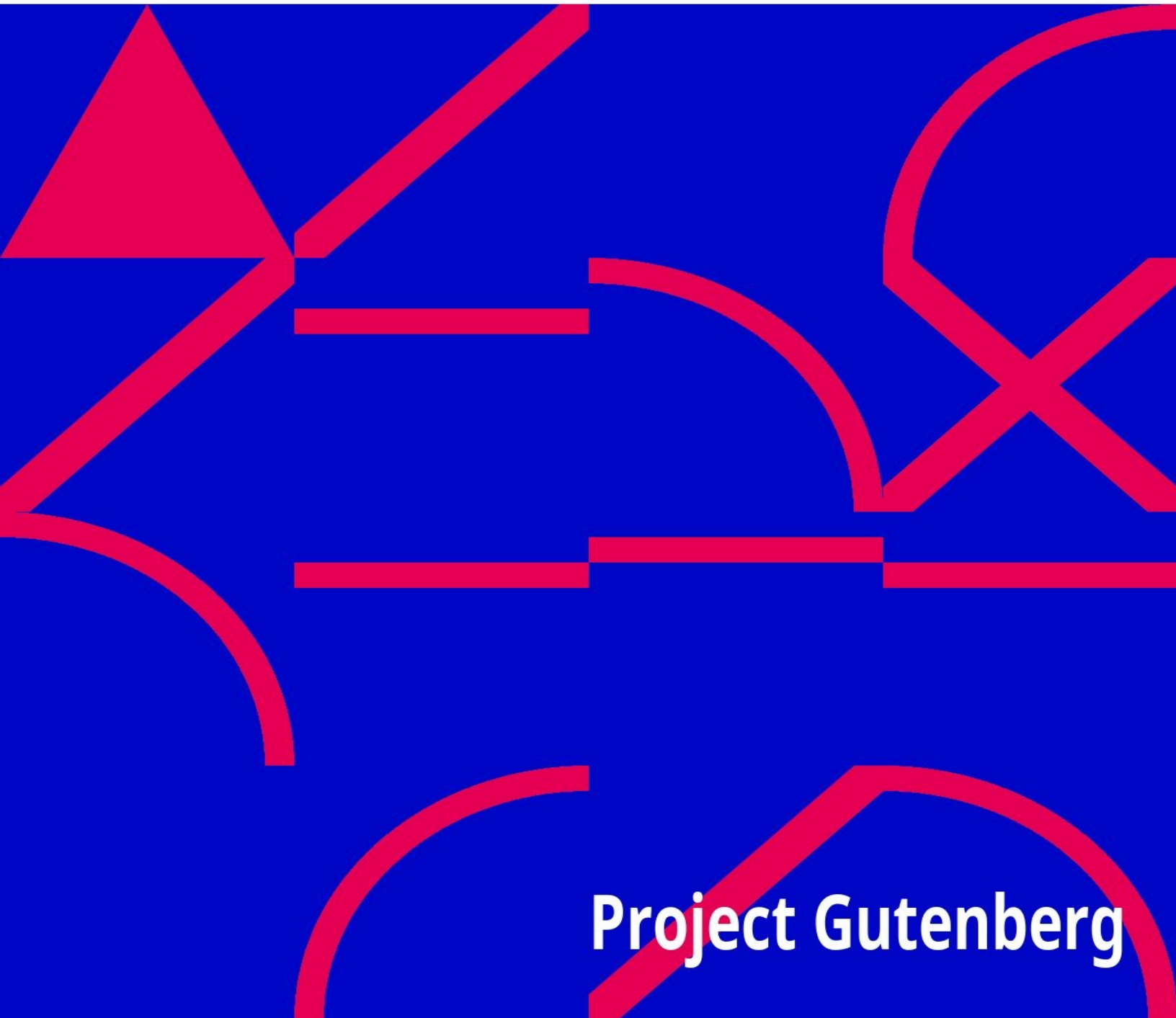
An Undivided Union

Oliver Optic and Edward Stratemeyer



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"Water!" He murmured, "Water!"
"Water!" He murmured, "Water!"
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The Blue and the Gray—On Land

AN UNDIVIDED UNION

BY

OLIVER OPTIC

AUTHOR OF "THE ARMY AND NAVY SERIES" "YOUNG AMERICA ABROAD, FIRST AND SECOND SERIES" "THE BOAT-CLUB STORIES" "THE GREAT WESTERN SERIES" "THE WOODVILLE STORIES" "THE ONWARD AND UPWARD SERIES" "THE LAKE SHORE SERIES" "THE YACHT-CLUB SERIES" "THE RIVERDALE STORIES" "THE BOAT-BUILDER SERIES" "THE BLUE AND THE GRAY—AFLOAT" "ALL OVER THE WORLD—FIRST, SECOND, AND THIRD SERIES" "THE BLUE AND THE GRAY—ON LAND" ETC. ETC. ETC.

COMPLETED BY

EDWARD STRATEMEYER

AUTHOR OF "THE OLD GLORY SERIES" "BOUND TO SUCCEED SERIES" ETC.

BOSTON
LEE AND SHEPARD PUBLISHERS
1899

AN UNDIVIDED UNION.

Norwood Press
J. S. Cushing & Co.—Berwick & Smith
Norwood Mass. U.S.A.

To My Friend

FRED D. IRISH

WHOSE ENTHUSIASTIC SUPPORT AND SUCCESSFUL EFFORTS

IN DISTRIBUTING MY BOOKS

AMONG THE YOUTH OF THE UNITED STATES

HAS BEEN A CONSTANT INSPIRATION

This Work is Affectionately Dedicated

PUBLISHERS' PREFACE

The outline and incomplete material of AN UNDIVIDED UNION were left among the papers of the late William T. Adams ("Oliver Optic"), and the same notes that were to complete the "Blue and Gray—On Land" series also closed the life-work of America's best-known writer of boys' stories.

There has been a constant demand that this unfinished concluding volume be prepared for publication, and Mr. Edward Stratemeyer, author of the remarkably popular "Old Glory" series, based upon the Spanish-American war, undertook the task of picking up the threads of the narrative and carrying it to such a conclusion as was evidently intended. He has performed the work devotedly and successfully, and sustained the harmony of the series to the end.

The publishers take this opportunity to pay tribute to the memory of Mr. Adams, whose name has been inseparably connected with this house for so many years. Such was his loyalty that no manuscript for publication in bound form was ever given to any other publisher, and the present volume is the one hundred and eighth to bear the magical name of "Optic." It is gratifying to be able to record that in return for his steadfastness in remaining by the house of his choice through prosperity and adversity an actual sale of more than two million copies of Mr. Adams's books has been reached, while the present season finds them enjoying undiminished favor.

No more striking testimonial could be asked than the constant applications from men of mature life for the books that so charmed them as boys, in order that their own sons may have the same enjoyment. Or, could anything be more conclusive than that one of the most prominent men in the public life of our state still turns to his favorite "Oliver Optic" books for pleasurable relief when the cares of the day have made rest seem almost an impossibility?

Critics come and critics go, but the hold of "Oliver Optic" upon the popular mind remains unchanged. No mean-souled man could so endure. As he said himself: "I have never written a story which could excite the love, admiration, and sympathy of the reader for an evil-minded person or bad character. This has been my standard; and, however others may regard it, I still deem it a safe one." All who had any connection with the publication of Mr. Adams's works loved the

man, and his visits were marked with cheerful words for each one, in whatever capacity employed, and will linger helpfully while life remains. All who knew him join in honoring the unfailing kindness and clean, true nature of this great writer and noble friend of youth.

LEE AND SHEPARD.

APRIL 1, 1899.

PREFACE

"AN UNDIVIDED UNION" is the sixth and last volume of the "Blue and Gray—On Land" series. Like its predecessors it relates the adventures of the Riverlawn Cavalry, a Union regiment, raised in Kentucky, and participating in the daring campaigns undertaken by the Army of the Cumberland. The fifth volume of the series left the regiment at Murfreesboro, after most gallant service performed at the battle of Stone River; in the present book is given an account of the operations around Murfreesboro, before Tullahoma, and through the bloody battles of Chickamauga, Chattanooga, Lookout Mountain, Missionary Ridge, and other contests leading up to Sherman's famous March to the Sea.

As in the other stories of this series, Deck Lyon has again come to the front as a daring hero, but his achievements are closely seconded by his foster brother, Artie, and by the firm friend of the two, Captain Life Knox. If Deck does some smart things, it must be remembered that he was a smart young man or he would not have risen to be senior major, first battalion, of the Riverlawns. Besides this, the major still had with him his famous charger, Ceph, a steed with almost human intelligence on certain points, and one that had helped him to escape from many a perilous position.

In the completion of this work some thirty authorities have been consulted, including the Government Records, records of the Army of the Cumberland, and biographies of the principal generals on both sides who took part in the various operations. Thus the book has been made, from an historical standpoint, as accurate as possible. It may be that errors have crept in, but if so it is hoped that they will not be of sufficient importance to mar the general usefulness of the volume, outside of its value as a bit of fiction.

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

AN UNDIVIDED UNION

CHAPTER I

A CALL FOR ASSISTANCE

"How many miles have we still to go, Deck?"

"Not over seven by this road, Artie," replied Major Deck Lyon, commanding the first battalion, Riverlawn Cavalry, of Kentucky. "I should think the surroundings would begin to look familiar to you, even if we have been away from home for some time."

"I never frequented this road," exclaimed Captain Artie Lyon, commanding the fourth company of the Riverlawns. "Doesn't it run into that cut where you saved Kate Belthorpe and the rest of her party from that gang of so-styled 'Home Guard' ruffians?"

"I believe it does," was the slow response, and Major Dexter Lyon blushed; for although the incident referred to had occurred many months before, it was still fresh in his mind, as were also the beautiful face and bewitching eyes of the maiden. The young major was but nineteen years of age, and it could hardly be said that he was in love, yet a warm attachment had sprung up between these two people. "Does your wound trouble you in riding, Artie?" he went on, to change the subject, and thus prevent his cousin from teasing him in his most susceptible spot.

"Not enough to count." Artie paused to urge his lagging horse ahead. "I wonder if any of Morgan's desperadoes are in this neighborhood. I understood from what Captain Ripley said that they were trying to overrun the whole State. It's a pity we haven't more of such first-class sharpshooters around as he commands."

"What's the matter with Life Knox's tall boys, Artie? I reckon they can shoot about as well as any of Ripley's men, even though they are not as well drilled. If I know anything about it, Life is a whole host in himself."

"Oh, I agree with you there, Deck." There was another pause as the pair of horsemen swung around a heavily wooded bend. "What a pity father couldn't get a furlough to come home with us. I don't believe he would have been missed, when the main body of the Department of the Cumberland is doing nothing but

keeping an eye on Bragg. Mother and the girls would have been delighted to see —Hullo, if there isn't Levi Bedford coming this way—and with half a dozen of the boys! Something is up, sure!"

As Captain Artie broke off, a tall, heavy-set man, mounted on a coal-black horse, burst into view, riding at a high rate of speed. Behind the man came six stout negroes; and all of the party carried guns, and the white man a pistol in addition.

"Hi, Levi!" yelled Major Deck, as soon as the party of seven came within hailing distance.

"Deck!" burst out the overseer of Riverlawn. "And Artie, by all that's fortunate!"

"De young mars'rs!" came from several of the colored men. "Proud to see yo', Mars'r Dexter, an' Mars'r Artie!"

At this Deck and Artie smiled on the slaves. Deck shook hands with Levi Bedford, and Artie followed suit. "Is there any special reason for this meeting being fortunate, Levi?" questioned the major, anxiously.

"I think so," was the hasty answer. "Less than two hours ago, and just after I had made the rounds at Riverlawn, to make sure that everything was all right, and no marauders in sight, I received this note." And the overseer passed over a small sheet of note-paper, upon which a few lines were written in pencil, in a small hand.

> "DEAR MR. BEDFORD: If you can, come to our assistance at once. A detachment of three soldiers of Morgan's cavalry has arrived at Lyndhall. One of the three is to return to his company at once and bring them here to plunder the estate. I am at home alone with my sister Kate and three servants. The negro who delivers this is a stranger to me, but well known to my father.
>
> "MARGIE BELTHORPE."

"Kate in danger!" The words left Deck's lips before he could think to repress them. "Levi, we must not waste a moment in getting to Lyndhall!"

"Just my idea," responded the overseer. "I didn't lose a minute in getting the boys together, after I received that. Some of the boys were out in the back pasture, rounding up two stallions that broke away; but I sent word for them to follow, and I reckon they'll soon be after us, four or five strong."

"Four more will give you eleven men, counting yourself. Artie and I will make thirteen. An unlucky number—for those ruffians, if we get to Lyndhall in time. Forward!" and Major Deck wheeled his horse, followed by Captain Artie; and away went the entire party at the best speed their animals could command.

The time was the middle of the month of January, 1863, and the Army of the Cumberland, under General Rosecrans, was resting in and around Murfreesboro. The long, stubborn fight at Stone River had exhausted the men, and no new campaign could be undertaken until the wrecked and burned lines of communication were restored, the army reclothed and otherwise put into proper shape, and the necessary steps taken to make Murfreesboro safe as a new base of supplies.

As the readers of the former volumes of this series know, the Riverlawn Cavalry was one of the first to be organized in the State of Kentucky, at the time when the Commonwealth was still undecided as to whether it should remain in the Union or throw its lot in with the Confederacy. The original body of men, forming two companies, had been raised very largely by Noah Lyon, the father of Dexter, who had used them in putting down the lawless uprisings of the Home Guards of the neighborhood—a mob of unprincipled fellows who, under the guise of wishing to defend Kentucky's neutrality during the great conflict, secretly plotted to aid the Confederacy, and later on, when the Commonwealth declared for the Union, promptly joined the ranks of the Secessionists.

From two companies the command had developed to a full regiment of twelve companies, of which Noah Lyon was colonel. Following his father into the war, Dexter had, by hard work and a bravery which sometimes bordered on recklessness, risen from the ranks until he became senior major, while his cousin Artie, of about Deck's age, had well earned the commission of a captain. Both had been wounded more than once, Artie rather seriously, and both were known to care little or nothing for the injuries received in such a righteous cause.

The first duty of the Riverlawns as a regular military body had been to put down the raids of several bands of guerillas operating in counties bordering upon, or near, the Tennessee State line. Successful in these, the command had become a part of the Union army, and as such had taken an active part in the battle of Mill Springs, or Logan's Crossroads, as it is sometimes called. After this had come a series of operations on and around Duck River, and in the entrenchments before Corinth, and then had come the advance of Rosecrans's forces upon Murfreesboro, ending in the bloody battle of Stone River, which, while hardly a

victory, caused the shattered forces of the Confederate General Bragg to retreat, and go into winter quarters at Tullahoma.

Although each of the Lyons fought with the warmth and enthusiasm of a true Kentuckian, not one of the members of the several families living at Riverlawn and at Barcreek, a small, nearby town, had been born within the borders of the State. All hailed from New Hampshire, and were Yankee bred as well as born.

The original emigrant to Kentucky had been Duncan Lyon, one of four brothers, who had settled at Riverlawn and made a comfortable fortune in raising hemp, tobacco, and horses. Duncan Lyon had been as good-hearted as he was successful, and under his care Riverlawn had become a model plantation and stock-breeding farm, with Levi Bedford as superintendent or overseer, and with fifty-one slaves, old and young, who thought "Mars'r Lyon de best gen'men in de hull world."

The next member of the family to come West had been Titus Lyon, another of the four brothers. Titus was a mason by trade, and inclined to be shiftless, and when Duncan Lyon wrote that the mason at Barcreek was dead, Titus had very promptly come on with his wife, two sons, and three daughters. It had taken a good deal of help from Duncan to place Titus on his feet, and even then the proprietor of Riverlawn was pained to note that the mason was more inclined to loaf around the village, drinking whiskey and talking politics, than he was to work at his trade.

During the times that Duncan Lyon and Titus were locating in Kentucky, Noah Lyon was attending strictly to his farm in New Hampshire, not a large place, but still one upon which, by economy, he managed to earn a living not only for himself, his wife, and his two children, Dexter and Hope, but also for the two children of his deceased brother Cyrus, Artemas and Dorcas. From the time that Artie and Dorcas came into the family they were looked upon as brother and sister by Deck and Hope, and both always referred to Mr. and Mrs. Noah Lyon as father and mother.

The somewhat unexpected death of Duncan Lyon had proved a shock to all his relatives, but when Lawyer Cosgrove, of Bowling Green, the county seat, came forward to read the plantation owner's will, the second shock, to Titus Lyon, was even greater than the first.

Duncan Lyon had valued his estate at one hundred thousand dollars. Riverlawn was put down as being worth twenty-five thousand dollars, and this magnificent

property, including all things in the house and on the grounds and the fifty-one slaves, went to Noah Lyon, who likewise received ten thousand dollars, half cash and half stocks, for having taken care of Artie and Dorcas since they had become orphans. It may here be remarked that Duncan Lyon had been a bachelor, and had never felt capable of raising the children himself. To the children he left one-quarter of his estate, half cash and half stocks, Noah to remain their guardian until of age.

Of the balance of his property he gave to Titus only twenty-five thousand dollars, from which amount was to be deducted a note for five thousand, leaving the mason twenty thousand dollars, half cash and half in stocks. All the stocks to be divided were named in a schedule, so there might be no disputes.

As might be supposed, Titus Lyon was very angry over the provisions of his brother's will, thinking that Riverlawn should have been settled upon himself. When Noah Lyon gave up his home in the East to take charge of Riverlawn, Titus did not call upon him for several days, and for some time after that the unreasonable mason talked about being swindled out of five thousand dollars, he thinking he ought to have had half of the ten thousand given to Noah for supporting Cyrus's children, although he had never lifted a hand to assist the orphans.

With the breaking out of the war Titus had been in his element. Strange as it may seem, he had sided with the South in the struggle, and had even gone so far as to spend a large amount of money in equipping a company of Home Guards, of which he was to be captain. But the arms and ammunition, hidden away in a cavern, had been discovered by Artie and Deck who had turned them over to Noah Lyon, for use, later on, by the Unionists. This confiscation of property had made matters even worse between the two families, and for a long while Titus and his two sons were very bitter. They entered the Confederate service much against the wishes of Titus's wife, and while serving under the stars and bars one of the sons, Orly, was killed and Titus was taken prisoner.

His own capture and the killing of Orly, coupled with the fact that Sandy, the older son, was nearly starved while in the Southern service, produced a profound impression upon Titus Lyon. While a prisoner he gave up drinking and signed the pledge. Then when Sandy suddenly left the Confederate service to enlist on the Union side under his Uncle Noah, he began to study the situation, and he wrote to Noah that he had seen the error of his ways and was now for the Union, once and forever. Later on he was released, and he joined the Riverlawns, to

become adjutant of the regiment in which Sandy was now a second lieutenant of the fifth company, second battalion, the battalion being commanded by Major Tom Belthorpe, of Lyndhall and the company by Captain Gadbury, a dashing young soldier, who was far more attentive to Margie Belthorpe than Deck Lyon had ever dared to be to her younger sister.

There had been but one thing concerning Duncan Lyon's will which had excited much curiosity when the document was read and when the lawyer having the matter in hand had had his say. This was concerning the fifty-one negroes installed at Riverlawn. Noah Lyon was requested not to part with any of them. Furthermore, the heir to the plantation was left a sealed letter which was not to be opened until five years later. The Lyons sometimes imagined the contents of the letter concerned the disposition of the slaves, but they had no positive information on the point.

CHAPTER II

AN UNEXPECTED SET-BACK

Deck Lyon was mounted on his famous horse Ceph, so nicknamed after the even more famous charger ridden in ancient days by Alexander the Great. The young major had trained Ceph from ponyhood, and rider and beast understood each other perfectly. On more than one occasion Ceph had performed in a truly wonderful fashion on the battlefield, and once, when being promoted, Deck had declared that the honor of the occasion rested with his equine comrade and not himself.

As the small body of whites and negroes moved onward in the direction of the Belthorpe plantation, Deck took the lead, with Artie and the faithful Levi close behind him. In the rear came the armed slaves riding in two ranks of three men each. The men could hardly be termed soldiers, yet during the time that Noah Lyon had been away from Riverlawn the overseer had drilled them thoroughly, both in horsemanship and in carbine practice, and they were, consequently, a long way removed from raw recruits. Moreover, upon the occasion of the attack upon Riverlawn, they had been under fire and had not flinched, so it was known that they could be depended upon even in a hazardous emergency.

Even without such a fine bit of horseflesh under him, Deck would have been anxious to go to the front. The note received by Levi filled him with alarm, and in his mind all sorts of troublesome thoughts ran riot. The Belthorpe sisters were at home alone, two of Morgan's guerillas were in possession of Lyndhall, and a whole company were soon expected. What indignities might not the sisters suffer, not to say anything of the confiscation and ruin of Mr. Belthorpe's property?

"This is certainly rough on Kate," observed Artie, as he advanced to his cousin's side. "We ought to have Captain Gadbury with us—for Margie's sake."

"If only those ruffians don't attempt to carry Margie and Kate off," half groaned the major, biting the lip upon which a faint mustache was beginning to show. "I suppose the major would be at Lyndhall, only father didn't think it wise to let so many officers off at one time. Levi, what did the negro who delivered the note

have to say?"

"Nothing."

"Not a word?" queried Artie.

"Absolutely not a word—and for the best reason in the world: he was deaf and dumb," and the overseer smiled broadly. "I tried to question him, but he only shook his head and pointed to his tongue."

"Humph! I didn't know there was a deaf and dumb negro around Lyndhall," mused Deck. "Forward, boys, we mustn't lag!" he shouted to the ranks in the rear.

"We's comin', Mars'r, jest as fast as we kin come!" answered the servant called General, who was the "high private" of the occasion. "Come, don't yo' go fo' to drap behind, Clinker!" he cried out to the heaviest man of the crowd, the blacksmith and horseshoer at Riverlawn.

"Ain't drappin' behind," growled Clinker. "I'll git to Lyndhall afore yo' do, yo' don't look out," and away he galloped after Deck and the others.

The day was frosty but clear, an ideal one for a ride, and mile after mile was passed, between the now almost barren fields, and through long groves of leafless trees. The horses from Riverlawn had always been boasted of as being the best in that section of the country, and now they were proving their worth.

The mansion home of the Belthorpes stood near the road, with the plantation extending to both sides and to the rear. At a distance up the highway upon which Major Deck and the others were travelling was a grove of walnut trees, and as soon as this grove was reached the young commander of the forces called a halt.

"We don't want to run into an ambush," he explained to Levi and Artie. "For all we know to the contrary, that whole company of guerillas may be in possession of Lyndhall, and if they have got wind of the fact that word has been sent out for assistance, it may go hard with us, if we are caught napping. I'll go on a scout, and if the coast is clear I'll come back and tell you. If I get into trouble a couple of pistol shots will notify you."

To carry out his object, the major dismounted and turned Ceph over to one of the servants. Then, examining his pistol to see that it was in proper condition for use, he struck out boldly, along a path which ran through the walnuts and came

up over a lawn fringed by magnolias, to the south of the mansion.

Deck did not slacken his pace until the magnolias were reached. Here, from an opening, he looked toward the house. Not a soul was in sight, and pistol in hand, he crept along the line of trees until he was within fifty feet of a side veranda.

At this moment the door to the veranda opened and a girl stepped out, clad in a house dress, with a cape thrown around her shoulders and a worsted shawl caught over her head in bonnet fashion. Deck did not have to look twice to convince himself that the girl was Kate Belthorpe.

"Kate!" he cried, softly and half involuntarily. "Kate!"

The girl, hearing his voice, stopped short and stared around her in amazement. Then, as he waved his hand to her, she ran down the steps of the veranda, and reaching him, almost embraced him.

"Oh, Deck! Why I—I didn't know you were coming here!" she stammered, with a blush. "Are you home on a furlough?"

"Yes—fortunately, Kate," he answered, remembering that they had kissed before, yet hardly daring to do so now—since, to him at least, his intentions were becoming serious. "I—I trust they haven't harmed you and Margie any? Where are the ruffians? Have the whole company arrived yet?"

The girl started and stared at him. "Why, Deck, what are you talking about? I know nothing of any ruffians."

The major was nearly dumfounded by this announcement. "You don't know?" he queried slowly. "Then what does this mean? Levi Bedford received it less than three hours ago."

It took but a moment for Kate Belthorpe to master the contents of the note. "I don't know what it means," she said. "I don't believe Margie ever wrote it. Come in, she is in the sitting room, writing a letter to brother Tom."

With his mind in a whirl the young major followed Kate into Lyndhall mansion. Margie was found as described, and was equally astonished to see him. The situation was explained, and she glanced at the note.

"It is a forgery, and is not even in my hand-writing, Deck," she said quickly. "There is some underhanded work here."

"Yes, and I know what it is!" cried Deck. "That note was penned with the intention of getting Levi and the negroes away from Riverlawn. My father's place may even now be suffering an attack. I must get home without an instant's delay!"

"Oh, I trust you are mistaken, Deck!" murmured Kate, her beautiful eyes filling with tears. "What will your mother and your sisters do?"

"Heaven alone knows, Kate," he answered, his voice growing curiously husky. "Artie and I were going home when we met Levi and six of the slaves on the road. Four or five other slaves were to follow, so it is safe to say that out of about fifteen men who can use firearms two-thirds are now away from Riverlawn and awaiting me in the walnut grove just below here. Good-by!" and he held out his hand.

"Good-by, and take care of yourself!" burst in Margie, and gave him a warm brotherly kiss. Seeing this, Kate did not hold back, and Deck sped from the mansion with the warm contact of her sweet lips still haunting him.

But now was no time for sentiment, however delightful it might prove, and the young major burst into the grove all out of breath with running.

"Quick, to Riverlawn!" he shouted, as he leaped again into the saddle. "We have not a moment to lose! The note was a decoy, to get Levi and the others to leave our house. Pray Heaven we may reach there before mother and the others are subjected to insult, or before any damage is done!"

"A decoy!" gasped Levi Bedford. He could scarcely believe his ears. "Then that negro was not dumb, I'll wager! Boys," he turned to the slaves, "did any of you see that fellow who brought Mrs. Lyon the note this morning?"

"'Deed I did, sah!" came from Clinker.

"So did I, sah," put in Woolly, another of the body.

"Did either of you hear him speak?"

Clinker shook his head. Woolly, however, smiled shrewdly. "I dun racken I did, Mars'r Bedford, when he crossed de creek bridge. But I dunno wot he said, fo' I was a right smart step off."

"It doesn't matter what he said," replied Levi. He turned to Deck. "You are right.

I have been badly fooled, and don't deserve to hold the position with which your father entrusted me—that of taking care of his family and his property."

"Don't blame yourself, Levi," Deck hastened to say, seeing how bad the overseer felt. "You did what you thought was right, and what I should have done under the circumstances. The best we can do is to get over the ground just as lively as we can, and if you know of any short cuts to take, so much the better."

They were already going ahead at full speed, Deck and Levi in the lead and Artie and the negroes following as rapidly as possible. "I was thinking, we might take the trail through Charwell meadow—the ground is stiff enough to hold horseflesh," observed the manager of Riverlawn. "But that may make us miss the four or five fellows who were to follow us, and if anything is wrong at Riverlawn, we may want all the help we can gather."

"How much will the Charwell trail shorten the ride?"

"A good mile and three-quarters, possibly two miles, if the ground at the lower end is hard."

"Then let us take that short cut, all but Clinker, who can take the regular road and turn back the second detachment as soon as it comes up," answered the young major, unconsciously speaking in military terms, as was now his usual habit.

"Good! You've got a long head—just as you always had!" cried Levi, and in a minute more Clinker was instructed into the new order of things. Shortly after this the others left the road and took to a well-defined trail running through a woods and then across the meadow previously described. At the end of the meadow the party came out upon the road running almost parallel with the creek, but at a considerable distance above the spot where the bridge to Colonel Lyon's domain was located.

"Halt!" cried Deck, as the horsemen reached the edge of the clearing. "Don't show yourselves until I give the order."

"I think Levi and I ought to go forward with you, Deck," interposed Artie, who was thinking of his sister, as well as of his Aunt Ruth and his Cousin Hope.

"Well, you can go; but we must be careful not to expose ourselves to the enemy," was the ready reply of the major, who had unconsciously taken command of the expedition.

"Supposing we separate," went on Artie. "One can go up to the bridge, one down to where the logs are usually tied up, and one over to the bend. That will give us three points of observation."

"Right you are, Artie. General Thomas couldn't have planned it better," answered Deck. "I'll go to the bridge, and you can go down to the logs. Levi, is there a raft handy?"

"There is, just above the logs, and there is a canoe up at the bend. We used it day before yesterday, when Faraway and I went over and came back by the bridge."

"Then it will be an easy matter for us to make an advance all along the line. What of Fort Bedford?" continued the major, referring to the ice-house which, during the early troubles at Riverlawn, had been turned into an arsenal. The so-styled fort was built along the creek, almost opposite the point where the logs and the raft rested.

"It's still there, but it contains little outside of a few guns and two boxes of ammunition."

"I was thinking, if those rascals are here, and the worst comes to the worst, it will be a good thing if we can take possession of the fort, and use it in defending my mother and the girls and ourselves."

"If the coast is clear, I'll move for the fort without delay," said Artie. "One man can hold that place, if the doors and the portholes are properly secured."

"That's so, but don't do anything rash, Artie," said Deck, gravely. "Remember what Ripley said—those guerillas of Morgan's are the worst cut-throats Kentucky has ever seen."

"Artie might wait until I can help him," suggested Levi. "If the fort isn't occupied now, it won't take long to get the boys over to it in the canoe and with a small raft in tow."

And so it was arranged that the young captain should wait on the movements of the overseer, and this decided, the three set off on their various missions.

CHAPTER III

THE ENCOUNTERS AT THE BRIDGE AND ON THE RAFT

At the time of which I write the name of Morgan's Cavalry was already known throughout the length and breadth of Kentucky, and those of the inhabitants who were on the side of the Union heard of his coming to one neighborhood or another with dread.

When the boys in blue were refitting at Nashville, late in the year 1862, Morgan, having made several raids in Kentucky, though hardly, as yet, any of consequence, determined to visit the State once more, taking with him the pick of the Confederate cavalry of this section of our country. His first engagement was with a few companies of Michigan troops, on the 24th of December, where he suffered a loss of seventeen men. On Christmas Day came an engagement near Munfordsville, and then the notorious leader attacked the stockade at Bacon Creek. A vigorous resistance was made, but the explosion of a number of shells within the enclosure made a surrender necessary, and this was followed by the burning of the bridge across Bacon Creek, after which Morgan advanced to Nolan, where another bridge was destroyed.

The march of the cavalry was now turned toward Elizabethtown, and here a fierce fight occurred between the Confederates and a body of six hundred infantry under Lieutenant-Colonel Smith, which lasted six hours. The infantry could do but little against the superior numbers of the cavalry, although fighting valorously, and in the end Morgan gained his point and began a march along the railroad, destroying everything in sight as he advanced.

It had been hoped by Bragg that Morgan's raid would help the cause of the South a great deal; but the sudden movement of Rosecrans from Nashville to Murfreesboro dimmed the glory considerably. On the 29th of December Morgan was attacked at Rolling Fork on Salt River and driven to Bardstown, from which point he began to make his slow but certain retreat from the State.

Captain Ripley, Deck's friend of the sharpshooters, had called Morgan's cavalry cut-throats. This was an appellation common in those days, but it is hardly justifiable. But there is no doubt that a portion of the raiders were men of low

moral character, and these fellows, when foraging, thought it no more than right to confiscate everything in sight. In the neighborhoods strong in Union sentiment whole plantations were laid waste, and the women and children made to suffer untold indignities.

It has been said that Morgan himself had left the State. This was true, but numerous detachments of the cavalrymen remained, some under captains and lieutenants who held no commissions in the Confederate army, and these were mixed up with guerillas,—lawless bodies,—who, while pretending to fight for the Southern cause, thought only of murder and plunder. For these latter bodies Morgan was not responsible, yet they were spoken of everywhere as Morgan's Raiders.

From the very start of hostilities there had been a strong sentiment in Barcreek and vicinity against the dwellers at Riverlawn. Here the first Union cavalry companies had been formed, and from this house a father and two sons (Artie was always called the colonel's son) had gone forth. More than this, Colonel Lyon had declared that all he possessed should go to uphold the Union cause were it needed. Those of Confederate tendencies had muttered against this, and ever since the first attack on Riverlawn had been repulsed, numerous "fire-eaters" had longed for a chance to "get square."

Deck thought of all these things as he moved from the shelter of the clearing along the creek in the direction of the bridge. From one source and another he had learned of a score of men of the vicinity joining Morgan's Raiders, and he felt certain now that these fellows would be found among those bent on the looting of his father's estate.

The young major could not get his mind away from a certain rowdy of Barcreek who rejoiced in the name of Gaffy Denny. At a Union meeting held at the schoolhouse when the war began, Deck had refused this man admittance to the building, even when the ruffian drew a bowie-knife, and had caused the fellow to decamp by showing his pistol. Since this time he had heard twice from Denny—first that he had joined the guerillas operating throughout the county, and again that he was trying to pay his addresses to Dorcas, who, it may readily be imagined, would have nothing to do with him. Denny was a man of thirty-five, a "hoss" trader when he worked, which was but seldom, and as sly and nervy as he was unprincipled.

"If Gaffy Denny is in this, he shall hear from me," murmured the major, as he

worked his way along the creek's shore. There was a low fringe of brush overhanging the water, and he skulked behind this, passing the few breaks encountered by crawling on his chest through the grass. His progress was necessarily slow, and it took five minutes to reach the bridge, although the distance from the clearing was not more than an eighth of a mile.

From behind the brush he had more than once looked over in the direction of the mansion. Not a soul had appeared in sight, and had he not known otherwise, he would have said that the homestead was deserted.

When within half a rod of the bridge the major halted, for a slight movement behind the tree overshadowing the bridge seat—that seat where his father and Uncle Titus had once so bitterly quarrelled—had attracted his attention.

"Was that a squirrel or a man's hat?" was the question he asked himself, when the view of something else answered the question. The new object to come into view was the elbow of a man, and the shining barrel of a gun followed.

"A guard, I'll wager my commission," was Deck's thought. "I wonder if he is alone and if I can capture him single-handed."

The major, having led the way into many a hot fight, was not the one to hang back in such an emergency as this. Even while wondering if the man on the bridge was alone, he hurried forward, keeping the tree between himself and the individual. The bridge was gained and the tree was but three yards off when a partly loose plank tipped up, making enough noise to attract the attention of the man, who leaped forward, pointing his gun as he came.

"Halt!" he spluttered, but the word was still on his lips when Deck ducked, caught the gun barrel with his left hand, and with his right levelled his pistol full into the sentinel's face.

"Surrender, or you are a dead man!" commanded Major Deck, sternly. "Let go of the gun."

The fellow, taken completely by surprise, hesitated, as if inclined to argue the point. "Wha—what?" he stammered. "See yere, this ain't fair, nohow!"

"Let go, or I'll fire," was Deck's only answer, and he fingered the trigger of his revolver nervously.

In a second more he had the gun in his possession, and then he compelled the

man to throw up both hands. "Now march up the road away from the bridge," he continued. "And no treachery, or I'll put a ball through you on the spot."

"I reckon I have fell in with Deck Lyon," said the sentinel, with a sickly grin, as he moved on as the major had commanded.

"I am Deck Lyon; but I don't know you, although I've seen you at Bowling Green. What do they call you?"

"They call me Sergeant Hank Scudder in our company."

"Surrender, or You are a Dead Man!"
"Surrender, or You are a Dead Man!"
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"And what company is that?"

"Cap'n Casswell's command—unattached."

"Casswell's guerillas, eh?"

"We ain't guerillas—we belong to the boys in gray."

"Does your captain hold a commission from headquarters?"

"'Tain't fer me to answer thet question, Major."

"From the fact that you refuse to answer it, I infer that he does not; consequently he is nothing but a guerilla, and worse, and you are—"

"Hold on, Major, don't be too hard on a poor fellow who has his living to make."

"This isn't making a living—it's stealing one. Tell me truthfully, is Gaffy Denny with your company?"

"Gaffy Denny is first leftenant, Major."

"Where are the others?"

"Somewhere around the house and barns."

"How long since you arrived here?"

"'Bout an hour and a half ago."

"How many are there here? Answer me truthfully, or, my word for it, I and my friends will hang you to one of yonder trees."

"Got many friends with yer, Major?"

"Enough. Now answer my question," and again Deck's weapon came up on a level with the guerilla's head.

"There air twenty-five on us, I reckon."

"Were you the only man left on guard?"

"I dunno."

"Who put you on guard?"

"Leftenant Denny."

"Isn't Captain Casswell in command?"

"No, the cap'n was shot down in a skirmish three days ago—back of Edmonton, and he's laying at the house of a friend ten miles from yere."

While talking the pair had moved across the road, and now Deck turned his prisoner in the direction of the clearing. Soon they came in sight of General, Clinker, and one other of the slaves.

"The first prisoner, General," said the young officer. "Have you anything with which to bind him?"

"Look yere, Major, this ain't handsome!" cried Sergeant Hank Scudder, in alarm.

"Handsome or not, you can thank your stars that I didn't shoot you dead on the bridge," rejoined Deck. "How about a cord, General?"

"We dun got one, Mars'r Deck," answered the slave, and producing it he and Clinker soon bound the guerilla's hands behind him, after which the rope at his wrists was passed around a stout tree.

Deck's next movement was in the direction of the raft, for nothing was to be seen of Artie, and he was anxious to know how the young captain was faring. He had hardly reached the pile of logs to which the raft was moored, when a sharp cry rang out on the frosty air.

"Help! General, Woolly, Clinker! Help!" There followed another cry, and leaping through the brush and onto the logs Deck saw his cousin battling manfully in a hand-to-hand conflict with two rough men in gray, one of whom was trying to possess himself of the captain's sabre.

In such an emergency Major Deck did not hesitate as to a proper course of action. Had the men been regular Confederates he would have been justified in shooting at them; being guerillas he felt himself even more justified. He took careful aim and fired, and the rascal who had just wrenched the sabre from Artie's grasp fell, shot through the thigh, an ugly wound though not a fatal one.

Surprised at the counter-demonstration thus made, the second guerilla turned to see from what direction the shot had come. Giving him no chance in which to take in the situation, Deck fired a second time, the bullet whistling past the man in gray's shoulder. With a yell the fellow started to retreat from the logs, slipped on the wet and frost-covered surface beneath him, and rolled over and over until he went with a loud splash into the creek, not to reappear upon the surface of the icy current until fifty feet away.

"Artie, are you hurt?" demanded Deck, as he watched the man who had gone overboard.

"N—no, but th—that man nearly choked the life out of me," was the answer, with a cough. "Don't let him get away," and the young captain nodded toward the guerilla who was making for the plantation side of the creek.

"He shan't get away." Deck elevated his voice and his shooter at the same time. "Come back here, unless you want a hole put through your head!" he called out.

To this the guerilla did not reply. But he kept on swimming, and seeing this both Deck and Artie fired. A yell of pain was the answer to the shots, and the man turned around.

"Are you coming back?" demanded Deck.

"Yes! yes! don't shoot ag'in!" came with something like a groan.

The wounded man on the logs was writhing in pain, but nothing could be done for him just now, and Deck and Artie watched the man in the water. "I'm a goner!" came from the individual of a sudden, and throwing up both arms he disappeared from view.

For the instant Deck stared blankly and Artie looked at him. "Was that a genuine move, or is he shamming?" questioned the captain.

"I take it he is shamming," answered the major. "I don't believe he was badly wounded at all. Wait," and he continued to watch.

In half a minute the body of the guerilla appeared, a hundred feet below the logs. "Turn back here, or I'll put a bullet through your body for luck!" sang out Deck, and raised his pistol again.

"Don't! don't!" came the quick reply. "I'll come—don't hit me ag'in, Cap'n!"

In less than five minutes after this the guerilla was on the raft once more. Deck was on the point of marching him up into the grove by the creek road when Levi Bedford came up in the canoe, demanding to know what the several shots meant. He was highly pleased to think that three men had already been put out of the contest.

"I've discovered the guerillas moving around at the back of the mansion and around the largest of the barns," he said. "Now that you have used your pistols the best thing to do, in my opinion, is to get over to the fort and take possession of it."

"You are right," returned Deck. "Let us go over on the raft, as first proposed; but General can come around by the bridge and bring all of the horses, or keep them where they will be handy in case they are wanted. We ought not to give these guerillas the least chance to escape."

The General was called from his hiding-place and matters were explained. While he went off with the horses, Levi Bedford led the way to the raft and unmoored her, fastening the painter to the stern of the canoe, which, though so called, was, as old readers already know, really a round-bottom rowboat. The overseer, Deck, and Artie entered the canoe, the first two at the oars, while the slaves deposited themselves on the raft, doing what they could to aid their progress over the stream by means of several sweeps which had been picked up.

CHAPTER IV

A FIRST VICTORY OVER THE ENEMY

It may be asked why a rush was not made upon the mansion and barns, instead of the stealthy advance now under way. The answer to this is, Deck and the others knew that the force to be encountered was larger than their own, and probably just as well, if not better, armed. Moreover, the young major felt that some of the guerillas must be on the lookout from the mansion, and an advance across the lawn in front and to one side, or the meadow to the rear and the other side, could only have been accomplished after a serious loss of life. The guerillas of Kentucky were for the most part "dead-shots," and the youthful commander was not inclined to risk his men in the open against their superior numbers.

The creek at the point where the raft had been moored was between sixty and seventy feet wide, consequently the journey to the other side did not occupy over five minutes, even though the raft was an unwieldy thing to handle. As soon as they were near enough to do so, all hands leaped into the meadow grass, and started on a rush for Fort Bedford.

Bang! bang! bang! The three shots in rapid succession came from the rear of the largest barn, and Deck felt something rush through his cap and his hair beneath. A groan came from Clinker, who was struck in the side. The negro staggered but kept on, his eyes rolling and staring from a pain that was new to him.

'"Tain't much, I reckon," he panted, in reply to Levi Bedford's question. "Anybuddy else hit?"

Nobody was, and without halting to return the fire they pressed on. Soon they were under the shelter of the ice-house, as dark and silent as the rest of the plantation had previously appeared.

"I left it locked up," explained Levi Bedford, when Artie gave a cry as he caught sight of the door. The heavy slabs of wood had been smashed in with a stout log used as a battering-ram, and a hasty search revealed the fact that the arms and ammunition, the overseer had mentioned, had been carried away.

As the party passed into the building several more shots were fired at them, but

the bullets merely found resting-places in the woodwork or flattened themselves on the stone walls. Levi Bedford now saw one of the shooters near the edge of the barn and fired his rifle, but whether or not the shot took effect he could not ascertain.

"Well, we are here," said Artie, after Clinker's wound had been examined and dressed. "The question is, what's next?"

Deck silently counted their forces again. As General was absent, they numbered but eight including himself. He shook his head seriously.

"We are but eight, and if that captured rascal is to be believed they have three times that number," he said.

"But our other negroes must be around somewhere," said Artie, "and they'll need some men to guard the women folks,—unless they have locked them up,—or—or—"

"Or done away with them," finished Deck, bitterly. "For myself, I am ready to make a dash forward, be the consequence what it may. But I can't ask it of you and the slaves," and he turned to the overseer.

"I'll do whatever you think best, Major," responded Levi, warmly. "But supposing I go out with a flag of truce and learn what they have to say?"

"Hadn't I better go along?" asked Deck, eagerly.

"If you wish—yes."

A handkerchief was soon tied to a stick, and, leaving Artie in command of the armed slaves, the young major and the overseer sallied forth, waving the flag of truce over their heads. They started toward the mansion, but before half the distance was covered a loud and rough voice from the barn called upon them to halt, and they halted.

"Come this way with thet rag!" was the next order. "If ye go to the house we'll open fire on ye!"

As there seemed no help for it, Deck and Levi turned toward the barn. While still a hundred feet from the building they were ordered to halt again, and then a man in gray, wearing a tangled beard of black, with matted hair to match, came forth to greet them.

"Well?" he demanded laconically, as the major and the overseer paused.

"Dan Wolfall, what does this mean?" demanded Levi, recognizing the individual as a former citizen of Barcreek, and one who had left "between two days" because of a horse stealing which had been laid at his door.

Wolfall grinned, thereby showing a set of uneven yellow teeth, much the worse for constant tobacco chewing. "I reckon as how it means we-uns is in persession o' this yere plantation," he answered slowly, shifting his quid from one jaw to the other.

"Whom do you mean by we-uns?" asked Deck.

"Me an' the rest o' Captain Casswell's company o' Confederates, sonny. Say, you feel big in them sodger clothes, don't ye?" Wolfall asked, with another grin.

"Do you know that you are liable to be shot down or hung as outlaws?" went on Deck.

"Reckon we air jest as liable ter be shot down as Confed'rates, ain't we?"

"Such men as you would be a disgrace even to the Confederacy, Wolfall," interposed Levi Bedford, his honest eyes flashing fire. "Years ago Duncan Lyon saved you from a long term in prison, and this is how you reward his brother and his nephews."

"Don't preach, Bedford, I ain't ust to hearin' on it. Times is changed, an' if the Lyonses is gwine to take a stand ag'in the best interests o' this State, why they hev got to take the consequences, thet's all."

"Kentucky has declared for the Union and we are on the right side," said Deck. "Let us come to an understanding of the situation. What have you done with my mother and my two sisters?"

"I reckon Leftenant Denny has 'em safe, sonny. Them's nice clothes, sonny, but a gray suit would look a heap sight better."

"Are they still at the mansion?"

"They air onless the leftenant has took 'em away."

"What do you propose to do here?"

"Enjoy ourselves, sonny."

"Which means that you are going to confiscate all our stores and steal our valuables."

"As you please, sonny. If yer come only to abuse such gents as we air, better be gittin' back, sonny," and now the Kentucky guerilla tapped his horse pistol significantly.

"How many are there of you?" went on Deck, hardly able to resist keeping his hands from the ruffian.

"Twict as many as half, sonny. Is that all ye want ter know?"

"I see you are not inclined to meet me fairly," continued Deck, sternly. "I order you to leave this place at once."

"Ain't obeyin' orders jest now, sonny."

"Very well; then you and your comrades in this raid must take the consequences if you are captured. Moreover, my men and I will shoot you down like dogs if we get the chance," and Deck turned back, followed by Levi.

"Thet shootin' won't be all one-sided!" called the guerilla after the pair, and disappeared into the barn.

When the major and the overseer returned to Fort Bedford, Artie wished to know immediately what had been accomplished.

"Nothing," answered Deck, his face clouded in perplexing thoughts. He was almost "stumped," although he did not care to admit it.

A shout was now heard along the creek, and looking from the fort those within saw five colored men standing at the clearing. They were the slaves that had followed the first detachment to Lyndhall. With the colored men were three whites, farmers living in the vicinity who had called at Lyndhall on business and who had been persuaded by Margie and Kate to join in the defence of Riverlawn.

"Eight more guns," said Artie. "That gives us sixteen all told. Hang me, if I'm not in for making a rush!"

Deck's face began to brighten. "Levi, how many men do you think are at the barn?"

"I saw four looking from behind the doors," answered the overseer. "Those with

Wolfall made five. I don't believe there were any more."

"Then I'll tell you what I'll do," went on the young commander. "As secretly as I can, I'll recross the creek and join the men in the clearing. I'll bring them around to the meadow by the road, and along the berry bushes at the other side of the lawn. There will be nine of us, and as soon as we are in a position to attack the barn, I'll fire two shots in quick succession. Then you must make a demonstration against the house. But be careful that it doesn't cost you any lives."

Both Levi and Artie were quick-witted enough to see the advantage of Deck's plan and readily agreed to it. Without the loss of a moment the major left the fort, crawling on his hands and knees through the grass to the creek.

Here the canoe and the raft were found as they had been left. Detaching the boat from the logs, he leaped in, and crouching low, sculled for the opposite shore with all speed. He was taking a big risk and knew it, and expected every instant to receive a shot from the enemy.

But none came, thanks to Levi, who, calculating the time he would be thus exposed, ran to the opening of the fort and called on several to do the same. As no good chance for an aim was given, the guerillas did not open with their guns, but they kept their eyes on the fort, and the creek was for the time being neglected.

On reaching the edge of the clearing, Deck did not lose a moment, but hurried the slaves and the white men back to the road and to the bushes lining the upper side. As they marched along on the double quick he explained the situation to Ralph Bowman, Sandran Dowleigh, and Carson Lee, the three farmers, all natives of the county, and all Union men to the core.

"They ought to be wiped out," said Bowman, with a vigorous nod of his head. "I know Wolfall and Denny well, and a rope over a tree is the medicine they need."

"I've got my Long Sam with me," put in Carson Lee, tapping his long rifle affectionately. "Just let me get one peep at Denny or Wolfall, thet's all." Lee was a crack shot, and on more than one occasion had taken the first prize at target-shooting.

It took the best part of a quarter of an hour to reach the meadow Deck had mentioned. Here there was a slight rise of ground, beyond which stood the barn.

From their position only the top of the structure could be seen. Crawling Indian fashion to the top of the rise, the major inspected the situation again. As before, not a soul was in sight.

Before moving forward he had stationed one of the slaves some distance closer to the mansion. The man was armed with a double-barrelled gun, and as Deck waved his handkerchief two reports rang out, the signal agreed upon. Hardly had the echo of the gun died away than Levi, Artie, and the others emerged from the fort, and began moving around the meadow toward the front of the house.

The demonstration did just what was expected. Several men appeared at the mansion windows, to fire in vain at the detachment from the fort, they keeping pretty well out of range. From the barn poured the five guerillas counted by Levi, anxious to learn if their services were needed elsewhere.

By this time Deck's command was at the top of the rise, and the major called on his men to take careful aim and fire, discharging his pistol at the same moment. Carson Lee picked out Wolfall and the ruffian dropped like a log, shot through the head. Two of the others went down, one hit in the arm and the other in the side. The two remaining stopped in perplexity, not knowing whether to return to their original shelter or run for the mansion.

"Charge!" cried Major Deck, rushing for the barn with all the swiftness of his youthful legs. "Come on, boys; don't let one of them get away!" And he continued to fire as he advanced, finally succeeding in hitting one of the remaining pair of guerillas in the calf of the leg, a painful though not a serious wound. Seeing the turn of affairs, the last ruffian, also wounded, sped for the mansion as though a legion of demons were after him. Those who had reloaded gave the fellow half a dozen shots, but he was not hit again, and tumbled pell-mell up the veranda steps and through a doorway opened hastily to afford him entrance.

"A first victory and without a single loss," said Deck, as sheltered by the big barn he began to reload his pistol, while the others also looked after their weapons.

"Don't kill us!" came in a groan from one of the wounded—the man the major had hit.

For reply Deck pointed his pistol at the ruffian's head. "You deserve to die, but I'll let up on you on one condition—tell me exactly how many men there are in the mansion."

"I don't know, Major. There were twenty-two of us at the start, including the five we had here. I think three men were posted on the road and along the creek."

"One man has returned to the house; the others are out of the fight," said Deck, turning to Lee. "That leaves exactly fifteen guerillas in the mansion. We number sixteen."

"That's so; but they are well fortified," interposed Sandran Dowleigh, who had not gone to war because he was subject to fits, but who, nevertheless, took a lively interest in military matters. "They will mow us down like wheat if we dare to make a rush."

"I will consult with Levi Bedford and Artie before we make another move. Keep your eyes open while I am gone," said the major, and moved off in a roundabout way for Fort Bedford.

CHAPTER V

TWO FLAGS OF TRUCE

The first battle, if such it might be called, had been fought and won. Four of the guerillas had been put out of the contest, one forever, and one had escaped to the mansion. The contest had been entirely one-sided, for the ruffians had not had time left to them in which to fire so much as a single charge.

But though the present victory had been gained quickly and with ease, Deck knew that the work still cut out for himself and his command would prove much more difficult and dangerous. The guerillas in the mansion would be on a close watch, and it would go hard with any one imprudent enough to advance within reasonable shooting distance.

By the time the major had gained the fort those intrusted with the work of making a demonstration had returned to the shelter of the stone walls. No injury had been done, and Artie and the overseer had had their hands full in keeping the slaves from rushing directly for the mansion regardless of consequences, especially when it was noted that four men had gone down in the vicinity of the barn.

"Fifteen still left," mused Levi, when Deck had spoken. "We can go them one better, but—"

"It makes a big difference where the fifteen men are located," said Artie. "Five might hold the mansion against us—if they were good shots and wide-awake."

"If only I knew mother and the girls were safe, I would play them a waiting game," said Deck, taking a long breath. "They'll think we have sent for reënforcements and will want to make terms, sooner or later."

"We can send off for reënforcements!" cried Artie. "Clinker can rouse out every Unionist within two miles of here."

"He would not find many," answered Levi. "The majority are off to the war."

"One thing, it will be dark soon," went on Deck. "We can move up pretty close then, for there won't be much moonlight."

"But what of mother and the girls in the meantime?" questioned the young captain.

"I don't believe they will dare harm them," said the overseer. "They know that if they did, and were caught, every one of 'em would swing for it. Denny may try to get a bit sweet on Miss Dorcas, but I reckon she can hold her own. Those guerillas—"

"Hark!" interrupted Deck. "Somebody is screaming for help! It is Dorcas!"

He rushed to the door of the fort, followed by Levi and Artie. It was Dorcas, true enough. The girl had just come out on the mansion porch and was trying to get away from a guerilla who held her.

"That is Gaffy Denny!" ejaculated the major, drawing his pistol once more. "Hi, you rascal, leave her alone!" and regardless of consequences he started across the meadow for the lawn fronting the porch.

"Deck, save me!" came in faint tones from Dorcas. "Oh, save me!"

"I will!" was the reply. And Deck increased his speed, bounding over the meadow trenches with an agility that would have done credit to a trained athlete. He had barely gained the lawn when Dorcas broke from Gaffy Denny's grasp and fled down the porch steps toward him. At the same time Hope appeared, followed by Mrs. Lyon and several guerillas who had been in the act of transferring the lady prisoners from one room of the mansion to the other.

The sight of his mother pursued by these ruffians excited Deck to the highest degree, and without a thought of the danger he continued on his course until within a hundred feet of the porch. Then he fired at Gaffy Denny and saw the guerilla clap his left hand over his right shoulder, showing that he had been struck. Denny had scarcely made the movement when Levi Bedford fired and the temporary leader of the guerillas pitched headlong on the grass, not to rise again.

The fall of Denny caused the men behind him to pause, and as they stood on the porch Artie opened on them and another fellow was slightly wounded. Then came half a dozen gun and pistol reports, and Deck felt himself hit across the left side of the neck. The bullet left nothing more than an ugly scratch, from which the blood flowed freely.

But now the prisoners from the mansion had come up to their would-be rescuers,

and catching sight of the blood, Hope fainted in Artie's arms. Mrs. Lyon staggered toward Deck, while Levi caught Dorcas by the hand.

"My son, you are wounded," gasped the mother. "Oh, what shall we do?"

"It's not much, mother," answered Deck. "Come, give me your arm and we'll get back to the fort," and catching hold of his parent he urged her in the direction of the meadow. At the same time Artie caught up Hope and followed, with Levi and Dorcas by his side.

The overseer was the only man of the party who was not handicapped, for the major did not dare let go of his mother for fear she would sink down. Levi turned quickly, and as the men on the porch prepared to fire, pulled trigger twice, wounding one additional guerilla.

But now came a volley from the mansion windows, and the overseer was struck in the arm. A second volley was about to follow, when a yell arose from the meadow and the slaves under Clinker came on, shooting as well as they could on the run. The windows of the mansion, now wide open, received considerable attention, and two guerillas were noted to fall back with yells of either fright or pain.

Deck got one more chance to fire, and then had to turn all of his attention to his mother, who was so out of breath she could no longer move. "My brave boy, save yourself!" she gasped. "Save yourself! And save Hope and Dorcas!"

"I won't leave you, mother dear," he returned tenderly, and picked her up despite her protests. He was soon following Artie to the fort, with Dorcas running by his side, while Levi remained behind to take command of the slaves and cover the retreat. From around the back of the meadow came those left by the major at the barn, thinking a regular attack on the mansion had been made.

Mrs. Noah Lyon was no light load, and when Deck gained the shelter of the fort he was ready to drop with his burden. Finding the most comfortable seat the place afforded, he deposited his precious load upon it and fanned her with his soldier cap. Hope was just reviving and was soon able to take care of herself.

"Oh, how thankful I am we have escaped from those ruffians!" cried Dorcas, almost ready to cry in her excitement. Then she knelt down in front of her aunt —that aunt who had for years been a mother to her. Hope joined the group, and tears flowed down every feminine cheek.

"Keep watch here, Artie!" called out Deck, when he saw that all was well for the time being, and as the young captain nodded, the major leaped out into the open once more. The battle between those in the mansion and those on the edge of the lawn was waxing hot, and he felt that he was needed.

A great load was lifted from his mind, now he knew his mother and the girls were safe, and he felt that he could endure almost anything. Taking a short cut by leaping over a ditch some ten feet wide, he came up in front of Carson Lee and the others from the barn. Lee had already been firing, at long range, and the man subject to fits declared he had dropped one guerilla stationed at an attic window.

"It is best that we divide our forces," said Deck. "Levi can take care of those under him. We will take the opposite side of the house. There are two magnolias over there—just the spot for such a sharpshooter as you, Lee."

"Co-rect, lead on and I'll follow," answered Carson Lee, with a grin, for nothing pleased him more than to have his marksmanship praised. Soon the entire party was making another detour, while Levi's men fell back gradually to a safe position in a dry trench near the centre of the meadow—a trench begun in the spring but never connected with the creek.

When the major's party reached the magnolias, Lee and another of the farmers climbed into the branches, taking care, however, to keep the main trunks of the trees between themselves and the mansion. The others collected underneath, also, on the sheltered sides.

"Levi and the niggers have fallen back to a ditch in the meadow," announced Lee, a minute later. "All the guerillas have gone into the house."

"An' there ain't a head to be seen at the winders," finished Dowleigh, the other man in the tree. "Reckon they have gone in fer a parley among themselves."

"We have them where the hair is good and long now," said Deck, smiling. "Not one of them can leave the house without being seen."

"How about to-night, Major?" laughed Bowman.

"As soon as it gets dark we can draw closer, and throw a guard completely around the place. But I imagine we'll hear from them before that—now the ladies have escaped."

"How so?" asked Bowman, with interest.

"As long as they held the ladies they thought they could make terms when they pleased. Now, the case is different, and, in my opinion, they will try to make terms before we have a chance to send for aid with which to wipe them out, as the saying goes."

"Don't ye make no terms," burst in Carson Lee. "They don't deserve 'em."

"We'll see what they have to say, if they do come out," concluded the major.

The best part of half an hour passed, and during that time everybody placed his weapon in proper fighting trim again. Lee took one shot at a face which appeared at a bedroom window and received a shot in return, but neither took effect. Evidently the guerillas were on the alert.

"I told you so!" Deck felt like saying, when the side door of the mansion opened and a man waved a white towel toward them. But the major remained silent, and the man advanced cautiously to the edge of the veranda. Then the young commander waved his handkerchief in return, and marched up the lawn to interview the ruffian with the flag of truce.

The fellow was an ugly looking customer, over six feet tall, thin, and with a face horribly pox-marked. He came swaggering up to within five yards of Deck and halted.

"Say, don't yer think this game has been played long enough?" he grunted rather than asked.

"Entirely too long," answered Deck, briefly. He had not yet forgotten the manner in which he had been addressed at the barn.

"We-uns is ready ter make terms if yer don't ask the earth," continued the tall guerilla, swinging his lanky arms into a fold. "Wot do yer say to it?"

"I think you had better make terms."

"Oh, we ain't so terribully skeered, Major. But makin' terms might suit better all around, thet's all."

"Well, what do you propose?"

"This. You-uns let us withdraw on our hosses to the road an' give us half a mile start, an' we-uns will leave everything in the house jest as we found it."

"And if I refuse?"

"Then we'll burn the hull shebang to the ground and take wot comes arfterward," exclaimed the guerilla, vehemently, and added an expression I would not care to transcribe to these pages.

"Do you know what will come?"

"A fight most likely," and the guerilla shrugged his bony shoulders.

"Yes, and a heavy one, if our reënforcements arrive in time. And as commander here I'll promise you that if you harm the house or its contents in the least, every man captured shall be hung to yonder trees as an incendiary and thief."

"Ye can't do thet—not to Confed'rit sodgers, Major."

"I don't recognize you as Confederates. You are simply outlaws."

"'Tain't so; we—" The guerilla paused and began to think of the instructions which had been given him. "Wot kind o' terms air you calkerlatin' ter make, Major?" he asked, in a milder tone.

"I want all in the house to surrender, and if you do I'll simply hand you over to the county authorities and they can do with you as they think best. But each of you must swear to leave Riverlawn alone in the future."

"The boys won't agree on thet—I know they won't."

"They can do as they please; you have my terms," returned Deck, curtly.

"Yer won't treat us as simple prisoners o' war?"

"No; for such you are not. Neither your captain nor your lieutenant holds a commission signed by the Confederate authorities."

The guerilla paused as if to say more. Then tossing his shaggy head he walked back to the mansion, while Deck joined his command at the magnolias.

"Bowman, you can do a big thing for me if you will," he said, calling the farmer aside, and he explained a little ruse which had just popped into his head. The scheme made Bowman laugh heartily, and he at once departed to carry it out, taking one of the negroes with him.

It was just growing dusk when the farmer reached the vicinity of the creek

bridge. Calling on Woolly, the negro, to march by his side, he quickly crossed the roadway, in plain sight of the mansion. He passed from one thicket to another, and as soon as he was out of sight turned back and went through the same performance again. This he repeated a score of times, sometimes going alone and again with Woolly. This accomplished, he told the negro to move down the creek and show himself at half a dozen different places just as quickly as the act could be performed, he at the same time doing as much in the opposite direction. Sometimes the pair showed themselves with their coats, sometimes without, and they knocked their head coverings into all sorts of shapes.

The ruse succeeded admirably, for even Levi, at the fort, was led to believe a dozen or more armed men had just arrived, and he was for a while considerably worried, thinking they might possibly be reënforcements for the enemy. Bowman's appearance opposite Fort Bedford cleared up the matter, and the farmer came over to give the overseer the particulars, thereby risking a shot which, fortunately, proved harmless.

"It certainly ought to bring them to terms," said Levi. "I'll wager they will be out with another flag in less than a quarter of an hour."

Had a bet been made the overseer would have won by five minutes, for exactly ten minutes later another flag of truce was shown, and a second messenger sallied forth to make terms with Major Deck.

CHAPTER VI

A MISSING DOCUMENT OF IMPORTANCE

Major Dexter Lyon was on the lookout and saw the second flag of truce as quickly as any one. At the same time Carson Lee, still in the top of the magnolia, announced that "another rag" was "out for an airin'."

"You want ter go slow," he added. "They may be gittin' desperate an' up to some o' their mean tricks."

Promising to use all caution, Deck advanced to meet the new messenger. He proved to be a mild sort of a guerilla and was evidently extremely nervous.

"I came out to arrange terms with you," he said, in such a low voice that Deck could hardly hear him.

"Are you ready to surrender?"

"We are—on certain terms."

"I gave your other messenger my terms. I haven't any others to make."

"The boys is divided as to wot to do. About half of 'em is willing to give themselves up unconditionally, the other half want to be treated as prisoners of war."

"I will not treat any as prisoners of war—I said that before," answered Deck, firmly. "Are you willing to give yourself up unconditionally?"

"Yes."

"Then you had best do so without delay—and so had the others who think as you do. We will give you just ten minutes in which to make up your minds," went on Deck, feeling he had the enemy, "on the run," and determined to make the best of his chances.

"So them reënforcements have arrived, eh?" said the messenger, and now his voice actually trembled. "Just hold on ten minutes, Major, and I'll be back," and he almost ran for the house.

The man left the front door wide open, and Lee, from his superior position, announced that a lively confab was in progress within. In less than five minutes the messenger marched forth, followed by five of his comrades, all trailing their guns.

"Five on 'em goin' to give up," announced Lee, when a shot was fired from the mansion, and one of the guerillas was seen to throw up his arms and fall headlong. He had been shot through the neck, and expired almost instantly. The others set out on a run for the magnolias, fearful that their former companions in arms would murder them likewise for deserting. A dozen reports from both sides followed, but no further damage was done.

As soon as the four guerillas reached Deck's command they were disarmed, and a guard of two slaves conducted them to a distance, keeping a close watch upon them. Another negro was sent by a circuitous route to the fort, to tell the defenders there what had occurred.

Deck now felt certain that those remaining in the mansion would soon make a dash for safety, satisfied that every moment's delay increased their peril, and preferring to run the risk of being shot than the certainty of being hung if captured. At the most there could not be over eight guerillas in a condition to fight, and the major felt assured his forces could readily take care of them.

The dash came just after Deck's message had been delivered to Levi and Artie. Almost simultaneously all the lower doors of the mansion were thrown open and seven guerillas darted out, to scatter in as many different directions, three going off toward the meadow behind the barns, one in the neighborhood of the negroes' huts, and the others taking to the creek and the bridge over it. In less than two minutes each ruffian was at least a hundred yards from the nearest of his companions.

In this emergency there was but one thing to do, and that was to divide up the detachments at the magnolias and at the fort. This was done by Deck on one side and Artie on the other, and away went the major and Faraway, the slave, after the guerilla who was making for the bridge, while every other ruffian was being pursued in a similar fashion by the remaining Unionists.

It had grown darker rapidly, and it was with difficulty that the major kept his man in sight, especially after the bushes near the bridge were reached. There was also a danger of a shot, but none came just then.

"He's gone!" suddenly burst out Faraway, when the bridge was less than a hundred feet away. "De earth hab swallowed him up!"

"He went under the bridge," answered Deck, halting. "Go slow, for he'll shoot us if he can."

After this the advance was made with great caution, until the young commander had gained the pile of stones upon which rested one end of the wooden structure. Here the great tree growing by the bridge bench cast a deep shade all around, and he had to strain his eyes to see at all.

Crack! It was the report of a pistol and it came from less than fifty feet away. As the report died away Deck was seen to throw up his arms and drop. At once an exultant chuckle proceeded from the guerilla's lips, and heedless of the negro, he darted out of his hiding-place and ran for the creek road.

"Oh, Mars'r Deck!" cried Faraway, in dismay, when he started back dumfounded, for the young major had suddenly arisen to a kneeling position, taken careful aim and fired. The bullet sped true to its mark, and the guerilla went down, shot through the right knee.

"Hang yer cursed Yankee trick!" he groaned, as Deck came up to him, totally uninjured from the shot aimed at him a minute previously. Lying as he was, he attempted to fire again, but the major kicked the pistol from his grasp and Faraway pounced upon him and pinned him to the ground.

"Any kind of a trick would be justifiable in capturing such a rascal as you," said Deck, as he directed Faraway to disarm the prisoner. This done, and making sure that the fellow could not walk away, they propped him up on the creek bridge and left him.

Returning to the vicinity of the mansion, Deck found that one other guerilla had been captured by Artie and Clinker, and that white men and negroes were scattered in all directions endeavoring to round up the remainder. The search for the fleeing ones was kept up until midnight, and two others were wounded and taken into custody.

All the prisoners were either marched or carried to Fort Bedford, and here the wounded ones were cared for as tenderly as though they were friends instead of enemies. The dead were laid out for burial, unless the bodies should be claimed by relatives or friends.

Deck had bound a silk handkerchief around his neck, which felt stiff where the bullet had scratched it. Artie had been hurt, too, but the wound was of small consequence. The Unionists received even greater care than the guerillas.

It was exactly two o'clock in the morning when Deck came into the mansion thoroughly worn out by what he had passed through. Mrs. Lyon had ordered Diana (not Dinah, if you please) to prepare the best meal Riverlawn could afford, and while the family and the other whites sat down in the dining room, the negroes made themselves comfortable in the spacious kitchen. In the meantime the prisoners at the fort were kept under close guard and a messenger was despatched to notify the county authorities of what had taken place.

The mansion had been turned topsy-turvy, and a few articles of bric-à-brac had been smashed, but otherwise the loss did not seem to be of much consequence outside of the fact that two dozen silver spoons and a gold butter dish were missing, also some wine and whiskey put down in the cellar by Duncan Lyon and which the family of Noah had never touched.

"I do not mind the liquor, but I do mind the loss of my mother's spoons," said Mrs. Noah. "However, I am glad matters are no worse."

"I was afraid they would break open father's safe," said Deck, referring to the strong box in the library, in which the colonel was wont to keep his cash and his private papers. "I was much relieved to see it still locked up."

While Deck had been speaking Levi came in, and now he turned to Mrs. Lyon. "That safe—I left it open for you," he cried hurriedly. "Did you—"

"I left it open," gasped Mrs. Lyon, falling back in her chair. "I forgot all about it until just now—the guerillas scared me so when they marched in. If they—"

"The safe is shut—but still—" began Deck, and arising hastily he hurried to the library, with Levi, Artie, and the women folks at his heels. The door refused to budge and Levi worked the combination, a new device Noah Lyon had had put on the door just before leaving home for the seat of war.

When the strong box came open a mass of private papers and account-books fell out upon the carpeted floor, and it was easy to surmise that the guerillas had looted the safe of all that could be made valuable to them. Levi declared three hundred dollars in gold gone, also two hundred in United States paper money, besides a small box of jewellery, the most valuable articles in which had been a

diamond ring and a diamond stud Duncan Lyon had worn during his life, and of which no disposition had ever been made.

"We are five hundred dollars out by this raid," said Artie, while Mrs. Lyon shook her head sadly. "We had better question the prisoners about this."

He went off to do so, accompanied by Levi. While they were gone Deck proceeded to arrange the scattered books and papers and restore them to their original resting places.

"Hullo!" he ejaculated, as he picked up an empty envelope. It was marked! "Not to be opened till five years from the date of my death. Duncan Lyon."

"The secret envelope uncle left to father!" cried out Hope. "Oh, Deck, where are the contents?"

"That is what I should like to know," responded her brother, kneeling down with a hand lamp, the better to see. A large batch of papers were sorted with great care, but nothing which might have belonged in the envelope was unearthed.

"This is worse than the loss of the money or the spoons," sobbed Mrs. Lyon, bursting into tears. "Your father has always been very careful of that secret communication, which he thought related to your Uncle Duncan's slaves. I am sure he will be much put out when he finds the contents of the envelope gone."

Mrs. Lyon's tears set the girls to crying, and it took some time for Deck to quiet the three. In the meanwhile he had all the female colored help in the mansion search for the missing paper. These people brought him a dozen or more sheets from out-of-the-way corners, but all proved valueless, and at length Deck strode down to the fort.

The prisoners had been searched, but nothing had been found on them of value. Each man was closely questioned, and the timid guerilla who had carried the second flag of truce that afternoon admitted that he had seen a certain fellow known as Totterly at the safe and had seen the guerilla tear open an envelope, look over its contents and then cram a paper in his coat pocket. Totterly had also taken a chamois bag—the bag which contained the three hundred dollars in gold. Who had taken the paper money was not known to the timid prisoner, nor did he know anything about the spoons.

"I didn't want to jine them sodgers," he whined. "Gaffy Denny talked me into it. Wish I had a-stayed on my dad's plantation in Logan County."

"Yes, you would have been much better off," answered Deck, briefly.

The discovery of the loss sustained put a damper on the supper, and several of Diana's best dishes were hardly touched. But nothing could just then be done, and after Mrs. Lyon and the girls had told how they had been surprised by Gaffy Denny and his men and locked up in the storeroom off of the dining apartment, each of the party retired to catch a few hours of sleep. It is safe to say the lady of the mansion and the girls hardly closed their eyes, but Deck and Artie were growing used to excitement and had slumbered in the very midst of a battlefield, and they rested soundly.

On the day following, several of the county authorities put into appearance, and the prisoners were taken away to Bowling Green, some to the prison, and the wounded ones to a hospital. A vigorous search was instituted for Totterly, but nothing was learned about him further than that he had confiscated a horse at a little settlement known as Culver's, and had been seen riding with all speed directly south for the Tennessee State line.

Deck and Artie accompanied the prisoners to the county seat, and on returning to Riverlawn in the afternoon an hour's call was made at Lyndhall—a space of time all too short for the major, for Kate Belthorpe wished to know all about the affair at the mansion, and he was impatient to ask her about herself. Artie, knowing a thing or two or imagining he did, very considerately drew Margie Belthorpe to listen to what he might have to relate, so the affectionate pair were left alone part of the time, something which Deck very much appreciated, and to which pretty Kate did not at all object. The girl shuddered when he was forced to admit that he had been scratched on the neck by a bullet, and flinging her arms about his shoulders begged him to be more prudent in the future, and this he promised—for her sake, as he said in a whisper, and the compact was sealed with a kiss which if not exactly brotherly or sisterly was fully as affectionate.

"I suppose you proposed, didn't you?" said Artie, when he and Deck were galloping home. "I gave you the best chance in the world."

"I—I—don't be foolish, Artie," returned the young major, and blushed. "No," he went on, after a pause, "I didn't—but—I reckon it's all right—at least I hope it is;" and Artie clapped him on the back heartily and said he was positive it was all right, and they shook hands. After that the cousins were more brotherly than ever before.

CHAPTER VII

IN WHICH THE ENEMY'S SUPPLIES ARE CONFISCATED

"Deck, what is that glittering over there?" cried Artie, as they were crossing the creek bridge. "I declare, it's one of mother's spoons!"

"You're right, Artie," answered the major, leaping to the ground. "And here is another. That rascal I wounded must have thrown them away after I left him on the bridge bench."

Artie dismounted also, and the pair began a rigorous search for the balance of the missing silverware. Four additional spoons were brought to light, all having lain within a distance of two yards of each other.

"That's all," said Artie, after looking around for quarter of an hour without finding any more. "More than likely several of the guerillas divided the tableware between them."

Mrs. Lyon was much pleased over the recovery of even a part of the stolen property, and a hunt was immediately instituted at the various spots where the prisoners had been shot down or captured. Before night a dozen and a half spoons were in, also the gold butter dish. The other spoons were never found, although long after it was learned that the thief had thrown them into the creek.

Immediately after learning what was to be ascertained concerning Totterly, Levi had gone off with General and Clinker to run the men down, were such a thing possible. The overseer was gone two days and a night, and came back looking worn and haggard.

"I couldn't catch him, try my best," he said. "He has escaped into Tennessee, and I doubt very much if any of us ever lay eyes on him again."

From one of the prisoners they had received a very good description of the guerilla, who was said to be tall, with a marked stoop to his left shoulder, and with a long nose which did not point directly ahead, but somewhat to the right. He was said to be a well-educated man, inclined to drink, and was put down as using "school English."

"We shall never see or hear of him again," sighed Mrs. Lyon. "The money and that precious paper are gone forever."

"I don't see why he took the paper," said Artie. "I don't believe it is of any value excepting to father."

"We ought to write to father at once," said Hope, who, though younger than any present, took a deep interest in what had occurred. "If the paper concerned the slaves, what will he do if it is not found?"

"That's the conundrum, Hope," answered her big brother. "I'll write to-night, and father will get the letter inside of forty-eight hours, I think."

The major and the captain had expected to have a right royal time at home while on their furlough; but the attack on Riverlawn had upset all of their calculations. Nevertheless, they were warmly welcomed by those at the plantation, and Kate Belthorpe made Deck especially happy by coming over with her sister to spend a whole day at the mansion.

The furlough of the major and the captain was for ten days, and before the time was up a letter came from Colonel Lyon, stating that he had received the news of the attack on Riverlawn even before Deck's communication was handed to him. The loss of the private document intrusted to him by his dead brother worried him greatly, but he presumed everything possible was being done to recover it, so he would not risk leaving his command to take a hand personally.

"General Rosecrans is almost certain the enemy is up to some movement," he added. "I was talking to Colonel Minty only yesterday, and he thinks we shall have work cut out for us inside of a week. Unless you can accomplish something at home, you and Artie had better return to your positions at the front."

The note had evidently been written in a hurry, for no mention was made of the lost money, the colonel evidently valuing that at less than the stolen paper. The communication produced a profound impression on Deck and Artie, and after talking it over, both decided to leave for their regiment on the following morning. Levi urged them to do this, and promised to guard more carefully than ever against any possible future attack at Riverlawn.

Early in the year 1863 several changes were made in the Army of the Cumberland, and one of these was to transfer Fort Henry and Fort Donelson from Grant to Rosecrans, giving the latter the entire control of the Cumberland

River. In the meantime, and during the several months to follow, the cavalry of the Union forces was recruited as much as possible, and many companies of infantry were placed on horseback, for Rosecrans had discovered that little or nothing could be done against the enemy's raiders by foot soldiers, no matter how daring or long-winded on the double-quick the latter might be.

Toward the end of January, General Bragg, somewhat recovered from the shock of the conflict at Murfreesboro, thought it about time to make another demonstration against the army of the North, and he accordingly directed General Wheeler to make an attack against Fort Donelson, so gallantly taken by the forces under Grant nearly a year previous. Wheeler directed Forrest to move his brigade with a battery of four guns along the river road to the neighborhood of Dover, while he with Wharton's command took a road to the left.

Several trusted scouts reported this movement to Rosecrans without delay, and the general immediately ordered Davis to take his division and two brigades of cavalry under Colonel Minty down the Versailles road and endeavor to take Wheeler in the rear, while Steedman was directed to watch the Confederate general's movements by way of Triune.

As the work of the Riverlawn Cavalry was well known, Colonel Lyon was pressed into the services of the cavalry moving toward Fort Donelson without, however, Captain Batterson's battery being attached, as heretofore. The brigades of cavalry were directed to move by way of the Unionville and Rover roads, the infantry going direct to Eaglesville.

The major and the captain arrived in camp just as the men were striking their tents. They were warmly received by Major Belthorpe, who wanted to know the news from home, and by Captain Gadbury, who was likewise anxious to hear from Lyndhall and especially from Margie. Both young men, however, lost no time in reporting to their father.

"It's a bad business, Dexter," said the colonel, when the loss of the secret letter was alluded to. "I must say I am treed, as the bear said to Davy Crockett."

"Don't you think the letter referred to the slaves, father?" said the major. "I always thought it did."

"I did think so, because I was particularly cautioned by Brother Duncan not to dispose of any of the slaves under any circumstances. They originally numbered fifty-one, but three have died, leaving forty-eight, as perhaps you know."

"Perhaps they were to be given their freedom," said Artie. "If that is so, President Lincoln's proclamation has forestalled Uncle Duncan's design."

At this the colonel smiled. "Almost true, Artie, but not quite," he said slowly. "If we lived in a rebellious State the proclamation would act as you say, but Kentucky, being still in the Union, is not affected by that proclamation, strange as the statement may seem."

"Creation! but I reckon you're right, father!" almost shouted Major Deck. "I never looked at it in that light before. We can hold slaves even if the folks living below the Mason and Dixon's line can't."

Colonel Lyon turned his eyes fully on the young commander, and studied that resolute face for several seconds in silence. From his parent's manner Deck knew something important was coming.

"My son, would you care to hold our colored people as slaves if all the other colored people in these United States were set at liberty? I say these United States, for I pray God that this conflict will speedily come to an end and that we shall remain an undivided Union."

"No; I say let them be free! Let us hire them to work for us," answered the major, promptly.

"Yes; give them their liberty," echoed Artie. "I never believed in slavery when we lived in New Hampshire, and I haven't got used to it yet. It isn't a Christian-like institution."

"My boys, I am glad you speak my thoughts," said Colonel Lyon, and grasped each by the hand. "Yes, the slaves shall be free; I settled that in my mind as soon as I read our President's proclamation. I have already begun a letter of instructions to Levi Bedford on the subject."

At this juncture Colonel Lyon was called away to confer with the officer in command of the division to which the Riverlawns had been assigned, and Deck and Artie hurried to their respective headquarters, the one to assume command of his company and the other his battalion.

"Major, you are looking as fine as fine can be!" exclaimed Captain Life Knox, of the seventh company, as he came up, saluted Deck, and then gave a hearty shake to the proffered hand. "Your furlough has evidently agreed with you."

"It would have agreed with me if it hadn't been for the trouble we had at Riverlawn."

"I heard something of that, but I'd like to listen to the particulars," continued Life.

They were readily given. When the tall Kentuckian heard Totterly's name mentioned his face grew dark.

"I know the skunk!" he cried. "He hails from the western part of the State and once cheated me in a hoss trade. So he is the man? Very well, we'll keep our eyes open for him."

Major Truman was also at hand, an eager listener to what was said. The former squire of Barcreek shook his head dubiously. "I was hoping our neighborhood would miss being raided after that last trouble," he said. "But, being on the border of this conflict, I dare say we shall suffer in this fashion as long as the war lasts."

In less than two hours after this the Riverlawn Cavalry was on the march, Deck at the head of the first battalion, with Artie as commander of his fourth company, and Colonel Lyon in charge of the whole. Major Batterson of the battery was sorry to be left behind, but wished "the boys" the best of luck.

"Don't let the enemy take Fort Donelson," he said. "Grant had too much of a job taking it from Buckner."

The cavalry forces under Minty had been divided, one taking the road through Unionville and the other that through Rover. The weather was cold and threatened a storm, yet the Riverlawns made good progress over the semi-frozen and rough highway.

The most worried man in the column was Quartermaster Hickman. For several weeks the troops had been living on half rations, for the government could get no supplies through, owing to the wrecking of the railroad. The country for miles around had been so thoroughly foraged that absolutely nothing was left that was worth picking up.

"It's easy enough to talk about providing something," grumbled the quartermaster, while riding at ease beside Deck. "I'd turn the shirt on my back into a peck of potatoes if I could, but the thing can't be done—and there you are. I've lived on nothing but hardtack and a couple of potatoes for two days,—and

your father has done the same,—and yet some of the boys kick."

"It's hard lines, truly," answered Deck, soberly. "But we shall have to make the best of it, and that is all there is to it. When we halt for dinner, I'll make my battalion a little speech on the subject."

"I wish you would, for the third company is the hardest kicker of the lot," grumbled Hickman, and rode off, trying to solve in his mind how he was going to make six boxes of hardtack, two barrels of potatoes, and one box of beans last nearly a thousand men two days or more. "I'll just have to swell out them beans, that's all," he said. "And all hands will have to play Yankees and eat 'em," he added, remembering that some of the Kentuckians had turned up their noses at this particularly New England dish.

When the halt came Major Deck made his promised speech. "Our quartermaster is doing his best," he said, "and officers are faring no better than the men. If we are badly off, the enemy is worse, so let us leave the growling to them. I feel certain our government will not forget us, and that supplies will soon be coming through in abundance."

For a moment there was a silence. "We didn't mean anything, Major," came from a private of the second company. "The quartermaster is all right. Three cheers for him!" The cheers were given with a will; and then Hickman felt much better.

Life Knox and several others had gone off on a scout for "extras." They had brought down two rabbits when they ran across a house set in a grove of untrimmed trees. The front door was open on a crack, and at the crack an elderly man was stationed with a shot-gun.

"Keep off! keep off!" cried the man as he stepped onto the porch. "I don't want any soldiers around here."

"So it would seem," answered the tall Kentuckian, dryly. "Who are you?"

"Eh?" queried the man, who was a bit deaf.

"Stand still and tell us who you are."

"That's my business. You clear out!"

"Rather guess it's our business just now," laughed another of the cavalrymen.

"A man's house is his castle, and I want you to leave me," stormed the man with

the shot-gun. "You are nothing but Yankees!"

"That is true," returned Life. "What have you in your house?"

"Eh?"

"Most awfully deaf, he is," grunted another of the party. "Have you got many provisions on hand?" he added, in a louder key.

"Eh?" and the man with the shot-gun leaned forward. "Did you say provisions?"

"Yes; have you any?" joined in Life.

"Enough for myself. Ain't got none for you—I can tell you that!"

"Reckon you have got something for us," grinned the tall Kentuckian.

Another of the party, Sandy Lyon, had, in the meantime, slipped behind the house. He now appeared at the edge of the porch and suddenly leaped upon the elderly man.

Utterly off his guard, for he had not heard Sandy approaching, the deaf man proved an easy victim, and in a twinkle his gun was taken from him.

"That was a good move, Sandy," said Life. "Now sit down and behave yourself, sir," he added, to the man, whose name was Gessel, and forced the deaf one to a seat on the porch.

Having overcome the only inhabitant of the house, the cavalrymen made an inspection of the premises and found over a score of boxes and barrels, filled with provisions intended for a Confederate force encamped in the vicinity of Rover.

Orders were at once sent to the quartermaster to take possession of the prize, and Colonel Lyon was notified of the Confederate detachment mentioned.

Realizing that the matter would brook of no delay, a consultation with the general of the command was held, and this resulted in Deck being sent off with his battalion to locate the Confederates, if possible, and engage them.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ENGAGEMENT NEAR SPRING HILL

The course of the first battalion of the Riverlawn Cavalry was along a path scarcely wide enough for four horsemen to ride abreast. It was through a thicket of dwarf trees, the limbs of which took off many a hat and scratched hands and faces. At several points the riders came to hollows, filled with icy water, and here detours had to be made, for fear the animals might become stuck in the stiff soil beneath.

As was his usual habit, Deck rode at the head of his command, with Captain Abbey, of the first company, beside him. Several scouts had been sent out and with them had gone Artie Lyon, by special permission of the major.

The scouts soon found the road making a broad sweep to the south, and presently came to a point where there was a clearing in the woods and a brook. Here they stopped their horses for a drink, and Artie pointed out some fresh tracks leading up the watercourse. The tracks were of men as well as horses.

"Let us investigate those tracks," he said to Lieutenant Fronklyn, who was one of the party. "I think they are about what we are looking for."

"I wouldn't be surprised," answered Fronklyn, who, as old readers know, had frequently been on the scout with Deck, and he knew a thing or two about the business. "Do we go afoot, Captain?"

"I think we had better."

The horses were tethered in the brush, and the pair advanced along the brook with caution. Soon the trail led to the westward, and here they found themselves confronted by a series of rocks, overgrown by moss and covered with dead leaves. Fronklyn stopped and scratched his head.

"Are we stumped?" questioned Artie. He got down on his knees and commenced to examine the moss. "I reckon we can follow the trail in spite of the rocks. Come ahead," and again they advanced.

The rocks ran up and then down. At the other side was another clearing, and not

far away the regular road to Rover.

"Halt!" whispered Artie, catching his companion by the arm. "There they are, as sure as guns!" and he pointed to their left.

The young captain was right. Encamped on the edge of the clearing, and not over two hundred yards from the Rover road, was a company of Confederate cavalry. The men were taking it easy, smoking and playing cards. Not even a picket appeared in their vicinity.

"Let us count them," whispered Artie, and began the task, while Fronklyn did the same. They settled on forty-three men, not counting several who could be heard talking, but who were out of sight.

"Half a hundred," murmured the young captain. "If we are smart we ought to be able to bag the lot. Come on back, just as quickly as we can make it;" and he caught Fronklyn by the arm a second time.

When the brook was again reached, the other scouts were called in, and all lost no time in reporting to Deck. The major listened to what Artie and Fronklyn had to say with interest, and nodded when Artie spoke of bagging the lot.

"You are right," he said, and sent for Captains Abbey, Blenks, and Richland of the other companies.

It was soon arranged that the first and second companies should proceed along the regular road until the vicinity of the Confederate camp was reached. In the meantime the third and fourth companies under Captain Richland were to take to the trail Artie had discovered, thus covering the enemy's rear.

"As soon as we reach our position, I will send out Lieutenant Fronklyn to ascertain your arrival," said the major. "Then the four companies will take their positions north, west, east, and south as they rank. The enemy will thus be completely surrounded, and as our men will be protected by the woods, I do not see how they can do anything but surrender, unless they submit themselves to great slaughter."

"But supposing they make a break?" was the question put by Captain Richland.

"If they do, it will depend upon circumstances as to what shall be done, and I'll send you further orders," answered the major.

The two commands separated, and Deck rode forward at the head of the first detachment. The approach to the Confederate encampment by the regular road was considerably longer than by the brook route, but the latter way was the rougher of the two; so the young commander judged that both detachments would arrive at their destinations at about the same time. In this his supposition proved correct.

As before, scouts were sent out, Fronklyn at the head of the first detachment and Lieutenant Black at the head of the second, each with three men under him. It was wise that this was done, for the Confederates had just begun to throw out pickets, having received word that Rosecrans was sending troops after Wheeler and feeling the boys in blue must come somewhere in the neighborhood of where they were stopping. Each advanced guard managed to bag two pickets, silencing them ere they had a chance to make any outcry.

"Who is in command of your company?" questioned Deck, when one of the pickets was brought to him.

"Captain Barstow."

"How many men has he?"

"About twice as many as you," answered the Confederate, hoping to scare the Unionists off.

"Indeed," rejoined the major. "That is all," and the captured one was led to the rear.

There was a sharp turn in the road some distance from the camp of the enemy, and here the first detachment rested, while Fronklyn hurried through the woods to get word from Captain Richland. He found the second detachment just crossing the rocks, and, waiting until the two companies were located as ordered, reported the fact to the major.

The engagement was opened by the enemy, who, on finding themselves confronted in the rear by the two companies at the rocks, began a scattering fire and retreated toward the Rover road. The second detachment of the Riverlawns returned the fire with deadly effect, and four Confederates were either killed or wounded. In their hurry to leave the exposed camp, the enemy left nearly its whole outfit behind.

But down on the main road matters were still worse for them, for they almost ran

into the first company, while the second company opened upon their right. Bewildered, they came to a halt, and looked inquiringly at their captain, while two other men dropped.

"Left wheel, double-quick march!" yelled Captain Barstow. "Load!" And away they went, loading as they ran. But at the base of the rocks they came to another halt, for from the trees some distance back glinted nearly a hundred carbine barrels. They turned again to find more carbines on the other side.

The first detachment had now come closer, and the Confederates were completely hemmed in, with hardly a tree to shelter them. In this position Major Deck called on them to surrender.

"If you don't do it, my troops will cut you to pieces," he added.

The captain of the Confederates wanted to fight, and to gain time attempted to parley over terms. But Deck would not listen to him; and five minutes later the company threw down their arms, and the angry commander was forced to give up his sword.

It was learned that the captured body numbered but thirty-six men, the others having either been shot down or having left the camp between the time that Artie and Fronklyn made their discovery and the contest opened. The wounded were cared for and placed in a farm wagon borrowed from a planter in the vicinity, and the prisoners were marched along the Rover road to where the second and third battalions of the Riverlawns were stationed.

"You did well, Dexter," said the colonel, when he had been informed of the course of events. "To capture such a force with only the loss of one man killed and three wounded was remarkable," and he smiled affectionately.

"I didn't do very much myself," said the major, modestly. "Artie and Lieutenant Fronklyn found the rebels and I ordered the only thing done that seemed practicable—to surround them."

"I see you still have your neck tied up. Does it hurt much?"

"A little, but not enough to speak about. Artie's wound was much the worse of the two."

"You must not be rash. Captain Abbey tells me that you exposed yourself several times while giving orders."

"I can't remain in the rear, father," pleaded the major. "How would it look?"

"My first battalion can't afford to lose its major, Dexter. You owe a duty to your command, as well as to yourself and me;" and here the conversation dropped.

The larger portion of the cavalry had moved forward toward Rover, and here another body of Minty's command encountered a small regiment of Confederates and captured them. To this body of the defeated were added the force taken by Major Deck.

Following the commands of General Rosecrans, Steedman moved forward by way of Triune and Nolinsville, and joined Davis's forces at Franklin. But Wheeler was on the alert, and by pushing forward at his utmost speed, managed to pass between those in his pursuit. On the third day of February he reached Dover, and there forced a fight with Colonel Harding, commanding about six hundred and fifty men of the Eighty-third Illinois. The latter was well intrenched at the new site of Fort Donelson, and bravely resisted two savage attacks, then charged over his works and captured nearly half a hundred of the enemy. In his double onslaught Wheeler lost five hundred and fifty in killed and wounded, while the loss to the Union forces was less than a hundred, exclusive of fifty soldiers who were captured. With broken ranks Wheeler started on his retreat through Centerville. Davis's command tried their best to cut him off, and so did a portion of Minty's cavalry, but the Confederate could not be caught, and he escaped with the remnant of his troops across Duck River. It may be added here that when Colonel Harding charged over his breastworks, he was sustained by the fire of several gunboats on the river, which were bound for Nashville with a number of transports.

The affair near Rover ended the present series of conflicts so far as the Riverlawn Cavalry was concerned, and they went into camp once more and were again joined by Batterson's battery. But the Confederates continued to be active, and early in March an encounter took place three miles outside of Spring Hill and another at Thompson's Station. The Union forces, under Coburn, were outnumbered and compelled to surrender; but the victory was of little value to the Confederates, since it did nothing for the advancement of their position.

On the 7th of March General Phil Sheridan moved with his division to Franklin, where he was joined by troops from Nashville and by Minty's cavalry. The object was to learn the enemy's true position. Van Dorn, the rebel leader, was at Spring Hill, and Granger was sent to dislodge him. This was done with the aid of

several other Union troops, and Van Dorn was pursued as far as Rutherford Creek.

Once more the Riverlawns found themselves in the saddle and posted on a side road not half a mile from the scene of the initial blows of the battle. The road was a winding affair, and the several battalions covered not only the highway, but also the hemp fields on either side. They were kept waiting for nearly an hour, when a staff officer came galloping up and informed Colonel Lyon that a portion of the enemy was cutting through a woods to the northeast.

"You are to cut them off, Colonel Lyon," added the officer. "The general leaves the details of the movement to yourself."

"How many are coming?" asked the commandant of the Riverlawns.

"Five or six hundred, at least."

Colonel Lyon said no more, but at once directed his regiment to break into battalions. The first was to move up the road for an eighth of a mile, the second was to cut directly across the hemp field on the left, while the third was to follow the first, as a reserve, keeping as well posted as possible on the movements of Deck's companies.

In less than five minutes Major Belthorpe's battalion was galloping across the field as fast as the nature of the soil permitted, while Deck was moving up the highway at equal speed. Soon a patch of timber cut off the view of the first battalion by the second.

Major Deck now felt it "in his bones" that some sharp fighting was in store for his men, and in this he was not mistaken. The position determined upon by the colonel had hardly been gained when the Confederate detachment, consisting of several companies of cavalry and a like number of infantry, discovered the battalion in the hemp field, and opened fire.

Understanding fully Colonel Lyon's scheme, Major Belthorpe now swung around to the enemy's rear, the movement being easy on account of a fence and a hedge at the further entrance to the enclosure. They returned the fire, and several men fell upon both sides.

A slight rise in the centre of the hemp field cut off the view of the road from the woods, and now the commander of the Confederate forces thought he saw a clear opening before him, leading directly for Rutherford Creek. He resolved to

move in a semicircle also, and make for the road, and gave his commands accordingly.

The march of the enemy's forces brought him on the road, midway between the first battalion and the third, situated, as before stated, an eighth of a mile apart. Owing to the winding course of the highway he did not see either battalion until it was too late to retreat. Deck marched down upon him, and Major Truman marched up, and he was caught between two fires, with the second battalion pressing him in the rear.

But the Confederate leader was a "fire-eater," in the most positive meaning of that term, and he resolved to make a dash for liberty by attempting to break through Deck's command, since the field on the road's right did not look like a promising one to enter, being broken by a ditch and several swamps, into which horses and infantry were bound to go down. He yelled to his leading cavalry to follow him, and, waving his sabre over his head, charged down upon Deck like a veritable demon.

CHAPTER IX

MAJOR DECK LYON MAKES A PROMISE

"They are coming, Major!" shouted Captain Abbey, as the Confederate leader forced his cavalry on the charge. "What had we best do?"

"Draw—pistols!" shouted Deck, by way of an answer. "Give them a round as soon as they turn the bend."

The command had hardly been given when the first company opened fire, followed by the second company, both wheeling to the left to let the other companies fire. By this time the Confederates were answering with their pistols; but, on account of their rapid riding, their aim was poor, and the shots did but little damage.

The young major was a central figure in the combat, and more than one soldier in gray directed his fire at him. But he escaped unharmed, to find himself, two minutes later, faced by the Confederate leader, wearing the straps of a major also.

The fellow was all of six feet tall, heavy-set, with a black mustache, and beady black eyes, that somehow put Deck in mind of a rattlesnake ready to strike. He came on, giving the Confederate yell heard so many times before, and to be heard so many times afterward—a yell no pen can describe, and one which arose, clear and full, above the clash of arms.

"Down you go!" hissed the major in gray, as he advanced upon Deck with his sabre pointed, as if to run him through. His look was sufficient to paralyze any ordinary man; but Deck did not quail, having been confronted thus before. He spoke to Ceph, and the intelligent animal reared up, and came down on one side, and a sharp blow from Deck's weapon caused the Confederate's sabre to fly from his hand.

The Confederate was astonished, almost dumfounded, for he had calculated that such a youthful commander would be "easy meat" for him. With another yell he swung his horse in a circle to avoid a second blow from Deck, and then, pulling his pistol, aimed it at our friend's head.

But Lieutenant Fronklyn was in a line directly behind Deck, and he did not intend that his commander should be shot down thus readily. As the Confederate leader's pistol went up, Fronklyn's sabre came down, and the firearm fell to the ground, carrying with it three of the fingers which had clutched its handle.

"Good for you, Fronklyn!" cried Deck. "I owe you one for that!" And then the tide of the contest carried them apart.

Fully half a hundred of the Confederate horsemen were as daring as their leader, and, while the others fell back and into the hands of the second and third battalions of the Riverlawns, these continued to press forward desperately, hoping to force a passage by sheer might of will power. Truly, their bravery was worthy of a better cause.

The shock of battle was one of the heaviest Deck's battalion had ever received, and for several minutes it looked as if the four companies must go to pieces. But the gallant major rallied his forces, and the Confederates were hemmed in so closely that they could neither advance nor retreat. Sabre blows fell thick and fast, striking fire in a dozen spots at once, and fully a dozen horses and riders went down in less than five minutes.

But the meeting, if sharp, was also short, and with himself and two of his officers disabled, the Confederate leader surrendered and the fighting stopped. Scarcely had Deck received word that the fight was won than Sandy Lyon rode up, as a special messenger from Major Belthorpe.

"The infantry are in the lower end of the hemp field," said Lieutenant Sandy. "Where is the colonel, please?"

"With Major Truman," responded Deck. "Does Major Belthorpe need reënforcements?"

"He says he can take the infantry if he is given two more companies."

"All right; tell him I'll be over as soon as I can get there," was the major's answer.

He turned to Captain Richland, in charge of the second division of the first battalion, and left it to the third and fourth companies to take charge of the prisoners, forty-two in number. This done, he took the first and second companies with him, and rode with all speed in the direction his cousin had pointed out to him.

His arrival came none too soon, for Major Belthorpe was having his hands full with the infantry of the enemy, and it looked as if they might slip through his fingers. Finding a good position near the rise in the field, Deck managed to drive them back toward a position they had occupied a quarter of an hour before. In the meantime word had reached the colonel and Major Truman, and the third battalion came up on a gallop. A charge all along the line was made, and the Confederate infantry was placed in full retreat. One company was captured, but the others took to the stony ground beyond the hemp field, and under cover of darkness managed to make their way, along with a number of other troops, to Rutherford Creek. They were hotly pursued by the second and the third battalions, but the high water in the creek made fording out of the question, and the Confederates escaped on boats, rafts, and floating logs.

As brilliant as had been Deck's services during the day, he was not content to let matters rest as they stood. Feeling that some of the Confederate forces might still be in the vicinity, he obtained permission to go on a scouting tour along the creek, taking with him his companion of many such expeditions, Life Knox. The pair left the camp quietly, although on horseback, and were soon out of sight and hearing of their comrades.

"It may be a wild-goose chase," said Deck, referring to what his father had said concerning the expedition. "But if we return empty-handed, there will be no harm done."

"Just exactly my way of looking at it, Major," answered Life, to whom the backwoods manner of talking was now a thing of the past. Deck had taught him how to speak correctly, and for this the tall Kentuckian was exceedingly grateful. He often declared that it was Deck who had made him fit to be an officer under Uncle Sam.

"General Sheridan is bound to uncover the enemy's full force," went on the major, as he urged Ceph to make a sturdy leap over a strong running brook. "If we—hullo, what's this?"

He stopped short, as Ceph swerved to one side, almost unseating him. This movement, on the part of the intelligent horse, was so unusual Deck knew at once something must be wrong. "What is it, Ceph?" he questioned, patting the steed on the neck.

For reply the horse turned about and pointed his nose toward the meadow grass which he had just trodden. The major leaped down and peered into the semi-

darkness.

"A Confederate captain, seriously wounded or dead," he cried to Life. "Poor fellow, he is hardly more than a boy," he went on, gazing on the pale, youthful face, along one side of which the blood had flowed and dried. "Perhaps we can do something for him," and he knelt over the prostrate body.

Life also came to the spot, and between them they raised the boyish captain up. As they did this, he opened his eyes and gave a gasp.

"Water!" he murmured. "Water!"

Plenty of water was handy, and filling his canteen, Deck gave the wounded one a drink and bathed his face, after which he started to bind up the injured head with his handkerchief.

"It's no use, I'm going to die," gasped the Confederate, not able to speak above a whisper. "Are you—you Southern men?"

"We belong to the Kentucky troops," answered Deck.

"Yes; but what side?"

"We are on the side of the Union."

At this the youthful captain gave a groan. "Then I—I can't expect anything of you. Too bad! I wanted to send word to my sister—" A sudden spasm of pain caused him to stop speaking.

"We are not enemies, Captain, saving on the battlefield," said Deck, tenderly, for this case appealed strongly to his considerate heart. "You can rest assured that I will do all that I can for you—within the lines of my duty to the government."

"Will you? You—you look like an honest fellow—and you are young, like me."

"The major is all right, Captain," broke in Life. "Trust him for anything he promises."

"I come from Chattanooga, where I lived alone with my sister Rosebel. She didn't want me to join the army, and we—we quarrelled—" The captain gave something like a sob. "I joined the cavalry—ran away from Rosebel—and we—we quarrelled so hard I got mad and took the money—hid it away—down in the back cellar—in an iron pot—eight hundred dollars in gold. If you will do a

stranger and an enemy a kindness, go to Rosebel,—or send word—ask her to forgive—ask her—tell her I am so sorry—so sorry—" Again the captain broke off, and now his eyes closed.

"Let me give him a bit of liquor, Major," said Knox, and poured some into his cup. The wounded youth took a swallow, and it gave him temporary strength.

"Oh, Rosebel, if I could only see you again," he murmured. He looked at Deck searchingly. "You will go to her—or send word?"

"I will."

"Don't forget to say how sorry I am—how ashamed I was when I got away—not for fighting for my country—for the glorious stars and bars; but because I—I treated her so. She was always so good, since mother and father died."

"I will do all I can for you. But your name—I must have that," said Deck. The captain had fallen back, and the eyes were becoming glassy. "Perhaps he had better have some more liquor, Life," he cried.

"My name is Paul—my name is Pa—" The sufferer broke off short. In vain he tried to speak. A shudder took possession of him, and he stretched out—dead.

"Gone!" muttered the tall Kentuckian. "Too bad. And only a boy, Major."

Deck could not trust himself to speak. During the past two years he had seen many men die, but no death had affected him like this. Two tears stole silently down his browned cheeks.

"Didn't catch his name, either?" went on Life.

"No."

"Then how are you going to find that sister of his?"

"I don't know yet; but I will find a way—I must," was the firm answer. He felt that the dead Confederate had intrusted him with a mission that could not be ignored.

Ere now the dead had been left where they had fallen, but both Deck and Life felt they could not leave this boyish captain lying in the meadow grass. Looking around, they found a trench dug through the meadow to the brook, and in a dry portion of this they deposited the body, first relieving it of a watch, a pocket-

knife, and a photograph of a pleasant-looking Southern girl, presumedly Rosebel. The sods from the trench still lay upon the banks, and with these and some loose dirt they covered up the corpse. Then taking a long stick, Deck cut one end flat, and marked upon it with a heavy pencil,—

ROSEBEL'S PAUL LIES BURIED HERE.

The stick was stuck at the top of the grave, and silently they mounted their horses once more and proceeded on their way. It was fully ten minutes before either of them spoke again, and then the subject was something of an entirely different nature.

"Halt, Major!" It was Life who uttered the word, speaking in a whisper. The tall Kentuckian had discerned three forms moving before them in the darkness.

Deck also saw them, and brought Ceph to a stop. The three forms were on foot, but whether friends or foes they could not tell.

They had reached the edge of the creek, and above the spot was a patch of woods, while below was a long meadow, cut up into numerous brooks. On the opposite side of the creek was another patch of woods much denser than the first mentioned.

"This is the spot, Leftenant," they heard one of the party of three remark.

"Are you sure, Bolder?" came in a second voice. "Remember, you were mistaken before."

"Well, I'm not mistaken now," answered Bolder. "Here is the very tree I notched."

"Yes, this is the trail," came in a third voice. "And I don't believe there has been a single Yankee around."

"I trust not, Peters. But we are not out of the woods yet—in more ways than one. The raft may be gone, and fording this stream in such a flood as this is entirely out of the question."

"Oh, we could get over alone, Leftenant," answered the man named Bolder. "But that wouldn't be getting over those cases of ammunition and that field-pi—"

"Hush," came in a warning from the lieutenant. "You don't know but what some of those hanged Yankees may be around here."

"That's true, though I didn't see any of 'em as we came along."

"Perhaps, Bolder, you had better make a circuit of the woods before we get to work," said the lieutenant, a moment later. "We don't want to be surprised at our task."

"As you say, Leftenant; Tom Bolder is here to obey Leftenant Blackrook every time."

"Then go at once, and if you see anything alarming, give the whistle before agreed upon," rejoined Lieutenant Blackrook, as he and Peters moved into the grove of trees.

In a moment more Bolder had started off, gun on his shoulder. His course was almost directly toward a clump of bushes behind which Deck and Life had sought shelter, and from which spot they had overheard all that had been said.

CHAPTER X

A TRIP ON A RAFT

The talk of the three Confederates had filled the young major with interest. Evidently they had belonged to the troops just defeated, and they were now on their way to escape to the south of Rutherford Creek, as the main body on the retreat had gone.

But this was not all. A raft had been mentioned, also some cases of ammunition, and something had been spoken of that sounded as if it might have been meant for a field-piece. This looked as if the three Confederates intended to transfer some army property as well as themselves to a safer locality for men and goods.

It was too dark for either Deck or Life to make out the uniforms of the enemies, but they were inclined to believe that they belonged to some Southern battery which Wheeler had brought along, but which the Confederate commander had been unable to bring into use. It instantly crossed Deck's mind that it would be a big thing to bag the men, and even a bigger thing to seize the ammunition and the field-piece.

But now a difficulty arose—a difficulty which must be met and settled on the spot. One of the Confederates was coming toward them. What was to be done with the man?

Deck did not doubt but that Life and himself were more than a match for the half-starved upholder of a mistaken cause. They could easily compel him to surrender at the point of the pistol, or they might throw him down and gag him before he had any chance to make an outcry.

But would this be doing just the right thing, all circumstances considered? Might not the loss of one of their number frighten off the two others, and if the cases of ammunition and the field-piece were hidden away, could Life and himself find the things in that woods, filled as it was with rocks and brush? More than likely the articles had been hidden away with care, especially the boxes of ammunition.

To Deck's way of thinking, the only thing to do was to escape the observation of the fellow called Bolder, and then follow him up to where the army stores and

the gun were hidden. After this it would be time enough to close in on the enemy, bring them to terms, and confiscate all they were in charge of that was of value.

Doubtless Captain Knox's thoughts were similar to those of Deck's, for as the Confederate artillerist advanced, he looked inquiringly at his companion, and uttered the monosyllable, "Well?"

"We must not be discovered," whispered the major. "Turn to the left. Easy, Ceph, easy!"

The horse understood the words of caution and moved off as silently as a shadow of the night, to another clump of bushes. Life followed, and his steed, also well trained, made no more noise than did Ceph. The course of the pair took them out of the semicircle Bolder had started to make around the patch of woods, and the Confederate passed fifty or sixty feet to their left.

"Now we will follow him," whispered Deck, when Bolder's back was partly turned upon them. "Be on your guard against a surprise, Life; there may be more Confederates in this vicinity."

"I'm always on my guard," was the laconic reply, as both horses moved off with care.

The course around the woods was a rugged one, and the journey took the best part of twenty minutes. At times they lost sight of Bolder, but never more than for half a minute at a time. Once they caught the Confederate looking behind him and promptly disappeared from view into a ditch, where flowed several inches of water.

The detour on the part of the enemy having come to an end, Bolder struck out for the centre of the thicket. Here it was impossible to ride without making considerable noise, and the major and Life dismounted and fastened the animals to a tree.

"Is that you, Bolder?" came in the voice of Lieutenant Blackrook, as the scout came into a clearing near the centre of the woods and at a point where there was a fair-sized inlet from the creek.

"Yes."

"All clear?"

"Not a soul in sight, Leftenant. I guess our boys are further up the stream, and the Yankees are below."

"I don't care where the Yanks are—so long as they don't come here," muttered the Confederate officer. "Hurry up, or we'll be all night at this job."

"Is the raft here?"

"Yes, under yonder bushes. Help Peters carry down the three boxes of ammunition, and then the three of us can see what we can do with the field-piece. I'm afraid it is pretty well stuck in the mud, and we may have to use a log or two to budge her."

"How about hosses on the other side?" asked Bolder. "We can't drag the gun by hand, even if she is light."

"We'll find horses, never fear. Come, get to work, and I'll take a hand myself."

Deck was in hopes that the Confederates would bring forth their ammunition and the field-piece without delay; but such was not the case. They first went to work on the raft, a clumsy affair built of two logs and a dozen rough two-inch hemlock planks. The raft had become wedged in under the brush overgrowing the bank of the inlet, and the trio tugged and strained at a rope to bring her away. Evidently, like many other Southerners, they were not used to work, and the task proceeded with many growls from all hands.

The raft brought over to the inner end of the inlet, the three Confederates took a breathing spell and passed around a bottle which the lieutenant carried. A plug of tobacco also went the round, each whittling off a piece to suit himself, with his jack-knife. Then the three started along a dry gully just above the inlet. A thrashing around in some brush followed.

"Here we are!" cried the lieutenant. "What a pity we didn't have a chance to use that gun and the canister against the Yanks!"

"Never mind, we'll use 'em another time," answered Peters. "Catch hold, Bolder," and he began to handle one of the ammunition cases.

Deck had seen enough, and now he touched Life on the arm, and the two retreated to a distance where it would be safe to talk. "We've spotted the things," he said. "What do you advise as the next move to make?"

"That is for you to say, Major."

"See here, Life, don't major me so much. You used to call me Deck. Perhaps I had better address you as captain in the future."

"Don't you do it, Deck," pleaded the Kentuckian. "I won't say major again, excepting when we are in the ranks."

"All right. Now, what do you think? I want your advice."

"Well, I reckon we want to capture the gun and the ammunition."

"That goes without saying."

"And we likewise want to take the fellows prisoners."

"Certainly, if it can be done—and I think it can."

"Then what more is there to say, Majo—, I mean Deck?"

"Something quite important. Shall we move against them at once, or wait until the gun and the ammunition are loaded on the raft?"

Life Knox stared at the speaker for a moment in perplexity. Then a grin overspread his good-natured face. "Reckon we'll let them do the work, seeing that the stuff will be better on the raft than off it. We can't do anything in the woods with such heavy luggage; but we might pole that raft to some safe place in the Union territory."

"Now you've struck it, Life—just what was passing in my own mind. Come, we'll watch the work, and I'll give the signal to open the ball with them."

When they reached their first point of observation, they discovered that two cases of ammunition had already been transferred to the raft. The third followed, and then a rope was attached to the field-piece, a small affair, but one capable of doing good execution in the hands of a skilful gunner.

The men strained and swore at the hard work, and Deck and Life were glad they had concluded to let the enemy undertake it instead of themselves. To the rope two logs were added as implements by which to start the piece, and at last it rolled over a rock in front of it, and they hauled it to the water's edge. Here arose another difficulty, and the piece was not placed on board until it had run the risk of dropping to the bottom of the inlet. The weight of the gun sent the top of the

raft under water, and the lower box of ammunition received a wetting. The others, having been placed on top of the first, remained uninjured.

"Take the lieutenant and cover him well, Life!" whispered Deck; and it must be confessed that he was growing excited. "I will cover the man we followed around the woods. All ready?"

"Wait till I take to the other side of the inlet," answered the captain of the seventh company of the Riverlawns. He moved off immediately.

A low whistle told Deck when he was ready, and the major aimed his pistol at the Confederate lieutenant, who was assisting in casting off the rope which held the raft to the shore. The man Life was covering stood on the raft, with his comrade, ready to pole the craft out into the creek.

"Surrender!" The word rang out loudly, and its force covered up any nervousness Deck may have felt.

The command took the three Confederates completely by surprise. One of them dropped his pole, and the lieutenant let go the rope and straightened up.

"What's that?" he queried, as if he had not heard aright.

"Surrender!" repeated Life Knox, from the opposite side of the inlet. "If you don't, every one of you is a dead man!"

"Throw down your pistols," went on Deck, and the men turned again toward the spot from which the first voice had come. Of course the major and the captain kept themselves well concealed from view, and the Confederates saw nothing in the gloom.

"Who are you?" questioned Lieutenant Blackrook, grating his teeth in chagrin.

"We're a detachment of Union troops—true blue Kentucky cavalry—and each man a crack shot. Do you surrender, or do you prefer to be bored full of holes?"

"For Heaven's sake, don't shoot me down like a dog!" burst out Bolder, whose name belied his nature.

"Shut up, Bolder!" yelled the lieutenant. "How many of you out there?" he went on, and at the same moment leaped on the raft with the evident intention of hiding behind the boxes of ammunition.

"Halt! I'll give you five seconds in which to throw down your arms," went on Deck, and began to count off the seconds. More frightened than ever, Bolder flung his pistol in the brush at Deck's feet, and, seeing this, Peters did the same, and followed the pistol up with a sword he carried.

The Confederate lieutenant, however, was game, and dodging behind the boxes of ammunition made a leap from the inlet into the creek proper. Deck immediately fired at him, but owing to the darkness, the major's aim was poor and the bullet passed harmlessly by. Life Knox also took a shot, with no better result. Listening, they heard the lieutenant come up and strike out for the opposite shore. But he kept as far under the surface as his necessary breathing allowed, and the darkness speedily hid him entirely from view.

Satisfied that Bolder and Peters had no other weapons than those thrown down, Deck and Life came out into the open. As they did this, however, Deck turned back, as if speaking to others in the brush. "You fellows keep back until I tell you to come out," he said, and the two Confederates immediately felt certain that a detachment of at least eight or ten Yankees had surrounded them.

"Are you willing to submit quietly?" demanded the major, approaching Peters, for he felt sure Bolder would do nothing of his own account.

"Can't help myself, Cap'n," answered Peters, who had not yet discovered the young officer's rank.

"Are there any more of your kind about here?"

"I don't reckon there are, Cap'n."

"Where have the others gone?"

"Don't know as I kin answer that question, Major. Say, this is a right handsome bit of work for an officer as young as you, Major."

"I want to know how close your nearest troops are to us?"

Before Peters could answer, a pistol cracked out from the opposite shore of the creek. The ball whistled through the trees over Deck's head.

Crack! It was Life Knox's weapon in reply, but whether or not any damage was done could not be determined.

"We must leave this spot, Deck!" cried the tall Kentuckian. "Whoever fired that

shot has our range here."

"It must be that lieutenant," answered Deck, and he was right. Lieutenant Blackrook had swum directly across the creek and was now firing as rapidly as possible.

"Tell the rascal to stop, or he may hit you," said Life to the two Confederates.

"Stop that firing!" roared Bolder. "Don't hit your friends!"

"Take to the water, you cowards!" came in the lieutenant's voice, and he fired again, a shot that both Deck and Life returned.

Nobody was touched, and now Deck ordered the Confederates to pole the raft into the creek and down that watercourse, as he remembered what had been said about the Southern forces being further up. All he desired at present was to get out of reach of the enemy, and remain so until he could get reënforcements.

Inside of two minutes the raft was out of the inlet, and the trip down the stream began. The flow of the current was in their favor, and soon the woods was left behind, and they came out between meadow banks on both sides. The Confederates remained passive enough, and Deck gave his whole attention to discovering a suitable landing place—one which might put him within easy call of assistance.

As has been said, it had grown dark, and now a fog began to creep over the meadows and the creek, gradually shutting every object but those close at hand, from view. The fog was very penetrating, and all on board began to shiver with the cold.

"Where are you goin' to take us?" asked Bolder, presently.

"To a safe place, my man," answered Life. "Better not ask any more questions."

"We are booked for a Northern prison, I reckon," said Peters, gloomily. "If those prisons are as bad as I've been told they are, I'd rather be shot than taken to one."

"All right; we'll shoot you if you say so," rejoined the Kentuckian; and then the Confederates relapsed once more into silence.

"There seems to be a bend here—" began Deck, a moment later. "The fog is so thick I can't see if we are turning to the left or the right. If we—"

He got no further, for a shock told him that the raft had grounded. A cry of consternation escaped his lips. They were on the Confederate side of the swollen stream.

CHAPTER XI

THE ENCOUNTER AT THE RAILROAD TRESTLE

"Here's a pretty mess, Life!"

"We'd better get off just as quick as we can," answered the captain of the seventh company. "For all we know to the contrary there may be two or three thousand rebels around this shore."

"Pole her off!" cried Deck to the Confederates, and ran to assist. Bolder began to do as directed, but Peters, without looking back, leaped for the ground beyond, and ran for it as rapidly as his long legs would carry him. Life was about to fire on him, when the major checked him.

"Don't do it, Life; it may bring the enemy around our ears."

"Right you are, Deck," answered the Kentuckian. "But don't you dare to go," and he shook his weapon threateningly at Bolder.

"I ain't goin'," was the sullen response, and the Confederate began to use his pole, although straining his eyes in the hope that Peters or Lieutenant Blackrook would appear with aid for him.

But nobody came, and in a few minutes more the raft was again in midstream. Deck now kept her headed for the other shore, and before long they drifted up into a meadow which was overflown for several acres. Here they ground so hard it was impossible to budge the unwieldy craft; and the voyage came to a termination.

Before leaving the raft, Deck bound Bolder's hands behind him. Looking across the meadow they discovered a farmhouse not over a hundred yards away, and hurried in that direction.

"Major Lyon, where have you been?" the cry came from Major Tom Belthorpe. "You look as if you had been lost in the fog."

"We were—a short time," answered Deck. He looked around and saw that Tom had a dozen soldiers with him. "I don't know what you and your men are doing

here, but if you haven't anything in particular to do, I'd like you to help Captain Knox and myself."

"Why, what's up?"

"We went out on a scouting tour and captured one rebel, three boxes of ammunition, and a small field-piece."

The eyes of Kate Belthorpe's brother opened very widely. "Jee-rusa-lem! but you are doing things by the wholesale, Major,—one reb, three boxes of ammunition, and a gun! Where are they?"

"Down in the meadow lot below here. But you haven't told me what brought you here yet."

"Four prisoners got away and we gave chase,—that is, my men did. I met them on the road and came along, just for the excitement. We collared three of them, and the fourth escaped in the fog. Certainly, I'll go with you."

The pair of majors set off, Belthorpe taking six men with him. It was not long before Bolder was placed among the other prisoners, and the lot were hurried to the prisoners' camp, a mile and three-quarters away. By messenger Deck sent word to his father regarding the capture of ammunition and the field-piece.

As may well be imagined, Colonel Lyon was more pleased than ever over this new exploit of his son. The matter was referred to the commandant of the cavalry forces, and soon a detail of artillery came over and took formal charge of the capture. Later on the field-piece was used to take the place of one lost on Duck River some months back.

Van Dorn had retreated to the territory south of Rutherford Creek, and for the present no further pursuit was inaugurated, and the Riverlawns found themselves taking it easy, enjoying a well-earned rest. In the meantime Morgan became active again, and the second division of Reynold's brigade, under Colonel Hall, was sent in his pursuit. The division took a stand near Milton, and Morgan, after trying in vain to dodge to the right or the left, and, after a stubborn contest lasting about four hours, was forced to retreat, with heavy losses.

But the daring Confederate cavalry leader, now reënforced by some of the best Confederate soldiers which the State of Kentucky ever reared, was on his mettle, and resolved to make his raid in that State a success. He had gone to Liberty, and was preparing to make another dash, when Stanley's cavalry came upon him, and

forced a fight between Liberty and Snow Hill. Morgan fought desperately, but Stanley was too wide-awake for him, and turned his left flank, and the raiders became demoralized, the exact reason for which has never been explained. Carbines were thrown away, horses went wild, and teamsters deserted their wagons; and the battle ended in such a rout that it took Morgan ten days to get his troops together again. Many another leader would have given up in disgust after such a scene as this; but Morgan's nerve was of iron, and he acknowledged no such word as fail.

It was about the middle of April that the Riverlawns received word to move again. In the meantime Deck had not forgotten the dead Confederate named Paul who had a sister called Rosebel living at Chattanooga. He had made diligent inquiries concerning the young man and his family, but, so far, nothing definite had turned up. He was hoping to get some word from such prisoners as might have had their homes at Chattanooga; but these prisoners were hard to find.

The movement of the Riverlawns was again in connection with two brigades of cavalry under Minty. To this force was united three brigades of infantry under General J. Reynolds and Wilder's mounted infantry. Orders were to proceed to McMinnville, take possession of the town, and destroy the railroad from there to Manchester. If the expedition should prove a success thus far, the troops were then to be reënforced by others from Carthage, and Morgan was to be attacked again.

The weather was not bad overhead, although hardly clear; but the roads were in a deplorable condition, and, as the regiment advanced along the road, the horses sunk up to their fetlocks in mud, while the train of wagons was even worse off. At short distances one or more wagons would get stuck, and extra horses would be needed to pull the vehicles from the ruts. After proceeding with the cavalry for three hours, Captain Batterson's battery was turned back, to take up a position which was being guarded near the river.

The railroad reached, at a point just outside of the town, a staff officer presented himself to Colonel Lyon, who was riding at ease, with Lieutenant-Colonel Gordon at his side.

"Colonel Lyon, the general directs that you take the road branching off just below here and leading to the trestlework of the railroad. You are to destroy as much of the trestle and the road-bed of the railroad as you can, also burn all supplies and sheds containing the same."

"Very well; tell General Reynolds I will do my best," replied Colonel Lyon. Then turning, he gave the necessary orders, and the Riverlawns detached themselves from the other cavalry and galloped down the side road indicated.

At this time McMinnville was but a small place, yet it boasted of a newspaper, and the surrounding territory was rich in fruit and other farms. The ground in spots was full of hollows, and over these the railroad corporation had built a series of trestles, with here and there a shed and a siding for freight cars.

Coming within sight of the trestle mentioned to him, Colonel Lyon found it guarded by a small company of Southerners, determined-looking men, about half uniformed, yet each with a trusty-looking gun in his hands. The Southerners opened fire without any parleying, and two cavalrymen were struck, although not seriously.

"They have a fine position, Colonel," remarked Lieutenant-Colonel Gordon. "They are above us, and that planking on this side gives them a first-class protection."

"That is right, Gordon; but we'll dislodge them fast enough," answered Noah Lyon, confidently. A leader somewhat against his will, he had now studied up military tactics in dead earnest, and with him, as with his son Deck, nothing was an impossibility.

The first battalion was ordered to halt and take a safe place behind a slight rise of ground to the northwest of the trestle. The second was marched around to the north, and the third to the south. This done, the party above was pretty well surrounded. Half a dozen shots were exchanged, but the planking mentioned protected the Confederates, and they did not budge.

It would have been easy to have advanced upon the party from both ends of the trestlework, but this would have cost a severe loss of life, and the humane colonel was for protecting his men from all injury if the thing could be done.

While Colonel Lyon was debating in his mind what should be his next movement, Artie came up and saluted, having received the proper permission from his major. The young captain observed the formalities as though the colonel was of no relationship to him.

"Colonel, I have to report something which may be of importance to you," he said.

"Well, Captain, what is it?" smiled the colonel. "A sure way to defeat the enemy?"

"Our company has discovered that a barrel of tar lies at the northeast end of the trestle. A freight car above was broken open, and I think the barrel was jounced out, as the road-bed seems to be very uneven, especially at the curve."

"The tar will certainly be useful to us, Artie."

"Yes, sir, especially as the wind is blowing from the northeast," went on the captain. "Tar, you know, makes a good, thick smoke."

The colonel stared for an instant, then a smile came into his face.

"Artie, I see you are bound to be a general like Deck. Your plan is to smoke the enemy out."

"I only mentioned what we had found, and how the wind was blowing," was the modest return.

"It amounts to the same thing. You can light that barrel, and roll it as close up to the enemy as you dare. I will send the third battalion around to the lower end of the trestle. Send Major Belthorpe to me."

Artie retired, and presently Tom Belthorpe came dashing up. He was told to keep a strict watch through the smoke for the enemy, should they turn up the tracks. Then Colonel Lyon galloped off with the third battalion in the opposite direction.

It was not long before the tar barrel was blazing merrily, and to add to the smoke some of the soldiers threw on a mass of dead and wet brush. The dense cloud rolled upward, and the wind carried it directly to the spot where the Confederates were located. In the midst of the smoke the barrel was rolled closer, until it set fire to the northeast end of the trestle.

Blinded and choked, the Confederates fired several volleys at random, and were then compelled to seek some spot where a breath of pure air might be obtained. Some ran up the tracks and some down, and these engaged the second and the third battalions. A few, risking life and limb, leaped from the trestle through the advancing fire beneath; but these were captured by Major Deck's command, each man being fully covered as he landed.

To Life Knox's gallant seventh company fell the lot of resisting the majority of

those who had defended the trestle, and a desperate conflict took place in a small hollow at a second trestle above the first. The Confederate company was scarcely drilled, yet each man knew how to shoot, and when surrounded the fellows discarded their arms, and used their fists and such clubs as they had picked up on the railroad. As one Irishman in the seventh company declared afterward, "It was the most delightful Donnybrook fair he had seen since lavin' the ould country!" A private of Kentuckian blood declared, "They didn't know enough as soldiers to surrender, but jest fit, an' fit, an' fit!" This pitched battle was laughed over for many a day afterward. In the end, however, every Confederate was taken prisoner.

By the time the contest closed, the trestle was burning at a furious rate, and the regiment was ordered further along. Inside of an hour they found themselves in McMinnville, and here the battalions were divided. A portion of a Confederate regiment had taken a stand at a cotton mill not a great distance from the depot, and Deck's battalion was sent to the place to dislodge them.

With the intrepid major at the head, the four companies advanced on the double-quick until the cotton mill in question was gained. A halt was made, and as several shots were fired, the major directed his companies to take shelter behind a number of outbuildings. Here several Confederates were brought to light and made prisoners.

The taking of the cotton mill looked as if it would be a much harder task than had been that of deposing the company at the trestle. The Confederates were located at every window and door of the building, and as soon as any one of Deck's command appeared he was fired upon. Moreover, the mill stood in a plot of ground by itself, so it could not be approached excepting by a dash through the open.

"We have a nice bit of work cut out for us now, Major," observed Captain Abbey, of the first company, as he gazed at the solid-looking building in perplexity. "That makes a first-class fort."

"I was thinking as much myself," answered Deck.

"Can't we smoke them out—as we did down to the railroad?"

"There is nothing at hand with which to build a fire. I wouldn't care to burn the fellows up, either."

"Then let them come out and surrender."

"The mill is on fire!" suddenly shouted some one. "The enemy must have set the blaze themselves."

The report was correct, and in a minute more a heavy volume of smoke burst from several windows. Men leaped from half a dozen openings, and in a short while enough had gathered to form a good-sized company.

"Charge!" yelled a captain, savagely. "Break right through the Northern mudsills!"

And the Confederates charged, straight for the two companies commanded by Captain Richland and Artie Lyon.

CHAPTER XII

IN THE BURNING COTTON MILL

The two companies were in such positions that Captain Artie's command would be the first to receive the charge of the Confederates, who were coming on yelling like demons. The enemy felt that the chances of escape were slim, and came on in sheer desperation; and a crowd of desperate men can accomplish a good deal at times.

But Artie, youthful as he was, did not quail. As rapidly as it could be accomplished, he wheeled to one side and shouted to his first line to "Take aim —fire!" And the blaze of the carbines caused a temporary check.

As the Confederates came on again, the second line emptied their weapons. Again there was a halt, and the enemy's line split, as though the men had thought better of it and were desirous of running around the Union soldiers.

Artie saw the movement and turned to Captain Richland. "I can take care of the crowd on the right," he said.

"All right; I'll take that on the left," was the quick reply, and the third company of the first battalion opened fire, while Artie's command double-quicked to the new position indicated.

Again came a charge against the fourth company. But the force of the Confederates now numbered but eighteen, and with two men shot down they retreated as quickly as they had charged, and sought shelter behind the cotton mill. Here the first company dislodged them, and then they threw down their arms.

The other wing, led by the impetuous captain, hurled itself against Captain Richland's company. The Confederate leader was supported by half a dozen "fire-eaters," and about two score men; and although the charge was not entirely successful, yet in the general mêlée resulting, the captain and about half of those behind him managed to escape. The others were either shot down or added to the prisoners previously taken.

The mill was now burning furiously at one end, making one of the hottest fires the Lyon boys had ever witnessed. In it were stored hundreds of bales of cotton which the owners had been trying to work off in one way or another for months, but without success, for the cotton trade of the Southern states was glutted, the blockade runners from Europe carrying away only a small portion of the product.

"That building is doomed," observed Deck to Artie, who had come up, breathing heavily after his hard work in disarming a burly ruffian who had tried to cut him down from behind. "We may as well move on with our prisoners."

Deck had scarcely spoken, when a cry rent the air. The cry came in a man's voice, and was full of agony and terror.

"Help! help! help!"

"The cry comes from the other end of the mill," exclaimed Artie. "Come on around and see what is up," and he ran off; for he was on foot, as was also the major.

The end to which the captain had referred was not yet in a blaze, but the smoke was curling from every opening, showing that the fire was making rapid headway in that direction. Presently came a change in the wind, causing the smoke to veer around.

"It's a man—in that upper window!" ejaculated Artie, pointing with his hand. "Why don't you jump down?" he yelled.

"I can't!" came in a painful gasp. "My leg is caught fast in some machinery and I can't loosen it. Save me, for the love of Heaven! Don't let me die like this—even if I am a Confederate!"

"Caught fast!" echoed Deck. "Can't you break away at all?"

"No! no! Reckon my leg is broken!" The unfortunate one gave a moan of pain. "Won't you do something for me?"

"I will—if it can be done," answered Deck. He turned to the cavalrymen standing near. "Boys, have any of you seen a ladder about?"

One and another shook their heads. "There's a box," said one, "but it's not over three feet high, and the window is twenty feet up."

"The box won't do. How about a rope?"

"Here's a stout cord," said another.

"Not heavy enough."

"Help me—quick! The fire is coming this way!" shrieked the imperilled Confederate. "Save me, and I'll give you all I'm worth!"

"I'm coming!" answered Deck. "I wonder where the stairs are," he half muttered, as he turned toward one of the entrances to the mill.

"For gracious' sake, Deck, what are you going to do?" cried Artie.

"Going to that fellow's aid."

"But it's not safe to enter the building. The fire is working this way just as hard as it can."

"I'll risk it, Artie; I don't want to see that poor fellow die like a rat in a trap."

"Yes, but—but—"

"There is no time to waste, Artie," answered Deck, and breaking away from the hold the captain had taken, he leaped for the wide-open door of the mill.

"If he goes, I'll go too," cried Artie, and started to follow the major; but strong hands held him back.

"One is enough," said Captain Abbey. "I trust he is successful."

Captain Richland shook his head seriously. "The fire is sweeping to this quarter of the building with great swiftness," he remarked.

Into the building rushed Deck, to find himself at once in an atmosphere charged with smoke, yet not so heavily but that he could see about him. To his left was a rough wooden stairway with an iron rod for a hand-rail. Leaping for this, he began to mount the stairs three steps at a time.

The higher up he went, the thicker became the smoke, and on the upper flooring he could scarcely breathe. Bending low, to get the benefit of any air which might be circulating, he crept along in the direction of the Confederate sufferer. He had gone but a dozen steps when he halted. Before him was what appeared to be a solid wooden partition.

"Hi! where are you?" he called out; but the fire had now crept so close that the crackling of the flames drowned out every other sound. Feeling that it would be a waste of precious time to remain where he was, he ran along the wooden barrier from one end to the other. A door at last was found, but it was tightly closed and refused to budge.

Taking his sabre, Deck attempted to get it in the crack between the door and its frame. The point only could be introduced, and not caring to break this off, he withdrew the blade. By this time the smoke was making him dizzy, and he flew for a window to get some air.

"Help!" he heard the Confederate cry again, and now made a discovery he fancied would be of advantage to him in his endeavor to assist the unfortunate man. The window to which he had made his way was within two feet of the wooden partition, while the window at which the Confederate was calling from was an equal distance from the partition, on the other side. The two windows, therefore, were but four feet apart.

As has been mentioned, it was twenty feet to the ground, a distance great enough to cause serious results should the major take a tumble. But Deck did not count the consequences. He was going to help the rebel if he could.

Crawling forth, he turned on the window-sill and stood upright. The framing was not over six inches in depth and was plain, affording but a scant hold. He had hardly appeared when a shout went up from below. "There is the major now!"

"Major, look out there, or you'll break your neck!"

These and other remarks were made, but Deck paid no attention further than to "look out," whatever that might mean. In reality his gaze was fastened on the window next to him, and now he leaned over and caught hold of the edging. But at this distance the hold was too uncertain to be depended upon, and he drew back.

The question of what was to be done next was a serious one. The wind had shifted again, giving a temporary check to the fire in that direction; but it would shift back, and then Deck felt the end of the mill would be close at hand. He looked at the next window again.

A large nail caught his eye, fastened at the top of the frame. He felt that this would hold, if only he could reach it. He took off his sabre belt and examined it.

The belt was strong and so was the buckle, and leaning over he threw one end of the belt out, not once, but several times. At last a portion of the buckle caught over the nail. He pulled on the leather to make sure it would bear his weight, then swung to the sill of the next window with ease.

"Thank Heaven!" he heard the Confederate ejaculate. The man had been holding himself up as far as possible, but had now dropped flat on his back.

Despite the smoke, the major soon took in the situation. The Confederate had stepped upon the lever of a compressor; the jaw of the machine had opened, and his leg had been caught and held. Whether the limb was broken or not, the major could not tell; but it was certain the unfortunate one was suffering intense pain, and this, added to his fright because of the fire, made him truly an object of compassion.

"Can you—you—release me?" he groaned, and he seemed to be on the point of fainting.

For reply Deck grasped the lever and attempted to force it back. It was stuck, and he had to exert all his strength to move it even an inch. Seeing an iron rod handy, he used it as another kind of lever, and with a click the jaws of the machine opened, and the Confederate was free.

"What shall I do?" he asked, in a whisper. "I—I can't walk."

"I will carry you," answered Deck. "Wait just a second."

He bounded along the wooden partition to where the door was situated. The air was tremendously hot, and the wind was shifting back. As he gained the door there was a dull booming, as a portion of the flooring in another department of the mill gave way, and the whole structure began to shake.

The door was merely latched and he flung it wide open. But this created a draught, and he closed it again; then ran back for the Confederate. The poor fellow had fainted.

The load was a heavy one, but in the excitement Deck could have carried twice the weight. Flinging his burden over his right shoulder, he staggered through the smoke. The room was now ablaze overhead, and the sparks fell thickly upon his unprotected head and neck.

"God see us both through this in safety!" was the silent prayer which came from his heart, and now the door was reached again. In a moment more he stood in the apartment he had first entered. A look of consternation spread over his pale, set face.

The fire had been at work overhead, running from end to end of the mill roof. Now it had worked its way downward, and that part of the ceiling above the stairway was a seething and roaring mass of flames and smoke. It looked as if at any instant a portion of the roof might cave in, burying the whole stairway beneath it.

Should he risk a descent? Deck's heart almost stood still as he asked himself the question. He was brave, even to rashness; but this was very much like courting death. For the moment he thought of home, his mother, and of sweet Kate Belthorpe. Should he risk being torn from all that was dear to him?

Another booming decided him. The fire had come down behind him, cutting off his retreat. He must go forward or give up the struggle. With another silent prayer that Heaven might guide and protect him, he grasped his burden closer and advanced to the top of the stairs. Soon he was hurrying downward as rapidly as the weight on his shoulder would permit. Five steps were passed and he paused.

A blazing board had come down directly in front of him. As he stood still, another came down, striking him on the unoccupied shoulder. He waited no longer, but, calculating as well as he could, made a clean leap to the bottom.

Luckily he landed squarely, and, though his burden made him stagger, he did not fall. As he started for the open doorway, there was a crash, and the stairway became a thing of the past. The young major had missed death by less than five seconds.

How he gained the open air, Deck could not tell afterward. The smoke was so thick he could not see, and breathing was out of the question. "Out there—help me!" he yelled, when he saw the light, and then Artie and several others ran to his aid. Two cavalrymen took the unconscious Confederate and laid him on the grass.

"Deck, are you hurt?" asked the young captain, anxiously, seeing how pale the young officer was. The major could not stand upright.

"Hurt? No—I'm—I'm—all right," was the answer; and then the gallant youth fainted dead away.

With the wounded, he was carried on a stretcher to the nearest ambulance. Artie was permitted to go along, and Captain Abbey took command of the battalion. The Confederate was placed among the wounded of his own company.

Colonel Lyon was not near the mill, and it was not until night that he heard Deck was sick. The major did not recover consciousness for an hour, and then it was found he had a fever. That night was an anxious one for both the colonel and the young captain, and the morning brought small comfort. Deck was out of his mind, and the doctor was afraid he had inhaled too much smoke, and possibly some of the flames.

"The boy meant well, but he overdid the matter," said Colonel Lyon, sadly. "I warned him over and over again to be more careful; but he was too anxious to

make a record for himself to listen to me. If anything happens to him, what will his mother and the others say?"

CHAPTER XIII

AN ADVANCE ALL ALONG THE LINE

General Bragg, the Confederate commander, had established his headquarters at Tullahoma, but his troops lay some twenty or thirty miles to the north of that town, in a grand semicircle extending from Wartrace on the east, through Shelbyville to Columbia on the west. The troops numbered about forty thousand, of all sorts, according to the commander's own report, and a larger portion of them were sheltered behind hastily constructed intrenchments.

Although Bragg occupied this advanced position, General Rosecrans was certain that should the Confederate be unable to hold Shelbyville and the surrounding territory, he would retreat to his stronger intrenchments at Tullahoma. This town, situated on the rocky bank of Duck River and surrounded by mountainous passes, was an ideal stronghold. Once the Southern forces should retreat to it, to follow them would be extremely hazardous, for the Confederates could easily command the river and every defile, and pour in a hot fire without permitting the Union troops to get a shot in return.

Under these circumstances, General Rosecrans determined, if possible, to cut off the Confederate's chances of retreating to Tullahoma, or, at least, of retreating by the direct way. To do this, he determined to turn the enemy's right, and then make a dash for the railroad bridge at Elk River. Once he had turned the enemy's right and gained the bridge, Bragg, if he retreated, would have to go to Tullahoma by side roads, where both armies would have an equal chance in fighting, so far as the lay of the land was concerned.

In all military operations, one of the main elements of success lies in the fact of keeping the other fellow guessing what you are going to do until you do it; and, in order to blind General Bragg as to his real intention, General Rosecrans started in by making an attack on the Confederate centre, as though he intended to push through at that point if he could. While this was going on he hurried his main divisions around to the enemy's right.

The army numbered many thousands of infantry, cavalry, and artillery; the battle-ground extended over many miles of territory; and to get every regiment

in its proper place was no light task. Messages flew hither and thither, carried by telegraph and by horseback messengers, and many a detail was completed only to be totally altered at the last moment. And while this was going on, a close watch had to be kept on the enemy, for fear he would make some movement never dreamed of by our troops.

After months of preparation and numerous small conflicts, the army began to move on the 23d of June, 1863. It was divided into three corps, the right under McCook, the centre under Thomas, and the left under Crittenden. The weather was by no means favorable; and soon it was raining in torrents, rendering the roads a mass of liquid mud, and swelling even the smaller streams to such an extent that they could scarcely be forded. In a campaign lasting nine days, General Rosecrans declares that their advance was delayed ninety hours by the elements.

After their work along the railroad in the vicinity of McMinnville, the Riverlawns were ordered to Triune, where they went into camp just outside of the town, on the bank of a little creek backed up by a hemp field. Their hospital tent was located in the midst of this field, and here, on a cot, lay Deck, suffering in a manner that was new to the doctors caring for him. At times the major was out of his mind, then he would be rational, but so weak he could scarcely talk.

"It's awful—simply awful," said Artie, to his Cousin Sandy one day. "It's the worst case I ever heard of."

"It is too bad," replied the second lieutenant, of Captain Gadbury's command. "I wish I could do something for him, I really do."

There was a great change in Sandy Lyon. He was no longer the wild fellow he had been. Army discipline had made a man of him, and he was a first-class soldier in every sense of the word. Only one thing he regretted, that being that he had not become attached to the Engineering Corps. He declared that as soon as the war was over he was going to study hard and become an architect and builder.

The change in Titus Lyon was also great. He had kept the pledge, and his brother Noah could not have had a more useful adjutant. The brothers were real brothers once more, much to the satisfaction of Titus's wife and daughters, as well as the other members of the Lyon family at large.

At last Colonel Lyon began to think of sending Deck home, although he hated

the thought of having the youth where he could not see him constantly. Moreover, Mrs. Lyon had not been informed of how much Deck was suffering, and the truth might give her a shock.

It was three weeks previous to the movement of the army upon the Confederate forces that the major began to mend. At first the change was gradual, but inside of ten days he was up on his feet. His appetite now came back, and he began to walk around, declaring that he would soon be as well as ever.

"Deck, you must take no more such risks—I positively forbid it," said Colonel Lyon, when calling on his son one evening.

"All right, father, I'll try to be more careful," answered Deck, with a faint smile. "To tell the truth, I didn't realize what a risk it was until it was too late to turn back. On that account, I don't think I am half the hero the boys are making me out to be."

"I have a letter for you," continued the colonel, producing the communication. "It will certainly interest you, for it is from the Confederate soldier you rescued from the mill."

"Is that so? How is he doing?"

"He is doing too much—he got so well that he ran away yesterday."

"Ran away!"

"Exactly; and left that letter behind. Read it," and Deck did so. The communication ran as follows:—

"MAJOR DEXTER LYON:—

"*My Dear Sir:* I am on the point of trying to make my escape from the sick camp in which I have been placed by your Union hospital surgeons. It is a rather shabby way to act after such kindness, but I have no hankering after a life in a Northern prison pen.

"Before I leave, and knowing well I shall run the risk of being shot down, I wish to thank you for your goodness in rescuing me from the burning cotton mill. You did more for me than I think I should have done for any Northern man—you risked your life to save mine. Major Lyon, I thank you from the bottom of my heart, and if it ever comes in my power to do you a good turn I

shall do it—no matter what it may cost me. I thank you again.

"Yours respectfully,

"THOMAS DERWIDDIE,

"*Tennessee Volunteers.*"

"Did they follow Thomas Derwiddie up?" asked Deck, as he folded the letter. It was written on a scrap of very old and dirty newspaper, in pencil.

"They tried to; but they could not catch him. I reckon by this time he is well within the Southern lines."

"He is certainly very thankful," mused the major. "Come what may, it would seem that I have one friend in the South—although it is likely I shall never see or hear of him again."

"That is true, Deck; yet it must make you feel glad to know the fellow appreciates your kindness."

"It does, father; I shall prize the letter very highly," and Deck placed it in an inner pocket. When next he wrote to Kate Belthorpe he enclosed the communication with his own, and Kate thought almost as much of one letter as of the other.

The first cavalry division, under General Mitchell, was located near Triune, and this division now moved forward, on the Eagleville and Shelbyville turnpike, in the direction of the enemy's centre and left. Less than half an hour after came the order for the Riverlawns to move in a similar manner.

"Hurrah! we'll soon be in it again!" cried Captain Artie, rushing into his company street with the news. "Get to moving, boys; for there is no time to lose. We are going to smash the rebs this trip."

"Well, I hope so," said Black, his first lieutenant. "How about your brother, the major?"

"Deck is going along. My father doesn't like to hear of it; but the major says he is feeling all right again. I reckon he will take it a bit easy, though."

There was little time to say more, for the call to move made plenty of work for

everybody. Every man was supplied with twelve days' rations of bread, coffee, sugar, and salt, and six days' rations of pork and bacon, while other meat was carried "on the hoof," as it was expressed, that is, alive, the animals being driven along in droves, or tied to the rear of the supply wagons.

"I'm glad we're going to move, but I'd just as lief have clear weather for it," observed Life Knox, as he came up, shaking the water from his military cape. "Captain Lyon, do you feel like taking a dash of some ten or twelve miles on horseback with me?"

"A dash—where to?" queried Artie, stopping in his operations of strapping his belongings together.

"The general wants to learn in what condition the side road to the southeast is in, and he has detailed me to make an investigation. I can take any one along whom I please, and I thought of you and Deck; but Deck is not fit to go, even though I have seen him around on his faithful old Ceph."

"The side roads are probably drowned out," laughed Artie. "But I'll go, with pleasure—scouting always did just hit me right," and without delay he turned over his command to Lieutenant Black.

Inside of a quarter of an hour, the two captains were off, each mounted on his favorite horse, each fully armed, and each carrying his rations with him. The rain came down steadily, and the horses sent the water flying in all directions as they pushed their way along over a turnpike covered with pools.

"Does the general think of sending troops by that side road?" asked Artie, presently, as a turn hid them from their late companions, who had wondered where they were going.

"Nothing was said about that, and I didn't ask any questions," returned Life. "My private opinion is, he wants to make sure the road can be used in case the rebels try to break through our corps."

"They wouldn't dare to do that."

"They might dare anything, Artie. Bragg has some fine soldiers under him—not the least doubt of that. The more I see of this campaign, the more I am convinced that the war will not end until there has been an immense amount of blood shed. We began in a haphazard sort of way, but we are speedily getting down to business."

"I agree with you there, Life. Of course Bragg will drive us back to Kentucky, if he can; in fact, he'll drive us through Indiana into the Lakes, if we let him. But we are not going to let him," concluded the youthful captain of the fourth company.

They had been moving along a level road, but now a second turn took them up a gentle slope, from the top of which a bird's-eye view of a small stretch of country could be obtained. Behind them, to the right and the left, many companies of soldiers, afoot and on horseback, could be seen advancing southward.

"There is the road we are to investigate," said Life, pointing with his long forefinger. "By the lay of the land, I should say it doesn't amount to anything. The infantry and cavalry may get through, but never the artillery."

"Well, all we can do is to make an examination and report," answered Artie. "But see here, why isn't a detail of the Engineering Corps doing this work?"

"Every man is engaged elsewhere. Besides, we are to look for rebels while we are at it. The general is inclined to believe there are spies in this vicinity. If we run across any such cattle, we are to lasso them and bring them in."

After this, the two relapsed into silence, for the rain was driving into their faces, and it was difficult to talk while muffled up in their storm capes. They descended the slope on the other side, then turned into a small woods, where the tall trees afforded some shelter.

Two miles had been covered, and the horses were making good time on a rocky road-bed, when, looking ahead, they saw a split in the highway. One branch ran to the southward, the second, a few points to the eastward.

"Which is which?" asked Artie, as he drew rein.

"That's the riddle. One road looks as if it was travelled about as much as the second."

"And neither very much, Life."

"I think we had better try the one to the right."

"And I was going to suggest the one on the left."

"Well, they can't both be right."

"No, only one is right—the other is left," laughed the young captain.

"And you'll be left to take the left," said the tall Kentuckian. "But, seriously, which had we better follow?"

"I don't know—unless we toss up for it."

"There may be sign-boards about. Let us look."

They made a careful survey of all the trees and posts in the vicinity, but nothing like a guide-post came to light. If there had been signs, the enemy had removed them long before.

"I have a suggestion to make," said Artie, as the pair came together in the road again. "Let us each take to a road and ride, say, quarter of a mile. Then we can return and compare notes."

"That would certainly be better than halting in the rain, Artie. It's settled, and I'm off," and using his spurs, Life Knox dashed away down the road to the right. A few seconds later, Artie took the road to the left, little dreaming of the adventure that was in store for him.

CHAPTER XIV

ARTIE IS MADE A PRISONER

Life Knox had been right; the road he had taken was the correct one, while that which Artie was pursuing was merely a side trail, joining the main road again about a half mile beyond. The side road led up to a plantation owned by Colonel Dick Bradner, one of the most zealous Confederates in the State of Tennessee.

Colonel Bradner was a military man, but he was not now in active service. In his younger days he had served in the Mexican War, and had gained, under General Taylor, a commission as first lieutenant in the volunteer army of that date. His military ardor had cost him his right arm and his left leg, and, being thus crippled, further service was out of the question.

Colonel Bradner had always been a fire eater, hot to the last degree; and if he had had his way, war between the North and the South would have broken out in '58 instead of '61. For a time he had drawn a pension from the government at Washington; but this was now cut off, and the loss made the military gentleman more bitter than ever, if such a thing were possible.

The plantation on the side road was one of good size. In days gone by it had flourished, and been a source of riches to the colonel and his wife, the only members of the household. The slaves had numbered sixty-five, all able-bodied, and all worth five hundred dollars each at the auction block in Memphis. Now all but six of the slaves had run away, the plantation was neglected, and what there had been of stores had been given to the Confederate forces, simply from the fact that, had they not been given up, friend or foe would have confiscated them as one of the necessities of the great conflict.

Unaware that he was wrong, and likewise unaware that he was "running his head into the lion's mouth," Artie galloped down the side trail, sending a shower of mud up against the trees as he passed them by. Not a soul was in sight, and it looked as if the neighborhood, for miles around, was deserted.

Presently he reached a negro hut—the first belonging to the Bradner plantation. The door stood wide open, the rain beating far in over the sill. A brief survey convinced the young captain that the abode was deserted.

"The negroes have grown scared, and run for it," he mused, as he continued on his way. "Hullo, there's another cabin, and another. I've struck some village, I reckon—or a plantation. If somebody would only appear—ah!"

Through the low-hanging trees he had caught sight of the mansion, standing between an avenue of pines. To the front was a path of sand, and to the rear a small brook. The fields were on the other side of the brook.

"That looks as deserted as were those cabins," thought Artie, when he saw a woman pass hastily by one of the parlor windows. Concluding that the men were off to the war, and that the lady was the only person left at home, he turned up the sandy path and rode to the front porch, where he dismounted, and used the heavy brass knocker attached to the oaken door.

His arrival had been noticed, yet it was several minutes before anybody answered his summons. In the meantime he heard a spirited murmur of voices, as though two persons in the hallway were discussing the situation.

It was Mrs. Dick Bradner who let him in,—a short, stout woman of fifty, with piercing black eyes and jet-black hair. Her skin was as dark as that of a mulatto, and her features were by no means prepossessing.

"Well?" she snapped, as she threw back the door.

"I stopped for a bit of information," replied Artie, as he bowed and came into the hallway, a wide affair, running directly through to the rear.

"What is it you wish to know?" was the short query, as snappy as her first greeting had been.

"I am a bit mixed on the roads. There is a split about an eighth of a mile above here, and I would like to know if this is the regular road, or if the other road is."

"You're a Yankee officer, I take it."

"I am, madam."

"What company do you belong to?"

"I am captain of the fourth company of the Riverlawn Cavalry, of Kentucky."

"The Riverlawns!" came in something like a gasp. "Well, I never! Dick! Dick!"

"Well, Martha, what?" growled the colonel, from an inner room. "Send him

about his business."

"He belongs to the Riverlawns, Dick,—that cavalry—"

"Hush, Martha." There was the stumping of a wooden leg, and Colonel Bradner appeared. "So you belong to the Riverlawns, Captain? Come in, I would like to talk to you."

"I haven't much time to talk, sir," answered Artie. "I must be on my way. If you will tell me about the roads—"

"In a minute, Captain, in a minute. But I would like a little information myself—about the Riverlawns."

"Yes, we want to know all about them," put in Mrs. Bradner. "My brother—"

"Martha, do let me do the talking," interrupted the colonel, with a significant look behind Artie's back which the captain failed to catch. "Walk into the sitting room, where there is a small fire. I can't go without some fire on a damp day, even in June. The rheumatism is too bad in my poor stumps. Come in."

The colonel led the way, and Artie followed, although the delay was not to his taste. Yet he was curious to learn what his host wanted to know concerning the cavalry his father (so called) commanded. Perhaps the lady's brother belonged to one of the companies, despite the fact that she was a Tennesseean.

The sitting room was a cheerful place, and the fire felt decidedly comfortable, and Artie wished he was not in a hurry. Colonel Bradner shoved a cane rocker toward him, and sank down on a lounge. Feeling that his wet clothing would not hurt a cane rocker, Artie sat down.

"By the way, Martha, tell Joe and Sam to come in," said the colonel, in an off-handed way. "They must clean up that cellar before the rain ruins everything. Tell them to clean out that back pantry the first thing."

"But, Dick—"

"Never mind, my dear, tell them;" and the head of the house waved his wife off, winking at her when Artie was not looking. The wink satisfied the lady more than did her husband's words, and she moved off in deep thought.

"So you belong to the Riverlawns, Captain. What company, if I may ask?"

"I am captain of the fourth company, Mr. ——"

"Excuse me, I should have introduced myself and my wife. Colonel Dick Bradner, at your service."

"You are not in active service, Colonel," and Artie smiled faintly.

"Do I look as if I was? But I have seen service, young man, having gone all through the Mexican War."

"Indeed! I am glad to meet you, sir. But about the Riverlawns and Mrs. Bradner's brother—"

"I'll get there in a moment, Captain. You see I am getting old and long-winded. I used to stump the State during election time, but I'm getting so tiresome now nobody will listen to me."

"I am listening, Colonel. But I have a duty to perform which must be accomplished as soon as possible."

"I reckon I need not ask what it is. It's none of my business, of course not."

"What were you going to ask me concerning our regiment?" asked Artie, half desperately, for he was afraid the crippled colonel would keep him there all day.

"I wanted to ask you if your command did not take part in an engagement at Greeger Lake, last fall?"

"We did."

"What was the result of that engagement?"

"We took about five hundred guerillas prisoners, and—"

"Guerillas! Do you dare to call our troops—Oh! pshaw, go on,—what did you do?"

"We took about five hundred guerillas prisoners, and to keep them from eating up our rations, marched them back into Tennessee, where they belonged."

"And confiscated their horses and their money?"

"No, we turned their horses loose; that was all. I never heard anything about any money," answered Artie, promptly.

He tried to appear at ease, but he was much worried. The veteran of the Mexican War was turning out to be a strong Southern sympathizer. It looked as if there might be trouble before he left the house.

"I understand some of the soldiers had their money taken from them. But that was to be expected of the Yankees—they don't know what honor is."

"Colonel Bradner, I did not come here to be insulted!" exclaimed Artie, leaping to his feet. "I have answered your questions, now I would like you to answer mine. What about this road in front of your house? Is it the main road, or is it not?"

"It is the main road—to my plantation."

"Then the other road is the main road?"

"Yes."

"That is all I wish to know, and I'll bid you good afternoon," replied the young captain, and backed toward the hallway door.

"You're not going just yet, are you?" asked Colonel Bradner, with a quizzical tone in his voice.

"I am," said Artie, and not liking that tone, he swung around, to find himself confronted by Mrs. Bradner and two burly negroes, each of the latter with a gun in his hands.

"Up with your hands, Captain, or Joe and Sam will blow off your head," commanded the cripple, and drew at the same time a pistol from his hip pocket. The pistol was pointed at Artie's breast, while each of the guns was aimed at the side of his head.

Artie was brave, and in some instances as rash as Deck; but there were times when he kept his head cool, and this was one of these times. He had both pistol and sabre in his belt, but he knew that the slightest movement to use either of the weapons would mean to him either serious injury or death. And he was just then of a mind to keep his skin whole.

"Do you surrender?" demanded Colonel Bradner, after a painful pause, during which Artie had been doing a powerful lot of thinking.

"I don't see what else I can do," was the cool reply, and as he spoke, Artie raised

his hands. But he also walked to the window,—to find it locked, and another negro standing guard outside.

"There is where you show your sense, Captain. Joe, advance and receive the captain's sabre and his pistol."

"You spoke about what was done with the guerillas at Greeger Lake. Are you going to rob me of my weapons?"

"No, you shall have them back,—when the proper time comes. If I let you keep them, you might attempt to commit suicide when left alone."

"Which means that you are going to make a prisoner of me?"

"Which means exactly that, Captain. I trust you enjoy the prospect."

"I think it is a foolish movement on your part. Do you not know that this country is overrun with Union troops, some of which are bound to come to this place sooner or later?"

"Let them come; we do not care," burst out Mrs. Bradner. "My poor brother's loss shall be avenged!" she added tragically.

"Did your brother belong to those guerillas?" questioned Artie, a light breaking in on his mind.

"He was at the head of the command which participated in the unfortunate engagement at Greeger Lake," responded the woman, tartly. "He would have won had he not been outnumbered, four to one."

"Was your brother Major Gossley?" continued Artie.

"He was and is. His command is now with General Bragg—and will soon help to wipe out this horde of villanous mudsills, who have entered our State," resumed the lady of the house, grandiloquently. "Do you remember my brother in person?"

"I remember him very well. There was a miller at Greeger Lake named Price. He had hidden away his money, and your brother made him give it up by threatening to hang him. The man was dragged to a tree and a rope placed about his neck. When the Riverlawns captured the command, your brother was compelled to give Price back his money."

At these plain words, the lady of the house grew furious. "It is a falsehood—a base, malicious, Yankee falsehood!" she screamed. "Dick, why don't you bind him and give him—a—a—the lash?"

"I'll bind him fast enough," answered the colonel. "After that, we'll see what is best to be done. Joe, is there a rope handy?"

"Yes, Mars'r," answered the foremost of the negroes.

"Take it and bind the prisoner's hands behind him. Sam, keep him well covered, and I will do the same. Between two fires, he will keep quiet enough, I'll warrant."

Without delay, the negro Joe procured the rope and walked up behind Artie. Resistance just then would have been foolish, and Artie's weapons were soon taken from him, after which he was made a close prisoner. The rope had scarcely been adjusted, when there came a loud knocking on the front door of the house.

CHAPTER XV

GOSSLEY THE GUERILLA

"Who can that be?" asked the lady of the mansion, nervously, as the knock was repeated.

"I will go and see," answered Colonel Bradner. He turned to the two negroes. "See that he doesn't get away from you."

"He shan't git de chance, Mars'r," answered Joe, who had picked up his gun again.

Arising from his couch, where he had retained his seat while covering the young captain, the crippled advocate of the Southern cause stumped to the door, walked out of the room, and closed the barrier behind him. His wife accompanied him.

Artie strained his ears to catch what might be said. A hope had entered his mind that the newcomer might be Life Knox, who had grown impatient of waiting at the forks of the road and come in this direction to find him. He felt certain that if it was the tall Kentuckian, there would presently be exceedingly "warm" times about the place.

But he was doomed to disappointment. The voice was that of a man, loud, rough, and savage, and the front door was closed with a bang. Then a long talk followed in the hallway, and the newcomer pushed his way into the sitting room.

"So we meet again," was the salutation Artie received, with a dark frown from a pair of wolf-like eyes. "Reckon you didn't expect to see me quite so soon, and under such circumstances."

"You are right,—I never expected to see you again, Major Gossley," replied Artie, for the newcomer was the noted leader of the guerillas encountered at Greeger Lake.

"How does it make you feel?"

"I haven't had time enough to consider that side of the question," Artie returned, trying to keep as calm as possible, although he realized that the coming of the

guerilla leader was a bad thing for him.

"Reckon you will realize it before I have done with you," muttered Gossley. "Martha, has he been telling you anything about me?" he added, turning to his sister.

"So We meet again," was the Salutation Artie received.
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"A string of falsehoods, Dan,—a string of falsehoods! Said you actually robbed a miller,—was going to hang him because he wouldn't give up his money," ejaculated Mrs. Bradner, excitedly. "I wanted Dick to give him the lash; the base Yankee deserves it."

"He deserves a rope—as they all do," said Gossley. "It was a fine thing to steal our hosses and sell 'em, wasn't it?"

"Your horses were not stolen, as I told that lady."

"They were—and my money was taken, too. The Riverlawns are a pack of thieves,—worse than any band of raiders that ever came out of Tennessee," stormed the irate leader of the ill-fated expedition to Greeger Lake.

"How much money did you have?" questioned Artie, calmly, hoping to draw the guerilla out.

"I had nearly two thousand dollars, all told."

"In Confederate money?"

"Partly; and partly in United States scrip and gold."

"Where did you get so much money?"

The major of the guerillas scowled. As readers of the volume before this know, Gossley had obtained the money by selling a large quantity of grain, pork, hams, and bacon taken in the guerilla raids. The chief had kept the money on his person, expecting to divide with his men later. About the time the horses of the raiders were driven off, the money disappeared, stolen by some of the guerillas, but Gossley was firmly convinced that the base Yankees had relieved him of the amount.

"It's none of your business where I got the money," stormed the man. "I had it, and that's enough. Your regiment stole it,—and I'm going to get square."

"That's right, Dan; don't give him an inch," broke in Mrs. Bradner.

"I never saw your money or heard of it," added Artie, quietly.

"Of course he wouldn't acknowledge it," said Colonel Bradner, who had sunk down on the couch again.

"I've a good mind to put a bullet through you where you stand," went on the guerilla leader. "But I won't do it; I'll try another game. If I am not mistaken, you are Captain Lyon."

"I am."

"You have a brother who is a major in the Riverlawn regiment."

"Right again."

"And your father is the colonel of the command."

"I call him my father. He is in reality my uncle."

"It's the same thing—so far as I am concerned."

"I don't see how that concerns you at all."

"Don't you? I am bound to have that money back."

"We haven't got it."

"Never mind, a colonel of a regiment is responsible for the actions of his men; eh, Dick?"

"To be sure—undoubtedly," answered Colonel Bradner, and he winked his eye suggestively.

"Which means that you are going to try to get your money from Colonel Lyon?" said Artie, indignantly.

"Which means that or something like it. I don't care if the colonel pays it, or the major, so long as I get it back in gold. I won't take any more United States shinplasters. In a few months more they won't be worth the paper they are printed on."

"That's as true as you're born," put in Colonel Bradner.

"What about Confederate scrip?"

"It will be as good as gold—in a short time. But we are talking too much, and I came here on another errand." The guerilla turned to his brother-in-law. "You can keep him locked up for about forty-eight hours, can't you?"

"I had planned to lock him up before you came," answered the crippled veteran. "There is a pantry in the cellar which will make a capital cell."

"All right. Joe, lead the way, and you will follow him, Lyon. I will come after," said the guerilla chief. "March!"

"Supposing I refuse to be locked up," ventured Artie.

"I will put a bullet through your head without hesitation."

"You are a generous enemy, to say the least," was the young captain's comment; and without further words he moved off.

The colored man led the way through the hallway to the rear, where there was an enclosed stairway to the cellar. The latter place was gloomy, and the air far from wholesome. Soon the three stood before the pantry which had been mentioned. It was a square affair, built of heavy planking and with an equally heavy door. There was a bolt on the door, and likewise a padlock.

"Now, Captain, you will step inside," said the guerilla, grimly. "And let me utter a word of caution. One of the negroes shall stand guard, and at the first attempt to escape he shall fire on you."

Artie entered the pantry, and the door was immediately closed, locked, and bolted. A moment later Gossley walked away and returned upstairs. What the negro Joe did, Artie did not know.

The cellar had been damp and unwholesome, the pantry was more so, and the first breath of air he took into his lungs made Artie shudder. Was it possible he would be kept in such a place as this for forty-eight hours, and in his wet clothing?

"I must get out,—if such a thing is possible," he said to himself. "But I must be careful what I do, or the guard will shoot at me. Those negroes fear their master, and they are bound to obey orders."

Waiting for a while, to make certain he was really alone, Artie brought forth a match and lit it. The tiny blaze revealed to him a long splinter of pitch-pine board, and this he ignited into a tiny torch, not daring to let it burn too freely for fear of being smothered by the smoke.

As has been said, the pantry was built of heavy planking. It was five feet from front to back and side to side, and in the rear were several shelves, now swept of their contents. Behind the shelving were several small boards, put up as if they covered a cellar window. Overhead were the beams and boards of the parlor floor of the mansion, and beneath was a cement bottom as hard as stone.

The under shelf in the closet was quite low, and removing the shelves above it, Artie used it as a seat, and gave himself up to his reflections. It must be confessed that he felt decidedly blue. He was caged like a rat in a trap, and what his captors intended to do next with him there was no telling.

"I wonder if they will send to father for money?" he asked himself. "Gossley intimated as much. This is a new way of handling a prisoner in this country. Gossley ought to be an Italian brigand. I shouldn't wonder if he sends a note to the colonel, threatening, if the money is not forthcoming, to shoot me. And he will shoot me, too—there is no doubt of that. The man has no more heart than a grindstone—he showed that when he attempted to hang Price, the miller."

Artie was not one to sit down and kick his heels in dejection. To him, 'while there was life there was hope,' and having examined the sides and front of his prison, he turned his attention to the rear. A little work loosened one of the small boards previously mentioned. He was about to tear the board away, when he heard footsteps in the cellar; and he shoved the board back into place.

It was Martha Bradner who had come down, accompanied by the negro Joe. Evidently the woman wanted nothing more than to render the young Unionist uncomfortable.

"Hope you like the cell?" she began.

"Thank you, Madam."

"What is that strange smell? Have you been burning something?"

"Nothing of any consequence," returned Artie. He had put out the pitch-pine torch and hid it behind him.

"My brother is going to get square for the terrible manner in which your regiment treated him," went on the lady of the house, maliciously.

"He is holding me for a hostage, is that it?"

"You will find out fast enough, young man."

"Is he going to make his demands at once?"

"No. He has important work for General Bragg that must first be attended to," answered the lady, who had not yet learned the value of silence upon certain occasions.

"Then he is a messenger for the general, eh? That is quite a high position to occupy."

"No higher than Daniel deserves," was the airy reply. "My brother is a great soldier, were his real ability recognized."

"No doubt he is a big man,—if General Bragg trusts him to do his scouting for him. It's hard work to play the part of a spy in a Union camp, I can tell you that."

"Daniel is fully equal to the task," said the lady.

She seemed totally ignorant of the fact that Artie was "drawing her out," and that she was letting her tongue run altogether too fast. Her brother had told her something of his mission, and she wanted this Northern mudsill to know what an important man that brother really was.

"Perhaps your brother won't get back into the Confederate lines to tell all that he has learned," continued Artie.

"He'll be back to-morrow morning. He has a first-class horse, and the Union password, and he—"

"Martha! What are you doing down there?" came in the voice of Colonel Dick Bradner, as he appeared at the head of the cellar stairs. "I thought you promised Dan to leave the prisoner alone for the present."

"I am not hurting him—nor is he hurting me," called back Mrs. Bradner.

"I wouldn't talk too much to him—at least, not about our affairs or Dan's."

"Colonel, I am able to manage for myself," was the icy response to this

suggestion. "If it had not been for me we would not have captured this—this good-for-nothing Yankee."

"Perhaps that is true, my dear. But be sure and tell him nothing about Dan."

"Oh, dear, I can never do anything without your interference!" burst out the lady, petulantly. "Joe, lock him in again;" and she flounced out of the cellar, past the colonel, who tried in vain to detain her, and up to her own room. The negro did as ordered, and Artie was left once more to himself.

What the captain had learned filled him with interest. Gossley was not only going to hold him for the money that might be gotten out of such a proceeding, but he was going to hold him until a secret mission for General Bragg could be executed. The guerilla chief was now a spy within the Union lines.

"If only Life knew that, and knew I was here," he half groaned. "I must get away from here—not only for my own sake, but in order to make Gossley a prisoner and thus prevent him from carrying any news of importance to the Confederates. How can I get away?"

Over and over again Artie asked himself that question. In the meantime he began work on the board again, this time without a light. After several minutes of twisting and pulling the board came off, revealing several panes of glass, set in a window frame. But beyond the glass was a mass of dirt, showing that the cellar opening had been completely closed up from the outside.

For the instant the captain was dismayed; then his natural buoyancy of spirit returned. "I can dig that dirt away, sooner or later," he muttered, and set to work removing the glass.

A job of this sort looks easy, on paper; in reality Artie found the task quite hard, and it took the best part of an hour to remove the panes without making a noise. The glass out of the way, he drew his pocket-knife and began to dig at the dirt, which came away easily, falling in clods into his hand. The clods he placed on the cement flooring directly under the opening.

The ground had been banked up for nearly three feet, so it took some time to reach daylight. But at last the blade of the knife cut into the roots of the sodding, and Artie felt that liberty was only a question of a few minutes more. He worked away diligently, and soon had a hole as big as his hand. Through this he peered anxiously. Was there a guard outside, ready to frustrate his design?

CHAPTER XVI

THE HOLDING-UP OF THE CLOSED CARRIAGE

Artie found it still raining outside, harder than before, and the landscape was dreary and deserted,—neither man nor beast being in sight.

"That remark about putting the negroes on guard was only meant to frighten me," he thought. "Now to get out and find my horse, and I'll make it warm for Major Dan Gossley and his hot-headed relatives. I'll show them that they cannot make a Union officer a prisoner with impunity."

The young captain recommenced his digging, and presently the hole was sufficiently large to admit the passage of his body, for Artie was of slender build, and advancement in the army had not puffed him up with pride. Undaunted by the rain, which covered the passageway with mud, he crawled forth, on to the mansion lawn. A hasty look around convinced him that his egress had not been discovered.

He was on a side lawn, and to get to the gateway of the road, must pass to the front of the house. But wishing to remain unnoticed, he did not take the direct course, but backed away with all speed for the nearest grove of trees. Once these were reached, he made a long detour, coming out near the spot where he had left his animal tied to a tree.

The horse was gone, and as the equine was one not in the habit of either breaking or straying away, he rightfully concluded that Colonel Dick Bradner had had him taken to the plantation stables, directly after the surrender in the sitting room.

"I've got to have the horse, that is all there is to it," he muttered. "I wonder if I can't get him without arousing the whole household?"

It must be remembered that Artie was unarmed, and he knew that if discovered, it would go hard with him. But he was full of grit, and after a moment's consideration, started on another detour, this time in the direction of the quarters for horses, visible through a grove of walnut trees.

The larger of the barns reached, Artie found the doors wide open, for the day was now fairly warm despite the rain, and he slipped inside. As he did so, a negro voice broke on his ear:—

"De Yankees da hab got ter run,
Da cannot fight no mo',
We'll knock 'em wid de sword an' gun,
An' da'll surrender suah!"

It was the negro Sam who was doing the singing, while cleaning up Artie's horse, that had been tied up in a large box stall. The colored man was taking his time at the job, thinking he had the whole day before him.

Ere Artie caught sight of either Sam or the horse, he espied something else which made his heart bound with satisfaction. On a feed-box lay the gun Sam had handled while on guard in the sitting room. It was double-barrelled and loaded ready for use.

Making certain that the negro was the only person about the stables, the captain advanced cautiously and secured the firearm. He had it well in hand, when Sam swung around and discovered him.

"Who—wha—what—" began the slave, staring at him as though he were a ghost.

"Silence!" whispered Artie, and pointed the gun at the negro's head.

"Please don't go fo' to shoot me, Cap'n!"

"I won't, if you will remain quiet and answer my questions truthfully. If you attempt to cry out—"

"I won't cry out—'deed I won't!" was the trembling answer.

"All right. Now tell me the truth. Where is Major Gossley?"

"Went out, sah, 'bout quarter of an hour ago."

"On horseback?"

"Yes, sah."

"Do you know where he went?"

"I ain't suah, sah, but t'ink he went to Rover."

"Did he say anything about coming back?"

"He dun tole missus he would be back in about two houhs."

"You are telling me the truth? Remember, if you lie to me it may cost you your life."

"I'se tole yo' de truf, Cap'n—deed I has," answered Sam, earnestly. He was still so scared he could scarcely speak.

"I will soon find out. I am glad to see you have rubbed down my horse. Now saddle him as quick as you can."

"Yes, sah."

The negro sprang to work, and as he moved around Artie continued to keep him covered with the gun. In a few minutes the horse was ready for use, and then the young captain made the slave bring out one of Colonel Dick Bradner's animals likewise. Both were taken to a rear doorway, out of sight of the mansion.

"Now get up there and come along with me," said Artie, as he hopped into the saddle. "And no treachery."

"Whar yo' gwine ter take me, Cap'n?"

"To the Union camp, so that you can't give your master the alarm. Do what I want you to do, and you will suffer no harm. In the sitting room you were only obeying your master's orders, so I shan't blame you for that."

At these words Sam was evidently much relieved, and he consented to show the way by a back path to the side road. With the negro in front of him, Artie put spurs to his steed, and soon gained the fork where he had separated from Life Knox. He found the captain of the seventh company taking it easy under the thick shelter of a clump of trees and some brush.

"Well, Captain, you've been a long time getting back," he remarked, as he gazed questioning at Artie with the gun and then at the negro. "Had some adventure, I reckon?"

"That's it, Life, and there is no time to waste in giving particulars. I wonder how near the nearest troops are?"

"A company of mounted infantry passed this place less than five minutes ago."

"Can we overtake them, do you think?"

"I don't see why not. They weren't moving fast. They had struck the wrong road, and thought some of going back."

"We must bring them back. Come on!" and away went the captain, with Sam beside him and Life Knox just in advance. As they progressed, Artie told his tale, to which the tall Kentuckian listened closely.

"You are right," he said, when Artie had concluded. "We must capture this Gossley by all means; and it will be as well to put a guard over the mansion and place Colonel Bradner and his wildcat of a wife under military arrest. There is no telling how much harm that couple has been doing the Union cause."

Through the rain they soon discerned the company of mounted infantry returning, having found the mud and quicksands too much for the horses. They were a body of Michigan men, under the command of Captain Allen Fordick.

"I am under no special orders, having finished my mission to this neighborhood," said the captain, when they had told him why he was wanted. "I'll take hold with pleasure. That spy ought to be captured, if such a thing is possible. I thought the rebels had given up the spy business since Williams and Peter were hung."

The captain of the mounted infantry referred to a case which early in the month had challenged the attention of the entire North and South. Two young men presented themselves at the headquarters of Colonel Baird and represented themselves as inspectors from Washington, sent on to inspect the outposts. They showed proper papers supposed to be signed by Adjutant General Thomas and by General, afterwards President, Garfield, then chief of Rosecrans's staff, and were allowed to begin their work. But soon a suspicion was excited, and the pair were captured just as they were about to pass out of the Union lines. They were searched, and the sword of one was found to be marked C. S. A.—Confederate States of America. General Rosecrans was telegraphed to and denounced them as pretenders. A drum-head court-martial was ordered at quarter to five in the morning, and the two Confederates broke down and confessed. They begged for clemency, but orders had been to hang them if they were found guilty, and at half past ten in the morning they were executed in the presence of a large body of troops. This act was denounced in the South, but, terrible as it was, it was in strict accord with the rules of war.

From the negro, the three captains, riding abreast, in advance of the mounted infantry, learned in what direction lay the road Major Gossley would most likely

use in returning from Rover. It was little more than a foot-path, running through the plantation fields and coming up over a foot-bridge to the creek in the rear.

"I would advise hiding in the woods close to the house," said Artie, when consulted. "A dozen men can surround the house, to prevent the colonel and his wife from taking French leave."

"But they may have taken leave already," suggested Life, and as he spoke he saw a covered carriage approaching. "Perhaps they are in this."

"They must be!" cried Artie, as the carriage came to a sudden halt, and the negro spoke to somebody inside. "Sam, isn't that Joe on the box?"

"Yes, Cap'n."

"Then it is Colonel Bradner's rig, sure," went on the young officer. "Forward, and we'll soon have them prisoners!" and away he dashed in the lead. By the time he had come alongside of the turnout the negro coachman had turned about and was lashing the team furiously, in an attempt to escape in the opposite direction.

"Stop that team, or I will fire!" ordered Artie, and aimed the gun he still carried.

At these words a scream came from the carriage, and then from under a black canvas cover was thrust the face of Mrs. Bradner.

"Don't you dare stop us, you miserable Yankee!" she screamed. "I won't have it!"

"Don't make a fool of yourself, Martha," came from the colonel, in a lower tone.

"Stop, I say," went on Artie, and placed the muzzle of the gun within two feet of the negro driver's head. Without delay Joe drew up, and the carriage came to a stop.

"Go ahead! Don't stop!" screamed Mrs. Bradner, more unreasonable than ever.

"Madam, you had best keep quiet," said Captain Fordick. "We know what you and your husband have been doing to Captain Lyon, and you can both consider yourselves under military arrest."

"Under arrest!" gasped the lady. "How dare you speak to me in this insulting fashion!"

"I dare by the authority of the United States. You will please keep quiet while the

negro drives you back to the house."

"I won't keep quiet! I'll—"

"Oh, Martha, shut up!" broke in the colonel. "You'll only make matters worse."

"What, Dick Bradner, do you turn against me?" was the indignant query. "Have you no backbone left to stand up against these—these vile Northern mudsills?"

"If you don't keep quiet I'll have you bound and gagged, Madam," said Captain Fordick, after whispering to Artie.

"You won't do—"

"Yes, I will. Cameron and Waltling, advance and bind this woman. If she says another word, gag her."

For one moment the lady of the plantation glared at the speaker. Then her courage gave way, and she sank back and burst into tears.

"Oh, please—please don't touch me!" she moaned. "I'll—I'll keep quiet—I didn't mean anything by what I said."

"Very well then—see you remain silent." The captain of the mounted infantry turned to the negro driver. "Turn back to where you came from, and lose no time in driving."

"Yes, Mars'r Ossifer!" replied Joe, promptly, and there was a grin on his ebony face, as though he rather enjoyed the discomfiture of his mistress.

With roads so bad, it was hard work to get the closed carriage back to the mansion, and once it looked as if the turnout would have to be abandoned in the mud. But the trip was finally concluded, and the colonel and his downcast spouse were marched into the sitting room.

"Now, Colonel Bradner, the boot is on the other leg," remarked Artie, and it must be confessed the young captain could not help smiling. "How do you like the situation?"

"I don't like it," grumbled the crippled advocate of the Southern cause. "But I have sense enough not to kick;" with a significant glance at his wife.

"Dick Bradner, if we ever—" began Mrs. Bradner, when a look from Captain Fordick silenced her. All three of the Union captains now questioned Bradner

concerning Gossley's return.

"He won't be back—he has gone to join Bragg," said the colonel, before his wife could speak.

"He will be back—to punish you all," burst out Mrs. Bradner, and then covered her face with her hands, as she realized the mistake she had made. "Oh, what have I done now?" she wailed.

"Made a fool of yourself again," answered the colonel, bluntly. "That speech may cost Dan his life."

"Oh, I didn't mean it;" and she burst into tears. Leaving her husband to comfort her as he saw fit, the Unionists left the couple in the sitting room. Several weapons they had possessed had been taken from them, and now a guard was stationed in the hallway outside of the door, and another guard in the garden under the sitting-room windows. This done, the three captains prepared to capture Major Dan Gossley as soon as he should make his appearance.

CHAPTER XVII

THE CAPTURE OF THE CONFEDERATE SPY

As previously agreed upon, the mounted infantry had secreted themselves about the mansion and along the foot-path leading across the brook bridge in the rear. The latter point was well wooded, and it was an easy matter for the thirty or forty men stationed at that point to keep out of sight. It still rained incessantly, and the riders were glad enough to keep under the densest trees they could find.

Artie and Life took positions at the head of the company across the bridge, leaving Captain Fordick on the opposite side of the foot-path with half of the soldiers. In these positions nearly an hour went by without anything unusual turning up.

Artie had been worrying about what the general would say if Life and he did not report at headquarters, but the tall Kentuckian assured him that matters had been arranged by having one of the mounted infantrymen take a written report. "Others have already tried to get through, and found the road impassable," he added. "So the news won't be new even when it does come."

Presently from a distance came the splashing of a horse's hoofs through the pools of water formed in the path, and Artie held up his hand significantly. "Wait until we make sure it is not the wrong person," he whispered.

A few seconds passed, and a man rode up. He was dressed in the suit of a Union soldier, and was not Gossley. He headed directly for the mansion, but soon turned and rode for the barn.

"What can this mean?" asked Life, but Artie shook his head in perplexity. Then came the sound of another horse's hoofs, and Major Gossley rode into view. He, too, started for the mansion, but the other arrival hailed him from the barn; and both entered that structure.

"Now I reckon we'll hear something worth listening to," said Life Knox. "Come on, Artie." He turned to an infantryman standing by. "Send your captain after us without delay."

There was, however, no need to send for Captain Fordick, for he was already coming to join them. Borrowing a pistol to take the place of the gun, Artie led the way, and the other two came after. Soon they were by the side of the barn, and in a position to overhear all that was being said by those inside.

"It's queer I missed you, Rose," Gossley was saying. "I don't understand it."

"I had to be careful not to excite suspicion, Gossley, and it was some time before I could get away. But I've got the information for you, and if you want to do General Bragg any good you had best make off with it without delay."

"Well, what is the information?"

"Here it is,—on a map I prepared last night. Here is the territory with the names of the troops stationed at different points. The attack on the centre and left is only a ruse, and the main attack will be on Bragg's right, which the Union army will try to turn. Once the turn is made, Rosecrans intends to push on with all speed until Tullahoma is reached."

"He'll never get there," muttered Major Gossley. "We'll fight them on the right for all they are worth, and beat them back; see if we don't. Lieutenant, have a drink," and he pulled a whiskey-flask from his pocket. Both men drank a large portion of the fiery liquor, and the Confederate spy returned the flask to his pocket. The map was stowed away, inside of the major's boot.

"The leather is split in two," he explained to his companion. "Even if the boot was pulled off they wouldn't discover the map."

"You are better prepared than Major André," laughed his companion. "Well, I must be getting back. Good-by, and good luck to you, Major Gossley."

"The same to you, Lieutenant Blevlich; and you can rest assured General Bragg won't forget your service."

The two shook hands and prepared to leave the barn. But Captain Fordick had sent out a signal, and a score of infantrymen on their horses surrounded the building.

"Surrender!" was the command of the mounted infantry's captain. "Surrender, or we will fire upon you!"

"Trapped!" yelled Gossley, in consternation, and his bronzed face grew pale. His

companion for the moment said nothing.

"Do you surrender, or not?" demanded Captain Fordick.

"Who are you?"

"I am Captain Fordick, commanding the Fordick Michigan mounted infantry, unattached," was the reply. "But you haven't answered my question yet."

"I won't surrender, to be hung for what I've done," burst out the traitorous lieutenant, and cutting his horse, he urged him out of the barn. "Back, if you value your life!" and he thrust his pistol into Captain Artie Lyon's face.

The young captain was about to fire on the fellow, when Life Knox's weapon rang out, and the lieutenant pitched forward in his saddle and fell down at his horse's side. Frightened, the steed took to his heels, running directly for the brook. The lieutenant's foot had caught fast in the stirrup and he was dragged along, his head striking the ground at every step. In a twinkle, horse and man had disappeared into the water together.

In the meantime Gossley had fired, and an infantryman riding behind Captain Fordick was struck in the hip. The Confederate spy fired half a dozen shots, and then leaped from his horse's back into the hay-mow above. As he disappeared from view he yelled that he would kill anybody who attempted to capture him.

"Better get back," said Life. "There is no use in running a useless risk. We'll make him come down from his perch as fast as Davy Crockett brought the 'possum from the tree."

The advice was good, and captains and men scattered to points where the Confederate could not get a chance at him.

"Now, if you'll let me take the lead I'll bring him down in short order," said the captain of the seventh company of the Riverlawns.

"All right, do as you please," answered the Michigan captain, and Artie nodded in approval.

Advancing on foot to a tree directly behind the barn, Life called out to Gossley, —

"Are you coming down, Gossley?"

"Not much."

"You had better give yourself up. We are about fifty to one, you know."

"I won't give myself up. You'll hang me as you hung Williams and Peter. I'm going to die game."

"Wouldn't you rather be hung than burnt alive?" went on Life, coolly.

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that if you won't come down and surrender, we'll burn you out."

"You can't do it. The place is too wet."

"Well, we'll smoke you out then, and shoot you as soon as you appear. If you want to become an ordinary prisoner, now is your chance. I won't do any talking with you after we have applied the torch."

At this Gossley began to say some very uncomplimentary things concerning the Unionists in general and those outside in particular. But the tall Kentuckian cut him short.

"I'll give you exactly two minutes in which to make up your mind," he went on.

"Go to thunder!" growled Gossley.

"I'll go and light that torch," answered Life, and retreated.

At the end of exactly one minute and a half Gossley called to him.

"Say there!"

"Have you made up your mind to come down?"

"If I give myself up, what will you do with me?"

"Turn you over to the commander at headquarters."

"As an ordinary prisoner of war?"

"No, as a rebel spy."

"Then I won't come down," howled Gossley, and continued to say uncomplimentary things.

But when Life really advanced with a lighted torch, his courage failed him, and just as some loose hay was lighted, he called out that he would give in and threw down his pistols. In another moment he came down himself and submitted to having his hands bound behind him. Then Artie took possession of the map placed in the bootleg.

"What are you going to do with that?"

"Turn it over to General Mitchell, who will probably take the case to General Rosecrans."

"You can't prove anything against me," blustered the Confederate.

"Never mind, we can try pretty hard," said Life Knox, dryly.

"Have you done anything up to the house?"

"You will learn in time, I reckon," concluded Life, and hurried off toward the brook.

Here it was ascertained that the traitorous lieutenant had paid for his treachery with his life. The horse had dragged him over the rough stony bottom of the brook until the man's head was fairly crushed in by hoofs and stones. The negroes Joe and Sam were set to work digging a grave close to the brook, and the remains were soon after buried in this,—where they still lie, unnamed, and well-nigh forgotten.

It was now getting late, and all felt they must be on the way. Yet every man was hungry, and it was decided that a meal should first be had at Colonel's Bradner's expense. The negro cook, who had been hiding about the kitchen, was brought to light, and made to promise to get ready the best spread the plantation could provide, and it must be acknowledged that she kept her word.

As Captain Fordick was not willing to escort a woman prisoner back to camp, a detail was left at the mansion, taking both the lady of the house and her husband into custody. Every weapon about the place was confiscated, and the colored people were placed under strict surveillance, that they might not help master and mistress in secret.

Mrs. Bradner wept bitterly when told that her brother was captured and would be taken to the Union headquarters as a spy. On her knees she begged Artie, Life, and Captain Fordick in turn to let Gossley go. But this was, of course, out of the

question. Now that matters had turned out so favorably for him, Artie could not help but feel sorry for the lady, who had allowed her mistaken patriotism to lead her so far astray, yet he could do nothing for her, and left the place as soon as the dinner was finished.

Two hours of hard riding brought the infantry and their prisoner to general headquarters, and here Gossley was turned over to the proper authorities, who sent him to a western prison, there to remain until the close of the war. The head of the staff, although busy with numerous other reports, listened with close attention to Artie's tale, and placed the map taken from the spy on file.

"It was a good bit of work, Captain Lyon," he said. "And it is likely to be remembered to your credit."

"It was only my duty, sir," answered Artie. "Any Union soldier would have done as much."

"Possibly. But let me say, it is a big thing to catch a spy," and then Artie was dismissed to join his company, along with Life Knox. The unattached infantrymen were ordered to remain in the vicinity of Colonel Bradner's plantation, which was afterwards transformed into a temporary hospital.

By this time the cavalry, of which the Riverlawns formed a portion, had passed through Eagleville, to do some sharp skirmishing at Rover. Here the Confederates attempted to make a stand, but the forces under General Mitchell were too powerful for them, and they broke and filed down the road leading to Unionville and Shelbyville. At the same time another cavalry force made a demonstration on the extreme left, and some infantry began to operate about Woodbury. Thus was Bragg completely blinded to what the true intention of the Union commander was, and sent force after force to his left when he should have hurried them in exactly the opposite direction.

When Artie reached his command, to relieve Lieutenant Black, he found Deck in his old place at the head of the battalion. The major was pale and nervous, and probably weaker than he cared to show, yet he insisted on remaining where he was, against the advice of his father and both Majors Truman and Belthorpe.

"We're bound to drive the Confederates as far as Unionville before nightfall," he said, enthusiastically. "The battalion has been doing splendidly, and Black couldn't have done better."

The colonel was also glad to see Artie back, and astonished at the tale the young man had to tell. But the talk between the two was cut short by an order from General Mitchell. They had been halting just outside of Rover. Now they were commanded to proceed to a side road and cut off any Confederates who were trying to escape to Unionville from that direction.

In two minutes the cavalry was off on a gallop, feeling that some hot work was in store for them. And that feeling did not prove a disappointment.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE EVACUATION OF TULLAHOMA

On the afternoon of this 23d day of June, General Granger had left Triune, with his forces, and after but little fighting had driven the Confederates back to Christiana, a small village on the road from Murfreesboro to Shelbyville. At the same time the cavalry under General Mitchell—commonly called Stanley's cavalry, although the major-general was absent—moved along as already told, having with them the Riverlawns. The two commands met at the village mentioned, and after a brief conference it was decided that both should proceed onward in an endeavor to drive the enemy from Guy's Gap back into the rifle-pits at Shelbyville.

Going into the Gap after the Confederates was no easy task. The way was rough in some spots, and knee-deep with mud in others, and the forces went forward in the lightest marching order possible. It was out of the question to use one road alone, as each regiment that passed over it rendered it all the more torn up and difficult of travel, and troops were consequently sent on in several ways.

Colonel Lyon rode at the head of his column, with Deck beside him. The Riverlawns were riding by fours, but now the way widened, and the horsemen came up by eights. For half an hour no enemy had been sighted, but now the vedettes came back announcing several battalions just above the bend.

"And some of the company are sharpshooters," said the leader. "They picked off poor Rolloson at a distance of three hundred yards."

Without hesitation Colonel Lyon summoned Major Belthorpe to his side and explained the situation. "I wish you would send Captain Knox's company to the front. I think it would be as well for him to spread his men to the left of the road, but he can use his own judgment after he sees the lay of the land."

As we know, Captain Knox's men were more or less experts at shooting, they being Kentuckians who were used to handling firearms almost daily in the woods and on the border. The order was transmitted to Life, who took his command ahead on the double-quick. This accomplished, the remaining companies continued on the road until another bend was gained.

The Confederate sharpshooters had stationed themselves behind some heavy brush, not daring to climb the trees for fear of being surrounded. No sooner had the seventh company of the Riverlawns appeared than they opened a sharp fire, wounding two privates.

The flashes of fire and the smoke served to locate the sharpshooters in spite of the downpour of rain, but instead of answering the shots at once, Life took his command around to the shelter of some other brush. Then he commenced to work up on the Confederates' rear, picking off three men in less than as many minutes.

By this time Deck had his battalion ready for a rush, and as soon as Life sent word where he was located, the young major started forward on a gallop. He, however, went but two hundred yards, just enough to give the enemy the impression that a direct attack was contemplated. Up came the Confederates, as expected, firing as rapidly as they could. Then, realizing how they were caught between two fires, they started to retreat, only to find themselves faced by Life Knox's command.

"Take aim! Fire!" cried the tall Kentuckian, and the command discharged their weapons, not as a regular company would, but as soon as a proper "bead" could be drawn. This fire was most deadly, and when Deck ordered another advance, the Confederates began to flee in confusion, about half of them taking to the main road of Guy's Gap, and the balance taking to the mountain trails.

"Forward, men, we have them on the run now!" shouted Major Deck, waving his sabre. His illness was now forgotten, and he rode well in advance, by Captain Abbey's side. The first battalion was far in advance of the rest of the regiment, and as it swept along, Life Knox's company joined it in the rear without waiting for Major Belthorpe's battalion to appear.

The road now led upward, and at the top of a rise, the Confederate force took another stand. There were in all about four hundred men, about the same number Deck possessed, counting the seventh company in with his own. Without hesitation the major ordered the charge, and up the hill went the cavalry at full speed, firing as they advanced.

The cracking of guns was incessant, and now came a fierce hand-to-hand conflict, as the first and second companies of the Riverlawns rode directly upon the front rank of the enemy. Infantry and cavalry splashed and slipped in the mud, and many a sabre-stroke fell harmlessly upon the flying ends of a water-

soaked army cloak. But the top of the hill was gained and held, and with a yell of defiance the Confederates fell back to where their main body was located, at the other end of the Gap. Deck then halted, to allow the rest of the regiment to overtake him.

It was decided by General Mitchell to follow up every advantage gained, and soon another advance was ordered, directly along the main road of Guy's Gap, and for nearly two hours the battle raged, the Confederates trying vainly to hold their own. At last they broke, and fled directly to the rifle-pits in front of Shelbyville.

"We've got them pretty well back now," said Artie, to Life Knox, after the engagement had been going on for the best part of two hours. "I don't believe General Mitchell will want us to charge those rifle-pits to-day."

"There is nothing like keeping at them when they have been retreating," answered the tall Kentuckian. "By to-morrow they may be braced up again."

"Yes, but Wheeler is here with a very large force of cavalry, Life."

"So I've heard. Well, we'll obey orders, I reckon, no matter what they are," concluded the commander of the seventh company.

Orders were not long in coming. It was about six o'clock in the evening, and now General Granger joined Mitchell with his infantry once more, and another advance was ordered, with the cavalry again to the front. Away went the horsemen, straight for the trenches. Many took flying leaps over the openings, sending the mud into the very faces of the surprised and bewildered Confederates. The attack was short and sharp, and unable to withstand the shock of cavalry backed up by Granger's fine infantry, the enemy threw down their arms and started pell-mell for Shelbyville proper. The Union forces pursued, and captured a number of Confederates near the bank of Duck River. The larger portion of the Confederate cavalry, under General Wheeler, however, escaped by swimming their animals across the turbulent and swollen stream. At seven o'clock the town had surrendered, giving up a number of small arms, three cannon, and a quantity of corn, which proved highly acceptable.

The corps commanders were now called to general headquarters and each received his orders in writing. McCook was to advance on the Shelbyville pike, turn to the left on the Wartrace road, and seize and hold Liberty Gap; General Granger to threaten Middleton; General Thomas to advance on the Manchester

pike, and hold, if possible, Hoover's Gap; some cavalry under Turchin to establish a lookout toward McMinnville, and the balance of the cavalry under Mitchell to attack the rebel cavalry at Middleton.

These movements were executed promptly, despite floods and the wretched condition of the roads. The fighting was sharp, the Confederates disputing every foot of territory. Both sides suffered heavily, and the weather made matters worse, yet nobody grumbled, for the enlisted men were now becoming hardened to the campaign, and realized that this fighting was only the introduction to the tremendous battles still to come.

The morning of the 28th found Thomas ready to start the move which was to bring the campaign to a climax. McCook and Crittenden were slowly but surely concentrating at Manchester. Thomas's first movement was to send Colonel Wilder to Dechard, where this command destroyed about three hundred yards of the railroad which the Confederates had been using. The next day the Tracy City railroad was also placed in a useless condition.

On the 29th of June the army was ready for the final blow at Tullahoma. The advanced troops were within a mile and three-quarters of the city. The corps of McCook and Crittenden came up and closed in, and the main body of the cavalry, including the Riverlawns, arrived at Manchester. Thus it was felt Tullahoma was, after a nine days' campaign, completely at the mercy of the Northern forces.

A surprise now awaited General Rosecrans. A citizen of the town came to Thomas with the report that General Bragg had fled, taking all his troops with him. At first the Union commander could not believe the news, and, to make sure, he sent General Steedman ahead to make an investigation. The general marched into Tullahoma, captured a few prisoners, and verified the report. Instantly General Rosecrans laid plans to pursue the flying Confederates. But though a few skirmishes resulted, and a brave stand was taken by both sides at Elk River, the pursuit proved of no avail, and Bragg crossed the Cumberland Mountains unmolested, leaving, as the fruits of the campaign, Middle Tennessee free from Confederate domination.

It has been said by several authorities that the Tullahoma campaign was the greatest conducted by General Rosecrans, being even superior to that which came immediately after. The enemy was dislodged from first one strongly fortified position and then another, and sent flying over the mountains in the

wildest confusion. Nearly seventeen hundred prisoners were taken, and also eleven pieces of artillery and an immense amount of army stores. The loss to the Union army was about five hundred in killed, wounded, and missing.

"We've cleared them out!" cried Artie, enthusiastically, when the news went the rounds that the Confederates had really crossed the mountains and were on their way to Chattanooga.

"Yes, and the two armies are just about where they were last summer," answered Deck. He was resting on a cot in his rain-soaked tent, while his brother sat on a camp-stool, writing a letter to the folks at home. "My, but what a washing-out we've had!"

Despite the hardships, however, Deck was feeling better steadily, until it could almost be said that he was his old self again. He had made several inquiries about Thomas Derwiddie, the Confederate whose life he had saved, but nothing had been heard concerning the escaped prisoner.

In a skirmish on Duck River, Colonel Lyon had been struck in the leg. The wound was not serious, but the officer was told by the surgeon who attended him that he had best keep out of the saddle for a while, and this advice was now being followed. As a consequence, the command of the Riverlawns had fallen upon Lieutenant-Colonel Gordon.

The soldiers were feeling good, and the Fourth of July was celebrated in camp in a rousing fashion, with huge camp-fires, a double supply of rations, and the roasting of several small porkers confiscated at Manchester, when that town was first entered. In the evening several pieces of "home-made" fireworks were set off, and the more hilarious of the boys in blue got up a dance, ladies being represented by several cavalrymen who had appropriated portions of feminine attire found in deserted houses that had been passed. The "boys" were bound to have their play at any cost, no matter how tired the recent hard marching and riding had left them.

The appearance of the Army of the Cumberland in the centre of Tennessee once again filled the inhabitants with dismay. Bragg had assured them of his protection, and the planters had taken him at his word and tilled and cultivated their fields. Now, instead of these products going to enrich the Confederacy, they were confiscated by the Union forces, as a necessity of war. As was natural, the farmers protested; but these protests were of no avail, excepting in rare cases, when payments were made for what was taken.

The Riverlawns had been ordered to Manchester, and were encamped not far from the railroad. They were now ordered to Salem, and reaching there, found themselves brigaded with Major-General Stanley's entire force.

"Something is up," remarked Major Deck to Major Belthorpe. "But what it is I can't imagine."

"I heard something said about a shortness of horses," answered Kate Belthorpe's brother. "Perhaps we are to go on a raid and see what we can round up."

Major Belthorpe's surmise proved correct, as Deck soon learned by the orders given him. The entire cavalry was to combine in a grand sweep to Huntsville, Alabama, rounding up as many horses and as much cattle and other live stock as possible. The advance was to cover several miles of territory, and a dozen different roads were pursued, the start being made on July the 12th.

As Lieutenant-Colonel Gordon was suffering from an attack of chills and fever, Major Lyon was placed in command of the regiment. He was instructed to move almost directly southward, by the way of a small village called Crespin, the name of which has since been changed. The road was a fair one, and ten o'clock in the morning saw the Riverlawns on the move. It was not intended that the round-up should last more than four or five days, and the cavalry went in the lightest possible marching order.

Less than ten miles had been covered when the scouts in advance, under Captain Ripley of the eighth company, sent word back that a small detachment of Confederates were in advance, driving about thirty horses southward just as hard as they could. Besides the horses, they had three Union prisoners, one of whom wore the uniform of a captain of artillery.

"Three prisoners and thirty horses," mused Deck. "We must stop them, by all means." Without delay he sent for Majors Truman and Belthorpe and gave the necessary orders, and soon the Riverlawns were making the best possible speed over the torn-up pike. A distance of two miles was covered in less than twenty minutes, when another report came in that astonished Deck beyond measure. The report was as follows:—

"Confederate force, horses, and prisoners have utterly disappeared. No buildings or woods for them to hide in. Cannot guess what has become of them. Looks as if the earth had swallowed them up, but the quicksands are not quite bad enough for that. Will keep our eyes wide open, but that is all we can do."

Without delay Deck, accompanied by Major Belthorpe, rode forward to investigate.

CHAPTER XIX

IN WHICH THE RIVERLAWNS ARE CAUGHT IN A TRAP

To have a body of the enemy disappear utterly from view when there were no hills or woods in which they might hide, was a new experience to Major Lyon, and it was small wonder, therefore, that his brow contracted into a frown as he urged Ceph ahead at topmost speed.

"What do you make of this, Tom?" he questioned, of the major of the second battalion.

"Hang me if I know what to make," was the answer. "Captain Ripley must be losing his eyesight if he can't keep forty or fifty men and nearly a hundred horses in sight."

"Then his whole command must be losing their eyesight, for the enemy is gone, and nobody can even guess where to."

"We'll solve the mystery somehow, Deck. But we ought to beware that we don't fall into some trap."

It took but a few minutes to reach Captain Ripley's advance guard, consisting of one-third of the eighth company. The captain himself had the blankest look on his face Deck had ever beheld.

"It gets me, Major; never heard of such a thing in all my born days," declared the captain. "We saw them as plain as day, riding behind yonder hedge. They didn't come out at the other end, and so I and three of the others climbed into the trees, only to find the vicinity of the brush deserted. Reckon the earth has swallowed 'em up."

"Well, Ripley, they have gone somewhere, that's as sure as guns," was the answer of the young major. "Move a portion of your men to the upper end of the brushwood, and another portion to the other side, and we'll endeavor to get to the bottom of this mystery."

The command was obeyed, and meanwhile Deck sent back word to Major Truman to bring up the regiment and scatter it in a huge circle around the

vicinity. "Unless they have slipped on ahead, we are bound to get them," he said to Tom Belthorpe.

Captain Ripley had gone with six men to the upper end of the brush, Belthorpe remained with six others where the first stand had been taken, while Deck, with the remaining cavalrymen present, made a detour, coming up on the opposite side of the growth, and at a distance of three hundred yards. He was on a slight hill, and could look directly down upon the spot the Confederates, with the extra horses, had occupied. As Captain Ripley had said, the enemy was nowhere in sight.

The men looked at Deck, and it must be confessed the major felt uncomfortable, for he had been certain that something would turn up when a better view of the ground back of the brush was obtained.

"We will advance,—but do so cautiously," said the major, and drew his pistol. Hardly two hundred feet had been covered when he made a discovery. The brush overhung a small, rocky brook, probably three feet deep in the centre. But where the water came from and where it went to was another question. Certainly, in making the detour, he and his men had crossed no such watercourse.

"It must come either from a powerful spring or from underground," he reasoned. "Forward!" he shouted. "That running stream must solve the mystery."

The brook was soon gained, and found to flow to the southwestward. A detail was sent up the stream, and soon came back reporting that there were several small springs there, but the larger portion of the water came from a flow out of the side of a small hill.

Major Truman now reported that the Riverlawns had surrounded the entire territory, and feeling certain he had the enemy secure, Deck continued his investigation. Several cavalrymen were sent down the centre of the brook, while he kept abreast of them beyond the brush.

Almost the end of the wood was gained, when the cavalrymen shouted out that they had reached a small waterfall, and could go no further. Pressing over the rocky ground, Deck gained the waterfall, to find at its bottom a well-hole in the almost solid rock, some fifty or sixty feet in diameter. At the bottom was a pool, partly covered with dead brush and decayed tree trunks, and the water ran off in a large opening to one side of the well-hole.

"Here are horses' hoof-prints, Major," said one of the men. "I shouldn't wonder if there is a winding path leading down to that 'air pool. But if the rebs went down there, what became of 'em?"

"There may be a cave there," answered Deck. "These underground watercourses often flow through caves around where I live, not far from the Mammoth Cave."

"To be sure, Major. Shall we go down?"

"Yes, but be on your guard."

The winding path was soon traced out, and not caring to risk the limbs of their animals, the cavalrymen went down on foot. In high curiosity, Deck followed, to find himself in a cold and gloomy place continually filled with fine spray from the waterfall. True enough, there was a cave some ten feet high by twenty feet wide beyond the falling waters, through the bottom of which flowed the brook as peacefully as it flowed above in the sunshine. Looking ahead, they saw the outlet of the cave, several hundred yards distant.

"They have outwitted us!" cried Deck, after a moment's examination. "They came down here and rode right through the cave. Evidently they were commanded by somebody who knows this locality well. They have a fine start of us, but if we don't let them know what we have discovered we may yet take them unawares."

As no one had his horse, all present had to climb back to the top of the well-hole. As soon as this was done, Major Lyon despatched several messengers to notify his officers of the truth of the situation, and then set off at full speed in the direction the retreating enemy had taken. He was soon joined by Captain Abbey with the first battalion, and the four companies were urged forward at the best speed the condition of the road allowed.

The Confederates had made good use of the time gained by the trick they had played, but they could not go on forever, and by nightfall their horses were so wearied they refused to get off a walk, and then their commander, a plucky young man from Montgomery, who was by profession a surveyor, and well acquainted with the territory, led his men and the extra horses directly into a bit of swamp ground, surrounded by a thicket of cypresses. There were but two paths into the swamp, and he felt tolerably safe from pursuit.

The trick that had been played upon him put Deck upon his mettle, and he

determined, come what might, that the Riverlawns should capture those particular Confederates ere the journey to Huntsville was resumed. As an entrance to the swamp would have proved dangerous in the darkness, he encamped for the night on the outside, but sent out a strong picket guard to surround the district.

The Confederates endeavored to escape at four in the morning, knowing that daylight would prove fatal to such an undertaking. They came out of the swamp on both roads, and an alarm from the two spots rang out almost simultaneously. But Major Lyon had prepared for this, and at the first alarm the first battalion galloped to one road, the second battalion to the other, while Major Truman's command kept on the grand circle. Thus it was fight or go back and be hunted down, and the plucky Confederate captain chose to fight. Those on the second road ran or rode to the first, and the entire command charged the first company of Deck's battalion.

His Foot caught the Man in the Face.
His Foot caught the Man in the Face.
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Maddened by what seemed a hopeless charge, the Confederates fought desperately, but they could do nothing against such superior numbers, and almost the first man to go down was the captain, shot through the heart. Deck was within a hundred feet of the fellow, and hardly had their leader fallen than two Confederates rushed upon the young major, each with a bayonet affixed to his gun.

"We'll run you through, Yank!" cried one, and made a furious onslaught with his bayonet. The other did the same, and although Deck was not touched, Ceph received a severe prick in the right flank. The next instant Deck fired, and one soldier went down, shot through the ankle.

The second soldier was directly in front of Ceph, and maddened by pain, the horse reared up on his hind legs, made a leap, and came down heavily on the Confederate. His right front foot caught the man in the face, and he went down with a broken nose, a disfigured forehead, and totally senseless. Then Ceph took another leap, and in a twinkling the whole scene was a thing of the past.

The second battalion had followed the flying enemy through the swamp, Major Belthorpe being satisfied his horses could go wherever the Confederates found a footing. As the enemy was now brought to a standstill, he was caught between two fires, and there was nothing left for him to do but to surrender. The captain being killed, the second in command, a tough-looking specimen of the "swamp angel," threw up his hands, in one of which fluttered a dirty white handkerchief.

"Do you surrender?" demanded Major Lyon, who saw the movement.

"Yes," was the surly response.

"Very well; advance one by one, and throw down your arms in a heap. Captain Abbey, have your company cover them well."

"Say, but you're a young rooster to be givin' orders around hyer," went on the "angel."

"You will keep silent and do as ordered," said Deck, briefly; and then no more was said.

One by one the Confederates advanced and deposited their arms as commanded. This being concluded, Captain Abbey was ordered to form the enemy into columns of fours and march them to the highway beyond the swamp. The second company took charge of the horses, of which there proved to be forty-seven all told. Four were found to be in a pitiable condition, and these the major ordered shot, to put them out of their misery.

"Well, Major, we have made a fine capture truly," remarked Captain Blenks, of the second company, after reporting that at least thirty of the horses were thoroughbreds. "Those animals alone are worth twelve or fifteen thousand dollars."

"Where are the three prisoners the Confederates were holding?"

"I haven't heard of them."

Without delay Deck summoned the leader of the captured crowd before him.

"I want to know something about the three prisoners you had with you," he said.

"They got away from us last night."

"You are telling me the truth?"

"Yes, Major. We had a traitor among us—a lad from Kentucky named Feswell. He untied 'em, and the hull four skipped in the darkness."

Unwilling to believe the fellow, who looked the rascal in his face, Deck waited until daylight, and then sent a detail to search the swamp from end to end. The men were under the command of Sandy Lyon, and in less than an hour they returned with the three prisoners, who had been tied to trees and gagged. One of the poor fellows, the captain of an Illinois company, was in distress from a bullet-wound in his arm, and all three were suffering from hunger and thirst.

Deck's indignation over this discovery was great, and he at once visited the batch of prisoners and read them a lecture on their brutality. "War is one thing, and uncalled-for heartlessness is another," he said. "Had these three men been left to die in the swamp, every one of you who knew of their plight would have been guilty of murder. I had intended to send you into the Union lines as you are; now each of you shall ride the distance with his arms strapped behind him, and your rations shall be hardtack and water,—nothing more."

At this there was an outburst of indignation. But Deck was obdurate, and the Confederates were forced to submit. Men and horses were placed in the charge of the third battalion, and by noontime Major Truman was on his way northward with them, the three Union men accompanying the command, and assisting in watching the prisoners.

By nightfall the first and second battalions had reached a small hamlet known as Conners, and they encamped on the outskirts, occupying a deserted farmhouse, and a half-dozen barns close by. Sentinels had been carefully posted, and Deck and the others got a good sleep after the night of wakefulness at the swamp.

It still wanted two hours of daylight when a message was brought to Deck that the Riverlawns were wanted at a spot two miles south of where they were encamped. It was reported that a portion of Minty's cavalry had encountered a body of Forrest's command, to which was attached a number of Tennessee guerillas. Help was wanted at once, or the Union troops would be annihilated.

The message perplexed Deck not a little, as he had no idea that Minty was in the vicinity. Yet, if help was needed, he was not the one to hold back, and in less than half an hour the Riverlawns were on the way, eating their ham and hardtack as they galloped forward. The messenger, an elderly man who wore the shoulder straps of a lieutenant of cavalry, stated that he knew every foot of ground in that part of Alabama, and was, therefore, allowed to take the lead without question.

For half a mile the course was along a well-defined trail leading out of the swamp lands to a rocky and sandy elevation covered with a stunted growth of trees. Then they came to a narrow defile where but two cavalrymen could ride abreast. Here a guard was thrown out; but no enemy developed, and the defile was left behind and they emerged upon an open plain ending in a slight depression. From here a woods could be seen, almost three-quarters of a mile distant.

Deck had been riding at the head of the column, but at the defile he had turned back, to make certain that every company came through in safety. Now he moved forward once more, just as Captain Abbey made the discovery that the trail was becoming dangerous through quicksands.

"We have gone wrong, Major, I believe," said the captain. "Where is that guide?"

"Why, I left him with you!" exclaimed Deck, in astonishment.

"I know you did; but he rode back to interview you and see if it wouldn't be advisable to branch off on two roads which he stated were just beyond here."

"I have seen nothing of him," said Deck, and instantly became suspicious. Several messengers were sent out, to the front and the rear, and it speedily became known that the guide had disappeared. Hardly had this word come in than the rear guard announced the presence of a body of Confederate cavalry on the hills on both sides of the defile just passed. Deck had but listened to the report when there came another from the front. The plain was impassable, being nothing more than an immense bed of quicksand. The Riverlawns were caught in a trap.

CHAPTER XX

MAJOR LYON WINS A BATTLE AND LOSES HIS HORSE

Major Dexter Lyon realized that he had been played false by the so-styled guide, and that his two battalions were in a dangerous situation. The eight companies of horsemen were in the centre of a small plain. In a semicircle in front was a low and treacherous quicksand, impossible of passage; in a semicircle to the rear was a rocky elevation, divided in half by the defile through which the cavalry had just passed. On the rocky elevation, on both sides of the defile, Confederate cavalry had been discovered, ready to pour in a hot fire on them the moment they attempted to turn back on their trail.

"Major, it looks as if our goose was cooked," remarked Tom Belthorpe, after the reports from the front and the rear had been considered. "They couldn't have laid a neater trap for us."

"And I allowed myself to walk into it blindfolded," answered Deck, somewhat bitterly.

"The rebels kept mighty shady when we came through the defile," put in Captain Abbey, who was also at hand. "I wonder why they didn't open on us then and there?"

"That is an easy question to answer, Captain," said Deck. "If they had opened up, our command could have retreated; now they have every one of us just about where they want us."

"But you won't surrender without a fight, will you?" demanded Kate Belthorpe's brother, anxiously.

"I have never yet done any surrendering, Tom. I want to know just how bad—What is it, Captain?"

"A flag of truce," answered Captain Life Knox, as he dashed up. "A private is carrying it, and there is a Confederate captain of cavalry with him."

"Indeed! They evidently want to rush things. Come with me, and we'll see what they want."

Side by side Deck and Life rode off, the way being to the lower edge of the rocky elevation. Here the Confederates had come to a halt in the midst of some underbrush.

"I am Captain Adairs, Mississippi Volunteer Cavalry," said the Confederate officer, with a salute, which the others promptly returned. "Who is in command of those Union troops?"

"I am in command," answered Deck.

"Major Dexter Lyon," put in Life, introducing him.

"Well, Major Lyon, I reckon you know we have you in a pretty tight box," went on the Confederate captain, with a smile.

"Is that so?" returned Deck, as though the thought was brand-new to him.

"We have. Ahead is nothing but swamp and quicksand, and back here my command hold the defile and the entire elevation."

"You must have your company pretty well spread out," remarked Deck.

"I have more than one company with me—fully enough men to hold the spot. So you see you are entirely cut off."

"Cut off from where?"

"The outside world, so to speak," was the Confederate's impatient answer.

"If we are, that's rather bad for us, Captain," and now Deck began to smile.

"It is. The question is, are you willing to surrender?" demanded Captain Adairs.

"To whom?"

"Why, to me, of course."

"Great Cæsar, Captain, what for?"

"What for? Because you can't help yourself, that's what for!" and now the veneering of gentlemanliness vanished. "I call on you to surrender. If you won't, I'll open fire on you in less than five minutes."

"Make it ten minutes, Captain," and Deck kept on smiling.

"Ten minutes?" And the smile and the request perplexed the Confederate not a little, as it also perplexed Life Knox. The latter could not imagine what the major was driving at, for while he was a good soldier, and a first-class shot, diplomacy, military or otherwise, was beyond him.

"Exactly, ten minutes—or possibly quarter of an hour."

"I shall not wait longer than five minutes."

"Then I'll try to make five minutes do, although it will hardly be time enough."

"Time enough for what?"

"Time enough for me to arrange my plans for giving you battle," answered Deck, as calmly as ever.

"See here, do you take me for a—a fool?" cried the Confederate captain. "What are you driving at? I won't waste any more words with you."

"Won't you?" Deck had his field-glasses in his hand, and now he pointed them to the northward of the rocky elevation. "They are coming, Life!" he cried. "We are all right! Come on back!" And he waved his hand to his companion. "Good day, Captain, and I don't think I'll surrender—now!"

"Fooled!" burst from the Confederate's lips. "They are being reënforced! Why did I waste words here!" And without another look at Deck, he turned and galloped off with his orderly; and soon the two pairs were several hundred yards apart.

"It was well done—you scared him nicely!" burst out Life. "But what's the next move on the checkerboard, Deck?"

"The next move is to gain yonder grove of trees as quickly as we can. Carry the word to Major Belthorpe, and tell him to send Captain Ripley's sharpshooters and your own in advance. The first and second companies can come over here."

Away went Life Knox with the swiftness of the wind, realizing that success depended upon speed, for it would take but a few minutes for the Confederates to learn the truth concerning the ruse Deck had employed against them.

As soon as the tall Kentuckian had gone, Deck advanced toward the trees mentioned, rapidly but cautiously, for he had no desire to be picked off by some concealed Confederate marksman. His course lay over a series of rough rocks,

but Ceph sprang from one to another with the lightness of a mountain goat. Soon the shelter of the first row of trees was gained.

Deck was not particularly a woodsman, but as a boy he had climbed many a maple-tree in New Hampshire, and later on, many a walnut in Kentucky. He had not forgotten the art, and standing up on Ceph's back he leaped into the branches of the tree above him, and climbed to the top in what Artie would have called "jig time."

The tree was tall, and standing on an elevation, afforded a good view of the surrounding territory for a mile or more on every side. Taking up his glasses again he inspected the situation with care.

Captain Adairs had told the truth about having more companies than one. There were three commands all told, each numbering probably seventy to eighty men. One was on this side of the defile, and two were on the opposite side. The men were scattered at convenient points for holding the defile against almost any force.

While Deck was surveying the situation, the Confederate captain reached his men, and orders were at once issued which took away half of the men at the rocky pass, and sent them in the direction of the main road beyond. This left but half a company in the neighborhood Deck was reconnoitring.

"If we can't whip half a company, no matter what advantage they have behind the rocks, we are not fit for the Union army," thought the major, and began to descend the tree.

He had just stepped on the limb below him, when he heard a crashing through the brush between the rocks. Wondering if it was friend or foe, he paused, and tried to look down. But the thick leaves and heavy branches cut off the view below completely.

"Git up thar, git up!" he heard, in a rough, heavy voice, as somebody leaped upon Ceph's back. Then came a clatter of horse's hoofs, and he heard his faithful steed move off—a prisoner of the enemy!

To Deck, Ceph was among his dearest possessions, and regardless of his danger, he scrambled down the tree with all possible speed, at the same time calling upon the unknown horse-thief to stop. But neither man nor beast halted, and by the time the major was down both were well out of sight.

Bitter as he felt over his loss, now was no time for Deck to grieve, and he scrambled over the rough ground until he came in sight of the first and second company, advancing as directed. At the same moment a scattering volley of shots from the other grove of trees told that the sharpshooters under Ripley and Life Knox had got to work.

"Lieutenant Fronklyn!" cried the major. "Go to Major Belthorpe at once, and tell him to bring all of the companies he has excepting Captain Ripley's men around here without delay. Captain Ripley is to work into the woods, but steer for the defile."

"Orders understood," replied Lieutenant Fronklyn, and galloped off.

Lieutenant Fronklyn was known to be a good rider, and he was soon out of sight. Without waiting for the balance of his command, minus the sharpshooters under Ripley, to come up, Deck urged the first and second companies forward.

The sudden attack, added to the report that another force of the enemy was on the highway, threw the Confederates in confusion, and although they stood their ground, it could be seen that they felt more like breaking away. Several volleys were exchanged, and half a dozen men on both sides were hit, but nobody seriously.

In the meantime Captain Ripley and Captain Knox had worked into the woods rapidly, and it was found impossible by Major Belthorpe to bring Life back, although an orderly was sent to deliver Deck's order to the Kentuckian. The balance of the companies followed the first half of the first battalion without delay.

Realizing that the Union cavalry was massing on the north side of the defile, the Confederate commander endeavored to bring up the balance of the two companies from the opposite side. But the descent from the rocks on one side and the ascent on the other took time, and just now every moment was precious.

Deck did not "let the grass grow under his feet." The first battalion went ahead on the double-quick, and soon a fierce hand-to-hand encounter was under way among the rocks. A dozen cavalrymen were wounded, and the Confederates fell back to a point midway between the defile and the highway.

Those Confederates who had gone down into the cut were now trying to gain the heights where the fighting was going on. But Deck was ready for them, and sent

Major Belthorpe to the edge of the defile with two companies of the second battalion and Artie Lyon's company of the first. They fired directly down upon the heads of the Confederates, and in less than five minutes had the enemy retreating in the wildest confusion.

Deck had swung his three companies around, so that they had their backs to the defile. He could hear the sharpshooters pushing the enemy through the woods toward him. Presently the Confederates appeared, and the whole company which had occupied this ground originally was surrounded. Ten men were killed and an equal number wounded, and then the officer in command, a lieutenant, held up his sword, hilt first, to which was tied a white handkerchief; and the battle in that vicinity came to an end.

As soon as the company, or what was left of it, surrendered, Deck sent a battalion and a half after those who were fleeing. But the Confederates were filled with terror, thinking the reënforcements had surely come, with sharpshooters in advance, and they continued to retreat at the full speed of their horses. They were pursued for half a mile, and then the chase was given up.

An examination proved that the Riverlawns had lost eight men in killed and wounded, and the Confederates had lost nearly twice that number. Fifteen of the enemy had been captured, including an officer who said he had once practised as a surgeon. To his care were consigned all the wounded Confederates, who were, later on, carried to a farmhouse a quarter of a mile away. The wounded of the Riverlawns were turned over to Doctor Farnwright, the regular surgeon of the regiment, and the dead were buried with proper ceremonies at the spot where they had fallen.

"You did the trick, Major!" cried Tom Belthorpe, after it was all over. "It was one of the neatest moves I ever saw!"

"It saved our goose from being cooked," laughed Deck. He felt that he could afford to be light-hearted now.

"That's so,—I was too hasty in what I said," answered Kate Belthorpe's brother. "But what horse is that you are riding?"

"One taken from the enemy, Tom."

"And where is Ceph?"

"Gone."

"Dead?"

"No, somebody stole him while I was up in a tree looking over the situation."

"That's too bad. I know you set a store by that horse."

"I wouldn't lose him for a thousand dollars,—no, not for five times that amount," replied the young major, earnestly.

And Deck meant what he said. To him the loss of faithful Ceph meant more than any of his comrades in arms could understand. He wondered if he should ever set eyes on the noble animal again.

CHAPTER XXI

CROSSING THE TENNESSEE RIVER

Twenty-four hours after the affair described in the last chapter, the Riverlawns rode into Huntsville, bringing with them their last prisoners and their horses. They found that the larger portion of the Union cavalry had already arrived, and prisoners, horses, and negroes ready to flee to the North, were numerous.

"You have done remarkably well, Major Lyon," said the general in command, on receiving Deck's report. "I doubt if any of our forces have done better," and with this compliment the youthful commander was dismissed.

The stop in Huntsville did not last long, some of the cavalry leaving on the same night that the Riverlawns came in. By a pre-arranged plan the Union forces spread out into a large semicircle when on their way northward, and they came home with about three hundred prisoners, sixteen hundred horses and mules, and a thousand head of cattle, sheep, and pigs. On the return, the Riverlawns encountered but one body of the enemy, less than fifteen in number, and these fled at the first sight of the Unionists. About six hundred negroes joined the army on its northward movement, and thus escaped to the free States, much to their own satisfaction.

General Bragg, accompanied by Wheeler's cavalry force, had escaped to Chattanooga, and it was thought by some that General Rosecrans ought to pursue the enemy without delay. But there were great difficulties in the way. The enemy had torn up the railroads, the Army of the Cumberland, despite such raids as the one just mentioned, was short of rations and forage, and the commanding general felt that he must have support for his flanks ere braving the river and the mountain gaps, which he felt the Confederates would hold as long as possible.

To thoroughly understand the situation, the reader must remember that between the Union army and Chattanooga lay the lofty Cumberland Mountains, washed on either side by the waters of the Elk and the Tennessee rivers. To the northward the mountains were rugged and but poorly wooded; to the southward they were partly broken up by the Sequatchie River, flowing through the valley of that name, nearly fifty miles long, a valley much broken in spots.

Behind this great barrier Bragg felt, for a time at least, safe, and he utilized each hour in adding to his troops, men being forced into the Southern army wherever and whenever they could be found. The soldiers were poorly clothed and scantily fed, and some of the cavalry were mounted on mules. The firearms were of various sorts, English and Belgian weapons being quite common.

It was not until the 16th of August that the Army of the Cumberland began that momentous advance which will ever be remembered in the annals of history. In the meantime, railroads had been repaired, the artillery had been equipped with extra heavy harness for the horses, boats on the rivers had been put in good condition, and, equally important, the corn had ripened in sunny spots and been gathered in by the army quartermasters. The loss of their crop of corn caused many a heartburning among the farmers of this section of our country, but the confiscation was one of actual necessity; and, wherever such a course seemed just, payments were made for what was taken.

Twice had Rosecrans defeated the enemy by turning his flank. Now, with the mountains between himself and Bragg's front, there seemed nothing to do but to try the trick again. But the movement must be well planned and well executed, or the enemy would immediately become aware of what was going on, and make a move that would upset all the Union commander's calculations.

As has been said, the mountains to the northward were high and rugged; to the southward, they were broken up by a long valley, a river, and several small creeks. To turn the enemy's right would, therefore, require a long and arduous journey through a country almost barren. Rosecrans resolved to make his real movement to the left; that is, to the southward of Chattanooga. And the first act in the great drama was to hoodwink Bragg into believing that he was coming around by the mountain paths to the north.

Carrying with them ammunition enough for two great battles, and rations for twenty-five days, the forward movement began by throwing Crittenden's corps over the Cumberland Mountains and Walden's Ridge into the Tennessee Valley, directly opposite and to the north of Chattanooga. The corps moved from Hillsboro, Manchester, and McMinnville, and when in the Tennessee Valley were joined by Wilder's brigade of mounted infantry,—a portion of the fourteenth corps. To these bodies were added Minty's cavalry, which, riding on the left, through Sparta and Pikeville, operated along the river for twenty-eight miles above Blythe's Ferry.

The boys in blue were bound to deceive the enemy if the thing could be done, and at night immense camp-fires were lighted for miles along the river front, always in front and to the north of Chattanooga. Foot-soldiers and cavalry showed themselves first at one place and then another, and at night bugle-calls sounded out in spots where no cavalry had yet been or was likely to be. On the river bank, trees were cut down and sawed up, the ends being left to float down the stream, to give the enemy the impression that extensive bridge-building was on the way. One detachment climbed up a nearby ridge, and with its battery threw shells toward the city,—something that made the inhabitants imagine that the final contest was now at hand.

And while all this was going on, the main portion of the Union forces had crossed the Cumberland Mountains thirty odd miles below, and were gathering on the bank of the Tennessee River. A train had come in, bringing on it a pontoon-bridge which was to be thrown across the stream at Caperton. The train was stopped in the woods, and the boats and planking were hurried forward in secret.

While the sun was still rising on the 29th of August, fifty boats, with a capacity of twenty-five hundred men, were taken across the open fields of Caperton, launched, and rowed to the south shore of the Tennessee. The picket guard of the enemy was driven away, and soon the pontoon-bridge was in position. Immediately upon the completion of the work, Davis's division crossed and went into camp at the base of Raccoon Mountain. In three days his division, with Johnston's, had marched across the range, and forty-eight hours later these troops established themselves at Winston's Pass over Lookout Mountain, within forty-two miles of Bragg's stronghold. The same day Stanley's cavalry, under General Mitchell, crossed Lookout, and on the week following descended into Broomtown Valley.

The march of the army was now well under way, and Thomas's corps and the other troops came along at various points, covering the ground as rapidly as the nature of the territory permitted. It was felt that General Bragg must know by this time what was going on, and strict watch was kept all along the line to prevent a surprise.

The laying of the pontoon-bridge was to Major Deck Lyon and his brother, Captain Artie, a good deal of a novelty, and the Riverlawns assisted in carrying more than one boat down to the rushing waters of the Tennessee. Once the boats were strung from shore to shore, it was no easy matter to link them together, or

to get the planking down even after they were linked, but all hands worked bravely, despite the occasional shots from the Confederate pickets fleeing from the neighborhood.

The Riverlawns crossed the bridge in safety, all but two men, a private of the sixth company, who quickly swam his horse ashore, and Sandy Lyon. Sandy had a spirited horse, and was advised to lead him over; but the lieutenant insisted on riding, and when the middle of the bridge was reached, his horse shied, and Sandy slid overboard like a flash. He went down, to come up at a point fifty feet down the turbulent stream.

"Help! help!" he yelled, as soon as he could eject the water from his mouth. "Some of you fellows haul me out!"

"Can't you swim?" asked several, unwilling to endure a wetting if it was not necessary.

"I can't swim much—ain't swum in five years," came in a gasp, "and this clothing weighs a ton!"

Artie Lyon had seen Sandy go overboard, and now he drew his uncle's attention to the scene. Titus was very much excited on the instant. "Save Sandy—save my boy!" he cried, and he tried to leap overboard, but Artie hauled him back.

"You can't swim, can you?" asked the captain.

"No—but—I don't want Sandy to drown!" panted Titus Lyon. "I've lost one son already in this war!"

"There is a boat—I'll get that and go after Sandy," answered Artie. "You stay here;" and he motioned for two cavalrymen standing near to hold Titus and thus prevent him from throwing himself into the rushing element.

The boat was a flat-bottomed affair, owned by an old fisherman of Caperton. The oars were handy, and Artie was soon on a seat in the craft. As he pushed off Life Knox leaped in beside him.

"Reckon two rowers are better nor one," said the tall Kentuckian, and without a word Artie tossed him an oar. Soon the boat was making good headway down the stream in the direction in which Sandy's head could be seen bobbing up and down.

"Help me!" he cried again. "I'm played out!"

"Keep up a little longer,—we are coming," replied Artie, encouragingly.

"I can't keep up—something is fast to my foo—" And the words ended in a gurgle, as Sandy suddenly disappeared.

"Why, what can this mean?" asked the young captain. "Has he caught his spurs into each other?"

"More than likely he got tangled up in one of those boat chains," remarked Life Knox. "I noticed the chains hanging around when the bridge was put down."

"Then they'll take him to the bottom, sure," said Artie, and grew more anxious than ever for his cousin's safety.

The disappearance of Sandy had been noticed from the bridge and from both shores, and now several small boats put out. Titus Lyon broke away from those who held him and went overboard with a loud splash, and two minutes later a boat picked him up, more dead than alive.

When Artie and Life reached the spot where Sandy had disappeared, nothing was to be seen of the young lieutenant, and a blank look seized upon the faces of the would-be rescuers. Suddenly, however, the tall Kentuckian gave a leap to the stern.

"There he is!" he shouted.

"Where?"

"Under water several feet. He is going down!"

As Life spoke he threw off his coat and hat, his boots followed,—in a moment he slipped overboard.

The boat had now swung around with the current, and Artie had his hands full bringing her up to the proper position and holding her there. Artie's heart was in his throat. Poor Orly Lyon had been shot down in battle, and now, if Sandy was also lost, what would his Uncle Titus and his kind-hearted Aunt Susan do?

"Oh, I do hope Life brings him up!" he thought, when the head of the Kentuckian appeared, dripping with water. Life supported Sandy in his arms, and Artie brought the flatboat up close. In a moment Sandy was laid on the seat and

the captain of the seventh company clambered in.

The eyes of the lieutenant were closed, and Artie could not tell whether he was dead or otherwise. "Is it—it all right?" he faltered.

"I hope so, Artie. He had his ankle caught in a chain just as I supposed. It was hard work releasing him, I can tell you. Let us get to shore just as fast as we can."

Artie needed no urging to do this, and soon the flatboat grounded on the south bank of the river, and willing hands carried Sandy to a grassy bank where he was rolled and worked over, until the water came out of him, and he gave a gasp.

"He's all right now," said Life, drawing a long breath.

"Yes, and I'm mighty glad of it," murmured Artie.

Surgeon Farnwright then took charge of the case, but Sandy scarcely needed him. By morning the lieutenant was as hearty as ever, although a bit "shaky" as he expressed it.

"I won't forget you," he said, squeezing Life Knox's hand. "You're a brick!"

Titus Lyon was even more affected. "I've lost Orly," he said, in a husky voice, "I couldn't afford to lose Sandy, nohow. We ain't been very much of friends in the past, Captain Knox, but I hope we will be in the future—leas'wise, I'll be your friend, through thick and thin."

And the adjutant of the Riverlawns kept his word.

CHAPTER XXII

THE SIGNALS IN THE DARK

The Tennessee River passed, the Riverlawns, with the other cavalry, preceded the Twentieth Army Corps to Winston's Gap, not far from Valley Head, at the base of Lookout Mountain, and some thirty-five miles south of Chattanooga. At the same time the other troops came over Sand and Raccoon mountains, and through various gaps, until, on the 6th of September, the army lay along the base of Lookout, from Valley Head, just mentioned, northward to Wauhatchee, several miles above Chattanooga.

The passage of Sand Mountain was a trying one, never to be forgotten by about half of Captain Abbey's company, who were riding in advance of the regular body of cavalry. The Engineering Corps had had the roads repaired, but the ascent was steep, and in certain spots the trail was but wide enough for one horseman to pass at a time. The provisions were brought along on pack mules, and the artillery had to take a roundabout route twelve miles longer.

Captain Abbey was at the head of his men, and several hundred feet in advance of any other body of cavalry, when, without warning, thirty-two of the Riverlawns were caught on a mountain trail not over six feet broad, having on one side a wall or cliff nearly a hundred feet high, and on the other a sheer descent of twice that number of feet into a hollow filled with jagged rocks.

The accident which brought this condition of affairs about was in reality as simple as it was serious. The trail wound around the mountain in the shape of a horseshoe, and the cavalrymen were journeying slowly along at the bottom of the curve, when some rocks and sand far above them began to slide down. The rumble was heard in time to allow the riders to escape the landslide, but immediately the trail before and behind them was choked up with boulders and sand to the height, or depth, of fifteen feet or more.

It cannot be denied that the members of the first company who were thus caught were greatly alarmed. Second Lieutenant Burton was with Captain Abbey, and he yelled out that the mountain was coming down. For several minutes a score of cries and yells filled the air, but gradually these died away, and when the

landslide stopped, and the dust had rolled away, the cavalrymen looked about them to see what damage had been done.

"Nobody hurt," announced Captain Abbey. "That was the most fortunate landslide I ever saw."

"We'll have to go back," said Lieutenant Burton, who had surveyed the disaster ahead. "We can't climb over that mass of rocks,—it wouldn't be safe."

"I'd like to know how we are going back," put in one of the sergeants. "We are blocked in the rear as well as in front. That stuff came from the top of yonder ridge, and half of it slid down on this side of the curve and half on the other. We are hemmed in."

This announcement made all feel very uneasy, and more than one cavalryman turned slightly pale. If they couldn't advance or retreat what were they to do?

"Let us make a careful investigation of our condition first," said Captain Abbey, who was as calm as anybody in the detachment. "If we can do nothing better, we can clear that rubbish off the trail."

At this Lieutenant Burton shook his head.

"That would be a dangerous undertaking, Captain. When rocks and sand once begin to slide there is no telling when they will stop."

"But this stuff can only slide into the valley below, Burton."

"This stuff can, that's true; but it may bring down ten times as much on our heads."

At this Captain Abbey shrugged his shoulders. "Well, we'll investigate first and lay plans afterward. We can't stay here forever. In a couple of hours more it will be dark."

A cry now arose from other portions of the trail, front and back, asking if anybody had been hurt. The answer was reassuring: and then the captain began looking over the ground, moving cautiously around on foot, followed by the lieutenant and the sergeant. As the trail was so narrow, the other cavalrymen remained where they were, continually on the watch to see if more of the ridge above was liable to break away.

There was no doubt but that the platoon was in a "tight fix," to use Lieutenant

Burton's way of expressing it. The boulders in the pathway were four and five feet in diameter, and several of them were wedged together, all covered with sand and a sort of shell-rock. The blockade in the front was as bad as that in the rear; indeed, there seemed to be no choice between the two.

"Well, we're treed," remarked the lieutenant.

"I should say we were shelved," answered the captain, with a faint smile.

"We're in a bad box," added the sergeant. "What's to do?"

"I think we might tackle that blockade in the rear, and thus open the way to join the rest of the regiment. Then, if Colonel Lyon says so, we'll clear the blockade ahead." The captain spoke thus of Colonel Lyon, for that officer once more occupied his position with the Riverlawns, having just about recovered, but no more.

With extreme caution Captain Abbey advanced to the landslide in the rear, and managed, with his lieutenant's aid, to reach the ground just above the blockade. It was shaky and uncertain, and he sank into the sand up to his ankles.

"If we had a lever of some sort we might pry those rocks over the edge of the cliff," he observed. "I don't believe much more would come down outside of sand and small stones, and that we could shovel away. Let us try to find a pole, or—Hullo, Major!" he added, suddenly, "how did you get here?"

"Climbed up from the other side of the fallen mass," answered Major Deck Lyon, for the new arrival was he. "Here's a pretty how-do-you-do, eh?"

"That's right, Major. I was just saying we might pry these rocks off with a heavy pole, if we had the pole."

"I thought as much, Captain, and have already sent back for the heaviest wagon pole the train possesses," responded Deck. "It will be here as soon as the boys can bring it up. The problem will be, can we get enough strength on one end of the lever to move the weight at the other end?"

"The boys are strong, if only they can get a hold."

"But they may not be able to get a hold,—in which case we'll have to try some other plan. To be sure, the men might climb back in this direction, but that won't be saving the horses, or opening the trail again," concluded Deck.

The problem on foot interested him, and as soon as the heavy wagon pole put into appearance he had it slid up on the rocks, and one end was inserted between the largest of the boulders, and that next to it. The major, captain, and sergeant tugged with might and main, but the upper stone did not budge, and it looked as if ten men could not do the work.

"I reckon that rock is there to stay," remarked Captain Abbey, as he wiped the perspiration from his face. "This is nigger's work; and I'm done."

Deck studied the problem for a moment. "Well, 'as the mountain wouldn't come to Mahomet, Mahomet went to the mountain,'" he quoted. "As this rock refuses to budge, I don't know but that it is solid enough to remain where it is, and we can fix up a trail right over it."

"By Jove! that's so!" cried Captain Abbey. "It's fairly flat on top. All we need is a slope from the front and the back."

A number of men were now called forward, and under Deck's directions the upper surface of the landslide was cleared away. Everything in the shape of a flat stone was placed before and behind the big rock, and the sand and fine shell-rock was shovelled into the cracks between. Inside of an hour, a new footway was formed at the spot, rising five feet in the centre and sloping off fifteen feet in either direction. It was made easy for the horses, and the animals went over it without hesitation.

In the meantime the other obstruction had been attacked by another body of workers. Here the heavy pole came into good play, and rock after rock was sent tumbling into the valley below. The sand was shovelled after it, and by the time the rear obstruction was taken care of, the other was likewise a thing of the past.

"You had better join the Engineering Corps, Dexter," remarked Colonel Lyon, as he came up, having been to the rear in consultation with the commander of the cavalry forces.

"It was a work of necessity, father," answered the major. "The platoon of the first company was stuck, and it would never have done to have abandoned those horses. We haven't a single animal to spare, even though we did round up those others in Alabama."

"I know we haven't any to spare, Dexter. By the way, how do you like that black charger you have chosen?"

"Oh, he seems to be all right. But he isn't Ceph,—not by a good deal."

"No, you won't find one horse in a thousand like Ceph, my son. I'm afraid the loss of that noble animal will handicap you in making those famous leaps on the heads of Confederate officers, such as you have made in the past."

"No, this horse would never do such work—I wouldn't dare to try him," answered the major. "He is of ordinary intelligence, and of good speed and endurance; and that is all I can say of him."

"I have just been in consultation with the general commanding," went on Colonel Lyon, after a pause. "He wishes a special piece of work done, and says he would like Major Dexter Lyon to do it."

"I am ready, sir. What is the work?"

"As you know, we are to move up to Winston's Gap. The general imagines a detachment of Wheeler's cavalry is located somewhere at this side of the Gap, or near Valley Head, strongly intrenched, to take us unaware. You are to learn the truth of the situation."

"I will do my best."

"It was agreed between us that you should take a detachment of six men with you, and one of the number was to be Captain Knox."

"That just suits me."

"The other men are to be sharpshooters from Captain's Knox's company."

"That will also be satisfactory."

"Before you go you are to come to the general for instructions. He is just below here, at the Knob, as it is called. You must remember passing the spot."

"Yes, I remember," answered Deck.

It was supper time, but the major did not wait for the meal. Calling a negro orderly aside, he procured a bite and a strong cup of coffee, and having swallowed both, set off on a gallop.

The conference with General Mitchell occupied the best part of quarter of an hour. Deck was instructed to take the road leading to the headwaters of Town Creek, to the northwest of Valley Head. He was to pass over the creek or around

it, and note with care all of the approaches to Lookout Mountain in that vicinity. The mission might prove dangerous, and the sharpshooters were to do their best to avoid a capture by the enemy, should the Confederates develop in force and surprise them.

With these instructions well understood, Deck returned to the Riverlawns and summoned Life. The selection of the five sharpshooters was left to the tall Kentuckian, and it is needless to state that the captain picked out the most able fellows his company afforded. The horses had already been watered and groomed, and the men had had supper; so after Deck's own steed was cared for, they set off, the major and the captain side by side, and the sharpshooters by column of twos in the rear.

At about eight o'clock the mountain was passed, and the seven cavalrymen found themselves in a small valley, with rocks upon one side, and a woods backed up by a small creek on the other. The trail lay along the bank of the creek, and was easy to follow, even in the gathering darkness.

"How long do you propose to travel—all night?" asked Life, presently.

"That will depend upon circumstances," answered Deck. "We may as well push along while the trail is as clear as it is here."

"But we can't locate any enemy in the dark."

"I doubt very much if any Confederates are so close to us. I was thinking, however, we might spot a camp-fire before midnight."

"If they have any camp-fires."

"They won't do without them in this fall weather unless ordered especially to that effect, Life. An Alabama mountaineer loves his camp-fire almost as well as he loves his moonshine whiskey."

"But the mountaineers are not exactly what we are after," insisted the Kentuckian, who wanted to "corner" his companion, if he could, just for the fun of it.

"A mountaineer can tell a lot of things, if you can make him talk," was the major's significant response. "If Wheeler's cavalry is in this vicinity you can lay odds on it that all the inhabitants of this wild territory know it."

"Well, I reckon you are about right,—as you always are, Deck. If we—Hullo, what's the meaning of that?"

Life drew rein suddenly, and pointed toward the rocky elevation to one side of the trail. Deck looked in the direction, but could make out nothing unusual.

"What are you pointing at, Life?"

"It's gone now. It was—There it is again!"

Deck now saw that which had attracted his companion's attention. A light had appeared, evidently a pine torch. It was swung around in a circle several times, then moved up and down,—and then it vanished as before.

"It's a signal, Life!"

"They moved it that way before," answered the captain of the seventh company. "What can it mean?"

"It means that one detachment of the Confederates is signalling to another," ejaculated Deck. "Come ahead; I am going to learn the particulars of this movement if I can."

CHAPTER XXIII

AN IMPORTANT CAPTURE ON THE MOUNTAINS

Major Deck Lyon felt certain that they had not only made a discovery of importance, but that this discovery, if followed up, would lead to something of still more value to know.

He felt, however, that not a moment was to be lost. Already the shades of night had fallen across Sand Mountain and Lookout Mountain, casting deep patches of gloom among the several valleys. In the darkness, the trail would become dangerous, if it was not already so.

The five sharpshooters were halted, and the situation was explained to them. Then two were sent on the back trail, to cover their rear, two were sent up the creek, one on either side, and the remaining man accompanied Deck and Life to the base of the rocky hill from which the signal had been flashed.

"You will take care of our horses, Clefton," said the major, to the last sharpshooter. "If an enemy appears, keep out of the way if you can. I want to learn just what is going on before an alarm is given."

In a minute more, the major and the captain were crawling over the rocks and through the brush, directly for the place whence the signal-light had appeared. No answering signal had been discovered, and Deck concluded that the second signal station was out of the range of the valley bottom.

The distance from the trail to the spot from which the light had flashed was calculated by Life Knox to be not over five hundred yards, that is, about a quarter of a mile, and the tall Kentuckian was not the man to make a mistake in calculating such a distance. But the way was rugged, and often a gully or a wall of rock brought the pair to a halt. Yet the gullies were not so wide but that each could be covered by a stiff jump, and they helped one another up the steep places. The Kentuckian advanced with hardly any noise, and Deck followed his example, although not so familiar with woodcraft.

Three-quarters of the distance to the top of the rocky hill had been covered when each clutched the other by the arm. Both had made a discovery, whether of

importance or not, they could not just then tell. They had found three horses, tethered in a spot through which ran a trail running east and west, diagonally to the course they were pursuing.

"Hist, somebody is coming," whispered Deck, as Life started to speak; and both shrunk back in the shadow of a clump of bushes.

They could hear the low murmur of three voices, and presently they distinguished three Confederates, attired in the uniform of the signal corps. Each man carried a pair of field-glasses and some sort of an apparatus strapped to his back.

"They are the fellows we are after, sure enough," whispered Life. "Three to two. What shall we do?"

"Wait; and see to your pistol," answered the major, in an equally low voice.

"Captain, what did you make that last signal out to mean?" asked one of the Confederates.

"It meant that the Yankees have crossed Sand Mountain and are assembling along Lookout."

"But what of the cavalry?"

"They are on the extreme right of their troops."

"Then they must be in this neighborhood. It's a good thing for General Wheeler that we have learned this. I suppose they'll come close to Alpine."

"More than likely they'll strike right through to Summerville."

"Then they mean to turn our left if they can," put in the third signalman, who had not spoken heretofore. "What do you suppose General Bragg will do?"

"He'll come out of Chattanooga and fight 'em, that's what he'll do, Simpler. To my notion it was foolish not to offer them a fight right on the bank of the Tennessee."

Speaking in this strain, the three signalmen turned in at the spot where they had left their horses, and began to untie the animals. While they were doing this, Life leaned over to Deck.

"Well?" he asked in a whisper.

"Do you think we can manage them, Life?"

"Why not? We have the drop of them, if we keep behind the trees."

"I should like to make them prisoners."

"Let us try it; I don't think we'll come off second best," answered the matter-of-fact captain of the seventh company.

Deck raised his pistol and Life did the same. "I'll cover the fellow beside the white horse," he explained.

"Correct; I'll cover both of the others," was Life's reply, as he produced another weapon.

The next moment Deck called upon the three signalmen to surrender. His command started the three very much, and they stopped their talk and gazed around them in bewilderment.

"What's that?" questioned the captain, nervously.

"I call on you to surrender. Down with your arms or you are dead men."

"Who are you?"

"A major in the Union army, in command of a detachment of sharpshooters," answered Deck, telling the exact truth.

"Stand ready to fire, boys," he continued, as if addressing a full company behind him.

"We surrender," said the leader of the signalmen, promptly.

"Throw down your arms."

One after another the weapons of the Confederates were cast away.

"Keep them well covered, boys," said Deck, and going forward he gathered the pistols up, also the captain's sword.

"Now march down the hillside in that direction," went on the major; "and no treachery, or you'll be dead men inside of ten seconds." He raised his voice. "Forward, boys! Captain Knox, take command!"

"All right, Major," answered Knox, gruffly. He turned around. "Forward, boys, and keep them covered," and then as the Confederates moved off, he also moved, making as much noise as a dozen men. The ruse was completely successful, even more so than it had been at the time the cannon on the raft was captured.

At the foot of the hill Clefton, the sharpshooter, was called up, and sent to notify the others. Soon the detachment of seven was assembled, and then all surrounded the prisoners.

"You don't mean to say this is all the men you have?" demanded the leader of the signalmen.

"I haven't any others very near," said Deck.

"Well, that's the time I was fooled for fair. I thought you had a full company stuck up there among the trees."

"Are you prepared to go along peaceably?" asked Deck, to change the subject.

"Being unarmed, how can we help ourselves?"

"I see you have a large stock of common sense, even if you were captured," said Deck, with a laugh. "All right, you shall ride, but your animals must be chained to our own, or they might run away with you in the darkness."

"Which means that we might try to run away on them."

"I didn't put it quite so pointedly, Captain."

"But you meant it, nevertheless. Well, it's all right,—'fortune of war,' so to speak, and I shan't complain. Who are you?"

"Major Deck Lyon, of the Riverlawn Cavalry of Kentucky."

"And I am Captain Vallingham, of the South Carolina volunteers,—now on detached duty."

"You seem to have been running a sort of a signal station up there, Captain Vallingham."

"Oh, we have been amusing ourselves."

"Do you think the persons who were signalled to were likewise amused?"

"How do you know we were signalling to anybody?"

"I take it for granted you didn't wave those pine knots to the stars. You are too intelligent a man to believe in negro voodooism."

"Perhaps I am not as intelligent as you imagine, Major. Remember, I surrendered when I should have fought. We were three to two, and it would have been a pretty fair contest."

"But we had the drop on you."

"True, but it was pretty dark."

"Yes, and it is too dark now to suit me, Captain. Life, let us light up a bit."

"Here is an opening in the brush, Major," answered the Kentuckian, who imagined he understood what the young commander had in mind.

Evidently the leader of the signalmen also understood, or thought he did, for as the group turned into the clearing Life had mentioned, he was observed by the watchful major to throw a small note-book over the bushes.

"Halt!" cried Deck. "Brady, let me have that lantern you brought along."

The sharpshooter addressed complied, the lantern was lit, and the major began a hunt. The note-book lay wide open on some short brush, and was easily discovered, along with two letters beside it. With the articles in his hand, Deck returned to the Confederate signalmen.

"Captain Vallingham, I am sorry to see you throw away your property in this fashion," he remarked.

"You're altogether too sharp!" growled the signalman, and now his pleasant manner deserted him.

"In order to prevent you from throwing away anything more of value, I'll have you searched. Clefton, go through the man from hat to boots, and don't let anything escape you."

"Are you going to rob me?"

"Yes,—of information, if any more is to be had."

"I haven't anything beside that note-book and the two letters. The letters are from

my mother,—private correspondence."

"You give me your word of honor as a gentleman to that?"

"I do."

"Then there you are, Captain. I have no desire to pry into your personal affairs. I am working solely in the interests of the United States of America."

A flush came over the Confederate's face, and he crammed the letters into a pocket Clefton had just turned inside out. "Much obliged; I am glad to learn a Yankee can still be a gentleman in some respects."

"In all respects, Captain Vallingham. Clefton, anything else of value to our general?"

"Haven't pulled off his boots yet, Major."

"Do you think I carry the secrets of the Confederate army in my foot-wear?" demanded the captain.

"I am not thinking; I am trying to find out," answered Deck, calmly.

"I'm not used to going barefooted."

"We won't keep you barefooted. Now, Clefton—Ah, what's that?"

For from the top of Captain Vallingham's stocking an edge of paper had protruded. The paper was pinned fast, but easily released, and Deck unfolded it, and held it so that the light of the lantern might fall upon it.

"A map of this vicinity, and of the approaches to Chattanooga," he said. "Very good. Life, here is where that other signal corps was stationed, in the direction of Alpine. Is that all, Clefton?"

"Seems to be, Major Lyon."

"Now examine the other prisoners."

The order was carried out with despatch and care, and one other map was brought to light, along with an order from a member of General Wheeler's staff, directing the movements of the signalmen. The order was dated at Lafayette, a town about midway between where the detachment was now stationed and Chattanooga.

Deck gave the note-book a scanty inspection and found it contained the signal code for that campaign, and also a diary of the work performed. There was also a note speaking of the forces under General Wharton, commanding one division of Wheeler's cavalry. This showed that the Confederate cavalry were watching for General Mitchell's troops to the north of Lafayette.

Shoving the note-book and maps into his pocket, Deck ordered his men on the return, the prisoners to ride behind himself and Life, with the five sharpshooters in the rear. He felt that he had gained sufficient information to warrant his return. To use an old phrase, "the cat was out of the bag," and it would not be long before General Bragg would bring out his troops from Chattanooga and vicinity to do the Army of the Cumberland battle.

CHAPTER XXIV

OPERATIONS IN McLEMORE'S COVE

Captain Vallingham was a graduate of West Point who had gone into the volunteer service of the South immediately after Fort Sumter was fired upon. He had attached himself to the cavalry at first, but had soon been transferred, by his own wish, to the signal corps.

The corps as operated in the army of Tennessee under General Braxton Bragg was a poor one, yet it did some excellent work in those districts where travelling from one hilltop to another was slow work, but where the topography was just right for sending messages from point to point by means of various signalling apparatuses.

The captain was a brave fellow, and four years at our national military academy had "taught him a thing or two," as old army officers are wont to express it. He was a prisoner of the enemy, but he did not intend to remain so very long, if he could help it. To think that he had been captured by a Union officer much younger than himself, supported by only one or two followers, filled him with chagrin, and he resolved to square matters with Deck at the first opportunity.

Like the young major of the first battalion, the Confederate captain owned a horse that he had trained from ponyhood; but, unlike Deck, he still possessed the steed and was now riding him. In addition to this, the Confederate officer knew every foot of the ground the whole party were now traversing. He resolved to make use of his knowledge and of the abilities of his horse at the first opportunity.

The chance was not long in coming. At one point in the trail along the creek, the rocks came to within ten feet of the water, so that the safe part of the road was only wide enough for one rider to pass along at a time. Consequently, the party had to move ahead in single file, Captain Knox leading, Deck following, and Captain Vallingham coming next, with the remaining Confederates behind him, the sharpshooters bringing up in the rear.

The rocks were from six to ten feet in height, and were covered in spots with sparse growths of brush. Back of them, at a distance of a hundred feet or more,

was a hill, leading up into a growth of cedars.

As the narrowest part of the trail was gained, Captain Vallingham dropped behind, until fifteen or twenty feet separated him and Deck. Then, of a sudden, he drew his horse around and spoke to the animal. The intelligent equine understood, and with one marvellous leap, cleared the edge of the rocks and stood on the flat surface above. Without a halt, Captain Vallingham urged him forward, and away he went at a breakneck speed for the cedars.

The two Confederates riding back of their leaders saw the movement the instant it was made, but they said nothing. Deck heard the noise as the horse landed on the rocks and turned as quickly as he could. From where he sat nothing could be seen but the top of the escaping man's head, and he fired at this, putting a hole through Captain Vallingham's hat and giving the alarm.

Captain Vallingham attempting to escape.
Captain Vallingham attempting to escape.
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"Escaping, is he!" cried Life, and just then the rifle of the first of the sharpshooters rang out, and another ballet increased the ventilation in the daring man's head-covering. The second and the third sharpshooters tried to urge their horses up the rocks, but this could not be done, and they made the leaps alone, directly from their saddles.

"Stay back and watch these two!" cried Deck, to Life and the two remaining sharpshooters, and leaped up the rocks. As he landed, he heard a splash in the water, and glancing back saw that one of the other prisoners had tried to escape by swimming the creek. The movement was a foolish one, for the moment he reappeared, in midstream, both of the sharpshooters still on the trail fired at him, killing him instantly.

By the time Deck had reached the top of the rocks, Vallingham had covered half of the distance to the cedars. He was urging his horse along among the tallest brush the plain of rocks afforded, and it was difficult to get another shot at him. Deck fired once, and so did one of the sharpshooters behind him, but the bullets whistled harmlessly among the cedars beyond.

"He's got the bulge on us, Major, bein' mounted!" panted Clefton, who now caught up to Deck. "How he got his hoss to take that jump is a mystery to me."

"If I had had Ceph I could have jumped after him," answered Deck, and a pang of regret shot through his heart, as he realized what a great help noble Ceph had been to him. "Clefton, you run to the right and I will run to the left. Sanford, you keep on straight ahead. Unless he knows those woods thoroughly, he'll be bothered to find a path, and will have to turn in one direction or another."

By the time Major Lyon had ceased speaking, Vallingham had gained the first of the cedars. He struck the woods at a spot where the ground was very uneven, and turned to the left,—the direction Deck had assigned to himself.

Ordinarily it is impossible for a man on foot to catch up with a running horse, although the man may be able to overtake the horse in the course of two or three days' running, if the man is a trained runner. But Captain Vallingham had to move along with a certain amount of caution, for if his steed went down into a hole and broke a leg, the game would be up. Being closer to the ground, Deck could see fairly well, and he came along without slacking his speed.

The major was within a hundred feet of the Confederate, and was on the point of calling upon him to halt, when Vallingham slipped behind the first growth of cedars and out of sight.

"This way, boys!" called Deck, and made for the spot, with Clefton and Sanford not over two hundred feet away. There was a small brook to cross, and he came into the woods over some uncovered roots of trees and amid a mass of half-rotted leaves and pine needles and cones.

"Captain Vallingham, you might as well give up!" he called out. "You cannot escape."

"Follow me at your peril!" came back in a determined voice. "I am not unarmed, as you suppose."

This reply startled Deck, but in a moment he made up his mind that the Confederate was bluffing, and he did not slacken his speed. Clefton called to him, and he ordered both sharpshooters to come into the woods with him.

There was a road through the cedars, starting from a point to the north of where Vallingham had entered. Toward this road the Confederate now pressed, with Deck at his heels, trying to get a shot, but balked by the trees and the darkness. More than once, the major went down, and he wondered how the escaping prisoner could keep in the saddle.

As a matter of fact, Vallingham had dismounted, and was leading his steed for the road. He was armed, as he had intimated, but his weapon was nothing more formidable than a stout stick just picked up. He reached the road at last, and leaped into the saddle once more.

Deck came into the opening before Vallingham had advanced more than ten yards. In the gloom he saw the forms of horse and rider, and fired twice in quick succession, at the same time calling upon Clefton and Sanford that the prisoner was again in sight.

The second leaden messenger from the major's weapon struck the Confederate's horse in the flank, and he leaped to one side from the pain, unseating Vallingham, and sending the captain to the ground. The shock was a heavy one, and ere the captain could recover, Deck was upon him.

"Do you surrender, or shall I fire on you?" demanded the young Union officer.

"I—I surrender," groaned Vallingham. "Oh! I am afraid I have broken a rib."

"If you have, I am sorry for you, but you brought it on yourself," answered Deck, coolly. "Sit still until the others come up."

Clefton and Sanford were in sight, and a call brought them to Deck's side. By this time Captain Vallingham had grown very pale; and suddenly he fainted. Water was brought, and he revived, but he said his right side hurt him a good deal where it had struck against a sharp stone.

The horse that had been wounded walked lamely, but was still in fair condition, and the Confederate, being unable to walk, was allowed to ride, Sanford leading the steed. The whole party turned back to the trail, where they found Life and his men and the third prisoner awaiting them.

"And so Colver is gone," said Captain Vallingham, when told of the shooting of the man who had leaped into the creek. "Poor fellow; I am afraid I am responsible for his rashness."

"It was a fool move all round, Cap'n," growled the third prisoner, and the captain did not gainsay it.

Once more the march for the Union encampment was resumed, and this time a close watch was kept on the prisoners, something which was now scarcely necessary, as Captain Vallingham was in no condition to attempt another escape,

and the other prisoner being far too scared to dream of such a thing.

It was dawn of the following day when Major Lyon finally reached headquarters, having placed the prisoners in Life's charge, to be turned over to the proper authorities in the camp.

He found the general commander just finishing his scant toilet, after taking a much-needed sleep of a few hours.

"Be brief, Major Lyon, for I have little time to spare," he said, as he motioned Deck to a chair.

Deck had prepared his report in his mind before announcing himself, and was as terse as any one could wish. The general listened attentively, and studied the maps and the note-book with interest.

"This is another feather in your cap, Major Lyon," he said, at the conclusion of the interview. "I shall make mention of it."

"The men under me are as much entitled to credit as myself," answered the young major, wishing to be entirely fair. Yet it must be confessed that his bosom swelled with pride at his commander's words.

"Possibly they are;—they shall be remembered also," was the rejoinder, and then the major was dismissed, to make place for several others who had come in to report.

"You ought to be an out-and-out scout, Deck!" cried Artie, when the two got together later in the day. "Life has been telling me about what was done. I only wish I had been along." And later on Sandy Lyon said the same thing.

Information had been obtained, some days back, that the Union commander, Burnside, had occupied Knoxville, and that his opponent, S. B. Buckner, had retreated to Loudon. It was now stated that fifteen thousand Confederate forces were on their way to join Bragg. The question was, would the two forces concentrate in Chattanooga, or at some place outside, to do battle with the army of the North?

As has been said, the Army of the Cumberland lay along the western base of the mountains. On the 7th of September, Negley's division commenced the ascent of the steep sides, and at four o'clock in the afternoon gained the summit. A reconnaissance was made by Colonel Wood, and it was found that the enemy

had heavy guns in the vicinity, covering the eastern side of the mountain. The next day General Negley seized Cooper's and Stevens' Gaps, finding the latter heavily barricaded.

Other troops moved in various directions. The Riverlawns, with the cavalry on the extreme right, were ordered to sweep through Broomtown Valley and seize the railroad in the vicinity of Dalton, thus cutting off the enemy's line of communication in this district.

The Riverlawns moved forward full of enthusiasm, and satisfied that at last some sort of a battle was at hand. But, alas! those hopes were doomed to disappointment. Bragg was leaving Chattanooga as fast as he could, and by the 9th of the month, everybody in the Army of the Cumberland knew it. Rosecrans had gained "The Gateway to Georgia," by strategy alone.

As the enemy had retired, there was but one thing left to do,—go after him and compel him to either fight or surrender, and this Rosecrans did without a moment's delay.

As Chattanooga was abandoned, General Crittenden took possession without serious opposition. The remainder of his troops were called up from the river, and on the same day that the news of the evacuation was spread around, he started with his corps for Ringgold, arriving at Rossville that evening. On the same day, Negley marched to McLemore's Cove, a split formed between Lookout Mountain and Pigeon Mountain, where he met the enemy's outposts and drove them back for several miles. At the same time Heg's brigade marched into Broomtown Valley, to support the cavalry, should they be needed.

The pursuit was growing warm, and the next day the advance of the Union troops was checked in several places and severe skirmishes resulted. General Bragg had left Chattanooga in haste, but had no idea of retreating without a battle. He reckoned that the Union forces were larger in numbers than his own, and he devised a plan for meeting them not as a whole but by columns.

The Confederate's first combination was directed against the corps under General Thomas. If he could reach and crush Thomas's force before the others could come up, he felt the remainder of the campaign would be comparatively plain sailing. The division under Negley at McLemore's Cove was not allowed to rest, for Bragg ordered a movement against it in great force.

Had Bragg's orders been carried out, there is no doubt but that Negley's division

would have been overwhelmed by mere force of numbers if nothing else. But fortunately for Thomas's corps there was a delay. Hill sent word that the gaps were filled with felled timbers and could not be cleared in twenty-four hours. Bragg then ordered Buckner forward to coöperate with Hindman, but there was another fatal halt. To hasten this battle Bragg then moved his headquarters to Lafayette, and ordered more soldiers to this united attack, which was to fall on Negley, who was isolated from the balance of the Fourteenth Army Corps by mountains hard to travel.

All day long the Confederate commander listened for Hindman's proposed attack, but it did not come, for Hindman thought the force before him too strong and awaited reënforcements under Hill. In the meantime, General Baird had come to Negley's support. There was some sharp fighting, but Negley's division was saved and withdrew to the base of Lookout Mountain, where it was joined by Reynold's and Brennan's divisions; and then the Union centre was once more secure.

CHAPTER XXV

"HOLD THE HILL FOR TEN MINUTES, AT ANY COST!"

The first great movement of the Confederate commander having failed of success, he now tried another, which was to hurl his united forces upon Crittenden, who was approaching him from the direction of Chattanooga. He knew Crittenden's troops were divided by woods and mountains, and wrote to one of his generals, Polk: "This presents a fine opportunity of striking Crittenden in detail, and I hope you will avail yourself of it to-morrow. This division crushed, and the others are yours." He referred to the first division sent in the direction of Ringgold, not knowing that other troops had been sent after it. Wheeler's cavalry—or a large portion of it—was sent to cover Polk's right. But again there was a delay, Polk stating the enemy was too strong for him. Bragg, much put out, took Buckner's command and went to the front, only to learn a few hours later that Crittenden had reunited his forces and taken a stand on the other side of Chickamauga Creek.

So far there had been many movements and many forced marches, but no battle had resulted. There were still many changes, but in a work of this sort, written primarily to show the movements of the Riverlawn Cavalry, the details of these movements can hardly find a place. A battle seemed "in the air," and as day after day went by, both sides grew more anxious to fight, and each waited only for some slight advantage over the other.

General Rosecrans now made preparations to hold all the roads leading to Chattanooga east of the mountains. Van Cleve went to Crawfish Springs, Palmer to Gowan's Ford, McCook with several divisions took a mountain road to Stevens' Gap, to join Thomas, Sheridan marched down Lookout Valley to Johnson's Creek, and the cavalry went to Dougherty's Gap and McLemore's Cove. Thus were the three columns, right, centre, and left, once more within supporting distance of each other, "a matter of life and death," as General Rosecrans states in a report on the subject.

General Bragg now felt that he must do something. Two splendid chances for striking the Union forces had been allowed to slip by through the failure of his officers to carry out his instructions on time; he felt there must be no further

failure. He would concentrate his whole army into one grand effort to crush General Rosecrans and all under him. His efforts were spirited and daring, and worthy of a far better cause than that of trying to split our glorious Union into fragments.

The first movement was to concentrate his army along the east bank of Chickamauga Creek, and here he awaited reënforcements under Longstreet from Virginia, in the meantime sending out orders as to how each division of his command should take part when the general movement began. All was in readiness by the 17th of September, and the order was given to move across the stream at six o'clock the next morning; a portion of his command to go across at Alexandria Bridge, another at Reed's Bridge, a third at Ledford's Ford, and others to try what could be done at Lee and Gordon's Mill, or Dalton's Ford. The plan looked to the destruction of the left wing of our army and the retaking of the roads leading to Chattanooga. It brought on the battle of Chickamauga, which lasted for two days, Saturday and Sunday, September 19th and 20th,—a nerve-trying contest neither the wearers of the blue nor the wearers of the gray were ever liable to forget.

While the Army of the Cumberland was concentrating on one side of the Chickamauga and the Army of Tennessee on the other, with several outside forces to aid, if possible, on one side or the other, the cavalry was employed along the river banks to report all movements of the enemy,—Minty being on the Union side and Forrest on the Confederate side. To the Union forces were added the Riverlawns, although they operated largely as an independent body.

The cavalry were stationed at both Reed's and the Alexandria Bridges, and beyond them, and in the afternoon of the day before the great battle, Colonel Lyon received hurried orders to proceed across Reed's Bridge in the direction of Pea Vine Creek, three miles eastward, to support some of Minty's cavalry who had encountered the Confederate forces under General Johnson. The colonel lost no time in obeying this command, and in less than three minutes after it was delivered the Riverlawns were galloping along the uneven pike, every company with full ranks and every man ready to do his duty.

Johnson had left Ringgold early in the morning, his instructions being to cross the Chickamauga at Reed's Bridge, and then to sweep onward toward Lee and Gordon's Mill. The way was hard, the roads covered with dust, and by two o'clock it was reported to him that the Union cavalry under Minty was in front, at Pea Vine Creek, ready to dispute his passage to the Chickamauga. His column

consisted of four divisions of infantry, a portion of Forrest's cavalry, several batteries and eight pieces of reserve artillery.

"If Minty's cavalry is in front, so much the worse for Minty," were the Confederate's words. "Forward, and let every man do his best for the gallant stars and bars!"

The wearers of the gray responded with that battle-cry which has since become so well known; and the first division was hurled at Minty just as he appeared at a turn in the road not far from the little creek.

The shock was heavy but the cavalry stood up to it, and a rapid fire on both sides resulted. Seeing there were more Union cavalrymen in reserve, Johnson sent additional troops to the front, and Minty was gradually forced backward. It was then that the Riverlawns were called into action.

"You are wanted, Colonel Lyon!" cried the dashing Union commander, who sat astride of a steed covered with foam. "They are on us in overwhelming numbers, yet my orders are to hold this road and the bridge."

"I will help you all I can, Colonel," answered Colonel Lyon. "I'll go wherever you think is best."

"Then take that road to our right. I have sent some of my own troops to the left. Johnson may have so many men with him that he will try to cut off my rear."

"I will follow your directions, Colonel," said the commander of the Riverlawns; and, turning in the saddle, he issued the necessary orders; and away went the twelve companies across a small open field a short distance above Pea Vine Creek.

Minty had guessed correctly; Johnson was calculating to surround him, and a division of his troops was already hurrying to the right of the Union cavalry. There was a slight rise of ground, and it was the intention of the Confederate commander to have his left wing sneak around this. Once in the rear of Minty, the Union cavalry would be caught in a trap and either wiped out or compelled to surrender.

The Riverlawns were sweeping directly up the hill at full speed, with Deck in advance of the first battalion. His father was beside him, and both reached the top together, field-glasses in hand.

"There they are!" cried Deck, pointing with his hand. "We are none too soon!"

"You are right, my son," answered the colonel; and he motioned Lieutenant-Colonel Gordon to his side.

A plan of action was soon established; and by the time the Confederate force was within firing distance, the Riverlawns were drawn up along the brow of the hill in battalion ranks, each battalion resting within two hundred feet of that next to it.

"First company take aim—fire!" came the command; and the first blazed away, followed by the fifth, and the ninth,—the leaders of the second and third battalions. The smoke had not yet cleared away when the second, sixth, and tenth companies came to the front and discharged their carbines, and the companies behind these soon after followed suit.

The first volley did not halt the Confederates, but the second did, while the third and fourth rounds caused the leading companies to fall back, a score of men having been killed and wounded. But their leader urged them on, and they left the road and charged straight up the little hill.

Before the charge was made, Colonel Lyon saw that to combat with such a force with a single regiment of cavalry would be folly. Accordingly he despatched his orderly post-haste to Colonel Minty, with the following message:—

"Force operating on the right too heavy for me. Think it is half a division, or more. Will hold the top of the hill as long as I can."

The messenger had scarcely gone when the fight on the hillside began. The Confederates crowded forward in large numbers, and it looked as if the Riverlawns would be completely engulfed. But Colonel Lyon kept the whole three battalions up to the firing line, with the exception of the twelfth company, which was sent to the rear, to watch that they should not be cut off from concentration with Minty.

Two charges had been made, when the orderly came back.

"Hold the hill for ten minutes, at any cost!" was the message sent back. Minty was retreating, there being nothing else to do, and if the hill was lost, the Confederates would surround him before Alexandria Bridge could be gained.

"I will hold the hill," said Colonel Lyon, and waving his sabre, he came up

directly to the front. "Men, we are asked to hold this hill for ten minutes. It means life or death to the cavalry on the Pea Vine Creek road. Will you help me to hold it?"

"We will!" came in a stirring cry. "We will!"

"I knew you would do it! This is our stand, and here we must remain! Do not budge an inch!"

"We'll stand like rocks!" shouted a heavy-set Kentuckian. "Hurrah for Colonel Lyon!"

There was a cheer, and a volley from the companies at the front. The smoke was now becoming thick, and in the midst of this the enemy swarmed up the hillside.

"First battalion—charge!" came the order, and away went the four companies, with Deck in the lead, to break down a column which was advancing on the left, the most vulnerable point on the rise of ground. There was a crash of musketry and a cracking of pistols, and then the clash of sabres, striking fire, as the two forces closed in.

The young major found himself in a trying position. The enemy counted three times more men than were in his own ranks, consisting of a battalion and a half of cavalry and an equal number of infantry. On the moment, he planned to charge the cavalry first and draw them away from the foot-soldiers. The plan succeeded, and then the contest became a little more equal.

Colonel Lyon watched the scene with bated breath, for Deck was far too daring, to his mind; but the moment the enemy's cavalry and infantry separated, he smiled to himself. Calling Major Belthorpe, he ordered him forward to engage the separated infantry, and in a minute more two battles were on instead of one on the hillside.

In the meantime Minty was falling back, slowly, but surely, doing all the damage possible as he retreated. It had not been presumed by General Rosecrans that Minty could overcome the forces under Johnson, but the Union commander wished to subject Bragg to delays in concentrating his troops, knowing that such delays usually worked to the Confederate's ultimate defeat.

Fearing that Minty could not hold the force against him back long enough, the general in command sent Wilder after him, to operate as the Riverlawns were operating. They came up in the midst of the contest, and aided materially in the

retreat; but of their coming Colonel Lyon knew nothing.

Five minutes had gone by, and the Riverlawns were being pressed back. One company had been disorganized,—the fifth, Captain Gadbury being wounded, and the first lieutenant, Grand, being shot dead. Under these conditions, Second Lieutenant Sandy Lyon assumed command. The fifth company was the first of the second battalion, and Sandy now found himself charging the Confederate infantry just mentioned. He went in with vigor, and no one acted with greater heroism that day than did this young Kentuckian who had once marched under the stars and bars, but who had recognized the error of his ways, and was now fighting under the glorious stars and stripes.

"He's all there—Sandy is!" murmured old Titus Lyon, and there was something like a tear in his eye. "God bless him and preserve him for his mother's sake and for mine!" It did the old man's heart good to see his boy at the head of that dashing company of cavalrymen.

Exasperated at the stubborn resistance on the hill, Johnson sent forward another regiment of infantry to support the infantry and cavalry already in the field. What to do was now a question to Colonel Lyon. He looked at his watch. The Riverlawns had held the hill for exactly sixteen minutes. Should he fall back? If he remained he might be annihilated; if he fell back Minty might be lost.

A shout from the rear reached his ear. A staff-officer was riding toward him at breakneck speed. "Fall back—the retreat has been sufficiently covered!" came the order, and much relieved, Colonel Lyon ordered his battalions to retreat to the creek road, where they came up side by side with the front of the regular cavalry column. Minty had met Johnson at noon. It was now after three o'clock, and the Confederate advance had been delayed three hours. It could not be delayed longer, however, and Minty, Wilder, and the Riverlawns continued to fall back. Johnson reached Reed's Bridge shortly after three o'clock, and marched for Jay's Mill, arriving there an hour later. The Riverlawns went into camp not far from the Chickamauga, and awaited further orders.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE BATTLE OF CHICKAMAUGA

"Phew, but that was a hot time while it lasted!" observed Captain Artie Lyon, when the regiment was once more in a safe position and at ease. "Those fellows can fight if they set out for it."

"We were very fortunate, having lost no officers and but four men," answered Deck, to whom he was speaking. "The second battalion fared a good deal worse with that infantry. Captain Gadbury is so severely wounded he has been sent to the rear, and Lieutenant Grand is dead."

"Then Sandy will become captain of that company!" cried Artie. "Well, he deserves such a position, to my way of thinking."

"I am sorry for Captain Gadbury," resumed Deck, and he wondered what Margie Belthorpe would say when she heard that the gallant captain was wounded. As will be remembered, the relationship between Margie Belthorpe and Captain Gadbury was even more advanced than was the tender feeling between Deck and Kate Belthorpe.

Shortly after the conversation, Deck received permission to go to the rear and visit the injured captain. He found Gadbury suffering from a wound in the hip. It was not a dangerous shot, but one which would lay the dashing fellow up for some time. Deck saw to it that the captain was given every attention, and wrote to Margie telling her of what had happened. Later on, Captain Gadbury was removed to Lyndhall, where the Belthorpe sisters did all in their power to render his convalescent state pleasant in the extreme.

Matters had to move quickly, and as soon as the thing could be arranged, Sandy Lyon was made acting captain of the fifth company, with rank of first lieutenant. He assumed control with quiet dignity, and soon made himself fully as popular as Gadbury had been.

It was felt that General Bragg had one advantage—he could see without being seen. His scouts were on the top of Pigeon Mountain, and they watched every movement of the Union troops, while the Confederates lay concealed behind the

thick growth of timber along the Chickamauga. The most Rosecrans could do was to keep his cavalry in motion, reporting every movement the instant it was developed in front of the Army of the Cumberland.

Bragg had concentrated his forces, and now he planned to strike one tremendous blow at a flank of the Union forces, and gain Rosecrans' rear and his line of communication with his depot of supplies. For this purpose the Confederate leader divided his forces into two corps, one under Polk and the other under Longstreet, Hood commanding the latter temporarily. The troops advanced in the darkness, and by midnight held all the fords of the Chickamauga from Lee and Gordon's Mill well toward Missionary Ridge.

But meanwhile, the Army of the Cumberland was not idle. Crittenden was on the left, and Bragg was going to strike him. By a forced march along the Dry Valley road during the night, Thomas with his entire corps, and followed by a portion of McCook's corps, reached a position facing the Reed and Alexandria bridges, now burned,—thus making the left wing of our army virtually the right wing. And not only did Thomas do this, but without waiting for Bragg to attack, or recover from his surprise, he forced the battle by trying to capture a Confederate brigade said to have become isolated from the balance of its command. This was the opening of the great battle.

To go into the details of this contest would require volumes. Accounts without number have been written, yet the tale is far from complete. Of the fighting, let it be said briefly that it covered miles of territory thickly overgrown with timber and crossed and recrossed by numerous creeks and brooks, with here and there a rocky elevation or a stretch of marsh land. In these thickets whole divisions became separated from their comrades in arms, and often a single regiment on one side would be found fighting a regiment on the other side, totally ignorant of what was going on around them. It was almost impossible to move the artillery around, and when pieces were captured they were generally found to be "white elephants" upon the victor's hands.

As has been said, Thomas opened the fight. He had been told by McCook of the isolated Confederate brigade, McCook stating that the bridge behind the brigade had been burned, so the Confederates could not retreat. To capture this brigade Thomas sent Brennan forward, with the result that the Union forces soon encountered, not one brigade, but three, under Forrest, which were protecting Bragg's right flank. The fighting opened fiercely, and it was found necessary to send Baird to the support, along with an extra Ohio regiment. But more of the

Confederate forces appeared, under Liddell, and two brigades of Union troops were hurled back, with the loss of ten pieces of artillery.

This was the first round of the great contest, but ere the enemy had been given time to take breath, the Union troops pressed forward once more, and now, by a gallant charge of the Ninth Ohio one of the batteries lost was regained.

Thomas was now reënforced by a portion of Crittenden's command and some troops of McCook's, while Cheatham reënforced the Confederate front. The latter came forward in two columns, and as they separated Bragg placed Steward in the opening. The Confederates came on with terrific yells and in turn sent back first Palmer and then Van Cleve in great disorder. For a moment it looked as if the enemy would sweep all before them.

But Davis's division was now on the ground, and he advanced, supported by Wood, and the Union forces came to a halt and were reformed, when they drove almost all the Confederate forces back to their original positions. Sheridan's troops also took part in this movement, and a large number of the Confederates in Longstreet's corps were made prisoners.

It was now past noon, and after several charges in his division positions, Bragg began another assault, on the right of the Army of the Cumberland. The assault was led by Hood, who fell furiously upon Reynolds and Van Cleve. For a quarter of an hour it looked as if this fierce onset would prove successful, and it must be admitted that the Confederate valor was never greater than at this period.

"Down with the Yanks! We'll drive 'em into the Mississippi!" was the cry. "Hurrah for the stars and bars!"

Reynolds and Van Cleve were struck and driven back, but still they battled for every inch of the ground. In the meantime, portions of six batteries were hurried into position, and then a raking fire of canister was poured into the Confederate lines. But still on they came, until the tumult drew close to the Widow Glenn's house, where Rosecrans had his headquarters. The enemy occupied the Lafayette road, and our right was shattered,—and the day looked black. But now up came Negley's division on the double-quick, supported by Brennan, and, with a rousing battle-cry, went at Hood and Johnson, "tooth and nail," fighting so doggedly and taking such terrible punishment undauntedly, that the Confederates had at last, about sunset, to give way before them, and darkness ended the day's contest, with final victory still of the uncertain to-morrow. Still later, there was another outbreak, short and sharp, but with no positive results.

During this long day's fighting the cavalry operated principally along the upper fords of the Chickamauga, although occasionally called elsewhere, to save the artillery and to fill up breaks in the lines which, owing to the roughness of the ground, the infantry could not accomplish. The Riverlawns went into action at ten o'clock, half a mile from the creek proper, along the bank of a stream locally known as Duff's Claim. Here the growth of trees was heavy, but there was very little underbrush.

It was thought that a portion of the enemy's cavalry was moving upon Duff's Claim, with the intention of following the course of the stream and getting behind the Union lines half a mile to the northeast. A few isolated riders had been seen, and at first only the first battalion of the Riverlawns advanced to investigate. The route was uneven, and the four companies went ahead almost as separate commands, Deck riding with the fourth company and beside his brother Artie.

"The battle is on for certain, now," remarked Captain Artie, as the heavy roar of artillery reached their ears. "I think this day will bring forth some decided results."

"Yes, the two armies can't play hide-and-seek much longer," answered the young major. "Listen! That was artillery below this creek. I shouldn't wonder if we catch it all along the line."

"Those troops will try to come across here,—I don't doubt it for a moment. But we—What is it, Life?" he asked abruptly, as the tall captain of the seventh company dashed up from the timber on the left.

"We've spotted several companies of the enemy over in this direction," Life jerked his thumb toward the point to which Deck was marching. "Major Belthorpe thought I had best give you the tip."

"Are they moving?" asked Deck, much interested.

"No,—looks to me as if they were retreating—but it may be a blind."

"How is it you are here?"

"The colonel sent my company after your battalion, and Major Belthorpe is just coming up."

"What of Major Truman's command?"

"Two of the companies are over yonder, and the others are in the rear. I thought —Creation! Get to cover, quick!"

Life drew his own horse back, and the others followed suit. A dozen riflemen had opened upon them, putting a bullet through the mane of Deck's horse. The first volley was followed immediately by another, and Artie Lyon suffered the ruin of one of his shoulder straps. Before the Confederates could fire again, all were safely out of range.

"We've developed 'em," was Life's dry comment. "Reckon I had best get back to my command."

"Ask Major Belthorpe to request the colonel to send you over here with part of your men, if he can spare you. I am half of a mind those men over there are sharpshooters."

"I will do it, Major," answered the tall Kentuckian, and dashed away.

By this time the first three companies of the first battalion had fallen back to a safe position, and here all of the companies were joined, in ten minutes, by Life Knox, with half of his own company and half of Captain Ripley's best marksmen. A cautious advance was now ordered, and the sharpshooters advanced on their hands and knees in a huge semicircle. To learn the true condition of affairs, Deck went with Life, the two taking a course which soon brought them to where there was a little cove. Beyond this cove the creek split in two for the distance of thirty rods, forming a long island in the centre, one hundred and fifty feet wide at the middle, and heavily wooded.

"Some of the enemy are on that island, that's certain," whispered Life, as he came to a halt at the base of a sharp rock some four feet high. "Don't expose yourself, Deck."

"I don't intend to, Life. But what can those sharpshooters be doing here? They didn't know we were coming this way."

"That's true, Major."

"And they wouldn't be here just as an advance guard for some cavalry."

"Right again."

"Then why are they here?"

"I give it up."

"Well, I don't."

"What do you intend to do?"

"Find out why they are here."

"But that may be impossible, without an open fight."

"I wouldn't like to force an open fight until I know how those marksmen are backed up."

"That's just the trouble. I agree that the Johnnies are there on the island. To get to the island you have got to cross that stream. If you show yourself in the water, you're a dead man—that goes without saying. Now what are you going to do?" demanded the tall Kentuckian, with half a smile, feeling certain he had cornered Deck.

"Going over on the island."

"But you'll be shot!"

"I sincerely trust not."

"But you will be! It's suicide to wade that stream!"

"I shan't wade the stream."

"You can't jump it, for it is fifteen or eighteen feet wide, and a jump wouldn't be quick enough—to my way of looking at it. You'd land, and drop, sure pop."

"I shan't wade across, neither will I attempt to jump across," smiled the young major.

"Then how in thunder do you expect to get over to the island?" demanded Life, earnestly.

"Wait and see, Life; and in the meantime keep that spot well covered," answered Deck; and he pointed up the stream a distance of twenty yards.

"What has that spot got to do with your getting over there?"

"Everything."

"The stream is wider there by five feet than it is down below."

"Perhaps you had better not ask any more questions, Life. But don't fail to keep that point covered," concluded Deck; and in a moment more he had glided off through the brush bordering the stream.

CHAPTER XXVII

MAJOR LYON PLAYS THE PART OF A SPY

Major Dexter Lyon had made up his mind that a portion of the hostile sharpshooters were concealed upon the narrow island in the centre of the stream known as Duff's Claim. Several shots had been fired, and both he and Life Knox had come to the conclusion that these had come from the heavily wooded strip of land.

The major was very anxious to know what the sharpshooters were doing in this vicinity. No Union force had been in the neighborhood for forty-eight hours, and why should the enemy send such expert shots to such a spot unless it was known that they were wanted? Surely the Confederates had no sharpshooters to spare on a mere excursion into these woods.

The major was in the habit of thinking rapidly, and his conclusion was, that the sharpshooters were guarding something, which must, necessarily, be of value, especially to the army. His mind went back to the time when he had captured the ammunition and gun on the raft. Would it be his good fortune to make another haul of as much, or greater, worth?

It must be remembered that at this time the Riverlawns knew nothing of the great battle which General Thomas had precipitated by sending out troops to capture the brigade supposed to be isolated from the remainder of the Confederate command. To be sure, heavy firing was springing up here and there, but then there had been heavy firing before which had amounted to but very little when it came to summing up results.

When Deck had been conversing with Life, his eye had been caught by two gigantic willow trees growing along the banks of Duff's Claim. One tree was along the shore where the Kentuckian's men lay concealed; the other grew on the shore of the island, directly opposite. Both trees were bent and twisted, and their branches interlocked some fifteen feet above the stream's surface.

Perhaps the task Deck had set for himself may look easy to the average reader, but it was not altogether so, and the major realized this. The willows were old, and old trees often have rotten limbs which break when least expected.

Moreover green willow limbs are very pliable and bend and twist beyond expectation. Under ordinary circumstances, Deck would not have minded a tumble into the stream, but he knew that a tumble now would bring a shot meant to be fatal and one which would most likely prove so.

For Deck had decided to cross the stream by climbing up the tree nearest to him and making his way from one set of branches to the next. The tree was easily gained; and catching a limb on the side away from the water, he hauled himself up. Two minutes more, and he was at the point where he could grasp the branches which came from the opposite shore.

So far he had heard or seen nothing to awaken his suspicion, and he was beginning to think that no sharpshooter could be within a hundred feet of him, if as close. He caught the limbs, took a long step, and in a second was safe on the tree beyond the stream.

Deck did not deem it best to descend to the ground immediately. He moved first to the main trunk of the willow, and then to the ends of the limbs spreading toward the island's interior. Here there was a ridge, surmounted by some short but heavy brush, and behind the ridge was something of a hollow, although the surface was not below that of the stream.

The first thing that caught Deck's eye now was a barrel, rolled against the brush. Half a dozen boxes lay close by, and several barrels were behind them. Back of all was another line of brush, but he felt that more boxes and barrels were not far off.

"Some quartermaster's stores," he thought. "And if I am not mistaken, two of those boxes are from the hospital department. Evidently the enemy think they have a sure thing of it in this vicinity. Well, the Riverlawns will surprise them, I reckon."

No one had been in sight, but now Deck detected the gleam of a gun barrel but a few yards distant. The Confederate sharpshooter lay flat on his chest, peering through the bottom of some brush.

"By the boots, but thet's a good shot!" Deck heard him mutter; and he saw the fellow draw up his gun and take a careful aim at something.

Deck felt that he was firing at one of his own sharpshooters, and without hesitation the major drew his own pistol.

"Don't fire!" he commanded, in a clear, but low voice.

"What's thet?" demanded the Confederate, thinking one of his comrades had spoken to him.

"I said, 'don't fire,'" replied Deck, taking care to keep out of sight.

"Who is thet talkin' to me?" And now the sharpshooter turned half around. "I had a dandy shot."

"The cap'n's orders are not to fire, but to retreat to the other side of the creek," went on Deck. "Pass the order along;" and he spoke in a rough voice, and one apparently filled with disgust.

"Well, I swan!" came from the Confederate sharpshooter. "It was a dandy chance to bring down a man."

"I had a dandy chance myself just now," answered Deck. He felt that his position was a delicate one, and he kept his finger on the trigger of his pistol.

"Are you going to retreat, too?"

"No; the cap'n says I'm to stay on guard here."

"Then he don't want me no more?"

"No. You are to go back—and don't forget to pass the word along. We're running the chance of being surrounded, I've heard."

At this the Confederate sharpshooter muttered something Deck did not catch. But he arose, and fell back, and in a few seconds more was out of the major's sight.

Deck's ruse had succeeded, but he knew that the success would be of uncertain duration. His position was a perilous one, for discovery would more than likely mean death.

Anxious to make the most of the present opportunity, he began to retreat, hoping to gain the position his command occupied and give the necessary instructions to capture the Confederates as they crossed the stream on the opposite side of the island.

He reached the trunk of the tree and was on the point of moving to the outer branches, when a voice from below startled him.

"Wot yer doin' with thet Union suit on?"

Looking down, Deck saw a sharpshooter gazing up at him. The Confederate had his gun to his shoulder and the barrel was pointed directly for the major's head.

"Got to wear something," answered Deck, speaking as calmly as he could, although he was somewhat shocked by the salutation.

"Ain't you a Yank?" was the next question put.

"A Yank! over here?" queried Deck, in pretended astonishment.

The Confederate sharpshooter was silent for an instant, and shifted an immense quid of plug tobacco from one cheek to the other.

"Say, Major, tumble down right yere!" he ordered abruptly.

"Supposing I won't come down?"

"Then I'll have to tumble you."

"So you take me for a Union man?"

"I reckon I take you for a prisoner, or a corpse. Which is it?"

"I haven't any desire to become a corpse," answered Deck.

"Then you'll come down? Correct, Major. Toss them pistols down fust, though."

"Say, Major, tumble down right Yere!"
"Say, Major, tumble down right Yere!"
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The gun was still pointed at Deck's head while the sharpshooter remained partly screened by some brush. As there seemed no help for it Deck threw down his pistol and also an extra revolver he had lately taken to carrying. His sabre had been left in Life Knox's charge.

"Now come down, and no funny work," went on the Confederate. "I reckon you didn't reckon on bein' took so quick like, did ye?"

"I didn't reckon on 'bein' took' at all," answered Deck. It was an easy matter to descend to the ground and soon he found himself standing beside the man. He was a brawny mountaineer, all of six feet in height and the picture of rugged health and strength. There was no doubt but that he was a crack shot and would not hesitate to pull a trigger whenever the occasion required.

"We-uns is lucky," murmured the mountaineer, on surveying Deck. "Them is splenderiferous clothes you have got, Major."

"It is a very good suit, that's a fact, Sergeant."

"Don't call me sergeant, Major. I'm plain Tom Lum, from Dog-face Mountain, down in Alabama. Them stripes was left behind by a man as ain't got no further use fer clothin'. But you're a real major, I take it."

"Let us change the subject, Tom Lum. What do you propose to do with me?"

"Take you back to headquarters, I reckon. You're a spy."

"If I am a spy then all of the others in this vicinity are spies. But, Tom Lum, if you want to take my advice, you'll let me go, and save your own bacon," went on Deck, earnestly. The mountaineer tossed his shaggy head and combed his flowing beard with his crooked fingers. "Got a new wrinkle to work off on me, have ye? Wall, it won't work. We-uns know a thing or two. March!"

"Where to?"

"Back to—"

Bang!

The gunshot rang out before plain Tom Lum from Dog-face Mountain had time to finish his sentence. With a groan the mountaineer threw up his arms, staggered several steps, and pitched headlong into a hollow.

"Quick, Deck, or you'll never get away!" It was a cry from Life Knox, who had come up beside the willow on the other side of the stream and fired the shot, as Deck and the Confederate appeared through a small opening. "Never mind your shooting irons!"

The shot amazed the major, coming so unexpectedly. But he was quick to realize that a chance to escape had come and equally prompt to make the best of it. Like a flash he turned, picked up his pistols, and ran for the stream.

"This way, Deck!" continued Life. "The jig is up! The enemy are coming up behind us!"

"Behind us?" repeated the major, in amazement. "What do you mean?"

"There has been a fight back of this woods, and several regiments of infantry are retreating in this direction. If we are not sharp, we'll catch it on both sides!"

Before Deck had a chance to digest this information, he caught it from the rear. Another sharpshooter had espied him in the act of leaping across the stream. As Deck went with a splash into the water, the fellow fired, and the major felt a stinging sensation in the left arm, just below the shoulder, where the ball had grazed him.

"Heavens I don't say you are struck, Deck," ejaculated Life, seeing him stagger. "Take that for it!" he added, and fired at the Confederate who had delivered the shot. Whether he hit his man or not he could not tell, but the sharpshooter disappeared.

In another moment the major was beside the captain and orders were given for the sharpshooters to charge toward the island, which they did with vigor. In the meantime, Deck fell back to where the battalion lay.

"I have received orders to form on the road facing the stream," said Colonel Lyon. "Something is coming this way besides the Confederate infantry. The enemy is retreating."

Without delay, the three battalions minus half of Captain Knox's company and half of Ripley's sharpshooters, were faced about according to the order. They had

hardly taken positions favorable to each, when the outposts came running in.

"Three regiments of infantry and a part of a battery!" was the announcement. "They are coming along as though they were followed by the Old Nick himself!"

Colonel Lyon looked at Deck, his first major.

"We must meet them, and stop them—such are my orders, my son."

"As far as the first battalion is able, the orders shall be carried out, Colonel," replied the son, with a true military salute.

Majors Belthorpe and Truman were also called up, and told what had to be done, and the various captains were also instructed.

Hardly was this over, than a company and a half of infantry appeared, running at more than double-quick, over rocks and brush, some armed and some unarmed, and more without knapsacks than with them. They were followed by what seemed to be remnants of several other companies.

"Halt! I command you to halt, you cowards!" yelled a frenzied major of the Confederates. "What are you running for?"

"Ain't got no more ammunition!" called back a soldier, almost breathlessly. "Where's the ammunition they said was around here?"

"It is not far away. I say halt! Halt! Halt! and you shall have ammunition! Halt!" stormed the Confederate officer, but without avail, for a panic is a panic, and hard to subdue, even among those who are naturally the bravest of soldiers.

"They are coming like sheep!" exclaimed Deck. "First company, take aim—fire! Second company forward!" And around swung the battalion, one company after another delivering such an effective fire that the enemy stopped in a state bordering on total despair. Then half a dozen companies appeared which were not so panic-stricken. A cannon, dragged by eight struggling and almost exhausted horses, followed; and then came more infantry, until the woods seemed alive with them.

"We are in for the greatest fight of our lives!" cried Major Deck to Captain Artie. "How it will end Heaven alone knows!"

And then and there the Riverlawns got their first taste of that never-to-be-forgotten battle of Chickamauga Creek.

CHAPTER XXVIII

AN ADVENTURE AT CRAWFISH SPRINGS

The three battalions of the Riverlawns had been drawn up in something of a semicircle, the first under Deck occupying the right, the second the centre of the road, and the third the left. As the road was scarcely eight feet wide and winding through the woods at that, all of the companies were practically behind more or less shelter.

The attack by the first battalion paralyzed the panic-stricken advance guard of those in retreat, and they knew not how to turn. But when they did realize their position, they concluded that, for the present, the greater danger lay in front of them, and they scampered to the rear, behind the companies which still kept their formations.

The first battalion was still delivering its fire, when the second and third opened up, aiming at the Confederate companies drawn up in proper ranks. This fire was returned, and several of the Riverlawns were struck, though none fatally. Then more Confederate companies appeared, spreading out to the right and the left, in the hope of either surrounding the Union regiment and capturing it, or of passing around it and thus effecting an escape.

Colonel Lyon was wide awake, and never had he shown greater ability as a commander than now. As the Confederates came on, he made a rapid calculation as to their number, and of how many were armed. Then he sent word back to Captains Knox and Ripley, to divide their forces and send the sharpshooters into the woods, with orders to drive the fleeing ones toward the centre,—that is, the road. Then he dashed up to Deck.

"Dexter, can you take that gun?" he asked hurriedly.

"I can try," answered the young major.

"Do so at once, and train it on the companies coming up. We can take care of this panic-stricken horde, I feel certain."

Deck saluted and turned to his battalion. "We must take that gun, boys! And we

must take it quickly. Will you do it?"

"We will!" shouted over three hundred voices in deep unison; and away went the four companies on the double-quick.

The captain of the battery saw them coming. He had lost his other guns, and he was determined to hold this at any cost. As rapidly as he could, he turned his gun into position.

"I'll give 'em one dose of canister, if I die for it!" he roared, and sighted the piece himself.

But Deck was on the alert, and while the gun was being sighted, he gave the order, and the battalion moved out of range immediately. They darted among the trees, and only Artie Lyon's company received the shot, which killed one man and wounded two others. Before the cannon could be loaded again, the first company was on the battery, and the captain went down under a sweeping blow from Captain Abbey's sabre. Seeing their leader gone, the drivers tried to escape on the horses, but were brought down and compelled to surrender. Of the whole number but one assistant escaped.

No sooner was the gun captured, than it was turned about and reloaded. Among the Riverlawns there were a number who knew all about handling such a field-piece, and in less than two minutes a most destructive fire was poured into the regularly formed Confederate companies just appearing around a bend of the forest road. The shot brought forth a loud, defiant yell, but the command slackened its pace, and presently came to a halt, as if the leading officer was calculating what had best be his next move.

Between the trees and the brush and the drifting smoke—a smoke far more dense than that emanating from the powder used to-day—but little was to be seen of either friend or foe, and when another movement began, five minutes later, Colonel Lyon had to exercise great care, for fear one of his battalions might fire into another. Advance guards were sent out wherever practicable, and not a shot was fired until the commander knew exactly where it was going.

The Confederates had halted, but they could not do so long, for a Union force—some Michigan infantry—was pushing them in the rear. A charge was made on the battery and the gallant first battalion behind it. The rush was led by a hundred cavalrymen, and twice that number of infantry, and in the midst of it there came on two hundred additional cavalrymen on foot—a detachment of

Forrest's unmounted force operating near the ruins of the Alexandria bridge.

The crash of the conflict was terrific, the Confederates, hedged in front and rear, fighting with a valor born of desperation. The cannon marked the battle-ground, and around this circled friend and foe, blinded by dust and smoke, and deafened by the close discharge of carbines and muskets. In five minutes Deck saw that his battalion was being beaten back, not rapidly, but foot by foot, toward Duff's Claim.

"Don't retreat, boys!" he shouted. "Stand up to it like men! The victory is ours, for more Union troops are coming. Charge! and I will lead you!" and he did, with such a magnificent show of heroism that the four companies seemed to become inspired, and sent the enemy on the retreat. Then the cannon was reloaded, and the Confederates received another dose of canister, just as the Michigan infantry came into view.

"Surrender!" cried Deck, and the cry was taken up from behind the Confederates. But the leader of the enemy's force did not deem that the time to give up had yet arrived, and ordered his men into the woods.

It was a fatal blunder, for here they ran into the arms of the panic-stricken crowd, hemmed in by Captain Ripley's sharpshooters. Before they knew what to do, the second and third battalions were ordered up, and also Life Knox's command. Three more volleys were fired by the Unionists and one by the Confederates, and then the ranking officer of the latter, a major, held up his sabre to which he attached his handkerchief, as a token of surrender.

"I am Major Dudley Arkell," he said to Colonel Lyon, who received the surrender. "I hardly know what commands I have here, as I was taken out of my own regiment, and placed here but an hour ago,—after these poor fellows' officers were shot down."

"I am Colonel Lyon, of the Riverlawn Cavalry of Kentucky."

Major Arkell extended his hand, which the colonel shook willingly.

"I am proud to know you, Colonel Lyon, and I have heard of the Riverlawns before. They were pitted against some relatives of mine at Stone River,—a captain and a lieutenant, who were captured by your force. In behalf of these men I have surrendered to you, and who are not my own command, I request that you will treat them with consideration."

"I shall do the best I can for them—I do that for all prisoners," answered Colonel Lyon, soberly. "I do not believe in making war any more heartrending than is necessary."

"Your humanitarianism does you credit, Colonel Lyon," concluded Major Arkell, as he saluted, and rode to the rear.

With as little delay as possible, the captured troops were made to throw their weapons into a heap. Under a guard of one battalion—the third, they were speedily escorted to the rear and placed among other prisoners, also captured within the hour.

The next movement was to obtain two army wagons, and into these were placed the stores found on the island, and the captured firearms. In the meanwhile, Captains Ripley and Knox were sent after the retreating Confederate sharpshooters. But the pursuit was in vain, the shooters having removed themselves to the opposite shore of the Chickamauga.

It must be confessed that the engagement, although lasting less than an hour, had been a most tiring one, and many of the cavalrymen would have been for taking a rest had it been allowed them. But this was a "day of days" in which history is made with marvellous rapidity, and hardly were the prisoners and the captured weapons and stores disposed of, than Colonel Lyon received orders to take his first and second battalion up to a ford two miles above the present battle-ground. The Confederate cavalry, it was feared, would make a dash across the creek to Crawfish Springs, and the Riverlawns were sent to support McCook's command, which had been weakened by the loss of both Davis's and Johnson's divisions, both having already gone to the support of Thomas. With McCook at this time was Negley's division of the Fourteenth corps. The field hospital had been established in the vicinity of Crawfish Springs, and it was felt that the enemy must not be permitted to come over at this point.

Crawfish Springs was a most beautiful spot, a typical scene for a landscape painter. The spring was really the outlet for a subterranean river, and flowed forth between beautiful hills covered with trees and flowering bushes. It was on the estate of a widow, Mrs. Gordon, whose fine brick mansion stood not far away. In the vicinity of the spring was the house of Lowry, Second Chief of the Cherokees, and it was here that the Army of the Cumberland had, for the time being, established its hospital.

The Confederates had tried early in the morning to cross Chickamauga Creek,

opposite Lee and Gordon's Mill, but had been repulsed. The Union cavalry and infantry were now stretched along the bank of the stream, while the enemy was opposite, and each was watching the other as a cat watches a mouse.

"Colonel Lyon, you will take up a position in the field next to this," said General McCook, when the commander of the Riverlawns reported with his two battalions. "I am sorry you have but eight companies with you. How soon do you expect the remainder?"

"They will follow me as soon as they can dispose of some prisoners we succeeded in taking."

"Then you have already been successfully engaged?"

"Yes, General; we took several hundred prisoners."

"I am glad to hear it, for we need some go-ahead men here, or our hospital will be taken and General Rosecrans' very headquarters at the Widow Glenn's threatened. Keep a careful watch and report every movement the Confederates make."

"I will do my best, General," answered Colonel Lyon, and saluting, he galloped off on his steed.

There had been a lull in the firing, and now, when the Riverlawns took the position assigned to them, not a sight of a Confederate was to be seen. The stream at this point was lined with heavy brushwood. There was a ford above and another below, and there were numerous spots where the banks were high and rocky. In one place not far away there was a waterfall in the shape of a horseshoe, where the stream made a direct descent of five or six feet.

Half an hour went by, and all remained quiet. Deck had thrown himself under a tree and partaken of some hardtack, some rather tough beef, and a drink of black coffee. Artie was close by, and both were recounting their experiences in a low tone.

"They have been fighting all along the line, that's certain," said Artie. "We'll hear of some astonishing results, to-morrow, mark my words."

"Well, I trust we whip them, that's all," replied Deck. "My! but I am tired. I'll sleep like a rock to-night, no doubt of that."

"We'll all sleep—if the Johnnies let us," said his brother, laughingly. "I think—Hark! that's pretty heavy firing, eh?" He had broken off as a heavy cannonading reached their ears. Hardly had the cannons belched forth than the rattle of musketry followed.

The firing grew heavier, and they leaped to their feet, as if expecting the tide of battle would come their way. Then, of a sudden, Artie pointed to a spot between themselves and the creek.

"Look! look! Deck, who is that?"

The youthful captain had detected the form of a man moving silently but swiftly through the brush and deep grass. The man was dressed in a clerical suit of black, similar to those worn by unattached chaplains throughout the war.

"Whoever it is, he acts suspicious-like," commented Deck. "I don't like that."

"No more do I; let's investigate," rejoined Artie, and they made after the individual, who had passed in a direction leading from them.

A hundred feet were covered, before they caught sight of the man in black again, and then he was squatting behind the rocks, as if preparing to leap into the stream. But when he saw that they had discovered him he kept away from the water, and dove into the brush again.

"I'll wager that fellow is a spy!" ejaculated Deck. "Artie, we must take him by all means!"

"I am with you," answered the brother, readily. "Come on, before he gets too far away!" and he started on a run, with the major beside him. Soon both were out of sight and hearing of their commands, and in the midst of a thicket, where a short arm of the creek formed a cove surrounded by rocks and trailing vines.

"Do you see anything of him?" whispered Artie, as they came to a halt beside a large, square rock overhanging the cove.

"No; but he can't be far off," answered Deck. "He came down here, I am almost positive."

They stood perfectly still, looking to the right and the left, and then behind them. Far away boomed the cannons, and the rattle of smaller arms was incessant; but here all was as quiet as a graveyard.

"He's a sly one," went on Artie, after a long pause. "He believes in playing a waiting game. He's a spy beyond a doubt."

"I think you had better make a short detour around the cove," said Deck. "I will watch from this point, to see that he doesn't enter the water and swim away on the sly. Are you willing to undertake it, Artie?"

"Certainly, if you think it best," answered the captain, and started off without delay.

He was soon out of sight, and Deck sat down on the rock, pistol in hand, to await developments. For a few minutes he sat facing the water, then he swung around, to ascertain, if possible, what progress his brother was making.

As he turned around, a form appeared from the water under the big rock. The form straightened up, and a long arm was thrust forth, directly at Deck's side. The hand grasped the major's pistol, and in an instant it was snatched from Deck's grasp.

CHAPTER XXIX

MAJOR LYON REJECTS A PROPOSAL

The man who had thus suddenly deprived Major Deck Lyon of his weapon was the same who had been escaping through the brush. He had dropped into the water just as Deck and Artie reached the cove, and a small hollow under the rock had enabled him to keep his head above water and hear the conversation which passed between the two brothers.

It must be confessed that the major was not dreaming of an attack at such close quarters, and the pistol left his hand easily. Before he could recover from his astonishment over the changed nature of affairs, he found the barrel of the weapon pointed straight for his breast.

"Hands up there, and keep your mouth shut," was the low but determined command. "I imagine I am master of the situation."

"Who are you?" asked Deck, as calmly as he could, at the same time revolving in his mind the chances of turning the tables in his favor.

"I am only asking questions, not answering them," replied the man in black, and Deck now noted that his cleanly shaven face was a truly intelligent one. "Can you see that other fellow?"

"No."

"Then step into the water."

"Into the water?" queried Deck, in perplexity.

"Yes, and do not make any noise if you value your life, Major."

There was no help for it, and the major stepped from the brushwood into the stream. He was up to his knees.

"Come a little closer, but not too close," went on the man in black. "Can you swim?"

"Why do you ask that question?"

"I told you before, Major, that I was simply asking questions, not answering them," said the Confederate spy, for such the fellow really was. "I repeat, can you swim?"

"A little."

"Can you swim across this stream?"

"Perhaps I can."

"I am going to give you an opportunity to try. Wade out ahead of me, and toward that point where three trees appear to shoot from one trunk," directed the spy, with a wave of his unoccupied hand forward.

"So you expect to take me along with you," said Deck, steadily. "I may flatly refuse."

"If you refuse, you'll never tell anybody, Major, for I will take your life where you stand," answered the spy, as coolly as though he was speaking of the weather or some equally commonplace topic.

The young major did not doubt but that he would keep his word. The fellow evidently knew his business, and in coming into the Union camp he had taken his life into his hands. Probably he had before this shed human life in the same cold-blooded manner. To him the game of war was a science, and the end justified any means.

"Do you think I will make a valuable prisoner?"

"I see you are bound to ask questions. I am equally determined not to answer them. Will you swim or not?"

"I will swim," answered Deck, but his heart sank as he uttered the words. Oh, if only Artie was at hand to put a bullet through this enemy's head. He wanted to look back, but that steady gaze from the spy's keen black eyes deterred him.

In two minutes the little cove was left behind, and Unionist and Confederate found themselves breasting the swiftly flowing waters of Chickamauga Creek. Evidently the spy knew the creek well, for hardly had they covered ten yards of the distance than Deck's feet struck on a sand bar, and he found himself wading along in water not above his waist.

"Take my advice and keep down as low as possible," said the spy, keeping in his

rear. "A head in this creek to-day is like a head at Donnybrook Fair, anybody will hit it if it is possible to do so."

"I believe you there," answered Deck, and moved along with just his mouth above the surface. "It's mighty slippery walking," he continued.

"Which means that you will slip and escape if you can, Major. Don't try it, for it will be your corpse that floats to yonder falls," was the reply, which made Deck's flesh creep. The spy was certainly the most cold-blooded fellow for such a proceeding he had ever encountered.

Deck wanted to look back, and as a slight splash announced that his follower had taken a misstep, he did so, taking in the shore at one searching glance. Nobody appeared within his range of vision, and again his heart went down into his boots. Evidently he was booked for a Confederate prison as fast as the spy could get him there.

About three-quarters of the distance to the opposite shore was passed, and Deck was losing all hope, when a distant pistol shot rang out, coming from behind them. Artie had discovered two heads and an arm bobbing above water, and his field-glasses had apprised him of the true situation. He had fired on the spy, but the bullet flew several inches wide of its mark.

"Call to that fellow to stop shooting, or it will mean your death," ordered the spy, and Deck now understood why the Confederate had desired him to bear him company over the stream.

As the major had no desire to be shot, he promptly called to Artie. Whether or not his brother understood him clearly he could not tell, but no more shots followed. In a few minutes, both the spy and Deck were in a safe place, behind a heavy clump of bushes.

"Halt!" came the command, from not far away, and a Confederate picket appeared, holding his gun ready for use. He was ragged and dusty, but ready for business, as his determined face showed. "Have you the countersign?"

"I have that of three days ago," answered the spy, and advancing, he gave it, and also brought forth a slip of paper which the picket examined with interest. The corporal of the guard was called, and he took both of the newcomers in charge.

An examination in a tent pitched some distance back from the stream evidently proved satisfactory to several officers present, and the spy was allowed to

proceed on his way, and much to Deck's astonishment he was asked to come along.

"Are you going to take me to the prisoner's camp?" asked Deck, as they walked away.

"We will talk about that later, Major. By the way, what is your name?"

"Major Dexter Lyon."

"Well, Major Lyon, I presume you do not relish being a prisoner?"

"Hardly, Captain Brentford."

"I see you caught my name up to the tent. It saves me the trouble of introducing myself. I am Captain Brentford, of General Bragg's staff."

"I presume you gained considerable information while inside the Union lines," went on Deck, curiously.

"I did gain a good deal, but not as much as one would wish. Your fellows are pretty close-mouthed. I must give them credit for it. I wish I could say as much for our gallant boys of the South."

"I don't suppose it will do me any good to ask where you have been."

"Oh, I won't mind telling you, now we are over here. I have been up to the Widow Glenn's house."

"To General Rosecrans' headquarters!" gasped Deck, in consternation.

"I see it almost overwhelms you to think a Southern spy could get close to Union headquarters. A clever trick did it—a trick I learned when I was in the detective bureau at Washington."

"You impersonated one of our officers?"

"Exactly. The poor fellow was dead, and I donned his coat and hat, fixed up my face to suit, and took his place for ten hours. It was tough on the dead officer, but he will never make a kick."

"I believe you killed him," said Deck, bluntly.

A frown crossed the face of Captain Brentford. "We will let that pass, Major

Lyon; it will do no good for us to say things which are unpleasant. I want you to look at something else."

"Look at something else?"

"Your own personal position. Do you realize the nasty situation you are in?"

"Having heard of the horrors of your Southern prisons, I think I do."

"It is my duty to hand you over to the officers at the prisoners' camp, a mile or so from here."

"I suppose you will do your duty."

"To make a prisoner of such a young and promising fellow as yourself seems a great pity."

"I am willing to take what comes, as the fortunes of war," replied Deck, who did not propose to be led into showing the white feather, especially in front of such a coldly polished rascal as Captain Brentford appeared to be.

"Are you willing to be sent to prison, to languish there until the close of this struggle?"

"I am willing to submit to that which I cannot alter."

"Ah, that is more like it." Captain Brentford looked around, to see that nobody was in sight. "Major Lyon, I am tired, let us sit under yonder tree for a few minutes and rest."

"I don't care much to rest in these wet clothes. I may take cold."

"You are no wetter than myself. I think it may pay you to take the rest I propose."

"If you order a rest, I cannot do anything but obey, Captain Brentford," concluded Deck, and walked to the spot indicated.

At the tent where they had stopped, his coat had been wrung out for him and his boots emptied, so he was not so badly off as might be supposed, although far from as comfortable as he would have been had his garments been dry. He was now totally unarmed, even his sabre, extra pistol, and pocket knife having been taken from him. In addition to this his hands had been tied loosely together behind his back.

There was a large, flat rock under the tree designated, and Deck deposited himself on this, in the shelter of the slight breeze that was blowing. The captain took up a position opposite, so that he had a square view of his prisoner's face.

"Major Lyon, I think I am safe in making you a proposal," he began, after a moment's pause.

"What sort of a proposal, Captain Brentford?"

"I think you would rather recross the creek and join your command than go ahead to where I am to take you."

"That goes without saying."

"Exactly. And that being so, supposing we try to come to terms."

"I must confess I don't understand you," said Deck, much puzzled by his captor's words.

"It is too bad that I must speak plainer. You wish to return to the Union lines. Very well, what is it worth to you?"

"Worth to me?"

"That is what I said. I am a plain-spoken man, and to me a spade is a spade and not an instrument for upturning the soil."

"But I don't understand you, Captain Brentford. If you mean what is it worth in money, let me state that I am not worth ten dollars, all told, at the present moment."

"I know exactly what you have in your pocket, a five dollar goldpiece and four dollars in United States scrip that won't be worth anything after the Confederacy gets done with the North."

"Then what are you driving at?"

"You have something else about you which might prove of far more value to me than money."

"And that is—" began Deck, hesitatingly.

"Information. Now do you understand?"

The cat was out of the bag, and the major drew a long breath. At the same time a look of deep scorn came into his loyal eyes.

"So you wish me to buy my liberty through what information I may be able to give you concerning the Union troops and their proposed movements?" he said slowly.

"I did not put it that way."

"You suggested it, then."

"We will let it stand at that." Captain Brentford's face took on a sharp look. "What do you say to it?"

"I say, Captain Brentford, that you are a scoundrel to suggest such a thing to me."

"A scoundrel!"

"Yes, a scoundrel. Perhaps, were you placed as I am placed, you would barter your very soul to gain your liberty; I am made of different stuff—and I thank God for it!" answered Deck, with all the fervor of his patriotic heart.

"Don't get on a high horse, Major, it will do you no good."

"I mean what I say, and I shall stick to it. Try your best, you'll get no military information out of me."

"You forget that your very life is in my hands."

"I forget nothing," Deck replied, but a cold chill crept down his backbone, as he looked into those black eyes, now blazing like those of a snake. "I do not doubt but that you would kill me, as you killed that officer at General Rosecrans' headquarters, if you saw fit to do so."

"I would kill you if I thought it in the line of my duty. I was sent forth by General Bragg to obtain certain information, and to obtain it at any cost. I propose to obey orders. As a major in the Union cavalry you must know certain things, and you have got to tell me—or take the consequences. We will finish this business before we stir another step," answered Captain Brentford, and again took up his pistol, which he had allowed to drop into his lap.

For the instant Deck knew not how to reply. A nameless dread took possession

of him, as he realized how helpless he was, unarmed, and with his hands tied behind him. He looked up the road, and just then the sounds of rapid hoof-strokes reached his ears.

CHAPTER XXX

A FRIEND IN NEED

Captain Brentford had tried to bribe Major Deck Lyon into telling all he knew concerning the Union army's proposed movements, and had failed. He now proposed to wring the information out of the major at the point of the pistol.

It was an alarming situation, and Deck was more than glad to hear the hoof-strokes of horses approaching. He felt the horsemen must be Confederate cavalrymen, but just now anybody was to be preferred to nobody, to step between himself and the cold-blooded spy.

"Get up and pass behind yonder bushes!" ordered Captain Brentford, hastily, for he, too, had heard the sounds on the road.

Deck arose, but did it very slowly. A long look up the narrow highway brought to view eight cavalrymen, riding at top speed toward them.

"Did you hear what I said? Get behind yonder bushes!" cried the spy, impatiently.

"I heard what you said," answered Deck, and all the while he was doing a tremendous deal of thinking.

"Then why don't you obey me? Do you want to be shot?"

"Would you dare to shoot me, Captain Brentford?"

"I would, and I will, unless you get behind the bushes at once."

With slow steps the major moved toward the brush indicated. Nearer and nearer came the horsemen, until the leader was less than a hundred and fifty feet away. Then, without warning, Deck took to his heels, running straight for the cavalry, who were strung along in a column of twos.

Almost overcome with rage and chagrin, Captain Brentford raised his pistol. But the major had calculated well, and the spy did not dare to fire for fear of missing his mark and striking one of the cavalrymen. In less than half a minute the

opportunity for shooting was gone, for the cavalry halted with Deck in their midst, and the captain put up his weapon and strode forward. As soon as he caught sight of the major, one of the riders in the rear uttered an exclamation of astonishment, but this failed to attract Deck's notice.

"Well, what does this mean?" demanded the leader of the cavalry, eying Deck, sternly. "Are you a Union spy?"

"No, I am simply a prisoner of war, Major," answered Deck, noting the shoulder straps of the other. "Here is a spy," and he indicated Captain Brentford.

"Hullo! Captain Brentford!" exclaimed the Confederate major. "Are you on business in this neighborhood?"

"I just came through the lines, Major Collins," answered the spy, coldly, and Deck saw at once that for some reason there was no love lost between the two Confederate officers.

"And what of this man here?"

"I could not escape without him very well, so I brought him along. I reported to Major Dowlney, and he said I might turn the fellow over to the officers of Breckinridge's command."

"It is odd you are conducting him over the road on foot in this fashion."

"I would like to put in a word of explanation, Major Collins," interrupted Deck, who had listened closely to what was said.

"What is it you wish to say?"

"I would like to be placed under a regular guard of two or three men."

"For what reason?"

Major Lyon looked at Captain Brentford, who grew first red and then white. He felt his position was a delicate one. An exposure of the spy's treatment of him might only cause him more trouble. Fortunately Captain Brentford came to the rescue himself.

"I would be only too glad to turn the fellow over to you, Major Collins. He has caused me a great deal of trouble."

"And I do not deem that he has treated me as a prisoner should be treated,"

added Deck. "But I am willing to let the matter rest,—providing I can have another escort to the prisoners' camp."

Major Collins looked first at Deck and then at the spy.

"Has this man threatened you?" he demanded of the young Union officer.

"He was very anxious to get information out of me."

"I repeat, did he threaten you, Major?"

"He told me that I must tell him certain things or take the consequences, and he had his pistol in his hand while he spoke."

"And you were as helpless as you are now?"

"I was."

"It is a falsehood!" burst from Captain Brentford's lips. "He wanted to buy me off—offered me a thousand dollars if I would help him to get back over the river."

"I stand by what I said," went on Deck, his face flushing. "I haven't a thousand cents to offer any one."

Major Collins looked from one to the other. Had he and the spy been friendly he might have sided with the man, but as there was no love lost between them, he was inclined to favor Deck. Moreover, he was a fellow who could read character pretty thoroughly, and the young Union officer's open face appealed strongly to him.

"I will take charge of the prisoner, Captain Brentford," he said quietly. "Surely if all is right, you will be glad to get him off your hands."

"I am glad to be free of him," growled the spy, but his looks belied his words.

"I will detail three of my men to conduct him to General Breckinridge's camp," went on the Confederate major.

"I will go along."

"That will not be necessary."

"All right,—please yourself. I presume I can turn him over to you immediately."

"On the spot," was the quiet answer; and saluting stiffly, Captain Brentford, scowling at both of the majors, withdrew, and walked rapidly along the road.

In a few words Deck told his story, Major Collins listening eagerly. Then three men were counted off to escort the Union officer to the prisoners' camp. Among the three was the man who had been so surprised on first catching sight of Deck. Several times he was on the point of speaking to the young major, but each time he changed his mind.

The horsemen did not wish to spend any more time than was necessary in conveying Deck to the prisoners' camp, and so the leader told the major to mount behind him. "It will be better nor running, and that is what you'll have to do if you remain on foot," he said.

The course of the four riders was along a side road and past half a dozen plantations, the fields of which had been much cut up by detachments of Wheeler's cavalry, operating in that territory. The man who had Deck with him rode side by side with one of the other cavalrymen, while the fellow who seemed to have recognized Deck rode in the rear.

"It's hard lines, Major, but I reckon you're bound for one of our prisons right enough," observed the leader, as they trotted along.

"Fortune of war," said the young Union officer, as lightly as he could.

"But you don't like it?"

"To be sure not."

"Married?"

"No."

"That's one consolation—if you die on our hands," and the man laughed at what he considered a joke.

"I shan't die on your hands, if I can help it."

"Oh, I suppose—But I've heard a good many of 'em do die; can't stand this balmy Southern air."

"I think it is more likely they can't stand your poor food and foul prisons."

"Our prisons are about as good as those up North, I reckon, Major. I had a cousin

die up in New York somewhere—Elmira I think they called the lock-up. Reckon he was about starved."

"I trust you are mistaken. It would not be fair to starve anybody on either side."

At this the leader of the Confederate detachment grunted, and said no more. But presently he grew tired of his load and turned to the man riding in the rear.

"Tom, supposin' you take the prisoner for a while?" he observed.

"Just as you say, Messinger. Is he bound tight?"

"Tight enough, I reckon."

"All right, come right along," said the man in the rear, and happy to think he might continue to ride instead of walk, Deck transferred himself from the rear of one horse to the rear of the other.

The man in front of him had spoken in a hoarse voice, as if he was suffering from a cold, yet the voice appeared to be more or less familiar. Deck tried, after mounting, to get a view of the cavalryman's face, but it was kept away from him.

Inside of quarter of an hour the party began to climb a small hill. The road was winding, and lined with brush and rocks. At the top of the eminence stood an old stone mansion, and here the road split into three trails, one running straight on, and the others branching out at angles of forty-five degrees. Between the centre road and that to the left, stood the house, while near the trail on the right was located a large cattle shed and corn-crib.

"I reckon we can stop here for something to eat," observed Messinger, turning to his two companions.

"If we can get it," answered the man who had been riding beside him.

"I will give a quarter in silver for a glass of milk," said Deck. "The money is in my left pocket. You might as well take a dollar bill if it can be used here."

"It won't go—and I wouldn't tech it," cried Messinger. "Come on, Chador, and we'll see what we can get. Tom, you had better remain here with the prisoner."

"Just as you say, Messinger. Don't you try to git away from me," the latter words to Deck, spoken with great fierceness.

"If he tries to run for it, shoot him dead," ordered Messinger, carelessly, and

dismounting, he walked toward the house, and Chador followed his suit.

The two Confederates had scarcely disappeared than the man sitting in front of Deck turned his head so that he could look over his shoulder.

"Major Lyon, listen to me," he said earnestly. "You don't remember me, because I've let my beard grow, and I'm dressed differently from what I was when we met before. We met at McMinnville, where you risked your life to save mine, in a burning cotton mill. I am Tom Derwiddie, and I swore that if ever I could do you a good turn I would do it. I reckon that time has come. Do you want to get away, or rather, are you willing to take the risk?"

"Derwiddie!" gasped Deck, a flood of light bursting in on him. "Yes, I wish to get away, if it can be done. But your duty—"

"Is to help the man as saved my life. You are not a spy, are you?"

"I am not."

"And if I help you to get away, you will try to get back to the Union lines without delaying to pick up information."

"I will go as straight back as I can make it—I'll give you my word of honor, Derwiddie."

"Then I won't be acting wrong in giving you a free rein. Now to my plan—it's been in my head this last half hour. First, take my pistol."

"Yes, but you—"

"Now let me untie that rope on your hands," interrupted Derwiddie, cutting the prisoner short. "We haven't a moment to spare. They may come back at any moment. Remember, you are to take all three horses."

"All three?"

"Yes, all three. So that they will have a job to follow you."

"But yourself?"

"I will fall into the road, knocked out by you."

"Do you mean to say you want me to knock you out?" demanded Deck, who thought that his newly discovered friend was "going it rather strong."

"I will do the deed, if you feel backward about it," answered Tom Derwiddie, modestly.

"I certainly do feel backward, if that is what you are going to call it. You are by far too much of a friend to be touched."

"But I must be knocked out, or my record won't bear investigation, Major Lyon. Are you ready to gallop away on this horse?"

"Yes," answered Deck, promptly.

"All right, and don't forget to take those animals with you—at least for a ways." The Confederate hesitated. "If I give you the password, will you promise to use it only to get away on?"

"I will, and do."

The countersign was then given, and Derwiddie looked again toward the house. Not a soul was in sight.

"Give me a small crack on the forehead with that pistol!" he cried. "Right there!" and he indicated the spot over his left eye, at the same time scratching it sufficiently hard to draw blood. "Now, strike—and good luck go with you!"

Deck understood, and with his heart in his throat, struck out lightly. As the pistol landed on Derwiddie's forehead, he threw up his arms and reeled from the saddle. Pretending to stagger for a moment, he finally pitched headlong on the rocks. He was far from overcome, but he lay like a log where he had fallen.

The drama was on and the major did not waste an instant in making the scene move along. Urging the horse to where the other animals were standing, he gathered up the reins and placed one beast on either side of him. Then, with his pistol ready for use, he started on a wild ride down the trail leading past the corn-crib. He had covered less than a hundred and fifty yards when a cry from the house told him that his flight was discovered.

CHAPTER XXXI

THROUGH THE ENEMY'S LINES

The turn of affairs had been so sudden that Major Deck Lyon had had hardly time enough to arrange any plan for escaping, now the chance to get away was presented. Up to the time Tom Derwiddie had spoken to him so confidentially he had not dreamed that he had a friend so close at hand and one who was willing to do so much for him. Saving the Confederate's life at the burning cotton mill had been a generous action that was bearing splendid fruit, of which the major was destined to reap the full benefit.

Deck had no idea where the road he was taking led to, but he imagined that it would take him into the forest some distance beyond, and the shelter of this heavy growth of timber would be far more acceptable than would be a pursuit in the open.

Fortunately, the three horses were used to travelling together, so there was no hitch here, and the speed made by all three was very good. When the corn-crib was passed, Deck found himself passing through a stubble field, but this was less than two hundred yards in length.

But, short as was the distance, it was not yet fully covered, when Messinger appeared at the doorway of the farmhouse and gave the alarm. He could not see Derwiddie lying on the ground, but he could see Deck, and without pausing to think twice, he raised his pistol and fired several shots in rapid succession.

Had the distance been less, or had Deck been standing still, he might have been seriously wounded, for the second shot glanced along his thigh and struck the horse he was riding in the fore-quarter. The horse staggered and fell, and it was only by a quick leap that the young Union officer saved himself from being trampled under the beast's hoofs.

Alarmed by the injury to their mate, the remaining horses gave a snort and a bound and started to run. Deck tried to hold them, but was taken off his feet. Rather than be dragged along the ground, he released the reins, and like a flash the two animals left him to his fate.

All this had taken less time than it takes to relate it. Seeing the effect of his shot, Messinger yelled to Chador, and both ran forth from the house on a dead run, straight for where Deck lay.

As the major sprang up, bruised and covered with dust, he realized that a crisis was at hand and that he must do something or stand the chance of recapture. Luckily he had retained hold of the pistol Derwiddie had given him, and raising this he fired on Messinger, who was several yards in advance of his companion.

As we know, Deck had practised a good deal with a pistol, and although the present weapon was not of the latest pattern, it could shoot straight, and Deck's aim was as correct as the shooting qualities of the firearm. The crack of the pistol had hardly died away than Messinger gave a yell and began to dance around in awful anguish, the bullet having taken off the thumb and first finger of his left hand and cut a path over two of his ribs.

Seeing his companion struck, Chador came to a sudden halt; and when Deck prepared to fire again, the cavalryman lost no time in seeking the shelter of a slight rise of ground in the centre of the stubble field. He threw himself flat, and then Messinger did the same.

"I wonder where Tom is?" asked Chador, as he looked ahead, to see that Deck had turned once more and was speeding toward the woods.

"I don't know," groaned the leader of the Confederates. "Oh, my hand! I must go back to the house and have it attended to." And he started back, having, for the time being, lost all interest in going after the escaping prisoner.

Unwilling to make the pursuit alone, especially in the face of what had occurred, Chador concluded to fill in his time hunting up Derwiddie. At the fork in the road he found the man lying where he had fallen, the blood covering his forehead and one cheek.

"By gum! he's knocked out sure!" exclaimed Chador; and, getting down, he placed his hand to Derwiddie's heart. Of course it beat as strongly as ever, and, learning this, Chador ran for some water. As soon as the water was being used, Derwiddie began to groan and opened his eyes.

"Where—where is he?" he moaned.

"He got away," answered Chador. "How did it happen?"

"Don't ask me," moaned Derwiddie. "Oh, the villain! Where is Messinger? Why don't you stop him?"

"Messinger is shot in the hand, and the fellow skipped for the wood. I see he took your pistol."

"That's so." Derwiddie gave another groan. "Carry me to the house, will you, Bob? Oh, what an upsetting all around!"

Chador took up the man supposed to be "knocked out," and soon had him comfortable on a lounge in the sitting room of the farmhouse. In the meantime, Messinger was having two women folks care for his injured hand. When he felt better, Derwiddie told a long story of Deck's attack on him. "He was as strong as an ox, I couldn't do anything with him," he said; and he likewise declared himself altogether too weak to take part in any pursuit, so Chador was despatched to give the alarm to any soldiers or cavalry he might run across in the neighborhood.

As soon as Messinger and Chador fell in the stubble field, Major Lyon turned and continued on his way to the forest. The timber was soon reached, and, without loss of time, he made his way among the trees for a distance of several hundred feet. Deeming himself now safe for the time being, he sat down on a fallen log to catch his breath and consider what would be the next best move to make.

The darkness of night was beginning to fall over the vast battlefield; and under the trees with their dense foliage, but little could be seen. Deck listened attentively, but the only sounds which reached his ears were the shrill cries of the birds, who were terrorized by the long-continued booming of cannons and sharp cracking of musketry. Occasionally the roar of a battery could be heard, or a shot from the creek; but these were gradually dying away altogether, for both armies were worn out through fighting and because of forced marches over the uneven ground, and they were willing to leave the remainder of the contest for another day.

Deck felt that his position was very trying, for more reasons than one would readily imagine. In the first place, the wood was large and dense, and wild animals were still to be hunted there,—and they occasionally did a little hunting on their own account. To meet a wildcat or a bear, or even a rattlesnake, would prove far from an agreeable experience.

The wood was large, but it was entirely surrounded by open fields, and the major had every reason to believe that some Confederate troops lay back of them. As a matter of fact, nearly the whole of Breckinridge's command were encamped less than half a mile away.

The distance to Chickamauga Creek was between a quarter and a half of a mile, and how much of shelter lay in that direction was a problem still to be solved. One thing was certain; if he wished to get over the creek and into the Union lines again, the attempt must be made that night, and he must trust to luck to find his way, although, to be sure, the night was fair, and Deck had some knowledge of the stars and how to read the heavens.

Ten minutes passed in which time Deck made not the slightest sound. No one had come after him, and he rightfully guessed that he was safe for the time being. He waited a little longer and then placing the pistol in his belt, advanced cautiously through the forest in the direction he calculated the creek must be located.

Presently a gleam of light reached his view, coming from a small hollow. He crept forward noiselessly until he reached a fringe of bushes bounding the hollow. From this point he beheld half a dozen Confederate soldiers sitting around a small camp-fire, broiling a chicken spitted on a bayonet. They were a merry crowd, and cracked many a joke in a low tone as they waited for the dainty morsel to become done.

Deck did not view this scene long. Instead, he made a detour and continued on his way until he came to a small brook. Here he stopped for a much-needed drink. The brook was almost stationary, but a chip thrown into the water showed him in which way it was flowing, and, taking it for granted that the watercourse emptied itself into the Chickamauga, he decided to follow its fairly straight direction.

He was proceeding along with increased confidence, when suddenly a negro voice sounded upon his ear, coming from a road which crossed the brook. A colored man was coming along, bringing with him half a dozen cavalry horses that needed watering. The fellow seemed free from care and sang "Dixie" with rare musical ability.

Not having time to cross the road before the colored man arrived, the major drew back, thinking to make another detour, behind or in front of man and animals. He wished very much that he had one of the horses, but to gain one by force, he felt

might lead to discovery and capture.

The horses were very thirsty, and crowded for the brook in a bunch. There were several black chargers, one of white, and one of gray. As they came closer Deck could not help but notice that they were all in first-class condition, quite in contrast to many Confederate mounts he had seen.

"Ceph! By all that's wonderful!"

The words burst from the major's lips ere he had time to realize the injudiciousness of his remarks. He had caught sight of his own precious animal, Ceph, who had been stolen from him while he was up in a tree at the battle between the rocky defile and the swamp in Alabama. For the moment he could scarcely credit his eyesight.

But if he wanted extra proof that it was really Ceph he was gazing upon, the noble steed furnished it himself. At the sound of Deck's voice he pricked up his ears and raised his head. Then he left the bunch of horses and rushed straight for the young major and rubbed his soft nose affectionately upon Deck's neck.

"Good, faithful old Ceph!" Deck could not help saying. "Where in the world have you been? Oh, how I have missed you! They shan't take you again, not if I can help it!" And he leaped into the saddle.

"Wha—what do dis mean, massa?" stammered the negro. "What right hab you-un to dat hoss?"

"Every right in the world, Sambo," answered Deck. "The horse belongs to me, don't you, Ceph?"

For answer Ceph gave a low snort of satisfaction.

"Belong to yo'? I fink dat's a mistake, massa. Dat am Captain Loring's hoss, fo' suah," and the colored man shook his head decidedly. Then as he came close enough to note what uniform Deck was wearing, he gave a gasp of horror. "Fo' pity sake, massa, is you-un a—a Yankee?"

"Yes, I am, Sambo, and I want you to keep your mouth shut about this," replied Deck, sternly. "The horse is mine and always was mine, and I am going to ride off on him. If you make any outcry I will shoot you."

"Don't go fo' to do dat, massa orsifer!" came with a shiver. "I won't say a single

word, 'deed I won't. But—but who's to take the 'sponsibility when Captain Loring find dat hoss ain't heah no mo'?"

"You'll be telling the truth when you say he got away from you, Sambo,—for he did get away just now. Is this the way to Hall's Ford?"

"No, massa; dat's de way to Lee and Gordon's Mill."

"I don't know whether to believe you or not," said Deck, simply in order to get the negro "mixed." "I guess I'll find Breckinridge's camp somewhere around here. Now I'm off. If you give the alarm, remember, I'll come back and put half a dozen bullets through your body."

"Won't say a word, massa orsifer," returned the negro in a more shaky voice than ever.

"Very well, you'll be safe then—but not otherwise," concluded Deck, and continued on his way down the brook.

He passed along as rapidly as Ceph could travel over the rocks and dirt, keeping to the brook just so long as the negro remained in sight. As soon as the colored man was lost to view, he turned at right angles to the direction he had been travelling, to throw any possible pursuer off the trail.

Having left the brook which had been his guide, the major found it no easy matter to set himself right again concerning the direction of Chickamauga Creek. The way was dark and uncertain, and it was not until eleven o'clock that he came out at a point where a ledge of rock several yards in height overlooked the stream that divided the armies of the North and the South.

All was quiet; so quiet that one would imagine the neighborhood deserted. But Major Lyon was not to be taken unawares, and leading Ceph back into the brush, he made a survey of the situation on foot. Presently he found a safe path into the stream, with no picket guards within a hundred feet on either side. This just suited him, and in a few minutes more, horse and rider were braving the current of the rolling Chickamauga.

"Ceph could swim well, but not noiselessly, and they had not advanced over fifty feet before a command came out of the darkness from down the creek.

"Who is that out there? Speak, or I will fire!"

"What's that?" called back the major, at the same time urging Ceph forward, and up the stream.

"Who are you?"

"A friend."

"Come back here then and give the countersign."

"I can give you that without coming back," went on Deck, and did so, speaking just loud enough for his questioner to hear him.

"What are you doing out there?" went on the picket, only half satisfied.

"I am bound for the other shore to pick up some information."

"Who are you?"

"Have you ever heard of Captain Brentford, of General Bragg's staff?"

"You bet I have," was the quick return. "If it's you, Captain, it's all right, and I wish you luck," and then the picket relapsed into silence. He had once met Captain Brentford personally, and was greatly pleased to have the supposed spy take him into his confidence.

Much relieved, Major Lyon continued on his way, and in five minutes the Chickamauga had been crossed and he was on his way to find his command. Were it not for going too far into his confidence, we could state that he felt like hugging both himself and Ceph over their combined escape.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE SECOND DAY AT CHICKAMAUGA

"Deck!"

"Artie!"

And the two brothers rushed into each other's arms, while Colonel Lyon stood by, his face full of joy over the return of his son. Artie had told the story of Deck's capture, and both he and the colonel had felt almost positive that they would not see the major again for a long while to come, and perhaps never again.

"Yes, I've had a very fortunate escape," said Deck, as he shook his father's hand. "I wouldn't be here at all were it not for Tom Derwiddie."

"Tom Derwiddie?" queried Artie.

"Yes. Don't you remember him—the Confederate soldier I assisted at the burning cotton mill?"

"And you met him?" put in Colonel Lyon.

"I did. I was placed in his charge for a few minutes, and he very accommodatingly gave me his pistol, freed my hands, and let me knock him down," continued the major, with a laugh, and then told his tale in detail.

"Well, you are more than lucky," said Artie, when he had finished. "Finding Ceph was worth a good deal, eh?"

"It was worth as much as escaping," answered Deck, and he stroked the noble steed affectionately. "I wish you could tell your story, too, old boy!" And Ceph gave him a poke with that nose of his. It seemed as if the steed did most of his talking with that nose.

Others had gathered around, Captain Life Knox, Sandy Lyon, and Uncle Titus, and Deck's story had to be retold to them. In the meantime he was served with a hot supper, and later on, given the means to change his wet clothing for dry.

"You ought to have something to tell the general," said Titus Lyon to him. "Of course you kept your eyes and ears open while you were over there."

"No, Uncle Titus, I didn't. I promised the fellow who assisted me to say nothing, and I intend to keep my promise. But I wish I could have collared that Captain Brentford, and brought him along."

The Riverlawns were encamped at the foot of a hill not far from Crawfish Springs. It was a fine place for a camp, and many of the privates were already sleeping soundly. Soon Deck and his relatives and friends retired, only the pickets being kept awake. In spite of his adventures, the major slumbered soundly, and did not arise until the Sabbath dawn was well advanced.

It was felt by both sides that the morrow would tell the tale of defeat or victory, and all night long Generals Rosecrans and Bragg were busy arranging their plans. The former could get no reënforcements worth mentioning; but to the Army of Tennessee were now added reënforcements under General Longstreet, who arrived shortly before midnight, to assume personal charge of the corps temporarily commanded by Hood. A rough estimate of the troops on both sides at this time places the number of Unionists at fifty-five thousand, as against nearly seventy thousand Confederates. But what they lacked in numbers, the Army of the Cumberland made up in position, for they occupied higher ground than their opponents—something of great strategic importance, as we will soon see.

It must be confessed that General Rosecrans's troops were all but exhausted. Every soldier, excepting two divisions, had been thrown into the fight on Saturday, and every division had marched and countermarched until some of the infantry hardly knew whether they had feet or not. On the other hand, Bragg had three divisions and three brigades who had not participated in the battle, and who were thus fresh in every sense of the word.

The battle was again to be for the Lafayette road and the mountain gaps near it—the gateway to Chattanooga and the East. The centre of the field was the farm owned by a man named Kelley. The battle front of the Unionists ran around the northeast corner of the farm, across the Lafayette road and to the southwestward. The firing line was more compact than on Saturday, two brigades of each division being placed in front, with the third brigade behind, in reserve. At the left of the line was Baird, with Johnson, Palmer, and Reynolds following, in something of a semicircle. South of this semicircle lay Brennan and Negley, with

Davis and Sheridan guarding the vicinity of the Widow Glenn's—still Rosecrans's headquarters. As before, the cavalry was stationed at both ends of the line, although the larger portion remained between the Chickamauga and Crawfish Springs, to do regular duty and also help guard the field hospital previously mentioned.

Bragg's forces overlapped those of Rosecrans's both on the right and the left. Opposite to Baird was Breckinridge, who had just come up, with Armstrong, Pegram, and Forrest overlapping the Unionists' left wing. Next to Breckinridge came Cleburn, Steward, Johnson, and Hindman's battery. Behind Johnson lay Law and Kershaw, with Cheatham and Walker still further back, on the right; while Gracie, Kelly, and Preston were to the rear on the left.

During the night the Army of the Cumberland was not idle, even though a majority of the soldiers slept soundly. The pioneers were out in force, with the Engineering Corps, and many barricades of trees, logs, and brush were piled up, along with sods and loose rocks. The Confederates heard the ringing of axes and the crashing of timber as it came down, but could do nothing toward stopping the construction of these defences.

Sunday morning dawned with a heavy fog filling the valleys—a fog so dense that the mountains were shut out, giving the battle-ground, from every point of view, the appearance of a ghostly plain. This fog did not begin to lift until nine or ten o'clock. Bragg had given Polk orders to begin the battle, but minute after minute passed and the Confederate leader sat impatiently astride of his horse, waiting in vain for the sounds of the conflict.

"What is the matter with Polk,—why in common sense doesn't he do something?" General Bragg is reported to have said, and started off for the right wing personally. He found Polk absent from the field and no preparations being made to attack Baird. As the fog lifted, he saw how his right overlapped the Union left, and how the Rossville road was thus left open, and Breckinridge and Cleburn were given orders to advance without delay.

In the meantime Thomas had ordered Negley to reënforce Baird. But only one division could be spared, which was rushed to the scene with all possible speed, and that was all the support the left flank received.

At half past nine the battle was on, Breckinridge and Cleburn coming swiftly onward with a ringing yell, to meet a sturdy resistance from Baird and Beatty's division of Negley's brigade. The contest was fierce from the very opening, and

for a while it looked as if the left flank would be completely annihilated and Baird's command made prisoners. But regiments and divisions under Johnson, Stanley, and Vandever were hurried to the scene, and, suffering heavily, Breckinridge was thrown back, with two generals killed and his chief of artillery mortally wounded.

By this time the battle had extended down the line, and now Cleburn, Walker, Cheatham, and others became involved. The artillery on both sides were pouring forth shot, shell, and canister at a fearful rate, and whole lines of brave infantry were mowed down like blades of grass.

With the repulse of the Confederates' right the hopes of the Unionists ran high, but when victory seemed almost assured, a grave blunder at the Union centre brought fearful disaster to the Army of the Cumberland. Receiving an order to close up to Reynolds, Wood took it to mean that he was to fall back in support, and he left the Union centre to do this. The gap was quickly filled by Longstreet, and thus the right and left wings of the Army of the Cumberland became separated, and henceforth two battles ensued instead of one, on ground from a half a mile to one mile apart. To the east of Kelley's Farm and the Lafayette road were Baird, Johnson, Palmer, and Reynolds, still in their old semicircle, while to the westward of the road was a jagged, but unbroken, line composed of nearly all the other troops. The Confederate forces lay scattered in several directions, but principally in front of both of the positions mentioned.

The disaster to the centre, followed by a determined attack on the right, was more than the Union troops could bear, and they were forced to give up ground, until another stand was taken, as described above. In the meantime, Thomas was in ignorance of the state of affairs on the right, yet he soon discovered that he was fighting more than his share of the enemy on the left. He had massed his artillery on the slopes of Missionary Ridge, and now he withdrew from his breastworks of trees and dirt, and took up a position here. To get to the ridge was no easy work, and the slaughter counted up into the thousands upon both sides.

A pause in the tide of battle followed. Like two giants the armies faced each other, getting their "second wind," and speculating on how to proceed next. Thomas held the ridge and the Confederates were bound to drive him from it and shatter his forces. It was two o'clock and assault after assault was made, lasting until sundown. At times the Confederates would gain a slope or a minor ridge, but a Union division or a brigade would rush upon them and dislodge them, or a battery would literally cut them to pieces. The charges were truly magnificent,

but Thomas and his forces stood like so many rocks, and could not be dislodged. At sundown the attacks ceased, and it was well that this was so, for many of the Union troops were short of ammunition. In some cases the latter attacks were repulsed solely with bayonets and clubbed muskets.

With the coming of night, it was deemed advisable to have Thomas's forces withdraw in the direction of Chattanooga, and this plan was carried out, although not without additional fighting, in which a few men were lost and a large number of infantry were made prisoners. By this movement the Army of the Cumberland was again reunited, and stood once more as a wall between General Bragg and Chattanooga.

When Major Deck Lyon awoke in the morning he found the encampment of the Riverlawns submerged in mist so thick it almost appeared as if it was raining. Major Tom Belthorpe and Captain Artie Lyon were already astir, and the three gathered together, to talk over the situation.

They were not, however, left alone long. Colonel Lyon had already been moving around, surveying the "lay of the land," and had made the discovery that a large portion of the enemy had crossed the Chickamauga. While an early breakfast was being eaten, orders came to march the regiment up to a position midway between the creek and the hospital on the field.

The road ran for some distance parallel with the creek, with short brush on one side and a sparse growth of trees on the other. It was uneven and the cavalry had torn it up considerably.

The first battalion was well in advance, when, without warning, a regiment of the enemy poured down on them from the woods. The first intimation of the proximity of the Confederates was a round from four companies, which tore through the ranks of Captain Artie Lyon's command, killing three and wounding twice as many more.

Without waiting for orders from the colonel, who was riding in the rear, watching Major Truman's battalion, Major Deck Lyon called a halt, and swung the first and second companies into position. "Take aim—fire!" was the command, and the bullets clipped hither and thither through the trees. One Confederate was thus taken unawares and the whole regiment brought to a halt.

But though repulsed, the enemy did not halt long. In less than a minute the Confederate colonel gave the command for nearly his whole regiment to

advance, and the leading companies came out of the timber on the double-quick. A portion of them fired again at the first battalion of the Riverlawns while the remainder reserved their ammunition for Tom Belthorpe's four companies.

Colonel Lyon now galloped up and looked inquiringly at his son. "Deck, what does this mean?"

"We are caught, father, that is what it means," answered the major. "If you will allow me to say so, I think we had best re-form behind yonder brush."

"I will take your advice, for you have felt the enemy," said Colonel Lyon, and lost not an instant in giving the necessary orders. By the time the shelter of the brush was gained, the firing line of the Confederates was fairly well defined, and the colonel placed his own men, four companies abreast, and two companies deep, with the second half of the second battalion and the second half of the third battalion in reserve. Ten sharpshooters from Captain Life Knox's command and an equal number from Captain Ripley's company were detached, to make a detour and learn the true fighting force of the body thus suddenly encountered.

The Confederates had advanced as far as the edge of the woods. Between this and the road lay a small patch of grass, so that the cleared space between the brush and the first row of timber was a little over a hundred feet. The brush was heavy along the road, and the first row of the Riverlawns, dismounted, were as close up to this natural defence as possible.

The open space disturbed the Confederate colonel and he hardly knew whether to trust a rush across it or not. But, finally, he gave the order, and four of his companies came on, spread out in a skirmish line. They fired as they came, and received a sharp fire in return. At the brush they hesitated, and while doing this, received a volley from the Riverlawns behind.

"This is going to be warm work!" observed Major Belthorpe to Deck, as he galloped up on his black charger. "That fellow must have a good reserve force somewhere back there."

"Ripley and Knox have found them, that's certain," answered Deck, as a rattle of guns came from the sides of the enemy. "We'll soon get their report."

At that instant Colonel Lyon dashed up.

"There are but eleven companies of them," he said. "I think by a rapid dash to the north we can turn their flank and either make them retreat or surrender."

"Let us make the move then," said Belthorpe, and Colonel Lyon gave the orders. Soon the Riverlawns were in rapid motion, to the Confederates' surprise, and likewise their bewilderment.

CHAPTER XXXIII

CAPTAIN ARTIE LYON IS SHOT DOWN

Life Knox was responsible for the movement which was now being made. He had not only aided in uncovering the true strength of the enemy opposed to the Riverlawns, but he had made a discovery that he considered of great importance. Colonel Lyon had agreed with him and had acted on his advice.

As has been said, the timber faced the road. It was uneven ground, and to the north there was a sharp rise, running from the highway to a regular cliff ten rods to the rear. To the south, the rise sloped away into a hollow, at the lower end of which was a swamp having apparently no outlet.

The Confederate regiment had come upon the Riverlawns at a spot midway between the rise of ground and the swamp. If, therefore, the Riverlawns could gain the high ground, they would command the situation, for the enemy would either have to retreat to the swamp, or take to the highway and the field.

Colonel Lyon well knew that success depended very largely upon quickness of movement, and the order was passed to make the quickest time possible in advancing as indicated. All the Riverlawns' horses were of the best, and the way they tore over the brush and up the highway was marvellous to behold.

"After 'em boys, we have 'em on the run!" shouted one of the Confederate majors, and he started his battalion along the highway. He was given the chance to fire one volley, and received another in return, from Major Truman's command. He would have kept on running had not his colonel ordered him back. The Confederate commander knew there was no need for the Unionists to retreat and began to "smell a mouse."

The high ground was gained, and the first battalion, under Deck, galloped into the open timber. Life Knox, who had just been over the ground, rode in advance, as a guide. The ground was rough, but Life was a thorough backwoodsman and easily pointed out the best trail. In less than five minutes the whole regiment was behind the shelter of the trees, and by this time the first and second companies occupied positions directly in the rear of the Confederate reserves.

The reserves numbered but a company and a half, and not knowing what was taking place, the ranking captain ordered one round to be fired, and, receiving a round in return from the whole first battalion, started on a rapid retreat, to bring up against the companies from the road, which had just been turned in that direction.

These counter-movements in the timber, where the ground was sloping and rough, caused something of a mix-up, and before the Confederate colonel could bring order out of chaos, Colonel Lyon was swooping down upon him from the higher ground. The first and the third battalions were called into this action, and the Confederates ran like sheep down the slope toward the swamp.

As usual Deck was in the lead, and almost before he knew it he found himself face to face with the Confederate captain who had commanded the reserves. The captain was mounted like himself and fired at him with his pistol, while the two were less than five yards apart.

He found Himself Face to Face with the Confederate Captain.
He found Himself Face to Face with the Confederate Captain.
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A lucky leap on Ceph's part saved Deck from serious injury, if not from death, and in a flash captain and major came together, and sword met sabre in strokes which brought forth flashes of fire. The captain was a heavy-built man of twice Deck's age, and as their blades came together the major realized that he had engaged an opponent worthy of his steel.

Since joining the army, Major Lyon had practised industriously upon the sabre exercise, until he could handle that blade about as well as any officer, with a few exceptions. The captain was skilled in the use of the sword, and had it not been for the more important battle around them, both might have taken time to "try for points." But the present contest was not merely one of skill, it was one for supremacy, and Deck went at his man with a will from the very outset.

A parry and a thrust, and Deck felt the cold steel touch him in the rib. But a rearing up by Ceph saved him from serious injury, and he went at his man again. They had circled half way around, so that neither had an advantage, so far as the ground was concerned.

Suddenly the captain made a savage blow for Deck's neck, putting forth all his strength and quickness in the motion. Had the blow fallen as intended, the

major's head might have fallen from his shoulders.

But Deck was wide awake, and warded off the blow by an upper-cut which nicked his sabre, but did no further damage. Before the captain could recover, the major threw his sabre over on a side thrust, and the Confederate received the point of the blade in his shoulder.

"Oh!" groaned the victim, and gave a gasp. He tried to recover, but Major Lyon was too fast for him. He hit the sword sharply, and in a twinkling it sailed into the trees, to lodge among some small branches. The weapon had hardly left the captain's hand when a riderless horse ran against his own, and he went down, under the runaway's feet. Ceph swerved to one side; and then Deck was carried away from the scene of the stirring encounter.

The combat had warmed the major's blood, and he rode to regain the front of his battalion. It was some distance down the slope, and as he moved along he saw Sandy Lyon having a hard time of it with two Confederate sergeants, who seemed determined to bring the acting captain of the fifth company to grief. All three combatants were on foot, and it was a case of two pistols against a sabre, for Sandy's weapon was empty.

As Deck came up at full speed, or rather, as rapidly as the nature of the ground permitted, he saw his cousin on one knee, he having received an ugly wound below the left knee. One Confederate sergeant had fired his shot, and now his companion was about to follow it with a second, aimed at the acting captain's head.

Sandy Lyon made a stroke at the pistol with his sabre, but failed to reached it. The Confederate pulled the trigger, and it must be confessed that the young man who had fought so bravely since joining the Riverlawns gave himself up for lost. Even to Deck it looked as if Sandy was about to join his brother Orly as another victim of the grim Civil War.

But the pistol snapped without going off, the weapon being an old one and out of repair. "Hang the luck!" muttered the Confederate, and readjusted the trigger.

But Deck was too quick for him, and as the major's weapon rang out, the Confederate's arm dropped to his side and the pistol fell to the ground. The major fired again, striking the second sergeant in the shoulder, and a moment later both surrendered and were made prisoners.

"It was a good turn, Deck!" murmured Sandy Lyon, and he tried to rise. But the pain in his wounded leg was too great, and he fainted. Calling two privates, Deck had him carried to the rear, and he was, later on, removed to the hospital at Crawfish Springs.

As expected, the Confederate regiment had, with the exception of two companies, been driven down to the swampy ground, and here they tried to take a stand. Their colonel had been wounded, one major was dead, and the several companies were hopelessly mixed up. The two missing companies had taken to the highway, thinking the others would follow.

"I think we have the fellows where we want them," said Colonel Lyon, riding up to his son. "Dexter, don't you think you can follow those who took to the road?"

"Certainly, I can," was the prompt reply from Deck, although he could not help but wonder how bad that wound in the rib was. "How many companies got away?"

"Not more than two. You might take three companies with you."

"All right, Colonel," replied Deck, and started to find the companies in question.

Captain Abbey was busy down at the very edge of the swamp, but the second, third, and fourth companies were somewhat in the rear,—for the fierce hand-to-hand fighting had caused the battalion formations to disappear, although the companies were still in uneven lines. In a few words Deck explained to Captains Blenks and Richland, and his brother, what was expected of them, and the three companies swung around and made through the timber for the highway.

The Confederates had gone up the road a little beyond the rise. Here their leader had halted them, and sent back several messengers to tell of what he had done. The messengers were midway between the retreating troops and the scene of the conflict when Deck's command came upon them. There were three Confederates, and they came to a sudden stop in deep perplexity.

"Surrender!" cried Captain Blenks, who was at the front with the major. And as the Confederates made no sign he turned to his superior. "Shall I open on them, Major Lyon?"

"Yes," answered Deck, as one of the trio raised his pistol. He was about to fire when the second company sent in a volley, and the man dropped. The others turned and sped for their company at the best speed their legs could command.

"Forward!" ordered Major Deck, and away went the three companies up the highway until within two hundred yards of the Confederates. As they came up over the rise the enemy opened upon them, and they returned the fire. Then Deck turned to his brother.

"Artie, move over into the field and to their right," he said. "The other companies can handle them from the front."

Without delay Captain Artie Lyon switched off as commanded. The second company was sent to the opposite side, where there was a slight break in the timber.

The Confederate ranking captain, seeing this new move, and realizing that his command was not more than three-quarters as strong as the enemy, resolved to continue his retreat. But the road curved and this brought him closer and closer to the position Artie Lyon's company was riding for, a split in the road where there was a wide open field backed by some rocks impossible to travel across. Before the Confederate had time to think twice, Artie gave him two volleys, and, maddened beyond endurance, the Confederate ordered a charge in the hope of breaking through the Union line and rejoining the balance of the regiment of the South.

The rush was such as only certain Southern commands were in the habit of making, a wild, delirious oncoming, with but one purpose,—to crush all that was in front, regardless of consequences. These rushes were truly soul-inspiring and worthy of a better cause. In many cases they brought victory, but the victory was literally drowned out by the blood which flowed.

It was so in the present case. Captain Artie's company met the shock like true soldiers fighting for a cause they knew was both lofty and just. The clash of steel, the crack of musketry, the din, confusion, and smoke, the yelling and cheering, were beyond description. It was a hand-to-hand encounter, in which every man had to do for himself, leaving his nearest neighbor to do as he saw fit.

The shock came before Major Lyon could do anything to prevent it; but without waiting an instant he ordered the other companies to this part of the field, and both commands fired as they ran, aiming at the rear lines of the Confederates, which were not yet mixed up in the mêlée. The companies then went into close action, Captain Richland's men actually riding over the last line of the enemy.

Deck saw that Artie was being hard pressed personally, having gone directly to

the front to urge his command to stand firm. The young captain was daring to the last degree. "Don't give them an inch!" he shouted. "Down with them! Drive them back, boys!" And the "boys" did drive them back, twenty yards or more. Artie was waving his sabre on high and continued in the front, when suddenly Deck was horrified to see him throw up both arms, reel from the saddle, and disappear from view in the surging mass of cavalrymen and infantry around him.

"Artie!" he cried, but the tumult drowned Deck's voice. Forgetting aught else, he urged Ceph into the lines and straight for that fatal spot, fully expecting to find poor Artie a corpse. He had yet a dozen yards to go when he saw Second Lieutenant Milton falling back bearing the young captain in his arms. Artie's eyes were closed, and the clothing about his left side was saturated with blood.

"Dead?" asked the major, hoarsely. He could scarcely speak.

"I'm afraid so, Major; but I'm not certain," was the answer. "Shall I take him to the rear?"

"Yes, Lieutenant, and see that he gets the best of care if he still lives," said Deck. "I will come myself, as soon as I can."

By this time the other companies had rushed in, and now the major found it absolutely necessary to re-form his battalion of three companies. This was done inside of five minutes, and by this time the force of the first shock was over; but the Confederates had lost nearly one-third of their command, while Captain Artie's company had fared little better.

Finding the rush of no avail, so far as breaking through was concerned, the Confederate leader thought once again of retreating. But Deck had hemmed him in, and a galling fire from the front and the left brought him to his wit's end. The fire was about to be repeated, when the second captain of the Confederates interfered, and after a few words had passed between him and his superior, a flag of truce was hoisted. The prisoners taken numbered exactly thirty-seven, all the other Confederates being either wounded or dead.

The fight had hardly drawn to a close when Colonel Lyon's orderly dashed up, to learn from Deck how things were going.

"They have surrendered," answered the major. "Their loss is very heavy and ours is likewise considerable—due entirely to their pig-headed leader, who kept on fighting when he should have saved his men and surrendered," he added, with

perhaps more bitterness than was necessary. He was thinking of poor Artie.

"We have taken about half of the men in the swamp, and the battle is over there, also," said the orderly. "The remaining troops escaped into the timber, and Captain Knox's company has gone after them."

"Tell Colonel Lyon that Captain Artie Lyon is either dead or badly wounded," said Deck, and rode off, to learn the truth concerning his cousin and foster-brother's condition.

CHAPTER XXXIV

MAJOR LYON MAKES A DISCOVERY AND DELIVERS A MESSAGE

Deck found Artie lying in a sheltered spot, on a hastily constructed couch of pine boughs. Over the wounded young man stood Surgeon Farnwright, binding up a ghastly wound in the shoulder.

"What do you think of this, Surgeon?" asked the major, anxiously.

"Your brother is in a bad way, Major," was the grave response. "The bullet has shattered the shoulder blade and gone into the back."

"What are his chances of recovery, in your opinion?"

"Not the best, to be candid. They would be better if he could be removed immediately to some house where he would not be disturbed. In such cases as these, sudden jarrings are ofttimes fatal."

"I will see what can be done for him," went on Deck. "In the meantime, do your best for him."

"I always do my best in all our cases, Major," returned the surgeon, and turned away to aid some others who were wounded.

In a few minutes Colonel Lyon rode up and was taken to Artie's side. The poor fellow was now conscious, and on seeing them he tried to smile, but the attempt was a sickly one.

"Don't talk, Artie," said the colonel, as he saw the young captain make the attempt. "We will do what we can for you, and your recovery depends upon your keeping quiet."

"If you will relieve me from duty, I will try to find some house to which Artie can be taken," put in Deck. "I am afraid the field hospital is too far off."

"The trouble is, if we take him to a private place he will have no doctor's care," answered Colonel Lyon. "Surgeon Farnwright must remain with the others that

are wounded."

At this announcement Deck's hopes fell for an instant. "Well, I'll see what I can do anyway—if you will let me off," he returned soberly. "It would be too bad to have him die for the want of care. Mother would never forgive us—or Dorcas and Hope."

"That is true, Dexter." The colonel's voice sounded strangely husky. "Do your best,—and spare no money, if money is of avail," and he turned to consult with Surgeon Farnwright once more.

The major had noticed, during the ride along the timber road, a little farmhouse, set in a grove of walnuts, standing about a quarter of a mile back from the scene of the battle described in the last chapter. He now set off for this farmhouse post-haste, to see what accommodations it might offer.

It was past noon, and from a distance came a heavy firing. Although he did not know it, the Confederate cavalry had crossed the creek in force, and were now charging straight for Crawfish Springs and the hospital located there. The brigade under Colonel Long was sustaining the main attack, although other of General Mitchell's cavalry was in the vicinity.

As Deck rode toward the farmhouse, he noticed that all of the lower windows were boarded up, as if to resist an invasion. Some of the upper windows were also served in the same way, but two or three of them were partly unprotected.

Riding to the door, he dismounted, and used the iron knocker lustily. The clank-clank brought forth no reply, and he used the knocker again, with additional force.

"Please don't hammer that door down!" came in a shrill female voice, and now the head of an elderly lady appeared at one of the upper windows. The lady carried a pistol of ancient pattern in her hand, and her wrinkled face was full of determination.

"I should like to talk to you," said Deck, and he felt half like smiling when he saw the old-time weapon.

"I don't want to talk to you," was the short reply. "I have nothing to do with this war."

"I am sorry to disturb you, madam, but one of our captains has been badly

wounded and he is in need of some quiet spot where he can rest."

"My place is no hospital, sir. Take him to the regular army hospital."

"Unfortunately, that is just what we cannot do—for the present. He needs absolute quiet, or he may die."

"I don't want him here—don't want anybody here," was the slow but positive reply. "As I said before, I have nothing to do with this war."

"Perhaps you are a Southern sympathizer?" went on Deck, hardly knowing how to proceed.

"If I am it is none of your business, young man. I can tell you one thing, I am not afraid of a suit of soldier clothing, no matter who wears it."

"Oh, Aunt Clarissa, don't be rude," came in a soft voice from behind the elderly lady, and Deck saw a dainty hand placed on one of the gaunt shoulders.

"You be still, Rosebel," was the crusty interruption. "I can manage this matter very well alone. Do you think I am going to open my house to any of the military—least of all to those Yankees? I am sure if I won't have our own soldiers here I won't have those who are fighting us!"

"But he says the captain is badly wounded, and may die," pleaded Rosebel, and now she pressed closer to the window, to get a better look at the young Union officer below.

Her soft voice interested Deck, and he came as close as possible under the window to see her fully. As he gazed at her he gave a start. Where had he seen that face before? Somewhere, he was positive of it—but where?

"Rosebel, get back," ordered the elderly lady, and tried to crowd the maiden from the window, but she would not budge.

"Aunt Clarissa, remember, Paul is in the army," she said. "I know I did not want him to join, but if he was wounded and among strangers—" She did not finish, excepting with a long sigh.

Deck could hear her words plainly, and at the mentioning of the name, Paul, his heart gave a bound, then sank like a lump of lead in his bosom. He had found the missing sister of the young Confederate captain who lay in that cold trench many miles away, with a stick for a headstone, upon which was inscribed:—

ROSEBEL'S PAUL LIES BURIED HERE.

"Your name is Rosebel?" he said; and his voice was as soft as when he had spoken to Kate Belthorpe in his most sentimental mood.

"Yes."

"And your brother Paul was a captain in the Confederate service?"

"Yes." And now the young lady's eyes began to fill with wonder.

"You lived in Chattanooga with your brother, and you—you had a difference of opinion about his joining the army?"

"We did have—and I am sorry for it," answered the maiden. "But who are you to speak thus to me? Do you know my brother?"

"Rosebel, do not be hasty in talking to this young man," interposed the aunt.

"I did know your brother, Miss Rosebel. I do not know your other name."

"And yet you knew my brother!"

"He must be telling falseho—" began the aunt, but the girl's hand over her mouth checked her.

"I fell in with a young Confederate captain whose name was Paul," explained Deck, sadly. "He said he had a sister Rosebel living in Chattanooga. He had quarrelled with that sister, and in anger had hidden some money away so that she could not get it."

"It was Paul!" cried Rosebel Greene, for such was her full name. "Oh, tell me about him, and how he came to tell you this. Is he well?"

The young major looked at her, then turned his face away.

"I am very sorry for you, Miss Rosebel, very sorry. He fought as only a true soldier can fight—to the end."

"He is dead!" came with a moan. "Paul is dead, Aunt Clarissa! Oh, what shall I do now?" And the girl sank into the elderly lady's arms.

It was a trying moment for Deck, especially so as he could do nothing, in his present position, to aid the young lady. He waited and saw both females leave

the window. A minute after the front door was opened by the elderly lady, and he was asked to enter.

"I hope you are not fooling my niece," she said. "What is your name?"

"A man would not be human to fool upon such a heartrending subject," answered Deck. "I am Major Dexter Lyon, of the Kentucky cavalry. May I ask that young lady's name?"

"Rosebel Greene. I am Miss Clarissa Pomeroy, her aunt. Rosebel used to live in Chattanooga, but when Paul went to the war and took all their money with him, she came to live here with me."

"Paul did not take the money with him, Miss Pomeroy. He left it behind him, in hiding. I was with him when he died, and I promised to find his sister, if possible, and tell her where the money was secreted."

The two entered the little sitting room of the farmhouse, where Rosebel had sank down in a rocking-chair, crying silently. In a broken voice she asked to be told about Paul, and sitting beside her, Deck gave her the particulars just as they had occurred, and told where the money was to be found. The recital brought tears to Deck's eyes, also, which he hastily brushed away, and Miss Pomeroy was likewise visibly affected.

"I am glad to know Paul wasn't so bad as to run off with the money," the elderly lady observed, after a vigorous use of her handkerchief. "The house in Chattanooga is shut up now, but even if it wasn't, it isn't likely anybody would hunt down in the cellar for that money."

"I would rather have Paul back!" moaned Rosebel Greene. "Oh, Paul, Paul, how much I shall miss you!" And unable to restrain her emotions, she rushed from the room.

Deck was in a quandary, and looked at Miss Pomeroy. She saw his perplexity, and quickly made matters easy for him.

"You may bring that wounded officer here," she said. "We will do the best we can for him. Who is he?"

"His name is Captain Artie Lyon. He is in reality my cousin, but he has always been a member of our family, and I look at him almost as a twin brother."

"If he is so close a relative we will do our very best for him, Major Lyon," answered Miss Pomeroy. "I have had some experience as a nurse, and Rosebel is excellent around a sickbed."

"What he wants principally is quiet," rejoined Major Deck; and after a few words more he withdrew, his thoughts divided between poor Artie and the bereaved girl left behind.

It was no easy matter, in those trying times, to obtain an ambulance, and after scouting around for the best part of half an hour without success, Deck decided to have Artie carried on a stretcher to the farmhouse.

The young captain was in considerable pain, and the journey was by no means easy for him. Four men carried him, and Deck went along. Two rests were taken before the dwelling was gained. At the doorway both Miss Pomeroy and Rosebel met them. A small bed had been put up in the sitting room, and Artie was placed upon this; and hardly had this been accomplished when Surgeon Farnwright dashed up on his horse, to give the ladies instructions and to leave some medicine for the patient. Rosebel had now dried her tears, and went to work bravely, working with the tenderness of a sister over the sufferer.

"He shall not be disturbed," she said to Deck. "Aunty and I will take care of that."

Knowing he was needed in the field, Deck remained no longer than he deemed necessary. An urgent call from Crawfish Springs had reached the Riverlawns, and Colonel Lyon was now on the way to that locality, taking with him all but the twelfth company, which was escorting the prisoners to the rear. The major joined the command just as it was coming up in the rear of Colonel Long's brigade.

The fighting had been heavy, and the Confederate commander, Wheeler, had lost many men. They had come over the Chickamauga, hardly thinking that any Union cavalry remained in the neighborhood. For a time the battle-ground was near Glass's Mill, but gradually the Unionists were driven toward Crawfish Springs, while the Confederates massed themselves in the direction of the field hospital of the Army of the Cumberland.

Again Deck found himself in the fray, fighting as hard as ever. The Riverlawns had suffered heavily, but the organization still maintained its full number of companies. It supported Long in the second and third attacks and lost seven

additional men, including a second lieutenant and two sergeants.

By this time word came to Thomas from Rosecrans to fall back to Rossville, on the road to Chattanooga. To further this movement, some cavalry was needed to protect the immense wagon trains, and the Riverlawns were called to perform part of this service. It was no easy work, and there was but little glory in it; yet it had to be done, and every cavalryman, from Colonel Lyon down, went at it heart and soul. On the way to Rossville, the wagon train suffered two raids, but the Confederates were beaten off with a heavy loss. In the meantime, an ammunition train arrived, and infantry and cavalry were alike supplied with whatever was wanted. The movement of the wagons was slow, but by midnight the Riverlawns' duty came to an end, and they went into camp on the high ground not far from the turnpike running from Chattanooga through Rossville to Ringgold.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE SIEGE OF CHATTANOOGA AND A HUNT FOR DRUGS

"This is the worst situation I ever heard of, Deck. What in the world are we to do?"

"I fancy General Rosecrans is asking himself the same question, Tom," answered the major of the first battalion, gravely. "For myself, I must say I can't answer."

"We'll be eating horse-meat next," put in Life Knox, who stood by. "And the horses are dying right along, too."

"Poor Ceph! He hasn't had enough to eat for a week," said Deck, with a shake of his head. "But let all that go. What I am thinking of is the medicine my father and Artie require. If that can't be had, Surgeon Farnwright says he won't be responsible for consequences."

"I'd rather fight than starve like this," concluded Tom Belthorpe, and he walked away.

The Army of the Cumberland had retired to Chattanooga several weeks before, and Bragg had followed Rosecrans closely, taking possession of Lookout Mountain, Missionary Ridge, and several other important points. The Confederate leader had failed to defeat his Northern foe, and now calculated to cut off all the Unionist's lines of communication and starve him out. He had already cut off travel on the river and on the railroad, and the only supplies to come into Chattanooga had to be brought through the mountains.

The state of affairs in Chattanooga during this siege had grown rapidly from bad to worse. The first thing to give out was fresh meats, for the Confederate cavalry leader, Wheeler, raided the country for miles around Chattanooga and gathered in all of the animals in sight. Next, the fodder ran short, and horses and mules dropped in the streets, and whole detachments of regiments were kept busy burying the beasts, to prevent the spread of disease. And now rations were scarce, and not a man of the whole Army of the Cumberland had had a square meal for a week or over.

And yet, to Major Deck Lyon, this was not the worst feature of the long-to-be-remembered siege. On the day following the retreat to the city proper an ambulance had been procured and Captain Artie had been brought in, as carefully as possible, and taken to the house formerly occupied by the Greenes. Rosebel Greene and Miss Pomeroy had come in with the wounded captain, the former feeling it her duty to nurse the young man, because of what Deck had done for her, and the aunt saying she would not remain at the farmhouse alone, and because she was curious to see if Rosebel would really find the money hidden in the cellar, as the dead brother had mentioned.

The money had been found intact, and then hidden again, for there was no telling what might happen in those troublesome times. Artie had stood the journey fairly well, and was put in the best room the house afforded.

During these days the Riverlawns had been kept busy in the vicinity of Camp Thomas, some twenty-eight miles out of the city. Here one day they had had a fierce brush with Forrest, and when it was over it was discovered that Colonel Lyon was missing.

The discovery had caused a shock to Deck, and without delay he had organized a searching party, to learn if his father was killed, wounded, or a prisoner of the enemy. The search had lasted until nearly midnight and the gallant colonel had been found, lying partly under his horse, the latter dead, and the colonel shot through the head and unconscious.

As Artie was at Rosebel Greene's house, it was but natural that Deck should take his father to the same place, since the regular hospitals in Chattanooga were crowded far beyond their capacity. The colonel was placed in a chamber adjoining that of his foster-son, and Rosebel and Miss Pomeroy became his nurses, Deck promising to pay them handsomely for whatever was done. Rosebel said she wanted no pay. "You were a friend to my brother," were her words; "that is sufficient."

For two days the colonel had lain unconscious, and Surgeon Farnwright and the doctor called into consultation with him had given Deck but small hope. "Poor Artie's case was bad enough, Major," said the surgeon. "Your father—" and he finished with a shake of his head.

"The trouble is," said the doctor, later on, "the colonel is suffering for some medicine we cannot obtain in Chattanooga. We have a good general supply here, but there are certain things which I know would do your father a great deal of

good. And they would do your brother good, too."

The announcement that certain drugs which were so sorely needed were not procurable in Chattanooga made Major Lyon feel very bad. He got the doctor to write down a list of the missing articles for him, and started out on a personal hunt, visiting every druggist he could find, and offering large sums of money, even for small quantities.

"Can't be had," said one druggist. "You will have to wait until this siege comes to an end and we get in some new supplies."

"I can't wait. My father and my cousin may die in the meantime," answered Deck, and continued his search on foot. For several days he had not ridden Ceph, deeming the poor beast too weak from lack of food to bear such a burden.

General Rosecrans had been considering the advisability of making a determined effort against the enemy, but in the midst of this he was relieved of his command. The Army of the Cumberland was placed in a new military division, to be known as that of the Mississippi, under General Grant, and General Thomas was ordered to fill General Rosecrans's place. General Grant at once ordered Thomas to "hold Chattanooga at any cost," and added that he would come on as soon as possible and see what could be done.

General Grant, the leader of all leaders, the man of iron will, arrived on October 23. The plans made by Rosecrans and slightly changed by Thomas were approved, and movements were made to put them into immediate execution.

In the meantime, General Sherman had been engaged in opening up the Memphis and Charleston railroad eastward, hoping by this means to effect a communication with Chattanooga through Huntsville. But Grant had ordered him to cross the Tennessee at Eastport, and this was done, and Sherman then united with the right wing of what was now Thomas's command. Hooker had before been ordered to move to Bridgeport, below Chattanooga, and march thence by the wagon road to Wauhatchie, while Palmer was ordered to a point on the river opposite Whitesides.

The plan now put into operation was one looking to the seizing of a spur of mountains overlooking Lookout Valley. If this was successfully accomplished, Hooker and Palmer would be materially aided in their movements, and the river would be opened for steamboats as far as Brown's Ferry.

It was six miles to Brown's Ferry, and on the night of the 26th of the month, eighteen hundred men under General Hazen floated down the stream in sixty pontoon boats, around the sharp bend, and past nearly three miles of Confederate pickets. The darkness aided their movements, and as silently as ghosts, they landed at two points, overcame the pickets, and marched to the spurs to be taken. While this was going on, another force, under General Smith, marched by the north bank of the river, and were ferried over before daylight. A large crowd of men were set to work, and by early morning a pontoon bridge nine hundred feet long was swung across the river, and all points seized were protected by artillery and intrenched troops.

The Union forces now commanded the highway from Lookout Valley to Chattanooga Valley, and began a vigorous attack on the Confederates located between Shell Mound and Lookout Mountain. At the same time Hooker advanced, and Bragg awoke to the realization of the fact that a genuine effort was being made to raise the siege. Half a dozen small but sharp conflicts followed, and then the Confederates fell back; and the way was opened to Brown's Ferry, Bridgeport, and Stevenson, both by the river and the excellent wagon roads on either bank.

Many a commander would have paused here, but not so Grant. Without delay the whole army was put on an active footing and supplied with necessary food, clothing, and ammunition. Forage was brought in in large quantities, and the horses and mules put in the best possible condition, and heavy artillery was rushed forward. In the meantime, the arrival of General Sherman with reënforcements was eagerly awaited.

The Riverlawns, as a body, had not been active in the taking of Brown's Ferry and the spurs of mountains beyond, but a detachment under Major Lyon had gone on with Turchin's brigade, to clear out and hold a gorge through which the Bridgeport road ran to the crossing. The work was hazardous in the extreme, and the first two companies of the first battalion and Life Knox's company with them received a severe fire lasting for upward of two hours.

At this engagement Deck took more than an ordinary interest in his work. As a true soldier, he wanted to see the siege raised. More than this, he wanted to obtain the drugs so much needed by his father and Artie. He went in with a vigor almost born of desperation, and falling against a body of Confederates which were little better than guerillas, his command drove them, seven hundred strong, a distance of two miles into the mountain fastnesses.

As mentioned, the way was now open to Bridgeport, Stevenson, and other points, and Deck obtained permission to visit half a dozen towns and villages in quest of the drugs desired.

He took Life Knox with him, and the pair were gone the best part of the forty-eight hours. Nothing that was wanted could be found at the places named; but at another spot, where there was a cross-roads, the major discovered a large general store, with a medicine department attached.

Entering the place, the two Union officers were confronted by a burly Confederate over six feet high, and weighing over two hundred and fifty pounds. He scowled at them, but did not dare to abuse them openly.

"Yes, I've got drugs, but I ain't sellin' 'em to-day," he said shortly. "You'll have to find another drug shop, I reckon."

Deck gazed at the man in silence for a moment. Then he pulled out his pistol and pointed it at the fellow's head.

"Sit down in that chair, sir," he ordered, and the burly Confederate almost collapsed.

"Would you shoot an unarmed man?" he gasped.

"Not if he behaved himself."

"I haven't got to sell my drugs if I don't want to."

"In this case I think you have. Life, will you keep him covered?"

"Certainly, Deck."

"I want certain drugs and will have them if they are in your stock. I will pay for what I take. But there must be no disturbance," went on the major.

He spoke thus for the benefit of two clerks who were present and who seemed inclined to be ugly. They heard him and allowed him to move around the establishment unmolested. With his list in one hand and his pistol in the other, he looked over all the bottles and packages the store contained.

It was a wearisome search, but it was gratifying, for out of four articles wanted, Deck found three. He then interviewed the shopkeeper, who declared by all he held sacred that he had never had the fourth article and doubted if any of the

local doctors used it.

"Well, I will have to take your word for it," replied Deck. "Now I want these. What are you going to ask me for them?"

The storekeeper hemmed and hawed and finally said five dollars in gold. As this was not so unreasonable, Deck paid over the amount, and a moment later he and Life left the store. Before they could be molested, they were off at full speed for Chattanooga. Here they took the drugs to the doctor who had been attending Colonel Lyon and Artie.

"It was a clever haul," said the physician, after listening to Deck's story. "The drugs will do much good, I think. I am sorry, however, you could not obtain that fourth article, since it is the most important of the lot. These will help your brother, but the poor colonel will still have a hard time of it."

"But he will live—and so will Artie?" pleaded the major.

"While there is life there is hope," answered the doctor, and that was the only consolation Deck could get. As a matter of fact, both the lives of the colonel and the youthful captain hung upon a thread.

General Sherman having come up, and Bragg having weakened his forces by letting Longstreet's command leave him, to do battle elsewhere, Grant lost no time in moving forward. Hooker, holding Lookout Valley, faced the enemy occupying the heights, while Thomas was stationed before Missionary Ridge. Sherman was now commanded to take position on the right bank of the river above the city, with the idea that he could afterward cross and seize another portion of the ridge beyond, as yet unfortified. A portion of the cavalry, under Long, was assigned to aid him, and the Riverlawns went with this body, all of the other horsemen remaining in camp.

The advance of the cavalry was made in a violent thunderstorm, such as had not struck the command for many a day, and this delayed operations for twenty-four hours or more. When the pontoon bridge over the river was reached, it was found that the wind and the rush of the current had parted it, and no troops could cross until repairs were made. The Riverlawns went into temporary camp under the shelter of a long hill, but everybody was wet to the skin.

Lieutenant-Colonel Gordon was now in command, and he and Deck went off in the rain to take a survey of the situation. On the return, they stumbled across a

camp of a dozen or more Confederate guerillas. Shots were exchanged and the guerillas withdrew. In doing this, several rode close to Deck, and the major was amazed to hear one of them mentioned by his companion as Totterly. He glanced at the fellow and saw that he was tall, with a marked stoop to his left shoulder, and that his nose did not point straight ahead. The description fitted perfectly to that given of the guerilla who had rifled the safe at Riverlawn and made off with five hundred dollars, some jewellery, and the paper intrusted to Noah Lyon, which was not to be opened until five years after Duncan Lyon's death. This man's name had been Totterly, and Deck instantly concluded that the man in front of him and the raider of Riverlawn were one and the same person.

"I want to catch that man!" he cried to Lieutenant-Colonel Gordon, and dashed off, firing several shots at the retreating form. Away they went through the brush and along an ill-defined trail, but Totterly, for it was really he, had a fair lead, and had recognized his pursuer, and now he did his best to get away. Coming to a curve in the road, he cut into some timber, and by this means threw Deck completely off the scent in the darkness of the storm.

The major returned to the encampment in a thoughtful frame of mind. One chance to recover the money, jewels, and precious paper had slipped from him. Would another such chance ever present itself? He earnestly hoped so, and resolved that, in the future, he would keep his eyes wide open for the guerilla.

CHAPTER XXXVI

FIERCE FIGHTING—AN UNDIVIDED UNION—CONCLUSION

While Long's cavalry and the Riverlawns were operating as mentioned, General Thomas, under directions of Grant, began the first movement ending in the great battle of Chattanooga. With about twenty-five thousand men the new commander of the Army of the Cumberland marched forth to Missionary Ridge, to develop the Confederate lines at that point. The march was made in such order that the enemy thought a parade was taking place in the plain below them, and it was not until Thomas's skirmishers fired on their outposts that they became aware that a battle was on hand. They retreated to their rifle-pits and a hot engagement resulted, and a larger portion of Missionary Ridge was secured to the Unionists. On the next day another important advance was made along the river.

Hooker was near Lookout Mountain, and with his command scaled the lofty peaks, drove the Confederates from one point of advantage to another, and after a bloody battle, which will never be forgotten by either the blue or the gray, took about two thousand prisoners and intrenched himself on the mountain-side in full view of Chattanooga. This contest took place in the rain and mist, and was so high up that nothing of it could be seen from below because of the clouds. At night the moon came out through the scattering rain, and hundreds of victorious camp-fires blazed at as many different points, telling of the victory gained.

Bragg was now almost at his wit's end. He had lost at Tullahoma, gained nothing on the Chickamauga, failed in his siege of Chattanooga, and it looked as if the remnant of his command was to be scattered to the four winds of heaven. He had made some mistakes, officers under him had failed to carry out his commands, and now, when it was too late, he bitterly regretted having allowed a portion of his soldiers to move on, to fight elsewhere.

The dawning of day, November 25, saw a hundred flags with the stars and stripes floating from the peaks of Lookout Mountain, and Hooker prepared to make a descent and sweep in the direction of Rossville Gap. In the meantime Bragg marched his brigades along Missionary Ridge, his idea being to either

overwhelm Sherman or seize the railroad, which is not definitely known. He had been driven out of Chattanooga Valley, and it was now a question of fight or leave Chickamauga Valley.

Sherman was in need of reënforcements, not having brought all of his men over the stream, and Howard marched the Eleventh corps to join him. Sherman began, without delay, a furious assault on Bragg's right, and leaving the knoll upon which he was intrenched, swept up that upon which the enemy rested.

The line of battle, two miles in length, was now clearly defined, and at half past three in the afternoon a general advance was ordered. The Union skirmishers encountered at first a series of rifle-pits. The orders had been to take these, and nothing more was expected. The battle waged with great fury, and soon the Confederates were seen to waver and abandon first one pit and then another.

"Let us go on! Down with the enemy!" was the battle-cry, and no sooner were the pits gained, than the Union soldiers leaped over them and began the steep ascent of the mountain before them, the Confederates from the pits fleeing wildly in all directions, and a great number being made prisoners.

The peril connected with the storming of Missionary Ridge can hardly be overestimated. At some points the sides were almost perpendicular, and at others the shell rock crumbled beneath the touch. At the top were stationed forty pieces of artillery, and thousands of the enemy. Shot and shell rained down incessantly, and great gaps were torn into the ranks, as company after company pressed up, bound to gain the summit at any cost. To those who saw it, it was a sight the mind's eye could never lose. The officers were as excited as the men, and no one in command could have ordered those under him back, even had he been so inclined.

The Riverlawns had come forward on horseback, but now, after the rifle-pits were gained, it was deemed best to dismount. Away they went on foot, close to Sherman's side, with Long's cavalry but a short distance away.

"We have them on the run, boys!" shouted Colonel Gordon. "Forward! Don't lag behind the rest of the line!" And forward they went, until the first battalion was far up the heights, with Deck at their head, waving his sabre enthusiastically over his head. His breast had been sore from that sword prick in the rib, but now all that was forgotten in the excitement of the moment.

"There is a break!" he shouted to Gordon, and pointed to the spot with his sabre.

It was an opening several hundred feet wide, and the Riverlawns rushed to fill it. Then on they went again, pell-mell, panting for breath, and firing as often as the opportunity presented itself. Once a shot tore through the companies, but it did not stay their progress.

A cheer swept down the line. Some regiment had gained a peak some distance away, and the Confederate standard was torn down, and the glorious stars and stripes hoisted in its stead. The cheer was nerve inspiring, and onward swept the boys in blue with more enthusiasm than ever.

The Riverlawns were still a hundred feet from the point they were trying to gain, when, on looking through the cloud of smoke, Deck saw a sight that filled him with horror. Above was a huge mass of loose rocks and dirt. The Confederates had shovelled away to the front of the mass, and now it was just starting on its downward way. Should it strike the regiment it would fairly annihilate the ranks.

For an instant Deck could not speak. Then his voice rang out like a trumpet:—

"Riverlawns! Right face! Double-quick—march!"

"Right-face! Double-quick—march!" rang from one battalion to another, and a sharp turn off along the side of the ridge was made. Lieutenant-Colonel Gordon looked at Deck in wonder.

"What does this mean?" he began. "Do you—Great heavens! Double-quick, boys, if you want to save your lives!" And the double-quick became a triple-quick, and some went even faster. Scarcely had the regiment left the fated spot when the rocks and dirt came crashing down, sweeping trees, brush, and vines before it, and ploughing up the ground as though with so many gigantic plough-shares.

"You saved the regiment!" cried Tom Belthorpe as he met Deck, a moment later. And Gordon said the same.

The order to go forward again was now given, and away went the Riverlawns in what was little short of an ugly mood, for they did not consider the letting down of the rocks and dirt as square fighting. Deck continued at the head of the first battalion, and inside of five minutes gained the top of the ridge. A regiment of Confederates were there, in the act of retreating, and he charged them relentlessly, causing them to fairly tumble down the slopes opposite. The whole regiment was soon at hand, and the fight did not come to an end until the enemy

had been driven clear out of sight.

Missionary Ridge was won, but now was no time to celebrate the victory, although cheer after cheer rang along the mountain peaks and every Union flag to be had was waving lustily. The Confederate artillery was seized and pointed in the opposite direction, and the log barricades were torn down and set up in places of greater advantage. At the centre, the Confederates tried to make another stand, but it availed nothing, and overwhelmed, they threw down their arms and fled.

But even yet the work for the Riverlawns was not all over. There was another ridge between General Sherman and the main body of the Union troops, a ridge near the tunnel under the mountain, where General Bragg's right flank rested. This must still be taken, and again the Riverlawns played an important part, fighting until long after sundown, with Sherman's invincible command.

The fighting was still on, when Deck's battalion found itself in a little gulch, pursuing a small body of Confederates that had been uncovered ten minutes before. The enemy had been fired at four times, and half a dozen men had fallen. The battalion pressed them so closely that soon the leader was seen to throw away his sword and lift up his hands in token of surrender.

The face-to-face meeting with the Confederate was a surprise to Deck, for the man was none other than Totterly, and the men under him numbered two who had taken part in the attack on Riverlawn. Under a strong guard, all three guerillas were taken to the rear. Two other guerillas were picked up mortally wounded.

As soon as he could get the chance, Deck spoke to Totterly and the others about the articles stolen from the mansion. The leader would admit nothing, but one of the wounded men confessed to all that had been done and said that the articles taken had been left with a relative of Totterly in Chattanooga. One hundred dollars of the gold was gone, but all the other things were safe. That night Totterly tried to escape by running the prison guard and was shot in the back, a wound from which he died at sunrise.

Deck was anxious to learn if the information given to him concerning the stolen articles was correct, but it was just now impossible to get away. Early in the morning the Riverlawns were sent along the river in pursuit of the flying enemy. In the meantime Sherman, having done such gallant work at the Ridge, was ordered to prepare to go to Knoxville, where Burnside's position was becoming

embarrassing. And thus the Riverlawns parted with this brave and daring general for the time being.

When Major Lyon returned to Chattanooga he found Captain Artie much improved. Colonel Lyon was also a trifle better, but both Surgeon Farnwright and the city doctor agreed that he must not think of joining his command again for at least four or six months to come. As a matter of fact, the colonel never went into the field again, but, receiving an honorable discharge, retired to his home at Riverlawn, having done more than his share in upholding the glorious Union.

Upon the retirement of Noah Lyon, Lieutenant-Colonel Gordon became the commandant of the regiment, and Deck was made second in command. This left the office of major of the first battalion vacant, and for "meritorious service" Captain Artie Lyon became the new major, when he once again took the field, six months after the event narrated at the beginning of this chapter. At the same time Sandy Lyon became a full-fledged captain, much to old Titus Lyon's delight and to the joy of his mother and sisters.

Deck's first move on coming back to Chattanooga was to have a search made of the premises occupied by the relative of Totterly. This brought to light the stolen money, minus the hundred dollars which had been spent, the jewellery, and also the mysterious missing paper. To make sure that it was the right document it had to be read, and the reading made Noah Lyon and the other members of his household smile.

"I do not believe in the institution of slavery," wrote Duncan Lyon, "and I hope ere this paper is brought to light that it will be abolished in the State of Kentucky. If it is not abolished, I hereby urge upon my brother Noah to set the slaves free,—doing it in the following manner: All under eighteen years of age to be held until they can care for themselves, and the others to be freed at the rate of one every two months, starting with the oldest. This will make it easy on him. If the slaves wish to remain at Riverlawn, I urge that they be allowed to remain, at fair wages, so long as they perform their work faithfully."

Such was the contents of the much-discussed letter, and Noah Lyon said he was not surprised. "It pleases me to know that Duncan thought as I think," he said to Deck. "And I am glad to remember that our slaves are practically slaves no longer. Levi Bedford has already put every hand at Riverlawn on the pay-roll, and the only reason why they don't leave is because they don't want to leave."

A month later the old colonel returned to his plantation home, but Captain Artie remained at Chattanooga. The reason for this was, that the wounded captain had

found Rosebel Greene not only the best of nurses but likewise the loveliest girl he had ever met. As the days went by and Artie grew stronger, their friendship increased, and it was with tears in her eyes that she saw him depart at last for the seat of war, now miles away.

As the days passed the gateway to the southeast was thrown wide open, and Sherman began that march to the sea which brought him such undying fame. With the general went the Riverlawns, through many a fiery battle, doing their duty as of yore and winning fresh laurels day by day. To tell of all these happenings would require many volumes, and still not one half would be told. The war went on, and commanders came and went, but the Riverlawns kept in their place, well to the front, no matter what the danger. In one battle Colonel Gordon was shot down, and then Deck became the commander, a position he held until that final surrender of Lee to Grant at Appomattox.

The Union was saved! How the news flashed hither and thither over the telegraph wires! The church bells rang, bonfires leaped up to the very clouds, and men, women, and children shook hands, wept, cheered, and yelled themselves hoarse. Henceforth it would be the United States of America, and nothing less—against all comers. The Constitution of our forefathers, baptized in the blood of thousands of martyrs, should henceforth be held sacred!

The final surrender came in April, 1865. In October of that year occurred two events, which, while not of national importance, were of great moment to the immediate parties concerned. By invitation of the Belthorpes, Rosebel Greene had made her home at Lyndhall, and here she was united for life to the young soldier whom she had so tenderly nursed back from death's door to perfect health. At the same time that this occurred Kate Belthorpe became Mrs. Dexter Lyon. All belonging to the several families were present, and among them Margie Gadbury, who in the early spring had changed her name from Belthorpe. Lyndhall was a mass of lights and flowers, and both Deck and Artie were married in full military uniform, and the entire occasion was one long to be remembered by those who participated.

When the Riverlawns were mustered out there was some talk of disbanding the command, but this was overruled, and for a number of years the various companies remained intact, although unattached. Every year they held a grand reunion, where the veterans, young and old, would "fight their battles over again." At these reunions many toasts were offered, but that which brought forth the greatest applause was the one invariably offered by Colonel Dexter Lyon.

"Gentlemen," he would say, on rising, "let me give to you the toast I have proposed to you every year since the war closed: An Undivided Union. May God prosper it, and every citizen do all he can to uphold it!"

"An Undivided Union!" would come back in deep unison. "Once and forever! AN UNDIVIDED UNION!"

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