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SI KLEGG

EXPERIENCES OF SI AND SHORTY ON THE GREAT TULLAHOMA CAMPAIGN.

By John McElroy

Book Four

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"ANNABEL, HOW PURTY YOU LOOK."

(CHAPTER XIII.)

SI KLEGG

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BY JOHN MCELROY.



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WASHINGTON, D. C.

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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 some what 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 Govern ment. 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 some times, 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.

SI KLEGG

CHAPTER I. THE TULLAHOMA CAMPAIGN ON TO DUCK RIVER

"ONLY 25 MILES TO SHELBYVILLE."

JUNE 23, 1863, ended the Army of the Cumberland's six months of wearisome inaction around Murfreesboro its half-year of tiresome fort-building, drilling, picketing and scouting.

Then its 60,000 eager, impatient men swept forward in combinations of masterful strategy, and in a brief, wonderfully brilliant campaign of nine days of drenching rain drove Bragg out of his strong fortifications in the rugged hills of Duck River, and compelled him to seek refuge in the fastnesses of the Cumberland Mountains, beyond the Tennessee River.

"Now," said Shorty, as they stood in line, waiting the order to move, "as Old Rosy has clearly waked up to business, I hope to gracious that Mr. Bragg will be found at home ready for callers. We've wasted six months waiting for him to get good and ready, and he certainly ought to be in trim to transact any little business we may have with him."

"I think you needn't trouble yourself about that, Shorty," said Capt. McGillicuddy. "All the news is that Bragg is down there in Shelbyville in force, and with blood in his eye. Somebody is going to be terribly whipped before the end of the week, and I'm pretty sure it won't be the Army of the Cumberland."

"Well, let's have it over and done with," said Si. "It's got to be fought out some time, and the sooner the better. I wish the whole thing could be fought to a finish to-morrow. Then I'd know at once whether I'm to live through this war."

"I don't think you'll be kept long in suspense," replied Capt. McGillicuddy. "Shelbyville is only 25 miles away. We can't go forward many hours with out forcing a collision as to the right of way. If we can whip Bragg behind the works he has been building for the last six months, we'll settle the whole business for the Southern Confederacy in the West. Grant will take Vicksburg, and then we'll have peace."

"Only 25 miles," repeated Shorty. "We ought to be squarely up against them not later than to-morrow night and one or two days' lively pounding ought to make Mr. Bragg holler enough."

"Rosenbaum is as certain as he is of his life," said Si to the Captain and the rest, "that Bragg has the bulk of his army at Shelbyville, which, as you say, is but 25 miles from here, and that he will draw the rest in and fight us behind the awfully big forts that he has been building for the last six months from Shelbyville to War Trace. Rosenbaum says that he knows it for a fact that 3,000 negroes have been worked on the forts ever since Bragg retreated there last January."

"Well, 25 miles isn't far to go for a fight," returned Shorty. "All that I ask is that the 200th Ind. be given the advance. We'll make schedule time to ward Shelbyville, and bring on the fight before early candle-lightin' to-morrow evening."

"I guess you'll have your wish, Shorty," returned Capt. McGillicuddy. "We lead the brigade to-day, anyway, and we'll try to keep the lead clear through."

Then the rain poured down so violently that all the conversation was suspended, except more or less profane interjections upon the luck of the Army of the Cumberland in never failing to bring on a deluge when it started to march.

In the midst of this the bugles sounded "For ward!" and the 200th Ind. swung out on the Shelby ville Pike, and set its face sternly southward. After it trailed the rest of the brigade, then the ambulances and wagons, and then the rest of the division.

At times the rain was actually blinding, but the men plodded on doggedly and silently. They had ex austed their epithets at the start, and now settled down to stolid endurance.

"We've only got to go 25 miles, boys," Si would occasionally say, by way of encouragement. "This rain can't last forever at this rate. It'll probably clear up bright just as we reach Shelbyville to-morrow, and give us

sunshine to do our work in."

But when the column halted briefly at noon, for dinner for the men and mules, it was raining harder and steadier than ever. It was difficult to start fires with the soaked rails and chunks, all were wet to the skin, and rivulets of water ran from them as they stood or walked. The horses of the officers seemed shrunken and drawn-up, and the mud was getting deeper every minute.

"Lucky we had the advance," said the optimistic Si. "We have churned the roads into a mortar-bed, and them that comes after us will have hard pullin'. I wonder how many miles we've made of them 25?"

"I feel that we've already gone full 25," said Shorty. "But Tennessee miles's made o' injy-rubber, and stretch awfully."

They were too ill-humored to talk much, but stood around and sipped their hot coffee and munched sodden crackers and fried pork in silence. Pork fried in the morning in a half-canteen, and carried for hours in a dripping haversack, which reduced the crackers to a tasteless mush, is not an appetizing viand; but the hunger of hard exercise in the open air makes it "go."

Again the bugles sounded "Forward," and they plodded on more stolidly than ever.

Increasing evidences of the enemy's presence began to stimulate them. Through the sheets of rain they saw a squad of rebel cavalry close to them. There was much snapping of damp gun-caps on both sides, a few unavailing shots were actually fired, and they caught glimpses between the rain-gusts of the rebel horsemen galloping up the muddy road to ward the rising hills.

They pushed forward with more spirit now. They came to insignificant brooks which were now raging torrents, through which they waded waist deep, first placing their treasured ammunition on their shoulders or heads.

As they were crossing one of these, Si unluckily stepped into a deep hole, which took him in over his head. His foot struck a stone, which rolled, and down he went. Shorty saw him disappear, made a frantic clutch for him, and went down himself. For a brief tumultuous instant they bobbed around against the legs of the other boys, who went down like tenpins. Nearly the whole of Co. Q was at once floundering in the muddy torrent, with the Captain, who had succeeded in crossing, looking back in dismay at the disaster. The Orderly-Sergeant and a few others at the head of the company rushed in and pulled out by the collars such of the boys as they could grab. Si and Shorty came to the bank a little ways down, blowing and sputtering, and both very angry.



"All your infernal clumsiness," shouted Shorty. "You never will look where you're goin'. No more sense than a blind hoss."

"Shut up," said Si, wrathfully. "Don't you talk about clumsiness. It was them splay feet o' your'n that tripped me, and then you downed the rest o' the boys. Every mite of our grub and ammunition's gone."

How far the quarrel would have gone cannot be told, for at that instant a regiment of rebels, which had been pushed out in advance, tried to open a fire upon the 200th Ind. from behind a rail fence at the bottom of the hill. Only enough of their wet guns could be gotten off to announce their presence. The Colonel of the 200th Ind. yelled:

"Companies left into line!"

The soggy men promptly swung around.

"Fix bayonets! Forward, double-quick!" shouted the Colonel.

It was a sorry "double-quick," through the pelting rain, the entangling weeds and briars, and over the rushing streams which flooded the field, but it was enough to discourage the rebels, who at once went back in a heavy-footed run to the works on the hill, and the rebel cannon boomed out to cover their retreat.

"Lie down!" shouted the Colonel, as they reached the fence, and a shell struck a little in advance, filling the air with mud and moist fragments of vegetation.

As they lay there and recovered their breath there was much splashing and splattering of mud, much running to and fro, much galloping of Aids in their rear. The 200th Ind. was ordered to hold its place, and be ready for a charge upon the hill when it received orders. The brigade's battery was rushed up to a hill in the rear, and opened a fire on the rebel guns. The other regiments were deployed to the right and left to outflank the rebel position.

Si and Shorty and the rest of Co. Q put in the time trying to get their guns dry and borrowing ammunition from the men of the other companies. Both were jobs of difficulty and doubtful success. There could be no proper drying of guns in that incessant drench, and nobody wanted to open up his stock of cartridges in such a rain.

In the intervals between the heavier showers glimpses could be had of the "Kankakee Suckers" and the "Maumee Muskrats" working their way as fast as they could around toward the rebel flanks. The rebel artillery, seeing most danger from them, began throwing shells in their direction as they could be caught sight of through the rain and the opening in the trees.

"Why don't they order us forward with the bayonets?" fretted Si. "We can scatter them. Their guns ain't in no better shape than ours. If they hold us here, the Illinoy and Ohio fellers 'll git all the credit."

"The Colonel's orders are explicit," said the Adjutant, who happened to be near, "not to move until the head of one of the other regiments can be seen on the hills to the right or left. Then we're all to go forward together."

"Yes," grumbled Shorty, "and we'll jest git there in time to see them Illinoy Suckers hog everything. You kin see 'em limberin' up and preparing to git. Just our dumb luck."

It turned out just as Shorty had predicted. The rebel commander had kept a wary eye on the other regiments, and as he saw them gain the point of vantage in the open, where they could make a rush upon him, he ordered a quick retreat. The other regiments raised a yell and charged straight home. By the time the 200th Ind. could reach the gap the other regiments were in full possession, and the rebels out of musket-shot in the valley beyond.

"I told you so," snorted the irate Shorty. "Now we've lost the advance. To-morrow we'll have to take them other fellers' mud, and pry their teams out o' the holes."

"I wonder how many o' them 25 miles toward Shelbyville we've made to-day?" asked Si.

"I heard the Adjutant say," said one of his comrades, "that we'd come just six miles."

"Jewhillikins," said Shorty sorrowfully.

Thus ended the first day of the Tullahoma campaign.

CHAPTER II. THE BALKY MULES

SUGGESTIONS GALORE "SHELBYVILLE ONLY 18 MILES AWAY."

NEVER was there so wild a storm but there was a wilder one; never such a downpour of rain but there could be a greater deluge.

"Seemed to me yesterday," said Si, on the morning of June 25, as he vainly tried to peer through the dashing drench and locate some of the other regiments of the division, "that they was givin' us one of Noah's Deluge days that they'd happened to have left over. Seemed that it couldn't be no worse, but this beats it. I don't think that standin' under Niagara Falls could be no worse. Howsomever, this can't last long. There ain't water enough in the United States to keep this up a great while."

"Don't be so sure o' that," said Shorty, handing Si the end of a blanket, that he might help wring it out. "I believe the Lord sometimes thinks that He didn't divide the land and water jest right in the first place, and that He'd better 've made a big lake o' Tennessee instead o' these old clay knobs for rebels and niggers to roost on, and He starts in to carry out that idee. I wish He'd finish the job at once, and turn the whole blasted region over to the navy. It looks as if He had that in mind now."

"Well," said the ever-hopeful Si, "the Bible says that the rain falls on the just and unjust alike. If it's tough on us, it's jest as tough on them. Their guns wouldn't go off any better'n ours yesterday. If that regiment in front of us could've shot like they can on a dry day they'd 've made a sick time for us."

About 60,000 Union soldiers and 45,000 rebels struggled through the deluges of rain, the torrential streams and fathomless mud those June days, when it seemed that every water-gate of the heavens was wide open as it had never been before.

The calamity that Si and Shorty had foreseen came about. The 200th Ind. lost the advance of the brigade and brought up the rear, which meant a long day of muscle-straining, temper-wrecking struggles with stalling wagons, discouraged mules and stupid teamsters. And as Co. Q was the left of the regiment, it caught the worst of all.

The 200th Ind. had scarcely pulled out of camp when its troubles became acute. At the foot of the hill which had been carried the day before ran a brook, ordinarily quite a modest stream, but now raging like a mill-race. The two other regiments of the brigade and all of the 200th Ind. but Co. Q had managed to get across by means of trees which had been felled over the stream at various places. Co. Q was left behind to see that the teams got over, while the rest of the 200th Ind. was halted on the farther bank, to watch the operation and give help if needed. Si, with a squad in which was Shorty, was ordered to take the first team, which it happened Groundhog drove, down into the stream and start it across.

"Now, be very careful with that wagon," called the Adjutant across the stream. "That has the Headquarters' things and papers. Don't let any water get into the bed. Cross at the shallowest place."

Si and Shorty found some poles, and prodded around as well as they were able in the crossing to find the shallowest place. If there was a part so shallow that the bed could be kept above water it was very narrow, and would require exceedingly skillful driving to keep on it. The whole regiment stood around, like a barnyard full of turkeys on a wet day, and looked on with an air of sappy melancholy.

"Groundhog," said Si, approaching that function ary, "was you watchin' carefully while me and Shorty was pickin' out the shallow places?"

"Naw," answered he, insolently; "wasn't watchin' nothin' but my mules. Got enough to do takin' keer o' them, without watchin' a couple o' fools projeckin' around with poles in a mud-hole. No sense in it, nohow. We never kin git acrost that 'ere tail-race. Only thing to do is to go back into camp till it quits rainin' and the water runs out."

"Groundhog," said Si resolutely, "you're not goin' back to camp; you're not goin' to wait till it stops rainin'. You're goin' right over now, as sure as my name's Si Klegg, or I'll break every bone in your karkiss."

"I can't go over," persisted Groundhog. "I ain't no fool. I know better what kin be done with an army wagon and six mules than any Injianny galoot that ever wore stripes or shoulder-straps. You simply can't git a wagon acrost that branch, and I ain't goin' to try."

"Groundhog," said Shorty, "you've bin itchin' to be killed for at least a year, that I know of probably as long as you've lived. You ought've had a stone tied to your neck and bin flung into the crick as soon's you was born. I've promised myself a good many times that I'd about murder you when ever I had time, but something's always made me neglect it. I'm in the killin' mood to-day, and I'd like to begin on you. I certainly will unless you drive that team straight acrost, and don't git a drop o' water in the bed o' the wagon."

"Come, hurry up, over there," shouted the Adjutant. "We can't wait all day. What's the matter with you? Get a move on you."

"All right, sir; we'll start at once, sir," said Si with ostentatious alacrity.

Shorty slapped his bayonet on, and brought the point very near Groundhog's abdomen. "I'll jab this thing clean through you in a holy minute, you pusillanimous basswood cullin'; you pestiferous pile o' pizen, rotten punk," he said savagely. "Git on your wheel-mule and gether up the lines."

Impelled by this, and the vigorous clutch of Si upon his collar, Groundhog climbed clumsily into the saddle and sullenly brandished his whip.

The mules made a start and went down the bank, but at the edge of the turbid torrent the leaders set their legs as stiffly as if they were the supports of a sawhorse. They did not make a sound, but somehow the other four understood, with electric suddenness, and their legs set like posts.

"Jest as I expected," said Groundhog, with a grunt of satisfaction; "they've balked for all day, an' you can't git 'em to move another foot if you killed 'em. They're as solid as if they'd growed there."

With an air of having encountered the irresistible, he started to get out of his saddle.

"Stay in there, confound you," said Shorty, prodding him with his bayonet. "Lick them mules. Make 'em start."

"'Bout as much use in lickin' a white-oak stump," said Groundhog, plying the whip viciously as a relief to his feelings. "You kin lick every inch of skin off 'em, and they won't move no more'n a gravestone."

"Start those mules along. Stop fooling," said the Adjutant impatiently.

"We can't start 'em. They're balkin', sir," said Si desperately.

"Nonsense, nonsense," said the Adjutant. "Come ahead. Don't you see you're stopping the Second Brigade and all its teams?"

The men of the Second Brigade were already swarming across on the logs, while looking backward Si and Shorty could see the road filling up with teams. They ran down to the lead mules and caught them by the bridles and tried to pull them ahead. They might as well have pulled at the giant sycamore trees growing along the banks.

Everybody now began to take an interest in the affair. It is one of the delightful peculiarities of human nature that everybody knows better how to manage a balky horse or mule than the unfortunate man who is trying to.

"Stop whippin' them mules. You only make them wuss," shouted one man authoritatively. "Tie stones to their tails."

"Tie a string around their ears," shouted another. "That'll be sure to start 'em."

"Bite their ears, you fools. Don't you know nothin' about mules? Bite their ears, I tell you," shouted a man from Indianapolis.

"Throw some hot water on 'em."

"Tie their feet and tails together with a string."

"Build a fire under 'em."

"Turn the harness around the other way on 'em."

"Blindfold 'em."

Then the regimental humorists began to get in their work:

"Sing 'em the 'Battle Cry o' Freedom."

"They've struck for more grub. Promise 'em double rations till we get to Shelbyville."

"Stop swearin', there, you fellers. You've frozen 'em stiff with your bad language. Pray with 'em."

"Read them the Emancipation Proclamation."

"Call 'em pet names. You can do anything with kindness. Even a mule has, a heart."

"Bring up the band and serenade 'em."

Shorty was raging around the team, kicking and striking first at one mule and then at another, and swearing like a pirate, alternately at the team and then at the jeering crowds. Si was following suit to the best of his ability, but his pious education had left him out of sight of Shorty when it came to using language that the occasion seemed to justify. He had, however, yanked Groundhog out of the saddle and driven him up the bank, where he sat down and grinned at the confusion which had overtaken his enemies.

Setting a man at the head of each mule to coax and encourage him, and the rest of the company to pushing and prying on the wagon, Si had mounted the wheel-mule himself and put forth his mule-knowledge in one feverish effort, which was as futile as it was desperate, for the mules did not seem to change their positions for a rest, even, when the wagon was forced forward on them.

A very dapper young Aid, fresh from West Point, and with that high appreciation for himself that can only be acquired at the United States Military Academy, galloped up, sternly ordering everybody to make way for him, and,

"Present the compliments of the Major-General commanding the division, and what the h—'s the matter?"

"Capt. McGillicuddy, to whom the young gentle man had been referred as in charge, said quietly:

"You see: A mule-team has balked and stopped everything. We're doing our best to start them, but so far without success."

"So we all perceive," said the young man superciliously. "Why are you not down there directing them?"

"The men that I have down there thoroughly understand mules, and are doing their very utmost. They are having, as you can see, a superfluity of advice which is not helping them. I can best help by letting them alone to work it out their own way. They will do all that men can."

"I shall report the case to the General," said the Aid, with scarcely-concealed insolence. "Just like these confounded volunteers," he said as he turned away, taking no pains to keep the Captain from overhearing. "Never will be genuine soldiers in the world. Here, my men," continued he, riding over to the wagon, "stir yourselves lively, now, and start these wagons along. I want no more fooling, and won't have it. Start, now."

Shorty had the usual volunteer dislike to young West Pointers; like the rest of the men he cordially hated and ridiculed the young and airy staff officers, whether from West Point or not. It irritated him to see the youngster's treatment of his Captain. Saying snappy things at and about the Captain was a privilege jealously reserved to members of the company. To have anybody outside abuse the Captain was an insult to be resented. Above all, his American soul rose in wrath at the patronizing "my men." He would not have been at all offended at one of his own rough-and-ready officers jumping in and distributing curses on all hands, but "my men" was too much for him.

Without appearing to notice the presence of the Aid, Shorty walked up to the lead-mule, gave him a tremendous kick in the ribs, and sung out in a tone loud enough to be heard across the roaring branch:

"You pernickety pile o' poll-evil; you hee-hawin' graduate o' West Point; you pin-feathered, taller-faced, pop-eyed, lantern-jawed, loud-mouthed Second Lieutenant, you, won't you git up?"

The other boys began to catch on and grin. The Aid's face flushed, but Shorty continued his loud objurgations at the mule:

"You misbegotten pill o' perdition; you pompous, puddin'-headed staff officer; you miserable errand-boy for the General, puttin' on more airs than the General; you half-hatched officer, runnin' around yit with the shell on your head, and pretendin' to be cock-o'-the-walk, won't you git up?"

Even the Aid began to understand the drift of Shorty's remarks by this time, and Capt. McGillicuddy called out warningly:

"Shorty! Shorty!"

Si looked in amazement at this new development of his partner's genius. The officers and men on the other side of the branch seemed to have forgotten for the moment the annoyance of the balked team in enjoyment of Shorty's outburst.

"Why under heaven they put such murrain cattle as you in the army I can't tell," he continued with another savage kick in the mule's side. "You only take up room from your betters. You don't fight, you only strut like a turkey-cock, and eat and he-haw. Now, will you git up?"

The Aid could not fail to understand now. He burst out in a torrent of rage: "You infernal scoundrel," he shouted, forcing his horse up to Shorty; "I'll have you shot for insubordination, for insulting and mutinous language to your superior officer."

"I wasn't sayin' nothin' to you," said Shorty, looking up with an air of surprise. "I hain't had nothin' to do with you. I was cussin' this other piebald pilgarlic from West Point; this other pig headed pickaninny o' the Regular Army; this Brevet-Second Lieutenant o' the Quartermaster's Department, and Aid on the staff o' Gen. Groundhog. You ain't my superior officer, nohow."

"Corporal," shouted the Aid to Si, "take this rascal up there on the bank and buck-and-gag him. Do it at once."

"I don't believe you have the right to give me orders, sir," said Si respectfully. "I am under Capt. McGillicuddy's orders."

"You are right, Corporal," said Capt. McGillicuddy, stepping forward. "Lieutenant, you cannot order one of

my men to be punished. You have no right to command here. You are merely to convey the General's orders to those who are in command."

"I have the right to give orders. I represent the General, and speak in his name, and I order that man to be bucked-and-gagged," reiterated the Aid in a flame of anger. "I'll see that it is done. I shall not be so insulted before the whole army. It will destroy all discipline."

"Fortunately, the discipline of the army does not depend on the respect shown Second Lieutenants," Capt. McGillicuddy could not help saying. "If you have any complaint to make against one of my men, state it to me, their Captain, or to the Colonel of the regiment. We are the persons, not you, to deal with them."

The men around understood; nothing pleased them better than to see a bumptious young Aid sat down upon, and they were outspoken in their delight.

"I shall report you to the General, and have you court-martialed," said the Aid, shaking his fist at Capt. McGillicuddy. "I shall!"

"Mr. Farwell," said the Chief of Staff, riding up, "why haven't you reported to the General as to the trouble here? We've been waiting for you."

"Here," came the clear-cut tones of the Colonel across the branch; "no use of wasting any more time on those mules. They're there to stay. Unhitch them, fasten on a picket-rope, and we'll pull the wagon across from this side."

Everybody sprang to execute this order, but Si and Shorty's hands had not reached the traces when an idea seemed to shoot simultaneously through each of the six mules, and with one impulse they plunged ahead, directly into the swollen waters.

Si and Shorty sprang back toward their heads to guide them over the narrow crossing. But the mules seemed to take the right course by instinct, and landed the wagon safely on the other side, without a particle of water entering the bed. Everybody cheered, and Si and Shorty looked as if their minds had been relieved of a terrible load.

"Si," said Shorty, with a tinge of weariness in his tone, "they say it is about 18 miles from here to Shelbyville."

"Somethin' like that," answered Si.

"I think there are about three o' these cricks to every mile. Do you really suppose we'll be able to git there before our three years is up?"

"All depends on the mules," answered Si cheerily. "If this sudden spell o' goodness holds out we may get there before evening."

CHAPTER III. THIRD DAY OF THE DELUGE

TOILSOME PLODDING, AND "SHELBYVILLE ONLY 15 MILES AWAY."

IT SEEMS impossible, but the third day's rain was even worse than that of the two preceding. The drops seemed much larger, to follow each other faster, and with less interval between the downpours.

"Does it always rain this way in June down here?" Si asked a patriarch, who was sitting on his porch by the roadside in a split-bottomed rocking-chair, resting his bony hands on a cane, the head of which was a ram's horn, smoking a corn-cob pipe and watching the passing column with lack-luster eyes.

"Sah," said the sage, poking down the ashes in his pipe with his little finger, "I've done lived in the Duck River Valley ever sence Captin' Jimmy Madison wuz elected President the fust time, and I never seed sich a wet spell as this afore. I reckon hit's all along o' the wah. We allers have a powerful sight o' rain in wah times. Hit rained powerful when Jinerul Jackson wuz foutin' the Injuns down at Hoss Shoe Bend, and the Summers durin' the Mexican war wuz mouty wet, but they didn't hold a candle to what we're havin' this yeah. Hit's the shootin' and bangin', I reckon, that jostles the clouds so's they can't hold in."

"How far is it to Shelbyville, Gran'pap?" asked Shorty.



"Don't call me yer gran-pap," piped out the old man in angry falsetto, and shaking his cane. "I won't stand hit. I won't stand everything. I've had enough ter stand from you Yankees already. You've stole my chickens an' robbed my smoke-house, an' run off my stock, an' I've done stood hit, but I won't stan' bein' called gran'pap by ye. I've some mouty mean grandsons, some that orter be in the penitentiary, but I hain't none mean enough t' be in the Yankee army."

"We didn't mean no offense, sir," said Si placatingly. "We really don't want you for a gran'father. We've got gran'fathers o' our own, and they're very nice old men, that we wouldn't trade off for anything ever raised in Tennessee. Have you anything to eat that you'll sell us? We'll pay you for it."

"No, I haint got nothin' nary mite," quavered the old man. "Your men an' our men have stole everything I have stock, cattle, sheep, hogs, poultry, meat an' meal everything, except my bare land an' my hope o' heaven. Thank God, none on ye kin steal them from me."

"Don't be too blamed sure about that, old feller," said Shorty. "Better hide 'em. The Maumee Muskrats are jest behind us. They're the worst thieves in the whole army. Don't let 'em know anything about your land or your hope o' salvation, or they'll have it in their haversacks before you kin wink."

"You haint told us yit how far it is to Shelbyville," said Si.

"Young man," said the sage oracularly, "that altogether depends. Sometimes Shelbyville is mouty fur off, an' sometimes she is right here. On bright, cl'ar days, when the roads is good, hit's only a few steps over thar jest two sees an' a holler."

"What's that?" said Si. "Two sees an' a holler? How far is that?"

"He means," explained Shorty, "that you go as far as you kin see from the highest hilltop to the next highest hill-top twice, and then it's only about as much farther as your voice will reach."

"Jest so," asserted the patriarch. "I kin saddle my ole nag arter dinner, rack over an' do some tradin', an' rack back agin in time for supper. But 'when we have sich sorry weather as this, Shelbyville seems on t' other side o' nowhar. You've got t' pull through the mud an' swim every branch and crick, an' you're mouty lucky if you git thar in a week."

"Why don't you build bridges over the creeks?" asked Si.

"Can't do hit when hit's rainin' an' they're runnin' over thar banks."

"But why don't you do it when the weather's good?"

"What's the use? You kin git over all right then."

"Sir," said the Brigadier-General, riding up and addressing the old man, "where does the Shakerag road come into the Bellbuckle road?"

Instantly the old man felt that he was being asked to give "aid and information to the enemy," and his old eyes grew hard and his wrinkled face set. "I don't know, sah."

"Yes, you do," said the Brigadier-General impatiently, "and I want you to tell me."

"I don't know, sah," repeated the old man.

"Are there any works thrown up and any men out there on the Shakerag road?" asked the Brigadier.

"I don't know, sah."

"Did a large body of rebels go past your house yesterday, and which road did they take at the forks?"

inquired the Brigadier.

"I don't know, sah."

The Brigadier-General was not in the best of humor, and he chafed visibly at the old man's answers.

"Does not Goober Creek run down there about a mile in that direction?" he again inquired, pointing with his field-glasses.

"I don't know, sah."

"How long have you lived here?" asked the Brigadier savagely.

"Nigh on to 55 year, sah."

"And you don't know where Goober Creek is, and which way it runs?" asked the Brigadier, losing all patience.

"No, sah," responded the imperturbable old man.

"Well," said the Brigadier-General grimly, "it is high time that you discovered that interesting stream. You might die without seeing it. Men (to Si and Shorty) take him down that road about a mile, where you will find a considerable body of water which I'm given to understand is called Goober Creek. You'll show it to him in all its magnificence and beauty. Geography is a very interesting study, old man, and it is not too late for you to begin getting acquainted with your own country."

The bitter humor of taking a man through the mud and pouring rain to see a creek that he had seen nearly every day of his life for a half-century was such that all the men were in a mood to appreciate. Si and Shorty entered into the affair with zest. They put a blanket on the old man's shoulders, to shelter him from the rain. Such a thing as an umbrella had never been in his house. Even the women would have looked upon it as a piece of luxurious effeminacy.

The old fellow grumbled, expostulated, and protested, but if Si and Shorty had had no other motive, orders direct from the Brigadier-General would have been executed at any cost. It was the first time that they had ever received orders from anybody higher than the Colonel, and the effect upon them was extraordinary.

"What in the everlastin' kingdom," grumbled he, "kin your niggah-lovin' Yankees expect t' gain by draggin' me out when hit's a-rainin' cats and dogs?"

"Don't know nothin' about it," answered Si, catching him by the shoulder to hurry him up. "'Tain't our business to know. We ain't paid for knowin' anything more than orders, and hardly enough for that. A man can't know much for \$13 a month."

"'Twon't help yer niggeh-stealin' army a mite t' pi'nt out Goober Crick t' me. I ain't gwine t' tote ye over nor show ye the fords."

"Don't care nothin' about that neither," replied Shorty, as they pushed the old man along through the blinding 'rain. "Our orders is merely to show you Goober Crick. 'Tain't none o' our business what the General wants you to see it for. Mebbe he thinks it 'll improve your mind to gaze on the beauties o' nature. Mebbe he thinks you need exercise. Mebbe he thinks a shower-bath'd do you good."

The column had been checked by some difficulty in front, and as the boys conveyed their charge through the ranks of waiting men it seemed that everybody understood what they were doing, and volleys of sarcasm were flung at their prisoner. There were inquiries as to how he liked the study of geography as far as he had gotten; whether he would continue it in more favorable weather, and whether this primary lesson would be followed by others on the road to the mill, the path to the stable, and the way to the spring. If the old man had not already been as angry as he could be, his temper would have risen.

After a lot of toilsome plodding through the rain and mud which the passing wagons had made fathomless, they came to the top of a high hill, from which they could look down on a turbid sweep of yellow water, about half a mile away, which filled nearly the whole valley.

The reason of delay was at once apparent. The insignificant stream had suddenly become an almost impassable obstacle. Men were riding carefully across the submerged bottom land, prodding with poles, to pick out crossings. Others were digging down approaches to what seemed promising crossings, and making rude bridges across gullies and smaller streams that intervened.

It seemed that the fresh young Aid with whom the boys had the encounter the day before had in some mysterious way gained charge of the advance. He had graduated into the Engineer Corps from West Point, and here was an opportunity to display his immense knowledge to the glory of himself and the Engineers and the astonishment of those inferior persons who were merely officers of cavalry, infantry and artillery. Now he would show off the shrewd expedients and devices which have embellished the history of military engineering since the days of Hannibal and Julius Cesar.

That everybody might know who was doing all this, the Aid was riding back and forward, loudly commanding parties engaged in various efforts over more than a quarter of a mile of front. He had brought up the pontoon-train, and the pontoniers were having a hard time trying to advance the boats into the rushing waters. It was all that the men could do to hold them against the swift current. If a pole slipped or went down in a deep hole the men holding it would slip and probably fall overboard, the boat would whirl around and drift far out of its place, requiring great labor to bring it back again, and bringing down a torrent of curses from the young Lieutenant on the clumsiness of "the Stoughton bottles" who were pretending to be soldiers and pontoniers. He was feeling that every word of this kind showed off his superior knowledge to those around. Some of the men were standing waist-deep in the water, trying to fasten lines to trees, to hold in place the boats already stationed and being held there by arms straining at the poles. Everywhere those engaged in the work were tumbling down in the water or being carried off their feet by the current and rescued again with difficulty, to be hauled out on the bank, exhausted, soaked to the skin and covered with slimy mud.

For awhile this had seemed funny to the troops waiting to cross, and they had yelled and laughed themselves hoarse at the mishaps of their comrades. Now the fun had all evaporated and everybody was morose, with a strong tendency to outbreaks of profanity.

The old man surveyed the scene with evident satisfaction. "Yo' Yankees will git over thar about the middle o' July," he chuckled. "Now, I reckon that's Goober Crick, an' as I have done seed hit you'll let me go back home, I s'pose, won't ye?"

"That's probably Goober Crick, or at least Goober Crick is somewhere under that muddy freshet," acquiesced Shorty. "But I'm not at all sure that it's the crick. Looks more like a misplaced chunk out o' the Mizzouri River. I'm not sure, either, that your eyes kin see that distance. We'll have to walk you till we find a section of the crick somewhere that kin be recognized by the naked eyes. Come along, and step lively."

The old man groaned, but there was no hope for him from these relentless executants of orders. For a half hour more they plodded on. The mud grew deeper at every step, but the boys mercilessly forced the old man through the worst of it, that they might reach some point where they could actually see Goober Crick. He could not palm off on them any common old mud freshet for a creek that had a regular place on the map.

Finally they came near the pontoons, and saw one almost capsize, throwing everybody in it into the water, while another whirled madly away toward the center of the current, with but one man in, who was frantically trying to stop it and save himself.

"Yes, he'll stop it, much," said Shorty, looking after him. "If he gits ashore before he reaches the Mississippi I'll be surprised. Say, Si, it'll be easier lookin' for Goober Crick in a boat than wading through the mud. Let's git in one o' them boats."

This terrified the old man till he was ready to yield.

"I begin t' know the place," he admitted. "If we take this path through the woods t' the left hit'll bring us out whar yo' kin see Goober Crick for sartin, an' no mistake. Hit's allers above high-water thar."

The boys followed. A very short walk through a curtain of deep woods brought them on to much higher ground, where Goober Creek roared through a narrow channel it had cut in the rocks. As they stood on the banks, Si and Shorty's eyes met in a quick comprehension of the advantages of the place. They looked backward through the woods to see a depression in the hills, which promised a short and comparatively easy cut-off to the road in the rear, where the 200th Ind. lay.

"Yes, this is Goober Crick," said the old man, with an air of recalling an old acquaintance. "I'm sure of hit. Now, you'll let me go home, won't yer? I hain't got a dry thread left on me, an' I know I'll jest fairly die o' rheumatiz."

"Yes, you can go," said Shorty, who was filling his eyes with the lay of the ground, and the chances it offered of getting the 200th Ind. across ahead of the others and gaining the coveted head of the column. "I've no doubt you're awful wet, but mebbe you know more'n you did a couple of hours ago. Skip!"

The old man moved off with alacrity scarcely to be expected of him, and the boys saw that it was wisest to follow him, for he was taking a bee-line through the woods and brush for his home, and that they knew was near where they had left their regiment.

Soon Co. Q, crouching under the cedars and ponchos spread over fence corners, hovering around struggling fires, and sullenly making the best of a very poor prospect, was electrified by Si and Shorty appearing on as near a run as they could put up with their weight-soaked garments.

"Capt. McGillicuddy," gasped Si, "we've found a bully place to cross. Tell the Colonel quick. Let the boys git all the axes and shovels they kin, and come with us. We'll have a crossin' ready by the time the Colonel comes up with the regiment, and we kin git the advance agin."

Si had gained that enviable position in the regiment where he could always have plenty of followers to anything that he proposed. The sullen despondency passed into active alertness as soon as he began speaking, and before he was done some of them were rummaging around the wagons for axes and shovels. Two or three of these implements were found in the old man's yard.

"Go ahead," said the Captain. "I'll speak to the Colonel, and we'll follow you with the regiment. You can get the teams across, too?"

"Certain," said Si, as he handed his gun, cartridge-box, haversack, blanket-roll and overcoat to another boy to carry for him, shouldered his ax and started off at a run, the others following.

They came back to the spot whither the old man had led them. Si's experienced eye quickly selected two tall hickories, which could be felled directly across the stream and form the stringers for his bridge. The next instant the damp air was ringing with the strokes of eight as skillful axmen as there were in the army, Si leading on one tree and Shorty on the other. They could not keep up the feverish pace they had set for many minutes, but the instant their blows relaxed eight other men snatched the axes, and in a few minutes the trees toppled and fell just in the right position. Co. Q was now coming up, followed by the rest of the regiment, and they gave a cheer to echo the crash of the falling trees. Instantly hundreds of men and officers were at work clearing a road and completing the bridge. Some cut down other trees to furnish filling for the approaches, or to split into flooring for the bridge. Some dug down the bank and carried the clay to cover the brush and chunks. In an incredibly short time a bridge was completed, over which the regiment was marched, and the wagons pulled by the men, after the mules had been detached and walked over.

Every fresh success was announced by tremendous cheering, which carried information to the rest of the brigade that the 200th Ind. was doing something unusual. News as to what this was at last reached the ears of the Lieutenant of Engineers, who was continuing his struggle with the pontoons with a persistence worthy of better luck.

He rode up just in time to see Capt. McGillicuddy looking with elation at the passage of the last wagon.

"Why was I not informed as to what you were doing here, sir?" he asked angrily.

"Probably because we were too busy doing it to be talking about it. If you had known of it you would probably have tried to apply the 47th problem of Euclid to the case, and we wouldn't 've got ten over for a week. Eventually, sir, I expect you will find out that there are several things in the world that are not learned at West Point. Having accomplished all that we want with the bridge, I now have the pleasure of turning it over to the Engineer Department, and I wish that you may find it very useful," continued the Captain, as with

a mocking smile and salute he followed the last of the regiment across the creek.

"Adjutant," said Si, saluting that official with great respect, "we've now got the advance agin, hain't we?"

"You're right we have, you bully boy with a glass eye," said the Adjutant, slapping him on the shoulder with a familiarity that would have given the young Engineer Lieutenant a spasm and caused a strong report on the discipline of the 200th Ind. "And you can just bet we'll keep it, too. You ought to see the Colonel's eye. We'll lead the procession into Shelbyville, which is only 15 miles away."

CHAPTER IV. THE FOURTH DAY OF THE TULLAHOMA CAMPAIGN

"SHELBYVILLE ONLY 10 MILES AWAY."

AND it rained the fourth day rained as if there had been months of drouth, during which it had been saving up water and gathering its energies for an astonishing, overwhelming, make-up-for-lost-time effort.

"Great goodness," said Si, as he and Shorty were again wringing their blankets out to lighten the load they would start with; "seems to me they're tryin' to move Lake Superior down here, and dumping the water by train-loads."

"Old Rosey ought to set us to buildin' arks," grumbled Shorty. "We'll need 'em as bad as Noah did."

There was an alleviation to the weather and mud in the good news that came from all parts of the long front of 75 miles, on which the 60,000 men of the Army of the Cumberland were pressing forward against their enemies in spite of the apparent league of the same with the powers of the air against them. Away off on the extreme right Gen. Mitchel's cavalry had driven the enemy from Triune, Eagleville, Rover, and Unionville; Gordon Granger's and Crittenden's infantry were sweeping forward through Salem, Christiana, and Bradyville; grand old Pap Thomas, in his usual place in the center, had swept forward with his accustomed exhibition of well-ordered, calmly-moving, resistless power, and pushed the enemy out of his frowning strongholds at Hoover's Gap; McCook, whose advance had that splendid leader, John F. Miller, had struck success fully at Liberty Gap, and far to our left the dash ing Wilder had led his "Lightning Brigade" against the enemy's right and turned it. The higher officers were highly elated at the success of Gen. Rosecrans's brilliant strategy in forcing the very formidable outer line of the enemy without a repulse any where. Their keen satisfaction was communicated to the rank and file, and aroused an enthusiasm that was superior to the frightful weather. Every body was eager to push forward and bring Bragg to decisive battle, no matter how strong his laboriously-constructed works were.

"Old Rosey may be a little slow to start," Shorty held forth oracularly to the group crouching over the fire, "but when he does start, great Scott, but he's a goer. I'll put every cent I may have for the next 10 years on him, even though he's handicapped by a Noah's deluge for 40 days and 40 nights. And when it comes to playin' big checkers, with a whole State for a board, and brigades and divisions for men, he kin skunk old Bragg every time, without half tryin'. He's busted his front row all to pieces, and is now goin' for his king-row. We'll have Bragg before Grant gits Pemberton, and then switch around, take Lee in the rear, capture Richmond, end the war, and march up Pennsylvania Avenue before Old Abe, with the scalps o' the whole Southern Confederacy hangin' at our belts."

"Wish to Heaven," sighed Si, "Old Rosey'd thought to bring along a lot of Ohio River coal scows and Wabash canal-boats to make our campaign in. What fun it'd be jest to float down to Shelbyville and fight those fellers with 100 rough-and-ready gunboats. Then, I'd like awfully to know once more what it feels like to have dry feet. Seems to me my feet are swelling out like the bottom of a swamp-oak."

"Hope not, Si," said Shorty. "If they git any bigger there won't be room enough for anybody else on the same road, and you'll have to march in the rear o' the regiment. Tires me nearly to death now to walk around 'em."

"There goes the bugle. Fall in, Co. Q," shouted the Orderly-Sergeant.

As the 200th Ind. had the advance, and could leave the bothersome problems of getting the wagons across the creeks to the unlucky regiment in the rear, the men stepped off blithely through the swishing showers, eager to find the enemy and emulate the achievements on previous days by their comrades on other parts of the line.

Being as wet as they could be, they did not waste any time about crossing streams. The field officers spread out and rode squarely at the most promising crossings in sight. The men watched their progress, and took the best they found. If the water did not get above the middle of the sides of the Colonel's medium-sized horse, they took off their haversacks and unbuckled their cartridge-boxes, and plunged in after him, the shorter men pairing off with the taller men, and clinging to them.

So eager was their advance that by the time they halted at noon for a rest and a cup of coffee, they were miles ahead of the rest of the brigade, and beginning to look forward to catching glimpses of Shelbyville.

They had encountered no opposition except long-taw shots from rebel cavalry watching them from the opposite sides of the yellow floods, and who would scurry away as soon as they began to cross.

The young Aid again appeared upon the scene.

"Colonel," he said, saluting, "the General presents his compliments, and directs that you advance to that next creek, and halt there for the night and observe it."

"What did that young man remark?" said Shorty in an undertone; "that we wuz to advance to that crick and observe it? What in the thunder have we bin doin' for the past four days but observe cricks, an' cross the

nasty, wet things?"

"He means, Shorty," said Capt. McGillicuddy, "that we are to go as near as we can to the bank, and watch, that the rebels do not come across, and wait there until the rest of the division get in supporting distance."

"I guessed that was what his West Point lingo meant, if he has brains enough to mean anything. Why didn't he say in plain United States: 'Git down to the edge o' that there crick, watch for a chance to jump the rebels, and keep your eye peeled that the rebels don't jump you?' That'd be plain Methodist-Episcopal, that everybody could under stand."

"I'll see that you are appointed Professor of Military Language and Orders at West Point when you are discharged," said the Captain, laughing.

The regiment advanced to the edge of the swollen flood and made themselves as comfortable as possible under shelters improvised from rails, cedar boughs, pieces of driftwood, etc. A considerable force of rebels appeared on the opposite bank, whose business seemed to be to "observe" the Yankees.

The restless Si and Shorty started out on a private reconnoissance. They discovered that the shore opposite the left of the regiment was really an island, separated by some hundreds of yards of rushing water from them, but the main current ran on the other side of the island.

"We can't observe the crick through that mass o' willers and cottonwoods," said Shorty. "That's certain. No tellin' what devilment the rebels are up to on the bank over there. They may be gittin' up a flank movement over there, with pontoons and flatboats, to bust the whole army wide open."

"That's so," assented Si. "The orders are to observe this crick, and we can't do it if we can't see the other bank. We ought to git over to that island."

They went back and reported to Capt. McGillicuddy, and told him what they thought. He at once agreed with them, and sanctioned their proposal to go over to the island, if they could find means of crossing.

After a diligent search they came across an old canoe hollowed out of a tulip-tree log. It was a cranky affair, and likely to turn over if their hair was not parted exactly in the middle; but both of the boys were used to canoe management, and they decided to risk the thing.

It was ticklish business crossing the current, but they succeeded in reaching the island, which extended a foot or more above the level of the flood, and was covered with a thicket of willows and cottonwoods about the size of hoe-handles. They pushed their way through these and came in sight of the opposite banks. There was apparently some thing important going on over there. Quite a number of rebels could be seen moving about through the rain and mud, there was great deal of chopping going on, several flatboats, canoes and rafts were lying at the bank, wagons were passing, and the boys thought they could make out a cannon or two.

"I can't make out what in the world they're up to," said Si. "But I'm certain the Colonel ought to know it. Suppose you take the canoe, Shorty, and paddle over and report, and I'll stay here and watch."

"All right," answered Shorty, starting back for the canoe.

He reported to Capt. McGillicuddy, who took him up to the Colonel.

"It don't seem possible that they can be doing anything to threaten us," said the Colonel; "though they may know of some practicable crossing higher up the stream, which will let them in on our flank. Still, they ought to be watched. I'll inform the General at once. You had better station a picket on the island, Captain, if you can do so safely."

"Me and my pardner 'll look out for them, Colonel, if you think necessary," said Shorty, proud to be of service under the Colonel's direction.

"Very good," said the Colonel briefly. "I'll entrust the lookout to you boys. Let me know at once if anything important develops."

The young Aid had been standing nigh during this conversation.

"Your men, Colonel," he said patronizingly, "are excellent soldiers, in their way, but they lack the intelligence necessary to comprehend the movements of the enemy on the opposite bank. I think I shall go over there myself, take a personal observation, and determine precisely what the meaning of the movements may be."

"As you like," said the Colonel stiffly. "As for myself, I don't think it is necessary for me to go. I'd trust those boys' eyes as quick as I would my own. They are as good soldiers as ever breathed; they are as keen as a brier, with not a particle of nonsense about them. They are as truthful as the day. When they tell me anything that they have seen with their own eyes I can trust it as absolutely as if I had seen it myself; and their judgment can not be beat."

"No enlisted man can possibly see anything so well as an officer who has been educated," said the Aid.

"That is a matter of opinion," said the Colonel dryly.

"Anyway, I'm going over to see for myself," said the Aid. And he called after Shorty:

"Here, my man, I'm going along with you."

Shorty muttered some very warm words under his breath, but discipline asserted itself, and he answered respectfully:

"Very good, sir."

He halted until the Aid came alongside, and then started to walk beside him as he would have done with one of his own officers when out alone with him.

"Fall two paces behind," commanded the Aid sternly

Shorty said to himself some very hotly-disparaging things about pretentious young snips of Regular officers. They reached the canoe, and the Lieutenant calmly seated himself in the stern. This was another aggravation. If Shorty had gone out with one of his own officers, even the Colonel, he would have shown a deep interest in everything and wanted to do his share toward getting the canoe safely over. This young fellow calmly seated himself, and threw all the responsibility and work on Shorty.

"Now, you set right in the center, there," said Shorty, as he picked up the paddle and loosened the rope, "and keep mighty still."

"My man," said the Lieutenant, frowning, "when I want your advice I'll ask it. It is for me to give you directions, not you me. You paddle out, now, and head straight for that island. Paddle briskly, and get me over there as quick as possible."

Shorty was tempted to tip the canoe over then and there, but he restrained himself, and bent his strong arms to the hard task of propelling the canoe across the strong current, avoiding the driftwood, maintaining his balance, and keeping the bow pointed toward the place where he wanted to land.

The Lieutenant had sense enough to sit very still, and as he naturally had been drilled into bolt-up-rightness, Shorty had little trouble with him until they were nearing the shore. Then the canoe ran into a swirl which threw its bow around. Forgetting his dignified pose, the Lieutenant made a grab for some overhanging willows.

"Let them alone, blast you; I'll bring her around all right," Shorty started to yell, but too late. Before the words were out of his mouth the cranky canoe went over. Shorty with the quickness of a cat jumped clear, caught some branches with one hand, and made a grab for the canoe with the other. But he saw the Lieutenant go down head foremost, with fancy boots disappearing last. He let the canoe go, to make a grab for the boots. He missed them, but presently the Lieutenant's head appeared, and he gasped and sputtered:

"Save me, my good man. I can't swim a stroke."

Shorty plunged out, succeeded in catching the Lieutenant by the collar, and after a vicious struggle with the current, grabbed with his right hand a pole that Si thrust out to him, while with his left he dragged the Lieutenant ashore, "wetter'n a blamed drowned West Point muskrat," as he after ward expressed it.

"My good man, you saved my life, and I thank you for it," said the Lieutenant when he recovered his breath. "I shall mention you in my report."

"If you don't stop calling me your 'good man' I'll chuck you into the drink again, you wasp-waisted, stiff-backed, half-baked West Point brevet Second Lieutenant," said Shorty wrathfully. "If you'd had the sense of a six-months'-old goslin' you'd 'a' set still, as I told you, and let me manage that canoe. But you never kin learn a West Pointer nothin'. He'd try to give God Almighty points if he got a chance. Now we've lost our canoe, and we're in a devil of a fix. I feel like throwin' you back in the crick."

"Take care, my good" and then the Lieutenant caught the glare of Shorty's eye. "Take care, sir. You're on the verge of mutiny. I may have you court-martialed and shot, if you're not careful."

"Court-martial and be blamed," said Si, who was as angry as Shorty. "You've lost our canoe, and we may be drowned before we can git off this island. It's got so dark they can't see us from the shore, the water's steadily rising, these trees are too small to climb, and the Lord knows how we're goin' to git off."

"Corporal, I'll see that you're reduced to the ranks for disrespect to me. I had intended to recommend this man for promotion on account of his great service to the army in saving my life. Now I shall see that you are both punished for insubordination."

"Insubordination be damned, and you with it," said Shorty. "You'd better be thinking how we're to git off this island. The water's bin raisin' about a foot a minute. I've bin watchin' while we wuz talkin'."

The Lieutenant stood, dazed, while the boys were canvassing plans for saving themselves.

"I'll tell you, Shorty," said Si suddenly. "Le's ketch one o' them big saw-logs that's comin' down, straddle it, and let it carry us somewhere. It may take us into our own lines. Anything's better than drowndin'. Here comes one in the eddy now."

Shorty caught the log with a long pole, and dexterously steered it up close to the shore in comparatively still water. Si threw a grapevine over it and held it.

"Now, all git on," said Shorty. "Be careful not to push it away."

"Let me get on ahead," said the Lieutenant, still mindful of his rank, "and you two get on behind, the Corporal next to me."

"Not much, Mary Ann," jeered Shorty. "We want a man of sense ahead, to steer. I'll git on first, then you, and then Si, to bring up the rear and manage the hind end of the log."

The Lieutenant had to comply. They all got safely on, and Shorty pushed off, saying:

"Here, sit straight, both of you. Here goes mebbe for New Orleans, mebbe for Libby Prison, mebbe for the camp of the 200th Ind.

"We're out on the ocean sailin'."



CHAPTER V. AFLOAT ON A LOG

SI, SHORTY AND THE WEST-POINTER HAVE AN EVENTFUL JOURNEY.

THE log swept out into the yellow swirl, bobbing up and down in the turbulent current.

"Bobs like a buckin' broncho," said Shorty. "Make you seasick, Si?"

"Not yet," answered his partner. "I ain't so much afraid o' that as I am that some big alligator-gar 'll come along and take his dinner off my leg."

"Bah," said Shorty, contemptuously; "no alligator-gar is goin' to come up into this mud-freshet. He'd ruther hunt dogs and nigger-babies further down the river. Likes 'em better. He ain't goin' to gnaw at them old Wabash sycamore legs o' yourn when he kin git a bite at them fat shoats we saw sailin' down stream awhile ago."

"The belief in alligator-gar is a vulgar and absurd superstition," said the Lieutenant, breaking silence for the first time. "There, isn't anywhere in fresh water a fish capable of eating anything bigger than a bull-frog."

"Hullo; did West Point learn you that?" said Shorty. "You know just about as much about it as you do about gittin' over cricks an' paddlin' a canoe. Have you ever bin interduced to a Mississippi catfish? Have you ever seen an alligator-gar at home in the Lower Mississippi? Naw! You don't know no more about them than a baby does about a catamount. I have heard tell of an alligator-gar that was longer'n a fence-rail, and sort of king of a little bayou down in the Teche country. He got mad because they run a little stern-wheel steamboat up into his alley to git their cotton off, an' he made up his mind to stop it. He'd circle 'round the boat to git a good headway and pick out his man. Then he'd take a run-and-jump, leap clean across the boat, knock off the man he'd picked out, an' tow him off under a log an' eat him. He intended to take the Captain fust, but his appetite got the better of him. He saw a big, fat, juicy buck nigger of a deck-hand, an' couldn't stand the temptation. He fetched him easy. Next he took a nice, tender little cabin-boy. Then he fetched the big old Mate, but found him so full o' terbacker, whisky and bad language that he couldn't eat him nohow, an' turned him over to the mudturtles, what'll eat anything. The Captain then got scared an' quit. He didn't care a hat for the Mate, for he was glad to git rid of him; but he liked the cabin-boy an' he had to pay the owner o' the nigger \$1,200 for him, an' that made runnin' up the Teche unprofitable."

"Oh, Shorty," Si gasped. He thought he was acquainted with his partner's brilliant talents for romance, but this was a meteoric flight that he had not expected.

"But that wasn't nothin'," Shorty continued, "to a he catfish that a man told me about down near Helena, Ark. He used to swim around in a little chute near a house-cabin in which lived a man with a mighty good-lookin' young wife. The man was awful jealous of his woman, an' used to beat her. The ole he catfish had a

fine eye for purty women, and used to cavort around near the cabin whenever his business would permit. The woman noticed him, and it tickled him greatly. She'd throw him hunks o' bread, chunks o' cold meat, and so on. The man'd come out and slap her, and fling clubs and knots at him. One day the man put his wife in a basswood canoe, and started to take her across the river. He hadn't got a rod from the shore when the old he catfish ups and bites the canoe in two, then nips the man's hand so's he didn't git over it for months, and then puts his nose under the woman's arm, and helps her ashore as polite as you please."

"Shorty," gasped Si, "if you tell any more such stories as that this log'll certainly sink. See it how it wobbles now."

"I consider such stuff very discourteous to your officer," said the Lieutenant stiffly. "I shall make a note of it for consideration at some future time."

"Halt! Who goes thar?" rang out sharply from the bank.

"Hush; don't breathe," said Shorty. They were in an eddy, which was sweeping them close to the rebel bank.

"Who air yo' haltin'?" said a second voice.

"I see some men in a canoe out thar. I heard their voices fust," said the first voice.

"Whar' yo see any men in a canoe?" asked the second incredulously.

"Right over thar. You kin see 'em. They're comin' right this-a-way. I'm a gwine t' halt 'em agin an' then shoot."

"Stuff," said the other. "You're allers seein' shadders an' ghostses. That 'er's only an ole tree with three limbs stickin' up. Don't yo' shoot an' skeer the whole camp. They'll have the grand laugh on yo', an' mebbe buck-an'-gag yo'."

"Tain't stuff," persisted the other. "Thar never wuz a tree that ever growed that had three as big limbs as that all on one side. You're moon blind."

"A man mout well be rain blind in sich a storm as this, but I tell yo' that's nothin' but an ole sycamore drift log. If yo' shoot the boys'll never git tired o' damnin' yo', an' jest as likely as not the ossifers'll make yo' tote a rail through the mud termorrer."

The boys were so near that every word could be distinctly heard, and they were floating nearer every moment.

The suspense was thrilling. If the man fired at that distance he could not help hitting one of them and discovering the others. They scarcely breathed, and certainly did not move a muscle, as the log floated steadily in-shore in the comparatively stiller waters of the eddy. The rain was coming down persistently yet, but with a sullen quietness, so that the silence was not broken by the splashing of the drops.

A water-moccasin deadliest of snakes crawled up onto the log and coiled himself in front of Si, with that indifference to companionship which seems to possess all animals in flood-times. Si shuddered as he saw it, but did not dare make a motion against it.

The dialog on the bank continued.

"Thar, you kin see thar air men in a canoe," said the first voice.

"I can't see nothin' o' the kind," replied the other.

"If hit ain't a log with three dead limbs, hit's a piece o' barn-timber with the j'ists a-stickin' up."

"I don't believe hit nary mite. Hit's men, an' I'm a-gwine t' shoot."

"No, yo' hain't gwine t' make a durned fool o' yourself. Wait a minute. Hit's a-comin' nigher, an' soon you kin hit it with a rock. I'll jest do hit t' show yo how skeery yo' air. Le'me look around an' find a good rock t' throw. If I kin find jest the right kind I kin hit a yallerhammer at that distance."

This prospect was hardly more reassuring than that of being fired at, but there was nothing to do but to take whatever might come. To make it more aggravating, the current had slowed down, until the motion of their log was very languid. They were about 100 feet from the shore when they heard the second voice say:

"Heah, I've got jest the right kind o' a dornick. Now jest keep yer eye peeled an' fixed on that center limb, an' yo'll hear it chunk when I plunk hit an' show hit's nothin' but a stick o' wood."

Si thought he saw the Lieutenant crouch a little, but was not sure.

The stone came whistling through the air, struck the top of the Lieutenant's cap and knocked it off into the water.

"Thar," said the second voice triumphantly; "yo' see hit ain't no men. Jest as I done tole yo'. I knocked the bark offen the end o' one o' the sticks."

The log moved slowly on, and presently catching in a stronger current, swept out into the stream again. It seemed so like deliverance, that Si made a quick blow and knocked the snake off into the water, and Shorty could not help shouting triumphantly:

"Good-by, Johnnies! Sorry we can't stay with you longer. Got other engagements down the crick. Ta-ta! See you later."

The chagrined sentry fired an angry shot, but they were already behind a clump of willows.

"Lootenant," said Shorty, "you put on a whole lot of unnecessary frills, but you've got good stuff in you after all. You went through that little affair like a man. I'll back you after this."

"When I desire your opinion, sir, as to my conduct," replied the Lieutenant, "I shall ask you for it. Until then keep it to yourself. It is for me to speak of your conduct, not you of mine."

But again they "had hollered before they were out o' the woods," as Shorty afterward expressed it. The gunfire and the sound of their voices so near shore had stirred up the rebels. A canoe with three men in it had pushed out, and, struggling with the current, had made its way toward them, guided by their own voices. The top of a floating tree had hidden it from their sight until it suddenly came around the mass of leafage, and a man standing up in the bow leveling a revolver at them ordered instant surrender. The other two men

were sitting in the middle and stern with paddles, and having all they could do to maintain the course of the canoe.

Si and Shorty were so startled that for an instant they made no response to the demand. The Lieutenant was the first to speak:

"Are you a commissioned officer?" he inquired.

"No," was the answer.

"Then I refuse to surrender. I'll surrender to no one inferior to me in rank."

"Sorry we'uns can't obleege yo', nohow," said the man with the revolver, in a sneer; "but we'uns'll have t' be good enough commissioned ossifers for yo' jist now, an' yo'll have t' done hold up yo'uns hands. We'uns hain't no time t' send ashore for a Lootenant."

The other two chuckled as they struggled with the current, and forced the canoe up close to the log. Shorty made a motion as if throwing up his hands, and called out in a submissive way:

"Here, le'me git hold o' the bow, and I kin help you. It's awful hard paddlin' in this current."

Without thinking the men threw the bow in so close that Shorty could clutch it with his long hand. The grab shook the ticklish craft, so that the man with the revolver could scarcely keep his feet.

"Heah," he yelled at the other two. "Keep the dugout stiddy. What air yo'uns doin'? Hold her off, I tell yo'uns."

Then to the Lieutenant:

"Heah, yo'uns surrender to wonst, or I'll blow yo' heads offen yo'uns."

The Lieutenant started a further remonstrance, but Shorty had in the meantime got the other hand on the canoe, and he gave it such a wrench that the man with the pistol lost his footing and fell across the log, where he was grabbed by Shorty and his pistol-hand secured. The stern of the canoe had swung around until Si had been able to catch it with one hand, while with the other he grabbed the man in the stern, who, seeing the sudden assumption of hostilities, had raised his paddle to strike.

Si and Shorty had somewhat the advantage in position. By holding on to the log with their legs they had a comparatively firm base, while the canoe was a very ticklish foundation for a fight.

The middle man also raised his paddle to strike, but the Lieutenant caught it and tried to wrest it away. This held the canoe and the log close together while Si and Shorty were struggling. Si saw this, and letting go, devoted both hands to this man, whom he pulled over into the water about the same time that Shorty possessed himself of the other man's pistol and dragged him out of the canoe.

"Hold fast in the center there, Lieutenant," he called out, as he dropped the pistol into his bosom and took in the situation with a quick glance. "You two Johnnies hold on to the log like grim death to a dead nigger, and you won't drown."

He carefully worked himself from the log into the canoe, and then Si did the same. They had come to a part where the water spread out in a broad and tolerably calm lake over the valley, but there was a gorge at the further end through which it was rushing with a roar. Log and canoe were drifting in that direction, and while the changes were being made the canoe drifted away from the log.

"Hold on, men," shouted the Lieutenant; "you are certainly not going to abandon your officer?"

"Certainly not," said Shorty. "How could you imagine such a thing? But just how to trade you off for this rebel passenger presents difficulties. If we try to throw him overboard we shall certainly tip the canoe over. And I'm afraid he's not the man to give up peaceably a dry seat in the canoe for your berth on the log."

"I order you to come back here at once and take me in that boat," said the Lieutenant imperatively.

"We are comin' back all right," said Shorty; "but we're not goin' to let you tip this canoe over for 40 Second Lieutenants. We'll git you out o' the scrape somehow. Don't fret."

"Hello, thar! Help! Help!" came across the waters in agonized tones, which at the same time had some thing familiar in them.

"Hello, yourself!" responded Shorty, making out, a little distance away, a "jo-boat," that is, a rude, clumsy square-bottomed, square-ended sort of a skiff in which was one man. "What's wanted?"

"I'm out here adrift without no oars," came in the now-distinctly recognizable voice of Jeff Hackberry. "Won't yo' please tow me ashore?"

"Le's go out there and git him," said Shorty to Si. "We kin put all these fellers in that jo-boat and save 'em."

A few strokes of their paddles brought them alongside.

"How in the world did you come here, Hackberry," asked Shorty.

"O, that ole woman that I wanted so bad that I couldn't rest till I got her wuz red-hot t' git rid o' me," whined Hackberry. "She tried half-a-dozen ways puttin' wild parsnip in my likker, giving me pokeberry bitters, and so on, but nothin' fetched me. Finally she deviled me to carry her acrost the crick to the Confederit lines. I found this ole jo-boat at last, an' we got in. Suddenly, quick as lightning she picked up the oars, an' give the boat a kick which sent hit away out into the current. I floated away, yellin' at her, an' she standin' on the bank grinnin' at me and cussin'. I've been havin' the awfulest day floatin' down the freshet, expectin' every minute t' be drowned, an' both sides pluggin' away at me whenever they ketched sight o' me. I wuz willin' t' surrender t' either one that'd save me from being drowned, but none of 'em seemed t' care a darn about my drownin'; they only wanted t' plug me."

"Please save me, Mister," begged Jeff, "an' I'll do anything under the shinin' sun for yo'; I'll jine the Yankee army; I'll lead you' to whar thar's nests o' the pizenest bushwhackers. I'll do anything yo' kin ax me. Only save me from being drowned. Right down thar's the big falls, an' if I go over them, nothin' kin same me from drownin'." And he began a doleful blubbering.

"On general principles, I think that'd be the best thing that could happen," remarked Shorty. "But I haven't time to discuss that now. Will you do just what we want, if we save your life?"

"Yes; yes," responded he eagerly.

"Well, if you don't, at the very minute I tell you, I'll plug you for certain with this," said Shorty, showing the revolver. "Mind, I'll not speak twice. I'll give you no warnin'. You do what I tell you on the jump, or I'll be worse to you than Mrs. Bolster. First place, take this man in with you. And you (to the rebel in the canoe) mind how you git into that boat. Don't you dare, on your life, kick the canoe over as you crawl out. If I find it rocks the least bit as you leave I'll bust your cocoanut as the last act of my military career. Now crawl out."

The rebel crawled over the gunwale into the boat as cautiously as if there were torpedoes under him.

"Now," said Shorty, with a sigh of relief, as the man was at last out of the canoe, "we'll paddle around here and pick up some pieces of boards for you to use as oars. Then you bring the boat over to that log."

This was done, and the Lieutenant and the two rebels clinging to the log were transferred to the jo-boat. The moment the Lieutenant felt himself in the comparative security of the jo-boat his desire for command asserted itself.

"Now, men," said he, authoritatively, "pull away for the other side, pointing up stream. That glow over there is our campfires. Make for it."

"All right, Lootenant," said Shorty. "You command that boat. You've got your revolver with you, and kin make 'em mind. We'll pick up some more boards, so as to have oars for all o' 'em. They'd better use 'em lively, for it ain't a great ways t' the suck. If you git into that you'll go to Davy Jones's as sure as the Lord made little apples. Paddle, now, if you value your lives. Me and Si are goin' back to look for that galoot that shot at us. We want to make a present of him to our Colonel, who's after information from the other side. We want his gun and another one to make up for the two that we had to leave on the island. We'll join you before you git acrost."

The Lieutenant lifted up his voice in remonstrance against the desperate undertaking, but Si and Shorty paddled swiftly away, leaving him and his squad to struggle over the muddy lake in their clumsy bateau.

Though the boys were sadly worn by the day's exciting adventures, yet they were animated by the hope of doing something that would signally retrieve their earlier misfortunes. Both were adepts at canoe navigation, the canoe was light and easily managed with but two in it, and they had gotten the lay of the shore so well in mind that they felt sure that they could slip around and come in on the man who had fired upon them. The drizzle of the rain helped curtain them; they pushed the canoe through the top of a paw-paw thicket that rose but a little way above the flood, Shorty sprang out, and in a few steps came up behind the two pickets, who were crouching over a little fire they had built behind the cover of some dense weeds.

"Was this the post that fired on men in a canoe a little while ago?" he asked, as if a rebel officer out on a tour of investigation.

"Yes," the men stammered, as soon as they could recover from the startle of his sudden appearance.

"Which man fired?" asked Shorty.

"Me," answered one.

"Well, I want you and both your guns," said Shorty, thrusting his revolver against the man's face. "Pick up them guns and go right ahead there."

The man meekly did as bid, and in a few minutes was landed into the canoe, into which Shorty jumped and pushed off. When nearly across they came upon the jo-boat, with the Lieutenant standing erect with drawn revolver, while the men were laboring hard to propel it to shore. The boys fastened its painter to the stern of the canoe and helped by towing.

They headed for a large fire burning brightly on the bank, indicating that it was the headquarters of the pickets. In response to the sharp challenge, the Lieutenant responded:

"Friends, without the countersign."

Quite a number of officers and men thronged to the water's edge to see what could be coming from that unexpected quarter. The Lieutenant ordered the boys to fall to the rear with their canoe, that he might be the first to land, and as his bateau labored close to the shore he recognized the Colonel in command of the picket line, and said in a loud voice:

"Sir, I have the honor to report that I have been across the creek reconnoitering the enemy's lines. I have with me five prisoners four soldiers and one guerrilla."

CHAPTER VI. DISTRESSING ENEMIES

OTHER THAN THE REBELS AND RAIN, MUD, AND SWOLLEN STREAMS.

SI WOKE up early the next morning with a savage exclamation.

"I declare, I'm all on fire," he said. "Some thing's just eating me up. I believe I've got a million graybacks on me."



"Same here, Si," said Shorty. "Never knowed 'em to be so bad. Seem to 've just got in from a march, and are chawin' three days' rations out o' me every minute. I'd 'a' thought they'd all 've bin drowned from the duckin' they've bin havin' for the past five days, but it only seems to 've sharpened their teeth and whetted their appetites. They've all come to dinner, and invited their friends."

"Where in the world could they have all come from?" meditated Si. "We wuz certainly clean of 'em when we started out six days ago."

"O, the rebels skipped out in sich a hurry," explained Shorty, "that they even dropped their house hold pets, which we inherited as we follered 'em up. I wish this infernal rain'd let up long enough for us to do some skirmishin' and bile our clothes. Or if the sun'd only come out an hour or two, we could find an ant-hill, an' lay our clothes on it. I don't know any little thing that I enjoy more on a pleasant day when we've bin a long march and got mighty 'crumby, than to pull off my shirt and lay it on a lively ant-hill, and light my pipe and set there and watch the busy ants collar its inhabitants and carry 'em off to fill up their smoke-houses with Winter meat."

He put his hand meditatively into his bosom as he spoke. As he withdrew it he looked down and exclaimed:

"Jehosephat, it's fleas, too. Just look there. I'm alive with fleas."

"Same here," ejaculated Si, who had made a similar discovery. "Just look at 'em, hoppin' out every where. The rebels have not only set their grayback infantry on to us, but are jumping us with their flea cavalry."

"If you call the graybacks infantry and the fleas cavalry, what in the world do you call these, Si?" said Shorty, who had made still another discovery, and was pointing to his wrists and ankles, where rows of gorged ticks, looking like drops of fresh blood, encircled his limbs.

"Them's heavy artillery," answered Si; "and, Great Scott, I've got more of 'em on me than you have. And there's some just back of your ears, Shorty. Be careful, Shorty. Don't touch 'em. Le' me work 'em off. Be awful careful. If you break their heads off they'll stay in and make a sore that'll almost never get well."

They looked down the lines of men who, like themselves, had been rudely awakened from their slumber on wet beds by "the pestilence that walketh by night." There were howls, yells, oaths and imprecations from everybody. Officers forgot their carefully-maintained dignity, and were as vociferous and profane as the men.

Many were stripped, and trying to singe their wet clothes over the smoldering fires. Many were even trying to subdue the pests by thrashing their garments in the cold water of the creek.

"'Bout as much use as a General Order from Army Headquarters would be agin the varmints," said Shorty, as he watched their futile labors. "Say, you fellers," he called out to them; "why don't you repeat the Ten Commandments to 'em? Or sing the doxology? It'll do just as much good as sloshing your duds around in the water. The water only makes 'em savager'n ever. You ought to know that from experience."

By the happy thought of gently touching the gorged wood-ticks with the point of a pin Si and Shorty had gotten rid of those plagues, heads and all, so as to leave no apprehension as to future sores. They communicated this method to their afflicted comrades, and then turned their attention to the other parasites.

"I guess I'll just go down to the Surgeon's tent and git a pound of angwintum," said Shorty, "and rub myself from head to foot with it. That's the only thing I know of that'll do the least good."

"Mustn't do that," objected Si. "Put angwintum on you and get wet, and you'll be salivated. You ought to

know that."

"I don't care," said Shorty desperately. "I'd rather be salivated till my teeth drop out and my hair falls off than be carried off in large chunks by fleas and graybacks. Come along."

"Mebbe the Surgeon has something else that'll pizen these little cusses," said Si, falling in with his comrade.

They found a clamorous group around the Surgeon's tent, asking for "angwintum (mercurial ointment) or anything else that would alleviate their torments. The worried Surgeon was scratching himself as he explained to the Colonel:

"It seems to me, 'Colonel, that the rising water has concentrated all these parasites on the higher ground over which we have come. This is the only way in which I can account for their severe visitation upon us. The parasites seem to have the same instinct to gather on elevated spots when the water is rising that other animals have, and we have consequently gathered up four or five times as many, to say the least, as we should otherwise have gotten. But you don't know the worst of it yet. You see those men? They have sore feet. But it isn't ordinary sore feet. They've got chiggers in their feet."

"Chiggers. What are they?" asked the Colonel.

"Chiggers, jiggers, chigoes pulex penetrans," answered the Surgeon. "They are a great pest in the tropics, where the people go barefooted and do not take any care of their feet. This is the first time that I have ever heard of them being so far north. But there is no doubt about their being chiggers. They burrow in under the skin, and cause a great deal of suffering. Some of the men's hands and fingers are also affected by them. They are terrible things to deal with when they once get the start. If this thing goes on, not a man in the regiment will be able to walk a step."

"What can be done?" gasped the Colonel, gripping for a flea in his bosom.

"Nothing," answered the Surgeon, smashing an insect on the back of his hand, "except to issue a stringent order that the men must take special care of their feet and hands."

"Humph," said the Colonel, scornfully, as he caught a bug on his wrist; "much sense in an order of that kind, when the men have to wade through mud and water 18 hours out of 24, and then sleep in it the other six. Is that the best you can suggest? Is that all your conscience has to offer? Remember that you are responsible for the efficiency of the men on this great campaign, upon which the safety of the country depends. It will be a severe reflection upon you if you allow them to be broken down by a few insects."

"Great Pharaoh and Moses," responded the Surgeon irritably, as he grabbed for "a bite" on his throat. "Here we are, confronted with a condition of things like the curses which God Almighty sent against the Egyptians, and you expect me to manage it with quinine and epsom salts. It can't be done, Colonel."

"Isn't there anything that you can suggest or recommend that will mitigate this trouble?" said the Colonel in a more conciliatory manner, for he had just succeeded in crushing a tormentor. "Certainly, there must be something in your pharmacopeia which will at least retard these infernal vermin from eating my men alive. Can't you at least check them a little until we can get through the campaign? Then the men can be trusted to take care of themselves." And the Colonel made a swoop for a particularly vicious flea which was banqueting on the lobe of his ear.

"I never set up as a sharp on parasites," said the Surgeon, running down a "small deer" inside his collar; "but I remember to have read that an application of tobacco-juice is about as effective a preventive of insect bites as can be found."

"That'll do; that'll do," said Shorty triumphantly, as he and Si started back to their places to act at once on the Surgeon's suggestion. "Just the thing. Tobacker'll kill 'em deader than small-beer. Why didn't I think about it before?"

Shorty had some strong black plug tobacco. He cut this up into small pieces, while Si found an old tin can, into which they were put, and then the can filled up with boiling water.

"Let's make her good and strong, Si," said Shorty, putting in some more tobacco; "for the fellers are sock-dolagers, and it will take a horse dose to kill 'em. They'll just enjoy a little taste o' terbacker. Make it strong enough to bear up an aig. Now, let's git our clothes off while it's coolin' down. You drench me, and I'll drench you, and we'll salivate these gallinippers in a way that'll surprise 'em."

The surprise seemed to be mostly on the other side. Shorty's skin was raw from head to foot from the depredations of the various tribes of "epizoa," as the physicians generalize them. He gave a yell that could be heard through the whole regiment as the acrid, biting tobacco-juice struck a thousand little punctures in his skin inside of a second. Everybody rushed up to see what was the matter, and stood around, laughing and commenting, while scratching and slapping at their own colonies of tormentors. Then Shorty began the most vehement stream of profanity, and showered maledictions on everything in the State of Tennessee, which was only a breeding place for fleas, woodticks, jiggers, graybacks, niggers, rebels, traitors, bushwhackers, guerrillas, thieves, robbers and murderers, and other spawn of Jeff Davisism. Presently he grew violently sick at the stomach, turned deathly white, and fainted. Frightened, Si rushed for the Surgeon.

"Only tobacco poisoning," said the latter, after he had looked Shorty over carefully. "You made that solution too strong, and the lot of little punctures took it directly into his circulation. You might have killed him if you had made it stronger, or got more of it on him. I never saw such rapsallions as you boys are. You are always trying to kill yourselves or one another, in spite of all that I can do or tell you. A man that's Surgeon of this regiment has to earn his money, I tell you. He will come out all right pretty soon, only he will be very weak. I'll send you down some whisky to give him."

"Real old rye, Doctor?" said Shorty, very faintly, and opening his eyes feebly. "None of your Commissary stuff. This is a powerful bad case, and I need the best."

"You shall have it," laughed the Surgeon. "I know you. You are all right when you are all right. But you won't be able to march with the column to-day. I'll give you an excuse from duty. And you (to Si) had better stay with him. I'll speak to your Captain."

The bugles were sounding the "assembly" every where, and the men, slapping and scratching as if they would tear their flesh and their clothes off, were hastily swallowing their last mouthfuls of hot coffee and bread and pork, snatching up their guns and blankets and falling in.

"Shelbyville is only six miles away," said the Orderly-Sergeant as he lined up Co. Q, and clawed around his clothes at his persecutors. "There'll be a circus to-day, and no postponement on account o' the weather. It'll either be the gol-darnedest fight that the 200th Injianny Volunteers ever got into or the cussedest foot-race that ever wuz run. Here, Biles, consarn you, leave that fire and your munching, and fall in. You're like a cow's tail always behind."

Shorty made a violent effort to rise up and join the company, but he was manifestly too weak. Si was in sore distress. He didn't want to leave him, but he was anxious to be with his company.

"Corporal Klegg," said the Captain, coming down the line, and giving a frequent furtive scratch at himself, "Shorty can't possibly go with us to-day. I'm awfully sorry, but there is no use talking about it. You must stay behind and take care of him, and take care of these sore-footed men who will be unable to keep up. The Colonel orders you to command the whole outfit. You keep them together, keep up as well as you can, and if you see any place that you can be useful, go in. I know and the Colonel knows that you can be trusted to do that."

This made Si more reconciled to being left behind, and he mentally resolved that, though he might not be with his beloved regiment, he would manage to do his full share in the impending battle for Shelbyville.

The "Second Lieutenant and Aid-de-Camp" came up. It was noticed in the distance that he was suffering from the same causes as the others, but as soon as he came into the immediate presence of the men his official dignity asserted itself, he refrained from nervous pursuit of his verminiferous assailants, and walking stiffly up to the Colonel, saluted, and said:

"Colonel, I came to report the conduct of a couple of your men who came under my command night before last, and who, while doing very well in some respects, were so grossly disrespectful to me that they should be given a sharp lesson. Unless this is done, it will tend to impair discipline and diminish the respect which men should show officers."

The Colonel looked straight at the young officer, and noticed an unusually large insect emerge from his collar and walk deliberately up his neck onto his cheek. It must have been intensely annoying, but dignity triumphed, and the Lieutenant stood stiffly as a ramrod.

"I'm very sorry to hear that any of my men should seem wanting in respect to their officers," said the Colonel quietly, as he "attended to" a wicked flea which was breakfasting off his wrist. "I can hardly believe it. I have the most obedient and respectful men in the whole army. I'm afraid you did something that provoked, if it did not justify, disrespectful conduct."

The Lieutenant would have been different from the rest of the army if he had not been very short of temper that morning. The pangs that he was compelled to endure without the relief of scratching made him still more irritable, and he forgot himself sufficiently to answer:

"I beg your pardon, sir, but you are in error when you represent your men to be respectful and subordinate. On the contrary, they are the most lacking in that of any men in the army. I am constantly yelled at by them as I pass, and they say very insulting things to me. I'm determined to put a stop to it, and I want you to begin with those two men. If you don't I shall make a strong report on the subject to the General, which may lead to your being placed under arrest."

"Young man," said the Colonel severely, as he calmly exterminated another one of his tormentors, "you are so infested with vermin that I can see them crawling out from your clothes. It is an insult to me to have you appear before me in such a condition. Get out of here at once, and never approach me again in such a condition, or I shall be compelled to deal with you as you deserve."

The Lieutenant marched away, holding himself more stiffly than ever, and the Colonel walked to ward the other flank of the regiment, looking so cross that no one dared give the laugh he was bursting with until he had mounted his horse and shouted the command, "Forward!"

The rain actually ceased, and the sun came out for the first time in 10 long days; from miles to the right and left came sounds of infantry and artillery firing, gradually swelling in volume. Under these exciting influences, aided, perhaps, by a really fine article of whisky, which the Surgeon had left, Shorty rapidly recovered, picked up his gun, threw his blanket-roll over his shoulders, and announced his eagerness to move forward. The sore-footed men began to feel that their feet were not really as sore as they had thought, and they also hobbled forward. The road by which they had camped led straight to Shelbyville, and they felt that by following it they would have the best chance of getting into the fight. The road was filled with cavalry, and Si and his squad worked their way through the woods to the right to get up nearer the front and find an infantry line.

"What in the world are they doin' with all these cavalry here?" said Shorty fretfully. "They can't do nothin' agin the mud forts and big guns and miles o' breastworks and abatis and felled timber that the rebels 've bin puttin' out in front of Shelbyville for the last six months. Horses are only in the way for sich work. They must 'v'e put the cavalry back here to be safe, while the infantry does the work. We'll git in ahead o' the 'critter-companies' somewhere and find the dough-boys."

At last they came out on a hill which commanded a view of the country, and halted, with an exclamation of delight at the magnificent sight spread out before hem. The sun was now half-way up in the sky, and shining with a brightness which seemed divine after the long period of drenching showers. Its light was reflected in brilliance from thousands of sabers and accouterments and the waving of flags of the cavalry divisions which filled the country as far as the eye could reach. Ascending the slope at the farther side of the valley was a skirmish-line, two miles long, of dismounted cavalry men, from which rose wreathes of smoke as it pressed steadily forward up the hill against the rebels ensconced there. In the green fields on either side of the road, and in the road itself, were regiments and brigades of horsemen, massed up solidly, impatiently waiting for the progress of the skirmishers to bring about the moment when they could be hurled against the enemy in a

mighty avalanche of war. Bugles were sounding, flags flying, and all was intense, high-wrought, exciting animation.

The boys gave a cheer of exultation at the sight. Suddenly two little regiments separated themselves from the rest, drew sabers, and, with bugles sounding the charge and the men yelling, rode straight at the infantry and the batteries defending the crest of the hill. The rebels broke before the cavalry could reach them, and began a wild flight, with infantry, cavalry and artillery mixed in wild confusion, and our horsemen swooping down on them, capturing horses, men and cannon.

On everybody swept until the crest was gained which commanded a view of Shelbyville and its famous intrenchments. From these cannon thundered out, and long lines of infantry could be seen hurrying into the works to repel the audacious horsemen. Si and Shorty held their breaths, for it seemed that nothing but destruction awaited the cavalry in those awfully-planned defenses. But the cavalry thundered on with a headlong speed. Artillery galloped up on our side, to answer that in the works, and the boys lost speech in amazement at seeing the horsemen tear through the wide abatis and jump the high breastworks, while the defenders streamed back in rout into Shelbyville, pursued every step with yell and blow by the furious cavalry. Then came the noise of terrible fighting in the streets of Shelbyville. Jo Wheeler was massing every cannon that could be brought up to him in a desperate effort to hold the town, at least, until Forrest could come to his help, or he could make an orderly retreat across Duck River. But, bitterly as he fought, the Union troopers fought still more savagely. They simply would not allow the thought of successful resistance, and wave after wave of fierce charges followed so rapidly that Wheeler's men broke and fled for safety into and across the river.

The boys yelled themselves hoarse as they saw the stream of rebel fugitives pour across the river and seek safety in the country beyond.

"Well, Shelbyville is ours at last, after all this waiting and marching and manuvering," said Si, in a tone of intense exultation. "And the cavalry took it. Wish it had been the 200th Injianny Volunteers. I've always looked down on the cavalry, but I won't do so any more. I wish the 200th Injianny was mounted. My gracious, wasn't it grand the way those fellers just galloped over everything in sight breastworks, forts, batteries, felled timber, and lines of infantry."

"Yes," assented Shorty. "I wouldn't 've missed the sight for the best farm in the Wabash bottoms. It was worth marching 10 days in the mud and rain to see."

"Here, Corporal," said a Cavalry Lieutenant, riding up, "I want you to take charge of these prisoners with your squad, so we can go back and get some more. The woods are full of them. I'll make out a receipt for you to sign. I think there's just 100 of them. Count them over for yourself."

"Sure," said Si, springing forward.

CHAPTER VII. THE EXCITING ADVANCE TULLAHOMA

THE GREAT BATTLE THAT DID NOT COME OFF.

"DON'T yo'uns crow too much over gittin' Shelbyville," the prisoners said to Si. "Yo'uns couldn't never 've got hit in the world if Jinerul Bragg hadn't a'wanted yo'uns to."

"O, come off," said Shorty. "You tried your best to keep us from gittin' in. You put up a very pretty little fight, but our cavalry jest rode over you."

"Thar wuz nobody thar but Jo Wheeler and his critter company," persisted the prisoners, "and they'd fout for anything. They'd fout yo'uns for a chaw of terbacker, and then gin the chaw back. Ole Bragg wuz jist a-foolin' with yo'uns. He wuz drawin' yo'uns on. He made up his mind that Shelbyville wuzn't the best place for a fout, and he'd lay for yo'uns at Tullyhomy. He's got his whole army together down thar, and he'll wollop yo'uns till your hides won't hold shucks. Ole Bragg's smarter'n ary Yankee that ever lived, and he's fixed up a dead-fall for yo'uns at Tullyhomy that'll mash yo'uns flatter'n a pancack."

"Let him go ahead with his mashin' flat," answered Shorty; "we're some on the mash ourselves, as you fellers found out at Stone River."

"We'uns 'd 'a' welted the life ouden yo'uns at Stone River, if we'uns 'd had jest a few more men; ez hit wuz we'uns run yo'uns all over them 'ere old cotton-fields fur two days, tuk all yo'uns's cannon, an' more'n a million prisoners. Fust night I done thought we'uns 'd tuk the whole Yankee army. We'uns done got tired pickin' up prisoners in them ceders an' sink-holes, an' concluded t' leave the rest thar fur seed. We'uns jest f'arly wore ourselves out lickin' yo'uns, an' then yo'uns got a whole passel 'o fresh men, an' we'uns jest pulled back t' Shelbyville t' rest, spit on we'uns' hands an' take a fresh holt."

"How about the last day," inquired Si, "over the river on the left, when we tore you all to flinders with artillery, and run you back over the hill and took your guns?"

"O, that wuz Breckinridge's Division," said the prisoners, negligently, as if dismissing a matter of little consequence. "They'uns desared all they'uns got. They'uns wuz sent for t' come over and help we'uns lick yo'uns the fust two days, but they'uns wouldn't come. I'm jest glad they'uns kotched hit good an' hard ez they'uns done got hit. But we'uns 's now got heaps more men than we'uns had at Stone River, an' they're all together over thar by Tullyhomy. Lordy, you jest orter seed 'em az I did. I wuz on the top of a mounting on gyard, whar I could see for a hundred miles in every direction, an' I seed men marchin' toward Tullyhomy till my eyes ached a-lookin' at 'em. Yo'uns 'll stir up a mouty sight wuss hornets' nest at Tullyhomy than yo'uns did at Murfreesboro."

"Well, we'll knock seven kinds o' brimstone out o' your hornets' nest, big as it may be," answered Shorty. "The more o' you there is the better, for we kin finish up the job then, and be done with it, instid o' havin' to run you down an' knock you on the head one at a time. We've more men, too, than we had at Stone River. There was enough of us before, but Old Abe just gethered up the men in three or four new States, and sent 'em down to us to help make a clean, quick job of it. All we want of you fellers is jest to stand up and give us a square fight. We're no grayhounds, to run you fellers down. We came down here to fight, not to trot races with you.

"Well, yo'uns'll git yer bellyful o' foutin' over by Tullyhomy," shouted back the prisoners as they were marched away under guard.

"It certainly does look like we're to have a bigger scrimmage than we had at Stone River," said Si, as he and Shorty were once more alone. "Our army is much larger, and it's all been gathered right around here. There's bin great rivers of men pouring through all these gaps for days, and we've talked with fellers from every division and brigade in the army. There's entirely too many men around here for the country to hold. Something's got to bust soon, and when it does bust there'll be an explosion like that you read about."

"Well, let her bust," answered Shorty. "The sooner the better. I want to see it right off. It's got to come before the war kin end, and for my part I don't want to march a step further to find it. They can't nohow git up a worse time than we had at Stone River, and we managed to live through that; so that I guess we kin pull through another. If we don't, this 's just as good a place to go to Heaven from as we kin find, and we'll save a whole lot o' worry by finishin' up now."

"Well," said Si, "let's git back to the regiment as soon's possible. The battle may begin at any minute, and we musn't be away. We'd never forgive ourselves as long's we'd live if we wasn't with the boys when they line up under the colors for the great tussle."

"Getting to the regiment" was tedious and hard. Shorty was still very weak from his tobacco experiment, and Si had worked almost to exhaustion in helping his sore-footed squad along. These were as eager to get back to the regiment in time for the fight, and Si had not the heart to leave any one of them behind. The roads were filled with teams being pushed forward with ammunition and rations, and every road and path crowded with men hurrying to the "front." They were on the distant flank of their corps when they started out in the morning, and did not succeed in reaching the rear of their own division until nightfall. Though worn out by the day's painful tramping and winding around through the baffling paths between regiments, brigades and divisions, sometimes halting and some times moving off suddenly and unexpectedly, they nerved themselves for one more effort to reach the 200th Ind. before they lay down for the night. But the night was far harder than the day. The whole country was full of campfires, around which were men' cooking their supper, standing in groups, pipe in mouth, anxiously discussing the coming momentous battle, and the part their regiments would likely play in it, or sitting writing what they felt might be their last letters home. All were unutterably tired, and all earnestly thoughtful over the impending conflict. None felt ordinarily jovial, communicative and sympathetic with foot-sore stragglers trying to find their regiments. Even when they were, the movements and changes during the day had been so bewildering that their best-intentioned directions were more likely to be wrong than right.

"The 200th Ind.," they would say; "yes, we saw the 200th Ind. about the middle of the afternoon, right over there on that hillside, where you see that old tree blazing up. They were acting as if they were going into camp, and I expect that's their campfires you see there."

Si, Shorty and the rest would make their weary way to the point indicated, about a half-mile distant, only to find that their regiment had been sighted at another point a mile away in a different direction.

The morning of July 1, 1863, was almost ready to break when they at last came up with their regiment, and flung themselves down on the ground in absolute exhaustion. Worn out as they were, their soldierly ears could not be deaf to the stirring reveille which quickly followed the early daybreak of that Summer morning, and summoned the regiment for the final, decisive move upon the rebel stronghold of Tullahoma.

Though every bone and muscle seemed to cry out against it, Si, Shorty and their companions rose up promptly and joined the regiment.

Everybody seemed sobered by the nearness of the terrible battle. Nobody laughed, nobody swore, nobody joked, nobody played the usual light-hearted reveille tricks. The Orderly-Sergeant did not call the roll with his usual glibness and rasp. He seemed to linger a little over each name, as if thinking whether it would be answered to again, or he be there to call it. The officers gave the commands quietly, even gently. The men executed promptly, carefully, and silently, as one sees things done at a funeral or in church. A hasty breakfast was eaten in silence; the men fell into ranks again, and there was a low buzz as the cartridge-boxes were carefully inspected and each man supplied with his full quota of ammunition.

The Colonel mounted his horse, and gave the order, "Forward march," so quietly that only the leading company heard it. It moved promptly, and the others followed.

The same strange soberness ruled the other regiments they passed on their way to take the advance. There was for once no quip or jest from the men standing by the roadside, leaning thoughtfully on their muskets, and awaiting their turn to march. They merely watched them file by, with steady, grave eyes and an occasional calm nod or quiet greeting to an acquaintance.

The hurrah, the swagger, the noisy effervescence of a few months ago had disappeared from men who had learned to know what battle was.

The dripping clouds cleared away as the 200th Ind. drew out into the muddy road, and let the sun suddenly beam forth in full Midsummer power. In an instant everybody was reeking with perspiration, panting for breath, and scorching inwardly and outwardly.

It was too much for some who had bravely maintained their places thus far, and they had to sink by the roadside.

Every minute of the first hour it seemed to Si and Shorty that they could not go a rod farther, but at the end of every rod they made an effort to go an other, and succeeded. The sun momentarily grew more burning, but

also it seemed that every step brought them nearer the enemy, and the thought nerved them up to further exertion. Occasional rippling shots from watching parties of the rebel cavalry helped stimulate them.

Noon passed. They were so near the works of Tullahoma that the collision might come at any minute could not be postponed many minutes. The regiments left the road and went into line-of-battle, stretching a long wave of blue through the deep green of the thick forests. How far it reached no one could tell. Occasional glimpses obtained through the openings in the woods showed miles of length.

Everything was deeply quiet, except occasional startling crashes from rebel outposts and the distant booming of cannon on the left.

The 200th Ind. was advancing through a heavy growth of jack-oaks.

Lines of rebel skirmishers had occasionally appeared in front of the regiment, fired a few shots, and then disappeared. The ease with which they were driven gave the impression that they were trying to lead the regiment into ambush, and it moved slowly and very watchfully.

At last, as the hot sun was beginning to sink in the far west, the regiment came to the edge of the young jack-oaks, and saw before it a sight which thrilled every heart.

There, a little distance away, lay the formidable works guarding Tullahoma. To the right and left, as far as the eye could reach, stretched a bristling line of abatis hundreds of yards wide and seemingly hopelessly impassable. It was made of the young jack-oaks felled outwards and their limbs sharp ened till they were like thorns.

Frowning behind this fearsome barrier were high-rising forts mounted with cannon, and connected with long, sinuous breastworks. A deep ditch filled with muddy water ran along the foot of the works.

Squads of rebels could be seen running back to the shelter of the fortifications. Every man in the regiment gave a quick, involuntary gasp as he saw his work before him.

The whole of the long line was halted and carefully dressed by the officers, still speaking as softly and kindly as if arranging a funeral procession, and the men stepping into places promptly, and with a tender solemnity of manner. There was none of the customary rude jostling and impatient sharpness. It was:

"You'll have to give away to the left a little, John; I haven't room."

"Come out there, boys, on the right. You're too far back."

"Jim, you'd better fall in behind. I don't believe you're strong enough to keep up."

Even the brash young "Second Lieutenant and Aid-de-Camp" seemed impressed with the intense gravity of the moment. He came up to the Colonel, and seeing he was on foot, respectfully dismounted, saluted, and said, without a vestige of his usual pertness:

"Colonel, the General presents his compliments, and says that the battery is badly stuck in the mud a little ways back. As we shall need it very much, he directs that you send a company to bring it up at once."

"Very good, sir," said the Colonel, gravely returning his salute, and speaking as gently as at a tea-table. "It shall be done. Capt. McGillicuddy, take your company back and bring up the battery."

"Attention, Co. Q," suggested rather than commanded Capt. McGillicuddy. "Stack arms. Corporal Klegg, you and your squad remain where you are. You are too tired to do any good. Right face; file left; forward march."

The Colonel mounted his horse, rode down to the center of the regiment, and said, in a tone hardly raised above the conversational, but which made itself distinctly heard by every man:

"Fix bayonets."

There was an ominous crash of steel as the bright bayonets swept to their places.

"Men," continued the Colonel as quietly as if talking to a Sunday school, "we're going to take those works with the bayonet. Keep perfectly quiet; reserve your breath for quick, hard work, and pay close attention to orders. We'll move in quick time to the edge of that slashing of timber; every man make his way through it as best he can, keeping as near his Captain as possible. As soon as through it he will run with all his might for the works, fire his gun into the rebels as he jumps the works, and then rely on his bayonet. No man must fire a shot until we are crossing the works, and then I want every shot to fetch a rebel."

He waited a moment before giving the command to advance, for Co. Q, which had snaked the battery out of the mudhole in a hurry, was coming on a dead run in order to be on time for the charge. It snatched its guns from the stacks, and lined up like a long flash of blue light.

The artillerymen had lashed their jaded horses into a feverish run, swept out into an open space, flung their guns "into battery," and opened with a vicious bang on the rebel works.

So far not a head appeared above the breastworks; not a shot from the embrasures in the forts.

"They're just laying low," whispered Si to Shorty, as they instinctively brought their shoulders together and summoned their energies for the swift advance. "They'll blaze out like the fires o' hell just as we git tangled up in that infernal timber-slashin'."

"Well," muttered Shorty, "we'll know mighty soon now. In five minutes we'll either be in Heaven or bayoneting the rebels in that fort."

"Battalion, forward march!" commanded the Colonel.

The regiments to the right and left got the command at the same instant, and the long wave of blue rolled forward without a break or fault in its perfect alignment.

A hundred yards were quickly passed, and still the rebel works were as silent as a country churchyard. The suspense was fearful. Men bent their heads as if in momentary expectation of being struck by a fearful blast.

Another hundred yards. Still no bullet from the rifle-pits, no canister from the forts.

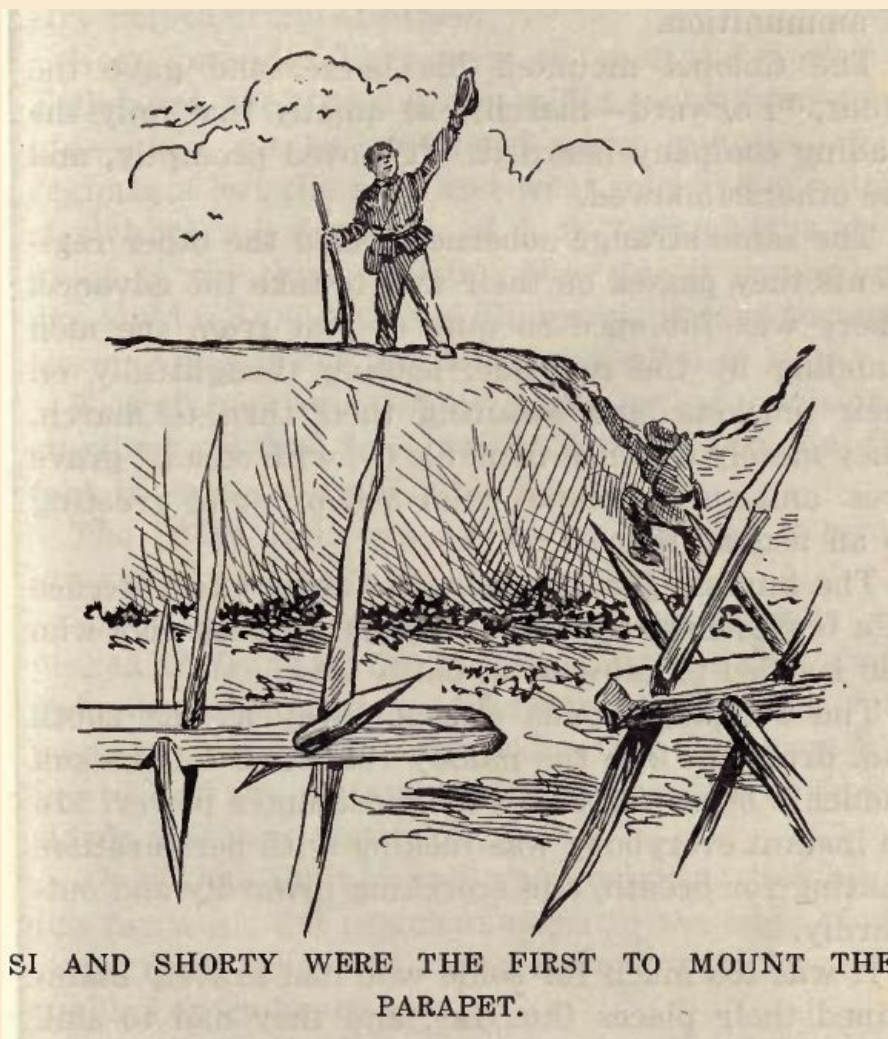
Another hundred yards, and they had struck the entangling abatis, and were feverishly working their clothes loose from the sharp-pointed limbs.

"Capt. McGillicuddy," excitedly shouted Si, "there's no men in them works. Didn't you see that flock o'

blackbirds just settle down on that fort?"

"That's true," said the Captain, after a quick glance. "Colonel, they've evacuated."

A little to the left of the company Si saw a path through the abatis made by the rebels taking short cuts in and out of the camp. He and Shorty quickly broke their way to it, and ran in feverish haste to the works. They found a puncheon laid to cross the ditch, ran over it, and mounted the rifle-pit. There was not a man inside of the works. The last of the garrison could be seen on the other side of Elk River, setting fire to the bridge by which they had just crossed.



SI AND SHORTY WERE THE FIRST TO MOUNT THE
PARAPET.

Utterly exhausted by fatigue and the severe mental strain, Si and Shorty could do nothing more than give a delighted yell, fire their guns at the distant rebels, when they sank down in complete collapse.

Almost at the same time the same discovery had been made at other points in the long line moving to the assault; the inside of the works were quickly filled with a mob of rushing men, who seemed to lift the clouds with their triumphant yells.

The campaign for Tullahoma was at an end. Bragg had declined battle, and put the whole of his army out of reach of pursuit behind the swollen waters of Elk River.

That night by its cheerful campfires the exultant Army of the Cumberland sang from one end of its long line to the other, with thousands of voices joining at once in the chorus, its song of praise to Gen. Rosecrans, which went to the air of "A Little More Cider."

*Cheer up, cheer up, the night is past,
The skies with light are glowing.
Our ships move proudly on, my boys,
And favoring gales are blowing.
Her flag is at the peak, my boys,
To meet the traitorous faction.
We'll hasten to our several posts,
And immediately prepare for action.*

Chorus.

*Old Rosey is our man.
Old Rosey is our man.
We'll show our deeds where'er he leads,
Old Rosey is our man.*

CHAPTER VIII. THE GLORIOUS FOURTH INDEPENDENCE DAY FUN

ON THE BANKS OF ELK RIVER.

"THIS is the glorious Fourth of July," remarked Si, as Co. Q broke ranks from reveille roll-call on the banks of Elk River, and he and Shorty turned anxious attention to the problem of getting a satisfactory breakfast out of the scanty materials at their command. "Up home they're gittin' ready for a great time. Yesterday mother and the girls cooked enough goodies to feed the whole company. Mother had Abe Lincoln split up a lot o' fine, dry hickory. Then she het up the big brick oven out by the Summer-kitchen, and she baked there a lot o' loaves o' her splendiferous salt-raisin' bread, the best in the whole country, if I do say it myself."

"Resemble this, Si?" asked Shorty, who was pawing around in his shrunken haversack, as he produced two dingy crackers and a handful of pieces, discolored by contact with the coffee and meat during the days of marching in the rain.

"And, then," continued Si, unmindful of the interruption, "after she took the bread out, smelling like a bouquet, she put in some biscuits, and then some dressed chicken, a young pig."

"Just like this," echoed Shorty, pulling out a rusty remnant of very fat commissary pork.

"Shet up, Shorty," said Si, angered at this reminder of their meager store, which was all that was left them for the day, since they had far out marched their wagons. "I won't have you makin' fun o' my mother's cookin'."

"Well, you shut up torturing me about home goodies," answered Shorty, "when we hain't got enough grub here to fill one undivided quarter-section o' one o' our gizzards, and there hain't no more this side o' the wagons, which are stalled somewhere in the Duck River hills, and won't be up till the katydids sing. I ain't making fun o' your mother's cookin'. But I won't have you tormenting me with gas about the goodies back home."

"I know it ain't right, Shorty," said Si. "It only makes us feel worse. But I can't help thinkin'—"

"Jest go on thinkin'," sneered Shorty, "if you kin fill yourself up that way. I can't. You'd better set to studyin' how to make less'n quarter rations for one fill up two men for all day. There ain't no use goin' a-foragin'. They call this country the Cumberland Barrens. There never was grub enough in it to half support the clay-eaters that live around here, and what there was the rebels have carried off. The only thing I kin think of is to cut up some basswood chips and fry with this pork. Mebbe we could make 'em soft enough to fill up on." And Shorty gloomily shook out the last crumb from the haversacks into a tin of water to soak, while he fried the grease out of the fragment of pork in his half-canteen.

"And Pap," continued Si, as if determined to banish famine thoughts by more agreeable ones, "has had the trottin' team nicely curried, and their manes and tails brushed out, and hitched 'em to that new Studebaker-spring wagon he wrote about. They'll put all the good things in, and then mother and the girls'll climb in. They'll go down the road in great style, and pick up Annabel, and drive over to the Grove, where they'll meet all the neighbors, and talk about their boys in the army, and the Posey Brass Band'll play patriotic tunes, and old Beach Jamieson'll fire off the anvil, and then Parson Ricketts'll put on his glasses and read the Declaration o' Independence, and then some politician young lawyer from Mt. Vernon or Poseyville 'll make a sky-soaring, spread-eagle speech, and—"

"O, do come off, Si," said Shorty irritably. "You're only making yourself hungrier exercising your tongue so. Come here and git your share o' the breakfast and mind you eat fair."

Shorty had fried out the pork in the dingy, black half-canteen, poured the soaked crackers into the sputtering hot grease, and given the mess a little further warming and stirring. Then he pulled the half-canteen from the split stick which served for a handle, set it on the ground, and drew a line through it with his spoon to divide the food fairly into equal portions..

Meanwhile Si had strolled over a little ways to where an old worm fence had stood when the regiment went into camp. Now only the chunks at the corners remained. He looked a minute, and then gave a yell of delight.

"Here, Shorty," he called out; "here's something that beats your fried breakfasts all holler. Here's ripe blackberries till you can't rest, and the biggest, finest ones you ever saw. Come over here, and you can pick all you can eat in five minutes."

He began picking and eating with the greatest industry. Shorty walked over and followed his example.

"They are certainly the finest blackberries I ever saw," he agreed. "Strange that we didn't notice them before. This country ain't no good for nothin' else, but it surely kin beat the world on blackberries. Hi, there! Git out, you infernal brute!"

This latt'er remark was addressed to a long-legged, mangy hound that had suddenly appeared from no where, and was nosing around their breakfast with appreciative sniffs. Shorty made a dive for him, but he cleaned out the half-canteen at one comprehensive gulp, and had put a good-sized farm between him and the fire before Shorty reached it. That gentleman fairly danced with rage, and swore worse than a teamster, but the breakfast was gone beyond recovery. The other boys yelled at and gibed him, but they were careful to do it at a safe distance.

"'Twasn't much of a breakfast, after all, Shorty," said Si, consolingly. "The crackers was moldly and the pork full o' maggots, and the Surgeon has warned us time and again against eatin' them greasy fried messes. All the doctors say that blackberries is very healthy, and they certainly taste nice."

Shorty's paroxysm of rage expended itself, and he decided it wisest to accept Si's advice.

"The berries is certainly fine, Si," he said with returning good humor. "If I could've only laid a foundation of crackers and meat I could've built a very good breakfast out of 'em. I misdoubt, though, whether they've got enough substance and stick-to-the-ribs to make a meal out of all by themselves. However, I'll fill up on 'em, and hope they'll last till a grub-cart gets through. There ought to be one here before noon."

"One consolation," said Si; "we won't have to march on this peck. The Adjutant's just passed the word that we're to rest here a day or two."

The rest of the regiment were similarly engaged in browsing off the blackberries that grew in wonderful

profusion all around, and were really of extraordinary size. After filling themselves as full as possible of the fruit, Si and Shorty secured a couple of camp kettles and gave their garments a boiling that partially revenged themselves upon the insect life of Tennessee for the torments they endured in the Tullahoma campaign.

"The better the day the better the deed," remarked Shorty, as he and Si stood around the fire, clothed in nothing but their soldierly character, and satisfiedly poked their clothes down in the scalding water. "Thousands must die that one may be free from graybacks, fleas, and ticks. How could be better celebrated the Fourth of July than by the wholesale slaughter of the tyrants who drain the life-blood of freemen and patriots? Now, that's a sentiment that would be fine for your orator who is making a speech about this time to your folks in Injianny."

By this time they were hungry again. The black berries had no staying power in proportion to their filling qualities, and anxiously as they watched the western horizon, no feet of the mules bringing rations had been seen beautiful on the mountains.

They went out and filled up again on blackberries, but these seemed to have lost something of their delicious taste of those eaten earlier in the morning.

They went back, wrung out their clothes, and put them on again.

"They'll fit better if they dry on us," remarked Shorty. "And I'm afraid we'll warp, splinter and check if we are exposed to this sun any longer after all the soakin' we've bin havin' for the past 10 days."

Comfortably full abdominally, with a delicious sense of relief from the fiendish insects, the sun shining once more brightly in the sky, and elated over the brilliant success of the campaign, they felt as happy as it often comes to men.

The scenery was inspiring. Beyond Elk River the romantic Cumberland Mountains raised their picturesque peaks and frowning cliffs into a wondrous cloud-world, where the radiant sunshine and the pearly showers seemed in endless struggle for dominion, with the bright rainbows for war-banners. When the sunshine prevailed, filmy white clouds flags of truce floated lazily from peak to peak, and draped themselves about the rugged rocks. It was an ever-changing panorama of beauty and mystery, gazing on which the eye never wearied.

"Bragg's somewhere behind them mountains, Shorty," said Si, as the two lay on the ground, smoked, and looked with charmed eyes on the sky line. "The next job's to go in there and find him and lick him."

"I don't care a durn, if it's only dry weather," answered Shorty. "I kin stand anything but rain. I'd like to soldier awhile in the Sahara Desert for a change. Hello, what's that? A fight?"

A gun had boomed out loudly. The boys pricked up their ears, took their pipes from their mouths and half raised in anticipation of the bugle-call. An other shot followed after an interval, and then a third and fourth.

"They're firing a National salute at Division Headquarters in honor of the Fourth of July," explained the Orderly-Sergeant.

Everybody jumped to his feet and cheered

Cheered for the Fourth of July;

Cheered for the United States of America;

Cheered for President Abraham Lincoln;

Cheered for Maj.-Gen. Wm. S. Rosecrans.

Cheered for the Army of the Cumberland;

Cheered for the Corps Commander;

Cheered for the Division Commander;

Cheered for the Brigadier-General;

Cheered for the Colonel of the 200th Ind.;

Cheered for their Royal Selves.

"Whew, how hungry that makes me," said Shorty as the cheering and the firing ended, and he studied the western horizon anxiously. "And not a sign yit of any mule-team comin' up from the rear. They must have religious scruples agin travelin' on the Fourth o' July. Well, I s'pose there's nothin' to do but hunt up some more blackberries. But blackberries is like mush. They don't seem to stay with you much longer'n you're eatin' 'em."

But they had to go much farther now to find blackberries. The whole hungry regiment had been hunting blackberries all day, and for more than a mile around camp the briars were bare. Si and Shorty succeeded at last in finding another plentiful patch, upon which they filled up, and returned to camp for another smoke and an impatient look for the Commissary teams.

"I like blackberries as well as any other man," mused Shorty, "but it don't seem to me that last lot was nearly so good as the first we had this morning. Mebbe the birds kin eat 'em four times a day and seven days in the week without gittin' tired, but I ain't much of a bird, myself. I'd like to change off just now to about six big crackers, a pound o' fat pork and a quart o' coffee. Wonder if the rebel cavalry could've got around in our rear and jumped our trains? No; 'Joe Wheeler's critter company,' as that rebel called 'em, hain't quit runnin' yit from the lickin' Minty give 'em at Shelbyville. Mebbe the mules have struck. I'd 'a' struck years ago if I'd bin a mule."

The sun began to sink toward the western hills, and still no welcome sign of coming wagons.

Si remarked despairingly:

"Well, after all the berry-eatin' I've done to-day I feel as holler as a bee-gum. I don't believe any wagons'll git up to-night, and if we're goin' to have any supper at all we'd better go out and pick it before it gits too dark to see."

They had to go a long distance out this time to find a good berry patch. It was getting dark before they

fairly began picking their supper. Presently they heard voices approaching from the other side. They crouched down a little behind the brier-clumps and listened.

"Be keerful. The Yankee pickets must be nigh. Thar's their campfires."

"Pshaw. Them fires is two miles away. Thar's no pickets fur a mile yit. Go ahead."

"No sich thing. Them fires ain't a mile off."

"Their pickets are likely right along that 'ere ridge thar."

"Bushwhackers," whispered Si, rising a little to reconnoiter. "One, two, three, four, five, six on 'em. Sneakin' up to pick off our pickets. What'd we better do?"

"Only thing I kin think of," whispered Shorty back, feeling around for a stick that would represent a gun, "is the old trick of ordering 'em to surrender. It's an awful bluff, but we may work it this time. If they've got any grit we needn't worry no more about rations. They'll git us."

Si snatched up a piece of rail, and they sprang up together, shouting:

"Halt! Surrender! Don't move a hand or we'll blow your heads off."

"All right, Yank. We surrender. Don't shoot. We'uns 've bin a-huntin' yo'uns to gin ourselves up. We'uns is tired o' the wah."



"The thunder you do," said Si in amazement.

"Yes," said the leader, walking forward; "we'uns is plumb sick o' the wah, and want t' take the oath and go home. 'Deed we'uns do."

"Well, you liked to 've scared two fine young soldiers to death," murmured Si under his breath.

"Halt, there," called out the suspicious Shorty.

"Don't come any nearer, or I'll fire. Stand still, and hold your guns over your heads, till I send a man out to git 'em."

The rebels obediently held their guns in the air.

"Sergeant," commanded Shorty, "go forward and relieve the men of their arms, while the rest of us keep 'em kivered to prevent treachery and gittin' the drop on us."

Si went out and took the guns, one by one, from the hands of the men, and made as good an examination as he could, hastily, to see that they carried nothing else.

"Lordy, Yank, if you only knowed how powerful glad we'uns is to git to yo'uns, you wouldn't 'spicion us. We'uns 's nigh on to starved t' death. Hain't had nothin' to eat but blackberries for days. And hit's bin march, march, all the time, right away from we'uns's homes. Goramighty only knows whar ole Bragg's a-gwine tuh. Mebbe t' Cuby. We'uns wuz willin' t' fout fur ole Tennessee, but for nary other State. When he started out o' Tennessee we'uns jest concluded t' strike out and leave him. Lordy, Mister, hain't you got something t' eat? We'uns is jest starvin' t' death. 'Deed we'uns is."

"Awful sorry," replied Shorty, as he and Si gathered up the guns and placed themselves behind the group.

"But we hain't nothin' to eat ourselves but blackberries, and won't have till our wagons git up, which 'll be the Lord and Gen. Rosecrans only knows when. You shall have it when we kin git it. Hello, the boys are cheerin'. That means a wagon's got in. Skip out, now, at a quarter-hoss gait. They may gobble it all up before we git there."

Inspired by this, they all started for camp in quick-time. Shorty was right in interpreting the cheering to mean the arrival of a ration-wagon.

When they reached Co. Q they found the Orderly-Sergeant standing over a half-box of crackers.

Around him was gathered the company in a petulant state of mind.

"Cuss and swear, boys, all you've a mind to," he was saying, "if you think that'll swell your grub. You know it won't. Only one wagon's come up, and it had only a half-load. Our share in it is what you see here. I figure that there's just about one cracker apiece for you, and as I call your names you'll step up and get it. Don't swear at me. I've done the best I could. Cuss the Tennessee mud and freshets in the cricks all you want to, if you think that'll fill your crops, but let me alone, or I'll bust somebody."

"I've my opinion o' the glorious Fourth o' July," said Shorty, as he nibbled moodily at his solitary cracker. "I'll change my politics and vote for Thanksgiving Day and Christmas after this."

"Well, I think that we've had a pretty fine Fourth," said the more cheerful Si. "For once in my life I've had all the blackberries I could eat, and otherwise it's a pleasant day. Them deserters gave me a cold chill at first, but I'm glad we got 'em. There'll certainly be more wagons up to-night, and to-morrow we'll have all we kin eat."

And that night, for the first in 10 days, they slept under dry blankets.

CHAPTER IX. A LITTLE EPISODE OVER LOVE LETTERS.

HOW exuberantly bright, restful, and happy were those long July days on the foothills of the Cumberland Mountains, after the fatigues and hardships, the endless rains, the fathom less mud, the angry, swollen streams, the exhausting marches, and the feverish anxieties of the Tullahoma campaign.

The insolent, threatening enemy had retreated far across the mountain barrier. For the while he was out of reach of striking or being struck. The long-delayed commissary-wagons had come up, and there was an abundance to eat. The weather was delightful, the forests green, shady and inviting, the scenery picturesque and inspiring, and every day brought news of glorious Union victories, over which the cannon boomed in joyful salutes and the men cheered themselves hoarse. Grant had taken Vicksburg, with 25,000 prisoners, and chased Joe Johnston out of sight and knowledge. Prentiss had bloodily repulsed Sterling Price at Helena. Banks had captured Port Hudson, with 6,000 prisoners. The Mississippi River at last "flowed unvexed to the sea." Meade had won a great victory at Gettysburg, and Lee's beaten army was in rapid retreat to Virginia. "The blasted old Southern Confederacy is certainly havin' its underpinnin' knocked out, its j'int's cracked, and its roof caved in," remarked Si, as the two boys lay under the kindly shade of a low-growing jackoak, lazily smoked their pipes, and gazed contentedly out over the far-spreading camps, in which no man was doing anything more laborious than gathering a little wood to boil his evening coffee with. "'Tain't fit to store brick-bats in now. By-and-by we'll go out and hunt up old Bragg and give him a good punch, and the whole crazy shebang 'll come down with a crash."

"I only wish old Bragg wasn't of sich a retirin' nature," lazily commented Shorty. "The shade o' this tree is good enough for me. I don't want to ever leave it. Why couldn't he've waited for me, and we could've had it out here, coolly and pleasantly, and settled which was the best man! The thing' d bin over, and each feller could've gone about his business."

Both relapsed into silence as each fell into day dreams the one about a buxom, rosy-cheeked little maiden in the Valley of the Wabash; the other of one in far-off Wisconsin, whom he had never seen, but whom he mentally endowed with all the virtues and charms that his warmest imagination could invest a woman. Neither could see a woman without thinking how inferior she was in looks, words or acts to those whose images they carried in their hearts, and she was sure to suffer greatly by the comparison.

Such is the divinely transforming quality of love.

Each of the boys had taken the first opportunity, after getting enough to eat, a shelter prepared, and his clothes in shape and a tolerable rest, to write a long letter to the object of his affections. Shorty's letter was not long on paper, but in the time it took him to write it. He felt that he was making some progress with the fair maid of Bad Ax, and this made him the more deeply anxious that no misstep should thwart the progress of love's young dream.

Letter-writing presented unusual difficulties to Shorty. His training in the noble art of penmanship had stopped short long before his sinewy fingers had acquired much knack at forming the letters. Spelling and he had a permanent disagreement early in life, and he was scarcely on speaking terms with grammar. He had never any trouble conveying his thoughts by means of speech. People had very little difficulty in understanding what he meant when he talked, but this was quite different from getting his thoughts down in plain black and white for the reading of a strange young woman whom he was desperately anxious to please, and desperately afraid of offending. He labored over many sheets of paper before he got a letter that seemed only fairly satisfactory. One he had rejected because of a big blot on it; second, because he thought he had expressed himself too strongly; a third, because of an erasure and unseemly correction; a fourth, because of some newborn suspicions about the grammar and spelling, and so on. He thought, after he had carefully gathered up all his failures and burned them, together with a number of envelopes he had wrecked in his

labor to direct one to Miss Lucinda Briggs, Bad Ax, Wis., sufficiently neatly to satisfy his fastidious taste.

He carefully folded his letter, creasing it with a very stalwart thumb-nail, sealed it, gave it a long inspection, as he thought how much it was carrying, and how far, and took it up to the Chaplain's tent to be mailed.

Later in the afternoon a hilarious group was gathered under a large cottonwood. It was made up of teamsters, Quartermaster's men, and other bobtail of the camp, with the officers' servants forming the dark fringe of an outer circle. Groundhog was the presiding spirit. By means best known to himself he had become possessed of a jug of Commissary whisky, and was dispensing it to his auditors in guarded drams to lighten their appreciation of his wit and humor. He had come across one of the nearly-completed letters which Shorty had thrown aside and failed to find when he burned the rest. Groundhog was now reading this aloud, accompanied by running comments, to the great amusement of his auditors, who felt that, drinking his whisky, and expecting more, they were bound to laugh uproariously at anything he said was funny.

"Shorty, that lanky, two-fisted chump of Co. Q, who thinks hisself a bigger man than General Rosecrans," Groundhog explained, "has writ a letter to a gal away off somewhere up North. How in the kingdom he ever come to git acquainted with her or any respectable woman 's more'n I kin tell. But he's got cheek enough for anything. It's sartin, though, that she's never saw him, and don't know nothin' about him, or she'd never let him write to her. Of course, he's as ignorant as a mule. He skeercely got beyant pot-hooks when he wuz tryin' to larn writin', an' he spells like a man with a wooden leg. Look here:

"'Mi Dere Frend.' Now, everybody knows that the way to spell dear is d-e-e-r. Then he goes on:

"'I taik mi pen in hand to inform u that Ime well, tho I've lost about 15 pounds, and hoap that u air injoyin' the same blessin."

"Think o' the vulgarity o' a man writin' to a young lady 'bout his losin' flesh. If a man should write sich a thing to my sister I'd hunt him up and wollop the life outen him. Then he goes on:

"'I aint built to spare much meat, and the loss of 15 pounds leaves fallow lots in mi cloze. But it will grow it all back on me agin mitey quick, as soon as we kin hav another protracted meetin' with the Commissary Department.'

"Did you ever hear sich vulgarity?" Groundhog groaned. "Now hear him brag and use langwidge unfit for any lady to see:

"'We've jest went throo the gosh-almightiest campane that enny army ever done. It wuz rane and mud 48 ours outen the 24, with thunder and litenin' on the side. We got wettern Faro's hosts done chasin' the Jews throo 50 foot of Red See. But we diddent stop for that till we'd hussled old Bragg outen his works, and started him on the keen jump for Chattynoogy, to put the Cumberland Mountings betwixt us and him.'

"Think o' the conceit o' the feller. Wants to make that gal believe that he druv off Bragg a'most single-handed, and intends to foller him up and kick him some more. Sich gall. Sich fellers hurts us in the opinion o' the people at home. They make 'em think we're all a set o' blowhards. But this aint nothin' to what comes next. He tries to honeyfugle the gal, and he's as clumsy 'bout it as a brown b'ar robbin' a bee-hive. Listen:

"'mi dere frend, I can't tell you how happy yore letters maik me. I've got so I look for the male a good dele more angshiously than for the grub wagon.'

"Think o' a man sayin' grub to a lady," said Groundhog, in a tone of deep disgust. "Awful coarse. A gentleman allers says 'peck,' or 'hash,' or Vittels,' when he's speakin' to a lady, or before ladies. I licked a man onct for sayin' 'gizzard-linen' before my mother, and gizzard-linin' aint half as coarse as grub. But he gits softer'n mush as he goes on. Listen:

"'I rede every wun of 'em over till they're cleane wore out, and then I save the pieces, bekaze they cum from u. I rede them whenever Ime alone, and it seems to me that its yeres before another one comes. If I cood make anybody feel as good by ritin' to 'em as u kin me Ide rite 'em every day.'

"Thar's some more of his ignorant spellin'," said Groundhog. "Everybody but a blamed fool knows the way to spell write is w-r-i-g-h-t. I learnt that much before I wuz knee-high to a grasshopper. But let me continner:

"'I think Bad Ax, Wisconsin, must be the nicest plais in the world, bekaze u live there. I woodent want to live anywhair else, and Ime cummin up thar just as soon as the war is over to settle. I think of u every our in the day, and—'

"He thinks of her every hour. The idee," said Groundhog, with deep scorn, "that sich a galoot as Shorty thinks of anything more'n a minute, except triple-X, all-wool, indigo-dyed cussedness that he kin work off on some other feller and hurt him, that he don't think's as smart as he is. Think o' him gushin' out all this soft-solder to fool some poor girl."

"You infernal liar, you, give me that letter," shouted Si, bolting into the circle and making a clutch at the sheet. "I'll pound your onery head off en you."

Si had come up unnoticed, and listened for a few minutes to Groundhog's tirade before he discovered that his partner was its object. Then he sprang at the teamster, struck him with one hand, and snatched at the letter with the other. The bystanders instinctively sided with the teamster, and Si became the center of a maelstrom of kicks and blows, when Shorty, seeing his partner's predicament, bolted down the hill and began knocking down every body in reach until he cleared a way to Si's side. By this time the attention of the Sergeant of the Guard was attracted, and he brought an energetic gun-barrel to the task of restoring the reign of law and order.

"How in thunder'd you come to git into a fracas with that herd o' mavericks, Si?" asked Shorty, in a tone of rebuke, as the Sergeant was rounding up the crowd and trying to get at who was to blame. "Couldn't you find somebody on your own level to fight, without startin' a fuss with a passel o' low-down, rust-eaten roustabouts? What's got into you? Bin livin' so high lately that you had to have a fight to work off your fractiousness? I'm surprised at you."

"Groundhog' d got hold of a letter o' your'n to your girl up in Wisconsin," gasped Si, "and was readin' it to the crowd. Here's a piece of it."

Shorty glanced at the fragment of torn paper in Si's hand, and a deep blush suffused his sun-browned cheek. Then he gave a howl and made a rush for Groundhog.

"Here, let that man alone, or I'll make you," shouted the Sergeant of the Guard.

"Sergeant," said Si, "that rat-faced teamster had got hold of a letter to his girl, and was reading it to this gang o' camp offal."

"O," said the Sergeant, in a changed tone; "hope he'll baste the life out of him." And he jumped in before a crowd that was showing some disposition to go to Groundhog's assistance, sharply ordered them to about-face, and drove them off before him.

"Here, Sergeant," shouted the Officer of the Guard, who came running up; "what are you fooling around with these fellows for? They're not doing any thing. Don't you see that man's killing that team ster?"

"Teamster had got hold of a letter to his girl," explained the Sergeant, "and was reading it to these whelps."

"O," said the Officer of the Guard in a different tone. "Run these rascals down there in front of the Quartermaster's and set them to work digging those stumps out. Keep them at it till midnight, without anything to eat. I'll teach them to raise disturbances in camp."

CHAPTER X. AFTER BRAGG AGAIN

RESTFUL SUMMER DAYS END—THE UNION PEOPLE OF EAST TENNESSEE.

THOUGH every man in the Army of the Cumberland felt completely worn out at the end of the Tullahoma campaign, it needed but a few days' rest in pleasant camps on the foothills of the Cumberland Mountains, with plenty of rations and supplies of clothing, to beget a restlessness for another advance.

They felt envious of their comrades of the Army of the Tennessee, who had cornered their enemy in Vicksburg and forced him to complete surrender.

On the other hand, their enemy had evaded battle when they offered it to him on the place he had himself chosen, had eluded their vigorous pursuit, and now had his army in full possession of the great objective upon which the eyes of the Army of the Cumberland had been fixed for two years Chattanooga.

It was to Chattanooga that Gen. Scott ultimately looked when he began the organization of forces north of the Ohio River. It was to Chattanooga that Gens. Anderson, Sherman and Buell looked when they were building up the Army of the Ohio. It was nearly to Chattanooga that Gen. Mitchel made his memorable dash after the fall of Nashville, when he took Huntsville, Bridgeport, Stevenson and other outlying places. It was for Chattanooga that the "Engine Thieves" made their thrilling venture, that cost eight of their lives. It was to Chattanooga that Buell was ordered with the Army of the Ohio, after the "siege of Corinth," and from which he was run back by Bragg's flank movement into Kentucky. It was again toward Chattanooga that Rosecrans had started the Army of the Cumberland from Nashville, in December, 1862, and the battle of Stone River and the Tullahoma campaign were but stages in the journey.

President Lincoln wanted Chattanooga to relieve the sorely persecuted Unionists of East Tennessee. Military men wanted Chattanooga for its immense strategic importance, second only to that of Vicksburg.

The men of the Army of the Cumberland wanted Chattanooga, as those of the Army of the Potomac wanted Richmond, and those of the Army of the Tennessee had wanted Vicksburg, as the victor's guerdon which would crown all their marches, skirmishes and battles.

But between them and Chattanooga still lay three great ranges of mountains and a broad, navigable river. Where amid all these fortifications of appalling strength would Bragg offer them battle for the Confederacy's vitals?

"I don't care what Bragg's got over there," said Si, looking up at the lofty mountain peaks, as he and Shorty discussed the probabilities. "He can't git nothing worse than the works at War Trace and Shelbyville, that he took six months to build, and was just goin' to slaughter us with. And if we go ahead now he won't have the rain on his side. It looks as if it has set in for a long dry spell; the country 'll be so we kin git around in it without trouble. If the walkin' only stays good we'll find a way to make Mr. Bragg hump out of Chattanooga, or stay in there and git captured."

"Yes," assented Shorty, knocking the ashes out of his brierwood pipe, and beginning to shave down a plug of bright navy to refill it, "and I'll put old Rosey's brains and git-there agin all the mountains and rivers and forts, and breastworks and thingama-jigs that Bragg kin git up. Old Rosecrans is smarter any day in the week than Bragg is on Sunday. He kin give the rebels cards and spades and run 'em out before the fourth round is played. Only I hope he won't study about it as long as he did after Stone River. I want to finish up the job in warm, dry weather, and git home."

And his eyes took on a far-away look, which Si had no difficulty interpreting that "home" meant a place with a queer name in distant Wisconsin.

"Well," said Si reflectively, "old Rosecrans didn't study long after he took command of us at Nashville, before plunking us squarely at the Johnnies on Stone River. I think he's out for a fight now, and bound to git it in short meter."

But the impatient boys had to wait a long Summer month, until the railroads to the rear could be repaired to bring up supplies, and for the corn to ripen so as to furnish forage for the cavalry.

But when, on the 16th of August, 1863, Rosecrans began his campaign of magnificent strategy for the possession of Chattanooga, the 200th Ind. had the supreme satisfaction of leading the advance up into the

mountains of living green to find the enemy and bring him to bay.

A few days' march brought them up onto the Cumberland Plateau. They had now left the country of big plantations with cottonfields, and come upon one of small farms and poor people. Si, with a squad, had been marching far ahead all day as an advance-guard. They had seen no rebels, but all the same kept a constant and vigilant outlook for the enemy. They were approaching a log house of rather better class than any they had seen since ascending the mountain. As they raised the crest of a hill they heard a horn at the house give a signal, which set them keenly alert, and they pushed forward rapidly, with their guns ready. Then they saw a tall, slender young woman, scarcely more than a girl, dart out of the house and attempt to cross the road and open ground to the dense woods. Si sprang forward in pursuit. She ran like a young deer, but Si was swift of foot, and had taken the correct angle to cut her off. He caught her flying skirts and then grasped her wrist.



"Where are you goin', and what for?" he asked sternly, as he held her fast and looked into her frightened eyes, while her breast heaved with exertion and fear.

"I ain't goin' nowhar, an' for nothin'," she answered sullenly.

"Yes you was, you young rebel," said Si. "You were goin' to tell some sneakin' rebels about us. Where are they?"

"Wa'n't gwine to do nothin' o' the kind," she answered between gasps for breath. "I don't know whar thar's no rebels. Thought they'uns had all done gone away down the mounting till I seed yo'uns."

"Come, girl, talk sense," said Si roughly. "Tell me where those rebels are that you was goin' to, and do it quick. Boys, look sharp."

A tall, very venerable man, with long, snowy-white hair and whiskers came hobbling up, assisting his steps with a long staff with a handle of a curled and twisted ram's horn.

"Gentlemen," he said, with a quavering voice, "I beg yo'uns won't harm my granddaughter. She hain't done nothin' wrong, I'll sw'ar it, t' yo'uns. We'uns 's for the Union, but that hain't no reason why we'uns should be molested. We'uns 's peaceable, law-abidin' folks, an' ain't never done nothin' agin the Southern Confederacy. All our neighbors knows that. Ax any o' they'uns. If yo'uns must punish someone, take me. I'm the one that's responsible for their Unionism. I've learned 'em nothin' else sense they'uns wuz born. I'm a very old man, an' hain't long t' live, nohow. Yo'uns kin do with me what yo'uns please, but for my sake spare my innocent granddaughter, who hain't done nothin'."

Si looked at him in amazement. It was no uncommon thing for people to protest Unionism, but sincerity was written in every line of the old man's face.

"You say you're Union," he said. "If that's so, you've nothin' to fear from us. We're Union soldiers. But what was that signal with the horn, and where was this girl goin'?"

"She blowed the horn at my orders, to inform my neighbors, and she wuz gwine on an arrant for me. Whatever she done I ordered her to do. Yo'uns kin visit hit all on my head. But hit wa'n't nothin' agin yo'uns or the Southern Confederacy."

"I tell you we're Union soldiers," repeated Si. "Can't you tell that by our clothes?"

The old man's face brightened a little, but then a reminder of sorrowful experience clouded it again.

"I've never seed no Union soldiers," said he. "The rebels come around here dressed all sorts o' ways, and sometimes they pretend to be Union, jest to lay a snare for we'uns. They'uns all know I'm Union, but I'm too old t' do 'em harm. Hit's my neighbors they'uns is arter. But, thank God, they'uns 's never kotched any o' them through me."

"I tell you we're genuine, true-blue Union soldiers from Injianny, belong to Rosecrans's army, and are down here to drive the rebels out o' the country. There, you kin see our flag comin' up the mountain."

The old man shaded his eyes with his hand, and looked earnestly at the long line of men winding up the mountain-side.

"I kin see nothin' but a blue flag," said he, "much the same as some o' Bragg's rijimints tote."

Si looked again, and noticed that only the blue regimental flag was displayed.

"Wait a minnit, I'll convince him," said Shorty, and running down the mountain he took the marker from the right guide of the regiment, and presently came back waving it proudly in the sunshine.

The old man's face brightened like a May day, and then his faded eyes filled with joyful tears as he exclaimed:

"Yes, thank Almighty God, that's hit. That's the real flag o' my country. That's the flag I fit under with ole Jackson at New Orleans. I bless God that I've lived to see the day that hit's come back."

He took the flag in his hands, fondly surveyed its bright folds, and then fervently kissed it. Then he said to his granddaughter:

"Nance, call the boys in, that they'uns's may see thar friends 've come at last."

Nance seemed to need no second bidding. She sped back to the porch, seized the long tin horn and sent mellow, joyful notes floating far over the billowy hills, until they were caught up by the cliffs and echoed back in subdued melody.

"Don't be surprised, gentlemen, at what yo'uns 'll see," said the old man.

Even while the bugle-like notes were still ringing on the warm air, men began appearing from the most unexpected places. They were all of the same type, differing only in age from mere boys to middle-aged men. They were tall, raw-boned and stoop-shouldered, with long, black hair, and tired, sad eyes, which lighted up as they saw the flag and the men around it. They were attired in rude, home spun clothes, mostly ragged and soiled, and each man carried a gun of some description.

They came in such numbers that Si was startled. He drew his men together, and looked anxiously back to see how near the regiment had come.

"I done tole yo'uns not t' be surprised," said the old man reassuringly; "they'uns 's all right every one of 'em a true Union man, ready and willin' t' die for his country. The half o' they'uns hain't got in yit, but they'll all come in."

"Yes, indeed," said one of the first of them to come in, a pleasant-faced, shapely youth, with the soft down of his first beard scantily fringing his face, and to whom Nancy had sidled up in an unmistakable way. "We'uns 've bin a-layin' out in the woods for weeks, dodgin' ole Bragg's conscripters and a-waitin' for yo'uns. We'uns 've bin watchin' yo'uns all day yisterday, an' all this mornin', tryin' t' make out who yo'uns rayly wuz. Sometimes we'uns thought yo'uns wuz Yankees, an' then agin that yo'uns wuz the tail-end o' Bragg's army. All we'uns 's a-gwine t' jine all yo'uns, an' fout for the Union."

"Bully boys right sentiments," said Shorty enthusiastically. "There's room for a lot o' you in this very regiment, and it's the best regiment in the army. Co. Q's the best company in the regiment, and it needs 15 or 20 fine young fellers like you to fill up the holes made by Stone River and Tennessee rain and mud."

"I'll go 'long with you, Mister Ossifer, if you'll take me," said the youth, very shyly and softly to Si, whose appearance seemed to attract him.

"Certainly we'll take you," said Si, "if the Surgeon 'll accept you, and I'll see that you're sworn in on the spot."

"Nancy," said the youth diffidently to the girl, who had stood by his side holding his hand during the whole conversation, "yo' done promised yo'd marry me as soon's the Yankee soldiers done come for sure, and they'uns 've done come, millions of 'em. Looky thar millions of 'em."

He pointed to the distant hills, every road over which was swarming with legions of blue.

"Yes, Nate," said the girl, reddening, chewing her bonnet-strings to hide her confusion, and stir ring up the ground with the toe of her shoe, "I reckon I did promise yo' I'd marry yo' when the Yankee soldiers done come for sure, and thar does seem t' be a right smart passel of 'em done come already, with a heapin' more on the way. But yo' ain't gwine t' insist on me keepin' my promise right off, air yo'?"

And she took a bigger bite at her bonnet-strings and dug a deeper hole with the toe of her shoe.

"Yes, indeedy right off jest the minnit I kin find a preacher," replied Nate, growing bolder and more insistent as he felt his happiness approaching. "I'm a-gwine off t' the war with this gentleman's company (indicating Si with a wave of his disengaged hand), and we must be spliced before I start. Say, Mister Ossifer (to Si), kin yo' tell me whar I kin find a preacher?"

Si and Shorty and the rest were taking a deep interest in the affair. It was so fresh, so genuine, so unconventional that it went straight to all their hearts, and, besides, made a novel incident in their campaign. They were all on the side of the would-be bridegroom at once, and anxious for his success. The Adjutant had come up with the order that they should stop where they were, for the regiment would go into camp just below for the day. So they had full leisure to attend to the matter. The Tennesseans took only a modified interest, for the presence of the Union army was a much more engrossing subject, and they preferred to stand and gaze open-eyed and open-mouthed at the astonishing swarms of blue-clad men rather than to pay attention to a commonplace mountain wooing.

"We have a preacher he's the Chaplain of the regiment," suggested Si.

"Any sort of a preacher'll do for me," said Nate sanguinely, "so long 's he's a preacher Hard Shell, Free Will,

Campbellite, Winebrennarian, Methodist, Cumberland Presbyterian and kind, so long 's he's a regularly-ordained preacher, 'll do for me. Won't hit for you, honey?"

"Granddad's a Presbyterian," she said, blushing, "and I'd rather he'd be a Presbyterian. Better ax granddad."

Nate hurried over to the grandfather, who was so deeply engrossed in talking politics, the war, and the persecutions the East Tennesseans had endured at the hands of the rebels with the officers and soldiers gathered around that he did not want to be bothered with such a comparatively unimportant matter as the marriage of a granddaughter.

"Yes, marry her any way you like, so long as you marry her honest and straight," said he impatiently to Nate. Then, as Nate turned away, he explained to those about him: "That's the 45th grandchild that I've had married, and I'm kind o' gittin used t' hit, so t' speak. Nate and her 've bin keepin' company and courtin' ever sense they wuz weaned, an' bin pesterin' the life out o' me for years t' let 'em git jined. Sooner hit's done the better. As I wuz sayin', we'uns give 80,000 majority in Tennessee agin Secession, but ole Isham Harris" etc.

"I'll speak to the Adjutant about it," said Si, when Nate came back glowing with gladness.

The young Adjutant warmly approved the enlistment proposition, and was electrified by the idea of the marriage.

"I'll go and talk to the Colonel and the Chaplain about it. Why, it'll be no end of fun. We'll fix up a wedding-supper for them, have the band serenade them, and send an account of it home to the papers. You go and get them ready, and I'll attend to the rest. Say, I think we'd better have him enlisted, and then married afterward. That'll make it a regimental affair. You take him down to Capt. McGillicuddy, that he may take him before the Surgeon and have him examined. Then we'll regularly enlist him, and he'll be one of us, and in the bonds of the United States before he is in the bonds of matrimony. It'll be the first marriage in the regiment, but not the first one that is ardently desired, by a long shot."

The Adjutant gave a little sigh, which Si could not help echoing, and Shorty joined in.

"Well, our turns will come, too, boys," said the Adjutant with a laugh, "when this cruel war is over." And he whistled "The Girl I Left Behind Me" as he rode back to camp.

The Surgeon found Nathan Hartburn physically sound, the oath was duly administered to the young recruit, and he made his mark on the enlistment papers, and was pronounced a soldier of the United States, belonging to Co. Q, 200th Ind. He had been followed through all these steps by a crowd of his friends, curious to see just what was the method of "jinin' the Union army," and when Co. Q received its new member with cheers and friendly congratulations the others expressed their eagerness to follow his example.

Co. Q was in a ferment over the wedding, with everybody eager to do something to help make it a grand success, and to fill the hearts of the other companies with envy. The first and greatest problem was to provide the bridegroom with a uniform in which to be married. The Quartermaster's wagons were no one knew exactly where, but certainly a day or more back on the road, and no one had started out on the campaign with any extra clothing. Shorty, who considered himself directly responsible for the success of the affair, was for awhile in despair. He was only deterred from stealing a pair of the Colonel's trousers by the timely thought that it would, after all, be highly improper for a private to be wearing a pair of pantaloons with a gold cord. Then he resolved to make a sacrifice of himself. He was the nearest Nate's proportions of any man in the company, and he had drawn a new pair of trousers just before starting on the march. They had as yet gotten very slightly soiled. He went to the spring and laboriously washed them until they were as bright as new, and, after they were dried, insisted on Nate trading pantaloons with him. A new blouse was more readily found, and as readily contributed by its owner. Si freely gave up his sole extra shirt, and another donated a pair of reserve shoes. The Adjutant came in with a McClellan cap. When the company barber cut Nate's long hair, and shaved him, he was arrayed in his wedding uniform, and as Si had given him a little drill in holding himself erect, he was as presentable a soldier as could be found in the regiment, and quite as proud of himself as the boys of Co. Q were of him. Then an other despairing thought struck Shorty:

"'Tain't right," he communed with Si and the rest, "that the bridegroom should have all the good clothes. The bride should have the boss togs o' the two. If we was only back near Nashville she should have a layout that'd out-rag the Queen o' Sheby, if it took every cent there was in the company. But I don't suppose you could buy a yard o' kaliker or a stitch o' finery within 50 miles o' this clayknob."

"What we might do," said Si reflectively, "would be to give her her trowso futuriously, so to speak. We've just bin paid off, and hain't had no chance to spend our money, so that all the boys has some. Every one o' 'em 'll be glad to give a dollar, which you kin hand her in a little speech, tellin' her that we intended to present her with her trowso, but circumstances over which we had no control, mainly the distance to a milliner shop, prevented, but we would hereby present her with the means to git it whenever convenient, and she could satisfy herself much better by picking it out her ownself. You want to recollect that word trowso. It's the elegant thing for a woman's wedding finery, and if you use it you'll save yourself from mentioning things that you don't know nothin' about, and probably oughtn't to mention. My sisters learned it to me. A girl who'd bin at boarding-school learned them."

"Good idee," said Shorty, slapping his leg. "I'll go right out and collect a dollar from each of the boys. Say that word over agin, till I git it sure."

Shorty came back in a little while with his hands full of greenbacks "Every boy ponied right up the moment I spoke to him," he said. "And the Captain and Adjutant each gave \$5. She's got money enough to buy out the best milliner shop in this part o' Tennessee."

Next came thoughts of a wedding-supper for the bride's friends. The Colonel took the view that the large number of recruits which he expected to gain justified him in ordering the Commissary to issue a liberal quantity of rations. Two large iron wash-kettles were scoured out one used to make coffee in and the other to boil meat, while there was sugar and hardtack in abundance. The mountains were covered with royal blooms of rhododendron, and at the Adjutant's suggestion enough of these were cut to fill every nook and corner of the main room of the house, hiding the rough logs and dark corners with masses of splendid color, much to

the astonish ment of the bride, who had never before thought of rhododendrons as a feature of house adornment.

Then, just before 6 o'clock roll-call, Co. Q, with every man in it cleaned up as for dress-parade, with Nathan Hartburn at the head, supported on either side by Si and Shorty, and flanked by the Adjutant and Chaplain, marched up the hill to the house, led by the fifers and drummers, playing the reveille, "When the Cruel War is Over," "Yankee Doodle," and everything else in their limited repertory which they could think as at all appropriate to the occasion. The rest of the regiment, with most of the officers, followed after.

The Chaplain took his place in front of the rhododendron-filled fireplace. The bride and groom stood before him, with Si and Shorty in support. All of Co. Q crowded into the room, and the rest looked through the windows and doors. The Chaplain spoke the words which made the young couple man and wife, and handed them a certificate to that effect. Shorty then advanced, with his hand full of greenbacks, and said:

"Missis Hartburn: Co. Q of the 200th Ind., of which you are now a brevet member, has appointed me to present their congratulations. We extend to you the right hand of fellership of as fine a crowd o' soldiers as ever busted caps on any field of battle. We're very glad to have your young husband with us. We'll take care of him, treat him right, and bring him back to you crowned with the laurels of victory. You just bet your life we will. That's our way o' doin' things. Madam, Co. Q very much wished to present you with a trou— trou— tro— what is that blamed word, Si?"

"Trowso," whispered Si—

"with a trowso," continued Shorty, "but circumstances and about 150 mile o' mud road over which we have no control prevented. To show, though, that we really meant business, and ain't givin' you no wind, we have collected the skads for a regular 24-carat trow— trous— trows— trou— tro— (blamed the dinged word, what is it, Si?)"

"Trowso," prompted Si

"for a regler 24-carat trowso which I have the pleasure o' putting in your lily-white hands, at the same time wishin' for the company, for you and your husband, all happiness and joy in your married 'life. No more, from yours truly."

Shorty's brow was beaded with perspiration as he concluded this intellectual effort and handed the bride the money, which she accepted, as she had done everything else on that eventful day, as some thing that she was expected to do. The company applauded as if it had been a speech by Daniel Webster, and then the supper-table was attacked.

Then came pipes, and presently the brigade band came over and serenaded. A fiddle was produced from somewhere, and a dance started. Suddenly came the notes of a drum in camp.

"Early for tattoo, ain't it?" said they, looking inquiringly at one another.

"That's no 'tattoo," said Shorty; "that's the long roll. Break for camp, everybody."

CHAPTER XI. THE MOUNTAIN FOLK

THE SHADOW OF AN EAST TENNESSEE VENDETTA.

THE long roll turned out to be occasioned by the burning of a Union Tennessean's house by a squad of revengeful guerrillas, but the regiment had to stay under arms until a party of cavalry went out and made an investigation. The men stacked their arms, and lay around on the ground to get what sleep was possible, and which was a good deal, for the night was pleasant, and there are worse beds than the mossy hillside on a July night.

"Too bad that your weddin' night had to be broken up so," said Si sympathetically, as he and Shorty and the bridegroom sat together on a knoll and watched the distant flames. "But you needn't 've come with us this time; nobody expected you to."

"Why, I s'posed this wuz part o' the regler thing," answered Nate in amazement. "I s'posed that wuz the way yo'uns allers married folkses in the army. Allers something happens at weddin's down hyah. Mos' ginerully hit's a free fout betwixt the young fellers o' the bride's an' bridegroom's famblies, from 'sputin' which fambly's made the best match. When Brother Wils married Becky Barnstable we Hartburn boys said that Wils mout-ve looked higher. The Barnstable boys done tuk hit up, an' said the Barnstables wuz ez good ez the Hartburns ary day in the week, an' at the weddin' Nels Barnstable had his eye gouged out, Ike Barnstable wuz knocked down with a flail, an' had what the doctor called discussion o' the brain, and ole Sandy Barnstable cut off Pete Hartburn's ear with a bowie. They-uns reopened the argyment at the infair, an' laid out two o' the Hartburns with ox-gads. I don't think they orter used ox-gads. Tain't gentlemanly. D'ye think so? Knives, an' pistols, an' guns, an' even flails an' axes, is all right, when you can't git nothin' better, but I think ox-gads is low an' onery."

Si and Shorty looked at the gentle, drawing, mild-eyed young Tennessean with amazement. A young girl could not have seemed softer or more pliant, yet he quietly talked of savage fighting as one of the most casual things in life.

"Well," said Shorty, "if that's the way you celebrat weddin's and in-fairs down here in Tennessee, I don't wonder that you welcome a battle for a change. I think I'd prefer a debate with guns to one with axes and flails and anything that'd come handy. It's more reg'ler to have umpires and referees, and the thing conducted accordin' to the rules of the P. R. Then when you git through you know for sure who's licked."

"Jist 'cordin' t' how one's raised," remarked Nate philosophically. "I've allers done seed a big furse o' some kind at a weddin'. Don't all yo'uns have none at yo'uns's weddin's?"

"Nothin' worse'n gittin' the girl's dad to consent," answered Shorty, "and scratchin' 'round to git the money to git married on to buy a new suit o' clothes, fee the preacher, pay for the license, and start housekeepin'. That's enough for one lifetime."

"Well, mam an' the gals made Wils's weddin' cloze," said Nate reflectively. "He had his own sheep, which he sheared in the Spring. They'uns carded, spun, dyed, an' wove the wool themselves, an' made him the purtiest suit o' cloze ever seed on the mountings."

"Your mother and sisters goin' to make your weddin' suit, Si?" asked Shorty. "What'd he have to pay for the license?"

"License? What's that?" asked Nate.

"License? Why, a license," explained Si, "is something you git from the County Clerk. It's leave to git married, and published in the County paper."

"Don't have t' have no leave from nobody down here t' git married. Hit's nobody's business but the man's an' the gal's, an' they'uns's famblies. Some times other folkses tries t' stick their noses in, but they'uns git sot down upon."

"What'd he pay the preacher?" asked Shorty.

"Why, mam gin his wife a hank o' fine stockin' yarn, an' dad gin him a couple sides o' bacon."

"At present prices o' pork in Injianny," remarked Si, after a little mental figuring, "that wasn't such a bad fee."

"If you speak to the Captain," suggested Si, "he'll let you go back home to your wife. I don't believe there's goin' to be anything special to-night. The cavalry don't seem to be stirrin' up nothin' out there."

"I don't keer t'," said Nate, in his sweet, girlish drawl. "Ruther stay with yo'all. Mout somethin' happen. Biff Perkins an' his gang o' gorillers is out thar somewhar, not fur off, huntin' a chance fur deviltry. I'd like mouty t' git a whack at they'uns. Nance'll keep. She's mine now, fast an' good, for ever, an'll wait fur me. Afore we wuz spliced I wuz afeered Zach Barnstable mout work some contrivance t' git her, but now she belongs t' me."

The boys took him to their hearts more than ever.

At the coming of the early dawn the regiment was aroused and marched back to camp, there to meet orders to move forward at once, as soon as breakfast was prepared and eaten. Away it marched for the Tennessee River, behind which Bragg was supposed to be gathering his forces for the defense of Chattanooga.

As Co. Q went by the cabin, Grandfather Onslow was seated in a rocking-chair on the porch, smoking a cob pipe, while Mrs. Nancy Onslow Hartburn, with her finger bashfully in her mouth, peeped around the corner. Co. Q gave her a cheer, at which she turned and fled out of sight, as if it was some raillery on her newly-married state, and Nate hung down his head, as if he, too, felt the boys were poking fun at him.

"Good-by, boys. Lick the life outen Ole Bragg," quavered Grandfather Onslow, waving his hand after them.

"That's what we're goin' to do," shouted the boys in reply.

"Well," said Si, "I bet if ever I'm married I'll kiss my wife before I go away."

"Me, too," echoed Shorty, very soulfully.

Shorty and Si considered Nate Hartburn their special protege, and were deeply anxious to transform him into a complete soldier in the shortest possible time. He was so young, alert, and seemingly pliable, that it appeared there would be no difficulty in quickly making him a model soldier. But they found that while he at once responded to any suggestion of a raid or a fight, drill, discipline and camp routine were bores that he could be induced to take only a languid interest in. Neither Si nor Shorty were any too punctilious in these matters, but they were careful to keep all the time within easy conversational distance of the regulations and tactics. Naturally, also, they wanted their pupil to do better than they did. But no lecturing would prevent young Hartburn from slouching around camp with his hands in his pockets and his head bent. He would not or could not keep step in the ranks, nor mark time. While Si was teaching him he would make a listless attempt to go through the manual of arms, but he would make no attempt to handle his gun the prescribed way after the lesson was ended. Si was duly mindful of the sore time he himself had in learning the drill, and tried to be very considerate with him, but his patience was sorely tried at times.

"For goodness' sake, Nate," Si would say irritably, "try to keep step. You're throwin' everybody out."

"'Tain't my fault, Si," Nate would reply with a soft drawl. "Hit's theirs. I'm walkin' all right, but they'uns hain't. Jaw them. What's the sense o' walkin' so' close together, anyway? Yo' don't git thar no sooner."

Then again:

"Great jumpin' Jehosephat, Nate, will you never learn the right way to hold your gun when you present arms? You must turn the trigger outside, not the hammer."

"O, Jeminy, what difference does hit make? I never kin recollect hit, an' what's the use o' tryin'? Can't see no sense in holdin' a gun straight up an' down that-a-way, anyway, an' if yo' do, hain't one side jest as good as t'other?"

He was so obdurate that the boys would some times be provoked to sharp words to him, but his gentle speech would quickly disarm them again, and make them feel penitent.

At last the 200th Ind. came out upon the crest of Waldron's Ridge, overlooking the Tennessee River, which wound and turned amid the towering mountains like a band of bright silver traversing the giant billows of green. Everyone caught his breath at the sight, for beyond the stream were rebel camps, and moving trains and long, lines of marching men. Was all of Bragg's army gathered over there to dispute the passage or was a part still this side of the river, ready to pounce on our heads of columns as they meandered down the mountain?

The brigade was closed up, information sent to the Division Commander, and the 200th Ind. pushed to the front to develop whatever might be there. Si with Shorty and some others were sent ahead to feel for the enemy.

"Take him along?" asked Si of Shorty in a low tone, with a nod toward Nate, as they were making up the squad.

"Don't know," answered Shorty. "If ever in the world, we want men with us to-day who don't git rattled, and make a holy show o' theirselves before the regiment, but'll keep cool, watch their chances, and obey orders. Guess we'd better leave him behind."

"Seems to me," said Si, trying vaguely to recall his Scriptural readings, "that the Bible says some thing agin takin' a newly-married man right into battle just after he's married."

He looked around again, saw Nate taking his place along with the other men selected, and called out:

"Here, Nate, fall back to the company. You can't go along."

"Please, Mister Si, le' me go along," begged Nate, in the soft tones of a girl asking for a flower. "I'll be good. I'll hold my gun straight, an' try t' keep step."

"No, you can't go., This 's partickler business, and we want only experienced men with us. Better fall back to the company."

"Go ahead, there, Corporal," commanded the Adjutant. "Time's passing. We must move."

Si deployed his men and entered the dense woods which curtained the view and shrouded the enemy. It was one of those deeply anxious moments in war, when the enemy is in ambush, and the next instant, the next step may develop him in deadly activity.

Si was on the right of his line and Shorty on the left, and they were pushing forward slowly, cautiously, and with every sense strained to the extremity of alertness.

So dense was the foliage overhead that it was almost a twilight in the forest depths they were penetrating, and Si's eyes were strained to keep track of the men moving on his left, and at the same time watch the developments in front. He had noticed that he was approaching a little opening some distance ahead, and that beyond it was a dense thicket of tall laurels. Then he thought he heard a low whistle from Shorty, and looked far to the left, while continuing to walk forward.

Suddenly he was startled by a shot a little to his rear and left. Then a shot answered from the laurel thicket, he saw the bushes over there stir violently, and he heard Nate's voice say:

"He wuz layin' for yo', Si, an' come nigh a-gittin' yo', but I think I must've at least creased him, from the wild way he shot back. Le's go forrard an' see."

"I thought I told you to stay back," said Si, more intent on military discipline than his escape.

"I know yo' did done hit, but I couldn't mind, an' tagged 'long arter yo'."

"How'd you know he wuz there?"

"I done seed the bushes move over his head. I knowed jest how he wuz a-layin' for yo'. Le's go forrard an' git him."

Si and Nate ran across the open space to the laurels, and found a little ways in a bushwhacker staggering from pain and loss of blood from a wound in his hip, and making labored efforts to escape.

"I done hit him; I done fetched him; I done knowed jist whar he wuz," exclaimed Nate with boyish exultation.

At the sound of his voice the bushwhacker turned around upon him an ugly, brutal face, full of savage hatred.

"Why, hit's bad ole Wash Barnstable, what burnt daddy's stable with two horses, an' shot brother Wils through the arm. I'll jist job him in the heart with my bayonet," screamed the boy as he recognized the face. His own features became transfigured with rage, and he began fixing his bayonet. Si pushed forward and caught the bushwhacker by the shoulder and tore the gun from his hand. Nate came springing up, with his bayonet pointed directly at the man's heart. Si saw it in time to thrust it aside, saying in wrathful astonishment:

"Nate, you little scoundrel, what do you mean? Would you kill a wounded man?"

"Suttenly I'll done kill him," screamed the boy in a a frenzy of rage. "Why not? He desarves hit, the hell-hound. All of us Hartburns 've said we'd done kill him the minnit we laid eyes on him. Now that I've got him I'm gwine t' finish him."

He made another vicious lunge at the man with his bayonet.

"Indeed you're not," said Si, releasing his hold on the prisoner and catching Nate's gun. "You mustn't kill a wounded man, you young wildcat."



"Why not?" shouted the boy, beside himself with rage. "He's done killed lots o' men. He'll kill more if yo' let him go. He wuz layin' t' kill yo'. Air yo' gwine t' gin him another chance to down yo'?"

Si wrested the gun from him. Two or three other boys who had been attracted by the shot came up at this moment. Si gave the prisoner into the charge of one of them, with instructions to take him to the rear. Nate released his hold on his gun and made a jump for the one which the other boy had stood against a tree when he started to take hold of the prisoner. Again Si was too quick for him. He was by this time so angry that he was in the mood to give Nate a severe lesson, but the Adjutant, had ridden forward, called out:

"Go ahead, there, Corporal. We're just behind you."

"Pick up your gun, there, Nate, and come along with me, if you kin behave yourself. There's work much more important than killin' wounded bushwhackers. Come along, this minute."

Nate hesitated a moment, then picked up his gun with a vengeful look at the prisoner.

"I'll kill him yit. Mebbe I'll git a chance this evenin' yit," said he, and followed Si.

CHAPTER XII. SI AND SHORTY IN LUCK

THEY MAKE A BRIEF VISIT TO "GOD'S COUNTRY."

THE shot fired by Nate Hartburn was the only one that interrupted the progress of the 200th Ind. to the banks of the Tennessee River. Its cautious advance at last brought it out on the crest of a hill, at the foot of which, 200 feet below, flowed the clear current of the mountain-fed stream. The rebels were all on the other side. Their pickets could be plainly seen, and they held the further pier of the burned railroad bridge. To our right rose three strong forts, built the year previous.

As soon as it was determined that all the enemy were beyond the river, the 200th Ind. went into camp for the afternoon and night upon a cleared spot which had been used for that purpose before our troops had been flanked out of that country by Bragg's raid into Kentucky just a year before.

A dress parade was ordered at 6 o'clock, and when the Adjutant came to "publish the orders," the regiment was astonished and Si electrified to hear:

"In pursuance of orders from Division Headquarters to detail squads from each of the different regiments to proceed to their respective States to bring back recruits and drafted men for the regiments, First Lieut. Bowersox, of Co. A, and Corp'l Josiah Klegg, of Co. Q, with six enlisted men of that company, to be selected by Capt. McGillicuddy, are here by detailed for that duty, and will prepare to leave to-morrow morning."

Si clutched his partner in his excitement and said, "Shorty, did you hear that? I'm to be sent back to Injianny. Ain't that what he said?"

"If my ears didn't mistake their eyesight, them was about his words," returned Shorty. "You're in luck."

"And you're goin' with me, Shorty."

"The Adjutant didn't include that in his observations. I ain't so crazy, anyway, to git back to Injianny. Now, if it wuz Wisconsin it'd be different. If you've got any recruits to bring on from Wisconsin, I'm your man. I'd go up there at my own expense, though I don't s'pose that Rosecrans could spare me just now. What'd become o' the army if he'd git sick, and me away?"

"But, Shorty, you are goin'. You must go. I won't go if you don't."

"Don't say won't too loud. You're detailed, and men that's detailed don't have much choice in the matter."

"You'll probably act sensibly and do whatever you're ordered to do. Of course, I'd like to go, if we kin git back in time for this sociable with Mister Bragg. Don't want to miss that. That'll be the he-fight o' the war, and probably the last battle."

"Nor do I," answered Si; "but the thing won't come off till we git back. They wouldn't be sending back for the drafted men and recruits except that they want 'em to help out."

"They'll be a durned sight more in the way than help," answered Shorty. "We don't need 'em. We've handled Bragg so far very neatly, all by ourselves, and we don't need anybody to mix into our little job. The fewer we have the more credit there'll be in lickin' old Bragg and capturin' Chattanooga."

The Orderly-Sergeant interrupted the discussion by announcing:

"Here, Shorty, you're one to go with Si. The detail is made by the Colonel's orders as a compliment to the good work you boys have been doing, and which the Colonel knows about."

"I always said that the Colonel had the finest judgment as to soldiers of any man in the army," said Shorty, after taking a minute's pause to recover from the compliment.

The boys were immediately surrounded by their comrades, congratulating them, and requesting that they would take back letters and money for them. The Paymaster had recently visited the regiment, and everybody had money which he wished to send home. There were also commissions to purchase innumerable things, ranging from meerschaum pipes to fine flannel shirts.

"Look here, boys," said Shorty, good-humoredly, "we want to be obligin', but we're neither a Adams Express Company nor in the gent's furnishin' line. We've neither an iron safe to carry money nor a pedler's wagon to deliver goods. John Morgan's guerrillas may jump us on the way home, and comin' back we'll have to have packs to carry the truck in, and half of it 'll be stole before we git to the regiment."

But the comrades would not be dissuaded, and before Si and Shorty went to sleep they had between \$5,000 and \$6,000 of their comrades' money stowed in various safe places about their personages.

"Great Jehosephat, Si," murmured Shorty, when they sat together in their tent, after the last comrade had departed, leaving his "wad of greenbacks," with directions as to its disposition, "I never felt so queer and skeery in all my life. I wouldn't for the world lose a dollar of the money these boys have been earnin' as they have this. But how under heaven are we goin' to make sure of it?"

"I've thought of a way o' makin' sure of to-night," said Si. "I spoke to the Officer of the Guard, and he'll put a sentinel over us to-night, so's we kin git a little sleep. I wouldn't shet my eyes, if it wasn't for that. We'll have to let to-morrow take care of itself."

Shorty lay down and tried to go to sleep, but the responsibility weighed too heavily on his mind. Presently, Si, who, for the same reason, only slept lightly, was awakened by his partner getting up.

"What are you up to?" Si asked.

"I've bin thinkin about pickpockets," answered Shorty. "They're an awful slick lot, and I've thought of a hiding place that'll fool 'em."

He picked up his faithful Springfield, and drawing an envelope with money out of his shirt-pocket, rolled it up to fit the muzzle of his gun, and then rammed it down.

"That's Jim Meddler's \$10," he said. "I'll know it, because his mother's name's on the envelope. Here goes Pete Irvin's \$20. I know it because it has his wife's name on it."

He continued until he had the barrel of the gun filled, and then stopped to admire his cunning.

"Now, nobody but me'd ever thought o' hidin' money in a gun. That's safe, as least. All I've got to do is to stick to my gun until we git acrost the Ohio River. But I hain't got the tenth part in; where kin I put the rest? O, there's my cartridge-box and cap-box. Nobody'll think o' lookin' there for money."

He filled both those receptacles, but still had fully half his money left on his person.

"That'll just have to take its chances with the pickpockets," said he, and returned to his bed, with his gun by his side, and his cap- and cartridge-boxes under his head.

The morning came, with their money all right, as they assured themselves by careful examination immediately after reveille.

As they fell in under Lieut. Bowersox to start, their comrades crowded around to say good-by, give additional messages for the home-folks, and directions as to their money, and what they wanted bought.

But Shorty showed that he was overpowered with a nervous dread of pickpockets. He saw a possible light-fingered thief in everyone that approached. He would let nobody touch him, stood off a little distance from the rest of the squad, and when any body wanted to shake hands would hold him stiffly at arm's length.

"Gittin' mighty stuck-up just because the Colonel patted you on the back a little, and give you a soft detail," sneered one of Co. Q.

"Well, you'd be stuck-up, too," answered Shorty, "if your clothes was padded and stuffed with other folks' greenbacks, and you was in the midst o' sich a talented lot o' snatchers as the 200th Injianny. Mind, I ain't makin' no allusions nor references, and I think the 200th Injianny is the honestest lot o' boys in the Army o' the Cumberland; but if I wanted to steal the devil's pitchfork right out o' his hand, I'd make a detail from the 200th Injianny to do the job, and I'd be sure o' gittin' the pitchfork. I'll trust you all when you're 10 feet away

from me."

The others grinned and gave him a cheer.

When they went to get on board the train Shorty had to change his tactics. He got Si on his right, the Lieutenant immediately in front of them, and two trusted boys of the squad directly behind, with strict injunctions to press up close, allow nobody between, and keep a hawk's eye on everybody. But both Si and Shorty were breathless with apprehension till they got through the crowd and were seated in the car, and a hasty feeling of various lumps about their persons assured them that their charges were safe. They were in a passenger car, for luck. The Lieutenant sat in front, Si and Shorty next, and the two trusty boys immediately behind. They breathed a sigh of relief. As they stood their guns over against the side of the car, Si suddenly asked:

"Shorty, did you draw your charge before you rammed that money in?"

Shorty jumped to his feet in a shudder of alarm, and exclaimed:

"Great Jehosephat, no. I forgot all about it."

"What's that you're saying about guns?" inquired the Lieutenant, turning around. "You want to load them, and keep them handy. We're liable to strike some guerrillas along the way, and we must be ready for them."

"You fellers'll have to do the shootin'," whispered Shorty to Si. "It'll be a cold day when I bang \$150 in greenbacks at any rebel that ever jumped. I'm goin' to take the cap off en my gun. The jostlin' o' the train's likely to knock it off at any time, and send a small fortune through the roof o' the car. I'd take the money out, but I'm afraid o' tearin' it all to pieces, with the train plungin' so."

He carefully half-cocked his piece, took off the cap, rubbed the nipple to remove any stray fragments of fulminate, and then let the hammer down on a piece of wadding taken from his cap.

The long ride to Nashville over the ground on which they had been campaigning and fighting for nearly a year would have been of deepest interest to Si and Shorty, as it was to the rest, if they could have freed their minds of responsibilities long enough to watch the scenery. But they would give only a cursory glance any say:

"We'll look at it as we come back."

In the crowded depot at Nashville they had an other panic, but the Provost-Guard kept a gangway clear as soon as it was discovered that they were on duty.

"You can stack your arms there, boys," said the Sergeant of the Guard, "and go right over there and get a warm supper, with plenty of coffee."

All but Shorty obeyed with alacrity, and stacked their guns with the quickness of old and hungry veterans.

Shorty kept hold of his gun and started with the rest to the supper-room.

"Here, Injianny," called out the Sergeant, "stack your gun here with the rest."

"Don't want to ain't goin' to," answered Shorty.

"What's the reason you ain't?" asked the Sergeant, catching hold of the gun. "Nobody's going to take it, and if they did, you can pick up another. Plenty of 'em, jest as good as that, all around here."

"Don't care. This is my own gun. I think more of it than any gun ever made, and I ain't goin' to take any chance of losin' it."

"Well, then, you'll take a chance of losing your supper," answered the Sergeant, "or rather you'll be certain of it, for the orders are strict against taking guns into the supper-room. Too many accidents have happened."

"Well, then," said Shorty stoutly, "I'll do without my supper, though I'm hungrier than a wolf at the end of a long Winter."

"Well, if you're so infernal pig-headed, you've got to," answered the Sergeant, nettled at Shorty's obstinacy. "Go back beyond the gunstack, and stay there. Don't you come nearer the door than the other side of the stack."

Shorty's dander rose up at once. At any other time he would have conclusions with the Sergeant then and there. But the remembrance of his charge laid a repressive hand upon his quick choler, and reminded him that any kind of a row would probably mean a night in the guard-house, his gun in some other man's hands, probably lost forever, and so on. He decided to defer thrashing the Sergeant until his return, when he would give it to him with interest. He shouldered his gun, paced up and down, watching with watering mouth the rest luxuriating in a hot supper with fragrant coffee and appetizing viands, to which his mouth had been a stranger for many long months. It cost a severe struggle, but he triumphed.

Si, in his own hungry eagerness, had not missed him, until his own appetite began to be appeased by the vigorous onslaught he made on the eatables. Then he looked around for his partner, and was horrified not to find him by his side.

"Where's Shorty," he anxiously inquired.

Each looked at the other in surprise, and asked:

"Why, ain't he here?"

"No, confound it; he ain't here," said Si, excitedly springing to his feet; "he has been knocked down and robbed."

Si bolted out, followed by the rest. They saw Shorty marching up and down as a sentinel sternly military, and holding his Springfield as rigidly correct as if in front of the Colonel's quarters.

"What's the matter with you, Shorty? Why don't you come in to supper?" called out Si. "It's a mighty good square meal. Come on in."

"Can't do it. Don't want no supper. Ain't hungry. Got business out here," answered Shorty, who had gotten one of his rare fits of considering himself a martyr.

"Nonsense," said Si. "Put your gun in the stack and come in. It's a bully supper. Best we've had for a year."

"Well, eat it, then," answered Shorty crustily. "I've got something more important to think of than good

suppers."

"O, rats! It's as safe in there as out here. Set your gun down and come on in."

"This gun shall not leave my side till we're home," said Shorty in a tone that would have become the Roman sentinel at Pompeii.

"O, I forgot," said Si. "Well, bring it in with you."

"Can't do it. Strictly agin orders to take any guns inside. But leave me alone. Go back and finish your gorge. I kin manage to hold out somehow," answered Shorty in a tone of deep resignation that made Si want to box his ears.

"That's too bad. But I'll tell you what we can do. I've had a purty good feed already enough to last me to Looeyville. Let me take your gun. I'll carry it while you go in and fill up. We hain't much time left."

The fragrance of the coffee, the smell of the fried ham smote Shorty's olfactories with almost irresistible force. He wavered just a little—.

"Si, I'd trust you as I would no other man in Co. Q or the regiment. I'll—"

Then his Spartan virtue reasserted itself:

"No, Si; you're too young and skittish. You mean well, but you have spells, when—"

"Fall in, men," said Lieut. Bowersox, bustling out from a good meal in the officers' room. "Fall in promptly. We must hurry up to catch the Looeyville train."

The car for Louisville was filled with characters as to whom there was entirely too much ground for fear—gamblers, "skin-game" men, thieves, and all the human vermin that hang around the rear of a great army. Neither of the boys allowed themselves a wink of sleep, but sat bolt upright the entire night, watching everyone with steady, stern eyes. They recognized all the rascals they had seen "running games" around the camps at Murfreesboro, and who had been time and again chased out of camp even the whisky seller with whom Si's father had the adventure. The Provost-Guard had been making one of its periodical cleanings-ups of Nashville, and driving out the obnoxious characters. Several of these had tried to renew their acquaintance by offering drinks from well-filled bottles, but they were sternly repulsed, and Shorty quietly knocked one persistent fellow down with a quick whirl of his gun-barrel. When Shorty was hungry it was dangerous to trifle with him.

They arrived at Louisville late in the morning, and were hurried across the river to Jeffersonville. Fortunately they were able to find there an eating-room where guns were not barred, and Shorty made amends for the past by ravaging as far as his arms could reach, holding his precious gun firmly between his knees.

"Say, pardner," said the man who ran the establishment, "I'd much rather board you for a day than a week. Rebels must've cut off the supply-trains where you've bin. You're not comin' this way agin soon, air you? I'm afraid I won't make 'nough this month to pay my rent."

Lieut. Bowersox came in with a telegram in his hand.

"We won't go on to Indianapolis," he said. "I'm ordered to wait here for our squad, which will probably get here by to-morrow evening."

A wild hope flashed up in Si's mind.

"Lieutenant," he said, "we live right over there in Posey County. Can't you let us go home? We can make it, and be back here before to-morrow night."

"I don't know," said the Lieutenant doubtfully, as he mentally calculated the distance to Posey County. "I hadn't ought to let you go. Then, you can't have more than an hour or two at home."

"O,' goodness; just think o' havin' one hour at home," ejaculated Si.

"It seems too bad," continued the Lieutenant, moved by Si's earnestness, "to bring you this near, and not let you have a chance to see your folks."

"It'll be a risk for me, and there are not many men in the regiment I'd take it for, but I'll let you go."

"Remember, it'll make a whole lot of trouble for me if you're not here by to-morrow evening."

"We'll be here by to-morrow evening, if alive," he pledged himself.

"Well, then, go," said the Lieutenant.

Si's head fairly swam, and he and Shorty ran so fast to make sure of the train that there was a suspicion in the minds of some of the citizens that they were escaping from their officers.

Si's heart was in a tumult as the engine-bell rang its final warning and the engine moved out with increasing speed. Every roll of the swift wheels was carrying him nearer the dearest ones on earth. The landscape seemed to smile at him as he sped past.

"Isn't this the grandest country on earth, Shorty?" he bubbled over. "It's God's country for a fact. So different from old run-down, rebel-ridden Tennessee. Look at the houses and the farms; look at the people and the live-stock. Look at the towns and the churches. Look at everything. Here's the country where people live. Down yonder's only where they stay and raise Cain."

"Yes," admitted Shorty, who had not so much reason for being enthusiastic; "but the Wisconsin boys say that Wisconsin's as much finer than Injianny as Injianny's finer'n Tennessee. I'll take you up there some day and show you."

"Don't believe a dumb word of it," said Si, hot with State pride. "God never made a finer country than Injianny. Wisconsin's nowhere."

Then he bethought himself of the many reasons he had for gladness in his home-coming which his partner had not, and said thoughtfully:

"I wish, Shorty, you wuz goin' home, too, to your father and mother and sisters, and—and best girl. But my father and mother'll be as glad to see you as if you was their own son, and the girls'll make just as much of you, and mebber you'll find another girl there that's purtier and better, and—"

"Stop right there, Si Klegg," said Shorty. "All girls is purty and nice that is, them that is purty and nice, but some's purtier and nicer than others. Then, agin, one's a hundred times purtier and nicer than any o' them. I've no doubt that the girls out your way are much purtier and nicer'n the general run o' girls, but none o' them kin hold a candle to that girl up in Wisconsin, and I won't have you sayin' so."

"If we're on time," said Si, by way of changing the subject, "we'll git to the station about sundown. The farm's about three miles from the station, and we'll reach home after supper. Pap'll be settin' out on the front porch, smokin', and readin' the Cincinnati Gazette, and mother'll be settin' beside him knittin', and the girls'll be clearin' away the supper things. My, won't they be surprised to see us! Won't there be a time! And won't mother and the girls fly around to git us something to eat! Won't they shake up that old cook-stove, and grind coffee, and fry ham and eggs, and bake biscuits, and git us cool, sweet milk and delicious butter from the old spring-house, and talk all the time! Shorty, you never heard my sisters talk, especially when they're a little excited. Gracious, they'll just talk the ears off both of us."

"Well, if they take after you, they are talkers from Talkville," said Shorty. "Mill-wheels ain't in it with your tongue, when it gits fairly started."

The train was on time, and just as the sun was setting behind the fringe of cottonwoods along Bean Blossom Creek they stopped at the little station, and started to walk out to the farm. A neighbor who was drawing a load of tile from the station recognized Si, and begged them to get up and ride, but the team was too slow for the impatient boys, and they forged ahead. A thousand well-remembered objects along the road would have arrested Si's attention were it not for the supreme interest farther on. At last they came to a little rise of ground which commanded a view of the house, and there, as Si predicted, sat his father and mother engaged in smoking, reading and knitting. His first impulse was to yell with delight, but he restrained himself, and walked as steadily on as he could to the front gate. Old Towser set up a bark and ran down the walk, and then changed his note to de lightful yelps of recognition. Si was so nervous that he fumbled vainly for a minute at the gate-latch, and while he did so he heard his mother say: "Father, there's a couple o' soldiers out there." "Wonder if they kin be from Si's company," said the father, lowering his paper, and looking over his spectacles.



"Why, it's Si himself," screamed the mother in joyful accents. The next instant she had sped down the walk quicker than she had ever gone in her girlhood days, her arms about his neck, and she was crying on his shoulder.

CHAPTER XIII. MANY HAPPY EVENTS

HOURS THAT WERE ALL-TOO-FEW AND ALL-TOO-SHORT.

THE girls heard their mother's happy scream and rushed out, dish towels in hand. They at once realized

what had happened, piped up their joyous altos, and precipitated themselves upon Si. The good old Deacon came trotting down the walk, fidgeting with his spectacles, but so enveloped was his son with skirts and women's arms and happy, teary faces that he could not get within arm's length of him. So he turned to Shorty:

"Great day, Shorty, but I'm glad to see you! Come right up on the steps and set down. How'd you happen to come home. Either of you sick or wounded?"

"Nope," answered Shorty sententiously. "Both sound as nuts and healthy as mules."

"Well, come right up on the porch and set down. You must be awful tired. Le'me carry your gun and things for you."

He took hold of the gun with such a desire to do something that Shorty was fain to yield it, saying:

"Deacon, you are the first man in about a million betwixt here and the Tennessee River that I'd let tech that gun. I don't know now of another man in the United States that I'd trust it with. That 'ere gun is loaded plum full of other folks's money."

"Goodness, is that so?" said the Deacon, handling the musket with increased respect. "I've heard o' a bar'l o' money, but never supposed that it was a gun bar'l."

"And more'n that," continued Shorty, "there's a full-grown cartridge below that might shoot a war widow's new dress and shoes for the children off into the moon."

"Goodness gracious!" ejaculated the Deacon, holding out the gun as he did Si the first time that interesting infant was placed in his hands, "handlin' other people's money's always ticklish business, but this's a leetle the ticklishes I ever heard of."

"That's what bin wearin' me down to the bone," responded Shorty soberly, and as they reached the porch he explained the situation to the Deacon, who took the gun in the house, and laid it carefully on a bed in the "spare room."

"Girls, you're smotherin' me! Let up, won't you? Mandy, you dabbed that wet dishcloth right in my eye then. Maria, I can't talk or even breathe with your arm over my windpipe. You, dear mother, I'll pick you up and carry you into the house, if you'll let me," Si was trying to say. "I can't answer all your questions at once, 'specially when you're shuttin' off my breath an' dinnin' my ears till I can't hear myself think."

"Le's carry your things up, Si," said Maria, after Si had gotten them calmed down a little. "You must be awful tired."

Si saw that this would be the best way to keep the girls off, while he devoted his attention to his mother. He handed his gun and belt to Maria, who marched on ahead, triumphantly waving her dish-towel as a gonfalon of victory, while she cheered for the Union in her sweet contralto. Mandy took possession of his blanket roll and haversack, while Si almost carried his tearful mother on to the porch. There her housewifely instinct at once asserted it self.

"I know you and your friend there must jest be starvin'," she said, gathering herself up. "I never knowed when you wasn't, if you'd bin an hour from the table."

"Shorty's worse'n me," said Si with a grin. "But I haven't interduced him yit. Mother, girls, this is Shorty, my pardner, and the best pardner a feller ever had."

"Glad to know you, Mr. Shorty," said they, shaking his hand. "We've heard so much of you that we feel that we've knowed you all along."

"Drop the Mister, then," said Shorty. "I'm plain Shorty to everybody until I'm out o' the army. I've heard so much of you that I feel, too, that I've bin acquainted with you all my life."

"Girls," commanded the mother, "come on and let's git the boys something to eat."

"No, mother," pleaded Si, holding fast to her hand. "Let the girls do it. I want you to sit here and talk to me."

"No, Si," answered the mother, kissing him again, and releasing her hand, "I must do it myself. I must cook your supper for you. The girls won't do it half well enough."

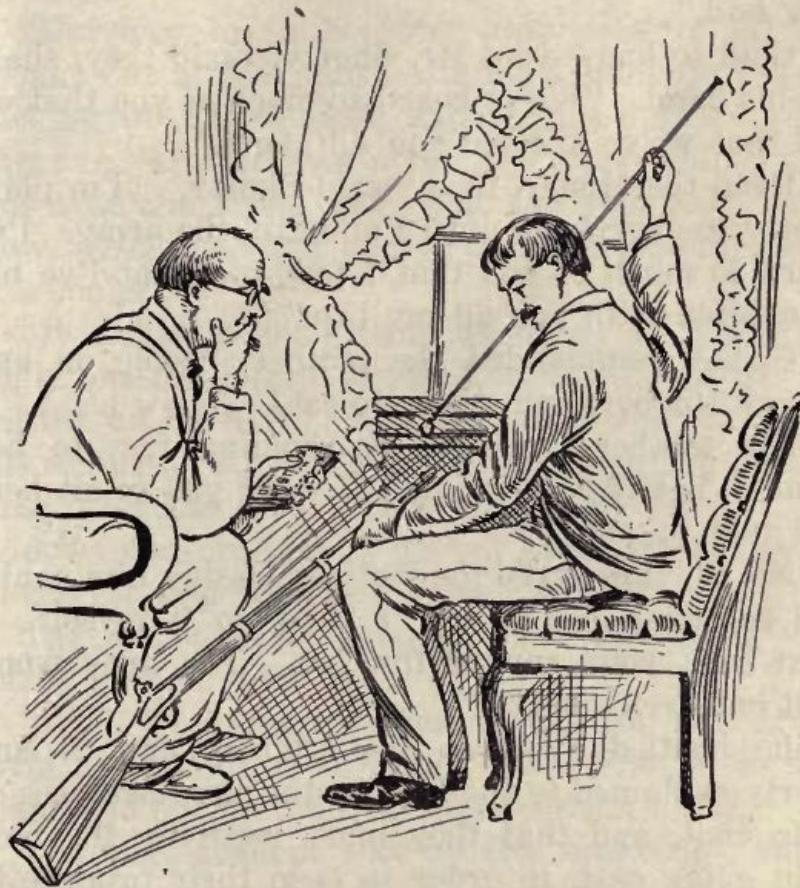
She hustled away to the kitchen, and Si and Shorty explained to the Deacon the circumstances of their visit, and that they must leave by the next train going east, in order to keep their promise to Lieut. Bowersox. The Deacon immediately started Abraham Lincoln and the boy on saddle horses to bring in the neighbors to see the boys, and get the money that had been sent them. They went into an inner room, carefully blinded the windows, and began to draw out the money from various pockets, cartridge-boxes, and other receptacles about their persons.

All drew a long breath of relief when, counting that in Shorty's gun, every dollar was found to be safe.

"But how in time you're ever goin' to git that money out o' that gun beats me," said the Deacon, picking up the musket, and gazing dubiously into the muzzle. "It was a mighty smart thing to do down at the front, but what are you going to do now, when you want to give the money to the people it belongs to?"

"It certainly don't seem as smart as it did that night on the banks o' the Tennessee," Shorty admitted as he fixed his bullet screw on the end of his rammer, "but I'm goin' to trust to my own smartness and the Providence that provides for war widows and orphans to git out every dollar in good shape for them it was intended for."

The bullet-screw brought out the first "wad" easily and all right.



“THE FIRST WAD CAME OUT EASILY AND ALL RIGHT.”

"Well, Providence is lookin' out for Jim Irvin's wife and children all right," said Shorty, as they smoothed out the bills and found them intact.

The next attempt was equally successful, and as Shorty unrolled the bills he remarked:

"Providence is again overlookin'. There's Jim Beardslee's \$50 for his widowed mother."

"And she needs it, poor woman," said the Deacon. "I've seen that she had all the meat and wood she's needed since Jim enlisted, and Deacon Flagler keeps her in flour."

The next offered more difficulty. The rammings on those above had compacted it pretty solidly. The bullet screw cut off bits of it, and when finally it was gotten out the \$10 bill was in pieces.

"That's Alf Ellerby's gift to his lame sister," said Shorty, as he ruefully surveyed the fragments. "I'm afraid Providence wasn't mindin' just then, but I'll give her a good bill out o' my own pocket."

"No, you needn't," said Maria, who had slipped in, fork in hand, to pinch Si, kiss him, and ask him a question which she did not want Mandy to hear; "I kin paste that all together with white of egg so's it'll look as good as ever. I done that with a bill that Towser snatched out o' my hand and chawed before I could git it away from him. The store keeper took it and said it was just as good as any. Sophy Ellerby 'd rather have it that way than a new bill, so long's it comes direct from Alf."

Again Shorty sent down the bullet screw, and again there was more tearing off of bits, and finally a mangled \$20 bill was dragged forth and laid aside for Mandy to repair. "Ike Englehardt sent that to his mother to help take his sister through the Normal School, so's she kin become a teacher. She'll git that all right. But I've broken my bullet screw in that wrastle. It snapped clean off, and I've got the worst job of all now to get out \$100 in two 50's that Abe Trelawney sent his mother to meet that mortgage on her little house. Abe's bin savin' it up for months, and I was more anxious about it than any other, and so I put it down first. Si, let me have your bullet-screw."

"Hain't got none. Lost mine weeks ago, while we was on the Tullahomy march."

"Great Jehosephat! what am I goin' to do?" groaned Shorty, the sweat starting out on his fore head. "Now's the time for Providence to help out, if He's goin' to. I'm at the end o' my string."

"Supper's ready, boys; come on in," announced the sweet, motherly voice of Mrs. Klegg. She seconded her invitation with her arm around Si and a kiss on his cheek. "Father, bring Shorty, unless he'd rather walk with the girls."

Shorty was altogether too bashful to take advantage of the direct hint. Si's lively sisters filled him with a nervous dread of his social shortcomings. He grew very red in the face, hung back from them, and caught hold of the Deacon's arm.

"Go slow with him, girls," whispered the Deacon to his daughters, after they were seated at the table. "He's a mighty good boy, but he ain't used to girls."

"He's rather good looking, if he does act sheepish," returned Mandy.

"Well, he ain't a mite sheepish when there's serious business on hand," returned the father. "And next to ourselves, he's the best friend your brother has."

It had been many years since the wandering, rough-living Shorty had sat down to such an inviting, well-ordered table. Probably he never had. No people in the whole world live better than the prosperous Indiana

farmers, and Mrs. Klegg was known far and wide for her housewifely talents. The snowy table linen, the spotless dishes, the tastefully-prepared food would have done credit to a royal banquet. Hungry as he was, the abashed Shorty fidgeted in his chair, and watched Si begin before he ventured to make an attack. The mother and girls were too busy plying Si with questions and anticipating his wants to notice Shorty's embarrassment.

Si was making a heroic effort to eat everything in sight, to properly appreciate all the toothsome things that loving hands were pressing upon him, and to answer the myriad of questions that were showered upon him, and to get in a few questions of his own at the same time. He just found time to ask Shorty:

"Say, this is great this 's like livin', ain't it?"

And Shorty replied with deep feeling: "Just out o' sight. How in the world'd you ever come to enlist and leave all this?"

The neighbors began gathering in fathers, mothers and sisters of members of Co. Q, all full of eager questions as to their kindred, and this relieved Shorty, for he could tell them quite as well as Si.

The supper ended, the problem of the money in the gun again loomed up. Everyone had an opinion as to how to extricate the valuable charge. The women, of course, suggested hair-pins, but these were tried without success. A gimlet taken from its handle and secured to the ramrod, refused to take hold.

Somebody suggested shooting the gun across a pond of water, and getting the money that way, but it was decided that the force of the Springfield seemed too great for any body of water in the neighborhood. Then Jabe Clemmons, the "speculative" genius of the neighborhood, spoke up:

"Gentlemen, I've an idee. Deacon, how much is in that small haystack of your'n?"

"'Bout 10 tons," answered the Deacon.

"Jest about. Well, I'll pay you the regular market price for it, and give \$100 to Miss Trelawney. Now, let this gentleman stand 50 feet from it and shoot his gun at it. He mustn't tell none of us where he aims at. I'll sell you, gentlemen, that hay in 40 quarter-ton lots, commencing at the top, each man to pay \$2 besides the regular price for a quarter ton o' hay, an' we'll draw numbers as to our turns in takin' the fodder."

"Looks somethin' like gamblin'," demurred the Deacon.

"No more'n church lotteries," answered Jabe, "since it's for a good purpose. Now, gentlemen, who wants to buy a quarter ton of Deacon Klegg's first-class hay?"

At once he had replies enough to take the whole stack, but while he was writing down the names Deacon Klegg had another idea.

"I can't quite git my mind reconciled to gamblin', even for a good purpose," he said. "And I ain't sure about how the two 50's 'll strike the haystack. It'd be a sin if they were destroyed, as they are likely to be. I've another idee. My well there is 25 foot deep. Let's take the bucket out, and let Shorty shoot his gun straight down into the well. I believe the money'll come out all right. If it don't I'll make it up myself, rather than be a party to a gamble."

"May blow the bottom o' your old well out," muttered Jabe Clemmons, who dearly loved anything in the shape of a game of hazard.

"I'll resk that," said the Deacon. "I kin dig an other well, if necessary."

The Deacon's proposal was carried. Shorty, holding the butt of his gun carefully upright, fired down into the well. A boy was lowered in the bucket, and soon announced by a joyful cry that he had gotten the bills. Upon being brought up and examined they were found to be uninjured, except by a slight singeing at the edges.

"Providence's agin managin' things," murmured Shorty gratefully; "but the Deacon's gumption helped out."

All the money for those not present to receive it in person was turned over to the Deacon, and then for the first time the boys felt relieved of a great responsibility.

"There are two trains goin' east," said the Deacon, in response to their inquiries as to the facilities for returning. "The through express passes here at 3:15, and it'll git you to Jeffersonville early in the morning. The accommodation passes about day break, and it'll git you there in the evenin', if it makes connections, which it often doesn't."

"We must go on the through express," said Si firmly. There was a loud outcry by the mother and sisters, but the father recognized the demands of military discipline.

Si began to fidget to get away from the crowd of eager inquirers, which Mandy noticing, she found opportunity to whisper:

"Don't fret. She'll be here presently."

Si's face burned. He had thought his secret well-kept, but here his sisters read his thoughts like an open book. He had wanted to go to Annabel, and have a few golden minutes alone with her. Just what for just what he would say or do he did not in the least know he could not imagine. Only he felt that in some way the main interest of his life depended on seeing her somewhere remote from curious eyes and listening ears. He wanted to go to her, not to have her come to him, and meet him in such a throng as was gathered at his home.

While these thoughts were coursing through his mind he heard Maria call:

"Si, come here into my room. I want to show you the purtiest thing you ever saw."

While Mandy was a most correct young woman, she could not withstand giving a significant wink to those around, to which they responded with knowing smiles. These, fortunately, Si did not see. He arose at once, the people made way, and he was led by Maria to her room. She opened the door and said:

"There, now, kiss me for a loving sister."

It was a fervent kiss that Si rewarded her with, for, there, rising from her chair as the door opened, dressed in her best, and her face wreathed with smiles and blushes, stood Annabel.

"Since you are so mean about goin' away so soon, you can only have 10 minutes together; make the most of

it," laughed Maria, and she scudded back to the sitting-room.

Si stood for an instant dazed. How beautiful she was far more so than his recollections had painted her. She had blossomed out from the school-girl into the mature woman, and every feature ripened. Fair as his home seemed in contrast with the country he had left, she seemed still fairer in contrast with any woman he had ever seen. Where were the thousand things that, brooding by the campfire and lying in his tent, he thought over to say to her when they met? All forgotten or dismissed as inappropriate. He simply stood and gazed at her. She re covered herself first, and said teasingly:

"Well, how do you do? Ain't you going to speak? Ain't you glad to see me?"

Si could only step forward and take her hand, and murmur:



“ANNABEL, HOW PURTY YOU LOOK.”

(CHAPTER XIII.)

"Annabel, how purty you look. How you've growed, and all purtier. I'm awfully glad to see you. That's what I most wanted to come home for."

Then his face burned with new blushes to think how much he had said. They sat down, he still holding her hand, with his eyes fixed upon her face. Somehow, in the mysterious telegraphy of first love, they so fully understood one another that words were unnecessary.

Speechless, but fuller of happiness than they ever dreamed was possible in the world, they sat with clasped hands until Maria came back, calling out:

"Time's up. The folks say that they can't let Annabel have you any longer. Come into the sitting-room, both of you. Come along, Si. Come along, Annabel."

Si rose obediently, but Annabel declined to go. She did not say why, but Maria, with a woman's instincts, knew that she wanted to be alone to think it all over. Maria therefore hurried back.

"Good-by, Annabel," he said, pressing her hand again. "I'll write to you first thing when I git back."

"Good-by, Si. God keep you for me, safe through battles and dangers."

She turned away to hide her bursting tears.

It was astonishing how quick midnight came. When the clock striking 12 smote the ears of the family, nobody had said, heard or asked one tith of what he or she was burning eager to, yet the parting was but a little more than two brief hours away.

With a heart heavier even than when she parted from her boy for the first time, Mrs. Klegg arose, and sought to distract her thoughts by collecting as big a package as they could carry of the choicest eatables. How often she stopped to cry softly into her apron not even the girls knew, for she was resolved to keep up a brave front, especially before Si, and would carefully wash all traces of tears from her face, and clear the sobs from her throat before re-entering the room where he was.

Shorty had at once been taken to the hearts of everyone, and all the older men urged him to "come back here as soon as the war's over, marry a nice girl, and settle down among us."

Si received many compliments upon his development into such a fine, stalwart man.

One after another said:

"Si, what a fine, big man you've growed into. I declare, you're a credit to your father and mother and the settlement. We all expect you to come back a Captain or a Colonel, and we'll run you for Sheriff or County Commissioner, or something as big."

"O, anything but Treasurer," Si would laughingly reply. "I've had enough handling other folks' money to last me my life."

Presently Abraham Lincoln brought the spring wagon around. Even in the moonlight Si could see that freedom and the Deacon's tuition had developed the ex-slave into a much better man than the wretched runaway whom his father had protected. He wanted to know more of him, but there were too many demands upon his attention. They all mounted into the wagon, the bundles were piled in, one last embrace from his mother, and they drove away, reaching the station just in time to catch the train. As he kissed Maria good-by she shoved a letter into his hand, saying:

"This is from Annabel. Read it after you git on."

As the train whirled away Si made an excuse to go away from Shorty, and standing up under the lamp in the next car he read on a tear-stained sheet:

"Deer Si: I wanted so much to tel you, but the words wooddent come to my lips, that Ime yours til deth, no matter what happens, and Ime shure you feel the saim way. Annabel."

Coming back with his heart in a tumult of rapture, he found his partner fast asleep and even snoring.

CHAPTER XIV. THE FRISKY YOUNGSTERS

TRYING TO LICK A BATCH OF RECRUITS INTO SHAPE.

FOR awhile the tumult of thought kept Si awake, but he was too young, healthy, and tired for this to last long, and soon he had his head pillowed on his blanket-roll, placed in the open car-window, and was sleeping too sound to even dream of Annabel, while the rushing train pelted his face with cinders from the engine and a hail of gravel from the road-bed. But what was that to a soldier-boy who had been home, seen his best girl, and had one of his mother's square meals?

When the train rolled into Jeffersonville in the afternoon, they saw Lieut. Bowersox on the platform anxiously waiting for them. His face lighted up with pleasure when he saw them, and eagerly coming forward he said:

"Great Cesar, boys, but I'm glad you've come. I've been waiting for you all day. Rush orders came last night to send everybody to the front. I guess they are in need of every gun they can get. I should have gone last night, but I managed to stave off my orders till now. If you hadn't come on this train, though, I should 've had to go on with out you. Hurry along, now. We are going right across the river."

Despite the Lieutenant's urgency, Si found time to hand him a jar of honey and a small crock of butter from their home supplies, which he received with proper appreciation, and handed over to the grinning negro boy he had picked up somewhere in Tennessee for a servant. They followed the Lieutenant to where he had his squad of about 100 recruits gathered. He said:

"Here, Klegg, you will act as Orderly-Sergeant, and Shorty and the rest of you as Sergeants of this detachment. Here is the list of them, Klegg. Make up a roll and call it whenever I order you to do so."

Si took the list and looked over the crowd. They were mainly boys of about the same age and style as himself when he first enlisted, but he thought he had never seen so green, gawky a lot in the world. Like him then, every one was weighted down with a bundle of things that would evidently be contributed to the well-being of the people along the line of march.

It seemed to him that they stood around the platform in as ugly crookedness as a lodgment of driftwood on a Wabash bottom after a freshet.

"Where on the Wea prairies," muttered Shorty, "did Old Abe pick up that job lot o' wind shaken, lopsided saplings? Must've bin pulled when green and warped in the dryin'."

"Well, we've got to git 'em into some sort o' shape," answered Si. "You must help."

"I help?" returned Shorty despairingly. "You'll need a West Point perfessor and a hay-press to git that crowd into soldier shape. I ain't once."

"Here, Sergeant," ordered Lieut. Bowersox, "line the men up, count them, learn their names, and give them a little preliminary drill, while I go to Headquarters and see the Colonel again about our transportation."

"Fall in, boys; fall in," commanded Si.

The crowd looked at him curiously. They knew that he wanted them to do something, they were willing to do it, but they hadn't the slightest idea what it was. They made a move by huddling up a little toward him.

"Fall in in two ranks, with the right here," shouted Si.

There was more inconsequent huddling, which seemed so purposely awkward that it irritated Si, and he spoke sharply:

"Gosh all Krismuss, what's the matter with you lunkheads? Don't you know nothing? You're dummer'n a lot o' steers."

"Guess we know 'bout as much as you did when you first enlisted," said the smallest of the lot, a red-cheeked, bright-eyed boy, who looked as if he should have been standing up before a blackboard "doing a

sum" in long division, instead of on his way to the field of strife. "Show us how, and we'll learn as quick as you did."

Si looked at the fresh young boy. There was something actually girlish in his face, and it reminded him of Annabel. His heart softened toward him at once, and he remembered his own early troubles. He said gently to the boy:

"You're right. What's your name, my boy?"

"Abel Waite."

"Well, Abel, we'll make a soldier out of you in a little while. You are the smallest; you'll be the left of the line. Go and stand there at the corner. Now, boys, all lay your bundles down. Here, you tall fellow, what's your name?"

"James Bradshaw."

"Well, Bradshaw, you'll be the right of the line all the time, and the rest 'll form on you. Come, stand here."

Bradshaw shambled forward in a way that made Shorty call out:

"Here, Bradshaw, wake up! You ain't now follerin' a plow over the last year's corn-furrers. Straighten up, lift them mud-hooks livelier and drop your hands to your side."

The man stopped, raised his hands, and looked at Shorty with his mouth wide open.

"Come, Bradshaw," said Si gently, taking hold of him, "I'll show you. Now you stand right here. Put your heels together. Now turn your toes out. Throw your shoulders back this way. Close your mouth. Put your little fingers on the seams of your pantaloons that way. Now stand just so."

The poor man looked as miserable as if put in a strait-jacket, but tried to literally obey instructions.

"Now, what's your name?" Si asked the next tall est man.

"Simeon Wheelwright."

"Wheelwright, you stand behind Bradshaw, just as he does."

And so Si went painstakingly through the whole squad until he came to Abel Waite, whom he found did not need any instruction, for he had profited by hearing the lectures to the others, and was standing as stiff and correct as a veteran could have done.

"Great outfit," remarked Shorty, walking down the line, gun in hand, and surveying it critically. "Looks like a mourners' bench froze stiff. Here, you red-headed man there, take in that corporation. You won't have so much bay window after you've lived on army rations awhile."

"Now," commanded Si, "when I say 'Count twos from the right,' I want you to begin and count. The first man you, Bradshaw says 'one,' and the next man on your left says 'two' and so on. The men in the rear rank do the same. Count twos from the right Count!"

"One, two; four, six; seven, nine; ten, 'leven," shouted the boys, in all manner of tones and general bewilderment.

"Stop it; stop it!" yelled Si, his temper again rising. "Great day, can't you fellers understand plain English when it's talked to you? What's the matter with you, anyway? Here, Bradshaw, when I give the order to count, you count one. Wheel wright, you count one at the same time. Williams and Talbot, you each count two. Then Aldrich, you and Reynolds count one, and so on."

At last he got them to count to his satisfaction, and then proceeded to the next lesson.

"Now, at the command 'right face' everybody face to the right. The No. 1 men in the front rank stand fast. The No. 1 men in the rear rank take a side step to the right. The No. 2 men each take a side step to the right, and places himself on the right of No. 1."

"Great Jehosephat, Si," remonstrated Shorty; "it'll take 'em a month to learn all that."

"Don't care if it does," said Si desperately. "They've got to learn it sometime, and they can't learn no younger. Might as well begin now as any time. 'Tention! Right face!"

Si had hard work restraining the angry words which fumed up when he saw the execution of his command. Only a few had turned to the right. The rest had either stood still, turned to the left or were turning first one way and then another, to adjust themselves to those nearest them.

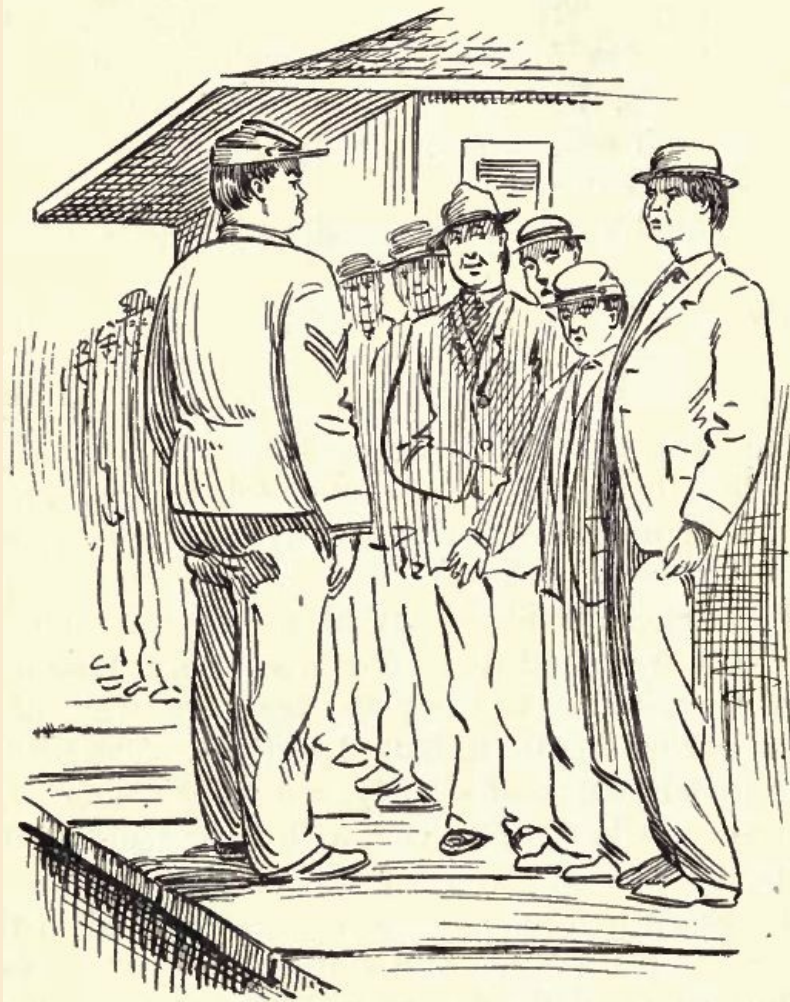
"Looks like a political primary just before the vote's called," remarked Shorty. "Better git red rags to tie around their right hands, so's they'll know 'em."

"It'll be a shame to take them across the Ohio river in this shape," said Si in deep vexation. "They'll shoot one another's heads off in the first fight, if they've guns in their hands."

"Don't worry," answered Shorty consolingly. "They'll pick it up mighty fast as soon as they see other fellers doing it, and 'll be in purty good shape by the time we git 'em to the regiment. We was just as green as they are."

Si repressed his petulant words with an effort, and started in to give them an ocular demonstration of the way to execute "right face," but was interrupted by the Lieutenant coming up and saying:

"Here, we've got to move right out to catch the ferryboat and the train on the other side. 'Tention! Pick up your bundles. Forward, march!"



THE RECRUITS LINED UP ON THE PLATFORM.

Tactics were forgotten in a go-as-you-please rush on to the ferryboat, through the streets of Louisville, and on to the cars for Nashville. Everybody else was doing the same. The boat and streets were filled and the depot yard packed with men all pushing forward for the "front." While Si, walking alongside the Lieutenant, led, Shorty and the rest of the detail brought up the rear. After they had scrambled into the old freight cars and stowed them selves away, Si looked over his squad and counted it.

"Have you got them all aboard, Sergeant?" inquired Lieut. Bowersox.

"I've got the right number, sir," Si answered, saluting; "and if they ain't all the same men they're just as good."

"All right," returned the officer. "I had 103 put in my charge to take to the regiment, and 103 men I must have when I get there."

"You shall have the full 103, Lieutenant," assured Shorty, "if we have to snatch in a native or two to take the place of some that fall through the cracks."

At Nashville the crowd and confusion were excessive; detachments of men of all kinds, sorts and conditions armed and unarmed recruits, convalescent veterans, men coming back from furlough, stragglers under guard, squads of Quartermaster's employees, gangs of railroad laborers and bridge-builders were all surging around, while their officers, superintendents, foremen, etc., shouted themselves hoarse in trying to get their men together and keep them so. When Si at last got his men on board, and the train had moved out, he was dismayed to find that he was five short.

"They was lost in that shuffle back there in the depot," said Shorty. "Lucky it wa'n't more. Wonder that we ever got through as well as we did."

"What in the world am I going to do?" inquired Si dolefully. "There's no use sending back for them. They've probably got mixed up with some other squads, and gone the Lord knows where. They haven't sense enough to find their regiment in such a ruck as this."

Si counted his men over again, with no better result.

"I've got an idee," said Shorty, as Si came up to commune again with him as to the misfortune. "I noticed five mighty lively young Irishmen in that bridge gang that's on the rear car, and I've got a pint flash of whisky that some fellow was green enough to lay down while we was there in Nash ville. I'm goin' back to that car on recruitin' duty."

Si, unable to think of anything better, went with him. The train had stopped on a switch, and seemed likely to rust fast to the rails, from the way other trains were going by in both directions. The bridge gang, under charge of a burly, red-faced young Englishman, was in the rear car, with their tools, equipments, bedding and cooking utensils.

The English foreman was a recent arrival in the country. This was his first employment here. Naturally surly and domineering, these qualities were enhanced by potations at Nashville and since leaving.

Si and Shorty strolled up to the young Irishmen, who were standing on the ground near their car. They were very plainly recent arrivals, for they still wore the characteristic clothes of the Emerald Isle, and after a little conversation with them Shorty produced his bottle and offered them a drink. The foreman had watched them suspiciously, and he came swaggering up, saying insolently:

"Ere, you bloomin' sojer, Hi want you to keep haway from my men, hand not be a-givin' them drink. You stay by yourselves, hand Hi won't 'ave 'em hinterfered wi' by nobuddy."

"Your men," sneered Shorty. "You talk as if they was niggers, and not white men. Who made 'em yours?"

"Stow yer wid, ye bloody blue-jack," returned the foreman contemptuously, "hand pull ha way from here. Hi never could bear sojers blokes, too lazy to work hand too cowardly to steal. Hike out o' here, and shut you 'ead, hif you know w'at's well for you."

"Shut up your own head, you British blowhard," retorted Shorty, "and mind your own business. Wait until you are a little longer in the country be fore you try to run it. And I don't want no more o' your slack. If you don't keep a civil tongue in your head I'll make you."

The Englishman was just in the mood to be savagely tickled at the prospect of a fight. He had not had a good, square one since he had been in the country, and nothing yet had offered so gratifying as the prospect of polishing off one of the despised "Hamerican sojers." Several of the hated officers had strolled up, attracted by the high words, and it would be an additional pleasure to thrash one of their men before their eyes, in revenge for the slights he felt they had put upon him.

"You won't fight," he said disdainfully, "except with a gun or a knife, like a bloody Dago. Ye dassent put up yer 'ands like a man."

For response, Shorty handed his cap, his gun, his bottle, his blanket-roll, his belt and haversack to Si, rolled up his sleeves, spit on his hands, doubled his fists, and stepped forward into a boxing attitude.

"Balance up to me, you beer-bloated Britisher," he exclaimed, "and git naturalized by a real Star-Spangled Banner lickin' by an artist who kin comb down any man that owes allegiance to Queen Victoree. Here's a Heenan for your Tom Sayers."

The Englishman began disrobing with an alacrity that showed how much his heart was in it. A ring was speedily formed, the officers, mainly Lieutenants and Captains, eagerly assisting, while keeping their eyes over their shoulders to see that no one of much higher rank was in the neighborhood.

When the men confronted one another it was seen that they were a fairly-good match. The English man was stouter and heavier; he showed a splendid forearm, with corresponding swelling muscles near the shoulders, and the way he poised himself and put up his hands revealed that he had "science" as well as strength and courage. Shorty was taller and more spare, but he was quicker and had the longer reach. It looked as if the Englishman had the advantage, from his solid strength and staying power, as well as "science." But those who looked on Shorty as inferior did not know of the training he had received among the turbulent crews of the Mississippi River boats. A man who had summered and wintered with that fractious race had little to learn in any trick or device of fighting.

The first round showed that both were past-masters of ring tactics. Their wardings and layings for openings were so perfect that neither could get a blow in.

When they stopped for a moment to breathe the Englishman said with frank admiration:

"Y're a heap better lot than Hi thort yer. Where'd ye learn to handle yer dukes?"

"Never mind where I learned," answered Shorty. "I learned enough to git away with any English man that ever chawed roast beef."

Again they closed, and sparred quick and hard for advantage, but neither succeeded in getting in any thing but light, ineffective blows. Each realized that the other was a dangerous man to handle, and each kept cool and watched his chances. When they took another second to breathe the Englishman said:

"I'm goin' to settle ye this time, young feller, in spite o' yer fibbin'. Ye peck around me like a cock pickin' up corn, but I'll bust ye. Look hout for yerself."

He made a savage rush to break through Shorty's guard by main force, but Shorty evaded him by a quick movement, the Englishman struck his toe against a piece of railroad iron, and fell to his knees. Shorty had him at his mercy, but he merely stepped back a little further, and waited for his opponent to rise and regain his position before he again advanced to the attack.

The Englishman lost his coolness. Again he rushed savagely at Shorty, with less care in his guard. Shorty evaded his mighty blow, and reaching up under his guard struck him on the chin so hard that the Englishman fell like an ox.

Shorty took him by the hand and helped him to his feet. "Do you want any more? Have you got enough?" he asked.

"Yes, Hi've got enough," answered the English man. "I'm too groggy to go on. Hi've been drink-in' a bit too much to 'andle myself wi' a first-class man like yerself. Y've downed me, and y've downed me fair, for Hi'm not the man to whimper about not being fit. There's my hand. We're friends. We'll try hit again some day, when Hi've got the likker out o' me; won't we?"

"Certainly, whenever you like," said Shorty, shak ing hands with him.

"Say, cul," said the Englishman, in the friendliest sort of way, "w'at was ye wantin' around among my men?"

"To tell you the truth," answered Shorty, "I was after them to enlist with us. We lost five men in the shuffle at Nashville, and I was lookin' out for some to take their places.

"That's w'at I thort," said the Englishman. "That's w'at I was afraid of. The 'ead bridge man 'as bin preachin' to me ever since 'e 'ired me, hand we made hup the gang in New York, to look hout hand keep my men from bein' enlisted. Say, youngster, his yours a good regiment?"

"The very best in the army," unhesitatingly as sserted Shorty. "All free-born American citizens, and high-toned gentlemen. I tell you, they're daisies, they are."

"Hi don't 'know," said the Englishman meditatively, "but Hi'd like to see a little bit o' fightin' myself. Bridge buildin's 'eavy, 'ard work, and Hi wouldn' mind sojerin' a little while for a change."

"Come right along with me and this man," said Shorty catching on. "You'll see the purtiest fighting to be found anywhere in the army, for the 200th Injianny kin do it up to the Queen's taste. And we'll treat you white. A better set o' boys never lived."

"Hi'll do hit," said the Englishman decidedly.

"Mebbe," suggested Shorty, remembering that this would still leave them four short, "some o' your gang'd like to come along with you."

"Some o' them," said the Englishman earnestly. "Hevery bloomin' one o' them 'as got to go. They've got to volunteer. Hif Hi find hany cowardly bloke that'd rather be a beastly bridge-builder than a gentleman and a sojer, I'll pound 'is 'ead offen 'im. They'll all volunteer, I tell ye, w'en Hi speak to 'em."

Si had been quietly talking to the rest of the gang while this conversation was going on, and discovered a general willingness to exchange mechanical pursuits for those of a more martial character, and so when they left the train at Chattanooga, Lieut. Bowersox marched at the head of 130 recruits, instead of the 103 with whom he had crossed the Ohio River.

CHAPTER XV. KEYED UP FOR ACTION

MARCHING INTO THE BATTLE OF CHICKAMAUGA.

ALL of that eventful 19th of September, 1864, the men of Lieut. Bowersox's detachment were keyed up with the knowledge that they were heading straight for a desperate battle, and the main fear with Si, Shorty and the great majority was that they would not reach the field in time to take a hand in the affray. It seemed that never ran a locomotive at such a snail's pace as their engine was compelled to do over the wretched road bed and improvised bridges. The engineer, stimulated by the excitement and the urgent messages at every station, was doing his very best, but his engine was ditched once and narrowly escaped it a hundred times. The only curb to their impatience was the absolute knowledge that an attempt at faster running would result in not getting there in time at all.

At every stopping place news from the front was eagerly sought for and canvassed. It was at all times aggressively meager. All that could be learned was that the whole rebel army was out on the Chickamauga some miles from Chattanooga, and savagely attacking the Union army to drive it away and recapture the town.

The news was generally very encouraging. Every attack of the rebels had been repulsed, though our own loss had been heavy. But every man was needed. The rebel lines extended far beyond those of the Union army in each direction, and still they had enough for heavy assaulting columns. Everybody in the neighborhood of Chattanooga had been ordered up, leaving only the meagerest possible guards for the trains and communications.

This increased the burning impatience of the boys to get where they could be of service. But it was far into the night when they finally skirted the frowning palisades of Lookout Mountain, and went into bivouac on the banks of Chattanooga Creek. All of the squad wanted guns, and Si and Shorty had been desperately anxious to get them for them.

At the stopping places were squads of guards, men more or less sick, and men on detached duty. Wherever Si or Shorty's sharp search could find a gun not actually in use, or not likely to be, it was pretty sure, by some means or other, either openly or surreptitiously, to be gotten into the hands of one of the squad. In this way, by the time they arrived at Chattanooga, they had nearly half their men armed, and had given them some preliminary instruction in handling their guns. The Indianians needed little so far as loading and firing, for they were all natural marksmen, but to the Englishman and his Irish squad the musket was a thing of mystery and dread.

"An' is that the goon for me?" said one of the Irishmen contemptuously, as Si proudly handed him a trusty Springfield he had found unwatched some where. "That fool thing wid a bore no bigger'n a gimlet hole? Fwhy, out in the ould country, when we go man-hunting, we take a goon wid a mouth like a funnel, that ye can put a hat full av balls inter. To the divil wid such a goon as this."

"Fix your mind on learnin' the kinks o' that gun, Barney," advised Shorty. "One ball from it put in the right place 'll do more than a hat full from your old Irish blunderbuss. A man that gits only one from it won't need nothin' more'n a head stone and his name crossed offen the roster. Git a good squint at him through them sights, jest be low his belt, hold stiddy while you pull the trigger, and his name 'll be mud."

"But fwhere is the powdher to make the ball go?" persisted Barney, looking at the cartridge which Shorty had put in his hand.

"The powder is behind the ball in that paper bag," explained Shorty. "You tear the paper with your teeth this way, and pour the powder into the muzzle."

"Fhat," said Barney contemptuously, surveying the cartridge. "There isn't enough powdher there to throw a ball as far as Oi can a pebble. Fwhy, Oi used to put a whole handful o' powdher in the old blunderbuss. Oi wud do betther to whack a man wid a shillelah. And fwhere is the flint to stroike foire?"

"O, the flintlock's played out, you flannel-mouthed Irishman," said Shorty irritably. "It's as out-of-date as a bow and arrer. This's a percussion-lock; don't you understand? This is a cap. You stick it right on this nipple, an' when the hammer goes down off goes your gun. Don't you see?"

"Well, you can say, maybe, an' maybe you can't But Oi can't. Take your old goon. Oi'll none avit."

"May the devil fly away wid it, an' wid you, too. Oi'd rather have a good shtick. Wid a shtick in me fist Oi'll take care of ony spalpeen fwhat'll stand up in front av me. But wid a fool goon loike that Oi'd be kilt at wance."

While Si and Shorty were still worrying about what to do for arms for the remainder of their men, they heard what seemed to be about a company marching toward them through the darkness.

"I suppose we had better stop here and stack our arms out of the way," they heard the officer say who seemed to be in command. "We've got an all-night's job before us, fixing up that bridge, and getting those wagons across. Stack arms, boys, and leave your belts and traps with them. There's lots of work down there for us."

They could see dimly the men obeying the orders, and going down the bank of the creek, where they started large fires to light them at their work.

"They have got a job ahead of 'em," remarked Shorty, looking in the direction of the fires.

"It'll take 'em all night and a large part o' tomorrow," said Si, significantly, as a thought entered his mind.

"Indeed it will," accorded Shorty, as the same idea occurred to him. "An' they won't need their guns. They're only pioneers, anyway."

"If they do," chimed in Si, "they kin pick up plenty more just as good around somewhere, when daylight comes. That's what pioneers is for."

"Si, you ketch on like a he snappin' turtle," said Shorty joyfully. "We'll jest help ourselves to them guns and cartridge-boxes, and then move our camp over a little ways, and skeet out airly in the mornin' for the front, and we'll be all right. Don't say nothin' to the Lieutenant about it. He'll be all right, and approve of it, but he mustn't know anything of it officially. You git the men up and I'll go over and give the Lieutenant the wink and tell him that we've found a much better bivouac about a mile further on."

While the pioneers were struggling with their task, and the air down by the creek was filled with shouts and commands, Si and Shorty, with some of the others, quietly appropriated enough stands of arms to complete the equipment of their squad.

Shorty took much credit for his honesty and forbearance that he did not touch a single one of the pioneers' belongings but their arms. A little later the squad was in bivouac a mile away.

At the earliest dawn of Sept. 20 they were awake, and after a hasty breakfast moving out the Rossville road for the battlefield. Only an occasional shot from a nervous picket, peering into the deep fog, or angry spatter from a squad of scouting cavalry disturbed the stillness of the beautiful Autumn morning. The bright rays of the level sun were bringing out the rich tints of the maples and dog woods on the mountain-sides in all their gorgeous richness. Nature was smiling so benignantly on every side that it needed the turmoil and rush in the winding roads to remind one that somewhere near men were in bitter contrast with her divine serenity. But the roads were crowded with ammunition and ration wagons pushing out to the front, and with mounted officers and Orderlies making their way as rapidly as possible back and for ward with orders and messages.

Lieut. Bowersox left the road with his detachment and made his way across the fields, over ditches, ravines and creeks, through the thickets and the brush, and at last came out on top of Missionary Ridge at the north side of Rossville Gap.

With eager eyes they scanned the landscape of billowy mountains and hills to the east and south.

A fog obscured all the lowlands, but far out columns of thin smoke rising lazily on the still air showed where 150,000 men were marshaling for bloody conflict.

"That Major I spoke to," said Lieut. Bowersox, as Si and Shorty looked anxiously in his face, "is on the corps staff, and he says the whole infernal Southern Confederacy is out there for blood. They jumped us yesterday like a pack of famished wolves. But Rosecrans had just got his army together in time, though some of the divisions had to march till their tongues were hanging out. All the boys were dead game, though, and they stood the rebels off everywhere in great shape. He hasn't the faintest idea where the 200th Ind. is. The divisions and brigades have been jumped around from one end of the line to the other till he has but little more idea where any regiment is than if it was in the moon. The only way for us is to make our way as fast as we can to the front, where they need every man, and trust to luck to find the regiment. We'll probably not find it, but we'll find a place where they need us badly."

"Le's go ahead, then," said Si firmly, "as fast as we can. We'd much rather be with the regiment, but we'll take whatever comes wherever it comes, and do our level best."

"I know you will, Sergeant," answered the Lieutenant. "Take another look over your men. See that they've all cartridges, and caution them to keep cool, stay together, whatever happens, and listen to orders."

Si felt a new and keener solicitude than he had ever before experienced. Hitherto his only thoughts were as to his own safety and to do himself credit in the discharge of his duty. Now he felt a heavy responsibility for every man in the detachment.

He walked slowly down the front of the line, and looked into every man's face. They appeared anxious but resolute. The face of Wat Burnham, the Englishman, had settled into more of a bull-dog look than ever. The Irishmen seemed eager. Abel Waite, the boy on the left, was as excited as if a game of foot-ball was to come off. He called out:

"Say, Sergeant, I hain't got but 10 cartridges. Will that be enough?"

"It'll have to be enough for the present," answered Si. "Be careful of 'em. Don't waste none. Be sure o' your man, aim low, git under his belt, an' be careful to ketch your hind-sight before you pull the trigger. If we need more cartridges we'll have to find more somewhere."

From away beyond the green and yellow waves of hills came the crash of the reopened battle. The ripping noise of regiments firing by volley was hoarsely punctuated by the deep boom of the field-pieces.

"Attention, company! Forward March!" shout ed Lieut. Bowersox.

They swept down the mountain-side, over the next eminence, and so onward. At every crest that they raised the uproar of the battle became louder, the crash of musketry and the thunder of the can non more

continuous. The roads were so filled with teams being urged forward or backward that they could not follow them, but had to make their way through the woods and occasional fields, only keeping such direction as would bring them quickest to some part of the stormy firing-line.

The Lieutenant and Si and Shorty tried to make themselves believe that the noise was receding, showing that the rebels were being driven. At times it certainly was so, and then again it would burst out,

"Nearer, clearer, deadlier than before," and their hearts would sink again. A little past noon they came upon a hight, and there met a sight which, for the moment, froze their blood. To their right front the whole country was filled with men flying in the wildest confusion. All semblance of regimental order was lost in the awful turmoil. Cannon, sometimes drawn by two or three horses, sometimes by only one, were plunging around amid the mob of infantrymen. Mounted officers were wildly galloping in all directions. Colors were carried to crests and ridges, and for a moment groups of men would gather around them, only to melt again into the mob of fugitives. From far behind came the yells of the exultant rebels, and a storm of shot and shell into the disorganized mass.

The boys' hearts sickened with the thought that the whole army was in utter rout. For a minute or two they surveyed the appalling sight in speechless despair. Then a gleam of hope shot into Si's mind.

"Listen," he said; "the firing is heavier than ever over there toward the center and left, and you can see that men are goin' up instid o' runnin' away. It's Stone River over again. McCook's bin knocked to pieces, just as he always is, but old Pap Thomas is standing there like a lion, just as he did at Stone River, and he's holding Crittenden with him."

"You're right, Si," shouted the Lieutenant and Shorty. "Hip, hip, hooray for the Army o' the Cumberland and old Pap Thomas!"

They deflected to the left, so as to avoid being tangled up in the mass of fugitives, and pushed forward more determinedly, if possible, than ever. They kept edging to the right, for they wanted to reach Thomas's right as nearly as possible, as that was the natural position of their regiment.

Presently, on mounting a roll of the ground, they saw sloping down from them a few rods away, and running obliquely to their right, a small "deadening," made by the shiftless farmer for his scanty corn crop. A mob of fugitives flying through had trampled the stalks to the ground. Si and Shorty had seen some of them and yelled at them to come up and form on them, but the skedaddlers either would not or could not hear.

Beyond the "deadening" came a horde of pursuing rebels, firing and yelling like demons. The sight and sound swelled the boys' hearts with the rage of battle.

"Lieutenant," suggested Si, "there's no need o' goin' any further just now for a fight. We can have just as nice a one right here as we can find anywhere. I move that we line up back here and wait for them rebels to come on, an' then git 'em on the flank with an enfilade that'll salivate 'em in a holy minute."

"The same idea has occurred to me," said the Lieutenant; "though I've felt all along that we should not be diverted by anything from making our way as fast as possible up to the main line. What do you think, Shorty?"

"My idee is to down a rebel whenever you git a good chance," said Shorty. "'Do the work nearest thy hand,' I once heard an old preacher say. Le's jump these hounds right here."

"All right," assented the Lieutenant quite willingly. "Form the men just back of the edge of the woods. Keep them out of sight, and caution them not to shoot till they get the order. We must wait till we get the rebels just right."



THEY POSTED THE MEN BEHIND THE TREES.

Si and Shorty hurriedly posted the men behind trees and rocks, cautioned them to wait for orders, and fire low, and then stationed themselves, one at the right, and the other at the left of the irregular line. They had scarcely done so when the rebels came surging through the "deadening" in a torrent. They were urged on by two mounted officers wearing respectively the silver stars of a Colonel and a Major.

"The feller on the bay hoss's my meat," shouted Shorty from the left.

"All right," answered Si. "I'll take the chap on the roan."

"Wait a little," cautioned the Lieutenant. "We'll get more of them if you do. Now, let them have it. Ready Aim FIRE!"

Down went the Colonel and Major and fully 50 of their men. The Indiana recruits might be green as to tactics, but they knew how to level a gun.

The startled rebels ceased yelling, and looked around in amazement in the direction whence the unexpected fire came. A few began firing that way, but the majority started to run back across the "deadening" to the sheltering woods. Groups gathered around the fallen officers to carry them back.

"Load as fast as you can, boys," commanded the Lieutenant. "That was a good one. Give them an other."

The young Irishmen were wild with excitement, and wanted to rush down and club the rebels, but the Lieutenant restrained them, though he could not get them to reload their guns. As Si was bringing down his gun he noticed the Englishman aiming at the groups about the officers.

"Don't shoot them. Fire at the others," Si called out, while he himself aimed at a man who was trying to rally his comrades.

"W'y the bloody 'ell shouldn't Hi shoot them the same has the hothers?" snarled the Englishman, firing into the group. "They're all bloody rebels."

By the time the second round was fired the "deadening" was clear of all the rebels but those who had been struck. The others were re-forming on the knoll beyond, and a field-piece was hurried up to their assistance, which threw a shell over at the line.

"We had better move off," said the Lieutenant. "They're forming out there to take us in flank, and we can't hold them back. We have done all that we can here, and a mighty good job, too. We have saved a lot of our men and salted a good bagful of rebels. Attention! File left March!"

"That was a mighty good introduction for the boys," said Si to Shorty as they moved on through the woods. "They begin to see how the thing's done; and didn't they act splendidly? I'm proud of Injianny."

"Sergeant, didn't I do well?" asked Abel Waite, in the tone that he would have inquired of his teacher about a recitation. "I done just as you told me. I kep' my eye on the tall feller in front, who was wavin' his gun and yellin' at the rest to come on. I aimed just below his belt, an' he went down just like I've seen a beef when pap shot him."

"Good boy," said Si, patting him on the shoulder. "You're a soldier already."

CHAPTER XVI. THE TERRIFIC STRUGGLE

THE END OF THE BATTLE OF CHICKAMAUGA.

LIEUT. Bowersox, Si, Shorty and the recruits left the woods and entered a large clearing, in the midst of which was a log cabin, with a few rude outbuildings. Over it flew the yellow flag of the hospital service, and beyond could be seen the parked trains and other evidences of the line-of-battle.

The roar of the battle would have told them as much, for it was now deafening. The earth seemed to throb and the trees shake with the awful shocks. As they passed the hospital they saw a grewsome pile of amputated legs and arms, while the ground around about was filled with wounded, whose groans pierced through the roar of battle.

James Bradshaw and Simeon Wheelwright, the two tall, stalwart men who had stood on the right and who had shown great coolness during the fight, gave one look at the dismembered limbs, turned pale as death, gasped, and fell in a faint.

"Forward! Can't stop to pay attention to them," commanded the Lieutenant, in whom the battle-fever was burning.

Though still more than two miles from the low crest of Snodgrass Hill, where Gen. Thomas, with the remainder of the Army of the Cumberland, was standing savagely at bay against the fierce assaults of Bragg's and Longstreet's overwhelming numbers, they were soon in the midst of the wild ruck and confusion of the rear of a great battle. Miles of wagons were being urged hither and yon, some times in accordance with intelligent orders by officers, more often from the panicky fears of wagon-masters and teamsters; riderless horses with saddles under their bellies were galloping frantically around; squads of artillerymen in search of ammunition were storming about, cursing cowardly teamsters, whom they could not find; streams of wounded men were trying to make their way to the hospitals; officers were yelling and swearing in their attempts to rally shirks and cowards who had fled from the front; men from regiments which had been broken and scattered by the fierce assaults were trying to find their colors; Colonels whose regiments had been ordered up from the rear were fiercely forcing their way forward, with many dire objurgations on all who impeded their progress.

It was a scene to discourage any but the stoutest heart, yet it only wrought up the boys to greater eagerness to get through to the firing-line.

The smoke-crowned crest of Snodgrass Hill was seen but half a mile away. They could make out the ragged, irregular line of blue constantly veiling itself in sulphurous vapor as it poured murderous volleys into the enemy. The shrill yell of the rebels as they renewed the charge, and the deep-toned cheer of the Union soldiers as they repulsed it, reached their ears in the momentary lulls of the firing.

So far, in spite of all deterrents, they had brought every man through except the two who had fainted at the hospital. Everyone had shown true metal. Little Abel Waite had particularly distinguished himself by skillful dodging under wagons and past flanks, in order to keep up with the swift pace of the longer-legged men.

They had as yet found no one in all the throng to give them the least information as to their regiment, when Si spied a member of Co. Q walking deliberately back, holding the wrist of his shattered left hand in his right, with his fingers compressing the artery to restrain the flow of blood.

"There's Silas Peckham," exclaimed Si, running up to him. "Badly hurt, Sile?"

"No," answered Silas, more coolly than if he had stubbed his toe. "Left hand's gone on a strike. That's all. Wisht I could find a doctor to fix it up so I could git back to the boys. They're havin' an awful tussle up there, an' need me bad. Better hurry up, Si. Don't waste no time on me. I'll find a doctor soon an' be back with you."

"Where's the regiment, Sile?" asked the Lieutenant.

"Right up there to the left o' them tall hickories," answered Silas, pointing with his bloody hand. "To the right o' that battery, you see there. That's our bully old battery at work. Greatest battery in the army. I've kept my eye on the place, because I want to git back as soon's I kin find the Surgeon. Ain't much left o' the regiment, or battery either, for that matter; but they're raisin' hell with the Johnnies every time, and don't you forgit it. Capt. McGillicuddy's in command."

"Capt. McGillicuddy?" said the Lieutenant. "Why, he's the junior Captain in the regiment."

"He was yisterday mornin', but he's now senior to everybody that's alive," answered Silas. "The Kunnel wuz killed yisterday forenoon. The Lootenant-Kunnel held out about three hours an' then he got it for keeps, an' the Major tuck command an' stuck out till nigh evenin', when they knocked him."

"This mornin' the Captains 's bin going down so fast that I couldn't keep track of 'em, till Capt. McGillicuddy was the only one left, an' he's swearin' that the rebels never run no bullet that could hit him. The Adjutant's acting Lootenant-Kunnel an' Major both to-wunst, and shootin' a gun when he hain't nothin' else to do. But the boys that's left 's stayers, I tell you. They've jest stuck their toenails into that hilltop there, an' every time them howlin' rebels come yippin' an' ki-yi-in' out o' the woods they send 'em back on the dead run. But they want you up there bad. You've got more than's left in the regiment. Hurry up. I'll be back with you jest as soon's I kin find a doctor to cooper me up a little."

"Forward Quick time March!" shouted the Lieutenant. "Guide on those tall hickories."

Onward they rushed full into the smoke that drifted backward down the hill. As they gained the crest the air became clearer, and they saw the sadly-shrunken remnant of their regiment strung in an irregular line along the forward edge. Some were binding up wounds more or less severe, some were searching the boxes of the dead and wounded for cartridges, some were leaning on their hot guns, looking curiously into the woods at the foot of the slope into which the rebels had fled.

Every face was blackened with powder almost beyond recognition. The artillerymen to the left were feverishly swabbing out their guns and trying to cool them off, and bringing up everything in the shape of ammunition from the limbers in the rear.

Capt. McGillicuddy was leaning on his sword at the right of the line, intently watching everything. He looked sharply around, when the men raised a cheer on recognizing Si and the rest, and coming back shook Lieut. Bowersox warmly by the hand, saying:

"Great God, Lieutenant, I've always been glad to see you, but I never was so glad to see a man in my life as I am you this minute. How many men did you bring?"

"I've got 128 with me," answered the Lieutenant. "What's the situation?"

"You have? Well, you've got more than we have left. You'll act as Major. Poor Wilkinson just got his dose. You can see him lying down there in the rear of the left. Put your men in anywhere. Mix them up with the others.. It don't matter much about formation. The main thing's to stand and shoot. The rebels have been charging us all after noon, but we have whipped them back every time.

"You can see our work out there (pointing to the slope in front, which was literally covered with dead and wounded). I've thought every time that they couldn't stand another such a slaughter, but they've rallied in those woods there and come out again with their infernal yell, just as before. The last time it seemed to me that we just swept them off the face of the earth, and I don't see how in God's name they can stand any more of that sort of thing. It's worse killing than we gave them at Stone River. It seems to me that hell has let out for noon, and sent all its devils to reinforce them. But it will soon be night now, when they'll have to stop. If they won't we'll have to depend on the bayonet, for we haven't five rounds apiece left, and I can't get more anywhere."

Si and Shorty had been distributing the detachment along the line, and had posted the Englishman and his squad of Irishmen, with themselves, around the tattered colors, which were now in the hands of the last survivor of the color guard, who was himself wounded.

Dusk was fast coming on, when the woods beyond the foot of the slope began to darken again with masses of men arraying in column of assault.

"They're coming again," called out Capt. McGillicuddy. "Lieut. Bowersox, look out there for the left. Men, if we haven't stopped them when we've fired out last shot, we'll fix bayonets and charge them. We must keep them off this hill or die right here."

He was answered with cheers. A demoniac yell from 10,000 fierce throats rang through the woods, and the next instant thunder and flames burst from the sweeping crescent of rebel cannon, and the ground in front of the foot of the hill was hidden from view by the tide of men rushing over it.

A fierce storm of cannon and musketry answered from the crest of the hill. As they reloaded, Si and Shorty saw in quick glances that the rebel line to the right and left seemed beaten to a standstill by the terrific storm which fell upon them, but in their immediate front a body of men, apparently a regiment, kept stubbornly forging forward. Upon their flag, held gallantly aloft, could be made out the letters "Miss."

By the time every shot in the cartridge-boxes had been fired at them they had forced their way half-up the slope.

"Attention, 200th Indiana," shouted Capt. McGillicuddy. "Dress on the colors. Fix bayonets."

"They'uns 's Injiannians," shouted the rebel Color-Sergeant, waving his flag defiantly. "Come on, you Hoosiers. We'uns 's Mississippians. Remember Buny Visty. Injiannians 's cowards."

"Shorty, le's have that 'ere flag," said Si.

"Le's," said Shorty, pushing around the ring that locked his bayonet on.

"Forward March Charge!" shouted Capt. McGillicuddy.



**THEY HAD A DELIRIOUS REMEMBRANCE OF THE MAD
WHIRL.**

Of the mad whirl of an eternity of events in the next few minutes neither Si nor Shorty had anything but a delirious remembrance. They could only recollect the fierce rush of the lightning-like play of bayonet and gun-barrel in the storm-center around the rebel colors. Each after an instant's savage fencing had sent his bayonet home in his opponent's body. Si had sprung at and seized the rebel colors, only to fall, as he grasped them, from a bullet out of the revolver of a rebel Captain, whom Shorty instantly bayoneted, and fell himself from a blow across the head with a musket-barrel.

The man who struck him was bayoneted by Abel Waite, who was dancing around the edges of the melee like a malignant little fiend, prodding wherever he could get a chance at a rebel body. The Irishmen, yelling like demons, were using their guns like shillelahs, and crushing heads in every direction, while Wat Burnham had thrown his musket aside, and was rushing at everybody with his mighty fists.

At length the rebels fled, leaving the Indians in possession of their colors and the hillside.

"Some of you find Lieut. Bowersox, and bring him here," said Capt. McGillicuddy, sitting up, and beginning to twist a handkerchief around his thigh, to form a tourniquet. "Lieutenant, you all right?"

"Nothing more than a mere scratch on the side of my head," said the Lieutenant, wiping away the blood.

"Well, Lieutenant, you'll have to take command of the regiment. I had a personal altercation with that Mississippi Colonel lying over there, and he put a bullet through my thigh. Get the men together, pick up our wounded, and fall back to the top of the hill again."

"I'm afraid there's no use of picking up Corp'l Klegg and Shorty," said the Lieutenant, with tears in his eyes. "They got the rebel flag, but they're lying there stiff and cold."

"Well, bring them back, anyway, so we can lay them beside the other gallant boys who have fallen to-day."

CHAPTER XVII. IN THE HOSPITAL

REMOVED FROM THE BATTLEFIELD TO THE HOSPITAL AT CHATTANOOGA.

FOR a short time a silence that seemed oppressive followed the fierce turmoil of the last charge of the rebels upon Snodgrass Hill and its repulse. Both sides had exhausted themselves in the awful grapple, and

had to regain breath and thought. Then the night was pierced by the agonizing groans of the innumerable wounded, the stern commands of officers to their men to re-form, the calls of scattered men seeking their regiments and companies.

The sadly-shrunken remnant of the unconquerable 200th Ind. gathered around its regimental colors, on the front of the crest of Snodgrass Hill, and grimly, silently prepared for the next event, whatever it might be. The wounds of those still able to fight were bound up, and they resumed their places in line. The worst hurt were helped or carried back to the busy Surgeon under the shelter of the hill. The newly-dead were brought up and added to the row of those who had already fought their last battle. Cartridge-boxes of both dead and wounded were carefully searched for remaining cartridges. Si and Shorty were laid at the end of the long row.

The chill air of the evening began to revive Si and Shorty. Si's brain responded long before any of his muscles. At first it seemed the vaguest and most shadowy of dreams. There was a dim consciousness of lying somewhere. Where it was, how he came there, what was going on around he had not the slightest idea nor desire to know. There was just the feeling of being there, without any sensation of comfort or discomfort, wish or longing.

One by one, and very slowly, other nerves awoke. He became conscious that there was a sharp stone or knot under his head, which hurt, and he tried to move it, but queerly his head would not move, and then he found that neither would his hands. This was faintly puzzling, as things are in dreams. Then his throat became on fire with thirst, and somehow there came a dream of the deliciously cool well on the farm at home, the bucket covered with green moss swinging over it, the splash of cool water when it was lowered, the trough by the side, where they used to pour water for the fowls to drink, the muddy spot around, where water plants grew on the splashing and drippings. Then were visions of the eternal, parching thirst of the damned, which he had often heard preachers describe, and he was conscious of a faint curiosity as to whether he had died and waked up in the home of the lost.

Still not a muscle waked up to obey his will, and he seemed indifferent whether it did or not. Then he forgot everything again, until presently his burning throat recalled his consciousness.

He felt the cold, bracing air in his nostrils, and slowly, very slowly at first, he began to hear and understand the sounds around him. The shriek of a wounded comrade carried past, whose leg had been shattered, first sounded like the hum of bees, and finally translated itself into something like its true meaning, but he had no comprehension or sympathy for its misery.

He tried to make some sound himself, but his tongue was as hypnotized as his other muscles, and refused to obey his will. Yet at the moment he did not seem to care much. His wishes were as numb as his tendons and sinews. He became shadowly conscious of his comrades gathering around him, picking him up, carrying him back up the hill, and laying him down again. This relieved the sharp pain from the stone under his head; but when they laid him down again his head fell too low. He heard the murmur of their voices, and felt their hands searching his pockets for cartridges.

Consciousness began returning more swiftly, though the muscles were yet paralyzed. He could feel to the tips of his fingers, yet he could not move them. He began to understand the words spoken about him, and comprehend their meaning. The first sentence that filtered its way to his brain was Lieut. Bowersox's order to the regiment:

"The orders are to fall back quietly. We'll follow the 1st Oshkosh, on our right. As soon as it is well down the hill we'll move by the right flank, and fall in behind it. Our wagon is right at the bottom of the hill. Those that are not able to march will start now, and get in it. It will move right after the regiment. Don't anybody say a word of this above his breath. The rebels are listening sharply for our movements. We dare not even cheer, for fear they'll find out how few are left of us. All of you keep a lookout, and follow right after me when I start, for I won't give any order."

Then all his consciousness seemed to wake up at once into an agony of fear of being left behind to fall into the hands of the rebels. He made a desperate effort to call out, but his tongue seemed dry and useless as a cornhusk in his parched mouth, and his throat too burning hot to perform its office. Nor could he lift a finger nor move a toe.

He found room for anger at Shorty that he did not look him up, and satisfy himself as to his condition, and Lieut. Bowersox and the rest seemed selfishly thoughtful of their own safety and neglectful of his.

He listened in agony to the regiment on the right marching off, to the cautions and admonitions given those who were carrying off the badly-wounded, and then to Lieut. Bowersox starting off with the right of the 200th Ind.

Then he heard little Abel Waite say:

"I know that Si Klegg has some things on him that his folks'd like to have. I know where they live. I'm goin' to git 'em, and send 'em to 'em."

"Make haste, then, young feller," he heard Wat Burnham growl. "Don't let the rebels ketch yer. We're movin' now."

He heard Abel Waite's steps running toward him, and felt his hands thrust into his blouse pocket over his breast. Then the boy said with a start of surprise:

"Why, he's alive yet. Come here, Wat."

Wat and the Irishmen hastened to him. He felt

Wat's hand laid on his breast, and then held over his mouth.

"'E's certainly warm yet. Hand 'e breathes."

Shorty made a violent effort, and summoned enough strength to reach over and touch the Englishman's foot.

"The tall feller's alive, too," said Wat.

"We must take 'em along with us," said Abel Waite excitedly.

"Yes, but 'ow?" growled the Englishman. "Don't speak so loud, you young brat. Do you want to hopen hup that 'ell's kitchen hagin?"

"The Liftinant's far down the hill wid the regiment," said Barney McGrath. "There's no toime to sind for him. Here, lit's pick thim up an' carry thim down to the wagon."

He put his hand under Si's shoulder. The others did the same, Wat lifting Shorty's feet.

"Halt, there, you Yanks, and surrender," said a stern voice just behind Wat.

Wat looked back over his shoulder and saw a single adventurous rebel who, divining what was going on, had slipped forward in the darkness, with his gun leveled on the squad bearing Si. Wat realized instantly that the rebel must be suppressed with out alarm to others that might be behind him. He dropped Shorty's foot, and with a backward sweep of his mighty right took the rebel in the stomach with such force as to double him up. The next instant Wat had his throat in his terrific grip, and tried to tear the windpipe from him. Then he flung the rebel forward down the hill, gathered up Shorty's feet again, and gave the command:

"Hall right. Go a'ead, boys, quick has you can."

With great difficulty they made their way over the wreckage of battle down the hill toward where they expected to find the regimental wagon. But it had received all that it could hold of its ghastly freight and moved off.

They were is despair for a few minutes, until Abel Waite discovered an abandoned wagon near by, with one mule still hitched to it. Next they found a wounded artillery horse which had been turned loose from his battery. He was hitched in, and Si and Shorty were laid on the layer of ammunition-boxes which still covered the bottom of the bed.

"Who'll drive the bloody team?" growled Wat. "Hi never druv a 'oss hin my life. 'Ere, Barney, you get hin the saddle."

"Not Oi," answered Barney. "Oi niver could droive ayven a pig, on the brightest day that shone. Oi'll not fool wid a couple av strange horses, a wagon-load av foire an' brimstone, an' a brace av dead men, in the midst av Agyptian darkness. Not Oi."

"Here, I kin drive two horses, anyway," said Abel Waite, climbing into the saddle. "I've done that much on the farm."

They pushed off into the road marked by the dark line of troops moving silently toward McFarland's Gap, and after some contest with other drivers secured a place behind one of the regiments of their brigade.

A couple of miles ahead Forrest's cavalry was making a noisy dispute of the army's retreat, the woods were on fire, and the fences on either side of the road were blazing.

The long line was halted in anxious expectation for a little while, as the storm of battle rose, and the men looked into each other's faces with sickening apprehension, for it seemed much like defeat and capture. Then loud cheers, taken up clear down the line', rose as Turchin's Brigade, by a swift bayonet charge, swept away all opposition, scattered the rebels to the shelter of the woods, and reopened the way. But the rebels still continued to fire long distance shots at the road as outlined by the burn ing fences.



THE DEAD BEING COLLECTED AFTER THE BATTLE.

Though one of his team was wounded, Abel Waite had little difficulty in keeping his place in column until the burning lane was reached. The regiment ahead had gone through on the double-quick, and teams as fast as they could be lashed.

"What'll we do now?" he called out to the others in his boyish treble. "I can't git these plugs out of a walk. If we go ahead the fire'll bust the ammunition, and send us all sky-huntin'. If we stop here them rebels 'll git us, sure."

"Go a'ead, Habe," growled Wat, after a moment's thought. "We can't 'elp you, but we'll stay wi' you. Hif she busts, she busts, hand that's hall there'll be hof hit hor hof us. We'll stick by the wagon, though, till she busts, hand then nobuddy but the crows 'll hever find hany hof hus. Go a'ead, you bloody brat."

"Cut me one o' them young hickories for a gad," said Abel, pointing to the brush by the side of the road, "and I'll git as good time out o' these poor brutes as they kin make, if I skin 'em alive."

Abel lashed his animals with all the strength of his young arm, and succeeded in keeping them in something like a trot. The men ran alongside, and fought the fire as well as they were able. Several times the wagon-cover caught fire from the intense heat, but it was at once beaten out by hats and blouses, and blouses were laid over the holes to protect them against the sparks.

They succeeded at last in getting through the fire-bordered road without an explosion, but they were all so exhausted that they could not move another step until they rested. The poor horse lay down and refused to get up.

Wat and Abel looked in to see how Si and Shorty had fared. The jolting of the wagon and the cold night air had at first revived them so that they could speak. Then they swooned again from the effects of the heat and the stifling smoke, and were speechless and motionless when Wat and Abel looked in.

"We've 'ad hall hour trouble for nothink," said Wat disconsolately, as he felt them over. "The 'eat and smoke's killed 'em."

"Not by a durned sight," slowly gasped Shorty. "Seen sicker dogs'n this git well. Nearly dead for a drink o' water, though. Then I'll be all right."

Abel snatched a canteen, ran to a branch a little way off, filled it, and returning, put it to Shorty's lips.

"Jehosephat, how good that tastes," said Shorty, speaking still faintly, but far more freely than at first, after he had drained the canteen. "Sonny, run and git some more; and mind you fill the canteen full this time. I feel as if I could drink up the Mississippi River. Say, boys, what's happened? Appearintly, I got a sock-dologer on my head from some feller who thought I was too fresh. I'm afraid I'll have a spell o' headache. But we got the flag, didn't we?"

"Yo're bloody right we did," said Wat; "hand we woloped them bloomin' rebels till they 'unted their 'oles hin the woods."

"That's good enough," said Shorty, sinking back.

"The column's movin' agin," said Abel Waite, turning his attention to his team.

Shortly after daybreak the team limped painfully up the slope of Mission Ridge, through Rossville Gap, on either side of which stood Thomas's indomitable army in battle array, sternly defying the rebel hosts of Bragg and Longstreet, which swarmed over the hills and valleys in front, but without much apparent appetite for a renewal of the dreadful fray.

"Where do you men belong? What have you got in that wagon? Where are you going?" demanded the Provost officer in the road.

"We belong to the 200th Hinjianny. We've got two badly-wounded men and ha lot o' hammynition in the wagon. We want to find our regiment," answered Wat Burnham.

"Stop your wagon right there. We need all the ammunition we can get. Lift your wounded men into that ambulance, and then go up to that side of the gap. Your division is up there somewhere."

It was late in the afternoon before the overworked Surgeon in the field hospital at Chattanooga, in which Si and Shorty were finally deposited, found time to examine them.

"You got a pretty stiff whack on your head, my man," he said to Shorty, as he finished looking him over; "but so far as I can tell now it has not fractured your skull. You Hoosiers have mighty hard heads."

"Reglar clay-knob whiteoak," whispered Shorty; "couldn't split it with a maul and wedge. Don't mind that a mite, since we got that flag. But how's my pardner over there?"

"I think you'll pull through all right," continued the Surgeon, "if you don't have concussion of the brain. You'll have to be—"

"No danger o' concussion of the brains," whispered Shorty. "Don't carry 'em up there, where they're liable to get slubbed. Keep 'em in a safer place, where there's more around 'em. But how's my pardner?"

"You'll come through all right," said the Surgeon smiling. "You're the right kind to live. You've got grit. I'll look at your partner now."

He went to Si and examined him. Shorty turned on his side and watched him with eager eyes. His heart sickened as he saw the Surgeon's face grow graver as he proceeded. The Surgeon probed the bullet's track with his fingers, and drew out a piece of folded letter paper stained with blood. Instinctively he unfolded it, and read through the ensanguined smears, written in a cramped school-girl hand:

*"Dear Si: Though I did not have the heart to say it, I me
yours till death, and I me sure you feel the same way.
Annabel."*

"I'm much afraid the end has come too soon to a brave as well as loving heart," said the Surgeon sadly.

"Doctor, he can't die. He mustn't die," said Shorty in agony. "The regiment can't spare him. He's the best soldier in it, and he's my pardner."

"He may live, but it's a very slender chance," said the Surgeon. "Men live in this war against all science and experience, and it is possible that he may."

"Major," said Lieut. Bowersox, coming in, "I understand that two of my men were brought in here wounded. The report which was sent North this morning gave them as killed. If you have them here I want to correct it and save their people sorrow."

"One of them," answered the Surgeon, "has no thought of dying, and will, I'm sure, pull through. I am sorry I cannot say the same for the other. It he lives it will be a wonder."

"Neither of us is a-going to die till we've put down this damned rebellion, and got home and married our girls," gasped Shorty with grim effort. "You can jist telegraph that home, and to ole Abe Lincoln, and to all whom it may concern."

And he fell back exhausted on his blanket.

CHAPTER XVIII. A DISTURBING MESSAGE

THE DEACON HURRIEDLY LEAVES FOR CHATTANOOGA.

THAT evening Lieut. Bowersox sent a telegram to Deacon Klegg. It had to be strictly limited to 10 words, and read:

JOSIAH KLEGG, ESQ.,

Somepunkins Station, Ind.:

*Josiah not killed. Hospital at Chattanooga. Badly wounded.
E. C. BOWERSOX.*

It did not arrive at Sumpunkins Station, three miles from the Deacon's home, until the next forenoon. The youth who discharged the multifarious duties of Postmaster, passenger, freight and express-agent, baggage-master, and telegraph operator at Sumpunkins Station laboriously spelled out the dots and dashes on the paper strip in the instrument. He had barely enough mastery of the Morse alphabet to communicate the routine messages relating to the railroad's business aided by the intelligence of the conductors and engineers as to what was expected of them. This was the first outside message that he had ever received, and for a while it threatened to be too much for him, especially as the absence of punctuation made it still more enigmatical. He faithfully transcribed each letter as he made it out and then the agglomeration read:

"Josiamn otkildho spitalat chatano ogabadl ywounded echower sox."

"Confound them smart operators at Louisville and Jefferson ville," he grumbled, scanning the scrawl. "They never make letters plain, and don't put in half of 'em, just to worrit country operators. I'd like to take a club to 'em. There's no sort o' sense in sich sending. A Philadelphia lawyer couldn't make nothing out of it. But I've got to or get a cussing, and mebbe the bounce. I'll try it over again, and see if I can separate it into words. Why in thunder can't they learn to put a space be tween the words, and not jumble the letters all to gether in that fool fashion?"

The next time he wrote it out:

"J. O. S. I am not kild Hospital at Chattanooga badly wounded E. C. Bower sox."

"That begins to look like something," said he, wiping the sweat from his forehead. "But who is J. O. S.? Nobody o' them initials in this neighbor hood. Nor E. C. Bower. Deacon Klegg can't know any of 'em. Then, how's the hospital badly wounded Bower? What's that about his socks? I'll have to try it over again as soon as No. 7, freight, gets by."

After No. 7 had gotten away, he tackled the message again:

"No, that sixth letter's not an m, but an h. H is four dots, and m is two dashes. It's specks in the paper that makes it look like an h. I'll put in some letters where they're needed. Now let's see how it'll read:"

228 SI KLEGG.

"Josiah Nott killed Hospital at Chattanooga. Badly wounded E. C. Bower sox."

"That seems to have more sense in it, but I don't know any Josiah Nott in this country. Does it mean that he killed a man named Hospital at Chattanooga, and badly wounded E. C. Bower in the socks? That don't seem sense. I'll try it again."

The next time he succeeded in making it read:

"Josiah Nott killed. Hospital at Chattanooga. Badly wounded E. C. Bower's ox."

"There, that's best I can do," he said, surveying the screed. "It'll have to go that way, and let the Deacon study it out. He's got more time 'n I have, and mebbe knows all about it. I can't spend no more time on it. No. 3, passenger, from the West 's due in 20 minutes, and I've got to get ready for it. Good luck; there comes the Deacon's darcy now, with a load of wheat. I'll send it out by him."

The operator wrote out his last version of the message on a telegraph-blank, inclosed it in a West ern Union envelope, which he addressed to Deacon Klegg, and gave to Abraham Lincoln, with strong injunctions to make all haste back home with it.

Impressed with these, Abraham, as soon as he delivered his grain to the elevator, put his team to a trot, and maintained it until he reached home.

Everything about the usually cheerful farm-house was shrouded in palpable gloom. The papers of the day before, with their ghastly lists of the dead and wounded, had contained Si's and Shorty's names, besides those of other boys of the neighborhood, in terrific, unmistakable plainness. There were few homes into which mourning had not come. The window curtains were drawn down, the front doors closed, no one appeared on the front porch, and it seemed that even the dogs and the fowls were op pressed with the general sadness, and forebore their usual cheerful utterances. Attired in sober black, with eyes red from weeping, and with camphor bottle near, Mr. Klegg sat in Si's room, and between her fits of uncontrollable weeping turned over, one after another, the reminders of her son. There were his bed, his clothes, which she had herself fashioned in loving toil for him; the well-thumbed school-books which had cost him so many anxious hours, his gun and fishing rod. All these were now sacred to her. Elsewhere in the house his teary-eyed sisters went softly and silently about their daily work.

The father had sought distraction in active work, and was in the cornfield, long corn-knife in hand, shocking up the tall stalks with a desperate energy to bring forgetfulness.

Abraham Lincoln burst into the kitchen, and taking the dispatch from his hat said:

"Hyah am a papeh or sumfin dat de agent down at de station done tole me to bring hyah jest as quick as I done could. He said hit done come ober a wire or a telugraph, or sumfin ob dat ere sort, and you must hab hit right-a-way."

"O, my; it's a telegraph dispatch," screamed Maria with that sickening apprehension that all women have of telegrams. "It's awful. I can't tech it. Take it Sophy."

"How can I," groaned poor Sophia, with a fresh outburst of tears. "But I suppose I must."

The mother heard the scream and the words, and hurried into the room.

"It's a telegraph dispatch, mother," said both the girls as they saw her.

"Merciful Father," ejaculated Mrs. Klegg, sinking into a chair in so nearly a faint that Maria ran into the next room for the camphor-bottle, while Sophy rushed outside and blew the horn for the Deacon. Presently he entered, his sleeves rolled to the elbow over his brawny arms, and his shirt and pantaloons covered with the spanish-needles and burrs which would grow, even in so well-tilled fields as Deacon Klegg's.

"What's the matter, mother? What's the matter, girls?" he asked anxiously.

Mrs. Klegg could only look at him in speechless misery.

"We've got a telegraph dispatch," finally answered Maria, bursting in a torrent of tears, into which Sophia joined sympathetically, "and we know it's about poor Si."

"Yes, it must be about poor Si; nobody else but him," added Sophia with a wail.

The father's face grew more sorrowful than be fore. "What does it say?" he nerved himself to ask, after a moment's pause.

"We don't know," sobbed Maria. "We haint opened it. We're afraid to. Here it is."

The father took it with trembling hand. "Well," he said after a little hesitation, "it can't tell nothin' no worse than we've already heard. Let's open it. Bring me my specs."

Maria ran for the spectacles, while her father, making a strong effort to calm himself, slit open the envelope with a jack-knife, adjusted his glasses, and read the inclosure over very slowly.

"Josiah Nott killed Hospital at Chattanooga badly wounded E. C. Bower's ox. What on airth does that mean? I can't for the life o' me make it out."

"Read it over again, pap," said Maria, suddenly drying her eyes.

The father did so.

"Le' me read it, pap," said Maria, snatching the telegram from his hand. "Josiah," said she, read ing. "That's Si's right name."

"Certainly it is," said her mother, reviving.

"Certainly; I didn't think o' that before," echoed the father.

"Josiah not killed," continued she. "Good heavens, that's what that means. They rebels has got hold o' the wires, and shook 'em and tangled up the rest, but the beginnin's all straight."

"I believe that Sam Elkins down at the station 's mixed it up," said Sophia, with hope springing in her breast. "He never can get things straight. He was in the class with me when I went to school, and too dumb to come in when it rained. He was the worst writer, speller and reader in the school. Think o' him being a telegraph operator. Why, he couldn't spell well enough to make tally-marks on a door when you're measurin' corn. Railroad was mighty hard up for help when it hired him. Let me read that dispatch. 'Josiah not killed.' That means Si Klegg, as sure's you're born. It can't mean nothin' else, or it wouldn't be addressed to you, pap. 'Hospital at Chattanooga.' Chattanooga's near where the battle was fought. 'Badly wounded.' That means Si's bin shot. 'E. C. Bower's ox.' What in the world can that be?"

"Bowersox?" said her father, catching the sound. "Why, that's the name o' the Lootenant Si and Shorty was under when they came home. Don't you remember they told us about him? I remember the name, for a man named Bowersox used to run a mill down on Bean-Blossom Crick, years ago, and I wondered if he was his son. He's sent me that dispatch, and signed his name. The Lord be praised for His never-endin' mercies. Si's alive, after all. Le' me read that over again."

He took the dispatch with shaking hands, but there was too much mist on his glasses-, and he had to hand it back to Maria to read over again to convince himself.

"I'll tell you what let's do: Let's all get in the wagon and ride over to the station, and get Sam Elkins to read the dispatch over again," suggested Sophia. "I'll jest bet he's mummixed it up."

"Don't blame him, Sophy," urged Maria. "I think the rebels has got at the poles or wires and shook 'em, and mixed the letters up. It's just like 'em."

Sophy's suggestion was carried out. Abraham Lincoln was directed to get out the spring wagon, and the Deacon helped hitch up, while the "women folks" got ready.

While they were at the station getting Sam Elkins to re-examine the dots and dashes on his strip of paper, the Eastern express arrived, bringing the morning papers. The Deacon bought one, and the girls nervously turned to the war news. They gave a scream of exultation when they read the revised returns of the killed and wounded, and found under head of "Wounded, in Hospital at Chattanooga":

"Corporal Josiah Klegg, Q, 200th Ind.

"Private Daniel Elliott, Q, 200th Ind."

"Mother and girls, I'm goin' to Chattanooga on the next train," said the Deacon.

It was only a few hours until the train from the East would be along, and grief was measurably forgotten in the joy that Si was still alive and in the bustle of the Deacon's preparation for the journey.

"No," he said, in response to the innumerable suggestions made by the mother and daughters. "You kin jest set all them things back. I've bin down there once, and learned something. I'm goin' to take nothin with me but my Bible, a couple o' clean shirts, and my razor. A wise man learns by experience."

Mother and girls were inconsolable, for each had something that they were sure "Si would like," and would "do him good," but they knew Josiah Klegg, Sr., well enough to understand what was the condition when he had once made up his mind.

"If Si and Shorty's able to be moved," he consoled them with, "I'm going to bring them straight back home with me, and then you kin nuss and coddle them all you want to."

The news of his prospective journey had flashed through the neighborhood, so that he met at the station the relatives of most of the men in Co. Q, each with a burden of messages and comforts for those who were living, or of tearful inquiries as to those reported dead.

He took charge of the letters and money, refused the other things, and gave to the kin of the wounded and dead sympathetic assurances of doing every thing possible.

He had no particular trouble or adventure until he reached Nashville. There he found that he could go no farther without procuring a pass from the Provost-Marshal. At the Provost's office he found a highly miscellaneous crowd besieging that official for the necessary permission to travel on the military railroad. There were more or less honest and loyal speculators in cotton who were ready to take any chances in the vicissitudes of the military situation to get a few bales of the precious staple. There were others who were downright smugglers, and willing to give the rebels anything, from quinine to gun-caps, for cotton. There were sutlers, pedlers, and gamblers. And there were more or less loyal citizens of the country south who wanted to get back to their homes, some to be honest, law-abiding citizens, more to get in communication with the rebels and aid and abet the rebellion.

Deacon Klegg's heart sank as he surveyed the pushing, eager crowd which had gotten there before him, and most of whom were being treated very cavalierly by the Provost-Marshal.

"No," he heard that official say to a man who appeared a plain farmer like himself; "you not only can have no pass, but you can't stay in Nashville an other day. I remember you. I've heard you tell that story of a sick son in the hospital before. I remember all the details. You haven't changed one. You're a smuggler, and I believe a spy. You've got mule-loads of quinine somewhere in hiding, and may be gun-caps and other munitions of war. If you know what's good for you, you'll take the next train north, and never stop until you are on the other side of the Ohio River. If you are in town to-morrow morning, I'll put you to work on the fortifications, and keep you there till the end of the war. Get out of my office at once."

Others were turned away with similar brusqueness, until the Deacon was in despair; but the thought of Si on a bed of pain nerved him, and he kept his place in the line that was pushing toward the Provost's desk.

Suddenly the Provost looked over those in front of him, and fixing his eye on the Deacon, called out:

"Well, my friend, come up here. What can I do for you?"

The Deacon was astonished, but in obedience to a gesture from the Provost, left the line, and came up.

"What's your name? Where are you from? What are you doing down here? What do you want?" inquired the Provost, scanning him critically.

The Deacon's eyes met his boldly, and he answered the questions categorically.

"Well, Mr. Klegg, you shall have a pass at once, and I sincerely hope that you will find your son recovering. You probably do not remember me, but I have seen you before, when I was on the circuit in Indiana. My clerk there is writing out a pass for you. You will have to take the oath of allegiance, and sign the paper, which I suppose you have no objection to doing."

"None in the world," answered the Deacon, surprised at the unexpected turn of events. "I'll be only too glad. I was gittin' very scared about my pass."

"O, I have hard work here," said the Provost smiling, "in separating the sheep from the goats, but I'm now getting to know the goats tolerably well. There's your pass, Deacon. A pleasant journey, and a happy termination to it."

The Deacon took out his long calf-skin wallet from his breast, put the precious pass in it, carefully strapped it up again and replaced it, and walked out of the office toward the depot.

He had gone but a few steps from the building when he saw the man who had been ordered out of the city by the Provost, and who seemed to be on the lookout for the Deacon. He came up, greeted the Deacon effusively and shook hands.

"You're from Posey County, Ind., I believe? I used to live there myself. Know Judge Drake?"

"Very well," answered the Deacon a little stiffly, for he was on his guard against cordial strangers.

"You do," said the stranger warmly. "Splendid man. Great lawyer. Fine judge. I had a great deal to do with him at one time."

"Probably he had a great deal to do with you," thought the Deacon. "He was a terror to evil-doers."

"Say, my friend," said the stranger abruptly, "you got a pass. I couldn't. That old rascal of a Provost-Marshal's down on me because I wouldn't let him into a speculation with me. He's on the make every time, and wants to hog everything. Say, you're a sly one. You worked him fine on that wounded son racket. I think I'd like to tie to you. I'll make it worth your while to turn over that pass to me. It'll fit me just as well as it does you. I'll give you \$50 to let me use that pass just two days, and then I'll return it to you."

"Why, you're crazy," gasped the Deacon.

"O, come off, now," said the other impatiently. "Business is business. I haint no time to waste. It's more'n it's worth to me, but I'll make it \$100, and agree to be back on this spot to-morrow night with your pass. You can't make \$100 as easy any other way."

"I tell you, you're crazy," said the Deacon with rising indignation. "You can't have that pass for no amount o' money. I'm goin' to see my wounded son."

"That's a good enough gag for the Provost, but I understand you, in spite of your hayseed airs. Say, I'll make it \$250."

"I tell you, you old fool," said the Deacon angrily, "I won't sell that pass for a mint o' money. Even if I wasn't

goin' to see my son I wouldn't let you have it under any circumstances, to use in your traitorous business. Let go o' my coat, if you know what's good for you."

"Now, look here," said the stranger; "I've made you a mighty fair proposition more'n the pass's worth to you. If you don't accept it you'll wish you had. I'm onto you. I'll go right back to the Provost and let out on you. I know enough to settle your hash mighty sudden. Do you hear me?"

It was very near train time, and the Deacon was desperately anxious to not miss the train. He had already wasted more words on this man than he usually did on those he didn't like, and he simply ended the colloquy with a shove that sent the impertinent stranger into the gutter as if a mule had kicked him there, hurried on to the depot, and managed to get on just as the train was moving out.

It was night, and he dozed in his seat until the train reached Bridgeport, Ala., when everybody was turned out of the train, and a general inspection of the passengers made.

"Very sorry for you, sir," said the Lieutenant; "but we can't let you go on. Your pass is all right up to this point, but the Commandant at Nashville has no authority here. Orders are very strict against any more civilians coming to Chattanooga under any pretext. Rations are very short, and there is danger of their being much shorter, with the rebel cavalry slashing around everywhere at our cracker-line. We only saved two bridges to-night by the greatest luck. You'll have to go back to Nashville by the next train."

"O, Mister Lootenant," pleaded the Deacon, with drops of sweat on his brow. "Please let me go on. My only son lays there in Chattanooga, a-dyin' for all I know. He's bin a good soldier. Ask anybody that knows the 200th Injianny, and they'll tell you that there ain't no better soldier in the regiment than Corporal Si Klegg. You've a father yourself. Think how he'd feel if you was layin' in a hospital at the pint o' death, and him not able to git to you. You'll let me go on, I know you will. It aint in you to re fuse."

"I feel awful sorry for you sir," said the Lieutenant, much moved. "And if I had it in my power you should go. But I have got my orders, and I must obey them. I musn't allow anybody not actually be longing to the army to pass on across the river on the train."

"I'll walk every step o' the way, if you'll let me go on," said the Deacon.

"I tell you what you might do," said the Lieutenant suggestively. "It isn't a great ways over the mountains to Chattanooga. There's a herd of cattle starting over there. The Lieutenant in charge is a friend of mine. I'll speak to him to let you go along as a helper. It'll be something of a walk for you, but it's the best I can do. You'll get in there some time to-morrow."

"P'int out your friend to me, and let me go as quick as I kin."

"All right," said the Lieutenant in charge of the herd, when the circumstances were explained to him. "Free passes over my road to Chattanooga are barred. Everybody has to work his way. But I'll see that you get there, if Joe Wheeler's cavalry don't interfere. We are going over in the dark to avoid them. You can put your carpet-bag in that wagon there. Report to the Herd-Boss there."

"You look like a man of sense," said the Herd-Boss, looking him over, and handing him a hickory gad. "And I believe you're all right. I'm goin' to put you at the head, just behind the guide. Keep your eye peeled for rebel cavalry and bushwhackers, and stop and whistle for me if you see anything suspicious."

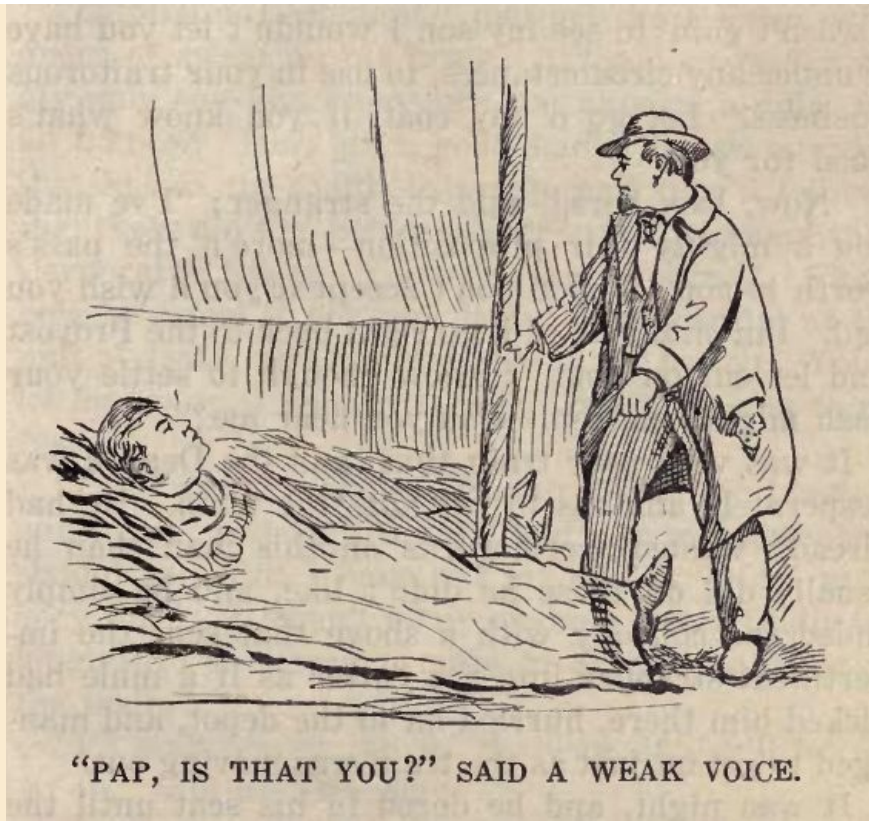
It was slow, toilsome work urging the lumbering cattle along over the steep, tortuous mountain paths. Naturally, the nimblest, friskiest steers got in the front, and they were a sore trial to the Deacon, to restrain them to the line of march, and keep them from straying off and getting lost. Of course, a Deacon in the Baptist Church could not swear under any provocation, but the way he remarked on the conduct of some of the "critters" as "dumbed," "confounded," and "tormented," had almost as vicious a ring as the profuse profanity of his fellow-herders.

Late in the afternoon the tired-out herd was halted in a creek bottom near Chattanooga. The patient animals lay down, and the weary, footsore Deacon, his clothes covered with burs, his hands and face seamed with bloody scratches, leaned on his frayed gad and looked around over the wilderness of tents, cabins, trains and interminable lines of breastworks and forts.

"Mr. Klegg," said the Herd-Boss, coming toward him, "you've done your duty, and you've done it well. I don't know how I could've ever got this lot through but for your help. Here's your carpet-sack, and here's a haversack o' rations I've put up for you. Take mighty good care of it, for you'll need every cracker. That lot o' tents you see over there, with a yaller flag flyin' over 'em, is a general hospital. Mebbe you'll find your son in there."

The Deacon walked straight to the nearest tent, lifted the flap and inquired:

"Does anybody here know where there is a boy named Si Klegg, of Co. Q, 200th Injianny Volunteers?"



“PAP, IS THAT YOU?” SAID A WEAK VOICE.

"Pap, is that you?" said a weak voice in the far corner.

"Great, jumpin' Jehosephat, the Deacon!" ejaculated a tall skeleton of a man, who was holding a cup of coffee to Si's lips.

"Great Goodness, Shorty," said the Deacon, "is that you?"

"What's left o' me," answered Shorty.

CHAPTER XIX. TEDIOUS CONVALESCENCE

THE DEACON COMMITS A CRIME AGAINST HIS CONSCIENCE.

"YOU are the father of that boy in the far end of the tent," said the Surgeon coming up to the Deacon, who had stepped outside of the tent to get an opportunity to think clearly. "I'm very glad you have come, for his life hangs by a thread. That thread is his pluck, aided by a superb constitution. Most men would have died on the field from such a wound. Medicine can do but little for him; careful nursing much more; but his own will and your presence and encouragement will do far more than either."

"How about Shorty?" inquired the Deacon.

"Shorty's all right if he don't get a setback. The danger from the blow on his head is pretty near past, if something don't come in to make further complications. He has been pulled down pretty badly by the low fever which has been epidemic here since we have settled down in camp, but he seems to be coming out from it all right."

"I've come down here to do all that's possible for these two boys. Now, how kin I best do it?" asked the Deacon.

"You can do good by helping nurse them. You could do much more good if there was more to do with, but we lack almost everything for the proper care of the wounded and sick. We have 15,000 men in hospital here, and not supplies enough for 3,000. When we will get more depends on just what luck our cavalry has in keeping the rebels off our line of supplies."

"Show me what to do, give me what you kin, and I'll trust in the Lord and my own efforts for the rest."

"Yes, and you kin count on me to assist," chimed in Shorty, who had come up. "I won't let you play lone hand long, Deacon, for I'm gittin' chirpier every day. If I could only fill up good and full once more on hardtack and pork, or some sich luxuries, I'd be as good as new agin."

"You mean you'd be put to bed under three feet of red clay, if you were allowed to eat all you want to," said the Surgeon. "There's where the wind is tempered to the shorn lamb. If you could eat as much as you want to eat, I should speedily have to bid good-by to you. For the present, Mr. Klegg, do anything that suggests itself to you to make these men comfortable. I need scarcely caution you to be careful about their food, for there is nothing that you can get hold of to over-feed them. But you'd better not let them have anything to eat until I come around again and talk to you more fully. I put them in your charge."

The Deacon's first thought was for Si, and he bestirred himself to do what he thought his wife, who was renowned as a nurse, would do were she there.

He warmed some water, and tenderly as he could command his strong, stubby hands, washed Si's face, hands and feet, and combed his hair. The overworked hospital attendants had had no time for this much-needed ministrations. It was all that they could do to get the wounded under some sort of shelter, to dress their wounds, and prepare food. No well man could be spared from the trenches for hospital service, for the sadly-diminished Army of the Cumberland needed every man who could carry a musket to man the long lines to repel the constantly-threatened assaults.

The removal of the soil and grime of the march and battle had a remarkably vivifying effect upon Si. New life seemed to pulse through his veins and brightness return to his eyes.

"Makes me feel like a new man, Pap," he said faintly. "Feels better than anything I ever knowed. Do the same to Shorty, Pap."

"Come here, Shorty, you dirty little rascal," said the Deacon, assuming a severely maternal tone, at which Si laughed feebly but cheerily, "and let me wash your face and comb your hair."

Shorty demurred a little at being treated like a boy, and protested that he could wash himself, if the Deacon would get him some warm water; but he saw that the conceit amused Si, and submitted to having the Deacon give him a scrubbing with a soapy rag, giving a yell from time to time, in imitation of an urchin undergoing an unwilling ablution. Si turned his head so as to witness the operation, and grinned throughout it.

"I think you'd both feel still better if you could have your hair cut," said the Deacon, as he finished and looked from one to the other. "Your hair's too long for sick people, and it makes you look sicker'n you really are. But I hain't got no shears."

"I know I'd feel better if I was sheared," said Shorty. "Hain't neither of us had our hair cut since we started on the Tullyhomy campaign, and I think I look like the Wild Man from Borneo. I think I know a feller that has a pair o' shears that I kin borry."

The shears were found and borrowed. Then ensued a discussion as to the style of the cut. The boys wanted their hair taken off close to their heads, 'but the Deacon demurred to this for fear they would catch cold.

"No, Si," he said; "I'm goin' to cut your hair jest like your mother used to. She used to tie one of her garters from your forehead down across your ears, and cut off all the hair that stuck out. I hain't any garter, but I guess I kin find a string that'll do jest as well."

"There," said the Deacon, as he finished shearing off the superabundant hair, and surveyed the work. "That ain't as purty a job as if your mother'd done it, but you'll feel lighter and cleaner, and be healthier. If hair was only worth as much as wool is now, I'd have enough to pay me for the job. But I must clean it up keerfully and burn it, that the birds mayn't git hold of it and give you the headache."

The Deacon had his little superstitions, like a great many other hard-headed, sensible men.

"Well, Mr. Klegg," said the Surgeon, when he made his next round, "I must congratulate you on your patients. Both show a remarkable improvement. You ought to apply for a diploma, and go into the practice of medicine. You have done more for them in the two or three hours than I have been able to do in as many weeks. If you could only keep up this pace awhile I would be able to return them to duty very soon. I have an idea. Do you see that corn-crib over there?"

"The one built of poles? Yes."

"Well, I have some things stored there, and I have been able to hold it so far against the soldiers, who are snatching every stick of wood they can find, for their cabins, or for the breastworks, or firewood. I don't know how long I'll be able to keep it, unless I have personal possession. I believe you can make it into a comfortable place for these two men. That will help them, you can be by yourselves, you can take care of my things, and it will relieve the crowd in the tent."

"Splendid idea," warmly assented the Deacon. "I'll chink and daub it, and make it entirely comfortable, and fix up bunks in it for the boys. I know they'll be delighted at the change. I wonder where Shorty is?"

The Deacon had just remembered that he had not seen that individual for some little time, and looked around for him with some concern. It was well that he did. Shorty had come across the haversack that the Deacon had brought, and it awakened all his old predatory instincts, sharpened, if anything, by his feebleness. Without saying a word to any body, he had employed the time while the Surgeon and Deacon were in conversation in preparing one of his customary gorges after a long, hard march.

He had broken up the crackers into a tin-cup of water which sat by his side, while he was frying out pieces of fat pork in a half-canteen.

"My goodness, man!" shouted the Deacon, springing toward him. "Are you crazy? If you eat that mess you'll be dead before morning."

He sprang toward him, snatched the half-canteen from his hand, and threw its contents on the ground.

"That stuff's not fit to put into an ostrich's stomach," he said. "Mr. Klegg, you will have to watch this man very carefully."

"Can't I have none of it to eat?" said Shorty, dejectedly, with tears of weakness and longing in his eyes.

"Not a mouthful of that stuff," said the Surgeon; "but you may eat some of those crackers you have soaked there. Mr. Klegg, let him eat about half of those crackers no more."

Shorty looked as if the whole world had lost its charms. "Hardtack without grease's no more taste than chips," he murmured.

"Never mind, Shorty," said the Deacon, pityingly; "I'll manage to find you something that'll be better for you than that stuff."

The Surgeon had the boys carried over to the corncrib, and the Deacon went to work to make it as snug as possible. All the old training of his pioneer days when literally with his own hands, and with the rudest materials, he had built a comfortable cabin in the wilderness of the Wabash bottoms for his young wife came back to him. He could not see a brick, a piece of board, a stick, or a bit of iron anywhere without the thought that it might be made useful, and carrying it off. As there were about 40,000 other men around the little village of Chattanooga with similar inclinations, the Deacon had need of all his shrewdness in securing

coveted materials, but it was rare that anybody got ahead of him. He rearranged and patched the clapboards on the roof until it was perfectly rain-tight, chinked up the spaces between the poles with stones, corncocks and pieces of wood, and plastered over the outside with clay, until the walls were draft proof. He hung up an old blanket for a door, and hired a teamster to bring in a load of silky-fine beech leaves which, when freshly fallen, make a bed that cannot be surpassed. These, by spreading blankets over them, made very comfortable couches for Si, Shorty and himself.

Then the great problem became one of proper food for the boys. Daily the rations were growing shorter in Chattanooga, and if they had been plentiful they were not suited to the delicate stomachs of those seriously ill. Si was slowly improving, but the Deacon felt that the thing necessary to carry him over the breakers and land him safely on the shores of recovery was nourishing food that he could relish.

He had anxiously sought the entire length of the camp for something of that kind. He had visited all the sutlers, and canvassed the scanty stocks in the few stores in Chattanooga. He had bought the sole remaining can of tomatoes at a price which would have almost bought the field in which the tomatoes were raised, and he had turned over the remnant lots of herring, cheese, etc., he found at the sutler's, with despair at imagining any sort of way in which they could be worked up to become appetizing and assimilative to Si's stomach.

"What you and Si needs," he would say to Shorty, "is chicken and fresh 'taters. If you could have a good mess of chicken and 'taters every day you'd come up like Spring shoats. I declare I'd give that crick bottom medder o' mine, which hasn't it's beat on the Wabash, to have mother's coopful o' chickens here this minute."

But a chicken was no more to be had in Chattanooga than a Delmonico banquet. The table of the Major-General commanding the Army of the Cumberland might have a little more hardtack and pork on it than appeared in the tents of the privates, and be cooked a little better, but it had nothing but hardtack and pork.

The Deacon made excursions into the country, and even ran great risks from the rebel pickets and bushwhackers, in search of chickens. But the country had been stripped, by one side or the other, of everything eatable, and the people that remained in their cheerless homes were dependent upon what they could get from the United States Commissary.

One day he found the Herd-Boss in camp, and poured forth his troubles to him. The Herd-Boss sympathized deeply with him, and cudgeled his brains for a way to help.

"I'll tell you what you might do," he said at length, "if you care to take the risk. We're goin' back with some teams to Bridgeport to-morrow mornin'. You might git in one of the wagons and ride back 10 or 15 miles to a little valley that I remember that's there, and which I think looks like it hain't bin foraged. I was thinkin' as we come through the other day that I might git something goo'd to eat up there, and I'd try it some day. No body seems to 've noticed it yit. But it may be chock full o' rebels, for all I know, and a feller git jumped the moment he sets foot in it."

"I'll take my chances," said the Deacon. "I'll go along with you to-morrer mornin'."

The Deacon found that a ride in a wagon was not such an unqualified favor as he might have thought. The poor, half-fed, overworked mules went so slowly that the Deacon could make better time walking, and he was too merciful to allow them to pull him up hill.

The result was that, with helping pry the stalled wagons out and work in making the roads more passable, the Deacon expended more labor than if he had started out to walk in the first place.

It was late in the afternoon when the Herd-Boss said:

"There, you take that path to the right, and in a little ways you'll come out by a purty good house. I hain't seen any Johnnies around in this neighborhood since I've bin travelin' this route, but you'd better keep your eye peeled, all the same. If you see any, skip back to the road here, and wait awhile. Somebody 'll be passin' before long."

Thanking him, the Deacon set out for the house, hoping to be able to reach it, get some fowls, and be back to Chattanooga before morning. If he got the chickens, he felt sanguine that he could save Si's life.

He soon came in sight of the house, the only one, apparently, for miles, and scanned it carefully. There were no men to be seen, though the house appeared to be inhabited. He took another look at the heavy revolver which he had borrowed from the Surgeon, and carried ready for use in the pocket of Si's overcoat, and began a strategic advance, keep ing well out of sight under the cover of the sumachs lining the fences.

Still he saw no one, and finally he became so bold as to leave his covert and walk straight to the front door. A dozen dogs charged at him with a wild hullabaloo, but he had anticipated this, and picked up a stout hickory switch in the road, which he wielded with his left hand with so much effect that they ran howling back under the house. He kept his right hand firmly grasping his revolver.

An old man and his wife appeared at the door; both of them shoved back their spectacles until they rested on the tops of their heads, and scanned him searchingly. The old woman had a law-book in her hand, and the old man a quill pen. She had evidently been reading to him, and he copying.

The old man called out to him imperiously:

"Heah, stranger, who air yo'? An' what d'yo' want?"

The tone was so harsh and repellent that the Deacon thought that he would disarm hostility by announcing himself a plain citizen, like themselves. So he replied:

"I'm a farmer, and a citizen from Injianny, and I want to buy some chickens for my son, who's sick in the hospital at Chattanooga."

"Injianny!" sneered the old man. "Meanest people in the world live in Injianny. Settled by scalawags that we'uns run outen Tennessee becase they'uns wuz too onery to live heah."

"Citizen!" echoed the woman. "They'uns heap sight wuss'n the soldjers. Teamsters, gamblers, camp-followers, thieves, that'll steal the coppers off en a dead man's eyes. I had a sister that married a man that beat her, and then run off to Injianny, leavin' her with six children to support. All the mean men go to Injianny. Cl'ar out. We don't want nobody 'round heah, and specially no Injiannians. They'uns is a pizun lot."

"Yes, cl'ar out immejitly," commanded the old man. "I'm a Jestice of the Peace, and ef you don't go to wunst I'll find a way to make yo'. We've a law agin able-bodied vagrants. Cl'ar out, now."

"Come, have a little sense," said the Deacon, not a little roiled at the abuse of his State. "I'm just as respectable a man as you dare be. I never stole anything. I've bin all my life a regler member o' the Baptist Church strict, close-communion, total-immersion Baptists. All I want o' you is to buy some o' them chickens there, and I'll give you a fair price for 'em. No use o' your flaring up over a little matter o' bizniss."

"I don't believe a word of hit," said the woman, who yet showed that she was touched by the allusion to the Baptist Church, as the Deacon had calculated, for most of the people of that section professed to be of that denomination. "What'll yo' gi' me for them chickens?"

The bargaining instinct arose in the Deacon's mind, but he repressed it. He had no time to waste. He would make an offer that at home would be considered wildly extravagant, close the business at once and get back to Chattanooga. He said: "I'll give you a dollar apiece for five."



"Humph," said the woman contemptuously. "I don't sell them for no dollar apiece. They'uns 's all we got to live on now. If I sell 'em I must git somethin' that'll go jest as fur. You kin have 'em at \$5 apiece."

"Betsy," remonstrated the old man, "I'm afeard this 's wrong, and as a Magistrate I shouldn't allow hit. Hit's traffickin' with the inemy."

"No, hit hain't," she asserted. "He's not a soljer. He's a citizen, and don't belong to the army. Besides, he's a Baptist, and hit hain't so bad as ef he wuz a Presbyterian, or a shoutin' Methodist. Most of all, I'm nearly dead for some coffee, and I know whar I kin git a pound o' rayle coffee for \$10."

The Deacon had been pondering. To his thrifty mind it seemed like a waste to give a crisp, new \$5 bill for such an insignificant thing as a chicken. Like Indiana farmers of his period, he regarded such things as chickens, eggs, butter, etc., as "too trifling for full-grown men to bother about. They were wholly women-folks' truck." He fingered the bills in his bosom, and thought how many bushels of wheat and pounds of pork they represented. Then he thought of Si in the hospital, and how a little chicken broth would build him up. Out came five new \$5 bills.

"Here's your money," he said, thumbing over the bills clumsily and regretfully.

The old woman lowered her spectacles from the top of her head, and scrutinized them.

"What's them?" she asked suspiciously.

"Why, them's greenbacks Government money the very best kind," explained the Deacon. "You can't have no better'n that."

"Don't tech hit! Don't have nothin' to do with it!" shouted the old man. "Hit's high treason to take Federal money. Law's awful severe about that. Not less'n one year, nor more'n 20 in the penitentiary, for a citizen, and death for a soljer, to be ketched dealin' in the inemy's money. I kin turn yo' right to the law. Ole man, take yo' money and cl'ar off the place immejitly. Go out and gather up yo' chickens, Betsy, and fasten 'em in the coop. Go away, sah, 'or I shell blow the horn for help."

"I wuz talkin' 'bout Confederit money," said the woman, half apologetically. "I wouldn't tech that 'ere stuff with a soap-stick. Yo'd better git away as quick as yo' kin ef yo' know what's good for yo'."

She went into the yard to gather up her flock, and the Deacon walked back into the road. When out of sight

he sat down on a rock to meditate. There was not another house in sight anywhere, and it was rapidly growing dark. If he went to an other house he would probably have the same experience. He had set his heart on having those chickens, and he was a pretty stubborn man. Somehow, in spite of himself, he parted the bushes and looked through to see where the woman was housing her fowls, and noted that it was going to be very dark. Then he blushed vividly, all to himself, over the thoughts which arose.

"To think of me, a Deacon in the Baptist Church, akchelly meditating about goin' to another man's coop at night and stealin' his chickens? Could Maria ever be made to believe such a thing? I can't believe it myself."

Then he made himself think of all the other ways in which he might get chickens. They all seemed impossible. He turned again to those in the coop.

"Nothin' but measly dunhills, after all dear at a fip-and-a-bit, and yet I offered her a dollar apiece for 'em. If she'd bin a real Christian woman she'd bin glad to 've given me the chickens for as sick as man as Si is. Gracious, mother'd give every chicken on the place, if it'd help a sick person, and be glad o' the chance. They're both tough old rebels, anyhow, and their property oughter be confiscated."

He stopped and considered the morals of the affair a little further, and somehow the idea of taking the fowls by stealth did not seem so abhorrent as at first. Then, everything was overslaughed by the thought of going into camp with the precious birds, of cleaning one and carefully stewing it, making a delicate, fragrant broth, the very smell of which would revive Si, and every spoonful bring nourishment and strength.

"Mebbe the army's demoralizin' me," he said to himself; "but I believe it's a work o' necessity and mercy, that don't stand on nice considerations. I'm goin' to have five o' them chickens, or know the reason why."

As has been before remarked, when Deacon Klegg made up his mind something had to happen. It was now quite dark. He took one of the \$5 bills out of his breast pocket and put it in a pocket where it would be handy. He looked over at the house, and saw the old man and woman sitting by the fire smoking. He picked up the hickory withe to keep off the dogs, and made a circuit to reach the chicken-coop from the rear of the house. The dogs were quarreling and snarling over their supper, and paid no attention to him, until he had reached the coop, when they came at him full tilt.

The Deacon dealt the foremost ones such vicious blows that the beasts fell as if they had been cut in two, and ran howling under the house. With a quickness and skill that would have done credit to any veteran in the army, he snatched five chickens from their roosts, wrung their necks, and gathered them in his left hand. Alarmed by the noise of the barking and yelping, the old couple flung open the door and rushed out on the porch with shouts. The open door threw a long lane of bright light directly on the Deacon.

"Blow the horn, granddad blow the horn," screamed the woman. Her husband snatched the tin horn down from the wall, and put all his anger into a ringing blast. It was immediately answered by a shot from a distant hill. Still holding his game in his left hand, the Deacon pulled the \$5 bill out of his pocket with his right, walked up to the porch, laid it at the woman's feet and put a stone on it.

"There's full pay for your dumbered old dunghills, you cantankerous rebel," said he, as he disappeared into the darkness. "Go into the house and pray that the Lord may soften your heart, which is harder than Pharaoh's, until you have some Christian grace."

When he reached the road he could hear the sound of hoofs galloping toward the house. He smiled grimly, but kept under the shadow of the trees until he reached the main road leading to Chattanooga, where he was lucky enough to find a train making its slow progress toward the town, and kept with it until he was within our lines.

CHAPTER XX. STEWED CHICKEN

THE DEACON'S CULINARY OPERATIONS BRING HIM LOTS OF TROUBLE.

THE Deacon reached the corn-crib again before daylight, and found Si and Shorty fast asleep. This relieved him much, for he had been disturbed with apprehensions of what might happen them while he was gone. Though he was more tired, it seemed to him, than he had ever been before in all his life, yet he nerved himself up to clean and cook one of the chickens, so as to give Si a delightful surprise when he awoke.

The Deacon had grown so wise in the army ways that his first problem was how to hide the remaining four fowls until he should need them.

"I'd simply be mobbed," he communed with himself, "if daylight should come, and show me with four chickens in my possession. The whole Army o' the Cumberland 'd jump me as one man, and I'd be lucky if I got away with my life. Mebbe even the General himself 'd send a regiment down to take the things away from me. But what kin I do with 'em? If I hang 'em up inside the corn-crib they'll spile. The weather is cold enough to keep 'em outside, but I'd need a burglar-proof safe to hold on to 'em. It's just awful that morals are so bad in the army, and that men will take things that don't belong to 'em."

He stopped short, for there arose the disturbing thought as to just how he himself had come into possession of the birds, and he murmured:

"'Tain't in me to blame 'em. What is 't the Bible says about 'Let him who is without sin cast the first stone?' Certainly I'm not the man to be heavin' dornicks just now."

Mindful of past experiences, he took the fowls in one hand, when he went down to the branch with a camp-kettle to get water. He washed his face and hands in the cold water, which revived him, and returning, built a fire and hung the kettle over it, while he carefully picked and cleaned one of the chickens for cooking. Then he plucked and cleaned the others, and burned the feathers and entrails in the fire.

"Chicken feathers 's mighty tell-tale things," he said to himself. "I once knowed a man that was finally landed in the penitentiary because he didn't look out for chicken feathers. He'd bin stealin' hosses, and was hidin' with them in the big swamp, where nobody would 've suspicioned he was, if he hadn't stole chickens from the neighborhood to live on, and left their feathers layin' around careless like, and some boys, who thought the foxes was killin' the chickens, followed up the trail and run onto him."

Then a bright idea occurred to him. He had a piece of board, which he laid on the stones that formed the foundation of one end of the crib, immediately under the flooring, and on this shelf he laid the other chickens.

"I remember that Wash Jenkins that we arrested for counterfeitin' had hid his pile o' pewter dollars in the underpinnin' of his cabin, and we'd never found any stuff to convict him, except by the merest accident. We hunted all through his cabin, below and in the loft, pulled the clapboards off, and dug up every likely place in the yard, and just about as we wuz givin' the whole thing up, somebody pulled a board out o' the underpinnin' to lay in the bed o' his wagon, and the bogus dollars run out. Wash made shoes for the State down at Jeffersonville for some years on account of that man wantin' a piece o' board for his wagon-bed."

But the astute Deacon had overlooked one thing in his calculations. The crisp morning air was filled with the pungent smell of burning feathers and flesh, and the fragrance of stewing chicken. It reached hungry men in every direction, made their mouths water and their minds wonder where it could come from.

First came a famished dog, sniffing and nosing around. His appearance filled the Deacon with alarm. Here was danger to his hidden stock that he had not thought of. He took his resolution at once. Decoying the cur near him he fastened a sinewy hand upon his neck, cut his throat with his jack-knife, and dragged the carcass some distance away from the corn-crib.

"I'll git a mattock and shovel and bury it after awhile," he murmured to himself, as he returned and washed his hands. "He's settled for good, any way. He won't be snoopin' around steal in' my chickens. I hope there hain't no more measly hounds around. Should've thought they wuz all starved out long ago. My! but that chicken does smell so nice. How Si and Shorty will enjoy it. It'll build 'em right up. I'd like awfully to take some of it myself, but they'll need every drop, poor fellows."

He got a spoon, and tested some of the broth appreciatively.

"Mother'd done much better, at home in her own kitchen, or anywhere you could've put her, than me with my clumsy ways," he continued, "but she never cooked anything that'll taste better to them boys."

A negro cook appeared, with a tin cup in his hand.

"Afo' de Lawd, Boss, is hit you dat's cookin' dat chicking? I done smelled hit more'n a miled away, and hab been huntin' foh hit all ober camp. Say, Boss, foh de Lawd's sake, jist gib me a little teenty, weenty sup in dis heah tin cup for my boss. He's an ossifer, an' is layin' in de ossifer's horsepital ober dar. Hit'll do him a powerful sight ob good."

"Awful Sorry, my friend," said the Deacon, hardening his heart, "but I haven't a bit to spare. Hain't got as much as I need for my own son and his partner. I couldn't spare a mouthful for the General o' the army even. Let your Colonel or Major sendout men to git chickens for himself."

"My boss'll be powehful disappointed," said the negro, with his big, white eyes full of tears. "He's powehful weak, foh sartin. A leetle sup ob broth'd do him an everlastin' world ob good. He ain't no Kunnel or Majah. He's only a Cappen Cappen McGillicuddy, ob the 200th Injianny."

"Capt. McGillicuddy, o' the 200th Injianny," said the Deacon, much moved. "You Bay you're Capt. McGillicuddy's man?"

"Yes, boss."

"And he's layin' very low over in a tent there?"

"Yes, boss. Got shot in de thigh in de battle, an' den had de feber. He's de very best man in de world, and I'd do ennyt'ing to help him. He's jest starvin' to def. I can't git nuffin' dat'll lay on his stummick, and stick to his ribs. I've done ransacked de hull camp and de country clean up to Jeneral Bragg's Headquarters. De tings dat I couldn't git wuz eider chained down, or had a man wid a gun ober dem. Foh Gawd's sake, boss, jist gib me a half a cupful for him."

"There's no man in the world I'd rather help than Capt. McGillicuddy," said the Deacon. "He's bin a mighty good friend to my son. I know that Si and Shorty'd divide their last crumb with him. Look here, Sambo, if I give you a cupful o' this broth and a piece o' the meat, will you git down on your knees and swear you'll take every bit straight to him, and not take even a smidjin of it for your self?"

"De Lawd be praised and magnified foreber, but I will," said the negro, dropping on his knees and holding up his hand. "Swar me on a pile o' Bibles big as a haystack. I'd radder go to hell on my knees backward dan tech de fust drap ob dat. I's too anxious to hab Cappen McGillicuddy git well, so I is. What'd become ob dis pore niggeh if he should die? No, indeedy. Hope I'll drap dead in my tracks if I taste de least wee morssel."

"I'm goin' to trust you," said the Deacon, stirring up the savory mess, ladling out a generous cupful, adding a drumstick, and covering the cup with a piece of paper. "Now, carry it carefully. Every drop's worth its weight in gold."

The Deacon looked a little regretful at the shrinking of the contents of the kettle, made by taking out the cupful, and said:

"Mebbe I oughtn't 've done it. The boys need every spoonful. But if it'd bin themselves, I know they'd have given their Captain more'n I did. He is twice blessed that giveth, and probably they'll git more somehow on account o' what I've given away. But I mustn't give any more."

"Say, Mister," said a very feeble voice at his elbow, "can't you give me a cupful o' that? It smells so good. It smells like home. I smelled it away over there in the tent, and it seemed to me that if I could get some of it I'd certainly get well, though they all say they think there's no hope for me. I crawled out of the tent and come while the nurse was asleep and wasn't watching. They won't let me get upon my feet when they're watching me, but I fooled them this time."

As he spoke, he sank down from sheer exhaustion, but still held out his cup imploringly, while an in tense

longing filled his great, blue eyes.

The Deacon looked pityingly at him. His wan face was fair and delicate as a girl's, and even before disease had wasted him he had been very tall and slender. Now his uniform flapped around his shrunken body and limbs.

The Deacon could not stand the appeal of those great, plaintive eyes and that wasted form.

"The Lord blesses the giver," he said, taking the cup from the thin hand, and proceeding to fill it from the kettle. "It may be that my own son will have the more from what I give this poor sick boy. It may be bread cast upon the waters. At any rate, I'm goin' to take the chances. There's still enough left for one meal for Si and Shorty, and I've four chickens left. After that the Lord'll provide. I'll do this in His name, and I'll trust Him. There, my boy, let the cup set on the ground till it cools, and then drink it, and here's a piece o' bread to go with it."

The boy could scarcely wait for the cooling, and his swimming eyes expressed a gratitude that no words could convey.

"Here, pardner, I'll take a cupful o' that 'ere, too," said a frazzled and frowsy teamster, shambling up through the half-light of the dawn. "I smelled it, and follered my nose till it brung me here. My, but it smells good! Jest fill my cup, and I'll do as much for you some time when you're hungry."

"Go away, Groundhog," said the Deacon, recognizing him. "I've only got a little here for Si and Shorty. I hain't a spoonful left for myself, and none to give away. Go and get your own chickens, and bile 'em yourself."

"Can't have any, eh?" said Groundhog, swaggering up. "We'll see about that, old man. I watched you givin' away to that nigger, and this little dead-beat here, but you hain't none to give me, who is doin' hard work for the army, and helpin' keep 'em from starvin'. If you've got enough for that nigger and that whinin' boy you've got enough for me, and I'm goin' to have it, for I need it."

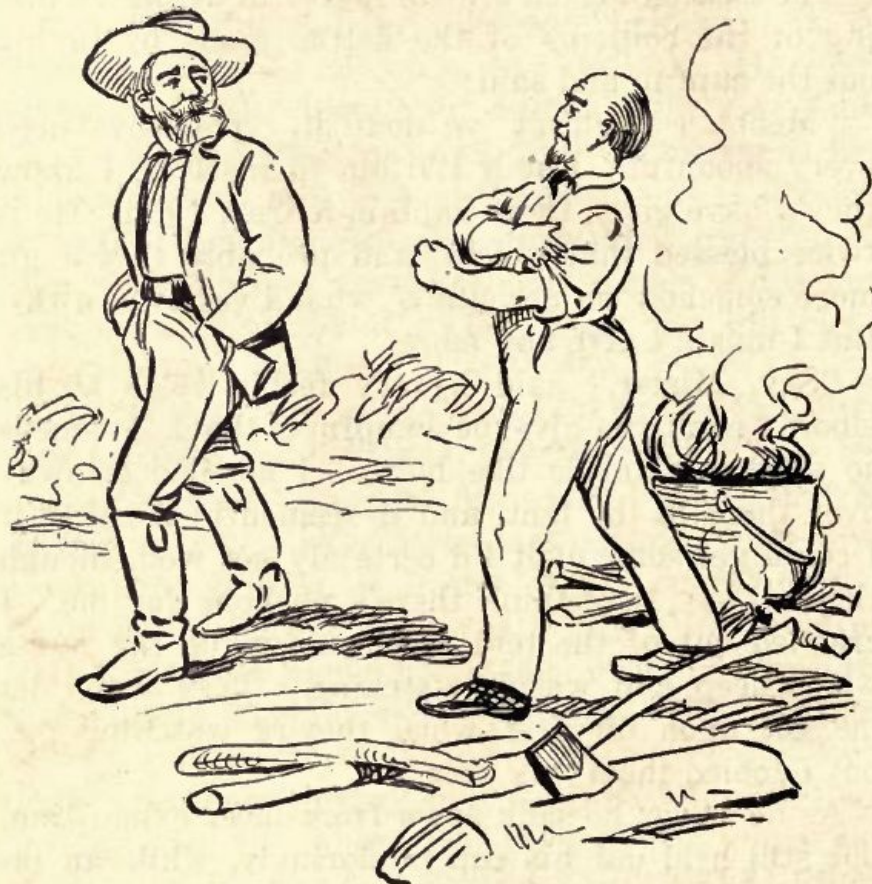
"You're not goin' to have a dumbed spoonful, Groundhog. Go away. I hain't enough for Si and Shorty, I tell you. Go away."

"And I tell you I need it more'n they do, for I'm workin' for the whole army, while they're layin' around, makin' out they're sick. You give me a cupful o' that and I'll go away and make no trouble."

"If you don't I'll kick the whole kettle over. An old fool citizen like you 's got no business in camp, any way, and no right to be havin' things that ought to go to the laborin' men."

And he raised his foot threateningly.

The Deacon laid down the spoon with which he had been stirring the broth, and doubling up his mighty fist, placed himself between Groundhog and the kettle, and said:



**"IF YOU DON'T SKIP OUT O' HERE THIS MINUTE I'LL
BUST YOUR HEAD AS I WOULD A PUNKIN."**

"Groundhog, I'm an old man, and always have bin a man o' peace. I don't believe in no kind o' fightin', nor molestin' no one. I belong to church, and 've always tried to lead a Christian life. But if you don't skip out o' here this minute, I'll bust your head as I would a punkin."

Groundhog retreated a few steps, but still kept up a show of determination.

"What are you foolin' with the ole hayseed for?" said another teamster, coming up behind Groundhog. "Slap

the old hawbuck over, snatch up the kittle and run with it. I'll do it if you don't."

"Go for 'em, Deacon; I'm with you. We kin lick both of 'em," shouted Shorty, who had been awakened by the noise of the dispute, and came tottering out, trying to raise a stick of wood for a club.

At that moment a rebel cannon roared on Lookout Mountain, just over them, and the wicked screech of a shell cleft the air. Both of the teamsters dropped on the ground in a paralysis of fear.

"The rebels 've got a new battery planted on the mountain," said Shorty, turning to study the smoke that drifted away, in order to get its location.

"The shell struck right over there, and hain't bursted yet," said the sick boy, looking up from sipping his broth, and pointing to a spot a short distance away. "I can hear the hissing of the fuse."

The teamsters sprang up like jacks-in-the-box, and ran with all the power of their legs. By the time the explosion came they were hundreds of yards away.

A column of dirt and stones was thrown up, of which a little sprinkle reached the fire. Thousands of voices yelled derisively at the rebel gunner.

"They're shootin' wuss and wuss every day," remarked Shorty, after judicially considering the shot and making comparison with its predecessors. "They'll git so after awhile that they can't hit the Tennessee Valley."

"Shorty," said the Deacon, "take this revolver and watch that kittle while I wash Si's face, and git him ready for his breakfast. If you let anybody git away with it you lose your breakfast. If I ever go into restaurantin' for a bizness, I'm goin' to find a quieter neighborhood than Chattanooga. I ain't exactly grumblin', so to speak, but there's enough excitement before breakfast every mornin' to last me a full year."

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SI KLEGG, BOOK 4 ***

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