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SI KLEGG

SI AND SHORTY MEET MR. ROSENBAUM, THE SPY, WHO RELATES HIS ADVENTURES

By John McElroy

BOOK No. 3

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SI KLEGG

SI AND SHORTY MEET MR. ROSENBAUM, THE SPY, WHO RELATES HIS ADVENTURES

By John McElroy.

PREFACE

"Si Klegg, of the 200th Ind., and Shorty, his Partner," were born years ago in the brain of John McElroy, Editor of The National Tribune.

These sketches are the original ones published in The National Tribune, revised and enlarged somewhat by the author. How true they are to nature every veteran can abundantly testify from his own service. Really, only the name of the regiment was invented. There is no doubt that there were several men of the name of Josiah Klegg in the Union Army, and who did valiant service for the Government. They had experiences akin to, if not identical with, those narrated here, and substantially every man who faithfully and bravely carried a musket in defense of the best Government on earth had sometimes, if not often, experiences of which those of Si Klegg are a strong reminder.

The Publishers.

THIS BOOK IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED TO THE RANK AND FILE OF THE GRANDEST ARMY EVER MUSTERED FOR WAR.

CHAPTER I. OUT ON PICKET

THE BOYS SHOW THE DEACON A NEW WRINKLE IN THE CULINARY ART.

SOME days later, Si had charge of a picket-post on the Readyville Pike, near Cripple Deer Creek. The Deacon went with them, at their request, which accorded with his own inclinations, The weather was getting warmer every day, which made him fidgety to get back to his own fields, though Si insisted that they were still under a foot of snow in Indiana. But he had heard so much about picket duty that, next to battle, it was the thing he most wanted to see. Abraham Lincoln was left behind to care for the "house." He had been a disappointment so far, having developed no strong qualities, except for eating and sleeping, of which he could do unlimited quantities.

"No use o' takin' him out on picket," observed Shorty, "unless we kin git a wagon to go along and haul rations for him. I understand now why these rebels are so poor; the niggers eat up everything they kin raise. I'm afraid, Deacon, he'll make the Wabash Valley look sick when you turn him loose in it."

"I guess my farm kin stand him," said the Deacon proudly. "It stood Si when he was a growin' boy, though he used, to strain it sometimes."

They found a comfortable fence-corner facing south for their "tent," which they constructed by making a roof of cedar boughs resting on a rail running from one angle to another. They laid more boughs down in the corner, and on this placed their blankets, making a bed which the Deacon pronounced very inviting and comfortable. They built a fire in front, for warmth and for cooking, and so set up housekeeping in a very neat and soldier-like way.



MR. KLEGG ENJOYS SOLID COMFORT.

The afternoon passed without special incident. Shorty came in with a couple of chickens, but the Deacon had learned enough to repress any questions as to where and how he got them. He soon became more interested in his preparations for cooking them. He had built a big fire in a hole in the ground, and piled a quantity of dry cedar on this. Then he cut off the heads and legs of the chickens, and, getting some mud from the side of the road, proceeded to cover each, feathers and all, with a coating nearly an inch thick. 17

"What in the world do you mean by that, Shorty?" asked the Deacon in surprise.

"He's all right. Pap," assured Si. "He'll show you a new wrinkle in chicken-fixin' that you kin teach mother when you go home. She knows more about cookin' than any other woman in the world, but I'll bet she's not up to this dodge."

The fire had by this time burned down to a heap of glowing embers. The boys scraped a hole in these, laid on it their two balls of mud, then carefully covered them with live coals and piled on a little more wood.

"I'll say right now," said the Deacon, "that I don't think much o' that way. Why didn't you take their feathers off and clean out their innards? Seems to me that's a nasty way."

"Wait and see," said Shorty sententiously.

Si had mixed some meal into a dough in the half-canteens he and Shorty carried in their haversacks. He spread this out on a piece of sheet-iron, and propped it up before the fire. In a little while it was nicely browned over, when Si removed it from the sheet-iron, turned it over, and browned the other side. He repeated this until he had a sufficiency of "hoe cakes" for their supper. A kettle of good, strong coffee had been boiling on the other side of the fire while this was going on. Then they carefully raked the embers off, and rolled out two balls of hard-baked clay. Waiting for these to cool a little, they broke them. The skin and feathers came off with the pieces and revealed deliciously savory, sweet meat, roasted just to a turn. The intestines had shriveled up with the heat into little, hard balls, which were thrown away. 18

"Yum—yum—yum," said Shorty, tearing one of the chickens in two, and handing a piece to the Deacon, while Si gave him a sweet, crisp hoe cake and a cup of strong coffee. "Now, this's what you might call livin'. Never beat that cookin' in any house that had a roof. Only do that when you've stars in the roof of your kitchen."

"It certainly is splendid," admitted the Deacon. "I don't think Maria could've done better."

It was yet light when they finished their supper, filled their pipes, and adjusted themselves for a comfortable smoke. One of the men came back and said:

"Corporal, there's a rebel on horseback down the road a little ways who seems to be spying on us. We've noticed him for some little time. He don't come up in good range, and we haven't fired at him, hopin' he'd come closer. Better come and take a look at him."

"Don't do anything to scare him off," said Si. "Keep quiet. Me and Shorty'll sneak down through the field, out of sight, and git him."

They picked up their guns and slipped out under the cover of the undergrowth to where they could walk along the fence, screened by the heavy thicket of sumach. Catching the excitement of the occasion, the 19

Deacon followed them at a little distance.

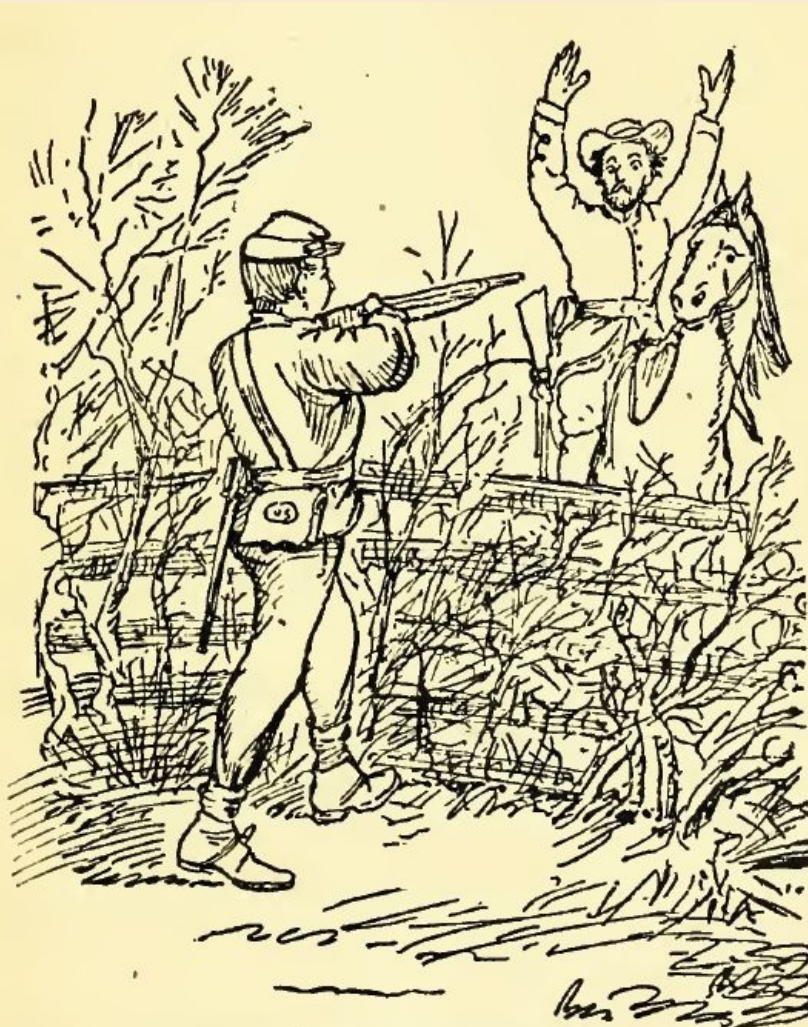
Without discovery Si and Shorty made their way to a covert within an easy 50 yards of where the horseman sat rather uneasily on a fine, mettled animal. They got a good look at him. He was a young, slender man, below medium height, with curly, coalblack hair, short whiskers, a hooked nose, and large, full eyes. He wore a gray suit of rather better make and material than was customary in the rebel army. He had a revolver in his belt and a carbine slung to his saddle, but showed no immediate intention of using either. His right hand rested on his thigh, and his eyes were intently fixed on the distant picket-post.

"A rebel scout," whispered Si. "Shall we knock him over, and then order him to surrender, or halt him first, and then shoot?"

"He can't git away," said Shorty. "I have him kivered. You kivver his hoss's head. Then call him down."

Si drew his sights fine on the horse's head and yelled:

"Surrender, there, you dumb rebel."



"SURRENDER, THERE, YOU DUMB REBEL."

The man gave a quick start, a swift glance at the blue uniforms, and instantly both hands went up.

"That is all right, boys. Don't shoot. I'm a friend," he called in a strong German accent.

"Climb down off o' that boss, and come here, and do it mighty sudden," called out Si, with his finger still on the trigger.

20

The horse became restive at the sound of strange voices, but the man succeeded in dismounting, and taking his reins in his hand, led the horse up to the fence.

"Very glad to see you, boys," said he, surveying their blue garments with undisguised satisfaction, and putting out his other hand to shake.

"Take off that revolver, and hand it here," ordered the wary Shorty, following the man with the muzzle of his gun. The man slipped his arm through the reins, unbuckled his revolver, and handed it to Shorty. Si jumped over the fence and seized the carbine.

"Who are you, and where did you come from?" asked Si, starting the man up the road toward the post.

"What regiment do you belong to?" asked the stranger, warily.

"We belong to Co. Q, 200th Injianny, the best regiment in Gen. Rosecrans's army," answered Si proudly, that the captive might understand where the honor of his taking belonged.

"That is all right," said the stranger, with an air of satisfaction. "The 200th Indianny is a very good regiment. I saw them whip John Morgan's cavalry at Green River. Clumsy farmer boys, but shoot like born devils."

"But who are you, and where did you come from?" repeated Si impatiently.

"I'm all right. I'm Levi Rosenbaum of Gen. Rosecrans's secret service. I got some news for him."

"You have?" said Si suspiciously. "Why didn't you ride right in and tell it to him? What've you bin hangin' 21

around here all afternoon, watchin' our post for?"

"I wasn't sure you was there. I was told that the Yankee pickets was going to be pushed out to Cripple Deer Creek to-day, but I didn't know it for sure. I was afraid that the rebels was there yet. Jim Jones, of the secret service, had agreed to come out this afternoon and wave a flag if it was all right. I was waiting for his sign. But he is probably drunk. He always gets so when he reaches camp." 22

The Deacon joined them in the road, and gave a searching glance at the prisoner.

"Ain't you a Jew?" he inquired presently. "Ain't your name Rosenbaum? Didn't you go through Posey County, Ind., a year or two ago, with a wagon, sellin' packs o' cloth to the farmers?"

"I'm an American citizen," said the man proudly, "the same as the rest of you. My religion is Hebrew. I don't know and don't care what your religion is. Every man has the religion that suits him. My name is Rosenbaum. I did sell cloth in Posey County, unt all over Indianny. It was good cloth, too, unt I sold it at a bargain."

"It certainly was good cloth, and cheap," admitted the Deacon. "What in the world are you doin' down here in them clothes?"

"I'm doing just what these men are doing here in their cloze," answered Rosenbaum. "I'm trying to serve the country. I'm doing it different from them, because I'm built different from them. I hope I'm doing it well. But I'm awfully hungry. Got anything to eat? Just a cup of coffee and a cracker? Don't care for any pork."

"Yes, we'll give you something to eat," said Shorty. "I think there's some of our chicken left. You'll find that good."

"How did you cook that?" said Rosenbaum, looking at the tempting morsel suspiciously.

Shorty explained.

"Thanks; I can't eat it," said Rosenbaum with a sigh. "It ain't kosher." 23

"What the devil's that?" asked Shorty.

"It's my religion. I can't explain. Send for the Officer of the Guard to take me to Headquarters," answered Rosenbaum, sipping his coffee.

CHAPTER II. ROSENBAUM, THE SPY

THE JEW TELLS THE THRILLING STORY OF HIS ADVENTURE.

THE Officer of the Guard was a long time in coming, and Mr. Rosenbaum grew quite chatty and communicative, as they sat around the bright fire of cedar logs and smoked.

"Yes," he said, "I have been in the secret service ever since the beginning of the war—in fact, before the war, for I began getting news for Frank Blair in the Winter before the war. They say Jews have no patriotism. That's a lie. Why should they have no patriotism for countries where they were treated like dogs? In Germany, where I was born, they treated us worse than dogs. They made us live in a little, nasty, pig-pen of an alley; we had to go in at sundown, unt stay there; we had to wear a different cloze from other folks, unt we didn't dare to say our souls were our own to any dirty loafer that insulted us.

"Here we are treated like men, unt why shouldn't we help to keep the country from breaking up? Jews ought to do more than anybody else, unt I made up my mind from the very first that I was going to do all that I could. The Generals have told me that I could do much better for the country in the secret service than as a soldier; they could get plenty of soldiers unt but few spies." 25

"Now you're shoutin'," said Shorty. "They kin git me to soldier as long as the war lasts, for the askin', but I wouldn't be a spy 10 minutes for a corn-basket full o' greenbacks. I have too much regard for my neck. I need it in my business."

"You a spy," said Si derisively. "You couldn't spy for sour apples. Them big feet o' your'n 'd give you dead away to anybody that'd ever seen you before."

"Spyin' isn't the business that any straightfor'rd man,"—the Deacon began to say in tones of cold disapproval, and then he bethought him of courtesy to the stranger, and changed hastily—"that I'd like to do. It's entirely too resky."

"O, it's jest as honorable as anything else. Pap," said Si, divining his father's thought. "All's fair in love and war. We couldn't git along without spies. They're as necessary as muskets and cannon."

"Indeed they are," said Mr. Rosenbaum earnestly; "you wouldn't know what to do with your muskets and cannon if the spies didn't tell you where the rebels were, unt how many there was of them. I go out unt get information that it would cost hundreds of lives to get, unt may save thousands of lives, unt all that it costs is one poor little Jew's neck, when they drop on to him some day, unt leave him swinging from a tree. But when that time comes, I shall make no more complaint than these other poor boys do, who get their heads knockt off in battle. I'm no better than they are. My life belongs to the country the same as theirs, unt this free Government is worth all our lives, unt more, too."

His simple, sincere patriotism touched the Deacon deeply. "I'd no idee that there was so much o' the man in a Jew," he said to himself. Then he asked the stranger: 26

"How did you come to go into the spy business, Mr. Rosenbaum?"

"Well, I was in St. Louis in the Clothing pizniss, unt you know it was purty hot there. All the Germans were for the Union, unt most of the Americans unt Irish seemed to be Secessionists. I sided with the Germans, but as nobody seemed to think that a Jew had any principles or cared for anything but the almighty dollar,

everybody talked right out before me, unt by keepin' my ears wide open I got hold of lots of news, which I took straight to General Lyon. I got well acquainted with him, and he used to send me here and there to find out things for him. I'd sell gray uniforms and other things to the Secessionists; they'd talk to one another right before me as to what was being done, and I'd keep my ears wide open all the time, though seemed to be only thinking about the fit and the buttons and the gold lace.

"Then General Lyon wanted to find out just exactly how many men there was in Camp Jackson—no guesswork—no suppose. I took 2,000 of my business cards, printed on white, and 1,000 printed on gray paper. I went through the whole camp. To every man in uniform I give a white card; to every man without a uniform, who seemed to be there for earnest, I give a gray card. When I got back I counted my cards in General Lyon's office, unt found I'd give out 500 white cards unt 200 gray ones. Then General Lyon took out about 3,000 men, unt brought the whole crowd back with him."

27

"Then General Lyon," continued Rosenbaum, "sent me out from Springfield, Mizzouri, to see how many men old Pap Price unt Ben McCullough had gathered up against him from Mizzouri, Arkansaw, Texas unt the plains. Holy Moses, I was scared when I saw the pile of them. The whole world seemed to be out there, yipping unt yelling for Jeff Davis, drinking raw sod-corn whisky, making secession speeches, unt shooting at marks.

"I rode right into them, unt pretended that I was looking for Mexican silver dollars to take to Mexico to buy powder unt lead for the rebel army. I had a lot of new Confedrit notes that I'd got from my cousin, who was in the tobacco business in Memphis. They was great curiosities, unt every man who had a Mexican dollar wanted to trade it for a Confedrit dollar.

"There was no use tryin' to count the men—might as well have tried to count the leaves on the trees, so I begun to count the regiments. I stuck a pin in my right lapel for every Mizzouri regiment, one in my left lapel for every Arkansaw regiment, one in my vest for every one from Texas. I had black pins for the cannons. I was getting along very well, when I run across Bob Smiles, a dirty loafer, who had been a customer in St. Louis. He wouldn't pay me, unt I had to get out a writ unt levy on his clothes just as he was dressing to go to a quadron ball.

"I left him with only a necktie, which was worth nothing to me, as it had been worn and soiled. He was very sore against me, unt I was not surprised.

28

"It made me sick at my stomach when I saw him come up.

"'Hello, you damn Dutch Jew,' he said. 'What are you doing here?'

"I tried to be very pleasant, unt I put out my hand unt said, with my best smile:

"'Good gracious. Bob, how glad I am to see you. When did you get here? Are you well? How are the other boys? Who's here? Where are you stopping?'

"But I might as well have tried to make friends with a bull dog in front of a farm house where all the people had gone away.

"'Go to blazes,' he said. 'None of your bizniss how I am, how I got here, or how the other boys are. Better not let them find out you're here. They'll take it out of your Jew hide for the way you used to skin them in St. Louis. I want to know what the devil you are doing here?'

"'Now, Mister Smiles,' I said, pleasant as a May morning, 'that's not the way to talk to me. You know I got up the stylishest clothes unt the best fits in St. Louis. We had a little trouble, it is true. It was nothing, though. Just a little business dispute. You know I always thought you one of the very nicest men in St. Louis, unt I said so, even to the Squire unt to the Constable.'

"'Go to the devil, you Savior-killing Jew,' said he. 'Shut up your mouth, or I'll stuff a piece of pork in it. I want to know at once what you are doing here? Where did you come from?'

"'I come from Memphis,' said I. 'I'm in the service of the Southern Confedrisy. General Pillow sent me to gather up all the Mexican dollars I could find, to send to Mexico to buy ammunition.'

29

"'It's a lie, of course,' said he. 'A Jew'd rather lie than eat, any day. Then you're one of them St. Louis Dutch—they imported Hessians. They're all dead against us. They all ought to be killed. I ought to kill you myself for being so cussed mean to me.'

"He put his hand on his revolver in a way that made my breakfast sour in my stomach, but then I knew that Bob Smiles was a great blowhard, unt his bark was much worse than his bite. In St. Louis he was always going to fight somebody unt kill somebody, but he never done neither. Quite a crowd gathered around, unt Bob blew off to them, unt they yelled, 'Hang the Jew spy. Kill the damn rascal,' and other things that made me unhappy. But what made my flesh crawl was to see a man who wasn't saying much, go to a wagon, pull out a rope, unt begin making a noose on the end. Bob Smiles caught hold of my collar unt started to drag me toward a tree. Just as I was giving up everything for lost, up comes Jim Jones—the same man I'm going to meet here—he come runnin' up. He was dressed in full uniform as a rebel officer—gray coat unt pants, silver stars on his collar, high boots, gray slouched hat with gold cord, unt so on.

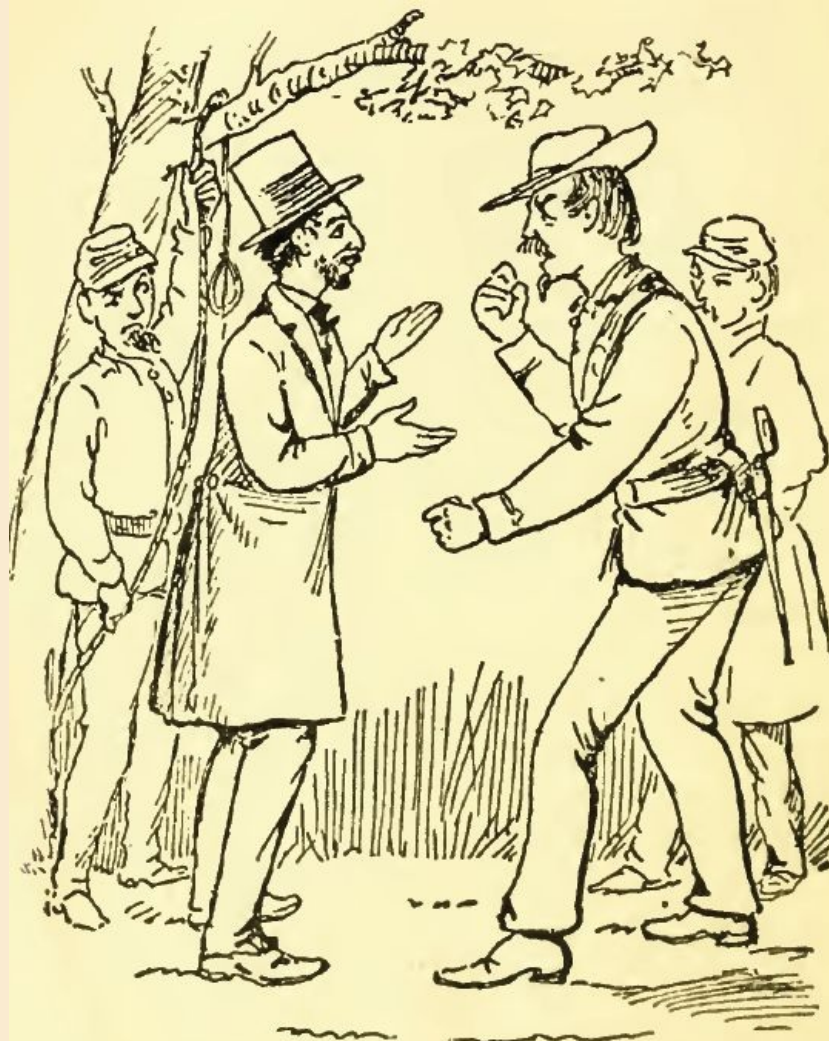
"'Here, what is the matter? What's all this fuss in camp?' he said.

"'We've ketched one of them Dutch Jews from St. Louis spying our camp, Major,' said Bob Smiles, letting loose of my collar to salute the Major's silver stars. 'And we are going to hang him.'

30

"'A spy? How do you know he's a spy?'" asked Jim Jones.

"'Well, he's Dutch; he's a Jew, unt he's from St. Louis. What more do you want?'" asked Bob Smiles.



TRYING TO SAVE HIS NECK.

The crowd yelled, unt de man with the rope went to the tree unt flung one end over a limb.

"His being a St. Louis Dutchman is against him," said Jim Jones, "but his being a Jew is in his favor. A Jew don't care a blame for politics. He hain't got no principles. He'd rather make a picayune off you in a trade than have a wagon-load of principles. But you fellers have got nothing to do with spies, anyway. That's headquarters' bizniss. I'm an officer at General Price's headquarters. I'll take him up there unt examine him. Bring him along." 31

"Go along, Jew," said two of three of them, giving me kicks, as Bob Smiles started with me. The man with the rope stood by the tree looking very disappointed.

"When we got near General Price's tent, Jim Jones says to the rest:

"You stop there. Come along with me, Jew."

"He took me by the collar, unt we walked toward General Price's tent. He whispered to me as we went along: 'You're all right, Rosenbaum. I know you, unt I know what you're here for. Just keep a stiff upper lip, tell your story straight, unt I'll see you through.'



"I KNOW YOU, UNT WHAT YOU'RE HERE FOR."

"That scared me worse than ever, but all that I could do was to keep up my nerve, unt play my cards coolly. We went into the General's tent, but he was busy, unt motioned us with his hand to the Adjutant-General.

"What's the matter?' asked the Adjutant-General, motioning me to sit down, while he went on making tally marks on a sheet of paper, as a man called off the regiments that had reported. Then he footed them all up, unt, turning to another officer, read from it so many Arkansaw regiments, so many Louisianny, so many Mizzouri, so many Texas, so many batteries of artillery, unt he said to another officer as he laid the paper face down among the other papers on his table: 'Just as I told you, Colonel. We have fully 22,000 men ready for battle.' Then to us: 'Well, what can I do for you?' 32

"The boys had picked up this Jew for a spy, Colonel,' said Jim Jones, pointing to me, 'unt they were about to hang him, just to pass away the afternoon more than for anything else. I took him away from them, telling them that it was your privilege to hang spies, unt you could do it according to the science of war. I brung him up here to get him away from them. After they're gone away or got interested in something else I'll take him unt put him outside of camp.' 33

"All right," said de Adjutant-General, without taking much interest in the matter. 'Do with him as you please. A Jew more or less isn't of any consequence. Probably he deserves hanging, though, but it isn't well to encourage the boys to hang men on sight. They're quite too ready to do that, anyway.'

"He talked to the other man a little, unt then when he went away he turned to me, unt said, sort of lazy like, as if he didn't care anything about it:

"Where are you from?"

"From Memphis,' said I.

"Great place, Memphis,' said he; 'one of the thriving suburbs of Satan's Kingdom. Had lots of fun there. I know every faro bank in it, which speaks well for my memory, if not for my morals. What bizness was you in?'

"Clothing,' said I.

"What a fool question to ask a Jew,' said he, yawning. 'Of course, you was in the clothing trade. You was born in it. All Jews have been since they gambled for the Savior's garments.'

"They wasn't Jews what gambled for Christ's clothes,' said I, picking up a little courage. 'They vass Romans—Italians—Dagoes.' 34

"Was they?' said he. 'Well, mebbe they was. I haven't read my Bible for so long that I've clean forgot. Say, what are you doing with all them pins?'

"The question come so unexpected that it come nearly knocking me off my base. I had calculated on almost every other possible thing, unt was ready for it, except that fool question. I thought for a minit that disappointed man by the tree with the rope was going to get his job, after all. But I gathered myself together with a jerk, unt calmly said with a smile:

"O, that's some of my foolishness. I can't get over being a tailor, and sticking all the pins what I find in my lapel. I must pick up every one I see.'

"'Queer where you found them all,' said he. 'Must've brung them from Memphis with you. I can't find one in the whole camp. Our men use nails unt thorns instead of pins. I've been wanting a lot of pins for my papers. Let me have all you got. I wish you had a paper of them.'

"I did have two or three papers in my pockets, unt first had a fool idea of offering them to him. Then I remembered that disappointed man with the rope by the tree, unt pulled the pins out of my lapels one by one unt give them to him, trying to keep count in my head as I did so.

"'What are you doing here, anyway?' he asked as he gathered up the pins unt put them in a pasteboard box.

"'I come here at General Pillow's orders, to pick up some Mexican silfer dollars, to buy ammuniton in Mexico.

"'Another of old blowhard Pillow's fool schemes,' said he. 'I know old Pillow. I served with him in Mexico, when he dug his ditch on the wrong side of his fortification. He's probably going to do some-thing else with the dollars than buy ammuniton. Old Gid Pillow's a mighty slick one, I tell you, when it comes to filling his own pockets. He's no fool there, whatever he may be in other ways. He's working some scheme to skin our men, unt making you his partner, then he'll turn around unt skin you. I'll stop it going any further by turning you out of camp, unt I ought to take away from you all the money you've gathered up, but I won't do it on one condition.'

35

"'What is your condition?' said I, trying not to speak too quick.

"'You say you are in the clothing pizniss. I want awfully a nice uniform, just like the Major's there. What's such a uniform worth?'

"'About \$75,' said I.

"'I paid \$65 for this in St. Louis,' said Jim Jones.

"'Well, \$10 is not much of a skin for a Memphis Jew,' laughed the Adjutant-General. 'I tell you what I'll do, if you'll swear by the book of Deuteronomy, unt Moses, Abraham unt Isaac, to have me inside of two weeks just such a uniform as the Major's there, I'll let you off with all the money you have made already, unt when you come back with it I'll give you written permission to trade for every silver dollar in camp.'

"'It is a bargain,' said I.

"'Unt it'll be a perfect fit," said he.

"'Just like the paper on the wall,' said I. 'Let me take your measure.'

36

"I had my eye all the time on the paper he had laid carelessly down unt forgotten. I pulled my tapemeasure out. The old idee of the tailor come up. I forgot about the disappointed man with the rope by the tree, unt was my old self taking the measure of a customer. I put all the figures down on his piece of paper, without his noticing what I was using. I asked him about the lining, the trimming, unt the pockets, unt wrote them down. Then I folded up the paper unt stuck it in my breast pocket, unt my heart gave a big thump, though I kept my face straight, unt went on talking about buttons unt silk braid unt gold lace for the sleeves. I promised him he should have the uniform in the army in two weeks' time. Just then some officers come in, unt Jim Jones hurried me out. I could not understand Jim Jones. He hurried me across to a place behind the woods, where we found some horses.

"'Untie that one unt get on quick,' he said. 'My God, you've got the thing dead to rights; you've got everything on that piece of paper. My God, what luck! Smartest thing I ever saw done. Get that paper in General Lyon's hands before midnight if you kill yourself unt horse in doing it. I'll take you out past part of the guards, unt show you how to avoid the rest. Then ride as if the devil was after you, until you reach General Lyon's tent.'

"I was dumfounded. I looked at Jim Jones. His eyes was like fire. Then it suddenly occurred to me that Jim Jones was a spy, too.

"As I mounted I looked back across the camp. I saw the rope still hanging from a limb of the tree, and the disappointed man sitting down beside it patiently waiting.

37

"That night the paper was in General Lyon's hands, unt the next night the army moved out to fight the battle of Wilson's Creek.

"The Adjutant-General is still waiting for that uniform."

"Halt, who comes there?" called out Shorty, whose quick ears caught the sound of approaching footsteps.

"The Officer of the Guard," responded from the bank of darkness in the rear.

"Advance, Officer of the Guard, and give the countersign," commanded Shorty, lowering his musket to a charge bayonets.

The officer advanced, leaned over the bayonet's point, and whispered the countersign.

"Countersign's correct," announced Shorty, bringing his gun to a present. "Good evening. Lieutenant. We have got a man here who claims to belong to the Secret Service."

"Yes," answered the officer. "We've been expecting him all afternoon, but thought he was coming in on the other road. I'd have been around here long ago only for that. This is he, is it? Well, let's hurry in. They want you at Headquarters as soon as possible."

"Good night, boys," called out Mr. Rosenbaum as he disappeared; "see you again soon."

38

CHAPTER III. THE DEACON GOES HOME

SHORTY FALLS A VICTIM TO HIS GAMBLING PROPENSITIES.

THE BOYS did not finish their tour of picket duty till the forenoon of the next day, and it was getting toward evening when they reached their own camp.

"What in the world's going on at the house?" Si asked anxiously, as they were standing on the regimental parade ground waiting to be dismissed. Strange sounds came floating from that direction. The scraping of a fiddle was mingled with yells, the rush of feet, and laughter.

"I'll go over there and see," said the Deacon, who had sat down behind the line on a pile of the things they had brought back with them. He picked up the coffee-pot, the frying-pan, and one of the haversacks, and walked in the direction of the house. As he turned into the company street and came in sight of the cabin he looked for an instant, and then broke out:

"I'm blamed if they don't seem to be havin' a nigger political rally there, with the house as campaign headquarters. Where in time could they have all come from? Looks like a crow-roost, with some o' the crows drunk."

Apparently, all the negro cooks, teamsters, officers' servants, and roustabouts from the adjoining camps had been gathered there, with Groundhog, Pilgarlic, and similar specimens of the white teamsters among them and leading them. 39



THE NEGROES MERRYMAKING.

Seated on a log were three negroes, one sawing on an old fiddle, one picking a banjo, and one playing the bones. Two negroes were in the center of a ring, dancing, while the others patted "Juba." All were more or less intoxicated. Groundhog and Pilgarlic were endeavoring to get up a fight between Abraham Lincoln and another stalwart, stupid negro, and were plying them with whisky from a canteen and egging them on with words. 40

The Deacon strode up to Groundhog and, catching him by the arm, demanded sternly:

"What are you doing, you miserable scoundrel? Stop it at once."

Groundhog, who had drunk considerable himself, and was pot-valiant, shook him off roughly, saying:

"G'way from here, you dumb citizen. This hain't none o' your bizniss. Go back to your haymow and leave soldiers alone."

The Deacon began divesting himself of his burden to prepare for action, but before he could do so, Shorty rushed in, gave Groundhog a vigorous kick, and he and Si dispersed the rest of the crowd in a hurry with sharp cuffs for all they could reach. The meeting broke up without a motion to adjourn.

The Deacon caught Abraham Lincoln by the collar and shook him vigorously.

"You black rascal," he said, "what've you bin up to?"

"Didn't 'spect you back so soon. Boss," gasped the negro. "Said you wouldn't be back till termorrer."

"No matter when you expected us back," said the Deacon, shaking him still harder, while Si winked meaningly at Shorty. "What d'ye mean by sich capers as this? You've bin a-drinkin' likker, you brute."

"Cel'bratun my freedom," gasped the negro. "Groundhog done tole me to."

"I'd like to celebrate his razzled head offen him," exploded the Deacon. "I'll welt him into dog's meat hash if I kin lay my hands on him. He's too mean and wuthless to even associate with mules. If I'd a dog on my place as onery as he is I'd give him a button before night. He's not content with bein' a skunk himself; he wants to drag everybody else down to his level. Learnin' you to drink whisky and fight as soon as you're out o' bondage. Next thing he'll be learnin' you to steal sheep and vote for Vallandigham. I'd like to put a stone 41

around his neck and feed him to the catfish."

There was something so strange and earnest about the Deacon's wrath that it impressed the negro more than any of the most terrible exhibitions of wrath that he had seen his master make. He cowered down, and began crying in a maudlin way and begging:

"Pray God, Boss, don't be so hard on a poor nigger."

Si, who had learned something more of the slave nature than his father, ended the unpleasant scene by giving Abraham Lincoln a sharp slap across the hips with a piece of clapboard and ordering:

"Pick up that camp-kettle, go to the spring and fill it, and git back here in short meter."

The blow came to the negro as a welcome relief. It was something that he could understand. He sprang to his feet, grinned, snatched up the campkettle, and ran to the spring.

"I must get that man away from here without delay," said the Deacon. "The influences here are awful. They'll ruin him. He'll lose his soul if he stays here. I'll start home with him to-morrow."

"He'll do worse'n lose his soul," grumbled Shorty, who had been looking over the provisions. "He'll lose the top of his woolly head if he brings another gang o' coons around here to eat us out o' house and home. I'll be gosh durned if I don't believe they've eat up even all the salt and soap. There ain't a crumb left of anything. Talk about losin' his soul. I'd give six bits for something to make him lose his appetite." 42

"I'll take him home to-morrow," reiterated the Deacon. "I raised over 'leven hundred bushels o' corn last year, 'bout 500 o' wheat, and just an even ton o' pork. I kin feed him awhile, anyway, but I don't know as I'd chance two of him."

"What'll you do if you have him and the grasshoppers the same year, Pap?" inquired Si.

That night the Deacon began his preparations for returning home. He had gathered up many relics from the battlefield to distribute among his friends at home and decorate the family mantlepiece. There were fragments of exploded shells, some canister, a broken bayonet, a smashed musket, a solid 12-pound shot, and a quart or more of battered bullets picked up in his walks over the scenes of the heavy fighting.

"Looks as if you were going into the junk business. Pap," commented Si, as the store was gathered on the floor.

The faithful old striped carpetsack was brought out, and its handles repaired with stout straps. The thrifty Deacon insisted on taking home some of Si's and Shorty's clothes to be mended. The boys protested.

"We don't mend clothes in the army, Pap," said Si. "They ain't wuth it. We just wear 'em out throw 'em away, and draw new ones." 43

The Deacon held out that his mother and sisters would take great pleasure in working on such things, from the feeling that they were helping the war along. Finally the matter was compromised by putting in some socks to be darned and shirts to be mended. Then the bullets, canister, round-shot, fragments of shell, etc., were filled in.

"I declare," said the Deacon dubiously, as he hefted the carpetsack. "It's goin' to be a job to lug that thing back home. Better hire a mule-team. But I'll try it. Mebbe it'll help work some o' the stupidity out o' Abraham Lincoln."

The whole of Co. Q and most of the regiment had grown very fond of the Deacon, and when it was noised around that he was going, they crowded in to say good-by, and give him letters and money to take home. The remaining space in the carpetsack and all that in the Deacon's many pockets were filled with these.

The next morning the company turned out to a man and escorted him to the train, with Si and his father marching arm-in-arm at the head, the company fifers playing,

*"Ain't I glad to get out of the Wilderness,
Way down in Tennessee,"*

and Abraham Lincoln, laden with the striped carpetsack, the smashed musket and other relics, bringing up the rear, under the supervision of Shorty. Tears stood in the old man's eyes as he stood on the platform of the car, and grasped Si's and Shorty's hands in adieu. His brief farewell was characteristic of the strong, self-contained Western man: 44

"Good-by, boys. God bless you. Take care of yourselves. Be good boys. Come home safe after the war."



MR. KLEGG STARTS FOR HOME.

The boys stood and watched the train with sorrowful eyes until it had passed out of sight in the woods beyond Overall's Creek, and then turned to go to their camp with a great load of homesickness weighing down their hearts.

"Just think of it; he's going straight back to God's country," said someone near.

A sympathetic sigh went up from all.

"Shet up," said Shorty savagely. "I don't want to hear a word o' that kind. He pulled his hat down over his eyes, rammed his hands deep in his pockets, and strode off, trying to whistle

"When this cruel war is over,"

but the attempt was a dismal failure. Si separated from the crowd and joined him. They took an unfrequented and roundabout way back to camp.

"I feel all broke up. Si," said Shorty. "I wish that we were goin' into a fight, or something to stir us up."

Si understood his partner's mood, and that it was likely to result in an outbreak of some kind. He tried to get him over to the house, so that he could get him interested in work there.

They came to a little hidden ravine, and found it filled with men playing that most fascinating of all gambling games to the average soldier—chuck-a-luck. There were a score of groups, each gathered around as many "sweat-boards." Some of the men "running" the games were citizens, and some were in uniform. Each had before him a small board on which was sometimes painted, sometimes rudely marked with charcoal, numbers from 1 to 6. 45

On some of the boards the numbers were indicated by playing-cards, from ace to six-spot, tacked down. The man who "ran" the game had a dice-box, with three dice. He would shake the box, turn it upside down on the board, and call upon the group in front of him to make their bets. 46

The players would deposit their money on the numbers that they fancied, and then, after the inquiry, "All down?" the "banker" would raise the box and reveal the dice. Those who had put their money on any of the three numbers which had turned up, would be paid, while those who bet on the other three would lose.

Chuck-a-luck was strictly prohibited in camp, but it was next to impossible to keep the men from playing it. Citizen gamblers would gain admittance to camp under various pretexts and immediately set up boards in secluded places, and play till they were discovered and run out, by which time they would have made enough to make it an inducement to try again whenever they could find an opportunity. They followed the army incessantly for this purpose, and in the aggregate carried off immense sums of the soldiers' pay. Chuck-a-luck is one of the fairest of gambling games, when fairly played, which it rarely or never is by a professional gambler. A tolerably quick, expert man finds little difficulty in palming the dice before a crowd of careless soldiers so as to transfer the majority of their bets to his pocket. The regular citizen gamblers were reinforced by numbers of insatiable chuck-a-luckers in the ranks, who would set up a "board" at the least

chance, even under the enemy's fire, while waiting the order to move.

Chuck-a-luck was Shorty's greatest weakness. He found it as difficult to pass a chuck-a-luck board as an incurable drunkard does to pass a dram-shop.

47

Si knew this, and shuddered a little as he saw the "layouts," and tried to get his partner past them. But it was of no use. Shorty was in an intractable mood. He must have a strong distraction. If he could not fight he would gamble.

"I'm goin' to bust this feller's bank before I go another step," said he, stopping before one. "I know him. He's the same feller that, you remember, I busted down before Nashville. I kin do it agin. He's a bum citizen gambler. He thinks he's the smartest chuck-a-lucker in the Army o' the Cumberland, but I'll learn him different."

"Don't risk more'n a dollar," begged Si as a final appeal.

"All down?" called the "banker."

"Allow doublin'?" inquired Shorty.

"Double as much as you blamed please, so long's you put your money down," answered the "banker" defiantly.

"Well, then, here goes a dollar on that five-spot," said Shorty, "skinning" a bill from a considerable roll.

"Don't allow more'n 25 cents bet on single cards, first bet," said the "banker," dismayed by the size of the roll.

"Thought you had some sand," remarked Shorty contemptuously. "Well, then, here's 25 cents on the five-spot, and 25 cents on the deuce," and he placed shin-plasters on the numbers. "Now, throw them dice straight, and no fingerin'. I'm watchin' you."

"Watch and be durned," said the "banker" surlily. "Watch your own business, and I'll watch mine. I'm as honest as you are any day."

48

The "banker" lifted the box, and showed two sixes and a tray up. He raked in the bets on the ace, deuce, four and five-spots, and paid the others.

"Fifty cents on the deuce; 50 cents on the five," said Shorty, laying down the fractional currency.

Again they lost.

"A dollar on the deuce; a dollar on the five," said Shorty.

The same ill luck.

"Two dollars on the deuce; two dollars on the five," said Shorty, though Si in vain plucked his sleeve to get him away.

The spots remained obstinately down.

"Four dollars on the deuce; four dollars on the five," said Shorty.

No better luck.

"Eight dollars on the deuce; eight dollars on the five," said Shorty.

"Whew, there goes more'n a month's pay," said the other players, stopping to watch the dice as they rolled out, with the deuce and five-spot down somewhere else than on top. "And his roll's beginning to look as if an elephant had stepped on it. Now we'll see his sand."

"Come, Shorty, you've lost enough. You've lost too much already. Luck's agin you," urged Si. "Come away."

"I ain't goin'," said Shorty, obstinately. "Now's my chance to bust him. Every time them spots don't come up increases the chances that they'll come up next time. They've got to. They're not loaded; I kin tell that by the way they roll. He ain't fingerin' 'em; I stopped that when I made him give 'em a rollin' throw, instead o' keep in' 'em kivvered with the box."

49

"Sixteen dollars on the deuce; sixteen dollars on the five-spot. And I ain't takin' no chances o' your jumpin' the game on me, Mr. Banker. I want you to plank down \$32 alongside o' mine."

Shorty laid down his money and put his fists on it. "Now put yours right there."

"O, I've got money enough to pay you. Don't be skeered," sneered the "banker," "and you'll git it if you win it."

"You bet I will," answered Shorty. "And I'm goin' to make sure by havin' it right on the board alongside o' mine. Come down, now."

The proposition met the favor of the other players, and the "banker" was constrained to comply.

"Now," said Shorty, as the money was counted down, "I've jest \$20 more that says that I'll win. Put her up alongside."

The "banker" was game. He pulled out a roll and said as he thumbed it over:

"I'll see you \$20, and go you \$50 better that I win."

Shorty's heart beat a little faster. All his money was up, but there was the \$50 which the Deacon had intrusted to him for charitable purposes. He slipped his hand into his bosom, felt it, and looked at Si. Si was not looking at him, but had his eyes fixed on a part of the board where the dice had been swept after the last throw. Shorty resisted the temptation for a moment, and withdrew his hand.

"Come down, now," taunted the "banker." "You've blowed so much about sand. Don't weaken over a little thing like \$50. I'm a thoroughbred, myself, I am. The man don't live that kin bluff me."

50

The taunt was too much for Shorty. He ran his hand into his bosom in desperation, pulled out the roll of the Deacon's money, and laid it on the board.

Si had not lifted his eyes. He was wondering why the flies showed such a liking for the part of the board where the dice were lying. Numbers of them had gathered there, apparently eagerly feeding. He was trying to understand it.

He had been thinking of trying a little shy at the four-spot himself, as he had noticed that it had never won,

and two or three times he had looked for it before the dice were put in the box, and had seen the "banker" turn it down on the board before picking the dice up. A thought flashed into his mind.

The "banker" picked up the dice with seeming carelessness, dropped them into the box, gave them a little shake, and rolled them out. Two threes and a six came up. The "banker's" face lighted up with triumph, and Shorty's deadened into acute despair.

"I guess that little change is mine," said the "banker" reaching for the pile.

"Hold on a minnit. Mister," said Si, covering the pile with his massive hands. "Shorty, look at them dice. He's got molasses on one side. You kin see there where the flies are eatin' it."

Shorty snatched up the dice, felt them and touched his tongue to one side. "That's so, sure's you're a foot high," said he sententiously.

Just then someone yelled:

"Scatter! Here come the guards!"

51

All looked up. A company coming at the doublequick was almost upon them. The "banker" made a final desperate claw for the money, but was met by the heavy fist of Shorty and knocked on his back. Shorty grabbed what money there was on the board, and he and Si made a burst of speed which took them out of reach of the "provos" in a few seconds. Looking back from a safe distance they could see the "bankers" and a lot of the more luckless ones being gathered together to march to the guard-house. "Another detachment of horny-handed laborers for the fortifications," said Shorty grimly, as he recovered his breath, watched them, and sent up a yell of triumph and derision. "Another contribution to the charity fund," he continued, looking down at the bunch of bills and fractional currency in his hands.

52



SHORTY SETTLES WITH THE BANKER.

"Shorty," said Si earnestly, "promise me solemnly that you'll never bet at chuck-a-luck agin as long as you live."

"Si, don't ask me impossibilities. But I want you to take every cent o' this money and keep it. Don't you ever give me more'n \$5 at a time, under any consideration. Don't you do it, if I git down on my knees and ask for it. Lord, how nigh I come to losin' that \$50 o' your father's."

CHAPTER IV. A SPY'S EXPERIENCES

MR. ROSENBAUM TELLS THE BOYS MORE OF HIS ADVENTURES.

MR. ROSENBAUM became a frequent visitor to the Hoosier's Rest, and generally greatly interested Si and Shorty with his stories of adventure.

"How did you happen to come into the Army of the Cumberland?" asked Si. "I'd a-thought you'd staid where you knowed the country and the people."

"That was just the trouble," replied Rosenbaum. "I got to know them very well, but they got to know me a confounded sight better. When I was in the clothing bizness in St. Louis I tried to have everybody know me. I advertised. I wanted to be a great big sunflower that everybody noticed. But when I got to be a spy I wanted to be a modest little violet that hid under the leaves, unt nobody saw. Then every man what knew me become a danger, unt it got so that I shuddered every time that I see a limb running out from a tree, for I didn't know how soon I might be hung from it. I had some awful narrow escapes, I tell you.

"But what decided me to leave the country unt skip over de Mississippi River was something that happened down in the Boston Mountains just before the battle of Pea Ridge. I was down there watching Van Dorn unt Ben McCullough for General Curtis, unt was getting along all right. I was still playing the old racket about buying up Mexican silver dollars to buy ammunition. One night I was sitting at a campfire with two or three others, when a crowd of Texans come up. They was just drunk enough to be devilish, unt had a rope with a noose on the end, which I noticed first thing. I had begun to keep a sharp lookout for such things. My flesh creeped when I saw them. I tried to think what had stirred them up all at once, but couldn't for my life recollect, for everything had been going on all right for several days. The man with the rope—a big, ugly brute, with red hair unt one eye—says:

"'You're a Jew, ain't you?'

"'Yes,' says I; 'I was born that way.'

"'Well,' says he, 'we're going to hang you right off.' Unt he put the noose around my neck unt began trying to throw the other end over a limb."



A CLOSE CALL FOR ROSENBAUM.

"'What for?' I yelled, trying to pull the rope off my neck. 'I ain't done nothing.'

"'Hain't eh?' said the man with one eye. 'You hook-nosed Jews crucified our Savior.'

"'Why, you red-headed fool,' said I, catching hold of the rope with both hands, 'that happened more as 1,800 years ago. Let me go.'

"'I don't care if it did,' said the one-eyed man, getting the end of the rope over the limb, 'we didn't hear about it till the Chaplain told us this morning, unt then the boys said we'd kill every Jew we come across. Catch hold of the end here, Bowers.'

"The other fellers around me laughed at the Texans so that they finally agreed to let me go if I'd promise not to do it again, holler for Jeff Davis, unt treat all around. It was a fool thing, but it scared me worse'n anything else, unt I resolved to get out of there unt go where the people read their Bibles unt the newspapers."

"How did you manage to keep Gen. Curtis posted as to the number of rebels in front of him?" asked Si. "You couldn't always be running back and forth from one army to the other."

"O, that was easy enough. You see. General Curtis was advancing, unt the rebels falling back most of the time. There was cabins every little ways along the road. All these have great big fireplaces, built of smooth rocks, which they pick up out of the creek unt wherever they can find them.

"I'd go into these houses unt talk with the people unt play with the children. I'd sit by the fire unt pick up a

dead coal unt mark on these smooth rocks. Sometimes I'd draw horses unt wagons unt men to amuse the children. Sometimes I'd talk to the old folks about how long they'd been in the country, how many bears unt deers the man had killed, how far it was to the next place, how the roads run, unt so on, unt I'd make marks on the jam of the fireplace to help me understand.

"The next day our scouts would come in unt see the marks unt understand them just as well as if I'd wrote them a letter. I fixed it all up with them before I left camp. I kin draw very well with a piece of charcoal. I'd make pictures of men what would make the children unt old folks open their eyes. Our scouts would understand which one meant Ben McCullough, which one Van Dorn, which one Pap Price, unt so on. Other marks would show which way each one was going unt how many men he hat with him. The rebels never dropt on to it, but they came so close to it once or twice that my hair stood on end."

"That curly mop of yours'd have a time standing on end," ventured Shorty. "I should think it'd twist your neck off tryin' to."

"Well, something gave me a queer feeling about the throat one day when I saw a rebel Colonel stop unt look very hard at a long letter which I'd wrote this way on a rock. 57

"Who done that?' he asked.

"This man here,' says the old woman, 'He done it while he was gassing with the old man unt fooling with the children. Lot o' pesky nonsense, marking up de walls dat a-way.'

"Looks like very systematic nonsense,' said the Colonel very stern unt sour. 'There may be something in it. Did you do this?' said he, turning to me.

"Yes, sir,' said I, 'I have a bad habit of marking when I'm talking. I always done it, even when I was a child. My mother used to often slap me for spoiling the walls, but she could never break me of it.'

"Humph,' said he, not at all satisfied with my story, unt looking at the scratches harder than ever. 'Who are you, unt what are you doing here?'

"I told him my story about buying Mexican silver dollars, unt showed him a lot of the dollars I'd bought.

"Your story ain't reasonable,' said he. 'You haven't done bizniss enough to pay you for all the time you've spent around the army. I'll put you under guard till I can look into your case.'

"He called to the Sergeant of the Guard, unt ordered him to take charge of me. The Sergeant was that same dirty loafer. Bob Smiles, that I had the trouble with by Wilson's Creek. He kicked me unt pounded me, unt put me on my horse, with my hands tied behind me, unt my feet tied under the horse's belly. I was almost dead by night, when we reached Headquarters. They gave me something to eat, unt I laid down on the floor of the cabin, wishing I was Pontius Pilate, so that I could crucify every man in the Southern Confedrisy, especially Bob Smiles. An hour or two later I heard Bob Smiles swearing again." 58



THE SPY IN CUSTODY.

"Make out the names of all the prisoners I have,' he was saying, 'with where they belong unt the charges against them. I can't. Do they take me for a counter-jumping clerk? I didn't come into the army to be a white-faced bookkeeper, I sprained my thumb the other day, unt I can't write even a Httle bit. What am I to do?' 59

"That was all moonshine about his spraining his thumb. He vas ignorant as a jackass. If he had 40 thumbs he couldn't write even his own name so's anybody could read it.

"I don't believe these's a man in a mile of here that can make out such a list,' he went on. They're all a set of hominy-eating blockheads. Perhaps that hook-nosed Jew might. He's the man. I'll make him do it, or break his swindling head.'

"He come in, kicked me, unt made me get up, unt then took me out unt set me down at a table, where he had paper, pen unt ink, unt ordered me to take down the names of the prisoners as he brought them up. He'd look over my shoulder as I wrote, as if he was reading what I set down, but I knowed that he couldn't make out a letter. I was tempted to write all sorts of things about him, but I didn't, for I was in enough trouble already. When I come to my own name, he said:

"Make de charge a spy, a thief, unt a Dutch traitor to the Southern Confedrisy.'

"I just wrote: 'Levi Rosenbaum, Memphis, Tenn. Merchant. No charge.'

"He scowled very wisely at it, unt pretended to read it, unt said:

"It's lucky for you that you wrote it just as I told you. I'd 'a' broke every bone in your body if you hadn't.'

"I'd just got done when an officer come down from Headquarters for it. He looked it over unt said:

"Who made this out?'

"Why, I made it out,' said Bob Smiles, bold as brass.

"But who wrote it?" said de officer.

"O, I sprained my thumb, so I couldn't write very well, unt I made a Jew prisoner copy it,' said Bob Smiles.

"It's the best writing I have seen,' said the officer. 'I want the man what wrote it to go with me to Headquarters at once. I have some copying there to be done at once, unt not one of them corn-crackers that I have up there can write anything fit to read. Bring that man out here unt I will take him with me.'

"Bob Smiles hated to let me go, but he couldn't help himself, unt I went with the officer. I was so tired I could hardly move a step, unt I felt I could not write a word. But I seemed to see a chance at Headquarters, unt I determined to make every effort to do something. They gave me a stiff horn of whisky unt set me to work. They wanted me to make out unt copy a consolidated report of the army.

"I almost forgot I was tired when I found out what they wanted, for I saw a chance to get something of great value. They'd been trying to make up a report from all sorts of scraps unt sheets of paper sent in from the different Headquarters, unt they had spoiled a half-dozen big sheets of paper after they'd got them partly done. If I do say it myself, I can write better and faster and figure quicker than most any man you ever saw. Those rebels thought they had got hold of a wonder—a lightning calculator unt lightning penman together.

61

"As fast as I could copy one paper, unt it would prove to be all right, I would fold it up unt stick it into a big yaller envelope. I also folded up the spoiled reports, unt stuck them in the envelope, saying that I wanted to get rid of them—put them where seeing them wouldn't bother me. I carefully slipped the envelope under the edge of a pile of papers near the edge of the table. I had another big yaller envelope that looked just like it lying in the middle of the table, into which I stuck papers that didn't amount to nothing. I was very slick about it, unt didn't let them see that I had two envelopes.

"It was past midnight when I got the consolidated report made out, unt the rebels was tickled to death with it. They'd never seen anything so well done before. They wanted a copy made to keep, unt I said I'd make one, though I was nearly dead for sleep. I really wasn't, for the excitement made me forget all about being tired.

"I was determined, before I slept, to have that yellow envelope, with all those papers, in General Curtis's hands, though he was 40 miles away. How in the world I was going to do it I could not think, but I was going to do it, if I died a trying. The first thing was to get that envelope off the table into my clothes; the next, to get out of that cabin, away from Bob Smiles unt his guards, through the rebel lines, unt over the mountains to General Curtis's camp. It was a dark, windy night, unt things were in confusion about the camp—just the kind of a time when anybody might kill a Jew pedler, unt no questions would be asked.

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"I had got the last copy finished, unt the officers was going over it. They had their heads together, not 18 inches from me, across the table. I had my fingers on the envelope, but I didn't dare slip it out, though my fingers itched. I was in hopes that they'd turn around, or do something that'd give me a chance.

"Suddenly Bob Smiles opened the door wide, unt walked in, with a dispatch in his hand. The wind swept in, blew the candles out, unt sent de papers flying about the room. Some went into the fire. The officers yelled unt swore at him, unt he shut the door, but I had the envelope in my breast-pocket.

"Then to get away. How in the name of Moses unt the ten commandments was I to do that?

"One of the officers said to Bob Smiles: 'Take this man away unt take good care of him until to-morrow. We'll want him again. Give him a good bed, unt plenty to eat, unt treat him well. We'll need him to-morrow.'

"'Come on, you pork-hating Jew,' said Bob Smiles crabbedly. 'I'll give you a mess of spare-ribs unt corn-dodgers for supper.'

"'You'll do nothing of the kind,' said the officer. 'I told you to treat him well, unt if you don't treat him well, I'll see about it. Give him a bed in that house where de orderlies stay.'

"Bob Smiles grumbled unt swore at me, unt we vent out, but there was nothing to do but to obey orders. He give me a good place, unt some coffee unt bread, unt I lay down pretending to go to sleep.

63

"I snored away like a good feller, unt presently I heard some one come in. I looked a little out the corner of my eye, unt see by the light of the fire that Bob Smiles was sneaking back. He watched me for a minute, unt then put his hand on me.

"I was scared as I never was, for I thought he vas after my precious yaller envelope. But I thought of my bowie knife, which I always carried out of sight in my bosom, unt resolved dat I would stick it in his heart, if he tried to take away my papers. But I never moved. He felt over me until he come to de pocket where I had the silver dollars, unt then slipped his fingers in, unt pulled them out one by one, just as gently as if he vas smoothing the hair of a cat. I let him take them all, without moving a muscle. I was glad to haf him take them. I knowed that he was playing poker somewhere, unt had run out of cash, unt would take my money unt go back to his game.

"As soon as I heard his footsteps disappear in the distance, I got up and sneaked down to where the Headquarters horses were tied. I must get a fresh one, because my own was played nearly out. He would never do to carry me over the rough roads I must ride before morning. But when I got there I saw a guard pacing up and down in front of them. I had not counted on this, and for a minute my heart stood still. There were no other horses anywhere around.

"I hesitated, looked up at Headquarters, and saw the lights still burning, and made up my mind at once to risk everything on one desperate chance. I remembered that I had put in my envelope some blank sheets of paper, with Headquarters, Army of the Frontier, and a rebel flag on them. There was a big fire burning over to the right with no one near. I went up in the shadow of a tree, where I could see by the firelight, took out one of the sheets of paper and wrote on it an order to have a horse saddled for me at once. Then I slipped back so that it would look as if I was coming straight from Headquarters, and walked up to the guard and handed him the order. He couldn't read a word, but he recognized the heading on the paper, and I told him the rest. He thought there was nothing for him to do but obey.

"While he was getting the horse I wrote out, by the fire, a pass for myself through the guards. I was in a hurry, you bet, and it was all done mighty quick, and I was on the horse's back and started. I had lost all direction, but I knewed that I had to go generally to the northeast to get to General Curtis. But I got confused again, and found I was riding around and around the camp without getting out at all. I even came up again near the big fire, just where I wrote out the pass.

"Just then what should I hear but Bob Smiles's voice. He had lost all his money—all my money—at poker, and was damning the fellows he had been playing with as cheats. He was not in a temper to meet, and I knowed he would see me if I went by the big fire; but I was desperate, and I stuck the spurs into my horse and he shot ahead. I heard Bob Smiles yell:

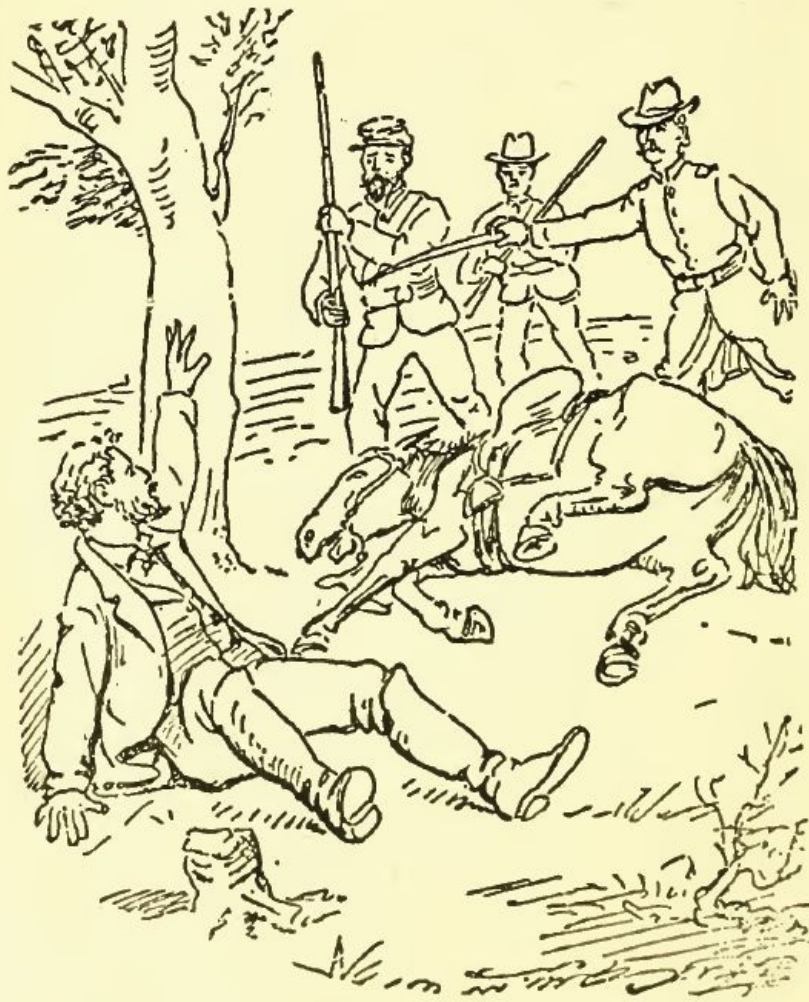
"There is that Jew. Where is he going? Halt, there! Stop him!"

"I knowed that if I stopped now I would be hung sure. The only safety was to go as fast as I could. I dashed away, where, I didn't know. Directly a guard halted me, but I showed him my pass, and he let me go on. While he was looking at it I strained my ears, and could hear horses galloping my way. I knowed it was Bob Smiles after me. My horse was a good one, and I determined to get on the main road and go as fast as I could. I could see by the campfires that I was now getting away from the army, and I began to hope that I was going north. I kept my horse running.

"Pretty soon the pickets halted me, but I didn't stop to answer them. I just bolted ahead. The chances of their shooting me wasn't as dreadful as of Bob Smiles catching me. They fired at me, but I galloped right through them, and through a rain of bullets that they sent after me. I felt better then, for I was confident I was out in the open country, but I kept my horse on the run. It seemed to me that I went a hundred miles.

"Just as the day was breaking in the east, I heard a voice, with a strong German accent call out the brush:

"Halt! Who comes there?"



ROSENBAUM RUNS INTO SIGEL'S PICKETS.

"I was so glad that I almost fainted, for I knewed that I'd reached General Sigel's pickets. I couldn't get my lips to answer.

"There came a lot of shots, unt one of them struck my horse in the head, unt he fell in the road, throwing me over his head. The pickets run out unt picked me up. The German language sounded the sweetest I ever heard it.

"As soon as I could make myself talk, I answered them in German, unt told them who I was. Then they couldn't do enough for me. They helped me back to where they could get an ambulance, in which they sent me to Headquarters, for I was top weak to ride or walk a step. I handed my yellow envelope to General Curtis, got a dram of whisky to keep me up while I answered his questions, unt then went to sleep, unt slept through the whole battle of Pea Ridge.

"After the battle, General Curtis wanted to know how much he ought to pay me, but I told him that all I wanted was to serve the country, unt I was already paid many times over, by helping him win a victory.

"But I concluded that there was too much Bob Smiles in that country for me, unt I had better leave for some parts where I was not likely to meet him. So I crossed the Mississippi River, unt joined General Rosecrans's Headquarters."

CHAPTER V. THE BOYS GO SPYING

ON AN EXPEDITION WITH ROSENBAUM THEY MAKE A CAPTURE.

MR. ROSENBAUM'S stories of adventure were not such as to captivate the boys with the career of a spy. But the long stay in camp was getting very tedious, and they longed for something to break the monotony of camp guard and work on the interminable fortifications. Therefore, when Mr. Rosenbaum came over one morning with a proposition to take them out on an expedition, he found them ready to go. He went to Regimental Headquarters, secured a detail for them, and, returning to the Hoosier's Rest, found the boys lugubriously pulling over a pile of homespun garments they had picked up among the teamsters and campfollowers.

"I suppose we've got to wear 'em, Shorty," said Si, looking very disdainfully at a butternut-colored coat and vest. "But I'd heap rather wear a mustard plaster. I'd be a heap comfortabler."

"I ain't myself finicky about clothes," answered Shorty. "I ain't no swell—never was. But somehow I've got a prejudice in favor of blue as a color, and agin gray and brown. I only like gray and brown on a corpse. They make purty grave clothes. I always like to bury a man what has butternut clothes on."

69

"What are you doing with them dirty rags, boys?" asked Rosenbaum, in astonishment, as he surveyed the scene.

"Why, we've got to wear 'em, haven't we, if we go out with you?" asked Si.

"You wear them when you go out with me—you disguise yourselves," said Rosenbaum, with fine scorn. "You'd play the devil in disguise. You can't disguise your tongues. That's the worst. Anybody'd catch on to that Indianny lingo first thing. You've got to speak like an educated man—speak like I do—to keep people from finding out where you're from. I speak correct English always. Nobody can tell where I'm from."

The boys had hard work controlling their risibles over Mr. Rosenbaum's self-complacency.

"What clothes are we to wear, then?" asked Si, much puzzled.

"Wear what you please; wear the clothes you have on, or anything else. This is not to be a full-dress affair. Gentlemen can attend in their working clothes if they want to."

"I don't understand," mumbled Si.

"Of course, you don't," said Rosenbaum gaily. "If you did, you would know as much as I do, unt I wouldn't have no advantage."

"All right," said Shorty. "We've decided to go it blind. Go ahead. Fix it up to suit yourself. We are your huckleberries for anything that you kin turn up. It all goes in our \$13 a month."

"O. K.," answered Rosenbaum. "That's the right way. Trust me, unt I will bring you out all straight. Now, let me tell you something. When you captured me, after a hard struggle, as you remember (and he gave as much of a wink as his prominent Jewish nose would admit), I was an officer on General Roddey's staff. It was, unt still is, my business to keep up express lines by which the rebels are supplied with quinine, medicines, gun-caps, letters, giving information, unt other things. Unt I do it."

70

The boys opened their eyes wide, and could not restrain an exclamation of surprise.

"Now, hold your horses; don't get excited," said Rosenbaum calmly. "You don't know as much about war as I do—not by a hundred per cent. These things are always done in every war, unt General Rosecrans understands the tricks of war better as any man in the army. He beats them all when it comes to getting information about the enemy. He knows that a dog that fetches must carry, unt that the best way is to let a spy take a little to the enemy, unt bring a good deal back."

"The trouble at the battle of Stone River was that the spies took more to General Bragg than they brought to General Rosecrans. But General Rosecrans was new to the work then. It won't be so in future. He knows a great deal more about the rebels now than they know about him, thanks to such men as me."

"I don't know as we ought to have anything to do with this, Shorty," said Si dubiously. "At least, we ought to inquire of the Colonel first."

"That's all right—that's all right," said Rosenbaum quickly. "I've got the order from the Colonel which will satisfy you. Read it yourself."

He handed the order to Si, who looked carefully at the printed heading, "Headquarters, 200th Ind., near Murfreesboro', Tenn.," and then read the order aloud to Shorty: "Corporal Josiah Klegg and one private, whom he may select, will report to Mr. Levi Rosenbaum for special duty, and will obey such orders and instructions as he may give, and on return report to these Headquarters. By order of the Colonel. Philip Blake, Adjutant."

71

"That seems all straight. Shorty," said Si, folding up the order, and putting it in his pocket.

"Straight as a string," assented Shorty. "I'm ready, anyway. Go ahead, Mr. Cheap Clothing. I don't care much what it is, so long's it ain't shovelin' and diggin' on the fortifications. I'll go down to Tullahoma and pull old Bragg out of his tent rather than handle a pick and shovel any longer."

"Well, as I was going to tell you, I have been back to Tullahoma several times since you captured me, unt I have got the express lines between here unt there running pretty well. I have to tell them all sorts of stories how I got away from the Yankees. Luckily, I have a pretty good imagination, unt can furnish them with first-class narratives."

"But there is one feller on the staff that I'm afraid of. His name is Poke Bolivar, unt he is a terrible feller, I tell you. Always full of fight, unt desperate when he gets into a fight. I've seen him bluff all those other fellers. He is a red-hot Secessionist, unt wants to kill every Yankee in the country. Of late he has seemed very suspicious of me, unt has said lots of things that scared me. I want to settle him, either kill him or take him prisoner, unt keep him away, so's I can feel greater ease when I'm in General Bragg's camp. I can't do that so long as I know he's around, for I feel that his eyes are on me, unt that he's hunting some way to trip me up."

72

"I'm going out now to meet him, at a house about five miles from the lines. I have my pockets unt the pockets on my saddles full of letters unt things. Just outside the lines I will get some more. He will meet me unt we will go back to Tullahoma together—that is, if he don't kill me before we get there. I have brought a couple of revolvers, in addition to your guns, for Poke Bolivar's a terrible feller to fight, unt I want you to make sure of him. I'd take more'n two men out, but I'm afraid he'd get on to so many."

"I guess we two kin handle him," said Shorty, slipping his belt into the holster of the revolver and buckling it on. "Give us a fair show at him, and we don't want no help. I wouldn't mind having it out with Mr. Bolivar all by myself."

"Well, my plan is for you to go out by yourselves to that place where you were on picket. Then take the right-hand road through the creek bottom, as if you were going foraging. About two miles from the creek you will see a big hewed-log house standing on the left of the road. You will know it by its having brick outside chimneys, unt de doors painted blue unt yaller. There's no other house in that country like it."

"You're to keep out of sight as much as you can. Directly you will see me come riding out, follered by a nigger riding another horse. I will go up to the house, jump off, tie my horse, go inside, unt presently come

out unt tie a white cloth to a post on the porch. That will be a signal to Poke Bolivar, who will be watching from the hill a mile ahead. You will see him come in, get off his horse, unt go into the house. 73

"By this time it will be dark, or nearly so. You slip up as quietly as you can, right by the house, hiding yourselves behind the lilacs. If the dogs run at you bayonet them. You can look through the windows, unt see me unt Bolivar sitting by the fire talking, unt getting ready to start for Tullahoma as soon as the nigger who is cooking our supper in the kitchen outside gets it ready unt we eat it. You can wait till you see us sit down to eat supper, unt then jump us. Better wait until we are pretty near through supper, for I'll be very hungry, unt want all I can get to keep me up for my long ride.

"You run in unt order us to surrender. I'll jump up unt blaze away with my revolver, but you needn't pay much attention to me—only be careful not to shoot me. While you are 'tending to Bolivar I'll get on my horse unt skip out. You can kill Bolivar, or take him back to camp with you, or do anything that you please, so long's you keep him away from Tullahoma. You understand, now?"

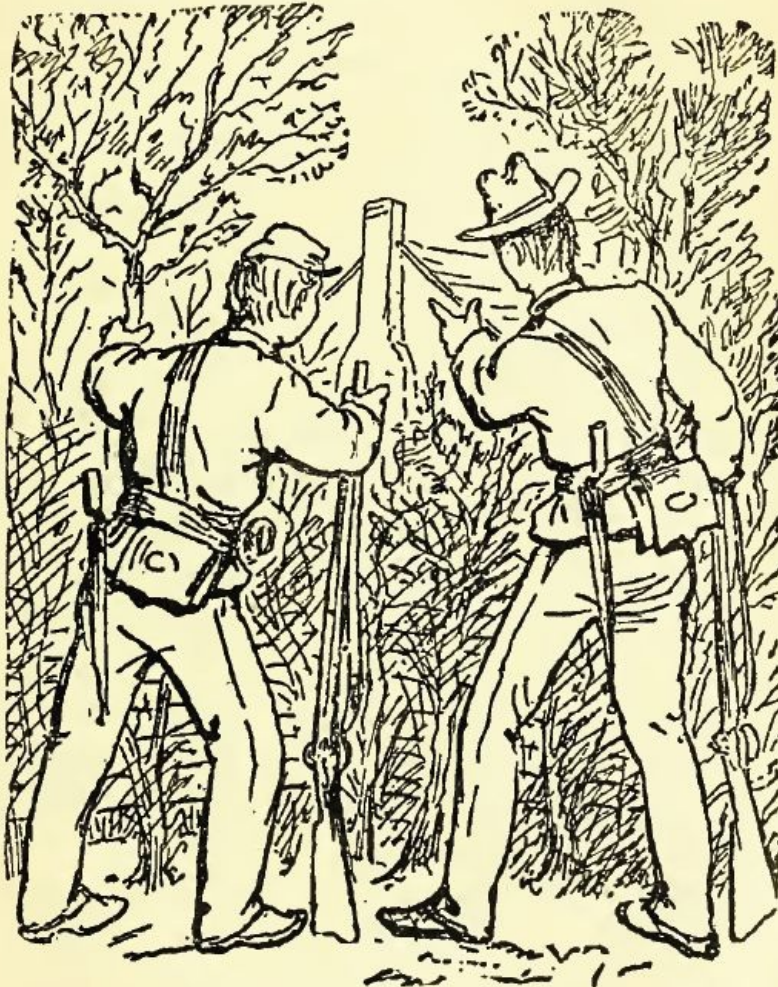
"Perfectly," said Shorty. "I think we can manage it, and it looks like a pretty good arrangement. You are to git away, and we're to git Mr. Bolivar. Those two things are settled. Any change in the evening's program will depend on Mr. Bolivar. If he wants a fight he kin git whole gobs of it."

Going over the plan again, to make sure that the boys understood it, and cautioning them once more as to the sanguinary character of Polk Bolivar, Mr. Rosenbaum started for his horse. He had gone but a little ways when he came back with his face full of concern. 74

"I like you boys better than I can tell you," he said, taking their hands affectionately, "unt I never would forgive myself if you got hurt. Do you think that two of you'll be able to manage Poke Bolivar? If you're not sure I'll get another man to help you. I think that I had better, anyway."

"O, go along with you," said Shorty scornfully. "Don't worry about us and Mr. Bolivar. I'd stack Si Klegg up against any man that ever wore gray, in any sort of a scrimmage he could put up, and I'm a better man than Si. You just favor us with a meeting with Mr. Bolivar, and then git out o' the way. If it wasn't for dividing up fair with my partner here I'd go out by myself and tackle Mr. Bolivar. You carry out your share of the plan, and don't worry about us."

Rosenbaum's countenance brightened, and he hastened to mount and away. The boys shouldered their guns and started out for the long walk. They followed Rosenbaum's directions carefully, and arrived in sight of the house, which they recognized at once, and got into a position from which they could watch its front. Presently they saw Rosenbaum come riding along the road and stop in front of the house. He tied his horse to a scraggy locust tree, went in, and then reappeared and fastened the signal to a post supporting the roof of the porch.



WATCHING THE HOUSE.

They had not long to wait for the answer. Soon a horseman was seen descending from the distant hill. As he came near he was anxiously scanned, and appeared a cavalier so redoubtable as to fully justify Rosenbaum's apprehensions. He was a tall, strongly-built young man, who sat on his spirited horse with easy and complete mastery of him. Even at that distance it could be seen that he was heavily armed. 75

"Looks like a genuine fighter, and no mistake," said Si, examining the caps on his revolver. "He'll be a stiff one to tackle."

"We must be very careful not to let him get the drop on us," said Shorty. "He looks quicker'n lightnin', and I've no doubt that he kin shoot like Dan'l Boone. We might drop him from here with our guns," he added suggestively.

"No," said Si, "that wouldn't be fair. And it wouldn't be the way Rosenbaum wants it done. He's got his reasons for the other way. Besides, I'd be a great deal better satisfied in my mind, if I could have it out with him, hand-to-hand. It'd sound so much better in the regiment."

"Guess that's so," assented Shorty. "Well, let's sneak up to the house."

When they got close to the house they saw that it had been deserted; there were no dogs or other domestic animals about, and this allowed them to get under the shade of the lilacs without discovery. The only inmates were Rosenbaum and Bolivar, who were seated before a fire, which Rosenbaum had built in the big fireplace in the main room. The negro was busy cooking supper in the outbuilding which served as a kitchen. The glass was broken out the window, and they could hear the conversation between Rosenbaum and Bolivar.

It appeared that Rosenbaum had been making a report of his recent doings, to which Bolivar listened with a touch of disdain mingled with suspicion.

The negro brought in the supper, and the men ate it sitting by the fire.



BOLIVAR AND ROSENBAUM.

"I declare," said Bolivar, stopping with a piece of bread and meat in one hand and a tin-cup of coffee in the other, "that for a man who is devoted to the South you can mix up with these Yankees with less danger to yourself and to them than any man I ever knew. You never get hurt, and you never hurt any of them. That's a queer thing for a soldier. War means hurting people, and getting hurt yourself. It means taking every chance to hurt some of the enemy. I never miss any opportunity of killing a Yankee, no matter what I may be doing, or what the risk is to me. I can't help myself. Whenever I see a Yankee in range I let him have it. I never go near their lines without killing at least one."

Shorty's thumb played a little with his gunlock, but Si restrained him with a look.

"Well," said Rosenbaum, "I hates the enemy as badly as any one can, but I always have business more important at the time than killing men. I want to get through with what I have to do, unt let other men do the killing. There's enough gentlemen like you for that work."

"No, there's not enough," said Bolivar savagely. "It's treasonable for you to say so. Our enemies outnumber us everywhere. It is the duty of every true Southern man to kill them off at every chance, like he would rattlesnakes and wolves. You are either not true to the South, or you hain't the right kind of grit. Why, you have told me yourself that you let two Yankees capture you, without firing a shot. Think of it; a Confederate officer captured by two Yankee privates, without firing a shot."

"They had the dead drop on me," murmured Rosenbaum. "If I had moved they'd killed me sure."

"Dead drop on you!" repeated Bolivar scornfully. "Two men with muskets have the dead drop on you! And you had a carbine and a revolver. Why, I have ridden into a nest of 10 or 15 Yankees, who had me covered with their guns. I killed three of them, wounded three others, and run the rest away with my empty revolver. If I'd had another revolver, not one would've got away alive. I always carry two revolvers now."

"I think our guns'll be in the way in that room," said Shorty, sotting his down. His face bore a look of stern

determination. "They're too long. I'm itching to have it out with that feller hand-to-hand. We'll rush in. You pretend to be goin' for Rosenbaum and leave me to have it out with Mr. Bolivar. Don't you mix in at all. If I don't settle him he ought to be allowed to go."

"No," said Si decisively. "I'm your superior officer, and it's my privilege to have the first shy at him. I'll 'tend to him. I want a chance singlehanded at a man that talks that way. You take care of Rosenbaum."

"We mustn't dispute," said Shorty, stooping down and picking up a couple of straws. "Here, pull. The feller that gits the longest 'tends to Bolivar; the other to Rosenbaum."

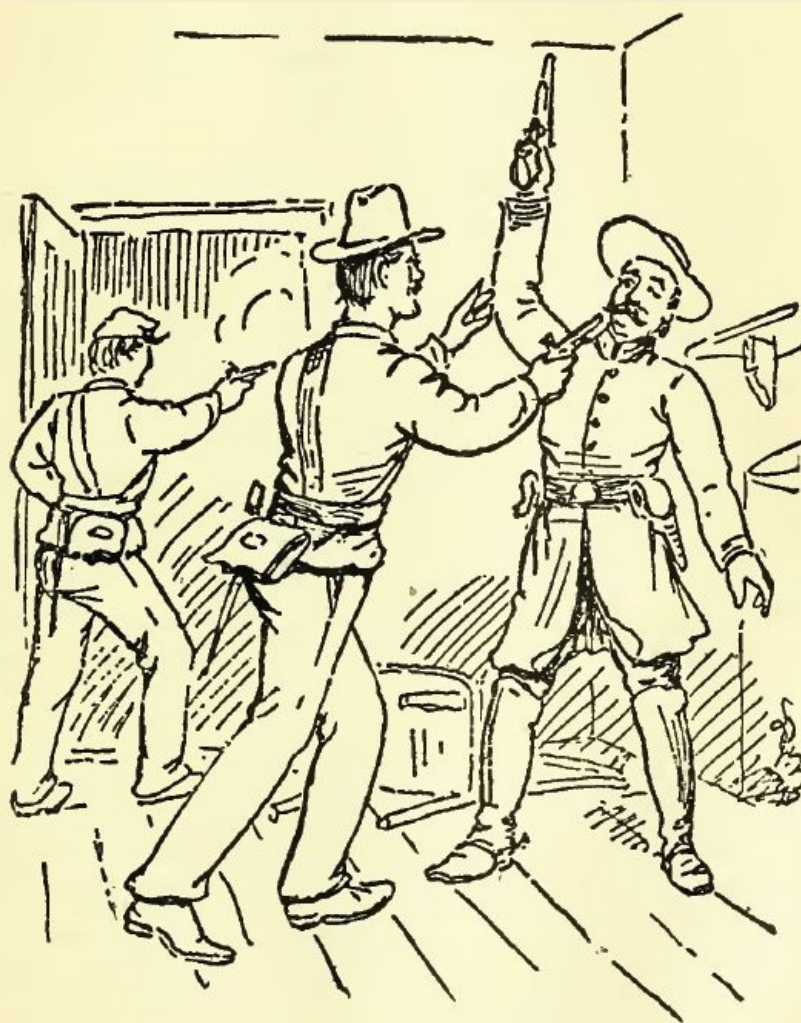
Si drew and left the longer straw in Shorty's hand. They drew their revolvers and rushed for the room, Shorty leading, Rosenbaum and Bolivar sprang up in alarm at the sound of their feet on the steps, and drew their revolvers.

"Surrender, you infernal rebels," shouted the boys, as they bolted through the door.

With the quickness of a cat, Rosenbaum had sidled near the door through which they had come. Suddenly he fired two shots into the ceiling, and sprang through the door so quickly that Si had merely the chance to fire a carefully-aimed shot through the top of his hat. Si jumped toward the door again, and fired a shot in the air, for still further make-believe. He would waste no more, but reserve the other four for Bolivar, if he should need them.

Shorty confronted Bolivar with fierce eyes and leveled revolver, eagerly watching every movement and expression. The rebel was holding his pistol pointed upward, and his eyes looked savage. As his eyes met Shorty's the latter was amazed to see him close the left with a most emphatic wink. Seeing this was recognized, the rebel fired two shots into the ceiling, and motioned with his left hand to Si to continue firing. Without quite understanding. Si fired again. The rebel gave a terrific yell and fired a couple of shots out the window.

"Do the same," he said to Shorty, who complied, as Si had done, in half-comprehension. The rebel handed his revolver to Shorty, stepped to the window and listened.



THE SURPRISE.

There came the sounds of two horses galloping away on the hard, rocky road.

"He's gone, and taken the nigger with him," he said contentedly, turning from the window, and giving another fierce yell. "Better fire the other two shots out of that pistol, to hurry him along."

Shorty fired the remaining shots out of the rebel's revolver.

"What regiment do you belong to, boys?" asked Bolivar calmly.

"The 200th Ind.," answered Si, without being able to control his surprise.

"A very good regiment," said the rebel. "What's your company?"

"Co. Q," answered Si.

"Who's your Colonel?"

"Col. Duckworth."

"Who's your Captain?"

"Capt. McGillicuddy."

"All right," said the rebel, with an air of satisfaction. "I asked those questions to make sure you were genuine Yankees. One can't be too careful in my business. I'm in the United States Secret Service, and have to be constantly on the watch to keep it from being played on me by men pretending to be Yankees when they are rebels, and rebels when they are Yankees. I always make it the first point to ask them the names of their officers. I know almost all the officers in command on both sides."

"You in the Secret Service?" exploded the boys.

82

They were on the point of adding "too," but something whispered to them not to betray Rosenbaum.

"Yes," answered Bolivar. "I've just come from Tullahoma, where I've been around Bragg's Headquarters. I wanted to get inside our lines, but I was puzzled how to do it. That Jew you've just run off bothered me. I wish to the Lord you'd killed him. I'm more afraid of him than any other man in Bragg's army. He's smart as a briar, always nosing around where you don't want him, and anxious to do something to commend him to Headquarters, Jew like. I've thought he suspected me, for he'd been paying special attention to me for some weeks. Two or three times I've been on the point of tailing him into the woods somewhere and killing him, and so get rid of him. It's all right now. He'll go back to Tullahoma with a fearful story of the fight I made against you, and that I am probably killed. I'll turn up there in a week or two with my own story, and I'll give him fits for having skipped out and left me to fight you two alone. Say, it's a good ways to camp. Let's start at once, for I want to get to Headquarters as soon as possible."

"You've got another revolver there," said Si, who had prudently reloaded his own weapon.

"That's so," said Bolivar, pulling it out. "You can take and carry it or I'll take the cylinder out, if you are not convinced about me."

"You'd better let me carry it," said Shorty, shoving the revolver in his own belt. "These are queer times, and one can't be too careful with rebels who claim to be Yankees, and Yankees who claim to be rebels."

83

They trudged back to camp, taking turns riding the horse. When the rebel rode, however, one of the boys walked alongside with the bridle in his hand. All doubts as to Bolivar's story were dispelled by his instant recognition by the Provost-Marshal, who happened to be at the picket-post when they reached camp.

"The longer I live," remarked Shorty, as they made their way along to the Hoosier's Rest, "and I seem to live a little longer every day, the less I seem to understand about this war."

Shorty spoke as if he had had an extensive acquaintance with wars.

"The only thing that I've come to be certain about," assented Si, "is that you sometimes most always can't generally tell."

And they proceeded to get themselves some supper, accompanying the work of denunciations of the Commissary for the kind of rations he was drawing for the regiment, and of the Orderly-Sergeant for his letting the other Orderlies eucher him out of the company's fair share.

CHAPTER VI. LETTER FROM HOME

THE DEACON'S TROUBLES IN GETTING HOME WITH ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

ONE MORNING the Orderly-Sergeant handed Si the following letter:

Deer Son: I got hoam safely a weke ago, thanks 2 all-protecting Providens; likewise 2 about 175 pound of tuff & helthy Josiah Klegg. Providens helpt rite along, but it tuk 50-year-old Injianny hickory & whit-leather 2 pull through sum ov the tite plasis.

Abraham Lincoln is as strong as an ox, but I never thought that anything that diddent wear horns or chew the cud could be so measly dumb. He kin eat as much as Buck, our off-steer, & I declare I don't believe he knows any more.

We had only bin on the train long enuff for Abe to finish up the whole of the 3 days rations you provided us with 2 last us home, when I notist that Blowhard Billings was on board. He was still dressed in full uniform, & playin off officer yit, but I happened 2 recollect that he was no officer no more, & it wuz lucky that I done so. He wuz lookin at me & Abe hard with them mean, fatfish ize ov hizn.

Jest as a matter ov precaushon. I make Abe change seats with me & taik the inside. Billings caim up. You know what I thought ov him ov old, & there's never bin any love lost betwixt us sence I stopped him cheatin poor Eli Mitchell outen his plow-team. I told him then that the coppers on a dead nigger's eyes wuzzent saif when he wuz around, & I woulddent trust him ez fur ez I could sling a bull by the tale. He got mad at this & never got over it. I never encouraged him to. I woulddent feel satisfied with myself if he wuzzent mad at me. I coulddent change my opinion, even when he tried to steal into respectability by goin into the army. I knowed he'd do anything but fite, & woulddent've bin supprized any day by hearing that him and the other mules in camp had disappeared together.

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Presently Billings he cum up very corjil like & says:

"Howdy, Deacon. I hope you air very well."

I told him I wuz tollable peart, and he says:

"I see a man in the third car forward that wuz inquiring for you, and wanted to see you powerful bad."

"That so?" says I, unconcernedlike.

"Yes," says he. "He wuz awful anxious to see you, and I said I'd send you to him if I cum acrost you."

Somehow, I dropped onto it in a minnit that he wuz schemin' to git me away from Abraham Lincoln—

"Well," says I, "it's about ez fur for me forward to him as it is for him back here to me. I don't know as I want to see him at all. If he wants to see me so bad let him cum back here."

"I think I'd go forward and see him," said Billings, sort ov impatient-like. "You'll have no trouble finding him. He's in the third car from here, up at the front end, right-hand side, next to the watercooler. He inquired most partickerlerly for you."

"Probably he wants 2 borry money," says I, without stirrin'. "Men that want particularly 2 see me always do. Well, I hain't got none 2 lend—hain't got no more'n 'll talk me hoam."

"You'd better go forward & see him," he said very bossy like, as if he was orderin me.

"I'd better stay right here, & I'm goin' to stay," says I, so decided that Billings see that it was no use.

His patience gave clean away.

"Look here, Klegg," said he, mad as a hornet, "I'm after that ere nigger you're trying to steal away into Injianny, and by the holy poker I'm goin' to have him! Come along here, you black ape," and he laid his hand on Abe Lincoln's collar. Abe showed the white ov his eyes as big as buckeyes, put his arm around the piece betwixt the winders, and held on for deer life. I see by the grip he tuk that the only way 2 git him wuz 2 tear out the side of the car, and I thought I'd let them tussle it out for a minnit or 2.

The others in the car who thought it grate fun to see a Lieutenant-Kurnol wrastlin' with a nigger, laffed and yelled:

"Go it, nigger,"

"Go it, Kurnel,"

"Grab a root,"

"I'll bet on the nigger if the car is stout onuf," and sich. Jest then Groundhog cum runnin' up to help Billings, and reached over and ketched Abe, but I hit him a good biff with the musket that changed his mind. Billings turned on me, and called out to the others:

"Men, I order you to arrest this man and tie him up."

Sum ov them seemed a-mind to obey, but I sung out:

"Feller-citizens, he ain't no officer—no more'n I am. He ain't got no right to wear shoulder-straps, and he knows it as well as I do."

At this they all turned agin him & began yellin at him 2 put his head in a bag. He turned 2 me savage as a meat-ax, but I ketched him by the throat, & bent him back over the seat. The Provo-Guard cum up, & I explained it 2 them, & showed my passes for me & Abe. So they made us all sit down & keep quiet.

Bimeby we got to Nashville. Abe Lincoln wuz hungry, & I stopped 2 git him something to eat. My gracious, the lot ov ham & aigs at 50 cents a plate & sandwiches at 25 cents a piece that contraband kin eat. He never seemed 2 git full. He looked longingly at the pies, but I let him look. I wuzzent runnin no Astor House in connexion with the Freedmen's buro.

We walked through the city, crost on the ferry, & wuz jest gittin in the cars which wuz about ready 2 start, when up comes Billings agin, with 2 or 3 other men in citizen's cloze. One ov these claps his hand on my shoulder & says:

"I'm a Constable, & I arrest you in the name ov the State ov Tennessee for abductin a slave. Make no trubble, but come along with me."

I jest shook him off, & clumb onto the platform, pullin Abe after me. The Constable & his men follered us, but I got Abe Lincoln inside the door, shet it & made him put his shoulders agin it. The Constable & his 2 assistants wuz buttin away at it, & me grinnin at them when the train pulled off, & they had 2 jump off. I begin 2 think there wuz something good in Abe Lincoln, after all, & when we stopped at an eatin-plais, about half-way 2 Louisville, & Abe looked at the grub as if he haddent had a mouthful sence the war begun, I busted a \$2-bill all 2 pieces gittin' him a little supper. If I wuz goin into the bizniss ov freein slaves I'd want 2 have a mule train haulin grub follering me at every step.

Abe wuz awful hungry agin when we reached Louisville, but I found a place where a dollar would buy him enuf pork & beans 2 probably last him over the river.

But I begun 2 be efear'd that sum nosin pryin Mike Medler might make trubble in gitting Abe safely acrost the Ohio. I tuk him 2 a house, & laid it down strong 2 him that he must stay inside all day, and 2 make sure I bargained with the woman 2 keep him eating as much as she could. I ruined a \$5 bill, & even then Abe looked as if he could hold some more. I've always made it a pint 2 lend 2 the Lord for the benefit ov the heathen as much as my means would allow, but I begun 2 think that my missionary contribushions this year would beat what I was layin out on my family.

After it got dark, me & Abe meandered down through the streets 2 the ferry. There wuzzent many people out, except soljers, & I've got 2 feel purty much at home with them. They seem more likely 2 think more nearly my way than folks in every-day clothes.

There wuz quite a passel ov soljers on the wharf boat waitin' for the ferry when we got there. They saw at wuns that I had probably bin down 2 the front 2 see my son, & sum ov them axed me 2 what rigiment he belonged. When I told them the 200th Injianny Volunteer Infantry they all made friends with me at wunst, for they said they knowed it wuz a good rigiment.

Bimeby a big, important-lookin' man, with a club with a silver head for a cane, cum elbowin through the crowd & scowling at everybody as if he owned the wharf-boat & all on it. He stopped in frunt ov Abraham Lincoln & says very sharp & cross:

"Boy, where did you come from?"

Abe diddent say nothin'. His ize got all white, he grinned sort ov scared like, showed his white teeth, & looked sickly over at me. I spoke up & says:

"I brung him along with me from Murfreesboro'."

"So I sposed," said he. "He's a slave you're tryin 2 steal from his master. You can't do it. I'll jest take charge ov him myself. That's my dooty here," & he ketchd hold ov Abraham Lincoln's collar. Abe, in his scare, put out his arms to ketch hold ov something, & throwed them around the big important man, & lifted him clean offen his feet. I never before realized how strong Abe wuz. The soljers gethered around, purty mad, and then laffin and yellin when they see the man in Abe's arms. Suddenly sum one hollered:

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"Throw him overboard; throw him in the river." Abe was wuss scared than ever when he found he had the man in his arms. He wuz afear'd 2 hold on & still more afear'd 2 let go. He heard them hollerin, & thought he had 2 do jest as they said, & begun edgin toward the river.

The man got more scared than Abe. He began kickin & wrigglin & hollerin:

"Don't let him do it. Help me. I can't swim a lick."

At this the men hollered worsen ever:

"Throw him in the river! Duck him! Baptize him! Drown him!"

I'm a Baptist, but I don't believe in immersion onless the convert has bin prepared for it, & is willin, which neither this man wuz. I stepped forward 2 make Abe let him down, but before T could do anything Abe had got 2 the edge of the wharfboat & let go, & plunk went the man into about 10 foot ov water. Abe, scared now nearly 2 death, stood there with his ize biggern sassers & whitern goose-eggs.

In a minnit the man cum up, sputterin & hollerin. A big Sergeant, with his left arm in a sling, reached over & ketchod him by the collar & held his head above water.

"If I pull you out will you promis 2 go out ov the niggor-kotchin bizniss forever?" axed the Sergeant.

"Pull me out & then I'll talk 2 you," says the man grabbin for the slippery sides ov the wharfboat.

91

"No, I won't," said the Sergeant, sousin him under water agin.

"Yes, yes, I'll promise," says the man, when he come up agin.

"Will you swear it?" axed the Sergeant.

"Yes, I'll swear it before a Justice ov the Peace."

"Will you swear 2 support the Constitution ov the United States agin all enemies & opposers whatsumever, & vote for Abraham Lincoln every time?" axed the Sergeant.

"I'll take the oath ov allegiance," says the man, sputterin the water out ov his mouth, "but I'll never vote for that Abolition ape as long as I live."

"Then down you go," says the Sergeant, sousin him again.

"Yes, yes, I'll vote for Abe Lincoln, & anybody else, if you'll only pull me out," said the man, in a tired tone of voice, when he cum up agin. I begin 2 see that immersion had a great deal ov good in it, even if a man isn't prepared & willin.

"Will you swear 2 always love a nigger as a man & a brother, until death do you part, & aid & comfort all them who are tryin 2 git away from slavery?" axed the Sergeant.

"Damned if I will," says the man. "No nigger kin ever be a brother 2 me. I'll die first."

"Then you'll die right now," says the Sergeant, sendin him down as far as his long arm would reach & holding him there until I wuz scared for fear he wuz really goin 2 drown the man. When he brung him up the man whimper'd:

"Yes, only pull me out—save my life—and I'll do anything you want."

92

By this time the ferryboat had cum up. We got aboard & crost over to Injianny, & I felt so glad at bein on my nativ soil wuns more that I took Abe up 2 the eatin stand, & blowed in a dollar filin up the vacant plasis in his hide.

When we tried 2 git on the train there cum another trubble: The conductor woulddnt let him ride in the car with white folks—not even in the smokin-car. He made him go into the baggage-car. Abe wuz so scared about leavin me for a minnit in' that strange country that I tried 2 go into the baggage-car with him, but the conductor woulddnt let me. He said it wuz agin the rules for passengers to ride in the baggage-cars, but Abe could go in there, same as dogs, prize poultry, & household pets. I tried 2 joke with him, tellin him that in sum plasis I wuz considered a household pet, but he said Ide have 2 git another mug on me before he could believe it.

One of Zeke Biltner's hogs ditched the train jest before we got home, & turned the baggage-car over. Sum crates ov aigs wuz smashed over Abraham Lincoln, & he wuz a sight to behold. He wuz awfully scared, though, & begged me 2 let him go the rest ov the way on foot. He said he wuz a thousand years older than when he left his ole massa, & I could understand what he meant.

I found your mother & the girls bright & chipper & jest tickled 2 death to see me safe back. They axed me so many questions about you & Shorty that my head buzzed like a bee-hive. It is hard 2 git away from them 2 tend 2 my Spring work, but I've made an arrangement 2 giv em an hour mornin & evenin 2 answerin questions. I think this will keep me purty busy till the snow flise agin.

93

Wheat is lookin surprisinly well, though I found sum bare plasis in the north field. I think we'll have a fair crop ov apples and peaches. Your colt is growin up the purtiest thing that ever went on four legs, & jumped an eight-rail fence. My hogs wintered in good shape, & pork is risin. They have the measles over on the Crick, & school's broke up. Bill Scripp's out agin for Sheriff, & I spose I'le have 2 turn 2 agin & beat him. Singler, that he'll never know when he's got enuff.

If anything, Abraham Lincoln's appetite has bin improved by Wabash air. I wuzzent goin 2 have the wimmen folks wear theirselves out cookin for him. So I fix-ed up a place for him in the old log house, & took him over some sides ov meat, a few bushel ov pertaters, a jug ov sorghum molasses, & every time mother bakes she sends over some leaves ov bread. I jest turned him loose there. He seems 2 be very happy, & we hear him singin & yellin most all the time when he's by hisself. He's a good worker when I stand right over him, & he'll lift & dig as patient as an ox. But he hain't no more sense about goin ahead by hisself than a steer

has, & the moment my back's turned he stops work. Ime af eared I've got a job on my hands makin a firstclass farmer out ov him. But if that's my share ov the work that Providens has chalked out for me, there's nothin left for me but 2 go ahead & do it in fear & tremblin.

No more from your affeckshionate father.

P. S. Give my best respects 2 Shorty.

CHAPTER VII. CORN PONE AND BUTTERMILK

SI AND SHORTY GO FORAGING AND ARE CAPTURED AND ROBBED

SI AND SHORTY got the common feeling of men of some months' service, that they had fully mastered the art of war, and that there was little, if anything, left for them to learn. It did not take some men even so long as months to acquire this pleasant idea of themselves. Some entered the army feeling quite capable of giving advice to the oldest General in it, and they were not slow about offering their opinions.

Si and Shorty had had successes enough since their enlistment to develop a self-confidence which might be pardoned if it expanded into self-sufficiency and vanity.

The 200th Ind. had been sent out on a reconnoissance toward Shelbyville. No sign of rebels in force developed in any direction, and Si and Shorty got permission to go off on a little scout of their own.

"No use o' huntin' rebels with a brass band," said Si, who, since his association with Mr. Rosenbaum, had gotten some idea that stealth and cunning were efficient war powers. "We kin jest slip around out here somewhere, and if there is any rebels, find 'em, and git more information than the whole regiment kin."

"I'm not so thirsty for information and rebels as I am for some fresh buttermilk," said Shorty. "Somehow, I've been hankering for buttermilk and cornpone for days. I hain't had any for a coon's age, and it'd go mighty good as a change from camp rations. Buttermilk and rebels sometimes grow near together. You look for one, I'll look for the other. Mebbe we kin git both." 95

"I wouldn't mind havin' some buttermilk an' cornpone myself," said Si. "But I'd like much better to drop on some rebels somewhere, and bring 'em into camp, and show that we kin git more information than the whole regiment kin."

"All right," assented Shorty; "ask the Captain to let us go. I'll be bound we'll find something worth goin' for, if it's no more'n a chicken for the Captain's supper. I'd like to take in one for him. He's been mighty good to me and you in several ways, and I'd like to show him that we appreciate it."

As the regiment had gone as far as ordered without discovering anything that in the least threatened the peace in that portion of Tennessee, it would start on its return, after the men had rested and had dinner. Si and Shorty, consequently, had no difficulty in securing the desired permission.

They cut off through a side-road, which gave promise of leading into a better-settled part of the country than that they had been traversing. A mile or so of walking brought them in sight of the substantial chimneys of a farmhouse showing above the trees. A glimpse of a well-fenced field roused warm hopes in Shorty's heart.

"Now, I think we're comin' to a better thing than we've ever struck before," said he, as they stopped and surveyed the prospect. "We've got out o' the barren plateaus and into the rich farming country. That's likely a farm jest like they have up in Injianny, and it's way off where they hain't knowed nothin' o' the war. No soljer's ever anigh 'em, and they've jest got lots and plenty o' everything. They've got a great big barnyard full o' chickens and turkeys, pigs and geese and guineas. There, you kin hear the guineas hollerin' now. There's cows layin' in the shade chawin' the cud, while their calves are cavortin' around in the sun, hogs rootin' in the woods-pasture, horses and sheep in the medder, and everything like it is at home. And down a little ways from the house there's a cool springhouse, with clear, cold water wellin' up and ripplin' out over the clean, white sand, with crocks o' fresh milk setting in it with cream half an inch thick, and big jars o' buttermilk from the last churnin', and piggins o' fresh butter, and mebbe a big crock full o' smemarkase. Si, do you like smemarkase?" 96

"Deed I do," answered Si, his mouth watering at the thought. "My goodness, you jest orter eat some o' mother's smemarkase. She jest lays over all the women in the country for smemarkase. Many's the time I've come in hot and sweatin from the field, and got a thick slice o' bread clear acrost the loaf from one o' the girls, and went down to our spring-house and spread it with fresh butter, and then put a thick layer o' smemarkase on top o' that, and then got about a quart o' cool milk, that was half cream, from ono o' the crocks, and then—"

"Shot up, Si," shouted Shorty, desperately. "Do you want me to bang you over the head with my musket? Do you s'pose I kin stand everything? But I believe there's jest sich a spring-house down there, and we'll find it plumb-full o' all them sort o' things. Le's mosey on." 97

"Do you think there's any rebels around here?" said Si, the caution which experience had taught him making a temporary reassertion of itself.

"Naw," said Shorty, contemptuously, "there ain't no rebel this side o' the Duck River, unless some straggler, who'd run if he saw us. If we ketch sight o' one we'll take him into camp, jest to gratify you. But I ain't lookin' for none. Buttermilk and cornpone's what I want."

The scene was certainly peaceful enough to justify Shorty's confidence. A calmer, quieter landscape could

not have been found in the whole country. A negro was plowing in a distant field, with occasional sonorous yells to his team. He did not seem to notice the soldiers, nor did a gray-haired white man who was sitting on the fence superintending him. A couple of negresses were washing the family linen by a fire under a large kettle on the creek bank, at some distance from the house, and spreading the cleansed garments out on the grass to dry and bleach. Cattle and horses were feeding on the fresh Spring grass and sheep browsing on the bushes on the hillside. Hens cackled and roosters crowed; the guineas, ever on the lookout, announced their approach with shrill, crackling notes. Two or three dogs waked up and barked lazily at them as they walked up the path to where an elderly, spectacled woman sat on the porch knitting. She raised her eyes and threw her spectacles on top of her head, and looked curiously at them. 98

Whatever faint misgivings Si might have had vanished at the utter peacefulness of the scene. It was so like the old home that he had left that he could not imagine that war existed anywhere near. It seemed as if the camp at Murfreesboro' and the bloody field of Stone River must be a thousand miles away. The beds of roses and pinks which bordered the walk were the same as decorated the front yard at home. There were the same clumps of snowballs and lilacs at the corners of the house.

"Howdy, gentlemen?" said the woman, as they came up.

It seemed almost a wrong and insult to be carrying deadly arms in the presence of such a woman, and Si and Shorty let their guns slip down, as if they were rather ashamed of them.

"Good day, ma'am," said Shorty, taking off his hat politely and wiping his face. "We're lookin' around to git some cornpone and buttermilk, and didn't know but what you might let us have some. We're willin' to pay for it."

"If you want suthin' to eat," said the woman promptly, "I kin gin it to ye. I never turn no hungry man away from my door. Wait a minnit and I'll bring ye some."

She disappeared inside the house, and Si remarked to Shorty:

"Your head's level this time, as it generally is. We'll git something that's worth while comin' after."

The woman reappeared with a couple of good-size corn-dodgers in her hand. 99

"This appears to be all the bread that's left over from dinner," she said. "And the meat's all gone. But the wenches 'll be through their washin' purty soon, and then I'll have them cook ye some more, if ye'll wait."

"Thankee, ma'am," said Shorty; "we can't wait. This'll be a plenty, if we kin only git some buttermilk to go with it. We don't want no meat. We git plenty o' that in camp."

"You can have all the buttermilk you want to drink," she answered, "if you'll go down to the spring-house thar and git it. It's fresh, and you'll find a gourd right beside o' the jar. I'd go with you, but it allers gives me rheumatiz to go nigh the spring-house."

"Don't bother, ma'am, to go with us," said Shorty politely. "We are very much obliged to you, indeed, and we kin make out by ourselves. How much do we owe you?" And he pulled a greenback dollar from his pocket.

"Nothin', nothin' at all," said the woman hastily. "I don't sell vittels. Never thought o' sich a thing. Ye're welcome to all ye kin eat any time."

"Well, take the money, and let us ketch a couple of them chickens there," said Shorty, laying down the bill on the banister rail.

After a little demur the woman finally agreed to this, and picked up the money. The boys selected two fat chickens, ran them down, wrung their necks, and, after repeating their thanks, took their bread and started for the spring-house. They found it the coolest and most inviting place in the world on a hot, tiresome day—just such a spot as Shorty had described. It was built of rough stones, and covered with a moss-grown roof. A copious spring poured out a flood of clear, cool water, which flowed over white pebbles and clean-looking sand until it formed a cress-bordered rivulet just beyond the house. In the water sat crocks of fresh milk, a large jar of buttermilk, and buckets of butter. The looks, the cool, pure freshness of the place, were delightful contrasts from the tiresome smells and appearances of the camp kitchens. The boys reveled in the change. They forgot all about war's alarms, stood their rifles up against the side of the spring-house, washed their dust-grimed faces and hands in the pure water, dried them with their handkerchiefs, and prepared to enjoy their meal. How good the buttermilk tasted along with the cornpone. The fresh milk was also sampled, and some of the butter spread upon their bread. 100 101

Si even went to the point of declaring that it was almost as good as the things he used to eat at home, which was the highest praise he could possibly give to any food. Si never found anywhere victuals or cooking to equal that of his mother.

He was pointing out to Shorty, as they munched, the likenesses and unlikenesses of this spring-house to that on the Wabash, when they were startled by the stern command:

"Surrender, there, you infernal Yankees!"



UNDESIRABLE ACQUAINTANCES.

They looked up with startled eyes to stare into a dozen muskets leveled straight at their heads from the willow thickets. Corn-dodgers and milk-gourds dropped into the water as they impulsively jumped to their feet.

"If yo'uns move we'uns 'll blow the lights outen yo'uns," shouted the leader of the rebels. "Hold up yer hands."

It was a moment of the most intense anguish that either of them had ever known. Their thoughts were lightning-like in rapidity. The rebel muzzles were not a rod away, their aim was true, and it would be madness to risk their fire, for it meant certain death. 102

The slightest move toward resistance was suicide.

Si gave a deep groan, and up went his hands at the same moment with Shorty's.

The rebels rushed out of the clump of willows behind which they had crept up on the boys, and surrounded them. Two snatched up their guns, and the others began pulling off their haversacks and other personal property as their own shares of the booty. In the midst of this, Si looked around, and saw the woman standing near calmly knitting.

"You ain't so afeared o' rheumatism all at once," he said bitterly.

"My rheumatiz has spells, young man, same ez other people's," she answered, pulling one of the needles out, and counting the stitches with it. "Sometimes it is better, and sometimes it is wuss. Jest now it is a great deal better, thankee. I only wisht I could toll the whole Yankee army to destruction ez easy ez you wuz. My, but ye walked right in, like the fly to the spider. I never had nothin' do my rheumatiz so much good."

And she cackled with delight. "When you git through," she continued, addressing the leader of the rebels, "come up to the house, and I'll have some dinner cooked for ye. I know ye're powerful tired an' hungry. I s'pose nothin' need be cooked for them," and she pointed her knitting-needle contemptuously at Si and Shorty. "Ole Satan will be purvidin' fur them. I'll take these along to cook fur ye." 103

She gathered up the dead chickens and stalked back to the house.

"Ef we're gwine t' shoot they'uns le's take they'uns over thar on the knoll, whar they'uns won't spile nothin'," said one evil-looking man, who had just ransacked Si's pockets and appropriated everything in them. "Hit'd be too bad t' kill they'uns here right in sight o' the house."

"Le'me see them letters, Bushrod;" said the leader, snatching a package of letters and Annabel's picture out of the other's hand. "Mebbe thar's some news in them that the Captain'd like to have."

Si gnashed his teeth as he saw the cherished missives rudely torn open and scanned, and especially when the ambrotype case was opened and Annabel's features made the subject of coarse comment. The imminent prospect of being murdered had a much lighter pang.

While the letters and ambrotype were being looked over the process of robbery was going on. One had

snatched Si's cap, another had pulled off his blouse, and there was a struggle as to who should have possession of his new Government shoes, which were regarded as a great prize. Si had resisted this spoliation, but was caught from behind and held, despite his kicks and struggles, while the shoes were pulled off. Shorty was treated in the same way.



THE SPOILS OF WAR.

In a few minutes both, exhausted by their vigorous resistance, were seated on the ground, with nothing left on them but their pantaloons, while their captors were quarreling over the division of their personal effects, and as to what disposition was to be made of them. In the course of the discussion the boys learned that they had been captured by a squad of young men from the immediate neighborhood, who had been allowed to go home on furlough, had been gathered together when the regiment appeared, and had been watching every movement from safe coverts. They had seen Si and Shorty leave, and had carefully dogged their steps until such moment as they could pounce on them. 104

"Smart as we thought we wuz," said Si bitterly, "we played right into their hands. They tracked us down jest as if we'd bin a couple o' rabbits, and ketched us jest when they wanted us."

He gave a groan which Shorty echoed.

Bushrod and two others were for killing the two boys then and there and ending the matter.

"They orter be killed, Ike, right here," said Bushrod to the leader. "They deserve it, and we'uns hain't got no time to fool. We'uns can't take they'uns back with we'uns, ef we wanted to, and I for one don't want to. I'd ez soon have a rattlesnake around me."

But Ike, the leader, was farther-seeing. He represented to the others the vengeance the Yankees would take on the people of the neighborhood if they murdered the soldiers.

This developed another party, who favored taking the prisoners to some distance and killing them there, so as to avoid the contingency that Ike had set forth. Then there were propositions to deliver them over to the guerrilla leaders, to be disposed of as they pleased.

Finally, it occurred to Ike that they were talking entirely too freely before the prisoners, unless they intended to kill them outright, for they were giving information in regard to the position and operations of rebel bands that might prove dangerous. He drew his squad off a little distance to continue the discussion. At first they kept their eyes on the prisoners and their guns ready to fire, but as they talked they lost their watchful attitude in the eagerness of making their points. 105

Si looked at Shorty, and caught an answering gleam. Like a flash both were on their feet and started on a mad rush for the fence. Bushrod saw them start, and fired. His bullet cut off a lock of Si's auburn hair. Others fired as fast as they could bring their guns up, and the bullets sang viciously around, but none touched the fugitives. Their bare feet were torn by the briars as they ran, but they thought not of these. They plunged into the blackberry briars along the fence, climbed it, and gained the road some distance ahead of their pursuers, who were not impelled by the fear of immediate death to spur them on. Up the road went Si and Shorty with all the speed that will-power could infuse into their legs. Some of the rebels stopped to reload; the others ran after. A score of noisy dogs suddenly waked up and joined in the pursuit. The old white man mounted his horse and came galloping toward the house. 106

On the boys ran, gaining, if anything, upon the foremost of the rebels. The dogs came nearer, but before

they could do any harm the boys halted for an instant and poured such a volley of stones into them that they ran back lamed and yelping. The fleetest-footed of the rebels, who was the sanguinary Bushrod, also came within a stone's throw, and received a well-aimed boulder from Si's muscular hand full in his face. This cheered the boys so that they ran ahead with increased speed, and finally gained the top of the hill from which they had first seen the farmhouse.

They looked back and saw their enemies still after them. Ike had taken the old man's horse and was coming on a gallop. They knew he had a revolver, and shivered at the thought. But both stooped and selected the best stones to throw, to attack him with as soon as he came within range. They halted a minute to get their breath and nerve for the good effort. Ike had reached a steep, difficult part of the road, where his horse had to come down to a walk and pick his way. 107



AN UNCOMFORTABLE SITUATION.

"Now, Si," said Shorty, "throw for your life, if you never did before. I'm goin' to git him. You take his horse's head. Aim for that white blaze in his forehead."

Si concentrated his energy into one supreme effort. 108

He could always beat the rest of the boys in throwing stones, and now his practice was to save him. He flung the smooth, round pebble with terrific force, and it went true to its mark. The horse reared with his rider just at the instant that a boulder from Shorty's hand landed on Ike's breast. The rebel fell to the ground, and the boys ran on.

At the top of the next hill they saw the regiment marching leisurely along at the foot of the hill. It was so unexpected a deliverance that it startled them. It seemed so long since they had left the regiment that it might have been clear back to Nashville. They yelled with all their remaining strength, and tore down the hill. Co. Q saw them at once, and at the command of the Captain came forward at the double-quick. The rebels had in the meanwhile gained the top of the hill. A few shots were fired at them as they turned from the chase.

The Colonel rode back and questioned the boys. Then he turned to the Captain of Co. Q and said:

"Captain, take your company over to that house. If you find anything that you think we need in camp, bring it back with you. Put these boys in the ambulance."

The exhausted Si and Shorty were helped into the ambulance, the Surgeon gave them a reviving drink of whisky and quinine, and as they stretched themselves out on the cushioned seats Si remarked:

"Shorty, we ain't ez purty ez we used to be, but we know a durned sight more."

"I doubt it," said Shorty surlily. "I think me and you'll be fools as long as we live. We won't be fools the same way agin, you kin bet your life, but we'll find some other way."

CHAPTER VIII. A PERIOD OF SELF-DISGUST

SI AND SHORTY HAVE AN ATTACK OF IT, FOLLOWED BY RECOVERY.

IT TOOK many days for the boys' lacerated feet to recover sufficiently to permit their going about and returning to duty. They spent the period of enforced idleness in chewing the cud of bitter reflection. The thorns had cut far more painfully into their pride than into their feet. The time was mostly passed in moody silence, very foreign to the customary liveliness of the Hoosier's Rest. They only spoke to one another on the most necessary subjects, and then briefly. In their sour shame at the whole thing they even became wroth with each other. Shorty sneered at the way Si cleaned up the house, and Si condemned Shorty's cooking. Thenceforth Shorty slept on the floor, while Si occupied the bed, and they cooked their meals separately. The newness of the clothes they drew from the Quartermaster angered them, and they tried to make them look as dirty and shabby as the old.

Once they were on the point of actually coming to blows.

Si had thoughtlessly flung some dishwater into the company street. It was a misdemeanor that in ordinary times would have been impossible to him. Now almost anything was.

Shorty instantly growled:

"You slouch, you ought to go to the guard-house for that."

Si retorted hotly:

"Slouch yourself! Look where you threw them coffee-grounds this morning," and he pointed to the tell-tale evidence beside the house.

110



SHORTY AND SI ARE AT OUTS.

"Well, that ain't near so bad," said Shorty crustily. "That at least intended to be tidy."

"Humph," said Si, with supreme disdainfulness. "It's the difference betwixt sneakin' an' straightout. I threw mine right out in the street. You tried to hide yours, and made it all the nastier. But whatever you do's all right. Whatever I do's all wrong. You're a pill." 111

"Look here, Mister Klegg," said Shorty, stepping forward with doubled fist, "I'll have you understand that I've took all the slack and impudence from you that I'm a-goin' to."

"Shorty, if you double your fist up at me," roared the irate Si, "I'll knock your head off in a holy minute."

The boys of Co. Q were thunderstruck. It seemed as if their world was toppling when two such partners should disagree. They gathered around in voiceless sorrow and wonderment and watched, developments.

Shorty seemed in the act of springing forward, when the sharp roll of the drum at Headquarters beating the "assembly" arrested all attention. Everyone looked eagerly toward the Colonel's tent, and saw him come out buckling on his sword, while his Orderly sped away for his horse. Apparently, all the officers had been in consultation with him, for they were hurrying away to their several companies.

"Fall in, Co. Q," shouted the Orderly-Sergeant. "Fall in promptly."

Everybody made a rush for his gun and equipments.

"Hurry up. Orderly," said Capt. McGillicuddy, coming up with his sword and belt in hand. "Let the boys take what rations they can lay their hands on, but not stop to cook any. We've got to go on the jump."

All was rush and hurry. Si and Shorty bolted for their house, forgetful of their mangled feet. Si got in first, 112

took his gun and cartridge-box down, and buckled on his belt. He looked around for his rations while Shorty was putting on his things. His bread and meat and Shorty's were separate, and there was no trouble about them. But the coffee and sugar had not been divided, and were in common receptacles. He opened the coffee-can and looked in. There did not seem to be more than one ration there. He hesitated a brief instant what to do. It would serve Shorty just right to take all the coffee. He liked his coffee even better than Shorty did, and was very strenuous about having it. If he did not take it Shorty might think that he was either anxious to make up or afraid, and he wanted to demonstrate that he was neither. Then there was a twinge that it would be mean to take the coffee, and leave his partner, senseless and provoking as he seemed, without any. He set the can down, and, turning as if to look for something to empty it in, pretended to hear something outside the house to make him forget it, and hurried out.

Presently Shorty came out, and ostentatiously fell into line at a distance from Si. It was the first time they had not stood shoulder to shoulder.

The Orderly-Sergeant looked down the line, and called out:

"Here, Corp'l Klegg, you're not fit to go. Neither are you, Shorty. Step out, both of you."

"Yes, I'm all right," said Shorty. "Feet's got well. I kin outwalk a Wea Injun."

"Must've bin using some Lightning Elixir Liniment," said the Orderly-Sergeant incredulously.. "I saw you both limping around like string-halted horses not 15 minutes ago. Step out, I tell you." 113

"Captain, le' me go along," pleaded Si. "You never knowed me to fall out, did you?"

"Captain, I never felt activer in my life," asserted Shorty; "and you know I always kept up. I never played sore-foot any day."

"I don't believe either of you're fit to go," said Capt. McGillicuddy, "but I won't deny you. You may start, anyway. By the time we get to the pickets you can fall out if you find you can't keep up."

"The rebel calvary's jumped a herd of beef cattle out at pasture, run off the guard, and are trying to get away with them," the Orderly-Sergeant hurriedly explained as he lined up Co. Q. "We're to make a short cut across the country and try to cut them off. Sir, the company's formed."

"Attention, Co. Q!" shouted Capt. McGillicuddy. "Right face!—Forward, file left!—March!"

The company went off at a terrific pace to get its place with the regiment, which had already started without it.

Though every step was a pang. Si and Shorty kept up unflinchingly. Each was anxious to outdo the other, and to bear off bravely before the company. The Captain and Orderly-Sergeant took an occasional look at them until they passed the picket-line, when other more pressing matters engaged the officers' attention.

The stampeded guards, mounted on mules or condemned horses, or running on foot, came tearing back, each with a prodigious tale of the numbers and ferocity of the rebels. 114

The regiment was pushed forward with all the speed there was in it, going down-hill and over the level stretch at a double-quick. Si felt his feet bleeding, and it seemed at times that he could not go another step, but then he would look back down the line and catch a glimpse of Shorty keeping abreast of his set of fours, and he would spur himself to renewed effort. Shorty would long to throw himself in a fence-corner and rest for a week, until, as they went over some rise, he would catch sight of Si's sandy hair, well in the lead, when he would drink in fresh determination to keep up, if he died in the attempt.

Presently they arrived at the top of the hill from which they could see the rebel cavalry rounding up and driving off the cattle, while a portion of the enemy's horsemen were engaged in a fight with a small squad of infantry ensconced behind a high rail fence.

Si and Shorty absolutely forgot their lameness as Co. Q separated from the column and rushed to the assistance of the squad, while the rest of the regiment turned off to the right to cut off the herd. But they were lame all the same, and tripped and fell over a low fence which the rest of the company easily leaped. They gathered themselves up, sat on the ground for an instant, and glared at one another.

"Blamed old tangle-foot," said Shorty derisively.

"You've got hoofs like a foundered hoss," retorted Si.

After this interchange of compliments they staggered painfully to their feet and picked up their guns, which 115 were thrown some distance from their hands as they fell.

By this time Co. Q was a quarter of a mile away, and already beginning to fire on the rebels, who showed signs of relinquishing the attack.

"Gol darn the luck!" said Si with Wabash emphasis, beginning to limp forward.

"Wish the whole outfit was a mile deep in burnin' brimstone," wrathfully observed Shorty.

A couple of lucky shots had emptied two of the rebel saddles. The frightened horses turned away from the fighting line, and galloped down the road to the right of the boys. The leading one suddenly halted in a fence-corner about 30 yards away from Si, threw up his head and began surveying the scene, as if undecided what to do next. The other, seeing his mate stop, began circling around.

Hope leaped up in Si's breast. He began creeping toward the first horse, under the covert of the sumach. Shorty saw his design and the advantage it would give Si, and, standing still, began swearing worse than ever.

Si crept up as cautiously as he had used to in the old days when he was rabbit-hunting. The horse thrust his head over the fence, and began nibbling at a clump of tall rye growing there. Si thrust his hand out and caught his bridle. The horse made one frightened plunge, but the hand on his bridle held with the grip of iron, and he settled down to mute obedience.

Si set his gun down in the fence-corner and climbed into the saddle.

Shorty made the Spring air yellow with profanity until he saw Si ride away from his gun toward the other 116 horse. When the latter saw his mate, with a rider, coming toward him he gave a whinney and dashed forward. In an instant Si had hold of his bridle and was turning back. His face was bright with triumph. Shorty stopped

in the middle of a soul-curdling oath and yelled delightedly:

"Bully for old Wabash! You're my pardner after all Si."

He hastened forward to the fence, grabbed up Si's gun and handed it to him and then climbed into the other saddle.

The rebels were now falling back rapidly before Co. Q's fire. A small part detached itself and started down a side road.

Si and Shorty gave a yell, and galloped toward them, in full sight of Co. Q. who raised a cheer. The rebels spurred their horses, but Si and Shorty gained on them.

"Come on. Shorty." Si yelled. "I don't believe they've got a shot left. They hain't fired once since they started."

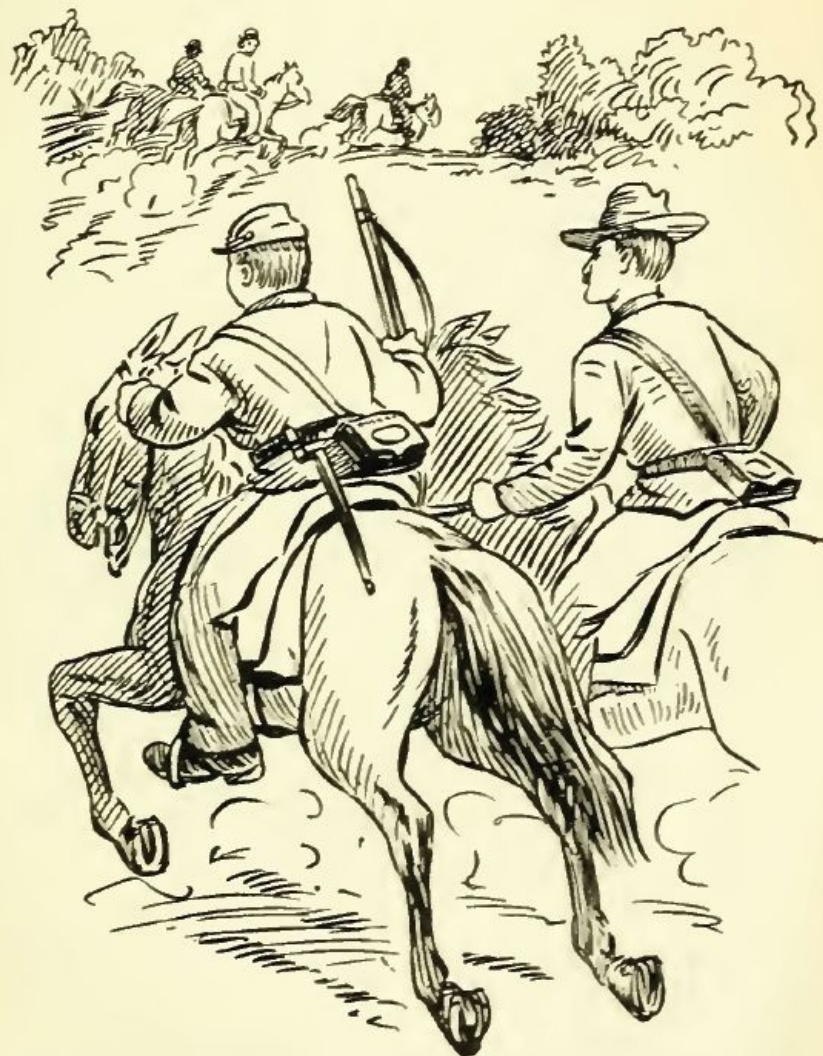
He was right. Their cartridge-boxes had been emptied.

At the bottom of the hill a creek crossing the road made a deep, wide quagmire. The rebels were in too much hurry to pick out whatever road there might have been through it. Their leaders plunged in, their horses sank nearly to the knees, and the whole party bunched up.

"Surrender, you rebel galoots." yelled Si reining up at a little distance, and bringing his gun to bear.

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"Surrender, you off-scourings of secession," added Shorty.



SI AND SHORTY AS MOUNTED INFANTRY.

The rebels looked back, held up their hands, and said imploringly:

"Don't shoot, Mister. We'uns give up. We'uns air taylored."

"Come back up here, one by one," commanded Si, "and go to our rear. Hold on to your guns. Don't throw 'em away. We ain't afraid of 'em." 118

One by one the rebels extricated their horses from the mire with more or less difficulty and filed back. Si kept his gun on those in the quagmire, while Shorty attended to the others as they came back. Co. Q was coming to his assistance as fast as the boys could march.

What was the delight of the boys to recognize in their captives the squad which had captured them. The sanguinary Bushrod was the first to come back, and Si had to restrain a violent impulse to knock him off his horse with his gun-barrel. But he decided to settle with him when through with the present business.

By the time the rebels were all up, Co. Q had arrived on the scene. As the prisoners were being disarmed and put under guard, Si called out to Capt. McGillicuddy:

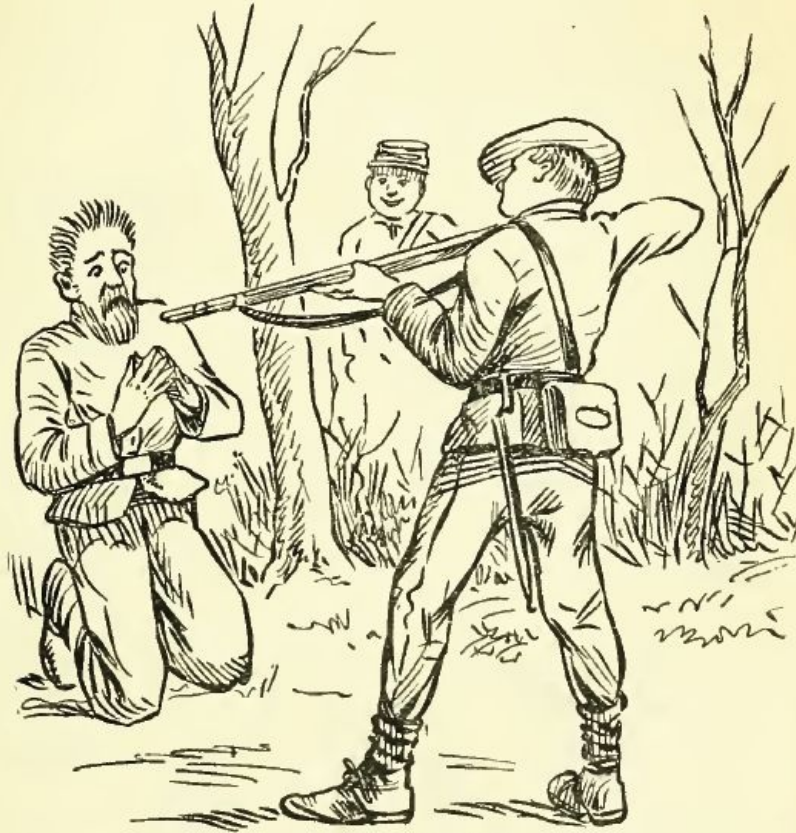
"Captain, one o' these men is my partickler meat. I want to 'tend to him."

"All right. Corporal," responded the Captain, "attend to him, but don't be too rough on him. Remember that he is an unarmed prisoner."

Si and Shorty got down off their horses, and approached Bushrod, who turned white as death, trembled violently, and began to beg.

"Gentlemen, don't kill me," he whined. "I'm a poor man, an' have a fambly to support. I didn't mean nothin' by what I said. I sw'ar't' Lord A'mighty I didn't."

"Jest wanted to hear yourself talk—jest practicin' your voice," said Shorty sarcastically, as he took the man 119 by the shoulder and pulled him off into the bush by the roadside. "Jest wanted to skeer us, and see how fast we could run. Pleasant little pastime, eh?" "And them things you said about a young lady up in Injianny," said Si, clutching him by the throat.



BUSHROD PRAYS FOR HIS LIFE.

"I want to wring your neck jest like a chicken's. What'd you do with her picture and letters?"

Si thrust his hand unceremoniously into Bushrod's pocket and found the ambrotype of Annabel. A brief glance showed him that it was all right, and he gave a sigh of satisfaction, which showed some amelioration of temper toward the captive.

120

"What'd you do with them letters?" Si demanded fiercely.

"Ike has 'em," said Bushrod.

"You've got my shoes on, you brindle whelp," said Shorty, giving him a cuff in bitter remembrance of his own smarting feet.

"If we're goin' to shoot him, let's do it right off," said Si, looking at the cap on his gun. "The company's gittin' ready to start back."

"All right," said Shorty, with cheerful alacrity. "Johnny, your ticket for a brimstone supper's made out. How'd you rather be shot—standin' or kneelin'?"

"O, gentlemen, don't kill be. Ye hadn't orter. Why do ye pick me out to kill? I wuzzent no wuss'n the others. I wuzzent rayly half ez bad. I didn't rayly mean t' harm ye. I only talked. I had t' talk that-a-way, for I alluz was a Union man, and had t' make a show for the others. I don't want t' be shot at all."

"You ain't answerin' my question," said Shorty coolly and inexorably. "I asked you how you preferred to be shot. These other things you mention hain't nothin' to do with my question."

He leveled his gun at the unhappy man and took a deliberate sight.

"O, for the Lord A'mighty's sake, don't shoot me down like a dog," screamed Bushrod. "Le'me have a chance to pray, an' make my peace with my Maker."

"All right," conceded Shorty, "go and kneel down there by that cottonwood, and do the fastest prayin* you ever did in all your born days, for you have need of it. We'll shoot when I count three. You'd better make a 121 clean breast of all your sins and transgressions before you go. You'll git a cooler place in the camp down below."

Unseen, the rest of Co. Q were peeping through the bushes and enjoying the scene.

Bushrod knelt down with his face toward the Cottonwood, and began an agonized prayer, mingled with confessions of crimes and malefactions, some flagrant, some which brought a grin of amusement to the faces of Co. Q.

"One!" called out Shorty in stentorian tones.

"O, for the love o' God, Mister, don't shoot me," yelled Bushrod, whirling around, with uplifted arms. "I'm too wicked to die, an' I've got a fambly dependin' on me."

"Turn around there, and finish your prayin'," sternly commanded Shorty, with his and Si's faces down to the stocks of their muskets, in the act of taking deliberate aim.

Bushrod flopped around, threw increased vehemence into his prayer, and resumed his recital of his misdeeds.

"Two!" counted Shorty.

Again Bushrod whirled around with uplifted hands and begged for mercy.

"Nary mercy," said Shorty. "You wouldn't give it to us, and you hain't given it to many others, according to your own account. Your light's flickerin', and we'll blow it out at the next count. Turn around, there."

Bushrod made the woods ring this time with his fervent, tearful appeals to the Throne of Grace. He was so wrought up by his impending death that he did not hear Co. Q quietly move away, at a sign from the Captain, 122 with Si and Shorty mounting their horses and riding off noiselessly over the sod.

For long minutes Bushrod continued his impassioned appeals at the top of his voice, expecting every instant to have the Yankee bullets crash through his brain. At length he had to stop from lack of breath. Everything was very quiet—deathly so, it seemed to him. He stole a furtive glance around. No Yankees could be seen out of the tail of his eye on either side. Then he looked squarely around. None was visible anywhere. He jumped up, began cursing savagely, ran into the road, and started for home. He had gone but a few steps when he came squarely in front of the musket of the Orderly-Sergeant of Co. Q, who had placed himself in concealment to see the end of the play and bring him along.

"Halt, there," commanded the Orderly-Sergeant; "face the other way and trot. We must catch up with the company."

Si and Shorty felt that they had redeemed themselves, and returned to camp in such good humor with each other, and everybody else, that they forgot that their feet were almost as bad as ever.

They went into the house and began cooking their supper together again. Shorty picked up the coffeecan and said:

"Si Klegg, you're a gentleman all through, if you was born on the Wabash. A genuine gentleman is knowed by his never bein' no hog under no circumstances. I watched you when you looked into this coffee-can, and mad as I was at you, I said you was a thorbred when you left it all to me."

123

CHAPTER IX. SHORTY GETS A LETTER BECOMES ENTANGLED IN A HIGHLY IMPORTANT CORRESPONDENCE.

A LIGHT spring wagon, inscribed "United States Sanitary Commission," drove through the camp of the 200th Ind., under the charge of a dignified man with a clerical cast of countenance, who walked alongside, looking at the soldiers and into the tents, and stopping from time to time to hand a can of condensed milk to this one, a jar of jam to another, and bunches of tracts to whomsoever would take them.

Shorty was sitting in front of the house bathing his aching feet. The man stopped before him, and looked compassionately at his swollen pedals.

"Your feet are in a very bad way, my man," he said sadly.

"Yes, durn 'em," said Shorty impatiently. "I don't seem to git 'em well nohow. Must've got 'em pizened when I was runnin' through the briars."

"Probably some ivy or poison-oak, or nightshade among the briars. Poison-oak is very bad, and nightshade is deadly. I knew a man once that had to have his hand amputated on account of getting poisoned by something that scratched him—nightshade, ivy, or poison-oak. I'm afraid your feet are beginning to mortify."

"Well, you are a Job's comforter," thought Shorty.

124

"You'd be nice to send for when a man's sick. You'd scare him to death, even if there was no danger o' his dyin'."

"My friend," said the man, turning to his wagon, "I've here a nice pair of home-made socks, which I will give you, and which will come in nicely if you save your legs. If you don't, give them to some needy man. Here are also some valuable tracts, full of religious consolation and advice, which it will do your soul good to peruse and study."

Shorty took the gift thankfully, and turned over the tracts with curiosity.

"On the Sin of Idolatry," he read the title of the first.

"Now, why'd he give that? What graven image have I bin worshipin'? What gods of wood and stone have I bin bowin' down before in my blindness? There've bin times when I thought a good deal more of a Commissary tent than I did of a church, but I got cured of that as soon as I got a square meal. I don't see where I have bin guilty of idolatry.

"On the Folly of Self-Pride," he read from the next one. "Humph, there may be something in that that I oughter read. I am very liable to git stuck on myself, and think how purty I am, and how graceful, and how sweetly I talk, and what fine cloze I wear. Especially the cloze. I'll put that tract in my pocket an' read it after awhile."

"On the Evils of Gluttony," he next read. "Well, that's a timely tract, for a fact. I'm in the habit o' goin' around stuffin' myself, as this says, with delicate viands, and drinkin' fine wines—'makin' my belly a god.' The man what wrote this must've bin intimately acquainted with the sumptuous meals which Uncle Sam sets 125

before his nephews. He must've knowed all about the delicate, apetzin' flavor of a slab o' fat pork four inches thick, taken off the side of the hog that's uppermost when he's laying on his back. And how I gormandize on hardtack baked in the first place for the Revolutioners, and kept over ever since. That feller knows jest what he's writin' about. I'd like to exchange photographs with him."

"Thou Shalt Not Swear." Shorty read a few words, got red in the face, whistled softly, crumpled the tract up, and threw it away.

"On the Sin of Dancing," Shorty yelled with laughter. "Me dance with these hoofs! And he thinks likely mortification'll set in, and I'll lose 'em altogether. Well, he oughter be harnessed up with Thompson's colt. Which'd come out ahead in the race for the fool medal? But these seem to be nice socks. Fine yarn, well-knit, and by stretching a little I think I kin get 'em on. I declare, they're beauties. I'll jest make Si sick with envy when I show 'em to him. I do believe they lay over anything his mother ever sent him. Hello, what's this?"

He extracted from one of them a note in a small, white envelope, on one end of which was a blue Zouave, with red face, hands, cap and gaiters, brandishing a red sword in defense of a Star Spangled Banner which he held in his left hand.

"Must belong to the Army o' the Potomac," mused Shorty, studying the picture. "They wear all sorts o' outlandish uniforms there. That red-headed woodpecker'd be shot before he'd git a mile o' the rebels out here. All that hollyhock business'd jest be meat for their sharpshooters. And what's he doin' with that 'ere sword? I wouldn't give that Springfield rifle o' mine for all the swords that were ever hammered out. When I reach for a feller 600 or even 800 yards away I kin fetch him every time. He's my meat unless he jumps behind a tree. But as for swords, I never could see no sense in 'em except for officers to put on lugs with. I wouldn't pack one a mile for a wagonload of 'em." 126

He looked at the address on the envelope. Straight lines had been scratched across with a pin. On these was written, in a cramped, mincing hand:

"To the brave soljer who Gits these Socks."

"Humph," mused Shorty, "that's probably for me. I've got the socks, and I'm a soldier. As to whether I'm brave or not's a matter of opinion. Sometimes I think I am; agin, when there's a dozen rebel guns pinte at my head, not 10 feet away, I think I'm not. But we'll play that I'm brave enough to have this intended for me, and I'll open it."

On the sheet of paper inside was another valorous red-and-blue Zouave defending the flag with drawn sword. On it was written:

"Bad Ax, Wisconsin,

"Janooary the 14th, 1863.

"Braiv Soljer: I doant know who you air, or whair you may be; I only know that you air serving your country, and that is enuf to entitle to the gratitude and afl'ection of every man and woman who has the breath of patriotism in their bodies.

"I am anxious to do something all the time, very little though it may be, to help in some way the men who air fitting the awful battles for me, and for every man and woman in the country.

"I send these socks now as my latest contribution. They aint much, but I've put my best work on them, and I hoap they will be useful and comfortable to some good, braiv man.

"How good you may be I doant know, but you air sertingly a much better man than you would be if you was not fitting for the Union. I hoap you air a regler, consistent Christian. Ide prefer you to be a Methodist Episcopal, but any church is much better than none.

"He be glad to heer that you have received these things all rite.

"Sincerely your friend and well-wisher,

"Jerusha Ellen Briggs."

Although Shorty was little inclined to any form of reading, and disliked handwriting about as much as he did work on the fortifications, he read the letter over several times, until he had every word in it and every feature of the labored, cramped penmanship thoroughly imprinted on his mind. Then he held it off at arm's length for some time, and studied it with growing admiration. It seemed to him the most wonderful epistle that ever emanated from any human hand. A faint scent of roses came from it to help the fascination.

"I'll jest bet my head agin a big red apple," he soliloquized, "the woman that writ that's the purtiest girl in the State o' Wisconsin. I'll bet there's nothin' in Injianny to hold a candle to her, purty as Si thinks his Annabel is. And smart—my! Jest look at that letter. That tells it. Every word spelled correckly, and the grammar away up in G. Annabel's a mighty nice girl, and purty, too, but I've noticed she makes mistakes in spelling, and her grammar's the Wabash kind—home-made." 128

He drew down his eyebrows, pursed his lips, and assumed a severely critical look for a reperusal of the letter and judgment upon it according to the highest literary standards.

"No, sir," he said, with an air of satisfaction, "not a blamed mistake in it, from beginnin' to end. Every word spelled jest right, the grammar straight as the Ten Commandments, every t crossed and i dotted accordin' to regulashuns and the Constitushun of the United States. She must be a school-teacher, and yit a school-teacher couldn't knit sich socks as them. She's a lady, every inch of her. Religious, too. Belongs to the Methodist Church. Si's father's a Baptist, and so's my folks, but I always did think a heap o' the Methodists. I

think they have a little nicer girls than the Baptists. I think I'd like to marry a Methodist wife."

Then he blushed vividly, all to himself, to think how fast his thoughts had traveled. He returned to the letter, to cover his confusion.

"Bad Ax, Wis. What a queer name for a place. Never heard of it before. Wonder where in time it is? I'd like awfully to know. There's the 1st and 21st Wis. in Rousseau's Division, and the 10th Wis. Battery in Palmer's Division. I might go over there and ask some o' them. Mebbe some of 'em are right from there. I'll bet it's a mighty nice place."

He turned to the signature with increased interest.

"Jerusha Ellen Briggs. Why, the name itself is reg'lar poetry. Jerusha is awful purty. Your Mollies and Sallies 129 and Emmies can't hold a candle to it. And Annabel—pshaw! Ellen—why that's my mother's name. Briggs? I knowed some Briggses once away-up, awfully nice people. Seems to me they wuz Presbyterians, though, and I always thought that Presbyterians wuz stuck-up, but they wuzent stuck-up a mite. I wonder if Miss Jerusha Ellen Briggs—she must be a Miss—haint some beau? But she can't have. If he wuzent in the army she wouldn't have him; and if he was in the army she'd be sending the socks to him, instead of to whom it may concern."

This brilliant bit of logic disposed of a sudden fear which had been clutching at his heart. It tickled him so much that he jumped up, slapped his breast, and grinned delightedly and triumphantly at the whole landscape.

"What's pleasin' you so mightily. Shorty?" asked Si, who had just come up. "Got a new system for beatin' chuck-a-luck, or bin promoted?"

"No, nothin'! Nothin's happened," said Shorty curtly, as he hastily shoved the letter into his blouse pocket. "Will you watch them beans bilin' while I go down to the spring and git some water?"

He picked up the camp-kettle and started. He wanted to be utterly alone, even from Si, with his new-born thought. He did not go directly to the spring, but took another way to a clump of pawpaw bushes, which would hide him from the observation of everyone. There he sat down, pulled out the letter again, and read it over carefully, word by word.

"Wants me to write whether I got the socks," he mused. "You jest bet I will. I've a great mind to ask for a 130 furlough to go up to Wisconsin, and find out Bad Ax. I wonder how fur it is. I'll go over to the Suiter's and git some paper and envelopes, and write to her this very afternoon."

He carried his camp-kettle back to the house, set it down, and making some excuse, set off for the Sutler's shop.

"Le'me see your best paper and envelopes," he said to the pirate who had license to fleece the volunteers.

"Awfully common trash," said Shorty, looking over the assortment disdainfully, for he wanted something superlatively fine for his letter. "Why don't you git something fit for a gentleman to write to a lady on? Something with gold edges on the paper and envelopes, and perfumed? I never write to a lady except on gilt-edged paper, smellin' o' bergamot, and musk, and citronella, and them things. I don't think it's good taste."

"Well, think what you please," said the Sutler. "That's all the kind I have, and that's all the kind you'll git. Take it or leave it."

Shorty finally selected a quire of heavy letter paper and a bunch of envelopes, both emblazoned with patriotic and warlike designs in brilliant red and blue.

"Better take enough," he said to himself. "I've been handlin' a pick and shovel and gun so much that I'm afeared my hand isn't as light as it used to be, and I'll have to spile several sheets before I git it just right."

On his way back he decided to go by the camp of one of the Wisconsin regiments and learn what he could of 131 Bad Ax and its people.

"Is there a town in your State called Bad Ax?" he asked of the first man he met with "Wis." on his cap.

"Cert'," was the answer. "And another one called Milwaukee, one called Madison, and another called Green Bay. Are you studying primary geography, or just getting up a postoffice directory?"

"Don't be funny, Skeezi," said Shorty severely. "Know anything about it? Mighty nice place, ain't it?"

"Know anything about it? I should say so. My folks live in Bad Ax County. It's the toughest, ornerist little hole in the State. Run by lead-miners. More whisky-shanties than dwellings. It's tough, I tell you."

"I believe you're an infernal liar," said Shorty, turning away in wrath.

Not being fit for duty, he could devote all his time to the composition of the letter. He was so wrought up over it that he could not eat much dinner, which alarmed Si.

"What's the matter with your appetite. Shorty?" he asked. "Haint bin eatin' nothin' that disagreed with you, have you?"

"Naw," answered Shorty impatiently; "nothin' wuss'n army rations. They always disagree with me when I'm layin' around doin' nothin'. Why, in the name of goodness, don't the army move? I've got sick o' the sight o' every cedar and rocky knob in Middle Tennessee. We ought to go down and take a look at things around Tullahoma, where Mr. Bragg is." 132

It was Si's turn to clean up after dinner, and, making an excuse of going over into another camp to see a man who had arrived there, Shorty, with his paper and envelopes concealed under his blouse, and Si's pen and wooden ink-stand furtively conveyed to his pocket, picked up the checkerboard when Si's back was turned, and made his way to the pawpaw thicket, where he could be unseen and unmolested in the greatest literary undertaking of his life.

He took a comfortable seat on a rock, spread the paper on the checkerboard, and then began vigorously chewing the end of the penholder to stimulate his thoughts.

It had been easy to form the determination to write; the desire to do so was irresistible, but never before had he been confronted with a task which seemed so overwhelming. Compared with it, struggling with a mule-train all day through the mud and rain, working with pick and shovel on the fortifications, charging an

enemy's solid line-of-battle, appeared light and easy performances. He would have gone at either, on the instant, at the word of command, or without waiting for it, with entire confidence in his ability to master the situation. But to write a half-dozen lines to a strange girl, whom he had already enthroned as a lovely divinity, had more terrors than all of Bragg's army could induce.

But when Shorty set that somewhat thick head of his upon the doing of a thing, the thing was tolerably certain to be done in some shape or another.

"I believe, if I knowed whore Bad Ax was, I'd git a furlough, and walk clean there, rather than write a line," he said, as he wiped from his brow the sweat forced out by the labor of his mind. "I always did hate writin'. I'd 133 rather maul rails out of a twisted elm log any day than fill up a copy book. But it's got to be done, and the sooner I do it the sooner the agony 'll be over. Here goes."

He began laboriously forming each letter with his lips, and still more laboriously with his stiff fingers, adding one to another, until he had traced out:

*"Headquarters Co. Q, 200th Injianny Volunteer Infantry,
Murfreeboro, Aprile the 16th eighteen hundred & sixty
three."*

The sweat stood out in beads upon his forehead after this effort, but it was as nothing compared to the strain of deciding how he should address his correspondent. He wanted to use some term of fervent admiration, but fear deterred him. He debated the question with himself until his head fairly ached, when he settled upon the inoffensive phrase:

"Respected Lady."

The effort was so exhausting that he had to go down to the spring, take a deep drink of cold water, and bathe his forehead. But his determination was unabated, and before the sun went down he had produced the following:

*"i talk mi pen in hand 2 inform U that ive reseved the SOX
U so kindly cent, & i thank U 1,000 times 4 them. They are
boss sox & no mistake. They are the bossest sox that ever
wuz nit. The man is a lire who sez they aint. He dassent tel
Me so. U are a boss nitter. Even Misses Linkun can't hold a
candle 2 U.*

*"The sox fit me 2 a t, but that is becaws they are nit so
wel, & stretch."*

134

"I wish I knowed some more real strong words to praise her knitting," said Shorty, reading over the laboriously-written lines. "But after I have said they're boss what more is there to say? I spose I ought to say something about her health next. That's polite." And he wrote:

*"ime in fair helth, except my feet are" locoed, & i weigh
156 pounds, & hope U are injoying the saim blessing."*

"I expect I ought to praise her socks a little more," said he, and wrote:

*"The SOX are jest boss. They outrank anything in the Army of
the Cumberland."*

After this effort he was compelled to take a long rest. Then he communed with himself:

"When a man's writin' to a lady, and especially an educated lady, he should always throw in a little poetry. It touches her."

There was another period of intense thought, and then he wrote:

*"Dan Elliott is my name,
& single is my station,
Injianny is mi dwelling place,
& Christ is mi salvation."*

"Now," he said triumphantly, "that's neat and effective. It tells her a whole lot about me, and makes her think I know Shakspeare by heart. Wonder if I can't think o' some more? Hum—hum. Yes, here goes:

*"The rose is red, the vilet's blue;
ime 4 the Union, so are U."*

Shorty was so tickled over this happy conceit that he fairly hugged himself, and had to read it over several 135 times to admire its beauty. But it left him too exhausted for any further mental labor than to close up with:

"No moar at present, from yours til death.

"Dan Elliott,

"Co. Q, 200th injianny Volunteer Infantry."

He folded up the missive, put it into an envelope, carefully directed to Miss Jerusha Ellen Briggs, Bad Ax, Wis., and after depositing it in the box at the Chaplain's tent, plodded homeward, feeling more tired than after a day's digging on the fortifications. Yet his fatigue was illuminated by the shimmering light of a fascinating hope.

CHAPTER X. TRADING WITH THE REBS

THE BOYS HAVE SOME FRIENDLY COMMERCE WITH THE REBEL PICKETS.

THE 200th Ind. Volunteer Infantry had been pushed out to watch the crossings of Duck River and the movements of the rebels on the south bank of that narrow stream. The rebels, who had fallen into the incurable habit of objecting to everything that the "Yankees" did, seemed to have especial and vindictive repugnance to being watched.

Probably no man, except he be an actor or a politician, likes to be watched, but few ever showed themselves as spitefully resentful of observation as the rebels.

Co. Q was advanced to picket the north bank of the river, but the moment it reached the top of the hill overlooking the stream it had to deploy as skirmishers, and Enfield bullets began to sing viciously about its ears.

"Looks as if them fellers think we want to steal their old river and send it North," said Shorty, as he reloaded his gun after firing at a puff of smoke that had come out of the sumach bushes along the fence at the foot of the hill. "They needn't be so grouchy. We don't want their river—only to use it awhile. They kin have it back agin after we're through with it."

"Blamed if that feller didn't make a good line shot," said Si, glancing up just above his head to where a twig had been clipped off the persimmon tree behind which he was standing. "He put up his sights a little too fur, or he'd 'a' got me." 137

Si took careful aim at where he supposed the lurking marksman to be and fired.

There was a waving of the tops of the bushes, as if the men concealed there had rushed out.

"Guess we both landed mighty close," said Shorty triumphantly. "They seem to have lost interest in this piece o' sidehill, anyway."

He and Si made a rush down the hill, and gained the covert of the fence just in time to see the rails splintered by a bunch of shots striking them.

"Lay down, Yanks!" called out Shorty cheerily, dropping into the weeds. "Grab a root!"

To the right of them they could see the rest of Co. Q going through similar performances.

Si and Shorty pushed the weeds aside, crawled cautiously to the fence, and looked through. There was a road on the other side of the fence, and beyond it a grove of large beech trees extending to the bank of the river. Half concealed by the trunk of one of these stood a tall, rather good-looking young man, with his gun raised and intently peering into the bushes. He had seen the tops stir, and knew that his enemies had gained their cover. He seemed expecting that they would climb the fence and jump down into the road. At a little distance to his right could be seen other men on the sharp lookout.

Shorty put his hand on Si to caution and repress him. 138

With his eyes fixed on the rebel, Shorty drew his gun toward him. The hammer caught on a trailing vine, and, forgetting himself, he gave it an impatient jerk. It went off, the bullet whistling past Shorty's head and the powder burning his face.

The rebel instantly fired in return, and cut the leaves about four feet above Shorty.

"Purty good shot that, Johnny," called out Shorty as he reloaded his gun; "but too low. It went between my legs. You hain't no idee how tall I am."

"If I couldn't shoot no better'n you kin on a sneak," answered the rebel, his rammer ringing in his gun-barrel, "I wouldn't handle firearms. Your bullet went a mile over my head. Must've bin shootin' at an angel. But you Yanks can't shoot nary bit—you're too skeered."

"I made you hump out o' the bushes a few minutes ago," replied Shorty, putting on a cap. "Who was skeered then? You struck for tall timber like a cotton-tailed rabbit."

"I'll rabbit ye, ye nigger-lovin' whelp," shouted the rebel. "Take that," and he fired as close as he could to the sound of Shorty's voice.

Shorty had tried to anticipate his motion and fired first, but the limbs bothered his aim, and his bullet went a foot to the right of the rebel's head. It was close enough, however, to make the rebel cover himself carefully with the tree.

"That was a much better shot, Yank," he called out. "But ye orter do a powerful sight better'n that on a sneak. Ye'd never kill no deer, nor rebels nuthor, with that kind o' shootin'. You Yanks are great on the sneak, but that's all the good it does, yet ye can't shoot fer a handful o' huckleberries." 139

"Sneaks! Can't shoot!" roared Shorty. "I kin outshoot you or any other man in Jeff Davis's kingdom. I dare you to come out from behind your tree, and take a shot with me in the open, accordin' to Hardee's tactics. Your gun's empty; so's mine. My chum here'll see fair play; and you kin bring your chum with you. Come out, you skulkin' brindle pup, and shoot man fashion, if you dare." 140

"Ye can't dare me, ye nigger-stealin' blue-belly," shouted the rebel in return, coming out from behind his tree. Shorty climbed over the fence and stood at the edge of the road, with his gun at order arms. Si came out on Shorty's left, and a rebel appeared to the right of the first. For a minute all stood in expectancy. Then Shorty spoke:

"I want nuthin' but what's fair. Your gun's empty; so's mine. You probably know Hardee's tactics as well as I do."

"I'm up in Hardee," said the rebel with a firm voice.

"Well, then," continued Shorty, "let my chum here call off the orders for loadin' and firin', and we'll both go through 'em, and shoot at the word."

"Go ahead—I'm agreed," said the rebel briefly.

Shorty nodded to Si.

"Carry arms," commanded Si.

Both brought their guns up to their right sides.

"Present arms."

Both courteously saluted.

"Load in nine times—Load," ordered Si.

Both guns came down at the same instant, each man grasped his muzzle with his left hand, and reached for his cartridge-box, awaiting the next order.

"Handle cartridges."

"Tear cartridges."

"Charge cartridges," repeated Si slowly and distinctly. The rebel's second nodded approval of his knowledge of the drill, and sang out:

"Good soldiers, all of yo'uns."

"Draw rammer," continued Si,

"Turn rammer."

"Ram cartridge."

Shorty punctiliously executed the three blows on the cartridge exacted by the regulations, and paused a breath for the next word. The rebel had sent his cartridge home with one strong thrust, but he saw his opponent's act and waited.

"Return rammer," commanded Si. He was getting a little nervous, but Shorty deliberately withdrew his rammer, turned it, placed one end in the thimbles, deliberately covered the head with his little finger, exactly as the tactics prescribed, and sent it home with a single movement. The rebel had a little trouble in returning rammer, and Shorty and Si waited.

"Cast about,"

"Prime!"

Both men capped at the same instant.

"Ready!"

Shorty cocked his piece and glanced at the rebel, whose gun was at his side.

"Aim!"

Both guns came up like a flash.

141



THE DUEL.

Si's heart began thumping at a terrible rate. He was far more alarmed about Shorty than he had ever been about himself. Up to this moment he had hoped that Shorty's coolness and deliberation would "rattle" the rebel and make him fire wildly. But the latter, as Si expressed it afterward, "seemed to be made of mighty good stuff," and it looked as if both would be shot down.

"Fire!" shouted Si, with a perceptible tremor in his voice.

142

Both guns flashed at the same instant. Si saw Shorty's hat fly off, and him stagger and fall, while the rebel dropped his gun, and clapped his hand to his side. Si ran toward Shorty, who instantly sprang up again, rubbing his head, from which came a faint trickle of blood.

"He aimed at my head, and jest scraped my scalp," he said. "Where'd I hit him? I aimed at his heart, and had a good bead."

"You seem to have struck him in the side," answered Si, looking at the rebel. "But not badly, for he's still standin' up. Mebbe you broke a rib though."

"Couldn't, if he's still up. I must file my trigger Gun pulls too hard. I had a dead aim on his heart, but I seem to've pulled too much to the right."

"Say, I'll take a turn with you," said Si, picking up his gun and motioning with his left hand at the other rebel.

"All right," answered the other promptly. "My gun ain't loaded, though."

"I'll wait for you," said Si, looking at the cap on his gun. A loud cheer was heard from far to the right, and Co. Q was seen coming forward on a rush, with the rebels in front running back to the river bank. Several were seen to be overtaken and forced to surrender.

The two rebels in front of the boys gave a startled look at their comrades, then at the boys, and turned to run. Si raised his gun to order them to halt.

"No," said Shorty. "Let 'em go. It was a fair bargain, and I'll stick to it. Skip out Johnnies, for every cent you're worth." 143

The rebels did not wait for the conclusion of the sentence, but followed their comrades with alacrity.

The boys ran forward through the woods to the edge of the bank, and saw their opponents climbing up the opposite bank and getting behind the sheltering trees. Si waited till his particular one got good shelter behind a large sycamore, and then sent a bullet that cut closely above his head.

This was the signal for a general and spiteful fusillade from both sides of the river and all along the line. The rebels banged away as if in red-hot wrath at being run across the stream, and Co. Q retorted with such earnestness that another company was sent forward to its assistance, but returned when the Irish Lieutenant, who had gone forward to investigate, reported:

"Faith, its loike the divil shearing a hog—all cry and no wool at all."

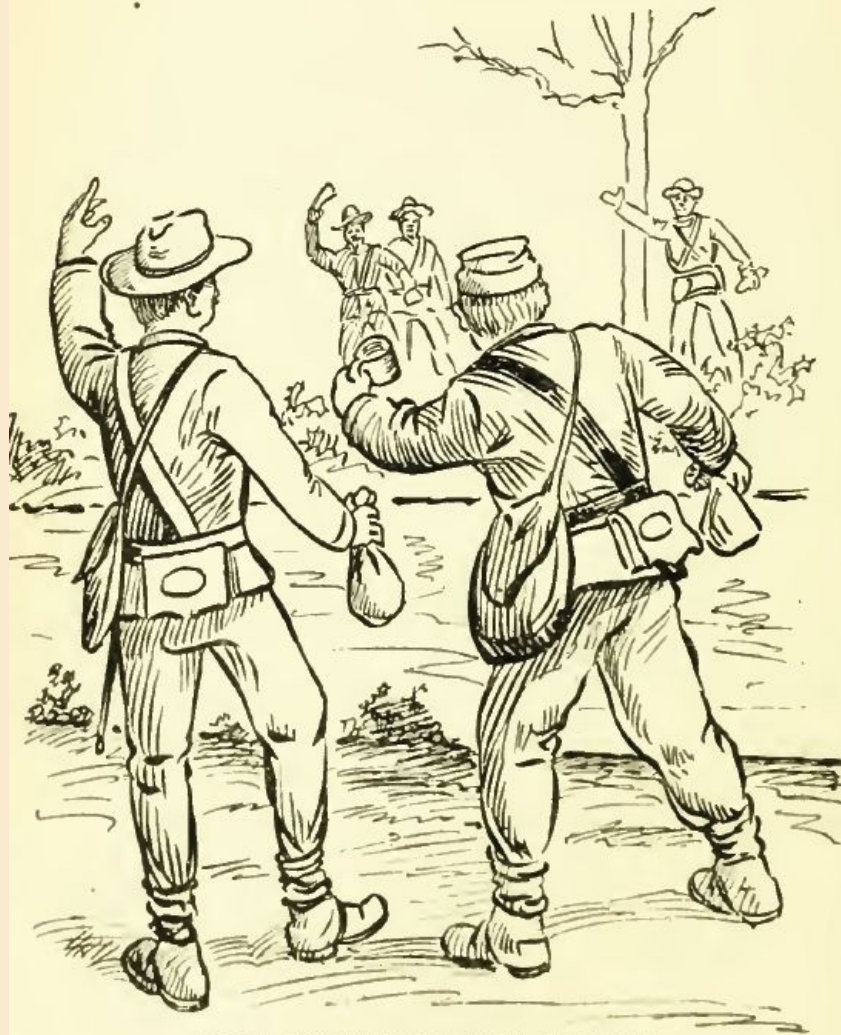
So it was. Both sides found complete shelter behind the giant trunks of the trees, and each fired at insignificant portions of the anatomy allowed to momentarily protrude beyond the impenetrable boles.

After this had gone on for about half an hour those across the river from Si and Shorty called out:

"Say, Yanks, ye can't shoot down a beech tree with a Springfield musket, nohow ye kin do it. If we'uns hain't killin' more o' yo'uns than yo'uns is a-killin' o' we'uns, we'uns air both wastin' a powerful lot o' powder an' lead and good shootin'. What d' yo'uns say to King's excuse for awhile?"

"We're agreed," said Si promptly, stepping from behind the tree, and leaving his gun standing against it. 144

"Hit's a go," responded the rebels, coming out disarmed. "We'uns won't shoot no more till ordered, an' then'll give yo'uns warnin' fust."



THE OVERTURE FOR TRADE.

"All right; we'll give you warning before we shoot," coincided Si.

"Say, have yo'uns got any Yankee coffee that you'll trade for a good plug o' terbacker?" inquired the man 145 whom Si had regarded as his particular antagonist.

"Yes," answered Si. "We've got a little. We'll give you a cupful for a long plug with none cut off."

"What kind of a cupful?" asked the bartering "Johnny."

"A big, honest cupful. One o' this kind," said Si, showing his.

"All right. Hit's to be strike measure," said the rebel. "Here's the plug," and he held up a long plug of "natural leaf."

"O. K.," responded Si. "Meet me half way."

The truce had quickly extended, and the firing suspended all along the line of Co. Q. The men came out from behind their trees, and sat down on the banks in open view of one another.

Si filled his cup "heaping-full" with coffee, climbed down the bank and waded out into the middle of the water. The rebel met him there, while his companion and Shorty stood on the banks above and watched the trade.

"Y're givin' me honest measure, Yank," said the rebel, looking at the cup. "Now, if ye hain't filled the bottom o' yer cup with coffee that's bin biled before, I'll say y're all right. Some o' yo'uns air so dod-gasted smart that y' poke off on we'uns coffee that's bin already biled, and swindle we'uns."

"Turn it out and see," said Si.

The rebel emptied the cup into a little bag, carefully scrutinizing the stream as it ran in. It was all fine, fragrant, roasted and ground coffee.

"Lord, thar's enough t' last me a month with keer," said the rebel, gazing unctuously at the rich brown grains. "I won't use more'n a spoonful a day, an' bile hit over twice. Yank, here's yer terbacker. I've made a good trade. Here's a Chatanooga paper I'll throw in to boot. Got a Northern paper about ye anywhar?"

Si produced a somewhat frayed Cincinnati Gazette.

"I can't read myself," said the rebel, as he tucked the paper away. "Never l'arned to. Pap wuz agin hit. Said hit made men lazy. He got erlong without readin', and raised the biggest fambly on Possum Crick. But thar's a feller in my mess kin read everything but the big words, and I like t' git a paper for him to read to the rest o' we'uns."

"Was your pardner badly hurt by mine's shot?" asked Si.

"No. The bullet jest scraped the bone. He'll be likely to have a stitch in his side for awhile, but he's a very peart man, and won't mind that. I'm s'prised he didn't lay your pardner out. He's the best shot in our company."

"Well, he was buckin' agin a mighty good shot, and I'm surprised your pardner's alive. I wouldn't 've given

three cents for him when Shorty drew down on him; but Shorty's bin off duty for awhile, and his gun's not in the best order. Howsumever, I'm awful glad that it come out as it did. His life's worth a dozen rebels."

"The blazes you say. I'd have you know, Yank, that one Confederit is wuth a whole rijimint o' Lincoln hirelings. I'll—" 147

"O, come off—come off—that's more o' your old five-to-one gas," said Si irritatingly. "I thought we'd walloped that dumbed nonsense out o' your heads long ago. We've showed right along that, man for man, we're a sight better'n you. We've always licked you when we've had anything like a fair show. At Stone River you had easy two men to our one, and yit we got away with you."

"'Tain't so. It's a lie. If hit wuzzent for the Dutch and Irish you hire, you couldn't fight we'uns at all." 148

"Look here, reb," said Si, getting hot around the ears, "I'm neither a Dutchman nor an Irishman; we hain't a half dozen in our company. I'm a better man than you've got in your regiment. Either me or Shorty kin lick any man you put up; Co. Q kin lick your company single-handed and easy; the 200th Injianny kin lick any regiment in the rebel army. To prove it, I kin lick you right here."



SI WANTS A FIGHT.

Si thrust the plug of tobacco into his blouse pocket and began rolling up his sleeves.

The rebel did not seem at all averse to the trial and squared off at him. Then Shorty saw the belligerent attitude and yelled:

"Come, Si. Don't fight there. That's no place. If you're goin' to fight, come up on level ground, where it kin be fair and square. Come up here, or we'll go over there."

"O, come off," shouted the rebel on the other side. "Don't be a fool, Bill. Fist-foutin' don't settle nothin'. Come back here and git your gun if ye want to fout. But don't le's fout no more to-day. Thar's plenty of it for ter-morrer. Le's keep quiet and peaceful now. I want powerfully to take a swim. Air you fellers agreed?"

"Yes; yes," shouted Shorty. "You fellers keep to your side o' the river, and we will to ours."

The agreement was carried into instantaneous effect, and soon both sides of the stream were filled with laughing, romping, splashing men.

There was something very exhilarating in the cool, clear, mountain water of the stream. The boys got to 149 wrestling, and Si came off victorious in two or three bouts with his comrades.

"Cock-a-doodle-doo," he shouted, imitating the crow of a rooster. "I kin duck any man in the 200th Injianny."

The challenge reached the ears of the rebel with whom Si had traded. He was not satisfied with the result of his conference.

"You kin crow over your fellers, Yank," he shouted; "but you dassent come to the middle an' try me two falls outen three."

Si immediately made toward him. They surveyed each other warily for a minute to get the advantages of the first clinch, when a yell came from the rebel side:

"Scatter, Confeds! Hunt yer holes, Yanks! The Cunnel's a-comin'!"

CHAPTER XI. SHORTY'S CORRESPONDENT

GETS A LETTER FROM BAD AX, WIS., AND IS ALMOST OVERCOME WITH JOY.

SHORTY had always been conspicuously lacking in the general interest which his comrades had shown in the mails. Probably at some time in his life he had had a home like the rest of them, but for some reason home now played no part in his thoughts. The enlistment and muster-rolls stated that he was born in Indiana, but he was a stranger in the neighborhood when he enrolled himself in Co. Q.

His revelations as to his past were confined to memories of things which happened "when I was cuttin' wood down the Mississippi," or "when I was runnin' on an Ohio sternwheel."

He wrote no letters and received none. And when the joyful cry, "Mail's come," would send everybody else in the regiment on a run to the Chaplain's tent, in eager anticipation, to jostle one another in impatience, until the contents of the mailpouch were distributed, Shorty would remain indifferent in his tent, without an instant's interruption in his gun cleaning, mending, or whatever task he might have in hand.

A change came over him after he sent his letter to Bad Ax, Wis. The cry, "Mail's come," would make him start, in spite of himself, and before he could think to maintain his old indifference. He was ashamed, lest he betray his heart's most secret thoughts. 151

The matter of the secure transmission of the mails between camp and home began to receive his earnest attention. He feared that the authorities were not taking sufficient precautions. The report that John Morgan's guerrillas had captured a train between Louisville and Nashville, rifled the mail car, and carried off the letters, filled him with burning indignation, both against Morgan and his band and the Generals who had not long ago exterminated that pestiferous crowd.

He had some severe strictures on the slovenly way in which the mail was distributed from the Division and Brigade Headquarters to the regiments. It was a matter, he said, which could not be done too carefully. It was a great deal more important than the distribution of rations. A man would much rather lose several days' rations than a letter from home. He could manage in some way to get enough to live on, but nothing would replace a lost letter.

Then, he would have fits of silent musing, sometimes when alone, sometimes when with Si in the company, over the personality of the fair stocking-knitter of Wisconsin and the letter he had sent her. He would try to recall the exact wording of each sentence he had laboriously penned, and wonder how it impressed her, think how it might have been improved, and blame himself for not having been more outspoken in his desire to hear from her again. He would steal off into the brush, pull out the socks and letter, which he kept carefully wrapped up in a sheet of the heavy letter paper, and read over the letter carefully again, although he knew every word of it by heart. These fits alarmed Si. 152

"I'm af eared," he confided to some cronies, "that rebel bullet hurt Shorty more'n he'll let on. He's not actin' like hisself at times. That bullet scraped so near his thinkery that it may have addled it. It was an awful close shave."

"Better talk to the Surgeon," said they. "Glancing bullets sometimes hurt worse'n they seem to."

"No, the bullet didn't hurt Shorty, any more than make a scratch," said the Surgeon cheerfully when Si laid the case before him. "I examined him carefully. That fellow's head is so hard that no mere scraping is going to affect it. You'd have to bore straight through it, and I'd want at least a six-pounder to do it with if I was going to undertake the job. An Indiana head may not be particularly fine, but it is sure to be awfully solid and tough. No; his system's likely to be out of order. You rapsallions will take no care of yourselves, in spite of all that I can say, but will eat and drink as if you were ostriches. He's probably a little off his feed, and a good dose of bluemass followed up with quinine will bring him around all right. Here, take these, and give them to him."

The Surgeon was famous for prescribing bluemass and quinine for every ailment presented to him, from sore feet to "shell fever." Si received the medicines with a proper show of thankfulness, saluted, and left. As he passed through the clump of bushes he was tempted to add them to the collection of little white papers which marked the trail from the Surgeon's tent, but solicitude for his comrade restrained him. The Surgeon was probably right, and it was Si's duty to do all that he could to bring Shorty around again to his normal condition. But how in the world was he going to get his partner to take the medicine? Shorty had the resolute antipathy to drugs common to all healthy men. 153

It was so grave a problem that Si sat down on a log to think about it. As was Si's way, the more he thought about it, the more determined he became to do it, and when Si Klegg determined to do a thing, that thing was pretty nearly as good as done.

"I kin git him to take the quinine easy enough," he mused. "All I've got to do is to put it in a bottle o' whisky, and he'd drink it if there wuz 40 'doses o' quinine in it. But the bluemass's a very different thing. He's got to swaller it in a lump, and what in the world kin I put it in that he'll swaller whole?"

Si wandered over to the Sutler's in hopes of seeing something there that would help him. He was about despairing when he noticed a boy open a can of large, yellow peaches.

"The very thing," said Si, slapping his thigh. "Say, young man, gi' me a can o' peaches jest like them."

Si took his can and carefully approached his tent, that he might decide upon his plan before Shorty could see him and his load. He discovered that Shorty was sitting at a little distance, with his back to him, cleaning

his gun, which he had taken apart.

"Bully," thought Si. "Just the thing. His hands are dirty and greasy, and he won't want to tech anything to eat." 154

He slipped into the tent, cut open the can, took out a large peach with a spoon, laid the pellet of bluemass in it, laid another slice of peach upon it, and then came around in front of Shorty, holding out the spoon.

"Open your mouth and shut your eyes, Shorty," he said. "I saw some o' the nicest canned peaches down at the Sutler's, and I suddenly got hungry for some. I bought a can and brung 'em up to the tent. Jest try 'em."

He stuck the spoon out towards Shorty's mouth. The latter, with his gunlock in one hand and a greasy rag in the other, looked at the tempting morsel, opened his mouth, and the deed was done.

"Must've left a stone in that peach," he said, as he gulped it down.

"Mebbe so," said Si, with a guilty flush, and pretending to examine the others. "But I don't find none in the rest Have another?"

Shorty swallowed two or three spoonfuls more, and then gasped:

"They're awful nice, Si, but I've got enough. Keep the rest for yourself."

Si went back to the tent and finished the can with mingled emotions of triumph at having succeeded, and of contrition at playing a trick on his partner. He decided to make amends for the latter by giving Shorty an unusually large quantity of whisky to take with his quinine.

Si was generally very rigid in his temperance ideas, He strongly disapproved of Shorty's drinking, and always interposed all the obstacles he could in the way of it. But this was an extraordinary case—it would be "using liquor for a medicinal purpose"—and his conscience was quieted. 155

Co. Q had one of those men—to be found in every company—who can get whisky under apparently any and all circumstances. In every company there is always one man who seemingly can find something to get drunk on in the midst of the Desert of Sahara. To Co. Q's representative of this class Si went, and was piloted to where, after solemn assurances against "giving away," he procured a halfpint of fairly-good applejack, into which he put his doses of quinine.

In the middle of the night Shorty woke up with a yell.

"Great Cesar's ghost!" he howled, "what's the matter with me? I'm sicker'n a dog. Must've bin them doggasted peaches. Si, don't you feel nothin'?"

"No," said Si sheepishly; "I'm all right. Didn't you eat nothin' else but them?"

"Naw," said Shorty disgustedly. "Nothin' but my usual load o' hardtack and pork. Yes, I chawed a piece o' sassafras root that one of the boys dug up."

"Must've bin the sassafras root," said Si. He hated to lie, and made a resolution that he would make a clean breast to Shorty—at some more convenient time. It was not opportune now. "That must've bin a sockdologer of a dose the Surgeon gave me," he muttered to himself.

Shorty continued to writhe and howl, and Si made a hypocritical offer of going for the Surgeon, but Shorty vetoed that emphatically. 156

"No; blast old Sawbones," he said. "He won't do nothin' but give me bluemass, and quinine, and I never could nor would take bluemass. It's only fit for horses and hogs."

Toward morning Shorty grew quite weak, and correspondingly depressed.

"Si," said he, "I may not git over this. This may be the breakin' out o' the cholera that the folks around here say comes every seven years and kills off the strangers. Si, I'll tell you a secret. A letter may come for me. If I don't git over this, and the letter comes, I want you to burn it up without reading it, and write a letter to Miss Jerusha Ellen Briggs, Bad Ax, Wis., tellin' her that I died like a man and soldier, and with her socks on, defendin' his country."

Si whistled softly to himself. "I'll do it. Shorty," he said, and repeated the address to make sure.

The crisis soon passed, however, and the morning found Shorty bright and cheerful, though weak.

Si was puzzled how to get the whisky to Shorty. It would never do to let him know that he had gotten it especially for him. That would have been so contrary to Si's past as to arouse suspicion. He finally decided to lay it where it would seem that someone passing had dropped it, and Shorty could not help finding it. The plan worked all right. Shorty picked it up in a few minutes after Si had deposited it, and made quite an ado over his treasure trove.

"Splendid applejack," he said, tasting it; "little bitter, but that probably comes from their using dogwood in the fires when they're 'stilhn'. They know that dogwood'll make the liquor bitter, but they're too all-fired lazy to go after any other kind o' wood." He drank, and as he drank his spirits rose. After the first dram he thought he would clean around the tent, and make their grounds look neater than anybody else's. After the second he turned his attention to his arms and accouterments. After the third he felt like going out on a scout and finding some rebels to vary the monotony of the camp-life. After the fourth, "Groundhog," unluckily for himself, came along, and Shorty remembered that he had long owed the teamster a licking, and he felt that the debt should not be allowed to run any longer. He ordered Groundhog to halt and receive his dues. The teamster demurred, but Shorty was obdurate, and began preparations to put his intention into operation, when the Orderly-Sergeant came down through the company street distributing mail. 157



SHORTY WANTS TO FIGHT GROUNDHOG.

"Shorty," he said, entirely ignoring the bellicosity of the scene, "here's a letter for you."

Shorty's first thought was to look at the postmark. Sure enough, it was Bad Ax, Wis. Instantly his whole demeanor changed. Here was something a hundred times more important than licking any teamster that ever lived.

"Git out, you scab," he said contemptuously. "I haint no time to fool with you now. You'll keep. This won't."

Groundhog mistook the cause of his escape. "O, you're powerful anxious to fight, ain't you, till you find I'm ready for you, and then you quiet down. I'll let you know, sir, that you mustn't give me no more o' your sass. I won't stand it from you. You jest keep your mouth shet after this, if you know when you're well off."

The temptation would have been irresistible to Shorty at any other time, but now he must go off somewhere where he could be alone with his letter, and to the amazement of all the spectators he made no reply to the teamster's gibes, but holding the precious envelope firmly in his hand, strode off to the seclusion of a neighboring laurel thicket.

His first thought, as he sat down and looked the envelope over again, was shame that it had come to him when he was under the influence of drink. He remembered the writer's fervent Christianity, and it seemed to him that it would be a gross breach of faith for him to open and read the letter while the fumes of whisky were on his breath. He had a struggle with his burning desire to see the inside of the envelope, but he conquered, and put the letter back in his pocket until he was thoroughly sober.

But he knew not what to do to fill up the time till he could conscientiously open the letter. He thought of going back and fulfilling his long-delayed purpose of thrashing Groundhog, but on reflection this scarcely commended itself as a fitting prelude.

He heard voices approaching—one sympathetic and encouraging, the other weak, pain-breathing, almost despairing. He looked out and saw the Chaplain helping back to the hospital a sick man who had over-estimated his strength and tried to reach his company. The man sat down on a rock, in utter exhaustion.

Shorty thrust the letter back into his blouse-pocket, sprang forward, picked the man up in his strong arms, and carried him bodily to the hospital. It taxed his strength to the utmost, but it sobered him and cleared his brain.

He returned to his covert, took out his letter, and again scanned its exterior carefully. He actually feared to open it, but at last drew his knife and carefully slit one side. He unfolded the inclosure as carefully as if it had been a rare flower, and with palpitating heart slowly spelled out the words, one after another:



SHORTY READING THE LETTER.

"Bad Ax, Wisconsin,

"April the Twenty-First, 1863.

"Mister Daniel Elliott, Company Q, 200th Indiana Volunteer Infantry.

"Respected Sir: I taik my pen in hand toe inform you that I am wel, and hoap that you aire in joying the saim blessing. For this, God be prazed and magnified forever."

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"Goodness, how religious she is," said he, stopping to ruminate. "How much nicer it makes a woman to be pious. It don't hurt a man much to be a cuss—at least while he's young—but I want a woman to be awfully religious. It sets her off more'n anything else."

He continued his spelling exercise:

"I am verry glad that my sox reached you all rite, that they fell into the hands of a braiv, pious Union soldier, and he found them nice."

"Brave, pious Union soldier," he repeated to himself, with a whistle. "Jewhilikins, I'm glad Bad Ax, Wis., is so fur away that she never heard me makin' remarks when a mule-team's stalled. But I must git a brace on myself, and clean up my langwidge for inspection-day."

He resumed the spelling:

"I done the best I could on them, and moren that no one can do. Wimmen cant fite in this cruel war, but they ought all to do what they can. I only wish I could do more. But the wimmen must stay at home and watch and wait, while the men go to the front."

"That's all right. Miss Jerusha Ellen Briggs," said he, with more satisfaction. "You jest stay at home and watch and wait, and I'll try to do fightin' enough for both of us. I'll put in some extra licks in future on your account, and they won't miss you from the front."

The next paragraph read:

"I should like to hear more of you and your regiment. The only time I ever beared of the 200th Indiana regiment was in a letter writ home by one of our Wisconsin boys and published in the Bad Ax Grindstone, in which he said they wuz brigaded with the 200th Indiana, a good fighting regiment, but which would stele even the shoes off the brigade mules if they wuzzent watched, and sumtimes when they wuz. Ime sorry to hear that any Union soldier is a thief. I know that our boys from Wisconsin would rather die

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"Steal! The 200th Injianny steal!" Shorty flamed out in a rage. "Them flabbergasted, knock-kneed, wall-eyed Wisconsin whelps writin' home that the Injiannians are thieves! The idee o' them longhaired, splay-footed lumbermen, them chuckleheaded, wap-sided, white-pine butchers talking about anybody else's honesty. Why, they wuz born stealin'. They never knowed anything else. They'd steal the salt out o' your hardtack. They'd steal the lids off the Bible. They talk about the 200th Injianny! I'd like to find the liar that writ that letter. I'd literally pound the head offen him."

It was some time before he could calm himself down sufficiently to continue his literary exercise. Then he made out:

"Spring's lait here, but things is looking very well. Wheat wintered good, and a big crop is expected. We had a fine singing-school during the Winter, but the protracted meeting drawed off a good many. We doant complain, however, for the revival brought a great many into the fold. No moar at present, but belave me

"Sincerly Your Friend,

"Jerusha Ellen Briggs."

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Shorty's heart almost choked him when he finished. It was the first time in his hfe that he had received a letter from any woman. It was the first time since his mother's days that any woman had shown the slightest interest in his personality. And, true man like, his impulses were to exalt this particular woman into something above the mere mortal.

Then came a hot flush of indignation that the Wisconsin men should malign his regiment, which, of course, included him, to the mind of such a being. He burned to go over and thrash the first Wisconsin man he should meet.

"Call us thieves; say we'll steal," he muttered, as he walked toward the Wisconsin camp. "I'll learn 'em different."

He did not see anybody in the camp that he could properly administer this needed lesson to. All the vigorous, able-bodied members seemed to be out on drill or some other duty, leaving only a few sick moping around the tents.

Shorty's attention was called to a spade lying temptingly behind one of the tents. He and Si had badly wanted a spade for several days. Here was an opportunity to acquire one. Shorty sauntered carelessly around to the rear of the tent, looked about to see that no one was observing, picked up the implement and walked off with it with that easy, innocent air that no one could assume with more success than he when on a predatory expedition.

CHAPTER XII. THE BAN ON WET GOODS

SI HAS A HARD TIME TRYING TO KEEP WHISKY OUT OF CAMP.

"DETAIL for guard to-morrow," sang out the Orderly-Sergeant, after he had finished the evening roll-call: "Bailey, Belcher, Doolittle, Elliott, Fracker, Gleason, Hendricks, Hummerson. Long, Mansur, Nolan, Thompson."

"Corp'l Klegg, you will act as Sergeant of the Guard.

"Dan Elliott will act as Corporal of the Guard." It is one of the peculiarities of men that the less they have to do the less they want to do. The boys of Co. Q were no different from the rest. When they were in active service a more lively, energetic crowd could not be found in the army. They would march from daybreak till midnight, and build roads, dig ditches, and chop trees on the way. They were ready and willing for any service, and none were louder than they in their condemnation when they thought that the officers did not order done what should be. But when lying around camp, with absolutely nothing to do but ordinary routine, they developed into the laziest mortals that breathed. To do a turn of guard duty was a heart-breaking affliction, and the Orderly-Sergeant's announcement of those who were detailed for the morrow brought forth a yell of protest from every man whose name was called.

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"I only come off guard day before yesterday," shouted Bailey.

"I'm sick, and can't walk a step," complained Belcher, who had walked 15 miles the day before, hunting "pies-an'-milk."

"That blamed Orderly's got a spite at me; he'd keep me on guard every day in the week," grumbled Doolittle.

"I was on fatigue dooty only yesterday," protested Fracker, who had to help carry the company rations from the Commissary's tent.

"I'm goin' to the Surgeon an' git an excuse," said Gleason, who had sprained his wrist a trifle in turning a handspring.

So it went through the whole list.

"I want to see every gun spick-and-span, every blouse brushed and buttoned, and every shoe neatly blacked, when I march you up to the Adjutant," said the Orderly, entirely oblivious to the howls. "If any of you

don't, he'll have a spell of digging up roots on the parade. I won't have such a gang of scarecrows as I have had to march out the last few days. You fellows make a note of that, and govern yourselves accordingly."

"Right face—Break ranks—March!"

"Corp'l Klegg," said the Officer of the Day the next morning, as Si was preparing to relieve the old guard, "the Colonel is very much worked up over the amount of whisky that finds its way into camp. Now that we are out here by ourselves we certainly ought to be able to control this. Yet there was a disgusting number of drunken men in camp yesterday, and a lot of trouble that should not be. The Colonel has talked very strongly on this subject, and he expects us to-day to put a stop to this. I want you to make an extra effort to keep whisky out. I think you can do it if you try real hard." 166

"I'll do my best, sir," said Si, saluting.

"Shorty," Si communed with his next in rank before they started on their rounds with the first relief, "we must see that there's no whisky brung into camp this day."

"You jest bet your sweet life there won't be, either," returned Shorty. He felt not a little elated over his brevet rank and the responsibilities of his position as Corporal of the Guard. "This here camp'll be as dry as the State o' Maine to-day."

It was a hot, dull day, with little to occupy the time of those off guard. As usual, Satan was finding "some mischief for idle hands to do."

After he put on the first relief, Si went back to the guard tent and busied himself awhile over the details of work to be found there. There were men under sentence of hard labor that he had to find employment for, digging roots, cleaning up the camp, chopping wood and making trenches. He got the usual chin-music from those whom he set to enforced toil, about the injustice of their sentences and "the airs that some folks put on when they wear a couple of stripes," but he took this composedly, and after awhile went the rounds to look over his guard-line, taking Shorty with him.

Everything seemed straight and soldierly, and they sat down by a cool spring in a little shady hollow.

"Did you ever notice, Shorty," said Si, speculatively, as he looked over the tin cup of cool water he was sipping, "how long and straight and string-like the cat-brier grows down here in this country? You see 25 or 30 feet of it at times no thicker'n wooltwine. Now, there's a piece layin' right over there, on t'other side o' the branch, more'n a rod long, and no thicker'n a rye straw." 167

"I see it, an' I never saw a piece o' cat-brier move endwise before," said Shorty, fixing his eyes on the string-like green.

"As sure's you're alive, it is movin'," said Si, starting to rise.

"Set still, keep quiet an' watch," admonished Shorty. "You'll find out more."

Si sat still and looked. The direction the brier was moving was toward the guard-line, some 100 feet away to the left. About the same distance to the right was a thicket of alders, where Si thought he heard voices. There were indications in the weeds that the cat-brier extended to there.

The brier maintained its outward motion. Presently a clump of rags was seen carried along by it.

"They're sending out their money for whisky," whispered Shorty. "Keep quiet, and we'll confiscate the stuff when it comes in."

They saw the rag move straight toward the guardline, and pass under the log on which the sentry walked when he paced his beat across the branch. It finally disappeared in a bunch of willows.

Presently a bigger rag came out from the willows, in response to the backward movement of the long cat-brier, and crawled slowly back under the log and into camp. As it came opposite Si jumped out, put his foot on the cat-brier and lifted up the rag. He found, as he had expected, that it wrapped up a pint flask of whisky. 168

"O, come off, Si; come off, Shorty!" appealed some of Co. Q from the alders. "Drop that. You ain't goin' to be mean, boy's. You don't need to know nothin' about that, an' why go makin' yourselves fresh when there's no necessity? We want that awful bad, and we've paid good money for it."

"No, sir," said Shorty sternly, as he twisted the bottle off, and smashed it on the stones. "No whisky goes into this camp. I'm astonished at you. Whisky's a cuss. It's the bane of the army. It's the worm that never dies. Its feet lead down to hell. Who hath vain babblings? Who hath redness of eyes? The feller that drinks likker, and especially Tennessee rotgut."

"O, come off; stop that dinged preaching, Shorty," said one impatiently. "There's nobody in this camp that likes whisky better'n you do; there's nobody that'll go further to get it, an' there's nobody up to more tricks to beat the guard."

"What I do as a private soldier, Mr. Blakesley," said Shorty with dignity, "haint nothing to do with my conduct when I'm charged with responsible dooty. It's my dooty to stop the awful practice o' likker-drinkin' in this camp, an' I'm goin' to do it, no matter what the cost. You jest shet up that clam-shell o' your'n an' stop interfering with your officers."

Si and Shorty went outside the lines to the clump of willows, but they were not quick enough to catch Groundhog, the teamster, and the civilian whom our readers will remember as having his head shaved in the camp at Murfreesboro some weeks before. They found, however, a jug of new and particularly rasping apple-jack. There was just an instant of wavering in Shorty's firmness when he uncorked the jug and smelled its contents. He lifted it to his lips, to further confirm its character, and Si trembled, for he saw the longing in his partner's eyes. The latter's hand shook a little as the first few drops touched his tongue, but with the look of a hero he turned and smashed the jug on a stone. 169

"You're solid. Shorty," said Si.

"Yes, but it was an awful wrench. Le's git away from the smell o' the stuff," answered Shorty. "I'm afraid it'll be too much for me yit."

"Corporal of the Guard, Post No. 1."

"Sergeant of the Guard, Post No. 1," came down the line of sentries as the two boys were sauntering back

to camp.

"Somethin's happening over there at the gate," said Si, and they quickened their steps in the direction of the main entrance to the camp.

They found there a lank, long-haired, ragged Tennessean, with a tattered hat of white wool on his head. His scanty whiskers were weather-beaten, he had lost most of his front teeth, and as he talked he spattered everything around with tobacco-juice. He rode on a blind, raw-bone horse, which, with a dejected, broken-down mule, was attached by ropes, fragments of straps, withes, and pawpaw bark to a shackly wagon.

In the latter were some strings of dried apples, a pile of crescents of dried pumpkins, a sack of meal, a few hands of tobacco, and a jug of buttermilk.

"I want t' go inter the camps an' sell a leetle jag o' truck," the native explained, as he drenched the surrounding weeds with tobacco-juice. "My ole woman's powerful sick an' ailin', an' I need some money awfully t' git her some quinine. Yarbs don't seem t' do her no sort o' good. She must have some Yankee quinine, and she's nigh dead fer some Yankee coffee. This war's mouty hard on po' people. Hit's jest killin' 'em by inches, by takin' away their coffee an' quinine. I'm a Union man, an' allers have bin." 170

"You haint got any whisky in that wagon, have you?" asked Si.

"O, Lord, no! nary mite. You don't think I'd try t' take whisky into camp, do you? I'm not sich a bad man as that. Besides, whar'd I git whisky? The war's broke up all the 'stilleries in the country. What the Confedrits didn't burn yo'uns did. I've bin sufferin' for months fur a dram o' whisky, an' as fur my ole woman, she's nearly died. That's the reason the yarbs don't do her no good. She can't get no whisky to soak 'em in."

"He's entirely too talkative about the wickedness o' bringin' whisky into camp," whispered Shorty. "He's bin there before. He's an old hand at the business."

"Sure you've got no whisky?" said Si.

"Sartin, gentlemen; sarch my wagon, if you don't take my word. I only wish I knowed whar thar wuz some whisky. I'd walk 20 miles in the rain t' git one little flask fur my ole woman and myself. I tell you, thar haint a drap t' be found in the hull Duck River Valley. 'Stilleries all burnt, I tell you." And in the earnestness of his protestations he sprayed his team, himself, and the neighboring weeds with liquid tobacco. 171

Si stepped back and carefully searched the wagon, opening the meal sack, uncorking the buttermilk jug, and turning over the dried apples, pumpkins and tobacco. There certainly was no whisky there.

Shorty stood leaning on his musket and looking at the man. He was pretty sure that the fellow had had previous experience in running whisky into camp, and was up to the tricks of the trade. Instead of a saddle the man had under him an old calico quilt, whose original gaudy colors were sadly dimmed by the sun, rain, and dirt. Shorty stepped forward and lifted one corner. His suspicions were right. It had an under pocket, in which was a flat, half-pint flask with a cob stopper, and filled with apple-jack so new that it was as colorless as water.

"I wuz jest bringin' that 'ere in fur you, Captin'," said the Tennessean, with a profound wink and an unabashed countenance. "Stick hit in your pocket, quick. None o' the rest 's seed you."

Shorty flung the bottle down and ordered the man off his horse. The quilt was examined. It contained a half-dozen more flasks, each holding a "half-pint of throat-scorch and at least two fights," as Shorty expressed it. A clumsy leather contrivance lay on the hames of the mule. Flasks were found underneath this, and the man himself was searched. More flasks were pulled out from the tail pockets of his ragged coat; from his breast; from the crown of his ragged hat.

"Well," said Shorty, as he got through, "you're a regler grogshop on wheels. All you need is a lot o' loafers talkin' politics, a few picturs o' racin' hosses and some customers buried in the village graveyard to be a first-class bar-room. Turn around and git back to that ole woman o' your'n, or we'll make you sicker'n she is." 172

Si and Shorty marched around with the second relief, and then sat down to talk over the events of the morning.

"I guess we've purty well settled the whisky business for to-day, at least," said Si. "The Colonel can't complain of us. I don't think we'll have any more trouble. Seems to me that there can't be no more whisky in this part o' Tennessee, from the quantity we've destroyed."

"Don't be too dinged sure o' that," said Shorty. "Whisky seems to brew as naturally in this country as the rosin to run out o' the pine trees. I never saw sich a country fur likker. They have more stills in Tennessee than blacksmith shops, and they work stiddier."

Si looked down the road and saw returning a wagon which had been sent out in the morning for forage. It was well loaded, and the guards who were marching behind had a few chickens and other supplies that they had gathered up.

"Boys seem to be purty fresh, after their tramp," said he, with the first thought of a soldier looking at marching men. "They've all got their guns at carry arms. I noticed that as they came over the hill."

"Yes," answered Shorty, after a glance, "and they're holdin' 'em up very stiff an' straight. That gives mo an idee. Lo's go over there an' take a look at 'em." 173

Shorty had sniffed at a trick that he had more than once played in getting the forbidden beverage past the lynx-eyed sentry.

"Don't you find it hard work to march at routstep with your guns at a carry?" he said insinuatingly. "No need o' doin' that except on parade or drill. Right-shoulder-shift or arms-at-will is the thing when you're on the road."

"H-s-sh," said the leading file, with a profound wink and a sidelong glance at Si. "Keep quiet, Shorty," he added in a stage whisper. "We'll give you some. It's all right. We'll whack up fair."

"No, it ain't all right," said Shorty, with properly offended official dignity. "Don't you dare offer to bribe me, Buck Harper, when I'm on duty. Hand me that gun this minute."

Harper shamefacedly handed over the musket, still holding it carefully upright. Shorty at once reversed it

and a stream of whisky ran out upon the thirsty soil.

Si grasped the situation, and disarmed the others with like result.

"I ought to put every one o' you in' the guardhouse for this. It's lucky that the Officer of the Guard wasn't here. He'd have done it. There he comes now. Skip out after the wagon, quick, before he gits on to you."

"What next?" sighed Si. "Is the whole world bent on bringin' whisky into this camp? Haint they got none for the others?"

"Sergeant of the Guard, Post No. 1," rang out upon the hot air. Si walked over again to the entrance, and saw seeking admission a tall, bony woman, wearing a dirty and limp sunbonnet and smoking a corn-cob pipe. She was mounted on a slab-sided horse, with ribs like a washboard, and carried a basket on her arm covered with a coarse cloth none too clean. 174

"Looks as if she'd bin picked before she was ripe and got awfully warped in the dryin'. All the same she's loaded with whisky," commented Shorty as the woman descended from her saddle and approached the sentry with an air of resolute demand.

"You haint got no right to stop me, young feller," she said. "I come in hyar every day an' bring pies. Your Jinerul said I could, an' he wanted me to. His men want my pies, an' they do 'em good. Hit's homecookin', an' takes the taste o' the nasty camp vittles out o' their mouths, an' makes 'em healthy. You jest raise yer gun, an' let me go right in, or I'll tell yer Jinerul, an' he'll make it warm fur yer. I've got a pass from him."

"Let me see your pass," said Si, stepping forward. The woman unhooked her linsey dress, fumbled around in the recesses, and finally produced a soiled and crumpled paper, which, when straightened out, read:

"Mrs. Sarah Bolster has permission to pass in and out of the camp of the 200th Indiana Volunteer Infantry.

"By order of Col. Quackenbush.

"D. L. Blakemore, Lieut. & Adj't."

"What've you got in that basket?" asked Si, still hesitating.

"Pies," she answered confidently. "The best pies you ever seed. Some of 'em pumpkin; but the rest of 'em 175 dried apple, with lots o' 'lasses in fur sweetenin'. Your mother never baked better pies 'n 'em."

"To my mind," muttered Shorty, as he stepped forward to investigate the basket, "she's the kind o' a woman I'd like to have bake pies for a gang o' State's prison birds that I wanted to kill off without the trouble o' hangin'. Say, ma'am, are your pies pegged or sewed? What'd you use for shortenin'—injury rubber or Aunt Jemima's plaster?" he continued as he turned back the cloth and surveyed the well-known specimens of mountain baking which were as harmful to Uncle Sam's boys as the bullets of their enemies.

"Young feller, none o' yer sass," she said severely. "Them's better pies than ye're used ter. Folks that's never had nothin' air allers the most partickeler, an' turnin' up thar noses at rayly good things. Don't fool with me no more, but let me go on inter camp, fur the soljers air expectin' me."

"Sure you haint got no whisky down in the bottom o' that basket?" said Si, pushing the pies about a little, to get a better look.

The indignation of the woman at this insinuation was stunning. She took her pipe out of her mouth to better express her contempt for men who would insult a Southern lady by such a hint—one, too, that had been of so much benefit to the soldiers by toiling over the hot oven to prepare for them food more acceptable than the coarse rations their stingy Government furnished them. She had never been so insulted in her life, and she would bring down on them dire punishment from the Colonel.

Several experiences with the tongue-lashings of Southern viragoes had made Si and Shorty less impressed 176 by them than they had been earlier in their service. Still, they had the healthy young man's awe of anything that wore skirts, and the tirade produced its effect, but not strong enough to eradicate the belief that she was a whisky-bringer. While she stormed Si kept his eyes fixed upon the scant linsey dress which draped her tall form. Presently he said to Shorty:

"What do you think? Shall we let her go in?" Shorty whispered back with great deliberation: "Si, what I know about the female form don't amount to shucks. Least of all the Tennessee female form. But I've been lookin' that 'ere woman over carefully while she's been jawin', an' while she's naturally covered with knots and knobs in places where it seems to me that women generally don't have 'em, I can't help believin' that she's got some knots and knobs that naturally don't belong to her. In other words, she's got a whole lot o' flasks of whisky under her skirts."

"Jest what I've been suspicionin'," said Si. "I've heard that that's the way lots o' whisky is brung into camp. Shorty, as Corporal o' the Guard, it's your duty to search her."

"What!" yelled Shorty, horror-struck at the immodest thought. "Si Klegg, are you gone plum crazy?"

"Shorty," said Si firmly, "it's got to be done. She's got a pass, and the right to go into camp. We're both o' the opinion that she's carryin' in whisky. If she was a man there'd be no doubt that she'd have to be searched. I don't understand that the law knows any difference in persons. No matter what you may think about it, it is 177 your duty, as Corporal o' the Guard, to make the search."

"No, sir-ree," insisted Shorty. "You're Sergeant o' the Guard, and it's your dooty to make all searches."

"Shorty," expostulated Si, "I'm much younger and modester'n you are, an' haint seen nearly so much o' the world. You ought to do this. Besides, you're under my orders, as Actin' Corporal. I order you to make the search."

"Si Klegg," said Shorty firmly, "I'll see you and all the Corporals and Sergeants betwixt here and Washington in the middle o' next week before I'll do it. You may buck-and-gag me, and tie me up by the thumbs, and then I won't. I resign my position as Corporal right here, and'll take by gun and go on post."

"What in the world are we goin' to do?" said Si desperately. "If we let her in, she'll fill the camp full o' whisky, and she'll have to go in, unless we kin show some reason for keepin' her out. Hold on; I've got an

idee."

He went up to the woman and said:

"You say you want to go into camp to sell your pies?"

"Yes, sir, an' I want to go in right off—no more foolin' around," she answered tartly.

"How many pies've you got?"

She went through a laborious counting, and finally announced: "Eight altogether."

"How much are they worth?"

"Fifty cents apiece."

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"Very good," announced Si taking some money from his pocket. "That comes to \$4. I'll take the lot and treat the boys. Here's your money. Now you've got no more business in camp, jest turn around and mosey for home. You've made a good day's business, and ought to be satisfied."

The woman scowled with disappointment. But she wisely concluded that she h'd better be content with the compromise, remounted her horse and disappeared down the road.

"That was a sneak out of a difficulty," Si confessed to Shorty; "but you were as big a coward as I was."

"No, I wasn't," insisted Shorty, still watchful. "You'd no right to order me do something that you was afraid to do yourself. That's no kind o' officering."

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CHAPTER XIII. THE JEW SPY WRITES

SHORTY HAS AN ADVENTURE WITH A LONE, LORN WIDDER LADY."

"I WONDER what has become of our Jew spy, Shorty?" said Si, as he and Shorty sat on the bank of Duck River and watched the rebel pickets lounging under the beeches on the other side. "We hain't heard nothin' of him for more'n a month now."

"He's probably hung," answered Shorty. "He was entirely too smart to live long. A man can't go on always pokin' his finger into a rattlesnake's jaw without gittin' it nipped sooner or later."

"I'm looking fur a man called Si Klegg," they heard behind them. Looking around they saw the tall, gaunt woman whom they had turned back from entering the camp a few days before, under the belief that she was trying to smuggle in whisky.

"What in the world can she want o' me?" thought Si; but he answered:

"That's my name. What'll you have?"

A flash of recognition filled at once her faded blue eyes. Without taking her pipe from between her yellow, snaggly teeth she delivered a volley of tobacco-juice at an unoffending morning-glory, and snapped out:

"O, y'r him, air ye? Y'r the dratted measly sapsucker that bounced me 'bout takin' likker inter camp. What bizniss wuz hit o' your'n whether I tuk likker in or not? Jest wanted t' be smart, didn't ye? Jest wanted t' interfere with a lone, lorn widder lady makin' a honest livin' for herself and 10 children. My ole man ketched the black ager layin' out in the brush to dodge the conscripters. It went plumb to his heart an' killed him. He wa'n't no great loss, nohow, fur he'd eat more in a week than he'd kill, ketch, or raise in a year. When his light went out I'd only one less mouth to feed, and got rid o' his jawin' an' cussin' all the time. But that hain't nothin' t' do with you. You 's jest puttin' on a lettle authority kase ye could. But all men air alike that-a-way. Elect a man Constable, an' he wants t' put on more airs than the Guv-nor; marry him, an' he makes ye his slave."

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"I should think it'd be a bold man that'd try to make you his slave. Madam," Si ventured.

"Y' she'd think," she retorted, with her arms akimbo. "Who axed y' t' think, young feller? What d' y' do hit with. Why d' y' strain y'rself doin' somethin' y' ain't used t'?"

It did Shorty so much good to see Si squelched, that he chuckled aloud and called out:

"Give it to him, old Snuff-Dipper. He's from the Wabash, an' hain't no friends. He's bin itchin' a long time for jest such a skinnin' as you're givin' him."

"Who air y' callin' Snuff-Dipper?" she retorted, turning angrily on Shorty. "What've ye got t' say agin snuff-dippin', anyway, y' terbacker-chawin', likker-guzzlin', wall-oyed, splay-footed, knock-kneed oaf? What air y' greasy hirelings a-comin' down heah fo', t' sass and slander Southern ladies, who air yo' superiors?"

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"Give it to him, old Corncob Pipe," yelled Si "He needs lambastin' worse'n any man in the regiment. But what did you want to see me for?"

"I wanted to see yo' bekase I got a letter to yo' from a friend o' mine, who said yo' wuz gentlemen, an' rayly not Yankees at all. He said that yo' wuz forced into the army agin yo' will."

"Gracious, what a liar that man must be," murmured Shorty to himself.

"An' yo' rayly had no heart to fight for the nigger, an' that yo'd treat me like a sister."

"A sister," Shorty exploded internally. "Think of a feller's havin' a sister like that. Why, I wouldn't throw her in a soap-grease barrel."

"Who was this friend. Madam?" said Si, "and where is his letter?"

"I don't know whether to give it to yo' or not," said she. "Y're not the men at all that he ascribed to me. He said yo' wuz very good-lookin', perlite gentlemen, who couldn't do too much for a lady."

"Sorry we're not as handsome as you expected," said Si; "but mebbe that's because we're in fatigue

uniforms. You ought to see my partner there when he's fixed up for parade. He's purtier'n a red wagon then. Let me see the letter. I can tell then whether we're the men or not."

"Kin yo' read?" she asked suspiciously.

"O, yes," answered Si laughingly at the thought almost universal in the South that reading and writing were—like the Gift of Tongues—a special dispensation to a few favored individuals only. "I can read and do lots o' 182 things that common people can't. I'm seventh son of a seventh son, born with a caul on my head at the time o' the full moon. Let me see the letter."

She was not more than half convinced, but unhooked her dress and took a note from her bosom, which she stuck out toward Si, holding tightly on to one end in the meanwhile. Si read, in Levi Rosenbaum's flourishing, ornate handwriting:

*"Corporal Josiah Klegg, Co. Q, 200th Indiana Volunteers,
in Camp on Duck River."*

"That means me," said Si, taking hold of the end of the envelope. "There ain't but one 200th Injianny Volunteers; there's no other Co. Q, and I'm the only Josiah Klegg."

The woman still held on to the other end of the letter.

"It comes," continued Si, "from a man a little under medium size, with black hair and eyes, dresses well, talks fast, and speaks a Dutch brogue."

"That's him," said the woman, relinquishing the letter, and taking a seat under the shade of a young cucumber tree, where she proceeded to fill her pipe, while awaiting the reading of the missive.

Si stepped off a little ways, and Shorty looked over his shoulder as he opened the letter and read:

*"Dear Boys: This will be handed you, if it reaches you at
all, by Mrs. Bolster, who has more about her than you
think."*

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"I don't know about that," muttered Shorty; "the last time I had the pleasure o' meetin' the lady she had 'steen dozen bottles o' head-bust about her."

"She's a Confederate, as far as she goes."

Si continued reading,

*"which is not very far. She don't go but a little ways. A
jay-bird that did not have any more brains would not build
much of a nest. But she is very useful to me, and I want you
to get in with her. As soon as you read this I want Si to
give her that pair of horn combs I gave him. Do it at once.
Sincerely your friend,*

"Levi Rosenbaum."

Si knit his brows in perplexity and wonderment over this strange message. He looked at Shorty, but Shorty's face was as blank of explanation as his own. He fumbled around in his blouse pocket, drew forth the combs, and handed them to the woman. Her dull face lighted up visibly. She examined the combs carefully, as if fitting them to a description, and, reaching in her bosom, pulled out another letter and handed it to Si.

When this was opened Si read:

*"Dear Boys: Now you will understand the comb business. I
wanted to make sure that my letter reached the right men,
and the combs were the only things I could think of at the
moment. Mrs. B. will prize them, though she will never think
of using them, either on herself or one of her shock-headed
brats. I want you to play it on her as far as your
consciences will allow. Pretend that you are awful sick of
this Abolition war, and tired fighting for the nigger, and
all that stuff. Make her the happiest woman in
Tennessee by giving her all the coffee you can spare. That
will fetch her quicker and surer than anything else. Like
most Southern women, she is a coffee-drinker first and a
rebel afterward, and if some preacher would tell her that
heaven is a place where she will get all the Yankee coffee
she can drink, she would go to church regularly for the rest
of her life. Tell her a lot of news—as much of it true as
you can and think best; as much of it otherwise as you can
invent. Follow her cautiously when she leaves camp. Don't
let her see you do so. You will find that she will lead you
to a nest of spies, and the place where all the whisky is
furnished to sell in camp. I write you thus freely because I
am certain that this will get in your hands. I know that
your regiment is out here, because I have been watching it
for a week, with reference to its being attacked. It won't
be for at least awhile, for there's another hen on. But make
up to the old lady as much as your consciences and stomachs
will allow you. It will be for the best interests of the
service.*

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"Sincerely your friend, Levi Rosenbaum."

"I wonder what game Levi is up to?" Si said, as he stood with the letter in his hand and looked at the woman. "I'll give her all the coffee I can and be very civil to her, but that's as far as I'll go. The old rebel cat. I'll not lie to her for 40 Levi Rosenbaums."

"Well, I will," said Shorty. "You fix her up with the coffee, and leave the rest to me. I always had a fancy for queer animals, and run off from home once to travel with a menagerie. I'd like to take her up North and start 185 a side-show with her. 'The Queen o' the Raccoon Mountains,' or the 'Champion Snuff-Dipper o' the Sequatchie

Valley.' How'd that do for a sign?"

"Well, go ahead," said Si. "But expect no help from me."

"Mr. Klegg, when I want your help in courtin' a lady I'll let you know," said Shorty with dignity. Si went back to the tent to see about getting the coffee, and Shorty approached Mrs. Bolster with an engaging expression on his countenance. She was knocking the ashes out of her pipe.

"Let me fill your pipe up again. Madam, with something very choice," said he, pulling out a plug of bright natural leaf. "Here's some terbacker the like o' which you never see in all your born days. It was raised from seed stole from the private stock of the High-muk-a-muk o' Turkey, brung acrost the ocean in a silver terbacker box for the use o' President Buchanan, and planted in the new o' the moon on a piece o' ground that never before had raised nothin' but roses and sweet-williams. My oldest brother, who is a Senator from Oshkosh, got just one plug of it, which he divided with me."

"O, my! is that true?" she gurgled.

"It's as true as that you are a remarkably fine lookin' woman," he said with unblushing countenance, as he began whittling off some of the tobacco to fill her pipe. "I was struck by your appearance as soon as I saw you. I always was very fond of the Southern ladies."

"Sakes alive, air y'?" she asked; "then what air yo'uns down here foutin' we'uns fur?"

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"That's a long story, m'm," answered Shorty. "It was a trick o' the Abolition politicians that got us into it. I'm awful sick o' the war (that we hain't gone ahead and knocked the heads offen this whole crowd instead o' layin' 'round here in camp for months)" he added as a mental reservation, "and wisht I was out of it (after we've hung Jeff Davis on a sour-apple tree). Then I might settle down here and marry some nice woman. You're a widder, I believe you said."

"Yes, I'm a widder," she answered, taking her pipe from her mouth and giving him what she intended for a languishing smile, but which Shorty afterward said reminded him of a sun-crack in a mud fence. "Yes, I'm a widder. Bin so for gwine on six months. Sakes alive, but ye do talk nice. You air the best-lookin' Yankee I've ever seed." "Nothin' painfully bashful about her," thought Shorty. "But I must be careful not to let her get me near a Justice of the Peace. She'd marry me before I could ketch my breath. Madam," he continued aloud.

"Yo' may call me Sophrony," she said, with another cavernous smile.

"Well, Sophrony, let me present you with half o' this plug o' famous terbacker." He drew his jackknife and sliced the plug in two. "Take it, with my warmest respects. Here comes my partner with some coffee I've sent him for, and which I want you to have. It is not as much as I'd like to give you, but it's all that I have. Some other day you shall have much more."

"Law's sakes." she bubbled, as the fragrant odor of the coffee reached her nose, and she hefted the package. "Yo' air jest the nicest man I ever did see in all my born days. I didn't s'pose thar wuz so nice a man, or sich a good-lookin' one, in the hull Yankee army, or in the oonfederit either, fur that matter. But, then, yo' ain't no real blue-bellied Yankee."

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"No, indeed, Sophrony. I never saw New England in all my life, nor did any o' my people. They wuz from Virginny (about 500 miles, as near as I kin calculate)" he added to himself as a mental poultice.

"Say, Mister, why don't you leave the Yankee army?"

"Can't," said Shorty, despairingly. "If I tried to git back home the Provos 'll ketch me. If I go the other way the rebel's ketch me. I'm betwixt the devil and the deep sea."

She sat and smoked for several minutes in semblance of deep thought, and spat with careful aim at one after another of the prominent weeds around. Then she said:

"If yo' want t' splice with me, I kin take keer o' yo'. I've helped run off several o' the boys who wuz sick o' this Abolition war. Thar's two o' them now with Bill Phillips's gang makin' it hot for the Yankee trains and camps. They're makin' more'n they ever did soljerin', an' havin' a much better time, for they take whatever they want, no matter who it belongs to. D' yo' know Groundhog, a teamster? He's in cahoots with us."

"Oh!" said Shorty to himself. "Here's another lay altogether. Guess it's my duty to work it for all that it's worth."

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"Is it a bargain?" she said suddenly, stretching out her long, skinny hand.

"Sophrony," said Shorty, taking her hand, "this is so sudden. I never thought o' marryin'—at least till this cruel war is over. I don't know what kind of a husband I'd make. I don't know whether I could fill the place o' your late husband!"

"Yo're not gwine t' sneak out," she said, with a fierce flash in her gray eyes. "If yo' do I'll have yo' pizened."

"Now, who's talkin' about backin' out?" said Shorty in a fever of placation, for he was afraid that some of the other boys would overhear the conversation. "Don't talk so loud. Come, let's walk on toward your home. We kin talk on the way."

The proposition appeared reasonable. She took the bridle of her horse in her arm, and together they walked out through the guard-line. The sentries gave Shorty a deep, knowing wink as he passed. He went the more willingly, as he was anxious to find out more about the woman, and the operations of the gang with which she was connected. She had already said enough to explain several mysterious things of recent occurrence. Night came down and as her ungainliness was not thrust upon him as it was in the broad glare of day, he felt less difficulty in professing a deep attachment for her. He even took her hand. On her part she grew more open and communicative at every step, and Shorty had no difficulty in understanding that there was gathered around her a gang that was practicing about everything detrimental to the army. They were by turns spies, robbers, murderers, whisky smugglers, horse-thieves, and anything else that promised a benefit to themselves. Ostensibly they were rebels, but this did not prevent their preying upon the rebels when occasion offered. Some were deserters from the rebel army, some were evading the conscript laws, two or three were deserters from our army.

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Shorty and the woman had reached a point nearly a half-mile outside of the guard-line when he stopped and said:

"I can't go no farther now. I must go back." "Why must yo' go back?" she demanded, with a sudden angry 190 suspicion. "I thought yo' wuz gwine right along with me."

"Why, no. I never thought o' that. I must go back and get my things before I go with you," said Shorty, as the readiest way of putting her off.

"Plague take y'r things," she said. "Let 'em go. Yo' kin git plenty more jest as good from the next Yankee camp. Yo' slip back some night with the boys an' git yo'r own things, if y'r so dratted stuck on 'em. Come along now."

She took hold of his wrist with a grip like iron. Shorty had no idea that a woman could have such strength.

"I want to go back and git my partner," said Shorty. "Me and him 've bin together all the time we've bin in the army. He'll go along with me, I'm sure. Me and him thinks alike on everything, and what one starts the other jines in. I want to go back an' git him."

"I don't like that partner o' your'n. I don't want him. I'll be a better partner t' yo' than ever he was. Yo' mustn't think more o' him than yo' do o' me."

"Look here, Sophrony," said Shorty desperately, "I cannot an' will not go with you to-night. I'm expectin' important letters from home to-morrow, and I must go back an' git 'em. I've a thousand things to do before I go away. Have some sense. This thing's bin sprung on me so suddenly that it ketches me unawares."

With the quickness of a flash she whipped out a long knife from somewhere, and raised it, and then hesitated a second.



“SHE WHIPPED OUT A LONG KNIFE.”

"I believe yo're foolin' me, and if I wuz shore I'd stick yo'. But I'm gwine t' give yo' a chance. Yo' kin go back 191 now, an' I'll come for yo' ter-morrer. If you go back on me hit'll be a mouty sorry day for yo'. Mind that now."

Shorty gallantly helped her mount, and then hurried back to camp.

CHAPTER XIV. SHORTY HAS AN ADVENTURE WITH SI

HE GOES OUT TO VISIT MRS. BOLSTER.

SHORTY sauntered thoughtfully back to the tent, and on the way decided to tell Si the whole occurrence, not even omitting the deceit practiced.

He had to admit to himself that he was unaccountably shaken up by the affair.

Si was so deeply interested in the revelations that he forgot to blame Shorty's double-dealing.

"Never had my nerve so strained before," Shorty frankly admitted. "At their best, women are curiouser than transmogrified hullaloos, and when a real cute one sets out to hornswoggle a man he might as well lay down and give right up, for he hain't no earthly show. She gits away with him every time, and one to spare. That there woman's got the devil in her bigger'n a sheep, and she come nigher makin' putty o' your Uncle Ephraim

than I ever dreamed of before. It makes me shivery to think about it."

"I don't care if she's more devils in her than the Gadarene swine, she must be stopped at once," said Si, his patriotic zeal flaming up. "She's doin' more mischief than a whole regiment o' rebels, and must be busted immediately. We've got to stop her."

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"But just how are we goin' to stop her?" Shorty asked. There was a weak unreadiness in Shorty's tones that made Si look at him in surprise. Never before, in any emergency, had there been the slightest shade of such a thing in his bold, self-reliant partner's voice.

"I'd rather tackle any two men there are in the Southern Confederacy than that woman," said Shorty. "I believe she put a spell on me."

"Le's go up and talk to Capt. McGillicuddy about it," said Si. Ordinarily, this was the last thing that either of them would have thought of doing. Their usual disposition was to go ahead and settle the problem before them in their own way, and report about it afterward. But Shorty was clearly demoralized.

Capt. McGillicuddy listened very gravely to their story.

"Evidently that old hen has a nest of bad, dangerous men, which has to be broken up," he said. "We can get the whole raft if we go about it in the right way, but we've got to be mighty smart in dealing with them, or they'll fly the coop, and leave the laugh on us. You say she's coming back to-morrow?"

"Yes," said Shorty, with a perceptible shiver.

"Well, I want you to fall right in with all her plans—both of you. Pretend to be anxious to desert, or anything else that she may propose. Go back home with her. I shall watch you carefully, but without seeming to, and follow you with a squad big enough to take care of anything that may be out there. Go back to your tent now, and think it all over, and arrange some signal to let me know when you want me to jump the outfit."

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The boys went back to their tent, and spent an hour in anxious consideration of their plans. Si saw the opportunity to render a great service, and was eager to perform it, but he firmly refused to tell any lies to the woman or those around her. He would not say that he was tired of the service and wanted to desert; he would not pretend liking for the Southern Confederacy or the rebels, nor hatred to his own people. He would do nothing but go along, share all the dangers with Shorty, and be ready at the moment to co-operate in breaking up the gang.

"Some folks's so durned straight that they lean over backwards," said Shorty impatiently. "What in thunder does it amount to what you tell these onery gallinippers? They'll lie to you as fast as a hoss kin trot. There's no devilment they won't do, and there kin be nothin' wrong in anything you kin do and say to them."

"Everybody settles some things for himself," said the unchangeable Si. "I believe them folks are as bad as they kin be made. I believe every one o' 'em ought to be killed, and if it wuz orders to kill 'em I'd kill without turnin' a hair. But I jest simply won't lie to nobody, I don't care who he is. I'll stand by you until the last drop; you kin tell 'em what you please, but I won't tell 'em nothin', except that they're a pizen gang, and ought t've bin roastin' in brimstone long ago."

"But," expostulated Shorty, "if you only go along with me you're actin' a lie. If you go out o' camp with mo you'll pretend to bo desertin' and j'inin' in with 'em. Seems to me that's jest as bad as tellin' a lie straight out."

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"Well," said the immovable Si, "I draw the line there. I'll go along with you, and they kin think what they like. But if I say anything to 'em, they'll git it mighty straight."

"Well, I don't know but, after all, we kin better arrange it that way," said Shorty, after he had thought it over in silence for some time. "I'm sure that if you'd talk you'd give us dead away. That clumsy basswood tongue o' your'n hain't any suppleness, and you'd be sure to blurt out something that'd jest ruin us. An idee occurs to me. You jest go along, look sour and say nothin'. I'll tell 'em you ketched cold the other night and lost your speech. It'll give me a turn o' extra dooty talkin' for two, but I guess I kin do it."

"All right," agreed Si. "Let it go that way."

"Now, look here, Si," said Shorty, in a low, mysterious tone, "I'm goin' to tell you somethin' that I hadn't intended to. I'm scared to death lest that old hag'll git the drop on me some way and marry me right out of hand. I tell you, she jest frightens the life out o' me. That worries me more'n all the rest put together. I expect I ought t'v' told you so at the very first."

"Nonsense," said Si contemptuously. "The idee o' you're being afeared o' such a thing."

"It's all very well for you to snort and laugh, Si Klegg," persisted Shorty. "You don't know her. I sneered at her, too, at first, but when I was left alone with her she seemed to mesmerize me. I found myself talkin' about marryin' her before I knowed it, and the next thing I was on the p'int o' actually marryin' her. I believe that if she'd got me to walk a half-mile further with her she'd a run me up agin a Justice o' the Peace and married me in spite of all that I could do. I'd much ruther have my head blowed off than married to that old catamount."

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"Bah, you can't marry folks unless both are willin'," insisted Si. "A man can't have a marriage rung in on him willy-nilly."

"There's just where you're shootin' off your mouth without any sense. You don't know what you're talkin' about. Men are lassoed every day and married to women that they'd run away from like a dog from a porcupine, if they could. You jest look around among the married folks you know, and see how many there are that wouldn't have married one another if they'd bin in their senses."

"Well, I don't think o' many," said Si, whose remembrances were that the people in Posey County seemed generally well-mated.

"Well, there mayn't be many, but there's some, and I don't propose to be one of 'em. There's some spell or witchcraft about it. I've read in books about things that gave a woman power to marry any man she wanted to, and he couldn't help himself. That woman's got something o' that kind, and she's set her eye on me. I'm goin' to meet her, and I want to help break up her gang, but I'd a great deal rather tackle old Bragg and his entire army. I want you to stay right by me every minnit, and keep your eye on me when she's near me."

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"All right," said Si sleepily, as he crawled into bed.

The next morning, as they were discussing the question of signals, they happened to pass the Sutler's, and Si caught a glimpse of packages of firecrackers, which the regimental purveyor had, for some inscrutable reason, thought he might sell. An idea occurred to Si, and he bought a couple of packages, and stowed them away in his blouse pocket and told the Captain that their firing would be the signal, unless a musket-shot should come first.

It was yet early in the forenoon as they walked on the less-frequented side of the camp. Shorty gave a start, and gasped:

"Jewhilikins, there she is already."

Si looked, and saw Mrs. Bolster striding toward them. Shorty hung back instinctively for an instant, and then braced up and bade her good morning.

She grunted an acknowledgment, and said rather imperiously:

"Y're a-gwine, air yo'?"

"Certainly," answered Shorty.

"And yo'?" she inquired, looking at Si.

"He's a-goin', too," answered Shorty. "Mustn't expect him to talk. He's short on tongue this mornin'. Ketched a bad cold night before last. Settled on his word-mill. Unjinted his clapper. Can't speak a word. Doctor says it will last several days. Not a great affliction. Couldn't 've lost anything o' less account."

"Must've bin an orful cold," said she, taking her pipe from her mouth and eyeing Si suspiciously.

"Never knowed a cold to shut off any one's gab afore. Seems t' me that hit makes people talk more. But these Yankees air different. Whar air yer things? Did yo' bring plenty o' coffee?"

"We've got 'em hid down here in the brush," said Shorty. "We'll git 'em when we're ready to start."

"We're ready now," she answered. "Come along."

"But we hain't no passes," objected Shorty. "We must go to the Captain and git passes."

"Yo' won't need no passes," she said impatiently. "Foller me."

Shorty had expected to make the pretext about the passes serve for informing Capt. McGillicuddy of the presence of the woman in the camp. He looked quickly around and saw the Captain sauntering carelessly at a little distance, so that any notification was unnecessary. He turned and followed Mrs. Bolster's long strides, with Si bringing up the rear.

They went to the clump of brush where they had hidden their haversacks and guns. Mrs. Bolster eagerly examined the precious package of coffee.

"I'll take keer o' this myself," she said, stowing it away about her lanky person. "I can't afford to take no risks as to hit."

Si and Shorty had thought themselves very familiar with the campground, but they were astonished to find themselves led outside the line without passing under the eye of a single guard. Si looked at Shorty in amazement, and Shorty remarked:

"Well, I'll be durned."

The woman noticed and understood. "Yo' Yanks," she said scornfully, "think yourselves moughty smart with all your book-larin', and yo'uns put on heaps o' airs over po' folks what hain't no eddication; but what you don't know about Tennessee woods would make a bigger book than ever was printed."

"I believe you," said Shorty fervently. His superstition in regard to her was rapidly augmenting to that point where he believed her capable of anything. He was alarmed a'bout Capt. McGillicuddy's being able to follow their mysterious movements. But they soon came to the road, and looking back from the top of a hill, Shorty's heart lightened as he saw a squad moving out which he was confident was led by Capt. McGillicuddy.

But little had been said so far. At a turn of the road they came upon a gray-bearded man, wearing a battered silk hat and spectacles, whom Mrs. Bolster greeted as "'Squire."

The word seemed to send all the blood from Shorty's face, and he looked appealingly to Si as if the crisis had come.

The newcomer looked them over sharply and inquired:

"Who are these men, Mrs. Bolster?"

"They'uns 's all right. They'uns 's had enough o' Abolition doin's, and hev come over whar they'uns allers rayly belonged. This one is a partickler friend o' mine," and she leered at Shorty in a way that made his blood run cold.

"Hain't yo' time t' stop a minute, 'Squire?" she asked appealingly, as the newcomer turned his horse's head to renew his journey.

"Not now; not now," answered the 'Squire, digging his heels into his steed's side. "I want to talk t' yo' and these 'ere men 'bout what's gwine on in the Lincoln camps, but I must hurry on now to meet Capt. Solomon at the Winding Blades. I'll come over to your house this evening," he called back.

"Don't fail, 'Squire," she answered, "fur I've got a little job for yo', an' I want hit partickerly done this very evenin'. Hit can't wait."

"I'll be there without fail," he assured her.

"Capt. Solomon's the man what sent the letter to you," she explained, which somewhat raised Shorty's depressed heart, for he began to have hopes that Rosenbaum might rescue him if Capt. McGillicuddy should be behind time.

As they jogged onward farther from camp Mrs. Bolster's saturnine earnestness began to be succeeded by what were intended to be demonstrations of playful affection for her future husband, whom she now began to regard as securely hers. She would draw Shorty into the path a little ahead of Si, and walk alongside of him, pinching his arm and jabbering incoherent words which were meant for terms of endearment. When the

narrowness of the road made them walk in single file she would come up from time to time alongside with cuffs intended for playful love-taps.

At each of these Shorty would cast such a look of wretchedness at Si that the latter had difficulty in preserving his steadfast silence and rigidity of countenance.

But the woman's chief affection seemed to be called forth by the package of coffee. She would stop in the 201 midst of any demonstration to pull out the bag containing the fragrant berry, and lovingly inhale its odor.

It was long past noon when she announced: "Thar's my house right ahead." She followed this up with a ringing whoopee, which made the tumbledown cabin suddenly swarm with animation. A legion of loud-mouthed dogs charged down toward the road. Children of various ages, but of no variety in their rags and unkempt wildness, followed the dogs, or perched upon the fence-corners and stumps, and three or four shambling, evil-faced mountaineers lunged forward, guns in hand, with eyes fiercer than the dogs, as they looked over the two armed soldiers.

"They'uns is all right, boys," exclaimed the woman. "They'uns 's plum sick o' doggin' hit for Abe Lincoln an' quit."

"Let 'em gin up thar guns, then," said the foremost man, who had but one eye, reaching for Shorty's musket. "I'll take this one. I've been longin' for a good Yankee gun for a plum month to reach them Yankee pickets on Duck River."

Though Shorty and Si had schooled themselves in the part they were to play, the repugnant thought of giving up their arms to the rebels threatened to overset everything. Instinctively they threw up their guns to knock over the impudent guerrillas. The woman strode between them and the others, and caught hold of their muskets.

"Don't be fools. Let 'em have your guns," she said, and she caught Si's with such quick unexpectedness that she wrenched it from his grasp and flung it to the man who wanted Shorty's. She threw one arm around 202 Shorty's neck, with a hug so muscular that his breath failed, and she wrenched his gun away. She kept this in her hand, however.

"Now, I want these 'ere men treated right," she announced to the others, "and I'm a-gwine to have 'em treated right, or I'll bust somebody's skillet. They'uns is my takings, and I'm a-gwine to have all the say 'bout 'em. I've never interfered with any Yankees any o' yo'uns have brung in. Yo've done with them as you pleased, an' I'm a-gwine to do with these jest as I please, and yo'uns that don't like hit kin jest lump hit, that's all."



"TAKE YOUR ARM FROM AROUND THAT YANK'S NECK."

"Frony Bolster, I want yo' to take yo'r arms from around that Yank's neck," said the man who had tried to take Shorty's gun. "I won't 'low yo' to put yo'r arm 'round another man's neck as long's I'm alive to stop it."

"Ye won't, Jeff Hackberry," she sneered. "Jealous, air ye? You've got no bizniss o' bein'. Done tole ye 'long ago I'd never marry yo', so long as I could find a man who has two good eyes and a 'spectable character. I've done found him. Here he is, and 'Squire Corson 'll splice us to-night."

How much of each of the emotions of jealousy, disappointment, hurt vanity, and rebel antagonism went into the howl that Mr. Jeff Hackberry set up at this announcement will never be known. He made a rush with clenched fists at Shorty.

A better description could be given of the operations of the center of a tornado than of the events of the next few minutes. Shorty and Hackberry grappled fiercely. Mrs. Bolster mixed in to stop the fight and save Shorty. Si and the other three rebels flung themselves into the whirlpool of strikes, kicks, and grapples. The delighted children came rushing in, and eagerly joined the fray, striking with charming impartiality at every opportunity to get a lick in anywhere on anybody; and finally the legion of dogs, to whom such scenes seemed familiar and gladsome, rushed in with an ear-splitting clamor, and jumped and bit at the arms and legs that went flying around.

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This was too violent to last long. Everybody and everything had to stop from sheer exhaustion. But when the stop came Mrs. Bolster was sitting on the prostrate form of Jeff Hackberry. The others were disentangling themselves from one another, the children and the dogs, and apparently trying to get themselves into relation with the points of the compass and understand what had been happening.

"Have yo' had enough, Jeff Hackberry," inquired Mrs. Bolster, "or will yo' obleege me to gouge yer other eye out afore yo' come to yer senses?"

"Le' me up, 'Frony," pleaded the man, "an' then we kin talk this thing over."

CHAPTER XV. SHORTY NEARLY GOT MARRIED

BREAKING UP A BAD REBEL NEST IS NO PICNIC.

WHEN physical exhaustion called a halt in the fracas, Mrs. Bolster was seated on Jeff Hackberry's breast with her sinewy hands clutching his long hair, and her thumb, with a cruel, long nail, pressing the ball of his one good eye. Shorty was holding down one of the guerrillas who had tried to climb on his back when he was grappling with Hackberry. Si had knocked one guerrilla senseless with his gun-barrel, and now came to a breathless standstill in a struggle with another for the possession of his gun. The children and dogs had broken up into several smaller stormcenters, in each of which a vicious fight was going on. In some it was dog and dog; in some child and child, and in others dogs and children mixed.

Then they all halted to observe the outcome of the discussion between Mrs. Bolster and Jeff Hackberry.

"Holler 'nuff, Jeff, or out goes yer last light," commanded Mrs. Bolster, emphasizing her words by rising a little, and then settling down on Jeff's breast with a force that drove near every spoonful of breath out of him.

"'Frony, le' me up," he begged in gasps.

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"Mrs. Bolster," she reminded him, with another jounce upon his chest.

"Mrs. Bolster, le' me up. I'd 'a' got away with that 'ere Yank ef ye' hedn't tripped me with them long legs o' your'n."

"I'm right smart on the trip, aint I," she grinned. "I never seed a man yit that I couldn't throw in any sort of a rastle."

"Le' me up, Mrs. Bolster, an le's begin over agin, an' yo' keep out," begged Hackberry.

"Not much I won't. I ain't that kind of a chicken," she asserted with another jounce. "When I down a man I down him fer good, an' he never gits up agin 'till he caves entirely. If I let yo' up, will yo' swar to quite down peaceable as a lamb, an' make the rest do the same?"

"Never," asserted Hackberry. "I'm ergwine to have it out with that Yank."

"No you haint," she replied with a still more emphatic jounce that made Hackberry use all the breath left him to groan.

"I'll quit," he said, with his next instalment of atmosphere.

"Will yo' agree t' let me marry this Yank, an' t' give me away as my oldest friend, nearest o' kin, an' best man?" she inquired, rising sufficiently to let him take in a full breath and give a free, unforced answer.

"Nary a time," he shrieked. "I'll die fust, afore I'll 'low yo' t' marry ary other man but me."

"Then you'll lose yor blinker, yo' pigheaded, likker-guzzling', ornery, no-account sand-hill crane," she said, viciously coming down on his chest with her full weight and sticking the point of hei nail against his eye. "I wouldn't marry yo' if ye wuz the last nubbin' in the Lord A'mighty's crib, and thar'd never be another crap o' men. Ye'll never git no chance to make me yer slave, and beat me and starve me t' death as yo' did Nance Brill. I ain't gwine t' fool with yer pervarsity nary a minnit longer. Say this instant whether yo'll do as I say with a freewill and good heart, or out goes yer peeper." "I promise," groaned Jeff.

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"Yo' sw'ar hit?" she demanded.

"Yes, I sw'ar hit," answered Jeff.

Mrs. Bolster rose, and confirmed the contract by giving him a kick in the side with her heavy brogan.

"That's jest a lovetap," she remarked, "'t let yo' know t' le' me alone hereafter. Now, le's straighten things around here fer a pleasant time."

She initiated her proposed era of good feeling by a sounding kick in the ribs of the most obstreperous of the dogs, and a slap on the face of a 12-year-old girl, who was the noisest and most pugnacious of the lot. Each of these set up a howl, but there was a general acquiescence in her assertion of authority.



“JEFF SAT UP AND RUBBED HIMSELF.”

Jeff Hackberry sat up, scratched and rubbed himself, seemed to be trying to once more get a full supply of air in his lungs, and turned a one-eyed glare on his surroundings. The guerrilla whom Si had knocked down began to show signs of returning consciousness, but no one paid any attention to him. One of the other two pulled out a piece of tobacco, split it in two, put the bigger half in his mouth and handed the remainder to his partner. Both began chewing meditatively and looking with vacant eyes for the next act in the drama. Shorty regained his gun, and he and Si looked inquiringly at one another and the mistress of the ranch.

"Come on up t' the house," she said, starting in that direction. The rest followed, with Si and Shorty in the lead.

The boys gazed around them with strong curiosity. The interior was like that of the other log cabins they had seen—a rough puncheon floor for the single room, a fireplace as big as a barn door, built of rough stones, with a hearth of undressed flat stones, upon which sat a few clumsy cooking utensils of heavy cast-iron, three-legged stools for chairs, a table of rough whip-sawed boards held together by wooden pins. In two of the corners were beds made of a layer of poles resting upon a stick supported at one end upon a log in the wall and at the other end a forked stick driven between the puncheons into the ground below. Upon this was a pile of beech leaves doing duty as a mattress. The bed-clothes were a mass of ragged fabrics, sheepskins, etc., used in the daytime for saddle-blankets and at night upon the bed. There had been added to them, however, looking particularly good and rich in contrast with their squalor, several blankets with "U. S." marked upon them. Around the room were canteens, shoes, and other soldier belongings.

"Have they killed and robbed the men to whom these belonged, or merely traded whisky for them?" was the thought that instantly flashed through Si's and Shorty's minds. The answer seemed to be favorable to murder and robbery. "Set down an' make yourselves at home. I'll git yo' out suthin' t' wet yer whistles," said Mrs. Bolster, wreathing as much graciousness as she could into her weathered-wood countenance. She apparently kicked at the same instant a stool toward them with her left foot, and a dog out of the way with her right, a performance that excited Shorty's admiration.

"When I see a woman kick in different directions with both feet at the same time, I understood how dangerous her trip would be in a rastle," he said afterward.

Si and Shorty shoved two of the stools so that they could sit with their backs to the wall, still holding their guns.

The guerrillas came filing in, with an expectant look on their faces. Even Jeff Hackberry looked more thirstily longing than wrathful. The man who had fallen under Si's gunbarrel had gotten able to walk, was rubbing his head and moaning with the design of attracting attention and sympathy.

Mrs. Bolster produced a key from her pocket. The others understood what this meant. They lifted aside some sacks of meal and shelled corn, and revealed a puncheon which had been cut in two, and the short piece was garnished by rude iron hinges and hasp, all probably taken from some burned barn. The hasp was locked into the staple by one of the heavy padlocks customary on the plantations, and this Mr. Bolster proceeded to open with her key. When the puncheon was turned up it revealed a pit beneath, from which she lifted a large jug of whisky. She poured some out in a tin cup and handed it to Shorty.

"Take a big swig," she said; "hit's mouty good stuff—ole Jeff Thompson's brewin' from yaller corn raised on

rich bottom land."

Si trembled as he saw his partner take the cup. Shorty smelled it appreciatively. "That is good stuff," he said. "Roses ain't nowhere alongside."

He put the cup to his lips and took a sip.

"Tastes as good as it smells," he said, heartily, while the mouths of the guerrillas were watering. He put the cup again to his lips, as if to take a deep draft. Then came a short cough and a tremendous sputter, followed 211 by more painful coughing and strangling.

"Jest my infernal luck," gasped Shorty. "I would talk, an' I got some down the wrong way.

"Lord, it's burnin' my lights out. Gi' me a drink o' water, somebody."

One of the children handed him a gourdful of water, while he continued to cough and sputter and blame himself for talking when he was drinking.

The woman handed the cup to Si, who feared that the liquor might be poisoned or drugged. He made a pretense of drinking, and then handed the cup back, making motions that his throat was so sore that he could not drink much. Mrs. Bolster looked at him suspiciously, but the clamor of the guerillas distracted her attention, and she turned to supply them.

"No, Jeff Hackberry," she said firmly, "yo' can't have more'n two fingers. I know yo' of old, an' jest how much yo' orter tote. Two fingers'll make yo' comfortable an' sociable; three'll raise the devil in yo,' an' four'll make yo' dancin' drunk, when yo'll have t' be held down. Yo'll have jest two fingers, an' not a drap more."

"Jest another finger, 'Frony. Remember, yo've bin orful rough on me, an' I need more. I'll promise t' be good," pleaded Hackberry.

"No, not a drap more'n two fingers now. If yo' behave yo'self I'll give yo' another two fingers by-an'-by."

"Hackberry swallowed his portion at a thirsty gulp and sat down on the door-sill to let it do its invigorating work. The other two guerrillas were given each two fingers, and the man whom Si knocked down had his 212 moanings rewarded by three fingers and a liberal application in addition to the wound on his head, which he declared was much relieved by it.

"Set your guns up agin the wall an' ack nacherul," commanded Mrs. Bolster. "Nobody's a-gwine to hurt yo'. The 'Squire'll be here soon, we'll git spliced, an' have a good time all around."

The noisy barking of the dogs announced the approach of someone.

"Lord, I hope that's 'Squire Corson," said Mrs. Bolster, running eagerly to the door. "If hit's him, we kin go right ahead with the weddin'."

"If that's the 'Squire," said Shorty, in a low whisper, without turning his head, "we'll grab our guns and fight to the death. We may clean out this gang."

Si's attention had been in the meanwhile attracted to some boxes concealed under the beds, and his curiosity was aroused as to what such unusual things in a cabin might contain.

"No; hit's Capt. Sol. Simmons," said she in a tone of disappointment mixed with active displeasure. "Now, he'll be cavortin' and tearin' around, and wantin' t' kill somebody. I wish he wuz whar hit's a good deal hotter."

She came over to where the boys were sitting, and said in a low tone:

"This man's allers makin' trouble, an' he's bad from his boots up. Keep a stiff upper lip, both on yo', an' we'll try t' manage him. Don't weaken. Hit'll do no good. He'll be wuss'n ever then." 213

Si and Shorty instinctively felt for the revolvers in their pockets.

The newcomer tied his horse to a sapling and strode into the house. The guerrillas seemed rather more fearful than otherwise to see him, but met him with manners that were ranged from respectful by Jeff Hackberry to absolute servility by the others. He was a burly, black-bearded man, wearing a fairly-good uniform of a rebel Captain. His face showed that he was a bully, and a cruel one.

He acknowledged in an overbearing way the greetings of the others, and called out imperiously:

"'Frony, gi' me a stiff dram o' yer best at wunst. My throat's drier'n a lime-kiln. Bin ridin' all mornin'."

"Folks wantin' likker don't say must t' me, but will yo', an' please," she answered sulkily.

"'Must,' 'please,' yo' hag," he said savagely. "Talk that a-way to me. I'll 'please' yo'. I've killed two Yankees this mornin', an' I'm not in the humor to fool around with an old pennyroyal huzzy like yo'. Gi' me some whisky at wunst, or I'll baste yo'."

If ever Mrs. Bolster had been favorably disposed to him, she could not endure to have him treat her this way before Shorty. She would assert herself before him if ever.

She put her arms akimbo and retorted vigorously:

"Nary drap o' likker yo'll git from me, Sol. Simmons. Go and git yer likker whar y're welcome. Y're not welcome here. I don't keer if yo' have killed two Yankees or 20 Yankees. Y're allers talkin' about killin' Yankees, but nobody never sees none that y've killed. I'm a better Confederit than yo' ever dared be. I'm doin' 214 more for the Southern Confederisy. Y're allers a-blowin' while I'm allers adoin.' Everybody knows that. Talk about the two Yankees y've killed, an' which nobody's seed, here I've brung two Yankees right outen their camps, an' have 'em to show. More'n that, they're gwine to jine we'uns."

She indicated the two boys with a wave of her hand. Simmons seemed to see them for the first time.

"Yankees here, an' yo' haint killed 'em," he yelled. He put his hand to his revolver and stepped forward. The two boys jumped up and snatched their guns, but before another move could be made Mrs. Bolster's unflinching trip brought Simmons heavily to the floor, with his revolver half out the holster. In an instant she sat down heavily upon him, and laid her brawny hand upon his pistol. The dogs and children gathered around in joyous expectation of a renewal of general hostilities. But the dogs broke away at the scent or sight of someone approaching.

"Mebbe that's 'Squire Corson,'" said Mrs. Bolster with a renewed flush of pleasant anticipation.

Instead, a rather, good-looking young rebel officer wearing a Major's silver stars dismounted from his horse and, followed by two men, entered the cabin.

"Hello, Simmons," said the Major in a tone of strong rebuke as soon as he entered. "What in the world are you doing here? Is this the way you carry out the General's orders? You're at your old tricks again. You were sent out here early this morning, to capture or drive away that Yankee picket at Raccoon Ford, so as to let Capt. Gillen come through with his pack-mules. I expected to meet him here and go on with him. Your men have been waiting at the crossroads for you since daylight, while you've been loitering around the rear. I ought to have you shot, and you would be if I reported this to the General. You skulking whelp, you ought to be shot. But I'll give you one more chance. It may not be too late yet. Break for your place as fast as you can, and take these whelps with you. I'll wait here till sundown for you. If you don't report back to me by that time you'd better make your will. Jump now."

Mrs. Bolster had let go of Simmons as this exordium proceeded, as she felt that he was in good hands.

As they disappeared the Major turned to Mrs. Bolster and inquired:

"Did Capt. Gillen get through with that quinine and guncaps?"

"They're thar," she said, pointing to the boxes under the beds.

"Very good. I've brought some men to take them away. We need them very badly. Who are these men?"

Mrs. Bolster told her story about how they were tired of the Abolition war, and had yielded to her persuasions to join the Southern army.

The Major looked them over sharply, and began a close cross-questioning as to where they were born, what regiment they belonged to, how long they had been in the service, what battles they had been engaged in and on what part of the field, where their regiment now was, its brigade, division and corps, commanders, etc., etc.

As Shorty did not see any present occasion for lying, he had no trouble in telling a convincing straightforward story. Si successfully worked the loss-of-voice racket, and left the burden of conversation to his partner.

The Major seemed satisfied, and said at the conclusion:

"Very good. I'll take you back with me when I return, and place you in a good regiment."

This was a new and startling prospect, which was almost too much for Shorty's self-control. For a minute he had wild thoughts of assassinating the Major then and there, and making a run for life. But he decided to wait a little longer and see what would develop.

If Mrs. Bolster's hue had permitted she would have turned pale at this threatened loss of a husband and upsetting of all her plans. She merely gulped down a lump in her throat and seemed to be thinking.

She became very attentive to the Major, and brought for his edification a private bottle of fine old whisky. She set about preparing something for them to eat.

Again the dogs barked, and in walked a man dressed in the fatigue uniform of a Union soldier with the chevrons of a Sergeant. The boys gave a start of surprise, and a great one when they saw on his cap:

A
200 Ind. Vols.

Si would have sprung up to greet him, but Shorty laid a restraining hand, and whispered:

"He don't belong to our regiment."

A second glance satisfied Si of this. While it is hardly possibly for a man to know every other man in his regiment, yet in a little while there comes something which enables him to know whether any man he meets does or does not belong to his regiment.

The Major and Mrs. Bolster instantly recognized the newcomer.

"Awful glad to see you, Tuggers," said the Major, rising and shaking his hand. "Did you get through without any trouble?"

"Not a bit o' trouble, thanks to you and Mrs. Bolster here. She got me this uniform and this cap," said Tuggers, taking off the latter article and scanning the lettering. "Rather more brass than I'm in the habit of carrying on top of my head, no matter how much I have in my face. I got your not giving me the positions of the Yankee regiments, for which I suppose we must also thank Mrs. Bolster. I found them all correct. As the 200th Ind. was the farthest out, I had no difficulty getting through the rest of them by saying that I was on my way to my regiment. Of course, I didn't come through the camp of the 200th Ind., but modestly sought a byroad which Mrs. Bolster had put me onto. I've got a lot of important letters from the mail in Nashville, among which are some letters for the General, which I am told are highly important. I'm mighty glad to be able to place them in your hands, and relieve myself of the responsibility. Here they are. Thanks, I don't care if I do, since you press me so hard," said he, without change of voice, as he handed over the letters and picked up the bottle and tin cup.

"Excuse me, Tuggers, for not asking you before," said the Major. "I was so interested in you and your letters I forgot for the moment that you might be thirsty. Help yourself."

"I didn't forget it," said Tuggers, pouring out a liberal dram. "Here's to our deserving selves and our glorious Cause."

A shy girl of about eight had responded to Si's persistent encouragement, and sidled up to him, examining his buttons and accouterments. Si gave her some buttons he had in his pocket, and showed her his knife and other trinkets in his pockets. The other children began to gather around, much interested in the elaborate dumb show he was making of his inability to speak.

Again the dogs barked. Mrs. Bolster ran to the door. "Hit's 'Squire Corson," she exclaimed joyously, and hustled around to make extra preparations for his entertainment.

The 'Squire entered, mopping his face with his bandana, and moving with the deliberation and dignity

consistent with his official position.

He looked at the boys with a severe, judicial eye, and gave the ominous little cough with which he was wont to precede sentences. But he recognized the Major and Tuggers, and immediately his attention was centered in them. They were connected with Army Headquarters; they were repositories of news which he could spread among his constituents. He greeted them effusively, and was only too glad to accept their invitation to sit down and drink. But he suggested, with official prudence, that they go out in front and sit under a tree where they could converse more at liberty. 219

"Afore you go out, 'Squire," said Mrs. Bolster, with an attempt at coyness, "I want yo' t' do a little job fer me."

Shorty's hair tried to stand on end.

"Jest wait a little, my good woman," said the 'Squire patronizingly. "I want to talk to these gentlemen first; I kin 'tend to your matter any time."

They lighted their pipes, and talked and talked, while Mrs. Bolster fidgeted around in growing anxiety. Finally, as the sun was going down, she could stand it no longer, and approached the group.

"'Squire," she said, "I'm orferly anxious to have a little job o' mine done. 'Twon't take yo' five minits. Please 'tend to it right away."

"What is it she wants?" inquired the Major.

"I think she wants me to marry her to a Yankee deserter in there. She whispered suthin' o' that kind to me awhile ago."

"That reminds me," said the Major; "I want you to swear those two men into the service of the Southern Confederacy. You might as well do it now, if you please, for I want to take them back with me and put them into a regiment."

"That won't give much of a honeymoon to Mrs. Bolster," grinned the 'Squire.

"Well, we've all got to make sacrifices for the Cause," said the Major; "her honeymoon'll be the sweeter for being postponed. I've had to postpone mine."

"Well, bring the men out," said the 'Squire, pouring himself out another drink. 220

Si and Shorty had moved to the front door when Mrs. Bolster went out, and could hear the whole conversation. They looked at one another. Their faces were whiter than they had ever been on the field of battle.

"Take the oath of allegiance to the Southern Confederacy? Die right here a hundred times," surged through both their hearts.

Si pulled the bunches of firecrackers from his pocket, undid them before the children's wondering eyes. He went through a pantomime to tell them to take a coal from the fire, run out back with them, and touch it to the fuses.

"Take a coal, run back, and tech it to them strings," said Shorty, forgetting himself in his excitement. "It'll be the greatest fun ye ever saw."

"What's that y're sayin'?" said Mrs. Bolster.

"Jest talkin' to the children," said Shorty, seeing with relief the children bolt out of the back door. He slipped his hand on his revolver, determined to kill the 'Squire, the Major, and the other three men before he would take a syllable of the oath.

"Come out here, men," said the Major authoritatively. Si slipped his hand into his pocket, grasped his revolver, and walked forward very slowly.

"Ahem," said the 'Squire, with an official cough. "Raise yer right hands, and repeat these words after me, givin' your own names."

The other rebels took off their hats.

The dogs raised a clamor, which directed all eyes to the road. Sol Simmons and the rest could be seen coming on a dead run.

"What does that mean?" said the Major anxiously. 221

At the same instant there was a series of crashes behind the house; the firecrackers were going off like a volley of rifle-shots. The Major whirled around to see what that meant, and looked into the muzzle of Shorty's revolver.

"Surrender, or I'll kill you," shouted Shorty desperately. "Don't stop a minit. Throw up your hands, I tell you."

Si was making a similar demand on Tuggers, while the 'Squire was standing, open-mouthed, with the first word of the oath apparently still on his tongue.

The Major sprang at Shorty, whose bullet cut his hair. The next bullet caught the officer in the shoulder, and he reeled and went down. Si was not so fortunate with Tuggers, who succeeded in grappling him. Simmons dashed by and struck Si, in passing, with his fist, which sent him to the ground, with Tuggers on top.

The next minute the 'Squire, who was the only one who had any opportunity to look, saw Yankees pop out of the brush and jump the fences in a long, irregular line which immediately surrounded the house. Capt. McGillicuddy cut down Simmons with his sword, and the rest incontinently surrendered.

"We had got tired of waiting, and were on the point of dashing in, anyhow, when we heard the firecrackers," said Capt. McGillicuddy, after the prisoners had been secured and things quieted down. "That feller that I cut down was out there with a squad and caught sight of us, and started back this way, and I concluded to follow him up and jump the house. Neither of you hurt, are you?" 222

"Not hurt a mite," answered Shorty cheerfully, "but it's the closest squeak I ever had. Wouldn't go through it agin for a pile o' greenbacks big as a cornshock. Say, Cap., you've made a ten-strike today that ought to

make you a Major. That house's plum full o' contraband, and there's a lot o' important letters there. But, say, Cap., I want you to either kill that 'Squire or git him as fur away as possible. I ain't safe a minnit as long as him and that woman's a-nigh me."

CHAPTER XVI. AN UNEXPECTED MARRIAGE

THE BOYS CAPTURE REBELS AND ADMINISTER THE OATH.

THE REBEL Major accepted the unexpected turn of events with soldierly philosophy. Tuggers, captured in a blue uniform, saw the ignominious fate of a spy loom up before his eyes. His face grew very white and set. He sat down on a log, looked far away, and seemed oblivious to everything around him.

Jeff Hackberry and Sol Simmons were frightened into nerveless terror, and occasionally sighed and groaned audibly. Their men huddled together like frightened sheep, and looked anxiously at every move of their captors.

'Squire Corson had ventured two or three remarks in a judicial and advisory way, but had been ordered by Capt. McGillicuddy to sit down and keep quiet. He took a seat on a stump, pulled a large bandana out of his beaver crowned hat, wiped his bald head, and anxiously surveyed the scene as if looking for an opportunity when the power and dignity of the State of Tennessee might be invoked to advantage.

Only Mrs. Bolster retained her aggressiveness and her tongue. If anything, she seemed to be more savage and virulent than ever. She was wild that she had been outwitted, and particularly by Si, whose fluent speech had returned the moment the firecrackers went oif. She poured out volleys of scorching epithets on all the Yankees from President Lincoln down to Corp'l Si Klegg, and fervently invoked for them speedy death and eternal torment where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. 224

Capt. McGillicuddy rounded up his prisoners, took arms from those who still retained them, had Si and Shorty do what they could toward dressing the Major's wound, and then began an examination of the house.

He found abundant evidence of all that he, Si and Shorty had believed of it. It was a rendezvous for spies, both great and small—both those, like Mrs. Bolster, who infested our camps, and got news of whatever was going on there, and those who operated on a larger scale, passing directly from the Headquarters of the rebels to the Headquarters of ours, and to the rear, and the sources of information at Nashville and Louisville. It was an important station on the route for smuggling gun-caps, quinine, medicines and other contraband from the North. Quantities of these were there waiting to be forwarded. As the source of the fighting whisky introduced into the camp of the 200th Ind. too much was known of it to require any further information. And it was more than probable that it was the scene of darker crimes—Union soldiers lured thither under some pretext, murdered and robbed.

"How in the world am I going to break this infernal nest up?" said Capt. McGillicuddy, with a puzzled air, after he had ordered the whisky destroyed and the other things gotten in shape to send back to camp. "By rights, I ought to burn that house down, but that would leave all these children without shelter. By the same token, I ought to shoot or at least send off to prison that old she-catamount, but that would mean starving the children to death. I declare, I don't know what to do." 225

He had drawn apart a little with Si and Shorty, to whom he spoke confidentially, while casting his eyes about him as if seeking some solution of the problem.

"If you'll allow me, Captain," said Shorty, "I've an idee. Now that we've got the trap, let's set it agin, and see if we can't ketch some more."

"Splendid idee. Shorty," said the Captain, catching on at once.

"And my idee," said Shorty, emboldened by the reception of his first suggestion, "is that you take all the company but me and Si and four or fire of the boys back to camp, leavin' us here until to-morrow at least. There'll probably some very interestin' men happen along here to-night, not knowing what's happened, and we'll jest quietly yank 'em in."

"That's good," assented the Captain.

"In the meantime," continued Shorty, "you kin be considerin' what you'll do with the house. It may be best to let it stand, and watch it. That's a good way to do with a bee-tree or a woodchuck hole.

"I believe you are right. I'll do as you say. Si, you and Shorty pick out as many men as you want to stay with you. I'll leave one of these horses with you. If you should happen to need any more, mount one of the boys and send him back for help. I'll come out with the whole company." 226

Shorty and Si consulted together for a few minutes, picked out their men, gave their names to the Captain, and received his assent to the selection. Then Shorty said:

"Captain, you don't want to take that old woman, the 'Squire and that skunk they call Jeff Hackberry back to camp with you, do you? Leave 'em here with us. I've got a little scheme."

"The old woman and the 'Squire you can take and welcome," answered the Captain. "I'll be glad to have them oif my hands. But Hackberry is a rebel soldier. I don't know about giving him up."

"Leave him with us, then. We'll turn him back to you all right, and the old woman and the 'Squire, too, if you want 'em."

"No," said the Captain, with an impatient wave of his hand. "Keep them, do what you please with them. If you should accidentally kill the old woman I should not be unduly distressed. But don't let Hackberry get away from you. I'll take the rest back to camp, and I must start at once, for it's getting late, and we didn't

bring any rations with us. Do you suppose you can find enough around the house to keep you till morning?"

"O, yes," said Si. "There's a sack of meal in there and some side-meat. We gave the old woman a lot of coffee. We'll make out all right."

The prisoners had been watching the Captain and his men with greatest anxiety. They now saw Si with his squad take the 'Squire. Mrs. Bolster and Hackberry off to one side, while the Captain placed the remainder of the prisoners in the center of his company and started back to camp with them. 227

There was something in this separation that terrified even Mrs. Bolster, who stopped railing and began to look frightened.

"What are yo'uns goin' to do with we'uns?" she inquired hoarsely of Si.

"You'll find out soon enough," said Si significantly. "Set down there on that log and think about what you deserve. You might put in any spare time you have in doing some big repentin'."

Hackberry began to whine and beg for mercy, but Shorty ordered him to keep silent.

"I want you to understand," said the 'Squire, "that I'm a regerlarly elected and qualified Magistrate o' the State o' Tennessee; that I'm not subjeck to military laws, and if any harm comes to me you'll have to answer for it to the State o' Tennessee."

"Blast the State o' Tennessee," said Shorty contemptuously. "When we git through there won't be no State o' Tennessee. It'll be roasting in the same logheap with South Caroliny and Virginny, with Jeff Davis brilin' in the middle."

"Boys," ordered Si, "a couple of you look around the house and see if you can't find a mattock and shovel."

Terrible fears assailed the three unhappy prisoners at this. What could a mattock and shovel be wanted for but to dig their graves?

Shorty stepped over a little distance to a large clump of "red-sticks." These grow in long wands of brilliant red, as straight as a corn-stalk, and slenderer. They are much used about the farms of the South for rods for rough measurement. He cut one off about six feet long and stripped off its leaves. 228

The anxious eyes of the prisoners followed every movement.

Two of the boys appeared with an old mattock and shovel.

"Guess you'd better dig right over there," said Si, indicating a little bare knoll.

"Nothin' else's ever bin planted there. At least nothin's ever come up. The chances are agin their comin' up if we plant 'em there."

"Stand up," said Shorty, approaching Hackberry with the bright crimson rod in his hand. "I'm goin' to measure you for a grass-green suit that'll last you till Gabriel blows his horn."

Hackberry gave a howl of terror. The 'Squire and Mrs. Bolster began a clamor of protests.

"Don't fuss," said Shorty calmly to them, as he took Hackberry's dimensions. "I ain't goin' to show no partiality. I'll serve you both the same way. Your turns 'll come after his'n."

The children, aware that something unusual was going on, yet unable to comprehend what it was, stood silently around, their fingers in their mouths and their vacant eyes fixed in the stolid stare of the mountaineer youth. Even the dogs were quiet, and seemed watching the scene with more understanding than the children.

Mrs. Bolster's mood suddenly changed from bitter vituperation. She actually burst into tears, and began pleading for her life, and making earnest promises as to better conduct in the future. The 'Squire and Hackberry followed suit, and blubbered like schoolboys. Mrs. Bolster reminded Si and Shorty how she had saved them from being killed by the fierce Hackberry and the still fiercer Simmons. This seemed to move them. She tried a ghastly travesty of feminine blandishments by telling Shorty how handsome she had thought him, and had fallen in love with him at first sight. Shorty gave a grimace at this. He and Si stepped back a little for consultation. 229

When they came back Shorty said oracularly:

"Our orders is strict, and we should've carried 'em out at once. But, talkin' with my partner here, we're reminded o' somethin'. We believe it's the law that when a man or woman is sentenced to death the execution kin be put off if they kin find anybody to marry 'em. Is that good law, 'Squire?"

"H-m-m," answered the Magistrate, resuming his judicial manner at once; "that is a general belief, and I've heard o' some instances of it. But before sayin' positively, I should like to examine the authorities an' hear argument."

"Well, there hain't goin' to be no continuance in this case for you to look up authorities and hear arguments," said Shorty decisively. "We're the higher court in this case, and we decided that the law's good enough for it. We've settled that if Mrs. Bolster 'll marry Hackberry, and Hackberry 'll marry Mrs. Bolster, and you'll marry 'em both, we'll grant a stay o' proceedings in the matter o' the execution o' the sentence o' death until we kin be advised by the higher authorities."

"I'll do anything. Mister," blubbered Hackberry. "I'll marry her this minnit. Say the words, 'Squire."

"I've said I'd rather die 10 times over than marry yo', Jeff Hackberry," murmured Mrs. Bolster. "I've bin the wife o' one ornery snipe of a whisky-sucking sand-digger, and when the Lord freed me from him I said I'd never git yoked with another. But I s'pose I've got to live for my children, though the Lord knows the yaller-headed brats hain't wuth hit. They're everyone of 'em their dad over agin—all Bolsters, and not wuth the powder to blow 'em to kingdom come. I'd a heap ruther marry Jeff Hackberry to make sure o' havin' him shot than to save him from shootin'." 280

"You hain't no choice, Madam," said Shorty severely. "Law and orders is strict on that pint."

"Well, then," said she, "since hit's a ch'ice betwixt death and Jeff Hackberry, I'll take Jeff Hackberry, though I wouldn't take him on no other terms, and I'm afeared I'm makin' a mistake as hit is."

"What do you say, 'Squire?" asked Shorty.

"I've bin studyin' on jest whar I come in," answered the Magistrate. "These two save their necks by

marryin', but do you understand that the law says that the Magistrate who marries 'em gits his neck saved?"

"The court is not clear on that as a p'int o' law," said Shorty; "but in the present case it'll hold that the 'Squire who does the splicin' gets as much of a rake-off as the rest. This is not to be considered a precedent, however."

"All right," assented the 'Squire; "let the couple jine hands."

With an air of glad relief, Hackberry sprang up and put out his hand. Mrs. Bolster came up more slowly and reluctantly grasped his hairy fist in her large, skinny hand. The 'Squire stood up before them in his most 231 impressive attitude.

"Hold on," suddenly called out Tom Welch, who was the "guard-house lawyer" of Co. Q, and constantly drawing the "Regulations," the "Tactics," and the "Constitution and Laws of the United States," in which he was sharply proficient, upon the members of the regiment. "I raise the point that the 'Squire can't officiate until he has taken the oath of allegiance to the United States."

Si and Shorty looked at one another.

"That's a good point," said Si. "He's got to take the oath of allegiance."

"Never," shouted the 'Squire, who had begun to recover his self-confidence. "Never, as long as I live. I've sworn allegiance to the Southern Confederacy, and won't take no other oath."

"Grave for one!" called out Shorty to the boys with the pick and shovel, as if he were giving an order in a restaurant. "Full size, and hurry up with it."

He picked up his measuring rod and started to take the 'Squire's dimensions.

The 'Squire wilted at once. "I s'pose I've got to yield to force," he muttered. "I'll take the oath."

"Who knows the oath?" inquired Si. "Do you, Tom?"

"Not exactly," replied Tom, non-plused for once. "But I know the oath we took when mustered in. That ought to do. What's good enough for us is good enough for him."

"Go ahead," ordered Si.

"We ought to have a Bible by rights," said Tom. 232

"Where kin we find your Bible, Mrs. Bolster, asked Si.

"We'uns air done clean out o' Bibles," she said, rather shamefacedly. "Thar hain't nary one in the house. I allers said we orter have a Bible. Hit looked 'spectable to have one in the house. But Andy allers wanted every cent to guzzle on."

"Here's a Testament. That'll do," said Tom, handing Si one which some of the boys had about him. "Le's make 'em all take the oath while we're at it."

"You'll all raise your right hands," said Si, opening the book. "Place your left on this book, and repeat the words after that man there, givin' your own names." Si was as solemn about it as he believed everyone should be at such a ceremony. Hackberry and Mrs. Bolster were not sure which were their right hands, but Si finally got them started, and Tom Welch repeated slowly and impressively:

"You do solemnly swear to support the Constitution and laws of the United States, and all laws made in pursuance thereof, against all enemies and opposers whatsoever, whether foreign or domestic, and to obey the orders of all officers duly appointed over you. So help you God, and kiss this book."

"And to quit liquor selling, smuggling, spying and giving aid and comfort to the enemy," added Shorty, and this was joined to the rest of the oath.

"I ought to have added that they wash their faces once a day, and put more shortenin' and fillin' in Mrs. Bolster's pies," said Shorty in an undertone to Si. "But I suppose we oughtn't to ask impossible things." 233

"Now go ahead with the wedding ceremony," ordered Si.

Again the 'Squire commanded them to join hands, and after mumbling over the fateful words, pronounced Thomas Jefferson Hackberry and Mrs. Sophronia Bolster man and wife.

"Now," said Shorty, who felt at last fully insured against a great danger, "I believe it's the law and custom for all the witnesses to a weddin' to see the bride and bridegroom in bed together. You'll go inside the house and take one of them beds, and after we've seen you there we'll consider your cases further. You're all right, anyway, until we hear from camp to-morrow."

Amid the grins of the rest the boys conducted the newly-weds into the house.

He and Si brought out the sack of meal, a few cooking utensils, a side of bacon, and the package of coffee, which they gave to the other boys to get supper with. They closed the door behind them, excluding the children and dogs, and left the pair to their own reflections.

"Gentlemen, what air you gwine to do with me?" asked the 'Squire. "I'd powerful like to git on home, if you've no further use for me."

"We hain't decided what to do with you, you old fomenter o' rebellion," said Si. "We ought to shoot you for what you've done in stirring up these men to fight us. We'll settle your case to-morrow. You'll stay with us till then. We'll give you your supper, and after awhile you kin go in and sleep in that other bed, with the 234 children."

The 'Squire gave a dismal groan at the prospect, which was lost on the boys, who were very hungry and hurrying around helping to get supper.

They built a fine fire and cooked a bountiful meal, of which all, including the 'Squire and children, partook heartily. A liberal portion, with big cups of strong coffee, were sent into the bridal couple. As bed-time drew near, they sent the 'Squire and the children into the house, and divided themselves up into reliefs to watch during the night.

CHAPTER XVII. GATHERING INFORMATION

SI AND SHORTY WORK A TRAP AND LAND SOME PRISONERS.

THE boys were sitting around having another smoke before crawling into their blankets, spread under the shade of the scraggly locusts and mangy cedars, when the dogs raised an alarm.

"Get back under the shadow of the trees, boys, and keep quiet," said Si.

"Hello, the house!" came out of the darkness at the foot of the hill.

"Hello, thar' yourself," answered Shorty, imitating Mrs. Bolster's voice.

"Hit's me—Brad Tingle. Don't yo' know my voice? Call off yer dogs. They'll eat me up."

"Hullo, Brad; is that yo'? Whar'd yo' come from? Git out, thar, Watch! Lay down, Tige! Begone, Bones! Come on up, Brad."

Shorty's imitations of Mrs. Bolster's voice and manner were so good as to deceive even the dogs, who changed their attitude of shrill defiance to one of fawning welcome.

"Whar'd yo' come from, Brad?" repeated Shorty as the newcomer made his way up the narrow, stony path.

"Jest from the Yankee camps," answered the newcomer. "Me an' Jim Wyatt's bin over thar by that Hoosier 236 camp tryin' to git the drop on their Kurnel as he was gwine t' Brigade Headquarters. We a'most had him when a company o' Yankees that'd bin out in the country for something a'most run over us. They'uns wuz a-nigh on top o' we'uns afore we seed they'uns, an' then we'uns had t' scatter. Jim run one way an' me another. I come back here t' see ef yo' had any o' the boys here. I hearn tell that a passel o' Yankee ossifers is at a dance over at the Widder Brewster's an' I thought we'uns might done gether they'uns in ef we'uns went about it right."

"So you kin—so you kin," said Shorty, reaching out from behind the bushes and catching him by the collar. "And to show you how, I'll jest gether you in."

A harsh, prolonged, sibilant, far-reaching hiss came from the door of the cabin, but came too late to warn Brad Tingle of the trap into which he was walking.

Shorty understood it at once. He jerked Tingle forward into Si's strong clutch, and then walked toward the cabin, singing out angrily:

"Jeff Hackberry, I want you to make that wife o' your'n mind her own bisness, and let other people's alone. You and her've got quite enough to do to tend to your honeymoon, without mixing into things that don't concern you. Take her back to bed and keep her there."

He went back to where Si was disarming and searching Tingle. The prisoner had a United States musket, cartridge-box, canteen, and a new haversack, all of which excited Shorty's ire. 237

"You hound, you," he said, taking him by the throat with a fierce grasp, "you've bin bushwhacking, and got these things off some soldier you sneaked onto and killed. We ought to kill you right now, like we would a dog."

"No, Mister, I haint killed nobody; I swar t' God I haint," gurgled the prisoner, trying to release his throat from Shorty's grip.

"Where'd you git these things?" demanded Shorty.

"Mrs. Bolster gi' me the gun an' cartridge-box; I done found the canteen in the road, an' the poke with the letters in hit the Yank had done laid down beside him when he stopped t' git a drink, an' me an' Jim crep' up on him an' ordered him to surrender. He jumped an' run, an' we wuz af eared to shoot least we bring the rest o' the Yanks down onto us."

At the mention of letters Si began eagerly examining the contents of the haversack. He held some of them down to the light of the fire, and then exclaimed excitedly:

"Why, boys, this is our mail. It was Will Gobright they were after."

A sudden change came over Shorty. He took the prisoner by the back of the neck and ran him up to the door of the house and flung him inside. Then he hastened back to the fire and said:

"Le's see them letters."

A pine-knot had been thrown on the fire to make a bright blaze, by the light of which Si was laboriously fumbling over the letters. Even by the flaring, uncertain glare it could be seen that a ruddy hue came into his face as he came across one with a gorgeous flag on one end of the envelope, and directed in a pinched, 238 labored hand on straight lines scratched by a pin. He tried to slip the letter unseen by the rest into his blouse pocket, but fumbled it so badly that he dropped the rest in a heap at the edge of the fire.

"Look out, Si," said Shorty crossly, and hastily snatching the letters away from the fire. "You'll burn up somebody's letters, and then there'll be no end o' trouble. You're clumsier'n a foundered horse. Your fingers are all thumbs."

"Handle them yourself, if you think you kin do any better," said Si, who, having got all that he wanted, lost interest in the rest. If Si's fingers were all thumbs. Shorty's seemed all fists. Besides, his reading of handwriting was about as laborious as climbing a ladder. He tackled the lot bravely, though, and laboriously spelled out and guessed one address after another, until suddenly his eye was glued on a postmark that differed from the others. "Wis." first caught his glance, and he turned the envelope around until he had spelled out "Bad Ax" as the rest of the imprint. This was enough. Nobody else in the regiment got letters from Bad Ax, Wis. He fumbled the letter into his blouse pocket, and in turn dropped the rest at the edge of the fire, arousing protests from the other boys.

"Well, if any o' you think you kin do better'n I kin, take 'em up. There they are," said he. "You go over 'em, Tom Welch. I must look around a little."

Shorty secretly caressed the precious envelope in his pocket with his great, strong fingers, and pondered as to how he was going to get an opportunity to read the letter before daylight. It was too sacred and too sweet to be opened and read before the eyes of his unsympathetic, teasing comrades, and yet it seemed an eternity to wait till morning. He stole a glance out of the corner of his eye at Si, who was going through the same process, as he stood with abstracted air on the other side of the fire. The sudden clamor of the dogs recalled them to present duties. 239

"Hullo, the house!" came out of the darkness.

"Hullo, yourself!" replied Shorty, in Mrs. Bolster's tones.

"It's me—Groundhog. Call off yer dogs."

Si and Shorty looked startled, and exchanged significant glances. "Needn't 've told it was him," said Shorty. "I could smell his breath even this far. Hullo, Groundhog," he continued in loud tones. "Come on up. Git out, Watch! Lay down, Tige! Begone, Bones! Come on up, Groundhog. What's the news?"

A louder, longer, more penetrating hiss than ever sounded from the house. Shorty looked around angrily. Si made a break for the door.

"No, I can't come up now," said Groundhog; "I jest come by to see if things wuz all right. A company went out o' camp this mornin' for some place that I couldn't find out. I couldn't git word t' you, an' I've bin anxious 'bout whether it come this way."

"Never tetch us," answered Shorty, in perfect reproduction of Mrs. Bolster's accents. "We'uns is all right."

The hissing from the cabin became so loud that it seemed impossible for Groundhog not to hear it. 240

"Blast it, Si, can't you gag that old guinea-hen," said Shorty, in a savage undertone.

Si was in the meanwhile muttering all sorts of savage threats at Mrs. Bolster, the least of which was to go in and choke the life out of her if she did not stop her signalling.

"Glad t' hear it," said Groundhog. "I was a leetle skeery all day about it, an' come out as soon's I could. Have yo' seed Brad Tingle?"

"Yes; seen him to-day."

"D' yo' know whar he is? Kin yo' git word to him quick?"

"Yes, indeed; right off."

"Well, send word to him as soon as you kin, that I've got the mules ready for stampedin' an' runnin' off at any time, an' waitin' for him. The sooner he kin jump the corral the better. To-night, if he kin, but suttinly not later'n to-morrer night. Be sure and git word to him by early to-morrer mornin' at the furthest."

"I'll be sure t' git word t' him this very night," answered the fictitious Mrs. Bolster.

"Well, good-night. I must hurry along, an' git back afore the second relief goes off. All my friends air on it. See yo' ter-morrer, if I kin."

"You jest bet you'll see me to-morrow," said Shorty grimly, as he heard Groundhog's mule clatter away. "If you don't see me the disappointment 'll come nigh breaking my heart. Now I'll go in and learn Mr. and Mrs. Hackberry how to spend the first night o' their wedded lives."

"I don't keer ef yo' do shoot me. I'd a heap ruther be shot than not," she was saying to Si as Shorty came up. 241
"I've changed my mind sence I've bin put in here. I'd a heap ruther die than live with Jeff Hackberry."

"Never knowed married folks to git tired o' one another so soon," commented Shorty. "But I should've thought that Jeff' d got tired first. But this it no time to fool around with fambly jars. Look here, Jeff Hackberry, you must make that wife o' yourn keep quiet. If she tries to give another signal we'll tie you up by the thumbs now, besides shoot you in the mornin'."

"What kin I do with her?" whined Jeff.

"Do with her? You kin make her mind. That's your duty. You're the head o' the fambly."

"Head o' the fambly?" groaned Jeff, in mournful sarcasm. "Mister, you don't seem to be acquainted with 'Frony.

"Head o' the fambly," sneered his wife. "He aint the head o' nothin'. Not the head o' a pin. He haint no more head'n a fishworm."

"Look here, woman," said Shorty, "didn't you promise to love, honor and obey him?"

"No, I didn't nuther. I said I'd shove, hammer an' belay him. Hit's none o' yer bizness, nohow, yo' sneakin' Yankee' what I do to him. You hain't no call t' mix betwixt him an' me. An' my mouth's my own. I'll use hit jest as I please, in spite o' yo' an' him, an' 40 others like yo'. Hear that?"

"Well, you git back into that bed, an' stay there, and don't you dare give another signal, or I'll buck-and-gag you on your wedding-night."

"Don't you dar tetch me," she said menacingly.

"I aint goin' to tech you. I'm too careful what I touch. But I'll tie you to that bed and gag you, if you don't do 242 as I say. Get back into bed at once."

"I ain't gwine t', and yo' can't make me," she said defiantly.

"Take hold of her, Jeff," said Shorty, pulling out his bayonet and giving that worthy a little prod.

Jeff hesitated until Shorty gave him a more earnest prod, when he advanced toward his wife, but, as he attempted to lay his hands on her shoulders, she caught him, gave him a quick twist and a trip, and down he went; but he had clutched her to save himself from falling, and brought her down with him. Shorty caught her elbows and called to Si to bring him a piece of cord, with which he tied her arms. Another piece bound her ankles. She lay on the floor and railed with all the vehemence of her vicious tongue.

"Pick her up and lay her on the bed there," Shorty ordered Jeff. Jeff found some difficulty in lifting the tall, bony frame, but Shorty gave him a little help with the ponderous but agile feet, and the woman was finally gotten on the bed.

"Now, we'll gag you next, if you make any more trouble," threatened Shorty. "We don't allow no woman to interfere with military operations."

They had scarcely finished this when the dogs began barking again, and Si and Shorty hurried out. The operations in the house had rather heated them, the evening was warm, and Shorty had taken off his blouse and drawn it up inside of his belt, in the rear.

The noise of the dogs betokened the approach of something more than usual visitors. Through the clamor the boys' quick ears could detect the clatter of an ominous number of hoofs. The other boys heard it, too, and were standing around, gun in hand, waiting developments. 243

"Hullo, dere, de house!" came in a voice Si and Shorty dimly recognized having heard somewhere before.

"Hullo, yourself," answered Shorty. "Who air yo?" 243

"I'm Capt. Littles," came back above the noise of barking. "Call off your togs. I'm all right. Is it all right up dere?"

"Yes. Lay down. Watch! Git out, Tige!" Shorty started to answer, when he was interrupted by the apparition of Mrs. Bolster-Hackberry flying out of the door, and yelling at the top of her voice:

"No, hit ain't all right at all. Captain. The Yankees 've got us. Thar's a right smart passel o' 'em here, with we'uns prisoners. Jump 'em, if you' kin. If yo' can't, skeet out an' git enough t' down 'em an' git us out."

Si and Shorty recognized that the time for words was passed. They snatched up their guns and fired in the direction of the hail. The other boys did the same. There was a patter of replying shots, aimed at the fire around which they had been standing, but had moved away from.

Apparently, Capt. Littles thought the Yankees were in too great force for him to attack, for his horses could be heard moving away. The boys followed them with shots aimed at the sound. Si and Shorty ran down forward a little ways, hoping to get a better sight. The rebels halted, apparently dismounted, got behind a fence and began firing back at intervals. 244

Si and Shorty fired from the point they had gained, and drew upon themselves quite a storm of shots.

"Things look bad," said Si to Shorty. "They've halted there to hold us while they send for reinforcements. We'd better go back to the boys and get things in shape. Mebbe we'd better send back to camp for help."

"We'll wait till we find out more about 'em," said Shorty, as they moved back. They had to cross the road, upon the white surface of which they stood out in bold contrast and drew some shots which came uncomfortably close.

The other boys, after a severe struggle, had caught Mrs. Bolster-Hackberry and put her back in the cabin. After a brief consultation, it was decided to hold their ground until daylight. They could get into the cabin, and by using it as a fortification, stand off a big crowd of enemies. The rest of the boys were sent inside to punch out loop-holes between the logs, and make the place as defensible as possible. Si and Shorty were to stay outside and observe.

"I've got an idee how to fix that old woman," said Shorty suddenly.

"Buck-and-gag her?" inquired Si.

"No; we'll go in there and chuck her down that hole where she kept her whisky, and fasten the hasp in the staple."

"Good idee, if the hole will hold her."

"It's got to hold her. We can't have her rampaging round during the fight. I'd rather have a whole company o' rebels on my back." 245

They did not waste any words with the old woman, but despite her yells and protests Si took hold of one shoulder Shorty the other, and forced her down in the pit and closed the puncheon above her.

They went out again to reconnoiter. The enemy was quiet, apparently waiting. Only one shot, fired in the direction of the fire, showed that they were still there.

Shorty suddenly bethought him of his blouse, in the pocket of which was the precious letter. He felt for it. It was gone. He was stunned.

"I remember, now," he said to himself, "it was working out as I ran, and it slipped down as I climbed the fence."

He said aloud:

"Si, I've lost my blouse. I dropped it down there jest before we crossed the road. I'm goin' to get it."

"Blast the blouse," said Si; "let it be till mornin'. You need something worse'n a blouse to-night. You'll ketch a bullet sure's you're alive if you try to go acrost that road agin. They rake it."

"I don't care if they do," said Shorty desperately. "I'd go down there if a battery raked it. There's a letter in the pocket that I must have."

Si instinctively felt for the letter in his own pocket. "Very well," he said, "if you feel as if you must go I'll go along."

"No, you sha'n't. You stay here in command; it's your duty. You can't help if you do go. I'll go alone. I'll tell you what you might do, though. You might go over there to the left and fire on 'em, as if we wuz feelin' around that way. That'll draw some o' their attention." 246

Si did as suggested.

Shorty crept back to the point they had before occupied. The rebels saw him coming over a hittle knoll, and fired at him. He ran for the fence. He looked over at the road, and thought he saw the blouse lying in the ditch on the opposite side. He sprang over the fence and ran across the road. The rebels had anticipated this and sent a volley into the road. One bullet struck a small stone, which flew up and smote Shorty's cheek so sharply that he reeled. But he went on across, picked up the blouse, found the dear letter, and deliberately stopped in the road until he transferred it to the breast of his shirt. Then he sprang back over the fence, and stopped there a moment to rest. He could hear the rebel Captain talking to his men, and every moment the

accents of the voice became more familiar.

"Don't waste your shods," he was saying. "Don'd vire undil you sees somedings to shood ad, unt den vire to hid. See how many shods you haf alretty vired mitout doing no goot. You must dink dat ammunition's as blenty as vater in de Southern Confederacy. If you hat as much druble as I haf to ket cartridges you would pe more garcful of dem."

Capt. Littles was Rosenbaum, the Jew spy, masquerading in a new role. Shorty's heart leaped. Instantly he thought of a way to let Rosenbaum know whom he had run up against.

"Corporal Si Klogg!" he called out in his loudest tones.

"What is it, Shorty?" answered the wondering Si.

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"Don't let any more o' the boys shoot over there to the left. That's the way Capt. McGillicuddy's a-comin' in with Co. Q. I think I kin see him now jest raisin' the hill. Yes, I'm sure it's him."

The next instant he heard the rebel Captain saying to his men:

"Boys, dey're coming up in our rear. Dey're de men ve saw a liddle vwhile ago. De only vay is to mount unt make a rush past de house. All mount unt vollow me as vast as dey gan."

There was a gallop of horsemen up the road, and they passed by like the wind, while Si and Shorty fired as fast as they could load—Shorty over their heads. Si at the noise. Just opposite the house the Captain's horse stumbled, and his rider went over his head into a bank of weeds. The rest swept on, not heeding the mishap.

"Surrender, Levi," said Shorty, running up.

"Certainly, my tear poy," said Rosenbaum. "Anyding dat you vant. How are you, any vay? Say, dat vas a nead drick, vasn't it? Haf your horse sdumble unt trow you jest ad de righd dime unt place? It dook me a long dime to deach my horse dot. I'm mighty glat to see you."

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CHAPTER XVIII. THE JEW SPY AGAIN

MR. ROSENBAUM RECITES A THRILLING EXPERIENCE.

"HIST, boys, don't talk friendly to me out loud," said the prudent Rosenbaum. "What's happened? I know you have got the house. I have been expecting for a long time that there would be a raid made upon it. What the devil is that saying you have: 'It's a long worm that don't have a turn.' No; that isn't it. 'It's an ill lane that blows nobody no good.' No; that's not it, neither. Well, anyway, Mrs. Sophronia unt her crowd got entirely too bold. They played too open, unt I knew they'd soon get ketched. Who did you get in the house?"

Si started to call over the names, and to recite the circumstances, but as he reached that of Brad Tingle, Rosenbaum clutched him by the arm and said earnestly:

"Hold on. Tell me the rest after a while. I'm afraid of that man. He's come pretty near getting on to me several times already. He's listening now, unt he'll be sure to suspect something if he don't hear you treating me as you did the others. Begin swearing at me as you did at the rest."

Si instantly took the hint.

"I'll stand no more foolishness," he called out angrily. "If you don't surrender at once I'll blow your rebel 249 head off."

"I have to give up," Rosenbaum replied in an accent of pain, "for I believe I broke my leg when I fell. I find I can't stand up."

"Give up your arms, then, and we'll help you up to the fire, and see how badly you're hurt," said Si.

Rosenbaum gave groans of anguish as Si and Shorty picked him up and carried him over to the fire.

"Now we're out of ear-shot o' the house," said Si, as they deposited him on the opposite side, and somewhat behind a thicket of raspberries, "and we can talk. Where did you come from this time, Levi?"

"Straight from General Bragg's Headquarters at Tullahoma, and I have got information that will make General Rosecrans's heart jump for joy. I have got the news he has been waiting for all these weeks to move his army. I have got the number of Bragg's men, just where they are stationed, and how many is at each place. I'm crazy to get to General Rosecrans with the news. I have been cavorting around the country all day trying some way to get in, unt at my wits' ent, for some of the men with me had their suspicions of me, unt wouldn't have hesitated to shoot me, if they didn't like the way I was acting. To tell the truth, it's been getting pretty hot for me over there in the rebel lines. Too many men have seen me in Yankee camps. This man, Brad Tingle, has seen me twice at General Rosecrans's Headquarters, unt has told a lot of stories that made much trouble. I think that this is the last visit I'll pay General Bragg. I'm fond of visiting, but it rather discourages 250 me to be so that I can't look at a limb running out from a tree without thinking that it may be where they will hang me."

"Excuse me from any such visitin'," said Si sympathetically. "I'd much rather stay at home. I've had 12 or 15 hours inside the enemy's lines, playin' off deserter, and I've had enough to last me my three years. I'll take any day o' the battle o' Stone River in preference. I ain't built for the spy business in any shape or form. I'm plain, out-and-out Wabash prairie style—everything above ground and in sight."

"Well, I'm different from you," said Shorty. "I own up that I'm awfully fond o' a game o' hocuspocus with the rebels, and tryin' to see which kin thimble-rig the other. It's mighty excitin' gamblin' when your own head's the stake, an' beats poker an' faro all holler. But I want the women ruled out o' the game. Never saw a game yit that a woman wouldn't spile if she got her finger in."

"Mrs. Bolster came mighty near marrying him, and he's pale yet from the scare," Si explained.

"Yes," said Shorty frankly. "You'll see I'm still while all around the gills. Never wuz so rattled in my life. That woman's a witch. You could only kill her by shooting her with a silver bullet. She put a spell on me, sure's you're a foot high. Lord, wouldn't I like to be able to manage her. I'd set her up with a faro-bank or a sweat-board, and she'd win all the money in the army in a month."

"Yes, she's a terror," accorded Rosenbaum. "She made up her mind to marry me when I first come down here. I was awfully scared, for I was sure she saw through me sharper than the men did, and would marry me or expose me. But I got some points on her about poisoning a neighboring woman that she hated unt was jealous of, unt then I played an immediate order from General Bragg to me to report to his Headquarters. But it took all the brains I had to keep her off me." 251

"She's safe now from marryin' anybody for awhile," said Shorty, and he related the story of her nuptials, which amused Rosenbaum greatly.

"But you have signed Jeff Hackberry's death warrant," he said. "If he tries to live with her she'll feed him wild parsnip, unt he'll get a house of red clay, that you put the roof on with a shovel. It'll be no great loss. Jeff ain't worth in a year the bread he'll eat in a day."

"She may be smothered in that hole," Shorty bethought himself. "I guess we'd better let her out for awhile."

"Yes," said Rosenbaum. "She can't do no harm now. Nobody else will come this way to-night. The men that were with me will scatter the news that the house is in Yankee hands. They think there's a big force here, unt so we won't be disturbed till morning."

"Then I'll go in and let her out," said Shorty.

The other inmates of the cabin were asleep when he entered, but they waked up, and begged him not to let the woman out until morning.

"Keep her in there till daylight," said 'Squire Corson, "and then restore me to my home and functions, and I'll call out a posse comitatus, and have her publicly ducked, according to the laws of the land, as a common scold. I've never heard such vile language as she applied to me when I gave her the advice it was my duty to give to live in peace and quietness with her husband. That there woman's a Niagary of cuss words and abuse." 252

"If yo' let her out, take me outside with yo'," begged Jeff Hackberry. "She'll kill me, sho', if I've to stay in here till mornin' with her. She begun by flingin' a bag o' red pepper in my face, and set us all to sneezin' until I thought the 'Squire'd sneeze his durned head off. Then she jobbed me with a bayonet, and acted as no woman orter act toward her lawful husband, no matter how long they'd bin married, let alone their weddin' night."

"Sorry, but it's agin all my principles to separate man and wife," said Shorty, as he moved to the puncheon trap-door and undid the hasp. "You took her for better or worse, and it's too early in the game to complain that you found her a blamed sight worse than you took her for. You're one now, you know, and must stay that way until death do you part."

Shorty lifted up the trap-door, and Si helped the woman out with some difficulty. They expected a torrent of abuse, but she seemed limp and silent, and sank down on the floor. The boys picked her up and laid her on the bed beside Jeff Hackberry. "She's fainted; she's dead. She's bin sufferkated in that hole," said Jeff.

"No, yo' punkin-headed fool," she gasped. "I hain't dead, nor I hain't fainted, nor I hain't sufferkated. Yo'll find out when I git my wind back a little, I'm so full o' mad an' spite that I'm done tuckered clean out. I'm clean beat, so clean beat that I hain't no words to fit the 'casion. I've got t' lay still an' think an' gether up some." 253

"She's comin' to, Shorty," said Si. "It'll be pleasanter outside."

"You say you have been having unusually exciting times," said Si to Rosenbaum, as the boys again seated themselves by the fire.

"Veil, I should say so," replied Rosenbaum with emphasis. "Do you know that General Bragg is the very worst man that ever lived?"

"All rebels are bad," said Shorty oracularly. "But I suppose that some are much worse than others. I know that the private soldiers are awful, and I suppose the higher you go the wuss they are. The Corporals are cussider than the privates, the Sergeants can give the Corporals points in devilishness, and so it goes on up until the General commanding an army must be one of the devil's favorite imps, while Jeff Davis is Old Horney's junior partner."

"No; it isn't that," said Rosenbaum. "I've known a good many rebel Generals, unt some of them ain't really bad fellers, outside of their rebelness. But old Bragg is a born devil. He has no more heart than a rattlesnake. He actually loves cruelty. He'd rather kill men than not. I've seen plenty of officers who were entirely too willing to shoot men for little or nothing. General Bragg is the only man I ever saw who would shoot men for nothing at all—just 'for example,' as he says, unt to make the others afraid unt ready to obey him. He coolly calculates to shoot so many every month. If they've done anything to deserve it, all right. If they hain't, he shoots them all the same, just to 'preserve discipline.'" 254

Si and Shorty uttered exclamations of surprise at this cold-blooded cruelty.

"I know it's hard to believe," said Rosenbaum, "but it's true all the same, as anybody around his Headquarters will tell you. Jeff Davis knows it unt approves it. He is the same kind of a man as General Bragg—no more heart than a tiger, I have seen a good deal of the inside of the rebel army, unt General Bragg is the coldest-blooded, cruelest man in it or in the whole world. It's true that the men he orders shot are generally of no account, like our man Jeff Hackberry—but it's the principle of the thing that shocks me. He just takes a dislike to the way a man looks or acts, or the way he parts his hair, looks at him with his steely-gray eyes, unt says coldly: 'Put him in the bull-pen.' In the bullpen the poor devil goes, unt the next time General Bragg gets an idea that the discipline of the army is running down, unt he must stiffen it up with a few executions, he orders all the men that happen to be in the bull-pen taken out unt shot."

"Without any trial, any court-martial, any evidence against them?" gasped Si.

"Absolutely without anything but General Bragg's orders. It is like you read of in the books about those Eastern countries where the Sultan or other High-muk-a-muk says, 'Cut that man's head off,' unt the man's head is cut off, unt no questions asked. unt no funeral ceremonies except washing up the blood." 255

"Lucky for you, Levi," said Shorty, "that he didn't have any of the common prejudices against Jews, and slap you in the bull-pen."

"O, but he did," said Rosenbaum. "He hated a Jew worse than any man I ever met. Unt it brought me so near death that I actually watched them digging my grave."

"While I had my ups unt downs, unt some very narrow escapes," continued Rosenbaum, "when I first went inside Bragg's lines, I got along very well generally. I played the peddler unt smuggler for the Southern Confederacy in great shape, unt run them through a lot of gun-caps, quinine, medicines, unt so so on, unt brought in a great deal of information which they found to be true. Some of dis General Rosecrans gave me himself, for he is smart enough to know that if he wants his Secret Service men to succeed he must give them straight goods to carry to the enemy."

"I brought in exact statements of what divisions, brigades unt regiments were at this place unt that place, how many men was in them, who their commanders were, unt so on. General Rosecrans would have these given me. It helped him in his plans to know just what information was reaching the enemy, for he knew just how old Bragg would act when he had certain knowledge. If he knew that Sheridan with 6,000 men was at this place, with Tom Wood 10 miles away with 6,000 more, he would do a certain thing, unt Rosecrans would provide for it. The news that I brought in the rebels could test by the reports they got from others, unt they always found mine correct." 256

"My work pleased the rebel Generals so well that they made me a Captain in their army, transferred me from Brigade Headquarters to Division, unt then to Corps Headquarters. I was given command of squads of scouts. I can draw very well, unt I made good maps of the country unt the roads, with the positions of Yankee unt rebel forces. This was something that the other rebel spies could not do, unt it helped me lots. I was careful to make copies of all these maps, unt they got to General Rosecrans's Headquarters."

"The other rebel spies got very jealous of me because I was promoted over them, unt they laid all sorts of plans to trip me up. They came awful near catching me several times, but I was too smart for them, unt could outwit them whenever I got a pointer as to what they were up to. Once they watched me go to a hollow sycamore tree, which I used as a postoffice for Jim Jones to get the things I wanted to send to General Rosecrans. They found there maps I had made at Shelbyville, with the positions of the rebel un Yankee forces unt the fortifications all shown."

"That was an awful close call, unt I could feel the rope tightening around my neck. But I kept my nerve, unt told a straight story. I said that that tree was my regular office where I kept lots of things that I was afraid to carry around with me when I was in danger of falling into the Yankee hands, as I was every day when I was scouting. Luckily for me I had some other private things unt a lot of Confederate money hid there, too, which I showed them. They didn't more than half believe my story, but they led me off, probably because they needed me so bad." 257

"I saw that the thing was only skimmed over, unt was ready to break out again any minute worse than ever, unt I kept my eyes peeled all the time. That's one reason why you have not seen me for so long. I didn't dare send General Rosecrans anything or go near outside the rebel lines. I had to play very good, but I kept gathering up information for the day when I should make a final break unt leave the rebels for good."

"A week ago I was ordered to go up to General Bragg's Headquarters to help them with their maps unt reports. They had nobody there that could do the work, unt Jeff Davis, who always wants to know everything about the armies, was bunching them up savagely for full information. He wanted accurate statements about the Yankee strength unt positions, unt about the rebel strength unt positions, to see if he couldn't do something to pull the Yankees off of Pemberton at Vicksburg. Bragg's Adjutant-General sent word through all the army for to find good rapid penmen unt map-makers, unt I was sent up."

"The Adjutant-General set me to work under a fly near Headquarters, unt he was tickled almost to death with the way I did my work. Old Bragg himself used to walk up unt down near, growling unt cussing unt swearing at everything unt everybody. Once or twice the Adjutant-General called his attention to my work. Old Bragg just looked it over, grunted, unt bored me through unt through with those sharp, cold, gray eyes of his. But I thought I was safe so long as I was at Headquarters, unt I gave a great stiff to other Secret Service men who had been trying to down me." 258



"OLD BRAGG USED TO WALK UP UNT DOWN, GROWLING UNT CUSSING."

"One morning old Bragg was in an awful temper—the worst I had ever seen. Every word unt order was a cruelty to somebody. Finally, up comes this Brad Tingle that you have inside. He is a sort of a half-spy—not brains enough to be a real one, but with a good deal of courage unt activity to do small work. He had been sent by General Cheatham to carry some papers unt make a report. Whatever it was, it put old Bragg in a worse temper than ever. Brad Tingle happened to catch sight of me, unt he said in a surprised way:

"'Why, there's that Jew I saw sitting in General Rosecrans's tent talking to him, when I was playing off refugee Tennessean in the Yankee camps.'

"'What's that? What's that, my man?' said old Bragg, who happened to overhear him.

"Brad Tingle told all he knew about me. Old Bragg turned toward me unt give me such a look. I could feel those cold, cruel eyes boring straight through me.

"'Certainly he is a Jew, unt one of old Rosecrans's best spies,' he said. 'Old Rosecrans is a Jew, a Dutch Jew, himself. I knowed him well in the old army. He's got a regular Jew face. He plays off Catholic, but that is to hide his Jewishness. He can't do it. That hook nose'd give him away if nothing else did, unt he has got enough else. He likes to have Jews about him, because he understands them better than he does white people, unt particularly he is fond of Jew spies. He can trust them where nobody else can. They'll be true to him because he is a Jew. Put that man in the bull-pen, unt shoot him with the rest to-morrow morning.' "'Heavens,' gasped the Adjutant-General; 'he is by far the best man I ever had. I can't get along without him.'

"'You must get along without him,' said old Bragg. 'I'm astonished at you having such a man around. Where in the world did you pick him up? But it's just like you. How in God's name Jeff Davis expects me to command an army with such makeshifts of staff officers as he sends me, I don't know. He keeps the best for old Lee unt sends me what nobody else'll have, unt then expects me to win battles against a better army than the Army of the Potomac. I never got a staff officer that had brains once.'

"A Sergeant of the Provost Guard, who was a natural beast, unt was kept by old Bragg because he was glad to carry out orders to murder men, caught hold of me by my shoulder unt run me down to the bull-pen, leaving the Adjutant-General with forty expressions on his angry face.

"My goodness, my heart sunk worse than ever before when I heard the door shut behind me. There were 30 or 40 others in the bull-pen. They were all lying around—dull, stupid, sullen, silent, unt hopeless. They hardly paid any attention to me. I sat down on a log, unt my heart seemed to sink clear out of me. For the first time in my life I couldn't see the slightest ray of hope. Through the cracks in the bull-pen I could see the fresh graves of the men who had already been shot, unt while I looked I saw a squad of niggers come out unt begin digging the graves of those who were to be shot to-morrow. I could see rebel soldiers unt officers passing by, stop unt look a moment at the graves, shrug their shoulders, unt go on. It froze my blood to think that

tomorrow they would be looking at my grave that way. After a while a man came in unt gave each one of us a piece of cornbread unt meat. The others ate theirs greedily, but I could not touch it. Night came on, unt still I sat there. Suddenly the door opened, unt the Adjutant-General came in with a man about my size and dressed something like me. As he passed he caught hold of my arm in a sort of way that made me understand to get up unt follow behind him, I did so at once without saying a word. I walked behind him around the bull-pen until we came back to the door, when the guard presented arms, unt he walked out, with me still behind him, leaving the other man inside. After we had gone a little way he stopped unt whispered to me:

"The General had to go off in a hurry toward War Trace this afternoon. He took the Provost-Sergeant unt part of his staff with him, but I had to be left behind to finish up this work. I can't get anybody else to do it but you. I'm going to take you over to a cabin, where you'll be out of sight. I want you to rush that work through as fast as the Lord'll let you. After you get it done you can go where you damned please, so long as you don't let the General set eyes on you. I've saved your life, unt I'm going to trust to your honor to play fair with me. Help me out, do your work right, unt then never let me see you again.'

"Of course, I played fair. I asked no questions, you bet, about the poor devil he had put in my place. I worked all that night unt all the next day getting his papers in the best possible shape, unt in making copies 262 of them for General Rosecrans, which I stuck behind the chimney in the cabin. Along in the morning I heard the drums beating as the men were marched out to witness the execution. It made my heart thump a little, but I kept on scratching away with my pen for hfe unt death. Then the drums stopped beating for a while, unt then they begun again. Then I heard a volley that made me shiver all over. Then the drums beat as the men were marched back to their camps. If I had had time to think I should have fainted. Towards evening I had got everything in first-class shape. The Adjutant-General came in. He looked over the papers in a very satisfied way, folded them up, checked off from a list a memorandum of the papers he had given me to copy unt compile, unt saw that I had given them all back to him. Then he looked me straight in the eye unt said:

"Now, Jew, there's no use of my saying anything to you. You heard that volley this morning, unt understood it. Never let me or the General lay eyes on you again. You have done your part all right, unt I mine. Good-by.'

"He took his papers unt walked out of the cabin. As soon as he was gone I snatched the copies that I had hidden behind the chimney, stuck them here unt there in my clothes, unt started for the outer lines.

"I made my way to a house where I knew I'd find some men who had scouted with me before. I knew they might be suspicious of me, but I could get them to go along by pretending to have orders from Headquarters for a scout. I got to the house by morning, found some of them there, gathered up some more unt have been 263 riding around all day, looking at the Yankee lines, unt trying to find some way to get inside. I'm nearly dead for sleep, but I must have these papers in General Rosecrans's hands before I close my eyes."

"Your horse is all right, isn't he?" asked Shorty.

"Yes, I think so," answered Rosenbaum.

"Well, we have a good horse here. I'll mount him and go with you to camp, leaving Si and the rest of the boys here. I can get back to them by daylight."

So it was agreed upon.

Day was just breaking when Shorty came galloping back.

"Turn out, boys!" he shouted. "Pack up, and start back for camp as quick as you kin. The whole army's on the move."

"What's happened, Shorty?" inquired Si, as they all roused themselves and gathered around.

"Well," answered Shorty, rather swelling with the importance of that which he had to communicate, "all I know is that we got into camp a little after midnight, and went direct to Gen. Rosecrans's Headquarters. Of course, the old man was up; I don't believe that old hook-nosed duffer ever sleeps. He was awful glad to see Rosenbaum, and gave us both great big horns o' whisky, which Rosenbaum certainly needed, if I didn't, for he was dead tired, and almost flopped down after he handed his papers to the General. But the General wanted him to stay awake, and kept plying him with whisky whenever he would begin to sink, and, my goodness, the questions he did put at that poor Jew. 264

"I thought we knowed something o' the country out here around us, but, Jerusalem, all that we know wouldn't make a primer to Rosecrans's Fifth Reader. How were the bridges on this road? Where did that road lead to? How deep was the water in this creek? How many rebels were out there? Where was Bragg's cavalry? Where's his reserve artillery? And so on, until I thought he'd run a seine through every water-hole in that Jew's mind and dragged out the last minner in it. I never heard the sharpest lawyer put a man through such a cross-examination.

"Rosenbaum was equal to everything asked him, but it seemed to me that Gen. Rosecrans knowed a great deal more about what was inside the rebel lines than Rosenbaum did. All this time they was goin' over the papers that Rosenbaum brung, and Old Rosey seemed tickled to death to git 'em. He told Rosenbaum he'd done the greatest day's work o' his life and made his fortune.

"In the meantime the whole staff had waked up and gathered in the tents, and while the General was pumpin' Rosenbaum he was sending orders to this General and that General, and stirrin' things up from Dan to Beersheba. Lord, you ought t've seen that army wake up. I wouldn't 've missed it for a farm. Everything is on the move—right on the jump. We're goin' for old Bragg for every cent we're worth, and we want to git back to the regiment as quick as our leg'll carry us. Hustle around, now."

"But what'er we goin' to do with our prisoners?" asked Si.

"Blast the prisoners!" answered Shorty with profane emphasis. "Let 'em go to blue blazes, for all that we 265 care. We're after bigger game than a handful o' measly pennyroyal sang-diggers. We hain't no time to fool with polecats when we're huntin' bears. Go off and leave 'em here."

"That's all right," said Si, to whom an idea occurred. "Hustle around, boys, but don't make no noise. We'll march off so quietly that they won't know that we're gone, and it'll be lots o' fun thinking what they'll do when they wake up and begin clapper-clawin' one another and wonderin' what their fate'll be."

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SI KLEGG, BOOK 3 ***

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