take pardonable—"

"Father Richard Butler!" exclaimed Aunt Millicent. "Aren't you ashamed of yourself! Pen, let this be the last snowball fight you indulge in while you live in this house. Do you hear me?"

"Yes, Aunt Millicent. There won't be any more; not any more at all."

"I should hope not," she replied; "with such a looking face as you've got."

Colonel Butler was temporarily subdued. Only the merry twinkle in his eyes, and the smile that hovered about the corners of his mouth, still attested the satisfaction he was feeling in his grandson's military prowess. He could not, however, restrain his curiosity until the end of the meal, and, at the risk of evoking another rebuke from his daughter, he inquired of Pen: [Pg 93]

"A—Penfield, may I ask in which direction the tide of battle finally turned?"

"I believe we licked 'em, grandfather," replied Pen. "We drove 'em into the school-house anyway."

"Not, I presume, before some severe preliminary fighting had taken place?"

"There you go again, father!" exclaimed Aunt Millicent. "It's nothing but 'fighting, fighting,' from morning to night. What kind of a man do you think Pen will grow up to be, with such training as this?"

"A very useful, brave and patriotic citizen, I hope, my dear."

"Fiddlesticks!" It was Aunt Millicent's favorite ejaculation. But the colonel did not refer to the battle again at the table. It was not until after he had retired to the library, and had taken up his favorite position, his back to the fire, his eyes resting on the silken banner in the hall, that he plied Pen with further questions. His daughter not being in the room he felt that he might safely resume the subject of the fight. [Pg 94]

"I would like a full report of the battle, Penfield," he said. "It appears to me that it is likely to go down as a most important event in the history of the school."

Pen shook his head deprecatingly, but he did not at once reply. Impatient at the delay, which he ascribed to the modesty characteristic of the brave and successful soldier, the colonel began to make more definite inquiry.

"In what manner was the engagement opened, Penfield?"

And Pen replied:

"Well, you know we built a snow fort in the school-house lot; and they sneaked up the back road, and cut across lots where we couldn't see 'em, and jumped on us suddenly from the stone-wall."

"Strategy, my boy. Military strategy deserving of a good cause. And how did you meet the attack?"

"Why, we pulled ourselves together and went for 'em."

"Well? Well? What happened?" [Pg 95]

The colonel was getting excited and impatient.

"Well, we fought 'em and drove 'em down to the front of the school-house, and then they opened the door and sneaked in, just as I told you, and locked us out."

"Ah! more strategy. The enemy had brains. But you should have laid siege and starved him out."



"We did lay siege, grandfather."

"And did you starve him out?"

"No, they came out."

"And you renewed the attack?"

"Some of us did."

"Well, go on! go on! What happened? Don't compel me to drag the story out of you piecemeal, this way."

"Why, they—they played us another mean trick."

"What was the nature of it?"

"Well—you know that flag you gave the school?"

"Yes."

"They carried that flag ahead of 'em, Aleck Sands had it wrapped around him, and then—our fellows were afraid to fight." [Pg 96]

"Strategy again. Military genius, indeed! But it strikes me, Penfield, that the strategy was a bit unworthy."

"I thought it was a low-down trick."

"Well—a—let us say that it was not the act of a brave and generous foe. The flag—the flag, Penfield, should be used for purposes of inspiration rather than protection. However, the enemy, having placed himself under the auspices and protection of the flag which should, in any event, be unassailable, I presume he marched away in safety and security?"

"Why, no—not exactly."

"Penfield, I trust that no one had the hardihood to assault the bearer of his country's flag?"

"Grandfather, I couldn't help it. He made me mad."

"Don't tell me, sir, that you so far forgot yourself as to lead an attack on the colors?"

"No, I didn't. I pitched into him alone. I had to lick him, flag or no flag."

"Penfield, I'm astounded! I wouldn't have thought it of you. And what happened, sir?" [Pg 97]

"Why, we clinched and went down."

"But, the flag? the flag?"

"That went down too."

Colonel Butler left his place at the fire-side and crossed over to the table where Pen sat, in order that he might look directly down on him.

"Am I to understand," he said, "that the colors of my country have been wantonly trailed in the mire of the street?"

Under the intensity of that look, and the trembling severity of that voice, Pen wilted and shrank into the depths of his cushioned chair. He could only gasp:

"I'm afraid so, grandfather."

After that, for a full minute, there was silence in the room. When the colonel again spoke his voice was low and tremulous. It was evident that his patriotic nature had been deeply stirred.

"In what manner," he asked, "was the flag rescued and restored to its proper place?"

And Pen answered truthfully:

"I don't know. I came away."

The boy was still sunk deep in his chair, his hands were desperately clutching the arms of it, and on his pale face the wounds and bruises stood out startlingly distinct. [Pg 98]

In the colonel's breast grief and indignation were rapidly giving way to wrath.

"And so," he added, his voice rising with every word, "you added insult to injury; and having forced the nation's banner to the earth, you deliberately turned your back on it and came away?"

Pen did not answer. He could not.

"I say," repeated the colonel, "you deliberately turned your back on it, and came away?"

"Yes, sir."

Colonel Butler crossed back to the fire-place, and then he strode into the hall. He put on his hat and was struggling into his overcoat when his daughter came in from the dining-room and discovered him.

"Why, father!" she exclaimed, "where are you going?"

"I am going," he replied, "to perform a patriotic duty."

"Oh, don't go out again to-night," she pleaded. "You've had a hard trip to-day, and you're tired. Let Pen do your errand. Pen, come here!" [Pg 99]

The boy came at her bidding. The colonel paused to consider.

"On second thought," he said, finally, "it may be better that I should not go in person. Penfield, you will go at once, wherever it may be necessary, and inquire as to the present condition and location of the American flag belonging to the Chestnut Hill school, and return and report to me."

"Yes, sir."

Pen put on his hat and coat, took his umbrella, and went out into the rain. Six blocks away he stopped at Elmer Cuddeback's door and rang the bell. Elmer himself came in answer to the ring.

"Come out on the porch a minute," said Pen. "I want to speak to you."

Elmer came out and closed the door behind him.

"Tell me," continued Pen, "what became of the flag this afternoon, after I left."

"Oh, we picked it up and carried it into the school-house. Why?"

"My grandfather wants to know."

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"Well, you can tell him it isn't hurt much. It got tore a little bit in one corner; and it had some dirt on it. But we cleaned her up, and dried her out, and put her back in her place."

"Thank you for doing it."

"Oh, that's all right. But, say, Pen, I'm sorry for you."

"Why?"

"On account of what happened."

"Did I hurt Aleck much?"

A sudden fear of worse things had entered Pen's mind.

"No, not much. He limped home by himself."

"Then, what is it?"

Pen knew, well enough, what it was; but he could not do otherwise than ask.

"Why, it's because of what you did to the flag. Everybody's talking about it."

"Let 'em talk. I don't care."

But he did care, nevertheless. He went back home in a fever of apprehension and anxiety. Suppose his grandfather should learn the whole truth, as, sooner or later he surely would. What then? Pen decided that it would be better to tell him now. [Pg 101]

At eight o'clock, when he returned home, he found Colonel Butler still seated in the library, busy with a book. He removed his cap and coat in the hall, and went in. The colonel looked up inquiringly.

"The flag," reported Pen, "was picked up by the boys, and carried back to the school-house. It was cleaned and dried, and put in its proper place."

"Thank you, sir; that is all."

The colonel turned his attention again to his book.

Pen stood, for a moment, irresolute, before proceeding with his confession. Then he began:

"Grandfather, I'm very sorry for what occurred, and especially—"

"I do not care to hear any more to-night. Further apologies may be deferred to a more appropriate time."

Again the colonel resumed his reading.

The next day was Sunday; but, on account of the unattractive appearance of his face, Pen was excused from attending either church or Sunday-school. Monday was Washington's birthday, and a holiday, and there was no school. So that Pen had two whole days in which to recover from his wounds. But he did not so easily recover from his depression. Nothing more had been said by Colonel Butler about the battle, and Pen, on his part, did not dare again to broach the subject. Yet every hour that went by was filled with apprehension, and punctuated with false alarms. It was evident that the colonel had not yet heard the full story, and it was just as evident that the portion of it that he had heard had disturbed him almost beyond precedent. He was taciturn in speech, and severe and formal in manner. To misuse and neglect the flag of his country was, indeed, no venial offense in his eyes. [Pg 102]

Pen had not been out all day Monday, save to go on one or two unimportant errands for his aunt. Why he had not cared to go out was not quite clear, even to himself. Ordinarily he would have sought his schoolfellows, and would have exhibited his wounds, these silent and substantial witnesses of his personal prowess, with "pardonable pride." Nor did his schoolfellows come to seek him. That was strange too. Why had they not dropped in, as was their custom, to talk over the battle? It was almost dark of the second day, and not a single boy had been to see him or inquire for him. It was more than strange; it was ominous. [Pg 103]

After the evening meal Colonel Butler went out; a somewhat unusual occurrence, as, in his later years, he had become increasingly fond of his books and papers, his wood-fire and his easy chair. But, on this particular evening, there was to be a meeting of a certain patriotic society of which he was an enthusiastic member, and he felt that he must attend it. After he had gone Pen tried to study, but he could not keep his thought on his work. Then he took up a stirring piece of fiction and began to read: but the most exciting scenes depicted in it floated hazily across his mind. His Aunt Millicent tried to engage him in conversation, but he either could not or did not wish to talk. At nine o'clock he said good-night to his aunt, and retired to his room. At half past nine Colonel Butler returned home. His daughter went into the hall and greeted him and helped him off with his coat, but he scarcely spoke to her. When he came in under the brighter lights of the library, she saw that his face was haggard, his jaws set, and his eyes strangely bright. [Pg 104]

"What is it, father?" she said. "Something has happened."

He did not reply to her question, but he asked:

"Has Penfield retired?"

"He went to his room a good half hour ago, father."

"I desire to see him."

"He may have gone to bed."

"I desire to see him under any circumstances. You will please communicate my wish to him."

"But, father—"

"Did you hear me, daughter?"

"Father! What terrible thing has happened?"

"A thing so terrible that I desire confirmation of it from Penfield's lips before I shall fully believe it. You will please call him." [Pg 105]

She could not disobey that command. She went tremblingly up the stairs and returned in a minute or two to say:

"Pen had not yet gone to bed, father. He will be down as soon as he puts on his coat and shoes."

"Very well."

Colonel Butler seated himself in his accustomed chair and awaited the advent of his grandson.

When Pen entered the library a few minutes later, his Aunt Millicent was still in the room.

"Millicent," said the colonel, "will you be good enough to retire for a time? I wish to speak to Penfield alone."

She rose and started toward the hall, but turned back again.

"Father," she said, "if Pen is to be reprimanded for anything he has done, I wish to know about

it."

"This is a matter," replied the colonel, severely, "that can be adjusted only between Penfield and me."

She saw that he was determined, and left the room.

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When the rustle attendant upon her ascent of the staircase had died completely out, the colonel turned toward Pen. He spoke quietly enough, but with an emotion that was plainly suppressed.

"Penfield, you may stand where you are and answer certain questions that I shall ask you."

"Yes, grandfather."

"While in attendance this evening, upon a meeting of gentlemen gathered for a patriotic purpose, I was told that you, Penfield Butler, had, on Saturday last, on the school-house grounds, trodden deliberately on the American flag lying in the slush of the street. Is the story true, sir?"

"Well, grandfather, it was this way. I was—"

"I desire, sir, a categorical reply. Did you, or did you not, stand upon the American flag?"

"Yes, sir; I believe I did."

"I am also credibly informed that you spoke disdainfully of this particular American flag as a mere piece of bunting? Did you use those words?"

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"I don't know what I said, grandfather."

"Is it possible that you could have spoken thus disrespectfully of your country's flag?"

"It is possible; yes, sir."

"I am further informed that, on the same occasion, in language of which I have no credible report, you expressed your contempt for your country herself. Is my information correct?"

"I may have done so."

Pen felt himself growing weak and unsteady under this fire of questions, and he moved forward a little and grasped the back of a chair for support. The colonel, paying no heed to the boy's pitiable condition, went on with his examination.

"Now, then, sir," he said, "if you have any explanation to offer you may give it."

"Well, grandfather, I was very angry at the use they'd put the flag to, and I—well, I didn't just know what I was doing."

Pen's voice had died away almost to a whisper.

"And that," said the colonel, "is your only excuse?"

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"Yes, sir. Except that I didn't mean it; not any of it."

"Of course you didn't mean it. If you had meant it, it would have been a crime instead of a gross offense. But the fact remains that, in the heat of passion, without forethought, without regard to your patriotic ancestry, you have wantonly defamed your country and heaped insults on her flag."

Pen tried to speak, but he could not. He clung to the back of his chair and stood mute while the colonel went on:

"My paternal grandfather, sir, fought valiantly in the army of General Putnam in the Revolutionary war, and my maternal grandfather was an aide to General Washington. My father helped to storm the heights of Chapultepec in 1847 under that invincible commander, General Worth. I, myself, shared the vicissitudes of the Army of the Potomac, through three years of the civil war. And now it has come to this, that my grandson has trodden under his feet the flag for which his gallant ancestors fought, and has defamed the country for which they shed their blood."

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The colonel's voice had risen as he went on, until now, vibrant with emotion, it echoed through the room. He rose from his chair and began pacing up and down the library floor.

Still Pen stood mute. Even if he had had the voice to speak there was nothing more that he could say. It seemed to him that it was hours that his grandfather paced the floor, and it was a relief to have him stop and speak again, no matter what he should say.

"I have decided," said the colonel, "that you shall apologize for your offense. It is the least reparation that can be made. Your apology will be in public, at your school, and will be directed to your teacher, to your country, to your flag, and to Master Sands who was bearing the colors at the time of the assault."

Before his teacher, his country and his flag, Pen would have been willing to humble himself into the dust. But, to apologize to Aleck Sands!

Colonel Butler did not wait for a reply, but sat down at his desk and arranged his materials for writing. [Pg 110]

"I shall communicate my purpose to Miss Grey," he said, "in a letter which you will take to her to-morrow."

Then, for the first time in many minutes, Pen found his voice.

"Grandfather, I shall be glad to apologize to Miss Grey, and to my country, and to the flag, but is it necessary for me to apologize to Aleck Sands?"

Colonel Butler swung around in his swivel-chair, and faced the boy almost savagely:

"Do you presume, sir," he exclaimed, "to dictate the conditions of your pardon? I have fixed the terms. They shall be complied with to the letter—to the letter, sir. And if you refuse to abide by them you will be required to withdraw to the home of your maternal grandfather, where, I have no doubt, your conduct will be disregarded if not approved. But I will not harbor, under the roof of Bannerhall, a person who has been guilty of such disloyalty as yours, and who declines to apologize for his offense."

Having delivered himself of this ultimatum, the colonel again turned to his writing-desk and proceeded to prepare his letter to Miss Grey. Apparently it did not occur to him that his demand, thus definitely made, might still be refused. [Pg 111]

After what seemed to Pen to be an interminable time, his grandfather ceased writing, laid aside his pen, and turned toward him holding a written sheet from which he read:

"BANNERHALL, CHESTNUT HILL, PA.  
February 22.

*"My dear Miss Grey:*

"It is with the deepest regret that I have to advise you that my grandson, Penfield Butler, on Saturday last, by his own confession, dishonored the colors belonging to your school, and made certain derogatory remarks concerning his country and his flag, for which offenses he desires now to make reparation. Will you therefore kindly permit him, at the first possible opportunity, to apologize for his reprehensible conduct, publicly, to his teacher, to his country and to his flag, and especially to Master Alexander Sands, the bearer of the flag, who, though not without fault in the matter, was, nevertheless, at the time, under the protection of the colors. [Pg 112]

"Master Butler will report to me the fulfillment of this request. With personal regards and apologies, I remain,

"Your obed<sup>t</sup> servant,  
"RICHARD BUTLER."

He folded the letter, placed it in an envelope, and handed it to Pen.

"You will deliver this to Miss Grey," he said, "on your arrival at school to-morrow morning. That is all to-night. You may retire."

Pen took the letter, thanked his grandfather, bade him good-night, turned and went out into the hall, and up-stairs to his room.

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## CHAPTER VI

It is little wonder that Pen passed a sleepless night, after the interview with his grandfather. He realized now, perhaps better than any one else, the seriousness of his offense. Knowing, so well as he did, Colonel Butler's reverence for all things patriotic, he did not wonder that he should be so deeply indignant. Pen, himself, felt that the least he could do, under the circumstances, was to publicly apologize for his conduct, bitter and humiliating as it would be to make such an apology. And he was willing to apologize to any one, to anything—save Alexander Sands. To this point of reparation he could not bring himself. This was the problem with which he struggled through the night hours. It was not a question, he told himself, over and over again, of whether he should leave Bannerhall, with its ease and luxury and choice traditions, and go to live on the little farm at Cobb's Corners. It was a question of whether he was willing to yield his self-respect and manhood to the point of humbling himself before Alexander Sands. It was not until he heard the clock in the hall strike three that he reached his decision. [Pg 114]

And his decision was, to comply, in full, with his grandfather's demand—and remain at Bannerhall.

At the breakfast table the next morning Colonel Butler was still reticent and taciturn. He had passed an uncomfortable night and was in no mood for conversation. He did not refer, in any way, to the matters which had been discussed the evening before; and when Pen, with the letter in his pocket, started for school, the situation was entirely unchanged. But, somehow, in the freshness of the morning, under the cheerful rays of an unclouded sun, the task that had been set for Pen did not seem to him to be quite so difficult and repulsive as it had seemed the night before. He even deigned to whistle as he went down the path to the street. But he noticed, as he passed along through the business section of the town, that people whom he knew looked at him curiously, and that those who spoke to him did so with scant courtesy. Across the street, from the corner of his eye, he saw one man call another man's attention to him, and both men turned their heads, for a moment, to watch him. A little farther along he caught sight of Elmer Cuddeback, his bosom companion, a half block ahead, and he called out to him:

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"Hey! Elmer, wait a minute!"

But Elmer did not wait. He looked back to see who had called to him, and then he replied:

"I can't! I got to catch up with Jimmie Morrissey."

And he started off on a run. This was the cut direct. There was no mistaking it. It sent a new fear to Pen's heart. It served to explain why his schoolfellows had not been to see him and sympathize with him. He had not before fully considered what effect his conduct of the previous Saturday might have upon those who had been his best friends. But Elmer's action was suspiciously expressive. It was more than that, it was ominous and forbidding. Pen trudged on alone. A group of a half dozen boys who had heretofore recognized him as their leader, turned a corner into Main street, and went down on the other side. He did not call to them, nor did they pay any attention to him, except that, once or twice, some of them looked back, apparently to see whether he was approaching them. But his ears burned. He knew they were discussing his fault.

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In the school-house yard another group of boys was gathered. They were so earnestly engaged in conversation that they did not notice Pen's approach until he was nearly on them. Then one of them gave a low whistle and instantly the talking ceased.

"Hello, fellows!" Pen made his voice and manner as natural and easy as determined effort could make them.

Two or three of them answered "Hello!" in an indifferent way; otherwise none of them spoke to him.

If the battle of Chestnut Hill had ended when the enemy had been driven into the school-house, and if the conquering troops had then gone home proclaiming their victory, these same boys who were now treating him with such cold indifference, would have been flinging their arms about his shoulders this morning, and proclaiming him to the world as a hero; and Pen knew it. With flushed face and sinking heart he turned away and entered the school-house.

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Aleck Sands was already there, sitting back in a corner, surrounded by sympathizing friends. He still bore marks of the fray.

As Pen came in some one in the group said:

"Here he comes now."

Another one added:

"Hasn't he got the nerve though, to show himself after what he done to the flag?"

And a third one, not to be outdone, declared:

"Aw! He's a reg'lar Benedic' Arnold."

Pen heard it all, as they had intended he should. He stopped in the aisle and faced them. The grief and despair that he had felt outside when his own comrades had ignored him, gave place now to a sudden blazing up of the old wrath. He did not raise his voice; but every word he spoke was alive with anger.

"You cowardly puppies! You talk about the flag! The only flag you're fit to live under is the black flag, with skull and cross-bones on it."

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Then he turned on his heel and marched up the aisle to where Miss Grey was seated at her desk. He took Colonel Butler's letter from his pocket and handed it to her.

"My grandfather," he said, "wishes me to give you this letter."

She looked up at him with a grieved and troubled face.

"Oh, Pen!" she exclaimed, despairingly, "what have you done, and why did you do it?"

She was fond of the boy. He was her brightest and most gentlemanly pupil. On only one or two other occasions, during the years of her authority, had she found it necessary to reprimand him for giving way to sudden fits of passion leading to infraction of her rules. So that it was with deep and real sorrow that she deplored his recent conduct and his present position.

"I don't know," he answered her. "I guess my temper got the best of me, that's all."

"But, Pen, I don't know what to do. I'm simply at my wit's end."

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"I'm sorry to have given you so much trouble, Miss Grey," he replied. "But when it comes to punishing me, I think the letter will help you out."

The bell had stopped ringing. The boys and girls had crowded in and were already seated, awaiting the opening of school. Pen turned away from his teacher and started down the aisle toward his seat, facing his fellow-pupils as he went.

And then something happened; something unusual and terrible; something so terrible that Pen's face went pale, he paused a moment and looked ahead of him as though in doubt whether his ears had deceived him, and then he dropped weakly into his seat. They had hissed him. From a far corner of the room came the first sibilant sound, followed at once by a chorus of hisses that struck straight to the boy's heart, and echoed through his mind for years.

Miss Grey sprang to her feet. For the first time in all the years she had taught them her pupils saw her fired with anger. She brought her gavel down on the table with a bang.

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"This is disgraceful!" she exclaimed. "We are in a school-room, not in a goose-pond, nor in a den of snakes. I want every one who has hissed to remain here when school closes at noon."

But it was not until after the opening exercises had been concluded, and the younger children had gone out to the room of the assistant teacher, that she found an opportunity to read Colonel Butler's letter. It did help her out, as Pen had said it would. She resolved to act immediately upon the request contained in it, before calling any classes. She rose in her place.

"I have an unpleasant duty to perform," she said. "I hoped, when I gave you boys permission to have the snowball fight, that it would result in permanent peace among you. It has, apparently, served only to embitter you more deeply against each other. The school colors have been removed from the building without authority. With those guilty of this offense I shall deal hereafter. The flag has been abused and thrown into the slush of the street. As to this I shall not now decide whose was the greater fault. But one, at least, of those concerned in such treatment of our colors has realized the seriousness of his misconduct, and desires to apologize for it, to his teacher, to his country, to his flag, and to the one who was carrying it at the time of the assault. Penfield, you may come to the platform."

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But Pen did not stir. He sat there as though made of stone, that awful hiss still sounding in his ears. Miss Grey's voice came to him as from some great distance. He did not seem to realize what she was saying to him. She saw his white face, and the vacant look in his eyes, and she pitied him; but she had her duty to perform.

"Penfield," she repeated, "will you please come to the platform? We are waiting for your apology."

This time Pen heard her and roused himself. He rose slowly to his feet; but he did not move from his place. He spoke from where he stood.

"Miss Grey," he said, "after what has occurred here this morning, I have decided—not—to—apologize."

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He bent over, picked up his books from the desk in front of him, stepped out into the aisle, walked deliberately down between rows of astounded schoolmates to the vestibule, put on his cap and coat, and went out into the street.

No one called him back. He would not have gone if any one had. He turned his face toward home. Whether or not people looked at him curiously as he passed, he neither knew nor cared. He had been hissed in public by his schoolfellows. No condemnation could be more severe than this, or lead to deeper humiliation. Strong men have quailed under this repulsive and terrible form of public disapproval. It is little wonder that a mere schoolboy should be crushed by it. That he could never go back to Miss Grey's school was perfectly plain to him. That, having refused to apologize, he could not remain at Bannerhall, was equally certain. One path only remained open to him, and that was the snow-filled, country road leading to his grandfather Walker's humble abode at Cobb's Corners.

When he reached home he found that his grandfather and his Aunt Millicent had gone down the river road for a sleigh-ride. He did not wait to consider anything, for there was really nothing to consider. He went up to his room, packed his suit-case with some clothing and a few personal belongings, and came down stairs and left his baggage in the hall while he went into the library and wrote a letter to his grandfather. When it was finished he read it over to himself, aloud:

[Pg 123]

*"Dear Grandfather:*

"After what happened at school this morning it was impossible for me to apologize, and keep any of my self-respect. So I am going to Cobb's Corners to live with my mother and Grandpa Walker, as you wished. Good-by!

"Your affectionate grandson,  
"PENFIELD BUTLER."

"P. S. Please give my love to Aunt Millicent."

He enclosed the letter in an envelope, addressed it, and left it lying on the library table. Then he put on his cap and coat, took his suit-case, and went out into the sunlight of the winter morning. At the entrance gate he turned and looked back at Bannerhall, the wide lawn, the noble trees, the big brick house with its hospitable porch, the window of his own room, facing the street. Something rose in his throat and choked him a little, but his eyes were dry as he turned away. He knew the road to Cobb's Corners very well indeed. He had made frequent visits to his mother there in the summer time. For, notwithstanding his forbidding attitude, Colonel Butler recognized the instinct that drew mother and child together, and never sought to deny it proper expression. But it was hard traveling on the road to-day, especially with a burden to carry, and Pen was glad when Henry Cobb, a neighbor of Grandpa Walker, came along with horse and sleigh and invited him to ride.

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It was just after noon when he reached his grandfather's house, and the members of the family were at dinner. They looked up in astonishment when he entered.

"Why, Pen!" exclaimed his mother, "whatever brings you here to-day?"

"I've come to stay with you awhile, mother," he replied, "if grandpa 'll take me in."

"Of course grandpa 'll take you in."

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And then, as mothers will, especially surprised mothers, she fell on his neck and kissed him, and smiled through her tears.

"Well, I dunno," said Grandpa Walker, facetiously, balancing a good-sized morsel of food carefully on the blade of his knife, "that depen's on wuther ye're willin' to take pot-luck with us or not."

"I'm willing to take anything with you," replied Pen, "if you'll give me a home till I can shift for myself."

He went around the table and kissed his grandmother who had, for years, been partially paralyzed, shook hands with his Uncle Joseph and Aunt Miranda, and greeted their little brood of offspring cheerfully.

"What's happened to ye, anyhow?" asked Grandpa Walker when the greetings were over and a place had been prepared for Pen at the table. "Dick Butler kick ye out; did he?"

"Not exactly," was the reply. "But he told me I couldn't stay there unless I did a certain thing, and I didn't do it—I couldn't do it—and so I came away."

"Jes' so. That's Dick Butler to a T. Ef ye don't give him his own way in everything he aint no furder use for ye. Well, eat your dinner now, an' tell us about it later."

[Pg 126]

So Pen ate his dinner. He was hungry, and, for the time being at least, the echo of that awful hiss was not ringing in his ears. But they would not let him finish eating until he had told them, in detail, the cause of his coming. He made the story as brief as possible, neither seeking to excuse himself nor to lay the blame on others.

"Well," was Grandpa Walker's comment when the recital was finished, "I dunno but what ye done all right enough. They ain't one o' them blame little scalawags down to Chestnut Valley, but what deserves a good thrashin' on gen'al principles. They yell names at me every time I go down to mill, an' then cut an' run like blazes 'fore I can git at 'em with a hoss-whip. I'm glad somebody's hed the grace to wallop 'em. And es for Dick Butler; he's too allfired pompous an' domineerin' for anybody to live with, anyhow. Lets on he was a great soldier! Humph! I've known him—"

"Hush, father!"

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It was Pen's mother who spoke. The old man turned toward her abruptly.

"You ain't got no call," he said, "to stick up for Dick Butler."

"I know," she replied. "But he's Pen's grandfather, and it isn't nice to abuse him in Pen's presence."

"Well, mebbe that's so."

He rose from the table, got his pipe from the mantel, filled it and lighted it, and went over and



deposited his somewhat ponderous body in a cushioned chair by the window. Pen's mother and aunt pushed the wheel-chair in which Grandma Walker sat, to one side of the room, and began to clear the dishes from the table.

"Well," said the old man, between his puffs of smoke, "now ye're here, what ye goin' to do here?"

"Anything you have for me to do, grandpa," replied Pen.

"I don't see's I can send ye to school."

"I'd rather not go to school. I'd rather work—do chores, anything."

"All right! I guess we can keep ye from rustin'. They's plenty to do, and I ain't so soople as I was at sixty." [Pg 128]

He looked the embodiment of physical comfort, with his round, fresh face, and the fringe of gray whiskers under his chin, as he sat at ease in his big chair by the window, puffing lazily at his pipe.

So Pen stayed. There was no doubt but that he earned his keep. He did chores. He chopped wood. He brought water from the well. He fed the horse and the cows, the chickens and the pigs. He drove Old Charlie in the performance of any work requiring the assistance of a horse. He was busy from morning to night. He slept in a cold room, he was up before daylight, he was out in all kinds of weather, he did all kinds of tasks. There were sore muscles and aching bones, indeed, before he had hardened himself to his work; for physical labor was new to him; but he never shirked nor complained. Moreover he was treated kindly, he had plenty to eat, and he shared in whatever diversions the family could afford. Then, too, he had his mother to comfort him, to cheer him, to sympathize with him, and to be, ever more and more, his confidante and companion. [Pg 129]

And Grandpa Walker, relieved of nearly all laborious activities about the place, much to his enjoyment, spent his time reading, smoking and dozing through the days of late winter and early spring, and discussing politics and big business in the country store at the cross-roads of an evening.

One afternoon, about the middle of March, as the old man was rousing himself from his after-dinner nap, two men drove up to the Walker homestead, tied their horse at the gate, came up the path to the house and knocked at the door. He, himself, answered the knock.

"Yes," he said in response to their inquiry, "I'm Enos Walker, and I'm to hum."

The spokesman of the two was a tall young man with a very black moustache and a merry twinkle in his eyes.

"We're glad to see you, Mr. Walker," he declared. "My name is Hubert Morrissey, and the gentleman who is with me is Mr. Frank Campbell. We're on a hunting expedition."

"Perty late in the season fer huntin', ain't it? The law's on most everything now." [Pg 130]

"I don't think the law's on what we're hunting for."

"What ye huntin' fer?"

"Spruce trees."

"Eh?"

"Spruce trees. Or, rather, one spruce tree."

"Well, ye wouldn't have to shoot so all-fired straight to hit one in these parts. I've got a swamp full of 'em down here."

"So we understand. But we want a choice one."

"I've got some that can't be beat this side the White mountains."

"We've learned that also. We took the liberty of looking over your spruce grove on our way up here."

"Well; they didn't nobody hender ye, did they?"

"No. We found what we were looking for, all right."

"Jes' so. Come in an' set down."

Grandpa Walker moved ponderously from the doorway in which he had been standing, to his comfortable chair by the window, seated himself, picked up his pipe from the window-sill, filled it, lighted it and began puffing. The two men entered the room, closing the door behind them, and found chairs for themselves and occupied them. Then the conversation was renewed. [Pg 131]

"We'll be perfectly frank with you, Mr. Walker," said Hubert Morrissey, "and tell you what we want and why we want it. It is proposed to erect a first-class liberty-pole in the school-yard at Chestnut Hill. A handsome American flag has already been given to the school. The next thing in order of course is the pole. Mr. Campbell and I have been authorized to find a spruce tree that will fill the bill, buy it, and have it cut and trimmed and hauled to town while the snow is still on. It has to be dressed, seasoned, painted, and ready to plant by the time the frost goes out, and there isn't a day to lose. There, Mr. Walker, that is our errand."

"Jes' so. Found the tree did ye? down in my swamp?"

"We certainly did."

"Nice tree, is it? What ye was lookin' fer?"

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"It's a beauty! Just what we want. I know it isn't just the thing to crack up the goods you're trying to buy from the other fellow, but we want to be perfectly fair with you, Mr. Walker. We want to pay you what the tree is worth. Suppose we go down the hill and look it over, and then you can doubtless give us your price on it."

"'Tain't ne'sary to go down an' look it over. I know the tree ye've got your eye on."

"How do you know?"

"Oh, sort o' guessed it. It's the one by the corner o' the rail fence on the fu'ther side o' the brook as ye go in from the road."

"That's a good guess. It's the very tree. Now then, what about the price?"

The old man pulled on his pipe for a moment with rather more than his usual vigor, then removed it from his mouth and faced his visitors.

"Want to buy that tree, do ye?" he asked.

"Sure we want to buy it."

"Cash down, jedgment note, or what?"

The man with the black moustache smiled broadly, showing an even row of white teeth.

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"Cash down," he replied. "Gold, silver or greenbacks as you prefer. Every dollar in your hands before an axe touches the tree."

Grandpa Walker inserted the stem of his pipe between his teeth, and again lapsed into a contemplative mood. After a moment he broke the silence by asking:

"Got the flag, hev ye?"

"Yes; we have the flag."

"Might I be so bold as to ask what the flag cost?"

"It was given to the school."

"Air ye tellin' who give it?"

"Why, there's no secret about it. Colonel Butler gave the flag."

"Dick Butler?"

"Colonel Richard Butler; yes."

It was gradually filtering into the mind of Mr. Hubert Morrissey that for some reason the owner of the tree was harboring a resentment against the giver of the flag. Then he suddenly recalled the fact that Mr. Walker was the father of Colonel Butler's daughter-in-law, and that the relation between the two men had been somewhat strained. But Grandpa Walker was now ready with another question:

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"Is Colonel Richard Butler a givin' the pole too?"

"Why, yes, I believe he furnishes the pole also."

"It was him 't sent ye out here a lookin' fer one; was it?"

"He asked us to hunt one up for him, certainly."

"Told ye, when ye found one 't was right, to git it? Not to haggle about the price, but git it an' pay fer it? Told ye that, didn't he?"

"Well, if it wasn't just that it was first cousin to it."

"Jes' so. Well, you go back to Chestnut Hill, an' you go to Colonel Richard Butler, an' you tell Colonel Richard Butler that ef he wants to buy a spruce tree from Enos Walker of Cobb's Corners, to come here an' bargain fer it himself. He'll find me to hum most any day. How's the sleighin'?"

"Pretty fair. But, Mr. Walker—"

"No buts, ner ifs, ner ands. Ye heard what I said, an' I stan' by it till the crack o' jedgment."

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The old man rose, knocked the ashes out of his pipe and put the pipe in his vest pocket, stretched himself, and reached for his cap. It was plain that he considered the interview at an end. The persuasive Mr. Morrissey tried to get a wedge in somewhere to reopen it, but he tried in vain. Enos Walker was adamant. So, disappointed and discomfited, the emissaries of Colonel Richard Butler bade "good-day," to the oracle of Cobb's Corners, and drove back to Chestnut Hill.

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## CHAPTER VII

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On the morning after the interview with Enos Walker, Mr. Morrissey and Mr. Campbell went up to Bannerhall to report to Colonel Richard Butler. But they went hesitatingly. Indeed, it had been a question in their minds whether it would not be wiser to say nothing to Colonel Butler concerning their experience at Cobb's Corners, and simply to go elsewhere and hunt up another tree. But Mr. Walker's tree was such a model of perfection for their purpose, the possibility of finding another one that would even approach it in suitability was so extremely remote, that the two gentlemen, after serious discussion of the question, being well aware of Colonel Butler's idiosyncrasies, decided, finally, to put the whole case up to him, and to accept cheerfully whatever he might have in store for them. There was one chance in a hundred that the colonel, instead of scornfully resenting Enos Walker's proposal, might take the matter philosophically and accept the old man's terms. They thought it better to take that chance.

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They found Colonel Butler in his office adjoining the library. He was in an ordinarily cheerful mood, although the deep shadows under his eyes, noticeable only within the last few weeks, indicated that he had been suffering either in mind or in body, perhaps in both.

"Well, gentlemen," he said when his visitors were seated; "what about the arboreal errand? Did you find a tree?"

Mr. Hubert Morrissey, as he had been the day before, was again, to-day, the spokesman for his committee of two.

"We found a tree," he replied.

"One in all respects satisfactory I hope?" the colonel inquired.

"Eminently satisfactory," was the answer. "In fact a perfect beauty. I doubt if it has its equal in this section of the state. Wouldn't you say so, Mr. Campbell?"

"I fully agree with you," replied Mr. Campbell. "It's without a peer."

"How will it measure?" inquired the colonel.

"I should say," responded Mr. Morrissey, "that it will dress up to about twelve inches at the base, and will stand about fifty feet to the ball on the summit. Shouldn't you say so, Mr. Campbell?"

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"Just about," was the reply. "Not an inch under those figures, in my judgment."

"Good!" exclaimed the colonel. "Permit me to congratulate you, gentlemen. You have performed a distinct public service. You deserve the thanks of the entire community."

"But, colonel," said Mr. Morrissey with some hesitation, "we were not quite able to close a satisfactory bargain with the owner of the tree."

"That is unfortunate, gentlemen. You should not have permitted a few dollars to stand in the way of securing your prize. I thought I gave you a perfectly free hand to do as you thought best."

"So you did, colonel. But the hitch was not so much over a matter of price as over a matter of principle."

"Over a matter of principle? I don't understand you, sir. How could any citizen of this free country object, as a matter of principle, to having his tree converted into a staff from the summit of which the emblem of liberty might be flung to the breeze? Especially when he was free to name his own price for the tree."

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"But he wouldn't name any price."

"Did he refuse to sell?"

"Not exactly; but he wouldn't bargain except on a condition that we were unable to meet."

"What condition? Who is the man? Where does he live?"

Colonel Butler was growing plainly impatient over the obstructive tactics in which the owner of the tree had indulged.

"He lives," replied Mr. Morrissey, "at Cobb's Corners. His name is Enos Walker. His condition is that you go to him in person to bargain for the tree. There's the situation, colonel. Now you have it all."

The veteran of the Civil War straightened up in his chair, threw back his shoulders, and gazed at his visitors in silence. Surprise, anger, contempt; these were the emotions the shadows of which successively overspread his face. [Pg 140]

"Gentlemen," he said, at last, "are you aware what a preposterous proposition you have brought to me?"

"It is not our proposition, colonel."

"I know it is not, sir. You are simply the bearers of it. Permit me to ask you, however, if it is your recommendation that I yield to the demand of this crude highwayman of Cobb's Corners?"

"Why, Mr. Campbell and I have talked the matter over, and, in view of the fact that this appears to be the only available tree within easy reach, and is so splendidly adapted to our purposes, we have thought that possibly you might suggest some method whereby—"

"Gentlemen—" Colonel Butler had risen from his chair and was pacing angrily up and down the room. His face was flushed and his fingers were working nervously. "Gentlemen—" he interrupted—"my fortune is at your disposal. Purchase the tree where you will; on the hills of Maine, in the swamps of Georgia, on the plains of California. But do not suggest to me, gentlemen; do not dare to suggest to me that I yield to the outrageous demand of this person who has made you the bearers of his impertinent ultimatum." [Pg 141]

Mr. Morrissey rose in his turn, followed by Mr. Campbell.

"Very well, colonel," said the spokesman. "We will try to procure the tree elsewhere. We thought it no more than right to report to you first what we had done. That is the situation is it not, Mr. Campbell?"

"That is the situation, exactly," assented Mr. Campbell.

The colonel had reached the window in his round of the room, and had stopped there.

"That was quite the thing to do, gentlemen," he replied. "A—quite—the thing—to do."

He stood gazing intently out through the window at the banks of snow settling and wasting under the bright March sunshine. Not that his eyes had been attracted to anything in particular on his lawn, but that a thought had entered his mind which demanded, for the moment, his undivided attention.

His two visitors stood waiting, somewhat awkwardly, for him to turn again toward them, but he did not do so. At last Mr. Morrissey plucked up courage to break in on his host's reverie. [Pg 142]

"I—I think we understand you now, colonel," he said. "We'll go elsewhere and do the best we can."

Colonel Butler faced away from the window and came back into the room.

"Pardon me, gentlemen," he said. "My mind was temporarily occupied by a thought that has come to me in this matter. Upon further consideration it occurs to me that it may be expedient for me to yield on this occasion to Mr. Walker's request, and visit him in person. In the meantime you may suspend operations. I will advise you later of the outcome of my plans."

"You are undoubtedly wise, colonel," replied Mr. Morrissey, "to make a further effort to secure this particular tree. Wouldn't you say so, Mr. Campbell?"

"Undoubtedly!" replied Mr. Campbell with some warmth.

So the matter was left in that way. Colonel Butler was to inform his agents what, if anything, he had been able to accomplish by means of a personal interview with Mr. Walker, always assuming that he should finally and definitely decide to seek such an interview. And Mr. Hubert Morrissey and Mr. Frank Campbell bowed themselves out of Colonel Butler's presence. [Pg 143]

While the cause of this sudden change of attitude on Colonel Butler's part remained a mystery to his two visitors, it was, in reality, not far to seek. For, as he looked out at his window that March morning, he saw, not the bare trees on the lawn, not the brown hedge or the beaten roadway; he saw, out somewhere among the snow-covered fields, laboring as a farmer's boy, enduring the

privations of a humble home, and the limitations of a narrow environment, the lad who for a dozen years had been his solace and his pride, the light and the life of Bannerhall. How sadly he missed the boy, no one, save perhaps his faithful daughter, had any conception. And she knew it, not because of any word of complaint that had escaped his lips, but because every look and mood and motion told her the story. He would not send for his grandson; he would not ask him to come back; he would not force him to come. It was a piece of childish folly on the boy's part no doubt, this going away; due to his impetuous nature and his immature years; but, he had made his bed, now let him lie in it till he should come to a realization of what he had done, and, like the prodigal son of old, should come back of his own accord, and ask to be forgiven. Yet the days went by, and the weeks grew long, and no prodigal returned. There was no abatement of determination on the grandfather's part, but the idea grew slowly in his mind that if by some chance, far removed from even the suspicion of design, they should encounter each other, he and the boy, face to face, in the village street, on the open road, in field or farm-house, something might be said or done that would lead to the longed-for reconciliation. It was the practical application of this thought that led to his change of attitude that morning in the presence of his visitors. He would have a legitimate errand to the home of Enos Walker. The incidental opportunities that might lie in the path of such an errand properly fulfilled, were not to be lightly ignored nor peremptorily dismissed. At any rate the matter was worth careful consideration. He considered it, and made his decision.

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That afternoon, after his daughter Millicent had gone down into the village in entire ignorance of any purpose that he might have had to leave the house, he ordered his horse and cutter for a drive. Later he changed the order, and directed that his team and two-seated sleigh be brought to the door. It had occurred to him that there was a bare possibility that he might have a passenger on his return trip. Then he arrayed himself in knee-high rubber boots, a heavy overcoat, and a fur cap. At three o'clock he entered his sleigh and directed his driver to proceed with all reasonable haste to Cobb's Corners.

Out in the country where the winds of winter had piled the snow into long heaps, the beaten track was getting soft, and it was necessary to exercise some care in order to prevent the horses from slumping through the drifts to the road-bed. And on the westerly slope of Baldwin's Hill the ground in the middle of the road was bare for at least forty rods. But, from that point on, whether his progress was fast or slow, Colonel Butler scrutinized the way ahead of him, and the farm-houses that he passed, with painstaking care. He was not looking for any spruce tree here, no matter how straight and tall. But if haply some farmer's boy should be out on an errand for the master of the farm, it would be inexcusable to pass him negligently by; that was all. And yet his vigilance met with no reward. He had not caught the remotest glimpse of such a boy when his sleigh drew up at Enos Walker's gate.

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The unusual jingling of bells brought Sarah Butler and her sister to the window of the sitting-room to see who it was that was bringing such a flood of tinkling music up the road.

"For the land sakes!" exclaimed the sister; "it's Richard Butler, and he's stopping here. I bet a cookie he's come after Pen."

But Pen's mother did not respond. Her heart was beating too fast, she could not speak.

"You've got to go to the door, Sarah," continued the sister; "I'm not dressed."

Colonel Butler was already on his way up the path, and, a moment later, his knock was heard at the door. It was opened by Sarah Butler who stood there facing him with outward calmness. Evidently the colonel had not anticipated seeing her, and, for the moment, he was apparently disconcerted. But he recovered himself at once and inquired courteously if Mr. Walker was at home. It was the third time in his life that he had spoken to his daughter-in-law. The first time was when she returned from her bridal trip, and the interview on that occasion had been brief and decisive. The second time was when her husband was lying dead in the modest home to which he had taken her. Now he had spoken to her again, and this time there was no bitterness in his tone nor iciness in his manner.

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"Yes," she replied; "father is somewhere about. If you will please come in and be seated I will try to find him."

He followed her into the sitting-room, and took the chair that she placed for him.

"I beg that you will not put yourself to too much trouble," he said, "in trying to find him; although I desire to see him on a somewhat important errand."

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"It will not be the slightest trouble," she assured him.

But, as she turned to go, he added as though a new thought had come to him:

"Perhaps you have some young person about the premises whom you could send out in search of Mr. Walker, and thus save yourself the effort of finding him."

"No," she replied. "There is no young person here. I will go myself. It will take but a minute or two."

It was a feeble attempt on his part, and it had been quickly foiled. So there was nothing for him to do but to sit quietly in the chair that had been placed for him, and await the coming of Enos Walker.

Yet he could not help but wonder as he sat there, what had become of Pen. She had said that there was no young person there. Was the boy's absence only temporary, or had he left the home of his maternal grandfather and gone to some place still more remote and inaccessible? He was consumed with a desire to know; but he would not have made the inquiry, save as a matter of life and death.

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It was fully five minutes later that the guest in the sitting-room heard some one stamping the snow off his boots in the kitchen adjoining, then the door of the room was opened, and Enos Walker stood on the threshold. His trousers were tucked into the tops of his boots, his heavy reefer jacket was tightly buttoned, and his cloth cap was still on his head.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Butler," he said. "I'm pleased to see ye. I didn't know as ye'd think it wuth while to come."

"It is always worth while," replied the colonel, "to meet a business proposition frankly and fairly. I am here, at your suggestion, to discuss with you the matter of the purchase of a certain tree."

Grandpa Walker advanced into the room, closing the door behind him, went over to the window, laid aside his cap, and dropped into his accustomed chair.

"Jes' so," he said. "Set down, an' we'll talk it over." When the colonel was seated he continued: "They tell me ye want to buy a spruce tree. Is that right?"

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"That is correct."

"Want it fer a flag-pole, eh?"

"Yes. It is proposed to erect a staff on the school grounds at Chestnut Hill."

"Jes' so. In that case ye want a perty good one. Tall, straight, slender, small-limbed; proper in every way."

"Exactly."

"Well, I've got it."

"So I have heard. I have come to bargain for it."

"All right! Want to look at it fust, I s'pose."

"I have come prepared to inspect it."

"That's business. I'll go down to the swamp with ye an' we'll look her over."

Grandpa Walker rose from his chair and replaced his cap on his head.

"Is the tree located at some distance from the house?" inquired the colonel.

"Oh, mebbe a quarter of a mile; mebbe not so fer."

"A—have you some young person about, whom you could send with me to inspect it, and thus save yourself the trouble of tramping through the snow?"

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Grandpa Walker looked at his visitor curiously before replying.

"No," he said, after a moment, "I ain't. I've got a young feller stoppin' with me; but he started up to Henry Cobb's about two o'clock. How fer beyond Henry's he's got by this time I can't say. I ain't so soople as I was once, that's a fact. But when it comes to trampin' through the woods, snow er no snow, I reckon I can hold up my end with anybody that wears boots. Ef ye're ready, come along!"

A look of disappointment came into the colonel's face. He did not move. After a moment he said:

"On second thought, I believe I will not take the time nor the trouble to inspect the tree."

"Don't want it, eh?"

"Yes, I want it. I'll take it on your recommendation and that of my agents, Messrs. Morrissey and Campbell. If you'll name your price I'll pay you for it."

Grandpa Walker went back and sat down in his cushioned chair by the window. He laid his cap aside, picked up his pipe from the window-sill, lighted it, and began to smoke.

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"Well," he said, at last, "that's a prime tree. That tree's wuth money."

"Undoubtedly, sir; undoubtedly; but how much money?"

The old man puffed for a moment in silence. Then he asked:

"Want it fer a liberty-pole, do ye?"

"I want it for a liberty-pole."

"To put the school flag on?"

"To put the school flag on."

There was another moment of silence.

"They say," remarked the old man, inquiringly, "that you gave the flag?"

"I gave the flag."

"Then, by cracky! I'll give the pole."

Enos Walker rose vigorously to his feet in order properly to emphasize his offer. Colonel Butler did not respond. This sudden turn of affairs had almost taken away his breath. Then a grim smile stole slowly into his face. The humor of the situation began to appeal to him.

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"Permit me to commend you," he said, "for your liberality and patriotism."

"I didn't fight in no Civil War," added the old man, emphatically; "but I ain't goin' to hev it said by nobody that Enos Walker ever profited a penny on a pole fer his country's flag."

The old soldier's smile broadened.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "That's very good. We'll stand together as joint donors of the emblem of freedom."

"And I ain't ashamed of it nuther," cried the new partner, "an' here's my hand on it."

The two men shook hands, and this time Colonel Richard Butler laughed outright.

"This is fine," he said. "I'll send men to-morrow to cut the tree down, trim it, and haul it to town. There's no time to lose. The roads are getting soft. Why, half of Baldwin's Hill is already bare."

He started toward the door, but his host called him back.

"Don't be in a hurry," said Grandpa Walker. "Set down a while, can't ye? Have a piece o' pie or suthin. Or a glass o' cider."

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"Thank you! Nothing at all. I'm in some haste. It's getting late. And—I desire to make a brief call on Henry Cobb before returning home."

The old man made no further effort to detain his visitor; but he gave him a cordial invitation to come again, shook hands with him at the door, and watched him half way down to the gate. When he turned and re-entered his house he found his two daughters already in the sitting-room.

"Did he come for Pen?" asked Sarah Butler, breathlessly.

"Ef he did," replied her father, "he didn't say so. He wanted my spruce tree, and I give it to him. And I want to tell ye one thing fu'ther. I've got a sort o' sneakin' notion that Colonel Richard Butler of Chestnut Hill ain't more'n about one-quarter's bad as he's be'n painted."

Henry Cobb's residence was scarcely a half mile beyond the home of Enos Walker. It was the most imposing farm-house in that neighborhood, splendidly situated on high ground, with a rare outlook to the south and east. Mr. Cobb himself was just emerging from the open door of a great barn that fronted the road as Colonel Butler drove up. He came out to the sleigh and greeted the occupant of it cordially. The two men were old friends.

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"It's a magnificent view you have here," said the colonel; "magnificent!"

"Yes," was the reply, "we rather enjoy it. I've lived in this neighborhood all my life, and the longer I live here the better I like it."

"That's the proper spirit, sir, the proper spirit."

For a moment both men looked off across the snow-mantled valleys and the wooded slopes, to the summit of the hill-range far to the east, touched with the soft light of the sinking sun.

"You're quite a stranger in these parts," said Henry Cobb, breaking the silence.

"Yes," was the reply. "I don't often get up here. I came up to-day to make an arrangement with your neighbor, Mr. Walker, for the purchase of a very fine spruce tree on his property."

"So? Did you succeed in closing a bargain with him?"

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"Yes. He has consented to let it go."

"You don't say so! I would hardly have believed it. Now, I don't want to be curious nor anything; but would you mind telling me what you had to pay for it?"

"Nothing. He gave it to us."

"He—what?"

"He gave it to us to be used as a flag-staff on the grounds of the public school at Chestnut Hill."

"You don't mean that he gave you that wonderful spruce that stands down in the corner of his swamp; the one Morrissey and Campbell were up looking at yesterday?"

"I believe that is the one."

"Why, colonel, that spruce was the apple of his eye. If I've heard him brag that tree up once, I've heard him brag it up fifty times. He never gave away anything in his life before. What's come over the old man, anyway?"

"Well, when he learned that I had donated the flag, he declared that he would donate the staff. I suppose he didn't want to be outdone in the matter of patriotism."

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"Good for him!" exclaimed Henry Cobb. "He'll be a credit to his country yet;" and he laughed merrily. Then, sobering down, he added: "But, say; look here! can't you let me in on this thing too? I don't want to be outdone by either of you. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll cut the tree, and trim it, and haul it to town to-morrow, free gratis for nothing. What do you say?"

Then the colonel laughed in his turn, and he reached out his one hand and shook hands warmly with Henry Cobb.

"Splendid!" he cried. "This efflorescence of patriotism in the rural districts is enough to delight an old soldier's heart!"

"All right! I'll have the pole there by four o'clock to-morrow afternoon, and you can depend on it."

"I will. And I thank you, sir; not only on my own account, but also in the name of the public of Chestnut Hill, and on behalf of our beloved country. Now I must go. I have decided, in returning, to drive across by Darbytown, strike the creek road, and go down home by that route in order to avoid drifts and bare places. Oh, by the way, there's a little matter I neglected to speak to Mr. Walker about. It's of no great moment, but I understand his grandson came up here this afternoon, and, if he is still here, I will take the opportunity to send back word by him."

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He made the inquiry with as great an air of indifference as he could assume, but his breath came quick as he waited for an answer.

"Why," replied Henry Cobb, "Pen was here along about three o'clock. He was looking for a two-year old heifer that strayed away yesterday. He went over toward Darbytown. You might run across him if you're going that way. But I'll send your message down to Enos Walker if you wish."

"Thank you! It doesn't matter. I may possibly see the young man along the road. Good night!"

"Good night, colonel!"

The impatient horses were given rein once more, and dashed away to the music of the two score bells that hung from their shining harness.

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But, although Colonel Richard Butler scanned every inch of the way from Henry Cobb's to Darbytown, with anxious and longing eyes, he did not once catch sight of any farmer's boy searching for a two-year old heifer that had strayed from its home.

At dusk he stepped wearily from his sleigh and mounted the steps that led to the porch of Bannerhall. His daughter met him at the door.

"For goodness' sake, father!" she exclaimed; "where on earth have you been?"

"I have been to Cobb's Corners," was the quiet reply.

"Did you get Pen?" she asked, excitedly.

"I did not."

"Wouldn't Mr. Walker let him come?"

"I made no request of any one for my grandson's return. I went to obtain a spruce tree from Mr. Walker, out of which to make a flag-staff for the school grounds. I obtained it."



"That's a wonder."

"It is not a wonder, Millicent. Permit me to say, as one speaking from experience, that when accused of selfishness, Enos Walker has been grossly maligned. I have found him to be a public-spirited citizen, and a much better man, in all respects, than he has been painted."

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His daughter made no further inquiries, for she saw that he was not in a mood to be questioned. But, from that day forth, the shadow of sorrow and of longing grew deeper on his care-furrowed face.

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## CHAPTER VIII

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It was well along in April, that year, before the last of the winter's snow disappeared, and the robins and blue-birds darted in and out among the naked trees. But, as the sun grew high, and the days long, and the spring languor filled the air, Pen felt an ever-increasing dissatisfaction with his position in his grandfather Walker's household, and an ever-increasing desire to relinquish it. Not that he was afraid or ashamed to work; he had sufficiently demonstrated that he was not. Not that he ever expected to return to Bannerhall, for he had no such thought. To beg to be taken back was unthinkable; that he should be invited back was most improbable. He had not seen his grandfather Butler since he came away, nor had he heard from him, except for the vivid and oft-repeated recital by Grandpa Walker of the spruce tree episode, and save through his Aunt Millicent who made occasional visits to the family at Cobb's Corners. That he deplored Pen's departure there could be no doubt, but that he would either invite or compel him to return was beyond belief. So Pen's tasks had come to be very irksome to him, and his mode of life very dissatisfying. If he worked he wanted to work for himself, at a task in which he could take interest and pride. At Cobb's Corners he could see no future for himself worthy of the name. Many times he discussed the situation with his mother, and, painful as it would be to her to lose him, she agreed with him that he must go. He waited only the opportunity.

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One day, late in April, Robert Starbird dropped in while the members of the Walker family were at dinner. He was a wool-buyer for the Starbird Woolen Company of Lowbridge, and a nephew of its president. Having completed a bargain with Grandpa Walker for his scanty spring clipping of fleece, he turned to Pen.

"Haven't I seen you at Colonel Butler's, down at Chestnut Hill?" he inquired.

"Yes," replied Pen, "I'm his grandson. I used to live there."

"I thought so. Staying here now, are you?"

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"Until I can get regular work; yes, sir."

"Want a job, do you?"

"I'd like one, very much."

"Well, we'll need a bobbin-boy at the mills pretty soon. I suppose—"

And then Grandpa Walker interrupted.

"I guess," he said, "'t we can keep the young man busy here for a while yet."

Robert Starbird looked curiously for a moment, from man to boy, and then, saying that he must go on up to Henry Cobb's to make a deal with him for his fleece, he went out to his buggy, got in and drove away.

Pen went back to his work in the field with a sinking heart. It had not before occurred to him that Grandpa Walker would object to his leaving him whenever he should find satisfactory and profitable employment elsewhere. But it was now evident that, if he went, he must go against his grandfather's will. His first opportunity had already been blocked. What opposition he would meet with in the future he could only conjecture.

With Old Charlie hitched to a stone-boat, he was drawing stones from a neighbor's field to the roadside, where men were engaged in laying up a stone wall. He had not been long at work since the dinner hour, when, chancing to look up, he saw Robert Starbird driving down the hill from Henry Cobb's on his way back to Chestnut Hill. A sudden impulse seized him. He threw the reins across Old Charlie's back, left him standing willingly in his tracks, and started on a run across the lot to head off Robert Starbird at the roadside. The man saw him coming and stopped his horse.

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Panting a little, both from exertion and excitement, Pen leaped the fence and came up to the side of the buggy.

"Mr. Starbird," he said, "if that job is still open, I—I think I'll take it—if you'll give it to me."

The man, looking at him closely, saw determination stamped on his countenance.

"Why, that's all right," he said. "You could have the job; but what about your grandfather Walker? He doesn't seem to want you to leave."

"I know. But my mother's willing. And I'll make it up to Grandpa Walker some way. I can't stay here, Mr. Starbird; and—I'm not going to. They're good enough to me here. I've no complaint to make. But—I want a real job and a fair chance."

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He paused, out of breath. The intensity of his desire, and the fixedness of his purpose were so sharply manifest that the man in the wagon did not, for the moment, reply. He placed his whip slowly in its socket, and seemed lost in thought. At last he said:

"Henry Cobb has been telling me about you. He gives you a very good name."

He paused a moment and then added:

"I'll tell you what I'll do. If you'll give the old gentleman fair notice—and not sneak away from him like a vagabond—I won't harbor any runaways—why, I'll see that you get the job."

Pen drew a long breath, and his face lighted up with pleasure.

"Thank you, Mr. Starbird!" he exclaimed. "Thank you very much. When may I come?"

"Well, let's see. To-day's Wednesday. Suppose you report for duty next Monday."

"All right! I'll be there. I'll leave here Monday morning. I'll speak to Grandpa Walker to-night."

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"Very well. See you Monday. Good-by!"

"Good-by!"

Robert Starbird chirruped to his horse, started on, and was soon lost to sight around a bend in the road.

And Pen strode back across the field, prouder and happier than he had ever been before in all his life.

But he still had Grandpa Walker to settle with.

At supper time, on the evening after his talk with Robert Starbird, Pen had no opportunity to inform his grandfather of the success of his application for employment. For, almost as soon as he left the table, Grandpa Walker got his hat and started down to the store to discuss politics and statecraft with his loquacious neighbors. But Pen felt that his grandfather should know, that night, of the arrangement he had made for employment, and so, after his evening chores were done, he went down to the gate at the roadside to wait for the old man to come home.

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The air was as balmy as though it had been an evening in June. Somewhere in the trees by the fence a pair of wakeful birds was chirping. From the swamp below the hill came the hoarse croaking of bull-frogs. Above the summit of the wooded slope that lay toward Chestnut Hill the full moon was climbing, and, aslant the road, the maples cast long shadows toward the west.

To Pen, as he stood there waiting, came his mother. A wrap was around her shoulders, and a light scarf partly covered her head. She had finished her evening work and had come out to find him.

"Are you waiting for grandpa?" she asked; though she knew without asking, that he was.

"Yes," was the reply. "I want to see him about leaving. I had a talk with Mr. Starbird this afternoon, in the road, and he's given me the job he spoke about. I wasn't going to tell you until after I'd seen grandpa, and the trouble was all over."

"You dear boy! And if grandpa objects to your going?"

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"Well, I—I think I'll go anyway. Look here, mother," he continued, hastily; "I don't want to be mean nor anything like that; and grandpa's been kind to me; but, mother—I can't stay here. Don't you see I can't stay here?"

He held his arms out to her appealingly, and she took them and put them about her neck.

"I know, dear," she said; "I know. And grandfather must let you go. I shall die of loneliness, but—you must have a chance."

"Thank you, mother! And as soon as I can earn enough you shall come to live with me."

"I shall come anyway before very long, dearie. I worked for other people before I was married. I can do it again."

She laughed a little, but on her cheeks tears glistened in the moonlight.

Then, suddenly, they were aware that Grandpa Walker was approaching them. He was coming up

the road, talking to himself as was his custom when alone, especially if his mind was ill at ease. And his mind was not wholly at ease to-night. The readiness with which Pen had, that day, accepted a suggestion of employment elsewhere, had given him something of a turn. He could not contemplate, with serenity, the prospect of resuming the burdens of which his grandson had, for the last two months, relieved him. To become again a "hewer of wood and drawer of water" for his family was a prospect not wholly to his liking. He became suddenly aware that two people were standing at his gate in the moonlight. He stopped in the middle of the road, to look at them inquiringly.

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"It's I, father!" his daughter called out to him. "Pen and I. We've been waiting for you."

"Eh? Waitin' for me?" he asked.

"Yes, Pen has something he wants to say to you."

The old man crossed over to the roadside fence and leaned on it. The announcement was ominous. He looked sharply at Pen.

"Well," he said. "I'm listenin'."

"Grandpa," began Pen, "I want you to be willing that I should take that job that Mr. Starbird spoke about to-day."

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"So, that's it, is it? Ye've got the rovin' bee a buzzin' in your head, have ye? Don't ye know 't 'a rollin' stone gethers no moss'?"

"Well, grandpa, I'm not contented here. Not but what you're good enough to me, and all that, but I'm unhappy here. And I saw Mr. Starbird again this afternoon, and he said I could have that job."

"Think a job in a mill's better'n a job on a farm?"

"I think it is for me, grandpa."

"Work too hard for ye here?"

"Why, I'm not complaining about the work being hard. It's just because farm work does not suit me."

"Don't suit most folks 'at ain't inclined to dig into it."

Then Pen's mother spoke up.

"Now, father," she said, "you know Pen's done a man's work since he's been here, and he's never whimpered about it. And it isn't quite fair for you to insinuate that he's been lazy."

"I ain't insinuatin' nothin'," replied the old man, doggedly. "I ain't findin' no fault with what he's done sence he's been here; I'm just gittin' at what he thinks he's goin' to do." He turned again to Pen. "Made up yer mind to go, hev ye?"

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"Yes, grandpa."

"When?"

"Next Monday morning."

"Wuther I'm willin' or no?"

"I want you to be willing."

"I say, wuther I'm willin' or no?"

In the moonlight the old man's face bore a look of severity that augured ill for any happy completion to Pen's plan. A direct question had been asked, and it called for a direct answer. And with the answer would come the clash of wills. Pen felt it coming, and, although he was apprehensive to the verge of alarm, he braced himself to meet it calmly. His answer was frank, and direct.

"Yes, grandpa."

"Well, I'm willin'."

"Why, grandpa!"

"Father! you old dear!" from Pen's mother.

"I say I'm willin'," repeated the old man. "I hed hoped 't Pen'd stay here to hum an' help me out with the farm work. I ain't so soople as I use to be. An' Mirandy's man's got a stiddy job a-teamin'. An' the boy seemed to take to the work natural, and I thought he liked it, and I rested easy and took my comfort till Robert Starbird put that notion in his head to-day. Sence then I ain't had no

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hope."

"I'm sorry to leave you, grandpa, and it's awfully good of you to let me go, and you know I wouldn't go if I thought I could possibly stay and be contented."

"I understand. It's the same with most young fellers. They see suthin' better away from hum. And I ain't willin' to stand in the way o' no young feller that thinks he can better himself some'eres else. When I was fifteen I wanted to go down to Chestnut Hill and work in Sampson's planin' factory; but my father wouldn't let me. Consekence is I never got spunk enough agin to leave the farm. So I ain't goin' to stand in nobody else's way, you can go Monday mornin' or any other mornin', and I'll just say God bless ye, an' good luck to ye, an' start in agin on the chores."

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Then Pen's mother, like a girl still in her sympathies and impulses, flung her arms around her father's neck, and hugged him till he was positively obliged to use force to release himself. And they all walked up the path together in the moonlight, and entered the house and told Grandma Walker and Aunt Miranda of Pen's contemplated departure, to which Grandpa Walker, with martyrlike countenance, added the story of his own unhappy prospect.

When Monday morning came Pen was up long before his usual hour for rising. He did all the chores, picked up a dozen odds and ends, and left everything ship-shape for his grandfather who was now to succeed him in doing the morning work. Then he changed his clothes, packed his suit-case and came down to breakfast. Grandpa Walker had offered to take him into town with Old Charlie, but Pen had learned, the night before, that Henry Cobb was going down to Chestnut Hill in the morning, and when Mr. Cobb heard that Pen also was going, he gave him an invitation to ride with him. He and the boy had become fast friends during Pen's sojourn at Cobb's Corners, and both of them anticipated, with pleasure, the ride into town.

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After breakfast Grandpa Walker lighted his pipe and put on his hat but he did not go to the store, as had been his custom; he stayed to say good-by to Pen, and to bid him Godspeed, as he had said he would, and to tell him that when he lacked for work, or wanted a home, there was a latch-string at Cobb's Corners that was always hanging out for him. He did more than that. He shoved into Pen's hands enough money to pay for a few weeks' board at Lowbridge, and told him that if he needed more, to write and ask for it.

"It's comin' to ye," he said, when Pen protested. "Ye ain't had nothin' sence ye been here, and I kind o' calculate ye've earned it."

Pen's mother went with him to the gate to wait for Henry Cobb to come along; and when they saw Mr. Cobb driving down the hill toward them, she kissed Pen good-by, adjured him to be watchful of his health, and to write frequently to her, and then went back up the path toward the house she could not see for the tears that filled her eyes.

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Henry Cobb drove a smart horse, and a buggy that was spick and span, and it was a pleasure to ride with him. He pulled up at the gate with a flourish, and told Pen to put his suit-case under the seat, and to jump in.

It was not until after they had left the Corners some distance behind them that the object of Pen's journey was mentioned. Then Henry Cobb asked:

"How does the old gentleman like your leaving?"

"I don't think he likes it very well," was the reply. "But he's been lovely about it. He gave me some money and his blessing."

"You don't say so!"

Henry Cobb stared at the boy in astonishment. It was not an unheard of thing for Grandpa Walker to give his blessing; but that he should give money besides, was, to say the least, unusual.

"Yes," replied Pen, "he couldn't have treated me better if I'd lived with him always."

Mr. Cobb cast a contemplative eye on the landscape, and, for a full minute, he was silent. Then he turned again to Pen.

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"I don't want to be curious or anything," he said; "but would you mind telling me how much money the old gentleman gave you?"

"Not at all," was the prompt reply. "He gave me eighteen dollars."

"Good for him!" exclaimed the man. "He's got more good stuff in him than I gave him credit for. I was afraid he might have given you only a dollar or two, and I was going to lend you a little to help you out. I will yet if you need it. I will any time you need it."

Henry Cobb was not prodigal with his money, but he was kind-hearted, and he had seen enough of Pen to feel that he was taking no risk.

"You're very kind," replied the boy, "but grandpa's money will last me a good while, and I shall get wages enough to keep me comfortably, and I shall not need any more."

After a while Mr. Cobb's thoughts turned again to Grandpa Walker.

"He'll miss you terribly," he said to Pen. "He hasn't had so easy a time in all his life before as he's had this spring, with you to do all the farm chores and help around the house. It'll be like pulling teeth for him to get into harness again."

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Henry Cobb gave a little chuckle. He knew how fond Grandpa Walker was of comfortable ease.

"Well," replied Pen, "I'm sorry to go, and leave him with all the work to do; but you know how it is, Mr. Cobb."

"Yes, I know; I know. And you're going with splendid people. I've known the Starbirds all my life. None better in the country."

They had reached the summit of the elevation overlooking the valley that holds Chestnut Hill. Spring lay all about them in a riot of fresh green. The world, to boyish eyes, had never before looked so fair, nor had the present ever before been filled with brighter promises for the future. But the morning ride, delightful as it had been, was drawing to an end.

Coming from Cobb's Corners into Chestnut Hill you go down the Main street past Bannerhall. Pen looked as he went by, but he saw no one there. The lawn was rich with a carpet of fresh, young grass, the crocus beds and the tulip plot were ablaze with color, and the swelling buds that crowned the maples with a haze and halo of elusive pink foretold the luxury of summer foliage. But no human being was in sight. The street looked strange to Pen as they drove along; as strange as though he had been away two years instead of two months. They stopped in front of the post-office, and he remained in the wagon and minded the horse while Henry Cobb went into a hardware store near by. People passed back and forth, and some of them looked at him and said "good-morning," in a distant way, as though it were an effort for them to speak to him. He knew the cause of their indifference and he did not resent it, though it cut him deeply. Last winter it would have been different. But last winter he was the grandson of Colonel Richard Butler, and lived with that old patriot amid the memories and luxuries of Bannerhall. To-day he was the grandson of Enos Walker, of Cobb's Corners, leaving the farm to seek a petty job in a mill, discredited in the eyes of the community because of his disloyalty to his country's flag. He was musing on these things when some one called to him from the sidewalk. It was Aunt Millicent.

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"Pen Butler!" she cried, "get right down here and kiss me."

Pen did her bidding.

"What in the world are you doing here?" she continued.

"I'm on my way to Lowbridge," he said. "I have a job up there in the Starbird woolen mills, as bobbin-boy."

"Well, for goodness sake! Who would have thought it? Pen Butler going to work as a bobbin-boy! And Lowbridge is fourteen miles away, and we shall never see you again."

Pen comforted her as best he could, and explained his reasons for going, and then he asked after the health of his grandfather Butler.

"Don't ask me," she said disconsolately. "He's grieving himself into his grave about you. But he doesn't say a word, and he won't let me say a word. Oh, dear!"

Then Henry Cobb came out and greeted Aunt Millicent, and, after a few more inquiries and admonitions, she kissed Pen good-by and went on her way.

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Mr. Cobb was going on down to Chestnut Valley, but, as the train to Lowbridge did not leave until afternoon, Pen said he would go down later. So he was left on the sidewalk there alone. He did not quite know what to do with himself. The boys were, doubtless, all in school. He walked up the street a little way, and then he walked back again. He had no reason for entering any of the stores, and no desire to do so. There was really no place for him to go. Finally he decided that he would go down to the Valley and wait there for the train. So he started on down the hill. People whom he met, acquaintances of the old days, looked at him askance, spoke to him indifferently, or ignored him altogether. It seemed to him that he was like a stranger in an alien land.

As he passed by the school-house a boy whom he did not know was lingering about the steps. Otherwise there was no one in sight.

Then, suddenly, there burst upon his view a sight for which he was not prepared. In the yard on the lower side of the school-house, the yard through which he and his victorious troops had driven the retreating enemy at the battle of Chestnut Hill, a flag-staff was standing; tall, straight, symmetrical, and from its summit floated the Star-Spangled Banner; the very banner that he had trodden under his feet that February day. It was as though some one had struck him on the breast with an ice-cold hand. He gasped and stood still, his eyes fixed immovably on the flag. Then something stirred within him, a strange impulse that ran the quick gamut of his nerves; and when he came to himself he was standing in the street, with head bared and bowed, and his eyes

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filled with tears. Like Saul of Tarsus he had been stricken in the way, and ever afterward, whenever and wherever he saw his country's flag, his soul responded to the sight, and thrilled with memories of that April day when first he discovered that rare quality of patriotism that had hitherto lain dormant in his breast.

So he walked on down to the railroad station in Chestnut Valley, and went into the waiting-room and sat down. [Pg 182]

It was very lonely there and it was very tiresome waiting for the train.

At noon he went out to a bakery and bought for himself a light luncheon. As he was returning to the depot he came suddenly upon Aleck Sands, who had had his dinner and was starting back to school. There was no time for either boy to consider what kind of greeting he should give to the other. They were face to face before either of them realized it. As for Pen, he bore no resentment now, toward any one. His heart had been wrung dry from that feeling through two months of labor and of contemplation. So, when the first shock of surprise was over, he held out his hand.

"Let's be friends, Aleck," he said, "and forget what's gone by."

"I'm not willing," was the reply, "to be friends with any one who's done what you've done." And he made a wide detour around the astonished boy, and marched off up the hill.

From that moment until the train came and he boarded it, Pen could never afterward remember what happened. His mind was in a tumult. Would the cruel echo of one minute of inconsiderate folly on a February day, keep sounding in his ears and hammering at his heart so long as he should live? [Pg 183]

It was mid-afternoon when Pen reached Lowbridge, and he went at once to the Starbird mill on the outskirts of the town. He caught sight of Robert Starbird in the mill-yard, and went over to him. The man did not at first recognize him.

"I'm Penfield Butler," said the boy, "with whom you were talking last week."

"Oh, yes. Now I know you. You look a little different, some way. I've been watching out for you. How did you make out with your Grandpa Walker?"

"Well, Grandpa Walker found it a little hard to take up the work I'd been doing, but he was quite willing I should come, and helped me very much."

"I see." An amused twinkle came into the man's eyes; just such a twinkle as had come into the eyes of Henry Cobb that morning on the way to Chestnut Hill. [Pg 184]

"Well," he added, "I guess it's all right. Come over to the office. We'll see what we can do for you."

They crossed the mill-yard and entered the office. An elderly, benevolent looking man with white side-whiskers, wearing a Grand Army button on the lapel of his coat, was seated at a table, writing. Three or four clerks were busy at their desks, and a girl was working at a type-writer in a remote corner of the room.

"Major Starbird," said the man who had brought Pen in, "this is the boy whom I told you last week I had hired as a bobbin-boy. He's a grandson of Enos Walker out at Cobb's Corners."

The man with white side-whiskers laid down his pen, removed his glasses, and looked up scrutinizingly at Pen.

"Yes," he said, "I know Mr. Walker."

"He is also," added Robert Starbird, "a grandson of Colonel Richard Butler at Chestnut Hill."

"Indeed! Colonel Butler is a warm friend of mine. I was not aware that—is your name Penfield Butler?" [Pg 185]

"Yes, sir," replied Pen. Something in the man's changed tone of voice sent a sudden fear to his heart.

"Are you the boy who is said to have mistreated the American flag on the school grounds at Chestnut Hill?"

"I—suppose I am. Yes, sir."

Pen's heart was now in his shoes. The man with white side-whiskers raked him from head to foot with a look that boded no good. He turned to his nephew.

"I've heard of that incident," he said. "I do not think we want this young man in our employ."

Robert Starbird looked first at his uncle and then at Pen. It was plain that he was puzzled. It was equally plain that he was disappointed.

"I didn't know about this," he said. "I'm sorry if it's anything that necessitates our depriving him of the job. Penfield, suppose you retire to the waiting-room for a few minutes. I'll talk this matter over with Major Starbird."

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So Pen, with the ghosts of his misdeeds haunting and harassing him, and a burden of disappointment, too heavy for any boy to bear, weighing him down, retired to the waiting-room. For the first time since his act of disloyalty he felt that his punishment was greater than he deserved. Not that he bore resentment now against any person, but he believed the retribution that was following him was unjustly proportioned to the gravity of his offense. And if Major Starbird refused to receive him, what could he do then?

In the midst of these cruel forebodings he heard his name called, and he went back into the office.

Major Starbird's look was still keen, and his voice was still forbidding.

"I do not want," he said, "to be too hasty in my judgments. My nephew tells me that Henry Cobb has given you an excellent recommendation, and we place great reliance on Mr. Cobb's opinion. It may be that your offense has been exaggerated, or that you have some explanation which will mitigate it. If you have any excuse to offer I shall be glad to hear it."

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"I don't think," replied Pen frankly, "that there was any excuse for doing what I did. Only—it seems to me—I've suffered enough for it. And I never—never had anything against the flag."

He was so earnest, and his voice was so tremulous with emotion, that the heart of the old soldier could not help but be stirred with pity.

"I have fought for my country," he said, "and I reverence her flag. And I cannot have, in my employ, any one who is disloyal to it."

"I am not disloyal to it, sir. I—I love it."

"Would you be willing to die for it, as I have been?"

"I would welcome the chance, sir."

Major Starbird turned to his nephew.

"I think we may trust him," he said. "He has good blood in his veins, and he ought to develop into a loyal citizen."

Pen said: "Thank you!" But he said it with a gulp in his throat. The reaction had quite unnerved him.

"I am sure," replied Robert Starbird, "that we shall make no mistake. Penfield, suppose you come with me. I will introduce you to the foreman of the weaving-room. He may be able to take you on at once."

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So Pen, with tears of gratitude in his eyes, followed his guide and friend. They went through the store-room between great piles of blankets, through the wool-room filled with big bales of fleece, and up-stairs into the weaving-room amid the click and clatter and roar of three score busy and intricate looms. Pen was introduced to the foreman, and his duties as bobbin-boy were explained to him.

"It's easy enough," said the foreman, "if you only pay attention to your work. You simply have to take the bobbins in these little running-boxes to the looms as the weavers call for them and give you their numbers. Perhaps you had better stay here this afternoon and let Dan Larew show you how. I'll give him a loom to-morrow morning, and you can take his place."

So Pen stayed. And when the mills were shut down for the day, when the big wheels stopped, and the cylinders were still, and the clatter of a thousand working metal fingers ceased, and the voices of the mill girls were no longer drowned by the rattle and roar of moving machinery, he went with Dan to his home, a half mile away, where he found a good boarding-place.

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At seven o'clock the next morning he was at the mill, and, at the end of his first day's real work for real wages, he went to his new home, tired indeed, but happier than he had ever been before in all his life.

So the days went by; and spring blossomed into summer, and summer melted into autumn, and winter came again and dropped her covering of snow upon the landscape, whiter and softer than any fleece that was ever scoured or picked or carded at the Starbird mills. And then Pen had a great joy. His mother came to Lowbridge to live with him. Death had kindly released Grandma Walker from her long suffering, and there was no longer any need for his mother to stay on the little farm at Cobb's Corners. She was an expert seamstress and she found more work in the town than she could do. And the very day on which she came—Major Starbird knew that she was coming—Pen was promoted to a loom. One thing only remained to cloud his happiness. He was still estranged from the dear, tenderhearted, but stubborn old patriot at Chestnut Hill.

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With only his daughter to comfort him, the old man lived his lonely life, grieving silently, ever more and more, at the fate which separated him from this brave scion of his race, aging as only the sorrowing can age, yet, with a stubborn pride, and an unyielding purpose, refusing to make the first advance toward a reconciliation.

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## CHAPTER IX

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Pen made good use of his leisure time at Lowbridge. There was no night school there, but the courses of a correspondence school were available, and through that medium he learned much, not only of that which pertained to his calling as a textile worker, but of that also which pertained to general science and broad culture. History had a special fascination for him; the theory of government, the struggles of the peoples of the old world toward light and liberty. The working out of the idea of democracy in a country like England which still retained its monarchical form and much of its aristocratic flavor, was a theme on which he dwelt with particular pleasure. Back somewhere in the line of descent his paternal ancestors had been of English blood, and he was proud of the heroism, the spirit and the energy which had made Great Britain one of the mighty nations of the earth.

To France also, fighting and forging her way, often through great tribulation, into the family of democracies, he gave almost unstinted praise. Always splendid and chivalric, whether as monarchy, empire or republic, he felt that if he were to-day a soldier he would, next to his own beautiful Star Spangled Banner, rather fight and die under the tri-color of France than under the flag of any other nation.

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But of course it was to the study and contemplation of his own beloved country that he gave most of the time he had for reading and research. He delved deeply into her history, he examined her constitution and her laws, he put himself in touch with the spirit of her organized institutions, and with the fundamental ideas, carefully worked out, that had made her free and prosperous and great. And by and by he came to realize, in a way that he had never done before, what it meant to all her citizens, and especially what it meant to him, Penfield Butler, to have a country such as this. He thought of her in those days not only as a thing of vast territorial limit and of splendid resources of power and wealth and intellect, not only as a mighty machine for humane and just government, but he thought of her also as a beloved and beautiful personality, claiming and deserving affection and fealty from all her children. And he never saw the flag, he never thought of it, he never dreamed of it, that it did not arouse in him the same tender and reverent feeling, the same lofty inspiration he had felt that day when he first saw it floating from its staff against a back-ground of clear blue sky on the school-house lawn at Chestnut Hill.

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He held himself closely to his tasks. Only twice since he came away had he gone back with his mother for a holiday visit at Cobb's Corners. Grandpa Walker had a hearty handshake for him, and an affectionate greeting. The boy was forging ahead in his calling, was developing into a fine specimen of physical young manhood, and the old man was proud of him. But he did not hesitate to remind him that if a day of adversity should come the latch-string of the old house was still out, and he would always be as welcome there as he was on that winter day when he had come to them as an exile from Bannerhall.

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One Memorial Day, as Pen stood at the entrance to the cemetery bridge watching the procession of those going in to do honor to the patriotic dead, he was especially impressed with the fine appearance of the local company of the National Guard which was acting as an escort to the veterans of the Grand Army post. The young men composing the company were dressed in khaki, handled their rifles with ease and accuracy, and marched with a soldierly bearing and precision that were admirable. It occurred to Pen that it might be advisable for him to join this body of citizen soldiery provided he had the necessary qualifications and could be admitted to membership. It was not so much the show and glamour of the military life that appealed to him as it was the opportunity that such a membership might afford to be of service to his country. Even then Europe was being devastated by a war which had no equal in history. The German armies, trained to a point of unexampled efficiency, with the aid of their Allies, had overwhelmed Belgium and had almost succeeded in entering Paris and in laying the whole of France under tribute. Beaten back at a crucial moment they had dug themselves into the soil of the invaded country and were holding at bay the combined forces of their Allied enemies. Half of Europe was in arms. The tragedies of the seas were appalling. International complications were grave and unending. More than one statesman of prophetic foresight had predicted that a continuance of the war must of necessity draw into the maelstrom the government of the United States. In such an event the country would need soldiers and many of them, and the sooner they could be put into training to meet such a possible emergency the better.

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Moreover it was not necessary to look across the ocean to foresee the necessity for military readiness. Our neighbor to the south was in the grip of armed lawlessness and terrorism. Northern Mexico was infested with banditti which were a constant menace to the safety of our border. Such government as the stricken country had was either unable or unwilling to hold them in check. It appeared to be inevitable that the United States, by armed intervention, must sooner or later come to the protection of its citizens. In that event the little handful of troops of the regular army must of necessity be reinforced by units of the state militia. It might be that soldiers

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of the National Guard would be used only for patrolling the border, and it might well be that they would be sent, as was one of Penfield Butler's ancestors, into the heart of Mexico to enforce permanent peace and tranquility at the point of the bayonet.

So this was the situation, and this was the appeal to Pen's patriotic ardor. And the appeal was a strong one. But he did not at once respond to it. His work and his study absorbed his time and thought. It was not until late in the fall of that year, the year 1915, when the crises, both at home and abroad, seemed rapidly approaching, that Pen took up for earnest consideration the question of his enlistment in the National Guard. Given by nature to acting impulsively, he nevertheless, in these days, weighed carefully any proposed line of conduct on his part which might have an important bearing on his future. But he resolved, after due consideration, to join the militia if he could.

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He went to a young fellow, a wool-sorter in the mills, who was a corporal in the militia, to obtain the necessary information to make his application. The corporal promised to take the matter up for him with the captain of the local company, and in due time brought him an application blank to be filled out stating his qualifications for membership. It was necessary that the paper should be signed by his mother as evidence of her consent to his enlistment since he was not yet twenty-one years of age. She signed it readily enough, for she quite approved of his ambition, and she took a motherly pride in the evidences of patriotism that he was constantly manifesting.

Armed with this document he presented himself, on a drill-night, to Captain Perry in the officers' quarters at the armory. The captain glanced at the paper, then he laid it on the table and looked up at Pen. There was a troubled expression on his face.

"I'm sorry, Butler," he said, "but I'm afraid we can't enlist you."

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The announcement came as a shock, but not utterly as a surprise. For days the boy had felt a kind of foreboding that something of this sort would happen. Yet he did not at once give way to his disappointment nor accept without question the captain's pronouncement.

"May I inquire," he asked, "what your reason is for rejecting me?"

Captain Perry sat back in his chair and thrust his legs under the table. It was apparent that he was embarrassed, but it was apparent also that he would remain firm in the matter of his decision. Nor was Pen at such a loss to understand the reason for his rejection as his question might imply. He knew, instinctively, that the old story of his disloyalty to the flag had come up again, after all these years, to plague and to thwart him. He was quite right.

"I will tell you frankly, Butler," replied the captain, "what the trouble is. Since it became known that you wanted to enlist, some members of my company have come to me with a protest against accepting you. They say they represent the bulk of sentiment among the enlisted men. You see, under these circumstances, I can't very well take you. We are citizen soldiers, not under the iron discipline of the regular army, and in matters which are really not essential I must yield more or less to the wishes of my boys. They like, in a way, to choose their associates."

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He ended with an apologetic wave of the hand, and a smile intended to be conciliatory. Chagrined and wounded, but not abashed nor silenced, Pen stood his ground. He resolved to see the thing through, cost what pain and humiliation it might.

"Would you mind telling me," he inquired, "what it is they have against me?"

"Why, if you want to know, yes. They say you're not patriotic. To be more explicit they say that up at Chestnut Hill, where you used to live, you—"

Pen interrupted him. His patience was exhausted, his calmness gone. "Oh, yes!" he exclaimed, "I know. They say I mistreated the flag. They say I insulted it, threw it into the mud and trampled on it. That's what they say, isn't it?"

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"Yes, substantially that. Now, I don't know whether it's true or not—"

"Oh, it's true enough! I don't deny it. And they say also that on account of it all I had to leave Colonel Butler's house and go and live with my grandfather Walker at Cobb's Corners. They say that, don't they?"

"Something of that kind, I believe."

"Well, that's true too. But they don't say that it all happened half a dozen years ago, when I was a mere boy, that I did it in a fit of anger at another boy, and had nothing whatever against the flag, and that I was sorry for it the next minute and have suffered and repented ever since. They don't say that that flag is just as dear to me as it is to any man in America, that I love the sight of it; that I'd follow it anywhere, and die for it on any battlefield,—they don't say that, do they?"

His cheeks were blazing, his eyes were flashing, every muscle of his body was tense under the storm of passionate indignation that swept over him. Captain Perry, amazed and thrilled by the boy's earnestness, straightened up in his chair and looked him squarely in the face.

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"No," he replied, "they don't say that. But I believe it's true. And so far as I'm concerned—"

Pen again interrupted him.

"Oh, I'm not blaming you, Captain Perry; you couldn't do anything else but turn me down. But some day, some way—I don't know how to-night—but some way I'm going to prove to these people that have been hounding me that I'm as good a patriot and can be as good a soldier as the best man in your company!"

"Good! That's splendid!" Captain Perry rose to his feet and grasped the boy's hand. "And I'll tell you what I'll do, Butler; if you're willing to face the ordeal I'll enlist you. I believe in you."

But Pen would not listen to it.

"No," he said, "I can't do that. It wouldn't be fair to you, nor to your men, nor to me. I'll meet the thing some other way. I'm grateful to you all the same though."

"Very well; just as you choose. But when you need me in your fight I'm at your service. Remember that!" [Pg 202]

On his way home from the armory it was necessary that Pen should pass through the main street of the town. Many of the shops were still open and were brilliantly lighted, and people were strolling carelessly along the walk, laughing and chatting as though the agony and horror and brutality of the mighty conflict just across the sea were all in some other planet, billions of miles away; as though the war cloud itself were not pushing its ominous black rim farther and farther above the horizon of our own beloved land. Now and then Pen met, singly or in pairs, khaki clad young men on their way to the armory for the weekly drill. Two or three of them nodded to him as they passed by, others looked at him askance and hurried on. The resentment that had been roused in his breast at Captain Perry's announcement flamed up anew; but as he turned into the quieter streets on his homeward route this feeling gave way to one of envy, and then to one of self-pity and grief. Hard as his lot had been in comparison with the luxury he might have had had he remained at Bannerhall, he had never repined over it, nor had he been envious of those whose lines had been cast in pleasanter places. But to-night, after looking at these sturdy young fellows in military garb preparing to serve their state and their country in the not improbable event of war, an intense and passionate longing filled his breast to be, like them, ready to fight, to kill or to be killed in defense of that flag which day by day claimed his ever-increasing love and devotion. That he was not permitted to do so was heart-rending. That it was by his own fault that he was not permitted to do so was agony indeed. And yet it was all so bitterly unjust. Had he not paid, a thousand times over, the full penalty for his offense, trivial or terrible whichever it might have been? Why should the accusing ghost of it come back after all these years, to hound and harass him and make his whole life wretched? [Pg 203]

It was in no cheerful or contented mood that he entered his home and responded to the affectionate greeting of his mother.

"You're home early, dear," she said.

"Didn't they keep you for drill? How does it seem to be a soldier?" [Pg 204]

"I didn't enlist, mother."

"Didn't enlist? Why not? I thought that was the big thing you were going to do."

"They wouldn't take me."

"Why, Pen! what was the matter? I thought it was all as good as settled."

"Well, you know that old trouble about the flag at Chestnut Hill?"

"I know. I've never forgotten it. But every one else has, surely."

"No, mother, they haven't. That's the reason they wouldn't take me."

"But, Pen, that was years and years ago. You were just a baby. You've paid dearly enough for that. It's not fair! It's not human!"

She, too, was aroused to the point of indignant but unavailing protest; for she too knew how the boy, long years ago, had expiated to the limit of repentance and suffering the one sensational if venial fault of his boyhood.

"I know, mother. That's all true. I know it's horribly unjust; but what can you do? It's a thing you can't explain because it's partly true. It will keep cropping up always, and how I am ever going to live it down I don't know. Oh, I don't know!" [Pg 205]

He flung himself into a chair, thrust his hands deep into his trousers' pockets and stared despairingly into some forbidding distance. She grew sympathetic then, and consoling, and went to him and put her arm around his neck and laid her face against his head and tried to comfort him.

"Never mind, dearie! So long as you, yourself, know that you love the flag, and so long as I know it, we can afford to wait for other people to find it out."

"No, mother, we can't. They've got to be shown. I can't live this way. Some way or other I've got to prove that I'm no coward and I'm no traitor."

"You're too severe with yourself, Pen. There are other ways, perhaps better ways, for men to prove that they love their country besides fighting for her. To be a good citizen may be far more patriotic than to be a good soldier."

"I know. That's one of the things I've learned, and I believe it. And that'll do for most fellows, but it won't do for me. My case is different. I mistreated the flag once with my hands and arms and feet and my whole body, and I've got to give my hands and arms and feet and my whole body now to make up for it. There's no other way. I couldn't make the thing right in a thousand years simply by being a good citizen. Don't you see, mother? Don't you understand?"

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He looked up into her face with tear filled eyes. The thought that had long been with him that he must prove his patriotism by personal sacrifice, had grown during these last few days into a settled conviction and a great desire. He wanted her to see the situation as he saw it, and to feel with him the bitterness of his disappointment. And she did. She twined her arm more closely about his neck and pressed her lips against his hair.

But her heart-felt sympathy made too great a draft on his emotional nature. It silenced his voice and flooded his eyes. So she drew her chair up beside him, and he laid his head in her lap as he had used to do when he was a very little boy, and wept out his disappointment and grief.

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And as he lay there a new thought came to him. Swiftly as a whirlwind forms and sweeps across the land, it took on form and motion and swept through the channels of his mind. He sprang to his feet, dashed the tears from his face, and looked down on his mother with a countenance transformed.

"Mother!" he exclaimed, "I have an idea!"

"Why, Pen; how you startled me! What is it?"

"I have an idea, mother. I'm going to—"

He paused and looked away from her.

"Going to what, Pen?"

He did not reply at once, but after a moment he said:

"I'll tell you later, mother, after it's all worked out and I'm sure of it. I'm not going to bring home to you any more disappointments."

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## CHAPTER X

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It was three days later that Pen came home one evening, alert of step, bright-eyed, his countenance beaming with satisfaction and delight.

"Well, mother," he cried as he entered the house; "it's settled. I'm going!"

She looked up in surprise and alarm.

"What's settled, Pen? Where are you going?"

"I'm going to war."

She dropped the work at which she had been busy and sat down weakly in a chair by her dining-room table. He went to her and laid an affectionate hand on her shoulder.

"Pardon me, mother!" he continued, "I didn't mean to frighten you, but I'm so happy over it."

She looked up into his face.

"To war, Pen? What war?"

"The big war, mother. The war in France. Do you remember the other night when I told you I had an idea?"

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"Yes, I remember."

"Well, that was it. It occurred to me, then, that if I couldn't fight for my own country, under my own flag, I would fight for those other countries, under their flags. They are making a desperate and a splendid war to uphold the rights of civilized nations."

He stood there, erect, manly, resolute, his face lighted with the glow of his enthusiasm. She could but admire him, even though her heart sank under the weight of his announced purpose. Many times, of an evening, they had talked together of the mighty conflict in Europe. From the very first Pen's sympathies had been with France and her Allies. He could not get over denouncing the swiftness and savagery of the raid into Belgium, the wanton destruction of her cities and her monuments of art, the hardships and brutalities imposed upon her people. The Bryce report, with its details of outrage and crime, stirred his nature to its depths. The tragedy of the *Lusitania* filled him with indignation and horror. Now, suddenly, had come the desire and the opportunity to fight with those peoples who were struggling to save their ideals from destruction.

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"I'm going to Canada," he continued, "to enlist in the American Legion. They say hundreds and thousands of young men from the United States who are willing to fight under the Union Jack, have gone up into Canada for training and are this very minute facing the gray coats of the German enemy in northern France."

"But, Pen," she protested, "this is such a horrible war. The soldiers live in the muddiest, foulest kinds of trenches. They kill each other with gases and blazing oil. They slaughter each other by thousands with guns that go by machinery. It's simply terrible!"

"I know, mother. It's modern warfare. It's up to date. It's no pink tea as some one has said. But the more awful it is the sooner it'll be over, and the more credit there'll be to us who fight in it."

"And you'll be so far away."

She looked up at him, pale-faced, with appealing eyes. He knew how uncontrollably she shrank from the thought of losing him in this wild vortex of savagery. He patted her cheek tenderly.

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"But you'll be a good patriot," he said, "and let me go. It's my duty to fight, and it's your duty to let me fight. There isn't any doubt about that. Besides, this isn't really France's war nor England's war any more than it is our war, or any more than it is the war of any country that wants to maintain the ideals of modern civilization. I shall be serving my country almost the same as though I were fighting under the Stars and Stripes. And I'll be answering in the only way it's possible for me to answer, those people who have been charging me with disloyalty to the flag. Oh, I must show you what Grandfather Butler says. He made a speech yesterday at the flag-raising at Chestnut Valley, and it's all in the *Lowbridge Citizen* this morning. Listen! Here's the way he winds up."

He drew a newspaper from his pocket and read:

"So, fellow citizens, let me predict that before this great war shall come to an end the Stars and Stripes will wave over every battlefield in Europe. Sooner or later we must enter the conflict; and the sooner the better. For it's our war. It's the war of every country that loves liberty and justice. Up to this moment the Allies have been fighting for the freedom of the world, your freedom and mine, my friends, as well as their own. It is high time the Government at Washington, impelled by the patriotic ardor of our thinking citizens, declared the enemies of England and France to be our enemies, and joined hands with those heroic countries to stamp out forever the teutonic menace to liberty and civilization. In the meantime I say to the red-blooded youth of America: Glory awaits you on the war-scarred fields of France. Go forth! There is no barrier in the way. Remember that when the ragged troops of Washington were locked in a death-grip with the red-coated soldiers of King George, Lafayette, Rochambeau and de Grasse came to our aid with six and twenty thousand of the bravest sons of France. It is your turn now to spring to the aid of this stricken land and prove that you are worthy descendants of the grateful patriots of old."

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Pen finished his reading and laid down the paper. There had been a tremor in his voice at the end, and his eyes were wet.

"That's grandfather," he said, "all over. I knew he'd feel that way about it. I had decided to go before I read that speech. Now I couldn't stay at home if I tried. I'm his grandson yet, mother, and I shall answer his call to arms."

After that he sat down quietly and unfolded to his mother all of his plans. He told her that he had gone to Major Starbird and had confided to him his desire to serve with the Allied armies. The old soldier, veteran of many battles, had sympathized with his ambition and had procured for him the necessary information concerning enlistment and training in Canada. He was to go to New York and report to a certain confidential agent there at an address which had been given him, where he would receive the necessary credentials for enlistment in the new American Legion then in process of formation. And Major Starbird had said to him that when he returned, if at all, his place at the mill would still be open to him and he would be welcomed back. He told it all with a quiet enthusiasm that evidenced not only his fixed purpose, but also the fact that his whole heart was in the adventure, and that there would be no turning back.

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And his mother gave her consent that he should go. What else was there for her to do? Mothers have sent their sons to war from time immemorial. It is thus that they suffer and bleed for their country. And who shall say that their sacrifice is not as great in its way as is the sacrifice of those who offer up their lives in battle? But that night, through sleepless hours, when she thought of the loneliness that would be hers, and the hazards and horrors that would be his, and of how,

after all, he was such a mere boy, to be petted and spoiled and kept at home rather than to be sent out to meet the trials and terrors of the most cruel war in history, her heart failed her, and she wept in unspeakable dread. It is the women, in the long run, who are the greater sufferers from the armed clash of nations!

The mother who conceals her grief  
While to her breast her son she presses,  
Then breathes a few brave words and brief,  
Kissing the patriot brow she blesses,  
With no one but her secret God  
To know the pain that weighs upon her,  
Sheds holy blood as e'er the sod  
Received on Freedom's field of honor!

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It was three days later that Pen went away. There were many little matters to which he must attend before going. His mother must be safeguarded and her comfort looked after during his absence. His own private affairs must be left in such shape that in the event of his not returning they could easily be closed up. He permitted nothing to remain at loose ends. But to no one save to his employer and his mother did he confide his plans. He did not care to publish a purpose that lay so near to his heart. He went on the early morning train. Major Starbird was at the station to wring his hand and bid him Godspeed and wish him a safe return. But his mother was not there. She was in her room at home, her white face against the window, gazing with tear-wet eyes toward the south. She heard the distant rumble of the cars as they came, and the blasts from the far away whistle fell softly on her ears. And, by and by, the ever lengthening and fading line of smoke against the far horizon told her that the train bearing her only child to unknown and possibly dreadful destiny was on its way.

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Pen had been in New York before. On several memorable occasions, as a boy, he had accompanied his grandfather Butler to the city and had enjoyed the sights and sounds of the great metropolis, and had learned something of its ways and byways. He had no difficulty, therefore, in finding the address that had been given him by Major Starbird, and, having found it, he was made welcome there. He learned, what indeed he already knew, that Canada was not averse to filling out her quota of loyal troops for the great war by enlisting and training young men of good character and robust physique from the States. Armed with confidential letters of introduction and commendation, and certain other requisite documents, he left the quiet office on the busy street feeling that at last the desire of his heart was to be fully gratified. It was now late afternoon. He was to take a night train from the Grand Central station which would carry him by way of Albany to Toronto. Borne along by the crowd of home-going people he found himself on Broadway facing Trinity Church. The dusk of evening was already falling, and here and there the glow of electric lamps began to pierce the gloom. On one occasion he had wandered, with his grandfather, through Trinity Churchyard, and had read and been thrilled by inscriptions on ancient tomb-stones marking the graves of those who had served their country well in her early and struggling years. Had it been still day he would not have been able to resist the impulse to repeat that experience of his boyhood. As it was, he stood, for many minutes, peering through the iron railing that separated the living, hurrying throngs on the pavement from the narrow homes of those who, more than a century before, had served their generation by the will of God and had fallen on sleep.

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As he turned his eyes away from the deepening shadows of the graveyard it occurred to him that he would go to a hotel formerly frequented by Colonel Butler, and get his dinner there before going to the train. It would seem like old times, for it was there that they had stayed when he had accompanied his grandfather on those trips of his boyhood. To be sure the colonel would not be there, but delightful memories would be stirred by revisiting the place, and he felt that those memories would be most welcome this night.

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Ever more and more, in these latter days, his thoughts had turned toward his boyhood home. After six years of absence and estrangement there was still no tenderer spot in his heart, save the one occupied by his mother, than the spot in which reposed his memories of his childhood's hero, the master of Bannerhall. He wished that there might have been a reconciliation between them before he went to war. He would have given much if only he could have seen the stern face with its gray moustache and its piercing eyes, if he could have felt the warm grasp of the hand, if he could have heard the firm and kindly voice speak to him one word of farewell and Godspeed. He sighed as he turned in at the subway kiosk and descended the steps to the platform to join the pushing and the jostling crowd on its homeward way. At the Grand Central Station he procured his railway tickets and checked his baggage and then came out into Forty-second street. After a few minutes of bewildered turning he located himself and made his way without further trouble to his hotel. But the place seemed strange to him now; not as spacious as when he was a boy, not as ornate, not as wonderful. It was only after he had eaten his dinner and come out again into the lobby that it took on any kind of a familiar air, and not until he was ready to depart that he could have imagined the erect form of Colonel Butler, with its imposing and attractive personality, approaching him through the crowd as he had so often seen it in other years.

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Then, as he turned toward the street door, a strange thing happened. A familiar figure emerged from a side corridor and came out into the main lobby in full view of the departing boy. It needed no second glance to convince Pen that this was indeed his grandfather. The stern face, the white, drooping moustache, the still soldierly bearing, could belong to no one else. The colonel stopped

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for a minute to make inquiry and obtain information from a hotel attendant, then, having apparently learned what he wished to know, he stood looking searchingly about him.

Pen stood still in his tracks and wondered what he should do. The vision had come upon him so suddenly that it had quite taken away his breath. But it did not take long for him to decide. He would do the obvious and manly thing and let the consequences take care of themselves. He stepped forward and held out his hand.

"How do you do, grandfather," he said.

Colonel Butler turned an unrecognizing glance on the boy.

"You have the advantage of me, sir," he replied. "I—"

He stopped speaking suddenly, his face flushed, and a look of glad surprise came into his eyes.

"Why, Penfield!" he exclaimed, "is this you?"

But, before Pen had time to respond, either by word or movement, to the greeting, the old man's gloved hand which had been thrust partly forward, fell back to his side, the light of recognition left his eyes, and he stood, as stern-faced and determined as he had stood on that February night, years ago, asking about a boy and a flag.

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"Yes, grandfather," said Pen, "it is I."

The colonel did not turn away, nor did any harsh word come to his lips. He spoke with cold courtesy, as he might have spoken to any casual acquaintance.

"This is a surprise, sir. I had not expected to see you here."

He made a brave effort to control his voice, but it trembled in spite of him.

Pen's heart was stirred with sudden pity. He saw as he looked on his grandfather's face, that age and sorrow had made sad inroads during these few years. The hair and moustache, iron-gray before, were now completely white, the countenance was deep-lined and sallow, the eyes had lost their piercing brightness. But Pen did not permit his surprise, or his sorrow, or his grief at the manner of his reception, to show itself by any word or look.

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"Nor did I expect to see you," he said. "Have you been long in the city?"

"I arrived less than an hour ago. I expect to meet here my friend Colonel Marshall with whom I shall discuss the state of the country."

"Did—did you come alone?"

It was the wrong thing to say, and Pen knew it the moment he had said it. But the old man's appearance of feebleness had aroused in him the sudden thought that he ought not to be traveling alone, and, impulsively, he had given expression to the thought. Colonel Butler straightened his shoulders and turned upon his grandson a look of fine scorn.

"I came alone, sir," he replied. "How else did you expect me to come?"

"Why, I thought possibly Aunt Milly might have come along."

"In troublous times like these the woman's place is at the fire-side. The man's duty should lead him wherever his country calls, or wherever he can be of service to a people defending themselves against the onslaught of armed autocracy."

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"Yes, grandfather."

"I am therefore here to take counsel with certain men of judgment concerning the participation of this country in the bloody struggle that is going on abroad. After that I shall proceed to Washington to urge upon the heads of our government my belief that the time is ripe to throw the weight of our influence, and the weight of our wealth, and the weight of our armies, into the scale with France and Great Britain for the subjugation of those central powers that are waging upon these gallant countries a most unjust and unrighteous war."

"Yes, grandfather; I agree with you."

"Of course you do, sir. No right-minded man could fail to agree with me. And I shall tender my sword and my services, to be at the disposal of my country, in whatever branch of the service the Secretary of War may see fit to assign me as soon as war is declared. As a matter of fact, sir, we are already at war with Germany. Both by land and sea she has, for the last year, been making open war upon our commerce, on our citizens, on the integrity of our government. It is exasperating, sir, exasperating beyond measure, to see the authorities at Washington drifting aimlessly and unpreparedly into an armed conflict which is bound to come. Our president should demand from congress at once a declaration that a state of war exists with Germany, and with that declaration should go a system of organized preparedness, and then, sir, we should go to

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Europe and fight, and, thus fighting, help our Allies and save our native land. It shall be my errand to Washington to urge such an aggressive course."

Of his belief in his theory there could be no doubt. Of his earnestness in advocating it there was not the slightest question. His profound sympathy with the Allies did credit to his heart as well as his judgment. And the devotion of this one-armed and enfeebled veteran to the cause of his own country, his eagerness to serve her in the field and his confidence in his ability still to do so, were pathetic as well as inspiring. It was all so big, and patriotic, and splendid, even in its childish egotism and simplicity, that the pure absurdity of it found no place in the mind of this affectionate and manly-hearted boy.

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"I believe you are right, grandfather," he said, "and it's noble of you to offer your services that way."

"Thank you, sir!"

The colonel turned as if to move toward the information desk at the office, and then turned back.

"Pardon me!" he said, "but I forgot to inquire concerning your own errand in the city."

"I am on my way to Canada, grandfather."

A look of surprise came into the old man's eyes, followed at once by an expression of infinite scorn. He remembered that, in the days of the civil war, slackers and rebel sympathizers who wished to evade the draft made their way across the national border into Canada. They had received the contempt of their own generation and had drawn a figurative bar-sinister across the shield of their descendants. Could it be possible that this grandchild of his was about to add disgrace to disloyalty? That, in addition to heaping insults on the flag of his country as a boy, he was now, as a man, taking time by the forelock and escaping to the old harbor of safety to avoid some possible future conscription? The absurdity and impracticability of such a proposition did not occur to him at the moment, only the humiliation and the horror of it.

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"To Canada, sir?" he demanded; "the refuge of cowards and copperheads! Why to Canada, sir, in the face of this impending crisis in your country's affairs?"

His voice rose at the end in angry protest. The look of scorn that blazed from under his gray eyebrows was withering in its intensity. Pen, who was sufficiently familiar with the history of the civil war to know what lay in his grandfather's mind, answered quickly but quietly:

"I am going to Canada to enlist."

"To—to what? Enlist?"

"Yes; in the American Legion; to fight under the Union Jack in France."

A pillar stood near by, and the colonel backed up against it for support. The shock of the surprise, the sudden revulsion of feeling, left him nerveless.

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"And you—you are going to war?"

He could not quite believe it yet. He wanted confirmation.

"Yes, grandfather; I'm going to war. I couldn't stay out of it. Until my own country takes up arms I'll fight under another flag. When she does get into it I hope to fight under the Stars and Stripes."

A wonderful look came into the old man's face, a look of pride, of satisfaction, of unadulterated joy. His mouth twitched as though he desired to speak and could not. Then, suddenly, he thrust out his one arm and seized Pen's hand in a mighty and affectionate grip. In that moment the sorrow, the bitterness, the estrangement of years vanished, never to return.

"I am proud of you, sir!" he said. "You are worthy of your illustrious ancestors. You are maintaining the best traditions of Bannerhall."

"I'm glad you're pleased, grandfather."

"Pleased is too mild an expression. I am rejoiced. It is the proudest moment of my life." He stepped away from the pillar, straightened his shoulders, and gazed benignantly on his grandson. "Not that I especially desire," he added after a moment, "that you should be subjected to the hazards and the hardships of a soldier's life. That goes without saying. But it is the hazards and the hardships he faces that make the soldier a hero. Death itself has no terrors for the patriotic brave. '*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.*'"

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His eyes wandered away into some alluring distance and his thought into the fields of memory, and for a moment he was silent. Nor did Pen speak. He felt that the occasion was too momentous, the event too sacred to be spoiled by unnecessary words from him.

It was the colonel who at last broke the silence.

"It is not an opportune time," he said, "to speak of the past. But, as to the future, you may rest in confidence. While you are absent your mother shall be looked after. Her every want shall be supplied. It will be my delight to attend to the matter personally."

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Swift tears sprang to Pen's eyes. Surely the beautiful, the tender side of life was again turning toward him. It was with difficulty that he was able sufficiently to control his voice to reply:

"Thank you, grandfather! You are very good to us."

"Do not mention it! How about your own wants? Have you money sufficient to carry you to your destination?"

"Thank you! I have all the money I need."

"Very well. I shall communicate with you later, and see that you lack nothing for your comfort. Will you kindly send me your address when you are permanently located in your training camp?"

"Yes, I will."

Pen glanced at his watch and saw that he had but a few minutes left in which to catch his train.

"I'm sorry, grandfather," he said, "but when I met you I was just starting for the station to take my train north; and now, if I don't hurry, I'll get left."

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He held out his hand and the old man grasped it anew.

"Penfield, my boy;" his voice was firm and brave as he spoke. "Penfield, my boy, quit yourself like the man that you are! Remember whose blood courses in your veins! Remember that you are an American citizen and be proud of it. Farewell!"

He parted his white moustache, bent over, pressed a kiss upon his grandson's forehead, swung him about to face the door, and watched his form as he retreated. When he turned again he found his friend, Colonel Marshall, standing at his side.

"I have just bidden farewell," he said proudly, "to my grandson, Master Penfield Butler, who is leaving on the next train for Canada where he will go into training with the American Legion, and eventually fight under the Union Jack, on the war-scarred fields of France."

"He is a brave and patriotic boy," replied Colonel Marshall.

"It is in his blood and breeding, sir. No Butler of my line was ever yet a coward, or ever failed to respond to a patriotic call."

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And as for Pen, midnight found him speeding northward with a heart more full and grateful, and a purpose more splendidly fixed, than his life had ever before known.

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## CHAPTER XI

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It was late in the day following his departure from New York that Pen reached his destination in Canada. In a certain suburban town not far from Toronto he found a great training camp. It was here that selected units of the new Dominion armies received their military instruction prior to being sent abroad. It was here also that many of the young men from the States, desirous of fighting under the Union Jack, came to enlist with the Canadian troops and to receive their first lessons in the science of warfare. Canada was stirred as she had never been stirred before in all her history. Her troops already at the front had received their first great baptism of fire at Langemarck. They had fought desperately, they had won splendidly, but their losses had been appalling. So the young men of Canada, eager to avenge the slaughter of their countrymen, were hastening to fill the depleted ranks, and the young men from the States were proud to bear them company.

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But life in the training camps was no holiday. It was hard, steady, strenuous business, carried on under the most rigid form of discipline. Yet the men were well clothed, well fed, had comfortable quarters, enjoyed regular periods of recreation, and were content with their lot, save that their eagerness to complete their training and get to the firing line inevitably manifested itself in expressions of impatience.

To get up at 5:30 in the morning and drill for an hour before breakfast was no great task, nor two successive hours of fighting with tipped bayonets, nor throwing of real bombs and hand-grenades, nor was the back-breaking digging of trenches, nor the exhaustion from long marches, if only by such experiences they could fit themselves eventually to fight their enemy not only with courage but also with that skill and efficiency which counts for so much in modern warfare.

It was ten days after Pen's enlistment that, being off duty, he crossed the parade ground one evening and went into the large reading and recreation room of the Young Men's Christian Association, established and maintained there for the benefit of the troops in training. He had no

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errand except that he wished to write a letter to his mother, and the conveniences offered made it a favorite place for letter writing.

There were few people in the room, for it was still early, and the writing tables were comparatively unoccupied. But at one of them, with his back to the entrance, sat a young man in uniform busy with his correspondence. Pen glanced at him casually as he sat down to write; his quarter face only was visible. But the glance had left an impression on his mind that the face and figure were those of some one he had at some time known. He selected his writing paper and took up a pen, but the feeling within him that he must look again and see if he could possibly recognize his comrade in arms was too strong to be resisted. Apparently the feeling was mutual, for when Pen did turn his eyes in the direction of the other visitor, he found that the young man had ceased writing, and was sitting erect in his chair and looking squarely at him. It needed no second glance to convince him that his companion was none other than Aleck Sands. For a moment there was an awkward pause. It was apparent that the recognition was mutual, but it was apparent also that in the shock of surprise neither boy knew quite what to do. It was Aleck who made the first move. He rose, crossed the room to where Pen was sitting, and held out his hand.

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"Pen," he said, "are you willing to shake hands with me now? You know I was dog enough once to refuse a like offer from you."

"I'm not only willing but glad to, if you want to let bygones be bygones."

"I'll agree to that if you will agree to forgive me for what I've done against you and against the flag."

"What you've done against the flag?"

Pen was staring at him in surprise. When had the burden of that guilt been shifted?

"Yes, I," answered Aleck. "I did far more against the flag that day at Chestnut Hill than you ever thought of doing. I haven't realized it until lately, but now that I do know it, I'm trying in every way I possibly can to make it right."

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"Why, you didn't trample on it, nor speak of it disrespectfully, nor refuse to apologize to it; it was I who did all that."

"I know, but I dogged you into it. If I myself had paid proper respect to the flag you would never have got into that trouble. Pen, I never did a more unpatriotic, contemptible thing in my life than I did when I wrapped that flag around me and dared you to molest me. It was a cowardly use to make of the Stars and Stripes. Moreover, I did it deliberately, and you—you acted on the impulse of the moment. It was I who committed the real fault, and it has been you who have suffered for it."

"Well, I gave you a pretty good punching, didn't I?"

"Yes, but the punching you gave me was not a thousandth part of what I deserved; and, if you think it would even matters up any, I'd be perfectly willing to stand up to-night and let you knock me down a dozen times. Since this war came on I've despised myself more than I can tell you for my treatment of the flag that day, and for my treatment of you ever since."

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That he was in dead earnest there could be no doubt. Phlegmatic and conservative by nature, when he was once roused he was not easily suppressed. Pen began to feel sorry for him.

"You're too hard on yourself," he said. "I think you did make a mistake that day, so did I. But we were both kids, and in a way we were irresponsible."

"Yes, I know. There's something in that, to be sure. But that doesn't excuse me for letting the thing go as I got older and knew better, and letting you bear all the blame and all the punishment, and never lifting a finger to try to help you out. That was mean and contemptible."

"Well, it's all over now, so forget it."

"But I haven't been able to forget it. I've thought of it night and day for a year. A dozen times I've started to hunt you up and tell you what I'm telling you to-night, and every time I've backed out. I couldn't bear to face the music. And when I heard that they turned you down when you tried to enlist in the Guard at Lowbridge, on account of the old trouble, that capped the climax. I couldn't stand it any longer; I felt that I had to shoulder my part of that burden somehow, and that the very best way for me to do it was to go and fight; and if I couldn't fight under my own flag, then to go and fight under the next best flag, the Union Jack. I felt that after I'd had my baptism of fire I'd have the face and courage to go to you and tell you what I've been telling you now. But I'm glad it's over. My soul! I'm glad it's over!"

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He dropped into a chair by the table and rested his head on his open hand as though the recital of his story had exhausted him. Pen stood over him and laid a comforting arm about his shoulder.

"It's all right, old man!" he said. "You've done the fair thing, and a great lot more. Now let's call

quits and talk about something else. When did you come up here?"

"Five days ago. I'm just getting into the swing."

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"Well, you're exactly the right sort. I'm mighty glad you're here. We'll fix it so we can be in the same company, and bunk together. What do you say?"

"Splendid! if you're willing. Can it be done? I'm in company M of the —th Battalion."

"I know of the same thing having been done since I've been here. We'll try it on, anyway."

They did try it on, and three days later the transfer was made. After that they were comrades indeed, occupying the same quarters, marching shoulder to shoulder with each other in the ranks, sharing with each other all the comforts and privations of life in the barracks, moved by a common impulse of patriotism and chivalry, longing for the day to come when they could prove their mettle under fire.

But it was not until February 1916 that they went abroad. After three months of intensive training they were hardened, supple, and skillful. But their military education was not yet complete. Commanders of armies know that raw or semi-raw troops are worse than useless in modern warfare. Soldiers in these days must know their business thoroughly if they are to meet an enemy on equal terms. They must be artisans as well as soldiers, laborers as well as riflemen, human machines compounded of blood and courage.

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So, in a great camp not far from London, there were three months more of drill and discipline and drastic preparation for the firing line.

But at last, in late May, when the young grass was green on England's lawns, and the wings of birds were flashing everywhere in the sunshine, and nature was rioting in leaf and flower, a troop-ship, laden to the gunwales with the finest and the best of Canada's young patriots and many of the most stalwart youth of the States, landed on the welcoming shore of France. In England evidences of the great war had been marked, abundant and harrowing. But here, in the country whose soil had been invaded, the grim and stirring actualities of the mighty conflict were brought home to the onlooker with startling distinctness. At the railroad station, where the troops entrained for the front, every sight and sound was eloquent with the tenseness of preparation and the tragedy of the long fight. Soldiers were everywhere. Coats of blue, trousers of red, jackets of green, gave color and variety to the prevailing mass of sober khaki. Here too, dotting the hurrying throng, were the pathetic figures of the stricken and wounded, haggard, bandaged, limping, maimed, on canes and crutches, back from the front, released from the hospitals, seeking the rest and quiet that their sacrifices and heroism had so well earned. And here too, ministering to the needs of the suffering and the helpless, were many of the white-robed nurses of the Red Cross.

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It was evening when the train bearing the first section of the —th Battalion of Canadian Light Infantry to which Pen and Aleck belonged steamed slowly out of the station. All night, in the darkness, across the fields and through the fine old forests of northern France the slow rumble of the coaches, interrupted by many stops, kept up. But in the gray of the early morning, a short distance beyond Amiens, in the midst of a mist covered meadow, the train pulled up for the last time. This had been fighting ground. Here the invading hosts of Germany had been met and driven back. Ruined farm houses, shattered trees, lines of old trenches scarring the surface of the meadow, all told their eloquent tale of ruthless and devastating war. And yonder, in the valley, the slow-moving Somme wound its shadowy way between green banks and overhanging foliage as peacefully and beautifully as though its silent waters had never been flecked with the blood of dying men. Even now, as the troops detrained and marched to the sections of the field assigned them, the dull and continuous roar of cannon in the distance came to their ears with menacing distinctness.

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"It's the thunder of the guns!" exclaimed Pen. "I hope to-morrow finds us where they're firing them."

"I'm with you," responded Aleck. "I shall be frightened to death when they first put me under fire, but the sooner I'm hardened to it the better."

"Tut! You'll be as brave as a lion. It's your kind that wins battles."

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Pen turned his face toward a horizon lost in a haze of smoke, and the look in his eyes showed that he at least, would be no coward when the supreme moment came. Lieutenant Davis of their company strolled by; impatiently waiting for further orders. He was a strict disciplinarian indeed, but he was very human and his men all loved him. Pen pointed in the direction from which came the muffled sounds of warfare.

"When shall we be there, Lieutenant?" he asked.

"I don't know, Butler," was the response. "It may be to-morrow; it may be next month. Only those in high command know and they're not telling. We may camp right here for weeks."

But they did not camp there. In the early evening there came marching orders, and, under cover

of darkness, the entire battalion swung into a muddy and congested road and tramped along it for many hours. But they got no nearer to the fighting line. Weary, hungry and thirsty, they stopped at last on the face of a gently sloping hill protected from the north by a forest which had not yet suffered destruction either at the hands of sappers or from the violence of shells. It was apparent that this had been a camp for a large body of troops before the advancement of the lines. It was deserted now, but there were many caves in the hillside, and hundreds of little huts made of earth and wood under the sheltering trunks and branches of the trees. It was in one of these huts that Pen and Aleck, together with four of their comrades, were billeted. It was not long after their arrival before hastily built fires were burning, and coffee, hot and fragrant, was brewing, to refresh the tired bodies of the men, until the arrival of the provision trains should supply them with a more substantial breakfast. There was plenty of straw, however, and on that the weary troops threw themselves down and slept.

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At this camp the battalion remained until the middle of June. There were drills, marching and battalion maneuvers by day, such recreation in the evenings as camp life could afford, sound sleeping on beds of straw at night, and always, from the distance, sometimes loud and continuous, sometimes faint and occasional, the thunder of the guns. And always, too, along the muddy high-road at the foot of the slope, a never-ending procession of provision and munition trains laboring toward the front, and the human wreckage of the firing line, and troops released from the trenches, passing painfully to the rear. No wonder the men grew impatient and longed for the activities of the front even though their ears were ever filled with tales of horror from the lips of those who had survived the ordeal of battle.

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But, soon after the middle of June, their desires were realized. Orders came to break camp and prepare to march, to what point no one seemed to know, but every one hoped and expected it would be to the trenches. There was a day of bustle and hurry. The men stocked up their haversacks, filled their canteens and cartridge-boxes, put their guns in complete readiness, and at five o'clock in the afternoon were assembled and began their march. The road was ankle-deep with mud, for there had been much rain, and it was congested with endless convoys. There were many delays. A heavy mist fell and added to the uncertainty, the weariness and discomfort. But no complaint escaped from any man's lips, for they all felt that at last they were going into action. Four hours of marching brought them into the neighborhood of the British heavy artillery concealed under branches broken from trees or in mud huts, directing their fire on the enemy's lines by the aid of signals from lookouts far in advance or in the air. The noise of these big guns was terrific, but inspiring. At nine o'clock there was a halt of sufficient length to serve the men with coffee and bread, and then the march was resumed. By and by shells from the guns of the Allies began to shriek high over the heads of the marching men, and were replied to by the enemy shells humming and whining by, seeking out and endeavoring to silence the Allied artillery. Now and then one of these missiles would burst in the rear of the column, sending up a glare of flame and a cloud of dust and debris, but at what cost in life no one in the line knew.

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As the men advanced the mud grew deeper, the way narrower, the congestion greater. The passing of enemy shells was less frequent, but precautions for safety were increased. Advantage was taken of ravines, of fences, of fourth and fifth line trenches. The troops were not beyond range of the German sharpshooters, and the swish of bullets was heard occasionally in the air above the heads of the marchers.

It was toward morning that the destination of the column was reached, and, in single file, the men of Pen's section passed down an incline into their first communicating trench, and then past a maze of lateral trenches to the opening into the salients they were to supply. It was here that the soldiers whom they were to relieve filed out by them. Going forward, they took the places of the retiring section. At last they were in the first line trench, with the enemy trenches scarcely a hundred meters in front of them. Sentries were placed at the loop-holes made in the earth embankment, and the remainder of the section retired to their dug-outs. These under-ground rooms, built down and out from the trench, and bomb-proof, were capable of holding from eight to a dozen men. They were carpeted with straw, some of them had shelves, and in many of them discarded bayonets were driven into the walls to form hooks. It was in these places that the men who were off duty rested and ate and slept.

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In the gray light of the early June morning, Pen, who had been posted at one of the loop-holes as a listening sentry, looked out to see what lay in front of him. But the most that could be seen were the long and winding earth embankments that marked the lines of the German entrenchments, and between, on "no man's land," a maze of barbed wire entanglements. No living human being was in sight, but, at one place, crumpled up, partly sustained by meshes of wire, there was a ragged heap, the sight of which sent a chill to the boy's heart. It required no second glance to discover that this was the unrescued body of a soldier who had been too daring. Pen had seen his first war-slain corpse. Indeed, war was becoming to him now a reality. For, suddenly, a little of the soft earth at his side splattered into his face. An enemy bullet had struck there. In his eagerness to see he had exposed too much of his head and shoulders and had become the target for Boche sharpshooters. Other bullets pattered down around his loop-hole, and only by seeking the quick shelter of the trench did he escape injury or death. It was his first lesson in self-protection on the firing-line, but he profited by it. Two hours later he and Aleck, who had also been doing duty on a lookout platform, were relieved by their comrades, and threw themselves down on the straw of their dug-out and, wearied to the point of exhaustion, slept soundly. With the dawning of day the noise of cannonading increased, the whining of deadly

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missiles grew more incessant, the crash of exploding shells more frequent, but, until they were roused by their sergeant and bidden to eat their breakfast which had been brought by a ration-party, both boys slept. So soon had the menacing sounds of war become familiar to their ears. After breakfast those who were not on sentry duty were put to work repairing trenches, filling sand-bags, enlarging dug-outs, pumping water from low places, cleaning rifles, performing a hundred tasks which were necessary to make trench life endurable and reasonably safe. The food was good and was still abundant. There were fresh meat, bacon, canned soups and vegetables, bread, butter, jam and coffee. The two hours on sentry duty were by far the most strenuous in the daily routine. To remain in one position, with eyes glued to the narrow slit in the embankment, gas mask at hand, hand-grenades in readiness, rifle in position ready to be discharged on the second, the fate of the whole army perhaps resting on one man's vigilance, this was no easy task.

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But there were no complaints. The men were on the firing line, ready to obey orders, whatever they might be; they asked only one thing more, and that was to fight. But, in these days, there was a lull in the actual fighting. The "big drive" had not yet been launched. Aside from a skirmish now and then, a fierce bombardment for a few hours, an attempt, on one side or the other, to rush a trench, there was little aggressive warfare in this neighborhood, and few casualties; nor was there any material variance in the front lines of trenches on either side. There were six days of this kind of duty and then the men of Pen's company were relieved and sent to the rear for a week's rest, to act as reserves, and to be called during that time only in case of an emergency. But the following week saw them again at the front; not in the same trench where they had first served, but in an advanced position farther to the south. The trenches here were not so roomy nor so dry as had been those of the first assignment. There was much mud, slippery and deep, to be contended with, and the walls at the sides were continually caving in. The duties of the men, however, were not materially different from those with which they were already familiar. Clashes had been more frequent here, and the dead bodies of soldiers, crumpled up in the trench or lying, unrescued, on the scarred and fire-swept surface of "no man's land" were not an unusual sight. But the "rookies" were becoming hardened now to many of the horrors of war.

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It was while they were in this trench that Pen had his "baptism of fire." Late one afternoon the German artillery began shelling fiercely the first line of Allied trenches. Aleck and Pen were both on sentry duty. Just beyond them Lieutenant Davis stood at an advanced lookout post intent on studying the outside situation by means of his periscope. At irregular intervals machine guns, deftly hidden from the sight of the enemy, poked their menacing mouths toward the Boche lines. Now and then, finding its mark at some point in the course of the winding trench, an enemy shell would explode throwing clouds of dust and debris into the air, wrecking the earthworks where it fell, taking its toll of human lives and limbs. Twice Pen was thrown off his feet by the shock of near-by explosions, but he escaped injury, as did also Aleck. It was apparent that the Germans were either making a feint for the purpose of attacking at some unexpected point, or else that they were preparing for a charge on the trenches which they were bombarding. It developed that the latter theory was the correct one, for, after a while, they directed their fire to the rear of the first line trenches, and set up a still more furious bombardment. This, as every one knew, was for the purpose of preventing the British from bringing up reinforcements, and to give their own troops the opportunity to charge into the Allied front. The charge was not long delayed. A gray wave poured over the parapet of the German first line trench, rolled through the prepared openings in their own barbed-wire entanglements, and advanced, alternately running and creeping, toward the Allied line. But when the Germans were once in the open a terrible thing happened to them. The machine guns from all along the British trenches met them with a rain of bullets that mowed them down as grain falls to the blades of the farmer's reaper. The rifles of the men in khaki, resting on the benches of the parapet, spit constant and deadly fire at them. The artillery to the rear, in constant telephone touch with the first line, quickly found the range and dropped shells into the charging mass with terrible effect. A second body of gray-clad soldiers with fixed bayonets swarmed out of the German trenches and came to the help of their hard-beset comrades, and met a similar fate. Then a third platoon came on, and a fourth. The resources of the enemy in men seemed endless, their persistence remarkable, their recklessness in the face of sure death almost unbelievable. The noise was terrific; the constant rattle of the machine guns, the spitting of rifles, the booming of the artillery, the whining and crashing of shells, the yells of the charging troops, the shrieks of the wounded. In the British trenches the men were assembled, ready to pour out at the whistle and repel the assault on open ground; but it was not necessary for them to do so. The German ranks, unable to withstand the fire that devoured them as they met it, a fire that it was humanly impossible for any troops to withstand, turned back and sought the shelter of their trenches, leaving their dead and wounded piled and sprawled by the hundreds on the ground they had failed to cross.

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The casualties among the Canadian troops were not large, and they had occurred mostly before the charge had been launched, but it was in deep sorrow that the men from across the ocean gathered up from the shattered trenches the pierced and broken bodies of their comrades, and sent them to the rear, the living to be cared for in the hospitals, the dead to be buried on the soil of France where they had bravely fought and nobly died.

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The great Somme drive began on July 1, 1916, after a week's devastating bombardment of the German lines. The enemy trenches had been torn and shattered, and when the Allied armies, in great numbers and with abundant ammunition, swept out and down upon them, the impetus and force of the advance were irresistible. Trenches were blotted out. Towns were taken. The German lines melted away over wide areas. Victory, decisive and permanent, rested on the Allied banners. On the third of the month the British took La Boisselle and four thousand three hundred prisoners. But on the fourth the enemy troops turned and fought like wild animals at bay. This was the day on which Aleck received his wounds. In the morning, as they lay sprawled in a ravine which had been captured the night before, waiting for orders to push still farther on, Aleck had said to Pen:

"You know what day this is, comrade?"

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"Indeed I do!" was the reply, "it's Independence Day."

"Right you are. I wish I could get sight of an American flag. It will be the first time in my life that I haven't seen 'Old Glory' somewhere on the Fourth of July."

"True. Back yonder in the States they'll be having parades and speeches, and the flag will be flying from every masthead. If only they could be made to realize that it's really that flag that we're fighting for, you and I, and drop this cloak of neutrality, and come over here as a nation and help us, wouldn't that be glorious?"

Pen's face was grimy, his uniform was torn and stained, his hair was tousled; somewhere he had lost his cap and the times were too strenuous to get another; but out from his eyes there shone a tenderness, a longing, a determination that marked him as a true soldier of the American Legion.

The cannonading had again begun. Shells were whining and whistling above their heads and exploding in the enemy lines not far beyond. Off to the right, a village in flames sent up great clouds of smoke, and the roar of the conflagration was joined to the noise of artillery. Back of the lines the ground was strewn with wreckage, pitted with shell-holes, ghastly with its harvest of bodies of the slain. With rifles gripped, bayonets ready, hand grenades near by, the boys lay waiting for the word of command.

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"Aleck?"

"Yes, comrade."

"Over yonder at Chestnut Hill, on the school-grounds, the flag will be floating from the top of the staff to-day."

"Yes, I know. It will be a pretty sight. I used to be ashamed to look at it. You know why. To-day I could stare at it and glory in it for hours."

"That flag at the school-house is the most beautiful American flag in the world. I never saw it but once, but it thrilled me then unspeakably. I have loved it ever since. I can think of but one other sight that would be more beautiful and thrilling."

"And what is that?"

"To see 'Old Glory' waving from the top of a flag-staff here on the soil of France, signifying that our country has taken up the cause of the Allies and thrown herself, with all her heart and might into this war."

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"Wait; you will see it, comrade, you will see it. It can't be delayed for long now."

Then the order came to advance. In a storm of shrapnel, bullets and flame, the British host swept down again upon the foe. The Germans gave desperate and deadly resistance. They fought hand to hand, with bayonets and clubbed muskets and grenades. It was a death grapple, with decisive victory on neither side. In the wild onrush and terrific clash, Pen lost touch with his comrade. Only once he saw him after the charge was launched. Aleck waved to him and smiled and plunged into the thick of the carnage. Two hours later, staggering with shock and heat and superficial wounds, and choking with thirst and the smoke and dust of conflict, Pen made his way with the survivors of his section back over the ground that had been traversed, to find rest and refreshment at the rear. They had been relieved by fresh troops sent in to hold the narrow strip of territory that had been gained. Stumbling along over the torn soil, through wreckage indescribable, among dead bodies lying singly and in heaps, stopping now and then to aid a dying man, or give such comfort as he could to a wounded and helpless comrade, Pen struggled slowly and painfully toward a resting spot.

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At one place, through eyes half blinded by sweat and smoke and trickling blood, he saw a man partially reclining against a post to which a tangled and broken mass of barbed wire was still clinging. The man was evidently making weak and ineffectual attempts to care for his own wounds. Pen stopped to assist him if he could. Looking down into his face he saw that it was Aleck. He was not shocked, nor did he manifest any surprise. He had seen too much of the actuality of war to be startled now by any sight or sound however terrible. He simply said:

"Well, old man, I see they got you. Here, let me help."

He knelt down by the side of his wounded comrade, and, with shaking hands, endeavored to staunch the flow of blood and to bind up two dreadful wounds, a gaping, jagged hole in the breast beneath the shoulder, made by the thrust and twist of a Boche bayonet, and a torn and shattered knee.

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Aleck did not at first recognize him, but a moment later, seeing who it was that had stopped to help him, he reached up a trembling hand and laid it on his friend's face. Something in his mouth or throat had gone wrong and he could not speak.

After exhausting his comrade's emergency kit and his own in first aid treatment of the wounds, Pen called for assistance to a soldier who was staggering by, and between them, across the torn field with its crimson and ghastly fruitage, with fragments of shrapnel hurtling above them, and with bodies of soldiers, dead and living, tossed into the murky air by constantly exploding shells, they half carried, half dragged the wounded man across the ravine and up the hill to a captured German trench, and turned him over to the stretcher-bearers to be taken to the ambulances.

It was after this day's fighting that Pen, "for conspicuous bravery in action," was promoted to the rank of sergeant. He wore his honor modestly. It gave him, perhaps, a better opportunity to do good work for Britain and for France, and to rehabilitate himself in the eyes of his own countrymen; otherwise it did not matter.

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So the fighting on the Somme went on day after day, week after week, persistent, desperate, bloody. It was early in August, after the terrific battle by which the whole of Delville Wood passed into British control, that Pen's battalion was relieved and sent far to the rear for a long rest. Even unwounded men cannot stand the strain of continuous battle for many weeks at a stretch. The nervous system, delicate and complicated, must have relief, or the physical organization will collapse, or the mind give way, or both.

At the end of the first night's march from the front the battalion camped in the streets of a little, half-wrecked village on the banks of the Avre. Up on the hillside was a long, rambling building which had once been a convent but was now a hospital. Pen knew that somewhere in a hospital back of the Somme Aleck was still lying, too ill to be moved farther to the rear. It occurred to him that he might find him here. So, in the hazy moonlight of the August evening, having obtained the necessary leave, he set out to make inquiry. He passed up the winding walk, under a canopy of fine old trees, and reached the entrance to the building. From the porch, looking to the north, toward the valley of the Somme, he could see on the horizon the dull gleam of red that marked the battle line, and he could hear the faint reverberations of the big guns that told of the fighting still in progress. But here it was very quiet, very peaceful, very beautiful. For the first time since his entrance into the great struggle he longed for an end of the strife, and a return to the calm, sweet, lovely things of life. But he did not permit this mood to remain long with him. He knew that the war must go on until the spirit that launched it was subdued and crushed, and that he must go with it to whatever end God might will.

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He found Aleck there. He had felt that he would, and while he was delighted he was not greatly surprised. There was little emotion manifested at the meeting of the two boys. The horrors of war were too close and too vivid yet for that. But the fact that they were glad to look again into one another's eyes admitted of no doubt. Aleck had recovered the use of his voice, but he was still too weak to talk at any length. The bayonet wound in his shoulder had healed nicely, but his shattered knee had come terribly near to costing him his life. There had been infection. Amputation of the leg had been imminent. The surgeons and the nurses had struggled with the case for weeks and had finally conquered.

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"I shall still have two legs," said Aleck jocosely, "and I'll be glad of that; but I'm afraid this one will be a weak brother for a long time. I won't be kicking football this fall, anyway."

"It's the fortune of war," replied Pen.

"I know. I'm not complaining, and I'm not sorry. I've had my chance. I've seen war. I've fought for France. I'm satisfied."

He lay back on the pillow, pale-faced, emaciated, weak; but in his eyes was a glow of patriotic pride in his own suffering, and pride in the knowledge that he had entered the fight and had fought bravely and well.

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"America ought to be proud of you," said Pen, "and of all the other boys from the States who have fought and suffered, and of those who have died in this war. I told you you'd be no coward when the time came to fight, and, my faith! you were not. I can see you now, with a smile and a wave of the hand plunging into that bloody chaos."

"Thank you, comrade! I may never fight again, but I can go back home now and face the flag and not be ashamed."

"Indeed, you can! And when will you go?"

"I don't know. They'll take me across the channel as soon as I'm able to leave here, and then,

when I can travel comfortably I suppose I'll be invalided home."

"Well, old man, when you get there, you say to my mother and my aunt Milly, and my dear old grandfather Butler, that when you saw me last I was well, and contented, and glad to be doing my bit."

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"I will, Pen."

"And, Aleck?"

"Yes, comrade."

"If you should chance to go by the school-house, and see the old flag waving there, give it one loving glance for me, will you?"

"With all my heart!"

"So, then, good-by!"

"Good-by!"

It was in the spacious grounds of an old French château not far from Beauvais on the river Andelle that Pen's battalion camped for their period of rest and recuperation. There were long, sunshiny days, nights of undisturbed and refreshing sleep, recreation and entertainment sufficient to divert tired brains, and a freedom from undue restraint that was most welcome. Moreover there were letters and parcels from home, with plenty of time to read them and to re-read them, to dwell upon them and to enjoy them. If the loved ones back in the quiet cities and villages and countryside could only realize how much letters and parcels from home mean to the tired bodies and strained nerves of the war-worn boys at the front, there would never be a lack of these comforts and enjoyments that go farther than anything else to brighten the lives and hearten the spirits of the soldier-heroes in the trenches and the camps.

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Pen had his full share of these pleasures. His mother, his Aunt Millicent, Colonel Butler, and even Grandpa Walker from Cobb's Corners, kept him supplied with news, admonition, encouragement and affection. And these little waves of love and commendation, rolling up to him at irregular intervals, were like sweet and fragrant draughts of life-giving air to one who for months had breathed only the smoke of battle and the foulness of the trenches.

At the end of August, orders came for the battalion to return to the front. There were two days of bustling preparation, and then the troops entrained and were carried back to where the noise of the seventy-fives on the one side and the seventy-sevens on the other, came rumbling and thundering again to their ears, and the pall of smoke along the horizon marked the location of the firing line.

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But their destination this time was farther to the south, on the British right wing, where French and English soldiers touched elbows with each other, and Canadian and Australian fraternized in a common enterprise. Here again the old trench life was resumed; sentinel duty, daring adventures, wild charges, the shock and din of constant battle, brief periods of rest and recuperation. But the process of attrition was going on, the enemy was being pushed back, inch by inch it seemed, but always, eventually, back. As for Pen, he led a charmed life. Men fell to right of him and to left of him, and were torn into shreds at his back; but, save for superficial wounds, for temporary strangulation from gas, for momentary insensibility from shock, he was unharmed.

It was in October, after Lieutenant Davis had been promoted to the captaincy, that Pen was made second lieutenant of his company. He well deserved the honor. There was a little celebration of the event among his men, for his comrades all loved him and honored him. They said it would not be long before he would be wearing the Victoria Cross on his breast. Yet few of them had been with him from the beginning. Of those who had landed with him upon French soil the preceding May only a pitifully small percentage remained. Killed, wounded, missing, one by one and in groups, they had dropped out, and the depleted ranks had been filled with new blood.

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In November they were sent up into the Arras sector, but in December they were back again in their old quarters on the Somme. And yet it was not their old quarters, for the British front had been advanced over a wide area, for many miles in length, and imperturbable Tommies were now smoking their pipes in many a reversed trench that had theretofore been occupied by gray-clad Boches. But they were not pleasant trenches to occupy. They were very narrow and very muddy, and parts of the bodies of dead men protruded here and there from their walls and parapets. Moreover, in December it is very cold in northern France, and, muffle as they would, even the boys from Canada suffered from the severity of the weather. They asked only to be permitted to keep their blood warm by aggressive action against their enemy. And, just before the Christmas holidays, the aggressive action they had longed for came.

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It was no great battle, no important historic event, just an incident in the policy of attrition which was constantly wearing away the German lines. An attempt was to be made to drive a wedge into the enemy's front at a certain vital point, and, in order to cover the real thrust, several feints were to be made at other places not far away. One of these latter expeditions had been intrusted

to a part of Pen's battalion. At six o'clock in the afternoon the British artillery was to bombard the first line of enemy trenches for an hour and a half. Then the artillery fire was to lift to the second line, and the Canadian troops were to rush the first line with the bayonet, carry it, and when the artillery fire lifted to the third line they were to pass on to the second hostile trench and take and hold that for a sufficient length of time to divert the enemy from the point of real attack, and then they were to withdraw to their own lines. Permanent occupation of the captured trenches at the point seemed inadvisable at this time, if not wholly impossible.

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It was not a welcome task that had been assigned to these troops. Soldiers like to hold the ground they have won in any fight; and to retire after partial victory was not to their liking. But it was part of the game and they were content. So far as his section was concerned Pen assembled his men, explained the situation to them, and told them frankly what they were expected to do.

"It's going to be a very pretty fight," he added, "probably the hardest tussle we've had yet. The Boches are well dug in over there, and they're well backed with artillery, and they're not going to give up those trenches without a protest. Some of us will not come back; and some of us who do come back will never fight again. You know that. But, whatever happens, Canada and the States will have no reason to blush for us. We're fighting in a splendid cause, and we'll do our part like the soldiers we are."

"Aye! that we will!" "Right you are!" "Give us the chance!" "Wherever you lead, we follow!"

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It seemed as though every man in the section gave voice to his willingness and enthusiasm.

"Good!" exclaimed Pen. "I knew you'd feel that way about it. I've never asked a man of you to go where I wouldn't go myself, and I never shall. I simply wanted to warn you that it's going to be a hot place over there to-night, and you must be prepared for it."

"We're ready! All you've got to do is to say the word."

No undue familiarity was intended; respect for their commander was in no degree lessened, but they loved him and would have followed him anywhere, and they wanted him to know it.

The unusual activity in the Allied trenches, observed by enemy aircraft, combined with the terrific cannonading of their lines, had evidently convinced the enemy that some aggressive movement against them was in contemplation, for their artillery fire now, at seven o'clock, was directed squarely upon the outer lines of British trenches, bringing havoc and horror in the wake of the exploding shells.

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It was under this galling bombardment that the men of the second section adjusted their packs, buckled the last strap of their equipment, took firm hold of their rifles, and crouched against the front wall of their trench, ready for the final spring.



**INTO THE FACE OF DEATH HE LED THE REMNANT OF HIS BRAVE  
PLATOON**

At seven-thirty o'clock the order came. It was a sharp blast of a whistle, made by the commanding officer. The next moment, led by Lieutenant Butler, the men were up, sliding over the parapet, worming their way through gaps in their own wire entanglements, and forming in the semblance of a line outside. It all took but a minute, and then the rush toward the enemy



trenches began. It seemed as though every gun of every calibre in the German army was let loose upon them. The artillery shortened its range and dropped exploding shells among them with dreadful effect. Machine guns mowed them down in swaths. Hand-grenades tore gaps in their ranks. Rifle bullets, hissing like hail, took terrible toll of them. Out of the blackness overhead, lit with the flame of explosions, fell a constant rain of metal, of clods of earth, of fragments of equipment, of parts of human bodies. The experience was wild and terrible beyond description.

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Pen took no note of the whining and crashing missiles about him, nor of the men falling on both sides of him, nor of the shrieking, gesticulating human beings behind him. Into the face of death, his eyes fixed on the curtain of fire before him, heroic and inspired, he led the remnant of his brave platoon. Through the gaps torn out of the enemy entanglements by the preliminary bombardment, and on into the first line of Boche entrenchments they pounded and pushed their way. Then came fighting indeed; hand to hand, with fixed bayonets and clubbed muskets and death grapples in the darkness, and everywhere, smearing and soaking the combatants, the blood of men. But the first trench, already battered into a shapeless and shallow ravine, was won. Canada was triumphant. The curtain of artillery fire lifted and fell on the enemy's third line. So, now, forward again, leaving the "trench cleaners" to hunt out those of the enemy who had taken refuge in holes and caves. Again the rain of hurtling and hissing and crashing steel. Human fortitude and endurance were indeed no match for this. Again the clubs and bayonets and wild men reaching with blood-smeared hands for each other's throats in the darkness.

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And then, to Penfield Butler, at last, came the soldier's destiny. It seemed as though some mighty force had struck him in the breast, whirled him round and round, toppled him to earth, and left him lying there, crushed, bleeding and unconscious. How long it was that he lay oblivious of the conflict he did not know. But when he awakened to sensibility the rush of battle had ceased. There was no fighting around him. He had a sense of great suffocation. He knew that he was spitting blood. He tried to raise his hand, and his revolver fell from the nerveless fingers that were still grasping it. A little later he raised his other hand to his breast and felt that his clothing was torn and soaked. He lifted his head, and in the light of an enemy flare he looked about him. He saw only the torn soil covered with crouched and sprawling bodies of the wounded and the dead, and with wreckage indescribable. Bullets were humming and whistling overhead, and spattering the ground around him. Men in the agony of their wounds were moaning and crying near by. He lay back and tried to think. By the light of the next flare he saw the rough edge of a great shell-hole a little way beyond him toward the British lines. In the darkness he tried to crawl toward it. It would be safer there than in this whistling cross-fire of bullets. He did not dare try to rise. He could not turn himself on his stomach, the pain and sense of suffocation were too great when he attempted it. So he pulled himself along in the darkness on his back to the cavity, and sought shelter within it. Bodies of others who had attempted to run or creep to it, and had been caught by Boche bullets on the way, were hanging over its edge. Under its protecting shoulder were many wounded, treating their own injuries, helping others as they could in the darkness and by the fitful light of the German flares. Some one, whose friendly voice was half familiar, yet sounded strange and far away, dragged the exhausted boy still farther into shelter, felt of his blood-soaked chest, and endeavored, awkwardly and crudely, for he himself was wounded, to give first aid. And then again came unconsciousness.

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So, in the black night, in the shell-made cavern with the pall of flame-streaked battle smoke hanging over it, and the whining, screaming missiles from guns of friend and foe weaving a curtain of tangled threads above it, this young soldier of the American Legion, his breast shot half in two, his rich blood reddening the soil of France, lay steeped in merciful oblivion.

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## CHAPTER XIII

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When Colonel Butler declared his intention of going to New York and Washington to consult with his friends about the great war, to urge active participation in it by the United States, and to offer to the proper authorities, his services as a military expert and commander, his daughter protested vigorously. It was absurd, she declared, for him, at his age, to think of doing anything of the kind; utterly preposterous and absurd. But he would not listen to her. His mind was made up, and she was entirely unable to divert him from his purpose.

"Then I shall go with you," she declared.

"May I ask," he inquired, "what your object is in wishing to accompany me?"

"Because you're not fit to go alone. You're too old and feeble, and something might happen to you."

He turned on her a look of infinite scorn.

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"Age," he replied, "is no barrier to patriotism. A man's obligation to serve his country is not measured by his years. I have never been more capable of taking the field against an enemy of civilization than I am at this moment. To suggest that I am not fit to travel unless accompanied by a female member of my family falls little short of being gross disrespect. I shall go alone."

Again she protested, but she was utterly unable to swerve him a hair's breadth from his determination and purpose. So she was obliged to see him start off by himself on his useless and Quixotic errand. She knew that he would return disappointed, saddened, doubly depressed, and ill both in body and mind.

Since Pen's abrupt departure to seek a home with his Grandpa Walker, Colonel Butler had not been so obedient to his daughter's wishes. He had changed in many respects. He had grown old, white-haired, feeble and despondent. He was often ill at ease, and sometimes morose. That he grieved over the boy's absence there was not a shadow of doubt. Yet he would not permit the first suggestion of a reconciliation that did not involve the humble application of his grandson to be forgiven and taken back. But such an application was not made. The winter days went by, spring blossomed into summer, season followed season, and not yet had the master of Bannerhall seen coming down the long, gray road to the old home the figure of a sorrowful and suppliant boy.

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When the world war began, his mind was diverted to some extent from his sorrow. From the beginning his sympathies had been with the Allies. Old soldier that he was he could not denounce with sufficient bitterness the spirit of militarism that seemed to have run rampant among the Central Powers. At the invasion of Belgium and at the mistreatment of her people, especially of her women and children, at the bombardment of the cathedral of Rheims, at the sinking of the *Lusitania*, at the execution of Edith Cavell, at all the outrages of which German militarism was guilty, he grew more and more indignant and denunciatory. His sense of fairness, his spirit of chivalry, his ideas of honorable warfare and soldierly conduct were inexpressibly shocked. The murder of sleeping women and children in country villages by the dropping of bombs from airships, the suffocation of brave soldiers by the use of deadly gases, the hurling of liquid fire into the ranks of a civilized enemy; these things stirred him to the depths. He talked of the war by day, he dreamed of it at night. He chafed bitterly at the apparent attempt of the Government at Washington to preserve the neutrality of this country against the most provoking wrongs. It was our war, he declared, as much as it was the war of any nation in Europe, and it was our duty to get into it for the sake of humanity, at the earliest possible moment and at any cost. His intense feeling and profound conviction in the matter led finally to his determination to make the trip to New York and Washington in order to present his views and make his recommendations, and to offer his services in person, in quarters where he believed they would be welcomed and acted on. So he went on what appeared to his daughter to be the most preposterous errand he had ever undertaken.

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He returned even sooner than she had expected him to come. In response to his telegram she sent the carriage to the station to meet him on the arrival of the afternoon train. When she heard the rumbling of the wheels outside she went to the door, knowing that it would require her best effort to cheerfully welcome the disappointed, dejected and enfeebled old man. Then she had the surprise of her life. Colonel Butler alighted from the carriage and mounted the porch steps with the elasticity of youth. He was travel-stained and weary, indeed; but his face, from which half the wrinkles seemed to have disappeared, was beaming with happiness. He kissed his daughter, and, with old-fashioned courtesy, conducted her to a porch chair. In her mind there could be but one explanation for his extraordinary appearance and conduct; the purpose of his journey had been accomplished and his last absurd wish had been gratified.

"I suppose," she said, with a sigh, "they have agreed to adopt your plans, and take you back into the army."

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"Into the what, my dear?"

"Into the army. Didn't you go to Washington for the purpose of getting back into service?"

"Why, yes. I believe I did. Pardon me, but, in view of matters of much greater importance, the result of this particular effort had slipped my mind."

"Matters of greater importance?"

"Yes. I was about to inform you that while I was in New York I unexpectedly ran across my grandson, Master Penfield Butler."

She sat up with a look of surprise and apprehension in her eyes.

"Ran across Pen? What was he doing there?"

"He was on his way to Canada to join those forces of the Dominion Government which will eventually sail for France, and help to free that unhappy country from the heel of the barbarian."

"You mean—?"

"I mean that Penfield was to enlist, has doubtless now already enlisted, with the Canadian troops which, after a period of drilling at home, will enter the war on the firing line in northern France."

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"Well, for goodness sake!" It was all that Aunt Millicent could say, and when she had said that she practically collapsed.

"Yes," he rejoined, "he felt as did I, that the time had come for American citizens, both old and

young, with red blood in their veins, to spill that blood, if necessary, in fighting for the liberty of the world. Patriotism, duty, the spirit of his ancestors, called him, and he has gone."

Colonel Butler was radiant. His eyes were aglow with enthusiasm. His own recommendations for national conduct had gone unheeded indeed, and his own offer of military service had been civilly declined; but these facts were of small moment compared with the proud knowledge that a young scion of his race was about to carry the family traditions and prestige into the battle front of the greatest war for liberty that the world had ever known.

In Pen's second letter home from Canada he told of the arrival and enlistment of Aleck Sands, and of the complete blotting out of the old feud that had existed between them. Later on he wrote them, in many letters, all about his barrack life, and of how contented and happy he was, and how eagerly he was looking forward to the day when he and his comrades should cross the water to those countries where the great war was a reality. The letter that he wrote the day before he sailed was filled with the brightness of enthusiasm and the joy of anticipation. And while the long period of drill on English soil became somewhat irksome to him, as one reading between the lines could readily discover, he made no direct complaint. It was simply a part of the game. But it was when he had reached the front, and his letters breathed the sternness of the conflict and echoed the thunder of the guns, that he was at his best in writing. Mere salutations some of them were, written from the trenches by the light of a dug-out candle, but they pulsed with patriotism and heroism and a determination to live up to the best traditions of a soldier's career.

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Colonel Butler devoured every scrap of news that came from the front in the half dozen papers that he read daily. He kept in close touch with the international situation, he fumed constantly at the inactivity of his own government in view of her state of unpreparedness for a war into which she must sooner or later be inevitably plunged. He lost all patience with what he considered the timidity of the President, and what he called the stupidity of congress. Was not the youngest and the reddest and the best of the Butler blood at the fighting line, ready at any moment to be spilled to the death on the altar of the world's liberty? Why then should the government of the United States sit supinely by and see the finest young manhood of her own and other lands fighting and perishing in the cause of humanity when, by voicing the conscience of her people, and declaring and making war on the Central Powers, she could most effectually aid in bringing to a speedy and victorious end this monstrous example of modern barbarism? Why, indeed!

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One day Colonel Butler suggested to his daughter that she go up to Lowbridge and again inquire whether Pen's mother had any needs of any kind that he could possibly supply.

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"And," he added, "I wish you to invite her to Bannerhall for a visit of indefinite duration. In these trying and critical times my daughter-in-law's place is in the ancestral home of her deceased husband."

Aunt Millicent, delighted with the purport of her mission, went up to Lowbridge and extended the invitation, and, with all the eloquence at her command, urged its acceptance. But Sarah Butler was unyielding and would not come. She had been wounded too deeply in years gone by.

So spring came, and blade, leaf and flower sprang into beautiful and rejoicing existence. No one had ever before seen the orchard trees so superbly laden with blossoms. No one had ever before seen a brighter promise of a more bountiful season. And the country was still at peace, enriching herself with a mintage coined of blood and sorrow abroad, though drifting aimlessly and ever closer to the verge of war.

There was a time early in July when, for two weeks, no letter came from Pen. The suspense was almost unbearable. For days Colonel Butler haunted the post-office. His self-assurance left him, his confident and convincing voice grew weak, a haunting fear of what news might come was with him night and day.

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At last he received a letter from abroad. It was from Pen, addressed in his own hand-writing. The colonel himself took it from his box at the post-office in the presence of a crowd of his neighbors and friends awaiting the distribution of their mail. It was scrawled in pencil on paper that had never been intended to be used for correspondence purposes.

Pen had just learned, he wrote, that the messenger who carried a former letter from the trenches for him had been killed en route by an exploding shell, and the contents of his mail pouch scattered and destroyed. Moreover he had been very busy. Fighting had been brisk, there had been a good many casualties in his company, but he himself, save for some superficial wounds received on the Fourth of July, was unhurt and reasonably well.

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"I am sorry to report, however," the letter continued, "that my comrade, Aleck Sands, has been severely wounded. We were engaged in a brisk assault on the enemy's lines on the Fourth of July, and captured some of their trenches. During the engagement Aleck received a bayonet wound in the shoulder, and a badly battered knee. I was able to help him off the field and to an ambulance. I believe he is somewhere now in a hospital not far to the rear of us. I mean to see him soon if I can find out where he is and get leave. Tell his folks that he fought like a hero. I never saw a braver man in battle.

"You will be glad to learn that since the engagement on the fourth I have been made a sergeant, 'for conspicuous bravery in action,' the order read.

"I suppose the flag is flying on the school-house staff these days. How I would like to see it. If I could only see the Stars and Stripes over here, and our own troops under it, I should be perfectly happy. The longer I fight here the more I'm convinced that the cause we're fighting for is a just and glorious one, and the more willing I am to die for it.

"Give my dear love to Aunt Milly. I have just written to mother.

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"Your affectionate grandson,  
"PENFIELD BUTLER."

Colonel Butler looked up from the reading with moist eyes and glowing face, to find a dozen of his townsmen who knew that the letter had come, waiting to hear news from Pen.

"On Independence Day," said the colonel, in answer to their inquiries, "he participated in a gallant and bloody assault on the enemy's lines, in which many trenches were taken. Save for superficial wounds, easily healed in the young and vigorous, he came out of the *melée* unscathed."

"Good for him!" exclaimed one.

"Bravo!" shouted another.

"And, gentlemen," the colonel's voice rose and swelled moderately as he proceeded, "I am proud to say that, following that engagement, my grandson, for conspicuous bravery in action, was promoted to the rank of sergeant in the colonial troops of Great Britain."

"Splendid!"

"He's the boy!"

"We're proud of him!"

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The colonel's eyes were flashing now; his head was erect, his one hand was thrust into the bosom of his waistcoat.

"I thank you, gentlemen!" he said, "on behalf of my grandson. To pass inherited patriotism from father to son, from generation to generation, and to see it find its perfect fulfillment in the latest scion of the race, is to live in the golden age, gentlemen, and to partake of the fountain of youth."

His voice quavered a little at the end, and he waited for a moment to recover it, and possibly to give his eloquence an opportunity to sink in more deeply, and then he continued:

"I regret to say, gentlemen, that in the fierce engagement of the fourth instant, my grandson's gallant comrade, Master Alexander Sands, was severely wounded both in the shoulder and the knee, and is now somewhere in a hospital in northern France, well back of the lines, recuperating from his injuries. I shall communicate this information at once to his parents, together with such encouragement as is contained in my grandson's letter."

Proud as a king, he turned from the sympathetic group, entered his carriage and was driven toward Chestnut Valley.

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It was late in September when Aleck Sands came home. The family at Bannerhall, augmented within the last year by the addition of Colonel Butler's favorite niece, was seated at the supper table one evening when Elmer Cuddeback, now grown into a fine, stalwart youth, hurried in to announce the arrival.

"I happened to be at the station when Aleck came," he said. "He looked like a skeleton and a ghost rolled into one. He couldn't walk at all, and he was just able to talk. But he said he'd been having a fine time and was feeling bully. Isn't that nerve for you?"

"Splendid!" exclaimed the colonel, holding his napkin high in the air in his excitement. "A marvelous young man! I shall do myself the honor to call on him in person to-morrow morning, and compliment him on his bravery, and congratulate him on his escape from mortal injury."

He was as good as his word. He and his daughter both went down to Cherry Valley and called on Aleck Sands. He was lying propped up in bed, attended by a thankful and devoted mother, trying to give rest to a tired and irritated body, and to enjoy once more the sights and sounds of home. He was too weak to do much talking, but almost his first words were an anxious inquiry about Pen. They told him what they knew.

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"He came to see me at the hospital in August," said Aleck. "It was like a breeze from heaven. If he doesn't come back here alive and well at the end of this war, with the Victoria Cross on his breast, I shall be ashamed to go out on the street; he is so much the braver soldier and the better man of the two of us."

"He has written to us," said the colonel, and his eyes were moist, and his voice choked a little as he spoke, "that you, yourself, in the matter of courage in battle, upheld the best traditions of American bravery, and I am proud of you, sir, as are all of your townsmen."

The colonel would have remained to listen to further commendation of his grandson, and to discuss with one who had actually been on the fighting line, the conditions under which the war was being waged; but his daughter, seeing that the boy needed rest, brought the visit to a speedy close.

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"Give my love to Pen when you write to him," said Aleck, as he bade them good-by; "the bravest soldier—and the dearest comrade—that ever carried a gun."

After the winter holidays a week went by with no letter from Pen. The colonel began to grow anxious, but it was not until the end of the second week that he really became alarmed. And when three weeks had gone by, and neither the mails nor the cable nor the wireless had brought any news of the absent soldier, Colonel Butler was on the verge of despair. He had haunted the post-office as before, he had made inquiry at the state department at Washington, he had telegraphed to Canada for information, but nothing came of it all. Aleck Sands had heard absolutely nothing. Pen's mother, almost beside herself, telephoned every day to Bannerhall for news, and received none. The strain of apprehensive waiting became almost unbearable for them all.

One day, unable longer to withstand the heart-breaking tension, the old patriot sent an agent post-haste to Toronto, with instructions to spare no effort and no expense in finding out what had become of his grandson.

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Three days later, from his agent came a telegram reading as follows:

"Lieutenant Butler in hospital near Rouen. Wound severe. Suffering now from pneumonia. Condition serious but still hopeful. Details by letter."

This telegram was received at Bannerhall in the morning. In the early afternoon of the same day Pen's mother received a letter written three weeks earlier by his nurse at the hospital. She was an American girl who had been long in France, and who, from the beginning of the war, had given herself whole-heartedly to the work at the hospitals.

"Do not be unduly alarmed," she wrote, "he is severely wounded; evidently a hand-grenade exploded against his breast; but if we are able to ward off pneumonia he will recover. He has given me your name and address, and wished me to write. I think an early and cheerful letter from you would be a great comfort to him, and I hope he will be able to appreciate some gifts and dainties from home by the time they could reach here. Let me add that he is a model patient, quiet and uncomplaining, and I am told that he was among the bravest of all the brave Americans fighting with the Canadian forces on the Somme."

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Between Bannerhall and Sarah Butler's home at Lowbridge the telephone lines were busy that day. It was a relief to all of them to know that Pen was living and being cared for; it was a source of apprehension and grief to them that his condition, as intimated in the telegram, was still so critical.

As for Colonel Butler he was in a fever of excitement and distress. Late in the afternoon he went to his room and, with his one hand, began, hastily and confusedly, to pack a small steamer trunk. His daughter found him so occupied.

"What in the world are you doing?" she asked him.

"I am preparing to go to Rouen," he replied, "to see that my grandson is cared for in his illness in a manner due to one who has placed his life in jeopardy for France."

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"Father, stand up! Look at me! Listen to me!" The very essence of determination was in her voice and manner, and he obeyed her. "You are not to stir one step from this town. Sarah Butler and I are going to France to be with Pen; we have talked it over and decided on it; and you are going to stay right here at Bannerhall, where you can be of supreme service to us, instead of burdening us with your company."

He looked at her steadily for a moment, but he saw only rigid resolution and determination in her eyes; he was too unstrung and broken to protest, or to insist on his right as head of the house, and so—he yielded. Later in the day, however, a compromise was effected. It was agreed that he should accompany his daughter and his daughter-in-law to New York, aid them in securing passage, passports and credentials, and see them safely aboard ship for their perilous journey, after which he was to return home and spend the time quietly with his niece Eleanor, and make necessary preparations for the return of the invalid, later on, to Bannerhall.

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He carried out his part of the New York program in good faith, and had the satisfaction, three days later, of bidding the two women good-by on the deck of a French liner bound for Havre. He had no apprehension concerning the fitness of his daughter to go abroad unaccompanied save by her sister-in-law. She had been with him on three separate trips to the continent, and, in his

judgment, for a woman, she had displayed marked traveling ability. His only fear was of German submarines.

"A most cowardly, dastardly, uncivilized way," he declared, "of waging war upon an enemy's women and children."

He was in good spirits as the vessel sailed. His parting words to his daughter were:

"If you should have occasion to discuss with our friends in France the attitude of this nation toward the war, you may say that it is my opinion that the conscience of the country is now awake, and that before long we shall be shoulder to shoulder with them in the destruction of barbarism."

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## CHAPTER XIV

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For twenty-five years there has stood, in one of the faubourgs of Rouen, not far from the right bank of the Seine, a long two-story brick building, with a wing reaching back to the base of the hill. Up to the year 1915 it was used as a factory for the making of silk ribbons. Rouen had been a center of the cotton manufacturing industry from time immemorial. Why therefore should not the making of silk be added? It was added, and the enterprise grew and became prosperous. Then came the war, vast, terrible, bringing in its train suffering, poverty, a drastic curtailment of all the luxuries of life. Silk ribbons are a luxury; they go with soft living. So, then; *voilà tout!* Before the end of the first year of the conflict the factory was transformed into a hospital. The clatter of looms and the chatter of girls gave place to the moanings of sick and wounded men, and the gentle voices of white and blue clad nurses. It was no longer bales of raw silk that were carted up to the big doors of the factory, and boxes of rolled ribbon that were trundled down the drive to the street, to the warehouses, and thence to the admiring eyes of beauty-loving women. The human freight that was brought to the big doors in these days consisted of the pierced and mutilated bodies of men; soldiers for whom the final taps would soon sound. If they chanced to be of the British troops, and held fast to the spark of life within them, then they were close enough to the seaport to be taken across the channel for final convalescence under English skies.

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It was to this hospital that Lieutenant Penfield Butler was brought from the battlefield of the Somme. His battalion had done the work assigned to it in the fight, had done it well, and had withdrawn to its trenches, leaving a third of its men dead or wounded between the lines. Later on, under cover of a galling artillery fire, rescue parties had gone out to bring in the wounded. They had found Pen in the shelter of the shell-hole, still unconscious. They had brought him back across the fire-swept field, and down through the winding, narrow trenches, to the first-aid station, from which, after a hurried examination and superficial treatment of his wounds, he was taken in a guard-car to a field hospital in the rear of the lines. But space in these field hospitals is too precious to permit of wounded men who can be moved without fatal results, remaining in them for long periods. The stream of newcomers is too constant and too pressing. So, after five days, Pen was sent, by way of Amiens, to the hospital in the suburbs of Rouen. He, himself, knew little of where he was or of what was being done for him. A bullet had grazed his right arm, and a clubbed musket or revolver had laid his scalp open to the bone. But these were slight injuries in comparison with the awful wound in his breast. Torn flesh, shattered bones, pierced lungs, these things left life hanging by the slenderest thread. When the *médecin-chef* of the hospital near Rouen took his first look at the boy after his arrival, he had him put under the influence of an anaesthetic in order that he could the more readily and effectively examine, probe and dress the wound, and remove any irritating splinters of bone that might be the cause of the continuous leakage from the lungs. But when he had finished his delicate and strenuous task he turned to the nurse at his side and gave a hopeless shake of his head and shrug of his shoulders.

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"*Fichu!*" he said; "*le laisser tranquille.*"

"But I am not going to let him die," she replied; "he is too young, too handsome, too brave, and *he is an American.*"

He smiled, shook his head again and passed on to the next case. The girl was an American too, and these American nurses were always so optimistic, so faithfully persistent, she might pull him through, but—the smile of incredulity still lay on the lips of the *médecin-chef*.

The next day the young soldier was better. The leakage had not yet wholly ceased; but the wound was apparently beginning to heal. He was still dazed, and his pain was still too severe to be endured without opiates. It was five days later that he came fully to his senses, was able to articulate, and to frame intelligent sentences. He indicated to his nurse, Miss Byron, that he wished to have his mother written to.

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"No especial message," he whispered, "just that I am here—have been wounded—recovering."

But the nurse had already learned from other men of Pen's company, less seriously wounded than he, who were at the same hospital, something about the boy's desperate bravery, and how his stern fighting qualities were combined with great tenderness of heart and a most loving

disposition, and she could not avoid putting an echo of it in her letter to his mother.

Later on Pen developed symptoms of pneumonia, a disease that follows so often on an injury to the structure of the lungs.

When the *médecin-chef* came and noted the increase in temperature and the decrease in vitality, he looked grave. Every day, with true French courtesy, he had congratulated Miss Byron on her remarkable success in nursing the young American back to life. But now, perhaps, after all, the efforts of both of them would be wasted. Pneumonia is a hard foe to fight when it attacks wounded lungs. So an English physician was called in and joined with the French surgeon and the American nurse to combat the dreaded enemy. It seemed, somehow, as if each of them felt that the honor of his or her country was at stake in this battle with disease and death across that hospital bed in the old factory near Rouen.

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It was late in February when Pen's mother and his Aunt Millicent reached Havre, and took the next available train up to Rouen. They had not heard from Pen since sailing, and they were almost beside themselves with anxiety and apprehension. But the telephone service between the city and its faubourgs is excellent, Aunt Millicent could speak French with comparative fluency, and it was not many minutes after their arrival before they had obtained connection with the hospital and were talking with Miss Byron.

"He is very ill," she said, "but we feel that the crisis of his disease has passed, and we hope for his recovery."

So, then, he was still living, and there was hope. In the early twilight of the winter evening the two women rode out to the suburban town and went up to the hospital to see him. He did not open his eyes, nor recognize them in any way, he did not even know that they were with him.

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"There have been many complications of the illness from his wound," said the nurse; "double pneumonia, typhoid symptoms, and what not; we dared not hope for him for a while, but we feel now that perhaps the worst is over. He has made a splendid fight for his life," she added; "he deserves to win. And he is the favorite of the hospital. Every one loves him. The first question all my patients ask me when I make my first round for the day is 'How is the young American lieutenant this morning?' Oh, if good wishes and genuine affection can keep him with us, he will stay."

So, with tear-wet faces, grateful yet still anxious, the two women left him for the night and sought hospitality at a modest *pension* in the neighborhood of the hospital.

But a precious life still hung in the balance. As he had lain for many days, so the young soldier continued to lie, for many days to come, apparently without thought or vitality, save that those who watched him could catch now and then a low murmur from his lips, and could see the faint rise and fall of his scarred and bandaged breast.

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Then, so slowly that it seemed to those who looked lovingly on that ages were going by, he began definitely to mend. He could open his eyes, and move his head and hands, and he seemed to grasp, by degrees, the fact that his mother and his Aunt Millicent were often sitting at his bedside. But when he tried to speak his tongue would not obey his will.

One day, when he awakened from a refreshing sleep, he seemed brighter and stronger than he had been at any time before. The two women whom he most loved were sitting on opposite sides of his cot, and his devoted and delighted nurse stood near by, smiling down on him. He smiled back up at each of them in turn, but he made no attempt to speak. He seemed to know that he had not yet the power of articulation.

His cot, in an alcove at the end of the main aisle, was so placed that, when the curtains were drawn aside, he could, at will, look down the long rows of beds where once the looms had clattered, and watch wan faces, and recumbent forms under the white spreads, and nurses, some garbed in white, and some in blue, and some in more sober colors, moving gently about among the sufferers in performance of their thrice-blest and most angelic tasks. It was there that he was looking now, and the two women at his bedside who were watching him, saw that his eyes were fixed, with strange intensity, on some object in the distance. They turned to see what it was. To their utter astonishment and dismay they discovered, marching up the aisle, accompanied by an *infirmière*, Colonel Richard Butler. Whence, when, and how he had come, they knew not. He stopped at the entrance to the alcove, and held up his hand as though demanding silence. And there was silence. No one spoke or stirred. He looked down at Pen who lay, still speechless, staring up at him in surprise and delight.

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Into the colonel's glowing face there came a look of tenderness, of rapt sympathy, of exultant pride, that those who saw it will never forget.

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He stepped lightly forward and took Pen's limp hand in his and pressed it gently.

"God bless you, my boy!" he said.

No one had ever heard Richard Butler say "God bless you" before, and no one ever heard him say it again. But when he said it that day to the dark-haired, white faced, war-worn soldier on the cot

in the hospital near Rouen, the words came straight from a big, and brave, and tender heart.

He laid Pen's hand slowly back on the counterpane, and then he parted his white moustache, as he had done that night at the hotel in New York, and bent over and kissed the boy's forehead. It may have been the rapture of the kiss that did it; God knows; but at that moment Pen's tongue was loosened, his lips parted, and he cried out:

"Grandfather!"

With a judgment and a self-denial rare among men, the colonel answered the boy's greeting with another gentle hand-clasp, and a beneficent smile, and turned and marched proudly and gratefully back down the long aisle, stopping here and there to greet some sick soldier who had given him a friendly look or smile, until he stood in the open doorway and lifted up his eyes to gaze on the blue line of distant hills across the Seine.

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Later, when the two women came to him, and he went with them to the *pension* where they were staying, he explained to them the cause of his sudden and unheralded appearance. He had received their cablegrams indeed; but these, instead of serving to allay his anxiety, had made it only the more acute. To wait now for letters was impossible. His patience was utterly exhausted. He could no more have remained quietly at home than he could have shut up his eyes and ears and mouth and lain quietly down to die. The call that came to him from the bed of his beloved grandson in France, that sounded in his ears day-time and night-time as he paced the floors of Bannerhall, was too insistent and imperious to be resisted. Against the vigorous protests of his niece, and the timid remonstrances of the few friends who were made aware of his purpose, he put himself in readiness to sail on the next out-going steamer that would carry him to his longed-for destination. And it was only after he had boarded the vessel, and had felt the slow movement of the ship as she was warped out into the stream, that he became contented, comfortable, thoroughly at ease in body and mind, and ready to await patiently whatever might come to him at the end of his journey.

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So it was in good health and spirits that he landed at Havre, came up to Rouen, and made his way to the hospital.

And for once in her life his daughter did not chide him. Instinctively she felt the power of the great tenderness and yearning in his breast that had impelled him to come, and, so far as any word of disapproval was concerned, she was silent.

He talked much about Pen. He asked what they had learned concerning his bravery in battle, the manner in which he had received his wounds, the nature of his long illness, and the probability of his continued convalescence.

"I hope," said Pen's mother, "that I shall be able to take him back to Lowbridge next month."

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The old man looked up in surprise and alarm.

"To Lowbridge?" he said, and added: "Not to Lowbridge, Sarah Butler. My grandson will return to Bannerhall, the home of his ancestors."

"Colonel Butler, my son's home is with me."

"And your home," replied the colonel, "is with me. My son's widow must no longer live under any other roof than mine. The day of estrangement has fully passed. You will find welcome and affection, and, I hope, an abundance of happiness at Bannerhall."

She did not answer him; she could not. Nor did he demand an answer. He seemed to take it for granted that his wish in the matter would be complied with, and his will obeyed. But it was not until his daughter Millicent, by much argument and persuasion, through many days, had convinced her that her place was with them, that her son's welfare and his grandfather's length of days depended on both mother and son complying with Colonel Butler's wish and demand, that she consented to blot out the past and to go to live at Bannerhall.

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It was on the second day of April, 1917, that the President of the United States read his world famous message to Congress, asking that body to "declare the recent course of the Imperial German Government to be in fact nothing less than war against the Government and people of the United States" and to "employ all of its resources to bring the Government of Germany to terms and to end the war."

And it was on the third day of April that Colonel Richard Butler, walking up the long aisle of the war hospital near Rouen in the late afternoon, smiled and nodded to right and left and said:

"At last we are with you; we are with you. America has answered the call of her conscience, she will now come into her own."

And they smiled back at him, did these worn and broken men, for the news of the President's declaration had already filtered through the wards; and they waved their hands to the brave American colonel with the white moustache, stern visage, and tender heart, and in sturdy English and voluble French and musical Italian, they congratulated him and his noble grandson, and the

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charming ladies of his family, on the splendid words of his President, to which words the patriotic Congress would surely respond.

And Congress did respond. The Senate on April 4, and the House on April 6, by overwhelming majorities, passed a resolution in full accordance with the President's recommendation, declaring that a state of war had been thrust upon the United States by the German government, and authorizing and directing the President "to employ the entire naval and military forces of the United States, and the resources of the government, to carry on war against the Imperial German government."

Colonel Richard Butler was at last content.

"I am proud of my country," he declared, "and of my President and Congress. I have cabled the congressman from my district to tender my congratulations to Mr. Wilson, and to offer my services anew in whatever capacity my government can use them."

If he had favored the Allied cause before going abroad he was now thrice the partisan that he had been. For he had seen France. He had seen her, bled white in her heroic endeavor to drive the invader from her soil. He had seen her ruined homes, and cities, and temples of art. He had seen her women and her aged fathers and her young children doing the work of her able-bodied men who were on the fighting line, replacing those hundreds of thousands who were lying in heroes' graves. He had been, by special favor, taken to the front, where he had seen the still grimmer visage of war, had caught a glimpse of life in the trenches, of death on the field, and had heard the sweep and the rattle and the roar of unceasing conflict. And in his eyes and voice as he walked up and down the aisles of the hospital near Rouen, or sat at the bedside of his grandson, was always a reflection of these things that he himself had seen and heard.

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And he was a favorite in the wards. Not alone because he so often came with his one arm laden with little material things to cheer and comfort them, but because these men with the pierced and broken and mutilated bodies admired and liked him. Whenever they saw the familiar figure, tall, soldierly, the sternly benevolent countenance with its white moustache and kindling eyes, enter at the hospital doors and walk up between the long rows of cots, their faces would light up with pleasure and admiration, and the friendliness of their greetings would be hearty and unalloyed.

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Somehow they seemed to look upon him as the symbol and representative of his country, the very embodiment of the spirit of his own United States. And now that his government had definitely entered into the war, he was in their eyes, thrice the hero and the benefactor that he had been before.

When he entered the hospital the morning after news of America's war declaration had been received, and turned to march up the aisle toward his grandson's alcove, he was surprised and delighted to see from every cot in the ward, and from every nurse on the floor, a hand thrust up holding a tiny American flag. It was the hospital's greeting to the American colonel, in honor of his country. He stood, for a moment, thrilled and amazed. The demonstration struck so deeply into his big and patriotic heart that his voice choked and his eyes filled with tears as he passed up the long aisle.

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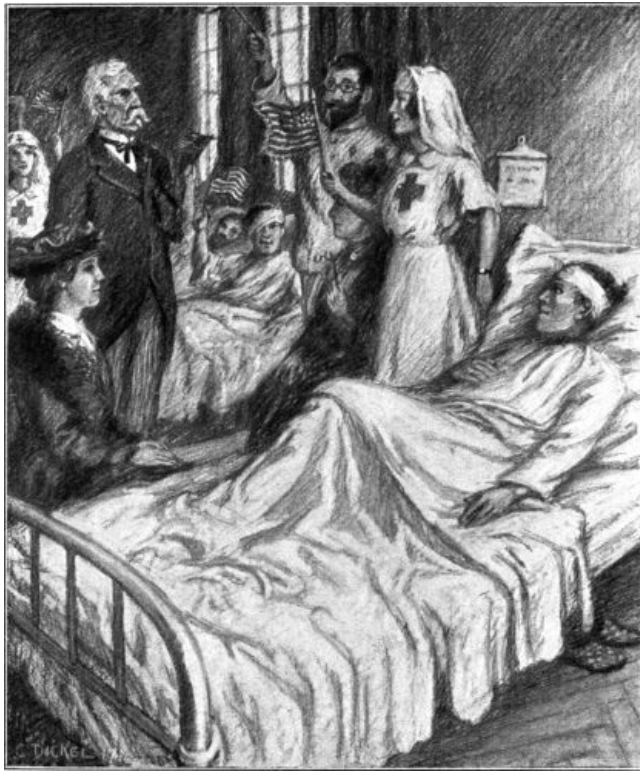
There were many greetings as he went by.

"Hurrah for the President!"

"Vive l'Amerique!"

And one deep-throated Briton, in a voice that rolled from end to end of the ward shouted:

"God bless the United States!"



THE FRENCH HOSPITAL'S GREETING TO THE AMERICAN COLONEL

But perhaps no one was more rejoiced over the fact of America's entrance into the war than was Penfield Butler. From the moment when he heard the news of the President's message he seemed to take on new life. And as each day's paper recorded the developing movements, and the almost universal sentiment of the American people in sustaining the government at Washington, his pulses thrilled, color came into his blanched face, and new light into eyes that not long before had looked for many weeks at material things and had seen them not.

He was sitting up in his bed that morning, and had seen his grandfather come up the aisle amid the forest of little flags and the sound of cheering voices.

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Grouped around him were' his mother, his Aunt Millicent, the *médecin-chef*, and his devoted nurse, the American girl, Miss Byron. She was waving a small, silk American flag that had long been one of her cherished possessions.

"We are so proud of America to-day, Colonel Butler," she exclaimed, "that we can't help cheering and waving flags."

And the *médecin-chef* shouted joyously:

"*À la bonne heure, mon Colonel!*"

Pen, looking on with glowing eyes and cheeks flushed with enthusiasm, called out:

"Grandfather, isn't it glorious? If I could only fight it all over again, now, under my own American flag!"

Colonel Butler's face had never before been so radiant, his eyes so tender, or his voice so vibrant with emotion as when standing on the raised edge of the alcove, he replied:

"On behalf of my beloved country, ladies and gentlemen, I thank you. She has taken her rightful place on the side of humanity. Her flag, splendid and spotless, floats, to-day, side by side with the tri-color and the Union Jack, over the manhood of nations united to save the world from bondage and barbarism."

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He faced the *médecin-chef* and continued: "Your cry to us to 'come over into Macedonia and help' you, shall no longer go unheeded. Our wealth, our brains, our brawn shall be poured into your country as freely as water, to aid you in bringing the German tyrant to his knees, and, as our great President has said: 'To make the world safe for democracy.'"

He turned toward the rapt faces of the listening scores who lined the wards: "And men, my brothers, I say to you that you have not fought and suffered in vain. We shall win this war; and out of our great victory shall come that thousand years of peace foretold by holy men of old, in which your flag, and yours, and yours, and mine, floating over the heads of freemen in each beloved land, will be the most inspiring, the most beautiful, the most splendid thing on which the sun's rays shall ever fall."

# Short Historical Sketch of the United States Flag

After the war of the Revolution, it became necessary for the newly formed United States of America to devise a symbol, representing their freedom. During the war the different colonies had displayed various flags, but no national emblem had been selected. The American Congress, consequently, on the 14th of June, 1777, passed the following Resolution:

"Resolved, That the flag of the thirteen united states shall be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white, that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation."

Betsy Ross, an upholsterer, living at 239 Arch Street, Philadelphia, Pa., had the honor of making the first flag for the new republic. The little house where she lived is still standing, and preserved as a memorial. This flag contained the thirteen stripes as at present, but the stars were arranged in a circle. This arrangement was later changed to horizontal lines, and the flag continued to have thirteen stars and thirteen stripes until 1795. When Vermont and Kentucky were added to the Union, two more stripes, as well as two more stars, were added. In 1817, it was seen that it would not be practicable to add a new stripe for each new state admitted to the Union, so after deliberation, Congress, in 1818, passed the following Act:

"An Act to establish the flag of the United States.

"Sec. 1. That from and after the 4th of July next, the flag of the United States be thirteen horizontal stripes, alternate red and white—that the Union have twenty stars, white in a blue field.

"Sec. 2. Be it further enacted, that on the admission of every new State into the Union, one star be added to the Union of the flag, and that such addition shall take effect on the 4th of July next succeeding such admission."

Since the passing of this Act, star after star has been added to the blue field until it now contains forty-eight, each one representing a staunch and loyal adherent.

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## Boy Scouts Pledge to the Flag

"I pledge allegiance to my flag and to the Republic for which it stands; one nation indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE FLAG \*\*\*

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