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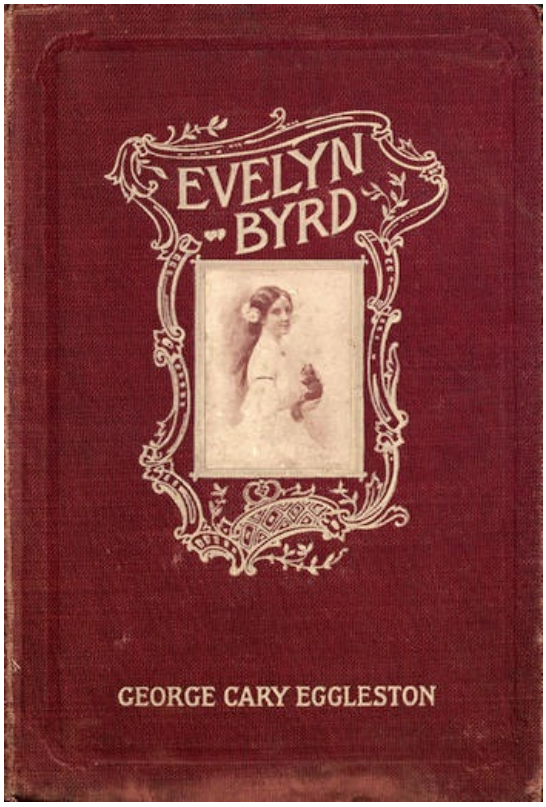
EVELYN BYRD
GEORGE CARY EGGLESTON

See page 317.

"I ALREADY KNOW WHAT IS IN THE PAPERS."

EVELYN BYRD

By GEORGE CARY EGGLESTON

AUTHOR OF “A CAROLINA CAVALIER,” “DOROTHY SOUTH,” “THE MASTER OF WARLOCK,” “RUNNING THE RIVER,” ETC., ETC.

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PREFACE

THIS book is the third and last of a trilogy of romances. In that trilogy I have endeavoured to show forth the character of the Virginians—men and women.

In "Dorothy South" I tried to show what the Virginians were while the old life lasted—"before the war."

In "The Master of Warlock" I endeavoured faithfully to depict the same people as they were during the first half of the Civil War, when their valour seemed to promise everything of results that they desired. In "Evelyn Byrd" I have sought to show the heroism of endurance that marked the conduct of those people during the last half of the war, when disaster stared them in the face and they unfalteringly confronted it.

GEORGE CARY EGGLESTON.

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EVELYN BYRD

I

A STRICKEN CORSAGE

A BATTERY of six twelve-pounder Napoleon guns lay in a little skirt of woodland on the south bank of the Rapidan. It was raining, not violently, but with a soaking persistence that might well have made the artillery-men tired of life and ready to welcome whatever end that day's skirmishing might bring to the weariness of living. But these men were veteran soldiers, inured to hardship as well as to danger. A saturating rain meant next to nothing to them. A day's discomfort, more or less, counted not at all in the monotonously uncomfortable routine of their lives.

They had been sent into the woodland an hour or two ago, and had done a little desultory firing now and then, merely by way of disturbing the movements of small bodies of the enemy who were being shifted about on the other side of the river. [10]

Just now the guns were silent, no enemy being in sight, and Captain Marshall Pollard being disposed to save his ammunition against the time, now obviously near at hand, when the new commander of the Federal forces, General Grant, should push the Army of the Potomac across the river to make a final trial of strength and sagacity with that small but wonderfully fighting Army of Northern Virginia directed by the master mind of Robert E. Lee.

But, while no enemy was within sight, there was a hornets' nest of Federal sharp-shooters concealed in a barn not far beyond the river, and from their secure cover they were very seriously annoying the Confederate lines. The barn lay a little to the left of the battery front, but near enough for the sharp-shooters' bullets to cut twigs from the tree under which Captain Marshall Pollard sat on horseback with Owen Kilgariff by his side. Still, the fire of the sharp-shooters was not mainly directed upon the woodland-screened battery, but upon the troops in the open field on Pollard's left.

Presently Captain Pollard, with the peculiar deliberation which characterised all his actions, lowered his field-glass from his eyes, and, withdrawing a handkerchief from a rain-proof breast pocket, began polishing the mist-obscured lenses. As he did so, he said to Kilgariff:— [11]

"Order one of the guns to burn that barn."

As he spoke, both his own horse and Kilgariff's sank to the ground; the one struggling in the agony of a mortal wound, the other instantly dead.

"And tell the quartermaster-sergeant to send us two more horses —good ones," Captain Pollard added, with no more of change in his tone than if the killing of the horses at that precise moment had been a previously ordered part of the programme.

A gun was quickly moved up to a little open space. It fired two shots. The flames burst from the barn, and instantly a horde of sharp-shooters abandoned the place and went scurrying across an open field in search of cover. As they fled, the gun that had destroyed their lurking-place, and another which Captain Pollard had instantly ordered up, shelled them mercilessly.

It was then that Owen Kilgariff said:— [12]

"That barn was full of fodder. Its owner had saved a little something against a future need, and now all the results of his toil have gone up in smoke. That's war!"

"Yes," answered Captain Pollard, "and the worst of it is that the man whose possessions we have destroyed is our friend, and not our

enemy; again, as you say, 'that's war.' War is destruction—whether the thing destroyed be that of friend or foe."

Just then a new and vicious fire of skilled sharp-shooters broke forth from the mansion-house of the plantation to which the burned barn had belonged. It was an old-time colonial edifice. Marshall Pollard had spent many delightful days and nights under its hospitable roof. He had learned to love its historic associations. He knew and loved every old portrait that hung on its oak-wainscotted walls. He knew and loved every stick of its old, colonial, plantation-made furniture; its very floors of white ash, that had been polished every morning for two hundred years; and its mahogany dining-table, around which distinguished guests had gathered through many generations. All these were dear to the peculiarly sympathetic [13] soul of the scholar-soldier, Marshall Pollard, a man born for books, and set by adverse fate to command batteries instead; a man of creative genius, as his novels and poems, written after the war, abundantly proved, set for the time to do the brutal work of destruction. He remembered the library of that mansion, too, the slow accumulation of two hundred years. He had read there precious volumes that existed nowhere else in America, and that money could not duplicate, however lavishly it might be offered for books, of which no fellows were to be found except upon the sealed shelves of the British Museum, or in other great public collections from which no treasures are ever to be sold while the world shall endure.

That house, with all its memories and all its treasures, must be destroyed. Marshall Pollard clearly understood the necessity, and he was altogether a soldier now, in spite of his strong inclinations to peace and civilisation, and all gentleness of spirit. Yet he found it difficult to order the work of destruction that it was his manifest duty to do. Presently, with bullets whistling about his ears, he turned to Owen Kilgariff, and, in a tone of petulance that was wholly [14] foreign to his habit, asked:—

"Why don't you order the thing done? Why do you sit there on your horse waiting for me to give the order?"

Kilgariff understood. He was a man accustomed to understand quickly; and now that Captain Pollard had made him his chief staff officer, sergeant-major of the battery, his orders, whatever they might be, carried with them all the authority of the captain's own commands.

Kilgariff instantly rode back to the battery and ordered up two sections—four guns. Advancing them well to the front, where the house to be shot at could be easily seen, he posted them with entire calm, in spite of the fact that a Federal battery of rifled guns stationed at a long distance was playing vigorously upon his position, and not without effect. The artillery-men in both armies had, by this late period of the war, become marksmen so expert that the only limit of the effectiveness of their fire was the limit of their range.

Half a dozen of Marshall Pollard's men bit the dust, and nearly a dozen of his horses were killed, while Owen Kilgariff was getting the [15] four guns into position for the effective doing of the work to be done, although that process of placing the guns occupied less than a minute of time. Two wheels of cannon carriages were smashed by well-directed rifle shells, but these were quickly replaced by the extra wheels carried on the caissons; for every detail of artillery drill was an *a-b-c* to the veterans of this battery, and if the men had nerves, the fact was never permitted to manifest itself when there was work of war to be done.

Within sixty seconds after Owen Kilgariff rode away to give the orders that Marshall Pollard hesitated to give, four Napoleon guns were firing four shells each, a minute, into a mansion that had been famous throughout all the history of Virginia, since the time when William Byrd had been Virginia's foremost citizen and the Knights of the Golden Horseshoe had ridden out to possess themselves of the regions to the west.

Half a minute accomplished the purpose. The mansion was in flames, the sharp-shooters who had made a fortress of it were scurrying to the cover of the underbrush a few hundred yards in rear, and Owen Kilgariff ordered the guns to "cease firing" and [16] return to the cover of the woodlands whence they had been brought forward for this service. Six of Marshall Pollard's men lay stark and stiff on the little meadow which the guns had occupied. These were

hastily removed for decent burial. Nine others were wounded. They were carried away upon litters for surgical attention.

These details in no way disturbed the battery camp. They were the commonplaces of war; so the men, unmindful of them, cooked such dinner as they could command, and ate it with a relish unimpaired by the events of the morning.

But Captain Marshall Pollard and his companion, Sergeant-major Owen Kilgariff, were not minded for dinner. Seeing the flames burst forth from the upper stories of the old colonial mansion, Kilgariff said to his captain:—

"I wonder if all those fellows got away? There may be a wounded man or two left in the house to roast to death. May I ride over there and see?"

"Yes," answered Pollard, "and I will ride with you. But first order two of the guns to shell the sharp-shooters in the thicket yonder. Otherwise we may not get back."

In spite of the heavy fire that the two guns poured into the [17]
thicket beyond the house, the sharp-shooters stood their ground like the veterans that they were, and Pollard and Kilgariff were their targets as these two swam the swollen river and galloped across the last year's corn lands on their way to the burning house.

Arrived there, they hastily searched the upper rooms. Here and there they came upon a dead soldier, left by his companions to be incinerated in company with the portraits of old colonial notables and beautiful colonial dames that were falling from the walls as the ancient oaken wainscot shrivelled in the fire.

But no living thing was found there, and the two Confederates, satisfied now that there was no life to be saved, hurried down the burning stairway and out into the air, where instantly they became targets again for the sharp-shooters, not three hundred yards away.

As they were about to mount their horses, which had been screened behind a wall projection, Kilgariff suddenly bethought him of the cellar, and plunged down the stairway leading to it. He was promptly followed by his captain, though both of them realised the peculiar danger of the descent at a time when the whole structure [18]
seemed about to tumble into that pit as a mass of burning timber. But they realised also that the cellar was the place where they were most likely to find living men too badly wounded to make their escape, and so, in spite of the terrible hazard, they plunged into the depths, intent only upon their errand of mercy.

A hasty glance around in the half-light seemed to reveal only the emptiness of the cavernous cellar. But just as the two companions were about to quit the place, in a hurried effort to save themselves, a great, blazing beam fell in, together with a massive area of flame-enveloped flooring, illuminating the place. As Kilgariff turned, he caught sight of a girl, crouching behind an angle of the wall. She was a tall, slender creature, and Kilgariff was mighty in his muscularity. There was not a fraction of a second to be lost if escape from that fire pit was in any wise to be accomplished. Without a moment's pause, Kilgariff threw his arm around the girl and bore her up the cellar stairs, just as the whole burning mass of timbers sank suddenly into the space below.

His captain followed him closely; and, emerging from the flames, [19]
scorched and smoke-stifled, the three stood still for a moment, under the deadly fire of the sharp-shooters. Then, with recovered breath, they turned an angle of the wall, mounted their horses, and sped away toward the river, under a rifle fire that seemed sufficient for the destruction of a regiment. The shells from their own side of the line, shrieking above the heads of the three fugitives, made their horses squat almost to the ground; but with a resolution born of long familiarity with danger, the two soldiers sped on, Kilgariff carrying the girl on the withers of his horse and trying to shield her from the fire of the sharp-shooters by so riding as to interpose his own body between her and the swiftly on-coming bullets.

Finally the river was reached, and, plunging into it, the two horses bore their burdens safely across. Pollard might easily have been fifty yards in advance of his sergeant-major, seeing that he had the better horse, and that his companion's animal was carrying double. But that was not Marshall Pollard's way. Instead of riding as fast as he could toward the river and the comparative safety that lay [20]
beyond it, he rode with his horse's head just overlapping the flanks of the animal which bore the girl and her rescuer. In this way he managed to make of himself and his horse a protecting barrier

between the enemy and the girl whom Kilgariff was so gallantly trying to bear to safety.

This was not a battle, or anything remotely resembling a battle. If it had been, these two men would not have left their posts in the battery. It was only an insignificant “operation of outposts,” which the commanders in the front of both armies that night reported as “some slight skirmishing along the outer lines.” On neither side was it thought worth while to add that fifty or sixty brave young fellows had been done to death in the “slight skirmishing.” The war was growing old in the spring of 1864. Officers, hardened by experience of human butchery on a larger scale, no longer thought it necessary to report death losses that did not require three figures for their recording.

When Pollard and Kilgariff reached the bit of woodland in which the battery had been posted for a special purpose, they found the guns already gone. The battery had been ordered during their [21] absence to return to its more permanent camp two or three miles in the rear, and in Captain Pollard’s absence his senior lieutenant had taken command to execute the order. It is the way of war that “men may come and men may go,” but there is always some one next in command to take the place of one in authority who meets death or is absent for any other cause. An army organisation resembles Nature herself in its scrupulous care for the general result, and in its absolute indifference to the welfare or the fate of the individual.

War is a merciless thing—inhuman, demoniacal, devilish. But incidentally it calls into activity many of the noblest qualities of human nature. It had done so in this instance. Having fired the house on the enemy’s side of the river, and having thus driven away a company of sharp-shooters who were grievously annoying the Confederate line, Captain Pollard’s duty was fully done. But, at the suggestion that some wounded enemy might have been left in the house to perish in the torture of the flames, he and his companion had deliberately crossed the river into the enemy’s country, and had [22] ridden under a galling fire to the burning building, as earnestly and as daringly intent upon their mission of mercy as they had been a little while before upon their work of slaughter and destruction.

“Man’s a strange animal,” sings the poet, and his song is an echo of truth.

Pollard and Kilgariff rode on until the camp was reached. There Kilgariff pushed his horse at once to the tent of the surgeon, and delivered the girl into that officer’s keeping.

“Quick!” he said. “I fear she is terribly wounded.”

“No, no,” cried the girl; “I am not hurt. It is only that my corsage is—what you call stricken. Is it that that is the word? No? Then what shall I say? It is only that the bullet hurt what you call my stays. Truly it did not touch me.”

Just then Captain Pollard observed that Kilgariff’s left hand was wrapped in a piece torn from the front of the girl’s gown, and that the rude bandage was saturated with blood. Contrary to all military rule, the sergeant-major had been holding his reins in his right hand, and carrying the girl in the support of his left arm. This [23] awkwardness, as he was at pains to explain to the captain, had been brought about by the hurry of necessity.

“I grabbed the girl,” he explained, “without a thought of anything but the danger to her. The house timbers were already falling, and there was no time to be lost. When I got to my horse, the fire of the sharp-shooters was too severe to be trifled with when I had a girl to protect, so I mounted from the right side of my horse instead of the left, and continued to ride with her on my left arm and my bridle-rein in my right hand. I make my apologies, Captain.”

“Oh, confound your apologies!” ejaculated Captain Pollard. “What’s the matter with your left hand? Let the surgeon see it at once.”

“It is nothing of consequence,” answered the young man, stripping off the rudely improvised bandage. “Only the ends of a finger or two carried away. I had thought until a moment ago that the bullet had penetrated the young lady’s body. You see, Captain, I was holding her in front of me and clasping her closely around the waist with my fingers extended, the better to hold her in her [24] uncertain seat on the withers. So, when the bullet struck my fingers, I thought it had pierced her person. Thank God, she has come off safe! But by the time the surgeon is through with his work on my fingers, I shall have to use my right hand on the bridle for a

considerable time to come, Captain."

"You will have to go to the hospital," said the surgeon.

"Indeed I shall do nothing of the kind."

"Why not, Kilgariff?" asked Pollard, who had become mightily interested in the strange and strangely reserved young man whom he had made his sergeant-major.

"Why not? Why, because I'm not going to miss the greatest and probably the last campaign of the greatest war of all time."

As he spoke, the captain turned away toward his tent, leaving Kilgariff to endure the painful operations of the surgeon upon his wounded hand, without chloroform, for there was none of that anæsthetic left among the supplies of this meagrely furnished field-hospital after the work already done upon the wounded men of that morning. Kilgariff endured the amputations without a groan or so much as a flinching, whereat the surgeon marvelled the more, [25] seeing that the patient was a man of exceptionally nervous constitution and temperament. When the bandages were all in place, the sergeant-major said simply:—

"Please let me have a stiff drink of spirits, Doctor. I am a trifle inclined to faintness after the pain." That was absolutely the only sign the man gave of the fact that he had been enduring torture for nearly a half-hour.

Relighting his pipe, which he had smoked throughout the painful operation, Kilgariff bade the doctor good morning, and walked away to the tent which he and the captain together occupied.

In the meantime Captain Pollard had been questioning the girl as to herself, and getting no satisfactory answers from her, not so much because of any unwillingness on her part to give an account of herself, as seemingly because she either did not understand the questions put to her, or did not know what the answers to them ought to be.

"I'll tell you what, Captain," said Kilgariff, when Pollard had briefly suggested the situation to him, "Doctor Brent is at Orange Court House, I hear, reorganising the field-hospital service for the [26] coming campaign, and his wife is with him. Why not send the girl to her?"

"To Dorothy? Yes, I'll send her to Dorothy. She will know what to do."

He hastily summoned an ambulance for the girl to ride in, and still more hastily scribbled a note to Dorothy Brent—to her who had been Dorothy South in the days of her maidenhood before the war. In it he said:—

> I am sending you, under escort, a girl whom my sergeant-major most daringly rescued this morning from a house on the enemy's side of the river, after we had shelled and set fire to the place. She seems too badly scared, or too something else, for me to find out anything about her. You, with your womanly tact, will perhaps be able to gain her confidence and find out what should be done. If she has friends at the North to whom she should be returned, I will arrange with General Stuart to send her back across the river under a flag of truce. If she hasn't any friends, or if for any other reason she should be kept within our lines, you will know what to do with her. I am helpless in such a case, and I earnestly invoke the aid of the very wisest woman I ever knew. When you see the girl—poor, innocent child that she is— [27] you, who were once yourself a child, and who, in growing older, have lost none of the sweetness and especially none of the moral courage of childhood, will be interested, I am very sure, in taking charge of her for her good.

Having despatched this note, and the girl, under escort, Pollard turned to Kilgariff, and abruptly asked:—

"Why did you call this coming campaign 'the greatest and probably the last campaign' of the war?"

"Why, all that seems obvious. The Army of the Potomac has at last found a commander who knows how to handle it, and both sides are tired of the war. Grant is altogether a different man from McClellan, or Pope, or McDowell, or Burnside, or Meade. He knows his business. He knows that the chief remaining strength of the Confederacy lies in the fighting force of the Army of Northern Virginia. He will strike straight at that. He will hurl his whole force upon us in an effort to destroy this army. If he succeeds, the Confederacy can't last even a fortnight after that. If he fails, if Lee hurls him back across the Rapidan, broken and beaten as all his predecessors have been, the North will never raise another army—if [28] the feeling there is anything like what the Northern newspapers represent it to be. You see, I've been reading them all the while—

but, pardon me, I meant only to answer your question."

"Don't apologise," answered Pollard. And he wondered who this man, his sergeant-major, was—whence he had come, and how, and why. For Captain Marshall Pollard knew absolutely nothing about the man whom he had made his confidential staff-sergeant, his tent mate, his bedfellow, and the executant of all his orders. Nevertheless, he trusted him implicitly. "I do not know his history," he reflected, "but I know his quality as a man and a soldier."

II

OWEN KILGARIFF

THE relations between Pollard and Kilgariff were peculiar. In many ways they were inexplicable except upon the ground of instinctive sympathy between two men, each of whom recognised the other as a gentleman; both of whom were possessed of scholarly tastes combined with physical vigour and all that is possible of manliness; both of whom loved books and knew them intimately; and each of whom recognised in the other somewhat more than is common of intellectual force.

The history of their acquaintance had been quite unusual. Marshall Pollard had risen from the ranks to be now the captain of a battery originally organised and commanded by Captain Skinner, a West Point graduate who had resigned from the United States army many years before the war, but not until after he had seen much service in Mexico and in Indian warfare. The battery had been [30] composed at the outset of ruffians from the purlieus of Richmond, jailbirds, wharf-rats, beach-combers, men pardoned out of the penitentiary on condition of their enlistment, and the friends and associates of such men. It had been a fiercely fighting battery from the beginning. Slowly but surely many of the men who had originally constituted it had been killed in battle, and Virginia mountaineers had been enlisted to fill their places. In the meanwhile discipline of the rigidest military sort had wrought a wonderful change for the better in such of the men as survived from the original organisation. By the time that the battery returned to Virginia, after covering itself with glory at Gettysburg, it was no longer a company of ruffians and criminals, but it continued to maintain its reputation for desperate fighting and for cool, self-contained, and unfaltering courage. For those mountaineers of Virginia were desperately loyal to the fighting traditions of their race.

During the winter of 1863-4 Captain Pollard's battery was stationed at Lindsay's Turnout, on the Virginia Central Railroad a few miles west of Gordonsville. Indescribable, almost inconceivable [31] mud was the characteristic of that winter, and General Lee had taken advantage of it, and of the complete veto it placed upon even the smallest military operations, to retire the greater part of his army from the Rappahannock and the Rapidan to the railroads in the rear, where it was possible to feed the men and the horses, at least in some meagre fashion.

It was during this stay in winter quarters that Owen Kilgariff had come to the battery. Whence he came, or how he got there, nobody knew and nobody could guess. There were only two trains a day on the railroad; one going east, and the other going west. It was the duty of strong guards from Pollard's battery to man the station whenever a train arrived and inspect the passports of every passenger who descended from the cars to the platform or passed from the platform to the cars. Owen Kilgariff had not come by any of the trains. That much was absolutely certain, and nobody knew any other way by which he could have come. Yet one evening he appeared in Pollard's battery at retreat roll-call and stood looking on and listening while the orders for the night were being read to the men.

He was a singularly comely young man of thirty years, or a little [32] less—tall, rather slender, though very muscular, symmetrical in an unusual degree, and carrying his large and well-shaped head with the ease and grace of a trained athlete.

When the military function was ended and the men had broken ranks, Kilgariff approached Captain Pollard, and with a faultlessly correct military salute said:—

"Captain, I crave your permission to pass the night with some of your men. In the morning I think I shall ask you to enlist me in your battery."

There was something in the man's speech and manner which strongly appealed to Marshall Pollard's sympathy and awakened his respect.

"You shall be my own personal guest for the night," he said; "I can offer you some bacon and corn bread for supper, and a bundle of dry broom-straw grass to sleep upon. As for enlistment, we'll talk further about that in the morning."

The evening passed pleasantly. The stranger was obviously a gentleman to his finger tips. He conversed with rare intelligence and interest, upon every subject that happened to arise among the [33] officers who were accustomed to gather in the captain's hut every evening, making a sort of club of his headquarters. Incidentally some one made reference during the evening to some reported Japanese custom. Instantly but very modestly Kilgariff said:—

"Pardon me, but that is one of many misapprehensions concerning the Japanese. They have no such custom. The notion arose originally out of a misunderstanding—a misinterpretation; it got into print, and has been popularly accepted ever since. Let me tell you, if you care to listen, what the facts really are."

Then he went on, by eager invitation, to talk long and interestingly about Japan and the Japanese—matters then very slightly known—speaking all the while with the modest confidence of one who knows his subject, but who is in no sense disposed to display the extent of his knowledge.

Finally, inquiry brought out the modestly reluctant information that Kilgariff had been a member—though he avoided saying in what capacity—of Commodore Perry's expedition which compelled [34] the opening of the Japanese ports, and that instead of returning with the expedition, he had somehow quitted it and made his way into the interior of the hermit empire, where he had passed a year or two in minute exploration.

All this was drawn out by questioning only, and in no case did Kilgariff go beyond the question asked, to volunteer information. Especially he avoided speaking of himself or of his achievements at any point in his conversation. He would say, "An American" did this, "An English-speaking man" saw that, "A foreigner had an experience," and so forth. The first personal pronoun singular was almost completely absent from his conversation.

One of the lieutenants was a Frenchman, and to him Kilgariff spoke in French whenever that officer seemed at a loss to understand a statement made in English. The surgeon was a German, and with him Kilgariff talked in German about scientific matters, and in such fashion that the doctor said to Pollard next morning:—

"It is that this man an accomplished physician is, or I mightily mistaken am already."

In the morning Owen Kilgariff warmly thanked Captain Pollard [35] for his entertainment, adding:—

"As one gentleman with another, you have been free to offer, and I free to accept, your hospitality. Be very sure that I shall not presume upon this after I become a common soldier under your command, as I intend to do this morning if I have your permission."

Pollard protested that his battery was not a proper one for a man of Kilgariff's culture and refinement to enlist in, explaining that such of the men as were not ex-criminals were illiterate mountaineers, wholly unfit for association on equal terms with him. For answer, Kilgariff said:—

"I am told that you yourself enlisted here, Captain, when the conditions were even less alluring than now."

"Well, yes, certainly. But my case was peculiar."

"Perhaps mine is equally so," answered the man. "At any rate, I very much want to enlist under your command, in a battery that, as I learn, usually manages to get into the thick of every fight and to stay there to the end."

A question was on Pollard's lips, which he greatly wanted to ask, [36] but he dared not. With the instinctive shrinking of a gentleman from the impertinence of personal questioning, Pollard found it impossible to ask this man how it happened that he was not already a soldier somewhere. And yet the matter was one which very naturally prompted questioning. The Confederate conscription laws had long ago brought into the army every able-bodied man in the South. How happened it, then, that this man of twenty-eight or thirty years of age, perfect in physique, had managed to avoid service until this fourth year of the war? And how was it, that one so manifestly eager now for service of the most active kind had been willing to keep out of the army for so long a time?

As if divining the thought which Captain Pollard could not bring himself to formulate, Kilgariff said:—

"Some day, perhaps, I shall be able to tell you how and why it is

that I am not already a soldier. At present I cannot. But I assure you, on my honour as a gentleman, that there is absolutely no obstacle in the way of your enlistment of me in your command. I earnestly ask you to accept me as one of your cannoniers." [37]

Accordingly, the man was enrolled as a private in the battery, and from that hour he never once presumed upon the acquaintance he had been privileged to form with the officers. With a scrupulosity greater than was common even in that rigidly disciplined command, he observed the distinction between officers and enlisted men. His behaviour indeed was that of one bred under the strict surveillance of martinet professors in a military school. He did all his military duties of whatever kind with a like attention to every detail of good conduct; always obeying like a soldier, never like a servant. That distinction is broad and very important as an index of character.

The officers liked him, and Pollard especially sought him out for purposes of conversation. The men liked him, too, though they felt instinctively that he was their superior. Perhaps their liking for him was in large part due to the fact that he never asserted or in any wise assumed his superiority—never recognised it, in fact, even by implication.

He nearly always had a book somewhere about his person—a book borrowed in most cases, but bought when there was no opportunity to borrow, for the man seemed always to have money in plenty. Now and then he would go to a quartermaster or a paymaster with a gold piece and exchange it for a great roll of the nearly worthless Confederate notes. These he would spend for books or whatever else he wanted. [38]

On one occasion, when the men of the battery had been left for thirteen bitterly cold days and nights with no food except a meagre dole of corn meal, Kilgariff bought a farmer's yoke of oxen that had become stalled in the muddy roadway near the camp. These were emphatically "lean kine," and their flesh would make very tough beef, but the toughest beef imaginable was better than no meat at all, and so Kilgariff paid what looked like a king's ransom for the half-starved and wholly "stalled" oxen, got two of the men who had had experience in such work to slaughter and dress them, and asked the commissary-sergeant to distribute the meat among the men.

The next day he exchanged another gold piece for Confederate notes enough to paper a goodly sized wall, and the men rightly guessed that for some reason, known only to himself, this stranger among them carried a supply of gold coin in a belt buckled about his waist. But not one of them ever ventured to ask him concerning the matter. He was clearly not a man to be questioned with regard to his personal affairs. [39]

Thus it came about that Captain Pollard, who had made this man successively corporal, sergeant, and finally sergeant-major, solely on grounds of obvious fitness, actually knew nothing about him, except that he was an ideally good soldier and a man of education and culture.

Now that he had become sergeant-major, his association with the captain was close and constant. The two occupied the same tent or hut—when they had a tent or hut—messed together, slept together, and rode side by side whithersoever the captain had occasion to go on duty. They read together, too, in their idle hours, and talked much with each other about books, men, and affairs. But never once did Captain Pollard ask a personal question of his executive sergeant and intimate personal associate.

Nor did Kilgariff ever volunteer the smallest hint of information concerning himself, either to the captain or to anybody else. On the contrary, he seemed peculiarly to shrink even from the accidental or incidental revelation of anything pertaining to himself. [40]

One day, in winter quarters, a gunner was trying to open a shell which had failed to explode when fired from the enemy's battery into the Confederate lines. The missile burst while the gunner was handling it, and tore off the poor fellow's hand. The surgeon had ridden away somewhither—nobody knew whither—and it was at least a mile's distance to the nearest camp where a surgeon might be found. Meanwhile, the man seemed doomed to bleed to death. The captain was hurriedly wondering what to do, when Kilgariff came quietly but quickly, pushed his way through the group of excited men, knotted a handkerchief, and deftly bound it around the wounded man's arm.

"Hold that firmly," he said to a corporal standing by. "Watch the

stump, and if the blood begins to flow again, twist the loop a trifle tighter, but not too tight, only enough to prevent a free hemorrhage —bleeding, I mean."

Then, touching his cap brim, he asked the captain:— [41]

"May I go to the surgeon's tent and bring some necessary appliances? I think I may save this poor fellow's life, and there is no time to be lost."

The captain gave permission, of course, and a few minutes later Kilgariff returned with a score of things needed. Kneeling, he arranged them on the ground. Then he examined the wounded man's pulse, and with a look of satisfaction saturated a handkerchief with chloroform from a bottle he had brought. He then turned again to Captain Pollard, saying:—

"Will you kindly hold that over the man's nose and mouth? And will you put your finger on his uninjured wrist, observing the pulse-beats carefully? Tell me, please, if any marked change occurs."

"Why, what are you going to do?" asked the captain.

"With your permission, I am going to amputate this badly shattered wrist. There is no time to be lost."

With that, he set to work, pausing only to direct one of the [42] corporals to keep the men back and prevent too close a crowding around the patient.

With what seemed to Captain Pollard incredible quickness, Kilgariff amputated the arm above the wrist, took up the arteries, and neatly bandaged the wound. Then he bade some of the men bear the patient on a litter to his hut, and place him in his bunk. He remained by the poor fellow's side until the effects of shock and chloroform had subsided. Then he returned to his quarters quite as if nothing out of the ordinary routine had happened.

Captain Pollard had seen enough of field surgery during his three years of active military service to know that Kilgariff's work in this case had been done with the skill of an expert, and his astonishment over this revelation of his sergeant-major's accomplishment was great. Nevertheless, he shrank from questioning the man about the matter, or saying anything to him which might be construed as an implied question. All that he said was:—

"I thank you, Kilgariff, and congratulate you! You have saved a good man's life this day, and God does not give it to many men to do [43] that."

"I hope the surgeon will find my work satisfactory," responded the sergeant-major. "Is there any soup in the kettle, Tom?"— addressing the coloured cook. "Bring me a cup of it, please."

The man's nerves had gone through a fearful strain, of course, as every surgeon's do when he performs a capital operation, and the captain saw that Kilgariff was exhausted. He offered to send for a drink of whiskey, but Kilgariff declined it, saying that the hot soup was quite all he needed. The bugle blowing the retreat call a moment later, Kilgariff went, quite as if nothing had happened, to call the roll and deliver the orders for the night.

A little later the surgeon returned and was told what had happened. After looking at the bandages, and without removing them, he muttered something in German and walked away to the captain's quarters. He was surgeon to this battery only, for the reason that the company was for the time detached from its battalion, and must have a medical officer of its own.

Entering the captain's quarters, the bluff but emotional German [44] doctor grasped Kilgariff's hand, and broke forth:—

"It is that you are a brother then as well as a frient already. Why then haf you not to me that you are a surgeon told it? Ach! I haf myself that you speak the German forgot. It is only in the German that I can what I wish to tell you say."

Then in German the excited doctor went on to lavish praise upon the younger man for his skill. Presently the captain, seeing how sorely Kilgariff was embarrassed by the encomiums, came to his relief by asking:—

"Have you taken off the bandages, Doctor, and examined the wound?"

"Shade of Esculapius, NO! What am I, that I should with such a bandaging tamper? One glance—one, what you call, look—quite enough tells me. This the work of a master is—it is not the work with which for me to interfere. The man who those bandages put on, that man knows what the best masters can teach. It is not under the

bandages that I need to look to find out that. Ach, Herr Sergeant-major, I to you my homage offer. Five years I in the hospitals of [45]
Berlin am, and four years in Vienna. In the army of Austria I am surgeon for six years. Do I not know?"

Then the doctor began to question Kilgariff in German, to the younger man's sore embarrassment. But, fortunately for his reserve, Kilgariff had the German language sufficiently at his command to parry every question, and when tattoo sounded, the excited surgeon returned to his own quarters, still muttering his astonishment and admiration.

In the morning Captain Pollard asked Kilgariff to ride with him, in order that they two might the better talk together. But even on horseback Pollard found it difficult to approach this man upon any subject that seemed in the least degree personal. It was not that there was anything repellent, anything combative, and still less anything pugnacious in Kilgariff's manner; for there was never anything of the sort. It was only that the man was so full of a gentle dignity, so saturated with that reserve which a gentleman instinctively feels concerning his own affairs that no other gentleman wishes to intrude upon them.

Still, Pollard had something to say to his sergeant-major on this [46]
occasion, and presently he said it:—

"I did not know until yesterday," he began, "that you were a surgeon, Kilgariff."

"Perhaps I should not call myself that," interrupted the man, as if anxious to forestall the captain's thought. "One who has knocked about the world as much as I have naturally picks up a good many bits of useful information—especially with regard to the emergency care of men who get themselves hurt."

"Now listen to me, Kilgariff," said Pollard, with determination. "Don't try to hoodwink me. I have never asked you a question about your personal affairs, and I don't intend to do so now. You need not seek by indirection to mislead me. I shall not ask you whether you are a surgeon or not. There is no need. I have seen too much with my own eyes, and I have heard too much from our battery surgeon as to your skill, to believe for one moment that it is of the 'jack-at-all-trades' kind. But I ask you no questions. I respect your privacy, as I demand respect for my own. But I want to say to you that this army is badly in need of surgeons, especially surgeons whose skill is [47]
greater than that of the half-educated country doctors, many of whom we have been obliged to commission for want of better-equipped men. I learn this from my friend Doctor Arthur Brent, who tells me he is constantly embarrassed by his inability to find really capable and experienced surgeons to do the more difficult work of the general hospitals. He said to me only a week ago, when he came to the front to reorganise the medical service for this year's campaign, that 'many hundreds of gallant men will die this summer for lack of a sufficient number of highly skilled surgeons.' He explained that while we have many men in the service whose skill is of the highest, we have not nearly enough of such to fill the places in which they are needed. Now I want you to let me send you to Doctor Brent with a letter of introduction. He will quickly procure a commission for you as a major-surgeon. It isn't fit that such a man as you should waste himself in the position of a non-commissioned officer."

Not until he had finished the speech did Pollard turn his eyes upon his companion's face. Then he saw it to be pale—almost cadaverous. Obviously the man was undergoing an agonising [48]
struggle with himself.

"I beg your pardon, Kilgariff," hastily spoke Captain Pollard, "if I have said anything to wound you; I could not know—"

"It is not that," responded the sergeant-major. But he added nothing to the declaration for a full minute afterward, during which time he was manifestly struggling to control himself. Finally recovering his calm, he said:—

"It is very kind of you, Captain, and I thank you for it. But I cannot accept your offer of service. I must remain as I am. I ought to have remained a private, as I at first intended. It is very ungracious in me not to tell you the wherefore of this, but I cannot, and your already demonstrated respect for my privacy will surely forbid you to resent a reserve concerning myself which I am bound to maintain. If you do resent it, or if it displeases you in the least, I beg you to accept my resignation as your sergeant-major, and let me

return to my place among the men as a private in the battery."

"No," answered Pollard, decisively. "If the army cannot have the advantage of your service in any higher capacity, I certainly shall not let myself lose your intelligence and devotion as my staff-sergeant. Believe me, Kilgariff, I spoke only for your good and the good of the service."

[49]

"I quite understand, Captain, and I thank you. But with your permission we will let matters remain as they are."

All this occurred about a week before the events related in the first chapter of this story.

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[50]

III

EVELYN BYRD

WHEN the girl whom Kilgariff had rescued from the burning building was delivered into Dorothy Brent's hands, that most gracious of gentlewomen received her quite as if her coming had been expected, and as if there had been nothing unusual in the circumstances that had led to her visit. Dorothy was too wise and too considerate to question the frightened girl about herself upon her first arrival. She saw that she was half scared and wholly bewildered by what had happened to her, added to which her awe of Dorothy herself, stately dame that the very young wife of Doctor Brent seemed in her unaccustomed eyes, was a circumstance to be reckoned with.

"I must teach her to love me first," thought Dorothy, with the old straightforwardness of mind. "Then she will trust me."

So, after she had hastily read Pollard's note and characterised it [51]
as "just like a man not to find out the girl's name," she took the poor, frightened, fawnlike creature in her arms, saying, with caresses that were genuine inspirations of her nature:—

"Poor, dear girl! You have had a very hard day of it. Now the first thing for you to do is to rest. So come on up to my room. You shall have a refreshing little bath—I'll give it to you myself with Mammy's aid—and then you shall go regularly to bed."

"But," queried the doubting girl, "is it permitted to—"

"Oh, yes, I know you are faint with hunger, and you shall have your breakfast as soon as Dick can get it ready. Queer, isn't it, to take breakfast at three o'clock in the afternoon? But you shall have it in bed, with nobody to bother you. Fortunately we have some coffee, and Dick is an expert in making coffee. I taught him myself. I don't know, of course, how much or how little experience you have had with servants, but I have always found that when I want them to do things in my way, I must take all the trouble necessary to teach [52]
them what my way is. Get her shoes and stockings off quick, Mammy."

"I have had little to do with servants," said the girl, simply, "and so I don't know."

"Didn't you ever have a dear old mammy? queried Dorothy, thus asking the first of the questions that must be asked in order to discover the girl's identity.

"No—yes. I don't know. You see, they made me swear to tell nothing. I mustn't tell after that, must I?"

"No, you dear girl; no. You needn't tell me anything. I was only wondering what girls do when they haven't a good old mammy like mine to coddle them and regulate them and make them happy. Why, you can't imagine what a bad girl I should have been if I hadn't had Mammy here to scold me and keep me straight. Can she, Mammy?"

"Humph!" ejaculated the old coloured nurse. "Much good my scoldin' o' you done do, Mis' Dorothy. Dere nebber was a chile so cantankerous as you is always been an' is to dis day. I'd be 'shamed to tell dis heah young lady 'bout your ways an' your manners. Howsomever, she kin jedge fer herse'f, seein' as she fin's you heah [53]
'mong all de soldiers, when you oughter be at Wyanoke a-givin' o' dinin'-days, an' a-entertainin' o' yer frien's. I'se had a hard time with you, Mis' Dorothy, all my life. What fer you always a-botherin' 'bout a lot o' sick people an' wounded men, jes' as yo' done do 'bout dem no-'count niggas down at Wyanoke when dey done gone an' got deyselves sick? Ah, well, I spec dat's what ole mammies is bawn fer—jes' to reg'late dere precious chiles when de're bent on habin' dere own way anyhow. Don' you go fer to listen to Mis' Dorothy 'bout sich things, nohow, Mis'—what's yer name, honey?"

"I don't think I can tell," answered the girl, frightened again, apparently; "at least, not certainly. It is Evelyn Byrd, but there was something else added to it at last, and I don't want to tell what the rest of it is."

"Then you are a Virginian?" said Dorothy, quickly, surprised into a question when she meant to ask none.

"I think so," said the girl; "I'm not quite sure."

She looked frightened again, and Dorothy pursued the inquiry no further, saying:—

"Oh, we won't bother about that. Evelyn Byrd is name enough for [54]
anybody to bear, and it is thoroughly Virginian. Here comes your breakfast"—as Dick knocked at the door with a tray which Mammy took from his hands and herself brought to the bed in which the girl had been placed after her bath. "We won't bother about anything now. Just take your breakfast, and then try to sleep a little. You must be utterly worn out."

The girl looked at her wistfully, but said nothing. She ate sparingly, but apparently with the relish of one who is faint for want of food, the which led Dorothy to say:—

"It was just like a man to send you on here without giving you something to eat."

"You are very good to me." That was all the girl said in reply.

When she had rested, Dorothy sitting sewing in the meanwhile, the girl turned to her hostess and asked:—

"Might I put on my clothes again, now?"

"Why, certainly. Now that you are rested, you are to do whatever you wish."

"Am I? I was never allowed to do anything I wished before this time—at least not often."

The remark opened the way for questioning, but Dorothy was too [55]
discreet to avail herself of the opportunity. She said only:—

"Well, so long as you stay with me, Evelyn, you are to do precisely as you please. I believe in liberty for every one. You heard what Mammy said about me. Dear old Mammy has been trying to govern me ever since I was born, and never succeeding, simply because she never really wanted to succeed. Don't you think people are the better for being left free to do as they please in all innocent ways?"

There was a fleeting expression as of pained memory on the girl's face. She did not answer immediately, but sat gazing as any little child might, into Dorothy's face. After a little, she said:—

"I don't quite know. You see, I know so very little. I think I would like best to do whatever you please for me to do. Yes. That is what I would like best."

"Would you like to go with me to my home, and live there with me till you find your friends?"

"I would like that, yes. But I think I haven't any friends—I don't know."

"Well," said Dorothy, "sometime you shall tell me about that— [56]
some day when you have come to love me and feel like telling me about yourself."

"Thank you," said the girl. "I think I love you already. But I mustn't tell anything because of what they made me swear."

"We'll leave all that till we get to Wyanoke," said Dorothy. "Wyanoke, you should know, is Doctor Brent's plantation. It is my home. You and I will go to Wyanoke within a day or two. Just as soon as my husband, Doctor Brent, can spare me."

The girl was manifestly losing something of her timidity under the influence of her new-found trust and confidence in Dorothy, and Dorothy was quick to discover the fact, but cautious not to presume upon it. The two talked till supper time, and the girl accompanied her hostess to that meal, where, for the first time, she met Arthur Brent. That adept in the art of observation so managed the conversation as to find out a good deal about Evelyn Byrd, without letting her know or suspect that he was even interested in her. He asked her no questions concerning herself or her past, but drew her [57]
into a shy participation in the general conversation. That night he said to Dorothy:—

"That girl has brains and a character. Both have been dwarfed, or rather forbidden development, whether purposely or by accidental circumstances I cannot determine. You will find out when you get her to Wyanoke, and it really doesn't matter. Under your influence she will grow as a plant does in the sunshine. I almost envy you your pupil."

"She will be yours, too, even more than mine."

"After a while, perhaps, but not for some time to come. I have much more to do here than I thought, and shall have to leave the laboratory work at Wyanoke to you for the present. You'd better set out to-morrow morning. The railroads are greatly overtaxed just now, as General Lee is using every car he can get for the

transportation of troops and supplies—mainly troops, for heaven knows there are not many supplies to be carried. I have promised the surgeon-general that the laboratory at Wyanoke shall be worked to its full capacity in the preparation of medicines and appliances, so you are needed there at once. But under present conditions it is [58] better that you travel across country in a carriage. I've arranged all that. You will have a small military escort as far as the James River. After that, you will have no need. How I do envy you the interest you are going to feel in this Evelyn Byrd!"

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[59]

IV

THE LETTING DOWN OF THE BARS

NOT many days after Pollard's fruitless talk with Kilgariff, the sergeant-major asked leave, one morning, to visit Orange Court House. He said nothing of his purpose in going thither, and Pollard had no impulse to ask him, as he certainly would have been moved to ask any other enlisted man under his command, especially now that the hasty movements of troops in preparation for the coming campaign had brought the army into a condition resembling fermentation.

When Kilgariff reached the village, he inquired for Doctor Brent's quarters, and presently dismounted in front of the house temporarily occupied by that officer.

As he entered the office, Arthur Brent raised his eyes, and instantly a look of amazed recognition came over his face. Rising and grasping his visitor's hand—though that hand had not been extended—he exclaimed:— [60]

"Kilgariff! You here?"

"Thank you," answered the sergeant-major. "You have taken my hand—which I did not venture to offer. That means much."

"It means that I am Arthur Brent, and glad to greet Owen Kilgariff once more in the flesh."

"It means more than that," answered Kilgariff. "It means that you generously believe in my innocence—jail-bird that I am."

"I have never believed you guilty," answered the other.

"But why not? The evidence was all against me."

"No, it was not. The *testimony* was. But between evidence and testimony there is a world of difference."

"Just how do you mean?"

"Well, you and I know our chemistry. If a score of men should swear to us that they had seen a jet of oxygen put out fire, and a jet of carbonic acid gas rekindle it from a dying coal, we should instantly reject their testimony in favour of the evidence of our own knowledge. In the same way, I have always rejected the testimony [61] that convicted you, because I have, in my knowledge of you, evidence of your innocence. You and I were students together both in this country and in Europe. We were friends, roommates, comrades, day and night. I learned to know your character perfectly, and I hold character to be as definite a fact as complexion is, or height, or anything else. I had the evidence of my own knowledge of you. The testimony contradicted it. Therefore I rejected the testimony and believed the evidence."

"Believe me," answered Kilgariff, "I am grateful to you for that. I did not expect it. I ought to, but I did not. If I had reasoned as soundly as you do, I should have known how you would feel. But I am morbid perhaps. Circumstances have tended to make me so."

"Come with me to my bedroom upstairs," said Arthur Brent. "There is much that we must talk about, and we are subject to interruption here."

Then, summoning his orderly, Arthur Brent gave his commands:—

"I shall be engaged with Sergeant-major Kilgariff upstairs for some time to come, and I must not be interrupted on any account. Say so to all who may ask to see me, and peremptorily refuse to [62] bring me any card or any name or any message. You understand."

Then, throwing his arm around his old comrade's person, he led the way upstairs. When the two were seated, Arthur Brent said:—

"Tell me now about yourself. How comes it that you are here, and wearing a Confederate uniform?"

"Instead of prison stripes, eh? It is simple enough. By a desperate effort I escaped from Sing Sing, and after a vast deal of trouble and some hardship, I succeeded in making my way into the Confederate lines. Thinking to hide myself as completely as possible, I enlisted in a battery that has no gentlemen in its ranks, but has a habit of getting itself into the thick of every fight and staying there. You know the battery—Captain Pollard's?"

"Marshall Pollard's? Yes. He is one of my very best friends. But tell me—"

"Permit me to finish. I wanted to hide myself. I thought that as a cannonier in such a battery I should escape all possibility of observation. But that battery has very little material out of which to make non-commissioned officers. Very few of the men can read or [63] write. So it naturally came about that I was put into place as a non-commissioned officer, and I am now sergeant-major, greatly to my regret. In that position I must be always with Captain Pollard. When I learned that he and you were intimates, and that your duty often called you to the front, I saw the necessity of coming to you to find out on what terms you and I might meet after—well, in consideration of the circumstances."

Arthur Brent waited for a time before answering. Then he stood erect, and said:—

"Stand up, Owen, and let me look you in the eyes. I have not asked you if you are innocent of the crimes charged against you. I never shall ask you that. I *know*, because I know *you*!"

"I thank you, Arthur, for putting the matter in that way. But it is due to you—due to your faith in me—that I should voluntarily say to you what you refuse to ask me to say. As God sees me, I am as innocent as you are. I could have established my innocence at the critical time, but I would not. To do that would have been to condemn—well, it would have involved—"

"Never mind that. I understand. You made a heroic self-sacrifice. [64] Let me rejoice only in the fact that you are free again. You are enlisted under your own name?"

"Of course. I could never take an alias. It was only when I learned that you and Captain Pollard were friends—"

"But suppose you fall into the hands of the enemy? Suppose you are made prisoner?"

"I shall never be taken alive," was the response.

"But you may be wounded."

"I am armed against all that," the other replied. "I have my pistols, of course. I carry an extra small one in my vest pocket for emergencies. Finally, I have these"—drawing forth two little metallic cases, one from the right, the other from the left trousers pocket. "They are filled with pellets of cyanide of potassium. I carry them in two pockets to make sure that no wound shall prevent me getting at them. I shall not be taken alive. Even if that should happen, however, I am armed against the emergency. Two men escaped from Sing Sing with me. One of them was shot to death by the guards, his face being fearfully mutilated. The other was [65] wounded and captured. The body of the dead man was identified as mine, and my death was officially recorded. I do not think the law of New York would go behind that. But in any case, I am armed against capture, and I shall never be taken alive."

A little later Arthur Brent turned the conversation.

"Let us talk of the future," he said, "not of the past. I am reorganising the medical staff for the approaching campaign. I am sorely put to it to find fit men for the more responsible places. My simple word will secure for you a commission as major-surgeon, and I will assign you to the very best post at my disposal. I need just such men as you are—a dozen, a score, yes, half a hundred of them. You must put yourself in my hands. I'll apply for your commission to-day, and get it within three days at most."

"If you will think a moment, Arthur," said the other, "you will see that I could not do that without dishonour. Branded as I am with a conviction of felony, I have no right to impose myself as a commissioned officer upon men who would never consent to [66] associate with me upon such terms if they knew."

"I respect your scruple," answered Doctor Brent, after a moment of reflection, "but I do not share it. In the first place, the disability you mention is your misfortune, not your fault. You *know* yourself to be innocent, and as you do not in any way stand accused in the eyes of the officers of this army, there is absolutely no reason why you should not become one of them, as a man conscious of his own rectitude.

"Besides all that, we are living in new times, under different conditions from those that existed before the war. It used to be said that in Texas it was taking an unfair advantage of any man to inquire into his life before his migration to that State. If he had conducted himself well since his arrival there, he was entitled to all his reserves with regard to his previous course of life in some other

part of the country. Now a like sentiment has grown strong in the South since this war broke out. I don't mean to suggest that we have lowered our standards of honourable conduct in the least, for we have not done so. But we have revised our judgments as to what constitutes worth. The old class distinctions of birth and heritage [67] have given place to new tests of present conduct. There are companies by the score in this army whose officers, elected by their men, were before the war persons of much lower social position than that of a majority of their own men. In any peacetime organisation these officers could never have hoped for election to office of any kind; but they are fighters and men of capacity; they know how to do the work of war well, and, under our new and sounder standards of fitness, the men in the ranks have put aside old social distinctions and elected to command them the men fittest to command. The same principle prevails higher up. One distinguished major-general in the Confederate service was a nobody before the war; another was far worse; he was a negro trader who before the war would not have been admitted, even as a merely tolerated guest, into the houses of the gentlemen who are to-day glad to serve as officers and enlisted men under his command. Still another was an ignorant Irish labourer who did work for day's wages in the employ of some of the men to whom he now gives orders, and from whom he expects and receives willing obedience. I [68] tell you, Kilgariff, a revolution has been wrought in this Southern land of ours, and the results of that revolution will permanently endure, whatever the military or political outcome of the war may be. In your case there is no need to cite these precedents, except to show you that the old quixotism—it was a good old quixotism in its way; it did a world of good, together with a very little of evil—is completely gone. There is no earthly reason, Kilgariff, why you should not render a higher and better service to the Confederacy than that which you are now rendering. There is no reason—"

"Pardon me, Arthur; in my own mind there is reason enough. And besides, I am thoroughly comfortable as I am. You know I am given to being comfortable. You remember that when you and I were students at Jena, and afterward in the Latin Quarter in Paris, I was always content to live in the meagre ways that other students did, though I had a big balance to my credit in the bank and a large income at home. As sergeant-major under our volunteer system, I am the intimate associate not only of Captain Pollard, whose [69] scholarship you know, but also of all the battery officers, some of whom are men worth knowing. For the rest, I like the actual fighting, and I am looking forward to this summer's campaign with positively eager anticipations. So, if you don't mind, we will let matters stand as they are. I will remain sergeant-major till the end of it all."

With that, the two friends parted.

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[70]

V

DOROTHY'S OPINIONS

IT was not Arthur Brent's habit to rest satisfied in the defeat of any purpose. He was deeply interested to induce Owen Kilgariff to become a member of the military medical staff. Having exhausted his own resources of persuasion, he determined to consult Dorothy, as he always did when he needed counsel. That night he sent a long letter to her. In it he told her all he knew about the matter, reserving nothing—he never practised reserve with her—but asking her to keep Kilgariff's name and history to herself. Having laid the whole matter before that wise young woman, he frankly asked her what he should do further in the case. For reply, she wrote:—

I am deeply interested in Kilgariff's case. I have thought all day and nearly all night about it. It seems to me to be a case in which a man is to be saved who is well worth saving. Not that I regard service [71] in the ranks as either a hardship or a shame to any man, when the ranks are full of the best young men in all the land. If that were all, I would not have you turn your hand over to lift this man into place as a commissioned officer.

If I interpret the matter aright, Kilgariff is simply morbid, and if you can induce him to take the place you have pressed upon him, you will have cured him of his morbidity of mind. And I think you can do that. You know how I contemn the duello, and fortunately it seems passing out of use. In these war times, when every man stands up every day to be shot at by hundreds of men who are not scared, it would be ridiculous for any man to stand up and let one scared man shoot at him, in the hope of demonstrating his courage in that fashion.

That is an aside. What I want to say is, that while the duello has always been barbarous, and has now become ridiculous as well, nevertheless it had some good features, one of which I think you might use effectively in Owen Kilgariff's case. As I understand the matter, it was the custom under the code duello, sometimes to call a "court of honour" to decide in a doubtful case precisely what honour required a man to do, and, as I understand, the decision of such a court was final, so far as the man whose duty was involved was concerned. It was deemed the grossest of offences to call in question the conduct of a man who acted in accordance with the finding of a [72] court of honour.

Now why cannot you call a court of honour to sit upon this case? Without revealing Kilgariff's identity—which of course you could not do except by his permission—you could lay before the court a succinct but complete statement of the case, and ask it to decide whether or not the man concerned can, with honour, accept a commission in the service without making the facts public. I am sure the verdict will be in the affirmative, and armed with such a decision you can overcome the poor fellow's scruples and work a cure that is well worth working.

Try my plan if it commends itself to your judgment, not otherwise.

Little by little, I am finding out a good deal about our Evelyn Byrd. Better still, I am learning to know her, and she interests me mightily. She has a white soul and a mind that it is going to be a delight to educate. She has already read a good deal in a strangely desultory and unguided fashion, but her learning is utterly unbalanced.

For example, she has read the whole, apparently, of the *Penny Cyclopædia*—in a very old edition—and she has accepted it all as unquestionable truth. Nobody had ever told the poor child that the science of thirty years ago has been revised and enlarged since that time, until I made the point clear to her singularly quick and receptive [73] mind in the laboratory yesterday. She seems also to have read, and well-nigh committed to memory, the old plays published fifty or sixty years ago under the title of *The British Drama*, but she has hardly so much as heard of our great modern writers. She can repeat whole dialogues from *Jane Shore*, *She Stoops to Conquer*, *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, *High Life Below Stairs*, and many plays of a much lower moral character; but even the foulest of them have manifestly done her no harm. Her own innocence seems to have performed the function of the feathers on a duck's back in a shower. She is so unconscious of evil, indeed, that I do not care to explain my reasons to her when I suggest that she had better not repeat to others some of the literature that she knows by heart.

I still haven't the faintest notion of her history, or of whence she came. She is docile in an extraordinary degree, but I think that is due in large measure to her exaggerated sense of what she calls my goodness to her. Poor child! It is certain that she never before knew much of liberty or much of considerate kindness. She seems scarcely able to realise, or even to believe, that in anything she is really free to do as best pleases her, a fact from which I argue that she has been subject always to the arbitrary will of others. She is by no means lacking in spirit, and I suspect that those others who have arbitrarily dominated her life have had some not altogether pleasing experiences [74] with her. She is capable of very vigorous revolt against oppression, and her sense of justice is alert. But apparently she has never before been treated with justice or with any regard whatever to the rights of her individuality. She has been compelled to submit to the will of others, but she has undoubtedly made trouble for those who compelled her. At first with me she seemed always expecting some correction, some assertion of authority, and she is only now beginning to understand my attitude toward her, especially my insistence upon her right to decide for herself all things that concern only herself. The

other day in the laboratory, she managed somehow to drop a beaker and break it. She was about to gather up the fragments, but, as the beaker had been filled with a corrosive acid, I bade her let them alone, saying that I would have them swept up after the day's work should be done. She stood staring at me for a moment, after which she broke into a little rippling laugh, threw her arms around my neck, and said:—

"I forgot. You never scold me, even when I am careless and break things."

I tried hard to make her understand that I had no right to scold her, besides having no desire to do so. It seemed a new gospel to her. Finally she said, more to herself than to me:— "It is so different here. [75] There was never anybody so good to me."

Her English is generally excellent, but it includes many odd expressions, some of them localisms, I think, though I do not know whence they come. Occasionally, too, she frames her English sentences after a French rhetorical model, and the result is sometimes amusing. And another habit of hers which interests me is her peculiar use of auxiliary verbs and intensives. Instead of saying, "I had my dinner," she sometimes says, "I did have my dinner," and to-day when we had strawberries and cream for snack, she said, "I do find the strawberries with the cream to be very good."

Yet never once have I detected the smallest suggestion of "broken English" in her speech, except that now and then she places the accent on a wrong syllable, as a foreigner might. Thus, when she first came, she spoke of something as ex*cel*lent. I spoke the word correctly soon afterward, and never since has she mispronounced it. Indeed, her quickness in learning and her exceeding conscientiousness promise to obliterate all that is peculiar in her speech before you get home again, unless you come quickly.

The girl doesn't know what to make of Mammy. That dearest of despots has conceived a great affection for this new "precious chile," and she tyrannises over her accordingly. She refused to let her get up the other morning until after she had taken a cup of coffee in bed, [76] simply because no fire had been lighted in her room that morning. And how Mammy did scold when she learned that Evelyn, thinking a fire unnecessary, had sent the maid away who had gone to light it!

"You'se jes' anudder sich as Mis' Dorothy," she said. "Jes' case it's spring yo' won't hab no fire to dress by even when it's a-rainin'. An' so you'se a-tryin' to cotch yo death o' cole, jes' to spite ole Mammy. No, yo' ain't a-gwine to git up yit. Don't you dar try to. You'se jes' a-gwine to lay still till dem no-'count niggas in de dinin'-room sen's you a cup o' coffee what Mammy's done tole 'em to bring jes' as soon as it's ready. An' de next time you goes fer to stop de makin' o' you dressin'-fire, you'se a-gwine to heah from Mammy, yo' is. Jes' you bear dat in mind."

Evelyn doesn't quite understand. She says she thought we controlled our servants, while in fact they control us. But she heartily likes Mammy's coddling tyranny—as what rightly constructed girl could fail to do? Do you know, Arthur, the worst thing about this war is that there'll never be any more old mammies after it is ended?

I'm teaching Evelyn chemistry, among other things, and she learns with a rapidity that is positively astonishing. She has a perfect passion for precision, which will make her invaluable in the laboratory [77] presently. Her deftness of hand, her accuracy, her conscientious devotion to whatever she does, are qualities that are hard to match. She never makes a false motion, even when doing the most unaccustomed things; and whatever she does, she does conscientiously, as if its doing were the sum of human duty. I am positively fascinated with her. If I were a man, I should fall in love with her in a fashion that would stop not at fire or flood. I ought to add that the girl is a marvel of frankness—as much as any child might be—and that her truthfulness is of the absolute, matter-of-course kind which knows no other way. But these things you will have inferred from what I have written before, if I have succeeded even in a small way in describing Evelyn's character. I heartily wish I knew her history; not because of feminine curiosity, but because such knowledge might aid me in my effort to guide and educate her aright. However, no such aid is really necessary. With one so perfectly truthful, and so childishly frank, I shall need only to study herself in order to know what to do in her education.

There was a postscript to this letter, of course. In it Dorothy wrote:—

Since this letter was written, Evelyn has revealed a totally unsuspected accomplishment. She has been conversing with me in French, and *such* French! I never heard anything like it, and neither [78] did you. It is positively barbaric in its utter disregard of grammar, and it includes many word forms that are half Indian, I suspect. It interests me mightily, as an apt illustration of the way in which new languages are formed, little by little, out of old ones.

There was much else in Dorothy's letter; for she and her husband were accustomed to converse as fully and as freely on paper as they did orally when together. These two were not only one flesh, but one in mind, in spirit, and in all that meant life to them. Theirs was a perfect marriage, an ideal union—a thing very rare in this ill-assorted world of ours.

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[79]

VI

“WHEN GREEK MEETS GREEK”

AT midnight on the 3d of May, 1864, a message came to General Lee’s headquarters. It told him only of an event which he had expected to occur about this time. Grant was crossing the river into the Wilderness, his army moving in two columns by way of the two lower fords.

General Lee’s plans were already formed in anticipation of this or any other movement of the Army of the Potomac. He needed to learn only which line of march of the several that were open to him General Grant would adopt. Now he knew, and instantly his orders were given to carry out plans previously and completely wrought out in his mind. Grant’s movement by the lower fords indicated clearly what his plan of campaign was to be. He had under his orders a veteran army of one hundred and thirty thousand men, of [80] whom rather more than one hundred thousand were ready for actual battle. Lee had a total of a little less than sixty thousand men —forty-five thousand of whom, perhaps, he could put upon the firing-line, with which to oppose the Federal advance.

Grant’s plan was to push forward rapidly through the Wilderness before Lee could strike a blow, turn his adversary’s right, and plant his greatly superior army near Gordonsville, in Lee’s rear, and between him and Richmond. If he could have accomplished that purpose, the surrender or destruction of the Army of Northern Virginia would have been a matter only of a few days, or perhaps a few hours. For if cut off in this fashion from all its sources of supply, and with no other army anywhere to come to its relief, the already half-starving Virginia force would have had no resource except to hurl itself upon Grant’s double numbers and shatter itself to fragments in a vain effort to break through impregnable lines. It would have had no possible route of retreat open to it, no conceivable road of escape, no second line of defence to fall back upon.

But General Grant was dealing with the greatest master of [81] strategy of modern times. Grant’s plan of campaign was flawless, but Robert E. Lee stood in the way.

Lee instantly moved forward to interfere with his adversary’s march toward Gordonsville, by assailing him in flank. At the same time he threatened his advance corps on their front, in such fashion as to compel Grant to recall them and accept battle amid the tangled underbrush of the Wilderness.

This Wilderness is, perhaps, the very wildest tract of land that lies anywhere east of the Mississippi. It skirts the southern bank of the Rapidan for fifteen miles, extending inland from that stream for about ten miles. Originally it was densely timbered, but in colonial days, and a little later, the timber was cut away to supply fuel for the iron-furnaces that once abounded there, but that were afterward abandoned. As the region does not at all tempt to agriculture, the abandonment of the iron mines left it a veritable wilderness. Its surface became covered with densely growing scrub trees, interlaced with a tangle of vines and imbedded, as it were, in an undergrowth of a density inconceivable to men who have not acquainted themselves with the lavish luxuriance of Southern [82] vegetation.

It was in this Wilderness that Lee’s columns struck Grant’s in flank, and for two days a battle raged there, of which, for difficulty of conditions, there is scarcely a parallel in the history of warfare.

The men could not see each other at a distance of more than a few rods. Regiments, struggling through the tangled vines and underbrush, came unexpectedly upon regiments of the enemy and fought desperately for the possession of the ground, neither knowing how much or how little the holding, the conquest, or the loss of the position involved might signify in a military way.

Orderly fighting was utterly out of the question. Not only was it impossible for corps commanders to handle their troops with co-operative intent; even brigades were so broken up, and their several parts so hopelessly separated and lost to each other in the thickets, that their commanders knew neither when nor where nor how to set one regiment to reinforce another at a critical juncture.

It was a veritable Donnybrook Fair on a large scale, where the only strategy consisted in pushing forward, and the only tactics in striking with all possible might at the enemy, wherever he was found. [83]

The fighting was desperate on both sides. It was such fighting as only the most hardened veterans could have been expected to do under circumstances so unfavourable, such fighting as would have been simply impossible at any earlier stage of the war. To valour these two armies had added discipline and long use in war. Their determination was that of veterans, their courage that of matchless heroes, their endurance that of insensate machines. Here for the first time the two greatest armies of modern history had met in their perfection of discipline, of experience in war, and of that high courage which makes no distinction between the facing of death and the confronting of a summer shower. To these war-seasoned men on either side the hum of bullets meant no more than the buzzing of mosquitoes; battle, no more than a breeze.

But bullets were by no means the only source of trouble and danger. Several times during the long struggle, the woods caught fire, literally suffocating men by hundreds who had passed safely through hail-storms of bullets and successfully met and repelled charges with the bayonet. Earthworks hastily thrown up with pine-log revetments for their support, after enabling the men behind them to resist and repel successive assaults of desperate adversaries, became themselves an irresistible foe, by the firing of their log fronts and the consequent emanation of a smoke too stifling for human lungs to breathe and yet retain capacity for further breathing. The artillery played a comparatively small and very difficult part in all this. Manœuvring with guns in that underbrush was well-nigh impossible, and there were no vantage grounds anywhere from which a gun could deliver its fire at more than pistol-shot range. So delivering it, either the cannon fire quickly drove the enemy away, or the fire of the enemy drove the gun away; and in neither case, after that, could the artillery-men see any enemy to shoot at. [84]

Nevertheless, Marshall Pollard's battery managed to expend the greater part of its ammunition during those days, and that with effect. Kilgariff was largely instrumental in this. Early in the contest Pollard had clearly seen the difficulty—nay, the impossibility—of handling a battery of six guns as a unit in such conditions. He was subject to orders, of course, but in the execution of his orders he had a certain necessary discretion, and he exercised it. He had only two lieutenants present for duty. Each of these, of course, had immediate command of a section of two guns. The third section fell to Sergeant-major Kilgariff, as next in command. So to him Marshall Pollard said:— [85]

"I cannot have you personally with me in this fight. You have a lieutenant's duty to do, and I trust you to do it well. I shall try to keep the battery together, and under my own command so far as I can; but I foresee that it is going to be impossible to do that completely. I must leave each section commander to his own discretion, in a very large degree. Frankly, I have much greater confidence in your ability to fight your guns for all they are worth than I have in that of either of the lieutenants. They are good men and true, but they have had no experience in independent command. You—well, anyhow, you know more than they do So I am glad that you have the left section. That, of course, must be the first to be detached. The others I shall try to keep under my own direction." [86]

Beyond a mere "Thank you, Captain," Kilgariff made no response. Half an hour later his section was detached and sent to a point of special difficulty and danger. He plunged into action with an impetuosity which surprised General Ewell, who was in personal command at that point, and whose uniform habit it was to place himself at the post of danger. But a moment later, observing the discretion with which Kilgariff selected a position of vantage and planted his guns, with equal reference to their effectiveness and their safety from capture by a dash of the enemy, General Ewell turned to his staff, and said:—

"That young man evidently knows his business. Who is he?"

Nobody knew.

"Then find out," said Ewell.

Meanwhile, Kilgariff was using canister in double charges, the

range being not greater than two hundred yards. Under this withering fire the enemy gave way at that point, and Ewell's whole line advanced quickly. Again Kilgariff selected his gun position with discretion, and opened a murderous fire upon the enemy's key position. But this time he did not use canister. Still, his fire seemed to have all the effect of canister, and his target was for a brief while less than fifty yards distant from the muzzles of his guns. [87]

Presently Ewell himself rode up to the guns, and asked, in his peculiarly querulous voice:—

"What ammunition are you using, Sergeant-major?"

"Shrapnel, doubled and fuse downward," answered Kilgariff. "It's hard on the guns, I know, but I've run out of canister, and must use what I can, till a new supply comes. I've sent for it."

It should be explained that shrapnel consists of a thin, hollow shell of iron, filled with leaden bullets. In the centre of each shell is a small charge of powder, intended only to open the shell twenty-five yards or so in front of an enemy's line, and let the leaden bullets with their initial impetus hurl themselves like hailstones into the faces of the troops. But Kilgariff was turning his shrapnel shells reverse way, with their fuses toward the powder charge, so that the fuses should be melted at the moment of firing, and the shells explode within the gun, thus making them serve the purpose of canister, which consists of tin cans filled with iron balls. [88]

"Where did you learn that trick?" queried Ewell.

"Oh, I suppose every artillery-man knows it," answered the sergeant-major, evasively. "But here comes a fresh supply of canister, so I may spare the guns."

At that moment a rifled gun of the enemy, posted upon a hill eight or nine hundred yards away, opened upon Kilgariff, through a gap in the forest, threatening, by the precision of its fire, either to dismount his guns or to compel his retirement from the position he had chosen. Instantly he ordered one of his Napoleons to reply. It did so, but without effect. After it had fired three shots to no purpose, Kilgariff went to the gun, bade the gunner stand aside, and himself aimed the piece, with as much of calm in his demeanour as if he had not been under a double fire.

"WHO ARE YOU?"

The gun was discharged, while Ewell watched the effect through a field-glass. The shell seemed to strike immediately under the muzzle of the enemy's gun, and to explode at the very moment of striking. When the smoke of its explosion cleared away, Ewell saw through his glass that the enemy's gun had been dismounted, its carriage destroyed, and the men serving it swept out of existence. [89]

Dismounting, he walked up to Kilgariff, and asked simply:—

"Who are you?"

"Owen Kilgariff, sergeant-major of Captain Marshall Pollard's Virginia battery."

"Thank you," said Ewell, remounting as he issued orders for another charge along his entire line.

On both days, night ended the conflict, for the time at least, and the first duty of officers great and small, after darkness set in each evening, was to get their commands together as best they could and reorganise them for the next day's work.

On the Confederate side, it was confidently expected, after the two days' fighting, that the next day's work would consist in vigorously pressing the rear of Grant's columns on their retreat across the river. For every soldier in the Army of Northern Virginia [90] regarded such retreat as inevitable, and the only difference of opinion among them was as to what General Lee would do next. The general expectation was that he would almost instantly move by his left flank for another invasion of Maryland and Pennsylvania, another threatening of Washington City.

And there was good ground of precedent for these Confederate expectations. Lee had undoubtedly inflicted a severer punishment upon Grant than he had before done upon McClellan, Pope, Burnside, or Hooker, and moreover he had completely baffled Grant's plan of campaign, thwarting his attempt to turn the Confederate right and plant his army in the Confederate rear near Gordonsville. Four times the Army of Northern Virginia had seen its adversary retreat and assume the defensive after less disastrous defeats than that which the Southerners were confident they had inflicted upon Grant in these two days' desperate work. Why should they not expect Grant, therefore, to retreat across the river, as all his predecessors had done under like circumstances? And why should not Lee again assume the right to decide where and when [91] and how the struggle should be renewed, as he had done three times before?

The fallacy in all this lay in its failure to recognise Grant's quality, in its assumption that he was another McClellan, another Pope, another Burnside, another Hooker.

Between him and his predecessors there was this fundamental difference: they set out to force their way to Richmond by strategy and fighting, and when they found themselves outmanœuvred and badly damaged in battle, they gave up their aggressive attempts and contented themselves with operations for the defence of the Federal capital; Grant had set out to conquer or destroy Lee's army by the use of a vastly superior force whose losses could be instantly made good by reinforcements, while Lee had nowhere any source from which to draw fresh troops, and when Grant found his first attempt baffled and his columns badly damaged in fight, he obstinately remained where he was, sent for reinforcements, and made his preparations to "fight it out on this line if it takes all summer."

Thus, in Grant's character and temperament the Confederates had a totally new condition to meet. And there was another supremely important fact governing this campaign. Grant was the [92] first commander of the Army of the Potomac who also and at the same time controlled all the other Federal armies in the field. These he directed with sole reference to his one supreme strategic purpose—the purpose, namely, of destroying the Army of Northern Virginia and making an end of the tremendous resisting power of Robert E. Lee. In that resisting power he, first of all men, saw clearly that the vitality of the Confederate cause had its being.

In order that he might destroy that, he had not only concentrated a mightily superior force against it, and arranged to keep the strength of his own army up to its maximum by heavy reinforcement after every battle loss, but he had also ordered all the Federal armies in other parts of the country to carry on such operations as should continually occupy every Confederate force and forbid Lee to reinforce the Virginia army from any quarter as its numbers should decline by reason of battle losses.

Grant directed Sherman to begin the Atlanta campaign simultaneously with the beginning of the year's work on the Rapidan. He ordered Thomas to hold East Tennessee, and to [93] operate in such fashion as to occupy all the Confederate forces there. He ordered the Federal armies west of the Mississippi to abandon their wasteful operations in that quarter, concentrate in

New Orleans, and move at once upon Mobile, in order to prevent Lee from drawing troops from the Far South.

He filled the valley of Virginia with forces sufficient to compel Lee to keep a strong army corps there, instead of calling it to his assistance in Northern Virginia. He sent Butler to the James River region below Richmond, by way of compelling Lee to keep strong detachments at Richmond and Petersburg, which otherwise he might have called to his assistance in the crucial struggle with the Army of the Potomac.

As one looks back at all this, and clearly discerns Grant's purpose and the means he used for its accomplishment, it is easy to see that both Lee and the Confederate cause were doomed in the very hour of Grant's passage across the Rapidan. The only chance of any other issue lay in the remote possibility that the sixty thousand men of the Army of Northern Virginia should inflict a decisive and destructive [94] defeat upon the one hundred and thirty thousand men of the Army of the Potomac at the outset of the campaign, and in that way bring hopeless discouragement at the North to their aid.

This they did not succeed in doing at the Wilderness, and when, after two days' battling there, Grant moved by his left flank to Spottsylvania Court House to join battle again, there was scarcely a veteran in the Virginia army who did not fully understand that the beginning of the end had come. Yet not one of them flinched from the further fighting because of its manifest hopelessness. Not one of them lost the courage of despair in losing hope. Perhaps there was no part of the titanic struggle which so honourably distinguished those men of the South as did that campaign in which they doggedly fought on after they had come to understand that their fighting was futile.

It is natural enough that men should be brave when the lure of hope and the confident expectation of victory beckon them to the battle front, but only men of most heroic mould may be expected to fight with still greater desperation after all doors of hope are closed to them.

From that hour when Grant moved from the Wilderness to [95] Spottsylvania till the end came, nearly a year later, these men of the South did, and dared, and endured for love of honour alone, with no hope to inspire them, no remotest chance of ultimate success as the reward of their valour. Theirs was a pure heroism, untouched, untainted, unalloyed.

After two days of such fighting as bulldogs do, the struggle in the Wilderness ended with no decisive advantage on either side. Grant had secured possession of roads leading out of the Wilderness. On the other hand Lee had succeeded in completely baffling his adversary's strategic purpose, and was still in full possession of that region in his own rear which Grant had hoped to seize upon with decisive effect. Grant's losses in killed, wounded, and prisoners greatly exceeded Lee's; but as an offset, he could afford to lose more heavily than the Confederates, not only because his force outnumbered Lee's by more than two to one, but also because he could repair all his losses by reinforcement, while Lee had no such resource.

Baffled, but not beaten, Grant decided, on the evening of the 7th of May, to move to the left, passing out of the Wilderness and taking [96] up a new position—strong both for attack and defence—on a line of hills near Spottsylvania Court House. It was his hope to possess himself of this position before Lee should discover his purpose, and to that end he began his march after nightfall, pushing strong columns forward by all available roads, while still ostentatiously holding his positions in the Confederate front, as if to renew the battle in the Wilderness the next morning.

But his wily adversary anticipated the movement, and discovered it almost as soon as it was begun. Lee sent his cavalry and a considerable force of infantry to fell trees across the roads and otherwise obstruct the march of Grant's column. Meanwhile, with his main body, he moved in haste to Spottsylvania Court House. The head of his column reached that point in advance of Grant, and promptly seized upon the coveted line of hills which the men, accustomed to such work, proceeded hastily to fortify, fighting, meanwhile, with such of the Federal commands as had come up to dispute their possession of the strategic position.

It was during this preliminary struggle that a certain little hill in [97] front of the main ridge fell into hot dispute. Its possession by the

Federals would greatly weaken the Confederate line, and it was deemed essential by the Confederate commanders present to secure it at all hazards, while the Federals, seeing the importance of the little hill, concentrated the fire of twenty guns upon it, sweeping its top as with a broom, whenever a Confederate force, large or small, showed itself there.

Three times Confederate infantry were advanced to the crest, and three times they were driven back by a storm of cannon shot before they could throw up a dozen shovelfuls of earth.

Kilgariff, again detached with his two guns, sat upon his horse, looking on at all this and wondering what the result would be. Presently a brigade of North Carolinians moved up into line just in front of him, at the moment when the third of the charging bodies was hurled back, baffled, beaten, and broken into fragments.

Just then the chief of artillery of the corps with which Kilgariff was temporarily serving rode up and said to him:—

"Do you want your opportunity for distinction and a commission?"

"I want all the opportunity I can get to render service," was [98]
Kilgariff's answer.

"Then take your guns to the crest of that hill and *stay there*!" fairly shouted the officer.

Kilgariff fully realised the desperate character of the attempt, and the practical certainty that his guns, his men, and his horses would be quickly swept off the face of the earth when he should appear upon that shell-furrowed hilltop. But he had no thought of faltering. On the contrary, just as he gave the order, "Forward," a whimsical thought occurred to him. "The general need not have been at the trouble to order us to 'stay there.' We'll stay there, whether we wish to or not. The enemy will take care of that." Then came the more serious thought that unless he could bring his guns into battery almost instantly upon reaching the hilltop, the slaughter of his horses might prevent the proper placing of the pieces. So, at a full run, he carried the guns up the slope, shouting the orders, "Fire to the front! In battery!" at the moment of coming within sight of the Federal guns, less than half a thousand yards away, and already partially protected by a hastily constructed earthwork.

Fortunately, the men of Captain Pollard's battery were perfect in [99]
drill to their very finger tips, and their alert precision brought the guns into position within a second or two, and the twelve-pounders were bellowing before the horses began falling just in the rear.

Kilgariff ordered the horses and caissons to be retired a little way down the hill, for the sake of such protection as the ground afforded, but scarcely one of the animals lived to enjoy such protection even briefly.

Meantime, Kilgariff, dismounted now (for his horse had been the first to fall), stood there working his two utterly unsupported guns under the fiercely destructive fire of a score of pieces on the enemy's side. His men fell one after another, like autumn leaves in a gale. Within half a minute he had called all the drivers to the guns to take the places of their dead or dying comrades, and still each gun was being operated by a detachment too scant in numbers for effectiveness of fire.

It was obviously impossible that any of them could long survive under a fire so concentrated and so terrific. Kilgariff reckoned upon three minutes as the utmost time that any man there could live; and [100]
when one of his guns was dismounted at its fifth discharge, and two of his limber-chests exploded almost at the same moment, he hastily counted the cannoniers left to him and found their number to be just seven, all told.

But he had not been ordered to undertake this desperate enterprise without a purpose. Reckoning upon the almost superstitious reverence that the infantry cherish for cannon, the generals in command had sent Kilgariff's guns into this caldron of fire as a means of luring the infantry to a desperate attempt to take and hold the little hill. Before Kilgariff had traversed half the distance toward the crest, the commander of that North Carolina brigade had called out a message that was quickly passed from mouth to mouth down his line. The message was:—

"We must save those guns and hold that hill. They call us tar heels. Let us show *how tar sticks*."

Instantly, and with a yell that might have come from the throats

of so many demons, the brigade of about two thousand men bent their heads forward, rushed up the hill, and swarmed around Kilgariff's guns. Their deployment into line quickly diverted the enemy's attention to a larger front. Other guns were hurriedly brought up to the hill, and half an hour later a substantial line of earthworks covered its crest. [101]

The three minutes that Kilgariff had allowed for the complete destruction of his little command were scarcely gone when this relief came. He was ordered to withdraw his remaining gun by hand down the hill—by hand, for the reason that not a horse remained of the thirty odd that had so lately galloped up the steep.

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[102]

VII

WITH EVELYN AT WYANOKE

As if bearing a charmed life, Kilgariff had gone through all this without a scratch. He had galloped up that hill in the face of a heavy infantry fire; he had planted his section under the murderous cannonading of twenty well-served guns firing at point-blank range; he had fought his pieces under a bombardment so fierce that within the brief space of three minutes his command was well-nigh destroyed. Yet not a scratch of bullet or shell-fragment had so much as rent his uniform.

By one of those grim jests of which war is full, he fell after all this was over, his neck pierced and torn by a stray bullet that had missed its intended billet in front and sped on in search of some human target in the rear.

He was carried immediately to one of the field-hospitals which Doctor Arthur Brent was hurriedly establishing just in rear of the [103] newly formed line of defence. There he fell into Doctor Brent's own friendly hands; for that officer, the moment he saw who the patient was, left his work of supervision and himself knelt over the senseless form of the sergeant-major to discover the extent of his injury and to repair it if possible. He found it to be severe, but not necessarily fatal. He proceeded to stop the dangerous hemorrhage, cleansed and dressed the wound, and within half an hour Kilgariff regained consciousness.

A few hours later, finding that the temporary hospital was exposed to both artillery and musketry fire, Doctor Brent ordered the removal of the wounded men to a point a mile or so in the rear; and finding Kilgariff, thanks to his elastic constitution, able to endure a little longer journey, he took him to his own quarters, still farther to the rear.

Here Captain Pollard managed to visit his sergeant-major during the night.

"General Anderson, who is in command of Longstreet's corps, now that Longstreet is wounded," he said, during the interview, "has asked for your report of your action on the hill. If you are [104] strong enough to answer a question or two, I'll make the report in your stead."

"I think I can write it myself," answered Kilgariff; "and I had rather do that."

Paper and a pencil were brought, and, with much difficulty, the wounded man wrote:—

> Under orders this day, I took the left section of Captain Pollard's Virginia Battery to the crest of a hill in front.
>
> After three minutes of firing, infantry having come up, I was ordered to retire, and did so. My losses were eighteen men killed and fifteen wounded, of a total force of thirty-eight men. One of my gun carriages was destroyed by an enemy's shell, and two limber-chests were blown up. All of the horses having fallen, I brought off the remaining gun and the two caissons by hand, in obedience to orders. I was fortunately able also to bring off all the wounded. Every man under my command behaved to my satisfaction.
>
> All of which is respectfully submitted.
>
> Owen Kilgariff,
> *Sergeant-major*.

"Is that all you wish to say?" asked Pollard, when he had read the report.

"Quite all."

"You make no mention of your own wound." [105]

"That was received later. It has no proper place in this report."

"True. That is for me to mention in my report for the day."

But in his indorsement upon the sergeant-major's report Pollard wrote:—

> I cannot too highly commend to the attention of the military authorities the extraordinary courage, devotion, and soldierly skill manifested by Sergeant-major Kilgariff, both in this affair and in the fighting of the last few days in the Wilderness.

In the meantime General Ewell had mentioned in one of his reports the way in which Kilgariff had done his work in the Wilderness, and now General Anderson wrote almost enthusiastically in commendation of this young man's brilliant and

daring action, so that when the several reports reached General Lee's headquarters, the great commander was deeply impressed. Here was a young enlisted man whose conduct in action had been so conspicuously gallant and capable as to attract favourable mention from two corps commanders within a brief period of three or four days. General Lee officially recommended that a captain's [106] commission should be issued at once to a man so deserving of promotion and so fit to command.

The document did not reach Kilgariff until a fortnight later, after Arthur Brent had sent him to Wyanoke for treatment and careful nursing. Kilgariff took the commission in his enfeebled hands and carefully read it through, seeming to find some species of pleasure in perusing the formal words with which he was already familiar. Across the sheet was written in red ink:—

> This commission is issued in accordance with the request of General R. E. Lee, commanding, in recognition of gallant and meritorious conduct in battle.

That rubric seemed especially to please the sick man. For a moment it brought light to his eyes, but in the next instant a look of trouble, almost of despair, overspread his face.

"Send it back," he said to Evelyn, who was watching by the side of the couch that had been arranged for him in the broad, breeze-swept hall at Wyanoke. "Send it back; I do not want it."

Ever since Kilgariff's removal to the house of the Brents, Evelyn had been his nurse and companion, tireless in her attention to his comfort when he was suffering, and cheerily entertaining at those [107] times when he was strong enough to engage in conversation.

"You know, it was he who took me out of the burning house," she said to Dorothy, by way of explanation, not of apology; for in the innocent sincerity of her nature, she did not understand or believe that there can ever be need of an apology for the doing of any right thing.

For one thing, she was accustomed to write the brief and infrequent letters that Kilgariff wished written. These were mostly in acknowledgment of letters of inquiry and sympathy that came to him from friends in the army.

Usually he dictated the notes to her, and she wrote them out in a hand that was as legible as print and not unlike a rude print in appearance. At first glance her manuscript looked altogether masculine, by reason of the breadth of stroke and the size of the letters, but upon closer scrutiny one discovered in it many little peculiarities that were distinctly feminine.

Kilgariff asked her one day:—

"Who taught you to write, Evelyn?"

"Nobody. Nobody ever taught me much of anything till I came to live at Wyanoke."

"How, then, did you learn to read and write, and especially to [108] spell so well?"

The girl appeared frightened a bit by these questions, which seemed to be master keys of inquiry into the mystery of her early life. Kilgariff, observing her hesitation, said quickly but very gently:—

"There, little girl, don't answer my 'sick man's' questions. I didn't mean to ask them. They are impertinent."

"No," she said reflectively, "nothing that comes from you can be impertinent, I reckon,"—for she was rapidly adopting the dialect of the cultivated Virginians. "You see, you took me out of that house afire, and so you have a right—"

"I claim no right whatever, Evelyn," he said, "and you must quit thinking about that little incident up there on the Rapidan."

"Oh, but I can never quit thinking about that. You were great and good, and oh, so strong! and you did the best thing that ever anybody did for me."

"But I would have done the same for a negro."

"But you didn't do it for a negro. You did it for me. So you see I [109] am right about it. Am I not?"

"I suppose so. Your logic is a trifle lame, perhaps, but your heart is right. Never mind that now."

"But I want to tell you all I can," the girl resumed. "You see, I can't tell you much, because I don't know much about myself, and because they made me swear. But I can answer this question of

yours. I don't know just how I learned to read. I reckon somebody must have taught me that when I was so little that I have forgotten all about it. Anyhow, I don't remember. But after I had read a good many books, there came a time when I couldn't get any books, except three that I was carrying with me. That was when I was a little boy, and—"

"A little boy? A little girl, you mean."

"No, I mean a little boy, but I mustn't tell you about that, only I have already told you that once I was a little boy. It slipped out, and you must forget it, please, for I didn't mean to say it. I wasn't really a boy, of course, but I had to wear a boy's clothes and a boy's name. Never mind that. You mustn't ask me about it. As I was saying, when I grew tired of reading my three books over and over again, I [110] decided to write some new ones for myself. The only trouble was that I had never learned to write. That didn't bother me much, because I had seen writing and had read a little of it sometimes; so I knew that it was just the same as print, only that the letters were made more carelessly and some of them just a little differently in shape. I knew I could do it, after a little practice. I got some eagle's quills from—" here the girl checked herself, and bit her lip. Presently she continued:—

"I got some eagle's quills from a man who had them, and I made myself some pens. I had some blank-books that had been partly written in at the—well, partly written in. But there wasn't any ink there, so I made myself some out of oak bark and nutgalls, 'setting' the colour with copperas, as I had seen the people at the—well, as I had seen somebody do it in that way. It made very good ink, and I soon taught myself how to write. As for the spelling, I tried to remember how all the words looked in the books I had read, and when I couldn't remember, I would stop writing and look through the three books I still had till I came upon the word I wanted. After [111] that, I never had any trouble about spelling that word."

"I should imagine not," said Kilgariff. "But did you succeed in writing any books for yourself?"

"Yes, two of them."

"What were they about?"

"Well, in one of them I wrote all I could remember about myself; they got hold of that and threw it into the fire."

"Who did that?"

"Why—well, the people I was with—no, I mustn't tell you about them. In another of my books I wrote all I had learned about birds and animals and trees and other things. I reckon I know a good deal about such things, but what I wrote was only what I had learned for myself by seeing so much of them. You see, I was alone a good deal then, except for the wild creatures, and I got pretty well acquainted with them. Even here, where they never knew me, I can call birds or squirrels to me out of the trees, and they soon get so they will come to me even without my calling them."

"Is that book in existence still?" asked Kilgariff, with manifest eagerness.

"I reckon so, but maybe not. I really don't know. Anyhow, I shall [112] never see it again, of course, and nobody else would care for it."

"Oh, yes, somebody else would. I would give a thousand dollars in gold for it at this moment."

"Why, what for? It was only a childish thing, and besides I had never studied about such things."

"Listen!" interrupted Kilgariff. "Do you know where science comes from, and what it is? Do you realise that absolutely every fact we know, of the kind we call scientific, was originally found out just by somebody's looking and listening as you did with your animals and birds and flowers? And the persons who looked and listened and thought about what they saw, told other people about them in books, and so all our science was born? Those other people have put things together and given learned names to them, and classified the facts for convenience, but the ones who did the observing have always been the discoverers, the most profitable workers in science. Audubon was reckoned an idle, worthless fellow by the commonplace people about him, because he 'wasted his time' roaming about in the woods, making friends of the wild creatures [113] and studying their habits. But scientific men, who are not commonplace or narrow-minded, were glad to listen when this idle fellow told them what he had learned in the woods. In Europe and

America the great learned societies never tired of heaping honours upon him and the books he wrote; and the pictures he painted of his woodland friends sold for fabulous sums, bringing him fame and fortune."

"I am glad of that," answered the girl, simply; "for I like Audubon. I've been reading his *Birds of America*, since I came to Wyanoke. But I am not Audubon, and my poor, childish writings are not great like his."

"They are if they record, as they must, observations that nobody else had made before. On the chance of that, I would give a thousand dollars in gold, as I said before, for that childish manuscript. Could you not reproduce it?"

"Oh, no; never. Of course, I remember all the things I put into it, but I set them down so childishly—"

"You set them down truthfully, of course."

"Oh, yes—but not in any proper order. I just wrote in my book each day the new things I had seen or learned or thought. Mostly I was interested in finding out what animals think, and how or in [114] what queer ways plants behave under certain circumstances. There was nothing in all that—"

"There was everything in all that, and it was worth everything. But of course, as you say, you cannot reproduce the book—not now at least. Perhaps some day you may."

"But I don't understand?" queried the girl. "If I can't rewrite the book now—and I certainly can't—how shall I ever be able to do it 'some day'? Before 'some day' comes I shall have forgotten many things that I remember now."

"No, you will not forget anything of vital interest. But now you are self-conscious and therefore shy and self-distrustful, as you were not in your childhood when you wrote the book, and as you will not be when you grow into a maturer womanhood and learn to be less impressed by what you now think the superiority of others. When that time comes, you will write the book again, adding much to its store of observed facts, for you are not going to stop observing any more than you are going to stop thinking."

Evelyn shook her head. [115]

"I could never write a book—a real book, I mean—fit to be printed."

"We shall see about that later," said Kilgariff. "You are a young woman of unusual intellectual gifts, and under Mrs. Brent's influence you will grow, in ways that you do not now imagine."

Kilgariff was profoundly interested, and he was rapidly talking himself into a fever. Evelyn was quick to see this, and she was also anxious to escape further praise and further talk about herself. So, with a demure little air of authority, she said:—

"You must stop talking now. It is very bad for you. You must take a few sips of broth and then a long sleep."

All this occurred long after the day when Kilgariff handed her his captain's commission and bade her "send it back," saying, "I don't want it." At that time she was wholly ignorant of military formalities. She did not know that under military usage Kilgariff could not communicate with the higher authorities except formally and "through the regular channels"; that is to say, through a succession of officers, beginning with his captain. She saw that this commission [116] was dated at the adjutant-general's office in Richmond and signed, "S. Cooper, Adjutant-general." Nothing could be simpler, she thought, than to relieve Kilgariff of all trouble in the matter by herself sending the document back, with a polite note to Mr. S. Cooper. So she wrote the note as follows:—

S. Cooper, Adj't-general,
Richmond.

Dear Sir:—

Sergeant-major Kilgariff is too weak from his wound to write his own letters, so I'm writing this note for him, to send back the enclosed paper. Mr. Kilgariff doesn't want it, but he thanks you for your courtesy in sending it.

Yours truly,
Evelyn Byrd.

Precisely what would have happened if this extraordinary note with its enclosure had reached the adjutant-general of the army, in response to his official communication, it is difficult to imagine. Fortunately, Evelyn was puzzled to know whether she should write on the envelope, "Mr. S. Cooper," or "S. Cooper, Esq." So she

waited till Kilgariff should be awake and able to instruct her on that point.

When he saw what she had written, his first impulse was to cry out in consternation. His second was to laugh aloud. But he did neither. Instead, he quietly said:— [117]

“We must be a little more formal, dear, and do this business in accordance with military etiquette. You see, these official people are very exacting as to formalities.”

Then he wrote upon the official letter which had accompanied the commission a respectful indorsement declining the commission, after which he directed his secretary-nurse to address it formally to Captain Marshall Pollard, who, he explained, would indorse it and forward it through the regular channels, as required by military usage.

“But why not accept the commission?” asked Evelyn, simply. She did not at all realise—and Kilgariff had taken pains that she should not realise—the enormity of her blunder or the ludicrousness of it. “Isn’t it better to be a captain than a sergeant-major?”

“For most men, yes,” answered Kilgariff; “but not for me.”

But he did not explain.

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[118]

VIII

SOME REVELATIONS OF EVELYN

IN the meanwhile Arthur Brent had acted upon Dorothy's suggestion. He had prepared a careful statement of Kilgariff's case, withholding his name of course, and had submitted it to General Stuart, with the request that that typical exemplar of all that was best in chivalry should himself choose such officers as he deemed best, to constitute the court.

The verdict was unanimous. Stuart wrote to Arthur Brent:—

> Every member of the court is of opinion that your own assurance of the innocence of the gentleman concerned is conclusive. They are all of opinion that he is entirely free and entitled to accept a commission, and that he is not under the slightest obligation to reveal to anybody the unfortunate circumstances that have caused him to hesitate in this matter. It is the further opinion of the court, and I am asked to express it with emphasis, that the course of the gentleman concerned, in refusing to accept a commission upon the point of honour that [119] influenced him to that decision, is in itself a sufficient assurance of his character. Tell him from me that, without at all knowing who he is, I urge and, if I may, I command him to accept the post you offer him, in order that he may render his best services to the cause that we all love.

Arthur Brent hurried this letter to his friend at Wyanoke; but before it arrived, the writer of it, the "Chevalier of the Lost Cause," had passed from earth. He fell at the Yellow Tavern, at the head of his troopers in one of the tremendous onsets which he knew so well how to lead, before this generous missive—perhaps the last that he ever wrote—fell under the eyes of the man, all unknown to him, whom he thus commanded to accept honour and duty with it.

The fact of Stuart's death peculiarly embarrassed a man of Kilgariff's almost boyish sensitiveness.

> I feel [he wrote to Arthur Brent] as if I were disobeying Stuart's commands and disregarding his dying request, in still refusing to reconsider my decision. Yet I feel that I must do so in spite of the decision of your court of honour, in spite of your friendly insistence, in spite of everything. After all, Arthur, a man must be judge in his own [120] case, when his honour is involved. The most that others can do—the most even that a court of honour can do—is to excuse, to pardon, to permit. I could never submit to the humiliation of excuse, of pardon, of permission, however graciously granted. I sincerely wish you could understand me, Arthur. In aid of that, let me state the case. I am a man condemned on an accusation of crime. I am an escaped prisoner, a fugitive from justice. I am innocent. I know that, and you are generous enough to believe it. But the hideous fact of my conviction remains. It seems to me that even upon the award of a court of honour, backed by something like the dying injunction of our gallant cavalier, Stuart, I cannot honourably consent to accept a commission and meet men of stainless reputation upon equal terms, or perhaps even as their superior and commanding officer, without first revealing to each and all of them the ugly facts that stand in the way. Generous they may be; generous they are. But it is not for me to impose myself upon their generosity, or to deceive them by a reserve which I am bound to practise.
>
> I have already sent back a captain's commission which I had fairly won by that little fight on the hill at Spottsylvania. With you I may be frank enough to say that any sergeant-major doing what I did on that occasion would have been entitled to his captaincy as a matter of [121] right, and not at all as a matter of favour. I had fairly won that commission, yet I returned it to the war department, simply because I could not forget the facts in my case. How much more imperative it is that I should refuse the higher commission which you press upon me, and which I have not won by any conspicuous service! Will you not understand me, my friend? Will you not try to look at this matter from my point of view? So long as I am a condemned criminal, a fugitive from justice, I simply cannot consent to become a commissioned officer entitled by my government's certification to meet on equal terms men against whom no accusation has been laid.
>
> Let that matter rest here. I shall remain a sergeant-major to the end —an enlisted man, a non-commissioned officer whose captain may send him back to the gun whenever it pleases him to do so, a man who must touch his cap to every officer he meets, a man subject to orders, a man ready for any work of war that may be given him to do. In view of the tedious slowness with which I am recovering from this wound, and the great need I know Captain Pollard has for an executive sergeant, I wrote to him, two weeks ago, resigning my place, and asking him to select some other capable man in my stead. He replied in his generous fashion, absolutely refusing to accept my resignation.

[122]

That was Kilgariff's modest way of putting the matter. What Pollard had actually written was this:—

> By your gallantry and your capacity as a hard-fighting soldier, you have won for my battery such honour and distinction as had not come to it from all its previous good conduct. Do you imagine that I am going to lose such a sergeant-major as you are, merely because his

> honourable wounds temporarily incapacitate him? I had thought to lose you by your richly earned promotion to a rank equal to my own, or superior to it. That promotion you have refused—foolishly, I think—but at any rate you have refused it. You are still my sergeant-major, therefore, and will remain that until you consent to accept a higher place.

This was the situation so far as Kilgariff was concerned, as it revealed itself to Pollard and Arthur Brent. Dorothy knew another side of it. For with Dorothy, Kilgariff had quickly established relations of the utmost confidence and the truest friendship; and to Dorothy, Kilgariff revealed every thought, as he had never done to any other human being.

Indeed, revelation was not necessary. Dorothy was a woman of that high type that loves sincerely and with courage, and Dorothy had seen the daily and hourly growing fascination of Kilgariff for [123]
Evelyn. She had seen Evelyn's devoted ministry to him, and had understood the unconscious love that lay behind its childlike reserve. She had understood, as he had not, that, all unknown to herself, Evelyn had made of Kilgariff the hero of her adoration, and that Kilgariff's soul had been completely enthralled by a devotion which did not recognise its own impulse or the fulness of its meaning. Dorothy knew far more, indeed, of the relations between these two than either of themselves had come to know.

She was in no way unprepared, therefore, when one day Kilgariff said to her, as they two sat in converse:—

"You know, of course, that I am deeply in love with Evelyn?"

"Yes," Dorothy answered; "I must be blind if I did not see that."

"Of course," responded the man, "I have said nothing to her on the subject, and I shall say nothing, to the end. I speak to you of it only because I want your help in avoiding the danger-point. Evelyn is not in the least in love with me."

Dorothy made no response to that. [124]

"She is grateful to me for having saved her life, and gratitude is a sentiment utterly at war with love. Moreover, Evelyn is perfectly frank and unreserved in her conversations with me. No woman is ever so with the man she loves, until after he has made her his wife. So I regard Evelyn, as for the present, safe. She is not in love with me, and I shall do nothing to induce such sentiment on her part."

Again Dorothy sat silent.

"But there is much that I can do for her, and I want to do it. You must help me. And above all you must tell me the moment you discover in her any shadow or trace of that reserve toward me which might mean or suggest a dawning of love. I shall be constantly on the lookout for such signs, but you, with your woman's wit and intuitions, may be quicker than I to see."

"Precisely what do you mean, Kilgariff?" Dorothy asked, in her frank way of going directly to the marrow of every matter with which she had occasion to deal. "You say you are in love with Evelyn. Do you not wish her to be in love with you?"

"No! By every consideration of propriety, by every sentiment of [125]
honour, no!" he answered, with more of vehemence than he was accustomed to put into his words.

"Do you not understand? I can never ask her to marry me; I am therefore in honour bound not to win her love. I shall devote myself most earnestly to the task of repairing such defects in her education as I discover. But the moment I see or suspect the least disposition on her part to think of me otherwise than with the indifference of mere friendship, I shall take myself out of her life completely. I ask you to aid me in watching for such indications of dawning affection, and in forestalling them."

"You shall have all the assistance you need to discover and do your real duty," said Dorothy. But that most womanly of women did not at all share Kilgariff's interpretation either of his own duty or of Evelyn's sentiment toward him. She knew from her own experience that a woman grows shy and reserved with a man the moment she understands herself to be in love with him. But equally she knew that love may long conceal itself even from the one who cherishes it, [126]
and that reserve, when it comes, comes altogether too late for purposes of safeguarding.

But Dorothy did not care. She wanted these two to love each other, and she saw no reason why they should not. She recognised their peculiar fitness for each other's love, and as for the rest—wise woman that she was—she trusted love to overcome all difficulties. In

other words, Dorothy was a woman, and she herself had loved and mated as God meant that women should. So she was disposed to let well alone in this case.

Kilgariff's wound was healing satisfactorily now, and little by little his strength was coming back to him. So, every day, he sat in the laboratory with Dorothy and Evelyn, helping in the work by advice and suggestion, and often in more direct and active ways. For Arthur Brent had written to Dorothy:—

> I must remain with the army yet a while in order to keep the hospital service in as efficient a state as adverse circumstances will permit, and the constant shiftings from one place to another render this difficult. When Kilgariff grows strong enough, set him at work in the laboratory. He would never tell you so, but he is a better chemist than I am, better even than you in some respects. Especially he is [127]
> expert in shortening processes, and the army's pressing need of medicines renders this a peculiarly valuable art just now. We need everything at every hour, but especially we need opium and its products, and quinine or quinine substitutes. Please give your own special attention to your poppy fields, and get all you can of opium from them. Send to Richmond all the product except so much as you can use in the laboratory in extracting the still more valuable alkaloids.
>
> Another thing: the dogwood-root bark bitters you are sending prove to be a valuable substitute for quinine. Please multiply your product if you can. Enlist the services of your friends everywhere in supplying you with the raw material. Get them to set their little negroes at work digging and drying the roots, so that you may make as much of the bitters as possible. There are a good many wild cherry trees at Wyanoke and on other plantations round about. Won't you experiment, with Kilgariff's assistance, and see if you can't produce some quinine? Our need of that is simply terrible. Malaria kills five times as many men as Federal bullets do, and, apart from that, hundreds of sick or wounded men could be returned to duty a month earlier than they now are if we had quinine enough. Tell Kilgariff I invoke his aid, and you'll get it.

[128]

Kilgariff responded enthusiastically to this appeal. He personally investigated the quinine-producing capacity of every tree and plant that grew at Wyanoke or in its neighbourhood.

"The dog fennel," he said to Dorothy, "is most promising. It yields quinine in greater quantity, in proportion to the time and labour involved, than anything else we have. Of course, if ours were a commercial enterprise, it would not pay to attempt any of these manufactures. But our problem is simply to produce medicines for the army at whatever cost. So I have taken the liberty of ordering all your chaps"—the term "chaps" in Virginia meant juvenile negroes —"to gather all the dog fennel they can, and to dry it on fence-rail platforms. I am having the men put up some kettles in which to steep it. The rest we must do in the laboratory. Our great lack is that of kettles enough."

"Must they be of iron?" asked Evelyn, with earnest interest. "Must they have fires under them?"

"N-no," answered Kilgariff, hesitatingly. "I suppose washtubs or anything that will hold water will do. We must use hot water to steep the plants in, but we might pour hot water into vessels in [129]
which we couldn't heat it. Yes, Evelyn, any sort of vessel that will hold water will answer our purpose."

"Then I'll provide all the tanks you need, if Dorothy will give me leave to command the servant-men. I do know how."

The leave was promptly given, and Evelyn instructed the negroes how to make staves of large proportions, and how to put them together. Three days later, with an adequate supply of these, and with a quantity of binding hoops which she had herself fashioned out of hickory saplings to the utter astonishment of her comrades, the girl manufactured a number of wooden and water-tight tanks, each capable of holding many scores of gallons.

"Where did you learn to do that?" Kilgariff asked, when the first of the tanks was set up.

"Among the whale fishermen," she answered. "But I mustn't tell you about that, and you mustn't ask. But my tanks will hold oil as well as water, and I am going to make a little one for castor oil. You know we have five acres in castor beans. I reckon you two do know how to make castor oil out of them."

"Come here, Evelyn, and sit down," said Dorothy. "Of course we [130]
know how to extract castor oil from the beans, but we don't know where or how you got your peculiar English. Tell us about it."

"I do not understand. Is my English not like your own?"

"In some respects, no. When you volunteered to make these tanks for us, you said, 'I do know how,' and now you say, 'You do

know.’ We should say, ‘I know,’ and ‘You know.’ Where did you get your peculiar usage?”

The girl flushed crimson. Presently she answered:—

“It is that I have not been taught. Pardon me. I am trying to learn. I do listen—no, I should say—I listen to your speech, and I try to speak the same. I have read books and tried to learn from them what the right speech is. Am I not learning better now? I try, or I am trying—which is it? And the big book—the dictionary—I am studying. I never saw a dictionary until I came to Wyanoke.”

“Don’t worry,” said Kilgariff, tenderly. “You speak quite well enough to make us glad to listen.”

And indeed they were glad to listen. For now that the girl had become actively busy in the laboratory, she had lost much of her shy [131] reserve, and her conversation was full of inspiration and suggestiveness. It was obvious that while her instruction had been meagre and exceedingly irregular, she had done a world of thinking from such premises as were hers, and the thinking had been sound.

Her ways were sweet and winning, chiefly because of their utter sincerity, and they fascinated both Dorothy and Kilgariff.

“Kilgariff must marry her,” Dorothy wrote to Arthur Brent. “God evidently intended that, when he made these two; but how it is to come about, I do not at all know. Kilgariff has some foolish notions that stand in the way, but of course love will overcome them. As for Evelyn—well, she is a woman, and that is quite enough.”

Evelyn’s use of the intensives, ‘do’ and ‘did’ and the like, was not at all uniform. Often she would converse for half an hour without a lapse into that or any other of her peculiarities of speech. It was usually excitement or embarrassment or enthusiasm that brought on what Dorothy called “an attack of dialect,” and Kilgariff one day said to Dorothy:—

“The girl’s speech ‘bewrayeth her,’ as Peter’s did in the Bible.” [132]

“How do you mean?”

“Why, it is easy and perfectly safe to infer from her speech a good deal of her life-history.”

“Go on, I am interested.”

“Well, you observe that she has almost a phenomenal gift of unconscious imitation. She has been with you for only a very brief while, yet in the main her pronunciation, her inflection, and even her choice of words are those of a young woman brought up in Virginia. She says ‘gyarden,’ ‘cyart,’ and the like, and her *a*’s are quite as broad as your own when she talks of the grass or the basket. Now when she lapses into her own dialect, there is a distinctively French note in her syntax, from which I argue that she has lived among French-speaking people for a time, catching their construction. But, on the other hand, her English is so good that I cannot think her life has been mainly passed among French-speaking people. Have you tried her in French itself?”

“Yes, and she speaks the most extraordinary French I ever heard.”

“Well, that fits in with the other facts. This morning she spoke of [133] a hashed meat at breakfast as ‘pemmican,’ though she quickly corrected herself; she often uses Indian terms, too, by inadvertence. Then again, her accomplishments all smell of the woods. Putting all things together, I should say that she has spent a good deal of time among, or at least in frequent contact with, Canadian Frenchmen and Indians.”

“I think you are right,” said Dorothy, “and yet some part of her life has been passed in company with a well-bred and accomplished woman.”

“Your body of facts, please?” said Kilgariff.

“Her speech, for one thing; for in spite of its oddities it is mainly the speech of a cultivated woman. She never uses slang; indeed, I’m sure she knows no slang. Her constructions, though often odd, are always grammatical, and her diction is that of educated people. Then again, her scrupulous attention to personal neatness tells me much. More important still, at least in my woman’s eyes, is the fact that she perfectly knows how to make a bed and how to make the most of the little ornaments and fripperies of a room. She did not learn these things from squaws or half-breeds. Moreover, she does [134] needlework of an exquisite delicacy which I never saw matched anywhere. That tells of a highly bred woman as an influence in her life and education.”

While these three were at dinner that day, the negro head-man—for even in his enforced absence Arthur Brent would not commit his authority over his negroes to the brutal instincts of any overseer—came to the door and asked to speak with “Mis’ Dorothy.”

“Bring me a decanter and a glass, Elsie,” said Dorothy to the chief serving-maid. She poured a dram into the glass, and handed it to the girl.

“Take that out to Uncle Joe,” she said, “and tell him to come in after he has drunk it.”

It was a peculiarity of the plantation negro in Virginia that he never refused a dram from “the gre’t house,” and yet that he never drank to excess. Those negroes that served about the house in one capacity or another were always supplied with money—the proceeds of “tips”—and could have bought liquor at will. Yet none of them ever formed the drink habit.

When Uncle Joe came into the dining-room, he had a number of matters concerning which he desired instruction. When these affairs had been disposed of, and Dorothy had directed him to slaughter a [135]
shoat on the following morning, the mistress asked:—

“How about the young mare, Uncle Joe? Are you ever going to have her broken?”

“Well, you see, Missus, Dick’s de only pusson on de plantation what dars to tackle dat dar mar’, an’ Dick he’s done gone off to de wah wid Mahstah. ‘Sides dat, de mar’ she done trowed Dick hisse’f tree times. Dey simply ain’t no doin’ nuffin’ wid dat dar mar’, Missus. I reckon de only ting to do wid her is to sell her to de artillery, whah dey don’ ax no odds o’ no hoss whatsomever. She’s five year ole, an’ as strong as two mules, an’ nobody ain’t never been able to break her yit.”

“Poor creature!” said Evelyn. “May I try what I can do with her, Dorothy?”

“You, little Missus?” broke in Joe. “*You* try to tackle de iron-gray mar’? Why, she’d mash you like a potato wid her foh-feet, an’ den turn roun’ an’ kick you to kingdom come wid de hind par.”

“May I try, Dorothy?” the girl calmly asked again, quite ignoring Uncle Joe’s prophecies of evil.

“Hadn’t you better let some of the men or boys break her first?” [136]

“No. To me it is plain they have done too much of that already. Let me have her as she is. Have her brought up to the house, Uncle Joe, soon after dinner, with nothing on her but a halter.”

“Why, little Mis’, you don’ know—”

“Do precisely as I tell you,” interrupted the girl, who could be very imperious when so minded.

When the mare was brought, she was striking viciously at the negro who led her. With ears laid back close to her head, and with the whites of her eyes showing menacingly, she was striking out with her hoofs as if intent upon committing homicide without further delay.

“Turn her loose, Ben,” said the girl, who sat idly in the porch as if she had no task on her hands. “Then go away from her, and make all the rest go away, too—” motioning toward the gang of little negroes who had assembled, “to see de iron-gray mar’ kill little Missie.”

When all were gone, Evelyn began nibbling at a sugar lump. Presently, after the mare had discovered that she was quite free and that her tormentors were gone, Evelyn held out her hand with the [137]
sugar lump in its palm. The animal was obviously unfamiliar with sugar lumps, but she had the curiosity which is commonly—perhaps erroneously—attributed to her sex. So, as Evelyn sat on the bench and made no motion indicative of any purpose to seize the halter, the animal presently became interested in the extended hand. Little by little, and with occasional snortings and recessions, she approached the girl. Finally, finding that the extended hand was not moved, she nosed the sugar lump, and then with her long, flexible tongue, swept it into her mouth.

Evelyn did not withdraw the hand at once, but held it extended till the mare had got the full flavour of the sweet. Meanwhile, she cooed to the animal soothingly, and, after a little, she produced a second sugar lump and laid it upon the extended palm. This time, as the mare took the dainty, Evelyn, still talking soothingly, ventured with her other hand to stroke the beast’s silky nose, caressingly. There was a shrinking back on the part of the timid creature, but the lure of the sugar was enticing, and after once the gentle hand

had stroked the mare's face, she seemed rather to welcome than to [138]
resent the caress.

Thus, little by little, did the girl establish relations of amity between herself and the spirited mare. After a while, Evelyn quitted her seat, went out upon the lawn, and with a sugar-lump bribe tempted the animal to approach her. Then she stroked its head and neck and sides, gradually giving it to understand that she meant no harm and accustoming it to the pleasant touch of her hands. Finally she stroked its legs vigorously, and lifted one foot after another, examining each.

By this time the mare seemed to have concluded that the young woman, who talked ceaselessly in her cooing, contralto voice, was an altogether pleasant acquaintance. Wherever the girl went, around the grounds, the mare followed, nosing her and seemingly soliciting her attention.

At last the girl tolled the mare to a horse block, and for a time stood upon it, gently stroking her silky back.

Then she made a motion as if to sit upon that shapely back. The mare shied away, perhaps remembering former attempts of the kind which she had resented as indignities. But as Evelyn did not insist [139]
upon her apparent purpose, and as the mare was by this time very much in sympathy, if not in love, with the gentle girl, she presently sidled back into position, and Evelyn seated herself upon her back, at the same time caressingly stroking the sides of her neck. She had neither saddle on which to sit securely, nor bridle with which to control her mount, but there was no need of either. The mare was nibbling grass by this time, and Evelyn permitted her to do so, letting her wander about the house grounds at will, in search of the most succulent tufts. As the supper hour drew near, the girl slipped from the animal's back and led the way, the animal following, to the stables. There, with her own hands she filled the manger and the hay-rack, and after an affectionate farewell to her new friend, returned to the house. But first she said to Ben, the hostler:—

"Let nobody feed the mare but me. I will be at the stables in time in the morning. And let nobody touch her with a currycomb. I will myself attend to all."

Three or four days later the high-spirited mare was Evelyn Byrd's very humble servant indeed. The girl rode her everywhere, teaching [140]
her a number of pretty tricks, the most astonishing of which was the art of lifting a gate latch with her teeth, and letting herself and her rider through the many barriers that Virginian law accommodatingly permitted planters to erect across the public roads.

"But how did you learn all this?" asked Kilgariff, full of interest.

"Oh, I do not know. I reckon I never learned it at all. You see, the animals fight us only because they think we mean to fight them. So long as they are afraid of us, they fight, of course. When they learn that we are friendly, they are glad to be friends. Anybody can tame any animal if he goes to work in the right way. I once tamed a Canada lynx, and it became so used to me that I let it sleep on the foot of my bed. But the lynx has a great deal of sense and very little affection, while a horse has a great deal of affection and very little sense. With the lynx, I appealed to its good sense, but I did never—I mean, I never trusted its affection.

"I have treated this mare like a baby that does not understand much, but I have won its affection completely, and I trust that. The [141]
animal has so little sense that it would scare at a scrap of paper lying in the road, and go almost frantic if it saw a man pulling a buggy. But if I were on its back, it would not run or do anything that might throw me off. You see, one must know which is stronger in each animal—sense or sentiment. With a horse it is sentiment, so I curry the mare myself, talking to her all the while in a loving way, and I never let anybody else go into the stall. Another thing: a horse loves liberty better than anything else, so I have taken off the halter with which the mare used to be tied in her stall, and, as you know, I turn her loose every morning when she has finished her fodder, and she follows me up here to the house grounds where she is perfectly free to nibble grass. But she loves me so much that she often quits the grass and comes up here to the porch just to get me to rub her nose or stroke her neck. She is strong, and I am light, so she likes me to sit upon her back, as you have seen me do for an hour at a time. She doesn't quite like a saddle yet—and neither do I. I would never use anything more than a blanket, just for the protection of [142]

my clothes, only that Dorothy thinks that people would wonder, if I should go visiting or to church riding bareback. Why do people wonder in that way, Mr. Kilgariff, about other people's doings?"

"Upon my word, I don't know, unless it is that we are all like the Pharisee in the parable, and want to emphasise our own superiority by criticising others."

"But why shouldn't the others criticise, too? The ways of the people they criticise are no more different from their ways, than their ways are different from those of the people they criticise. I confess I don't quite understand."

"Neither do I, Evelyn, except that it is the habit of people to set up their own ways as a standard and model, and to regard every departure from them as a barbarism. If it were not an accepted fact that the Venus of Milo is the most perfect exemplification we have of feminine beauty, and that it is the fashion to go into raptures over that piece of sculpture, I imagine that nine fashionable women in every ten would ridicule the way in which her hair is done up, simply because they do not do up theirs in the same way."

"Yes, I know," answered the girl, dreamily, and as if in a reverie. "That was the trouble in the circus." [143]

"In the circus? What do you mean?"

"Nothing. Don't ask me."

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[144]

IX

THE GREAT WAR GAME

ALL this while the war was going on tremendously and Kilgariff was chafing at the restraint of a wound which forbade him to bear his part in it.

As we have seen, General Grant had crossed into the Wilderness with a double strategic purpose. He had hoped to turn Lee's right flank and compel the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia. Failing in that, he had hoped, with his enormously superior numbers, to crush and destroy Lee's army in battle.

He had failed in that purpose also. By his promptitude and vigour in assailing Grant's army in flank, Lee had compelled his adversary to abandon his flanking purpose, and to withdraw his advance columns over a distance of more than ten miles in order to reinforce his sorely beset divisions in the Wilderness and to save his own army from the destruction he had hoped to inflict upon his adversary. [145]

After suffering a far heavier loss than he inflicted, Grant had summoned reinforcements and moved by his left flank to Spottsylvania Court House. By this movement he had again hoped to turn Lee's right flank, place himself between the Confederates and their capital, and in that way compel the surrender or dispersal of the Army of Northern Virginia. Again he had been foiled by Lee's alertness and by the marvellous mobility of an army that moved without a baggage-train, and whose men carried no blankets, no extra clothing, no overcoats, no canteens, no tin cups, no cooking-utensils—nothing, in fact, except their rifles and their ammunition.

Those men were on the verge of starvation all the while. Often they had no rations at all for two days or more at a time. When rations were fullest, they consisted of one, two, or three hard-tack biscuits a day for each man, and perhaps a diminutive slice of salt pork or bacon, which was eaten raw.

But these men, who had formerly fought with the courage of hope, inspired by splendid victory, were fighting now with the courage of utter despair. A great wave of religious fervour had passed over the army and the South. It took upon itself the fatalistic forms of Calvinism, for the most part. The men of the army came to believe that every event which occurs in this world was foreordained of God to occur, decreed "before ever the foundations of the world were laid." They had not ceased to trust the genius and sagacity of Lee, but they had accepted the rule and guidance of a greater than Lee—of God Almighty himself. With a faith that was sublime even in its perversion, these men committed themselves and their cause to God, and ceased to reckon upon human probabilities as factors in the problem. [146]

There were prayer meetings in every tent and at every bivouac fire, every day and every night. At every pause in the fighting, were it only for a few minutes, the men on the firing-line threw themselves upon their knees and besought God to crown their efforts and their arms with victory, submissively leaving it to Him to determine the where, the when, the how. And in this worship of God and this absolute dependence upon His will the men of that army learned to regard themselves personally as mere pawns upon the chess-board of the divine purpose. They came to regard their own lives as dust in the balance, to be blown away by the breath of God's will, to be sacrificed, as fuel is, for the maintenance of a flame. [147]

Believing firmly and without question that their cause was in God's charge, they executed every order given to them with an indifference to personal consequences for the like of which one may search history in vain.

In his movement from the Wilderness to Spottsylvania, General Grant again failed to turn the flank of his wily adversary, and, after a prolonged endeavour to break and destroy Lee's army there, the Federal commander again moved by his left flank, in the hope of reaching Hanover Court House in advance of the arrival there of the Army of Northern Virginia.

Again he was baffled of his purpose. Again Lee got there first, and took up a position in which, by reason of the river's tortuous course and the conformation of the ground, Grant could not assail

him without dividing his own army into three parts, no one of which could be depended upon to support either of the others.

[148] At one point the Federal general very nearly succeeded. There was a bridge across the stream near Hanover Court House. If that could be seized, the Federal forces might cross and assail Lee's left flank with effect. A strong column of Federals was thrown forward to possess the bridge, and for a time it looked as if they would succeed and bring the war to an end right there.

But two Confederate batteries—utterly unsupported—were thrown forward. One was Captain Pollard's; the other was a battery from the battalion of Major Baillie Pegram. Advancing at a full run, the two batteries planted their guns at the head of the bridge, just as the Federal columns were beginning to cross it, and within five minutes the bridge had ceased to be.

Has the reader ever seen Shepard's spirited painting called "Virginia, 1864"? The sketch from which that painting was made was drawn on this hotly contested field, the artist having three pencils carried away from his grasp by rifle bullets and half a dozen rents made in his drawing-paper while he worked.

[149] Thus, for the third time baffled in his effort to place his army between Lee and Richmond, Grant moved again by his left flank to the neighbourhood of Cold Harbour, where one of the severest battles of the seven days' fight between Lee and McClellan had been waged.

Again Lee discovered his purpose, and again he got there first. He seized upon a line of hills and hastily fortified them. He was now in front of Richmond and only a few miles in advance of that city's defences. He thought it not imprudent, therefore, to call to his assistance such troops as were engaged in garrisoning the works about Richmond; thus for the first time in all that strenuous campaign having an opportunity in some small degree to make good the waste of war, by way of preparing himself to meet an enemy who had been reinforced almost daily since the beginning of the campaign, and whose army at that time outnumbered the Confederate force by more than three to one.

At Lee's back lay the now bridgeless Chickahominy—an erratic stream which might at any moment cut him off from all possibility of retreat. If Grant could defeat him where he lay, or even seriously cripple him, the pathway of the Army of the Potomac into Richmond would be scarcely at all obstructed.

[150] In hope of this result, Grant determined upon an assault in force. In the gray of the morning of June 3, he assailed Lee with all of impetuosity and all of force that an army of one hundred and fifty thousand men could bring to bear against an army of less than fifty thousand.

The result was disastrous in the extreme to the Federals. They marched into a very slaughter pen, where they lost about ten thousand men within twenty minutes, for the reason that Lee had previously discovered their purpose and had prepared himself to receive their onslaught with all the enginery of slaughter.

In effect, this disaster to the Federal arms ended the field campaign of 1864. It had been four times demonstrated that in strategy Lee was more than a match for his adversary. It had been four times demonstrated that in field fighting the little Army of Northern Virginia could not be overcome by the force, three times as great, which Grant had so often and so determinedly hurled against it.

There was nothing left to the Federal commander except to besiege Richmond, either directly on the north and east, or indirectly by way of Petersburg, twenty-two miles south and [151] commanding the main lines of Confederate military communication.

Butler already lay on the south side of the James River with a strong detachment and within easy striking distance of Petersburg, a city defended by an exceedingly inadequate force under Beauregard. Grant ordered Butler to seize upon Petersburg quickly, before the place could be defended. If that plan had been successful, Richmond must have surrendered or been evacuated, and the war must have ended in the early summer of 1864, instead of dragging its slow length along for nearly a year more. But Beauregard's extraordinary alertness and vigour baffled Butler's purpose. In spite of the exceeding meagreness of the Confederate defending force, before Grant could push the head of his column into Petersburg, Lee was there; and within a few hours the Army of

Northern Virginia, equally skilled in the use of bayonet and spade, had created that slender line of earthworks behind which Lee's thin and constantly diminishing force defended itself for two thirds of a year to come.

X

THE LAW OF LOVE

"MRS. BRENT—" Kilgariff so began a sentence one morning.

But Dorothy interrupted him, quickly.

"Why do you persist in addressing me in that way?" she asked. "Are we not yet sufficiently friends for you to call me 'Dorothy,' as all my intimates do? You know, I exacted that of Evelyn in the first moment that I found myself fond of her and knew that she loved me."

"But there is a difference," answered Kilgariff. "You see—"

"Yes, there is a difference, but it is altogether on the side of my contention. Evelyn is much younger than I am; for although, as you know, I am still only twenty-four, Evelyn has the advantage of several years of age. She *thinks* she is only seventeen, but as nearly as I can figure out from what she tells me she must be approaching [153] nineteen. However that may be, you, at any rate, are nearly as old as Arthur. You and he have been intimates all your lives, and if that intimacy is well-founded, I see no reason why you should not include me in it, so far at least, as to call me by my Christian name. You see, I was 'Dorothy' long before I became 'Mrs. Brent,' and my given name has many pleasing associations in my ears. My father always called me that. So did my mother, after I came to know her. Arthur did so, too, after I learned to like him and gave him leave. Of course, to all outsiders I am 'Mrs. Brent'—a name that I am proud and glad to bear, because—well, because of Arthur. But to the insiders—to my friends—I have a strong inclination to be just 'Dorothy.' Don't you think you have become an insider?"

Kilgariff hesitated for a time before answering. Finally he said:—

"It is very gracious of you—all this. But I wonder how much Arthur has told you about me?"

"He has told me everything he knows," she answered, with an added touch of dignity. "We should not be man and wife if either were capable of practising reserve with the other in such a case as [154] this."

"Very well, then," responded Kilgariff. "I do not like sailing under false colours; but, as you know all, why, it will be a special pleasure to me to be permitted to call you 'Dorothy.'"

"Now, what were you going to say when I interrupted you?" asked Dorothy, the direct.

"I'm afraid I forget."

"No, you don't, or at least you can remember in such a case. So think a bit, Owen, and tell me what you were going to say. It was something about Evelyn."

"Why do you think that?"

"Why, for several reasons. For one thing, you caught sight of Evelyn just at that moment, as she was teaching her mare to kneel down for her to mount. You heard her voice, too, as she chided the mare in half playful fashion for rising too abruptly after the mount. A woman's voice means much to a man of sensitive nature. She talks in just that way to the children—my babies—and their liking for it is positively wonderful. Only this morning Mammy and I were having all sorts of trouble to get them out of their bath. Bob, the boy, was bent upon spending the rest of the day in the tub, and was disposed [155] to raise a rumpus over every effort to lift him out, and Mildred, girl-like, took her cue from her 'big brother.' In the midst of the turmoil Evelyn came in. She assumed a look of astonishment, which attracted Bob's attention and for the moment quieted him. Then she said:—

"'Oh, Bob! I m sorry you're bad. But you are. You're very bad indeed, so I mustn't tell you about the ten little Injuns. You're getting to be bad just like them.'

"By that time she had lifted the boy out of the tub and dried him and slipped a garment upon him, he not protesting in the least. Then she stood him up in her lap, and, looking at him in seeming surprise, she exclaimed:—

"'Why, Bob isn't bad a bit! Evey made a great big mistake. Evey's going to tell Bob about the ten little Injun boys.' And from that

moment there was no disturbance in the nursery except the noise of joyous laughter.

"I said to her:—

"'You deal with them just as if they were wild animals to be tamed.'

"She answered:—

"'So they are, only people often forget it, cruelly.'" [156]

"Well, now," said Kilgariff, "let me have your other reason, or reasons, for thinking that what I set out to say had some reference to Evelyn. I plead guilty to your charge that I caught sight of Evelyn teaching the mare, and that I was charmed by the sweetness and sympathetic jollity of her voice, as she addressed the animal in her winning way. But you were going to offer another fact in support of your assumption. What was it?"

"Why, simply that you hadn't spoken for ten minutes before you addressed me. You were meditating, and whenever you meditate nowadays, you are thinking of Evelyn."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Absolutely. You are not always aware of the fact, but the fact is always there. I like it to be always there."

"Why, Dorothy?"

"Why, because I want you to be that way with Evelyn. It will mean happiness in the future for both of you."

"No; it will mean at best a gently mitigated unhappiness to me—and I shall be glad of the gentle mitigation. To her it will mean [157] nothing more than a pleasant friendship. I do not intend that it ever shall mean more than that to her."

"But why not? Why should it not mean everything to her that womanhood longs for? Why should you not win Evelyn's love and make her your wife? I never knew two people better fitted to make each other happy, and fortunately you have possessions in Europe and at the North which will enable you to take a wife, no matter how disastrously this war may end for us of the South. Believe me, Owen, in creating men and women, God intended marriage and happiness in marriage for the common lot of humanity. He does not give it to all of us to be great, or to achieve great things, or to render great services, but, if we hearken to His voice as it whispers within us, He intends happiness for us, and His way of giving happiness is in marriage, prompted by love. We poor mortals interfere with Nature's plan in many ways. Especially we sin by 'match-making'—by bringing about marriages without love and for the sake of convenience of one kind or another. We wed bonds to city lots. We trade girls for titles, giving a money boot. We profane [158] the holiest of human relations in order to join one plantation to another, or to unite two distinguished houses, or for some other equally devilish reason.

"It is the best thing about this war that its tendency is to obliterate artificialities and restore men and women to natural conditions—at least here at the South. Believe me, Owen, the union of a man and a woman who really love each other, is the crowning fact of all existence. You and I are somewhat skilled in science. We know the truth that Nature is illimitably attentive not only to the preservation of the race, but to its improvement also; and we know that Nature takes no care whatever of the individual, but ruthlessly sacrifices him for the sake of the race. Nature is right, and we are criminally wrong when we thwart her purposes, as we do when we make marriages that have no love for their inspiration, or in any way bar marriage where love prompts it. I am old-fashioned, I suppose, but old fashions are sometimes good fashions. They are always so when they are the outgrowths of natural conditions.

"Now put all that aside. I have had my little say. Let me hear [159] what it was that you were going to say to me concerning Evelyn. I recognise your right, as you do not, to criticise in that quarter."

"Oh, I had no thought of criticising," answered Kilgariff. "On the contrary, I am disposed to think you and I have made a valuable discovery in pedagogics."

"What is it?"

"Why, that the best way to teach science is backward."

"I confess I do not understand."

"Well, look at the thing. If Evelyn had been sent to a scientific school to study chemistry, her professor would have set her to

studying a book of general principles. Then, after three or four months of drudgery, she would have been permitted to perform a few experiments in the laboratory, by way of illustrating and verifying what the book had told her, the greater part of which she had known before she began. You and I have begun at the other end. We have set Evelyn to do practical work in the laboratory. I remember that her first task was to wash opium, and her next to [160] manufacture blue mass out of rose petals and mercury. Incidentally we explained to her the general principles involved, and in that purely incidental way she has learned her general chemistry so thoroughly within a few weeks, and without opening a book, that she could pass any examination upon it that any college professor could put up. She has learned more in a month than any systematic class work would have taught her in a year."

"I suppose you are right," answered Dorothy. "But that is the only way I know. It is the way in which Arthur taught me."

"Yes, I should suppose that Arthur is distinctly a man of original genius. He *knows how to get things done*. He is so immeasurably the superior of all the professors I ever knew that I am disposed to name none of them in comparison with him. If it is ever my lot to undertake the teaching of science, I shall adopt precisely that method. And I do not see why the same principle should not be applied to other departments of learning. We begin at the wrong end. The teacher makes the boy begin where he himself did. I think Arthur's methods immeasurably better, and I spoke of Evelyn's case [161] only as an illustration of their superiority. That young woman knows much—very much—of science without having had any formal instruction in it at all. She has learned it in the natural way, and she is deeply imbued with the scientific spirit. Only yesterday she said to me, in answer to some question of mine, that she 'looked straight at things, and thought about them.' I cannot imagine a more perfect method than that.

"And what book ever taught her what she knows about animals and their ways? What lecturer in all the world could have told her how to subdue that wild and rebellious mare as she has done? She learned all that simply by 'looking straight at things and thinking about them.' The professional horse-tamers—Rarey and the rest—set to work, with their mechanical appliances, to convince a horse that they are mightier than he is. They succeed in a way. They make the horse afraid of them, and so long as they deal with him, he submits, in fear of their superior power. But let a timid novice undertake to ride horses thus broken, or to drive them, and disaster comes. Evelyn's way is incalculably better and more scientific. She [162] has studied animals and learned to understand them and sympathise with them. She makes her appeal to what is best in their natures, not to what is worst, and she gets results that no horse-tamer of them all could ever hope for. The horse-tamer's processes belong to the domain of artifice. Hers are purely scientific."

"Absolutely," answered Dorothy; "and I often wonder where she learned it all, or rather where she got her inspiration, for it is not so much learning as a natural bent."

"Well, she was born with an instinct of truthfulness for one thing," said Kilgariff. "That is the only basis of the scientific temperament. I observed her yesterday trying to tempt a fox squirrel out of one of the trees. She chirped to him in her peculiar fashion, and, in response to her invitation, he would run down as far as the root of the tree; but there he would pause and shrewdly reconnoitre, after which he would run back up the tree.

"'Why don't you hold out your hand?' I asked.

"She quickly answered:—

"'That would be lying to him. Whenever I hold out my hand to him, I have something in it for him to eat. If I held it out empty, I [163] should be saying there was something for him to eat in it, and that would be a lie. He would come to me then and find out that I had deceived him. You do quit believing—pardon me—you quit believing —anybody that tells you lies.'

"I admitted my propensity to distrust untruthful persons, and she gravely asked:—

"'Why then do you wish me to deceive the poor little squirrel? Do you want him to think me a person not to be trusted?'

"I made some lame excuse about his being only a dumb animal, and she quickly responded:—

"'But dumb animals are entitled to truthfulness, are they not,

particularly when we ask them to confide in us? I should be ashamed of you, Monsieur'—you know she always calls me 'Monsieur' when she is displeased with me—'if I did not understand. The human people do not know the animals—how trustful they want to be if only we would let them. We set traps for them, we deceive them in a hundred ways, and that is why they distrust us. I did read a few days ago—you smile, Monsieur; I should say, I read the other [164] day—that the wild creatures are selfish, that they care for us only as a source of food supply. That is not true, as that squirrel shall teach you. It is true that all the wild creatures are *hungry all the time*. There is not food enough for all of them, and so when we offer them food, they come to us, even in fear. They have many of their young to feed, and their supplies are very scant. That is why they congregate around houses where there is waste thrown out. But oh, Monsieur, many hundreds of them do starve to death in the long winters. You notice that in the spring there are a dozen robins on the lawn; in the early summer, when they have brought forth their broods, there are scores and hundreds of them. But in the next spring there are only the dozens again. The rest have perished of cold and hunger. I have been reading Mr. Darwin's book, and I know that this is the universal law of progress, of advancement by the struggle for existence, and the survival of the fittest under the law of heredity. But it is very cruel. That isn't what I wanted to say. I wanted to show you that even the wild creatures—hungry as they always are—have affection. I am going to make that squirrel come [165] to me and sit on my shoulder without giving him any food as a temptation. You shall see. After that, I will give him plenty to eat.'

"And she did. She wheedled the squirrel till he came down his tree, crossed the lawn, and invaded her lap. It was only then that she gave him the peanuts with which she had filled her pockets. I tell you that girl is a born scientist, and that her knowledge is wonderful. Did it ever occur to you that the squirrels and birds that seem so happy here in the Wyanoke grounds are habitually in a state of starvation?"

Just then Evelyn came walking toward the porch. The mare was closely following her, and a squirrel perched upon one shoulder, while a robin clung to the other. She had pockets in her gown—she insisted upon pockets—and from these she fed the wild creatures. Upon getting a nut, the squirrel leaped to the ground, and upon receiving a bit of bread, the robin flew away.

"You see," said Kilgariff, "how coldly selfish and calculating your wild creatures are. The moment they get something to eat, they quit your hospitality."

"Not so, Monsieur," the girl answered. "They have their babies to [166] feed. They will come back to me when that is done," and they did.

"Touch the squirrel," she said to Kilgariff, "and he will fasten his long teeth in your flesh. But I may stroke his fur as much as I please. That is because he has made friends with me. And see! The robin is a wild bird. His first instinct is to keep his wings free for flying. Yet I may take him thus"—possessing herself of the bird —"and lay him on his back in my lap, so that his wings are useless to him, and he does not mind. It is because he knows me for his friend and trusts me. Ah, if only people would learn to know the wild creatures and teach them the lesson of love!"

Kilgariff felt like saying, "I know no such teacher of that lesson as you are," but he refrained, and so it fell to Dorothy afterward to say: —

"Not many people have your gift, dear, of making other creatures love them."

"But you have it," the girl answered enthusiastically. "Oh, how I do love you, Dorothy!"

"I MAY STROKE HIS FUR AS MUCH AS I PLEASE."

XI

ORDERS AND “NO NONSENSE”

WHEN General Grant, with one hundred and twenty thousand men, sat down before Petersburg and Richmond and called for reinforcements as a necessary preliminary to further operations, his plan was obvious, and its ultimate outcome was nearly as certain as any human event can be before it has happened.

Richmond lies on the north bank of the James River. Petersburg lies on the Appomattox River twenty-two miles due south of Richmond. Each river is navigable up to the gates of the city situated upon it, so that in besieging the two cities from the east, General Grant had an uninterrupted water communication over which to bring supplies and reinforcements at will. His line of fortifications stretched from a point on the north of Richmond, eastwardly and southwardly to the James River, and thence [168] southwardly, with a westerly trend, to a point south of Petersburg. A rude outline map, which accompanies the text, will give a clearer understanding than words can.

A glance at the map will show the reader three lines of railway upon which Richmond depended for communication with the South and for supplies for Lee’s army. All of them lay south of the James River.

Grant’s problem was to break these three lines of railway, and thus to compel Richmond’s surrender or evacuation. If he could break the Weldon railway first, and the others later, as he purposed, his vastly superior army at the time of Richmond’s evacuation could be easily interposed between Lee and any point farther south to which the Confederate commander might plan to retreat.

That is what actually happened eight months later, with Lee’s surrender at Appomattox Court House as the outcome of this successful strategy.

In the meanwhile, Lee, with less than forty thousand men, was called upon to defend a line more than thirty miles long against an enemy whose numbers were three or four times his own, and whose capacity of reinforcement was almost limitless.

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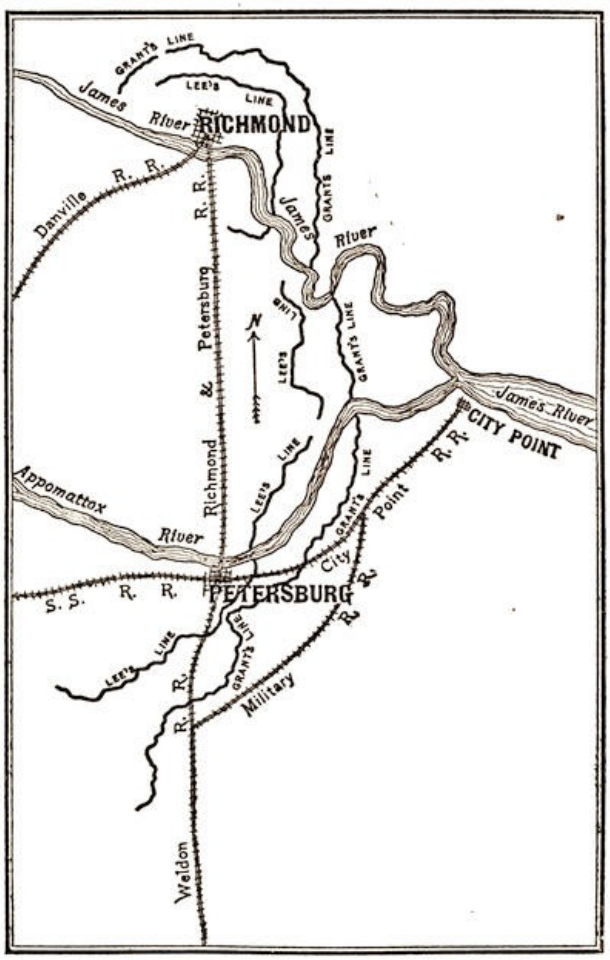

Sketch Map showing Lee’s and Grant’s lines about Richmond and Petersburg

Still more important was the fact that Lee must stand ready, by [170] day and by night, to defend every point on this long line, while his adversary, with the assistance of ships and railroads in his rear, could concentrate irresistible forces at any point he pleased and at any time he pleased, without the knowledge of the Confederate commander. To the military on-looker it appeared easy for Grant to break through Lee’s lines whenever he pleased, by hurling an overwhelming force with irresistible momentum against any part of the attenuated thread that he might elect, breaking through with certainty and entire ease.

Such would have been the case but for the splendid fighting quality of that Army of Northern Virginia which was struggling almost literally in its “last ditch.” Time after time Grant massed his forces and threw them with all his might against the weakest points he could find in Lee’s defensive lines, only to be baffled and beaten by a fighting force that was absolutely unconquerable in its obstinate determination.

But Grant had other arrows in his well-stocked quiver. His [171] enormous superiority in numbers, and his easy ability to manœuvre beyond his adversary’s sight or ken, made it possible for him continually to extend his lines to the left; pushing south and west, and compelling Lee to stretch out his already slender line to the point of hopeless thinness.

Grant could one day assail the defences below Richmond on the north side of the James River in vastly superior force, and the next morning at daybreak hurl five men to Lee’s one against the works defending the Weldon Railroad, thirty miles or more to the south.

Yet even under these conditions the brilliant Confederate strategist not only held his own, but detached from his all too meagre force a strong column under Early, and sent it to sweep the valley of Virginia, invade Maryland, and so far threaten Washington as to compel Grant either to send forces for the defence of the Federal capital or to forego for the time being the reinforcements which he was clamorously demanding for the strengthening of his lines at Petersburg.

Captain Marshall Pollard’s battery was included in the detail of [172] troops made for this final and despairing invasion of the country

north of the Potomac; and when the battery marched, Sergeant-major Owen Kilgariff rode by the side of his captain, ready for any duty that might fall to his lot.

The wound in his neck was not yet well, or even nearly so, but he was quite regardless of self in his eagerness to bear his part, and so, in spite of all the warnings of all the doctors, he had rejoined his command at the first moment in which he was strong enough to sit upright in the saddle.

Captain Pollard had but one commissioned officer with him on this dare-devil expedition, and that one officer was shot in the first skirmish, so that Owen Kilgariff, non-commissioned officer that he was, was second in command of the battery.

Early's column swept like a hurricane down the valley, and like a cyclone burst upon Maryland and Pennsylvania. It marched fearlessly wherever it pleased and fought tremendously wherever it encountered a foe. Its invasion of the North at a time when Grant with three or four men to Lee's one was beleaguering the Southern [173]
capital, was romantic, gallant, picturesque, startling. But it did not accomplish the purpose intended. It was Grant's conviction that Washington City could take care of itself; that the authorities there had force enough at command, or within call, to meet and repel a Confederate invasion, without any assistance from him. He, first of all Federal generals, acted upon this conviction, and refused to weaken his lines at Petersburg and Richmond by sending any considerable forces to defend Washington against Early. Grant had little imagination, but he had a great fund of common sense.

Only one considerable action was the outcome of this expedition. In a minor encounter on the day before the battle was fought, Captain Marshall Pollard lost a leg, thus leaving his sergeant-major, Owen Kilgariff, in command of the battery, reduced now to four guns, with only four horses to each piece or caisson.

At Monocacy, Kilgariff fought the guns at their best, and by a dash of a kind which artillery is neither armed nor expected to make, captured two Federal rifled guns, with their full complement of horses. In his report he spoke of this feat of arms only as "an [174]
opportunity which offered to add two guns to the battery and to raise the tale of horses to the regulation number of six to each gun and caisson."

But that night General Early sent for Kilgariff, in response to that non-commissioned officer's request that a commissioned officer should be sent to take command of the battery.

"I don't see the necessity," said Early, in his abrupt way. "I don't see how anybody could fight his guns better than you have done. Get yourself killed if you want somebody else to command Pollard's battery. So long as you live, I shall send nobody else. How does it happen that you haven't a commission?"

"I do not covet that responsibility," Kilgariff answered evasively.

"Well, that responsibility will rest on your shoulders from this hour forth, till the end of this campaign, unless you escape it by getting yourself killed. I shall certainly not send anybody else to command your battery while you live. From this hour I shall regard you as Captain Kilgariff; and when I get myself into communication with General Lee or the war department, I'll see that the title is [175]
made good."

"Thank you, General," answered Kilgariff. "But I sincerely wish you wouldn't. I have already received and rejected one commission as captain, and I have declined a still higher rank offered me."

"What an idiot you must be!" squeaked Early in his peculiar, falsetto voice. "But you know how to fight your guns, and I've got a use for such men as you are. You may do as you please after this campaign is over, but while you remain under my command you'll be a captain. I'll see to that, and there'll be no nonsense about it, either."

An hour later, an order, officially signed and certified, came to Kilgariff. It read in this wise:—

> Special Order No. 7. Sergeant-major Owen Kilgariff, of Captain Pollard's Virginia Battery, is hereby ordered to assume command of said Battery as Acting Captain, and he will exercise the authority of that rank in all respects. He is ordered hereafter to sign his reports and orders as "Captain Commanding," and all officers concerned are hereby directed, by order of the Commanding General, to recognise the rank thus conferred, not only in matters of ordinary obedience to [176]
> orders, but also in making details for court-martial service and the like. This temporary appointment of Captain Kilgariff is made in

> recognition of peculiarly gallant and meritorious conduct, and in due time it will be confirmed by the War Department. In the meanwhile Captain Kilgariff's rank, commission, and authority are to be fully recognised by all persons concerned, by virtue of this order.

This order was duly signed by General Early's adjutant-general, as by his command.

There was nothing for Kilgariff to do but obey an order so peremptory, from a commander who was not accustomed to brook opposition with patience. Kilgariff's first thought was to send through the regular military channels a written protest and declination. But an insuperable difficulty stood in the way. Under Early's order, he must sign that document not as "Sergeant-major," but as "Captain." Otherwise, his act would be of that contumacious sort which military law defines as "conduct subversive of good order and military discipline."

But aside from that consideration was the fact that General Early had sent Kilgariff a personal note, in which he had written:—

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> I have issued an order in your case. Obey it. I don't want any damned nonsense.

Kilgariff was too good a soldier to protest further while the campaign under Early should continue. He meant to ask excuse later, but for the time being there was nothing for him to do except assume the captain's rank and command to which Early had thus peremptorily assigned him.

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XII

SAFE-CONDUCT OF TWO KINDS

AS Early was slowly making his way back into the valley of Virginia—fighting wherever there was a force to be fought—there came a messenger to Owen Kilgariff one night a little before midnight. He bore a slip of paper on which these words were written:—

> Come to me quickly. I am mortally wounded, and it is very necessary for me to see you before I die—not for my sake, for you'd rejoice to see me in hell, but for the sake of others and for your own sake—though for yourself you don't often care much. I'm in a farm-house hospital three miles south of Harper's Ferry on the Martinsburg road. My messenger will guide you. The Federals have possession, of course, but the bearer of this note has a safe-conduct for you. Of course, this might be a trick, but it is not. On the word of a gambler (and you know what that means) I am playing fair this time. You are a brave enough man to risk this thing anyhow. Come!

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This note bore no signature, but Owen Kilgariff knew the hand that had written it. That handwriting had sent him to jail once upon a time. He had not forgotten. He was not given to forgetting.

He summoned the messenger who had brought him the note.

"You have a safe-conduct for me, I believe?" he asked.

"Yes, Captain," and he produced the document.

"How did you manage to pass our picket lines? Did you come under a flag of truce?"

"No. That would have taken time, and there is no time to be wasted. Major Campbell is terribly wounded. I live in these parts. I ain't a soldier, you know. So I slipped through the lines."

For a moment Kilgariff regarded the fellow with indignant contempt. Then the indignation passed, and the contempt was intensified in his expression. Presently he said:—

"You low-lived, contemptible hound, I can't make up my mind even to be angry with you. You and your kind are the pest in this war. You haven't character enough to take sides. You serve either [180] side at will, and betray both with jaunty indifference. Now listen to me. Within twenty-four hours I shall see Major Campbell, who sent me this note. But I shall not go to him under the safe-conduct you have brought."

With that, Kilgariff tore the paper to bits and scattered its fragments to the night wind.

"I shall order you sent to the guard-house and manacled, until General Early shall have decided what to do with you. He doesn't like your sort."

The man fell at once into panic and pleaded for his life.

"Oh, what will become of me?" he piteously moaned.

"I really don't know," answered Kilgariff, quite as if the question had related to the disposition to be made of some inanimate object. "General Early may have you shot at sunrise, or he may decide to hang you instead. I don't at all know, and after all it makes no real difference. The one death is about as painless as the other, and as for the matter of disgrace, of course you are hopelessly incapable of considering that. Perhaps—oh, well, I don't know. General Early may conclude to turn you loose as a creature too contemptible to be [181] seriously dealt with."

"God grant that he may!" said the man, with fervour, as the guards took him away.

A minute later Kilgariff mounted his horse, Wyanoke—a special gift from Dorothy—and rode hurriedly to General Early's headquarters; it was after midnight, but with this army sleeplessly "on service" very little attention was given to hours, either of the day or of the night. So, after a moment's parley with a sentinel, Kilgariff was conducted to General Early's presence, under a tree.

It was not Kilgariff's habit to grow excited. He had passed through too much for that, he thought. But on this occasion his perturbation of spirit was so great that he had difficulty in enunciating his words.

"General," he said, "I want a little cavalry force, if you please. I want to capture one of the enemy's hospitals and hold it long enough for me to have a talk with the most infamous scoundrel who

ever lived.”

“Calm yourself, Captain,” said Early. “Have a little apple brandy as a tonic. Your nerves are shaken.”

Kilgariff declined the stimulant, but at Early’s earnest solicitation [182] he sat down upon a stump, and presently so far commanded his own spirit as to go on with what he had to say.

“One of those contemptible border wretches got himself smuggled through our lines to-night. I don’t know how. He brought me a note from the most infamous scoundrel I ever knew, together with a safe-conduct under which I could sneak into the enemy’s lines and talk with the fellow, who is mortally wounded. I tore up the safe-conduct and sent the emissary to the guard-house with the comfortable assurance that his case would be submitted to you, and that you would pretty certainly order him shot or hanged according to the gravity with which you might regard his offence. I hope you’ll let him go. He is so poor-spirited a cur that he will suffer a thousand deaths to-night in dreading one for to-morrow. However, that isn’t what I want to speak with you about. I want a cavalry force of a company or two. I want to raid that hospital before morning and talk with that rascal in the interest of others whose fate he may hold in his hands.”

“Do you plan to kill him?”

“Of course not. He is wounded unto death. And besides—well, [183] General, he isn’t of our class.”

“I quite understand—not a man you could ‘call out.’”

“Distinctly not—although he has a major’s commission.”

“Oh—if you want a colonel’s or a brigadier-general’s, you shall have it,” broke in Early, full of the enthusiasm of fight.

“No, General,” answered Kilgariff, with an amused smile; “I have always found it possible to fight anybody I pleased without raising the question of rank. You know, a private, if he is a man of good family, may slap a major-general’s jaws in our army, in full certainty that his escapade will bring a challenge rather than a citation before a court-martial. No. I want to talk with this man before he dies. He sent me a safe-conduct, as I have already said. That was a gracious permission from the Federal authorities for me to see him. I have a very pronounced prejudice against the acceptance of gracious permissions from the Federal authorities. So I have come to ask for a squadron of cavalry, to which I will add a couple of guns, in order [184] that I may capture that post, enter its hospital, and have my talk with its inmate without anybody’s permission but yours, General.”

The humour of the situation appealed strongly to Early, as it did also to Major Irby of the Virginia Cavalry, who was sitting near by. That officer was a man of few words, but he carried an unusually alert sabre, and his sense of humour was uncommonly keen.

“If you don’t mind, General,” he said, in his quiet fashion, “I should like to ‘sit in’ the captain’s game.”

“Do it!” said Early. “Take three companies and two of Kilgariff’s guns, and let him show the fellow that he carries his own safe-conduct at his back.”

Things were done promptly and quickly in those stirring times, and five minutes after Early had spoken his words of permission, Major Irby moved at the head of three companies of cavalry and two of Kilgariff’s guns—the two so recently captured from the enemy, and selected now by way of emphasising the jest.

A dash, a scurry, and every picket post south of Harper’s Ferry was swept out of sight.

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XIII

KILGARIFF HEARS NEWS

AS soon as Major Irby had possessed himself of the hospital and the region round about, he gave orders to throw out pickets a mile or so in every direction, in order to guard against surprise. He posted Kilgariff's guns on a little hill, where their fire could sweep all of the roads over which an advance of the enemy was possible. Then he ordered the officer of the guard to post a strong line of sentinels around the house itself, which served as hospital, and to send a corporal's guard into the building with orders to dispose themselves as Kilgariff might direct.

Kilgariff, who had stripped the chevrons off his sleeves, and sewed a captain's three bars on his collar in obedience to General Early's order, immediately entered the house and made his way to [186] the separate room in which Campbell's cot had been placed. Kilgariff turned to the corporal of the guard, and commanded:—

"Place two sentinels in that outer room. Order them to see to it that there is no eavesdropping. You understand?"

"Perfectly, Captain."

There is this advantage about military over other arrangements, that they can be absolutely depended upon. The sentinel who has "orders" is an autocrat in their execution. He has no discretion. He enters into no argument. He parleys with nobody, whatever that somebody's rank may be. He simply commands, "Halt"; and if the one advancing takes one other step, the sentinel fires a death shot at short range and with absolutely certain aim. Killing, on the part of a sentinel whose command of "Halt" is disregarded, is not only no crime in military law—it is a virtue, a simple discharge of peremptory duty. And the sentinel himself, if ordered to stand twenty feet away from a door, stands there, not encroaching upon the distance by so much as a foot, under pain of punishment "in the discretion of a court-martial," as the military law phrases it.

So, when Kilgariff entered the room in which the man who had [187] ruined his life lay wounded, in answer to that man's summons, he knew that his conversation would be neither interrupted nor overheard in any word or syllable of it. The absoluteness of military law and practice forbade that, even as a possibility.

Kilgariff advanced to the man's bedside, took his seat upon a camp stool, and without the remotest suggestion of a greeting in his voice or manner, abruptly said:—

"I am here. What do you want?"

"I was sure you would come," answered the man; "the safe-conduct—"

"I tore that up the moment I received it," answered Kilgariff.

"But why? It was valid."

"For any other officer in our army, yes," answered Kilgariff; "but not for me, as you very well know. Anyhow, I preferred to come under the safe-conduct of Southern carbines and cannon and sabres. Never mind that. Go on. What do you want?"

The man winced and groaned with pain as he turned himself a little on his cot in order to face his interlocutor. Presently he said:—

"I'm shot through the groin with a canister ball. It is a wound [188] unto death, I suppose."

"Yes? Well? What else? I did not come to ask after your health."

"Of course not. I mention my condition only as a man who flings a card upon the table at a critical moment exclaims, 'That's a trump.' You see, the things I want to say to you are in the nature of an ante-mortem statement, and I want you to understand that, so that you may believe all I have to tell you."

"I understand," said Kilgariff. "You are precisely the sort of man, who, after lying and cheating all his life, would tell the truth in a dying statement, if only by way of cheating the Day of Judgment and playing stacked cards on the Almighty. Go on."

But before the man could speak again, Kilgariff added:—

"As a still further stimulus to truth-telling on your part, let me make a few suggestions. You are completely in my power. If I choose, I can have you taken hence to General Early and introduce you to him as a man who accepted a commission in the Confederate Army and then deserted to the other side and deceived the authorities there into giving him a commission to fight the cause he had solemnly sworn to support. You know what would happen in such a case."

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"Yes, I know. There'd be a drumhead court-martial, and I'd be hanged at daybreak. But hear me, Kilgariff. I'm a gambler, as you know, not in one way, but in all ways. And I know how to be a good loser. I've drawn a very bad hand this time, but I've called the game; and if I'm hanged for it, I shall not whine about my luck. Whenever I die, and however I die, I'll die game. So you can't intimidate me. But before I die, there are certain things I want to tell you—for the sake of the others. For although I have no moral principles and don't profess any, there are some things I want to tell you about—"

"Go on. Tell me about my brother."

"That wasn't what I wanted to talk about first. Besides, you know most of the story."

"Never mind that. I want to hear it all from your lips. Much of it I never understood. Tell it all and quickly."

"Well, your brother's a fool, you know."

"Yes, I know. Otherwise—never mind that. Tell me the whole story. How far was my brother a sharer in your guilt? How far did he consent to my wrecking? Why did he join you for my destruction, after all I had done for him?"

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"It's very hard to say. Opinions differ, and standards of morality —"

"Damn opinions and standards!—especially yours. I want the facts—all of them, to the last detail. Go on, and don't waste time."

"Well, your brother is a fool, as I said before, though in the end he did 'make his jack' and win a pot of money. But that was good luck—not good play."

"Don't fall into reflections," interrupted Kilgariff, seeing that Campbell was in a reminiscent mood. "We've no time for that sort of thing. Go on with the facts."

"Well, you see your brother was that sort of man about whom people say that he was 'more sinned against than sinning.' He always wanted to do right, and if he could have got a good steady job as a millionaire, I don't know anybody who would have been more scrupulously upright than he. You see, he really thought he had principles—moral character and that sort of thing—when he hadn't anything of the kind. Many people deceive themselves in that way. I never did. I was born of as good a family as yours, or any other. I was raised in the most honourable traditions, and as a young man I was reckoned a pattern of high-minded conduct. I knew all the time that I had no moral character, no principles. Or rather, I gradually became conscious of that fact."

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Kilgariff was exceedingly impatient of this autobiography, but he thought the shortest way to the man's facts was to let him talk on in his own way. So he forebore to interrupt, and Campbell continued:—

"I would have killed any man who called me a liar, but I never hesitated to lie when lying seemed to me of advantage. I was scrupulous in paying my debts and discharging every social duty, but I knew myself well enough to know that if an opportunity came to me to rob any man without being found out, I would do it and not hesitate or repent over it. Like the great majority of men, I was honest only as a matter of policy. I had no moral character. Most people haven't any, but they go on thinking they have and pretending about it until they completely deceive themselves. They refuse to take the old sage's advice to 'know thyself.' I took it. I early learned to know myself.

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"But if I had no principles, I at least had sentiments. One of those sentiments was pride in my family. When I saw clearly that I was going to be an adventurer, a gambler, a swindler, a man living by his wits, I did not shrink from that, but I shuddered at the thought of disgracing the name I bore. So I decided not to bear that name, but to choose another. At first I thought of calling myself 'George Washington Bib'—just for the humour of the thing. The sudden slump from the resonance of 'George Washington' to the monosyllabic inconsequence of 'Bib' struck me as funny. But I

reflected that while I had never heard of anybody named Bib, there might be people by that name. Still further, it occurred to me that anybody on being introduced to George Washington Bib would be sure to remember the name, and in the career I had marked out for myself that might be inconvenient. So I made up my mind to call myself Campbell. There are so many families of that name, and they are so prolific, that the mere name means nothing—not even a probability of kinship. But you're not interested in all this. You want [193] to hear about your brother."

"Yes," answered Kilgariff.

"Well, your brother was highly respectable, as you know. He was comfortably rich at the first, and after he lost most of his money he struggled hard to keep up the pretence of being still comfortably rich. He did the thing very cleverly, and it let him into several pretty good things in Wall Street. But it let him into a good many very bad things also, and in his over-anxiety to become really rich again, he went into the bad things headforemost and blindfold. I was posing as a lawyer then, you know, and cutting a large swath. I really had no regular practice of any consequence, but I kept two large suites of offices and any number of clerks, as a blind, and I managed every now and then to find out things that I could turn to account—"

"Blackmail, I suppose."

"Yes, I suppose you'd call it that, but always with a weather eye on the law. You see, when an active lawyer finds out that a big banker has been doing things he oughtn't, the big banker is apt to conclude that he needs the services of precisely that particular [194] lawyer as private counsel. There are big fees in the business sometimes, but it's risky and uncertain. So I had my ups and downs. I was in one of the very worst of my downs when this bank affair fell in. I had been a bank examiner at one time, and had twice examined the affairs of this bank. I knew that its deposits were enormous and its assets sufficient, if properly handled, to pay out everything and leave a large surplus, besides something for the receiver. So I decided to become in effect, though not in fact, the receiver. I owned a judge. He owed me money which he couldn't pay, and that money was owing on account of things which he couldn't on any consideration allow to be inquired into in 'proceedings.' Moreover, I knew a lot of other things which in themselves made me his master. Still again, his term was nearly at an end, and I had the political influence necessary to secure or defeat his renomination and re-election, as I might choose. In short, I owned him body and soul. So, when it fell to him to appoint a receiver for this bank, he naturally sent for me in consultation. His idea was to appoint me to the receivership, but I saw clearly that that would not do. It would raise [195] a row, for I was pretty well known to the big financiers, many of whom had been obliged to employ me by way of silencing me at one time or another. But more important than that was the fact that the plans I had formed for the handling of the bank's affairs involved a good deal of risk to the receiver. The bank had a great many investments that must be closed out in order to put the institution on its feet again, and there are various ways of closing out such investments. It was my idea that they should be so closed out as to leave the bank just barely solvent and able to pay its depositors, you understand—"

"Yes—and that you and your pals should pocket the surplus."

"Precisely. I didn't imagine you had so good a head for business."

"Never mind my head. Consider your own neck, and go on with the story."

"Now won't you understand," said the adventurer, "that I'm not thinking about my neck? I've staked that as my 'ante' in this game, and I never ask the ante back. Well, I showed my judge that it wouldn't do at all to make me receiver, but I told him I would find [196] him the right man. Your brother had already occurred to me as available. He was in extreme financial difficulties at that time. He was in arrears in his club dues, and his tailor's bills, and even to his servants. He had sold out every bond and every share of stock he owned, and still his debts were sorely pressing him. He lived at a fine though small place just out of town, where he and his wife and daughters entertained sumptuously. For even to his wife and daughters he kept up the pretence of being comfortably rich, so that they had no hesitation in giving orders at the caterers' and the florists' and directing that the bills be sent to him.

"I knew his condition. I knew that he was passing sleepless

nights in dreadful apprehension of the quickly coming time when the florists and the caterers would surely refuse to fill the orders of his wife and daughters on the ground that he owed them and didn't pay.

"One day I sent for him to dine with me in a private room at an expensive hotel. I vaguely suggested to him that his fortune was made; that within a few days I should be able to put him in position to twiddle his fingers at the florists and the caterers. But I gave him no details. I gave him limitless champagne instead, and, as my [197] digestion resented champagne at that time, I excused myself from drinking more than a very small share of the enticing beverage. We decided to play poker, after dinner, just for amusement. The chips were valued high—a dollar for a white chip, two and a half for a red, and five dollars for a blue.

"For a time your brother had marvellous 'luck.' He won enough of my paper promises to pay to make him feel already quite independent of the caterers and the florists, and to convince him that at poker I was exceedingly easy prey to a man who 'really understood the game,' as he conceitedly thought he did. Well, we played on till morning; and when sunrise came, he had given me his I O U's for more money than he had ever owned in his life."

"That is to say, you had made him drunk on champagne, and then had cheated him without limit?"

"Well, yes, that's about it. Anyhow, I owned him. After he had got over the headache and the champagne, he came to me at my office to see what could be done by way of compromise. I told him that I had no money and no resources except my wits; I frankly confessed [198] that but for certain cash payments he had made early in the game, I could not have paid for the hotel room and tipped the waiters to the tune that waiters set when they are privy to a game of that kind.

"'But it's all right,' I assured him. 'Don't bother about the I O U's. They'll keep. They are debts of honour, of course, but they needn't be paid till it is convenient to pay them; and when you go into the position that I've secured for you, it will be not only convenient, but exceedingly easy.'

"Then I told him about the receivership and my purpose to have him appointed. I explained that in the mere matter of commissions it would give him a princely income, to say nothing of perquisites. I didn't explain what 'perquisites' in such a case meant. That was because I had no moral character. He didn't ask. That was because he thought he had a moral character and wished to spare it affront.

"It was easily arranged that the judge I owned should appoint as receiver the man I owned. But I didn't own my man completely, as yet. He owed me more money, as a debt of honour, than he could [199] pay at that time; but once in the receivership, he could quickly pay off all that, and then I shouldn't own him at all. Indeed, he might have repudiated the I O U's as illegal gambling debts; he might have refused to pay them at all. But I wasn't afraid of that. Your brother fondly imagined that he was a man of honour, of high moral principle, and so I knew that in order to keep up that pretence with himself he would stand by his debts of honour. But I foresaw that he might presently discharge them all, out of the proceeds of the receivership, and send me adrift. I must get a stronger grip on him. So I told my judge to send for him and say certain things to him.

"'You must setup a house,' the judge told him, 'in a fashionable quarter of the town, by way of maintaining your position. You see, it won't do for me to put anybody in charge of those many millions who isn't recognised as himself a man of independent wealth. You must have a good house and enlarge your establishment. The receivership will abundantly recoup you in the end, but from the beginning we must keep up appearances.'

"Your brother came to me in great distress of mind to tell me [200] what the judge had required of him. He frankly told me he hadn't the money necessary to make a first payment on the lease of a town house, to furnish it suitably, and to establish himself in it. I pretended to be worried over the matter, and I took twenty-four hours in which to think about it. Then I sent for your brother again and told him I saw a way out; that certain clients of mine had money to invest on bond and mortgage, and had placed it in my hands; that by a little stretching of my authority I could let him have the amount he needed, as a mortgage loan on his place in the country. I saw his face fall when I suggested this, as I had expected to see it fall. Presently he explained that in order to give a mortgage on his

country place, which really stood in his wife's name and had in fact come to her as a dowry, he must get her to execute the papers. That would be very awkward, he explained, as he had never thought it necessary to bother his womankind about his affairs. To ask his wife to execute a mortgage would necessitate a statement to her of his financial position, and a whole lot more of that sort, which I had [201] expected. I told him I thought I could arrange the matter; that my clients had placed their affairs completely in my hands; that all they wanted was the prompt payment of interest and adequate security for their invested money; that the profits of the receivership would be ample to secure all this; and that any arrangement I might make would never be questioned by my clients. I told him that the mortgage security was after all only a matter of form in a case where the other security was so ample, and that the whole thing was in my hands. So I suggested that he should—as a mere matter of form—execute the mortgage, himself signing his wife's name in her stead. I would take care of the document, not even recording it, and the loan could be paid off presently, with nobody the wiser. Your brother fell into the trap. He executed the mortgage, signing his wife's name to it, and he was at once made receiver of the bank.

"From that hour, of course, he was my property. No negro slave in all the South was ever more completely owned, or more absolutely under the control of his master.

"I had only to reveal the facts at any moment in order to send [202] him to jail. He had committed a felony—he, the highly respectable receiver of a savings bank, and a man regarded as a leader in social and even in religious movements of every kind. I held complete proofs of his felony in my own hands. He must do my bidding or go to State's prison.

"My first order to him was to put me into the bank as counsel to the receiver, at a good salary, and also as expert accountant, at another good salary. The bank could afford all this and vastly more. Its assets were easily three times its liabilities—if properly handled, and I knew how to handle them. I meant no harm to your brother. On the contrary, I meant to make him rich and let him retire from the completed receivership with the commendation of the court for the masterly manner in which he had so handled the affairs of the institution as to make good every dollar of its deposits with interest, and to deliver it into the hands of its trustees again in a perfectly solvent condition. You see, the assets were ample for that, and to provide for my future besides. The only trouble before had been bad management and a deficient knowledge of the art of bookkeeping on [203] the part of the respectable old galoots who had been in control of the bank. They might easily have straightened out everything without any court proceedings at all, if they had known how. Their violations of the law had been purely technical—such as occur in every bank every day—and these things can always be arranged on a good basis of assets, if the people in charge only know how.

"Now, when I began operations in the bank, your brother was inclined to object to some of the things I did. I had only to remind him of the mortgage papers in order to reduce him to subjection. He still thought he had a moral character, and so when I proposed to sell out the bank's securities at ten or twenty or fifty per cent less than their value, and take a commission of five or ten or forty per cent for ourselves from the buyers, he raised grave moral objections. But he was in no position to insist upon them, and besides he was largely profiting by the transactions. Meanwhile, I was slowly getting the bank's affairs into shape—very slowly, for there were the salaries of him and myself to be considered. Then came the revolt of the chief bookkeeper, and his complaint that we [204] were robbing the bank. I tried hard to square him, but he wouldn't square. That fellow really had a moral character, and, worse still, he couldn't be scared. I showed him that as he had already permitted false entries in the bank's books, he must himself be involved in any exposure that might be made. He answered that he knew that, and was prepared to explain matters in court and 'take the consequences.' Then your brother got scared half to death, and consulted you. If he had waited for forty-eight hours, I should have had that bookkeeper in jail, and your brother would have got credit for extreme vigilance. But when he sent for you, all was up. You came into the bank and practically took your brother's place and function. But you neglected to provide yourself with legal authority to be in the bank at all. Another thing you didn't reckon upon was my foresight. I had taken pains to win several of the clerks and

bookkeepers to my side. I had ‘let them in,’ so that when you angrily dismissed me, I still had daily and hourly information of what was [205] going on. You found out that the bank’s securities had been sold for less than they were worth, and you set to work to repair the wrong. You couldn’t cancel the sales that had been made, but you could and did pay your own money into the bank to make good what you regarded as the defalcations. That made it easy for me. I went to my judge—the one I owned—and laid before him the fact that you were handling the bank’s assets without a shadow of legal authority; that you had dismissed me—the receiver’s counsel and expert accountant—upon discovering that I knew of defalcations, and all the rest of it. You know that part of the story, for you suffered from it. To save your brother, you had sacrificed large sums of money. When that failed and you found that either he or you must go to prison for these defalcations, you decided to sacrifice your liberty and your reputation in order to save him and his wife and daughters. You refused to defend yourself. I thought your plan was to get a stay, give bail, and skip it. But you had the disadvantage of having a moral character, so you stood your hand and were sent to prison. Your brother, having no moral character, let you do this thing and pretended great grief over your dishonesty and perfidy. [206] But he had learned the business by that time, and so he got away with the swag, and with the reputation of a man of truly Roman virtue who suffered acutely over the misbehaviour of his ‘black sheep’ brother. What a farce it all is anyhow—life, I mean—if one tries to take it seriously! Let me have a little brandy, please! I’m growing very faint.”

The brandy did its appointed work of stimulation, and presently Campbell resumed:—

“I don’t in the least understand why you should care for your brother, but, as you do, it may gratify you to know that he is leading a quiet life of luxury in the country on the Hudson. He is a comfortably rich man; for he kept the money he got out of the bank and invested it prudently—a thing I never could do when I had money. He highly disapproved of me, of course; but when I quitted the Southern army and went North—”

“When you deserted, you mean.”

“Yes, if you look at it in that way—he used his influence to get me my present commission. That was cheaper than supporting me, which he must otherwise have done, for I had lost and squandered [207] everything. That brings me to what I really want to talk to you about. I have a daughter somewhere in the South, if she is still alive. She was captured a few months ago during an effort on the part of—well, never mind whom—to smuggle her through the lines into the South, where she has some relatives, though I don’t believe she knows who they are. It doesn’t matter. They say I’ve persecuted the girl—and I suppose in a way I have.

“Never mind that. I’m sinking fast now and haven’t any time for explanations. I have some papers here that may mean everything to her after she comes of age. She has been taught that she is only seventeen years old. In fact, she is nineteen, and she must have these papers when she is twenty-one. I sent for you to ask you to find her and deliver them. You really have a moral character, and so you won’t trade on this matter. With your wide acquaintance, you’ll know how to find the girl. Her name is Evelyn Byrd.”

If a shell had exploded in the room, Kilgariff would not have been so startled as he was by this announcement. But he had no time for questions. He had heard picket-firing for several minutes past, and [208] his practised ear told him with certainty that the rattle of the musketry was steadily drawing nearer. He knew what that meant. The Federals were advancing in adequate force for the recapture of the position and the destruction of Major Irby’s little handful of men.

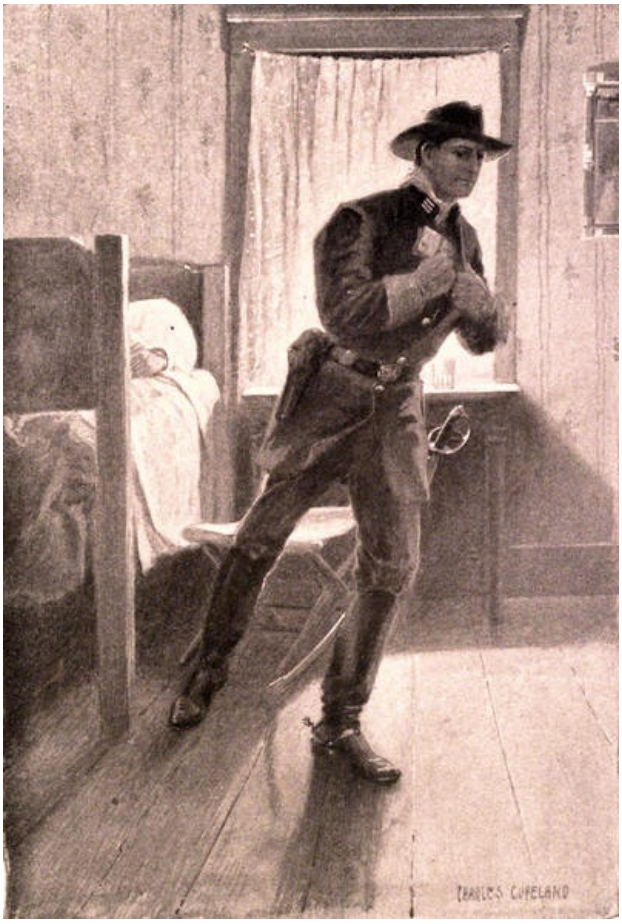
A few minutes before Campbell made his startling announcement, a note had come to Kilgariff from Major Irby, saying:—

“Enemy advancing in considerable force, but I can hold place for an hour or more if absolutely necessary. You needn’t hurry. Only cut it as short as you can.”

But just at the moment of the mention of Evelyn Byrd’s name, the voices of two rifled cannon were heard near at hand, and Kilgariff knew the guns for his own. Instantly he sprang up, and, taking the papers from Campbell’s hand, passed out of the house without a

word of farewell, leaped upon his horse, and galloped to the little hill where his guns had been posted.

It was in the gray of early dawn, and even considerable bodies of troops could not be seen except at short distances. But the enemy was pressing Major Irby hard, apparently bent upon capturing his force. Both his flanks were threatened, while his centre was specially hard pressed.



TAKING THE PAPERS FROM CAMPBELL'S HAND, PASSED OUT OF THE HOUSE WITHOUT A WORD OF FAREWELL.

No sooner had Kilgariff reported that his mission was finished, and that he was himself with the guns, than Irby gave some rapid commands, threw his whole force upon the enemy with great impetuosity, and then, while the recoil before his charge lasted, swung his little band about and made good its escape at a gallop. [209]

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XIV

IN THE WATCHES OF THE NIGHT

OWEN KILGARIFF was now beset with perplexities. So long as he should continue to serve with Early in the valley, he must retain the rank of captain which that commander had forced upon him, and this he was determined not to do. He knew that Early had reported upon his case, and that very certainly a commission would come to him in regular form from Richmond. He foresaw that its coming would greatly increase his embarrassment. He could not decline it except officially through General Early, to whom, of course, he could give no satisfactory reason for his erratic course.

Then, too, he was puzzled about the papers that Campbell had given him. These clearly belonged to Evelyn, and his first impulse was to send them to her and let her do what she would with them. But he remembered that Campbell's injunction had been, or seemed [211] to be, to deliver the documents into her hands only when she attained the age of twenty-one years. Not knowing what might be in the papers, Kilgariff could not know what or how much of harm might come to her from their premature delivery.

It is true that he had given no promise to Campbell, and as for the wishes of the adventurer, Kilgariff was in no way bound to respect them, and certainly he was not disposed to do so. His sole concern in the matter was for Evelyn's welfare, and he could not make up his mind what his course of conduct ought to be with respect to that. He needed counsel very sorely, and there was only one man in all the South of whom he could freely ask counsel. That man was Arthur Brent, who might be still at Petersburg, or might have gone back to his laboratory work at Wyanoke.

In either case, consultation with him seemed equally out of the question. No confidence was to be placed in mails at that disturbed time, and of course Kilgariff would not ask for or accept even the sick furlough which the increasing inflammation of his neglected wound rendered exceedingly desirable, so long as there was well- [212] nigh continuous fighting in progress at the front.

Altogether, Owen Kilgariff was sorely beset with puzzling uncertainty of mind. He was in action during most of the day after the night he had spent with Campbell, but neither weariness nor loss of sleep enabled him to close his eyes during the following night. He lay throughout the hours of darkness stretched upon the ground under a great chestnut tree, weary but with wide-open eyes, staring upward at the stars that showed through the leaves, and thinking to no purpose.

One thought occurred to him at last which caused him suddenly to sit up, and for a moment made his heart bound.

His vigil of ceaseless thought and perplexity had taught him much of his own soul's condition which he had but vaguely guessed at before. It had shown him clearly what his feeling was toward Evelyn Byrd. He understood now, as he had not done before, that his love for the girl was the supreme passion of his life—the limitless, all-embracing, all-conquering impulse of a strong nature which had schooled itself to repression and self-sacrifice. He saw clearly that all this self-discipline—greatly as it had enabled him to [213] endure and to make sacrifice—had given him no strength adequate to his present need. He had thought to conquer his passionate love; he knew now that he could never conquer it. He had thought to put it out of his mind as a longing for the unattainable; he knew now that it would for ever refuse to be dismissed.

"So long as I live," he thought, "I must bear this burden; so long as I live, I must suffer and be still. For I shall at any rate retain too much of manhood and courage to win Evelyn's love or to sadden her life by linking it with my own. My honour, at any rate, shall remain unspotted. Fortunately, a bullet or a sabre stroke is likely to solve all my riddles for me before this year comes to an end—and so much the more imperative is it that I arrange quickly for the disposal of her papers to her best advantage. But what is best? If these papers reveal to her the cruel fact that her father was an adventurer, a gambler, a swindler—and they must if they reveal anything—will it not be a great wrong to let her have them at all? And yet who but herself has a right to decide that she shall not receive whatever

revelation the documents may make?”

Then it was that the thought came to Kilgariff which made him sit [214]
up suddenly.

“She is the daughter of that man. Is there not in that fact an offset to my disability? Am I not free to tell her concerning myself, after she has learned her own origin, and to stand with eyes on a level with her own, asking her to be my wife?”

No sooner had he formulated the thought thus than he rejected it as unworthy. For a time he scourged himself for permitting the suggestion to arise in his mind, but presently he comforted himself by recalling the words of a great divine who, speaking of evil thoughts quickly dismissed, said:—

“I cannot prevent the birds from flying over my head, but I can forbid them to make nests in my hair.”

“I will not let that bird make a nest in my hair,” thought Kilgariff, resolutely, and greatly to the relief of his troubled conscience.

At that moment the reveille sounded in all the camps, and Kilgariff rose to his feet, stripped himself to the waist, sluiced his head, shoulders, and chest in the cold water of a neighbouring spring, resumed his clothing, and was ready for the day’s duties, [215]
whatever their nature might be. But his vigil had not brought him any nearer than he was before to the solution of the problems that so greatly perplexed him. It had only added a new and distressing self-knowledge to the burdens that weighed upon his mind. He had never feared death; now he looked upon it as a chance of welcome release from a sorely burdened life. Thenceforth he thought of the bullets as friendly messengers, one of which might bear a message for him.

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XV

IN THE TRENCHES

OPERATIONS in front of Petersburg had by this time settled down into a sullenly obstinate struggle for mastery between the two finest armies of veterans that ever met each other anywhere in the world. It is no exaggeration to characterise those armies by such superlatives. For in them it was not only organisations—regiments, brigades, and divisions—that were war-seasoned, but the individual men themselves. They had educated themselves by four years of fighting into a personal perfection of soldiership such as has nowhere else been seen among the rank and file of contending armies.

The slender lines of hastily constructed earthworks behind which these two opposing hosts had confronted each other at the beginning of that supreme struggle of the war, had been wrought [217] into other and incalculably stronger forms by work that had never for one moment ceased and would not pause until the end.

The breastworks had been raised, broadened, and strengthened under the direction of skilled engineers. At every salient angle a regular fort of some sort had been constructed and heavily armed for offence and defence.

In rear of these lines every little eminence had been crowned by a frowning fortification, as sullen in appearance and as capable of destructive work as the Redan or the Malakoff at Sebastopol.

At brief intervals along the outer lines traverses had been built at right angles to the works, as a protection against all enfilading fire.

The fields just behind the lines were intricately laced with trenches and protective earthworks of every kind. Without these the men in front would have been completely cut off from communication with the rear, by a resistless, all-consuming fire.

Great covered ways—protected passages—were cut as the only avenues by which men or supplies could be moved even for the shortest distances. Every spring that could yield water with which to [218] quench the thirst of the fighting men was defended by jealous fortifications.

There was no more thought now of enumerating the actions fought, or naming them. There was one continuous battle, ceaseless by day or by night, in which dogged resistance opposed itself daily and hourly to desperate assault, both inspired by a courage that did not so much resemble anything human as it did the struggle of opposing and titanic natural forces. Did the reader ever see the breaking up of the ice in a great river or lake, under the angry impulse of flood and storm? As the great ice floes in that case assailed the rocks with seemingly resistless fury, and as the rocks stood fast in the courage of their immovability, so at Petersburg the opposing forces met, day after day, with the courage and determination of inanimate forces.

Every great gun that either side could bring from any quarter was placed in position, so that the fire, continuous by day and by night, grew steadily greater in volume and more destructive in effect.

In this matter of guns, as well as in numbers of men, the Federals had enormous advantage. They had arsenals and foundries equipped with the most improved machinery to supply them, and [219] they could draw freely upon the armouries of Europe, besides. The Confederates had no such resources. The few and small shops within their command were antiquated in their equipment and very sharply limited in their capacity. But they did their best.

As soon as regular siege operations began, the Federals set to work establishing mortar batteries at every available point. Mortars are very short guns fired at a high “elevation”; that is, pointing upward at an angle of forty-five degrees to the horizon, or more than that, so as to throw shells high in air and let them fall perpendicularly upon an enemy’s works, breaking down defences and reaching points in rear of works to which ordinary cannon fire cannot penetrate.

The lines were so close together—at one point only fifty yards apart—that everything had to be done under cover of some kind, and thus mortars became a vitally necessary arm with which to

break down the enemy's cover. The Confederates had none of these guns at first, but their foundries were at least capable of manufacturing so simple a weapon in a rude but effective fashion, [220] making the mortars of iron instead of brass, and mounting them in oaken blocks heavily banded with wrought iron. In a very brief time the mortars began to arrive, and their numbers rapidly increased, but there were very few of the officers who knew how to handle a weapon so wholly different from ordinary guns both in construction and in methods of use.

This scarcity of mortar-skilled officers in the lower grades gave Owen Kilgariff his opportunity. The thought occurred to him suddenly on the day after his vigil, and he acted upon it at once.

He wrote to Arthur Brent, addressing his letter to Wyanoke, whence it would of course be forwarded should Doctor Brent be at Petersburg still.

> I want you, Arthur [he wrote], to use your influence in my behalf in a matter that touches me closely. For several reasons I want to be ordered from this place to Petersburg. For one thing, there is a matter of business, vitally interesting to you and me and closely involving the welfare of others. I simply must see you concerning it without delay. If I can get to Petersburg, I can see you, for Wyanoke is near enough to [221] the beleaguered city for you to visit me in the trenches. There are other reasons, but the necessity of seeing you is the most important and the least personal to myself, so I need not bother you now with the other considerations that move me to desire this change, which you can bring about if you will—and I am sure you will.
>
> I should ask for the transfer of the battery now under my command, if I did not know that it would be idle to do so. For some reason General Early seems to have taken a fancy to me, and still more to two highly improved rifle guns that I recently added to the battery by capture. He will never let me go unless compelled by orders to do so.
>
> But I see another way. I learn that our mortar fire at Petersburg is less effective than it should be, by reason of our lack of battery officers skilled in handling that species of ordnance. Now that is a direction in which I could render specially valuable service, not only by commanding many mortar pits myself, and instructing the men, but also by teaching our unskilled battery officers what to do with such guns, and how to do it. If you will personally see General Lee's chief of artillery and lay the case before him, I am sure he will order me transferred to the trenches. You can tell him that I was graduated at Annapolis, taking special honours in gunnery. You need tell him no [222] more of my personal history than that after graduation I resigned from the navy to study medicine, and that you learned to know me well in our student days at Jena, Berlin, and Paris.
>
> Do this thing for me, Arthur, and do it as quickly as possible. And as soon as I reach Petersburg, make some occasion to see me there, bearing in mind that to see you with reference to matters of vital importance to others is my primary purpose in asking for this transfer.

Arthur Brent was at Wyanoke when this letter came, but he hastened to Petersburg to execute his friend's commission. He told more of Kilgariff's personal history than Kilgariff had suggested. That is to say, he told of his gallantry at Spottsylvania and of its mention in general orders. He had neither to urge nor beseech. No sooner was the chief of artillery made aware of the facts than he answered:—

"I want such a man badly. Orders for his immediate transfer to the lines here shall go to-day."

So it came about that before the end of that week, Owen Kilgariff stood in a drenching rain-storm and nearly up to his knees in the [223] mud of a mortar pit at Petersburg, bombarding a salient in the enemy's lines.

The storm of bullets and rifle shells that raged around his pits was as ceaseless as the downpour of rain, but as calmly as a schoolmaster expounding a lesson in algebra, he alternately instructed his men and explained to the half a dozen subaltern officers who had been sent to him to learn. He was teaching them the methods of mortar range-finding, the details of powder-gauging for accuracy, the art of fuse-cutting, and all the rest of it, when out of a badly exposed covered way came Doctor Arthur Brent to greet him.

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XVI

THE STARVING TIME

THE stress of war had now fallen upon every Southern household. Its terrors had invaded every home. Its privations made themselves manifest in scanty food upon tables that had been noted for lavish and hospitable abundance, and in a score of other ways. The people of Virginia were not only standing at bay, heroically confronting an invading force three or four times outnumbering their own armies, but at the same time starvation itself was staring them in the face.

The food supplies of Virginia were exhausted. Half the State had been trampled over by contending armies, until it was reduced to a desert so barren that—as Sheridan picturesquely stated the case—"the crow that flies over it must carry his rations with him." The other half of the State, already stripped to bareness, was compelled during that terrible summer, almost wholly to support the army at [225]
Richmond and Petersburg and the army in the valley, for the reason that the means of drawing even scanty supplies from the well-nigh exhausted country farther south were practically destroyed. Little by little Grant had extended his left southward and westward until it crossed the Weldon Railroad south of Petersburg, thus severing that most important line of communication. In the meanwhile the Federal cavalry was continually raiding the South Side Railroad and the Richmond and Danville Line, tearing up tracks, burning the wooden bridges, and so seriously interrupting traffic as to render those avenues of communication with the South practically valueless, so far at least as the bringing of supplies for the armies was concerned.

Thus Virginia had not only to bear the calamities of the war, but also, single-handed, to maintain the armies in the field, and Virginia was already stripped to the point of nakedness.

Yet the people bore all with patriotic cheerfulness. They emptied their smokehouses, their corncribs, and their granaries. They sent even their milky herds to the slaughter, by way of furnishing meat [226]
for soldiers' rations, and they went thereafter without milk and butter for lack of cows, as they were already going without meat. Those of them who were near enough the lines desolated their poultry yards, and lived thereafter upon corn pone, with greens gathered in the fields and such perishable fruits as could in no wise be converted into rations.

The army was being slowly destroyed by the daily losses in the trenches, which, excluding the greater losses of the more strenuous battles, amounted to about thirty per cent a month in the commands that defended the most exposed points. Thus Owen Kilgariff's mortar command of two hundred and ten men lost sixty-two within a single month, and some others lost still more heavily for lack of the wise discretion Kilgariff constantly brought to bear upon the problem of husbanding the lives and limbs of his men while getting out of them the uttermost atom of effective service of which they were capable.

Whenever a severe mortar fire was opened upon his line of pits, he would station himself in a peculiarly exposed position on top of the earth mound that protected his magazine. From that point he [227]
could direct the work of every gun under his command and at the same time do much for the protection of his men. A mortar shell can be seen in the air—particularly at night, when its flaming fuse is a torch—and its point of contact and explosion can be calculated with a good deal of precision. It was Kilgariff's practice to watch for the enemy's shells, and whenever he saw that one of them was likely to fall within one or other of his pits and explode there with the certainty of blowing a whole gun detachment to atoms, he would call out the numbers of the exposed pits, whereupon the men within them would run into the boom-proofs provided for that purpose and shelter there till the explosion was over.

In the meanwhile, he, posted high upon the magazine mound, was exposed not only to the mortar fire that endangered his men, but still more to a hail-storm of musket bullets and to a ceaseless flow of rifled cannon shells that skimmed the edge of his parapet, with fuses so skilfully timed and so accurately cut that every shell exploded within a few feet of his head.

Perhaps he was thinking of the kindly bullet or the friendly shell [228]
fragment that was to make an end of his perplexities. Who knows? Yet his exposure of himself was not reckless, but carefully calculated for the preservation of his men. It was only such as was common among the Confederate officers at Petersburg, where the percentage of officers to men among the killed and wounded was greater than was ever recorded in any war before or since.

By this exposure of his own person Kilgariff undoubtedly saved the lives of many of his men, all of whom were volunteers who had offered themselves to man a position so dangerous that the chief of artillery had refused to order mortars to occupy it, and had reluctantly consented to its occupation by Kilgariff and his desperately daring men as volunteers in an excessively perilous service. He might have reduced his losses still more if he had been willing to order his subordinates at the several groups of pits to expose themselves as he did in the interest of the men. But this he refused to do, on the ground that to order it would be to exact more than even a soldier's duty requires of the bravest man.

One of his sergeants—a boy of fifteen, who had won promotion by [229]
gallantry—had indeed emulated his captain's example in the hope of sparing his men. But the second time he did it, a Hotchkiss shell carried away his head and shoulders, and the world suffered loss.

The hospital service, under such conditions, was terribly overtaxed, and for relief the plantation houses were asked to receive and care for such of the wounded as could in any wise be removed to their hospitable shelter. Thus, presently, every half-starving family in the land was caring for and feeding as best it could from three to a dozen wounded men.

At Wyanoke Dorothy had met this emergency by establishing a regular hospital camp, in which she received and cared for not less than fifty wounded officers and men. With the wise foresight that was part of her mental make-up, and aided by Arthur's advance perceptions of what this terrible campaign was likely to bring forth, Dorothy had begun early in the spring to prepare for the emergency. She had withdrawn a large proportion of the field hands from the cultivation of crops, and set them at work raising garden stuff instead. To the same end, she had diverted to her gardens a [230]
large part of the stable fertiliser which was ordinarily spread upon corn, wheat, or tobacco lands. She had said to Arthur:—

"There is nothing certain after this year except disaster. We must meet disaster as bravely as we can, and leave the future to take care of itself. I shall devote all our resources this year, outside the poppy fields, to the production of food stuffs—vegetables, fowls, and pigs—with which to feed the wounded who must presently come to us."

Thus it came about that Dorothy was able to care for fifty wounded men at a time, when the mistresses of other plantations as great as Wyanoke and Pocahontas found themselves sorely taxed in taking ten. And as the wounded men were impatient to get back into the trenches as soon as their injuries were endurably half healed, the ministry of mercy at Wyanoke was brought to bear upon many hundreds of brave fellows during that most terrible of summers, and the fame of Dorothy Brent as an angel of mercy and kindness spread throughout the army, fairly rivalling that of her mother—unknown as such—Madame Le Sud. Madame Le Sud, defiant alike of [231]
weariness and danger, poured water down many parched throats on Cemetery Hill at Petersburg, until at last a Minié ball made an end of her ministry; and on that same day a dozen brave fellows fell while carving her name on a rude boulder which marked the place of her final sacrifice. The places of those who fell in this service were promptly taken by others equally intent, at whatever cost, upon marking for remembrance the spot on which that woman gave up her life who had ministered so heroically to human suffering.

All these things are only incidents illustrative of that heroism on the part of women which the poet, if we had a poet, would seize upon as the vital and essential story of the Confederate war. If that heroism could be properly celebrated, it would make a literature worthy to stand shoulder to shoulder with the hero-songs of old Homer himself. But that story of woman's love and woman's sacrifice has never been told and never will be, for the reason that there is none worthy to tell it among those of us who survive of those who saw it and knew the self-sacrificing absoluteness of its heroism.

Into all this work of mercy Evelyn Byrd entered not only with [232]

enthusiasm, but with the tireless energy of healthy youth and with a queer sagacity—born, perhaps, of her strange life-experience—which enabled her sometimes to double or quadruple the beneficent effects of her work by the deftness of its doing.

Her enthusiasm in the cause rather astonished Dorothy, at first. If the girl had been brought up in Virginia, if her home had always been there, if she had had a people of her own there, with a father and a brother in the trenches, her devotion would have been natural enough. But none of those reasons for her enthusiasm existed. She had probably been born in Virginia, or at least of Virginian parentage, though even that assumption rested upon no better foundation than the fact that she bore a historic Virginian name. She had lived elsewhere during her childhood and youth. She had come into the Southern country under compulsion, and three fourths of the war was over before she came. So far as she knew, she had no relatives in Virginia, and very certainly she had none there whom she knew and loved.

Yet she was passionate almost to madness in her Virginianism, and she was self-sacrificing even beyond the standards of the other heroic women around her. [233]

> That she should enter passionately into any cause into which she enters at all [wrote Dorothy to Arthur during one of his absences at the front] is altogether natural. Her nature is passionate in an extreme degree, and, good as her judgment is when it is cool, she sends it about its business whenever it assumes to meddle with her passionate impulses. She has certain well-fixed principles of conduct, from which she never departs by so much as a hair's breadth—chiefly, I imagine, because they are principles which she has wrought out in her mind without anybody's teaching or anybody's suggestion. They are the final results of her own thinking. She regards them as ultimates of truth. But subject to these, she is altogether a creature of impulse. Even to save one she loves from great calamity, she would not think of compromising the most trivial of her fundamental principles; yet for the sake of one she loves, she would sacrifice herself illimitably even upon the most trivial occasion. It is a dangerous character to possess, but a most interesting one to study, and certainly it is admirable.

Arthur smiled lovingly as he read this analysis. "How little we know ourselves!" he exclaimed, in thought. "If I had worked with pen and paper for a month in an effort to describe Dorothy's own character fittingly, I couldn't have done it so perfectly as she has done it in describing the make-up of Evelyn. Yet she never for one moment suspects the similarity. Just because the external circumstances are different in the two cases, she is utterly blind to the parallel. It doesn't matter. It is far better to have such a character as Dorothy's than to try to create it—much better to have it than to know that she has it." [234]

It is worthy of observation and remark that in his thinking about this matter of character, and admiring and loving it, Arthur Brent connected the subject altogether with Dorothy, not at all with Evelyn.

That was because Arthur Brent was in love with his wife, and happy is the man with whom such a love lingers and dominates after the honeymoon is over!

One day Dorothy and Evelyn talked of this matter of Evelyn's enthusiasm for the Confederate cause and her passionate devotion to those who had received wounds in the service of it. It was Evelyn who started the conversation.

"The best thing about you, Dorothy," she said, one morning while they two were waiting for a decoction they were making to drip through the filtering-paper, "is your devotion to Cousin Arthur." Evelyn had come to that stage of Virginian culture in which affection expressed itself in the claiming of kinship where there was none. "It seems to me that that is the way every woman should feel toward her husband, if he is worthy of it, as Cousin Arthur is." [235]

"Tell me your whole thought, Byrdie," answered Dorothy, who had fastened that pet name upon her companion. "It interests me."

"Well, you see I haven't seen much of this sort of thing between husbands and wives, though I am satisfied it ought to exist in every marriage. I heard a woman lecture once on what she called the 'Subjection of Women.' She made me so angry that I wanted to answer her—mere slip of a girl that I was—but they—well, I wasn't let. That isn't good English, I know, but it is what I mean. The woman wanted to strike the word 'obey' out of the marriage service, just as if the form of a marriage ceremony had anything to do with a real marriage. As well as I could make out her meaning, she wanted [236]

every woman to enter upon wedlock with fixed bayonets, with her glove in the ring, and with a challenge upon her lips. I don't believe in any such marriage as that. I regard it as an infamous degradation of a holy relation. It isn't marriage at all. It is a mere bargain, like a contract for supplies or any other contract. You see, I had never seen a perfect marriage like yours and Cousin Arthur's at that time, but I had thought about it, because I had seen the other kind. It was my idea that in a true marriage the wife would obey for love, while for love the husband would avoid commanding. I don't think I can explain—but you understand me, Dorothy—you must understand, because it is just so with you and Cousin Arthur."

"Yes, I understand," answered Dorothy.

"Of course you do. You are never so happy as in doing whatever you think Cousin Arthur would like you to do, and he never wants you to do anything except what it pleases you to do. I reckon the whole thing may be ciphered down to this: you love Cousin Arthur, and Cousin Arthur loves you; each wants the other to be free and happy, and each acts as is most likely to produce that result. I can't [237] think of any better way than that."

"Neither can I," answered Dorothy, with two glad tears glistening on her cheeks; "and I am glad that you understand. I can't imagine anything that could be better for you than to think in that way. But tell me, Byrdie, why you are so enthusiastic in our Southern cause and in your ministry to our wounded soldiers?"

"Because your cause is my cause. I haven't any friends in the world but you and Cousin Arthur, and—your friends."

Dorothy observed that the girl paused before adding "—and your friends," and Dorothy understood that the girl was thinking of Owen Kilgariff. To Dorothy it meant much that she avoided all mention of Kilgariff's name.

The girl had completely lost her mannerisms of speech in a very brief while, a fact which Dorothy attributed to her rare gift of imitation. Only once in a great while, when she was under excitement, did she lapse into the peculiarities either of pronunciation or of construction which had at first been so marked a characteristic of her utterance. She read voraciously now, reading always, apparently, with minute attention to language in her eager [238] desire to learn. Her time for reading was practically made time. That is to say, it consisted chiefly of brief intervals between occupations. She was up every morning at five o'clock, in order that she might go to the stables and personally see to it that the horses and mules were properly fed and curried.

"The negroes neglect them shamefully when I am not there in Cousin Arthur's place," she said, "and it is cruel to neglect poor dumb beasts that cannot provide for themselves or even utter a complaint."

As soon after seven as Dorothy's nursery duties permitted, the two mounted their horses and rode away for a half-intoxicating draught of the air of a Virginia summer morning. Returning to a nine o'clock "breakfast of rags," as Dorothy called the scant, makeshift meal that alone was possible to them in that time of stress, Evelyn went at once to the laboratory. After setting matters going there, she mounted again and rode away to the camp of the wounded soldiers to whose needs she ministered with a skill and circumspection that had been born of her peculiar experience in remote places.

"The best medicine she brings us," said one of the wounded men, [239] one day, "is her laugh." And yet Evelyn rarely laughed at all. It was her ever present smile and the general joyousness of her countenance that the invalids interpreted as laughter.

She always carried a light shot-gun with her, and she rarely returned to the "gre't house" without three or four squirrels for her own and Dorothy's dinner. Now and then she filled her bag with partridges—or "quails," as those most toothsome of game birds are generally, and quite improperly, called at the North. When September came, she got an occasional wild turkey also, her skill both in finding game and in the use of her gun being unusually good.

One day Dorothy challenged her on this point.

"You are a sentimentalist on the subject of animals," she said, "and yet you are a huntswoman."

"But why not?" asked Evelyn, in astonishment at the implied

question. “In the summer, the wild creatures multiply enormously. When the winter comes, they starve to death because there is not food enough. In the fall, the woods are full of them; in the spring, [240] there are very few. Nine tenths of them must die in any case, and if my gun hastens the death of one, it betters the chance of another to survive. I could never deceive them, or persuade them to trust me and then betray their trust. I don’t think I am a sentimentalist, Dorothy, and—”

Just then Dorothy thought of something else and said it, and the conversation was diverted into other channels.

Nearly always Evelyn had a book with her, which she read at odd moments, and quite always she had one book or more lying around the house, each open at the place at which she had last read, and each lying ready to her hand whenever a moment of leisure should come in her very busy day. For besides her attendance upon the sick, she relieved Dorothy of the greater part of her household duties, and was tireless in her work in the laboratory. Her knowledge of chemistry was scant, of course, but she had quickly and completely mastered the processes in use in the laboratory, and her skill in drug manufacture was greater than that of many persons more familiar with the technical part of that work.

She had from the first taken exclusive care of her own room, [241] peremptorily ordering all the maids to keep out of it.

“A maid always reminds me,” she said to Dorothy, by way of offering an explanation that did not explain; for she did not complete her sentence. But so earnest was her objection that, even to the daily polishing of the white ash floor with a pine needle rubbing, she did everything within those precincts with her own hands.

Dorothy let her have her way. It was Dorothy’s habit to let others do as they pleased so long as their pleasing was harmless.

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[242]

XVII

A GUN-PIT CONFERENCE

FOR full half an hour after Arthur Brent came out of the covered way and greeted his friend, Kilgariff's bombardment and the enemy's vigorous response continued. Arthur Brent stood by his friend in the midst of it all quite as if "the scream of shot, the burst of shell, and the bellowing of the mortars" had been nothing more than a harmless exhibition of "pyrotechny for our neighbour moon," as Bailey phrases it in *Festus*.

It did not occur to Kilgariff to invite Doctor Brent to take refuge in one of the bomb-proofs till the fierceness of the fire should be past. It never did occur to Owen Kilgariff that a gentleman of education and culture could think of shrinking from danger, even though, as in this case, he had nothing to do with the war business immediately in hand, but was, technically at least, a non-combatant. Indeed, that gallant corps of doctors who constituted the medical [243] field-service in the Confederate army never did regard themselves as non-combatants, at least so far as going into or keeping out of danger was concerned. They fired no guns, indeed, but in all other ways they participated in the field-fighting on quite equal terms with officers of the line. Wherever their duty called them, wherever an errand of mercy demanded their presence, they went without hesitation and stayed without flinching. They performed the most delicate operations, where a moment's unsteadiness of hand must have cost a human life, while shells were bursting about their heads and multitudinous bullets were whistling in their ears. Sometimes their patients were blown out of their hands by a cannon shot. Sometimes the doctors themselves went to their death while performing operations on the battlefield.

In one case a surgeon was shot unto death while holding an artery end. But while waiting for the death that he knew must come within the brief space of a few minutes, the gallant fellow held his forceps firmly and directed his assistant how to tie the blood vessel. Then he gave up the ghost, in the very act of thus saving a human [244] life perhaps not worth a hundredth part of his own. The heroism of war does not lie altogether with those who make desperate charges or desperately receive them.

Arthur Brent was high in rank in that medical corps, the cool courage of whose members, if it could be adequately set forth, would constitute as heroic a story as any that has ever been related in illustration of daring and self-sacrifice, and he honoured his rank in his conduct. His duty lay sometimes in the field, whither he went to organise and direct the work of others, and sometimes in the laboratory, where no element of danger existed. In either case he did his duty with never a thought of self and never a question of the cost.

On this occasion he stood upon the exposed mound of the magazine, watching Kilgariff's splendid work with the guns, until at last the bombardment ceased as suddenly and as meaninglessly as it had begun; for that was the way with bombardments on those lines.

When at last the fire sank to its ordinary dead level of ceaseless sharp-shooting, with only now and then a cannon shot to punctuate the irregular rattle of the rifles, Kilgariff gave the order, "Cease [245] firing," and the clamorous mortars were stilled. Then he turned to the officers who had come to him for instruction, and said:—

"Some of my men have been quick to learn and are now experts. If any of you gentlemen desire it, I will send some of the best of them to you now and then to help you instruct your cannoniers and your gunners. You will yourselves impress upon the magazine men the importance of not compressing the powder in measuring it. A very slight inattention at that point often makes a difference of twenty-five or fifty yards in the range, and so renders worthless and ineffective a shell which might otherwise do its work well. If you need the services of any of my men as tutors to your own, pray call upon me. Now good evening. I'm sorry I cannot invite you to sup with me, but I really haven't so much as a hard-tack biscuit to offer you."

When the officers had gone, Kilgariff and Brent seated themselves on top of the magazine mound and talked.

"First of all," said Arthur Brent, "I want to hear about the things

personal to yourself. You put them aside, in your letter, as of smaller consequence than the matters, whatever they were, which related to others. I do not so regard them. So tell me first of them." [246]

"Oh, those things have pretty well settled themselves," answered Kilgariff, with a touch of disgust in his tone. "It was only that I very much wanted to decline this captain's commission, under which I have been commanding sixty mortars and something like a battalion of men here. General Early fairly forced the rank upon me, after Captain Pollard lost his leg—"

"By the way," interrupted Doctor Brent, "Pollard is at Wyanoke and convalescent. With his superb constitution and his lifelong wholesomeness of living, his recovery has been rapid. He very much wants to see you. He would like you to continue in command of his battery—or would have liked it if you had not been transferred to Petersburg. He is a major now, you know, promoted for gallantry and good service, and when he returns to duty (which will be within a day or two) he will have command of his battalion. Of course, your special qualification for the work you are doing here forbids you to go back to your battery. The chief of artillery would never permit that. But I'm interrupting. Tell me what you set out to say."

"Well, it's all simple enough. You know my reasons for wishing to be an enlisted man rather than a commissioned officer. When I wrote to you, I was acting as captain under General Early's peremptory orders, but the commission he had asked the authorities at Richmond to send me had not yet come. I knew that if it should come while I was with Early, he would never let me decline it. He would have refused even to forward my declination through the regular channels. It was my hope to get myself ordered to Petersburg before the commission could come. [247]

"In that case, I thought, I could decline it and take service in my own non-commissioned rank as sergeant-major and special drill-master for the mortar batteries. But the commission came, through Early, on the day before I left the valley, and when I reported here for duty, asking to have it cancelled, the chief of artillery peremptorily refused. He took me to General Lee's headquarters and there explained the situation. General Lee settled the matter by saying that I could render much better service with a commission than without one, and that he 'desired' me to act in the capacity to which I had been commissioned. I had no choice but to yield to his wish, of course, so I took command here as captain, and immediately all the fragments of batteries that had been disintegrated during the campaign, and especially those whose officers had been killed or captured, were turned over to me to be converted into mortar men. [248]

"They number about two hundred and fifty men, some of whom are non-commissioned officers, ranking all the way from corporal to sergeant-major, so that it is impossible to handle the command effectively under a single company organisation. I made a report on the matter two days ago suggesting that the body be organised into a number of small, compact companies, and that some major of artillery already holding his commission be ordered to assume control of the whole. To-day came my reply—about two hours ago. It was to the effect that by recommendation of the chief of artillery, approved by General Lee, I had been appointed lieutenant-colonel, in command of all the mortars on this part of the line. I am instructed to organise this service with a view to effectiveness, and to report only through the chief of artillery, without the intervention of any colonel or brigadier or major-general. I cannot refuse to obey such orders, given in aid of effective service. I cannot even ask to be excused without offering an affront to my superiors and seeming, at least, to shirk that service in which they think I can make the best use of my capacities in behalf of our cause. [249]

"So that matter has settled itself. I shall have two stars sewed upon my collar to-night, and to-morrow morning I shall begin the work of reorganising the mortar service. I shall encounter very black looks in the countenances of some of the courteous captains whom you saw here half an hour ago. They are men who care for military rank, as I do not, and they will not be pleased to find themselves overslaughed by my promotion. They will never believe that I wish, even more heartily than they can, that some one of them had been set to do this duty, and that I might have returned to the ranks. But a soldier must take what comes. I must accept their black looks, and their jealousies, and perhaps even the lasting enmity of some of them, precisely as I accept the fact of the shells flung at me

by the enemy."

At that moment a sergeant approached, and, saluting, said:— [250]

"Captain Kilgariff"—for Kilgariff had not yet announced his promotion even to his men—"one of the men is hurt by a fragment of the shell that burst over us half a minute ago. He seems badly wounded."

Instantly Kilgariff and Arthur Brent hurried to the pit where the wounded man lay, and Doctor Brent dressed his wound, which was serious. At his suggestion, Kilgariff ordered two of the men to carry the stricken one to the rear through the covered way, and deliver him to the surgeons of the nearest field-hospital.

Just as the party started, a huge fifteen-inch mortar shell descended from a great height, struck the apex of the earth mound that covered the magazine, where ten minutes before the two friends had been sitting in converse, and there instantly exploded with great violence.

Kilgariff hastened to inspect. He found the magazine intact, so far, at least, as its contents were concerned. There were more than a thousand pounds of Dupont rifle powder there, secured in wooden boxes called "monkeys," and there were two thousand mortar shells there also, each weighing twenty-four pounds, each terribly [251] destructive, potentially at least, and each loaded with a heavy charge of gunpowder. Fortunately the explosion of the gigantic shell had not ignited the magazine. Had it done so, neither a man nor a gun nor any trace of either would have remained in all that circle of mortar pits, to tell the tale of their occupancy.

But practically all of the earth that had constituted the mound had been blown completely away, and some of the timbers that had supported it had been crushed till they had broken and fallen in. The man who had been in charge of the magazine was found crushed to a pulp by the falling of the timbers.

When Kilgariff had fully explored, and discovered the extent of the disaster, he swore. Pointing to the mangled body of the man who had been caught in the ruin, he said to Arthur Brent:—

"There was never a better man than Johnny Garrett. He had a wife and four children up in Fauquier County. The wife is a widow now, and the children are orphans, and Johnny Garrett is a shapeless mass of inert human flesh, all because of the incapacity of an engineer, damn him! I know the fellow—" But before continuing, [252] Kilgariff turned to a sergeant and said:—

"Go at once to General Gracie's headquarters, and say that Lieutenant-colonel Kilgariff—be sure to say *Lieutenant-colonel Kilgariff*—commanding the mortars, asks the instant attendance of a capable engineer and at least twenty-five sappers and miners to repair damages and guard against an imminent danger at Fort Lamkin. If General Gracie cannot furnish the assistance needed, go to General Bushrod Johnson's headquarters and prefer a like request. Take a look first, and you'll understand how imperative it is to get help at once. There lie a thousand pounds of rifle powder exposed to every spark that a shell may fling into it; and there are two thousand loaded shells to explode. Go quickly, and don't return without the assistance required."

Ten minutes later came the sappers and miners, armed with picks, shovels, axes, and the other tools of their trade. At their head was the engineer officer, Captain Harbach, who had constructed the magazine in the first place.

Kilgariff was a cool, self-possessed person, who very rarely lost [253] his temper in any obvious fashion. But when he saw Harbach in command, he had difficulty in controlling himself. Pointing to the ruined magazine, he said:—

"See one result of your carelessness and gross ignorance."

Then, pointing to the crushed and mangled body of Johnny Garrett, he added:—

"Look upon another result of your criminality in seeking a commission in the engineers when you perfectly knew you had no adequate knowledge of engineering. When you were constructing that magazine, I warned you that your single tier of timbers under the earth was insufficient. I reminded you of the importance of adequately protecting the vast amount of powder that must be stored there. I begged you to use longer timbers for the sake of greater elasticity, and to use three tiers of them instead of one. Your rank at that time was older than my own, and I could only give you

advice, which you disregarded. You now have before you abundant evidence of your own criminal ignorance, your own criminal neglect of plain duty, your own criminal folly. For these I shall prefer charges against you before this night ends, and I shall press those [254] charges with vigour enough to offset even the personal and political influence that secured a commission for an incapable like you."

Kilgariff was in a towering rage, and with the mangled body of Johnny Garrett lying there before him for his text, he found it impossible to restrain his speech; but to the very end, that speech was so far under control that its tones, at least, gave no indication of the excitement that inspired it. If the man speaking had been delivering a university lecture, his voice and manner could scarcely have been under better control.

When he paused, Harbach broke in:—

"Be careful of your words, Captain Kilgariff—"

"Lieutenant-colonel Kilgariff, if you please; that is my present rank, and I'll trouble you to recognise it."

"Oh, well, Lieutenant-colonel Kilgariff, if that pleases you better. Be careful of your words. You have already spoken some for which I shall hold you responsible."

"Quite right," answered Kilgariff. "I hold myself responsible, and I'll answer for my words in any way and at any time and to any [255] extent that you may desire. But meanwhile, and as your superior officer, I now order you to set to work to render that magazine safe. As your superior officer, I shall assume authority to direct your work and to insist that it shall be done as I command. Let your men shovel away all that remains of the earth mound and send your axe-men into the timber there to cut seventy or eighty sticks, each twenty-three feet long and eight inches in diameter."

The captain showed signs of standing on his dignity by refusing, but Kilgariff promptly brought him to terms by saying:—

"Whenever you want to call me to account, I shall respond—I'll do it in an hour hence, if you choose. But for the sake of the lives of some hundreds of men, I am going to have this magazine securely constructed within the briefest possible time. After that, I shall be very much at your service. You may either set your men at work in the way I have suggested, or you may return to your quarters, in which case I shall assume command of your men and do the work myself. If you elect to return to your quarters, I pledge you my honour as an officer that I shall not make your desertion of duty at a [256] critical moment the subject of an additional charge in the court-martial proceedings that I shall surely institute against you to-morrow morning."

Thus permitted, Captain Harbach retired through the covered way, and Owen Kilgariff assumed command of the men he had left behind him.

Within two hours, the magazine was reconstructed, and so strongly that no danger remained of the kind that had threatened the lives of Owen Kilgariff's men.

When all was done, Kilgariff turned again to Arthur Brent and said:—

"Now let us resume our conversation."

"But what about this quarrel with Captain Harbach? He will surely challenge you."

"Of course, and I shall accept. Never mind that. He may possibly shoot me through the head or heart or lungs. The chance of that renders it only the more imperative that you and I shall talk out our talk. I have much to say to you that must be said before morning. Besides, I must prepare my charges against Captain Harbach. It is a duty that I owe to the service to expose the arrogant incapacity of [257] such men as he. Such incapacity imperils the lives of better men, by scores and hundreds, every day. If I can do anything to purge the service of such incapables—men whose fathers' or friends' influence has secured commissions for them to assume duties which they are utterly incapable of discharging properly or even with tolerable safety to the lives of other men—it will be a greatly good achievement. Let us talk now of something else."

Then he told Arthur about the papers that the man who called himself Campbell had intrusted to his keeping.

"The matter sorely embarrasses me," he explained. "I don't know what I ought to do. Of course I am in no way bound by that fellow's half-spoken, half-suggested injunction not to give the papers to

Evelyn till she attains the age of twenty-one. I completely disregard that. But there are other things to be thought of. My command here on the lines is losing from twenty to thirty per cent of its personnel each month. Nothing is more likely than that I shall turn up among the 'killed in action' some morning. If I keep the papers with me, they are liable to fall into other and perhaps unfriendly hands at any [258] moment. As I have not the remotest notion of what is recorded in them, of course I cannot even conjecture how much of harm that might work to Evelyn. You perfectly understand that her welfare, her comfort, her feelings, constitute the controlling consideration with me."

"Oh, yes, I understand that," said Arthur.

"Don't jest, if you please," broke in Kilgariff, with a note of offence in his voice.

"My dear fellow," answered Arthur, with profound seriousness, "nothing could be farther from my thought than jesting on a subject so serious. I beg you to believe—"

"I do. I believe you implicitly. But somehow this explosion, and poor Johnny Garrett's needless death, and my quarrel with that reckless incapable, Harbach, have set my nerves on edge, so that I am querulous. Forgive me, and let me go on. As to these papers, I want to do that which is best for Evelyn; but I don't know what is best, and I can't find out by questioning my own mind. You see, I not only do not know what is in the papers, but I do not even know what circumstances gave them birth, or what purpose of good or evil lies [259] behind them, or what distressing revelations they may make for her affliction. The cold-blooded gambler, swindler, adventurer, cheat, who gave the papers to me is—or was, for I don't know whether he is now dead or alive—capable of any atrocity. He admitted to me that he had cruelly persecuted the girl, his daughter. It would not be inconsistent with his character, I think, for him to send her from his deathbed a bundle of papers that should needlessly afflict and torture her. He cherished quite enough of enmity to me, I think, to make him happy in the conviction that he had made me his unwilling and unwitting agent in inflicting such wounds upon her spirit.

"Thus I dare not give her the papers, nor dare I withhold them, lest thereby I do her a wrong. Counsel me, my friend. Tell me what I should do!"

"Consult Dorothy," answered Arthur. "Her judgment in such a case will be immeasurably wiser than yours or mine, or both combined."

"Thank you. That is the best solution. I wonder I didn't think of it before. I will act upon it at once. I'll send the papers to Dorothy by [260] your hand, and I'll ask you also to bear her a letter in which I shall beg for her judgment. That's the end of one of my perplexities, for the time being at least. Now let us talk of another thing that concerns me very deeply. I am a pretty rich man, as you know. I own some real estate in New York City. That will probably be confiscated when this war comes to an end, as you and I clearly see that it must do very soon. I own a good many stocks and bonds and other securities, which cannot be so easily confiscated, inasmuch as they are in possession of my bankers, who are like drums for tightness, and are besides my very good friends. In addition to these things, the bulk of my fortune is invested in Europe, where it cannot be confiscated at all. The securities are held by the Liverpool branch of Frazer, Trenholm, and Company, of Charleston, for my account, so that they are perfectly safe.

"Now the only relatives I have in the world, so far as I know, are my brother and his family. I have every reason for desiring that none of them shall ever get a single cent from my estate. So much on the negative side. Affirmatively, I very earnestly desire that every dollar I have in the world shall go at my death to the one woman I [261] ever loved—Evelyn Byrd.

"It may seem to you a simple and easy thing to arrange that, but it is not so. Any will that I might make cutting off my relatives from the inheritance of my property would be obstinately contested in the courts."

"But upon what grounds?"

"Oh, the lawyers can be trusted to find reasons 'as plenty as blackberries.' For one thing, they could insist that I was a dead man long before the date of my will."

"How do you mean?"

“Why, when I escaped from Sing Sing, there were two other men with me. As we swam out into the Hudson, the guards opened a vigorous fire upon us. One of my companions was killed outright, his face being badly mutilated by the bullets. The other was wounded and recaptured. He positively identified the dead man’s body as mine. It was buried in my name, and my death was officially recorded as a fact. So, you see, I am officially a dead man, if ever my relatives have occasion to prove me so. But apart from that, my estate, when I die, will be a sufficiently large carcass to induce a great gathering of the buzzards about it. With half a million dollars [262] or more to fight over, the lawyers may be trusted to find ample grounds for fighting.”

“It seems a difficult problem to solve,” said Arthur, meditatively. “I don’t see how you can manage it.”

“Such matters are easy enough when one has friends, as I have, who may be trusted implicitly. I have thought this matter out, and I think I know how to handle the situation.”

“Tell me your plan, if you wish.”

“Of course I wish. My first thought was to give everything I have in the world to Evelyn now, giving her deeds for the real estate and absolute bills of sale for the securities. But of course I could not do that. I could never gain her consent to such an arrangement without first winning her love and making her my affianced bride.”

“Do you think that would be impossible?”

“I do not know—perhaps so. At any rate, it is out of the question.”

“I confess I do not see why.”

“I am a convicted criminal, you know—a fugitive from justice.”

“No. You are officially dead. The courts of New York will not hold [263] a dead man to be a fugitive from justice. And morally you are nothing of the kind. It was not justice, but infamous injustice, that condemned you.”

“However that may be, I can never ask Evelyn Byrd to be my wife, to share the life of a man who might even possibly be sent back to Sing Sing. I can never ask her to make of her children the sons and daughters of a convicted criminal. I will not do that. So I have thought out another plan. My second thought was to turn over all I have to you in trust for Evelyn. When I am dead, she need not refuse the gift. But there again is a difficulty. When this war ends in the complete conquest of the South, as it soon must, political passion at the North is well-nigh certain to find expression in acts of wholesale confiscation, directed against men of wealth at the South, and men who have served as officers in our army. They may, indeed, include all who have served at all, even as privates. At any rate, you are an officer of high rank, and between you and Dorothy you are one of the greatest plantation owners in Virginia. You are pretty sure to be included in whatever is done in this way.

“It will not do, therefore, to make you my trustee for Evelyn. I [264] must have some non-combatant to serve in that capacity, and, with your permission, I am going to ask Dorothy to accept the duty.”

“You have my permission, certainly. But I see another danger. Suppose anything should happen to Dorothy?—God forbid it! Suppose she should die?”

“I have thought of all that,” answered Kilgariff, “and I think I see a way out. I shall ask Dorothy to select some friend, some woman whom she can absolutely trust, to serve with her as a joint trustee, giving full power to the survivor to carry out the trust in case of the death of either of the two. I haven’t a doubt she knows such a woman.”

“She does—two of them. There is Edmonia Bannister, one of God’s elect in character, and there is Mrs. Baillie Pegram—she who was Agatha Ronald. Either of them would serve the purpose perfectly.”

“I’ll get Dorothy to ask both of them,” responded Kilgariff. “Then all possible contingencies will be fully met and provided for.

“Now for present concerns. If I can make a Confederate taper [265] burn for an hour, I’ll write my letter to Dorothy, to accompany the papers, and to ask her to serve me in this matter of the trusteeship. I have a very capable young lawyer under my command here as a sergeant. Early in the morning I shall set him to work preparing the trust conveyances. He is a rapid worker, and will have the documents ready by nightfall. Then I’ll send them to Wyanoke by a courier. In the meanwhile I have Captain Harbach on my hands. I’m

afraid I must ask you to act for me in that matter. While we have been talking, it has occurred to me that when I prefer my charges against Captain Harbach, he will be placed under arrest. In that position he would not be permitted to send me the hostile message he threatened to-night. It would be extremely unfair to him to place him in such a position. I want you to write to him, if you will, as my friend. Say to him that in view of his expressed desire to hold me responsible for words spoken to-night, and in order to give him opportunity to do so without embarrassment, I shall postpone for twenty-four hours, or for a longer time, if for any reason he cannot conveniently act within twenty-four hours, the preferring of my [266] official charges against him. Ask him, please, to advise you of his wishes in the matter in order that I may comply with them."

"You are a very cool hand, Kilgariff," said Arthur, "and your courtesy to an enemy is extreme."

"Oh, courtesy in such a case is a matter of course. Let me say to you, now, that when I meet Captain Harbach on the field, I shall fire high in the air. I have no desire to kill him or to inflict the smallest hurt upon him. I am merely giving him the opportunity he desires to kill me, by way of avenging himself upon me for the severe criticisms I have made upon his character, his conduct, and his assumption of functions that he is incapable of discharging with tolerable safety to other men. Let me make this matter plainer to your mind, Arthur. I do not at all believe in the duello. I think it barbarous in intent and usually ridiculous in its conduct. But I had the best of good reasons for saying what I did to Captain Harbach, and so I said it. What I said was exceedingly offensive to him, and the only way he knows of 'vindicating' himself is by challenging me to a duel. It would be a gross injustice on my part to refuse to meet [267] him, and to do an injustice is to commit an immorality. So, of course, I shall meet him. As I have no desire to do him other harm than to get him removed from a position which he is incapable of filling with safety to others and benefit to the service, I shall not think of shooting at him. But I shall give him the privilege he craves of shooting at me. I really don't mind, you know, under the circumstances, except that in any case I shall postpone his shooting at me till I can execute the documents relating to my property."

"In view of your explanation," answered Arthur, "I must decline to act as your friend in this matter."

"But why?"

"Because I will have no part nor lot in a murder. I detest duelling, as you do; I regard it as a relic of feudalism which ought to give place to something better in our enlightened and law-governed time. But while it lasts, I am forced to consent to it, however unwillingly. I recognise the fact that the right of the individual to make private war on his own account is the only basis on which nations can logically or even sanely claim the right to make public war. Nations [268] are only aggregations of individuals, and their rights are only the sum of the rights previously possessed by the individuals composing them. But while I feel in that way about duelling, I can have no part in a contest in which I know in advance that one of the contestants is going to shoot to kill, while the other is merely standing up to be shot at and does not himself intend to make war at all."

"Very well," answered Kilgariff. "I'll get some one else to send the letter."

He summoned an orderly and directed him to go to a neighbouring camp and ask an officer there to call upon Lieutenant-colonel Kilgariff, "concerning a purely personal matter, and not at all with reference to any matter of service."

The officer, a fiery little fellow, responded at once to the summons, and he promptly wrote—spelling it very badly—the message which Kilgariff had asked Arthur to send.

Half an hour later, the messenger who had borne the note returned with it unopened. For explanation, he said:—

"Captain Harbach had his head blown off in the trenches just before daylight this morning."

XVIII

EVELYN'S REVELATION

IT was during Arthur's absence at Petersburg that Evelyn began talking with Dorothy about herself.

"It isn't nice," she said, as the two sat together in the porch one day, "for me to have reserves and secrets with you, Dorothy."

"But why not? Every one is entitled to have reserves. Why should not you?"

"Oh, because—well, things are different with me. You are good to me—nobody was ever so good to me. I am living here, and loving you and letting you love me, and all the time you know nothing at all about me. It isn't fair. I hate unfairness."

"So do I," answered Dorothy. "But this isn't unfair. I never asked you to tell me anything about yourself."

"That's the worst of it. That's what makes it so mean and ugly [270] and unfair for me to go on in this way. Why should you be so good to me when you don't know anything about me?"

"Why, because, although I do not know your history, *I know you*. If it is painful for you to tell me about yourself—"

"It wouldn't be painful," the girl answered, with an absent, meditative look in her eyes. But she added nothing to the sentence. She merely caressed Dorothy's hand. After a little silence, she suddenly asked:—

"What's a 'parole,' Dorothy?"

Dorothy explained, but the explanation did not seem to satisfy.

"What does it mean? How much does it include? How long does it last?"

Dorothy again explained. Then Evelyn said:—

"It was a parole I took. I don't know what or how much it bound me not to tell. I wish I could make that out."

"If you could tell me something about the circumstances," answered the older woman, "perhaps I could help you to find out. But you mustn't tell me anything unless you wish."

"I should like to tell you everything. You see, they were trying to [271] send me South, through the lines somehow. They said I was to be sent to some relatives—but I reckon that wasn't true. Anyhow, they wanted to send me through the lines, and they had to get permission. So they took me to a military man of some sort, and he took my parole. I had to swear not to tell anything to the enemy, and after I had sworn that I wouldn't, he looked very sternly at me and told me I mustn't forget that I had taken an oath not to tell anything I knew."

Dorothy answered without hesitation that the parole referred only to military matters, and not at all to things that related only to the girl herself and her life.

"But, Dorothy, I didn't know anything about military affairs—how could I? So I reckon they couldn't have meant that."

"They could not know what information you might have, or what messages some one might send through you. You may be entirely sure, dear, that your oath meant nothing in the world beyond that. The military authorities at the North care nothing about your private affairs or how much you may talk of them. Still, you are not [272] to tell anything that you have doubts about. You are not to wound your own conscience. I sometimes think our own consciences are all there is of Judgment Day. You are always to remember that Arthur and I are perfectly satisfied to take you for what you are, asking no questions as to the rest. We are vain enough to think ourselves capable of forming our own judgment concerning the character of a girl like you. We are not afraid of making any mistake about that."

Evelyn did not reply. She sat still, continuing to caress Dorothy's hand. She was thinking in some troubled fashion, and Dorothy was wise enough to let her go on thinking without interruption.

After a while the girl suddenly dropped the hand, arose, and went out upon the lawn. Her mare was grazing there, and Evelyn called the animal to her. Leaping upon the unsaddled and unbridled mare, she started off at a gallop. Presently she slipped off her low shoes, and in her stocking feet stood erect upon the galloping animal's

back. With low, almost muttered commands she directed the mare's course, making her leap a fence twice, while her rider sometimes [273]
stood erect, sometimes knelt, and sometimes sat for a moment, only to rise again with as great apparent ease as if she had been occupying a chair.

Finally she brought her steed to a halt, leaped nimbly to the ground, and resumed her slippers. She walked rapidly back to the porch, and, with a look of positively painful earnestness in her face, demanded:—

"Does *that* make a difference? Does it alter your opinion? Do you still believe in me?"

Her tone was so eager, so intense, that it seemed almost angry. Dorothy only answered:—

"It makes no difference."

"You know what that means? You guess where I learned to do that?"

"Yes."

"And still you do not cast me out? Still you do not command me to go away?"

"Not at all. Why should I?"

"But why not? Most women of your class and in your position would send me away."

"I am perhaps not like most women of my class and condition. At any rate, as I told you a while ago, I *know you*, I trust you, I believe in you. *You are you.* What else matters? Let me tell you a little life- [274]
story. My mother was a musician, who performed in public. Everybody about here scorned her for that. But she was the superior of all of them. She was a woman of genius and strong character. She hated shams and conventionalities, and she was a good woman. When the war came, she set to work nursing the wounded. She was shot to death a little while ago, and the soldiers loved her so that they rolled a great boulder over her grave and carved a loving inscription upon it with their own hands. Many of them were killed in doing that; but whenever one fell, another took his place. Do you think, Evelyn, that I, her daughter, could ever scorn a good woman like you, merely because she was or had been an actor in a show? I tell you, Evelyn Byrd, I *know* you, and that is quite enough for me."

"Is it enough for Cousin Arthur?"

"Yes, assuredly."

"And for—well, for others?"

"If you mean Kilgariff, yes. If you mean the conventional people, no. So you had better never say anything about it to them."

At Dorothy's mention of Kilgariff's name, Evelyn started as if [275]
shocked. But quickly recovering herself, she said with passion in her tones:—

"You are the very best woman in the world, Dorothy. I shall not long have any secrets from you."

The girl's agitation was ungovernable. Emotionally she had passed through a greater crisis than she had ever known before, and her nerves were badly shaken. Without trying to utter the words that would not rise to her quivering lips, she took refuge in the laboratory, where she set to work with the impatience of one who must open a safety valve of some kind, or suffer collapse. Most women of her age, similarly agitated, would have gone to their chambers instead, and vented their feelings in paroxysms of weeping. Evelyn Byrd was not given to tears. Perhaps bitter experience had conquered that feminine tendency in her, though very certainly it had not robbed her of her intense femininity in any other way.

When Dorothy joined her in the laboratory an hour later, the girl was engaged in an operation so delicate that the tremor of a finger, the jarring of a sharply closed door, or even a sudden breath of air [276]
would have ruined the work.

"Step lightly, please," was all that she said. Dorothy saw that the girl had completely mastered herself.

And Dorothy admired and rejoiced.

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XIX

DOROTHY'S DECISION

KILGARIFF had not long to wait for Dorothy's answer, nor was the reply an uncertain one. It was not Dorothy's habit to be uncertain of her own mind, especially where any question of right and wrong was involved. She never hesitated to do or advise the right as she saw it, and she never on any account juggled with the truth or avoided it.

So far as the trusteeship was concerned, she accepted the appointment for herself and also for Edmonia Bannister and Agatha Pegram, both of whom were within an hour's ride of Wyanoke, as Agatha was staying for a time at Edmonia's home, Branton. Dorothy had gone to them at once on receipt of Kilgariff's letter, and both had consented to accept the trust.

That matter out of the way, Dorothy took up the other with that directness of mind which made her always clear-sighted and well-nigh unerring in judgment, at least where questions of conduct were concerned. [278]

> I am rather surprised, Kilgariff [she wrote], and not quite pleased with you. Can you not see that you have no more right to let me read Evelyn's papers than to read them yourself? They are hers to do with as she pleases, and neither you nor I may so much as read a line of them without her voluntary consent.
>
> Neither, I think, have you any right to withhold them from her. They are her property, and you must give them to her, as you would her purse, had it come into your possession. The fact that these papers may hurt her feelings in the reading has no bearing whatever on the case. It is not your function to protect her against unpleasantness by withholding from her anything to which she has a right, whether it be property or information or anything else. You are not her father, or her brother, or her husband, or even a man affianced to her—this last mainly by your own fault, I think. It is just like a man to think that he has a right to wrong a woman by way of protecting her and sparing her feelings.
>
> Let me tell you that Evelyn Byrd stands in need of no such protection. Little as I know of her life-experiences, that little is far more than you know. She has suffered; she has known wrong and [279] oppression; she has had to work out for herself even the fundamental principles of morality in conduct. Her experience has been such that it has made her wonderfully strong, especially in the matter of endurance. She is tender, loving, sensitive—yes, exquisitely sensitive—but she has a self-control which amounts to stoicism—to positive heroism, I should say, if that word were not a badly overworked one.
>
> Nevertheless, I have some fear that these papers may contain things that it will be very painful for her to read, and I strongly sympathise with your desire to spare her. I condemn only the method you have wished to adopt. I must not examine the papers. I have no right, and you can give me no right, to do that. Still less must I think of deciding whether they are to be given to her or withheld. That is a thing that decides itself. They are absolutely hers. You must yourself place them in her hands. In doing so, you can make whatever explanation or suggestions you please, and she can act upon your suggestions or disregard them, as shall seem best to her.
>
> To do this thing properly, you must come to Wyanoke. There seems to be no crisis impending at Petersburg just now, and you can easily get leave for two or three days, particularly as the distance between Wyanoke and Petersburg is so small. In case of need, you can return [280] to your post quickly. A good horse would make the journey in a very brief time. If pressed, he could cover it in two hours, or three at most. So come to Wyanoke with as little delay as may be, and do your duty bravely.

Kilgariff had no need to apply for a leave of absence. The wound in his neck had been behaving badly for ten days past, and it was now very angry indeed. Day by day a field-surgeon had treated it, to no effect. So far from growing better, it had grown steadily worse.

Under the night-and-day strain of his ceaseless war work, Kilgariff had grown emaciated, and so far enfeebled as to add greatly to the danger threatened by the wound's condition. On the morning of the day which brought him Dorothy's letter, the surgeon had found his condition alarming, and had said to him:—

"Colonel, I have before advised you to go to a hospital and have this wound treated. Now I must use my authority as your medical officer and *order* you to go at once. If I did not compel that, the service would very soon lose a valuable officer."

"Must it be a hospital, Doctor?" asked Kilgariff. "May I not run up to Wyanoke, instead, and get my friend Doctor Brent to treat me?" [281]

"Capital! Nothing could be better. Besides, the hospitals are full to overflowing, and you'd get scant attention in most of them. Go to Wyanoke by all means, but go at once. I'll give you a written order

to go, and you can make it the basis of your application for sick leave. Act at once, and I'll go myself to headquarters to impress everybody there with the urgency of the case and especially the necessity for promptitude. You ought to have your leave granted by to-morrow morning."

It was granted in fact earlier than that, so that before nightfall Kilgariff set out on a horse purchased from an officer of his acquaintance, a horse lean almost to emaciation, but strong, wiry, and full of spirit still. He was an animal in which blood did indeed "tell," a grandson of that most enduring of racers, Red Eye.

"Give a good account of yourself, old fellow," said Kilgariff to the animal, caressingly, "and I promise you better rations at Wyanoke than you have had for two months past."

[282]

Whether the horse understood the promise or not, he acted as if he did, and with a long, swinging stride, left miles behind him rapidly.

It was a little past midnight when the well-nigh exhausted officer reached the hospitable plantation; but before going to the house, he aroused the negro who slept on guard at the stables, and himself remained there till the half-sleeping serving-man had thoroughly groomed the animal and placed an abundance of corn and fodder in his manger and rack.

Then the way-worn traveller went to the house, entered by the never closed front door, and made his way to a bedroom, without waking any member of the family.

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XX

A MAN, A MAID, AND A HORSE

WHEN Evelyn went to the stables in the early morning, and found a strange horse there, she could not learn how he came to be there, or who had brought him. The negro man who had rubbed down the animal under Kilgariff's supervision during the night had already gone to the field, and the stable boy who was now in attendance knew nothing of the matter.

The horse gently whinnied a welcome as the girl entered, and his appearance interested her. She bade the stable boy lead him out, so that she might look him over, and his symmetry and muscularity impressed her mightily.

"Poor beastie!" she exclaimed, upon seeing his lean condition, "they have treated you very badly. You haven't had enough to eat in a month, and you've been worked very hard at that. But you are strong and brave and good-natured still, just as our poor, half- [284] starved soldiers are. You must be a soldier's horse. Anyhow, you shall have a good breakfast. Here, Ben, take this splendid fellow back to his stall and give him ten ears of corn. Rub him down well, and when he has finished eating, turn him into the clover field to graze. Poor fellow! I hope you're going to stay with us long enough to get sleek and strong again."

As was always the case when Evelyn caressed an animal, the horse seemed to understand and to respond. He held out his head for a caress, and poked his nose under her arm as if asking to be hugged. Finally he lifted one of his hoofs and held it out. The girl grasped the pastern, saying:—

"So you've been taught to shake hands, have you? Well, you shall show off your accomplishments as freely as you please. How do you do, sir? I hope you have slept well! Now Ben has your breakfast ready, so I'll excuse you, and after breakfast you shall have a stroll in a beautiful clover lot!"

As she finished her playful little speech and turned her head, she was startled to see Kilgariff standing near, looking and listening.

"Oh, Mr. Kilgariff!" she exclaimed, in embarrassment, "I didn't [285] know you were here. You must think me a silly girl to talk in that way with a horse."

"Not at all," he answered; "the horse seemed to like your caressing, and as for me, I enjoyed seeing it more than I can say."

"Then you wanted to laugh at me."

"By no means. I was only admiring the gentleness and kindliness of your winning ways. The thought that was uppermost in my mind was that I no longer wondered at the fascination you seem to exercise over animals. Your manner with them is such, and your voice is such, that they cannot help loving you. Even a man would be helpless if you treated him so."

"Oh, but I could never do that—at least, well—I mean I could—" There the speech broke down, simply because the girl, now flushing crimson, knew not how to finish it. The thought that had suddenly come into her mind she would not utter, and she could think of no other that she might substitute for it.

But her flushed face and embarrassment told Kilgariff something that the girl herself did not yet know—something that sent a thrill of gladness through him in the first moment, but filled him in the next [286] with regretful apprehension. He saw at once that that had happened which he had intended should never happen. Unconsciously, or at least subconsciously, Evelyn Byrd had come to think of him—or, more strictly speaking, to feel toward him without thinking—in a way that signified something more than friendship, something quite unrecognised by herself. Instantly the questions arose in his mind: "What shall I do? Is it too late to prevent this mischief, if I go away at once? If not, how shall I avoid a further wrong? Shall I go away, leaving her to work out her own salvation as best she can? Or shall I abandon my purpose and suffer myself to win her love completely? And in that case how shall I ever atone to her for the wrong I do her? I must in that case deal honestly and truthfully with her, telling her all about myself, so that she may know the worst. Perhaps then she will be repelled and no longer feel even friendship for a man living under such disgrace as mine. It will be painful for me to do

that, but I must not consider my own feelings. It is my duty to face these circumstances in the same spirit in which I must face the dangers and hardships of war." [287]

All this flashed through his mind in an instant, but, without working out the problem to a conclusion, he set himself to relieve the evident embarrassment of the girl—an embarrassment caused chiefly by her consciousness that she had felt embarrassment and shown it. He resolutely controlled himself in voice and manner and turned the conversation into less dangerous channels.

"You were startled at seeing me," he said, "because you did not know I was here. I came 'like a thief in the night.' I got here about midnight, after a hard ride from Petersburg. I saw the horse groomed and fed, and then went to the house and crept softly up the stairs to the room I occupied when I was at Wyanoke before. I came to let Arthur have a look at my wound—"

"Oh, are you wounded again?" interrupted the girl, with a pained eagerness over which a moment later she again flushed in shamed embarrassment.

"Oh, no. It is only that the old wound has been behaving badly, like a petted child, because it has been neglected. But tell me," he [288] quickly added, in order to turn the conversation away from personal themes, "tell me how the quinine experiments get on. I'm deeply interested in them, particularly the one with dog fennel. Does it yield results?"

Evelyn was glad to have the subject thus changed, and she went eagerly into particulars about the laboratory work, talking rapidly, as one is apt to do who talks to occupy time and to shut off all reference to the thing really in mind.

Kilgariff's half of the conversation was of like kind, and it was additionally distracted from its ostensible purpose by the fact that he was all the time trying to work out in his own mind the problem presented by his discovery, and to determine what course he should pursue under the embarrassing circumstances. All the while, the pair were slowly walking toward the house. As they neared it, a clock was heard within, striking six. It reminded Evelyn of something.

"It is six o'clock," she said, "and I must be off to the hospital camp to see how my wounded soldiers have got through the night. I make my first visit soon in the morning now, and Dorothy and I go together later."

Turning to a negro boy, she bade him go to the stables and bring [289] her mare.

Now it was very plainly Kilgariff's duty to welcome this interruption, which offered him three hours before the nine o'clock breakfast in which to think out his problem and decide upon his course of action. But a momentary impulse got the better of his discretion, so he said:—

"I will ride over there with you, if I may."

The girl was mistress of herself by this time, so she said:—

"Certainly, if you wish. I shall be glad of your escort, if you are strong enough to ride a mile."

She said it politely, but with a tone of cool indifference which led Kilgariff to wish he had not asked the privilege. Then, calling to the negro boy, who had already started on his errand, she bade him:—

"Bring a horse for Colonel Kilgariff; not his own, but some other." This was the first time Evelyn had ever called Kilgariff by any military title. "You see, Colonel, your splendid animal has been badly overworked and underfed. I have promised him a restful morning in a clover field, and it would be too bad to disappoint him, [290] don't you think?"

"Yes, certainly. Thank you for thinking of that. How completely you seem to have schooled yourself to think of dumb animals as if they were human beings! You even assume—playfully, of course—that the big sorrel understood your promise about the clover field."

"Why should he not? Dumb animals understand a great deal more than people think. Your sorrel understood, at any rate, that I regarded him with affection and pity. That in itself was to him a promise of good treatment, and just now good treatment means to him rest in a clover field. So, while he may not have understood the exact meaning of the words I used, he understood my promise. I am not so sure even about the words. Animals understand our words oftener than we think."

“How do you mean? Would you mind giving me an illustration of your thought?”

“Oh, illustrations are plenty. But here are the horses. Let us mount and be off. We can continue our talk as we ride. Are you really strong enough?”

The man answered that he was, and the two set off. [291]

When the horses had finished their first morning dash, Evelyn cried, “Walk,” to them and they instantly slowed down to the indicated gait.

“There!” said the girl. “That’s an illustration. The horses perfectly understood what I meant when I bade them walk. I am told that cavalry horses understand every word of command, and that, even when riderless, they sometimes join in the evolutions and make no mistakes.”

“That is true,” answered her companion. “I have seen them do it often. Both in the cavalry and in the artillery we depend far more upon the horses’ knowledge of the evolutions and the words of command, than upon that of the men. They learn tactics more readily than the men do, and, having once learned, they never make a mistake, while men often do.”

“How then can you doubt that horses understand words?”

“They understand words of command, but—”

“Yes? Well? ‘But’ what?”

“I really don’t know. The thought is so new to me that it seemed [292] for the moment a misinterpretation of the facts—that there must be some other explanation.”

“But what other explanation can there be?”

“I don’t know. Indeed, I begin to see that there is no other possible. Animals certainly do understand *some* words. That is a fact, as you have shown me, and one already within my own knowledge. I see no reason to doubt that they understand many more than we are accustomed to think. I wish you would write that book about them.”

“I am writing it,” she answered; “but I don’t think I’ll ever let anybody see it—at any rate, not now—not for a long time to come—maybe not for ever.”

As she ended, the pair reached the invalids’ camp, and the wounded men gave Evelyn a greeting that astonished Kilgariff quite as much as it pleased him.

“The little lady! The little lady!” they shouted, while those of them who could walk eagerly gathered about her, with welcome in their eyes and voices.

She briefly introduced Kilgariff, and together the two went the rounds of those patients who were still unable to sit up. There were [293] few of these, but they must be the first attended to. After that, Evelyn closely questioned each of the others concerning the condition of his wounds, his sleep, his digestion, and everything else that Arthur might wish to learn in preparation for his own rounds after breakfast. Kilgariff was struck with the readiness Evelyn manifested in calling each of the men by his name, and with the minuteness of her knowledge of the special condition and the needs of each.

“How do you remember it all so minutely?” he asked, as they walked together from one side of the camp to the other.

“Why, it is my duty to remember,” she replied, in a surprised tone, as if that settled the whole matter. And in a woman of her character, it did.

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XXI

EVELYN LIFTS A CORNER OF THE CURTAIN

DURING the return ride, Kilgariff carefully avoided all reference to the real purpose of his visit to Wyanoke. He had come to dread that subject, and in his present unsettled state of mind he feared it also. It might at any moment bring on an emotional crisis, and prompt him to do or say things that must afterward cause regret. He wished to think the matter out—the matter of his future relations with this girl—and to determine finally the course of conduct which this morning's discovery might require of him.

He ought to have seized upon the opportunity for this that he had so recklessly thrown away. He ought to have let Evelyn go to the invalid camp alone, he remaining behind to think. But he had missed that opportunity, and no other was likely to come to him. Certainly no other so good could come. He must get through the matter of the [295] papers on this day, not only because the chances of war might compel him to return to his post on the morrow, but because he might very probably decide that it was his duty to take himself out of this girl's life, and, if that was to be, the sooner he should quit the house that held her the better.

Both Arthur and Dorothy were present to welcome him when he and Evelyn returned to the house, so that there was no chance then to do his thinking. Then Arthur decided to examine his wound before the breakfast hour; and when he did so, he grew grave of face and manner.

"I'm sorry to tell you, old fellow, that I must operate on your neck to-day. Your wound is in a very dangerous condition indeed. It should have been operated upon a week or ten days ago. You shall have breakfast with us this morning, as you'll need all your strength. Of course I can't chloroform you till your breakfast is digested, so I'll not operate till a little after noonday."

"You needn't give me the chloroform at all," answered Kilgariff.

"But, my dear fellow, the pain will be—"

"I'll stand it." [296]

"But the operation will be a very delicate one, so near to the carotid artery that a mere flinch from the knife might end your life at once."

"I'll not flinch," said the resolute young man.

"But what objection have you to an anæsthetic? Your heart and lungs are in perfect condition. There's not the slightest danger—"

"Danger be hanged!" interrupted Kilgariff. "I am not thinking of danger or caring about it. But chloroform always leaves me helplessly ill for many days, and I mustn't be ill or helpless just now. I am going back to the lines to-morrow. One night's sleep after your operation will put me sufficiently in condition."

"But you're not fit for duty."

"Fit or not fit, I am going."

"But it will kill you."

"That doesn't signify in my case, you know."

"Listen to me, Owen Kilgariff. You have brooded over the unfortunate circumstances of your life until you have grown morbid, particularly since this wound has been sapping your vitality. You must brace yourself up and take a healthier view of things. If you [297] don't, I shall make you. Here you are imagining yourself disgraced at the very time when others in high places are pressing honours upon you as the well-earned reward of your superb conduct. It is all nonsense, I tell you, and you must quit it; if not for your own sake, then for the sake of us who love you and rejoice in your splendid manhood. Your present attitude of mind is not to your credit. If you were not ill, it would be positively discreditable to you."

"Wait a minute, Arthur. You are judging me without knowing all the facts. I'll tell you of them after breakfast. Then, before you operate, I must talk with Evelyn about her papers. When that matter is disposed of, you shall operate without an anæthetic, and I must

return to my duty on the lines."

"Your duty there is done. You've already taught those fellows how to use mortars effectively. As to mere command, any other officer will attend to that as well as you could. I must operate upon your neck, and I will not do it without chloroform. Indeed, even from your own point of view, there would be nothing gained by that, for after this operation, whether done with or without an anæsthetic, you must not only lie abed for some days to come, but be so braced and harnessed that you cannot turn your head." [298]

Arthur then explained to his patient, as one surgeon to another, the exact nature of what it was necessary to do, and Kilgariff knew his surgery too well not to understand how imperatively necessary it would be for him to be kept perfectly still, so far as motion with his head was concerned, for a considerable period afterward.

"Very well," Kilgariff responded. "Do as you will. But first I must arrange the matter of the papers. I'll do that during the forenoon. Then I shall tell Dorothy the things I intended to tell you. There is no need that I shall tell you, and it will be easier to tell Dorothy."

"As you please," said Arthur, satisfied that he had carried his point. "Now we must go to breakfast."

At the table, Kilgariff observed that, apart from the "coffee" made of parched rye, neither Dorothy nor Evelyn took anything but fruit. There was a cold ham on the table, and the customary loaf of hot bread, but the two women partook of neither. When Kilgariff half suggested, half asked, the reason for their abstemiousness, Dorothy replied:— [299]

"We Virginia women are saving for the army every ounce of food we can. So far as possible, we eat nothing that can be converted into rations. Arthur compels Evelyn and me to take a little meat and a little bread or some potatoes for dinner. He thinks that necessary to our health. But for the rest, we do very well on fruits, vegetables, and other perishable things, don't we, Byrdie?"

"Oh, yes, indeed. For my own part, I like it. I have had other experiences in living on a restricted diet. Once I had nothing to eat for three or four months except meat, so in going without meat now I am only bringing up the average."

Kilgariff looked up in surprise.

"For three months or more you had no food but meat!" he exclaimed. "No bread, no starchy food of any kind?"

"Nothing whatever. There weren't even roots or grass there to be chewed. The Indians often live in that way. Never mind that. At another time I lived for a month in winter almost exclusively on raw potatoes, with only now and then a bit of salt beef." [300]

"May I ask why you did not cook the potatoes? If it was winter, surely you had fire."

"Oh, yes, plenty of it. But there was scurvy, and raw potatoes are best for that."

"Are they? I never knew that."

"Oh, yes. But for eating their potatoes raw, the people in the lumber-camps would never survive the winter. But I don't want to talk about those things. I didn't mean to. Perhaps I'll put them all into another book that I'm writing just for Dorothy to read and nobody else in all the world."

She looked at Dorothy as she spoke, and Dorothy understood. This was the first she had heard of the proposed "book." It was the first reference Evelyn had made to their talk on the day when she had given her hostess an exhibition of bareback riding.

Kilgariff did not understand. Yet, taken in connection with other things that Evelyn had said to him during his former stay at Wyanoke, what she now said seemed at least to lift a little corner of the thick curtain of reserve which shrouded her life-history.

"She has lived," he thought, "among the wildest of wild Indians, and she has passed at least one winter in some northern lumber-camp. I wonder why." [301]

He was not destined as yet to get any reply to the question in his mind.

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XXII

ALONE IN THE PORCH

WHEN Kilgariff asked Evelyn to go with him to the front porch, telling her he had an important matter to discuss with her, she showed a momentary embarrassment. She quickly controlled it, but not so quickly that it escaped her companion's recognition.

This troubled him at the outset. This young woman had been until now as frank and free with him as any child might have been. Her present embarrassment, momentary as it was, impressed him the more strongly because the scene at the stables in the early morning was still fresh in his memory, and because he had observed that ever since that time she had uniformly addressed him by his military title.

All these things added to the difficulty of his present task, but it was his habit to meet trouble of every kind half-way, to confront difficulty with courage and not with any show of the shrinking there might be in his mind. [303]

He plunged at once into the matter in hand. Ordinarily he would have begun by addressing his companion as "Evelyn," but for some reason which he did not stop to analyse, he felt now that he ought not to do so. Yet to address her in any other way, after having for so long called her by her first name, would be too marked a suggestion of reserve. So he avoided addressing her at all in any direct fashion.

"I have asked you to give me this half-hour because I feel that I owe you and myself a duty."

He had no sooner uttered that sentence than he felt that it was a particularly bad beginning. In his own ears it sounded uncommonly like the introduction to a declaration of love, and he was annoyed with himself for his blundering. He began again, and tried to do so more circumspectly.

"I want to talk with you about a matter that touches your own happiness very closely, and may indeed affect your entire life."

Another blundering sentence! Even more than the first it sounded to him like the preface to a formal courtship, and, realising the fact, Kilgariff made the matter worse by manifesting precisely such embarrassment as a lover might feel when about to put his fortune to the touch. [304]

Evelyn was quick to see his embarrassment, though she probably had no clear idea of its cause, and she came to his relief by saying with a well-controlled and perfectly placid intonation:—

"I am deeply interested. I didn't imagine myself a person of sufficient consequence for anybody to have important business affairs to discuss with me. Go on, please. What is it?"

"A little while ago," he began again, this time approaching the subject with some directness, "I was summoned to meet a wounded Federal officer, who believed himself to be dying. Probably he was right. I do not know. However that may be, he believed that his end was near, and I think he tried to tell the truth—an art in which he has not had much practice in his evil life. I had known him for some years. He had injured me as no other man in all the world ever did or ever can again. There were many things that I wanted him to tell me about, and the time was very short; for I had got at the house in which he lay wounded only under escort of an armed force, and I knew that my escort could not long hold the position. By the time I had finished questioning him concerning the matters in which I was personally interested, the enemy was upon us in superior force, and we were compelled to retire. Just as I was quitting his bedside, he told me something that surprised and shocked me—something that deeply concerned you." [305]

"What was it, please?" asked the girl, now pale to the lips and nervously twisting her fingers together.

"I should not tell you that, I think; not now, at any rate. It would only distress you and do no good. Perhaps it may not have been true."

"You must tell me that, or you must tell me nothing!" exclaimed the girl, rising in a passion of excitement, and speaking as if utterance involved painful effort. "Understand me, Colonel Kilgariff. I am not a child, whose feelings must be spared by reservations and

concealments. I have not been much used to that sort of coddling, and I will not submit to it. My life has been such as to teach me how to endure. You have some things, you say, which you want to tell me [306] —some things that have somehow grown out of whatever it was that this man said to you. Very well, I will not hear them, unless you can tell me all. I will not listen to half-truths. I must hear all of this matter, or none of it. You say it concerns me closely. I am entitled, therefore, to know all of it, if I am to know any of it. You are free to tell me nothing, if you choose. But if you tell me a part and keep back the rest, you wrong me, and I will not submit to the wrong. I have endured enough of that in my life."

She paused for a moment, and then resumed:—

"Pardon me if I have seemed to speak angrily or resentfully to you. I did not mean that. Such anger as I felt was aroused by bitter memories of wrong, which were called up by your proposal to put me off with a half-truth. Let me explain myself. You are doubtless thinking that I myself have been practising reserve and concealment ever since I came to Wyanoke. That is true, but it has been only because I have firmly believed that I was oath-bound to do so; and at any rate I have not told any half-truths. Whenever I have told [307] anything, I have told all of it. Another thing: I so hate concealments that at the first moment after I learned that I might do so, I decided to tell Dorothy everything that I myself know about my life. I feared to attempt that orally, lest I should grow excited and break down; so I decided to write out the whole story and give it to her. That is what I meant this morning when I said I was writing a book for Dorothy alone to read. After she has read it, it will be hers to do with as she pleases. It will be an honest book, telling the whole truth and not half-truths."

Kilgariff did not interrupt this passionate speech. It revealed to him a new and stronger side than he had imagined to exist in the nature of the woman he loved. He rejoiced that she felt and thought as she did, and he was not sorry that an error of judgment on his part had brought forth this character-revealing outburst. He promptly told her so.

"You are altogether right," he said. "I apologise for my mistake, but, frankly, I do not regret it. It has shown me the strength and truthfulness of your nature with an emphasis that altogether pleases me. I had miscalculated that strength, underestimating it. I sought [308] to spare your feelings, not knowing how brave you are to endure. I know you better now, and the knowledge is altogether pleasing."

"Thank you sincerely. And you will be generous and forgive me?"

As she said this, Evelyn resumed her familiar tone and manner of almost childlike simplicity.

"There is nothing whatever for me to forgive," the man answered, in a way that carried conviction of his perfect sincerity with it. "Let me go on with my story."

"Please do."

"Just as I was hurrying to leave the wounded man and go to my guns, which were already bellowing, he handed me a bundle of papers. He said that he had a daughter who must be somewhere in the South, if she had not been shot in passing through the lines. He begged me to find her, if possible, and give the papers to her. When I asked him the name of his daughter, he answered that it was Evelyn Byrd."

The girl was livid and trembling, but what passion it was that so shook her Kilgariff could not make out. He paused, to give her time for recovery. She slowly rose from the bench on which she was [309] sitting, and with a firm, elastic step walked out into the grounds, where her mare was grazing. The animal abandoned the grass, and trotted up to her mistress to be caressed.

As the young woman stood there, stroking the mare's nose, Kilgariff thought it the most beautiful picture he had ever looked upon—the lithe, slender girl, who carried herself with the grace of an athlete not overtrained, caressing the beautiful mare and seeming to hold mute but loving converse with a boundlessly loyal friend.

"And how much it means!" he thought. "What a nature that woman has! And what a life hers must have been so far!"

Then came over him a great and loving longing to be himself the agent of atonement to her for all the wrong that had vexed her young life, to make her future so bright and joyous that her past

should seem to her only a troubled dream from which he had been privileged to waken her. But with this longing came the bitter thought that this could never be—that he was debarred by his own misfortunes from the privilege of winning or seeking to win Evelyn Byrd's love.

Then arose again in his mind the questions of the early morning [310]
—the question of duty, the question of the possibility of avoiding the wrong he so dreaded to do. Was there yet time for him to take himself out of Evelyn Byrd's life? Or was it already too late? What and how much did her embarrassment in his presence mean? Had she indeed already, and all unconsciously, learned to return the great, passionate love he felt for her? Had he blundered beyond remedy in making himself mean so much to her? Could he now go away and leave her out of his life without inflicting upon her even a greater wrong and a severer suffering than that which his leaving would be meant to avert? If not, then what should he do? What could he do?

He felt himself in a blind alley from which there was no escape. Unhappy indeed is the man who is confronted with a divided duty, a problem of right and wrong which he feels himself powerless to solve. In that hour Owen Kilgariff was more acutely unhappy than he had ever been, even in the darkest period of his great calamity.

Presently Evelyn returned to the porch and seated herself, quite as if nothing had occurred out of the commonplace.

"What was the man's name?" she asked, with no sign of [311]
excitement or emotion of any kind in her voice or manner.

"He called himself Campbell, but he told me that it was an assumed name, and not his own. I do not know his real name."

"Nor do I," said the young woman, in the tone of one who is recalling events of the past. "I never knew that. But go on, please. What else did he tell you—what else that concerns me, I mean?"

"Nothing. The enemy was upon us hotly, and I had no time for further talk. Oh, yes, he did say that he had persecuted you 'in a way'—that was his phrase."

"I wonder what 'in a way' signified to him," said the young woman, with an intensity of bitterness in her tone, the like of which Owen Kilgariff had never heard in the utterance of man or woman before.

"Never mind that," Evelyn said, an instant later, the look of agony leaving her face as suddenly as it had appeared. "You have more to tell me?"

"Yes. I must make a confession of grave fault in myself, and ask your forgiveness. The man, Campbell, your father, gave me a bundle [312]
of papers, as I told you a little while ago, and I have been impertinently asking myself ever since what I ought to do with them. It did not occur to me then that there was no question for me to decide; that my undoubted duty was simply to place the papers in your hands, as I now do"—withdrawing the parcel from a pocket and placing it in her lap. Dorothy had returned it to him for that purpose. He continued:—

"I had not learned my lesson then. I still thought it my duty to guard and protect you, as one guards and protects a child. I reasoned that those papers very probably contained information or statements, true or false, that would afflict you sorely, and I impertinently desired to spare you the affliction. On the other hand, I realised that they might contain, instead, information of the utmost consequence to you and calculated to bring gladness rather than sorrow to your heart. In my perplexity I turned to Dorothy for help. All of us who know Dorothy do that, you know. I sent the papers to her, explaining my perplexity concerning them. I asked her to examine them and determine whether or not they should be given to you.

"Then I learned my first lesson. Dorothy wrote to me, rebuking [313]
me with severity for my presumption. She explained to me what I ought to have understood for myself—that the question of what it was best to do with the papers was not mine to decide, or hers; that I had no shadow of right to ask her to read the documents, and she no possible right to read them. She bade me come to Wyanoke and do my duty like a man.

"That is the real reason I am here; for as to my wound, I should have left that to take care of itself. If it had made an end of me, so much the better."

“You have no right, I reckon, to say that,” interrupted Evelyn, “or to think it, or to feel it. It is a suicidal thought, and quite unworthy of a brave man.”

“But my life is my own, and surely—”

“Not altogether your own; perhaps not chiefly. It belongs in part to those of us who—I mean to all who care for you, all to whom your death would bring sorrow or to whom your living might be of benefit. Above all it belongs to our country and our cause. You recognise that fact in being a soldier. No; I reckon your life is not [314] your own to do with as you please. It is cowardly in you to think in that way, just as it is cowardly for one to commit suicide because he is in trouble out of which death seems the only way of escape, or the easiest way. So please never let yourself think in that way again.”

“I will try not to,” he replied, looking at his lecturer with undisguised admiration.

“Now, while I had, myself, no right to say whether or not you should read those papers, and while it was not my privilege to protect you against any distress they might bring to you, I still have a good deal of apprehension lest their reading shall needlessly wound you. I am going to make a suggestion, therefore, which I hope you will take in good part.”

“I am ashamed of myself,” answered Evelyn, “for making you feel in that way. I am ashamed of what I said to you—though it was all true and necessary—and of the way in which I said it. I wish I could explain why I did it, why it hurt me so when you tried to conceal something from me. My outbreak has hurt you, and almost humiliated you, I reckon, and I don’t like to think of you being hurt and humiliated. It is good and generous of you to try, as you have [315] done, to spare me. Believe me when I tell you that I feel it to have been so. I cannot explain, and it vexes me that I must not. Won’t you believe that?”

“I believe anything you say, and everything you say. Indeed, it is more than belief that I feel when you tell me anything; it is a conviction of actual and positive knowledge. And now I very much want you to believe me when I say that it was not your ‘outbreak,’ as you call it, that hurt and humiliated me. It was only my consciousness of my own presumptuous impertinence that hurt. I have nothing to forgive in you; and my own fault I cannot forgive.”

There were tears in Evelyn’s eyes as the strong and generous man who had been so careful of her said this, shielding her even now by taking all blame upon himself, just as he had shielded her long before by keeping his own person between her and the bullets that were raining about them. For the moment the old childlike simplicity came into her bearing. She advanced, took Kilgariff’s hand, and said:—

“Let’s forget all about it, please. You have always been good to me.”

Then the dignity came back, and, resuming her seat, she said:— [316]

“You were going to offer a suggestion. I should like to hear it. I am sure it is meant for my advantage.”

“It is only this: I have a haunting fear that your father—”

“He was not my father,” the young woman broke in, speaking the words quite as if they had borne no special significance. “But go on, please.”

Kilgariff almost lost the thread of his thought in his astonishment at this sudden statement. He went on:—

“Well, then, the man Campbell, or whatever his real name was. I have a haunting fear that he has prepared those papers for the purpose of wounding and insulting you. He was capable of any malice, any malignity, any atrocity. He may have put into these papers falsehoods that you will be the better for not reading. On the other hand, the papers may be innocent of any such purpose, and it may even be of the utmost importance that you should know their contents. I venture to suggest that you yourself do what I had no right to do; namely, ask Dorothy to examine the packet and tell you [317] whether or not it is well for you to read the papers. You love her and trust her, and her judgment is unfailing, I might almost say infallible. This is only a suggestion, of course. I have no right to press it.”

Evelyn sat silent, holding the packet in her hands and nervously turning it over. At last she arose and took a few steps toward the doorway. Then, turning about, she said:—

“If it were necessary for any one to read the papers and advise me concerning them, I should ask *you*, Colonel Kilgariff, to stand as my friend and counsellor in the matter. But it is not necessary. *I already know what is in the papers.*”

She turned instantly and entered the house, leaving Kilgariff alone in the porch.

XXIII

A LESSON FROM DOROTHY

FOR ten days after the surgical operation, Kilgariff lay abed, his head, neck, and shoulders held rigidly immovable by a wooden framework devised for that purpose. Otherwise than as regarded the wound, he seemed perfectly well, and the wound itself healed satisfactorily under Arthur Brent's skilful treatment.

In his constrained position it was impossible for the wounded man to hold a book before his eyes, and so, to relieve the tedium of his convalescence, Dorothy read to him for several hours each day.

He had vaguely hoped, without formulating the thought, that Evelyn would render him this service, as she had done during his first illness. But this time she came not. Every day—until the success of the operation was fully assured, she inquired anxiously concerning his condition; but at no time did she visit him, or ask to [319] do so. When at last Arthur so far relaxed the mechanical restraints that Kilgariff was able to sit below stairs in the porch when the weather permitted, and before a "great, bearded fire" in the hallway if it were too cool out of doors—for the autumn was now advanced—he was sorely disappointed to learn that Evelyn was no longer at Wyanoke. She had somewhat suddenly decided to stay at Branton, for a week or ten days, as the guest of Edmonia Bannister.

All this set Kilgariff thinking, and the thinking was by no means comfortable. Did Evelyn's course mean indifference on her part? It would have given him some pain to believe that, but it would have relieved him greatly. In that case, he might go away and never come back, without fear of any harm to her or any wrong-doing on his own account. In that case, the problem that so sorely vexed him would be completely solved.

Certainly that was the outcome of the matter which he was bound to hope for. Yet the very suggestion that such might be the end of it all distressed him more than he had thought that any possible solution of the difficulty could do.

But, in fact, Owen Kilgariff knew better. When he recalled what [320] had gone before, he could not doubt the interpretation of Evelyn's avoidance of him, and this thought troubled him even more than the other. It brought back to him all the perplexities of that problem with which he had been so hopelessly wrestling ever since that morning at the stables.

What should he do? What could he do? These questions were insistent, and he could give no answer to them. At one moment his old thought of a parity of disability came back to him—the thought that as she was the daughter of a gambling adventurer, the obligation on his part not to seek her love or win it might not be altogether binding. But then flashed into his mind a memory of her words:—

"He was not my father."

That excuse, then, no longer availed him. He could no longer—and yet, and yet. The more he thought, the more difficult he found it to accept the hopelessness of the case or make up his mind to take himself out of Evelyn's life. Yet that, he confidently believed, he would instantly do if he could satisfy himself that it was not already too late for Evelyn herself to welcome such an outcome.

One morning he opened his mind to Dorothy on the subject, and [321] got a moral castigation for his pains. The gear that had restrained his movements had been completely removed by that time, and Kilgariff was contemplating an almost immediate return to his post on the lines at Petersburg.

"I am sorely troubled, Dorothy," he began. "I am going away two or three days hence, and I wish I could go without seeing Evelyn again."

"Oh, I can easily manage that," answered she, with a composure and a commonplaceness of tone which seemed inscrutable to her companion. She took his remark quite as a matter of course, treating it as she might had he merely said:—

"I should like to leave my horse here."

It was not an easy conversational situation from which to find a way out. Obviously it was for him to make the next remark, and he

could not think what it should be. Possibly Dorothy intended that he should be perplexed. At any rate, she manifestly did not intend to help him out of his difficulty.

Presently he found the way out of it for himself—the only way [322] that Dorothy would have tolerated. That is to say, he became perfectly frank with her.

"I want to talk with you about that," he said, "if I may. I am much troubled; and while I have no right to call upon you for any sort of help, I feel that it may clear my mind simply to tell you all about the matter."

"I will listen with pleasure," she said, quite coldly.

Then he blurted out the whole story. He told her—as he need not have done, for she was not a woman for nothing—of the intensity of his love for Evelyn; of the purpose he had cherished to conceal his state of mind from its object, and suffer in silence a love which he felt himself honourably bound not to declare. Then, with some difficulty, he told her of the scene at the stables, and of all that had followed: he explained how these things had bred a fear in his mind that it was already too late for him simply to go away, saying nothing.

Dorothy did not help him in the least in the embarrassment he necessarily felt in suggesting that perhaps the girl loved him already. On the contrary, she sat silent during the recital; and when [323] it was ended she said, very coldly, and with a touch of severity in her manner:—

"If I correctly understand you, you are of opinion that Evelyn has fallen in love with you without being asked. It is perhaps open to you to cherish a belief of that kind, but is it quite fair to the young woman concerned for you to make a statement of that kind to me—either directly or by implication?"

"Of course I didn't mean that—" stammered Kilgariff; but, instead of accepting his protest, Dorothy mercilessly thrust him through with another question:—

"Might I ask what you did mean, then?"

Kilgariff did not answer at once. It was impossible to escape the relentless logic of Dorothy's question. It was equally impossible to turn Dorothy by so much as a hair's breadth away from the truth she sought. Gentle as she was, forbearing as it was her nature to be, she was utterly uncompromising in her love of truth. Moreover, in this case she was disposed to be the more merciless in her insistence upon the truth for the reason that Kilgariff had blunderingly offended the dignity of her womanhood. She held his assumption concerning Evelyn's state of mind and heart to be an [324] affront to her sex, and she was not minded to let it pass without atonement.

In his masculine way, Kilgariff had many of Dorothy's qualities. He shared her love of absolute truthfulness, and his courage was as resolute as her own. He met her, therefore, on her own ground. After a moment's pause, he said:—

"I suppose I did mean what you say; and yet I meant it less offensively than you assume. I frankly acknowledge my fault in speaking to you of the matter. I had no right to do that, even with you. I was betrayed into it by the exceeding perplexity of the situation. I was wrong. I ask your forgiveness."

"That is better," responded Dorothy. "I fully believe you when you say you did not mean to do an unmanly thing. For the rest, I cannot see that your situation is at all a perplexing one, except as you needlessly make it so."

"I confess I do not understand you," replied Kilgariff, "and yet I cannot explain my difficulty in understanding without in effect repeating my error and emphasising it. I should be rejoiced to know [325] that there is no foundation for the fears that I have been entertaining without any right to entertain them."

"Are you sure of that? Would you really rejoice to know that Evelyn Byrd's sentiments toward you are only those of friendship?"

"I believe so. It would involve a good deal of distress to me, of course; but I count the other consideration as supreme. It would enable me to feel that I am privileged to go away from here carrying my burdens on my own back and allowing no straw's weight to fall upon the shoulders of the only woman in the world that I ever loved or ever shall."

Dorothy made no reply in words. Instead, she turned her great,

brown eyes full upon him and looked at him for the space of twenty seconds, in a way that brought a flush to his face. Then, still making no direct reply to anything he had uttered, she said:—

“I am very greatly displeased with you, Owen Kilgariff. And I am very greatly disappointed.”

She rose to withdraw, but Kilgariff stopped her, and with eager earnestness demanded:—

“Why, Dorothy?”

“I do not wish to explain.”

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“But you must. It is my right to demand that. If you go away after saying that, and without explaining what you mean, you will do me a grievous injustice—and you hate injustice.”

“Perhaps I ought not to have said precisely what I did. I ought to have remembered that you are morbid; that by your brooding you have wrought yourself into a diseased condition of mind. When you recover, you will understand clearly enough that it is every honest man’s privilege to woo where his heart directs. He must woo honestly, of course, but the honest wooing of a man is no wrong and no insult to a maid. Only a morbid self-consciousness like your own could imagine otherwise.”

“Then you would wish me to—”

“I wish nothing in the case. I have said all that I shall say. If I have spoken severely, it has been because I have little patience with your diseased imaginings. I don’t think I like you very well just now.”

She left him to think.

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XXIV

EVELYN’S BOOK

LATE that day, came a letter and a parcel from Evelyn to Dorothy. In the letter the girl wrote:—

> I am going to stay here at Branton for two or three more days. That is because I do not want to be with you while you are reading the book I have written for you. Two or three days will be enough for the reading. Then I am going back to Wyanoke. I have been over to the hospital camp every morning, so I don’t need to tell you that I am perfectly well.
>
> I am sending the book by the boy who is to carry this. Please read it within two days, so that I may go home to Wyanoke. You know how much I love you, so I needn’t put anything about that in this letter. But Edmonia sends her love, and so does Mrs. Pegram. What a dear she is! She wants me to call her ‘Agatha,’ and I’m beginning to do so. But I would like it better if she would let me say ‘Cousin Agatha’ instead. Somehow that seems more like what I feel.
>
> I reckon Colonel Kilgariff will be going back to Petersburg about now. If he hasn’t gone yet, please give him my regards and good wishes. I hope he won’t get himself wounded again. [328]

Dorothy faithfully delivered Evelyn’s peculiarly reserved message to Kilgariff, whereupon the young gentleman declared his purpose of returning to Petersburg on the third day following, that being the earliest return that Arthur, as his surgeon, would permit.

“But I shall call at Branton to see Evelyn first,” he added. This brought a queer look into Dorothy’s eyes, but whether it was a look of pleasure, or of regret, or of simple surprise, he could not make out. “After all,” he thought, “it doesn’t matter. I have decided to take this affair into my own hands. And they shall be strong hands too—not weak and irresolute, as they have been hitherto.”

Before opening the manuscript, Dorothy sent off a young negro to Branton, with a little note to Evelyn, in which she wrote:—

> I shall not read a line of what you have written until I have told you how much gratified I am that you have wanted in this way to tell me about yourself. It means much to me that you wish to tell me those things, whatever they may be, that concern you. Another thing I want to say to you before reading your manuscript, and that is that no matter what it may reveal, I shall love and cherish you just the same. You remember what I said to you once—that I *know you*, and that no fact or circumstance of the past can in the least alter my feelings toward you. Be very sure of that. Now I am going to read your manuscript. [329]

She began the task at once. This is what she read:—

EVELYN’S BOOK

WRITTEN FOR DOROTHY AND NOBODY ELSE

Preface

I AM going to tell you all about myself in this book, Dorothy—or at least all that I know. I have wanted to tell you, ever since you began being so good to me, and I began to love you. I reckon you won’t like some of the things I must tell, but I can’t help that: I must tell you all of them anyhow, because it is right that I should. I couldn’t tell you so long as I thought I had sworn not to. Now that you have explained to me about a parole, I am going to do it. But I [330] am going to put it in writing, because I can tell it better that way. And besides, I might forget some things if I tried to tell them all with my tongue. And there are some of the things which you may want to read about more than once, so as to make up your mind about them.

Now that is all of the preface.

Chapter the First

I DON’T know where I was born. I reckon it must have been somewhere in Virginia, because, when I first saw you and heard you speak, I felt as if I had got back home again after a long stay away. Your voice and the way you pronounced your words seemed

so natural to me that I think the people about me when I was a child must have talked in the same way. You know how quickly I fell into the Virginia way of speaking. That was because it all seemed so natural to me.

So I think I must have been born in Virginia. At any rate I had a black mammy. I remember her very well. She was very, very big—taller than a tall man, and very broad across her back. I know that, because she used to get down on the floor and let me ride on her [331]
back, making believe she was a horse.

Her name was Juliet. When I read about Romeo and Juliet years afterward, I remember laughing at Shakespeare for not knowing that Juliet was big and strong and black. That must have been while I was still a little child, or I should have understood better. Besides, I remember where I was when I read the play, and I know I was only a little child when I was there.

That is all I remember about my life in Virginia, if it was in Virginia that I was born. There must have been other people besides Juliet around me at that time, but I do not remember anything about them. I cannot recall what kind of a house we lived in; but I do remember playing on a beautiful lawn under big trees. And I recollect that there were a great many squirrels there, just as there are in the trees in your Wyanoke grounds. It is strange, isn't it, that I should remember the squirrels and not the people? But perhaps that is because I used to feed the squirrels and play with them, and one day one of them bit me painfully. I must have been treating it badly.

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Chapter the Second

THE next thing that I remember is being in a large city somewhere. We lived in a hotel. My father and mother were with me, and a great many men came to see my father, and talked with him about business things. I didn't know then, but I think now that my father was engaged in some kind of speculation, and these men had something to do with it. At any rate, my father was a speculator always, and I think he sometimes gambled, for I heard some one say afterward that he would "gamble on anything from the turn of a card to the wrecking of a railroad." That was long after, however, and I didn't understand what the words meant. I reckon I don't quite understand even now, but at any rate I know that my father was always busy; that he had something to do with a water-works, and some railroads, and some steamboats, and some stores, and many other things. Sometimes he seemed to have more money than he knew what to do with, and sometimes he was very poor. My mother used to cry a good deal, though I reckon my father never treated her badly, as I never heard him scold her in any way. [333]
When she would cry, it seemed to distress him terribly. He would go away, sometimes for days at a time, and when he came back he would put a large pile of money in her lap and beg her to cheer up and believe in him.

I didn't know at that time what my father's name was. Everybody called him "Jack," and that was all I heard. I was a very little girl at that time, and if I ever heard his full name in those days, I can't remember the fact. But I loved him very much. He was always very good to me, and he laughed a great deal in a way that I liked. I didn't like to see my mother cry so much, so I loved my father far better than I did my mother.

Chapter the Third

THERE seems to be a gap in my memory at this point. I know I must have been a very little girl at the time I have spoken of—only four or five years old at most. The next thing I remember is that we landed from a big ship that had big sails, and a good many people and a cow on the top, and a great many pumps.

My father wasn't with us, and as I can't remember thinking about [334]
his absence, I suppose I hadn't seen him for a long time. There were only my mother and my grandmother, and me—or should I say "I"?—I don't know.

I reckon I must have been six or seven years old then.

When the ship landed, a man named Campbell met us at the

landing. His name wasn't really Campbell, as I have since found out, but he was called by that name. I remembered him in a vague way. He had been one of those who came to see my father when we lived in the hotel. My father called him his partner, and once, when my father suddenly became very poor, he called Campbell a swindler and a scoundrel, and said he had ruined all of us. I didn't know at that time what the words "swindler" and "scoundrel" meant, but from the way in which my father spoke them I knew they were something very bad; so I hated Campbell.

That was the only time I ever heard my father and mother quarrel. I remember it, because it frightened me terribly. They seemed to be quarrelling about Campbell. When my father called [335] him by bad names, my mother, as I now understand, seemed to defend him, and that made my father angrier than ever.

So, when Campbell met us at the ship and seemed so glad to see my mother, I thought of my father, and I hated Campbell. I remembered the names my father used to call him, though I still didn't know what the words meant. So, when Campbell tried to pet me, I resented it in my childish fashion, saying:—

"You're a swindler, you know, and a scoundrel. I don't want you to talk to me."

He pretended to laugh, but I know now that he was very angry with me.

Some time after that (I don't know how long, but it was probably not long) my mother and Campbell got married, out in a Western city somewhere, and went away for a time, leaving me with my grandmother.

I couldn't understand it, and I said so. Just before they started away on a train, my mother told me in the railroad station that Campbell was my new papa, and that I must love him very much. I remember what I said in reply. I asked:—

"Is my father dead?"

"Don't talk about that, dear," said my mother, trying to hush me. [336] But I asked the question again:—

"Is my father dead?"

"No, dear, but your father has gone away, and we'll never see him again. So you mustn't think about him."

"Then you have two husbands at once," I answered. "How can you have two husbands at once?"

She tried to explain it by telling me that my father was no longer her husband, but I couldn't understand. And, Dorothy, I don't understand it now. Of course I know now that my parents had been divorced, but I don't and can't understand how a woman who has been a man's wife can make up her mind to be any other man's wife so long as her first husband lives. I suppose I was a very uncompromising little girl at that time, and I was very apt to say what I thought about things without any flinching from ugly truths. So, when they went on trying to hush me by telling me that Campbell was now my papa, I flew into a great rage. I took hold of my hair and tore out great locks of it. I tried to tear off my clothes, and all the time I was saying things that caused all the passengers [337] in the station to gather about us; some of them laughing, and some looking on very solemnly, as I shrieked:—

"I won't have him for my new papa! He's a swindler and a scoundrel! My papa told you so a long time ago! I hate him, and I'm going to hate you now and for ever, amen!"

I didn't know what the words meant, but they had been strongly impressed upon my memory by the vehemence with which my father had uttered them long before. As for the final phrase, with the "amen" at the end of it, I had heard it in church, and had somehow got the impression that it was some kind of highly exalted curse.

Campbell was angry almost beyond control. I think he would have liked to kill me, and I think he would have done so but for all those people standing by while I so bitterly vituperated him. As he could not do that, he said angrily to my grandmother:—

"Take her away! Take her away quick!"

My grandmother then threw my little cloak over my head to suppress my voice, and hurried me into a carriage. To some woman who drove with us to our hotel, my grandmother said, thinking I [338] would not understand:—

"I'm seriously afraid the child is right."

I understood, and I liked my grandmother better than ever, after that.

Chapter the Fourth

WHEN Campbell and my mother came back from their journey, he seemed determined to placate me. He brought me many toys. Among them was a big doll that could open and shut its eyes and cry. I did not utter a word of thanks. I didn't feel any gratitude or pleasure. I took the toys, and dealt with them in my own way. A very bad man had been hanged in the town a little while before, and I had heard the matter talked of a great deal. So I got a string, tied it around the doll's neck, and proceeded to hang it to the limb of a tree in our yard. The rest of the toys I threw into a little stream near our house. When all was done, I returned to the house and marched into the drawing-room, where a good many people had gathered to greet my mother and her new husband. Everybody grew silent when I entered the room. They had all heard of the scene I [339] had made at the railroad station, and they now held their breath to wait for what I might say or do.

I walked straight up to Campbell and said, as loudly as I could:—

"I have hanged that doll you gave me, and I've pitched the other things into the creek. You're a swindler and a scoundrel, and I hate you."

There was a great commotion, but I gave no heed to that or anything else. Before anybody could think of what was best to be done, I turned about and marched out of the room with all the dignity I could muster.

I am not sorry or ashamed over these things, Dorothy. I think I was right, and I am glad I did as I did. But that was the beginning of trouble for me.

Chapter the Fifth

WE were living then in Campbell's big house, in some Western city. It was a very fine and costly place, I reckon. A little bedroom had been furnished for me, opening off the suite of [340] rooms that Campbell and my mother were to occupy. If it had been in anybody's house but Campbell's, I should have loved that beautiful bedroom. As it was, I hated it with all my soul. My grandmother and I had gone to the house on the day before my mother's return, and that night—the night before they came back—I was put to bed in my room. I lay there with my eyes wide open till I knew that everybody else in the house was asleep. Then I slipped out of bed, crept downstairs, and out over the wet grass to a kennel that had been assigned to my own big Saint Bernard dog, Prince. I crept in, and slept beside the big, shaggy fellow till morning, when a great outcry was raised because I was missing from my room.

All the servants said my behaviour was due to my loneliness in the great house. That wasn't so. I was never lonely in my life, because whenever I began to feel lonely I always called the fairy people to me, and they were glad to come. I had created them in my own fancy, and they loved me very much. But I wouldn't invite them into that room or that house. So I went to Prince, as my only other friend.

But after my outbreak in the drawing-room, a servant was [341] directed to take me to my room and lock me in. I sat there in the window-seat for a long time, wondering what would be done to me next, and wondering how I was to escape from my prison; for I fully intended to escape, even if I should find no other way than by leaping out of my second-story window.

After a while, the door was opened and Campbell came in. I could see that he was very angry, and I was particularly glad of that, because it showed me that my words had hurt his feelings very much. That was what I intended.

He had a little switch in his hand, and, as he stood over me, glowering in order to scare me before speaking, I saw it. I instantly seized a heavy hair-brush that a maid kept to brush my thick hair with.

"You mustn't strike me." That was all I said.

"I'm going to teach you better manners," he began.

"You'd better not try," I answered. "If you strike me, *I'll kill you*."

I meant that, Dorothy; and when, a minute later, he struck me [342]
with the switch, meaning to give me a dozen blows, I reckon, I leaped at him—slender, frail little child that I was—and with all the strength my baby arm had, I struck him full in the face with the edge of the heavy brush. I fully intended that the blow should brain him. It only broke his nose, but it made him groan with pain.

Now I want to be absolutely truthful with you, Dorothy. You mustn't excuse my attempt to kill that man, on the ground that I was a mere child and did not know what I was doing. I was a mere child, of course, but I knew what I was doing or trying to do, and I felt no sort of regret afterward, when he had to send for a surgeon to mend his nose bone, and had to lie abed for a fortnight with a fever. Or, rather, I did feel regret; but it was only regret over the fact that I had done so little. I had meant to kill him, and I was very sorry that I had not succeeded. That is the fact, and you must know it. And more than that, it is the fact, that even now, when I am a grown-up woman and have thought out a code of morals for myself, I still cannot feel any regret over what I did, except that I didn't succeed [343]
in doing more. I would do now what I tried to do then, if the situation could repeat itself.

I don't know what you will think about all this. But I don't want you to think about it without knowing that I am not sorry for it, but justify it in my own mind. I am trying to be perfectly honest and truthful with you; so that if you love me at all after reading my book, it shall be with full knowledge of all that is worst in me. If you don't love me after you know all, I shall go away quickly and not pain you with my presence.

Now, Dorothy, I want you to stop reading this book and put it away for a few hours—long enough for you to think about what I have written, and make up your mind about this part of my story. After that, you can read the rest of it and make up your mind about that.

* * * * * * *

Dorothy complied with this request. She laid the book aside for two hours. Then she came back to the reading; but before beginning again, she scribbled this paragraph at the bottom of the page last read:—

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> I have taken two hours of recess from the reading. There was no need of that. My whole soul sympathises with that poor, persecuted little creature. So far from condemning her words or acts, I rejoice in them. I approve them, absolutely and altogether. I see nothing to condemn, nothing to excuse.
>
> DOROTHY.

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XXV

MORE OF EVELYN'S BOOK

WHEN Dorothy resumed her reading, her sympathies were keenly alive and responsive. She had thought out the matter, and reached a definite conclusion which entirely satisfied her conscience.

"Ordinarily," she thought, "I should think it excessively wrong to sympathise with a desire to kill, or even to tolerate it in my mind. But I see clearly that in that matter, as in most others, there are questions of circumstance to be considered. Every human being has a right to kill in self-defence. Both law and morals recognise that. In a state of nature, I suppose, every man is constantly at war on his own private account, and he has an entire right to make war in defence of himself and his family. The only reason he hasn't that right in a state of civilisation is that society protects him, in return [346] for his giving up his right to make private war. But when society, as represented by the state, refuses to protect him, or when the state cannot protect him, he has his right of private war in full force again.

"That was Evelyn's case. She was a helpless child in the hands of a brute. There was no way in which she could secure protection from any wrong he might see fit to do her. So, when he came with evident intent to do her harm, she had a perfect right, I think, to fight for herself in any way she could. No human being is under obligation to submit to an insult or a blow.

"Besides—well, never mind that. I was thinking of the way in which we all recognise killing in war as entirely legitimate. But that is a large subject, which I haven't thought out to the end as yet. For the present purpose it is enough to know that Evelyn had a right to make such war as she could—poor little mite of a girl that she was—upon that brutal man. I should have done the same under like circumstances. Yes; I heartily approve her conduct."

With that, Dorothy turned again to the manuscript, and read what follows:—

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Chapter the Sixth

I HAD hurt Campbell very badly indeed. I had shattered the bridge of his nose to bits, and there was a great commotion in the house—sending for a lot of doctors, and all that. My mother thought of nothing but staunching the blood and getting the doctors there. The servants were all excited and running about bringing hot water and towels and so forth, so that no attention was paid to me.

I took advantage of the confusion. I put on a little cloak and my sun-bonnet, and quietly slipped out through one of the back doors into the grounds. Then I called my dog, Prince, to go with me, and in the gloaming—for it was nearly nightfall—he and I waded across the little creek that ran at the back of the place. The house stood at the extreme edge of the little city, and there was no town on the farther side of the creek. So Prince and I went on down the road, meeting nobody.

My grandmother had left the town that day, to go back to her home somewhere in the East, so I made up my mind to walk toward the East every day till I should come to the village where she lived. I [348] knew the name of the village, but I didn't know what State it was in or how far away it might be; still, I hoped to find it after a while, by inquiring of people. But I feared a search would be made for me, so I decided not to reveal myself by making inquiries till I should be far away from the town where Campbell and my mother lived.

After walking along the road for what seemed to me many hours, Prince and I climbed over a fence and went far into the woods. There we hid ourselves in a clump of pawpaw bushes and went to sleep.

When we woke, there was a heavy rain falling, and we were very, very hungry. So we set out to find a road somewhere, so that we might come to a house and ask for something to eat. But there didn't seem to be any end to the woods. We went on and on and on, without coming out anywhere. I ate two pawpaws that I found on

the bushes, but poor Prince couldn't eat pawpaws, so he had to go starving.

At last we grew so tired that we stopped to rest, and I fell asleep. When I waked, it was still raining hard, and my clothing was very wet, and I was very cold, and it was nearly night again. So I told [349] Prince we must hurry, and find a house before it should grow dark.

But when I tried to hurry, my feet wouldn't do as I wanted them to. My knees seemed to give way under me, and I grew very hot. My head ached for the first time in my life, and my eyes bulged so that I couldn't see straight. Finally I seemed to forget who I was, or where I was trying to go. Then I went to sleep.

When I waked, I was lying in that bedroom in Campbell's house, and a nurse was sitting by me. I tried to get up, but couldn't. So I went off to sleep again, and when I waked once more, I understood that I was very ill and had been so for a considerable time. I asked somebody if Prince had been fed, and learned that he had. I never asked another question about the matter, and to this day I do not know how long I lay unconscious in the woods, or who found me there, or how, or anything about it.

I must have taken a good while to get well; for I remember how every morning I planned to run away again the following night, and how before night came I found myself still unable to do anything but lie in bed and take my medicine.

When at last I was able to sit in a rocking-chair for an hour or [350] two at a time, my mother undertook to chide me a little about my conduct. I reckon she didn't accomplish much, because she began at the wrong end of the affair.

"You hurt Mr. Campbell very badly," she said.

"Did I? I'm glad of that."

"You are a very wicked girl."

To that statement I made no reply. I accepted it as true, but I was not sorry for it. Instead, I asked:—

"Is he going to die?"

"No. But he is very ill. That is to say, he is suffering a great deal of pain."

"I'm glad of that."

"You terrible child! What am I to do with you?"

"I don't know. I'm going to run away again as soon as I can. You'd better let me stay runaway."

Small as I was, I vaguely understood that my mother's first care was for the man Campbell, and that so far as I was concerned, she cared only for the trouble she expected me to give her. If she had loved me a little, if she had taken me into her lap and seemed a little [351] bit sorry for me, I reckon she might have had an easier time with me. But she did nothing of that kind. Instead of that, she managed to make me feel that she regarded me somewhat in the light of a criminal for whom she was responsible.

She set a watch upon me day and night, keeping me practically a prisoner in my own room. That was because I had made the mistake of telling her I meant to run away again. But even as a prisoner, I might have been tractable if she had spoken kindly and lovingly to me when she visited my room, which she did two or three times a day. Instead of that, she always looked at me as one might at a desperate criminal, and she talked to me of nothing but what she called my wickedness, saying that it would break her heart.

Even when I got well enough to go out, I was kept in my room until at last the doctor positively ordered that I should be sent out of doors every day. When that was done, a servant maid whom I particularly disliked was sent with me, under orders never to let me out of her sight for a moment. I was as completely a prisoner out of doors as in the house. But out of doors I could sit down at the root of [352] a tree, shut my eyes, and bring my fairy friends to me. In that way I managed to make myself happy for little spells, as I could not do in my room, for I simply would not ask the fairy people to go to that horrible place.

But this relief was soon taken from me. The servant who watched me, seeing me sit with my eyes shut, reported that I spent all the time out of doors in sleep. She was directed by Campbell, who had assumed control of my affairs, not to let me sit down at all out of doors.

When this was reported to me, I simply refused to go out of doors

again, and I stuck to that resolution in spite of all commands and threats. My health soon showed the results of confinement, and the doctor, who was a friendly sort of man, but strongly prejudiced by the bad things he had been told about me, did all he could to persuade me to go out. I absolutely refused. Then my health grew still worse, and finally the doctor insisted that I should be sent away somewhere.

Before that could be arranged, something else happened to affect me. I'll tell you about that in another chapter.

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Chapter the Seventh

THE servant who acted as my keeper suddenly changed her manner toward me about this time. She talked with me in a friendly way, and she sang to me, trying to teach me to sing with her. I refused to do that, because I was unhappy and did not feel like singing. But I rather liked to hear her sing, as she had a pretty good voice. Still, in my childish way, I distrusted the girl. I could not understand why she had been so unkind to me before, if her present kindness was sincere.

She begged me to go out of doors with her, and promised of her own accord that I should sit down and shut my eyes whenever I pleased. After a day or two, I so far yielded as to go out with her for an hour and have a romp with Prince. But I resolutely refused, then or on succeeding days, to sit down and shut my eyes, and call the fairy people. I felt, somehow, that it would compromise my dignity to accept surreptitiously and from a servant a privilege which was forbidden to me by the servant's master and mistress.

Still, I went out for a little while every day. The girl called our [354]
outings "larks," which puzzled me a good deal, as I knew there were no larks in the town. Finally, one brilliant moonlight night, as I sat looking out of the window, the girl, as if moved by some sudden impulse, said:—

"Let's go out for a lark in the moonlight. I'll put your cloak and bonnet on you, and it will do you good."

I consented, and we quickly made ourselves ready. Just after we had got out of doors, I noticed that the girl had a satchel in her hand; and when I questioned her about it, she said that she wanted to make believe that we were two ladies going to travel; "and ladies always have satchels when they travel," she explained.

We wandered about for a little while, and then the girl led the way to the extreme corner of the grounds, a spot which could not be seen from the house even in the daytime, because of the trees. There was a little gate there, which opened into a road, and the girl proposed that we should pass through it for some reason which I cannot now remember.

We had walked only a little way beyond the gate when we came [355]
to a carriage which was standing still, with a big man on the box and a tall, slender man standing by the open door of the vehicle. When this man turned his face toward me in the moonlight, I recognised him. He was my father! He stooped and put his arms about me tenderly, laughing a little, as he always had done when talking with me, but stopping the laugh every moment or two to kiss me. Then he told me to get into the carriage so that we might go for a drive. When I had got in, he gave the servant girl some money, and said:—

"If you keep your mouth shut and know nothing, there'll be another hundred for you. I shall know if you talk, and if you do there'll be no money for you. I'll send the money, if you don't talk, in two weeks, in care of the bank."

Then we drove away in the moonlight, and I found presently that the girl had put the satchel into the carriage. I learned the next morning that it contained some of my clothes, and my combs and brushes.

We travelled in the carriage for several hours, and then got on board a railroad train, which took us to Chicago.

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Chapter the Eighth

WE hadn't been many days in Chicago when one morning about daybreak my father waked me and said that Campbell was after me, so that we must hurry. My father had bought me a lot of things in Chicago—clothes of many kinds, and a few books. I reckon he didn't know much about clothes or books—poor papa—for all the clothes were red, and the books, as I now know, were intended for much older people than I was. But he said that red was the prettiest colour, and as for the books, the man that sold them had told him that they were "standard works." I remember that one of them was called *Burke's Works*, and another *Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. I simply couldn't like *Burke's Works*, but I reckon that was only because I didn't know what Mr. Burke was talking about. I reckon I didn't understand Gibbon very well, but I liked him, because he told some good stories, and because his sentences were musical. I liked *Macaulay's Miscellanies* for the same reason, and I liked *Macaulay's History* because it was so simple that I could understand it. Best of all, I liked *Rasselas*, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and *The British Drama*, and Shakespeare—at least, in parts. I liked to read about Parolles, and the way he was tricked and his cowardice exposed. I identified him with Campbell, and rejoiced when he got into trouble. I suppose that was wicked, but I'm telling you all my thoughts, Dorothy, so that you may know the whole truth about me and not be deceived. I liked Falstaff, too. [357]

I liked *Rasselas*, because in his happy valley there was no man like Campbell. And I liked *Robinson Crusoe* for the same reason. Somehow I liked to live with him on his island, because I knew that if Campbell should land there, Robinson Crusoe would shoot him.

But above all, I liked the *British Drama*, because it opened a new and larger life to me than any that I had ever known.

When my father waked me up on that morning, I hurriedly packed my books and clothes into a trunk. There were very few underclothes, for my father knew nothing about such things, but there were many red dresses and red cloaks and red hats. And there were two fur coats—big enough for a grown woman to wear.

We got on board a train and travelled all day. Then we took another train and travelled all night, till we came to the end of the railroad. Then we got into a cart and travelled three or four days into the woods. [358]

Finally we came to a camp in the woods, where my father seemed to be master of everything and everybody. There were Indians there and half-breeds, and Canadian lumber-men, for it was a lumber-camp. There was a Great Lake there, and many little lakes not far away. I reckon the Great Lake was Lake Superior, but I don't know for certain.

There were no women in the camp except squaws and half-breeds. They were pretty good people, but very dirty, so I could not live with them. My father made the men build a little log house for him and me, and he made them hew a bath-tub for me out of a big log. Then he hired a half-breed girl to heat water every day and fill the tub for me to bathe in. As for himself, he jumped into the lake every morning, even when he had to make the men cut a hole in the ice for his use.

I liked the lumber-camp life because I was free there, and because there were big fires at night, like bonfires. One of them was just before my door, and my father made an Indian boy keep it blazing all night for me, so that I might see the light of it whenever I waked. I used to sit by it and read my books, even when the snow was deep on the ground; for by turning first one side and then the other to the fire I could keep warm. And the Canadians and the half-breeds and the Indians used to squat on the ground near me and beg me to read the books aloud to them. As they all spoke French, and understood no word of English, of course they didn't understand what I read to them, but they liked to hear me read, and it was sometimes hard to drive them away to their beds, even when midnight came. [359]

They taught me French during the year I lived among them. You tell me it is very bad French, and I reckon it is; but it was all they knew: they did their best, and I reckon that is all that anybody can do. At any rate, they were kind to me, and they taught me all the ways of the birds and the animals. I tried to teach them to be kind to the birds and the animals, after I began to understand the wild creatures; but the camp people never would learn that. Their only [360]

idea of an animal or a bird was to eat its flesh and sell its skin.

There was a young priest there who knew better, and he ought to have loved the birds and animals. But he used to talk about God's having given man dominion over the beasts and the birds, and that doctrine perverted his mind, I think. He killed a pretty little chipmunk, one day, to get its skin to stuff. That chipmunk was my friend. I had taught it to climb up into my lap and eat out of my hand. He persuaded it to climb into his lap, and then he betrayed its confidence and killed it. I was very angry with him. I picked up an ox-whip and struck him with it twice. I was only a little girl, but I had grown strong in the outdoor life of the camp, and it doesn't take much strength to make an ox-whip hurt.

There was great commotion in the camp when this occurred. The people there were very religious in their way, but they seemed to me to worship the priest rather than God. They didn't mind sinning as much as they pleased, because they knew that the priest would forgive their sins on easy terms; but they thought that my act in striking the priest with the ox-whip was a peculiarly heinous crime. [361] Perhaps it was, but I can't even yet so look upon it. They regarded him as a "man of God"; but if he was so, why did he deceive the poor little chipmunk, and persuade it to trust him, and then kill it cruelly? Dorothy, I am not a bit sorry, even now, that I chastised him with the ox-whip.

["Neither am I," wrote Dorothy in the margin of the manuscript.]

But the occurrence created a great disturbance in the camp, and so my father had to take me away, for fear that the lumber-men would kill me. Curious, isn't it, that while they were so religious as to feel in that way about the priest, who after all was only a man, they were yet so wicked that they were ready to commit murder in revenge? But those people were very ignorant and very superstitious. They thought some terrible calamity would fall upon them if I were permitted to remain in the camp. I think they cared more about that than they did about the priest. Even those who had been kind to me, teaching me to ride bareback and to shoot and to fish and to make baskets, and all the rest of it, turned against me; so that my father had to stand by me with his pistols cocked and ready [362] in his hand, till he could get me out of the camp.

Chapter the Ninth

FROM that camp my father took me way up to Hudson's Bay. We travelled over the snow on sledges drawn by dogs, and I learned to know the dogs as nobody else did. They were savage creatures, and would bite anybody who came near them. But somehow they never bit me. They didn't like to be petted, but they let me pet them. I don't know why this was so, but it was so.

We did not remain long at Hudson's Bay—only a few weeks. After that, we went somewhere—I don't know where it was—where the whale-men came ashore and rendered out the blubber they had got out at sea.

You must remember that my father had many interests. He owned part of the lumber-camp we had stayed in, he had a fur trade at Hudson's Bay, and he had an interest in some whaling-ships. Wherever we went, my father seemed to be at home and to be master of the men about him. I admired him greatly, and loved him [363] very much. I wondered how my mother could have left him and married Campbell. I am wondering over that even yet.

It was while we were at Hudson's Bay that I began to understand something about my father. He sat down with me one day (he didn't often sit down for more than a few minutes at a time, but on this occasion he sat with me for nearly half a day) and explained things to me.

"I want to tell you some things, little girl," he said, "and I want you to try to understand them. Above all, I want you to remember them. You know sometimes I have a great deal of money, and sometimes I have none at all. That is because my business is a risky one. Sometimes I make a great deal of money out of it, and sometimes I lose a great deal.

"Now, when your mother left me, I made up my mind to provide well for her and you, so that no matter what else should happen, you and she might never come to want. You see, I still loved your mother. I insured my life for a large sum, and as I had plenty of

money then, I paid for the insurance cash down. You don't understand about such things, and it isn't necessary that you should. But by insuring my life and paying cash for the insurance, I made it certain that whenever I should die, a rich insurance company would pay you a big sum of money; I had purposely made it payable to you and not to your mother, because I knew you would take care of your mother, while she could never take care of anybody or anything. I also bought some bonds and stocks and put them in your name, and placed them in a bank in New York. [364]

"Now, I want you to pay close attention and try to understand what I tell you. Here are some papers that I want you to keep always by you—always in your little satchel. Always have them by you when you go to bed, and always lock them up by day. Take them with you wherever you go.

"This one is my will. It gives you everything that I may happen to own when I die." With that, he handed me the papers.

"This one is the life-insurance policy. When I die, you, or whoever is acting for you, will have to present that to the life-insurance company, together with doctors' certificates that I am really dead. Then the company will pay you the money.

"This one is a list of the securities—the bonds and stocks—that I have deposited in your name in the Chemical Bank of New York. You see, it is signed by the cashier of that bank. It is a receipt for the bonds and stocks. So you must keep it very carefully. [365]

"Now, another thing you must remember: you can't draw the money on my life-insurance policy until I die; but you can get these bonds and stocks at any time that you please, merely by presenting the receipt and asking for them. So long as you are a little girl under age, you couldn't do this for yourself. Somebody must do it for you. You must be very careful whom you select for that purpose."

Then he gave me the names and addresses of several gentlemen, who, he said, were his friends and honest men, and advised me to apply to them to act for me if I ever had occasion to do anything of the kind. Then he went on to say:

"The scoundrel, Campbell, knows that you own all this, besides some houses and lands (here's a memorandum of them) which I have deeded to you. In the hope of getting hold of your property, he, as your stepfather, has had himself appointed your guardian. It is a shame that the courts allow that, but he owns a judge or two, and he has managed to get it done. That is why he is following us and trying to get hold of you. He doesn't know what your property is, or where, and he thinks you will have these papers. So, if he can get hold of you, he thinks he can get hold of the property also. If I can manage to get you to New York, I'll take the papers out of your hands and place them in charge of some men there whom I can trust. But as I may fail in that, and as something may happen to me, I want you to have the papers. [366]

"I am pretty well off just now, but my business is very uncertain. When I die, I may be very rich, or I may 'go broke' any day between now and then. That is why I have put this property into your hands while I have it. I am a reckless fellow. I 'take the very longest chances' sometimes in my business enterprises. Sometimes I suddenly lose pretty nearly everything I have in the world, and I might die just at such a time. So I have provided for you in any case.

"If I can get to New York with you, I am going to hide you completely from that man, Campbell. There is an excellent gentlewoman there in whose hands I intend to put you. She is a woman to be trusted, and she is rather poor, so she will be glad to take charge of you and keep you out of Campbell's way, damn him! Pardon me, dear! I didn't mean to swear in your presence. I only mean that I can give that lady plenty of money, and she can take you wherever she thinks you will be safe." [367]

"But I had much rather stay with you, Father," I answered, with tears in my eyes.

"Yes, I know. And God knows," he said, "that I had rather have you with me. But everything is a gamble with me. I have many enemies, child, and some one of them may make an end of me any day. The other way will be safest for you."

"I don't care for myself," I answered. "I only care for you, and to be with you. I'll take the risks, and if any of your enemies ever makes an end of you, as you say, I want to be there to wreak vengeance. You know I can shoot as straight as any man alive, whether with a pistol or a rifle or a shot-gun."

“You dear child!” he responded, “I know all that. And that is why I want to house you safely. You have it in you to be as reckless as your dad is, and I don’t intend that you shall have occasion or opportunity.” [368]

How I did love my father! I don’t believe he was ever bad, Dorothy, though they said he was. People who liked him used to say he was “uncommonly quick on trigger”; people who hated him called him a desperado. I call him my father, and I love his memory, for he is dead now, as you will hear later.

But I was anxious to remember all that he had told me, and to make no mistake about it. I had taught myself how to write, during my stay at the lumber-camp and on Hudson’s Bay, so I got some old blank books from the agency, books which had been partly written in by a clerk who made his lines so hairlike that I could write all over them and yet make my writing quite legible. In these I wrote all that my father had said, just as he had said it, meaning to commit it to memory if I had got it right. When it was done, I took it to him and he read it. He laughed when he came to the swear word, and said:—

“You might have omitted that. Still, I’m glad you didn’t, because it shows how bravely truthful you are, and I love that in you better than anything else.” [369]

I have always remembered that, Dorothy. I don’t know how far those who have left us know what we do; but I always think that if my father knows, he will be glad to have me perfectly truthful, and I love him so much that I would make any sacrifice to make him glad.

After he had read over what I had written, and had corrected a word here and there, I set to work to commit it to memory, so that I should never forget a line or a word of it. That is how it comes about that I am able to report it all to you exactly.

Now I know you are tired, so I am going to begin a new chapter, and you can rest as long as you like before reading it.

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XXVI

EVELYN'S BOOK, CONTINUED

IT was Dorothy's habit when reading a book to stop for an hour now and then, and devote that space to careful thinking. She explained her practice to Arthur one day, saying:—

"If a book be interesting, it is apt to dominate the mind, and sometimes to mislead the judgment. I think it well to suspend the reading now and then, and give myself a chance to shake off the glamour of the narrative, and to think out for myself what it means and to what it tends. One must do that, indeed, if one doesn't want to surrender himself or herself completely to the dominance of an author's thought, but chooses instead to do his or her own thinking."

So Dorothy took an hour or two for thinking before going on with the reading of Evelyn's book. Evelyn knew her habit, and she had recognised it by changing chapters at this point.

When Dorothy took up the pages again, she read as follows:— [371]

Chapter the Tenth

WE stayed a long time among the whaling people, and they taught me many things. I learned from them how to tie all sorts of knots, and how to catch sea fish, and how to row, and best of all, how to sail a boat.

They were a curious kind of men. They swore all the time, in almost every sentence. But their swearing didn't mean anything, and so it didn't shock me in the least. They were not at all angry when they swore. They swore, I think, merely because they hadn't any adjectives with which to express their thoughts. They called me a "damned nice gal," and they meant it for a compliment. In the same way, they spoke of a tangle in a fish-line as "a damned ugly snarl," or of a fish as "a damned big catch." I suppose one might cure them of swearing by teaching them some adjectives. But nobody ever took the trouble to do that.

They were good fellows—strong and brave, and wonderfully enduring. When I went out fishing with them, and the tide was out [372] on our return, so that we couldn't come up to a pier, one of them would jump overboard in the mud, pick me up, swing me to his broad shoulders, and carry me ashore dry-shod, without seeming to think anything of it.

One day we had a storm while I was out in a fishing-boat. As soon as it came on, all the boats came to the side of ours, though it was dangerous to do so, just to make sure of my safety. The boat I was in was swamped, and I was spilled overboard. But I was no sooner in the angry sea than I was grabbed by the arms of a stout young fellow who gallantly bore me toward a little sloop that lay at hand. A mast broke off and fell. It hit the poor fellow, and, finding himself unable to do any more, he called to a comrade to take me, and he sank in the water and was drowned. He didn't seem to care for himself at all, but only to save me, and all the rest of them seemed to think that that was a matter of course. I got my father to give me some money, and I hired a stone-cutter to put up a monument over the poor fellow's grave; for we recovered his body, with both arms broken by the blow from the falling mast. There are lots of heroes, [373] Dorothy, who are never engaged in wars.

At last my father took me away from the whaling town, and we went to New York in a little schooner. It took us a long time, because the winds were adverse, but we got there after a while, and went to a hotel. It was the Astor House, I think, and it had a beautiful little park nearly in front of it. I don't think that is of any consequence, but, you see, I am trying to tell you everything. You can skip anything you don't care for.

["I'm not skipping anything," wrote Dorothy in the margin.]

As soon as we were settled at the hotel, my father sent for the gentlewoman he had spoken about, and placed me in her care. Then something happened that I never understood. Before my father could take the papers from me and place them in the hands of the gentleman he intended to leave them with, he was somehow

compelled to leave the city. He went away suddenly after midnight, and I never saw him again. I still kept the papers after he left New York so suddenly.

The lady was greatly excited when my father's note came to her, [374] saying that he had gone away, and she seemed to fear some danger for me. So, between midnight and morning, she packed our things, and we went to a boarding-house away up-town. Even there she didn't feel safe, and so, within a day or so, we went on board a canal boat, and went up the river, and then along the canal for many days.

I asked the lady (Mrs. Dennison was her name) why we hadn't taken a railroad train instead, so as to travel faster. She answered: "They were watching all the trains, dear, and would have caught you if we had tried to take one. They didn't think of canal boats, because nobody travels by them in these days."

After we had travelled by canal boat for several days (a week or more, I think), we left the boat at a very little village, and went away across country to a little house in a sparsely settled district. There Mrs. Dennison and I lived quite alone for more than a year. It was a very happy year, except that I couldn't see my father, and except for another thing. Mrs. Dennison made me wear a boy's clothes and call myself by a false name, "Charlie Dennison." She did that to prevent Campbell from finding me. [375] I suppose it really didn't matter much, but somehow I didn't like the thought of wearing a disguise and going by an assumed name.

Of course, as a boy, I couldn't go much with the few girls there were in the neighbourhood, and at the same time, being in fact a girl, I couldn't go out and associate with the boys. So my only companion was Mrs. Dennison. We lived together in a tiny bit of a house that belonged to her, and she was the only real teacher I ever had. I reckon she didn't know much about books. At any rate, she didn't care about them. But she let me read mine as much as I pleased, and she taught me how to do all sorts of household things. Especially she taught me to do needlework, and as I used to do it in our little porch in the summertime, the boys thought it strange for a boy to use a needle, so they used to call me "Miss Charlotte" and gibe and jeer at me a good deal. But I didn't mind, particularly as there was a woodland near our house, so that I could see a great deal of my birds and squirrels. It was then, too, that I made acquaintance with many insects and bugs—pinch-bugs, ants, yellow-jackets, and a lot more. [376] You can't imagine how greatly interested I became in studying the ways of these creatures. They all have characters of their own; and when one really becomes acquainted with them, they are vastly more interesting than commonplace people are.

Chapter the Eleventh

AFTER we had lived for more than a year in the little cottage, Mrs. Dennison one day told me we must go away quickly, and we left within an hour. She let me put my girl's clothes on before we started.

"They have found out that you are disguised as a boy," she explained, "and when they set out to find us again, they'll probably look for a lady and a boy. So, by wearing girl's clothes again, you'll have a better chance to escape their clutches."

I was getting to be a pretty big girl by that time, and so I had been ashamed of wearing boy's clothes for some time past. But when I put on my gowns again, they made me still more ashamed, because they were so short.

So, as soon as we got to a place where we could stop for a few [377] days, Mrs. Dennison sent for two dressmakers to fashion some new gowns for me, and I really looked quite like another person when I put them on.

That must have been about four years ago. According to what I was afterward told, I was then thirteen years old. I know now that I was fifteen. But I'll tell you all about that further on.

All this while, Mrs. Dennison was receiving money from my father at regular intervals, and there was plenty of it. But it never came directly from my father. It came from a bank, with a very formal note saying that the money was sent "by order of Mr. Jackson Byrd," and asking Mrs. Dennison to sign and return a receipt for it. My father sent us no letters and no messages. This troubled me very

much when I got to thinking about it. And that made me very unhappy, for I loved my father dearly, and I remembered how happy I had been with him. But after thinking more about it, I saw that he hadn't forgotten his little girl and hadn't quit caring about her, because if he had, the money wouldn't have come so regularly.

Still, that troubled me more than ever, because it must mean that [378]
my father was in some kind of difficulty, that he could not send any letters to us. I learned afterward that this was so, but Mrs. Dennison would never tell me anything about it.

We were moving about a good deal at this time, generally starting suddenly—sometimes so suddenly as to leave many of our things behind. But I always carried the little satchel that contained the papers my father had given me.

At last, one day when we left the train at Chicago and entered a carriage to drive to a little hotel that we were to live at, a man came to the carriage door and handed Mrs. Dennison a paper. He said something which I did not understand, and Mrs. Dennison kissed me and got out of the carriage. The man got in, and ordered the carriage to drive away with us, leaving Mrs. Dennison standing there on the sidewalk.

I was terribly scared, and wanted to jump out. I tried to open the doors, but the man had placed his hands on the two latches, so that I couldn't move them. I felt like shrieking, but I decided that it was best to control myself, keep my wits about me, and be ready to deal with the situation wisely, as soon as I should find out what it really [379]
was. So, summoning all my self-control, I entered into conversation with the man who sat on the front seat opposite me.

"Do you mind telling me," I asked, "why you have kidnapped me in this fashion?"

"It ain't kidnapping, young lady, an' it ain't anything else irregular. You see, I had a warrant. I'm a court officer, an' I does what the court orders an' nothin' else."

"Then a court ordered you to seize me?" I asked.

"Ya'as 'm," he answered.

"But on what ground?"

"'Tain't my business to know that, Miss, an' as a matter of fac' I don't know it. All I know is, I was give a warrant an' tole to serve it, an' bring you to the court. Don't you worry about a-payin' of the cabman. I'll ten' to all that."

"But what do they want with me in court?" I asked insistently.

"Dunno, Miss."

"But who is it that wants me?"

"Dunno, Miss, only the warrant head said, 'Campbell vee ess Byrd and Dennison.'"

"But what right have they to bother me in this way? Am I not a [380]
free person? Haven't I a right—"

"Dunno, Miss, 'tain't my business to know. But I suppose you're a gal under age, and I suppose gals under age ain't got no rights in pertic'lar, leastways in opposition to their gardeens."

By this time, we had arrived at the courthouse, and I was taken before the judge. I remember thinking that if I should displease him in any way, he could order me hanged. I know better now, but I thought so then; so I made up my mind to be very nice to the judge.

Campbell was there, and he had a lawyer with him. The lawyer told the judge that Campbell was—something in Latin—*loco parentis*, I think it was. Anyhow, it meant stepfather, or something like that. He said the courts in his State had made him my guardian; that I possessed valuable property; that I had been abducted by my father, who was a dissolute person, now serving out a sentence in the State's prison for some crime. He gave the judge a lot of papers to prove all this.

I was so shocked and distressed to hear that my father was in prison, that for a while I couldn't speak. At last I controlled myself [381]
and said to the judge:—

"I love my father. If he has been sent to prison, it was that man"—pointing to Campbell—"who got him sent there. My father is good and kind, and I love him. Campbell is wicked and cruel, and I hate him. Look at his flat nose! That's where I smashed it with a heavy hair-brush when he tried to whip me for telling the truth about him. I don't want to go with him. I want to go back to Mrs. Dennison, till my father can come after me. Please, Judge, let me do

that."

The judge asked Campbell's lawyer how old I was, and he answered:—

"Thirteen years old, your Honour."

Then the judge said:—

"She seems older. If she were fourteen, I should be bound by the law to let her choose her own guardian for so long at least as she shall remain in Illinois. But as the papers in the case seem to show that her age is only thirteen, I am bound to recognise the guardianship established by the courts of another State. I must remand the girl to the custody of her guardian, Mr. Campbell."

Then, seeing in how desperate a strait I was, I summoned all my [382]
courage. I rose to my feet and faced the judge. I said:—

"But, please, Mr. Judge, this isn't fair. That man Campbell hates me, and I hate him. Isn't it better to send me to somebody else? Besides that, he has a lawyer, and I haven't one. Can't I hire a lawyer to speak for me? I've got two dollars in my pocketbook to pay him with."

Everybody laughed when I said that. You see, I had no idea what the price of lawyers was. But just then an old gentleman arose and said to the judge:—

"If it please the court, I will appear as counsel for this persecuted girl. I have listened to these proceedings with indignation and horror. It is perfectly clear to my mind that this is a case of kidnapping under the forms of the law."

There the judge interrupted him, saying:—

"The court will permit no reflections upon its proceedings."

Then my lawyer answered:—

"I have cast no reflections upon the court. My challenge is to the integrity and good faith of this man, Campbell. I do not know the facts that lie behind this proceeding. I am going to ask the court for [383]
an adjournment, in order to find them out. It is obvious that this young girl—helpless and friendless here—looks not only unwillingly, but with positive horror, upon the prospect of being placed again in Campbell's charge. Morally, and I think legally, she has a right to be heard in that behalf, to have the facts competently explored and fully presented to the court. To that end, I ask that the matter be adjourned for one week, and that the young girl be paroled, in the meanwhile, in the custody of her counsel."

Then the dear old gentleman, whom everybody seemed to regard with special reverence, took his seat by my side, and held my hand in his. Campbell's lawyer made a speech to the judge, and when he had finished, the judge said that my lawyer's request was denied. He explained the matter in a way that I did not understand. It seemed to anger the old lawyer who had taken my case. He rose and said, as nearly as I can remember:—

"Your Honour's denial of my motion is a denial of justice. This young girl, my client, is a minor child, utterly defenceless here except in so far as I have volunteered my services to defend her. But [384]
she is an American citizen, and as such is entitled to be heard in her own behalf. In this court she cannot get a hearing, for the reason that this court has corruptly prejudged the case, as it corruptly prejudges every case in which money or influence can be brought to bear."

By this time the judge was pounding with his mallet, and the whole court-room was in an uproar. But, raising his voice, my dear old lawyer continued:—

"If justice were done, you, sir, would be dragged from the bench that you dishonour by sitting upon it. Oh, I know, you can send me to jail for speaking these truths in your presence. I trust you will try that. If, by any martyrdom of mine, I can bring the corruption of such judges as you are to the knowledge and attention of this community, I shall feel that my work is well done. In the meantime I shall set another to secure for this helpless girl a writ of habeas corpus which shall get for her, in another and more righteous court, the fair hearing which you insolently and criminally deny to her here. Now send me to jail in punishment of the immeasurable contempt I feel for a court where justice is betrayed for money, and [385]
where human rights are bartered away for a price."

The judge was very angry, and a lot of men surrounded my old lawyer. But what happened afterward I have never known. For no sooner was I put in Campbell's charge than I was hurried to a train,

and the next morning I heard him say to one of the men he had with him:—

“We are out of Illinois now; we’ve beaten that writ of habeas corpus.”

Then he turned to me and said:—

“If you care for your own comfort, you will recognise me as your guardian, and behave yourself accordingly.”

I reckon you must be tired reading by this time, Dorothy, so you are to take a rest here, and I’ll write the remainder of my story in other chapters. I’m afraid I’m making my story tedious; but I’ve fully made up my mind to tell it all, because I don’t know what you will care for in it, and what will seem unimportant to you. If I try to shorten it by leaving out anything, the thing I leave out may happen to be precisely the thing that would change your opinion of me. I want to deal absolutely honestly with you; so I am telling you everything I remember.

XXVII

KILGARIFF'S PERPLEXITY

DURING the two days that Dorothy had thus far given to the reading of Evelyn's book, Kilgariff had been chafing impatiently. He wanted to go back to Petersburg and active duty, and he wanted, before doing so, to ride over to Branton and "talk it out with Evelyn," as he formulated his thoughts in his own mind.

He could do neither, for the reason that his wound began to trouble him again, and Arthur Brent, upon examining it, condemned him to spend another week or ten days in the house.

So far as "talking it out with Evelyn" was concerned, it was perhaps fortunate that he was compelled to submit to an enforced delay. For he really did not know what he was to say to Evelyn; and the more he thought about the matter, the more he did not know.

[387] The question was indeed a very perplexing one. How should he even begin the proposed conversation? Should he begin by abruptly telling Evelyn that he loved her, but that there were reasons why he did not want her to give him love in return? That was not the way in which a woman had a right to expect to be wooed. It would be a direct affront to her womanly and maidenly pride, which she would promptly, and bitterly, and quite properly, resent. Moreover, by arousing her anger and resentment, it would utterly defeat his purpose, which was to find out his own duty by finding out how far Evelyn had already learned to think of him as a possible lover.

Should he, then, ask her that question, in her own singularly direct and truthful way of dealing?

That would be to affront and wound her by the assumption that she had given her love unasked.

Should he begin by explaining to her the circumstances which prompted him to shrink from wooing her, and then offer her his love if she wanted it?

Nothing could be more preposterous than that.

[388] Should he simply pay her his addresses, ask her for her love, and then, if she should give it, proceed to explain to her the reasons why she should not have permitted herself to love such a man as he?

That question also promptly answered itself in the negative, with emphasis.

What, then, should he do?

Clearly it would be better to await Evelyn's return to Wyanoke, and trust to good luck to open some possible way. At any rate, he might there approach the subject in indirect ways; while if he could have ridden over to Branton for the express purpose of having a conference with her, no such indirection would have been possible. His very going to her there would have been a declaration of some purpose which he must promptly explain.

Obviously, therefore, it was better that he should not go to Branton, but should await such opportunity as good fortune might give him after Evelyn's return to Wyanoke. But that necessity postponed the outcome, and Kilgariff was in a mood to be impatient of delay, particularly as every hour consciously intensified his own love, and rendered him less and less capable of saying nay to his passion.

[389] With her woman's quickness of perception, Dorothy shrewdly guessed what was going on in his mind, and she rejoiced in it. But she made no reference to the matter, even in the most remotely indirect way. She simply went about her tasks with a pleased and amused smile on her face.

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[390]

XXVIII

EVELYN'S BOOK, CONCLUDED

WHEN Dorothy took up Evelyn's manuscript again, it was nine o'clock in the evening of the second day, and, moved by her eagerness to follow the story, even more than by her conscientious desire to finish it before the author's return on the morrow, she read late into the night. But she had sent Evelyn a note in the late afternoon, in which she had written:—

> My Evelyn is not to fail in her promise to come back to me to-morrow. I have not yet completed the reading of the manuscript, though I hope to do so to-night, if a late vigil shall enable me to accomplish that purpose. I have asked Arthur to let me sleep in the nursery to-night, if I finish the reading in time to sleep at all. So I can sit up as late as I please without fear of disturbing him. Poor fellow, he is working too hard and thinking too hard even for his magnificent strength.
>
> But whether I finish your manuscript to-night or not, Evelyn dear, I [391] have read enough of it to know that your life-story only confirms the judgment I had formed of your character, and draws you nearer to my sympathies. So come home in the morning, and don't disappoint me.

When she took up the manuscript again, this is what she read:—

Chapter the Twelfth

WE travelled by the railroad as far as it went. Then we had to get into a big wagon, drawn by six mules.

The country we passed through was wild, and quite uninhabited, I think. At any rate, we saw no houses, and no people except now and then a little party of Indians. There were no roads, only dim trails, and there were no bridges, so that it sometimes took us three or four days to get across a river.

We carried all our provisions in the wagon, and when we stopped for the night we cooked our suppers by great big fires, built out of doors. It was usually about nightfall when we pitched our camp, and so long as our way lay through the woods, I used to lie awake for hours every night, looking up and watching the light from the camp- [392] fire as it played hide and seek among the great trees. When at last we got out of the woods and began travelling over a vast prairie, the camping was far less pleasant, particularly when a norther blew, making it bitter cold. Still, I insisted on sleeping out of doors, although Campbell had fitted up a cosy little bedroom for me in the big wagon. That was because it was Campbell's wagon. Out of doors I felt a sort of freedom, while if I even looked into the wagon I realised that I was that man's prisoner.

He was trying to be good to me then. That is to say, he was trying to make me think him kind and to make me like him. Among other things, he gave me a horse to ride on. He had intended at first that I should travel in the wagon, but I would not do that. I preferred to walk, instead. So, after the second day, when we met a party of Indians, he bought a horse of them and gave it to me to ride. It was a vicious brute, bent upon breaking my neck, but I knew how to ride, and within a day or two I had taught the animal to like me a little, and to obey me altogether. I had no saddle, of course, but I never did like a saddle, and I don't, even now, as you know. So I got [393] one of the men to strap a blanket on my horse's back with a surcingle, and I rode upon that.

The men who drove our mules were very rough fellows, but they soon got to liking me. I suppose that was because I knew how to ride and wasn't afraid of anything. However that may be, they seemed to like me. They would do their best to make me comfortable, giving me the best they could get to eat—birds, squirrels, and the like—and always making for me a pallet of dry grass or leaves to sleep upon.

Finally, one evening, when Campbell had gone away from the camp for some purpose or other, one of the rough men came to me and said:—

"Little Missy"—that is what they always called me—"little Missy, you don't like Campbell an' you want to get away from him. Now he's pretty quick on trigger, but I'm a bit quicker'n he is, an' anyhow I'll take the chances for you. Ef you say the word, I'll pick a

quarrel with him an' kill him in fair fight. Then my pards an' me'll take you to some civilised town an' leave you there, so's you kin git back to your friends. Only say the word, an' I'll git him ready for his [394]
funeral afore mornin'."

Of course this horrified me, particularly the indifference with which the man thought of murder. I told him he must never think of doing anything of the kind, and asked him to promise me.

"It's jest as you says, little Missy," he answered. "Only me an' my pards wants you to know how ready we are to do you any little favour like that ef you want it done."

That night I couldn't sleep. I lay all night looking up at the stars and thinking with horror of the light way in which this man had proposed to commit a murder for me. Then the thought came to me that I had myself tried to kill Campbell once with a hair-brush, and for a while I felt that after all I was no better than these murderous men. But, after thinking the thing out, I saw that the two cases were quite different. I had hit Campbell in self-defence, and I could not even yet feel sorry that I had wanted to kill him.

[395]

Chapter the Thirteenth

CAMPBELL was living, at that time, in a little town somewhere in Texas, and we got there after two or three weeks.

It was a dismal-looking place. All the houses were built of rough boards, set upon end, and most of them were saloons. Campbell's house was like all the rest, and when I asked my mother why he lived in so small a house, and what he had done with the fine one that I remembered, she told me he had lost most of his money.

Almost immediately after I got to his house, Campbell took me before a sort of judge who had two pistols and a knife in his belt. Campbell told the judge that he wanted to adopt me as his daughter. When the judge asked him how old I was, he said I was thirteen, and then the judge said that my consent to his adoption of me was not necessary.

The reason he said that was because I had told him that I didn't want to be Campbell's daughter. The judge signed the papers, and told me that Campbell was my father now, and that I must obey him in everything. Campbell told me that my name would hereafter be [396]
Evelyn Byrd Campbell. I supposed then that he was telling the truth.

When he got home that evening, he had been drinking heavily, and he seemed particularly happy. He told my mother that he had "fixed things," so that they wouldn't be poor any longer. He said he was going to buy a big ranch and raise horses.

That night when I went to my bed, I found that somebody had broken into my closet and taken the satchel in which I kept my papers. When I raised an alarm, Campbell told me he had taken the papers and put them in a secure place, lest I should lose them. He said he was my father now, and that it was his duty to take care of my property.

I was terribly angry—so angry that if the teamster who had offered to kill Campbell for me had been there, I think I should have asked him to get my papers for me, although I knew that he would probably kill Campbell in doing so. But the teamster was gone from the town, and I was helpless.

Campbell and my mother did not get on together very well at this time. They never exactly quarrelled, at least in my presence, but I [397]
think that was because my mother regarded quarrelling as vulgar. She was a refined woman, or had been. She seemed now to be very unhappy, and I was sorry for her, though I could not love her. I never had loved her since she had married Campbell while her real husband, my father, was still living. One day I asked her if she didn't think she had made a mistake in doing that, and if she didn't think it wrong and wicked and vulgar for a woman to have two husbands alive at the same time. She rebuked me severely for what she called my insolence, and bade me never mention that subject again. I never did—to her.

Chapter the Fourteenth

VERY soon after this, Campbell bought a large ranch, as he said he would do, and we moved away from the town to live on the ranch.

I know now that he bought it with my money. When he had me made his daughter, and got hold of my papers, the law somehow allowed him to sell the stocks and bonds my father had given me, and he did so. I never knew this until a very little time ago—since I [398] have been at Wyanoke. I'll tell you about that in the proper place.

There were many horses on the ranch, and I spent nearly all my time riding them bareback and teaching them little tricks. It was the only thing I could do to amuse myself; for I did not like to be with my mother, and I hated the very sight of Campbell.

I had already learned to ride standing on the back of a horse, and I decided to learn all about that sort of riding. I enjoyed the danger involved in it, for one thing, especially when I learned to ride two horses at once in that way. But I did not practise these things for the sake of the excitement alone. I had a plan to carry out. I had determined to run away with the first circus that should come to that part of the country. I thought that if I could learn to be a really good bareback rider, the circus people would be glad to take me with them, and in that way I should get away from Campbell.

So I practised my riding every day, growing steadily surer of myself and more expert. I practised jumping through hoops, too—forward and backward—and standing on my hands on horseback, and throwing somersaults.

At last a circus came to the town twelve miles from the ranch, [399] and Campbell offered to take me to see it. He was in one of his placative moods just then, and thought he would please me by this. But I declined the invitation. I did that because I meant to run away and join that circus, and I wanted him to think I cared nothing about a circus, so that he shouldn't look for me among the show people. I still had the horse he had bought from the Indians and given to me, so that I could take that without being accused of horse-stealing. The horse was a tough, wiry fellow, who liked nothing so much as to run with all his might. I think he could have travelled at half-speed for twenty or thirty miles without growing tired.

One night, while the circus was in the town, I mounted my horse just after dark and set off for a ride. As I often rode for half the night, I knew Campbell would think nothing of my doing this. As soon as I was well away from the house, I turned into the road that led to the town, and put my horse—Little Chief—at a rapid gallop. Within less than two hours, I reached the town. Just before getting there, I turned Little Chief loose, set his head toward the ranch, and [400] bade him "scamper." I had taught him always to go to his stable as quickly as possible when I said that word "scamper" to him. This time I had removed the blanket from his back and the bridle from his head. I knew, therefore, he would be found in his stall next morning with nothing on him to show that he had been ridden.

As soon as Little Chief had started on his scamper, I turned and walked into the town. The circus performance was not quite over, so I went to the door of the big tent and told the man there that I wanted to see the proprietor of the show on important business. I hadn't a cent of money, so I didn't expect to go in. But the man at the door politely invited me to enter and see the end of the show. For a moment I thought of accepting his invitation, but then I remembered that all the ranch-men for twenty miles round would be there, and that they all knew me by sight as "that wild gal of Campbell's." I didn't want any of them to see me at the circus, lest they should tell of it when the search for me began. So I told the man that I would not go in, and asked him where and how I could see the owner of the show after the performance. He called a man [401] and told him to take me to "the Lady Superior, in the dressing-tent." I found out presently that all the people in the circus called the manager's wife by that name, and the manager they called "the Grand Panjandrum." In fact, they had a nickname of some sort for every one in authority.

The Lady Superior received me as a queen might. She had just been riding around the ring in a red and gold chariot drawn by six white horses, and playing Cleopatra in what they called "the magnificent and gorgeous historical panorama of human splendour." As Cleopatra, Napoleon, Alexander the Great, George Washington, Genghis Khan, Julius Cæsar, and a great many others took part in the spectacle, the people in the audience must have got

their notions of history considerably mixed up, but at any rate the Lady Superior always seemed to enjoy her part, and particularly her gorgeous raiment. I had a hard time trying not to laugh in her face when I was first presented to her on that night. She was still dressed in her robe of flaming, high-coloured silk, trimmed with ermine and spangles, with her crown still on her head, and she was [402] almost greedily eating a dish of beef à la mode with roast onions. But in spite of her gorgeous apparel and her defective grammar, she proved to be a good-natured creature, and she received me very kindly.

I told her what I could do as a bareback rider, and she took me to her hotel in her carriage as soon as she had put on some plain clothes. I told her that I didn't want anybody in that town to see me, so she drove up to a back door of the little tavern and smuggled me into her room. I remember that the tavern was a little two-story, wooden building, with the inside partition walls made of rough boards set on end so loosely that one could see through the cracks into the next room. But it was called the Transcontinental Hotel, and the painter had found some difficulty in getting the big name into one line across the narrow front of the building.

In her room the Lady Superior gave me some supper, she eating with me as heartily as if she had not had a dish of beef à la mode with roast onions less than half an hour before. She explained to me that the circus people never take their supper till after the performance.

"It makes 'em lazy and not up to their work," she said. [403]

When her husband, the Grand Panjandrum, came in, she introduced me to him and told him about my accomplishments.

He slapped his thigh with his palm and exclaimed:—

"That's superb! We've just lost Mademoiselle Fifine, our 'matchless female equestrienne,' and as we have advertised her everywhere, the audiences are threatening to shoot me every time I go into the ring as clown. You see, audiences don't like to be disappointed. I'll let you show me your paces in the morning, and if you can do the stunts, I shall engage you, and you shall appear as Mademoiselle Fifine to-morrow afternoon and evening."

I objected that I mustn't be seen in that town, lest I be recognised, whereupon he broke into a laugh and exclaimed:—

"Recognised! Why, your own mother won't know you when the dresser gets you into Mademoiselle Fifine's finery, and daubs your face with grease paint, and plasters it with powder. Bridget's clothes will just fit you."

"Who is Bridget?" I asked, as I had not heard of that person [404] before. The manager laughed, and answered:—

"Bridget? Why, she was Mademoiselle Fifine, you know. She wasn't well up to the business, but she was plucky and took risks, so she got a very bad fall that broke her up, and she had to quit and go to a hospital. She was a good girl, and I am paying her expenses. If she don't die of her injuries, I'll pay her board somewhere as long as she lives. For she will never ride again."

Then a sudden thought occurred to the Grand Panjandrum.

"Tell you what, Sis," he said. "Why can't we drive down to the tent, and you let me see you ride a little to-night? You see, it will be a sort of life insurance to me; for if we give the show again without Fifine in it, some o' them wild Texans will shoot me, like as not. If you can do the trick, I'll get a printer to work, and early in the morning we'll come out with a flaming announcement of 'The Return of Mademoiselle Fifine, the Matchless Equestrienne of the Universe,' and you can go into the ring at the afternoon performance."

I didn't like the lies he intended to tell, and I said so. I wanted [405] him to give me some other ring name, but he said that all his big, coloured posters had Mademoiselle's name on them, with coloured pictures of her on horseback, and that he couldn't afford to throw the posters away, even if there had been any printers in Texas who could make new ones, as there were not.

"Besides," he added, "you'll be Mademoiselle Fifine, just as much as Bridget was. Everybody knows that the name is fictitious. All they want is to see good riding, and if you can't ride as well as poor Bridget did, I couldn't think of engaging you."

I had to consent, and indeed I saw that there was really no deception to be practised. So the Grand Panjandrum and the Lady

Superior and I sent for the carriage and drove back to the circus tent, which was dark now, except for the dim light of a few watchmen's lanterns. I went to the dressing-room and put on some of Fifine's riding-clothes—not those she wore in the presence of the audience, but a plain practice gown of black. Meanwhile the manager had made the men light up a little and bring out some horses.

I mounted and rode a little, doing my very best, though I was [406] extremely nervous for fear that I should not prove to be acceptable. I suppose I rode a good deal better than Bridget had done, for the manager, his wife, and all the men in the ring seemed greatly delighted. I ended by throwing some somersaults, and that set them almost wild. The manager engaged me on the spot, making me sign the contract in the dressing-room tent before I had changed my clothing. Then he hurried me back to the tavern, registered me as Mademoiselle Fifine, writing the name in a big hand all across the page, and ordered me to bed.

"You mustn't be nervous at your first performance," he said; "so you must get plenty of sleep."

When it came time to go to the circus, I was surprised to find that a special carriage, drawn by two large, white horses with long, flowing tails, had been provided for me. I learned afterward that this was one of the Grand Panjandrum's devices for advertising his "matchless equestrienne." It gave the people the impression that Mademoiselle Fifine was a person of so much consequence that she must be treated like a queen, and it led to many wild, exaggerated [407] stories of the royal salary the manager had to pay in order to secure so distinguished an "artiste." It was popularly believed that "ten thousand a year wouldn't touch her"; that she had her own carriage and coachman and footman and maid, and always the finest rooms in the hotel. My salary, in fact, was fifty dollars a month, and the "coachman" was one of the ring attendants. But I did have the best rooms in all the hotels. The Grand Panjandrum insisted upon that, and he did it rather noisily, too, complaining that the hotels really had no rooms fit for such a person to live in. All this was advertising, of course, but at any rate I was made as comfortable as could be.

I succeeded very well indeed in the bareback riding, and at my suggestion the manager sent an agent to Campbell's ranch and bought the five or six horses there that I had trained. I soon drilled them to perform little acts in the ring which seemed to please the public. For this the manager added ten dollars a month to my salary. He and his wife were always very good to me, but some of the actors in the circus seemed jealous of the attention shown me and of the applause I got. I was already miserable, because I hated the [408] business and especially my own part of it.

The whole thing seemed to me vulgar, and the people I had to associate with were very coarse. But what could I do? Anything was better than being Campbell's daughter, and the circus gave me a living at the least.

Chapter the Fifteenth

I DID not remain long with the circus—not more than four or five months, I think—before Campbell found out where I was and came after me. If the manager had been a man of any courage, I should have refused to go with Campbell. But when Campbell threatened him with all sorts of lawsuits and prosecutions, he agreed to discharge me. Even then I should not have gone with Campbell if I could have got the money due me for my riding. But after the first month the manager had paid me almost nothing, on the plea of bad business (though his tent was always packed), and as he was paying all my expenses except for my plain clothes, I hadn't pressed him for the money. He owed me nearly two hundred dollars when Campbell came, and I asked him for it, meaning to run [409] away and find some other employment. But Campbell told him he was my father and my guardian, and that the money must be paid to him and not to me. The manager weakly yielded, and so I hadn't enough money even to pay a railroad fare.

Under the circumstances, there was nothing for me to do but go with Campbell. He had sold the ranch, and was now keeping a big wholesale store in the city of Austin. He had built a very big house, and had a great many negro servants in it. Soon after I got to

Austin, Campbell's store was burned, and I thought at first that he was ruined. But he seemed richer after that than ever. My mother told me it was the insurance money, and a good many people used to think he had burned the store himself. There was a lawsuit about it, but Campbell won.

One day I concluded to have a talk with him. I asked him why he wanted to keep me with him, and why he wouldn't give me the money I had earned in the circus, and let me go away.

He laughed at me, and told me it was because he didn't choose to have his daughter riding in a circus. So I got no satisfaction out of him then. But in the letter he sent me in the bundle of papers that [410] Colonel Kilgariff brought me, he explained the matter. It was because he feared I would get somebody else to be my guardian, and any new guardian would come upon him for the stocks and bonds my father had given me. Campbell had sold all of them that he could, and was using the money himself.

After a while, Campbell became interested in some kind of business—I don't know what—out in Arizona; and when he had to go out there to stay for several months, he broke up his house in Austin, and took my mother and me with him. We lived in tents on the journey, and Campbell grew very uneasy after a time, because there were reports of a threatened Indian war. Still, we travelled on, until at last we got among the Indians themselves. They were very angry about something, but Campbell seemed to know how to deal with them, in some measure at least. But presently the war broke out in earnest, and Campbell told my mother he was completely ruined, as he had put all his money into the business, and this Indian war had destroyed it.

One day he had a parley with a big Indian chief, and that night he took my mother and went away somewhere, leaving me in the tent [411] alone. About midnight a band of Indians came to the tent, howling like so many demons. They took me and carried me away on one of their horses.

I was greatly frightened, but I pretended not to be, and the Indians liked me for that. They always like people who are not afraid. They treated me well—or at any rate they did me no harm—but they carried me away to their camp, where all their squaws and children were; for they were on the war-path now, and Indians always take their families with them when they go to war.

When I found that they were not disposed to treat me badly I was almost glad they had captured me; for at least they had taken me away from Campbell, and I liked them much better than I did him.

In the letter Campbell sent me by Colonel Kilgariff, he told me that he had himself planned my capture by the Indians. He had arranged it with the chief when he had the parley with him; and when he went away with my mother, leaving me in the tent alone, he knew the Indians were to catch me that night. He wanted them to get me because then I couldn't get another guardian, and he [412] thought I could never come back to trouble him about my money when I grew up. I don't know why he wrote all these things to me, except that he was dying and wanted me to know the whole story. He sent me back all my papers, so that I might some day get what was left of the property my father had given me. Among other things, he told me that my father was dead, and that he himself had killed him in a fight.

Chapter the Sixteenth

I STAYED with the Indians for several months—as long as the war lasted. It was then that I lived on buffalo meat alone, with no other food. Finally the soldiers conquered the Indians and forced them to go back on their reservation. Then Campbell came to see if I was still alive, and, finding me, he took me with him to New York, where he was practising law and doing something in a bank. That lasted a year or so. Nothing ever lasted long with Campbell. But when he left New York and went to Missouri to live, he seemed to have plenty of money again.

Soon afterward, this war came on, and Campbell raised a [413] company, got himself appointed its captain, and went into the Confederate service. After a while, he came home on a leave of absence. He and my mother had been on very bad terms for a long time, and things seemed worse than ever.

One day, when he had been drinking a good deal, he insulted my mother frightfully, and she turned upon him at last, saying she intended to expose his rascalities and “bring him to book”—that was her phrase—for embezzling my property.

Dorothy, I can’t tell you all about that scene. I was so shocked and frightened that it gives me a nightmare even now to recall it. Campbell *killed my mother by choking her to death in my presence*!

As I was the only person who saw him do it, I think he would have killed me, too, if I had not run from him. As it was, he followed me presently, and with a pistol in his hand told me I must go with him, adding that if I ever told anybody what had happened he would kill me.

He took off his uniform and put on a suit of citizen’s clothing. Then he made me mount a horse, he mounting another, and we rode all night. In the morning we were in a Federal camp. [414]

I don’t know what Campbell told the Federal officers, but he satisfied them somehow, and, taking me with him, he went East. He put me in charge of a very ugly old woman and her daughter, somewhere up in the mountains of Pennsylvania, not near any town or even village. Then he went away, and for three years I lived with those people, practically a prisoner. They never for a moment let me out of their sight, and at night I had to sleep in an upper room, a kind of loft, which had no window and no door—nothing but a trap-door over the stairs. Every night the younger woman closed the trap-door, fastening it below. The two women slept in the room beneath.

If I could have got away, I should have gone, even if I had been obliged to go into the woods and starve. For the women treated me horribly, and I could not forget the scene when my mother was killed. I thought of her always as she lay there on the floor, dead, with her face purple and—I can’t write about that.

Once I tried to escape. By hard work I made a hole in the roof above me, one night, and tried to climb up to it. But I missed my [415] hold and fell heavily to the floor. That brought the two women up the stairs, and after that they took away every stitch of my clothing every night before I went to bed, not leaving me even a nightgown. So I made no further efforts to escape.

But I set to work in another way. I had learned that Campbell was now an officer in the Federal army, and I managed to find out how to reach him with a letter, so I wrote to him. I told him I intended to have him hanged for killing my mother, and that it didn’t matter how long he kept me in the mountains; that some time or other, sooner or later, I should get free; and that whenever that time came, I meant to go to a lawyer and tell him all about the crime.

I knew that this would make Campbell uneasy. I thought it not improbable that he would come up into the mountains and kill me, though I thought he might be afraid to do that. You see, when he killed my mother there was nobody but me to tell about it, and he knew he could go to the other side in the war and not be followed; while if he should do anything to me up there in the Pennsylvania [416] mountains, everybody would know of it. For in that country everybody knew when a stranger came into the neighbourhood, and when he went away again. So I thought Campbell would be afraid to kill me there. I thought my letter would frighten him, and that he would take me away from that place. That was what I wanted. I thought that if I were taken to any other place, I should have a better chance of escaping.

Chapter the Seventeenth

THAT was not long before you saw me, Dorothy, and it turned out as I had expected. Campbell grew alarmed. He ordered the two women to bring me to him in Washington. When I got there, he told me that I had relatives in Virginia who wanted me to come to them, and that he had arranged to send me through the lines under a flag of truce. I know now that he was not telling me the truth, but I believed him then, and I was ready to do anything and go anywhere if only I could get out of his clutches.

He took me into another room, where an officer was writing, and there they made me swear to a parole. Then Campbell took me [417] down to the Rapidan, and we went into that house from which

Colonel Kilgariff rescued me. Campbell said that the flag of truce would start from there, but that we must wait there for the soldiers in charge of it to come.

When the shells struck the house and set it on fire, Campbell took me to the cellar and left me there, saying that he would be back in a few minutes, and that there was no danger in the cellar. I know now what his intention was. He expected me to be burned to death there in the cellar, and it would have happened that way, but for Colonel Kilgariff.

There, Dorothy, dear: now you know all about me that I know about myself.

The End of Evelyn's Book.

XXIX

EVELYN'S VIGIL

EVELYN BYRD'S exceeding truthfulness of mind and soul made her a transparent person for loving eyes to look through, and Edmonia Bannister's eyes were very loving ones for her.

When she went to Branton for her ten days' visit, Evelyn herself scarcely knew why she wished thus to separate herself from Kilgariff; but she went with a subconscious determination to avoid all mention of his name. She could hardly have adopted a surer means of revealing her state of mind to so wise and so experienced a woman as Edmonia.

After much thought upon the subject, Edmonia sent a little note to Dorothy. In it she wrote:—

> You have never said a word to me on the subject, Dorothy, but I am certain that you know what the situation is between Evelyn and Kilgariff. So do I, now, and I am not satisfied to have it so.
>
> Unless you peremptorily forbid, I am going to bring on a crisis between those two. I am going to tell Evelyn what Kilgariff has done for her in the matter of this trust fund. When she knows that, there will be a scene of some sort between them, and I think we may trust love and human nature to bring it to a happy conclusion. [419]
>
> If you will recall what occurred when the trust papers were executed and given to us three, you will remember that no promise of secrecy was exacted of us. It is true we quite understood that we were to say nothing to Evelyn about the matter until the proper time should come; but we three are sole judges as to what is the proper time, and Agatha and I are both of the opinion that the proper time is now. Unless you interpose your veto, therefore, I shall act upon that opinion, making myself spokeswoman for the trio.
>
> Please send me a line in a hurry.

To this Dorothy replied by the messenger who had brought the note. She wrote but a single sentence, and that was a Biblical quotation. She wrote:—

> Now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation.

On the evening before the day appointed for Evelyn's return to Wyanoke, Dorothy received a second note from Edmonia, saying:— [420]

> I don't know whether we have done wisely or otherwise. For once Evelyn is inscrutable. We have told her of Kilgariff's splendid generosity, and we can't make out how she takes it. She has grown very silent and somewhat nervous. She is under a severe emotional strain of some kind, but of what kind we do not know. A storm of some sort is brewing, and we must simply wait to learn what its character is to be.
>
> Evelyn is proud and exceedingly sensitive, as we know. And there is a touch of the savage in her—or rather the potentiality of the savage—and in a case where she feels so strongly, it may result in an outbreak of savage anger and resentment.
>
> We needn't worry, however, I think. Even such an outbreak would in all probability turn out well. Every storm passes, you know; and when the clouds clear away, the skies are all the bluer for it. When a man and a woman love each other and don't know it, or don't let each other know it, any sort of crisis, any sort of emotional collision, is apt to bring about a favourable result.

Evelyn spent that evening in her room, writing incessantly, far into the night.

She wrote a letter to Kilgariff. When she read it over, she tore it up. [421]

"It reads as if I were angry," she said to herself, "and anger is not exactly what I feel. I wonder what I do feel."

Then she wrote another letter to Kilgariff, and put it aside, meaning to read it after a while. In the meantime she wrote long and lovingly to Dorothy, telling her she had decided not to return to Wyanoke, but to go to Petersburg instead, and help in nursing the soldiers.

When she had read that letter over, she was wholly unsatisfied with it. Written words are apt to mean so much more or so much less than is intended. She put it aside and took up the one to Kilgariff. As she read it, it seemed even more unsatisfactory than the first.

"It is too humble in parts, and too proud in parts," she thought.

Again she set to work and wrote both letters once more. The result was worse than before. The letters seemed to ring with a false note, and above all things she was determined to meet this crisis in

her life with absolute truth and candour. Besides, she not only wanted to utter her thought to Kilgariff—she wanted to hear what [422] he might have to say in reply, and she wanted to see his face as he spoke, reading there far more important things than any that he could put into a letter.

Suddenly she realised that she was very cold. The weather was growing severe now, and in her preoccupation she had neglected her fire until it had burned down to a mass of slowly expiring coals.

Then she recovered her courage.

“I have been trying the cowardly way,” she said aloud, but speaking only to herself. “I must face these things bravely. I’ve been planning to run away again, and I will not do that. I’ve been running away all my life. I’ll never run away again. I’ll go to Wyanoke in the morning.”

With that, she gathered all the sheets on which she had written and dropped them upon the few coals which remained alive. The paper smouldered and smoked for a time. Then it broke into a flame and was quickly consumed.

The girl prepared herself for bed, with a degree of composure which she had not been able to command at any time since the knowledge of Kilgariff’s act had come to her. When she blew out her [423] candle and opened the window, a gust of snow was blown into her face, and she heard the howling of the tempest without.

“It is the first storm of the winter,” she thought, as she drew the draperies about her. “How those poor fellows must be suffering down there in the trenches at Petersburg to-night—half clad, and less than half fed!” Then, as she was sinking into sleep, she thought:—

“I’m glad Mr. Kilgariff is not there to-night.”

The thought startled her into wakefulness again, and during the remaining hours of the night she lay sleeplessly thinking, thinking, thinking.

---

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XXX

BEFORE A HICKORY FIRE

EVELYN'S thinking accomplished its purpose. At the end of it she understood herself, or thought she did. And when she returned to Wyanoke the next morning, she thought she knew precisely what she was going to say to Kilgariff. But who of us ever knows what we will say in converse that involves emotion? Who of us can know what response his utterance will draw forth from the other, or how far the original intent may be turned into another by that response?

At any rate, Evelyn knew that she intended to ask Colonel Kilgariff for an interview, and so far she carried out her purpose.

They were left alone in the great drawing-room at Wyanoke, where hickory logs were merrily blazing in the cavernous fireplace, quite as if there had been no war to desolate the land, and no man and woman there with matters of grave import to discuss.

Evelyn began the conference abruptly, as soon as Kilgariff [425] entered and took a seat.

"I have heard," she began, "of what you have done—of your great generosity toward me. Of course I cannot permit that. You must cancel those papers at once—to-day. I cannot sleep while they exist."

"Who told you of the matter?" Kilgariff asked in reply.

"Edmonia, with Dorothy's permission and Mrs. Pegram's."

"They should not have told you. I meant that you should not know till I am dead, unless—unless I should live longer than I expect, and you should fall into need when the war ends."

"But what right had you to treat me so? Do you think me a beggar, that I should accept a gift of money? Why did you do it?"

The girl was standing now and confronting him, in manifest anger.

Curiously enough, he did not seem to mind the anger. He had completely mastered himself, and knew perfectly what he was to say. He answered:—

"I did this because I love you, Evelyn, and because I cannot [426] provide for your future in any ordinary way."

Seeing that she was about to make some reply, he quickly forestalled it, saying:—

"Please let me continue. Please do not speak yet. Let me explain."

The girl was still standing, but the look of anger in her face had given way to another expression—one more complex and less easily interpreted. There was some pleasure in it, and some apprehension, together with great astonishment.

"Go on," she said.

"Only on even terms," he answered, rising and standing in front of her. "What I have to say to you must be said with my eyes looking into yours. Now listen. By reason of a quite absurd convention, a young woman may not receive gifts of value, and especially of money, from a young man not her husband; yet she may freely take such gifts if they come to her by his will, after he is dead.

"There are circumstances which render it impossible for me to leave my possessions to you by will. Any will that I might make to that effect would be contested and broken by those for whom I care [427] so little that I would rather sink everything I have in the world in the Atlantic Ocean than let them inherit a dollar of it.

"There are also reasons which forbid me to ask you to be my wife —at least until I shall have laid those reasons before you."

Evelyn was pale and trembling. Kilgariff saw that it was difficult for her to stand, so, taking her hand, he said:—

"Let us sit; I have a long story to tell." Whether purposely or not, he continued to hold her hand after they were seated. Whether consciously or not, she permitted him to do so, without protest. He went on:—

"There was only one other way to accomplish my purpose. It was and still is my wish that everything I have in the world shall be yours when I die. You are the woman I love, and though I have no

right to say so to you now, my love for you is the one supreme passion of my life—the first, the last, the only one. Pardon me for saying that, and please forget it, at least for the present. I have relatives, but they are worse than dead to me, as you shall hear presently. I would rather destroy everything I have by fire or flood than allow one cent of it to pass into their unworthy hands. Enough [428] of that. Let me go on.

"There was only one way in which I could carry out my purpose, and that was the one I adopted. I could not consult you about it or ask your permission, for that would have been indeed to affront you in precisely the way in which you now tell me I have affronted you. It would have been to ask you to accept a money gift at my hands while I yet lived. I intended, instead, to give you all I possess, only after my death and in effect by my will or its equivalent. I did not intend you to be embarrassed by any knowledge of my act, until a bullet or shell should have laid me low. Now I want you to speak, please. I want you to say that you understand, and that you forgive me."

"I understand," she said; "there is nothing to forgive; but now that I know your purpose, I cannot permit it. You must cancel those papers."

"Does it make no difference that I have told you I love you, and that I should entreat you to be my wife if I were free to do so?"

"I do not see," she replied, "that that makes a difference."

"Do not decide the matter now, wait!" he half entreated, half [429] commanded. "Let me finish what I have to say. Let me tell you why I must do this thing. Wait!"

He paused for a moment, as if collecting his thoughts. Then he told her his life-story, omitting nothing, concealing nothing, palliating nothing. That done, he went on:—

"You understand now why I was driven to the course I have adopted with you. You understand that as an honourable man I could not ask you for love, leaving you in ignorance of the fact that I am under a conviction of felony. My sentence is at an end, of course, and I cannot be rearrested, inasmuch as I am officially adjudged to be dead. But that makes no difference in my duty. I could not honourably reveal my love to you until you should know the facts. I do not now ask you to accept my wrecked life and to forget the facts that have wrecked it. I have no right to ask so great a sacrifice at your hands. I ask only that you shall permit me to regard you as the woman I love, the woman I should have sought to make my wife if I had been worthy. I ask your permission so to arrange my affairs, or so to leave them as already arranged, that at my death all that I [430] have will pass into your hands. You can never know or dream or imagine how I love you, Evelyn. Surely it is only a little thing that I ask of you."

As he delivered this passionate utterance, Kilgariff threw his arm around the girl's waist, and for a moment held her closely. She let her head rest upon his shoulder, and did not resist or resent his impulse when he kissed her reverently upon the forehead.

But an instant later, she suddenly realised the situation, and quickly sprang to her feet, he rising with her and facing her with strained nerves and eyes fixed upon her own, sternly but caressingly.

Evelyn Byrd was not given to tears, and for that reason the drops that now trickled down her cheeks had far more meaning to Kilgariff than a woman's tears sometimes have for a man.

For a time, she looked him full in the face, not attempting to conceal her tears even by brushing them away. She simply let them flow, as an honest expression of her emotion.

Finally she so far composed herself as to speak.

"Owen Kilgariff," she said—it was the first time she had ever so [431] addressed him—"Owen Kilgariff, you have dealt honestly with me; I want to deal honestly with you. If I were worthy of your love, I should rejoice in it. As it is, this is the greatest calamity of my life. You do not know—but you shall. There are reasons that forbid me to accept the love you have offered—peremptory reasons. You shall know them quickly."

With that she glided out of the room, and Owen Kilgariff was left alone.

XXXI

[432]

THE LAST FLIGHT OF EVELYN

EVELYN went for a few minutes to her room. There she bathed her eyes; for like all women, she was ashamed of the tears that did her honour by attesting the tender intensity of her womanhood.

That done, she went to the laboratory, where she found Dorothy at work. To her she said:—

“Please let me have my book. I want Mr. Kilgariff to read it.”

Dorothy asked no explanation. She needed none. She went at once and fetched the manuscript. Evelyn took it and returned to the parlour, where she placed it in Kilgariff’s hands.

“Please read that, carefully,” she said. “Then you will understand.”

“If you mean,” he replied, “that anything this manuscript may reveal concerning your past life can lessen my love for you, you are utterly wrong, and the reading is unnecessary. If you wish only that I shall know you better, and more perfectly understand the influences that have made you the woman you are, I shall be glad to read every line and word that you have written.”

[433]

“Please read it.” That was all she said, and she instantly left the room.

Five minutes later she told Dorothy she wanted the carriage.

“I want to go to Warlock,” she said, “on a little visit to Mrs. Pegram. Oh, Dorothy! you understand.”

“Yes, dear,” answered Dorothy, “I understand. It is rather late to start to Warlock. It is a thirty-mile drive. But I’ll give you Dick for your coachman, and there is a moon. Dick is quite a military man now, and he knows what a forced march means. He’ll get you to Warlock in time for a late supper.”

Dick drove like a son of Jehu. After the manner of the family negro in Virginia, he shrewdly conjectured what was in the wind; and when he put up his horses at Warlock before even the regular supper was served, he said to the stableman:—

“I reckon mebbe Mas’ Owen Kilgariff’ll want stablin’ here for a good horse to-morrow, an’ purty soon in de mawnin’ at dat.”

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XXXII

THE END OF IT ALL

DICK was right. Kilgariff read nearly all night, and finished Evelyn's book in the small hours of the morning. Then he slept more calmly than he had done at any time during recent weeks.

At six o'clock he went to the kitchen and negotiated with Aunt Kizzey, the cook, for an immediate cup of coffee. Then he mounted the war-horse that had brought him to Wyanoke—sleek and strong, now, and full of gallop—and set off for Warlock plantation.

When he got there, the nine o'clock breakfast was just ready, but he had luckily met Evelyn in a strip of woodland, where she was walking in spite of the snow that lay ankle-deep upon the ground. Dismounting, he said to her:—

"I have read your book from beginning to end, Evelyn. I have [435] come now for your answer to my question."

"What question?" she asked, less frankly than was her custom.

"Will you be my wife?"

"Yes—gladly," she said, "if my story makes no difference."

"It makes a great difference," he responded. "It tells me, as nothing else could, what a woman you are. It intensifies my love, and my resolution to make all the rest of your life an atonement to you for the suffering you have endured."

The next day Evelyn cut short her visit to Warlock and returned to Wyanoke. At the same time Kilgariff went back to Petersburg to bear his part in the closing scenes of the greatest war of all time.

Grant was already in possession of the Weldon Railroad. With his limitless numbers, he had been able to stretch his line southward and westward until his advance threatened the cutting off of the two other railroads that constituted Richmond's only remaining lines of communication southward. Lee's small force, without hope of reinforcement, had been stretched out into a line so long and so thin [436] that at many points the men holding the works stood fully a dozen yards apart.

Still, they held on with a grim determination that no circumstance could conquer.

They perfectly knew that the end was approaching. They perfectly knew that that end could mean nothing to them but disaster. Nevertheless, they stood to their guns and stubbornly resisted every force hurled against them. With heroic cheerfulness, they fought on, never asking themselves to what purpose. Throughout the winter they suffered starvation and cold; for food was scarce, and of clothing there was none.

Surely the spectacle was one in contemplation of which the angels might have paused in admiration. Surely the heroism of those devoted men was an exhibition of all that is best in the American character, a display of courage which should be for ever cherished in the memory of all American men.

When the spring came, and the roads hardened, Grant delivered the final blow. Sherman had cut the Confederacy in two by his march to the sea, and was now, in overwhelming force, pushing his [437] way northward again, with intent to unite his army with Grant's for Lee's destruction.

Then Grant concentrated a great army on his left and struck a crushing blow. Lee withdrew from Richmond and Petersburg, and made a desperate endeavour to retreat to some new line of defence farther south.

The effort was foredoomed to failure. It ended in the surrender at Appomattox of a little fragment of that heroic Army of Northern Virginia which had for so long stood its ground against overwhelming odds, and so manfully endured hunger and cold and every other form of suffering that may befall the soldier.

It was during that last retreat that Kilgariff and Evelyn met for the first time since they had plighted troth, and for the last time as mere man and woman, not husband and wife.

Kilgariff, a brigadier-general now, had been ordered to take command of the guns defending the rear. By night and by day he was always in action. But when the line of march passed near to

Wyanoke, he sent a messenger to Evelyn, bearing a note scrawled upon a scrap of paper which he held against his saddle-tree, in lieu of a desk. In the note he wrote simply:— [438]

> Come to me, wherever I am to be found. I want you to be my wife before I die. You have courage. Come to me—we'll be married in battle, and the guns shall play the wedding march.

Evelyn responded to the summons, and these two were made one upon the battlefield, with bullets flying about their heads and rifle shells applauding.

The ceremony ended, Evelyn rode away to Wyanoke to await the end. A week later Owen Kilgariff joined her there.

"We are beginning life anew," he said, "and together."

"Yes," she answered, "and at last I have nothing to fear."

THE END

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[439]

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and keep it." The instructions as to planting, maintenance, etc., are clear and comprehensive, and can be read and practiced with profit by both amateur and professional.

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