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CASTLEMON'S WAR SERIES.

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TRUE TO HIS COLORS

HARRY CASTLEMON,

AUTHOR OF "GUNBOAT SERIES," "ROCKY MOUNTAIN SERIES," "SPORTSMAN'S CLUB SERIES," ETC., ETC.

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TRUE TO HIS COLORS.

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CHAPTER I.

ALL ABOUT THE FLAG.

"Rodney Gray, I am ashamed of you; and if you were not my cousin, I should be tempted to thrash you within an inch of your life."

"Never mind the relationship. After listening to the sentiments you have been preaching in this academy for the last three months, I am more ashamed of it than you can possibly be. You're a Yankee at heart, and a traitor to your State. Let go those halliards!"

"I'll not do it. Look here, Rodney. Your ancestors and mine have fought under this flag ever since it has been a flag, and, if I can help it, you shall not be the first of our name to haul it down. Let go yourself, and stand back, or I will throw you over the parapet."

"But that flag doesn't belong up there any longer, and I say, and we all say, that it shall not stay. Here's our banner; and if there's a war coming, as some of you seem to think, it will lead us to victory on every battle-field."

An exciting scene was being enacted in and around the belfry of the Barrington Military Institute on the morning of the 9th of March, 1861; and it was but one of many similar scenes which, for some time past, had been of almost daily occurrence in many parts of the South. It had been brought about by the efforts of a band of young secessionists, headed by Rodney Gray, to haul down the academy flag, and to hoist in its place a strange banner—one that nobody had ever seen or heard of previous to the 4th of March, the day on which Mr. Lincoln was inaugurated President of the United States. The students who were gathered on the top of the tower at the time our story begins were Southern boys without exception, but they did not all believe in secession and disunion. Many of them were loyal to the old flag, and were not ready to see it hauled down, and a strange piece of bunting run up in its place.

Those were exciting times in our country's history, you may be sure. Rumors of war filled the air on every side. Seven States had rebelled and defied the authority of the government, and for no other reason than because a man they did not like had been elected President. A new government had been established at Montgomery, and formally inaugurated on the 18th of February. Jefferson Davis, President of the seceded States, had been authorized to accept the services of one hundred thousand volunteers to serve for one year, unless sooner discharged, and they were to be mustered to "repel invasion, maintain the rightful possession of the Confederate States of America, and secure the public tranquillity against threatened assault." Every schoolboy who has paid any attention to his history knows that there was not the slightest excuse for calling this immense army into existence. The disunion leaders repeatedly declared that Northern men would not fight, and they seemed to have good grounds for thinking so; for, although Fort Sumter was surrounded by hostile batteries, no attempt had been made to send supplies to Major Anderson and the gallant fellows who were shut up in the fort with him, and more than five weeks passed after the formation of the Confederate government before President Lincoln called for seventy-five thousand militia to "suppress unlawful combinations, and to cause the laws to be duly executed." But this unnecessary act of the Confederate Provisional Congress

had just the effect it was intended to have. It "fired the Southern heart," and immediately every man, woman, and boy "took sides." The papers had just brought the glorious news to Barrington, and the students at the military academy were in a state of intense excitement over it.

Even at this late day there are boys—bright fellows, too—who believe that when the war broke out every one who lived in the South was a rebel; but this was by no means the case. The South was divided against itself, and so was the North. Horace Greeley, in his "Recollections of a Busy Life," tells us that in the beginning there were not more than half a million "Simon-pure" secessionists to be found among the five millions and more of whites who lived south of Mason and Dixon's line. Of course subsequent events, like the War and Emancipation proclamations, added to this number; but even at the end there were Union-loving people scattered all through the seceded States, and they clung to their principles in spite of everything, fighting the conscript officers, and resisting all the efforts that were made to force them into the rebel army. The Confederates called these plucky men and boys traitors, although they denied that they were traitors themselves. They hated them with an undying hatred, and when they captured them with arms in their hands, as Forrest captured the garrison at Fort Pillow, they made short work with them.

If it is true that a majority of the Southern people believed that a State had the right to withdraw from the Union when things were not managed in a satisfactory way, it is equally true that there was a party in the North who held the same opinion. They said, "Let the erring sisters go" if they want to, and declared that "Whenever any considerable section of our Union shall deliberately resolve to go out, we shall resist all coercive measures designed to keep it in." These were the rabid Abolitionists, who were perfectly willing that the nation should be destroyed rather than that it should continue to exist half-slave and half-free. One of their leaders, who afterward became a Union general, declared, "If slavery is the condition of the perpetuity of the Union, let the Union *slide,*" for slavery must in no case be allowed to continue. The Southern planters wanted that their "peculiar institution" should be taken into the territories, while the Abolitionists demanded that it should be blotted out altogether; and to these two parties we are indebted for our four years' war.

There was still another secession party on both sides of the line, who thought the government had no power to keep the Southern States in the Union if they did not want to stay, and that if allowed to go in peace they would soon get tired of trying to manage their own affairs, and drift back into the Union of their own free will. It was better that the Union should be peacefully sundered than that there should be a war about it. But another party said that such talk was treason; that the Constitution was ordained to establish a "more perfect Union," which was to be "perpetuated"; that no State, or combination of States, had any right to try to break up the government because they could no longer run things to suit themselves; and that there was not room enough for another flag on this Continent. This was the good old Union party, and fortunately it was resolute enough and strong enough to run the starry banner up to the masthead and keep it there. This was what Marcy Gray, a North Carolina boy, had done on this particular morning on the roof of the Barrington Military Institute, and he had done it, too, in spite of all the efforts his cousin, Rodney Gray, backed by nearly all the young rebels in the school, had made to prevent it. Ever since the day on which the news came that South Carolina had passed the ordinance of secession, that flag, which up to this time had been raised and lowered only at certain hours, had been a bone of contention. For long years it had floated over the academy, and no one had ever had a word to say against it; but the moment it became known that one of the Southern States had decided that she would not stay in the Union if Mr. Lincoln was to rule over it, there was a great change in the feelings of the students regarding that piece of bunting. What an excitement there was on the morning of the 21st of December, when Rodney Gray rushed into the hall with his Charleston *Mercury* in his hand!

"Hurrah for plucky little South Carolina!" he shouted, striking up a war-dance and flourishing the paper over his head. "Listen to this, fellows: 'The Union is dissolved. Passed at 1:15 P.M., December 20, 1860, an ordinance to dissolve the Union existing between the State of South Carolina and other States united with her under the compact entitled "The Constitution of the United States of America."' There it is in black and white. She's out, and of course all the other Cotton States will go with her. The Stars and Stripes have been pulled down in the city of Charleston, and the State flag is flying over all the public buildings. Let's follow their example, and haul that flag down from the tower. Come on, Marcy."

These two boys, Rodney and Marcy Gray, were very popular among their fellows, and had been looked up to as leaders ever since they arrived at the dignity of memberships in the first class and company. They were cousins, and both were Southern born. Marcy was a "Tarheel," because he came from North Carolina, and Rodney was called a "Pelican," Louisiana being his native State.

Rodney's father was a rich sugar-planter who did not want to have anything to do with Northern men, some of whom would have taken his slaves from him if they had possessed the power, and thus deprived him of the means of working his fine plantation; and it was natural that his only son should follow in his lead. Rodney believed in State Rights, and preached his doctrines as often as he could find

any one willing to listen to him. His Cousin Marcy had no father (he was lost at sea when the boy and his older brother, Jack, were quite young), and he believed as his mother did—that slavery was wrong, that the Union was right, and that those who wanted to destroy it were fanatics who did not know what they were about. But Marcy was not a passive Unionist. On the day South Carolina began threatening secession, he declared that she ought to be whipped into submission; and he had never ceased to proclaim his principles in spite of the lowering looks he saw and the threats he heard on every side. The boys declared that they would send him to Coventry; that is, withdraw from all fellowship with him; but when they came to try it, they found to their surprise and disgust, that they would have to go back on more than half the school, for some of the best boys in it promptly sided with Marcy. The latter had many friends, and the Union sentiment was strong in the academy; but on the morning that Rodney Gray read the extract from the Charleston *Mercury,* showing that South Carolina had made no idle threat when she threatened to secede if she could not have her own way, then the real test came. Many of the boys were astonished and shocked, for they had never believed that things would come to such a pass. The mail having just been distributed, they all had papers, but they did not stop to read them after listening to those ominous headlines. They shoved them into their pockets and went slowly out of the building, while Rodney and his fellows, who were almost beside themselves with exultation and excitement, made a rush for the stairs that led to the tower. On the way Rodney stopped to exchange a few words with his cousin.

"You didn't think it would come, did you?" he exclaimed, walking up to Marcy and snatching away the paper on which the latter's eyes were fastened. "But you see it has, don't you? It seems that those furious threats about secession were not all talk, don't it? But seriously, Marcy, I know you stand where every other Southern boy stands, and that you are with us heart and soul. All I ask of you is to say so. Why don't you speak? Which side are you on, any way?"

But Marcy did not utter a word. Although he looked straight at his cousin he did not appear to know that Rodney was talking to him, for his mind was busy with other matters.

"Tell him you're neutral," suggested Dick Graham, whose home was in Missouri, and whom we may meet again under different circumstances. "That's what I am going to be, for I don't think my State will follow in South Carolina's lead."

"But I am not neutral." replied Marcy, arousing himself at last. "I am for the Union all over, and I'm sorry we haven't a Jackson in Washington at this moment to say that it must and shall be preserved. I hope Buchanan will send ships enough into Charleston harbor to blow that miserable State out of water."

"Let him try it, and see how quickly the other Cotton States will arm to help her," exclaimed Bob Cole, who was one of Rodney's friends and followers. "Coerce a sovereign State? The President can't do it. The Constitution does not give him the power."

Bob Cole did not know it, and neither did any of the other boys who were standing around listening to his fiery words, but that was the very argument the frightened chief magistrate was going to put forth in his next message to Congress.

"The President will only make a bad matter worse if he tries any fool thing like that," continued Bob, who, like most of the boys of that section of the country, had heard these matters discussed so often that he had them at his tongue's end. "I tell you that the events of yesterday are an entering wedge. We are tired of the company of those Yankees up North, and now we are going to get rid of them and have a government of our own; see if we don't. Why should we not? The people up there do not belong to the same race we do. They are regicides and Roundheads—plodding, stingy folks, in whose eyes a dollar looks as big as a cart-wheel. The race who settled Virginia and scattered all over these Southern States, were cavaliers and money spenders, and their descendants are the same. We've wanted to get rid of them ever since 1830, and now we are going to do it. Patrick Henry warned us against forming a partnership with them in the first place."

"Whom do you mean by us and we?" demanded Marcy, who had listened in silence to this speech, which was addressed to the boys gathered in the hall rather than to himself. "You don't live in South Carolina."

"No, but I do," said Ed Billings, elbowing his way to the foot of the stairs on which Bob had perched himself when he began his address. "I go with my State, and you will have to go with yours or show yourself a traitor."

"A traitor to what?" inquired Marcy.

"To your State," Billings almost shouted.

"My State hasn't seceded yet; but if she does, and I go with her, how will I stand in regard to the old flag—the one that waves over this academy?"

Billings tried to answer, but his voice was drowned in the wild shouts that arose from the assembled students.

"Haul the flag down!" they yelled, almost as one boy.

"No, no," cried some of the more reasonable ones, after they had taken time to think twice. "Let's wait upon the colonel and request him to have it taken down."

"There's one thing I want you all to bear in mind," added a tall fellow, who hearing the tumult in the hall had come back to see what it was all about. "Those colors shall not come down without the colonel's orders, and I'll mix up promiscuous with any chap who lays an ugly hand upon them."

So it seemed that the old flag had defenders even here; and although it may not have had a very sincere friend in the person of the head of the school, he positively refused to order it down, or to permit the students to pull it down. It would be time enough to attend to that when they learned what the State was going to do. The boys went away disappointed; but the most of them believed that the day would come when they could work their sweet will with that "emblem of tyranny," as they had already begun to call it.

From that time forward there were none in all the length and breadth of the land who kept a closer watch upon passing events than did the three hundred students of the Barrington military academy; but it is a question whether they did not imbibe a great many false ideas along with the news they read. The Southern press never did deal fairly with its readers. All dispatches favorable to the secessionists and their cause were published, as a matter of course; but those that were not favorable were either suppressed entirely, or distorted out of all semblance to the truth. They began this course in the early days of the Confederacy and kept it up to the end, one of their generals forging a telegraph dispatch, in which he announced that he had won a great battle, during which he killed and captured twenty thousand Federals, and destroyed four of Porter's gunboats.

For three months the flag that floated over the academy held its place. Persevering and daring attempts were made to steal it at night, but they were every one frustrated by the vigilance and courage of the boys who had not yet lost all love for it, and for the memory of those whose deeds it commemorated. When the colonel announced that he would take charge of the bunting at night the Union boys thought it would be in safe hands; but it turned out afterward that they were mistaken.

The tension of brain and nerve to which the students were subjected during the next few weeks was something to wonder at, and every day added to their suspense and anxiety. South Carolina sent commissioners to other States, urging them to join her in the secession movement, and one of them shouted to the citizens of Georgia: "Buy arms, and throw the bloody spear into the den of the assassins and incendiaries, and God defend the right!" But Stephens said in reply: "I tell you frankly that the election of a man constitutionally chosen president is not sufficient cause for any State to separate from the Union." And yet in a very few weeks this same Alexander H. Stephens was vice-president of the Confederacy. Mississippi went out of the Union first, and others followed, until there were seven of them to organize a new government under a new flag. Then it was that the first open attempt was made to haul the old banner down from the academy flag-staff; but it was promptly met, and although Rodney Gray and his followers had been reinforced by nearly all the students belonging to the seceded States, the Union boys were strong enough to drive them down stairs, through the hall, and out of the building. They tried to be as good-natured as they could about it, but there were a few fights that took place before the peaceable ones could interfere, and the result was that Rodney Gray and some others found themselves in the guard-house. But they were never brought to trial, for, after that, events came thick and fast, and the rigid discipline to which the students had hitherto been subjected was so greatly relaxed, that it was a wonder the school held together as long as it did. Before the Confederate Congress adjourned it passed the act of which we have spoken, authorizing President Davis to accept the services of one hundred thousand one year's men, and then the excitement was at fever heat.

This act was passed on the 7th of March, and on the evening of the next day the papers brought the news of it to Barrington. There was also one other act of the Confederate Congress which excited some comment, but, with the exception of Rodney Gray, no one at the academy gave it a second thought. When you hear what that act was, and what Rodney did about it, you will perhaps realize how very much in earnest the disunionists were, and how their unreasonable hostility toward those who did not believe as they did led them to forget their manhood, and do things they would not have dreamed of in their sane and sober moments.

The same mail that brought these papers brought also several mysterious packages, each of which contained an article that none of the Barrington people had ever seen before. One of them was addressed to Rodney Gray. He ran the guard and went to the post-office after it; or, rather, he climbed the fence in full view of the sentry, who turned his back and walked off without making any effort to stop him. The thing he found in that package was what brought on the fight between him and Marcy, to which reference was made at the beginning of this chapter.

CHAPTER II.

THE STRANGE BANNER.

The military academy was located a little over two miles from Barrington, which was a wealthy and aristocratic place of about three thousand inhabitants. It was a square stone building, flanked with towers at each corner, and looked something like a little fortress when viewed from a distance. In the days when military discipline had been enforced, the mail was brought to the academy regularly every morning and evening; but after the presidential election the students became so very restless and impatient that they could not wait for old darkey Sam and his slow-going mule to bring them their letters and papers. They threw the regulations to the winds, and openly defying courts-martial and every other form of punishment, climbed the fence in plain sight of the sentries and went to town in a body. At least that was what some of them did; but a few of the more obedient and easy-going ones, like Marcy Gray and his particular friends, asked for a pass when they desired it, and if they didn't get it they had self-control enough to remain within bounds.

Rodney Gray and the boys who went to Barrington with him on the day we have mentioned saw that there was "something up" the minute they reached town. Blue "nullification" badges, and red, white, and blue rosettes were seen on every side, and strange banners were waving in the air; those who had no flag-staffs in their yards or on their houses hanging the colors out of their upper windows. Heretofore the students had sometimes seen men and women walking the streets with small Union flags pinned to their breasts; but there was not one in sight now.

"What's in the wind?" exclaimed Rodney, after he had taken a glance around and noted these little things. "And what sort of a flag is that up there on Mr. Riley's office?"

"It must be the new Confederate banner, that made its appearance for the first time on the 4th," replied Dick Graham, who was one of the party.

"Hurry up, fellows," cried Ed Billings, catching the two by the arm and quickening his pace. "We're going to hear great news this evening, and I am impatient to know what it will be. Hold on; now we shall hear all about it."

Just then a couple of young ladies with whom they were well acquainted came up; the boys lifted their caps to them, and Ed continued, pointing first to the red, white, and blue rosettes with which they were decorated, and then at the new colors that were fluttering over their heads:

"Anything exciting been going on lately? And what has become of all the little Union flags we saw yesterday?"

"No doubt they have been concealed to await the time when the Yankees shall come marching through here with fire and sword," replied one of the girls.

Such talk was common enough in the South in those days, and the people learned it not only from their own leaders, but from secession sympathizers who lived in the North. Fire and sword were just what Jefferson Davis intended to give the States that did not belong to the Confederacy. This is what he said in his speech at Montgomery on the evening of February 15:

"If war must come, it must be on Northern, not on Southern, soil. A glorious future is before us. The grass will grow in Northern cities where the pavements have been worn off by the tread of commerce. We will carry war where it is easy to advance, where food for the sword and torch await our armies in the densely populated cities."

Ex-President Franklin Pierce of New Hampshire made use of nearly the same language when he wrote to Davis, assuring him that, "If there is any fighting it will be within our own borders and in our

own streets." Turn to your history if you want to see how these confident predictions were fulfilled.

"Well, if those Yankee flags are not brought to light until the Yankees themselves come marching through this State, you will never see them again," said Rodney, with emphasis. "If the Northern people fool with us we will keep them so busy on their own ground that they will never think of coming down here. But what's the use of talking about war! They'll not fight. I only wish they would, so that we might show them how easy it would be for us to whip them. But is that our flag up there? And what is the meaning of those ribbons?"

"Oh, haven't you heard? Well, you'll know all about it when you get your paper. The president has been empowered to call for an immense army of our gallant—"

"Bosh!" sneered Rodney; and then he apologized for the interruption and for the expression he had used.

"But we need an army to hold possession of our coast defences, do we not? All the government property in the Confederacy has been seized, and now that we have got it, we must hold fast to it."

"Certainly; but we don't need an army to do that. Our school battalion, if the boys were only united, could do it and not half try."

"If they were united?" repeated one of the girls. "You do not mean to say that there are traitors in that school?"

Rodney replied that was just what he did mean to say. He declared that the academy was a hotbed of treason, and Cole and Billings confirmed his words. The girls were surprised to hear it.

"And even the colonel hasn't the pluck of a cat or a mind of his own," continued Billings. "He doesn't seem to know where he stands."

"Every one in town wonders why that flag has been permitted to float so long, and now I know," said one of the girls. "The colonel is friendly to it; but still, if you young gentlemen had half the courage we have given you credit for, you would have pulled it down long ago."

Rodney winced. He did not like to confess that he and his friends had tried their best to haul the flag down, but the Union boys had prevented them from doing it; for he knew the girls would laugh at him. They might do even worse than that. They might tell him that he need not trouble himself to call upon them any more (for things had come to that pass already), so he brought forward the best excuse he could think of on the spur of the moment.

"But the colonel will not allow it," he protested. "He says it will be time enough to bother with the flag when we find out what the State is going to do."

"But I don't see how you can march under those colors when your own gallant Louisiana has followed South Carolina out of the Union."

"I confess we don't like it," said Cole, "but a good soldier always obeys orders, you know. Wait until the State acts, and then you shall hear from us."

"I hope to hear from you before that time, although this State is bound to go with the others. I should be ashamed to acknowledge that I live within her borders if she shows such a want of spirit as to be willing to remain in the Union after all that has happened. The next time you come to see me, Mr. Cole," said the young lady sweetly, "I shall expect you to tell me that that flag has been hauled down in spite of all opposition, and that our own Confederate flag has been hoisted in its place."

"So that's our flag, is it?" said Rodney, casting a glance of pride toward the Stars and Bars that waved from several buildings within the range of his vision. "I thought as much. When did it get here?"

"We received a score or more of them by this day's mail, and our patriotic citizens lost no time in giving them to the breeze," was the reply.

"But the trouble is, we haven't any flag of that sort at the academy," said Cole. "So how are we to run it up in place of the Stars and Stripes?"

"My sister and I will see that you have the flag, if you will promise to hoist it," answered one of the girls. "We are at work upon one now, and will have it ready for you to-morrow at this hour, provided you can tell us that the old flag has been hauled down. Tomorrow, mind. Shall we expect you?"

"I'll be around," replied Cole, but he did not talk as glibly as he usually did, for he was thinking about something else. To-morrow at that hour. By gracious! that was bringing the thing straight home to a

fellow, wasn't it? That meant a fight, sure; and the Union boys were not only as brave as boys ever get to be, but their fists were as hard as so many bricks. Cole knew that by experience. And if he could not tell her that the old flag had been hauled down, he need not take the trouble to call at her house. The young lady did not say so, but Cole knew well enough that that was what she meant.

"The commandant is one traitor, but who are the others?" she asked, after a moment's pause. "You said in effect that the school is full of them. The colonel does not often honor us girls with his visits, but the young gentlemen do sometimes, and we should like to know who the traitors are, so that we can be at home or not, as circumstances seem to require. Give us their names, please."

Rodney's companions would have thought twice before complying with this request, but Rodney himself did not see anything surprising in it. The girls were ardent secessionists, and of course they did not care to associate with those who stood up for the Yankees and for the flag they worshiped. The cousin whom he had always loved as a brother was beneath contempt now, for he was a traitor to the South, and undeserving of the slightest show of respect from any one who had the least respect for himself.

"Well, there's that lovely relative of mine for one," said Rodney promptly.

The girls could hardly believe that they had heard aright. They looked at each other in silence for a moment, and then they looked at Rodney.

"I didn't think that Marcy Gray was such a coward," said one, at length.

"Oh, you are 'way off the track!" exclaimed Dick Graham, who, although he afterward went into the Confederate Army and became a partisan ranger, never forgot the warm friendship he cherished for Marcy Gray. "That fellow is nobody's coward, and you wouldn't think so if you could have seen him when—"

"Look here, Dick," interrupted Rodney, who was afraid that Marcy's friend was about to say something compromising. "It is very easy for a fellow to say that he is for the Union when he is so far away from the North that he can not, by any possible chance, be called upon to fight for the opinions he pretends to hold, but has Marcy the courage to show by his acts that he is sincere in what he says?"

"Well, yes; I think he has," answered Dick. "When you fellows had that fight over the flag—"

"That isn't what I mean," exclaimed Rodney, impatiently.

"What was it, Mr. Graham?" asked one of the girls, who rather wanted to see Marcy Gray's courage vindicated, if there were any way in which it could be done. "What did he do? Did you really have a fight at the academy over the flag? Go on, please, and tell us all about it."

Rodney tried to speak, but Dick was not to be put down. He knew that Rodney was determined to say something to his cousin's injury if he could, and Dick Graham was not the boy to stand by and see it done without raising his voice in protest.

"Yes; some of the boys tried their level best to get the flag," said Dick, "but its defenders were much too numerous and strong for them. During the struggle there were some middling heavy blows passed, and, if I mistake not, Rodney came in for a few that he'll not soon forget."

Rodney tried to laugh it off as a joke, but it was easy to see that he was about as mad as he could hold.

"Now go on and describe the part you took in that fracas," said he, as soon as he could speak.

"Who? Me? I didn't take any part in it. I don't fight. I'm neutral. You see Missouri hasn't gone out of the Union yet, and I don't intend to make a move until she does. See? I was not saying a word for myself, but for Marcy, who isn't here to take his own part."

"What I want to get at is this," continued Rodney. "If Marcy is so devoted to the Union, why does he stay here, flinging his obnoxious doctrines in our faces every chance he gets? Why doesn't he go North and join the Yankees?"

"He doesn't fling his doctrines in our faces," Dick interposed. "He stands up for them when he thinks it necessary, and so would I if I believed as he does."

"I admire him for that," said one of the girls.

"Oh, do you?" exclaimed Rodney, who was sure of his ground now. "Will you continue to admire him

when I tell you that he hoped the Yankees would send a fleet into Charleston harbor that would blow South Carolina out of water?"

No, the girls could not admire Marcy Gray or anybody else who talked that way. If that was his doctrine, he had better quit the South and go among those who believed as he did.

"I was sure you would say so; and that was the point I was trying to reach," continued Rodney. "That was what I meant when I asked if he had the courage to back up his opinions."

"I am sorry to hear that of Marcy," said one of the girls, and her face showed that she meant every word of it. "He is such a splendid horseman and looks so handsome riding with his battery! And to think that he sympathizes with our oppressors! I can't realize it. I must have a serious talk with him, for unless he comes over to our side, he will be liable to arrest if he stays here much longer."

"It's a wonder to me that he hasn't seen trouble of some sort before this time," observed Billings. "He doesn't haul in his shingle one inch, but blurts out his views wherever he happens to be, and the first thing he knows somebody will pop him over."

"I shouldn't like to be the one to try it," Dick Graham remarked. "Marcy will not take a whipping quietly."

"I didn't mean that he would get into trouble here in Barrington, although I am afraid he will, but with the government," said the girl. "One other thing our Congress did was to pass a law requiring all those who sympathize with the North to leave the limits of the Confederacy within ten days."

"But don't you know that this State hasn't joined the Confederacy yet?" asked the practical Dick.

"If I should forget it, you would be very likely to remind me of the fact," was the reply; "but she will join it before many days have passed, and then where will Marcy be?"

"That's the best news I have heard in a month," declared Rodney, speaking before he thought. Then, seeing that his companions looked surprised, he hastened to add: "I say it is good news, for when Marcy hears of it he will understand that he must quit his nonsense and come out boldly for one side or the other. If he is with us, all he has to do is to say so; and if he isn't, he'll have to pack up and clear out."

"Oh, we hope he'll not do that," said both the girls in a breath. "Tell him to come and see us, and we will turn him from the error of his ways. Here we are at our gate. Thanks for your escort."

"Why don't you ask us to come in?" inquired Cole.

"Because we have given you something to do first. Pull down that flag and run the banner of the Confederacy up in its place, and then you may come as often as you please."

"Well, shall I tell Marcy to keep his distance until he has made up his mind to hoist the right sort of colors?" said Rodney.

"By no means. We must have a talk with him, and if we fail to win him over, we shall know how to punish him."

"That was rather a snub for you, old fellow," said Billings, as the boys raised their caps to the girls and once more turned toward the post-office. "They are sweet on Marcy, and don't mean to throw him over just because you have taken a sudden dislike to him."

"It was a snub for Cole as well," replied Rodney, hotly. "He will never see the inside of Mr. Taylor's house again, for those girls have imposed upon him a task that is quite beyond his powers. Couldn't you get along without wagging your jaw so freely?" he demanded, turning fiercely upon Dick Graham. "For two cents you and I would mix up right here in the street."

"Why, what in the world did I say?" asked Dick, in reply.

"You disgraced the school by telling those girls, almost as plainly as you could speak it, that we Southerners are in the minority there."

"If she got that impression, she got a wrong one," said Dick quietly. "I said that the defenders of the flag were too many and too strong for you fellows who tried to haul it down, and that's the truth. I stood up for Marcy because I am his friend, and you ought to be."

"I am a friend to no boy, cousin or no cousin, who talks as he does," said Rodney spitefully. "I despise a traitor, and the fellow who sticks up for him—"

Dick stopped in the middle of the sidewalk, rested his clenched hands upon his hips, and waited for Rodney to finish the sentence. For a second or so it looked as though the two boys were going to "mix up" directly; but Cole and Billings interposed.

"This will never do," said the latter. "If you are determined to have a fight, hurry and get your mail, and then we'll go back to the academy and fight the Yankees and their sympathizers. That's what we've got to do tomorrow, if we run that new flag up on the tower, and we might as well get our hands in first as last. Cole, you go on with Dick, and Rodney and I will follow."

Dick laughingly declared that as he was not spoiling for a fight he could get on very well without an escort, but still he did not raise any objection when Cole took him by the arm and led him away. Rodney slowly followed, with Billings for a companion, the latter using his best arguments to make the stubborn Rodney see that he could not hope to gain anything by showing so much hostility toward his cousin, who was popular both at the academy and in the town, and that the Taylor girls, from whom they had just parted, didn't think any the more of him for what he had said. Rodney saw that plainly, and it was another thing that made him angry; but he was careful not to let Billings know it. He took no little pride in his horsemanship, and was confident that he made a very fine looking sergeant of artillery; but none of the girls had ever told him so, and he couldn't bear to hear Marcy praised either. He was envious, as well as jealous, and when Rodney got that way, he was in the right humor to do something desperate.

"That new law will fix him and Graham, too," he said to himself. "I'll take pains to call their attention to it the minute I get back to the academy, and if they don't take the hint and make themselves scarce about here, I will set somebody on their track. There are a good many traitors in and around Barrington, and I wonder that they haven't been driven out before this time. I'll rid the school of those two, I bet you; but before they go I'll pick a quarrel with them and whip them out of their boots."

This confident assertion recalls to mind something that was said by the Confederate General Rosser on the morning of the 9th of October, 1864, just previous to the beginning of the fight known in history as "Woodstock Races." Having formed his line of battle, Rosser sat on his horse watching the movements of his old schoolmate, General Custer, who was busy getting his own forces in shape to attack him. Finally Rosser turned to his staff and said:

"You see that officer down there? That is General Custer, of whom the Yanks are so proud, and I intend to give him the best whipping to-day he ever got; see if I don't."

When Custer was ready to fight he made his charge; the valiant Rosser fled before it, and never but once stopped running until he reached Mount Jackson, twenty-six miles away. It was a trial of speed, rather than a battle, and that is the reason the engagement is called "Woodstock Races." The Confederates lost everything they had that was carried on wheels, and the Union loss was but sixty killed and wounded. Rodney Gray was not as much of a braggart as Rosser was, but if he had tried to carry his threat into execution he might have been as badly whipped.

CHAPTER III.

CHEERS FOR "THE STARS AND BARS."

If any boy who reads this series of books believes that secession was the result of a sudden impulse on the part of the Southern people, he has but to look into his history to find that he is mistaken. They had not only been thinking about it for a long time, but, aided by some of Buchanan's treacherous cabinet officers, they had been preparing for it. The Secretary of the Navy ordered the best vessels in our little fleet to distant stations, so that they could not be called upon to help the government when the insurgents seized the forts that were scattered along the coast; and the Secretary of War took nearly a hundred and fifty thousand stand of arms out of Northern arsenals and sent them to the South. He did it openly and without any attempt at concealment, and the Southern papers publicly thanked him for so doing. The Mobile *Register* said, in so many words, that they were much obliged to Mr. Floyd for "disarming the North and equipping the South."

After such acts as these on the part of government officials, it is not surprising that private citizens began to take their local affairs into their own hands. A regular system of espionage and ostracism was established all over the South. Everybody who was known or suspected of being opposed to slavery and disunion was not only closely watched, but was denied admission to homes in which he had always

been a welcome visitor. Free negroes were given to understand that they could either clear out, or remain and be sold into bondage. Northern men—even those who had long been engaged in business in the South, and whose interests were centered there—were looked upon and treated with contempt, and their lives were made miserable in every way that the exasperated and unreasonable people around them could think of.

But, of course, things did not stop here. These suspected persons very soon became the victims of open violence. Some were taken out of their houses at night and whipped; others were tarred and feathered; and more were hanged by self-appointed vigilance committees, or killed in personal encounters. Up to the time of which we write there had been none of this violence in and around Barrington, but it was coming now. Almost the first thing that attracted the attention of Rodney Gray and his companions when they went into the post-office was a notice that had been fastened upon the bulletin board. It took them a minute or two to elbow their way through the crowd of men and boys who were gathered in front of it, reading and commenting upon the startling intelligence it contained, and when they succeeded they read as follows:

IMPORTANT NOTICE.

At a meeting of the citizens and voters of Barrington, held this day, March 9, 1861, it was unanimously

Resolved: That the excitement at present existing among the people renders it prudent for us to appoint a committee of the citizens of Barrington to recommend what measures (if any) should be adopted for the purpose of suppressing any unlawful or riotous outbreak in the town; and that the following named are hereby appointed a "*Committee of Safety*" who are respectfully requested to adopt such measures, or to recommend any measures for adoption by the citizens generally, as may seem to them proper and necessary for the preservation of good order.

Then followed a long list, containing the names of nearly all the prominent and wealthy men of the place.

"Humph!" exclaimed Dick Graham, contemptuously. "The fellows who got this up wasted time and ink to no purpose. There has been no outbreak in Barrington, and none threatened."

"How does it come that you are so well posted, Dick?" said a friendly voice at his elbow; and when he faced about Dick's eyes met those of Mr. Riley, one of the men whose names appeared on the list. "The gentlemen who framed that resolution did not mean to convey the impression that there had been any riotous proceedings in and around Barrington," he continued. "But if they had desired to create an uproar and excite the fears of the women and children, they might have said that there has been an outbreak threatened; and it would have been nothing but the truth. You boys, who are all the while shut up in the academy, can not be expected to know all that is going on in the country."

"Who has threatened any outbreak?" inquired Dick incredulously. "And when is it coming off?"

"Look here," said Mr. Riley, lowering his voice. "You remember the John Brown raid, don't you?"

"Seems to me I have heard something about it. But you are not afraid of him, are you?"

"I am not joking," replied Mr. Riley earnestly. "Brown laid out a regular campaign before he started in at Harper's Ferry. He had a map, and on it had marked several localities in which the negroes were greatly in excess of the whites. Those towns and villages were to be destroyed, after the blacks had been coaxed or forced into his army, and Barrington was one of them."

"Well, what of it?" exclaimed Dick. "He didn't get here, did he?"

"Of course he didn't; but he spread such a spirit of discontent among the niggers that we have been shaky ever since. And the events of the last few weeks do not tend to quiet our fears, I assure you."

"When is this insurrection, or whatever you call it, coming off?"

"We don't know when to expect it, but we mean to be ready for it at any hour of the day or night. We have positive evidence that there are about half a dozen too many Abolitionists, and altogether too many free niggers, in and around Barrington."

"When did you find it out?"

"We've always known it; but we never felt so very much afraid of them before. I don't mind telling you, although I should not want to post it on the town pump, that we have had spies out for the last

three or four days."

"That's what I thought you were getting at. But who are they?"

"There's Bud Goble, for one."

"Aw, Great Scott!" exclaimed Dick, and even Rodney looked disgusted. "I hope you haven't put the least faith in anything that lazy, worthless fellow has said to you."

"He may be too lazy to earn an honest living, but he is far from worthless in an emergency like the present," replied the committeeman. "He is with us all over, and has been very active since these troubles began."

"I don't see why he should be so very active. He never owned the price of a pickaninny in his life. But I'll tell you what's a fact, Mr. Riley: Bud Goble has got something against every Northern man in Barrington and for miles outside of it, and he will do anything or swear to any number of lies—"

"Don't you give the Committee of Safety any credit for common-sense or prudence?" demanded Rodney, who, although he appeared to be listening to the conversation, was busy thinking over a project that had suddenly suggested itself to him. "You don't suppose that anything will be done to these suspected men until they have had a fair trial, do you?"

"That's the idea," said Mr. Riley, with a smile. "Rodney, you have your share of common-sense, whether the committee have or not."

"A fair trial?" repeated Dick, who was like Marcy Gray in that he never "pulled in his shingle one inch"; in other words, never backed down from his principles, no matter who might hear what he had to say about them. "Who'll try these suspected men? Judge Lynch; who will order them to be strung up before they can say a word in their own defense. I tell you such work is all wrong."

"Don't let your excitement run away with your reason, Dick," said Mr. Riley soothingly. "There's been no innocent person harmed yet, and, moreover, such a thing never happened in this county."

"No, but it is going on all over the South; and I tell you that there are plenty of people of the Bud Goble stamp who would do the same thing right here if they were not afraid," said Dick earnestly.

"Put him out! He's a traitor!" cried one of the academy boys; and "put him out," was echoed from all parts of the post-office. But the boys who uttered the words were all Dick Graham's friends, and an attempt to put him out would certainly have resulted disastrously to somebody.

"Of course I understand that this is all sport," said Mr. Riley. "But seriously, Dick, the time may come when it will be anything but safe for you to express your sentiments with so much freedom."

"I assure you I appreciate your kindness in giving me a friendly word of caution, and thank you for it," replied the boy, "but this is a free country, and I shall say what I think, regardless of consequences. Wait till the time for fighting comes and see—"

"See what?" interrupted Billings. "There isn't going to be any fighting."

"Don't fool yourself. There'll be fighting before this thing is over, and more than you redhot secessionists will want to see—mark that! And when it comes we'll see who will do the most of it, I or men like Bud Goble, who have taken advantage of this time of excitement to get innocent folks into trouble."

Having had his talk out Dick turned to work his way to the window to get his mail; but before he got there a wild shout arose from the crowd of students who blocked his path, and a moment afterward a brand new Confederate flag fluttered over their heads. Rodney Gray had received a package from home and this was what he found in it.

"I say, Graham," he exclaimed, as soon as he could make himself heard, "doesn't the sight of this make you ashamed of the sentiments you have just uttered?"

"Not a bit of it," was the prompt response. "Missouri hasn't recognized that flag yet. When she does, I will fight for it as long and as hard as you will."

"Will you join us in a hurrah for it?" continued Rodney.

"No, I won't."

"Three cheers for the Stars and Bars!" shouted Ed Billings. "Long may that flag wave, and may it

never be polluted by the touch of a hated Yankee."

The cheers that followed were not cheers; they were whoops and yells—very much like those with which the charging Confederates so often saluted our blue-coats on the field of battle. Dick had half a notion to see if he could not get up a little counter-enthusiasm in behalf of the Stars and Stripes, but was afraid the attempt might result in failure; so after he had secured his mail, he went out on the porch and sat down to read those acts of the Confederate Congress calling for one hundred thousand volunteers, and ordering all who sympathized with the North to leave the limits of the Confederacy within ten days. His secession paper told him all about them, the editor enlarged upon and applauded them, and Dick was forced to the conclusion that things were getting serious; how serious, he little dreamed until four weeks more had passed away.

Dick spent half an hour over his paper and letters, and then Rodney Gray appeared. He had found a stick somewhere and fastened his flag to it. Although these two boys had had some sharp verbal contests during the last three months, they kept up an appearance of friendship, which was real so far as Dick Graham was concerned. The latter could not "swallow Rodney's disunion doctrines," as he often declared, but for all that he had a sincere regard for him, and always spoke of him as one of the finest fellows in school. Perhaps we shall see whether or not Rodney paid him back in kind.

"Give it a cheer, why don't you?" said Rodney, waving his flag over
Dick's head. "Where in the world have you been?"

"Right here, waiting for you."

"Well, come up the road a piece. There's a squad there, and we have been counting noses."

"How many noses do you want, and what do you want them for?" inquired Dick, putting his paper into his pocket and getting upon his feet. "What new nonsense are you up to?"

"There's no nonsense about this, I tell you. It's business. We want as many noses as we can get, and the boys behind them must be true blue. The fellows said I would be wasting time if I came after you, but I want to hear you say so with your own lips before I shall believe it. You have said more than once that if Missouri goes out and joins the Confederacy, you will go with her, haven't you?"

"You bet, and I say so yet. My State, or any State, has the right to go out of the Union as she came into it—of her own free will; and if those fellows up North are going to fight to keep her in, I shall fight to help her out. That's me; but you see Missouri hasn't yet—"

"I have heard that until I am tired of it," interrupted Rodney. "Missouri hasn't gone out yet, but she's going; and in the meantime, what about that flag at the academy? Are you in favor of letting it stay there?"

"That depends entirely upon the colonel," answered Dick. "If he says haul her down, down she comes. If he says let her stay up, up she stays. That's me."

"And will you continue to march and drill under it, now that we have a flag of our own?" demanded Rodney.

"That also depends. If the other boys drill under it and march after it, I will. In fact, I don't know but I shall do it any way, whether the others do or not. I don't know what you mean when you speak of a flag of our own. I don't recognize that thing you are carrying over your shoulder. The old flag is my flag, and will be as long as Missouri stays in the Union. I don't see the least use in rushing things. You and your friends are taking a good deal upon yourselves when you presume to act in advance of the State."

"Well, you see what the business men of Barrington think of the situation, don't you? That notice in the post-office looks and sounds mighty innocent, but reading between the lines—"

"So you read between the lines!" exclaimed Dick. "I did the same, and I tell you that that Committee of Safety is a fraud. Bud Goble has been carrying tales about some innocent men whom, for personal reasons, he does not like, and Mr. Riley and a few other hotheads are trying to find some excuse for driving them out of town. There'll be outrages here the first thing you know and they will be committed under cover of that business men's meeting, and with the connivance of those whose names are signed to that list."

"Do you mean to say that all those prominent men are such ruffians?" cried Rodney, in great excitement. "Why didn't you say as much when you were talking to Mr. Riley? You dared not do it."

"I didn't think of it; but I will wait here while you run back and tell him."

Dick looked sharply at his companion as he said this, and was surprised to see the usually self-possessed Rodney turn as red as a beet. It was plain that he had been touched in some tender spot by these chance words.

"What's he been up to?" was the question Dick Graham propounded to himself. "If I had known that I was going to hit him as hard as that, I wouldn't have said a word. He has been doing something sneaking, and I did not think that of Rodney Gray." Then aloud he said: "I didn't mean to hint that you would do such a thing, but you have been about half-wild during the last few weeks, and I don't believe you know all the time what you are doing."

"Well, if I'm crazy, I have the satisfaction of knowing that there are a good many like me in the South," replied Rodney, with a light laugh; and he uttered nothing but the truth. Taken as a body the Southern people certainly acted as if they had lost their senses. Among all those who rejoiced over South Carolina's reckless act there were few who saw that "it was but the prelude to the most terrible tragedy of the age—the unchaining of a storm that was destined to shake the continent with terror and devastation, leaving the Southern States a wreck, and sweeping from the earth the institution in whose behalf the fatal work was done." You may be sure that Rodney Gray did not see this sad picture, for just at that moment there were few things he could see except the elegant silk banner that waved above his head, and which he was determined to hoist at the academy flag-staff the very next morning.

"Here are the fellows," he added, as he and Dick came up with the squad who were gathered on a street corner waiting for them.

"And a fine-looking lot of lads they are," was Dick's comment. "Rebels the last one of them."

"Washington was a rebel, young fellow," replied one of the students, "and that is what he would be if he were with us to-day."

"Well, seeing that he isn't here to decide the matter, don't let's waste time in talking about it," said Cole. "The question is, Is that flag at the academy going to stay up or come down—which?"

"It's going to come down," replied Billings, very decidedly. "We've got a handsomer flag to take its place. Let's cheer it, and see how many of that crowd on the other side of the street will take off their hats to it."

The cheers were given with a will; and this time Dick Graham joined in—not because he cared a cent for the Stars and Bars, but just to help make a noise. The result was all the boys could have desired. The cheers were answered and hats were lifted in all directions, and handkerchiefs and red, white, and blue rosettes were waved from the windows of neighboring houses.

"Every one in sight made some demonstration," said Rodney gleefully.
"Dick, you are out in the cold."

"I don't feel very forlorn over it," was the reply. "How do you know but that some of those who cheered your old rag are Union at heart? But what are you fellows going to do, and what do you want of me?"

"We intend to hoist Rodney's flag on that tower to-morrow morning immediately after roll-call, and we want to know if you are in."

"No; I'm not in. I'm out. That's me."

"There, Rodney," exclaimed one of the students. "I hope you are satisfied now that you wasted time when you went after Dick Graham. He's a Yankee."

"You're another," retorted Dick.

"Do you still claim to be neutral?"

"I do, for a fact. You see, Missouri—"

"Oh, Dick, have a little mercy on a fellow, and don't say that again," cried half a dozen voices at once.

"Well, then, what do you want me to say? I'll not help you pull down the flag, if that is what you are after. I say, let her alone and she will come down of herself when the sunset gun is fired."

"We don't want her to come down of herself," answered Rodney. "We want the satisfaction of hauling her down."

"Very well, go and do it; but don't come to me whining over the broken heads you will be sure to get

before you are through with the business. If you will let the orderly run her down, I will help steal her, so that she can't be run up in the morning; but being neutral, Missouri not having gone out of—"

"That scheme won't work at all," Rodney declared, with some disgust in his tones. "Don't you know that the colonel takes charge of the bunting every night?"

"I believe I have heard something to that effect."

"And don't you know that he keeps it locked in his bureau?" chimed in Billings.

"Having been on duty at headquarters a time or two I am not ignorant of the fact," answered Dick. "All I ask of you is to do as I say, and I'll get the flag."

Of course the boys were impatient to know what they could do to help, and Dick at once proceeded to unfold his plans; but as they will be revealed presently we do not stop to tell what they were. Some of the combative ones among the students did not like the scheme at all, for there was not enough danger and excitement in it; and if it succeeded, they would be deprived of the pleasure of listening to the praises which they were sure the Barrington people would lavish upon them, when it should become known that they had hauled the flag down after a desperate battle with the Northern sympathizers who had tried to protect it. But these were in the minority. The others had no desire to provoke a fight with Marcy Gray and his friends, and it was finally decided that Dick's plan was the safest and best.

"That rather interferes with your arrangements, Cole," said Ed Billings, as the boys paired off and bent their steps toward the academy, Rodney Gray leading, with the flag in his hand. "Those girls were particular to say that the next time you came to see them you must bring word that the flag had been hauled down. I don't know whether or not they will be quite satisfied when you tell them that it was taken from the colonel's room, after it had been pulled down in the proper way."

Cole wasn't certain on that point, either; but he had said all he could against the adoption of Dick Graham's plan, and that was all anybody could do.

CHAPTER IV.

RODNEY'S THREAT.

"Now, fellows," said Rodney, as soon as the line had been formed, "who knows a song appropriate to the occasion? We want to let the folks in advance of us know that we are coming, so as to see what they will do and say when they behold the banner of our young Republic."

"Hear, hear!" shouted the boys. "Strike up something, somebody." Every one looked at Dick Graham, who was the finest singer in the squad, and the latter, after a moment's reflection, cleared his throat and sang as follows:

"We are many in one while there glitters a star
In the blue of the heavens above,
And tyrants shall quail 'mid their dungeons afar,
When they gaze on the motto of love.
By the bayonet traced at the midnight of war,
On the fields where our glory was won—
Oh, perish the hand or the heart that would mar
Our motto of 'Many in One.'"

A more disgusted lot of boys had never been seen in Barrington than Rodney and his friends were when Dick finished singing the above, which was a part of two verses of "*E Pluribus Unum*." Of course the members of the squad all knew the song, but they did not suppose that Dick would have the audacity to mix it up in this way. If they had suspected how the song was going to end, they would have drowned him out in short order.

"That's about the biggest sell that was ever perpetrated on a party of confiding students," said Ed Billings, as soon as the whoops and yells of derision with which the patriotic words were greeted had died away. "Can't some good Southerner sing something that will hit the spot?"

Nobody could; for if any of the Confederate songs, which afterward became so popular on both sides the line, were in existence, they had not yet reached Barrington; so the only thing left for the boys to do was to keep step to "hay-foot, straw-foot, boom, boom, boom!" which they chanted with all the power of their lungs. Dick Graham congratulated himself on having said a word for the Union, and paid no sort of attention to the good-natured prods in the ribs which he received from the boys who were marching beside him. He stoutly affirmed that he had uttered nothing but his honest sentiments, and hoped that every one who took a hand in marring "our motto of many in one" would get whipped for his pains.

The students were well acquainted with the people living along their line of march, and were more than satisfied with the enthusiastic greetings given to them and their flag. When they filed through the gate into the academy grounds the sentry presented arms, and the commandant, who was standing at his window, turned away. The boys saw it, and told one another that the colonel was coming to his senses, and that he would not interpose his authority when they were ready to run up the Stars and Bars on the following morning.

"You fellows are making a heap of fuss about nothing," said Marcy Gray, as his cousin halted beside the camp-chair in which he was sitting and waved the flag over his head, while the rest of the squad trooped up the wide steps that led into the hall. "Take that thing away. The time may come when you will be sorry you ever saw it."

"It shall gleam o'er the sea 'mid the bolts of the storm,
O'er the battle and tempest and wreck,
And flame where our guns with their thunder grow warm—"

sang Rodney. "Look here, old fellow: Couldn't you get up spirit enough to give us a cheer?"

"I don't think I could," replied Marcy. "Did you fellows all have passes? I thought not. If things were as they used to be you would find yourselves in the guard-house in less than ten minutes."

"We are aware of it," answered Rodney; "but if things were as they used to be, we should not have climbed the fence and gone to town without permission. But these are times when rules don't count. There is your mail, and if you will take a friend's advice, you will read that paper carefully. I think there is something in it that concerns you."

"What is it, and where is it? Tell me all about it, and then I shall be spared the trouble of looking it up."

"Well," said Rodney, as if he hardly knew how to give his cousin the desired information, "Congress has passed a law commanding all Northern sympathizers to leave the limits of the Confederacy within ten days."

"Has this State gone out?"

"Not that I know of."

"Then I don't see how that law concerns me. I am not in the Confederacy, am I? As long as the State does not tell me to go, I shall stay where I am until mother writes me to start for home. Has your father written for you yet?"

"No; but I am looking for a letter every day, and I don't see why I don't get it. But it will come fast enough if the Yankees begin preparations for war, as some lunatics seem to think they will."

"Those same lunatics are about the only sensible people there are in the South to-day. The Northern States will not stand by with their hands in their pockets and see this government broken up, and you may depend upon it," said Marcy earnestly. "If they don't hang a few on both sides the line, there will be a war here the like of which the world has never seen."

"Bosh!" exclaimed Rodney, snapping his fingers in the air.

"And some of it will be in your State and mine," continued Marcy.

"Haven't you read our president's speech?" demanded Rodney, almost fiercely. "He says that if war must come, it will be fought on Northern soil."

"It takes two to make a bargain. The Northern States are stronger than we are, and they would be fools to consent to any such arrangement."

"You'll see that it will be done, whether they consent or not," answered Rodney. "Of course they don't want us to separate from them, for they have made a lot of money out of us with their high protective

tariff and all that; but how are they to help themselves when there are no laws or ties of blood to hold us together? Although we speak the same language, we do not belong to the same race that they do; we are better every way than they are, and we're not going to be bound to them any longer. The slave-holders of the South ruled the old Union for sixty out of seventy years of her existence, and now that the reins of power have been snatched from their hands, they're not going to stand it. We'll have a nation of our own that will lead the world in everything that goes to make a nation. If North Carolina goes out, what will you do?"

"I shall go home, of course, for mother will need me. Our blacks will all leave us the first chance they get—"

"Bosh!" said Rodney, again. "The niggers know who their friends are, and I'll bet you there are not a hundred in the South today who would go over to the Yankees if they had the opportunity."

"Whether they run away or not, mother will need somebody on the plantation, and I am the only one she can call on, for Jack is at sea," replied Marcy.

"And, what's more, he may never get back," added Rodney. "We shall have a navy of our own pretty soon, and then, if the Yankees declare war against us, every ship that floats the old flag will have to watch out. We'll light bonfires on every part of the ocean. If your State secedes, you will go with her, of course?"

"Of course I'll not do any such thing."

"Marcy Gray, are you really a traitor? Be honest, now."

"Not much. I am true to my colors—the same colors that your grandfather and mine died under."

"But grandfather never dreamed, when he fought under that flag, that it was going to be turned into an emblem of tyranny," answered Rodney impatiently. "I'll bet you he would not fight under it now; and neither would Washington. But how will you fare when you get home? There are plenty of secessionists in your county, and they will have not the first thing to do with you."

"I don't care whether they do or not," replied Marcy, hardly realizing how much meaning there was in his cousin's last words. "Mother will have something to do with me, I reckon; and so will Jack when he returns; and if the neighbors choose to cut me because I am true to my colors, why I don't see that I can help it."

"Will you fight for the Union?"

"I hope I shall not be called upon to choose sides; but you may be sure
I shall not fight against it."

"Well, go your road, and I will go mine; but you will yet see the day when you will wish you had done differently. By the way," added Rodney carelessly; "those Taylor girls hinted that they would be pleased to see you at their house; but you don't want to air any of your disloyal sentiments in their presence, for if you do, they will be likely to tell you that you needn't come again. My paper says that is what the Richmond girls are doing, and our Barrington girls are following suit. And, Marcy, you had better haul in a little, for if you do not, you will get into trouble. The citizens are waking up, and there has been a Committee of Safety appointed to look out for all disturbers of the peace."

"I think such a committee is needed," was Marcy's quiet rejoinder. "The disturbers of the peace are secessionists without exception, and if the committee will shut up every one of that sort they can get their hands on, they will do the public a service. But as I don't care to be snubbed, I don't think I shall go out of my way to call upon those Taylor girls."

"Of course you will do as you please about that. I have simply delivered their message," said Rodney, as he passed up the steps and through the wide archway, waving his flag and making the hall ring with his shouts as he went. "Rally on the center, boys, and yell defiance to the Regicides and Roundheads. Keep your eye on the stairs, Billings, and if the kurn does not come down when he hears the racket, we are all right for to-morrow morning."

For a few minutes the greatest confusion reigned in the corridor. The secessionists yelled themselves hoarse over the Stars and Bars, and, carried away by the enthusiasm of the moment, pledged themselves to enlist with the defenders of their respective States within twenty-four hours after they reached home. Then followed a counter-demonstration for the Stars and Stripes, led by the tall student, Dixon, of Kentucky, who was backed up by nearly all the boys from the States that had not yet joined the Confederacy. The noise was deafening, but the colonel did not come out of his room to put a stop to

it, and that confirmed Rodney in the belief that he was "all right for tomorrow morning." His friends were greatly encouraged, and one of them, when the evening gun was fired, jerked, rather than pulled, the old flag down from the masthead; and he would have been glad to show his contempt for it by trampling it under his feet, had it not been for the presence of the guard, who paced the top of the tower in plain view of the open door of the belfry.

It was necessary to keep a sentry there now, for when the students found that they could not do as they pleased with the flag, they watched for an opportunity to pull the halliards out of the block at the head of the flagstaff. Of course the rope could and would have been restored to its place, but not without considerable trouble. The staff was so very slender that the lightest boy in school would have thought twice before attempting to climb it, and therefore the staff would have had to come down. Marcy Gray and his friends, who seemed to have a way of finding out all about the plans that were laid against the flag, thought it would be best to ask the colonel commanding to have a guard placed over the halliards, and this was accordingly done.

Although the sentry who was on duty at this particular time had the reputation of being a good soldier, he was not as friendly to the flag as he might have been; consequently he offered no remonstrance when the orderly gathered the colors up in a bunch and started downstairs to deliver them to the head of the school. But there were parties on the watch, as the orderly found when he reached the upper hall, for there he encountered the tall Kentuckian, Dixon, who at once took him to task.

"What made you wuzzle the flag up in that shape?" he demanded, in no friendly tones. "Put it down here on the floor and fold it as it should be, or off comes your head."

The orderly looked at Dixon, and then at the boys who stood behind him, but he could not see a single one of Rodney Gray's followers among them. Having no one to back him up he dared not refuse to obey the order, for he was well aware that he would get into trouble if he did. He folded the flag, and the tall student went with him to make sure that he delivered it to the commandant in good order. He saw it placed on the bureau in the colonel's room, and then posted off to tell Dick Graham all about it.

Supper was over at last; darkness came on apace, and as usual the students gathered in the corridors to discuss the situation. They did not seem to remember that there was a law forbidding this very thing, and the guards did not remind them of it, or try to send them to their rooms, for, besides being interested parties themselves, they knew by past experience that the boys would not pay the least attention to their commands.

These discussions were always conducted with more or less noise and hubbub, according to the humor the debaters happened to be in, but now one and all seemed bent on raising a row. They all talked at once, fists were flourished in the air and pretty close to the noses of some of the disputants, and finally the lie was passed, and Rodney Gray and several other students in the lower hall proceeded to "mix up" promiscuously. Dick Graham was not among them. He stood at the head of the stairs, where he could see all that was going on without being seen himself. When the leaders of the opposing sides ceased their arguments and came to blows, and on being separated by their respective friends surged through the door toward the parade, where the matter in dispute could be settled by a fair fight, Dick sprang into life and action and hurried to the commandant's room.

"Sounds something like a row below," said the orderly in a careless, indifferent tone. "Who's in for a black eye this time?"

"Run in and tell the colonel to come out, or there'll be a riot here before he knows it," replied Dick hastily. "Don't your ears tell you that the fellows are all fighting mad, and that the thing is going to be serious?"

Well—yes; there was something of a racket below, but the orderly said he didn't care for that, provided the Southerners would use up all the traitors in the gang. However, he thought it best to go in with the report, in order to save himself from being hauled over the coals for neglect of duty. When the colonel came out of his quarters, buttoning his uniform coat with one hand and settling his cap on his head with the other, he found Dick standing at the top of the stairs with his hands in his pockets, and a face as innocent as a child's.

"Graham, I am glad to see that you have nothing to do with this disgraceful performance," said he.

"Who? Me, sir?" exclaimed Dick. "I don't fight, sir. I'm neutral, sir.
You see Missouri—"

But the colonel could not wait to hear Dick say that his State had not yet gone out of the Union. He went down the stairs, along the hall, and through the archway with all haste, and then Dick went, too;

but he went down the back-stairs, around the corner of the building, and brought two boys to his side by giving a peculiar whistle.

"Everything is all right so far," whispered Dick. "But there's no telling how long the fellows will be able to keep up the farce, now that the colonel has gone down there, so we must be in a hurry."

"Did they do it well and without exciting suspicion?"

"First rate. Couldn't have done it better. If I hadn't been in the plot
I should have thought they were in dead earnest."

While Dick talked he led the way at top speed to the tool-house, and he and his companions vanished through the door. When they came out again they brought with them a light ladder that had been stored there for safe keeping. Moving at a run, they carried it around the building and placed it against the wall under the commandant's window. The sash was raised, and the evening breeze was gently rustling the curtains.

"Do you know whether or not the colonel was alone in his room when you sent the orderly in to fetch him out?" whispered one of the boys. "Suppose he left somebody in there?"

"Or suppose he left his door open and the orderly should chance to look in?" said the other.

"It's too late to think of those things now," replied Dick, placing his foot on the lowest round of the ladder and turning his head to listen a moment to the tumult of voices that came from the direction of the parade-ground. "The fellows are at it yet, and if they can only keep the colonel with them two minutes longer we'll have the flag easy enough. But, mind you, I'll not see it abused."

"It's an enemy's flag," observed one of his companions, who was rather surprised to hear Dick say this. If he was still friendly to the colors, why had he offered to steal them for Rodney Gray?

"No odds if it is an enemy's flag," replied Dick. "We all thought a heap of it once, and I don't know but I think as much of it as I ever did. I say, dog-gone State Rights anyhow."

This showed how much of a rebel Dick Graham was; and there were plenty of others just like him in the South—boys and men, too, who had been taught to believe that the founders of the Republic never meant that the sovereignty of the States should be surrendered to the general government, because they said so in the Declaration of Independence. "These United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent *States*," wrote Thomas Jefferson, and all the Northern and Southern delegates agreed with him. If they had intended to form one State or one government, they would have said so in language too plain to be misunderstood. That was Dick's way of looking at it, and he was honest in his belief that the authorities at Washington had no right to order him from his own State to keep another State in the Union when she wanted to leave it. Dick went into the Southern army after a while, as we have said, and so did many others who thought as he did; but their hearts were not in the work, and they were glad when the war ended and the old flag once more waved over our entire country.

[Illustration: DICK GRAHAM STEALS THE FLAG.]

"Now," continued Dick, "look out for yourselves. If you see anybody coming, make tracks for cover and leave me to take care of myself. There is no need that more than one of us should get into trouble over this nonsensical business."

So saying, Dick ran up the ladder, pushed aside the curtains, and, finding the room deserted, clambered in and seized the flag, which he found on the bureau just where the tall student told him he would find it. He made his escape with it, the ladder was taken back to the tool-house, and no one was the wiser for what had been done. If the students who presently followed the colonel back from the parade-ground had looked closely at Dick, they might have seen that his coat stuck out a little more about the breast than it usually did, but perhaps they did not notice it. At all events they said nothing about it.

"What was the row about this time?" inquired Dick, as Rodney came to the head of the stairs where he was standing.

"Politics; nothing but politics," replied Rodney. "But we didn't have time to find out which side was in the right, for the kurn came down and put a stop to the fun. Did you get it?" he asked in a lower tone, first making sure that no one except those who were "in the plot" were near enough to overhear his words. "Bully for you. Now we will see what Marcy and the rest of the traitors will say when they find another and handsomer flag floating at the masthead in the morning. Where is it?"

Dick tapped the breast of his coat.

"All right, hand it over. There's nobody around except those we can trust."

"What are you going to do with it?"

"I mean to put it where no one will ever see it again, and that is in the kitchen stove," answered Rodney.

"That's what I was afraid of. Well, I don't want it to go in the kitchen stove, and therefore I must decline to give it to you."

"Why, what in the name of sense do you want to keep it for?"

"To show as a proof of my loyalty and devotion to the Confederate States of America," replied Dick gravely. "I need some sort of an heirloom to hand down to my grandchildren, don't I?"

Of course Rodney was angry, and he had half a mind to "mix up" with Dick then and there and take the flag away from him. But the latter was a strong, active fellow, and plucky as well, and Rodney wasn't quite sure that it would be safe to attempt it. While he was thinking about it Bob Cole spoke up.

"Let me have the flag," said he, "and I will promise you, on the honor of a soldier, that you shall have it again as soon as it has served my purpose."

"What do you want to do with it?"

"Well, if you must know, I want it to set me right with my best girl. She as good as told me this afternoon that I need not call at her house again until I could tell her that the flag had been hauled down. I want to show it to her to prove that it has been done."

"But it hasn't," objected Dick. "It has been hooked out of the commandant's room, and that's not hauling it down by force. You can tell her that she will never see it hoisted again, and that assurance will have to satisfy her. If she should get her hands on it you would never see it again, and neither would I. When it can float over an undivided country, as it has in the past, and you rebels have been whipped into subjection, then—"

"I say—whipped!" exclaimed Billings.

"Subjection!" Rodney almost howled. "That will never be. Southerners die, but they don't submit. Dick Graham, you are a traitor, sure enough. You think more of that rag to-day than you do of the rights of the State you claim as your home."

"There's where you are wrong," replied Dick. "I don't quite believe in
State Rights, but my father does, and that's enough for me; and whenever
Missouri gets ready to—"

"When she gets ready to join the Confederacy you won't have the pluck to go with her," exclaimed Rodney hotly. "But there's one thing about it. Our own flag goes up on that tower after roll-call in the morning, and I'll pitch the first fellow over the parapet who tries to pull it down."

"Well, good-by, if you call that going," said Dick, good-naturedly.

The boys all followed Rodney down the stairs and Dick was left alone. He felt of the flag to make sure it was safe, and after looking up and down the hall to see that no one was observing his movements, he went into Marcy Gray's room, where Marcy himself found him a few minutes later.

CHAPTER V.

THE PAID SPY.

It must not be supposed that the students who did not side with Rodney Gray were entirely deceived by the demonstration that had taken place in the corridor. Noisy political discussions were of too common occurrence to attract the attention of Marcy and his friends, the most of whom were sitting quietly in their rooms, and they gave no heed to what was going on below until the shuffling of feet announced that there was a fight in progress. Then they rushed out in a body, but a single glance at the boys who were struggling in the hall was enough to show them that their services were not needed.

The combatants were all secessionists. There were a few "neutrals" among them—Dixon for one—who were trying to restore order, and who finally succeeded in getting them out of the building, but there was no Union boy there who was in want of assistance.

"What's in the wind now, do you reckon?" said Tom Percival, whose father had cast his ballot against secession with one hand, while holding a cocked revolver in the other. "That's a put-up job, and there's something behind it."

"I believe you're right, Tom," said Marcy. "Let's follow them and see what they are going to do."

There was right where he and his friends made a mistake. They went to the parade ground and looked on while the colonel read Rodney and a few others a severe lecture, and Dick Graham was left free to carry out his part of the programme. Then they went back to their dormitories fully satisfied that if Rodney had hoped to gain anything by getting up that fight, he had failed to accomplish his object. When Marcy opened his door he was surprised to find Dick sitting at the table with a paper in his hand.

"What are you doing here, you rebel?" he demanded.

"Rebel yourself," replied Dick. "You stand ready to go back on your State and I don't. But what is the use of this nonsense? You and I understand each other. Look at that."

"Dick, where did you get it?" exclaimed Marcy, when his visitor drew the flag from under his coat.

"I found it on the colonel's bureau and took it and welcome," answered Dick.

"When did you do it?"

"Just now."

"Where was the orderly?"

"He was at his post; but he didn't have anything to do with it, and will be as surprised as anybody when he finds that the flag is gone. We got a ladder and went in at the window."

"*We?* Who?"

"I did. You don't expect me to tell you who held the ladder while I went up, do you?"

"We knew that that fight was a put-up job, but of course we couldn't imagine what it was got up for. If we had seen or heard anything to set us on the right track, you never would have got your hands on that flag."

"Don't you suppose we knew that?" demanded Dick. "Having no taste for a knockdown and drag-out, we were rather sly about it. But what's the difference? You know as well as I do that it was bound to come down sooner or later, and perhaps it would have been lowered by some one who would not have been as careful of it as I have been. Imagine, if you can, what would have been done to it if the news had come that this State had joined the Confederacy! There hasn't been an ugly finger laid on it since I got it."

Marcy took a turn about the room and then faced his visitor and looked at him in silence.

"I am sure I don't know what to make of you," he said, at length. "Which side are you on? I don't believe you know yourself."

"Haven't I told you time and again that I'm neutral?" demanded Dick. "You see Missouri—"

"You never saw two dogs fight in the street without wanting one or the other of them to whip," interrupted Marcy. "There can't be such a thing as a neutral in times like these. You are opposed to the flag, and yet you don't want to see it in possession of those who would insult or destroy it. You handle it as though you loved it."

"I did once, and I don't hate it now, or anybody who stands up for it," answered Dick, thoughtfully. "I am going to give it to you on one—"

"I wondered why you brought it in here," said Marcy. "I shall be glad to have the flag, and to-morrow morning we'll—"

"Good-night," said Dick, getting upon his feet.

"Hold on. What have I said or done to send you away in such a hurry?"

"What will you do to-morrow morning?" asked Dick, in reply.

"We'll run the colors up where they belong, and stand by to see that they stay there. What else should we do?"

"That's what I thought you were going to say; but you must promise that you'll not think of it, or you can't have the flag. You see," continued Dick confidentially, "I am not exactly hand and glove with Rodney and his crowd, but I come pretty near to believing as they do, and that was one reason I offered to steal the flag. If I hadn't done it, they would have hauled it down by force, or tried to, and that might have raised a sure-enough row; no sham about it."

"I am quite sure it would," assented Marcy.

"That's what I was afraid of, and I think it a good plan to put the fighting off as long as we can. I haven't anything against the flag and never shall have, not even when Missouri—"

"Never mind Missouri," Marcy interposed. "Tell me why you are going to give me the flag."

"Simply because I know you think a good deal of it, and will take care of it," answered Dick. "It will be something to be proud of one of these days, I tell you. After we rebels get the licking we are bound to get in the end—"

"If you are so sure of it, why do you favor secession?" inquired Marcy.

"Who? Me? I don't favor it. I never so much as hinted at such a foolish thing, because a blind man ought to see what is going to come of it. Before the thing is over our niggers will all be gone, our homes will be in ruins, our fields grown up to briers, and we'll be as poor as church mice. You'll see. I say that the Southern States ought to stay in the Union; but if they are resolved that they won't do it, the government at Washington has no shadow of a right to compel them. That's me, and that's why I tell you that when Missouri—"

"Why don't you give me the flag, if you are going to?" said Marcy. "Some of the teachers might come in, and how should I account for your presence here?"

"In any way you please. I am not particular. Hold on a bit," said Dick, as Marcy tried to take the colors from his hand. "I must have your promise first. You must say, in so many words, that you will not attempt to hoist it in the morning, and further, that you will not let anyone know I gave it to you. A certain fellow wants to shove it in the stove—"

"That's my cousin," interrupted Marcy.

"And another wants to show it to his girl, who told him to-day, in my presence, that if he had the pluck she had given him credit for, the colors would have come down long ago."

"That's Bob Cole," said Marcy.

"I was taught never to tell names, and tales, too. I knew that if I gave the flag to either of those fellows I would never see it again. I have marched and drilled under it for almost four years, and shouldn't like to hear that it been abused in any way; but if you and I live to see the end of the terrible times that I believe are coming upon us, I *should* like to hear that it had been run up again. That's why I am going to give it to you; but I must have your promise first."

"It's a bargain, and there's my hand on it," answered Marcy, without hesitation. "That flag shall never go up to the top of the academy staff again if I can help it, and while I remain in this school I'll never say you gave it to me. Now hand it over, so that I can hide it before anybody comes in."

Dick was rather surprised at the promptness with which the required promise was given. Almost without knowing it he handed Marcy the flag, and saw him place it in his trunk and turn the key upon it.

"Say," he exclaimed, when he found his tongue, "what are you up to?"

"I am going to leave the flag there until I can think of some good hiding-place for it," replied Marcy.

"That isn't what I mean, and you know it. I didn't think you would be so very willing to make the promise, and I am afraid there is something back of it."

"I have said all you asked me to say, have I not? Well, I assure you I shall remember it, for I am not in the habit of breaking my word. The next time these colors float it will be in a breeze that is untainted by any secession rag, I bet you. Then, whether you are living or dead, I shall think of you, Dick. You and I have always been friends and I know we shall continue to be so, no matter where we are or what flag waves over us."

"You don't owe me any thanks," said Dick hastily, and in, rather a husky voice. "I don't want the old thing, for I may have to fight against it someday; but I didn't want to see Rodney and his crowd trample it under their feet before they destroyed it. You're right, we shall always be friends, no matter—dog-gone State Rights anyhow. That's me. Good-night."

"Just one word more before you go," said Marcy. "Where did Rodney get the secession flag he has been prancing around with ever since he came from town?"

"It came through the post-office, but who sent it I don't know. You ought to have heard the fellows whoop and yell when he took it out of the package."

"Does he labor under the delusion that he is going to run it up on the tower in the morning?" continued Marcy.

"You can't prove that by me," was Dick's response. "Good-night."

"Yes, I can prove it by you," thought Marcy, as his visitor went out, closing the door behind him. "Your face and your actions said plainly enough that that is what Rodney means to do; but I'll bet you he will be astonished when to-morrow comes. He and his crowd must take us for a lot of dunderheads."

Marcy waited until he thought Dick had had time to reach his own room, and then he opened the door and went out into the hall. He was gone about half an hour, and when he came back he was smiling all over, and rubbing his hands together, as if he felt very well satisfied with what he had done during his absence. Then he drew a chair to the table, turned up the lamp, and devoted himself to another reading of the letters and papers he had that day received from home. While he was thus engaged some things were happening a few miles away that eventually came very near raising a "sure-enough fight" at the academy, and opened the eyes of the "citizens and voters of Barrington" to the fact that they had not done a wise thing when they employed some of the most worthless members of the community to keep watch of those who did not wear red, white, and blue rosettes and hurrah for President Davis.

About the time the Missouri boy and his comrades made their successful raid on the commandant's room, one of the paid spies of whom Mr. Riley had spoken during his conversation with Dick Graham went to the post-office in Barrington and was handed a letter addressed to himself. An ordinary observer would have seen at a glance that the writing on the envelope was disguised, but Bud Goble, who seldom saw writing of any sort, did not notice it. He straightened up as if he had grown an inch or more when he found that he had a correspondent who was respectful enough to address him as "Mister," and rose immensely in his own estimation when he opened the letter and with *much* difficulty spelled out the following:

"This is verry privat and perticlar bisness and i wouldnt think of speaking to nobody but you about it who are one of the most promnent and respeckted sitizens of barington."

This was nothing but the truth, according to Mr. Goble's way of thinking; but up to this time he had never met any one whose opinions agreed with his own. If the business to which his correspondent referred was so very "private and particular," it would never do, he thought, to read the letter there in the post-office, while there were so many men standing around; so he straightway sought the privacy of his own dwelling—a little tumble-down log cabin with a dirt floor and stick chimney, which was situated in the outskirts of the town.

"One of the most respected and prominent citizens of Barrington; that's what I be," muttered Bud Goble, as he stumbled along the dark road toward his domicile. "I always knowed it, but there's a heap of folks about here who have always been down on me, kase I haven't got any niggers of my own and have to work for a livin'; but I'm to the top of the heap now, an' what's more, I'll let some of 'em know it before I am many hours older. I wisht I knew what's into this letter, kase it's mighty hard work for me to read it. If it's anything about them babolitionists an' the doctering they're preachin' up among our niggers—Well, they'll not do it much longer, kase I am about ready to take some on 'em outen their beds at night an' lay the hickory over their backs. There's money into it, kase Mr. Riley an' the rest of the men that's onto the committee said so; an' I'm onto every job where there's an honest dollar to be made."

Bud Goble was a fair type of that class of people who were known to those among whom they lived as "white trash." Even the negroes, particularly those who belonged to wealthy planters, looked upon

them with contempt. Too lazy to work, they lived from hand to mouth; and not one out of ten of the many thousands of them who went into the Confederate Army knew what they were fighting for. To save his life Bud Goble could not have told what all this excitement was about. He had a dim notion that somebody wanted to free the slaves, and the idea of such a thing made him furious; although it is hard to explain why it should, for, as Dick Graham said, he had never owned the price of a pickaninny. He had got it into his head that if the negroes were made free he would be brought down to their level and compelled to go to work, and that was something he could not bear to think of.

Bud Goble did not know what secession meant, but he was strongly in favor of it, because the majority of the wealthy and influential citizens in and around Barrington favored it; and taking his cue from them, he not only turned the cold shoulder upon those who were suspected of being on the side of the Union, but went further and became their deadly enemy. Mr. Riley and the other members of the Committee of Safety knew all this, and yet they employed him, the most vindictive and unreliable man in the neighborhood, to keep them posted in regard to what the Union men and free negroes were doing and saying. It is not to be supposed that men of their intelligence would put much faith in his reports, but they furnished an excuse for resorting to high-handed measures, and that was really what the committee wanted.

Meanwhile Bud Goble was making the best of his way homeward, guided by the blaze from a light-wood fire on the hearth which shone through the open door. It was not such a home as the most of us would care to go to at night, for it was the most cheerless place in the country for miles around. Even the humblest cabin in Mr. Riley's negro quarter, half a mile away, was a more inviting spot. And as for the family who occupied it—well, a benighted traveler, no matter how tired and hungry he might be, would have gone farther and camped in the woods rather than ask supper and lodging of them.

"Now, Susie," exclaimed Mr. Goble cheerfully, addressing a slouchy, unkempt woman who sat in front of the fire with her elbows resting on her knees and a dingy cob pipe between her teeth, "punch up the blaze an' dish up a supper while I read my letter an' see what's into it."

"Who's been a-writin' a letter to you?" queried the woman, without changing her position.

"That's what I don't know till I read it. It's something about them babolitionists that our gover'ment has ordered to get outen here, I reckon. But I'm powerful hungry. I aint had a bite to eat sense I left in the mornin'."

"Well, then, where's the meal an' bacon I told you to fetch along when you come home?" inquired Mrs. Goble. "I told you plain as I could speak it that there wasn't a drop of anything to eat in the house; an' here's the young ones been a-howlin' for grub the whole day long."

"Land sakes, if I didn't forget all about it," said Goble regretfully. "But how on earth am I goin' to get grub when I aint got no money to pay for it? Our committee didn't give me no money to-day kase I didn't have nothing to tell 'em. 'Pears like all the traitors keep mighty glum when I'm around. See two or three of 'em talkin' together, an' they shet up the minute I begin to sidle up to 'em."

"You aint wuth shucks to work for that committee," replied his wife impatiently. "If I was a man an' had the job, I'd tell 'em something every hour in the day."

"How could you when there wasn't nothing to tell, I'd like to know?"

"I'd find plenty, I bet you. You haven't disremembered how them babolitionists an' the free niggers used to talk, about the time John Brown was makin' that raid of his'n, have you?"

"'Course I aint; but them's old stories now. They've kept mighty still tongues in their heads sense that time."

"No odds if they have. They was Union then, an' they're that same way of thinkin' now; an' the talk that would have hung 'em then, if our folks hadn't been jest the peaceablest people in the world, would get 'em into trouble now if it was brung up agin 'em."

"An' would you tell them stories all over agin if you was me?" exclaimed
Bud Goble.

"I wouldn't do nothing else."

"Jest as if they happened yisterday?"

"Toby sure. You want money, don't you? an' that there committee of yourn won't give you none 'ceptin' you can tell 'em sunthin', will they?"

"Now, that's an idee," exclaimed Mr. Goble, gazing admiringly at his wife. "I never onct thought of that way of doin'."

"You never think of nothing till I tell you what to do," said Mrs. Goble sharply. "You've had no end of good jobs that you could have made money on if you'd only worked 'em right, but you won't listen to what I tell you. I don't reckon you see how you could make money two ways outen the job you've got now, do you? You might go to all the Union folks, niggers *an*' whites, an' tell 'em that if they don't give you some clothes for your fambly to wear, an' grub for 'em to eat, you will have that there committee of yourn after 'em, mightn't you?"

"So I could," exclaimed Bud gleefully. "But I'll tell 'em I want money for keepin' still about what I've heard 'em say."

"You won't do nothing of the sort," said his wife almost fiercely. "If you get money, you'll set in to loafin' around Larkinses', an' I won't see none of it, nor any grub or clothes nuther. Look around the house an' into the cubboard an' see if you oughtn't to be ashamed of yourself for swillin' so much apple-jack. Get the grub, I tell you, an' give some on 'em a hint that you want an order on the store keeper to get me a new dress I've been needin' for the last six months. That's one way to make it pay. Then go to that committee an' tell 'em what you've heard them babolitionists an' free niggers say about John Brown bein' right in what he did, an' they'll give you sunthin' for bringin' 'em the news."

"But them old stories won't be news."

"No odds. They're what the committee wants, an' you're plumb blind that you can't see it."

Bud Goble placed his elbows upon his knees, fastened his eyes upon the glowing coals on the hearth, and took a minute or two to consider the matter. Then he got upon his feet and went out into the darkness without telling his wife where he was going or what he intended to do. But that did not trouble Mrs. Goble. She administered a hearty shake to one of the ragged children who querulously demanded to know why pap hadn't brung home sunthin to eat, and then filled a fresh pipe and lighted it with a brand from the fire.

Bud climbed the fence that ran between the road and the little barren pasture in which he permitted his pigs to roam (when he had any), worked his way through a narrow strip of woodland, and finally struck the lane leading from Mr. Riley's tobacco patch to the negro quarter a double row of whitewashed cabins in which the field-hands lived. A few minutes later, after making free use of a club with which he had taken the precaution to arm himself, and fighting his way through a battalion of coon dogs that assembled to dispute his progress, he opened the door of one of the cabins and entered without ceremony. If the occupants had been white folks, Bud wouldn't have done that; but who ever heard of a Southern gentleman knocking at a negro's door?

"What made you-uns set there like so many bumps on a log when you heard me comin'?" was the way in which he greeted Uncle Toby and his family, who were sitting in front of the fire resting after the labors of the day. "Why didn't you come out and shoo off them dogs of your'n? You'd best be mighty careful how you treat me, kase I'm a bigger man in this settle_ment_ nor you think I be. What's that you're shovin' out of sight behind your cheer? Let me have a look at it."

Uncle Toby was one of the most popular negro preachers in the county, and had been known to boast of the fact that he addressed a larger Sunday morning congregation than any white minister in Barrington. Bud Goble thought he was a dangerous nigger to have around, and often asked Mr. Riley why he did not "shut him up." But the planter only laughed and said that if old Toby could preach so much better than the Barrington ministers, he didn't think he ought to be deposed. So long as the darkeys who came into his grove of a Sunday had passes from their masters, it was all right; but there was something that was not all right, and it was the occasion of no little uneasiness and perplexity to Mr. Riley. By some hocus-pocus Toby had learned to read his Bible. There was nothing wrong in that, of course, but a darkey who could read his Bible would be likely to read papers as well; and from them, especially if they chanced to be Northern papers, he might imbibe some ideas that no slave had any business to entertain. It was said, and Bud Goble believed it, that Toby had a great deal to do with the "underground railroad" that had carried so many runaway negroes to freedom. You will be surprised when you hear that Bud was ignorant enough to take this expression literally. He really thought that some one had built a railroad under Barrington for the purpose of assisting discontented slaves to escape to Canada, and some of the wags at the military academy offered him a large sum of money if he would find it and conduct them to it, so that they might tear it up. Bud concluded that somewhere in the woods there must be a ladder or flight of stairs that led down to the railroad, and he spent days in looking for it. When Mr. Riley, taking pity on his ignorance, explained the matter to him, Bud was fighting mad; and ever since that time he had been watching for an opportunity to be revenged upon the boys who had played upon his credulity.

"Let me have a look at that there thing you was a-shovin' out of sight behine your cheer when I come in," repeated Bud, striding up to the fire-place and catching up the article that had caught his eye. "Looked to me like one of them 'sendiary papers, an' it is too. What business you got to be readin' like a white gentleman?" he added, slapping Toby on the head with the paper which he picked up from the floor.

"Oh, Marse Gobble," began Toby.

"'Tain't my name," howled Bud, who always got angry whenever anybody took liberties with his cognomen. "G-o don't spell Gob, does it? You can't read or spell alongside of me, but you know too much to be of any more use around here. Me and Mr. Riley b'long to the Committee of Safety, an' it's our bounden duty to take chaps like you out in the woods an' lick ye. What do you say to that?"

Old Toby was so very badly frightened that he could not say anything. He had been caught almost in the act of reading a copy of the New York *Tribune*, and what would Mr. Riley say and do when he heard of it? The latter was known far and wide as a kind master. He gave his slaves plenty to eat and wear and never overworked them; but he believed as most of his class did, and it wasn't likely that he would deal leniently with one of his chattels who would bring a paper like the *Tribune* on the plantation, and afterward spread discontent among his fellows by preaching in secret the doctrines he found in it. Bud easily read the thoughts that were passing in the old negro's mind, and told himself that Susie deserved a new dress in return for the suggestions she had given him. He saw his advantage and determined to push it.

CHAPTER VI.

THE STRUGGLE ON THE TOWER.

Toby was said to be the most thrifty and "forehanded" darkey in the settlement. Like all the rest of the black people on Mr. Riley's plantation he had a little garden-patch, and as he and his family were industrious enough to cultivate it properly, they had vegetables to sell at the "great house" and received cash in hand for them. Being a minister, he did not think it right to spend much for clothing or finery, and there were those who believed that he had a goodly sum of money laid by. Bud Goble knew that his larder was generally well supplied, and he had designs upon it now.

"What do you reckon your Moster would do to ye if I should take this here docyment to him an' tell him I found you a-readin' of it?" Bud demanded, looking sharply at Uncle Toby. "It's my duty to do it, kase I b'long to the same committee that he does, bein' one of the most respected an' prominent citizens of Barrington. That's the way my letters come."

"Marse Bud," replied the negro (he did not dare venture on the surname again for fear of exciting his visitor's wrath), "I didn't go for to do wrong—I didn't for a fac'. Dat paper was gin to me—oh, laws, what am I sayin'?"

"Speak it out, nigger," exclaimed Bud fiercely. "Who gin it to you, an' how did he come by it in the first place?"

"Suah I don't know how he come by it, Marse Bud," replied Toby, who was greatly alarmed. "I don't know what 'is name was, nudder, kase I nevah seed him afo'. Dat's de Lawd's truth."

"No, I don't reckon it is," answered Bud, with a grim smile. "But as I am here on other business, I won't say nothing more on that p'int at this meetin'. I'll sorter hold it over ye like an overseer's whip, ready to fall when you don't hoe your row like you had oughter. Do you want me to take this here *Trybune* to your Moster? Well, then, I want you to sell me some of that fine tobacker of your'n. You told me t'other day that you didn't have none; but I reckon you can find some if you look around."

"Mebbe so, sah," replied Toby, with alacrity. His store was growing small, but if by breaking into it he could purchase Bud Goble's silence, he was perfectly willing to do it. He knew that he would never see a cent for the tobacco, for Bud was much too hightoned to use "twist" when he had money to invest in "store plug." He left the room, and in a few minutes returned with three or four big "hanks," which he handed to his visitor with the request that the latter would accept them with his compliments.

"Didn't mean to rob ye, Toby," said Bud, as he wrenched a huge mouthful from one of the "hanks" to

test the quality. "But I'll tell ye what's a fact. When I come home tonight, after a meetin' of that there Committee of Safety I was tellin' you about, I found that I had plumb disremembered to fetch along the bacon, meal, an' taters that my wife done told me to bring, an' so I thought I would jest run over an' see if I couldn't borry some of you to last me a few days."

Old Toby was astonished at the proposition. It was on the end of his tongue to refuse point-blank; but when he glanced at Bud he thought better of it. The latter was trying to look good-natured, but there was an expression on his face that brought all the negro's fears back to him with redoubled intensity. He saw very plainly that it would take more than a few twists of tobacco to make Bud Goble keep his lips closed.

"Ise got a little meal an' some few taters, Marse Bud," said Toby reluctantly. "But I tell you for a fac' dat de bacon we done drawed from de oberseer won't las' de week out for my own folks, let alone giving you some of it."

"Oh, well, I aint so sot on havin' bacon," replied Bud. "Give me two or three of them yaller-legged chickens of yourn, an' they will do jest as well. It's a mighty far ways back to town, an' I do despise walkin' there in the dark," he continued, seeing that Toby hesitated. "It's nigher to the great house, an' so I reckon I'll go up an' smoke a pipe with Riley."

"Set down, Marse Bud," cried Toby hastily. "Set down in dat cheer an' I'll have de things you want directly. An' say, Marse Bud, when I get 'em, will you give me dat paper?"

"Oh, yes; you can have the paper," said the visitor. And to show that he meant what he said, he tossed it upon the nearest shakedown.

"Thank you, sah; thank you kindly," said Toby, with the mental resolution that he would throw that tell-tale paper into the fire as soon as the visitor took his leave. "If I see dat man agin I'll tell him I don't want no mo' dat sort of trash to read. I'll be back in jes' a minute."

Toby was gone a good deal longer than that, but when he returned he brought with him two meal bags, partly filled, which he placed upon the floor beside Bud Goble's chair. The latter thrust his arm into them, one after the other, and found that the first contained corn meal enough to keep him and his hungry family in hoe-cake until he could earn money from the committee to buy more, and that there were three chickens and about a peck of potatoes in the other.

"That's what I'm a-needin'," said he, with a satisfied chuckle. "I bid you a kind goodnight, you an' your fambly; an' if I hear anybody talk about takin' you out in the bresh an' lickin' on ye, I won't let 'em."

Toby stood in the door to "shoo off the dogs," and drew a long sigh of relief when he saw his unwelcome guest disappear in the darkness.

"Dinah," said he, when he returned to the cabin, "de money you've got in dat stockin' of yourn has got to be buried in de groun' somewhar de first thing in de mawnin'. Ise dat skeared of having it in de house dat I can't sleep. I thought sure dat Gobble white trash man gwine ask for dat money."

Bud was not long in reaching home. He was so highly elated that he seemed to be treading on air, and the distance was passed over almost before he knew it. It was the source of great gratification to him to learn, by actual test, that his relations with the Committee of Safety put such power into his hands. There was one thing about it, he told himself: From that time forward he and his family would have more and better food to eat than they had ever had before, and be better clothed. If the scheme he had just put into operation would work once, he was positive it would succeed every time it was tried.

"There, now!" exclaimed Bud triumphantly, as he walked into his own house and dropped the bags by the side of his wife's chair. "Two heads are better'n one, if one is a woman's head. There's meal an' taters an' chickens; now go on an' dish up a good supper. I'll get your dress to-morrer."

"Where you goin' to get it?" inquired his wife, knocking the ashes from her pipe and rising from her seat. The knowledge that there was food in the house put a little energy into her, and at the same time quieted the complaining children.

"I'm workin' this job for all there is into it, let me tell you," replied Bud, taking his wife's pipe from her hand and filling it for his own benefit. "I ketched old preacher Toby with a babolition paper in his hand, an' that's the way I come to get the grub an' tobacker. To-morrer I'll go an' call on the storekeeper. He told me t'other day that he wouldn't trust me no more, but I kinder think he'll change his mind when I tell him that I'm onto that committee. An' then there's that Meth'dist preacher, Elder Bowen, who I suspicion gin Toby that babolition *Trybune.* There's a heap of hams an' side-meat in that

smokehouse of his'n, an' it sorter runs in my mind that I can talk him into givin' me some of it."

"An' did you speak to Toby about the money they say he's got hid somewheres?" asked Mrs. Goble, who was dressing two of the chickens preparatory to consigning them to the kettle, which she had placed upon the coals. "What business has he got to have money when white folks—"

"Set me down for a fuel!" exclaimed Bud, hitting his rheumatic leg such a slap that he could hardly repress the howl of anguish that arose to his lips. "There I was talkin' to him for as much as ten or fifteen minutes an' never onct thought of that money. Well, there's another day comin', an' Toby'll have to hand that money over or get whopped."

"An' if I was you," continued his wife, "I wouldn't say a blessed word to nobody about it. Keep your business to yourself, kase if you don't, them that helps you will want to share in what you get."

"Susie, you've got a long head an' that's a fac'," said Bud, who wondered why he had not thought of all these little things himself. "I'll bear them idees in mind. Now, punch up the fire a little an' let me see if I can read what's into this letter. One of the most prominent an' respected citizens of Barrington; that's what I be, an' the feller who writ to me knows it."

Having lighted his pipe and waited until the blaze from the fire had attained sufficient brightness, Bud drew the letter from his pocket and read aloud:

"Dear sir and frind i take my pen in hand to let you know that you aint doing as you had oughter do you are paid by the committee of safety to keep an eye on all the abolitionists in the kentry and you dont do it theres plenty of them in barington and a hul pile of them up to the cademy wich is a disgrace to the town them boys some of them is spiling for a licking sich as you and your frinds had oughter give them long ago but aint done it and had oughter have a little sense knocked into their heads why dont you send them warning to shet up or clear themselves outen the federasy like the govment says they must do inside of ten days theres that gray boy for one and that graham boy for an other but they aint no kin though theyre awful sassy and need looking to if you dont tend to business bettern this i shall have to see that the committee gets some body else in your place hurra for jeff davis and the south and long may she wave that is my moto."

Men of sense do not usually give a second thought to anonymous communications, but put them into the fire as soon as they ascertain their character; but Goble, of course, did not know this, and besides he was not that sort of a fellow. He was not strictly honorable himself, and was glad to receive hints, even if they came from a correspondent who was too much of a coward to sign his name to what he had written. He saw at once that he had been remiss in his duty, and the threat contained in the closing lines made him a little uneasy.

"Land sakes, I plumb forgot to keep an eye on them boys at the 'cademy," he said, as he folded the letter and prepared to return it to the envelope. As he did so, he found that there were a few lines written on the outside which he had not before noticed. They ran as follows:

"Them boys I spoke of that gray and graham boy are the verry ones who fooled you about that under ground rail road—"

When Bud read these words he hit his rheumatic leg another heavy blow, and jumped to his feet with a fierce exclamation on his lips.

"So them's the fellers that fooled me, are they?" he shouted, as soon as the pain in his leg would permit him to speak. "You haven't disremembered how they offered me a cool hundred dollars in gold if I would look around in the woods an' find the ladder or the stairs that led down to that railroad, have you, Susie? If it hadn't been for Riley I might have been lookin' for it yet. I said at the time that I would get even with them for that, but I couldn't seem to find no way to do it, kase I don't never have no dealin's with 'em; but I've got an idee now. I wisht I could think up some way to get them two out in the woods by theirselves. I'll have to have somebody to help me if I try that, Susie."

As that was very evident to Mrs. Goble she made no reply, but went on with her preparations for supper, while Bud smoked and meditated. When the chickens, potatoes, and hoe-cake were declared to be ready, he did not change his position, but grabbed what he wanted from the table, and devoured it while sitting by the fire and trying to conjure up some plan for making himself square with those fun-loving academy boys. He inferred that they had been preaching Union doctrines at the school, but Bud did not care a straw for that. He wanted to punish them for making him search for that underground railroad. When the dishes were cleared of everything eatable that had been placed upon them, and the table moved back to its place, Bud stretched his heavy frame on the ground in front of the fire and went to sleep, using his hat and boots for a pillow.

At an early hour the next morning another serious inroad was made upon the slender stock of provisions Bud had frightened out of old Uncle Toby, and then Bud shouldered his long squirrel rifle, which he carried with him wherever he went, and set out for Barrington, not forgetting to assure his wife that she might confidently expect him to bring that new dress when he returned at night. While he is on the way let us go back to the academy and see what is taking place there.

The sentries who were on duty at daylight took note of the fact that more than half the boys in school arose without waiting for *reveille.* Even a stranger would have known that there was something afoot. The students gathered in little groups in the corridors and held mysterious whisperings with one another, or sauntered around with their hands in their pockets, as if in search of something they were in no particular hurry to find; and while some seemed scarcely able to refrain from laughing outright and dancing hornpipes, the faces of others wore a resolute look that had a volume of meaning in it. Rodney Gray, with the flag of the Confederacy tucked safely under the breast of his coat, took a stroll about the building and grounds, looking sharply at every one he met, and finally drew off on one side to compare notes with some of his friends.

"I don't at all like the way the land lies," said he. "If Marcy and his gang haven't something on their minds, they certainly act like it. Graham, you know where the old flag is, do you not?"

"I do, for a fact. It is safe under lock and key, and in the keeping of one who knows how to take care of it," answered Dick.

"I wish I had insisted on seeing it destroyed the minute you got hold of it," continued Rodney. "Then I should know that there is no danger of its being hoisted again."

"I pledge you my word that you will never again set eyes on that flag as long as you remain at this academy," said Dick earnestly. "That assurance ought to satisfy you."

"Perhaps it ought, but it doesn't," Rodney took occasion to say to Billings and Cole a few seconds later, when Dick had gone off on some business of his own. "I wish now that some true Southern boy had had pluck enough to steal the flag, for then we should know where it is at this moment. Marcy and his friends certainly suspect something; and if they know that the colors are gone, they take it in an easy way I don't like."

"Dick has given his word that we shall never see the flag again, and I believe him," said Cole. "He is a good fellow and ought to be one of us."

"Oh, he will come out all right, and so will Marcy," said Billings confidently. "Wait till this excitement culminates in a fight, and then you will see a big change of opinion among these weak-kneed chaps. They expect a skirmish this morning and are prepared for it. We'll see fun before that new flag of ours goes up on the tower, and I'll bet on it."

"Boom!" said the gun, whereupon the drums began their racket, and the fifes piped forth the first strains of the morning call. The boys all started on the run for the court (a large glass-covered room in the center of the building which was used for morning inspection, and for drills and parades when stormy weather prevailed), and when the roll had been called, the sergeants of the several companies reported all present or accounted for. But still there were some boys missing, and no report was made as to their whereabouts. A familiar voice answered to Marcy Gray's name, but it was not Marcy's voice. Rodney's quick ear detected the cheat, and when ranks were broken he looked everywhere for his cousin, but he was not to be seen. With frantic gestures Rodney summoned a few of his right-hand men to his side and communicated his fears to them in hasty, whispered words.

"Seen Marcy during roll-call?" he inquired.

No one had. Didn't he answer to his name?

"No, he did not," replied Rodney, hastily scanning the faces of the students that filed by him on their way out of the court. "Somebody answered 'here,' but it wasn't Marcy. The sergeant must know where he is, for he reported the company present or accounted for."

"Doesn't that go to show that Marcy and the chap who answered to his name, as well as the sergeant himself, must be in some sort of a plot?" inquired Billings.

"I'll bet they are on the tower," declared Rodney. "Let's go up there, quick."

Rodney's friends did not at first see what Marcy could be doing on the tower, for had not Dick Graham assured them that the flag was all right, and that they would never see it hoisted again? But if Marcy suspected that his Cousin Rodney would make an effort to run up his new Confederate flag in

place of the Stars and Stripes, might it not be that he and a chosen squad had taken possession of the tower, intending to hold it so that Rodney could not carry out his design? If that was the case there was bound to be a struggle more or less desperate, and Rodney's adherents would be expected to be on hand; so they followed him to the top of the tower, but halted when they got there, astonished and appalled at the scene that was presented to their gaze. The cousins were clinched and swaying about in alarming proximity to the low parapet, over which they were in imminent danger of falling to the ground; the sentry on duty was vainly endeavoring to part them by placing his musket between the struggling boys and crowding them toward the middle of the tower; and Marcy Gray was clinging to the halliards leading up to the masthead, from which the starry flag was floating in all its glory. It was not the old flag, however, but a newer and better one, whose glossy folds had never before been kissed by the breeze.

"Stop this!" shouted Cole, recovering himself by an effort and darting forward to assist in separating the angry and reckless boys. "Haven't you any sense left? A misstep on the part of one would be the death of both of you. Don't you know that the academy is four stories high, and that the tower runs up one story higher? Let go, Rodney. Give me those halliards, Marcy."

"Stand back, both of you!" cried the latter. "I'd rather go over than give up the halliards. If I had two hands I would very soon end the fracas, but I haven't a friend to hold the ropes while I defend myself."

[Illustration: THE STRUGGLE FOR THE FLAG.]

Perhaps he hadn't when he began speaking, but a second or two later he had plenty of them. Hasty steps sounded in the hall below and came up the ladder, and in less time than it takes to write it the top of the tower was covered with boys. The last one who came up turned about and slammed down the trap-door through which he had gained access to the roof. It was Dixon, the tall student who had compelled the orderly to fold the flag properly, and who afterward told Dick Graham right where to find it. Being a Kentuckian, he was just now "on the fence," and ready to jump either way, according as his State decided to go out of the Union or remain in it. He was opposed to secession, and that being the case, it was strange that he should afterward find himself enrolled among John Morgan's raiders, but that was right where he brought up. Although he was a close student, a good soldier, and one of the best fellows that ever lived withal, he was at any time ready for a fight or a frolic, and it didn't make any great difference to him which it was.

"Now," said he cheerfully, as he closed the trap-door behind him, "we can have a quiet squabble and no one can come up to interfere with us. But look here, boys," he added, stepping to the parapet and looking over. "It's a mighty far ways to the ground—five stories or so—and if you go down, you will be sure to get hurt. On the whole, I think we had better adjourn for a while."

Rodney knew just how to take these words. Like that notice in the post-office, "there was reading between the lines." Seeing that he and his friends were taken at disadvantage and greatly outnumbered, he thought it best to handle his cousin with a little less rudeness; but he would not cease his efforts to pull down that hated flag and hoist his own Stars and Bars until he was compelled to do so. He let go his hold upon his cousin and seized the halliards.

"Never mind the relationship," he yelled, when Marcy said that if Rodney were not his cousin he would be tempted to thrash him within an inch of his life. "I am more ashamed of it than you can possibly be. Let go those halliards."

"Looks as though there might be a slight difference of opinion between the parties most interested, and there's no telling who is Governor until after the election," said Dixon quietly. "But I respectfully submit that the top of a high tower is no place to settle a dispute that may end in a scrimmage. We don't want to begin killing one another until we have to, and there are two ways in which the matter can be arranged: Wait until after dark, and then go silently to the parade and have it over before anybody knows a thing about it, or else kiss and make friends right here."

Dick Graham, who had thus far kept himself on the other side of the belfry out of sight, broke into a loud laugh when Dixon, speaking with the utmost gravity, made the last proposition. Dick had a cheery, wholehearted laugh, and the effect was contagious. The laugh became general and finally such an uproar arose that the students at the foot of the tower, who had been watching proceedings on the top with no little interest and anxiety, pulled off their caps and joined in with cheers and yells, although they had not the faintest idea what they were cheering and yelling for. Marcy smiled good-naturedly as he looked into his cousin's face, but Rodney scowled as fiercely as ever. When anything made him angry it took him a long time to get over it. He was almost ready to boil over with rage when he caught his cousin in the act of hoisting a brand new flag in place of the one that had been stolen, and if his friends had only been prompt to hasten to his support, he would have torn that flag into fragments in short order. But they had held back and given Marcy's friends time to come to his assistance, and now

there was no hope of victory. This made him believe that the boys who pretended to side with him were cowards, the last one of them.

"If I will give you the halliards, will you promise not to haul the colors down?" asked Marcy, who had no heart for trouble of this sort.

"I'll promise nothing," answered Rodney, in savage tones. "You and your gang have the advantage of me this time, but it will not be so when next we meet. Mark that."

"Hear, hear!" cried some of the boys.

"You shut up!" shouted Rodney. "You fellows are mighty ready to talk, but I would like to see you do something. As for you, Marcy, you are a traitor to your State. Let go those halliards."

"I'll not do it. Your ancestors and mine have fought under this flag ever since it has been a flag, and if I can help it, you shall not be the first of our name to haul it down."

"But that flag does not belong up there any longer, and I say, and we all say, that it shall not stay there. Here's our banner," exclaimed Rodney, and as he spoke he drew the Stars and Bars from under his coat and shook out its folds. "It's a much handsomer flag than yours, and if there's a war coming, as some of you seem to think, it will lead us to victory on every battle-field."

The sight of the Confederate emblem seemed to arouse a little martial spirit among Rodney Gray's friends. They cheered it lustily, and Rodney began to hope that they would make energetic and determined effort to run it up; but they lacked the courage. The disgusted Rodney told them in language more forcible than elegant that they were nothing but a lot of wind-bags.

"Sentry, you were stationed here to protect that flag," said Marcy, as he made the halliards fast to a cleat beside the door leading into the belfry.

"Are you officer of the day?" demanded the guard. "Then you are taking a good deal upon yourself when you presume to tell me what my duties are. Go below, the last one of you, or I will call the corporal."

"That is what you would have done long ago if you had been a good soldier, but I reckon he's coming without waiting to be called," observed Dixon, as an imperious knock, followed by the command to "open up here, immediately," was heard at the trapdoor. "Now, Rodney, don't let's have any more nonsense over the flag."

"I shall do as I please about that, and you can't help yourself," replied Rodney. "I'll settle the matter with you on the parade tonight, if you feel in the humor. That flag shall not float over this school with my consent."

"Then I am sorry to say that it will have to float without your consent. It will be time enough to make war upon it when the North makes war on us; and you will get plenty of that, I bet you. Now let's have a look at our friend below, who seems to be in something of a hurry to come up, and then we'll go down and attend to the business of the hour, which, I believe, means breakfast."

So saying Dixon raised the trap-door, revealing the flushed and excited faces of the commandant and officer of the day, who were most respectfully saluted when they entered the belfry.

CHAPTER VII.

OLD TOBY'S MONEY.

"Young gentlemen, what is the meaning of this new outrage?" demanded the colonel angrily.

"A tussle over the flag, sir," replied Dixon, standing very stiffly and raising his hand to his cap. "The old one having mysteriously disappeared, it became necessary to hoist a new one, sir."

Of course the commandant knew long before this time that the colors had been taken from his bureau, and he knew, also, that the theft had been committed under cover of that sham fight in the hall; but he did not say a word about it. To be candid, he did not think it would be good policy to try to sift the matter to the bottom, for fear of implicating some profitable student whom he could not afford to

expel. Being proprietor of the school, he desired to keep it intact as long as he could.

"And during the tussle two of your number came very near being precipitated to the ground," exclaimed the colonel. "I shall put a stop to this insubordination if I have to order the whole school into the guard-house."

"Very good, sir," answered the boys.

"Go downstairs, all of you," commanded the officer of the day. "Sergeant Rodney and Private Marcy Gray, report to me at once."

The students hastened down the ladder, wondering what was to be the result of this "new outrage." When they reached the hall one of them said, in tones loud enough to be heard by all his companions:

"Graham is a traitor. He stole the old flag, but he furnished a new one to be hoisted in its place."

"There's where you are wrong," exclaimed Marcy promptly. "Dick had nothing whatever to do with it, and when he saw this new flag, he was as much surprised as the rest of you were. I have had it concealed in my room for more than six weeks. I meant to be ready for you, you see."

"Where did you get it? if that is a fair question."

"It was made by a young lady who lives in Barrington, but of course you do not expect me to mention her name. She is true to her colors, and that's more than can be said in favor of you fellows who would have hauled it down if you had possessed the pluck."

"That was well put in, Marcy," said Rodney. "There isn't pluck enough among the whole lot of them to fit out a good-sized cat. If the Yankees should come down here, they could drive an army of such fellows with nothing but cornstalks for weapons."

The tone in which these words were uttered set Dick Graham going again, and he started all the rest that is, all except a few who were so angry they couldn't laugh. If that dread functionary, the officer of the day, heard the uproar, he must have thought that the culprits who had been commanded to report to him did not take their prospective punishment very much to heart.

Of course the boys who remained below were impatient to hear all about the things that had happened in and around the belfry, and to know what was going to be done with Rodney and his cousin. But the last was a point upon which no one could enlighten them, not even the cousins themselves when they came from the presence of the officer of the day, who had given them a stern reprimand and a warning. Being from Louisiana himself, and having offered his services to her in case they should be required, he bore down upon Marcy harder than he did upon Rodney, and even went so far as to try and convince the North Carolina boy that the word "traitor," which had so often been applied to him by his schoolmates, was deserved and appropriate. But Marcy could not look at it that way, and even in the presence of the man who could have shut him up in the guard-house, with nothing but bread to eat and water to drink, he did not "haul in his shingle one inch." He never had made any trouble in the school, and, what was more to the point, he did not intend to; but neither was he going to stand still and permit a lot of rebels to run over him. The colonel had said, in so many words, that the flag was to be hoisted every morning until further orders; and in hoisting a new one in the place of the one that had disappeared, he had not broken any rule. The officer knew that to be true, and as he could not punish one without punishing the other also, he was obliged to let them both go scot-free; but he detained Rodney a moment to whisper a word of caution to him.

"Don't let this thing be repeated," said he earnestly. "I think just as you do, and if I could have my own way, your flag would now be waving on the tower; but it is my duty to obey orders, and it is your duty as well. Don't make another move until this State joins the Confederacy, and then there will be no one to oppose you. The hoisting of another flag will break up the school, but that is to be expected. You may go."

"He said, in effect, that he would keep this thing hanging over our heads to see how we behave in future," said Rodney to Billings and Cole, who were in the hall waiting for him. "He is on our side, but not being the head of the school, he can't back us up as he would like to. But then this will keep," he added, once more shaking out his flag, which he had all the while carried under his arm. "I was afraid the teachers would take it away from me, but as they didn't, we'll hold ourselves in readiness to run it up when the other is ordered down."

But the incidents of the morning, exciting as they were, did not long monopolize the attention of the students, or remain the principal subjects of discussion. They were forgotten the minute the mail was distributed, for of course their papers contained news from all parts, and the boys made it their

business to keep posted. There was one thing the papers had already begun to do that excited derisive laughter among all the sensible boys in school. They called dispatches from the North "Foreign Intelligence." But there were some, like Rodney Gray, who could not see that that was anything to laugh at, and following the lead of their favorite journals in politics, they soon learned to follow their vocabulary also, and always spoke of the North as "the United States," and of the South as "the Confederate States."

When the adjutant's call was sounded Marcy Gray fell in with the other members of his company who had been warned for duty, and marched to the parade-ground to go through the ceremony of guard-mounting. Immediately after that he went on post in a remote part of the grounds, a favorite place with the sentries on hot summer days, for the woods on the other side came close up to the fence, and the trees threw a grateful shade over the beat. The only order the boy he relieved had to pass, was a simple as well as a useless one. It was to "keep his eye peeled for that fence and not permit anybody to climb over it"; but Marcy listened as though he meant to obey it. Then the relief passed on, and he was left alone with his thoughts, which, considering the incidents connected with that skirmish on the tower, were not the most agreeable company.

He had been there perhaps a couple of hours, out of sight of everybody, when he was brought to a stand-still by a rustling among the bushes on the other side of the fence, and presently discovered old Toby looking at him over a fallen log. A smile of genuine joy and relief overspread the black man's features when he saw who the vigilant sentry was, and he immediately got upon his feet and came to the fence.

"The top of the morning to you, parson," said Marcy pleasantly. "You act as though you might be looking for some one."

"Sarvent, sah," replied Toby. "I is for a fac' lookin' for you, an' nobody else. I was up to de gate, an' Marse Dick Graham done tol' me you down heah. You-uns gwine get in de biggest sort of trouble, you an' Marse Dick, an' I come heah to tol' you."

"I assure you we are grateful to you for it," answered the boy, with a smile. "But how are we going to get into trouble? Talk fast, for I have no business to hold any communication whatever with you."

"Dat white trash, Bud Gobble; he's de man," began Toby. "You an' Marse Dick done sont him into de woods to look for de way to dat underground railroad—"

Marcy leaned upon his musket, threw back his head, and laughed heartily but silently, for he did not want to bring the corporal of the guard down to his post until he had heard what the old negro had to tell him.

"Dat's jes' what you-uns done, Marse Marcy," continued Toby. "An' now dat man gwine tote you bofe out in de woods an' lick you like he was de oberseer an' you two de niggahs."

When Marcy heard this he did not know whether to laugh again or get angry over it. As time was precious he did neither, but began questioning Toby, who told a story that made the boy open his eyes. When it was concluded the fact was plain to Marcy that somebody had been trying to get him and Dick Graham into trouble; but who could it be? He knew that he had been airing his Union sentiments rather freely, but he wasn't aware that he had made any enemies by it. He wished the hour for his relief would hasten its coming, so that he might compare notes with Dick.

"You think it was the letter Bud received that put all these things into his head, do you?" said he, after a moment's reflection.

"You haven't any idea who wrote the letter or what else there was in it?"

"No sah, I aint. I wish't I had, so't I could tell you."

"Bud Goble mentioned Dick's name and mine while he was threatening us, did he?" continued Marcy.

"He did for a fac'. I didn't hear him, kase I wasn't dar; but Elder Bowen's niggah Sam was in de store when he 'buse de storekeeper, an' he was at de house when he come dar an' 'buse de elder for a babolitionist. You-uns want look out, Marse Marcy. Dat man mean mischief, suah's you born."

"Don't be uneasy," replied Marcy. "If Mr. Goble thinks he is going to catch us napping, he will find himself mistaken. I should like to see him and his friends come to this school and try to carry out their threats. There are plenty of Union boys among the students, parson."

"I'se suspicioned dat all along, sah, an' I'se mighty proud to hear you say so; I is for a fac'. Dere's a few of 'em in de settle_ment_, but I'se mighty jubus what will happen to 'em when Marse Gobble gets

on de war-paf, like he say he gwine do. He say he gwine lick de las' one."

"Then it is high time he was put under lock and key," said Marcy indignantly. "I hope if he goes to Mr. Bowen's house the elder will turn loose on him with that double-barreled shotgun of his."

"He say dat's what he allow to do; but I dunno," replied the old negro, shaking his head and looking at the ground as if he felt that troublous times were coming upon the earth. "It's gwine be mighty hot about yer, an' I dunno what we niggahs gwine do. I wish dem babolitionists up Norf shet dere moufs an' luf we-uns be. Dey gwine get us in a peck of trouble."

"And such fellows as Bud Goble seem perfectly willing to help it on," said Marcy, whose indignation increased, the longer he dwelt upon the details of the story Toby had told him. "For two cents I would muster a squad and go down to his shanty and turn him out of doors. We'll do something of the kind if the authorities do not put a curb on him."

[Illustration: MARCY REFUSES TO TAKE CHARGE OF OLD TOBY'S MONEY.]

"But dey *hire* him to do all dis meanness, Marse Marcy," exclaimed the negro. "He 'longs to dat committee."

"Don't you believe any such stuff. It is likely that he is in the pay of that committee, and more shame to them, but he doesn't belong to it. Now you run away, parson, because—"

"Hol' on, please, sah," interrupted the old man. "I want ax your device. I got a little money—not much, but jes' a little" (here he pulled from one of his capacious pockets a stocking filled half-way up the leg with something that must have been heavy, judging by the care he took in handling it),—"an' I'm that skeared of havin' it in de house dat I can't sleep. Marse Gobble 'lows to steal bacon an' taters of me now as often as he gets hungry, an' de fust ting I know he ax me for dis money; den what I gwine do? Take keer on it for me, please, sah."

"Why, parson, you're rich," said Marcy, reaching through the fence and "hefting" the stocking in his hand. "Is this all silver? Where did you get so much?"

"I earn it ebery cent, an' sabe it, too," answered Toby, with some pride in his tones. "It's all mine, but I 'fraid I aint gwine be 'lowed to keep it, now dat de wah comin'."

"I think myself that it will bring you trouble sooner or later. You ought never to have told anybody that you had it."

"Who? Me, sah? I never tol' de fust livin' soul in dis world. It got round de quarter some way, I dunno how, an' some of dem fool niggahs had to go an' blab it. Will you take keer on it for ole Toby, sah?"

"If I were going to stay in this part of the country I would do it in a minute," answered Marcy. "But I am liable to leave here at an hour's notice, and what should I do with it if I did not have time to take it to your cabin? Give it to your master, and ask him to take care of it for you."

"Oh, laws! Marse Riley secession de bigges' kind," exclaimed Toby, with a gesture which seemed that such a proposition was not to be entertained for a moment.

"No matter for that," replied Marcy. "He's honest, and what more do you want? He is a kind master, the best friend you have in the world, and you don't want to keep anything from him. Come to think of it, I wouldn't take the money, even if I were going to stay here. Go to Mr. Riley with it."

"You won't take keer on it for de ole niggah?" said Toby, who was very much disappointed. "Den I reckon I'd best bury it somewhars in de ground."

"You will surely lose it if you do that," protested Marcy. "Does Bud Goble know you've got it? Well, if he gets after you, he'll thrash you till you will be glad to tell where you have concealed it; but if you can tell him that it is in Mr. Riley's hands, he'll not bother you or the money, either. Now run along, parson. I see a uniform over there among the trees, and I shouldn't be surprised if the corporal was inside of it."

The old negro hastened into the woods, hiding the stocking somewhere about his patched clothes as he went, and Marcy brought his piece to "support arms," and paced his beat while waiting for the corporal to come up. It wasn't the corporal, after all, but a private like himself, who had come out to study his lesson and roll about on the grass. He did not speak to the sentry, but he was so close to him that Marcy could not have held any more private conversation with old Toby.

"It is nothing more than I expected," thought Marcy, recalling some of the incidents the negro had

described to him. "Union men all over the South have been the victims of hotheaded secessionists, like those who compose that Committee of Safety, and now we're going to have the same sort of work right here in our midst. I don't believe that Bud Goble has organized a company for the purpose of running Northern sympathizers out of the State; he said that just to frighten Toby and a few others. But if he has, I hope he will bring them up here some night and try to take Dick Graham and me out of the building. I am glad those men had the courage to defy him to his face, and wish I could have seen Bud about the time the elder was walking him out of the yard."

It would seem from this that old Toby had told Marcy some things we do not know, and that Bud Goble's plans were not working as smoothly as he could have wished. Let us return to Bud and see where he was and what he had been doing since he took leave of his wife in the morning.

He left home with a light heart and a pocketful of bullets, and took a short cut through the woods toward Barrington. A few of the bullets were to be expended upon such unwary small game as might chance to come in his way, and with the rest, if circumstances seemed to require it, intended to make a show of being ready for business. He struck a straight course for the little grocery and dry-goods store, at which he had for years been an occasional customer, and thought himself fortunate to find the proprietor in. He was busy dusting the counter, but he was not alone. There were three or four others present, and when we tell you that they were Bud Goble's intimate friends, you will know just what sort of men they were.

"Mornin'," said Bud cheerfully. "Famblies all well? Mine's only jest tol'able, thank ye. What's the news?"

"There aint none," was the reply from one, to which the others all assented. "Are there any with you?"

"Well," said Bud slowly, at the same time edging around so that he could keep an eye on the storekeeper and note the effect his words produced upon him. "I don't rightly know what you-uns call news. I reckon you-uns heared that I was workin' for that Committee of Safety, didn't you?"

They had heard something of it in a roundabout way. Was there any money in the job, and what was he expected to do?

"There's a little money into it," answered Bud. "Jest about enough to pay me for my time an' trouble, but no more. I've gin some of them loud-talkin' folks, who think a nigger is as good as a white man, notice that they had best cl'ar outen the 'Federacy before they are drove out, an' go up to the United States among them that believe as they do."

"An' it sarves 'em jest right," observed one of Bud's friends, helping himself to a handful of crackers. "I'd like to see the last one of 'em chucked out bag an' baggage. But s'pose they wont go?"

"I'm hopin' they wont, for that's where the fun'll come in. That'll give we-uns—"

Just at this moment Bud was interrupted by the entrance of "Elder Bowen's nigger Sam," who removed his hat respectfully and kept on to the counter where the storekeeper was at work. Bud and his friends listened and heard him say:

"I aint got no change dis mawnin', Mr. Bailey, but—"

"That's all right, Sam," Mr. Bailey hastened to reply. "You are an honest workingman, and your credit is good. What did you say you wanted? A dress and a pair of shoes for your old woman? Well, how will these suit you?"

"Dog-gone the nigger, why didn't he keep away a little longer?" whispered Bud. "Them's the very things I wanted, an' mebbe ole man Bailey won't want to trust two fellers at once."

"Then lick him," suggested one of his friends. "He's nobody but a babolitionist, anyway."

"That's what I allow to do," answered Bud.

When the negro had received the goods he asked for, he leaned against the counter as if he were in no particular hurry to go away. This suited Bud, who drawled, in lazy tones:

"Yes; I've warned some of them nigger-lovers that they aint wanted here no longer'n it'll take 'em to get out, but I am hopin' they won't leave, kase that's where the fun'll come in. I'm gettin' up a company of minute-men to sorter patrol the kentry hereabouts, an' them that don't do to please us we are goin' to lick, niggers *an*' whites. We jest aint goin' to have no more talkin' agin the 'Federacy, an' them that's for the North kin go up there. That's what the committee says. Will you-uns jine?"

Of course they would, to a man, and they would like nothing better. They were ready at any time to prove their devotion to the Confederacy by thrashing or hanging everybody, white *and* black, who did not believe that secession and disunion were the best things that could happen for the South. Then Bud, seeing that he had plenty of backing, waxed eloquent and made a short but stirring speech. He dwelt upon the wrongs and insults that had been heaped upon the Southern States ever since they had shown themselves foolish enough to join the Union; denied that a black man was as good as a white gentleman; loudly proclaimed that all Northerners, as well as those who thought as they did, were cowards; denounced as traitors all Southern men who did not shout for President Davis, and said they ought and must be whipped out of the country; and through it all he kept watch of the two at the counter to see what impression his patriotic words made upon them.

Mr. Bailey was a little man who carried the weight of sixty-five years upon his shoulders, and Bud talked for his especial benefit, hoping to frighten him into compliance with the demands he was about to make upon him. Mr. Bailey was opposed to secession, and never hesitated to say so when politics came up for discussion, as they often did among his customers; but Bud was sure the old fellow was frightened now. He did not say a word in reply, but used his brush with more energy, and now and then rapped the counter with the back of it; and these, Bud thought, were unmistakable signs of timidity or, at least, nervousness.

As for darkey Sam, there was no doubting the impression Bud's eloquence made upon him. He was greatly terrified, for he remembered that his master had once denounced secession from the pulpit, and told the members of his congregation just what they might make up their minds to endure if it were consummated. Possibly Bud Goble recalled the circumstance, for he looked very hard at Sam while he was talking. As soon as the speech was brought to a close Sam sidled along toward the door, looking into the show-cases as he went, and presently found himself safe on the porch. Then he clapped his hat on his head and started for home post-haste.

"I reckon he's gwine tell the parson what you said," exclaimed one of Bud's friends. "Well, I do think Elder Bowen is one of the dangerousest men in the whole kentry, an' that he'd oughter be snatched outen that church of his'n before he has time to preach up any more of them pizen docterings. Warned him yet?"

"No; but I allow to do it soon's I get through with my business yer," replied Bud, throwing his rifle into the hollow of his arm, and sauntering up to the counter where Mr. Bailey stood. He affected a careless, confident swagger, which was by no means indicative of his feelings. Now that he could look closely at him he found that the storekeeper wasn't frightened enough, and that his speech had not accomplished half as much as he meant to have it. "You don't seem to be right peart this mornin'," he continued. "What's the matter of ye?"

"Nothing whatever," answered Mr. Bailey. "I'm as gay as a lark.
Something wanted?"

"I reckon," replied Bud. "I want the same things you gin that there nigger a minute ago—a dress an' a pair of shoes for my ole woman."

"Got any money to pay for 'em?"

"Not jest this minute, but I shall have plenty this evening, an' then mebbe I'll—"

"Can't help it," said Mr. Bailey, shaking his head.

"Wont you trust me?"

"No, I won't. I told you so the other day, and when I say a thing of that sort I mean it."

"Do you give credit to a nigger before my face an' eyes, an' then refuse it to a white gentleman?" shouted Bud. "What do you do that-a-way for?"

"I run my business to suit myself," answered Mr. Bailey, without the least show of irritation. "If you don't like it, go somewhere else with your trade. I don't want it, any way."

"You think a nigger better'n a white man, do ye?" yelled Bud, growing red in the face. "What do you say to that, boys? Look a here," he added. "Mebbe you don't know who I am. I've got the power an' the will, too, to turn you houseless an' homeless into the street before you see the sun rise agin."

"I'll make moonlight shine through you while you are doing it," said the old man boldly.

"You will?" Bud brought his fist down upon the counter with tremendous force, and then he dived down into his pocket and brought out a handful of bullets, which he placed before the storekeeper. "Do

you see them? I want to warn ye that they was molded a-purpose to be shot into traitors like yerself; an' I brung 'em along to show ye—"

"Take 'em off the counter. I've just dusted it," interrupted Mr. Bailey; and with the words he hit the bullets a blow with his brush that sent them in every direction.

Bud Goble was astounded, and so were his friends, who had never dreamed that there was so much spirit in that little, dried-up man. The former looked at him a moment, and then he looked at the bullets that were rolling about on the floor.

"Come around yer an' pick 'em up, the very last one of 'em, an' say yer sorry ye done it, an' that you'll never do the like agin, or I'll take ye up by the heels an' mop the floor with ye," said Bud, in savage tones. "Come a-lumberin'."

"Pick 'em up yourself, and next time keep 'em off my counter," was Mr.
Bailey's answer. "What did you put them there for, any way?"

A glance at his friends showed Bud that they expected him to do something, and he dared not hesitate. He handed the nearest man his rifle to hold for him, peeled off his coat, gave a yell that was heard a block away, and was about to jump up and knock his heels together, when he happened to look toward Mr. Bailey, and stopped as if he had been frozen in his tracks. The old man was waiting for him. He leaned against a shelf behind the counter, but he held a cocked revolver in his hand.

[Illustration: MR. BAILEY ASTONISHES BUD GOBLE.]

CHAPTER VIII.

BUD GOBLE'S WATERLOO.

Did Bud Goble leap over the counter and wrench the threatening weapon from Mr. Bailey's grasp with one hand, while he throttled him with the other? We are obliged to say that he did not. He stood quite still, for something told him it would be dangerous to do anything else. This was the first time his courage had ever been tested, and he was found wanting; but, strange as it may appear, his friends did not think any the less of him for it. Under like circumstances they would have showed the same reluctance to pass the intervening counter. It was not Bud's lack of courage, but Mr. Bailey's pluck, that excited their ire. The latter had insulted their friend by refusing him the credit he had granted a field-hand, and now he had gone so far as to threaten Bud with a weapon. It opened their eyes to the fact that Union men were dangerous things to have in the community, and that they ought to have been driven out long ago.

"Sile, you've got the rifle," said Bud, who gained courage when his friends closed about him. "Why don't you draw a bead on him an' make him put that thing down?"

"Can't ye see for yourself that he's got the drop?" replied Silas, who thought discretion the better part of valor.

"Laws-a-massy, what's the matter of ye?" exclaimed Bud. "He dassent shoot."

"I don't b'lieve in fightin' no man when he's got the drop," repeated Silas. "Put on yer coat an' take yer rifle, Bud. This aint the onliest day there is in the world, an' the next time you ax him for the credit he's willin' to give a nigger, mebbe he'll hearken to ye."

"Pervided he's able to hearken to anything," observed another. "Look a-here, ole man, we-uns don't want sich chaps as you be in the kentry."

"I can easily believe that, but I don't see what you are going to do about it," answered the storekeeper, still holding the revolver so that he could cover Bud or any of his friends in a second of time. "I paid for this property with my own money, and I intend to stay here and enjoy it; and if any of you dispute my right to do so, I'll make it warm for you. Now clear out, the whole of you, and don't ever darken my doors again. I'll not sell you any goods if you come with your pockets full of cash."

"We-uns will go this time, kase we aint ready to begin business jest yet," said Bud, reaching out his hand for his rifle, but taking good care not to point it in Mr. Bailey's direction. "But we'll come agin

when you aint lookin' for us, an' then you will want to watch out. We're goin' to drive all you babolitionists outen the kentry, as well as them fellers up to the 'cademy; an' as for that Gray an' Graham boy, who aint no kin if their names is alike, we're goin'—"

Here Bud was interrupted by a poke in the ribs given by one of his companions, who did not think it prudent for him to say anything about his plans, if he had any in mind. But he had already revealed enough to interest Mr. Bailey, who was a firm friend to both the boys whose names had been mentioned.

"Those fellows never did you any harm," said he.

"Didn't, hey?" vociferated Bud.

"No, they didn't. They bought quinine right here in this store to cure your wife and children of the ague when you did not have a cent or credit, either; and they paid the doctor to go and see them when you were loafing around, too lazy to do anything but eat. If you fool with those students you'll get something you won't like. You'll have them all on you."

"I aint speakin' about them things," shouted Bud, as soon as he could frame a suitable reply. "They're for the Union, dog-gone 'em. An' didn't they go an' offer me money to look for that there underground —"

"Haw, haw!" roared the storekeeper, at the same time raising the muzzle of his revolver to a level with Bud's head, when the latter, almost overcome with rage, made a motion as if he were about to draw his rifle to his shoulder. "That underground railroad business was a joke on you, wasn't it? But you don't want to fool with Rodney and Dick, for if you do you will get the worst of it. The students will all help them. Besides, Rodney is as wild a secessionist as you ever dare be."

"'Taint so," exclaimed Bud. "I know better."

"And Dick Graham stands ready to go with his State the minute she pulls down the old flag and runs up the new one," continued Mr. Bailey. "He said so the other day when he came in here for a pint of goobers [peanuts]."

"I tell ye it aint so," repeated Bud confidently. "Bein' one of the most prominent and respected citizens of Barrington, I got a letter tellin' me all about them chaps an' the docterings they're preachin' up. I was told that the committee wants me to 'tend to their cases, an' I'm goin' to do it; an' to your case too. Hear me, don't you?"

"Who wrote that letter?" inquired the storekeeper, who did not think it necessary to answer the question.

"I don't know. There wasn't no name hitched to it."

"Then the writer was a coward," said Mr. Bailey, in a tone of contempt, "and you ought not to pay the least attention to it. Somebody wants to bring those boys into trouble, and hopes to use you as a tool. If you will take advice you will mind your own business and let those students alone. Look here, Goble," he added suddenly, "if this State goes out of the Union, will you go with her?"

"You jest bet I will. I'll go whether she does or not."

"Will you join the army and fight for her?"

"Sartingly."

"Well, we'll see who will go first—you or I."

"You? Why, dog-gone it, you're for the Union."

"Of course I am; always was and always shall be; but as I can't control my State, I shall have to do as she does. So you see, when you tried to gouge me out of a pair of shoes and a dress awhile ago, you tried to rob as good a friend of the South as you are yourself. I'll make it my business to see some of that committee and find out whether or not they uphold you in such doings. Now, clear out and don't bother me again."

Almost involuntarily Bud Goble and his friends turned toward the door, and Mr. Bailey followed them, revolver in hand, to make sure that they went without trying to "get the drop" on him. As they faced about, "Elder Bowen's nigger Sam" glided across the porch, but they did not see him.

We said the negro, who was alarmed by Bud Goble's fiery speech, started for home, and so he did;

but he had not made many steps before he heard Goble's voice pitched in a high key, and prompted by curiosity, and a desire to learn something of the nature and purposes of that company of minute-men of whom Bud had spoken, he came back and took his stand beside the open door out of sight. The slaves were all eavesdroppers in those days, and if anything escaped their notice and hearing, it was not their fault. They were better posted and took a deeper interest in the affairs of the day than many people supposed. The Northern papers, which now and then in some mysterious way came into their hands, just as the *Tribune* came into Uncle Toby's hands, told them the truth; while the white people around them pinned their faith to the falsehoods disseminated by the secession press. Sam stood on the porch and heard all that was said and saw all that was done in the store; and when Mr. Bailey brought the interview to a close by ordering Bud and his companions to "clear out," Sam made haste to get away before they caught sight of him. This time he went home and hunted up his master, who was at work in the garden.

Bud Goble had encountered an obstacle where he had least expected to find it; but although he was surprised, and a little disheartened, he would not admit that he was beaten. All Union men could not be as plucky as Mr. Bailey was, and Bud determined to try his plan again as soon as he could rid himself of the company of his four friends. He had no use for them just now, and if he succeeded in frightening Mr. Bowen into giving him a ham or a side of bacon, he did not want to be obliged to share it with any one.

"That's a trifle the beatenest thing I ever heared of," declared Silas, who was the first to speak. "I do think in my soul that that ole man oughter be dealt with. When does that company of your'n meet, Bud, an' how are we-uns goin' to get into it?"

"We aint met nowheres yet, an' to tell you the truth, I aint got the 'rangements fairly goin'," was the answer. "What I meant to say was, that I have been thinkin' of sich a thing; an' you can see from what happened in the store that a company of that sort is needed, can't you? S'pose you-uns talk it up. 'Pears like we'd oughter get twenty fellers of our way of thinkin' together, an' if we can, jest see how much help we-uns could be to that committee of our'n. Tell 'em what you've seen an' heared this mornin', that the kentry is full of sich men as Bailey is, an' that we aint goin' to have 'em here no longer. Now, where'll I find you-uns agin in about an hour so't we can talk it over? I'll be back directly I 'tend to a little private business I've got on hand."

The place of meeting having been agreed upon, Bud hastened away, confidently expecting to be successful in the attempt he was about to make to frighten a supply of provisions out of the Methodist minister. Elder Bowen did not believe in fighting, and of course it would be easy to make him open his smoke-house as often as he chose to demand it. Besides, Bud was made happy by a brilliant idea that suddenly popped into his mind; and in order that there might be no hitch in it at the critical time, he turned toward the post-office, hoping that he might find Mr. Riley there. He was not disappointed. Mr. Riley and a good many other planters about Barrington had taken to loitering around the telegraph and post offices during the last few months, and were generally to be met there or in the immediate neighborhood.

"Well, Goble, what is the news to-day?" he inquired, as Bud drew near and intimated by a wink that he would like to see him privately. There had been a time when Mr. Riley would have resented anything like familiarity on the part of such a man as Goble, but now that he wanted to use him, he was forced to treat him with a faint show of friendship.

"I don't get a bit of news of no kind," answered Bud, in a whining tone. "'Pears like the babolitionists all shet up their mouths soon's I come around. I've warned a few of 'em, but I aint seen no money for my trouble yet. My time is wuth a dollar and a quarter a day, an' when I give it all, it looks to me as though I oughter be paid for it; don't it to you?"

"Certainly," replied the planter, putting his hand into his pocket. "Our committee hasn't been organized long enough to get into working order yet, and so I shall have to give you something out of my own funds. How will that do to begin on?" he added, slipping a few pieces of silver into Bud's ready palm. "Go ahead with your work and come to me when you want anything. Whom have you warned?"

"Sarvent, sah," said Bud, pocketing the money. "Thank you very kindly, sah. Well, I've warned that there ole man Bailey, for one. He's pizen."

"Let him alone," said Mr. Riley, rather shortly.

"Why, he's Union the wust kind," exclaimed Bud, who was astonished as well as disappointed. He had hoped that the planter would tell him to drive the storekeeper out of town, and so furnish him and his friends with an excuse for any act of ruffianism they might be disposed to indulge in. "He'd oughter be whopped, ole man Bailey had, an' drove out before he has any more time to preach his docterings up

amongst the niggers."

"You let him alone," repeated Mr. Riley. "He will come out all right. When the first gun is fired he will be as warm a secessionist as I am. Who else have you warned?"

Bud mentioned the names of three or four suspected men whom he had neither seen nor heard of for a week or more, and finally said that he was on his way to Elder Bowen's to tell him that he could not get out of the country any too quick.

"I don't care what you say or do to that man," exclaimed Mr. Riley, who grew angry at the sound of the minister's name. "He is dangerous, and always has been. He takes abolition papers. I don't know how they come into his hands, the mail being so closely watched, but he gets them, and I suspect gives them to Toby to read. If I could prove it on him, I would have him whipped this very night."

Bud Goble opened his lips to tell Mr. Riley that he could furnish him with all the evidence he needed, but suddenly remembered that that was something he intended to use for his own benefit. That was what he was holding over Toby like an overseer's whip, ready to fall whenever he didn't hoe his row right, and it was no part of his plan to expose the old negro unless the latter declined to keep him in provisions, or refused to surrender his money on demand. So he said nothing about finding that copy of the *Tribune* in Toby's cabin the night before, but came at once to the point he desired to reach.

"Then there's them boys up to the 'cademy," said he. "They need lookin' after, some of 'em, the very wust kind."

"I've heard that the school of which we have been so proud is a hotbed of treason, but I can hardly believe it," answered Mr. Riley. "No doubt there is strong love for the old Union there, as there is here in Barrington; but when the time for action comes, I think the majority of those boys will go with their States."

"But there's that Gray an' Graham boy," continued Goble; and it made him angry to notice that Mr. Riley could scarcely refrain from laughing outright. "If they was poor boys do you reckon they'd be allowed to hold out agin the 'Federacy like they do, an' talk agin it? I'll bet they wouldn't. But they are all rich. I reckon them boys' paps is wuth a power of money an' niggers."

"I don't know anything about Graham's family, but Rodney's is wealthy. His father has six hundred blacks on one plantation. You want revenge, don't you? Well, I don't see how you are going to get it, for if you fool with any of the students the others will jump on you, sure."

"Not if we whop the traitors," exclaimed Bud.

"Yes, they will. They are as clannish as a drove of wild hogs, and if one squeals the others will rush to his assistance. You had better take my advice and pocket the insult Rodney and Dick put upon you when they sent you to look for that underground railroad. Now I think I will go to the telegraph office and see if there is anything new from Montgomery. Keep us posted, for we like to know who our enemies are."

"You bet I will," soliloquized Bud as he turned away, jingling the silver pieces in his pocket as he went. "But I won't let them two boys get off easy, nuther. Six hundred niggers on one plantation. They're wuth eight hundred dollars, I reckon, take 'em big *an*' little, an' that would make 'em all wuth —"

When Bud reached this point he stopped and shook his head. Finding the value of six hundred slaves at an average price of eight hundred dollars was too much arithmetic for him. He was obliged to content himself with the knowledge that Rodney's father was worth a good deal of money, and that Rodney would give five hundred and perhaps a thousand dollars, rather than be whipped as if he were a black boy. A Southern youngster, no matter how disobedient and unruly he might be, considered it a disgrace to be whipped, and the school-teacher who ventured upon corporal punishment was likely to get himself into serious difficulty. While Bud was turning these things over in his mind, he came within sight of Elder Bowen's house.

"Riley don't care what I do to this chap," said he to himself. "That means that I can be as sassy as I please, an' mebbe I'll make up my mind that I'd better lick him before I leave. I'll wait an' see how he acts when I ax him for some of the things he's got into his smokehouse. Tell your moster I want to see him directly," he added, addressing a little black boy who was playing at the foot of the steps that led to the porch.

The pickaninny disappeared, but in a few minutes returned with the announcement—

"Marse Joe workin' in de ga'den, an' he say if you want see him you best come wha' he is."

"That's an insult that I won't put up with from no babolitionist," declared Bud, who was about as angry as he could hold; and one would have thought, from the vicious way he settled his rifle on his shoulder and crunched the gravel under his feet as he strode around the house, that he would surely do something when he found himself face to face with the object of his wrath.

The first thing that attracted the visitor's attention was a very broad back covered by a clean white shirt (Bud detested "boiled" shirts, for he had never had one of his own), and when the owner of that back straightened up and turned toward him, Bud was confronted by a man who stood six feet four without his boots, and was built in proportion. He had tucked up his sleeves to keep them from being soiled, and the white forearms thus exposed were as muscular as a blacksmith's. He had been waiting for this visit, for his boy Sam, who came from town a quarter of an hour before, had told him just what happened in the store, and warned his master that Bud had said in his speech that he was on the war-path, and meant to drive every abolitionist out of the country before he quit. But for all that the minister greeted Bud pleasantly.

"Well, neighbor Goble, what do you find to shoot this time of year?" said he. "It is rather early for young squirrels, and turkey and deer will not be on the game list before September."

"I aint a-lookin' for little game," answered Bud gruffly. "I'm huntin' for babolitionists, an' you're one of 'em."

"Well, now that you have found me what do you purpose doing about it?" inquired the stalwart minister, smiling at Bud in a way the latter did not like. Perhaps it wasn't going to be so easy, after all, to frighten him into handing over a ham or a side of meat.

"I came here pur_pose_ly to tell you that you an' your kind aint wanted round yer no longer," said Bud. "You take babolition papers an' give 'em to old Toby to read."

"Can you prove that assertion?"

"Yes, I can. I seen one of 'em in his shanty last night, an' had it into my hand."

"But can you prove that I gave it to him?"

"Yes, I can," repeated End, growing bolder by degrees. "Everybody in town says it's you who spreads them papers around, kase there's no one else who is low enough down to 'sociate with niggers."

"That will do. I have heard enough of such talk."

"But I aint got half through," protested Bud. "One man told me, not more'n half an hour ago, that if he could prove it was you who give Toby them papers, he would have you licked before sun-up."

"Ah! And what would *I* do?"

"What would you do?" echoed Bud, who did not quite catch the minister's meaning. "You'd have to cl'ar yourself or take another an' wuss lickin'. Go up to the United States where you b'long. You aint wanted here."

"You don't understand me. If the gentleman of whom you spoke should attempt any violence, would I submit to it without trying to defend myself? I don't think I should. I have a double gun with fifteen buckshot in each barrel, and you may say you have been assured by me that I will shoot the first man who puts a hostile foot on my gallery [porch]. Now go."

"Then you'll shoot—"

"Go!" interrupted the minister; and Bud ought to have been warned by the flash in his eye that he was thoroughly in earnest.

"The best men in town say—"

"Will you go peaceably," said the minister, pointing toward the gate, "or shall I be obliged to pick you up and throw you off my grounds?"

He took a single step forward as he spoke, and in an instant Bud Goble jumped back and swung his rifle from his shoulder; but before he could think twice his antagonist, whose agility equaled his strength, was upon him, the weapon was twisted from his grasp, and Bud buried his face in the soft earth of a flower-bed. But the minister was not yet done with him. Holding the rifle in one hand he seized Bud by the neck with the other, jerked him to his feet, and walked him out of the gate and into

the road at double time. Then he fired the rifle into the air and leaned the weapon against the fence.

"I think this ends our interview, neighbor Goble," said he, without the least sign of anger or excitement, "and I will bid you good-day. The next time you visit me come in a proper frame of mind, and I will receive you accordingly; but please do not bring me any more threatening messages."

"This beats me," soliloquized Goble, who, after seeing the minister disappear around the corner of the house, felt of the back of his neck to make sure that the strong fingers which grasped it a moment before had not left any holes there. "Who'd a thought that a preacher could a had sich an amazin' grip? I wasn't no more'n a babby in his hands. Now what's to be done? Be I goin' to put up with sich an insult? I guess I'd best set down yer an' think about it."

Bud Goble was a thoroughly subdued man now. The events of the morning had satisfied him that open warfare was not his best hold, and that if he hoped to accomplish anything and retain the confidence of the committee, he must make a decided change in his tactics. He must work in secret and under cover of the darkness, and now when it was too late, he wished he had adopted that method at the outset. If he had he wouldn't have lost his reputation. There were two men in the neighborhood he was quite sure he would not trouble again unless he had a strong force at his back, for they had threatened to shoot, and Bud believed they were just reckless enough to do it. When he reached this point in his meditations he chanced to look up and saw old Uncle Toby emerge from the thicket on one side of the road, take a few long, rapid steps, and disappear among the bushes on the other side. He held something tightly clasped under his coat, and seemed so anxious to avoid observation that Bud's suspicions were aroused at once.

CHAPTER IX.

THE COMMITTEE AT WORK.

Elder Bowen's negro boy Sam, who was working among the flower-beds with his master, sought safety in flight when Bud Goble's coming was announced, and, standing concealed behind an evergreen in the garden, saw and heard all that passed between the minister and the man who had come there to browbeat him. When Bud was ejected from the grounds Sam came out from his hiding-place grinning broadly.

"Marse Joe," said he, as soon as he could make himself understood, "dat beats all de sermons you ever preached all holler. It does so. But, Marse Joe, I 'fraid Marse Gobble gwine make ole Toby trouble all along of dat babolition paper. De nex' time he go dar he ax Uncle Toby whar he got dat money of his'n stowed away. Dat's what I 'fraid of, sah.'

"I didn't think of that, and perhaps it would be well for you to run over and put Toby on his guard," replied Mr. Bowen. "Neighbor Goble is on the war-path sure enough, and he would just as soon rob that old negro as to rob a white man. Tell Toby to give the money into his master's keeping."

Sam obeyed instructions, but we have seen that the suspicious old Toby was not willing to listen to advice. He was terribly alarmed when Sam told him what Bud had been about that morning, and taking advantage of his master's absence, and of his own position as helper about the stables, he dug up his money which he had buried before daylight, and posted off to the academy to have a talk with one of the Gray boys. He kept to the fields and gave the roads a wide berth; but he was obliged to cross one highway during his journey, and that was the time Bud Goble saw him. The old negro's actions excited Bud's interest as well as his suspicions, and having nothing else to do, he rose from his log and followed him.

And right here it is necessary to make a short explanation in order that you may understand what happened afterward. Rodney and Marcy Gray had been studying at the academy for almost four years, and although they were popular among all classes in and around Barrington, there were some, whites as well as blacks, who invariably got them mixed up, and never could tell one from the other unless they chanced to meet them in company. It was Rodney, the rebel, who helped Bud Goble when his family were all prostrated with the ague, and offered him a reward for finding that underground railroad, but it was Marcy, the Union boy, who picked the banjo with superior skill, danced and sung his way into the affections of the plantation darkies, and saved old Toby's melon-patch from being devastated by the students. These two had eaten a good many of old Toby's melons, and more than one Thanksgiving turkey which graced his table had been bought with their money. Believing from what

Sam told him that his hard-earned wealth was not safe as long as he knew where it was, Toby decided that one of these two boys, the one he happened to find first, should be its custodian. Dick Graham, who was on duty at the front gate, told him where Marcy was, and the old man lost no time in making his way through the woods to his friend's beat. But Marcy declined to accept the responsibility, as we have seen, and so Toby took the money back and hid it in the ground whence he had taken it. He would have been better off—almost two hundred dollars better off—if he had done as Mr. Bowen and Marcy advised him to do; for Bud Goble dogged his footsteps every rod of the way, and Toby never once suspected it. Bud did not hear what passed between Toby and the sentry—he dared not go close enough for that; but he saw the stocking that went back and forth between the iron pickets of the fence, and he was in plain sight of the negro when he returned it to its hiding-place.

Here again Toby made a great mistake. If he had concealed the money under his cabin, within hearing and scenting distance of the coon dogs that were so numerous in the quarter, it would have been comparatively safe; but he was so very much averse to having it around him that he took it behind his garden-patch, rolled a decayed log from its bed and buried it there, covering it with his hands, and rolling the log back to its place.

[Illustration: TOBY HIDES THE MONEY.]

"Dar now," said Toby, loud enough to be overheard by the man who was crouching in the bushes not more than twenty yards away. "Nuffin can't find it dar 'ceptin' de hogs, an' dey can't eat it."

"That's a fact," soliloquized Goble, chuckling to himself. "But a two-legged hog like me can eat an' wear the things it will buy. Who keers for preachers an' storekeepers now? 'Pears like this mornin's work is goin' to turn out all right after all; don't it to you?"

Through the rails of the fence Bud Goble watched Toby until he disappeared in the quarter, and then he crept up to the log. In ten minutes more old Toby's money was tightly buttoned under the breast of his coat, and Bud, highly elated with the result of his morning's labor was taking long strides toward his cabin.

"I aint got the dress an' shoes I promised to have for ye when I come home," said Bud, when he burst in upon his wife, whom he found engaged in her usual occupation—sitting in front of the fire with her elbows upon her knees and a cob pipe between her teeth. "Old man Bailey wouldn't trust me, but Toby wasn't so perticular. He hid this here stockin' under a log, an' bein' afeared that the hogs might come along an' root it up an' carry it away, I jest thought I'd take keer on it for him," added Bud, laughing loudly at his own wit.

The woman's eyes glistened as she thrust her bony arm into the stocking and brought out a handful of shining silver coin. She would have her dress now in spite of old man Bailey; and as for Toby—she gave scarcely a thought to the consternation and alarm that would almost overwhelm him when he discovered his loss, for a field hand had no business to have a stocking half-full of money, when white folks did not know where their next meal was coming from. Her only fear was that Mr. Riley might somehow learn that Bud had taken the money, and then there would be trouble.

"You must look out for that yourself," Bud declared. "I've done my part, an' if you can't hide the stockin' where nobody can't find it, an' keep a still tongue in your head about our havin' it, you aint the woman I take you for. Now give me what you think your dress'll cost, an' a trifle more to put in bacon an' meal, an' I'll go an' get 'em."

His wife complying with the request, Bud hung his rifle upon its hooks over the fireplace and posted off to Barrington, where a surprise, that was not altogether an agreeable one, awaited him. He could not find any of his friends, but every one on the street, with whom he exchanged a word of greeting, seemed to know all about the adventures he had had that day. Bud didn't mind being told that he had permitted a little old man, who could not stand against a twelve-year-old boy, to scare him with a revolver, for he was not the only one in that scrape. Four other men had stood on the outside of the counter while Mr. Bailey talked to them as he pleased; but when folks came to joke him for being walked out of the yard by a preacher, it was more than he could endure.

"Jest let him get the grip on you that he got on me, an' he'll make the best among ye walk turkey," Bud retorted sharply. "There aint a man in town that's got any business with him, if he is a preacher. But let me tell ye: He aint by no means heared the last of me yet."

Bud saw signs of suppressed excitement on all sides and in the face of every man he met; but, conceited as he was, he could not believe that the excitement was occasioned by the incidents of which he had been the hero. They might have had something to do with the grave look he saw on Mr. Riley's face as the latter hurried by him without speaking, but Bud believed that there was something else in

the wind of which he had not heard. It had such a depressing effect upon him that he transacted his business with as little delay as possible and went home.

"There's goin' to be doin's of some sort or another about yer, an' before long, too," said he, as he handed his wife the articles he had bought for her, and deposited the bag containing the meal and bacon on the floor. "I don't know what's up, but Riley an' among 'em look sorter uneasy. Mebbe that outbreak old woman, that's what's the matter, sure's you're born. That outbreak's comin', an' who knows but it'll be here this very night?"

"Good lands save us!" exclaimed Mrs. Goble, in alarm; and even her husband looked as though he would have liked to go to a little safer place than Barrington was, if he had only known where to find it.

"Yes, sir, that's jest what's the matter," repeated Bud. "Riley's somehow got wind of it, an' that's what made him look so glum. Why didn't he stop an' tell me all about it, I'd like to know. I'll jest tell him he mustn't do that a-way no more, kase it aint right long's I am workin' for that committee. Say," he continued, lowering his voice almost to a whisper. "When John Brown made that raid of his'n, Barrington was one of the places that was marked on his map to be burned, kase there was more niggers here than white folks. 'Member it, don't you?"

"Good lands!" cried Mrs. Goble, who, if she had ever before heard of the circumstance, had quite forgotten all about it.

"That's what Riley says," continued Bud, "an' who knows but the thing we've been a-dreadin' is comin' now? They do say that there's guns an' things hid somewheres in the woods—"

"You don't tell me!"

"It's jest what I do tell ye, kase I've heard it often. Of course the niggers knows where them guns is, an' when they an' the babolitionists like Elder Bowen get ready, they'll fetch 'em out an' go for us."

In a very short time Bud succeeded in talking himself into a most uncomfortable frame of mind. He did not feel quite safe at home, for his cabin was exposed, being fully a quarter of a mile from the nearest house, and he was afraid to go into town. His utter ignorance of the nature of the danger that threatened him made the situation hard to bear. As for fighting in case he were attacked—that was something Bud had not yet thought of. He would have preferred to run. His wife was so badly frightened that she could scarcely cook the dinner, and Bud could eat but little of it after it was cooked; but he smoked more than his share of tobacco, managed to run a few extra bullets for his rifle, and to bring in a supply of light-wood sufficient to keep a bright fire burning during the night.

As the sun sank out of sight behind the trees, and daylight faded and darkness came on, Bud's fears grew upon him. He dared not stay in the cabin for fear that some evil-minded Union man might slip up behind it, and shoot him through some of the cracks where the chinking had fallen out, so he drew one of the rickety chairs in front of the door and sat upon it, with his rifle for company. That was a little better than being cooped up within doors, but the unwonted silence that brooded over the surrounding woods distressed him.

"Durin' all the years we've lived yer I never seen the road so deserted as it is to-night," he said, in a whisper to his wife. "There's always somebody goin' one way or t'other, but now they seem to have holed up."

"Mebbe they're feared the outbreak'll ketch 'em," Mrs. Goble suggested.
"What does it look like, any way?"

"Now, listen at her!" exclaimed Bud, in accents of disgust. "'Tain't a hant that'll run after you, all dressed up in white, an' retch out its hands to grab—"

"Don't, don't!" cried his wife, shuddering perceptibly and covering her eyes with her hands to shut out the picture that Bud's words had conjured up. "Don't talk that a-way."

"Well, then, an outbreak is a-a-thing where the niggers an' babolitionists run around, whoopin' an' yellin' like they was wild Injuns, shootin' the men an' scalpin' the women folks an' burnin' an' stealin'," said Bud. "That's what an outbreak is, an' you can see for yourself what will happen to us if one of 'em gets loose in Barrington. I wish't somebody would come along from over town so't I could ax him how things is goin' there."

But no one came, and for long hours Bud Goble sat there, listening and peering into the darkness, and in momentary expectation of hearing or seeing something alarming. About midnight, however, the excitement began. At that hour Bud mustered up courage enough to start on a trip around the cabin,

and when he got to the back of it, where he could look through the tops of the trees toward Mr. Riley's house, he stopped as if he had suddenly been deprived of the power to go a step farther. The sky in that direction was glowing with a brighter red than he had ever seen at sunset, and the longer he looked at it, the brighter it grew. Beyond a doubt Mr. Riley's house was on fire. When this thought flashed through Bud's mind, the cold chills crept all over him, and instead of hastening to render what assistance he could in saving the planter's property, he turned and ran into the cabin, banging the door behind him, and dropped the heavy bar to its place.

"Good lands!" exclaimed Mrs. Goble, whom her husband, in his excitement and terror had upset, chair and all, in front of the fireplace.

"Don't stop to talk, old woman," said Bud, in a hoarse whisper, "but get up an' fly around an' do something. The outbreak has come like I told you it would. Riley's house is a mask of fire. If you don't b'lieve it peep through this yer crack."

For a minute or two the deep silence that reigned in the cabin was broken only by the hurried breathing of its frightened inmates, and then there came a sound from the outside—a quick, heavy step on the hard ground, followed by the fumbling of a hand for the latchstring. Bud's face grew as white as a sheet, his knees trembled under him, and the muzzle of his rifle, which he tried to point toward the door, covered every square foot of surface on that side of the cabin in two seconds' time.

"Who's there?" he demanded, in quavering tones. "Speak up, for there's a bullet comin' right through the door where you stand."

"What's the matter of the fule?" inquired the man on the outside; and
Bud recognized the voice of one of his friends. "Lemme in."

Bud was only too glad to comply. He threw up the bar, opened the door, and Silas Walker same in the man who held his rifle in the store while he was making ready to punish Mr. Bailey for refusing him credit. Bud was glad to see that he was not the only one who had been alarmed and excited by that blaze in the sky. Silas's face had no color in it to speak of, and he trembled as he moved across the floor.

"How did you get home so quick?" were the first words he spoke.

"Who? Me?" cried Bud. "I've been home sense noon; aint I, old woman?"

"Then who done it?" questioned Silas.

"Done what?"

"Set the elder's house on fire."

Bud was astounded, and so was his wife. The former looked sharply at his visitor for a moment, and then backed toward the nearest chair.

"Isn't it Riley's house?" he gasped.

"Course not. I can see it plain from my door, an' there's Riley's house standin' up safe an' sound as it ever was. It's Elder Bowen's, fast enough. I kinder thought you done it to pay him for shovin' you outen his lot by the neck, and I said to my old woman that you had sarved him jest right; but if you didn't do it, then some of that Committee of Safety must be to work."

Bud hadn't once thought of that, and it put an entirely different look on the matter. If it was true that the "outbreak had come," it must be that—

"There's a light off this a-way, too," observed Mrs. Goble, who to conceal her agitation from the visitor, had moved around the room until she found an opening between the logs through which she could look out toward Barrington. "'Pears like there might be an other house a-fire."

"Hey-youp!" yelled Bud, whose terror had given away to almost fiendish exultation. "The outbreak has come, like I said it was goin' to do, but it aint the babolitionists an' niggers that's doin' of it. It's our own friends. Come on, Sile. Me an' you mustn't hang back when there's work to be done for the 'Federacy an' danger to be met."

"Now's a good time to settle with old man Bailey," Silas remarked.

"Couldn't find a better if we tried for a whole month," replied Bud gleefully. "I knowed I would get even with him some day, but I didn't think it would come before I'd had time to sleep. Hush yer noise, old woman. Course I'm goin' up there. Riley said the 'Federacy would look for every man to do his dooty

when the time come, an' if it aint come now, I'd like to know what's the reason. Nobody won't harm you here."

In spite of the querulous protests of Mrs. Goble, who strongly objected to being left alone now that "the outbreak had come," Bud and his companion rushed out of the house and started for Barrington, running full tilt all the way for fear that the fun would all be over, and the home of every Union man in town be destroyed before they could get there to lend a hand. There was no suspicion in their minds that these two fires, located so far apart, could be the result of accident. If there was any faith to be placed in that notice in the post-office there had been an outbreak of some sort threatened, and beyond a doubt the members of the Committee of Safety had thought it wise to anticipate it by driving from Barrington every man who was suspected of being implicated in it. That was the way Bud and Silas reasoned it out, and although they were not altogether correct, they had hit pretty close to the mark.

When they reached the cross-roads, so that they could look two ways and see both the fires at once, they told each other that the houses must have been burning for some time before they knew it, for the roofs had fallen in and the blaze was beginning to die away. But where were the engines? They could not hear any bells or brakes at work, and if there were any commands given the breeze must have carried them the other way.

"That committee of our'n has got everything cut an' dried," was Bud's gleeful comment. "Let Riley an' them fellers alone for doin' things up in shape when they get at it. But it won't do for us to say that we suspicion them, for I've kinder thought, from the way they acted, that they wanted to stay behine an' pay sich chaps as me an' you for doin' the work. Now le's scoot off this a-way an' set old man Bailey agoin'."

Bud Goble, who had taken the precaution to put some matches in his pocket before leaving home, led the way along the short cut, congratulating himself on the fact that he and Silas would have a clear field for their operations, for of course the little storekeeper, and all of the rest of the men in town, were congregated at the fire. So intent were they on taking vengeance on Mr. Bailey that they did not go a step out of their way to locate the fire that was raging in town, but went straight towards the store, and without taking the least care to conceal their movements.

"It's all dark," whispered Silas. "But I don't reckon we'd best go any furder on the road. Le's go through the field an' come up behine it."

Before Bud could say a word in reply or make a motion towards acting upon the suggestion, a clear strong voice directly in front of them, and but a short distance away, called out:

"Halt! Who comes there?"

"Well, I do think in my soul!" exclaimed Silas. "Who do you reckon that is?"

Bud was frightened again, and couldn't speak. He could not see anybody, either; but if it should chance to be old man Bailey who was on the watch, wouldn't he know in a minute what it was that brought Bud there at that hour, and would he not be likely to use that revolver if he had it about him? While Bud was trying to make up his mind what he had better do, take to his heels, or stand where he was until someone came up and identified him, the challenge came again, and in more peremptory tones.

"Who comes there?" cried the voice; and the question was followed by a sound that was suspiciously like the clicking of a gun-lock.

"It's us," replied Bud, who began to think he ought to say something.

"Halt, us!" commanded the voice. "Corporal of the guard number one!"

All of this was quite unintelligible to the two men, who could scarcely have been more bewildered and alarmed if they had found themselves confronted by one of those "white things" that Bud had described to his wife; and when they heard the unmistakable sound of footsteps on the road, without being able to see who or what it was that made the noise, they could stand it no longer, but faced about and ran for their lives.

"Halt!" shouted the voice, three times in quick succession; but the frightened men did not stop. A second later there was a flash and a roar behind them, and a musket ball whistled through the air and threw up a little cloud of dust a few yards further along the road. One of those would-be incendiaries came very near getting his exemption papers that night.

CHAPTER X.

THE CALL TO ARMS.

The suppressed excitement which was so apparent to Bud Goble when he made his second trip to Barrington, was not confined to the citizens. It extended even to the military academy, but everybody there knew what caused it, although they could not look far enough into the future to see what the result of it was going to be. It was brought about by the story Marcy Gray told his friend Graham when they met in the guard-tent after dinner. Dick's cheery laugh ran out loudly when Marcy spoke about that "underground railroad business," but he looked thoughtful and angry when he learned that Bud had made up his mind to whip him for it.

"Didn't I say that he and his kind would take advantage of this excitement to get somebody into trouble?" exclaimed Dick. "The members of that Committee of Safety are going to be sorry they ever thought of getting up such an organization when there wasn't the slightest excuse for it. I say bully for Elder Bowen; and I hope every one Bud interferes with will serve him the same way."

"Well, Marcy," said Ed Billings slowly. "I can't go your Union sentiments, and I do think you ought to be slapped for preaching them up the way you do; but I'll not stand by and see Bud Goble do it. Mind that. If he opens his head to you, knock him down and I'll help."

"All the boys in school will help," said Cole. "Mr. Riley and the rest ought to be ashamed of themselves for employing such a man. We'll stand by Mr. Bailey, too."

"Of course we will," observed Dick. "Where would we get our goobers if
Bud and Silas should burn him out?"

News of all kinds travels fast among a lot of boys, and in less than an hour after Marcy had been relieved every student in school knew what Bud Goble had threatened to do to him and Dick Graham. To say that they were angry wouldn't half express it. Dixon was strongly in favor of calling for volunteers that very afternoon, paying a visit of ceremony to Bud and Silas, and telling them in plain language that if they did not stop their nonsense at once and go to work to support their families, they would have something further to say to them at some future time.

"That underground railroad business," he began.

"I didn't have the first thing to do with that," Marcy interposed. "I didn't know about it until it was all over. If Bud wants revenge, let him thrash Rodney and Dick; but he'll have to thrash me too, while he is about it."

"What's the matter with Rodney?" said Billings, in a low tone.

Rodney stood around listening but taking no part in the conversation, and every one noticed that he seemed ill at ease. When his name was mentioned, he turned about and left the tent very abruptly.

"He is so mad he dare not trust himself to speak," said Billings. "His face is as white as a sheet."

"That underground railroad business isn't at the bottom of the matter at all," continued Dixon. "That proclamation in the post-office suggested an idea to some loon, who told Goble that this school needs looking after. I don't pretend to deny it. I say that every disunionist in it ought to be chucked out of the gate neck and heels; but it will take more men than that Committee of Safety and their paid spies can muster to do it."

These sentiments were received with a howl of derision from some and enthusiastic cheers from the rest; but there was one point on which they were united: The man, or body of men, who attempted violence toward any of their number would surely suffer for it. There was one among them who had not looked for this condition of affairs, who was utterly confounded by it, and who would have given everything he possessed if he could have undone a certain piece of mischief he had perpetrated in Barrington the day before.

During the afternoon many of the students acted and felt as if they were to be called upon to perform some duty outside of the usual routine of school work. Dick Graham was not the only one among them who scouted the idea of an outbreak, while others honestly believed that such a thing was more than possible. It was even probable. There were a good many Union men round about, who were quite as fearless as the secessionists were, and who held to their opinions with as great tenacity, the negroes outnumbered the whites more than five to one, and what was there to hinder them from striking a blow for the freedom that would be sure to come to them if the people of the North made up their minds that

secession ought to be resisted by force of arms? Might it not be possible that the townspeople were justified, after all, in calling that meeting; that they had some information that the boys knew nothing about, and that the lives and property of some of Barrington's "prominent and respected citizens" might really be in jeopardy? If that was the case, and the students were ordered out to preserve order, which side would they support? Would they hang together, or would they split up into factions? Somehow the students did not like to dwell upon these questions, but dismissed them as soon they came into their minds.

When four o'clock was struck by the bell on the tower, the usual number of boys climbed the fence and set out for Barrington, and although they came back fully satisfied that there was something afoot, there was not one among them who had a word of news.

"The town looks as though it had been struck by a panic," said Dixon. "There was hardly anybody in the post-office, and the few people I saw on the streets looked as if they might be on their way to a funeral. I couldn't get a thing out of any man I saw, so I called on the Taylor girls, who told me the committee has positive evidence that there is to be an uprising among the negroes, led by such men as Elder Bowen. Of course that is all humbug. I don't believe in running, but I really think it would be pleasanter for the elder if he would sell out and go up to the United States. He's got Bud Goble down on him—"

"Did he and Bud have a squabble sure enough?"

"Naw. Bud got impudent and the elder took him by the neck and showed him the way to the gate. That's all there was of it. Of course there are a few who are mad about it, but the majority of the folks I talked with think Bud was served just right. I wish the colonel would call for volunteers to guard the elder's house of nights. I'd go for one."

As usual there was nothing said to the guard runners, and neither was there another sham fight in the hall, the trouble over the flag having been settled for a few days at least. The students were very quiet that evening, and when Dick and Marcy went on post at eight o'clock, there were no indications of the hubbub and confusion that one of them was destined to create before he was relieved at midnight. Dick thought it a part of his duty to keep watch of the town as well as over a portion of the school grounds, and when he stopped to rest, he always turned his face toward Barrington. Once he thought he heard faint shouts, and a few minutes later he was sure he saw the first rays of the rising moon; but that could hardly be, for, if he remembered rightly, the almanac said there wasn't to be any moon that night.

"By gracious!" thought Dick. "Can it be a fire?"

He glanced toward the archway to make sure that the corporal was not watching him, and then did a thing he had never done before in his life and was never guilty of afterward. He deserted his post. He opened the gate without causing the iron latch to click, and ran across the road until he came to the fence on the opposite side. This brought him out of range of a clump of trees that obstructed his vision at the gate, and also enabled him to look around the edge of the piece of woods behind which Marcy Gray was pacing his lonely beat. There was not only one fire, but there were two; and they were a mile or more apart.

"By gracious!" repeated Dick.

He pulled off his cap and felt of his hair to see if it was standing on end, and then hastened back to his post, closed the gate, and summoned the corporal of the guard.

"I was ordered to report anything that looked like a blaze," said Dick, when the non-commissioned officer came up. "Just cast your eye in that direction and tell me—"

"Great Scott!" exclaimed the corporal.

"See it, don't you?" said Dick. "Well, now, look over that way, and tell me if there isn't another just breaking out."

Dick pointed toward the woods, which were so thick that not the first glimmer of light could come through them, and although the corporal bent almost to the ground and twisted himself into all sorts of uncomfortable shapes, he was obliged to confess that he could not see anything that looked like a fire.

"I'm sure I saw it not more than a minute ago," said Dick, who, of course, did not tell the corporal that he had been several yards from his post when he saw it. "Perhaps if you go across the road you can get a view of it."

The corporal went, and one look was enough to satisfy him. When he returned he was highly excited.

"The niggers are at it, sure as you live," said he. "That's right in range of Mr. Riley's house."

"Too far to the right for that," replied the sentry. "Looks to be more like Elder Bowen's."

"It can't be," exclaimed the corporal incredulously. "The negroes wouldn't hurt him."

"No; but the secessionists might."

"Well, I—eh?"

"I tell you the boot's on the other foot," said Dick confidently. "It's Union property that's being destroyed this moment, and you'll find it out to-morrow. Why don't you go in and report?"

The non-commissioned officer thought it best to act upon the suggestion. He ran into the building, and when he returned he was accompanied by the officer of the guard, who took a long look at the two fires before he went in to call the colonel. Then the latter hurried out and took a look, and the two talked in low, earnest tones; and although Dick and the corporal listened with all their ears, they could not catch a word that gave them a hint of the course they had decided to pursue. But they found out when the long roll echoed through the building, being followed almost immediately by a shuffling of feet which announced that the students were hastening to the armory. After five minutes or so of silence so deep that Dick could hear the beating of his own heart, two companies of boys, fully armed and equipped, marching four abreast and moving with a free, swinging stride that took them rapidly over the ground, emerged from the archway, passed through the gate and turned down the road leading to Barrington. At the same time a quartermaster-sergeant put ten rounds of ammunition into Dick's cartridge-box and ordered him to load his piece.

"Ball cartridges?" inquired Dick.

"Correct," replied the sergeant. "If you halt a fellow and he don't halt, these are the things that will make him halt."

"Say," whispered Dick. "Hang around a minute; I want to ask you a question or two."

The sergeant "hung around" until the officer of the guard started with the corporal to make his round of the posts, and then began without waiting for the sentry to question him.

"There isn't any thing to tell," said he. "The colonel made a little speech to the boys in which he said that some fanatics, who ought to be hanged without judge or jury, were destroying property in town, and it was our business to put a stop to it if we could. He sent two companies, and the others have been furnished with ball cartridges which they are to use on anybody who comes fooling around here."

"Did the colonel say who those fanatics were?" asked Dick.

"Eh? Course he didn't. We all know who they are."

"Who are they?"

"Aw! Go up to the United States, you Yankee."

"Hold on a bit," said Dick, as the sergeant was about to turn away. "I ask for information; I do indeed. Does he think the negroes have broken out?"

"*And* abolitionists? Of course he does. That's what we all think. It's what we know."

"Say," continued Dick. "The night is quiet, and the little breeze there is stirring blows toward us from town, doesn't it? Now listen. Do you hear any fire-bells ringing?"

"That's so," replied the sergeant; and Dick thought he was reluctant to say it. "I don't hear a tinkle."

"That's all I've got to say," added Dick, as he settled his musket on his shoulder and began pacing his beat. "On a still night like this you can hear those big church bells four or five miles, and there hasn't one of them said a word since those fires began. I noticed that from the start."

Dixon, the tall Kentuckian, who was marching with his company toward Barrington, also took note of the fact that the bells, which usually made noise enough to arouse the planters for miles around when there was a fire, were silent now, and he called attention to it. He also noticed that the house that was burning in town belonged to a prominent and outspoken Union man; that both the engines were disabled (at least the foremen said they were); that the crowd around the house stood with their hands

in their pockets, making no effort to keep the flames from spreading to the house of another Union man close by; and that Mr. Riley and a few other members of the Committee of Safety, who appeared to be full of business, but who, in reality, were doing just nothing at all, looked surprised and perplexed when the students marched up and came to a halt at the corner of the street. There was still another thing that the observant Dixon noticed and commented upon, and that was, that the colonel was not in command as he ought to have been. The colonel did not think it would be policy to take too firm a stand until he had learned whether his State was going to stay in the Union or go out of it; and so he sent in command of the students a teacher who had not yet made up his mind which side he favored. Dixon had always believed that he leaned toward the Union; and when he marched back to the academy the next morning about daylight, he was sure of it.

"I am surprised to see you here, Captain Wilson," said Mr. Riley, who was the first man to meet him when he brought the students to a halt.

"And I am surprised to see a man of your calibre get as nervous and excited over a little fire as you seem to be," replied the captain, in significant tones. "If I may presume to ask the question, how does it come that yon are on the ground so early when there are no alarm-bells ringing? What is the reason those engines are not at work? There's water enough."

"I happened to be awake when the fire broke out, and that's the way I come to be here," answered Mr. Riley sharply. "And the reason those engines are not playing on the flames is because they can't do it with their valves out of order. Really, captain, this looks to me like an uprising."

"It's the way it looks to me, too. Attention."

"What are you going to do?"

"I am going to get my men in position to carry out my orders, which are to protect property," answered the captain. "I shall put a guard around the house of every Union man in town."

"Why, Captain," exclaimed Mr. Riley. "You don't pretend to say that—"

"I don't pretend to say anything but this," interrupted the captain. "When the houses of two Union men, situated more than a mile apart, get on fire at the same time, and no bells are rung, and the engines can't work because they are out of order, and a big crowd like this stands about without lifting a finger to save anything when all these things happen, it makes me suspect that there are firebugs around, and that they are after Union men and nobody else. At any rate I shall act on that suspicion. These muskets are loaded with ball, and if any one attempts to apply a match to a building in the presence of my guards, he'll get hurt."

"Three cheers for Captain Wilson," shouted some Union boys in the ranks.

"Silence!" commanded the captain. He was angry enough to put that boy under arrest, but not foolish enough to try to find out who he was. He knew by past experience that the students would not tell tales on one another.

The captain was as good as his word. Paying no attention to the protests of the different members of the committee who gathered about him, the details were quickly made, and so it came about that Dixon and five others, including a non-commissioned officer, found themselves guarding Mr. Bailey's store. Another and much larger squad was sent down the road at double time to see what they could do to assist Elder Bowen.

"Go up that by-path a piece, Dixon," said the corporal, as he stepped upon the porch that ran in front of old man Bailey's door. "Keep your eye peeled for fire-bugs, and if you see—"

"Hey, there!" shouted a voice from the inside of the store. "Get off that porch."

"On the watch, are you?" replied the corporal. "Well, we'll watch too, if you will give us some candy to eat while we are doing it. Come out and see the Union men burn up. It will be your turn next."

Mr. Bailey was astonished—at least the corporal thought he was, for he heard him talking to himself as he stumbled around in the dark searching for a jar of candy. The old man had not looked for anything like this. Being on the watch he knew when the fire in town broke out, and believing that Bud Goble was at work, he began patroling his store with his revolver in his hand, ready to give the incendiaries a warm reception if they came near him. This was what the old man told the corporal when he opened the door and passed out the candy and a bag of peanuts.

"The nuts are for Graham, if he is with you," said he. "I never saw such an appetite as that boy's got for goobers."

"But he isn't here," replied the corporal. "He is on guard at the academy. Now tell me all you know about this business. I'm here to guard your property, although I can't see the sense of it. Mr. Riley wouldn't let Bud touch you."

"I don't think he would if he knew it, for he knows just where I stand," answered Mr. Bailey. "But Bud might take it into his crazy head to operate on his own hook, and that is what I am afraid of."

"Halt!" shouted Dixon, who had scarcely taken the position assigned him before he discovered Bud and Silas coming.

"There!" exclaimed Mr. Bailey. "I'll bet that's Bud. If it isn't, what is he sneaking around toward the back of the store for?"

"All right," replied the corporal. "I'll give him such a scare that he'll never trouble you again. If he doesn't tell a pretty straight story I'll march him before Captain Wilson."

As he spoke he stepped off the porch and started toward Dixon's post, and it was the sound of his footsteps that frightened Bud and his companion into a run. He was really alarmed when he heard the report of Dixon's piece.

"You've played smash on your watch, old fellow," said he, as he hastened to the sentry's side.

"Can't help it," was Dixon's answer. "Orders are orders."

"Who was it?"

"Bud Goble for one. I recognized his voice; but I don't know who his companion was."

"Did you hit either of them?"

"Guess not. I shot to hit if they were firebugs, and to miss if they were not. They both ran away, so I reckon they were innocent of any wrong intent; but they ought to have stopped when I told them."

The corporal walked up the road a few hundred yards, but could not see anything of Bud and his friend. They had taken themselves safely off. Just as he got back to Dixon's post a sentry on the other side of the store shouted out a challenge.

"I told you you had played smash," said the corporal. "The captain has come up to inquire into the matter."

That was just who the new-comer was, as the corporal found when he responded to the sentry's call; but he did not have a word of fault to find with the way Dixon had obeyed orders. His men had been commanded to halt everybody who came near their beat, and to fire upon all who did not come in and give an account of themselves. He was excited, and possibly expressed his sentiments with more freedom in the presence of his non-commissioned officer than he ought to have done.

"Dixon did right," said he. "The colonel told me to protect property, and if he doesn't approve of the measures I have taken to do it, he can send somebody else in command the next time he finds it necessary to order out a company of students. These are terrible times, corporal, and they are getting worse every day. Terrible times when neighbors are turned against one another as they seem to be in this town."

"It's some consolation to know that they can't be much worse, sir," observed the corporal.

"My dear boy, you haven't seen the beginning of it," replied the captain sadly. "I don't think you will be troubled again to-night, but carry out your orders to the letter. That's all you have to do."

Whether or not the colonel's prompt action in sending two hundred armed students into town operated as a check upon the firebugs (if there were any), the boys did not know; but when daylight came and the sentries were called in, and the column formed preparatory to marching back to the academy, they were all satisfied of one thing: They had made any number of enemies among the townspeople by their night's work.

"We've made a blunder, sure's you're born," said Billings angrily.

"Tell us something we don't know," said the boy who marched at his elbow. "I saw *that* the minute Mr. Riley came up and spoke to the captain. But what got it through your head at this late hour?"

"I wouldn't have had it happen for anything," continued Billings. "We've got every member of that Committee of Safety down on us, and they are the best men in town. They wouldn't even look at me

when they passed my beat, but always turned their heads as if they did not want to see me."

"Who cares for that?" demanded Dixon. "If they want to get down on us because we carried out our orders, let 'em get. If their arrangements have been interfered with, let them go up to the academy and look cross at the colonel. He's the man."

"Well, I know one thing," observed Cole. "If the colonel wants to send any more boys into town on an errand like this, he'll send somebody besides me. I'll refuse duty."

"Hear, hear!" exclaimed every one of the students who were close enough to Cole to catch his words.

The boys who had been left at the academy were not turned out to receive their returning comrades, who marched to the armory looking more like culprits than like boys who had tried to do their duty, ordered arms spitefully, and broke ranks sullenly.

"What's the meaning of this, I'd be pleased to know?" Dixon demanded of Marcy Gray and Dick, who were the first to greet him. "Where's our speech of welcome? Why doesn't the colonel pat us on the back and say: 'Well done, little boys?'"

"This is the reason," answered Dick. "Shortly after I was relieved, a delegation from that Committee of Safety rode up and interviewed the colonel for half an hour."

"Aha!" exclaimed Dixon. "We stepped on their toes, didn't we? Well, we suspected it from the first. Some of the fellows declare they'll not go another time, but I will. As long as I stay here I'm going to obey orders, I don't care what they are."

"I don't think you will ever be called upon for like service again," said Marcy. "The colonel has had a lesson of some kind. He looks as though he had lost his best friend. Heigh-o!" he added, stretching his arms and yawning. "What's the next thing on the programme? Will Fort Sumter be reinforced?"

Dixon couldn't say as to that, but there was one thing of which he was sure: This backing and filling on both sides couldn't last much longer, and the first thing they knew there would be an explosion of some sort, and it would come from Charleston harbor.

The students were not disturbed again that night, and on the following day things passed off much as they usually did, only the colonel, to quote from Dixon, was cross and snappish, not having had time to get over pouting about the lesson he had received the night before. During the day it leaked out that Mr. Riley and his friends had talked to him very plainly, told him that it was absolutely necessary for the peace and safety of the town that the Union men should be driven out of it, and that the colonel's interference with the committee's plans was, to say the least, unfriendly to the cause of the South. It was also reported that the colonel had promised he would never do the like again.

"That means destruction to the Union men," said Marcy, in a tone of contempt. "I believe I'll go home. I don't care to serve under a man who has no more pluck than the colonel seems to have."

If he had started at once he might have saved himself some anxiety, and would certainly have carried away with him a better opinion of his cousin Rodney than he had two days later.

CHAPTER XI.

BUD'S MESSENGER IN TROUBLE.

Although the hours from four until six in the afternoon were devoted to recreation, it was expected that those of the students who wished to visit friends in town would ask for a pass before attempting to leave the grounds; but we have seen that they didn't. There were some professional guard-runners among them, and on this particular afternoon they appeared in full force.

"Come on, old fellow," Billings shouted to Marcy Gray, who was carrying a camp-chair toward a spreading maple that stood near the guard tent.

"No; I think I will stay here and try to read," replied Marcy. "I know this book will not quarrel with me, but some of the Barrington people might. There must be a good deal of excitement down there, and

I shouldn't think you would care to go."

"It's the very reason we do care to go," replied Rodney, who, with Dick Graham at his side, was taking long steps toward the fence that separated the academy grounds from the woods. "We want to see what the folks think of last night's work. They'll not say a word to Dick and me, for we were not there."

"You'll find that that will not make any difference," said Marcy. "They are down on the school, and you two will have to stand snubbing with the rest."

Dick laughed and said he did not believe it, and he and his companion kept on to the fence, which they climbed without a word of remonstrance from the sentry, who was obliging enough to turn his back when he saw them coming. Marcy watched them until they disappeared in the bushes, and then fastened his eyes on his book; but he could not read. The air was too full of excitement for that, and he could do nothing but think. How he passed the time until the guard-runners and those who had received passes began to return from town, he could not have told. There was a good deal of feeling among the best of the Barrington people, they said, but the members of the committee did not blame the academy boys for marching into town. On the contrary, they were rather gratified at the promptness with which they "showed up"; for it was an indication that they would not be found wanting when the critical time came; but they did not like the way the commandant had of meddling with their municipal affairs, and had sent Mr. Riley and some others to extort from him a promise that he would never be guilty of it again.

"So that report was true," said Dixon, who brought this news to Marcy Gray, "and that was the lesson the colonel has been pouting over all day. He gave Mr. Riley the assurance that no matter what happened in Barrington, not a single boy of us should be allowed outside the grounds with a musket in his hand."

"Rodney didn't come home with you, did he?" said Marcy. "I wish he would make haste, for I should like to get my mail. Do you know where he is?"

"That reminds me of something I made up my mind to ask you the minute I got here," answered Dixon; and Marcy judged, by the furtive manner in which he looked around to make sure there was no one within earshot, that he did not want anybody else to know what he had to say. "Has Rodney anything in common with that villain, Bud Goble?"

"Not by a long shot," exclaimed Marcy indignantly. "Why do you ask?
Don't you know him any better than that?"

"I thought I did; but the last time I saw him and Dick Graham, they were searching everywhere for Bud. Graham is, or *was*, all right; there's no discount on him, but—"

"But what?" demanded Marcy, when Dixon paused. "Don't say a word behind
Rodney's back that you would not say to his face."

"I won't," replied Dixon, who was neither angry nor frightened. "I hope you have been acquainted with me long enough to know that I am not that sort of fellow. I say Dick is all right, because he will not make a move either way until his State moves; and in the mean time, he will not want to do harm to those whose opinions differ from his own. But, Marcy Gray, that cousin of yours is about half crazy."

"That's a fact," said Marcy, after thinking a moment.

"Consequently Rodney is *not* all right, and there's a heavy discount on him," continued Dixon. "He is down on everybody who does not think as he does, and I am afraid—Look here: Why is Rodney so anxious to see Bud Goble if it isn't to put him up to some mischief?"

"That's so," replied Marcy thoughtfully. "Why is he?"

"There was a time when Rodney's blood would have boiled at the idea of standing by and seeing helpless people served as those two Union men were served by the members of Mr. Riley's committee last night, but it isn't so now," continued Dixon. "He believes that Northern sympathizers ought to be punished, and he don't care how it is done or who does it!"

"But Dick Graham is with Rodney, and you think Dick is all right," Marcy reminded him. "Dick wouldn't be likely to stay with him if he thought Rodney was going to put any more mischief into Bud Goble's head."

"Dick was all right the last time I talked with him, but how do I know but that Rodney has succeeded in bringing him over to his side."

"Oh, I hope not," said Marcy earnestly. "I'll speak to Rodney when he comes, and tell him to let all such fellows as Goble alone. Don't repeat what you have said to me, will you?"

"Of course not. I think too much of Rodney for that, and if he gets himself into trouble through his foolishness, I'll be one of the first to jump in and help him out."

Marcy was on nettles after Dixon went away, and it is a question whether he would have felt much easier in his mind if he had known why it was that his cousin was so anxious to find Bud Goble. Rodney did not want to put any more mischief into the man's head; he wanted to take out some he had put there two days before. He did not feel as bitter toward Marcy and Dick Graham as he did when he slipped away from his friends on the evening that Confederate flag came to him through the post-office, and wrote that letter calling Bud's attention to the fact that there were some Union boys in the academy who ought to be told that their room was better than their company. The threats that Bud had made against Marcy, and the destruction of the property of those two Union men, frightened Rodney, who would have given up all his worldly prospects to know just how much his letter to the paid spy had to do with bringing about the present state of affairs. His desire now was to stop Bud before he could go any further.

Marcy, depressed in spirits and fearing, he knew not what, waited and watched in vain. Dress parade was over, supper had been eaten, and the gate closed for the night, and still Rodney and Dick had failed to report.

"I feel a little worried myself," said Dixon, to whom Marcy went for sympathy and comfort. "And I don't believe Captain Wilson is altogether right in his mind, for I have heard him making inquiries among the boys. In fact he has been to me to find out where I last saw the missing chaps, and what they were doing. But don't be uneasy. I didn't tell him that they were looking for Bud Goble. I almost wish I had," he added, to himself. "I may have to do it yet if they don't turn up all right."

"Captain Wilson doesn't think they could have got into any trouble, does he?" said Marcy anxiously.

"He didn't say a word on that score."

"But it looks as though he was afraid of it," replied Marcy. "If he wasn't afraid something had happened to them he would not ask about them."

This interview with Dixon would have added to Marcy's fears, even if he had not learned, as he did a few minutes later, that all the boys in the hall were talking about it, and wondering what had become of Rodney and Dick. Like many others these two had openly defied all the rules for weeks past, but they had never before stayed out after dark, and some of the students declared that they wouldn't do it now if they were not prevented from coming back to the academy. When Marcy heard this, he decided that something ought to be done. He went upstairs and told the orderly to ask if he might speak to the colonel.

"I think I know what you want," whispered the orderly, "and I tell you plainly that he won't let you do it. But I'll go in with your message."

There were others among the students who thought they knew what Marcy wanted, and who followed him to the head of the stairs to "see how he would come out with the old man." The orderly disappeared through the colonel's door, but came out a few minutes afterward to report—

"What did I tell you?"

"What did he say?" inquired Marcy.

"He says he doesn't want to be bothered. I put in a good word for you, suggesting that perhaps you wanted permission to go to Barrington and see what has become of Rodney, and he said in reply that you need not trouble yourself. You could not go. He will not allow a boy outside the gate after dark, no matter what his business is, and he'll chuck Rodney and Dick into the guard-house the minute they return, and keep them there."

For the first time since he had been a student at that school Marcy Gray felt rebellious. He stood high in his class, was always on hand when duty called him, never ran the guard, hadn't asked for a pass for more than a week, and for the colonel to send him off in this way, without even listening to the request he had to make, was rather more than Marcy could stand.

"I was going to ask him to let me go to town and see if I could learn what has become of Rodney and Dick," said he to the boys who were waiting for him at the top of the stairs. "But he sent word by the orderly that he wouldn't see me. I'm going to Barrington all the same."

"Do you want company?" asked Dixon.

"I should like to have three or four good fellows," replied Marcy, "but mind you, I shall not ask anybody to go with me. I am bound to get into trouble."

"Well, you can't find any better guard-house companion than I am," answered Dixon.

"I'm another good fellow for that cheerful hole," observed Billings. "I ought to be, for I've been there often enough."

Bob Cole said he was a third candidate for a court-martial, announced his determination to go if Billings went, whether Marcy said so or not, and the latter decided that three boys were as many as he cared to bring into trouble on account of their friendship for him and the missing students.

"Now, fellows," whispered Dixon to the other boys who were gathered about. "You stay in the hall, and if anybody asks you where we have gone, you can tell him you don't know. Be quiet now, all of us, and don't act or look as though there was anything in the wind."

This was easier said than done, for now that these four students had decided to run counter to the colonel's express orders, and find out what had become of Rodney Gray and his companion, they were impatient to be off. But three of their number managed to leave the hall without attracting very much attention, and halted in the shade of the trees to wait for Dixon, who, being an experienced guard-runner, had loitered behind to ascertain who were on posts three and four, between which they would have to pass in order to reach the fence.

"They're solid boys," said he, when he joined Marcy and the rest under the trees. "If we can get close enough to give them a hint of what we want to do before they challenge us, they'll let us through. After we get a little farther along, perhaps it would be best for me to go on ahead."

Of course the suggestion was adopted, for among all the boys in school there was not one who knew how to manage affairs of this sort better than Dixon. He succeeded in getting within sight of one of the sentries without being stopped, made him understand, in some mysterious way, that secrecy was not only desirable but necessary, and in a few minutes whistled for his companions. Such a proceeding as this would not have been successful, nor would it have been attempted, at any other time in the history of the academy.

"I've been thinking about those two boys ever since I came on post," said the sentry, in a low tone. "And I am glad you have made up your minds to go in search of them, in spite of the colonel. Crawl over whenever you get ready, but I mustn't see you do it."

The sentry faced about, and the four guard-runners placed their hands upon the fence and were about to "crawl over," when their movements were arrested by a sound coming from the thicket close in front of them. Remembering how old Uncle Toby had approached Marcy Gray's post, they stopped and listened.

"St—St—!" was the sound they heard, and something told them that the person who made it desired to communicate with them secretly.

"Who is it?" whispered Dixon.

"It's me," answered a voice.

"Who's me? If you are a friend come out and show yourself. If you are an enemy, get away from there or we will be down on you like a shower-bath."

"It's me; Caleb Judson. Don't you know me?"

"Whew!" whistled Dixon softly, while the rest of the boys nodded and winked at one another. "It's one of Bud Goble's friends. Are we not in luck? I know of you," he said aloud. "But what are you doing there in the bushes? Come close to the fence and tell us what you want. Be quiet, for there are guards on both sides, and we mustn't let them hear us."

Thus encouraged, Caleb Judson arose from his hiding-place and came forward; but, as if he were afraid of treachery, he halted just out of reach of the fence.

"That won't do," said Dixon. "Come up close so that we can talk between the pickets. It's too late for you to run now, even if you wanted to. You see this fellow?" he added, calling Caleb's attention to the sentry, who came up holding his musket at "arms port." "That gun of his has got a bullet in it, and his orders are—"

"Don't shoot," said Caleb; and in his excitement and alarm he spoke so loud that the boys trembled.

"Don't you know enough to keep still?" exclaimed Marcy angrily. "No one is going to hurt you. Come up to the fence. Now, what brought you here? Talk fast."

"Well," said Caleb, speaking slowly, as if he did not know how to explain his errand; "you mind them Gray an' Graham boys, don't ye?"

"We have a slight acquaintance with them," answered Dixon. "What about them? Do you want to see them?"

"See 'em?" repeated Caleb. "I jest did see 'em, not more'n an hour ago."

"Um," said Dixon. "Where did you leave them?"

"Down in the woods on Riley's place, a little piece back of nigger Toby's cabin. Bud Goble's got 'em."

"Hold on, or you will spoil everything," whispered Dixon, looking over his shoulder at Marcy Gray, who began breathing very hard and trying to work his way closer to the fence. "What does Bud intend to do with them?"

"Well, it's jest this a-way," replied Caleb. "A day or two ago Bud got a letter from somebody tellin' him that them two boys oughter be drove outen the kentry, kase they was Union all over an' preachin' up their docterings as often as they got a chance. Bud, he thought so too, an' this afternoon he grabbed 'em."

"Who wrote that letter?" inquired Dixon.

"There don't none of us know; Bud himself don't know, kase there wasn't no name to it."

"It was written by some coward who was afraid to let himself be known, was it? And Bud acted upon the advice that letter contained and grabbed the boys, did he? How did he go about it?" inquired Dixon; and his three companions, who knew how quick he was to get angry, wondered that he could speak so quietly and without the slightest show of excitement.

"When they was in town to-day Bud sont 'em word that there was a sick man up the road a piece, an' asked them would they get some quinine an' take it to him," replied Caleb.

"And of course they went," said Dixon, through his clenched teeth. "Bud worked upon their feelings and caught them as easy as falling off a log. When they got to that cabin there wasn't any sick man there, but a party of ruffians who jumped on Rodney and Dick and made prisoners of them," added Dixon, who was so impatient that he could not wait for Caleb to tell the story. "Was that the way of it?"

"It were; but you see he got the wrong one. Both of 'em are the wrong ones."

"How so?"

"Well, you see they're the wrong ones; not the ones he thought he was goin' to get. Rodney is secession the very wust kind."

"Of course he is; and Graham is State rights, which is the next thing to a rebel. Well, what of it?"

"Rodney is the wrong one, I tell ye. We-uns wanted the other Gray boy—the Union feller."

"What would you have done to him if you had got hold of him?"

"We-uns kalkerlated to lick him good an' send him outen the kentry with a striped jacket."

Caleb did not hesitate to acknowledge this. He had heard it said that there were some wild secessionists in the school, and taking his cue from the Barrington people, who thought it right to destroy the property of Union men, he believed that the students who were in favor of the Confederacy would be willing to take summary vengeance upon those of their number who were foolish enough to stand up for the old flag. But he thought it would be wise to make sure of that point before he went any further.

"You're Jeff Davis men, I reckon, aint ye?" said he "We are for the South every day in the week," replied Dixon. "When the Stars and Stripes are pulled down and the Stars and Bars run up in their place, I'll holler as loud as the next fellow. You may speak freely."

Caleb might have had some doubts on that point if he could have seen the flashing eyes and clenched

fists there were on the other side of the fence. But Dixon spoke so calmly, in spite of the towering rage he was in, that the man's suspicions were not aroused.

"You calculated to whip Rodney and drive him out of the country; but when you learned that he was a good rebel, you thought you wouldn't do it," said Dixon. "Is that the way of it? Then what are you holding him for? Why don't you let him come home?"

"All the company was in for lettin' both of 'em go, 'ceptin' Bud. He wouldn't hear to it."

"What sort of a company have you?"

"One we-uns got up yesterday and last night while them houses was burnin'. Minute men, you know, who are ready to grab their guns an' fight in a minute. Bud wanted to capting the company, but we-uns put in another feller, an' mebbe that makes him madder t'wards the boys than he would be if he was capting."

"Very likely; and it is a good idea to pound them for it. What was the reason he wouldn't listen when you proposed to let Rodney go?"

"Kase Rodney an' that Graham boy was the fellers that offered to give him a hunderd dollars if he would show them where that underground railroad was that used to tote the niggers off to Canady," replied Caleb. "Bud says they needn't think they're ever goin' to come back to the 'cademy less'n he gets them hunderd dollars. He looked for the railroad in good faith, an' allows that he'd oughter be paid for his time an' trouble."

"And this is the way he takes to get his pay, is it? Well, he must have it, and if I have any influence with the boys he will get more than he asks for. But why did you come here to tell us this?"

"Kase Bud sont me up here to get the money."

"You know right where he is, I suppose?"

"I do, for a fac'."

"Are there many men with him?"

"Nobody but jest Silas Walker. The rest of the company wouldn't have nothing to do with it, an' so they went home."

"And you expect us to send the money back by you, do you? How much of it will you get?"

"Not a dog-gone cent. I don't want none of it. I come kase I want to see them two boys let go. Hold on, there. What you doin'?" exclaimed Caleb, when he felt himself suddenly seized by the elbow and his whole arm pulled through the fence. "Turn me loose."

"Take hold of the other arm, Billings," said Dixon quietly. "Now, old man, keep perfectly still and do just as you are told, and no harm shall come to you. You are friendly to Rodney and Dick, and that makes us friendly toward you. Come over the fence. Up you go."

"What for?"

"We want you to tell the officer of the guard, and perhaps the colonel, just what you have told us, word for word."

"By gracious, boys, you're going to get me into a pretty mess," said the sentry nervously. "You can't get him over without alarming the whole school, and how shall I explain matters to the corporal? He's a chap who will not stand any nonsense. Come over that fence," he added, an idea striking him; and as he spoke he drew up his loaded musket and pointed it at Caleb's head. "Quick and still, or I'll cut loose."

The sight of the black muzzle that looked him squarely in the eye was too much for Caleb's nerves. Beseeching the sentry, in whining tones, to turn that weapon t'other way, he shinned up the pickets, Dixon and Billings shifting their hold from his arms to his legs and feet as he ascended, and in two minutes more he stood within the academy grounds.

CHAPTER XII.

"There," said Dixon soothingly. "I told you you shouldn't be hurt if you obey orders without making any fuss. Now come with us, and don't speak above a whisper."

"What do you reckon the kurn'll do to me?" inquired Caleb, who could scarcely have been more frightened if the students had threatened him as Bud Goble had threatened Rodney and Dick.

"He'll not do the first thing to you," Billings assured him. "Why should he when you come here as a friend to those two prisoners? We'll see you safe outside the gate as soon as the officers are through questioning you."

"An' will you-uns give me the money?" asked Caleb. "If you don't, them boys is bound to get whopped."

"Did Bud say so?"

"He made that same remark. An' he said, furder, that if I wasn't back by sun-up with the hunderd dollars, he would know you-uns had held fast to me, an' then he would lick 'em, sure hope to die."

"I promise you that you shall be back there before sunrise," said Dixon significantly. "We can't permit those fellows to be whipped on account of a joke, and we won't, either. You are quite sure you can go straight to him?"

Yes, Caleb was sure he could do that; and then his conductors, who had all the while held fast to his arms, halted in front of Captain Wilson, the officer of the guard, who chanced to be pacing back and forth in front of the tent. The captain listened in amazement while the boys told their story, and the light from the tent showed that there was a shade of anxiety on his face when he inquired:

"Where did you find this man?"

"Outside the grounds, sir," Dixon promptly responded.

"And what were you doing outside the grounds at this hour, when you know that such a thing is positively forbidden?" continued the officer severely.

"I had started for Barrington, sir," answered Marcy. "The commandant wouldn't give me a chance to ask permission to go."

"And so you went without it?"

"Yes, sir, I did. I was resolved to learn something about Rodney and Dick before I slept."

"I shall be obliged to shut you up," said the captain.

"Very good, sir," replied Marcy. "But how about Rodney and Dick? Is that villain Goble to be permitted to abuse them as he pleases?"

"I am surprised at your insolence, Private Gray," said the officer sternly. "Go inside the tent under arrest."

Marcy went, and all the boys, as well as Caleb Judson, went in with him, and Captain Wilson hastened away to lay the matter before the colonel.

"Now, I'll tell you what's a fact," said Marcy. "Captain Wilson would do something for those boys if he were in command, but the colonel will not do the first thing."

"So be it," answered Billings. "Then we'll see whether or not the fellows will do something. They are not the lads I take them for if they do not rally on center the minute they find out how the land lies."

"What's up?" whispered a student, thrusting his head into the tent and then looking back to see if there was any one coming. "Who's that gentleman" (nodding at Caleb), "and what are you doing in there?"

"In arrest for being sassy," replied Cole. "Say—"

Here all the boys got upon their feet, stepped to the door and held a short but earnest conversation with the student outside, who muttered, ejaculated, and scratched his head in a way that indicated the profoundest surprise and bewilderment. Then he said: "You bet I'll do it," disappeared around the corner of the tent, and the boys ran back to the table, beside which they stood, with their caps off and

their hands to their foreheads, when the officer of the guard came in accompanied by the colonel. The latter looked and acted as if the burden of his responsibility was too heavy for him to carry; and the worst of it was, it was growing heavier every day. He was out of patience, too, and as cross as a bear.

"What sort of a cock-and-bull story is this I hear about Sergeant Gray and Private Graham?" said he snappishly. "I am in no humor for wasting words."

"Neither are we, sir," Marcy replied boldly. "My cousin is in trouble, and I should like to have him helped out of it."

"If he hadn't run the guard and gone to town without permission, he wouldn't be in trouble," answered the colonel. "Now let me hear the story from beginning to end, and in as short a space of time as possible."

Marcy Gray and Dixon could talk to the point when they made up their minds to it, and the colonel was not kept in his chair a second longer than was necessary to make him understand just how Rodney and Dick were situated. That the recital made him nervous was plain from the way he rubbed his hands together and tumbled his hair about his forehead.

"Well, what do you expect me to do about it?" he asked, when the story was concluded.

"We should like to have you send an officer down there, under guidance of this man Judson, and rescue those boys," said Marcy.

"That is the duty of the civil authorities, and I cannot interfere with them," replied the colonel, in a tone which seemed to say that the matter was settled so far as he was concerned. "Last night I tried to do a friendly turn for the citizens of Barrington, but I will never do it again. They can be burned up or whipped for all I care."

"But, sir, these boys are not citizens of Barrington," said Dixon. "They are pupils of this school, and as such they are entitled to all the aid and comfort it is in your power to give them."

"When I think I need to be instructed in my duty toward those who are placed under my care, I will send for you, Private Dixon," replied the colonel loftily; but the boys all saw, and so did the officer of the guard, that he could not make up his mind how to act under the circumstances. The colonel knew well enough that there was little dependence to be placed upon the Barrington authorities, and that the surest way to help Rodney and Dick was to do as Marcy suggested; but he could not make a move without running the risk of offending the influential members of the Committee of Safety. As he spoke he pointed toward the door, and Dixon saluted and went out.

"In order to relieve your suspense, Private Gray, I will tell you what I purpose doing," continued the colonel. "I will send this man with a note to the police justice in town, and request him to take some steps looking to your cousin's release. That is all I can do."

"An' will you give me the hunderd dollars to hand to Bud?" inquired
Caleb.

"I shall not give you a cent."

"Then I sha'n't go nigh Bud, an' that's flat," declared Caleb, with more spirit than he had previously exhibited. "Them chaps will get licked if I don't have that money to hand to Bud when I see him, an' I aint wantin' to get into trouble."

Dixon, who was loitering about on the outside of the tent, did not wait to hear any more, but posted off to the hall, where he found an excited, almost frantic, crowd of students impatiently looking for some one to come from the guard tent and tell them what the commandant had decided to do.

"Colonel," said Marcy, whose white face showed how desperate was the conflict that was raging within him, and how hard it was to be respectful to the man who had it in his power to help Rodney, and who refused to use that power because he was afraid of the Barrington secessionists. "Your plan will not work, sir."

"I can't help it," was the colonel's answer. "It is the only thing I can do. If Rodney had stayed within bounds he would not be in need of help. Now go, all of you."

As soon as they were safe out of the tent Marcy caught Caleb by the arm and whispered—

"If the colonel hands you a note to carry to town, don't go away with it until I see you again. If you do you may get into difficulty. I'll raise some money for you."

"That's talking sense," said Caleb, in the same cautious whisper. "It's the only way to get 'em off without a lickin'."

"Look here," exclaimed Billings, as the three moved away leaving Caleb standing near the guard tent. "Are you going to raise a hundred dollars for Goble?"

"Not much. I don't think I could; but I'm going to raise something to pay Caleb for guiding me to Bud's hiding-place."

"Bully for you. Count us in."

"I'll not ask any one to go with me," answered Marcy. "If you want to help, you can do it by telling me how I can smuggle my musket and cartridge-box out of the armory."

"Now, that's an idea. Of course we'll help. Great Scott! What a crazy crowd, and what do you reckon they're going to do?"

It was no wonder that Bob Cole asked this question. While he and his companions were talking they walked through the archway into the hall, which was filled with pale, determined-looking students, who were quietly making their way up the wide stairs toward the armory.

"What's up?" repeated Cole.

"We're going after our muskets," replied one. "Fall in."

"Not the whole school?" Billings managed to gasp, while Marcy Gray stood speechless, wondering at the magnitude of the rebellion which had been brought about by the colonel's refusal to send a squad to Rodney's assistance and Dick's, and by the stirring appeals to which they had listened from Dixon, as well as from the lips of the boy who had received those hasty instructions at the guard-tent.

"Talk about rebels! Why, this is a riot," said Cole.

"It looks very like it," replied Dixon, who stood at the foot of the stairs urging every boy to fall in. "They're all going except the company officers, who have taken themselves off out of sight, so that they cannot be called upon to oppose us. Where's Caleb?"

"I made sure of him by saying that I would raise some money for him," replied Marcy.

"If we were only outside the gate we should be all right."

"We'll get out easy as falling off a log," said Dixon. "If you had glanced toward the gate when you came in, you would have seen four good fellows there talking with the sentry. It will be their business to disarm him, if he shows fight when we attempt to march out, as it is his duty to do; and if the officer of the guard tries to turn the key upon us, those four fellows will quietly take the gate from its hinges and tumble it over into the road. It's all cut and dried, and if the boys keep as still as they are now, we'll be out before the colonel knows what we are up to. Oh, I haven't been idle since the commandant ordered me from the guard-tent."

There was no need that Dixon should say this, for the actions of the students proved that he had done a good deal of talking since he was ordered out of the tent. Although they were pushing and crowding one another in their haste to get into the armory and out of it again before some busybody (there are boys of that sort in every school) could run to the colonel and apprise him of what was going on, there was not the least noise or confusion, not a word spoken above a whisper, and if there had been any studious scholars in the dormitories, they would not have been in the least disturbed. In five minutes more the armory was thronged with students, who having taken their muskets from the racks, were buckling on their cartridge-boxes. The weight of the boxes dispelled the fear that the colonel might have had the ball cartridges that were put in them the night before removed. Why he hadn't done it, seeing that he had promised to remain neutral in future, was a mystery.

"This is a high-handed proceeding, boys," observed one, "and if a shoulder-strap should come in and order us to put these guns back, then what?"

"Then would be the time for you, to prove that you were in earnest when you promised that you would stand by Rodney and Dick if the colonel refused to help them," said another. "Who cares? We're rebels anyhow, and we certainly would not go back on our principles at the command of anybody up North."

"Don't stop to discuss politics," said Dixon, who, by common consent, was the commander of the expedition, there being no commissioned officers present. "Some of you take muskets number twenty-

two, thirty-four, forty-four, and fifty-six from the racks in addition to your own for those four fellows at the gate. Now fall in, in your places as near as you can. We'll not stop to count fours or to divide the companies into platoons. So long as we get there, we don't care whether we go in military form or not. Fours right: Forward, column left, march!"

"Charge bayonets!" shouted some half-wild fellow in the ranks, when the colonel and officer of the guard, both with drawn swords in their hands, suddenly appeared in the doorway. "Run over everything that gets in the road."

"Young gentlemen! Boys! Private Dixon, what are you about?" cried the colonel, who was so amazed that he hardly knew what he said. "I'll put the last one of you in the guard-house. Just one moment, boys. Listen to reason. I'll do everything I can to get Rodney and Dick out of that scrape. I will, I assure you."

"Forward, double quick!" somebody shouted; and although the command came from one who had no business to give it, Dixon being the acknowledged leader, the most of the students would have obeyed it with the greatest promptness, had not the Kentucky boy jumped in front of the first four and barred their way with his musket, which he held at the height of his shoulders.

"Halt!" he shouted. "Colonel, this is too plain a case, as you see. If you will not help our friends who are in difficulty, we will. If we will break ranks, will you send the first company, under Judson's lead, to bring Rodney and Dick to the academy?"

"I will," replied the colonel, who saw that if he didn't agree to the proposition, the boys would go without being sent.

"Very good, sir," said Dixon; while the most of the rebels looked disappointed. "That is all we ask. Forward, column right, march. Fours, left, halt, right dress, front, order arms!"

This brought the boys back into the armory, in line, and in readiness to hear what the colonel had to say to them; but the latter was in no humor for making a speech. He could not praise the students for what they had done, and he was afraid to find fault with them, because there was an expression on their faces which said as plainly as words that the rebellion was not yet subdued, and that they were ready to go on with it if the colonel did not do as he promised without any unnecessary delay. This was something new in the history of the Barrington Military Institute. It was the first time the students had ever taken the law into their own hands, and they had showed the colonel that he could not carry water on both shoulders without running the risk of spilling some of it.

"I shall close the school and send you to your homes the first thing in the morning," sputtered the commandant, jamming his sword into its scabbard, as if to say that he had no further use for it. "This is a state of affairs to which I will not submit."

"And in the meantime, sir, permit me to remind you that my cousin is in the hands of a ruffian who has threatened to beat him, if certain demands he has made are not complied with," said Marcy, who was impatient to be off.

The colonel bit his lip, glared savagely at Marcy for an instant, said a few hurried words to Captain Wilson, and left the armory. The first thing the officer of the guard did was to remove his red sash and hand it to another teacher—an action which all the boys in line greeted with hearty cheers; and his second move was to march the first company out of line, and order the others to break ranks. This looked like business. Captain Wilson was going in command, and that meant that Rodney and his companion in trouble would be found and released before the company returned. But would the captain permit them to give Bud a whack or two with the butts of their muskets just to teach him to mind his own business in future? Probably not; and if Captain Wilson forbade it Bud would be safe, for the boys thought too much of him to rebel against his orders.

"We will wait a few minutes for the officers," said the Captain, "and in the meantime—count fours."

But the boy officers did not "show up." They had concealed themselves so effectually that the orderlies sent out by the colonel could not find them, and so the captain was obliged to go without them. They would be disappointed when they came out of their hiding-places and found that their company had gone off with the colonel's permission, but that could not be helped. Caleb Judson was much surprised when he found himself at the head of the column, surrounded by a corporal's guard who were instructed, in his hearing, to see that he did not give them the slip, but he did not refuse to act as guide.

"All I ask of you, capting," said he, "is to let me stay back out of sight when you grab Bud, so't he won't suspicion that I had anything to do with bringin' you-uns onto him. He's a bad man when he's

mad—"

"So I have heard," said the captain dryly. "He must be a terrible fellow to let Elder Bowen walk him out of the yard by the back of the neck. But your wishes shall be respected, and my boys will never mention your name in connection with this business."

This satisfied Caleb, who strode ahead as if he were in a great hurry to reach his destination.

"It's queer doings, this taking nearly a hundred boys to capture two vagabonds," whispered Dixon, who had taken pains to secure a place in the ranks next to Marcy Gray. "But it's the best thing that could be done. If any of us had been ordered to stay behind, there might have been another rebellion. Besides, Bud and Silas are Injuns, and I shouldn't be surprised if they slipped through our fingers."

"I hope they will," said Marcy honestly. "Bad as they are, I shouldn't want to see them hurt."

The students marched through the principal street of Barrington, but if any one saw then! they never heard of it. There was but one man stirring, and that was old Mr. Bailey, who devoted a wakeful half-hour to patroling his premises with his revolver in his hand. If he was surprised to see the boys he did not say anything about it, for the rapidity of their movements and the strict silence they maintained were indications that they did not care to have the citizens know they were out. Mr. Bailey would have given all the candy and peanuts in his store to know what their errand was, but was forced to content himself with the reflection that he would learn all about it the next time Dick Graham came to town.

"Now, capting," said Caleb, after they had gone a long distance down the road that led to Mr. Riley's house, "Bud's camp is off that a-way about a mile. The woods is tol'able thick, an' I don't reckon you can go through 'em in a bunch, like you be now, without scarin' him. He's got ears, Bud has. You-uns had best scatter out an' go one at a time."

"Form skirmish line, I suppose you mean."

"I don't know what you call it. Couldn't make 'em into something like a horse-shoe, could ye?"

"Certainly. Hold back the center and push the flanks forward. That's easy enough."

"Eh?" said Caleb.

"I'll make a horse-shoe, if that's what you want."

"All right. An' when you get to where his fire is, you can kinder bring the heels of the shoe in t'wards each other, an' there Bud an' Silas'll be on the inside of 'em. See?"

The captain understood, and thought it a good plan to act upon the guide's suggestion, although he could not make up his mind that he would permit his men to make prisoners of Bud and Silas. Perhaps, on the whole, it would not be safe. Good-natured, obedient Dick Graham could be easily controlled, but how about fiery Rodney Gray, angry as he undoubtedly was? The latter, quick-tempered and impatient of discipline as he was known to be, when he found himself backed by nearly all the boys in his class and company might avow a determination to take ample vengeance upon his captors; and if he so much as suggested the thing, the students were in the right mood to help him through with it.

"We don't want to make captives of those two men," said the captain, as he passed along the ranks getting the skirmish line in shape. "We'll scare them out of a year's growth and show them that they cannot fool with our boys with impunity, but that is as far as we will go. If they can get away, let them."

It took ten minutes to form the "horse-shoe" and make each boy acquainted with the signals that were to be used for his guidance, and then the order was given to advance. The woods were pitch dark, and it was a task of no little difficulty for the boys to find their way through the thick underbrush, and over the fallen logs that obstructed every foot of the mile that lay between the road and Bud Goble's camp, but they did it without making noise enough to alarm him. What they were most afraid of was that he would hear them coming and drag his prisoners away from the fire and deeper into the woods, where they could not be found until Bud had had time to wreak vengeance upon them. But they need not have borrowed any trouble on that score. If Bud Goble had had the faintest idea of the commotion his senseless act had caused among the academy boys, money would not have hired him to lay a finger upon Rodney and Dick.

[Illustration: TOO MUCH FOR THE MINUTE-MEN.]

At the end of an hour Captain Wilson, who was in the center of the line, came within sight of Bud's camp-fire, and the order was passed for the flanks to close upon each other. In fifteen minutes more a shrill whistle coming from the opposite side of the fire announced that the command had been obeyed,

and with a charging yell, that was never surpassed by any they afterward uttered in battle, the boys sprang up and rushed for the fire. Not a bayonet had been fixed or a piece loaded that is, by orders; but some of the young soldiers had quietly driven home a cartridge while working their way through the woods, and when the signal to advance was given, they fired their muskets into the air with such effect that Bud and Silas gave themselves up for lost, and the prisoners jumped from their beds of leaves by the fire, and shouted and waved their caps to show their comrades where they were.

"Death to all Minute-men!" somebody yelled; and the cry was taken up and carried along the line with such volume that Bud's frantic appeals for "quarter" could not be heard.

In less time than it takes to write it the students crowded into the camp, and Rodney and Dick were being shaken by both hands. Their captors were so completely surprised, and so very frightened that they had not thought of their rifles, which were leaning against convenient trees. And now came the very demonstration that Captain Wilson had been afraid of. Jerking himself loose from the detaining hands of his comrades, Rodney picked up a heavy switch lying on the ground near the log that Bud had been using for a seat.

"Turn about is fair play, old fellow," said he. "You promised to use this on our backs if you did not receive the hundred dollars you said we owed you, and now we'll see—"

"Give it to him!" shouted the students, almost as one boy. "We'll stand by you. Put it on good and strong. Stand back, Captain Wilson. We don't want to go against you, but these men must have a lesson they will not forget."

Thus encouraged Rodney raised the switch, and in a second more it would have fallen with full force upon Bud's head and shoulders, had not Marcy Gray, dashing aside three or four friends who stood in his way, jumped forward and seized his cousin's arm.

"Rodney," said he, "is this your manhood?"

The angry boy glared at his cousin for an instant, and then, to the surprise of all, he lowered his arm and gave up the switch.

"You here, Marcy?" he exclaimed. "There isn't as much manhood in my whole body as there is in your little finger. Don't look at me in that way. Don't speak to me; I am beneath contempt. Goble, you're free to go, but don't come near me again."

"Yes, Goble, clear yourself," shouted Dixon, who, although he did not understand the matter at all, thought Bud had better get out of danger while the students were in the mood to let him go. "I'm about to stick the butt of my gun through the air right where you are standing, and if you're there, you'll get hurt. One—two—"

Goble turned and ran for his life, the boys dividing right and left, and jeering him loudly as he passed through their ranks.

"He's a minute-man," said one.

"Yes; and he'll get there in a good deal less than a minute," cried another. "Go faster than that, for he's close after you. Ah, He came pretty near hitting you that time! Next time you'll be a goner."

Dixon had not moved an inch from his tracks, but he had accomplished his object and sent Bud off without injury. Silas Walker must have gone about the same time, for when the boys looked around for him they could not find him.

CHAPTER XIII.

HAULING DOWN THE COLORS.

Having accomplished the work he was sent out to do, Captain Wilson shook hands with the rescued boys, who did not seem any the worse for their short experience among the members of Bud Goble's company of minute-men, and commanded the students to "fall in." Some of the boys were in favor of smashing the rifles which the two vagabonds had left behind in their hurried flight; but better counsels prevailed, and the weapons were leaned against a tree where Bud could easily find them, in case he

should muster courage enough to come after them. The return march through the woods was rendered less dismal by the numerous light-wood torches that were carried along the line; but there was not much opportunity for talking until the timber had been left behind, and the ranks were closed up on the road leading to Barrington.

"Now tell us all about it," said Marcy Gray to his cousin, who marched by his side. "We know that you were enticed into a cabin to see a sick man who needed quinine, and that when you went in Bud and some others jumped out and made you prisoners. The man Bud sent to the academy after the money you and Dick promised to give him for finding that underground railroad told us about that; but what happened afterward? How did they use you?"

"We haven't a thing to complain of," replied Rodney, "except the suspense we were kept in while Judson was absent. I knew he would bring help, as well as I knew that Bud had threatened to whip us if he did not have that hundred dollars in his hands before sunrise. But I didn't think the colonel would send it. While I was in Barrington I learned from a dozen different sources that he had agreed to keep us inside, and never again interfere with anything that might happen in town."

This gave Marcy a chance to tell about the riot at the academy, but, contrary to his expectation Rodney did not seem to be very jubilant over it.

"I didn't know I had so many friends," said he, sinking his voice almost to a whisper, "and, to tell you the honest truth, I don't deserve them. You fellows ought to have stayed away until Bud gave me the licking he promised, and then come up in time to save Dick. He was in no way to blame for what I did."

"And I reckon you didn't do anything very bad," replied Marcy, with a laugh. "It was no part of our plan to let either of you be whipped. But, look here, Rodney. Why were you so anxious to see Bud Goble the last time you were in town?"

"I had put it into his head to do something to you and Dick Graham, and I wanted to stop it if I could," answered Rodney. "I tell you I was frightened when I saw those fires. I began to see what we were coming to, and I wanted to warn Goble that he was watched, and that he would surely bring trouble upon himself if he paid any attention to that letter."

"What letter?"

"Why, the one old nigger Toby told you about. I wrote it. Mean as you may think me, and as I am, I wrote it. I said to myself that I would drive you and Dick from the school, and that was the way I took to do it." Having got fairly started on the confession he had longed to make, and paying no sort of attention to his cousin's efforts to stop him, Rodney made a clean breast of the matter, and told just how far his loyalty to the Stars and Bars and his hatred for everybody who had a lingering spark of affection for the Stars and Stripes had led him. On the evening his new flag came he slipped away from his companions, ran into a store, wrote the letter that Bud afterward read to his wife, and got it into the office without any one being the wiser for what he had done. That letter sent Bud on the war-path, and encouraged him to impose upon Mr. Bailey and Elder Bowen, both of whom met his attempts in a manner so vigorous that Mr. Riley and his Committee of Safety became alarmed. They held a secret meeting, and determined upon a plan of operations which they hoped would drive Union men and abolitionists from the country, and bring the State-rights men, like Mr. Bailey, over to the Confederacy. The committee was responsible for those two fires—Rodney had heard enough from his rebel friends to make him sure of that; and they had but just begun operations, when Captain Wilson and his boys put in an appearance. That was what made Mr. Riley so angry that he would not speak to the students that night, or even look at them, and it was possible that he and the others who rode up to the academy had talked to the colonel in very plain language.

"I supposed, of course, that I would find Goble somewhere in town, and kept Dick with me because I wanted him to help with a word now and then," said Rodney, in conclusion. "He played a very slick trick on us when he sent word that that sick man was in need of medicine, and we fell into the trap as easy as you please. He was awful mad when he found that he had caught the wrong boy, that it was Marcy he wanted and not Rodney, but he hadn't forgotten the underground railroad joke, and was resolved that we shouldn't forget it, either. I didn't think Bud would be fool enough to threaten anybody with a whipping. If I had, I never would have written that letter, I assure you. If lie had whipped me for it, it would have served me right."

Marcy listened in silence to this astounding revelation, and although he was intensely grieved and shocked, he said everything he could to make Rodney understand that he was freely and fully forgiven, and that it would never be remembered against him; but Rodney refused to be comforted.

"Dick knows it, and you know it," said he. "And if the other fellows do not suspect it, they must be

both blind and deaf. I don't care to stay longer about the academy where everything I see will remind me of events I should be glad to forget, and I shall start for home by the first train that leaves Barrington to-morrow. If the colonel will not let me go—"

"I don't think he will object to any of us going," replied Marcy. "During the riot, when Dixon marched us back into the armory, he said he intended to disband the whole thing at once. Matters were coming to such a pass that he couldn't and wouldn't stand it any longer."

"I hope he will stick to it," said Rodney. "We might as well have been home three months ago for all the good we've done in school. If he won't permit me to go I'll skip, if you will send my trunk after me."

Marcy said he would, provided he was there to attend to it, and then gradually led the conversation into other channels; for that letter was a sore subject to Rodney, and Marcy never wanted to hear it again. No matter what happened, it would never get to his mother's ears or Sailor Jack's either.

When the company reached the academy, after four hours' absence, they learned that the teachers had made repeated efforts to get the boys to go to bed, but without doing much toward accomplishing the desired end. They went to their dormitories as often as they were told, but leading a horse to water and making him drink are two different things. As soon as the teachers' backs were turned, they would slip out into the hall, run downstairs, and join some of the excited groups strolling about the grounds. They were all up and awake when the rescuers returned, and accompanied them into the armory; but they did not cheer them as they would like to have done. The coolheaded ones among them thought that would be carrying their triumph a little too far. When ranks were broken Marcy reported to Captain Wilson, and asked if he should go into the guard-house.

"What for?" inquired the captain.

"Have you forgotten, sir, that you put me under arrest?"

"Why did you not stay in the guard-tent when I put you there?" said the officer, with a smile.

"Because the colonel ordered me out, sir. I am glad he did so, for it gave me a chance to go with my company and see Rodney and Dick helped out of their scrape."

"Well, behave yourself in future, and we'll not say any more about your being under arrest."

Marcy knew that would be the upshot of the matter. If the captain meant to put him in arrest, he had no business to permit him to go on that expedition.

The next morning things went on in their usual haphazard way, and the colonel did not say a word about disbanding the school. He thought better of it after he had taken time to cool off; but it was not so with Rodney Gray. By allowing himself to be led away by the excitement of the hour he had done something he never could forget if he lived to be a hundred years old, and he longed to leave the academy and everybody in it behind him, and mingle with people who believed as he did, and who did not know of the meanness of which he had been guilty. And, what was very comforting as well as surprising, the colonel permitted him to go without asking any disagreeable questions.

"I don't know that I blame you," said he, in a discouraged tone. "I think I should be glad to go somewhere myself. I have been hoping almost against hope that these troubles might be settled without a war, but I don't believe they ever will be. The folks about here seem to think that the people of the North are cowardly, but they are not. They are simply patient; but there will come a time when their patience will be exhausted, and then they will sweep over us like an army of locusts."

"You don't really think they will fight, do you, sir?" said Rodney, who was surprised to hear the colonel talk in this strain.

"I am sure of it. When Beauregard opens his batteries upon Sumter, you will see an uprising that will astonish the world. I am sorry to part with you, but you may go. You would no doubt get a letter from your father in a few days any way, so I don't suppose it makes much difference."

Rodney went, but he did not go alone. Instead of one carriage, there were four that drove away from the academy an hour later, and they were filled as full of students as they could hold. But the departing crowd did not whoop and yell as they were in the habit of doing when they set out for home at vacation time. They were sober and thoughtful, and so were those they left behind. The events of the last few hours had made them so. Rodney Gray voiced the sentiments of all of them when he said to Marcy and Dick, as he extended a hand to each:

"I realize now as I never did before that we're not going to have the easy times we looked for. I don't back down one inch from my position. I say the South is right, and that if the North will not give her the

freedom she demands, she ought to fight for it, and I'll do all I can to help her; but I don't believe, as I did once, in abusing everybody who differs from me in opinion. So let's part friends."

"We've always been friends to you," said Dick, in rather a husky voice.
"But your abominable ideas—dog-gone State rights anyhow! Good-by."

"Why, Dick, you are on our side," said Rodney.

"If Missouri is, I am; if she isn't, I aint. That's me."

The parting was a good deal harder than the boys thought it was going to be; but it was over at last; the carriages rolled out of the gate, the sentry presenting arms as they passed, and the boys who remained turned sorrowfully away to take up the drudgery of school routine. After that there were no more loud, angry discussions, no shaking of fists in one another's faces, and the orderlies who raised the flag at morning and hauled it down at night, handled it tenderly out of respect to the feelings of their Union schoolmates. They could not bear to think that there might come a time when they would be called upon to face some of their comrades with deadly weapons in their hands. Every one, from the colonel commanding down to the youngest boy in the academy, seemed resolved to do what he could to make their few remaining school days as pleasant as possible.

That afternoon the guard-runners were out in greater numbers than usual. Nearly all the students were anxious to go to Barrington, for there were several things they wanted to have cleared up. What had become of the Union men who had been burned out of house and home, and what did that Committee of Safety intend to do next? Marcy Gray did not go. He was too dispirited to do anything but lounge about and read, and long for a letter from his mother telling him to come home. He missed his cousin Rodney, and wondered if fate would ever bring them together again and under different flags. He sat under the trees and tried to read while awaiting the return of Graham and Dixon, who, for a wonder, had asked for passes. The first item of information they gave him, when they came back with his mail, was one that did not much surprise him, although he did not expect to hear it so soon.

"That old darkey parson has lost his money," said Dick.

"There now," exclaimed Marcy, "I told him he would if he did not put it where it would be safe. Who's got it?"

"I didn't hear, and don't know that any one is suspected. He hid it under a log back of the garden, and when he went there to see if it was all right, the place looked as though it had been rooted over by a drove of hogs. But of course the hogs had nothing to do with it."

"Some one like Bud Goble must have been on the watch when Toby put it under the log," said Marcy, who thought he knew just how the old negro felt when he discovered his loss. "He'll not see that money again. I told him to give it to Mr. Riley."

"And that reminds me that we saw and talked with Mr. Riley, who was as smiling and agreeable as you please," said Dixon. "If I had been guilty of burning out two innocent men because they differed from me in opinion, I don't think I could have had the cheek to show myself on the street. But Mr. Riley did not seem to mind it."

"Do you really think he had a hand in that affair?" inquired Marcy. "I don't like to think that he is that sort."

"When a fellow allows himself to be carried away, as he and the rest of that committee have, by prejudice and rage, he will do some things he would not think of doing if he were in his right mind. Look at Rodney," said Dixon; and Marcy wondered if he knew or suspected that Rodney had written that mischievous letter. "It's in the mouth of every rebel in town whom we talk with that the committee burned those houses, and what everybody says must have some truth in it."

"Listen to me a minute, and I will condemn Mr. Riley out of his own mouth," said Dick, in an earnest whisper. "When Captain Wilson asked him how it came that he could reach the fire so quickly, seeing that it was more than a mile from his own house and there were no alarm bells ringing, Mr. Riley replied that it was because he happened to be awake when the fire commenced. Now, if that was the case, why did he run right by Elder Bowen's burning house to come up town? I was on post that very night, and know that the two fires were started almost at the same moment. Mr. Riley wasn't at home, I tell you. He was in Barrington; and that was the way he got to the fire before we did. Put that in your pipes."

"You have made out a pretty strong case against him so far as circumstantial evidence will go," Dixon remarked.

"Plenty strong enough to make him prove an alibi if he were prosecuted," said Marcy. "Where are those Union men now?"

"Living quietly and comfortably in two of the Elder's negro cabins," replied Dick. "Some of the rebels we talked to think they need another and larger dose, for they are as independent and saucy as ever."

"I glory in their spunk," said Marcy. "See anything of Bud or Caleb Judson? I don't care what becomes of Bud, but if you happen to run across Caleb, I wish you would send him to me. I promised to raise some money for him that night, when I thought I should have to go after Rodney and Dick alone, and I want to give it to him. We couldn't have found them without his help."

As we are almost, if not quite, through with these two gentlemen, Bud and Caleb, we may remark that, a few days after this conversation took place, Marcy went to Barrington and found opportunity to square accounts with Caleb by handing him double the amount of money the man thought he ought to have for acting as Captain Wilson's guide. But Caleb couldn't or wouldn't give him any news of Bud Goble. In after-years some of the academy boys heard of him once or twice in a roundabout way—not as a brave soldier of the Confederacy, doing and daring for the sake of the principles he had so loudly promulgated when he thought old Mr. Bailey was afraid of him, but as a sneaking conscript, hiding in the woods and living, no one knew how, but probably keeping body and soul together by the aid of the bacon and meal that his wife bought with old Toby's money.

Not another thing happened at the academy that is worth recording until it became known that President Lincoln, instead of surrendering Fort Sumter on demand of the Confederate commissioners who had been sent to Washington, decided that provisions should at once be forwarded to the garrison. It was high time, for Major Anderson and his men had nothing but a small supply of bacon and flour left, and the commissary was not permitted to purchase provisions in Charleston. The Southern people were, or pretended to be, very angry at this decision, and gave notice that they would resist it as an act of war. "My batteries are ready. I await instructions," was what Beauregard telegraphed to President Davis; and on the 11th of April the answer came back: "Demand the immediate surrender of Fort Sumter." How the brave major's reply, helpless as he knew himself to be, thrilled every heart in the loyal North! "I cannot surrender the fort," said he. "I shall await the first shot, and if you do not batter me to pieces, I shall be starved out in three days."

Now was the time for the Confederates to show to the world that they were sincere when they declared that all they desired was to be permitted to leave the Union in peace. But they did not do it. They could not wait three days. They wanted the honor of reducing Fort Sumter, and of humbling the flag which had never been lowered to any nation on earth. They wanted to "fire the Southern heart," and make sure of the secession of Virginia by "sprinkling blood in the people's faces," and so they opened their batteries upon the fort. After a long waiting, which was "symbolic of the patience, endurance, and long suffering of the Northern people," the fort replied, and the war between Union and Disunion, freedom and slavery, was fairly begun. Major Anderson knew from the first that this battle could end but in one way, and when his provisions were all gone, and his ammunition so nearly exhausted that he could not respond to the enemy's fire oftener than once in ten minutes, he hauled down his flag and marched his handful of men out with the honors of war. It wasn't a victory to be proud of, but the Governor of South Carolina must have thought it was, for that night he said to the excited people of Charleston:

"I pronounce here before the civilized world that your independence is baptized in blood; your independence is won upon a glorious battle-field, and you are free now and forever, in defiance of the world in arms."

So thought the aged Edmund Ruffin of Virginia, who claimed the privilege of firing the first gun upon Sumter; but he did not think so a little while afterward, when he was preparing to hang himself because he saw that his dreams of Southern independence could not be realized.

Of course this thrilling news, and the fiery editorials commenting upon it, had an effect upon the students at Barrington academy. The Union boys were sadly depressed; Dixon and Graham shook their heads every time their eyes met; while Billings, Cole, and the rest of the rebels were fierce for another fight, and immediately became as noisy and aggressive as they had ever been in Rodney Gray's time.

"'The proud flag of the Stars and Stripes has been lowered in humility before the Palmetto and Confederate flags,'" shouted Billings, reading an extract from the speech of Governor Pickens. "Cole, where is the flag those Taylor girls gave you? Now is the time to unfurl it to the breeze, and let the good people of Barrington see that they are not the only ones who can rejoice over this glorious news. When it is once hoisted on the tower, we will keep it there in defiance of the world in arms."

This was another quotation from the Governor's speech, and when Billings roared it out so that it

could be heard by all the boys in the corridor, he looked at Marcy as much as to say: "Help yourself if you can."

It did not take Cole many minutes to produce the flag, which he had kept hidden in his trunk for just such an emergency as this; but when he and his backers got to the top of the tower with it, they were rather surprised to find Marcy, Graham, Dixon, and a good many other sturdy fellows there before them. They were walking around with their hands in their pockets, and Marcy's flag was still floating from the masthead.

"Do you mean—are you going to fight about it?" faltered Cole, who began to fear that his chances for receiving a standing invitation to visit those Taylor girls were as slim as they ever had been. "You have heard the news from Charleston, and ought to see for yourself that this flag can't stay up any longer."

"We may be of a different opinion, so far as this academy is concerned, but still we have given up the contest," replied Marcy. "Hold on, there; don't touch those halliards, please. This flag belongs to me, and when it comes down for good, I must be the one to pull it down. Major Anderson was allowed to salute his flag when he lowered it, and I claim the same privilege."

"I don't know that we have anything to say against that," replied Billings, looking around upon his friends to see what they thought about it. "Holler as much as you please. That's the only way you can salute it, for the colonel would go crazy if you asked him to lend you the battery."

"That's the only way," said Marcy as he unfastened the color-halliards from the cleat. "I shall not ask for the guns, for I shall have my trouble for my pains. Attention! Three cheers for the Star Spangled Banner; and may the traitors who caused it to be lowered in Charleston harbor for the time being be glad to turn to it for protection."

"That flag will wave over Sumter again, and don't you forget what I tell you," shouted Dixon.

It was not a very noisy salute that greeted the flag as it fluttered down from aloft, but it was a heart-felt one, and there was not a rebel on the tower who dared utter a derisive word, however much he might have felt inclined to do so. But when the Stars and Bars were bent on to the halliards and run up to the masthead, the yells of its supporters were almost deafening and their antics quite indescribable. There was an abundance of enthusiasm about that time. There wasn't quite so much one short year later, when some of those same boys learned, to their great disgust and rage, that the Confederate Congress had passed a sweeping conscription law, and that their one year's enlistment had been arbitrarily lengthened to three. Then they began to see what despotism meant.

All hope of conciliation or peace at any price was gone now. There was nothing to hold them together any longer, and the following morning saw another and larger exodus of students from the academy who were homeward bound. Among them were Cole, Graham, Billings, Dixon, and Marcy Gray. It was not quite so solemn a parting as the first one was, for the drooping spirits of the rebels had been raised to blood-heat by that glorious news from Charleston.

"Shoot high, Marcy, when you meet the Stars and Bars on the battlefield," said Billings. "There may be a Barrington boy thereabouts. But you can't deny that we've whipped you once in a fair fight, can you?"

"I don't know what you call a fair fight," replied Marcy. "Of course five thousand men, well supplied with grub and ammunition, ought to whip fifty-one soldiers and a few hired mechanics. But they held out against you as long as they had anything to eat or powder to shoot with. I wouldn't crow over it, if I were in your place."

"Well, we have given you a taste of what is in store for you, at all events."

"And you have learned something that I have tried to get through your thick heads ever since these troubles began," chimed in Dixon. "I told you the North would fight. But let's jump in if we are going home. You know the trains meet here, and we haven't much more than time to get to the depot."

The boys once more shook hands with their teachers, cheered lustily for the Barrington Military Academy and everybody connected with it, shouted themselves hoarse for their respective flags, and then sprang into the carriages and were driven away.

"We're done playing soldier," said Dick Graham. "The next time we shoulder muskets or draw sabers, there will be more reality in it than some of us will care to face. Let's keep track of one another as long as we can, and bear always in mind that we are not enemies, if we do march under different flags."

Marcy Gray was glad when his train came along and bore him away from Barrington. He wanted to

settle back in his seat and think; but that was something he was not permitted to do. The passengers, with now and then a notable exception, acted as though they were fit candidates for a lunatic asylum. They were walking about the car, flourishing their hats or fists in the air, talking loudly and shaking hands as often as they met in the aisle. "Glorious news," "Southern rights," "Yankee mudsills," "Fort Sumter," were the words that fell upon Marcy's ear when he opened the door and walked into the car. In an instant his uniform attracted general attention.

CHAPTER XIV.

MARCY CHANGES HIS CLOTHES.

Marcy Gray was blessed with as much courage as most boys, but he would have been glad if he could have backed out of that car without being seen, and gone into another. Perhaps the conviction that he was "an odd sheep in the flock," and that he held, and had often published, opinions that differed widely from those that animated the excited, gesticulating men before him, had something to do with his nervousness and timidity; and it may be that the revolvers he saw brandished by two or three of the half-tipsy passengers had more effect upon him. But he could not retreat. They saw his uniform as soon as he opened the door, and some of the noisiest among them stumbled to greet him.

"Here's one of our brave fellows now," shouted one, firing his revolver out of the window with one hand while he extended the other to Marcy. "Got his soldier clothes on and going to the front before our guns in Charleston harbor have got through smoking. Young man, you're my style. I'm a member of the Baltimore Grays, and I'm on my way home to join 'em in defense of our young republic. What regiment?"

"Company A, Barrington Cadets," replied Marcy, rightly supposing that the Baltimore man was too far gone to remember, if indeed he had ever heard, that there was a military school in the town they had just left. "I'm going home on a leave of absence."

"Course you are," replied the man. "Services not needed at present and mebbe never will be. The Yankees are all mechanics and small trades-people, and there's no fight in such. We're gentlemen, and there's fight in us, I bet you. But you show your good will in putting on those soldier clothes, and that's what every man's got to do, or go up to the United States. Those who are not for us are against us, and we'll make short work with 'em. Say, we licked 'em, didn't we?"

"Of course," answered Marcy. "Fifty-one soldiers without food or powder don't stand much chance against five thousand well-equipped men."

"It would have been all the same if there had been fifty-one thousand of 'em," declared the Baltimore man. "Aint got any business there. Fort belongs to So' Car'lina. Why didn't they get out when Beau'gard told 'em to, if they didn't want to get licked? Three cheers for Southern Confed'sy!"

Much disgusted, Marcy Gray finally succeeded in releasing his hand from the man's detaining grasp and forced his way 'to a seat; but he was often stopped to hear his patriotism applauded, and President Lincoln denounced for bringing on a useless war by trying to throw provisions into Fort Sumter.

"I don't see what else he could have done," soliloquized the North Carolina boy, as he squeezed himself into as small a compass as possible in a seat next to a window. "The fort belonged to the United States, and it was the President's business to hold fast to it if he could. South Carolina wanted a pretext for firing on the flag, and she got it. She'll be sorry for it when she sees grass growing in the streets of her principal city. So I am taken for a rebel, am I? What would that Baltimore fellow do to me if he knew that I have two Union flags in my trunk, and that I mean to hoist them some day? My life wouldn't be worth a minute's purchase if these passengers knew how I feel toward them and their miserable Confederacy."

All the way to Raleigh, which was nearly three hundred and sixty miles from Barrington, Marcy Gray lived in a fever of suspense. Although he did not know a soul on board the train, he might have had companions enough if he had been a little more sociable; but he did not care to make any new acquaintances, especially among people who were so nearly beside themselves. They all took him for just what he wasn't—a rebel soldier; and being ignorant of the fact that he was going toward home as fast as steam could take him, they supposed that the reason he was so silent and thoughtful was because he was lonely, and felt sorrowful over parting from his friends; and so it came about that now

and then some one would sit down beside him and try to give him a comforting and cheering word. All the ladies who spoke to him were eager for war and disunion. They were worse than the men; Marcy found that out before he had gone fifty miles on his journey.

Marcy mentally denounced these sympathetic and well-meaning rebels as so many nuisances, for they drew upon him attentions that he would have been glad to escape. They asked him all sorts of questions, and the boy adroitly managed to truthfully answer every one of them, and without exciting suspicion. Matters were even worse when the train stopped. The flags that were fluttering from the locomotive and the car windows attracted the notice of the station loafers, who whooped and yelled and crowded up to shake hands with the passengers. At such times Marcy always took off his cap; but that did no good, for some one was sure to see his gray overcoat, and propose cheers for him. Marcy trembled when he thought of what they would do to him if they learned that he was the strongest Union boy in the school he had left. But there was little danger of that. His secret was safe.

Raleigh was reached at last, and Marcy Gray, feeling like a stranger in a strange land, changed cars for Boydtown, which was a hundred and twenty miles further on. But before doing that he stepped into a telegraph office and sent the following dispatch to his mother:

"Will take a late breakfast with you to-morrow if you will send Morris to meet me at the depot. Three cheers for the right."

"How much?" he asked the operator, after the latter had read it over.

"Not a cent to a soldier," he replied, reaching out his hand, and taking it for granted that the boy was fresh from the seat of war. "Warm times in Charleston the other day, I suppose?"

"I shouldn't wonder if it was hot in the fort," answered Marcy, with a smile.

"But you happened to be on the outside."

"You're right, I did. It was no place for me in there."

"No; nor for any other man who believes in the right. Tell us all about it. Were you frightened when you heard the shells bursting over your head, and did the Yankees—"

"I must ask you to excuse me," said Marcy, hastily, "my train is ready to go, and I have barely time to catch it."

"Well, good luck to you."

Marcy hastened from the telegraph office before any one else could speak to him, and thanked his lucky stars that before another night came he would be at home where he could appear in his true character; but he was satisfied, from what his mother had said in her letters, that he would find few friends among the neighbors. They were nearly all secessionists, Mrs. Gray wrote, and those who were not were compelled to pretend that they were, in order to avoid being driven from the country. It was a bad state of affairs altogether, but Marcy knew he would have to get used to it. He slept but little that night, and it was a great relief to him when the train stopped at Boydtown, which was located on a navigable arm of Pamlico Sound, and was as far as the railroad went. As Marcy lived near Albemarle Sound, there was still a ride of thirty-five miles before him, but that would be taken in his mother's carriage, provided any of the negroes had been over to Nashville and got the dispatch he sent from Raleigh the day before. All doubts on this point were removed when the train drew up at the station, for the first person he saw on the platform was Morris, the coachman, who greeted him heartily as he stepped from the car. This faithful old slave was Marcy's friend and mentor, and Sailor Jack's as well; and the boy Julius, who had come with the spring wagon to bring home the trunk, was their playmate. Julius was just about Marcy's age. They had hunted and fished together, sailed their boats in the same mudhole, and had many a fight over their marbles, in which, we are sorry to say, Marcy did not always come out first best.

"There's my check, Julius," said Marcy, handing it over, and slipping a piece of money into the black boy's palm at the same time. "Shut the carriage door, Morris. I am going to ride on the box so that I can talk to you. I want you to tell me everything that's happened since I have been away. You are a good rebel, of course."

"Now, Marse Marcy, you know a heap better'n that," replied Morris, who plumed himself on being the "properest talking colored gentleman on the plantation." "Git up, heah," he shouted to his horses. "Don't you know that the long-lost prodigal son has come back? You don't want to say too much around heah. Everything in town got ears. Wait till we git in the country and then you can talk. Yes, sar, your mother is well; quite well. But she's powerful sorry."

"I know she is. Do you hear anything from Jack?"

"Not the first word. He's on the ship *Sabine*, which done sailed for some place, but I dunno where."

"I wish he was safe at home," said Marcy. "Somehow I feel uneasy about him."

He would have felt more than simply uneasy if he could have looked far enough into the future to see that Jack's ship was destined to be one of the first of a large number of defenseless vessels to fall into the hands of Captain Semmes, who, as commander of the *Sumter*, unfurled the Confederate flag on the high seas, June 30, 1861. But, as we shall presently see, the *Sabine* did not "stay captured." She escaped, and brought the prize crew that Semmes had thrown aboard of her into a Northern port as prisoners.

"There aint no secesh out on the watah, is there, Marse Marcy?" exclaimed Morris.

"I'm afraid there will be some there before long. We're going to have war, Morris. I saw by a paper I bought on the train to-day that President Lincoln has called out seventy-five thousand men."

"Shucks!" cried the negro. "That aint half enough men. The secesh done got a hundred thousand already."

"I think myself that he might as well have mustered in half a million while he was about it. But the thing that rather surprises me is that he should call upon the border States for troops," said Marcy, pulling from his pocket the paper of which he had spoken. "Of course he'll not get them. Hear what the Governor of this State says: 'Your dispatch is received; and if genuine, which its extraordinary character leads me to doubt, I have to say in reply that I regard the levy of troops made by the administration for the purpose of subjugating the States of the South, as in violation of the Constitution, and a usurpation of power. I can be no party to this wicked violation of the laws of the country, and in this war upon the liberties of a free people. You can get no troops from North Carolina.'"

"Marse Linkum oughter hang that man," exclaimed Morris wrathfully.

"That's what I say. He's a pretty fellow to talk about violating the Constitution when South Carolina has already violated it by levying war against the United States. The Southern folks seem to have little sense and less consistency. But don't let's waste any more time on politics. How are everything and everybody at home? Is my schooner all right, and has Bose got over the drubbing that big coon gave him last fall? How many of the boys have run away?"

"Now, just listen at *you*," exclaimed Morris. "Who going to run away from the Missus, and where he going to run to?"

"To the Yankees, of course. This war will make you black ones all free."

"Aw! Go on now, Marse Marcy."

"I really believe it. You darkies are the cause of all this fuss, and you will have to be killed off or made free before we can be a united people again."

The coachman's inimitable laugh rang out cheerily. The Northern folks need not trouble their heads about him, he said. He was better off than thousands of the poor whites in the free States, and wouldn't accept his freedom if it was offered to him. His subsequent actions proved that he meant every word he said; for when Marcy read the Emancipation Proclamation to him and his fellow-servants two years later, and told them that they were free to make their way into the Union lines if they could, Morris refused to budge an inch. A few of the slaves had already gone; a few more took Marcy at his word and slipped away by night with their bundles on their shoulders, but those who could get back to the plantation were very glad to come. Freedom wasn't such a beautiful thing after all, because it did not bring the freedom from work that they had looked for, and the Yankee soldiers were really harder task-masters than the ones from whom they had been so anxious to escape.

During the ride homeward Marcy did not see a single thing to remind him that there was a war impending—not a tent or Confederate flag or soldier in uniform was in sight. Negroes sang as they went to their work in the wide fields that stretched out on either side of the road, the birds chirped, the air was soft and balmy, the wheels hummed a melodious tune as they spun rapidly along the hard road, and all his surroundings spoke of peace and plenty.

At last an abrupt turn brought him within sight of his home,—in every respect a typical Southern home, with wide, cool halls, large and airy rooms, broad piazzas, and spacious, well-kept grounds, in which fruits, flowers, and grand old trees abounded. A few miles away, but in plain view, were the

sparkling waters of the sound, peaceful enough now, but destined ere long to be plowed by the keels of hostile ships, and tossed into wavelets by shrieking shot and shell. On the left, and about three hundred yards in front of the house, was Seven Mile Creek; and the first thing in it that caught Marcy's eye was his handsome schooner, the Fairy Belle, riding safely at her moorings. Marcy would have found it hard to find words with which to express his admiration for that little craft, and the way she behaved in rough weather. With her aid, and with Julius for a companion, he had explored every nook, corner, and inlet along the dangerous and intricate coast of the sound for miles in both directions; and they were as familiar to him as the road that led from Barrington to the academy. He and Sailor Jack were good pilots for that coast as far down as Hatteras Inlet, and on one or two occasions had been fortunate enough to assist distressed vessels in finding a safe anchorage.

Old Bose, the dog that had been so roughly handled by the last coon Marcy helped dispatch, was the first to welcome him when the carriage turned into the yard, and said, as plainly as a dog could say anything, that he was both surprised and hurt because his usually attentive master had scarcely more than a word and a pat for him. The boy did not even hear the greetings of the numerous house-servants who clustered about the carriage when it was brought to a stand-still, for his eyes and thoughts were concentrated upon the pale woman in black who stood at the top of the wide steps leading to the porch. It was his mother, and in a second more she was clasped in his arms.

"Are you so sorry I've come that you are going to cry over it?" exclaimed Marcy, when he saw that there were tears in her eyes. "I know you'll not expect me to shake hands with you until I have had a chance to say a word to my mother," he added, addressing the blacks who had followed close at his heels. "I will see you all after a while. Come in, mother. I told you I would be late to breakfast, but I know you have saved a bite for me."

After a few earnest questions had been asked and answered by both of them, Marcy went up to his room, whither his trunk had already been carried. His first task was to remove some of the North Carolina dust that had settled on his hands and face, and his next to divest himself of his uniform and put on a suit of citizen's clothes. During his long ride that gray coat had brought him in pretty close contact with some people he hoped he would never meet again.

"Stay there," said he, as he hung the garment upon a hook in his closet.
"I shall never wear you again, but I'll keep you to remind me of old
Barrington."

The boy afterward had reason to wish he had hidden that uniform or destroyed it. A detachment of Sherman's cavalry scouted through the country, after completing their famous march to the sea, went all over the house in search of valuables and contraband goods, and one of the first things they pitched upon was that gray suit. It might have been a serious thing for Marcy, had it not been for the flag Dick Graham gave him. What became of the other, the one that was hauled down on the day the news of the surrender of Fort Sumter was received, shall be told in its proper place.

"I feel like a free man once more," he said, when he rejoined his mother in the parlor and walked into the dining-room with his arm thrown protectingly around her waist. "Where's Dinah?" he added, seeing that there was no one to wait at table.

"I preferred to have our first breakfast in private," replied Mrs. Gray. "In times like these one doesn't know whom to trust. There's been nothing like open enmity yet," she continued, noticing a shade of anxiety on her son's face. "I have thought it wise to keep my own counsel, and have taken no part in the discussions that have been held in my presence; but I have not escaped suspicion."

"I understand you perfectly," answered Marcy. "Are there no Union people at all in this country?"

"There may be, but I do not know who they are. There are some who have told me, privately, that they are opposed to secession, but having the best of reasons for believing that they said so on purpose to induce me to express my opinion, I have kept silent. You must do the same, and be constantly on your guard. If your friends, or those who were your friends once, assure you that their sympathies are all for the Union, you may listen, but you must not say one word. If you do, you may regret it when it is too late to recall it."

"Why, this is worse than Barrington," Marcy declared. "There you know who your enemies are; but here you've got to look out for everybody, or the first thing you know some sneak may get on the blind side of you. Now, mother, let's talk business. How are the darkies?"

"They seem to be as happy and contented as they ever were, and as willing to work. The overseer hasn't a word of fault to find with them."

"So far so good. How's the overseer; Union or secesh?"

"You must decide that for yourself after you have talked with him," replied Mrs. Gray. "I think he will bear watching. At any rate, I do not trust him."

"Then if I have anything to say, he shall not stay around here a minute after his contract runs out. We don't want anybody about that we are afraid of. You're going to run the plantation right along. I suppose?"

"I thought I would, unless you have something better to propose."

"Well, I haven't. This is my boyhood's home and Jack's. By the way, where is Jack?"

"On the high seas somewhere, and that is all I can tell you."

"And Rodney once said he might never get back again," replied Marcy. "He thinks the South is going to have a navy that will beat anything the world ever saw. Yes, Rodney is a rebel to the backbone," he added in response to an inquiry from his mother. "Says the Northern folks will be whipped before they can take their coats off; but for all that he showed considerable feeling when he came to say good-by. He is under a promise to enlist under the Stars and Bars within twenty-four hours after he reaches home, and I know he will do it, if he can get to a recruiting office. But to return to business. I am sure we had better keep right along as we have been going, instead of pulling up stakes and moving to some new place to meet dangers and difficulties of which we know nothing. We've got to eat, and we must have something to wear; and how are we to get things if we have no crops? Have you any money?"

Mrs. Gray started perceptibly at this abrupt question, and before replying arose to her feet and opened, in quick succession, all the doors leading out of the dining-room.

"Aha!" said Marcy, who thought he knew the meaning of this pantomime. "You remind me of old Uncle Toby. *He* had money which he lost because he hid it in the ground instead of putting it where it would have been safe."

"That is what I have done with ours," said his mother, in a scarcely audible whisper. "That is to say, I have concealed it."

"How much?"

"Nearly thirty thousand dollars, and it is all in gold."

"W-h-e-w!" whistled Marcy. "What put it into your head?"

"I took warning; that is all. The Southern people have often threatened to secede if a Republican President was elected, and I was sure they meant it; so when the election returns came in and this excitement began, I made several quiet business trips to Newbern, Wilmington, Norfolk, and Richmond."

"Why, you never said a word about it in your letters."

"I know it. I did not think it necessary to trouble you with it. I drew a little money each time, brought it home in safety, and I trust without exciting suspicion, though on that point, of course, I cannot be sure, and hid it in the cellar at dead of night, after I had taken the greatest pains to assure myself that every one in the house was soundly asleep."

"How did you cover up the place where you had been digging?"

"I didn't do any digging," his mother answered, with a smile. "I took a stone out of the wall as heavy as I could lift, and cemented it in place again, after keeping out a sum sufficient to meet our immediate wants. It took me three nights to do it."

"It's a shame that there wasn't someone here whom you could trust to do the work for you," said Marcy. "I am here to bear the hard knocks now."

The Southerners were careful of their women. If they had had the faintest conception of the trials and privations their mothers, wives, and sisters would be called upon to bear, they never would have fired upon Sumter. The patience and heroic endurance exhibited by these carefully nurtured women, during the dark days of the war, were little short of sublime.

Marcy and his mother sat a long time at the table, and when they arose from it Mrs. Gray knew pretty nearly what had been going on at Barrington during the last few months (not a word was said, however, concerning the letter Rodney wrote to Bud Goble), and Marcy had a very correct idea of the way matters were being managed on the plantation. He had nothing to suggest. The only thing they could do was to keep along in the even tenor of their way, and await developments. There was one thing for

which he was sorry, and that was that he could not discharge Hanson, the overseer, that very day. He believed his mother was afraid of him; but the man was under contract for a year, and could have claimed damages if he had been turned adrift without good and sufficient reason. It was not the damages that Marcy cared for, but he was restrained from urging Hanson's dismissal through fear of setting the neighbors' tongues in motion.

"Hanson is secesh, easy enough," he said to himself. "If he were not, some of those officious planters would have demanded his discharge long ago. If we turn him away without a cause, they will say that we are persecuting him on account of his principles, and that would be bad for us. The man will have to stay for the present, and I'll make it my business to know every move he makes."

Marcy devoted the first few days to renewing old acquaintances among the black people on the plantation, who were overjoyed to see him safe at home, and in calling upon some of the neighboring planters; but the last proved to be rather a disagreeable duty, and one which he did not prosecute for any length of time. It seemed to him that something intangible had come between him and those who used to be on the best of terms with him something that could not be seen or felt, but which was none the less a barrier to their social intercourse. He was not of them, and they knew it; that was all there was of it. Before he had been at home ten days he began to see the force of his cousin Rodney's warning, that if he did not turn his back upon the Union and proclaim himself a secessionist, his neighbors would not have the first thing to do with him, and during those ten days two things happened that made the situation harder to bear than it was at first.

The little town of Nashville, to which Marcy sent his dispatch from Raleigh, was situated about three miles distant from the plantation. Besides the telegraph, express, and post offices it contained a court house, two hotels, and the homes of about five hundred inhabitants. The mail was received twice each day, and as often as it came in, rain or shine, there was some one from Mrs. Gray's house there to meet it. This duty was at once assumed by Marcy, who, besides having a fast horse of his own which he was fond of riding, was so impatient to see the latest papers that he could not wait for anybody to bring them to him. He always read them on his way home, allowing his filly to choose her own gait. On the day he reached home the papers told him that President Lincoln had placed an embargo upon the seaports of all the seceded States; but Marcy did not pay much attention to that. It was nothing more than those States might have expected, but it was a question whether or not the navy was strong enough to enforce the blockade. The same paper informed him that President Davis was ready to issue letters of marque and reprisal to anybody who would equip a privateer, and give bonds that the laws of the Confederate States regulating the capture of prizes should be obeyed. The boy didn't give a second thought to that either. His schooner wasn't heavy enough to engage in the business of privateering, and she would not have gone into it if she had been. She had always floated the flag of the Union, and as long as she remained in his keeping, she never would carry any other. But when on the 29th of April Marcy read that President Lincoln, two days before, had included the ports of Virginia and North Carolina in the limits of his proclamation, it made him open his eyes.

"My State hasn't seceded yet, and here he has gone and shut up her ports," exclaimed Marcy indignantly. "That's a pretty thing to do, isn't it now? Hurry up, Fanny. Let's get home and see what mother thinks about it."

CHAPTER XV.

FORCED INTO THE SERVICE.

Marcy Gray thought he had watched the movements of his native State pretty closely since the result of the presidential election became known, and perhaps he had; but there were some things connected with her recent history that must have slipped his mind, or he would have seen at once that the government at Washington was justified in closing her ports to the world. The State had been in armed rebellion ever since the month of January, when her local authorities committed treason by seizing the forts along her coast. It is true that her Governor disavowed the action, offered to restore the forts on condition that they should not be garrisoned by United States troops, and that the proposition was accepted; and it is also true that the State forces very soon took possession of the forts again, this time acting under the Governor's authority. The latter's refusal to send troops to the aid of the national government proved him to be as much of a rebel as the Governor of South Carolina was.

"So North Carolina is no whit better than the States that have joined the Confederacy, is she?" said

Marcy, when his mother had reminded him of all these things. "But there's a great difference between talking and doing," he added, wisely. "Three thousand miles make a pretty long coast, the first thing you know, and I don't believe Uncle Sam has ships enough to guard it. I'll bet you that when the blockade is established, I can take the Fairy Belle and slip out and in as often as I feel like it. It will be nothing but a paper blockade; but if it could be made effectual, it would send the price of things up so that you couldn't reach them with a ten-foot pole, would it not?"

Blockading more than three thousand miles of sea-coast, some portions of which were noted for sudden and violent storms, was a gigantic undertaking, and Marcy Gray was not the only one who did not think the attempt would prove successful. To begin with, there were only ninety vessels of all classes in the United States navy, and of the forty-two in commission all except twelve had been sent to foreign stations on purpose to have them out of the way when they were wanted. Of the vessels comprising the home squadron, all except four were in the Gulf of Mexico, where they stood a fine chance of falling into the hands of the secessionists. The officers, who had been educated at the expense of the government, and who had taken a solemn oath to support that government, were so badly tinctured with disloyalty that the authorities did not know whom to trust, some of the best men in the service, the gallant Porter among the rest, being suspected of disunion sentiments. During the time that elapsed between March 4 and July 5, two hundred and fifty-nine officers resigned their commissions and went over to the Confederacy. Some of them, who had been entrusted with commands, had the grace to give their vessels up to the government instead of surrendering them into the hands of the secessionists, and one Southern writer declared, with some disgust, that they carried their notions of honor altogether too far when they did it. His exact language was:

"If a sense of justice had prevailed at the separation of the States, a large portion of the ships of the navy would have been turned over to the South; and this failing to be done, it may be questionable whether the Southern naval officers in command would not have been justified in bringing their ships with them, which it would have been easy for them to do."

But the trouble was, the government never acknowledged that there had been any "separation of the States." The war-ships belonged to the nation, and not to a discontented portion of it, and were needed to aid in enforcing the laws that had been trampled under-foot.

In spite of all these disadvantages the loyal people of the North went resolutely to work, and before the fourth day of July the blockade was rendered so effectual that "foreign nations could not evade it and were obliged to acknowledge its legality." And this was done, too, after Norfolk navy yard, with its immense stores of munitions of war, twenty-five hundred pieces of heavy ordnance, and all its ships, save one, had been doomed to destruction by the perfidious officers who surrounded and advised its loyal but too credulous commander. It was something to be proud of.

But we have anticipated events a little. On the day Marcy Gray went to Nashville after the mail the blockade was not established, except on paper; there was not a ship of war on the coast so far as he knew; Hatteras Inlet was still open to the world, and privateers and coasting vessels were free to go and come as often as they pleased. Up to this time such a thing as a privateer had scarcely been heard of, but they appeared as if by magic when it became known that President Davis had invited applications for letters of marque and reprisal from good Southerners who were able and willing to fit out armed vessels to prey upon our commerce. The first one that attracted any attention was the *Savannah*, which ran out of Charleston on the 2d of June, and was shortly afterward captured by a ship of war that she mistook for a merchantman; but she was not the first privateer to operate in Southern waters. As early as May 7, several light-draught steamers, mounting two or three guns each, were hastily fitted out at New Orleans, and brought in prizes that were taken off the mouths of the Mississippi. There were also some along the coast, principally sailing-vessels, and although they did not succeed in making a name for themselves or in spreading much alarm among our merchant marine, they made a few good hauls. One of them was fitted out in Seven Mile Creek, not more than a mile from Mrs. Gray's plantation, and, wide-awake as Marcy thought himself to be, he never knew a thing about it until she was almost ready to sail. Then he found it out through her owner who came up to see him. He was sitting on the porch when the man came up the walk, and something told him that he had come there for no good purpose.

"What in the world does Lon Beardsley want here?" said Marcy to his mother, who was sitting near by. "He hasn't been to see me since I came from Barrington, and I don't think he would come now if he wasn't up to some meanness."

"Don't allow him to throw you off your guard with any of his specious talk," replied his mother, in a cautious tone. "To quote from Morris, he is a mighty palavering sort of fellow."

"I'll watch him. Good-afternoon, Mr. Beardsley. Will you come up and take a chair?" The man was a visitor, and as such was entitled to civil treatment even if his company wasn't desired.

"Yes, I reckon I'll set while I talk," answered Beardsley, taking possession of the seat that was placed for him. "Rough times these."

"Yes; and they'll be rougher before we see the end of them," was Marcy's reply.

"Don't reckon there'll be any fighting, do you?"

The boy said he was sure of it.

"Well, what's one man's pizen is another man's meat," said Mr. Beardsley, with a wink that no doubt meant a great deal. "By the way, Marcy, you've been to school and oughter be posted in such things,—what is a letter of mark-we and reprisal? I've been down to Wilmington a time or two on business, but I did not like to ask the folks there what it meant. They're strangers mostly, and I sorter scringed against letting 'em see how ignorant I was."

"It's a commission granted by a sovereign of a State to his subjects, authorizing them to prey upon the property of the subjects of another State, if they happen to find any at sea," answered Marcy. "That's as near as I can tell it without looking the matter up."

"It is about what I thought it meant. Now, does that letter or commission give protection to the crew of the privateer if they happen to be caught? They won't hang 'em, will they?"

"I don't think they will. A few years ago some European powers tried to induce Uncle Sam to enter into an agreement to abolish privateering, but he wouldn't do it. Our private armed vessels gave England a good deal of trouble while she was trying to whip us, and might do the same thing again under like circumstances."

"So the United States wouldn't agree to no such bargain," exclaimed Mr. Beardsley, with something like a sigh of relief. "Then Uncle Sam can't find fault with us for going into the business, can he?"

"He'll make prisoners of you and destroy or confiscate your vessel, if he can catch you," replied Marcy.

"*Of* course. That's to be expected; but he'll have to catch us first, and even then he won't treat us like we was pirates. That's what I want to know."

"Why do you ask? Are you interested in the matter?"

"Somewhat," answered the man, with a laugh. "My schooner is fixed over and fitted with bunks for twenty men and three officers, and I've bargained for two howitzers in Newborn. That's what I meant when I said that one man's pizen is another man's meat. Now is the time to slip out to sea and make a prize or two before that blockade comes and stops the business."

Marcy was astonished and so was his mother; and neither of them could imagine why Mr. Beardsley had taken the pains to come to the house and tell them all this.

"Make hay while the sun shines, eh?" said he, with a chuckle. "I aint got my commission yet, and can't get it till my bond for five thousand dollars, which I give to the collector at Wilmington to send to the Secretary of State, has been approved. I've got to promise to obey the laws, you know, and that's easy."

"What do you intend to do with your prizes, if you make any?" inquired
Mrs. Gray.

"Take 'em into Newbern and have 'em appraised and sold by a competent tribunal, whatever that means. I heard while I was in Newbern that there aint no admiralty court in this country like there is in England, and that the district court would most likely 'tend to the matter. As owner of the schooner I will, of course, get the lion's share of the money, and the rest will be divided up among the officers and crew. But I'll do the fair thing by you, Marcy."

"By me!" exclaimed the boy.

"Yes. You know this coast like a book—"

"There are plenty of others who know it better," interrupted Marcy, who now saw what the man's object was in coming there. It was two-fold: If Marcy would help him, he would give him good wages and a big share of prize-money to act as pilot; but if he wouldn't help him, then Mr. Beardsley would denounce him among the planters as unfriendly to the cause of the South, and that would be a bad thing for him to do. Marcy read the whole scheme as easily as he could have read a printed page, and if it had not been for his mother, he would have refused, point-blank, any offer that the owner of the

privateer could have made him. But he would do anything rather than add to his mother's troubles.

"You must remember that I am not a professional pilot, and that a good many months have passed since I sailed my schooner along this coast," continued Marcy. "I might run you aground at the wrong time. You can get plenty of better men in Newbern or Wilmington."

"If I am willing to trust you it's all right, aint it? I don't want a professional pilot. I want somebody who knows Crooked Inlet. You've been through there often."

As Marcy could not deny it he said nothing.

"I aint going to follow the reg'lar routes of travel," continued Mr. Beardsley. "If I was, I could sail my own vessel without hiring anybody to act as pilot. My plan is to slip down to Newbern some dark night, after I get notice that my application has been granted, take my guns aboard, ship a good crew, and then run up to, and out of, Crooked Inlet. That will bring me a good piece above Hatteras, and out of the way of any war-ship that may be prowling along the coast. If one see me and gives chase, I'll put back through the Inlet where she can't follow on account of shoal water. What do you think of the scheme?"

Much against his will Marcy was obliged to say that he thought it would work, provided the pursuing vessel did not happen to be a steamer fast enough to cut the schooner off from the Inlet.

"And if she is, I won't go nigh her," replied Mr. Beardsley, with a grin which was intended to mean that he was altogether too sharp to be caught in that way. "We won't chase steamers, kase we know we can't catch 'em; and 'taint no ways likely that we'll go to sleep and let one of 'em get between us and the coast."

"Did you have to buy the guns you intend to put on the schooner?" asked Marcy, when the visitor paused and looked at him as if waiting for him to say something.

"No. They came from one of the forts taken by the State troops awhile ago. I borrowed 'em on condition that I give 'em back when they are wanted. They're too light for coast defense, but just the thing for our business. Well, what do you say?"

"You have not yet asked my consent," Mrs. Gray reminded him.

"I didn't think I'd have to," answered Mr. Beardsley. "I reckoned you were like all the other women folks—ready and willing to do anything for the cause."

"But if Marcy should be killed—"

"Aw! He aint going to be killed," exclaimed the visitor rudely. "Don't I tell you that we'll run the minute we sight a war-vessel."

"But you might run aground and they might capture you," answered Mrs. Gray, who knew as well as anybody how dangerous the coast was, even to those who were acquainted with it. "And if Marcy should be sent to prison, as he would if he were taken on board an armed schooner, what would become of me? My oldest boy is at sea, and it is my desire to keep Marcy with me as much as I can."

"He can run up and see you when we come into port, which will be as often as we take a prize, or see signs of a blow in the clouds outside," said Mr. Beardsley, putting on his hat, and getting upon his feet. "Come down and see the schooner, Marcy. Stop at my house, and I'll show you right where she is."

"How soon do you start?"

"Some time this week, I hope. The sooner we get outside the better our chances will be. That's why I say, make hay while the sun shines. Two or three hauls will make us so rich that we needn't do no more work the longest day we live."

"And will you feel no sorrow for those who lose their property, and perhaps their all, through your efforts to enrich yourself?" asked Mrs. Gray.

"That's why I say that one man's pizen is another man's meat," replied Beardsley. "Not a mite of sorrow will I feel for them Yankees. Let them come under our flag if they want protection. When will you be along, Marcy?"

"To-morrow about this time," answered the boy.

"All right. Think over what I've said to you, and be ready with an answer. When you learn a little more

about a vessel I will give you a chance as mate. Good-by."

Beardsley walked down the steps and out of the gate, and Marcy kept his eyes fastened upon him as long as he remained in sight. Then he faced about and looked at his mother, who had dropped her sewing into her lap and sat motionless in her chair, the picture of misery and dejection.

"They're going for us, mother," said he, with a smile. "That interview with Beardsley has satisfied me that I can't live up to my principles in this country as I should like to."

"I never dreamed of anything like this," said Mrs. Gray, at length.
"What are you going to do, Marcy?"

"There's only one thing I can do and keep a roof over your head," answered Marcy, thrusting his hands deep into his pockets and striding up and down the porch. "I must accept his proposition; that's all there is about it."

"Oh, Marcy!" exclaimed his mother.

"It looks fair enough on the surface, but I tell you there is something back of it," said the boy, confidently. "He pretends to take it for granted that I am a rebel, but he doesn't really believe it, and this proposition of his is intended to try me and find out where I stand. Almost the last question our class debated in school was: "Is a man ever justified in acting from policy rather than principle." I took the negative, and contended that he ought to act from principle, let the consequences be what they might; but I don't think so now. I shall join that rebel privateer, and I shall do it because I am sure something will happen to your house if I don't. Now please don't say a word about it. I feel bad enough as it is."

If Mr. Beardsley really was testing the boy hoping to find him wanting, he was doomed to be disappointed, for promptly at half-past two the next afternoon Marcy rode into his yard and went with him to see the schooner, which was hidden in a bayou half a mile away. Marcy knew the little craft as well as he knew his own, but her appearance had been so greatly changed that he would not have recognized her if he had seen her on the sound. Her black hull had been painted white, so that she would not offer so fair a mark for the cannon of any cruiser she might be unlucky enough to fall in with; her midship section had been changed into a berth-deck, and she had gun-decks fore and aft. The two white men who had charge of her had hoisted her canvas to give it an airing, and Marcy saw a large figure "9" painted on her fore and main sails.

"That's to make folks believe that she is a pilot-boat," chuckled Mr. Beardsley. "We'll be almost certain to find some fellow creeping along inside of Diamond shoals, thinking of no danger, and he'll never try to sheer off when he sees us coming, kase he'll think we're friendly. He'll think different when he sees a puff of smoke go up from our bows, but then it will be too late for him to square away. Good scheme; don't you think so?"

Although Marcy had never felt greater contempt for a man in his life, he managed to get through the interview to his satisfaction; but whether or not Mr. Beardsley was satisfied, the boy could not tell. Sometimes he acted as if he was, and then again he looked and talked as if he suspected that Marcy was not half as enthusiastic as he pretended to be, and that his heart was set on something besides privateering.

"I'd like to capture this vessel, hoist Dick Graham's flag over it, and give her up to some man-of-war," he said to himself. "But if I should try it, I'd never dare show myself around home again. The game isn't worth the candle. Some of Uncle Sam's boys will knock her into kindling-wood if she stays outside long enough, and possibly they may send me to Davy's locker along with her. It's rather a desperate chance, but it's the only thing that will save mother from persecution. Perhaps the neighbors will be a little more civil to her when they find that I am in the service of the Confederacy." Then aloud he said: "When she gets her guns and stores aboard she will draw a good deal of water for Crooked Inlet, and I'd feel safer if I could have Julius at my elbow when—"

"Oh, that wouldn't do at all," interrupted Mr. Beardsley, stamping about the deck and shaking his head most emphatically. "Julius is a nigger and an abolitionist, and we don't want no such around. I've had carpenters at work on the schooner for almost two weeks, and there aint been one of my black people aboard of her."

"But they must all know that you have been doing something to her," replied Marcy.

"Of course. I told 'em that I was getting ready to go a-trading between Plymouth, Edenton, and Newbern, and that I was fixing on her up so't I could carry big cargoes."

"Mebbe they believed it and mebbe they didn't," was the boy's mental comment. "If the darkies hereabouts are as sharp as they are down Barrington way, they understand what this vessel is intended for as well as you do yourself."

"I won't have no niggers aboard my privateer," continued Mr. Beardsley, who talked and acted as if he had grown in importance since those gun-decks were put into the schooner. "I wouldn't trust the best of 'em in times like these, and so I shall man my ship with whites. These men belong to my crew, and the rest will be just as good."

Marcy thought they might be better without hurting anything, for he did not at all like the appearance of the two fellows he had found in charge of the privateer. They had probably been picked up among the sailor boardinghouses in Newbern; and if the test of the crew were going to be like them, Marcy thought he would not care to be in their company for a great while at a time. He afterward learned that one of the men was deep in Mr. Beardsley's confidence.

Before the boy took leave of the owner of the privateer they came to a plain understanding on all points, agreed upon terms, and Marcy was to hold himself in readiness to sail for Newbern at any hour of the day or night. He felt almost like a criminal when he rode home to meet his mother, but, although he was among the first, he was by no means the last, to serve the cause of the Confederacy because he could not help himself.

CHAPTER XVI.

SECRET ENEMIES.

"It's done and it can't be undone," said Marcy, after he had told his mother just what passed between him and the captain of the privateer. "I assured Mr. Beardsley that I didn't think the government would hang his men as pirates if they were taken on the high seas, but since I have seen a couple of them I have my doubts. If the ship-keepers are fair specimens of the crew, they are a hard lot, and I don't want to be captured in such company. This is being true to my colors with a vengeance."

That was what his mother thought, but she did not say a word to add to the bitterness of his feelings. Knowing the temper of the people around her as well as she did, she could not see that Marcy could have done anything else. Marcy Gray ate little supper that night, and as soon as it began to grow dark, he left the house and went out on the road to take a stroll. He wanted to be alone, even though the thoughts that crowded thick and fast upon him were anything but pleasant company. Almost without knowing it he kept on until he arrived within sight of the gate leading to Mr. Beardsley's yard, and saw three men standing close inside of it. The night was so dark he could not see who they were, and without giving the circumstance a second thought, he was about to retrace his steps, when the men moved into the road, and two of them made a few steps in his direction, but turned suddenly about as if listening to some parting instructions from the one they had left behind. Marcy waited to see no more, but walked rapidly homeward, unconscious of the fact that the men followed a little distance in his rear, although they did not see him. When he reached the carriage-way Marcy did not immediately go to the house, but paced up and down the road in a brown study, from which he was presently aroused by the sound of footsteps. A few seconds later a figure loomed up in the darkness, and Marcy thought he recognized in it one of the men he had seen on board the schooner that afternoon. The figure discovered him at the same moment, halted abruptly, and said in cautious tones, as if fearful of being overheard:

"Who's there?"

"It's no one who will hurt you," was the boy's reply. "Toddle right along about your business."

"Any dogs laying around?"

"Nary dog. I'm alone."

These answers must have satisfied the man, for he advanced without further hesitation, and peered sharply into Marcy's face.

"What you doing out here?" he asked, as though he had a right to know; and then Marcy saw that he had not been mistaken. The man was one of the ship-keepers.

"What's that to you, and who are you?" he replied, with spirit.

"I don't mean any offense—I don't really," said the man hastily. "But it is rather strange that I should find you so easy when you are the very one I was looking for. I didn't know whether it would be safe to come or not, for you have dogs in plenty, like all the rest of the planters about here. I am Sam Tierney, and I belong to Beardsley's privateer. You are Marcy Gray, and have been engaged to take the schooner through out-of-the-way inlets that the old man is not acquainted with. Let's go down the road a piece. I'd like to talk to you a minute, if you don't care."

"Why can't you say what you have to say right where you stand?" inquired Marcy. "There's no one to overhear you if your communication is private."

"Private? Well, you'll think so when you hear what it is. Come down the road."

It was right on the end of the boy's tongue to ask the man why he had come to see him so soon after holding that conversation at Mr. Beardsley's gate, and what he had done with his companion; but, on reflection, he decided that he would not say a word on these points. This might be an opportunity to learn something, he told himself, but there was one thing of which he was sure: he would not trust himself within reach of that missing ship-keeper, who might be hidden somewhere down the road, ready to pounce upon him the moment this man Tierney brought him to the ambush. He would remain right where he was, within earshot of the faithful Bose, who would be likely to make things lively for the privateersman if he attempted any violence. There was something in the wind, the boy was sure of that; but he could not, for the life of him, think what it could be.

"I don't care to go down the road," said he. "What objection can you have to this place? We can see in every direction, and there are no bushes behind which an eavesdropper could hide himself."

It was plain that Tierney was not satisfied with this arrangement. He walked about with his hands in his pockets, kicked a pebble or two out of his way, and finally wanted to know if Marcy would promise, honor bright, that he would not repeat a word of what might be said to him.

"No; I'll not make any such promise," Marcy answered promptly. "And you would be foolish to put any faith in it if I did. I don't want you to tell me anything confidentially, for I must be left free to do as I think best about repeating it."

The ship-keeper was plainly surprised at this answer, for he gave utterance to a heavy oath under his breath and kicked some more pebbles out of the road. Marcy waited patiently for him to speak, for he was positive that the man had come there with something on his mind, and that he would not go away until he had told what it was.

"You're mighty suspicious," said he, at length, "and I don't know but you have reason to be. You are a Union man."

"Who told you that?" exclaimed Marcy, somewhat startled.

"A little bird whispered it to me."

"Well, the next time you see that little bird tell him to mind his own business. My political views are nothing to him or you either."

"I wouldn't get huffy. The old man says—" began Tierney, and then he stopped and caught his breath.

"Aha! The old man says so, does he?" thought Marcy. "And he tells his foremast hands what he thinks about his neighbors, does he? I must be cautious. Well, go on; what does the old man say?"

"He says he has engaged you to act as pilot," replied the man, with some confusion.

"So he has; and if he chooses to trust his vessel in my hands in channels and inlets that he knows nothing about, what have you to say? He wouldn't do it if he did not think I would serve him to the best of my ability, would he? But what has my politics to do with the position I hold aboard that privateer?"

"Nothing much," answered Tierney, turning away. "But they have a good deal to do with the proposition I was going to make to you if I had found you to be the good Union I heard you were."

Now Marcy thought he began to see daylight, but he said not a word. Tierney acted as though he was about to go away, but the boy knew he wouldn't.

"I'm a Union man," said he.

"That's nothing to me, but if you are, I don't see why you stay about here. You've no friends in this

State to speak of. Go up to the United States."

The ship-keeper was evidently waiting for Marcy to ask him about the proposition to which he had referred a moment before, but he waited in vain. It was no part of Marcy's plan to draw the conversation back into that channel. Tierney saw that he must take the initiative himself, and he did it very abruptly.

"Look here, pilot," said he. "There's no use in your mincing matters with me in this way. Just a moment," he added, seeing that the boy raised his hand as if he were about to speak. "I am a Union man all over, my pardner is another, and you are another. I know it as well as I know anything, and the old man knows it—I mean, he as good as said he had heard of it, too."

"Well, what of it?" inquired Marcy. "What did he hire me for, when he knows that it is in my power to run his schooner hard and fast aground if a ship of war gets after us?"

"But he doesn't quite believe all he has heard, and he's willing to give you a chance to prove that you are true blue," said Tierney, with an awkward attempt to undo the mischief he had done by talking too rapidly.

"I am true blue," replied Marcy, "although I confess that my actions just about this time do not show it," he added, to himself. "As long as I remain aboard that schooner I shall do my duty the best I know how."

"And will you take her out of harm's way if a ship of war heaves in sight?"

"I will if I can."

"Then it isn't of any use for me to say more, I suppose?"

"Not the slightest; that is, if you mean to propose that I shall join you in seizing the vessel for the purpose of giving her up to one of Uncle Sam's ships."

"I never said so," exclaimed Tierney. "I never said one single, solitary word that could lead you to think I meant any such thing."

"I haven't hinted that you did; but all the same that is the proposition you came here to make me. I can see through a ladder as well as you can."

"Well, I don't see that it's any good to beat about the bush," said the ship-keeper frankly. "That's just what I came here for. We could get a reward for turning the schooner over, and you could run her up as far as Fortress Monroe, couldn't you?"

"I might do it on a pinch, but I won't."

"We'll have men enough to take her without the least trouble," urged Tierney.

"I hope you'll not try it, but if you do, you will find me close by Captain Beardsley's side."

"Will you fight?"

"I'll fight till I drop before I will go near the Yankees with the crew of that privateer. They would take one look at us, and then go to work and hang the whole lot."

"Why, didn't you tell the old man that they wouldn't?" exclaimed Tierney; and if Marcy could have had a view of his face, he would have seen that the ship-keeper was both astonished and frightened. "You must have changed your mind."

He certainly had, but did not feel called upon to explain why he had done so. His idea was that the faces of the schooner's crew, if Tierney and his companion ship-keeper were to be taken as specimens, would be quite enough to condemn them, and that the United States authorities would be justified in putting it out of their power to do mischief.

"I'll not have any hand in the mutiny, but will do my best to quell it if it breaks out," Marcy declared, with emphasis. "You've had your walk for nothing."

"So that's the end of *that* hope," said Tierney, looking down at the ground and trying to act as though he was very much disheartened. "You won't repeat what has passed between us, of course?"

"Of course I will. I'll go to Mr. Beardsley with it the first thing in the morning."

"What's that you say?" Tierney almost shouted. "Take back those words or I'll—"

He made a step forward and raised his hands as if he were about to spring at Marcy. His actions were certainly threatening, and the boy believing that he might commit an assault just to keep up appearances, thought it best to summon a friend upon whose loyalty he could always rely. A single shrill whistle arose upon the air, an answering bark came from the direction of the house, and Bose came bounding up to see what was the matter. Tierney recoiled.

"He'll not say a spiteful word to you if you let me alone," Marcy assured him. "You see now why I did not care to go down the road. You have nothing to fear from me, but I shall tell Captain Beardsley all about this interview as soon as I can find him. And that is just what I am expected to do," he added, to himself, as the ship-keeper turned around and hurried away. "That fellow isn't half as good a Union man as Bose is. Beardsley sent him here to test me, and I saw it almost from the beginning. If I don't report the matter, Beardsley will have his suspicions confirmed, and then he will set something else on foot against me. Oh, I'm a sharp one," laughed Marcy, taking off his cap and patting his own head, "but I'd give a good deal to know when and how I am going to get rid of that man. Whatever I do I must look out for mother's comfort and peace of mind, and so I will not lisp a word of this to her."

That night Marcy's sleep was disturbed by all sorts of bad dreams, during which he was constantly detecting Captain Beardsley in some plot to injure him, and when morning came he was not much refreshed. In accordance with his usual custom he had his horse brought to the door immediately after breakfast, kissed his mother good-by, and set out for Nashville to bring the mail; but he stopped on the way to have a talk with the owner of the privateer. Under almost any other circumstances Marcy would have thought he was playing a contemptible part; but being as certain as he wanted to be that Beardsley was trying to get a hold upon him for some purpose of his own, the boy thought himself justified in adopting heroic measures for self-defense. The ship-keeper was not the Union man he pretended to be, and Marcy would tell Beardsley nothing new when he revealed the plot at which Tierney had hinted the night before. This was what Marcy believed, and the manner in which he was greeted by the privateer captain confirmed him in his belief.

"Have you been over to the schooner this morning?" inquired the boy, when he had hitched his horse and taken possession of the chair that was brought out for him. "If you will not think me too inquisitive, I should like to know where you picked up the two men you left in charge of her."

"I found them in Newbern, and they were recommended to me, by a party in whom I have all confidence, as men who could be trusted," replied the captain. "What makes you ask the question? Don't you like the looks of 'em?"

"No, I don't, and neither do I like their actions," said the boy truthfully. "Tierney came to see me last night, and tried to induce me to take a walk down the road toward the place where I think his companion was concealed."

"What did he do that for?" exclaimed the captain, who was so anxious to be surprised that he could not wait until his visitor reached the surprising part of his story.

"He probably wanted a witness to the manner in which I received the plot he intended to propose to me if I had given the chance," answered Marcy, narrowly watching the effect of his words. "But he didn't propose it; I will say that much in favor of Tierney. He simply hinted at it, and I told him I wouldn't have a thing to do with it."

"Why, the—the—brat!" cried the captain.

"You wouldn't have thought it of him, would you?"

"Indeed I wouldn't. I thought he was trustworthy."

"But you see he isn't. I told him I would tell you all about it and I have," continued Marcy, who had told nothing at all; but he had led Captain Beardsley on to acknowledge, almost as explicitly as words could have done it, that he knew all about Tierney's plan for seizing the schooner. "I think you had better discharge him. I don't want to sail with a man who is all the while watching for a chance to get me into difficulty. And then see how he is going square back on the principles he professes!"

"I should say he was. I'll discharge him as soon as I can get where the schooner is, and tell him the next time he—But what did he do? What did he propose to you?"

"He didn't propose anything, because I didn't give him time. He only hinted at it, and I thought it an outrageous piece of villainy."

"So it was; so it was. But what did he hint at?"

"Why, seizing the schooner and turning her over to the Yankees. I told you all about it."

"So you did, and I say that hanging is too good for that traitor. What would you do with him if you was me?"

"Send him up to the United States or put him in jail," replied Marcy. He knew very well that the captain would do neither one nor the other, but Marcy wanted to get rid of that man. If he would go deliberately to work to get him into trouble, as he had done the night before by his employer's advice and consent, he might try it again when Marcy was not so well prepared for him.

"It scares me to think of it," said the owner of the privateer, who did not look as though he were very badly alarmed. "Such a thing as taking the schooner could be done easy enough, and where would you be if it was attempted?"

"I should be on the side of the authorities. There's where you will always find me. I wouldn't fall into the power of the Yankees for ten times the value of all the prizes that will be captured on this coast during the war. I should never expect to see home again. I told Tierney I would fight first."

"I guess you will do to tie to, Marcy," said the captain; and the visitor told himself that those were the only truthful words he had uttered during the interview. "If all my crew is as loyal as you are, and if all the men in the army stick up for the Stars and Bars as you do, we'll gain our independence in less'n six months."

Marcy was not aware he had "stuck up" for the Stars and Bars, but it would not be safe to set the captain right, as he would have been glad to do, and besides this was the time to learn something.

"I don't know where Tierney got his information, but he has heard from several sources that I am for the Union," said he.

"That's what folks say," replied Beardsley.

"What have I said or done since I came home to lead them to think so?"

"Not a word; not a thing. It's what you haven't said and done that makes 'em suspicion you. You don't whoop and holler and yell and slosh around with your revolver, like the most of the young chaps do."

"I am not given to such antics, and these are no times for monkey-shines. We need sober, thoughtful men who will do their best to steer us safely through the difficulties by which we are surrounded, rather than whooping and yelling young ones who seemed determined to wreck us."

"That's good, sound argument," assented Captain Beardsley, as the visitor pushed back his chair and went down the steps to unhitch his horse.

"But there's one thing I want to tell you," continued Marcy. "I haven't signed any papers and consequently I am still a free man; and if you want me in that schooner worse than you want Tierney, well and good. If you don't, you can keep him and I will stay ashore."

Marcy had pinned a very slight hope of release right here. He was satisfied that the owner of the privateer must think a good deal of the man Tierney or he would not have placed so much confidence in him; and he hoped the captain would decide to keep him and let his pilot go. For a time it looked as though the hope might be realized, for the captain hesitated and stammered in such a way that there was no doubt left in Marcy's mind that he was loth to give Tierney up; but seeing the boy's eyes fastened upon him with a most searching glance Beardsley aroused himself to say:

"Of course; *of* course."

"Would you feel safe at sea knowing that you had a traitor among the crew—one who was waiting and watching for an opportunity to turn you and your vessel over to the Yankees?" continued Marcy.

"No, I wouldn't," and the words came out quickly and honestly. "I wouldn't live on a vessel under them conditions."

"Well, whom are you going to keep—him or me?"

"You, of course. I couldn't get along without somebody who knows Crooked Inlet better than I do.

Going to Nashville after your mail? Well, when you come back ride round to the schooner and you'll find that Tierney isn't there."

"What good will it do to ride around to the schooner?" thought the boy, as he gave his horse the rein and galloped out of the yard. "Of course Tierney wouldn't be there. He would hear me coming through the bushes and have plenty of time to jump ashore and hide himself. A blind man ought to see that I did right when I went to Beardsley with my story. He never asked what the plot was until he committed himself, nor did he inquire how many there were in it, nor did he get half as mad over it as he would if Tierney were a sure-enough Union man. It was a put-up job, I tell you, and who knows but there may be others of much the same sort hanging over me at this very minute? I do despise secret enemies."

News travels rapidly when all the people in a place are thinking and talking about the same things, and Marcy saw the fact illustrated when he reached Nashville. The mail and express packages were delayed by an accident to the wagon in which they were conveyed to and from the nearest stage station; it took two or three hours to repair it, so that it was mid-day before Marcy was ready to start for home. He always dreaded an enforced delay in town, and tried to time himself so that he would reach the post-office after everybody else had left it. In the days gone by he had been on friendly terms with all the Nashville people who were worth knowing, but it was not so now. He was treated civilly enough, but rather coolly, by those he met on the street and in the office, and he noticed that few of them took the trouble to speak to him. This being the case, he wondered what influence had been at work to bring about the change he noticed before he was fairly inside the town limits. It was "Hello, Marcy!" here, and "How are you, old fellow?" there, and when he hitched his horse and went into the post-office, where there was a crowd assembled, his greeting was as cordial as any that had ever been extended to him. Marcy opened his eyes, but said little, knowing that if he had the patience to wait somebody would explain the matter to him. He got a clue to the situation when young Allison, after telling him that the mail wagon had broken down and might not be along for an hour or two, inquired:

"How's your ship, Marcy? I suppose you calculate to sweep the sea of everything that carries the Yankee flag, don't you? I shall look for astonishing reports when you get among the war-ships that are coming to blockade the coast."

Allison was a loud-mouthed young rebel who had made himself particularly obnoxious to quiet, peace-loving Marcy Gray. He did not say anything to Marcy's face that the latter could resent (he was afraid to do that, notwithstanding the fact that he always carried a loaded revolver in his pocket), but he had said a good many insulting words to others that were intended for Marcy's benefit. The latter turned upon him like a flash, and said, so that every one in the office heard it:

"We don't expect to whip the whole Yankee navy, but we shall do the best we can, and that's more than you seem inclined to do. You have had a good deal to say concerning the cowards who are stopping at home when the South is calling for their services. Why did you not go to the front yourself long ago, you noisy braggart? Put a uniform on before you speak to me again."

"Good for you, Marcy," cried a score of voices. "Actions and not frothy sentiment are what we want now."

"Hit him again and I'll help," shouted another; and Marcy's old-time friend, Wat Gifford, elbowed his way through the crowd. He was in full uniform, and was the only citizen of Nashville who had snuffed powder at the bombardment of Fort Sumter. "Talk is cheap, but it takes patriotism to face Yankees."

If Marcy had had a week in which to consider the matter, he could not have done a better thing than he did right there on the spur of the moment. Young Allison slunk away abashed, and the privateer's pilot regained at one bound all he had ever lost in the estimation of the Nashville people.

CHAPTER XVII.

MARCY GRAY PRIVATEERSMAN.

"Wat, you're just the fellow I want to see," exclaimed Marcy, taking his friend by the arm and leading him from the post-office. "When did you get home?"

"Came last night to recruit after my arduous campaign, and to spread a little enthusiasm and patriotism among you stay-at-home chaps," answered Wat. "But, say," he added, in a lower tone. "I

didn't expect to find you in the service. You're Union."

"Who told you that?"

"I'll be switched if I know. It's all over the country and in everybody's mouth. I reckon you're Union about as I am. I say that secession is all wrong, that we would be better without it, and that the people who are urging it on don't know what they are about. There's Allison for one; and I'm heartily glad you gave him such a set-back. He'll talk himself hoarse, but when it comes to shouldering a musket, he'll not be there. He'll be a bully chap to stand back and holler 'St-boy'; but he won't take a hand himself."

By this time the two friends had perched themselves upon a low fence where they could be alone and talk without fear of being overheard, and Gifford showed his Yankee descent by pulling out his knife and looking around for a stick to whittle.

"And is that the reason all our old friends have gone back on us, mother and me—because they think we are for the Union?" asked Marcy.

"I believe that is the reason a good many have turned the cold shoulder upon you," replied Gifford. "You asked me a fair question, and I have given you a plain answer; but I am sorry to have to do it."

"It's all right," Marcy assured him. "I want to know where I stand—"

"And then you will know how to carry yourself," added his friend. "But every one hasn't gone back on you; I haven't."

"You are the solitary exception."

"Well, you have taken the right course to show people that they were mistaken in you," said Gifford. "I don't see but that you were well enough treated to-day."

"And joining the privateer was what worked the change?"

"I think so. Where do you stand, any way? You need not be afraid to be honest with me."

"I think as you do, only I go a little farther. The Constitution says:
'Treason against the United States shall consist in levying war against
them.' Did you fellows levy war against them when you fired upon Sumter?
If you did, you are traitors the last one of you."

"W-h-e-w!" whistled Gifford. "And you think we ought to be hanged?"

"I certainly hope you won't be, you especially, but you know as well as
I do that the penalty of treason is death."

"And you don't call yourself a traitor to your State, I suppose?"

"I don't, because I have made no effort to overthrow the legal government of my State. Between you and me, I joined that privateer because I did not think it would be safe to do anything else."

"There's where you showed your good sense," said Gifford earnestly. "Judging by what I have heard, you took the only course that was open to you. The people here are not half as crazy as they are in Charleston, Wilmington, and Newbern, but they are none the less dead in earnest, and you will find that after the State goes out, a Union man will not be safe in this country. I think you have completely allayed suspicion here in Nashville, but you want to look out for secret enemies near home. Whatever you do, don't run Beardsley's schooner aground."

"What have I got to do with running the schooner?" asked Marcy, who was surprised at the extent of his friend's information. He began to see that he and his movements had been pretty thoroughly discussed.

"You're going to pilot her," answered Gifford. "That's what you've got to do with running her, and I say again, don't run her aground."

"If I do accidentally, Beardsley will shoot me, I suppose."

"No, he won't. He hasn't the pluck to shoot a squirrel; but you never could make him believe that it was an accident, and when he got ashore he would do all he could to inflame the secessionists against you. He seems to have something against you. I can't imagine what it is—"

"I can," replied Marcy, coloring to the roots of his hair. "He wants to marry our plantation."

"Whew!" whispered Gifford. "That is a piece of news, I confess, but it's safe, old boy. He'll not make it, of course. Then you have a most implacable foe in Lon Beardsley. He is one of your secret enemies, and that overseer of yours—what's his name, Hanson?—is another. They are sworn friends, I have heard, and if your mother has any money stowed away—Mind, I don't ask whether she has or not, because it is none of my business. But I understand that before you came home she made several trips about the country that could not have been made for nothing. If she has any money, take all the precautions you can think of to keep it from Hanson's knowledge. He's far more dangerous than Beardsley, because he's right there on the place. I'll ride up and see you to-morrow or next day, and then I will tell you more."

Just then the conversation was interrupted by the approach of a party of young fellows who wanted to shake hands with the soldier who had faced the Yankees in battle, and tell Marcy Gray that they were glad to hear he had joined the privateer, and that they had been mistaken in him, having supposed that he was for the Union and dead against secession. Having discharged this duty, and promised the young pilot that they would surely ride out and make him a visit before he sailed, they turned to Gifford and demanded a complete history of the battle in Charleston harbor.

"If it was a battle I hope I may never be in a worse one," replied the soldier, who was not as proud of that affair as were some of those who had no hand in it. "The South Carolina boys had everything their own way. There were few outsiders in it, except some who, like myself, were doing business in the city. Five thousand against fifty-one! Shucks!"

"But you heard the bullets whistle, and that's a thing to be proud of," said one.

"I didn't hear a single bullet, but I heard a shell or two, and saw the old flag come down. That was something I was sorry for."

Gifford could talk in this strain as much as he pleased because he had "been there"; but If Marcy Gray had ventured upon it, being under suspicion as he was, beyond a doubt he or his mother would have suffered for it. During the time he spent in waiting for the mail, he was never alone for a single minute. All his old friends seemed desirous of "making themselves square" with him, and not one left his side without first telling him that somehow the mistaken idea had got abroad that he was strong for the Union.

"And so I am," said Marcy to himself, as he mounted his horse and set out for home, glad to get away from the people who so misunderstood him. "I utterly despise this double life, but don't see any release from it just now. I should like to show myself true to my colors, but what can I do among a lot of ruffians who would burn the roof over my mother's head if I gave them the slightest excuse for it?"

When Marcy rode into his own yard he was surprised to see two strange carriages under the shed (a sight that had been common enough once upon a time, but which he had not seen before since his return from Barrington), and when he entered the room where his mother was sitting, he found that those carriages had brought to the house a party of ladies who had kept aloof from Mrs. Gray ever since she failed to celebrate South Carolina's secession by displaying a "nullification" badge. These ladies were as friendly and sociable as they had ever been, and a stranger would not for a moment have suspected that they had thought it advisable to drop Marcy's mother from their list of acquaintances. They fairly "gushed" over the boy when they told him how delighted they were to learn that he had enlisted under the banner of the Confederacy.

"But I haven't enlisted, and what's more I don't intend to," answered Marcy, who was resolved that there should be no misunderstanding on that point. "I've got to stay at home and look out for mother."

"But you and your brave comrades can run out once in a while and annoy the enemy's commerce, and that will be the same as though you were fighting in the army. Now is the time for every true son of the South to show his colors."

"Then it's high time some of *their* sons were showing their colors," said Marcy, after supper had been served, and the ladies had gone away and he was alone with his mother. "There were four women in that party who have sons older than I am. I saw them in town to-day; and although they showed themselves to be blatant rebels, and talked loudly about the good times we are going to have whipping the Yankees, they never said a word about going into the army. Why don't those women preach their doctrines at home instead of coming here to bother us with them?"

Then he told his mother what had passed between himself and Wat Gifford, and said he hoped Wat would visit him as he promised, for he was anxious to know what else his friend had to tell him. He had warned him against two secret enemies, and Marcy was sure he would feel safer if he knew who the others were. But it was a long time before he saw Wat Gifford again. The latter rode up the very next

day, but the boy he wanted to see was on his way to Newbern in the privateer, to take on board the two howitzers which Beardsley fondly hoped would be the means of bringing him so much prize-money that he would not be obliged to do another stroke of work the longest day he lived. Even while Marcy was talking to his mother Captain Beardsley galloped into the yard with a smile on his face and an official envelope in his hand, which he flourished in the air when he drew his horse up at the foot of the steps. Marcy's heart sank within him, and his mother turned away to conceal her agitation. Beardsley had received his commission, and there was no backing out.

[Illustration: CAPTAIN BEARDSLEY BRINGS THE OFFICIAL LETTER.]

"Tain't nothing to turn white over, Mrs. Gray," exclaimed the captain exultingly. "Seems to me that you ought to feel proud to know that your boy has got the chance to strike a telling blow at the enemies of his native State. That's the way it makes me feel, and, Marcy, we want to get the schooner out as soon as we can, so as to catch the ebb tide to take us down to Newbern."

"That means that you need him this very night, I suppose?" faltered Mrs.
Gray.

"Yes-um. That's what it means. The sooner he gets there to lend a hand, the better I'll like it."

"Has that man Tierney been discharged?" asked Marcy.

"He discharged himself," answered. Beardsley. "He must have seen you come into my yard and suspicioned what was up, for when I got to the schooner, he wasn't there. And his partner couldn't tell me nothing about him neither."

"I'll be along as soon as I can put a few clothes in a valise," said Marcy; whereupon Beardsley said good-by to Mrs. Gray and rode out of the yard.

"What was that man, whose name you mentioned, discharged for?" inquired Mrs. Gray, who knew too well that Marcy was going away under command of a man who would bring harm to him if he could.

"He was discharged because I didn't like his looks," replied the boy. "He told me he was for the Union, but I did not believe a word of it. Now, mother, I need everything I took when I went with Julius last vacation to explore the coast. I wish now that I had stayed at home, for then Beardsley wouldn't have thought of hiring me. Let us be as lively as we can, for it will look suspicious if I hang back."

Although the mother's heart was almost ready to break, she exhibited no sign of emotion. Like thousands of other women all over the land she gave up her son, hoping almost against hope that the fates would be kind enough to bring him back to her; but it is not to be supposed that she called Heaven's choicest blessings down upon the heads of the secession leaders who had made the sacrifice necessary. Marcy bustled about, doing no good whatever, but just to keep from thinking, and in ten minutes more there had been a tender farewell at the gate, a single kiss of parting, and the pilot of the privateer was well on his way toward Captain Beardsley's house. That gentleman saw him coming and waited for him. Perhaps he had hoped that the boy would show the white feather at the last moment. If so, he did not know Marcy Gray.

"We'll be short-handed going down," said he, as he led the way across the road and into the bushes; "but we shall be all right the minute we strike Newbern. When I got my commission out of the office this afternoon I telegraphed to my agent telling him we would start to-night, and for him to be sure and have a crew ready for us."

"Why, I thought your crew was already shipped," said Marcy. "You certainly gave me to understand as much."

"So they were, but I don't much expect to find 'em when I get there.
They'll get tired of waiting and go out on the first ship that sails.
But we'll have a crew. Don't worry about that."

"Worse and worse," thought Marcy. "We'll get a crew undoubtedly; but what sort of men will they be? Dock-rats and 'longshoremen, most likely, such as a decent captain wouldn't have on board his vessel. If we get into trouble and I run the schooner aground while trying to bring her out, they will be just the sort to pitch me overboard."

As this thought passed through Marcy's mind he slipped his hand into his pocket. Captain Beardsley saw the motion and inquired:

"Got a pop with you?"

"You wouldn't go on an expedition like this without one, would you?" asked Marcy, in reply. "Have you bargained for any small arms for the schooner?"

"I have, and know right where to get 'em. But I shall keep them locked up in the cabin and give 'em out to the crew only when I think it necessary."

"That's a good plan," observed Marcy. "Do you know anything about gunnery?"

"No, but one of the men I expect to get does. He has served his time on board an English man-of-war and knows all about howitzers, and such things. We couldn't get along without a gunner, you know. If we didn't have one, how would we bring the prizes to?"

Marcy wondered why the captain had so much to say on this point. He asked the question merely out of curiosity, and the man answered it as though Marcy had objected to having a gunner aboard. He learned more about it after a while.

When they reached the bank of the bayou in which the schooner was moored, Marcy found that Beardsley had acted promptly, and that the vessel was ready to be towed into the river. He had stopped there on his way home from the post-office to warn the ship-keeper, and immediately on his arrival at his own house, he had sent a dozen or more stout negroes to man the yawl with which she was to be hauled out.

"Come here, you mokes, and set us aboard," said Captain Beardsley to the negroes who were waiting in the yawl. "Now, let go the fasts and stand by to take a tow-line out for'ard." Then he said to the ship-keeper, in a low tone, "Is Tierney aboard?" and the man replied by pointing toward the deck, indicating, no doubt, that the man who had "discharged himself" could be found on the berth-deck whenever his services were needed.

By the aid of the negroes, who were handy with a boat, the schooner was towed from the bayou into Seven Mile Creek and thence into the Roanoke River a short distance above Plymouth. The jib and foresail were hoisted before she got there, and when they began to draw and the schooner to feel their influence, the darkies were commanded to cast off the tow-line and make the best of their way to the plantation. Marcy went to the wheel, not because there was any piloting to be done in that open river, but for the reason that he happened to be nearest to it, and Captain Beardsley came aft and spoke to him.

"When she gets clear of Plymouth we'll run up the mainsail and then she'll go a-humming," said he, rubbing his hands gleefully together. "This is the first time I was ever in command of a vessel sailing by government authority, and I feel an inch or two taller'n I ever felt before on my own quarter-deck. But this is a gun-deck now, aint it?" he added, stamping his foot upon it to see how solid it was. "If we only had aboard the howitzer that belongs here so that we could salute Plymouth as we skim by—You aint listening to me at all. What you looking at so steady?"

The captain faced about, and, following the direction of Marcy's gaze, saw the man Tierney slowly climbing the stairs that led to the deck. When he got to the top he turned around and came aft in the most unconcerned manner possible.

"Well, there," exclaimed the captain, dropping both his hands by his side and acting as if he were too astonished to say more just then. "If he aint got back I wouldn't say so."

Marcy's first thought was to give the wheel a fling, spill the sails, and demand to be put ashore at once; but he did not do it. As Dixon once told the colonel of the Barrington academy, it was too plain a case. Tierney had been aboard the schooner all the time, and Marcy might have found it out if he had been sharp enough to look between decks.

"I'm glad he's come back, for he's the gunner I was telling you about," whispered the captain. "We couldn't get along without him, don't you know we couldn't? Say," he added, as Tierney came up, "didn't you leave word with your partner that you had discharged yourself and wasn't never coming back any more? Aint you a pretty chap to show your face aboard my vessel, and you talking of giving her up to the—"

"Oh, what's the use of keeping that farce up any longer?" cried Marcy, in disgust. "You can't fool me. I don't know what Tierney's object was in trying to bamboozle me the way he did—"

"Well, I'll tell you," the man interposed, "and I'll be honest with you, too. I heard you were a Union man, and I did not want to sail with you if you were."

"That's the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," chimed in the captain, nodding and

winking at Marcy.

"Well, are you quite satisfied with the test you applied to me?" inquired the pilot.

"I am. I know that you are as good a Southern man as any body in the country."

"And you are willing to acknowledge that you and the captain talked the matter over beforehand, and that when you came to me, to urge me to seize the vessel and turn her over to the Yankees, you did it with his knowledge and consent?" continued Marcy, controlling himself with an effort.

"Course he is," exclaimed Beardsley. "I told him he would find you true as steel, but he—"

"But I wouldn't believe it until I had proved it to my own satisfaction," chimed in Tierney.

The man acted as though he had half a mind to extend his hand to Marcy in token of amity, but if he had, he thought better of it, and in obedience to the captain's order called the other ship-keeper aft to assist in hoisting the mainsail.

"He didn't offer to shake hands, and that proves that he isn't as friendly as he lets on to be," thought Marcy. "He and the captain are playing into each other's hands. That story was all made up, and if I don't keep my eyes open, they will spring another plot on me. This is a lovely way to live; but I've got to keep suspicion down in someway, and I don't know how else I can do it."

Nothing exciting or interesting occurred during the run to Newbern, for there were no war-vessels inside the sandy bars which inclose the coast of North Carolina and protect it from the fury of the Atlantic storms. Aided by the strong ebb tide and the favorable breeze that was blowing, the privateer made a quick passage along the low, swampy shores of Albemarle, and finally entered Croatan Sound, which runs between the eastern coast and Roanoke Island, and connects Pamlico with Albemarle Sound. The forts, water-batteries, and Commodore Lynch's fleet, which were afterward destroyed by Burnside and Goldsborough, were not in existence now. Forts Hatteras and Clark were being built at Hatteras Inlet, but the Confederates wasted time in their construction, for on the 28th day of August Butler and Stringham captured them without the loss of a man, and in defiance of a storm which twice compelled the assaulting fleet to put to sea for safety. How Marcy Gray's heart would have throbbed with exultation if he had known that the flag his Barrington girl gave him was destined to float in triumph over the very waters through which he was now sailing, and at the masthead of a Federal vessel of war! That glorious day was only seven months in the future, but the young pilot had some tight places to sail through before it came around to him.

Marcy Gray had so little heart for the business in which he was perforce engaged, that he hoped something might happen at Newbern to prevent the schooner from sailing on her piratical mission—that the collector of the port might find some fault with her papers; that the howitzers and small arms might not be forthcoming; that it might be impossible to raise a crew; or that anything, no matter what, would come at the last moment to knock Beardsley's scheme in the head. But he was disappointed. The collector could not find any fault with the vessel's commission, for he himself had received it direct from the Confederate capital and forwarded it to the captain; the agent had scarcely slept since he received that dispatch from Nashville, and the result was that when the schooner sailed up to her wharf, she found the howitzers, four cases of muskets and sabers, and a crew of eighteen men, including two mates, waiting for her. The patriotic agent unfurled a brand-new Confederate banner as the schooner threw out a line by which her head could be drawn into the pier, and jumped aboard with it the moment she touched.

"May it be the means of bringing you many an honest dollar," said he, as he spread the flag upon the deck so that the captain could see it. "Are your halliards rove? Then why not go into commission at once, while there is a crowd on the wharf to holler for you? Come aboard, you fellows," he added, waving his hand to the crew, who were already tumbling over the rail, "and stand by to cheer ship when the banner of the Confederacy is run up. Did your vessel take a new name with her coat of new paint, captain?"

"Yes, I kinder thought I would call her the *Fish-Hawk.*"

"Isn't that a queer name for a privateer?" asked the agent.

"Why is it?" inquired the captain, who was busy folding the flag and getting it ready to be run up to the masthead. "Don't the fish-hawk get her living from the water, and aint I going to get mine the same way?"

"That's true. Well, then, call her *Osprey.* That sounds a little better, *I* think, and it means the same thing."

"All right. *Osprey* she is," answered the captain, as he hauled up the flag which had been made into a little bundle. "You stand by to set 'em going."

The crew, as well as the rapidly increasing crowd on the wharf, who watched the little bundle as it traveled toward the head of the mast, did not wait for the agent to "set them going"! When it reached the top, and a slight jerk from one of the halliards loosened the flag to the breeze, they yelled vociferously, and patted one another on the back and shook hands as though they considered it a very auspicious occasion.

"Now, give three cheers for Captain Beardsley and his privateer *Osprey*, who have so promptly responded to our President's call. May they strike such terror to the hearts of the Yankee nation that they won't have a ship on the sea in six months from this day."

Of course such talk as this just suited the crowd on the wharf, who yelled longer and louder than before. Of course, too, Marcy had to join them in order to keep up appearances, but he almost despised himself for it, and made the mental prediction that in a good deal less than six months' time the people of Newbern would cease to remember that such a schooner as the *Osprey* ever existed, although her arrival was loudly heralded in all the city papers. Her "saucy air" and the "duck-like manner in which she rode the waters," were especially spoken of, and one reporter, whose penetration was both surprising and remarkable, discovered in Captain Beardsley a man who would "do and dare anything for the success of the glorious cause he had been so prompt to espouse."

The rest of that day and all the succeeding one were consumed in getting the provisions, ammunition, and arms aboard, mounting the howitzers, and stationing the crew. When the work was ended late at night, Marcy tumbled into his bunk between decks, heartily disgusted with the life he was leading. The schooner was to run out with the last of the ebb tide in the morning, so as to catch the flood tide, which would help her up to Crooked Inlet.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONCLUSION.

It took them the best part of the next day to run to their destination, and the whole of the following one to find and buoy the channel, which changed more or less with every storm that swept the coast. Marcy thought it a foolhardy piece of business to depend upon that treacherous inlet for a way of escape in case the schooner was discovered and pursued by a ship of war, and told Captain Beardsley so; but the latter simply smiled, referred Marcy to the work he had done that day, and reminded him that there were eight feet of water in the deepest part of the channel, and that the privateer, fully loaded, drew but little more than six.

"There aint a sea-going vessel in the Yankee navy that can run on six foot of water, and I know it," chuckled Beardsley. "If one of 'em gets after us we'll skim through easy as falling off a log, but she'll stick, 'specially if she runs 'cording to them buoys you set out." This was the "work" to which the captain referred. At that time the rule was for all ship-masters to leave black buoys to starboard and the red ones to port; or, to put it in English, they were to pass to the left of the black buoys, and to the right of red ones, or run the risk of getting aground and losing their insurance, in case their ships went to pieces. But Marcy, acting under the orders of Captain Beardsley (who, now that he was fairly afloat, began to show that he was much more of a sailor than the folks around home thought he was), had changed this order of things by anchoring the red buoys on the right of the channel going out, and the black ones on the left. Of course it was necessary for the pilot to bear this in mind if he were called upon to take the privateer through there in a hurry, or on a dark night when the wind was blowing strongly. To a landsman this may seem like a very small thing, but it was enough to insure the destruction of any vessel whose commander was so daring as to try to follow in Captain Beardsley's lead. More than that, Crooked Inlet was not marked upon any government chart. The Atlantic Ocean had opened it since the last survey was made.

All things being in readiness for the cruise, the *Osprey* ran through the inlet on the morning of the third day out from Newbern, and spread her wings to swoop down upon the first unsuspecting merchantman which happened to be holding along the coast inside of Diamond Shoals. Now the crosstrees were manned for the first time, a small pull taken at the sheets fore and aft, and with a fine breeze over her quarter the schooner ran off to the southeast toward the fair-weather highway leading

from the West Indies to Northern ports. Then the young pilot, who had given up his place at the wheel, had leisure to look about him and make a mental estimate of the crew. If there was a native American among them he could not find him. He guessed right when he told himself that they must have belonged to foreign vessels in port when President Lincoln's proclamation was issued, and that Beardsley's agent had induced them to join the Confederacy by offering higher wages than they were receiving, and making extravagant promises of a wild, free, easy life aboard the privateer, and unlimited dollars to spend in the way of prize money. But as far as Marcy could see they were good sailors, and Captain Beardsley and his mates enforced discipline from the first.

The young pilot was surprised at the ease with which the master of the schooner threw off his 'longshore manners and assumed the habit and language of a seafaring man. He had been a trader in a small way ever since Marcy could remember, and he said himself that the longest voyage he ever made was from some port in Cuba to New York. He had a way of going and coming at very irregular intervals. Sometimes his schooner would lie idle for months, and Beardsley would work among his negroes with so much industry and perseverance, that the planters around him would come to think he had given up the sea for good; but all on a sudden he would disappear as if by magic, and it would be a long time before any one could find out where he was or what he had been doing; and they were obliged to take his word for that. Marcy Gray was not the only one who thought that the term "smuggler" would come nearer to describing his vocation than the word "trader." But in spite of his erratic movements and long intervals of rest on shore, Captain Beardsley was a fair navigator and knew how to handle his schooner. He knew also, and quickly assumed, the dignity befitting his station, kept his quarter-deck sacred to himself, and, except when they were on duty, never permitted his crew to come aft the foremast This made a gulf between him and Marcy, but the latter did not mind that. He was content to be considered one of the crew.

Seventy hours passed, and the only thing the lookouts saw during that time to indicate that they were not alone on the ocean, was a thin cloud of smoke in the horizon, which might come from the chimneys of a peaceful passenger vessel, or from those of a cruiser on the watch for just such crafts as the *Osprey* was; and so Captain Beardsley prudently came about and sailed leisurely back toward the point from whence he started. This move was just what brought her first prize into the clutches of the *Osprey*.

Land had been out of sight for almost two days. In her eagerness to catch something the schooner had gone far beyond the highway toward which she had first shaped her course, but this retrograde movement brought her back to it. On the morning of the third day the thrilling cry "Sail ho!" came from aloft, and in an instant the deck was in commotion, the man at the wheel so far forgetting himself as to allow the privateer to swing into the wind with all her canvas flapping.

"Keep her steady, there," shouted the captain angrily. "Where away?" he continued, hailing the crosstrees.

"Broad on the weather beam. Topsail schooner, and standing straight across our course."

The captain seized a glass and hastened aloft to take a look at the stranger, while those on deck crowded to the rail and strained their eyes for a glimpse of the sail, which had not yet showed her top-hamper above the horizon. No change was made in the course of the privateer, and neither was anything done toward casting loose the guns. There would be time enough for that when the captain had made up his mind what he was going to do. He sat on the crosstrees beside the lookout for an hour without saying a word. By that time the sail was visible from the deck. To quote from one of the crew she was coming up at a hand gallop. Then Captain Beardsley was satisfied to come down and take charge of the deck.

"She's ours," Marcy heard him say to the two mates. "I would not sell my chances of making a rich haul for any reasonable sum of money. If I know anything about vessels, she is a Cuban trader bound to New York. Ease the *Osprey* up a bit. Don't crowd her so heavy, and the chase will pass by within half a mile of us. But we mustn't let her get by, for she is a trotter, and every inch of her muslin is drawing beautifully."

While the second mate set about obeying the last order, the captain addressed some others to the first officer, and in a remarkably brief time, considering their short experience on board the privateer, her crew had cast loose the bow gun and trained it over the port side, the magazine and shell-rooms had been opened and lighted, and Tierney, who acted in the double capacity of captain of the bow gun and drill-master to the crews of both, had driven home a five-second shrapnel.

"All ready forward, sir," said he.

"Throw that piece of canvas back over the gun to hide it," commanded

Captain Beardsley. "Send all the men below that are not needed on deck.
Gray, go aft and stand by to run up the Yankee flag when I tell you."

The topsail schooner could be plainly seen now, and Marcy was sailor enough to note that if her captain did not suspect there was something wrong, he acted like it. This could hardly be wondered at, for taking into consideration the "natty" appearance of the privateer, the lubberly way in which she was sailed, standing so far off wind when she ought to have been close to it if she were sailing her course, was enough to excite anybody's suspicions. Two of her officers were in the rigging, and Captain Beardsley, who was mentally calculating her chances for running by his own vessel in case she made the attempt, took his glass from his eye long enough to remark:

"They don't quite like our looks, do they? That proves that they are from some near port, and heard something about privateers before they sailed. I heard that parties in New Orleans had steamers afloat a week ago. Marcy, show them the Yankee flag and see if that won't quiet their feelings."

"If that isn't stealing the livery of Heaven to serve the Evil One in I don't want a cent," said Marcy, to himself, as with an "Aye, aye, sir," he obeyed the order that was intended to lure the stranger to her destruction. At the same moment her own colors, the Stars and Stripes, were run up to the peak.

But the sight of the friendly flag did not seem to allay the suspicions of those on board the topsail schooner. To the great surprise of those who were watching her, her bow began to swing slowly around, her sails trembled in the air for a minute or two and then moved over to the other side, her yard was braced forward, the sheets hauled taut, and she was off on the other tack with a big bone in her teeth. By this move she hoped to pass so far astern of the suspicious-looking craft in front of her, as to be beyond range of the light guns her captain had reason to believe were concealed under those piles of canvas which looked so innocent at a distance. It was beautifully and quickly done; but who ever saw a Yankee skipper who did not know how to handle his ship, or who would give her up to an enemy if he saw the slightest chance to escape with her? The Confederate Admiral Semmes had more than one chase after a plucky Yankee captain, who was resolved that he would not come to if he could help it, and he often goes out of his way to pay deserved tribute to the skill and courage of Northern sailors.

"That's his best sailing-point, and he's got a breeze that don't reach us," Captain Beardsley almost howled, stamping about the deck and shaking his fist at the flying schooner. "Where are you, Tierney? Fire that gun at him. Pitch the ball into him the first time without stopping to send it across his bows. Do something, or he'll get away from us."

Tierney and his crew, who had scattered themselves over the deck in obedience to an order from the mate, were on hand almost before the angry skipper had ceased talking. The captain of the gun knew that the schooner was far beyond the reach of the short-time projectile he had in his piece, but that did not prevent him from obeying orders. The canvas covering was torn off and cast aside, the gun trained, and the lock-string pulled. The privateer trembled all over with the force of the concussion; the howitzer bounded from its place and recoiled as far as its breeching would permit it to go, and the shrapnel went shrieking on its way. But it did not go more than a quarter of the distance that intervened between the two vessels before it exploded. However, it showed the crew of the fleeing schooner that her enemy was fully armed, and it enabled Tierney to load his gun with a shell provided with a longer fuse.

"Send home another one that will go farther before it busts," shouted Captain Beardsley. "And while you're doing it, we'll see if we can't come around on the other tack about as quick as she did."

Remember that the two vessels, pursuer and pursued, had not yet passed. They were sailing diagonally toward each other at the first, and that was the relative position they held when the privateer came about and stood off on the other tack. If Captain Beardsley had understood his business he might have had the after-gun cast loose and loaded with a fifteen-second shell, and fired it at the chase as the stern of the *Osprey* swung around. Marcy thought this could have been done, but of course he said nothing. His sympathies were entirely with the captain who had determined to make a race of it.

"I do hope he'll get away," thought the boy, looking first at the canvas of his own vessel to see how it was drawing, and then at the topsail schooner which was making such gallant efforts to escape. "Suppose the captain owns that craft, and that it is everything he has in the world to depend on for a living for his family? It will be just awful to take it away from him. Why don't Uncle Sam send some cruisers down here?"

While Marcy stood on the quarter-deck meditating, Tierney was working on the forecastle, and now he called out:

"All ready for'ard, sir."

"Let her have it!" cried the captain; and then, seeing that Marcy Gray was still holding fast to the halliards that kept the starry flag at the peak, he shouted: "Why don't you haul that thing down and run aloft the Stars and Bars? Are you asleep?"

"No, sir," replied the boy. "Waiting for orders, sir."

"Down with it then, and put our own flag up there," commanded the captain. "Fire, Tierney!"

The howitzer once more belched forth a cloud of flame and smoke, and Marcy stood on tiptoe and held his breath in suspense while he waited for the result. He felt the cold chills creep along his spine when, after an interval that seemed very short for the distance the shot had to travel, he saw it strike the water in line with the schooner and explode a second later almost at her side. There was no mistake about it this time. A fifteen-second fuse was long enough, and the next shot, with a single half-degree more of elevation, would surely strike her. Her skipper saw it, and rather than allow his vessel to be shot to pieces and his men killed before his eyes, he spilled his sails and gave up the contest.

"Come on deck, you lubbers below, and cheer our first prize," shouted the mate, who was almost beside himself with joy and excitement. "There she is, laying to and waiting for you to go and take possession," he went on, as the crew tumbled up the ladder. "Count your prize-money up on your fingers and then give a cheer."

This was an insulting way to treat men who had done all that brave men could do to elude their enemy, and surrendered at last because they had no means of defending themselves, and Marcy was glad to notice that Tierney saw it, and did not join in the cheers that followed. Perhaps the man had a better heart than Marcy had given him credit for.

"Where's that boat's crew?" inquired the captain, meaning the men who had been drilled in lowering the yawl and pulling off to imaginary prizes. "Here's the keys to the cabin, Marcy. Unlock the door and give every man who comes to you a saber, revolver, and a box of cartridges. And you," he added, turning to the first mate as Marcy took the keys and hastened below, "tumble ten men besides the boat's crew into the yawl, go off to the prize, and send the master and his papers on board of us. Put all the schooner's company, except the mates, in double irons, and stow them away somewhere under guard. Then keep your weather eye on me and follow in my wake when I fill away for Newbern. That's the way we'll manage things as often as we take a prize."

While these orders were being obeyed the *Osprey* was sailing steadily toward her prize; and by the time the men had been selected and the small arms distributed, she had come as close to her as Captain Beardsley thought it safe to venture. Having performed his duty, Marcy returned to the deck just in time to see the prize crew climbing upon her deck. A quarter of an hour later the boat came back, bringing a strange man who certainly took matters very coolly, seeing that he had lost his vessel and a valuable cargo.

"Captain," said he, as he clambered over the *Osprey's* rail, "I don't understand the situation at all, for all your mate would say to me was that my ship was a prize to the Confederate privateer *Osprey.*"

"What else did you want him to say?" asked Captain Beardsley, with a smile that must have made the merchant skipper angry. "That's the whole thing in a nutshell. Where are your papers? See that flag up there? That's the one I sail under. You must have heard that there were such fellows as me afloat, or you wouldn't have shied off as you did."

"Your appearance was all right, but I didn't like the way you acted," replied the skipper. "Yes, I have heard that there are some gentlemen of your sort roaming around the Gulf."

"Your schooner is the *Mary Hollins*, bound from Havana to Boston with an assorted cargo," said Captain Beardsley. "There is no attempt made to 'cover' either?"

"No, sir; it is an American vessel and her cargo is consigned to an American house," answered the skipper, who knew it would be useless to deny it with the plain facts staring Captain Beardsley in the face. "But, captain, I protest against your putting my men in irons. They are not felons, to be treated that way."

"Can't help it," said Beardsley shortly. "Can't you see for yourself that I have a small crew, and that I must take measures to prevent your men from recapturing the prize? I'll let 'em out as soon as we get through Hatteras."

The master of the privateer exchanged a few words with his second mate, and in a minute or two

more the *Osprey* came about and pointed her nose toward Newbern, the *Mary Hollins* following in her wake. The crew stepped around with unwonted alacrity, and tugged at the sheets as energetically as though the prize dollars the agent had promised them were fastened to the other end. Everybody was happy except Marcy Gray and the unfortunate skipper of the *Mary Hollins*. He took his capture very philosophically, but Marcy was sure he did some deep and earnest thinking while he stood on the privateer's quarterdeck, pulling his whiskers, and looking back at the vessel he had lost. Marcy almost wished that he could change places with him so that he could enter the navy as soon as he was released, and assist in sweeping the sea of such crafts as the *Osprey.* He dared not speak to him, for that would excite suspicion, and the prisoner, who looked at Marcy now and then, probably thought the boy as good a rebel as there was on board.

The low sand dunes about Hatteras Inlet, as well as the unfinished walls of the forts that were to defend it, came up out of the sea shortly after daylight the next morning, and at one o'clock the *Osprey* and her prize sailed through, loudly cheered by the working parties ashore. The prisoner now reminded Captain Beardsley of the promise he had made regarding the crew of the *Mary Hollins*, but Beardsley got out of it by saying that he had no way of signaling to the prize, and could not think of waiting for her to come alongside so that he could hail her. The truth was Captain Beardsley believed that the Yankees would fight if they were given half a chance. The sound upon which the vessels were now sailing was a pretty large body of water, Newborn was still many miles away, and if the *Hollins's* men were freed from their irons, they might recapture their vessel and elude the *Osprey* during the night that was coming. Beardsley kept them in durance until he reached port, and then released them to be jeered and hooted by the crowd that followed them from the wharf to the jail in which they were confined.

The reception that was extended to himself and his men was of different character. They were cheered to the echo, and as many as could get upon the decks of the *Osprey* and her prize, insisted on shaking them by the hand and telling them what brave fellows they were, and how much they had done for the glorious cause of Southern independence. Beardsley's agent was on hand, of course, and when he had seen the *Mary Hollins* turned over to the collector of the port, he insisted that the *Osprey* should run out again at once and make another haul, before the seizure of the *Hollins* became known at the North; but, to Marcy Gray's intense delight, Beardsley refused to budge.

"Not much I won't go outside again and leave you land-sharks to handle my prize and the money she'll sell for," he declared, with so much emphasis that the agent did not think it best to urge him further. "Me and my men have got the biggest interest in the *Mary Hollins*, and right here we stay till the legality of the capture has been settled, the vessel and cargo sold, and the dollars that belong to us are planked down in our two hands."

"Then I may go home?" said Marcy, as soon as he saw a good chance to ask the question.

"Course. Go by first train if you want to."

That was enough for the boy, who was disgusted with life on board a privateer. He hastened below, and in less than twenty minutes presented himself in Beardsley's cabin with his "grip" in one hand and a paper in the other.

"That's a leave of absence," said Marcy, placing the paper before the captain. "I don't suppose it is drawn up in proper form, but it will serve to show the people at home that I am there with your permission. I'd be glad if you would sign it."

The captain did so without a word of objection, gave Marcy a few messages to be delivered to his friends in and around Nashville, and promised to look out for his share of the prize money.

"You can keep it, if you can bring yourself to touch it," thought the boy, as he walked ashore, after shouting good-by to the crew, and bent his steps toward the nearest telegraph office. "It would burn my hands."

He sent a dispatch to his mother requesting that Morris might be sent to meet him at the depot at a certain time, and to allay any fears that might be awakened in her mind by his sudden return to Newbern, he announced that the privateer had just brought a valuable prize into port. Those few words sent the dispatch through without a cent's worth of expense to himself.

"So you are one of those gallant fellows, are you?" said the operator. "Well, I'll send it off and call it square. You deserve a world of credit."

"I can't for the life of me see where an armed vessel wins credit in capturing one that is entirely without means of defense," replied Marcy, who had heard so much of this sort of talk since he reached Newbern that he was tired of it.

"But that isn't the point," said the operator. "See what a blow you have struck at the enemy's commerce. Keep it up long enough and you will drive his hated old rag from the sea."

Marcy had another ride with Morris, who was at the depot waiting for him when his train came in, and reached home at last to receive a tearful welcome from his mother.

"You don't gush over me at all," said he, as she threw her arms about his neck and laid her head on his shoulder. "Don't you know that I have roamed the high sea, smelled powder, and helped capture a Yankee vessel? It's the most despicable business in the world," he added, as he led his mother into the house out of earshot of all the servants. And then he told her how the capture had been effected, and explained why Beardsley would not immediately put to sea to try his luck again. He said, with a long-drawn sigh, that he was glad to get home, and hoped from the bottom of his heart that the *Osprey* might sink at her wharf before he was ordered to report aboard of her again. As for the prize-money, he supposed he would have to take it or set Beardsley's tongue in motion; but he would put it carefully away, and send it to the master of the *Hollins* if he ever had the chance.

"You don't feel at all as your Cousin Rodney does," said his mother, when he ceased speaking. "A long letter from him addressed to you came during your absence, and I took the liberty to read it. Yes, he enlisted almost as soon as he reached home, and is going with his company to Missouri, where he hopes to join Dick Graham, who belongs to the state troops under General Price."

"They have both lived up to their principles, but how have I lived up to mine?" said Marcy, taking the letter from his mother's hand. "I told them I should be true to my colors, no matter what happened, and how have I held to my resolution? I can't tell them just how I am situated, for suppose the letter should miscarry and fall into the hands of some fellow like Captain Beardsley? This is a nice way to live."

Rodney wrote as if he were full of enthusiasm, and gave a complete history of his movements since the day on which he bade his cousin good-by in Barrington. There was one short paragraph in his letter which will serve as a very good introduction to the second volume of this series of books, and we produce it entire. It ran as follows:

"It wouldn't be safe for you to come to this country, old fellow, and talk as you did while we were at school. You would be mobbed in spite of all I could do to prevent it. I hope you haven't got into any trouble by trying to be true to your colors since you have been in North Carolina. I can talk as I please here, and you know I please to denounce everything except secession and independence. I belong to an independent company of cavalry. The colonel commanding the regiment we wanted to join didn't think he had any authority to accept us unless we would give up our independent organization, and as we were resolved we wouldn't do that, we began to think we would be obliged to fight on our own hook; but just in the nick of time we learned that the troops serving in Missouri, under Price and McCulloch, were mostly partisans, and that either of those commanders would be glad to accept us. So there is where we are going as soon as we can get transportation, and who knows but I may see our old friend Dick Graham? Shall I tell him 'Hello!' for you? We furnish our own horses, the government allowing us sixty cents a day for the use of them. If they die or are killed in action, we are to get another mount from the enemy. Come and join us, Marcy. Throw your Union sentiments to the winds—you'll have to sooner or later—take sides with the friends of your state, swear allegiance to the flag of the Confederacy and battle for the right. Come and join my company and we'll have some high old times running the Yankees out of Missouri."

But the sequel proved that the despised Yankees could not be so easily driven; on the contrary they drove the rebels. Marcy's cousin manfully bore a soldier's part in some of the hardest battles that were fought in Missouri; and just what he did, and whether or not he enjoyed the "high old times" that came rather sooner than he expected, shall be told in the succeeding volume of this series which will be entitled, "RODNEY, THE PARTISAN."

THE END.

[Illustration: Specimen Cover of the Gunboat Series.]

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